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## Hospice helped 63 families with at-home palliative care

Niamh Griffin

The LauraLynn children's hospice has helped 63 families in the first year of an at-home palliative care service across Cork, Kerry, and Limerick, the community lead said.

The charity expanded last year for the first time outside of its Dublin base to meet growing demand from parents whose children are unable to travel to the capital.

Marie Lynch is team lead for the community service based in Mallow Primary Care Centre.

"Initially we were covering Cork and Kerry, and in May of this year we extended cover to Co Limerick as well," she said.

"Between Cork, Kerry,

and Limerick we have cared for 63 families in that time.

"All of the children have life-limiting conditions, so they have quite complex care needs and would have a palliative need as well."

The LauraLynn hospice has always accepted families from around Ireland, but she said interest locally has grown since this service was launched.

"In our first year we had an increase of 100% in referrals from this area, so I think there definitely is a need for the support," said Ms Lynch.

"We are present and on the ground now, and people are more aware of the service. Previously families may not have wanted to travel to Dublin."

The service includes a



Marie Lynch, team lead for the community service based in Mallow Primary Care Centre.

music therapist and seven nurses and they work closely with regional HSE services.

"We are based in Mallow

which is a central base to get to everywhere," she said.

"The care is not just about going into the family's home,

it might be a goal that the family have to get to the beach for a day or get to the park for a day. These can be huge challenges for families sometimes to just be able to pack up and get out."

Siblings and parents can also benefit from a coffee morning held recently at Blarney Woolen Mills offering emotional support. Families in these counties can also access the Dublin hospice which offers respite as well as supports.

"Even though we are regionally based in Cork, once a family is accepted into LauraLynn they have accessibility to every service," said Ms Lynch.

LauraLynn CEO Kerry McLaverty said that the Mallow team delivered 1,000

visits by the end of August.

She plans that this service will act as a template for other community services to be developed elsewhere.

"Our ambition has always been to see how can we take the hospice care we have in Dublin and bring it closer to home for families," she said.

For now, they are focused on expanding regional at-home care but she said their next five-year strategy will consider whether another hospice is also needed outside of Dublin.

"If there is enough need out there, and if that is what we are hearing back from our families and the clinicians and other stakeholders, it is definitely something that we would consider," she said.