



Supporting & Strengthening Resilience
in Individuals, Families & Communities

Annual Report 2016



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WHAT WE DO

The LIMERICK SOCIAL SERVICE COUNCIL (LSSC) is a leading voluntary service, working in communities in Limerick for five decades.

The LSSC delivers its services at the LSSC Centre in Henry Street, Limerick and through outreach in a range of locations throughout Limerick City and County.

These are delivered through the CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICE, the EARLY YEARS SERVICES, the COUNSELLING SERVICE, and SERVICES FOR OLDER PEOPLE.

The LSSC also offers its rooms and facilities at the LSSC Centre to other agencies and organisations to enable them to serve their client groups within the community.

The LSSC has a dedicated and compassionate team of professionally qualified individuals who each bring a unique set of expertise and experience to the organisation. Though everyone serves a different role, each person is committed to supporting and building resilience in people and communities in our target area. The LSSC team, which is supported by a CE Scheme and dedicated volunteers, is led by the LSSC General Manager, Brian Ryan, and overseen by the LSSC Board.

50
YEARS

OUR SERVICE MODEL

Our model of service delivery is based on an integrated approach across our programmes and through our partnerships with other agencies and organisations. Our programmes cover The Child & Family Service, The Early Years Service, The Counselling Service and Service for Older People.

THE CHILD & FAMILY SERVICE

Parent Support & Outreach

Teen Parent Support Programme

Community Mothers Programme

Relationships & Sexual Health Programme

Family Support Initiative

Traveller Health Advocacy Programme

Family Advocacy Service

Family Welfare Conference

Supervised Access

Southside Child & Family Centre

THE EARLY YEARS SERVICE

Crèche

Pre-School

THE COUNSELLING SERVICE

Adult Services

Adolescent Services

SERVICES FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Care Of The Aged

Community Education

Community Outreach

LSSC SERVICE MODEL

Integrated Approach / Working with Partners

Diverse Programmes including Prevention & Early Intervention

Universal, Targeted & One-to-One Services

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Through a caring response, the LIMERICK SOCIAL SERVICE COUNCIL aims to promote the dignity and growth of individuals, families and groups.

OUR VALUES

The LIMERICK SOCIAL SERVICE COUNCIL aims to promote the self-worth and growth of individuals, families and groups by ensuring that:

- The dignity of every person is respected
- Quality services are developed
- Service provision is both preventative and supportive of individuals and families
- There is a multi-agency response to need, through networking with both statutory and voluntary agencies and organisations
- The services provided are affordable and accessible to those in need, or free of charge where appropriate
- Services are monitored and evaluated.



WELCOME



Dear Friends,

It gives me great pleasure to continue the tradition of providing a foreword for the Annual Report of the Limerick Social Service Council (LSSC).

This Report provides an insight into the numerous activities of LSSC's projects during 2016 as it discharged its core functions as well as continuing to promote the needs of the most marginalised in Limerick and surrounding areas. The focus and attention to consolidating the work of its key services while exploring new opportunities to respond to ever-changing needs of our communities, is especially welcome.

As Chair of the LSSC Board of Directors, I acknowledge the value of the Annual Report as it demonstrates the transparency and accountability of the organisation. In so doing, it provides a summary of LSSC's outputs, an overview of challenges it has faced in meeting targets as well as plans for work in the year ahead.

As a new departure for this year's report, we are delighted to throw a spotlight on the experience of two of our staff as a flavour of the personalities and individual work undertaken within the LSSC - we look forward to doing a similar spotlight on other staff members in future reports.

The Annual Report is a particularly important opportunity to express our appreciation and to acknowledge the contributions of the wide range of supporters of the LSSC. The work of LSSC would not be possible without the commitment of the LSSC General Manager, staff, volunteers, donors and the organisations with whom we work in partnership - I would like to thank you all for your on-going support to making a difference to the individuals, families and communities that the LSSC serves.



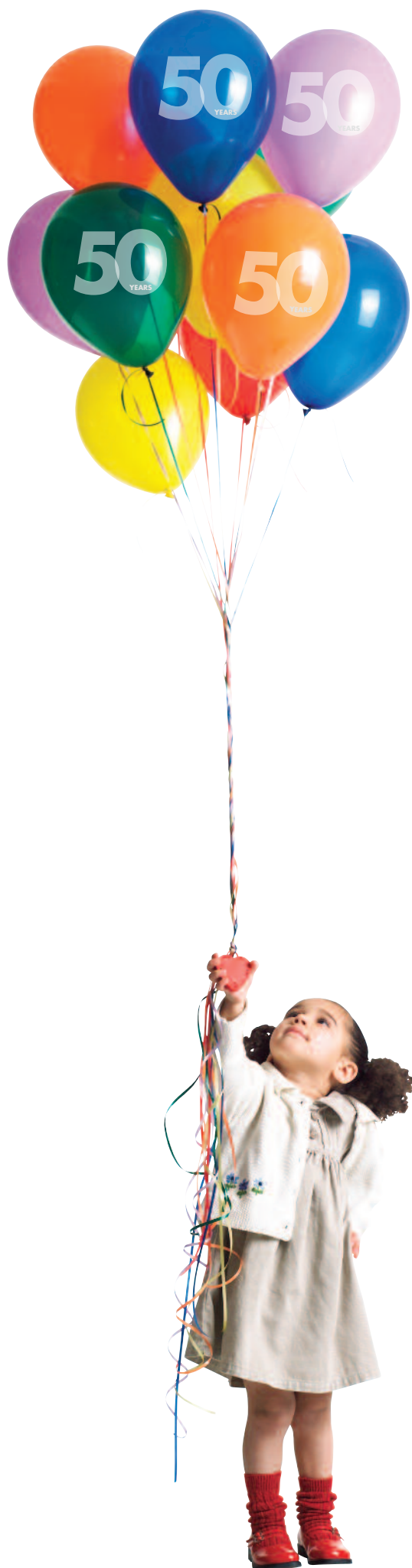
50 YEARS

I would finally like to mark the sad passing of Bishop Eamon Casey, whose report in April 1966, “Cartias Urgent Nos”, contributed to the establishment of the LSSC and to mark the passing of Fr. Andy Kennedy, who was the first Director of the LSSC. Their valuable contributions and deep commitment to social justice and to the needs of the most vulnerable in society pioneered a new departure in community care in Limerick and formed the foundation stone of the LSSC that we know today. They believed that even in the most marginalised and troubled communities, islands of strength and resilience would be found and that that positive supports would enable positive growth.

This Annual Report 2016 indicates another step in the fifty years of LSSC’s history and evolution. Let us appreciate the successes and learning of the past years as we face a new period of challenges in 2017. With our dedicated and expert people, I am confident that we will build on the leadership of our founders and of those who served before us as the LSSC continues its work to strengthen resilience in individuals, families and communities in Limerick.

**Mise le meas,
Martin Golden, Chairman of the Board
June 2017**

**A leading voluntary service serving and supporting
Limerick communities for 50 years**



UPDATE FROM THE LSSC GENERAL MANAGER

2016 marks the 50th anniversary of the LSSC and reflects five decades of our work to build strong communities and to support individuals and families so that they are not marginalised, disadvantaged or socially excluded.

From the experience of the past decades, we now believe that we have built a Service Model that works and shows positive results in meeting a range of different needs across communities.

Through this Model of working, statutory, voluntary and community organisations are acknowledged as equal partners in the conversation, and together over the years we have worked well to engage our service users and the broader community to be part of the solution and guide us in our service planning and delivery. It is a simple formula and a cost effective method whereby we combine the resources of the LSSC, volunteers and communities with local and statutory funding to identify needs and to focus our efforts to where they are most beneficial.

Within the Model, our Programmes are diverse, covering prevention and early intervention as well as intensive services for our most complex service users and situations. This illustrates that the Model is not just one concept but occurs on a continuum of needs, ranging from reaching a broad group of people in a universal way to targeted, one-to-one programmes and crisis intervention. Our Programmes are divided between four distinct strands which cover:

THE CHILD & FAMILY SERVICE

THE EARLY YEARS SERVICE

THE COUNSELLING SERVICE

SERVICES FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Among the particular elements highlighted within our Service Model and are illustrated across our work in 2016 are the following:

The importance of a holistic and integrated approach in planning, needs assessments and provision of services – this has been strengthened by the establishment of our **Referral Hub** in 2016, which operates weekly and facilitates information sharing between professionals and agencies for more effective needs identification, assessment and service provision;

The importance of having statutory support, partnership and co-operation at various levels - this facilitates our Programmes to work in an integrated manner with our different partnership agencies, resulting in more effective use of resources, greater sustainability and stronger financial commitment to the LSSC programmes. For example, our collaboration with the TUSLA has enabled us to extend our Counselling Service to a younger population and in 2016, 75 young people attended over 400 sessions at the LSSC service; we also share our facilities with the PHN services which has a mutual benefit and referrals of service users that avail of support from both agencies;

The importance of innovation in response to changing needs has resulted in the emergence of new projects e.g. the LSSC has become the lead agency in 2016 in the management of the new Child and Family Centre on the Southside Campus, etc.

The importance of evaluations and service reviews that enable quality of services to improve and staff to better plan and adapt implementation as necessary. For example, a review of Altamira Apartments led to the facility receiving a change of orientation and now offers accommodation for older women, which has become a role model for the City in addressing housing needs of older, vulnerable women;

The use of a strong theoretical framework and standardised common assessment tools that ensures continually raising quality in services. For example, the Early Years Services has worked intensely to reach the Síolta Standards. This has resulted in our Early Years Service being the first in Limerick to gain accreditation for the Centre in Síolta standards, which is the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and is designed to support the improvement of quality across all aspects of practice in early childhood care and education. We also work within the Meitheal National Practice Model and led on 7 this year with TUSLA in cases to safeguard and enhance the well-being of children;

The importance of a service user-focus, giving individuals and families a central voice in how we plan, deliver and review our Programmes. This means that we ensure that our service users are treated with dignity, respect and sensitivity. It also means that our services are accessible as possible and we have an extensive range of projects that are delivered in local communities and within homes. For example, our Community Mothers' Programme visited 87 mothers in their homes in 2016 and our Service for Older Persons made several hundred visits to senior citizens either in their homes or in hospital.

During 2016 and over the past 50 years, our Service Model has shown its effectiveness in not only identifying needs and empowering individuals and families to access services and receive support at the local level, but it has also proved that an agency such as the LSSC, can make a major impact by its leadership and collaboration in tackling poverty, social exclusion and disadvantage in the wider community.



A Special Message of Thanks

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who has enabled the LSSC to be there for so many individuals, families and communities we serve. I am particularly grateful to our service users who have placed great trust in us to share their lives, and their stories at moments of crisis and through challenging times.

The environment we are working in is increasingly difficult for those individuals and families. Resources have become tighter and the severity of need in the communities we work have become more complex. So we pay a particular thanks to our funding partners and many individual donors, without whom we could not do our important work in the community.

I thank our employees and volunteers for their unwavering commitment to working alongside our service users to achieve positive outcomes while operating in what has been, at times, an exciting but also challenging environment. Thank you to my colleagues on the Board for their professional expertise, their commitment to the LSSC and their clear strategic direction in guiding the organisation. I wish to pay a special thanks to all our retired employees for their past work and appreciate their attendance at our celebratory lunch to acknowledge their contributions to the LSSC.

2016 marks the 50th anniversary of the LSSC and I would finally like to acknowledge the motivation of our founders. Their pioneering spirit and commitment to social justice have inspired our staff for so many years to develop services to meet the needs of those who need us most and to support all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender. I am confident that their legacy will continue to guide the development of our organisation and reinforce our determination to promote the dignity and growth of individuals and families and to strengthen the resilience of people in Limerick's communities.

Mise le meas, Brian Ryan, LSSC General Manager

June 2017



The LSSC Service Model provides early intervention and prevention services that target the most vulnerable in society regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender.

Through this Service Model, the LSSC has supported individuals, families & communities in Limerick for 50 Years and has strengthened their resilience in dealing with crises and challenging circumstances.

THE CHILD & FAMILY SERVICE

The Child & Family Service offers a range of programmes and interventions through intensive work with children and with parents, joint parent and child work, sibling work and group work.

The Service targets the most disadvantaged and vulnerable families in the catchment area, and focuses on improving children's experiences of childhood, parenting skills and child parent relationships.

Specific attention is given to referrals from TUSLA Child & Family Agency, to families where child protection and welfare concerns exist, and to families in crisis situations.

The Service works from a strengths perspective with the child and the family, and in partnership with families, other agencies and communities. The Service follows the Meitheal National Practice Model, which offers a common approach to the identification of strengths and needs and a practice model for coordinating and reviewing interventions.

The range of programmes and services delivered through the Child and Family Service are outlined.



The Parent Support & Outreach Service

The Parent Support & Outreach Service offers a variety of interventions, including intensive family support, based specifically on the family and the child's needs. Interventions incorporate elements from: the Solihull Approach (Understanding Your Child) Model, the Family Caring Trust programmes, Incredible Years Parenting Programmes, One Family, Positive Parenting for Changing Families, the Therapeutic Crisis Intervention and Triple P Positive Parenting Programmes along with other resources used to provide parents with skills and information they need to support their families in the challenges of being a parent as well as in their own self-care. Interventions and resources are allocated following assessment through the Meitheal National Practice Model.

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The Teen Parent Support Programme

The Teen Parent Support Programme (TPSP) is a targeted community-based support service that offers confidential support to young people who are pregnant or who are parents. Support is also available to the young person's partner and members of their extended families. The Teen Parents Support Programme Limerick is part of the National Teen Parents Support Programme.

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The Relationships & Sexual Health Programme

The Relationships & Sexual Health Programme aims to increase parental capacity to communicate with their teenage children in the area of relationships and sexual health, and to develop parents' skills on conflict management and self-care.

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The Community Mothers Programme

The Community Mothers Programme is a home visiting service aimed to assist and empower new mothers in their role as parents. The Programme is designed so that mothers are visited in their homes during the first year of their children's lives by other mothers who are trained by the Programme to offer support and non-directive information on parenting and child care.

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The Family Support Initiative

The Family Support Initiative works to identify needs and to support and connect individuals and families to services as appropriate. The Initiative which was located in a number of communities in Limerick's Regeneration areas covering Southill, Ballinacurra Weston and Prospect, has now extended to the City centre.

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The Traveller Health Advocacy Programme

The Traveller Health Advocacy Programme has been operating since 2013 in conjunction with the Traveller Health Unit within the HSE in response to the 2010 All Ireland Traveller Health Study. The Programme comprises a Co-ordinator, 6 trained Traveller Health Advocates and 3 Health Advocate Assistants. The aim of the Programme is to improve the overall health status of Travellers in Limerick City which serves around 150 families living primarily on halting sites in and around the City.

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The Family Advocacy Service

The Family Advocacy Service is a confidential and independent service for parents in Limerick who have children who are either in care or in the process of being placed in the care of the State. The Service offers support to parents to continue involvement with their children while they are in care and assists them to fully participate in Child-in-Care Reviews and Child Protection Case Conferences.

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The Family Welfare Conference Service

The Family Welfare Conference Service (FWC) is a specialised service that supports family members to participate in the FWC process and plans for their children. Under the Children Act 2001, Child Protection services are obliged to request that a FWC is convened if it believes a child or young person may be in need of a Special Care Placement; FWCs may also be requested through the Courts. The FWC Service is utilised by TUSLA Social Workers where child protection or welfare concerns exist within families or when broad family support is being sought.

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The Supervised Access Service

The Supervised Access Service supports children in care to have contact with their parents, siblings and other family members. The Service facilitates access referrals from TUSLA Child & Family Agency.

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THE EARLY YEARS SERVICE



The LSSC Early Years Service is acknowledged as one of the leading community Crèche and Pre-school services in Limerick City that provides quality care for babies and young children. In its purpose-built facility, the Early Years Service forms part of the LSSC building and is therefore ideally located to enable parents who are living, working or in education/ training in the City Centre to avail of the service.

The Service offers a full day Crèche Service and a Pre-School Service (mornings only) five days a week.

The Service promotes Healthy Eating and participates in the national Healthy Ireland Programme. Mealtimes are viewed as a great opportunity to promote independence, good manners and acceptable social behaviour. At the Centre, healthy meals and afternoon snacks are served daily. An in-house cook prepares a range of nutritious dishes to suit the dietary requirements of all our children.

The team of staff, led by the Centre Manager, are committed to a high standard of service and pride themselves on providing a caring, stimulating and happy environment for every child in their care.

All are trained in Early Childhood Care & Education to provide an environment that is conducive to play and learning and which reflects the principles and standards of Síolta and the Áistear curriculum. The Centre gained Validation in Síolta Standards, which is the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and is designed to support the improvement of quality across all aspects of practice in early childhood care and education settings where children aged birth to six years are present.

All staff are also Garda vetted prior to employment by the LSSC and receive regular training updates in Child Protection and child care practices. The Centre operates in strict compliance with the Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations 2006 and other statutory obligations. In line with these legal requirements and best practice, the ratio of staff to babies is 1:3 and for toddlers 1:6. The ratio in the Pre-school Service is 1 Leader and 1 Pre-school Assistant to 12-22 children.

Following the LSSC Service Model, the Service works in close partnership with parents with a clear focus on improving outcomes for young children and their families, particularly those vulnerable and /or at risk of disadvantage.

THE COUNSELLING SERVICE

The LSSC Counselling Service is the largest community-based counselling service outside of Dublin and provides high quality, effective counselling in a number of Limerick City and County locations.

The Service is available to adults and adolescents, individuals and couples who are referred to the Service by TUSLA Child & Family Agency, HSE services, GPs, by other services, and by individuals who self-refer and who are otherwise excluded from relevant services because of finance or shortfall in service provision.

For many individuals, early intervention through the Counselling Service is a cost effective way of addressing a wide range of issues and a means to developing coping strategies for their day-to-day life. The Service supports people who may be struggling with personal, emotional, or mental health difficulties and is geared to assisting them either to find new ways to make a fresh start in certain areas of their lives or to come to terms with things that cannot be changed.

Session can also help people understand why certain things are repeatedly difficult and distressing for them, so that they can then manage their situation more effectively. A key element of the service is that service users are listened to in a non-judgemental way and in a safe and confidential environment.

The service is a member of the Association for Agency-based Counselling in Ireland (AACI) and all staff undergo stringent pre-employment assessments to ensure that they meet LSSC and professional standards. In this regard, the LSSC ensures that each staff member is a qualified and professionally accredited counsellor or therapist. Furthermore, a professional requirement for the staff is to have professional clinical supervision of their practice, which ensures that staff continue to work to the highest professional standards.

As part of the LSSC review of all service, the Counselling Service routinely collects data to monitor individual clinical outcomes and overall service performance. Comparing performance against recognised benchmarks has placed the Service positively in relation to other counselling services.



SERVICES FOR OLDER PERSONS

Services for Older Persons seek to promote the well-being and mutual support of elderly people by helping them to positively use and enjoy their leisure time, build social networks and participate in community activities.

The Service is needs-led which aims to listen and respond to what older people require, and is underpinned by the goal of maximising the dignity of social opportunities for older people in society. The Service has projects based Southill, Our Lady of Lourdes, Ballynanty and in St Mary's Parish, but also work with other groups throughout Limerick and provides classes at the LSSC Centre.

The Service organises a number of social and recreational activities for older people in the community and operates through a number of support groups, community education initiatives and through outreach services on a one-to-one basis or in a family context. There is an extensive programme of visitations to older persons in their home, in hospitals and in other care settings. Service users are linked to other agencies as needs arise and counselling is offered through the LSSC Counselling Service.

The Service also offers a range of practical information and advice, including assistance with access to services, form filling, and general administration that has challenged many older persons and vulnerable groups in recent times due to computerisation and the digital age.

Through the different areas of activity, the Service has a particular focus on preventing and alleviating the physical and mental health risks linked to social isolation as a result of aging. This Service, therefore benefits older adults by addressing loneliness and isolation often experienced by individuals who have no family members or other support systems. Many of the service users are in relatively good health but many live with disability or chronic illness that makes it hard for them to leave their homes. Many also are over 75, with some coming out of difficult situations like homelessness, poverty or domestic abuse.

From a number of consultations with service users, many have indicated that services like the Older Persons Service is a lifeline, keeping them connected to the outside world and comforting them through their isolation and through long days. It provides companionship, alleviating loneliness by bringing people into contact with others and helping them build social connections as well as giving them access to information and advice on emotional wellbeing and mental health to details of social welfare.





THE LSSC FACILITIES

The Limerick Social Service Council in its endeavour to maximise its support to Limerick communities offers facilities at the LSSC Centre in Henry Street, Limerick and at other LSSC premises to external agencies and services thus promoting greater inter-agency and partnership working toward common goals and complementary services.



The LSSC Centre Henry Street:

Facilities and rooms are made available at the LSSC Centre to over sixty organisations, agencies and groups from the statutory, community and voluntary sectors on a regular basis to deliver programmes, consultations and meet with clients.

Agencies such as the HSE provide Primary Care Services and Public Health Nursing Service offer clinics on a recurring basis at the Centre. Other agencies have a permanent base at the Centre from which they offer full-time services. These include: TUSLA After Care Services, Family Therapy Services, The Law & Mediation Service, Epilepsy Ireland, and Empowering People in Care (EPIC).

In recognition of the importance of maintaining a flexible approach with clients, the LSSC arranges for the Centre to be open outside of normal office hours on most evenings throughout the year.



Altamira Apartments:

The LSSC previously provided short-time accommodation to young and first time mothers at Altamira Apartments in Thomondgate in Limerick City. Following an extensive review of services, the LSSC sought a more effective use of resources to address issues of marginalisation in Limerick. Through a collaborative initiative with the Associated Charities Trust (Thomond House), apartments at Altamira Court were re-opened in 2013 to provide accommodation to women experiencing homeless and in need of support.

The Service is now acknowledged as a successful model for Limerick in regard to supporting older women who have housing concerns or are homeless.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM SERVICES IN 2016

THE CHILD & FAMILY SERVICE



The Parent Support & Outreach Service

86 parents availed of intensive one- to-one support	157 children availed of intensive one- to-one support	300 drop-ins and queries	10 families attended a School Holiday Programme
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The Child and Family Service provided centre-based, home-based and community-based initiatives designed to promote the flow of resources and supports to parents and families that strengthen functioning and enhance the growth and development of children and young people.

Through the range of Child and Family Service projects, 86 parents and 157 children availed of intensive one-to-one support services. 43 of these parents were also involved with the TUSLA Social Work Department, which reflected the nature of the cases with many on Levels 3 and 4 of the Hardiker Scale (see below).

10 families and 13 children attended a School Holiday Programme for parents and children. Such activities provided parents and children with the opportunity to bond and interact in a fun way as well as providing parents with new ideas and skills in relation to crafts, activities and engaging with their child. This holiday programme sought to improve relationships between parent and child as a result of the promotion of positive behaviour through child directed social and emotional coaching, praise and encouragement. Approximately 300 drop-ins and queries were directed to the service for parenting information and advice.

The Relationships & Sexual Health Programme

8 Relationship and Sexual Health workshops for parents	5 Relationship and Sexual Health workshops for teenagers	14 Parent Support Groups were facilitated	2 Locations
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8 Relationship and Sexual Health workshops were organised for parents of teen children and 5 Relationship and Sexual Health Programmes for Teenagers were delivered in a number of secondary schools throughout the City and County. These workshops sought to improve self-esteem and self-confidence for both parents and adolescents in relation to relationships and sexual health. 14 Parent Support Groups were facilitated and a new Parent Support Group commenced in Rathkeale, Co Limerick. The service also offered one-to-one support directly to parents.

The Teen Parent Support Programme (TPSP)

52
young people in full/part time education were financially supported

7
young parents aged 16 to 21 attended the City Slickers 10 week programme

45
young parents attended the weekly TPSP Parent & Toddler Group

95
young parents received advocacy and outreach support

The Teen Parent Support Programme (TPSP) is a unique service in Limerick devoted exclusively to the needs of adolescent parents and their children. Through the TPSP, 72 young parents received intensive one-to-one support and 95 young parents received advocacy and outreach support.

- 52 young people in full-time and part-time education were financially supported by the TPSP under the School Completion Programme Funding.
- 7 young parents aged 16 to 21 attended the City Slickers 10 week programme.
- 45 young parents and 47 children attended the weekly TPSP Parent & Toddler Group.
- 3 TPSP Ante-natal programmes were organised in partnership with the HSE PHN which were attended by 22 expectant young mothers and fathers.
- 8 parents participated in the TPSP Baby Weaning Classes.
- 15 attended the TPSP Cook It Programme.
- 8 attended the TPSP Paediatric First Aid Courses.
- 14 attended the TPSP Summer Messy Play Workshop and Story Time and Puppets Workshop.
- 21 Young Mothers and their 21 babies/toddlers participated in the Summer Educational Family Day Trip to Fota Park.
- 5 Grandparents attended a Grandparents Childminding Information Workshop.

The Community Mothers Programme

9
Parent, Baby & Toddler Groups

133
parents with their children attended programme

72
parents and babies attended Weaning clinics

87
families were visited by Community Mothers

The Community Mothers Programme is one of the LSSC's longest established programmes. Through this Programme, the LSSC has worked closely with the HSE PHN service to support mothers to enjoy and participate more fully in their child's development with the aim to enhance and promote parent-child bonding and positive relationships.

In 2016, this Programme supported

- 9 Parent, Baby & Toddler Groups that were attended by 133 parents with their children;
- 72 parents and babies attended Weaning clinics;
- 13 parents attended Baby and Child reflexology programmes;
- 24 parents attended 3 Incredible Years Infant and Basic Parent Programmes;
- 87 families were visited by Community Mothers in their homes offering one-to-one and outreach support.

The Family Support Initiative

The Programme continued to work with individuals and families through outreach support and expanded the Southside service in 2016 to households City wide.

Referrals for information and advice to deal with issues including education, training and employment, community safety, housing services, finance, rights and entitlements, substance misuse, child protection and welfare, child, youth and family services, community services, counselling, services for active retired, and health support services.

The Traveller Health Advocacy Programme

As in previous years, the Programme worked through a through a community development and peer education approach to ensure that information provided was easily understood in order that the knowledgebase on health issues amongst the Traveller community and the uptake of services was improved. Health issues addressed in 2016 included:

- Cancer screening,
- Diabetes and Asthma Awareness,
- Sun protection/Melatonin awareness,
- Census and Vote Awareness

Of particular note was a focus on positive mental health and wellbeing which was promoted by a group of Traveller women who carried out a creative project of glass works. This project resulted in the “Home” Exhibition in the Hunt Museum which subsequently toured other venues in the region. Qualitative research was also carried out in 2016 to examine the difference the service had made to date and how it can continue to be improved.

Family Advocacy Service

Through the Family Advocacy Service, the LSSC supported parents who have children who are either in care or in the process of being placed in care of the state. 27 parents were supported through one to one support, telephone and text messaging. 10 monthly parent support groups were arranged with an average attendance of 5 parents. Seminar for parents on legal issues were also organised as part of the support group. Parents were facilitated to give their views on a New Leaflet in relation to Voluntary Care (leaflet designed by Community Law & Mediation).

The majority of cases related to Level 4 of the Hardiker Scale.

The Family Welfare Conference Service



In 2016, 14 Family Welfare Conferences and 2 Review Family Welfare Conferences were planned and convened. The impact of the FWC meant that

- 30 children had Family Welfare Conferences/Review Family Welfare Conferences;
- The FWC staff met an average of 5 family members for individual consultations as part of each Family Welfare Conference process;
- 10 young people were consulted and took part in the Family Welfare Conference process;
- Family Plans were agreed in 13 Family Welfare Conferences/Review Family Welfare Conferences;
- Decisions to apply for Special Care Orders were made in 2 Family Welfare Conferences and 1 Review Family Welfare Conference.

The majority of cases related to Level 4 of the Hardiker Scale.

The Family Support Initiative

The Service supported 40 families so that children could have contact with their parents, siblings and other family members. All cases were on Level 4 of the Scale.

THE HARDIKER MODEL

LEVEL 4 ACUTE

Acute needs requiring specialist Social Work intervention. Threshold for child protection response reached.

LEVEL 3 COMPLEX

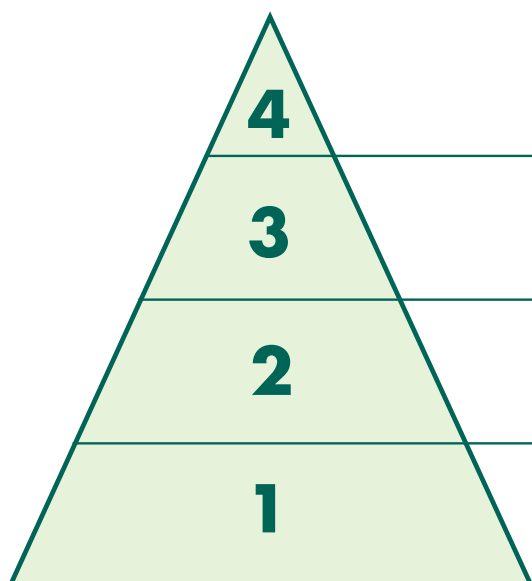
Complex needs requiring targeted, integrated intervention from within either LAP or Social Work services. Threshold for child welfare response reached.

LEVEL 2 ADDITIONAL

Additional needs requiring supports beyond those provided by universal services and preventative services from within LAP. Threshold for child in need response reached.

LEVEL 1 UNIVERSAL

No identified additional needs or concerns.



ADAPTED from: Hardiker et al (1991)

THE EARLY YEARS SERVICE



ACTIVITIES & DEVELOPMENTS in 2016

The Early Years Service provided Crèche services to 6 babies and 22 toddlers, and 22 children were enrolled at the Pre-school service.

The most significant achievements of the Service in 2016 were:

- Participating in the Healthy Ireland program and receiving our award in August 2016, this involved significant work with children and families in order to ensure everyone was involved in the programme.
- Engaging with the ABC Start Right Programme.
- Including families who use our service in our daily activities e.g. reading stories for the children, participating in the Halloween activities, etc.
- A strong focus on staff training i.e. one member of staff has completed the Dina in the Classroom training, one staff member began LINC training and one staff member who is in her second year of her degree programme to achieve her Early Years Degree.
- The children availed of a visit from the Limerick Fire Service, a visit from the Community Garda, a visit from a Farm who brought along lots of animals to see the children.

PARENT A – My child has been here since they were 8 months and I feel she has benefited greatly. It is a very good service and the staff are excellent.

PARENT B – My child has been here for over a year and the staff are very friendly and straightforward.

Comments by Service Users compiled through Service User Feedback Evaluation Forms in 2016.



THE COUNSELLING SERVICES



ACTIVITIES & DEVELOPMENTS in 2016

2016 proved to be another challenging yet rewarding year for the Counselling Service with 856 new referrals received. 5,170 sessions were offered with an 87% attendance rate.

There were notable increases in referrals from Tusla Child & Family Agency and the HSE Adult Mental Health Service while referrals from GP's and other Primary Care staff were stable. The overall number of referrals decreased in 2016 compared with 2015, reasons were due primarily to the redirection of referrals for couple counselling to other agencies as these agencies are now specifically funded to deal with these issues.

Key issues for referral included anxiety, depression, stress, traumatic changes in personal relationships including bereavement, difficulties in marriage or family relationships, separation and divorce, changes in family responsibilities, and difficulties in other significant relationships.

Other significant issues for referral related to addiction, drug and alcohol abuse, financial difficulties, unemployment, social isolation and dealing with life transitions. Of note was an increase in the number of referrals for pregnancy and maternity related issues including dealing with unexpected pregnancy, postnatal depression and fertility issues.

The Adolescent Psychotherapy service continued to develop and grow with an increase in the number of referrals. 75 young people attended over 400 sessions with specifically trained Adolescent Psychotherapists.

The service is committed to working as efficiently as possible and young people referred to the service were prioritised and offered counselling as soon as a referral was received. Overall feedback on the benefits of the service indicated that the service was both accessible and responsive to young people's needs.

"I'm forever grateful to the Counselling Service. It has changed my life for the better and I am a better person from all the support".

"It was a very bad time in my life and the Counsellor was excellent, so kind and helpful. She literally saved my life and I'm grateful".

"Arranging the appointment for the same time slot each week is most important. Easy to remember and prioritise when your personal life is in turmoil!"

"Very happy with my Counsellor, felt an equal balance and able to express myself at my own pace. Was able to explore more issues than the one that brought me into the service".

"It was the best decision I made for me. It has made me a better person. It is great to have someone to talk to and listen and hear what you want to say without judging you. It is my life line".

"My Counsellor was very kind and helpful to me. I learnt how to say 'No' and my confidence has come back slowly".

"Fantastic service, of great benefit. Could not have asked for a better Counsellor or service".

"My Counsellor was well matched to my needs and we clicked. I wish I could always have been as lucky to meet such a wonderful, understanding, compassionate and direct person in the past. She encouraged homework and always acknowledged that work in the next session. She was very respectful in bringing the session to a close gently and with little exercises to shake off the tensions and pain of discussion before accompanying me to the door. Together we improved my life and self-esteem and thought me new ways of thinking to help with new life skills to keep going".

SERVICES FOR OLDER PERSONS



ACTIVITIES & DEVELOPMENTS in 2016

The Service continued to support 12 Care of the Aged Groups in the Limerick Area. The 2016 Service Budget assisted local groups in the care of local older adults with a particular focus on helping older adults in need with fuel costs, bedding/clothing support, accessing services, encouraging older adults out of isolation and connecting with groups, accessing local community education and social groups for local adults.

Over 100 older adults attended the LSSC Centre for community education classes on a weekly basis. The aim of the Community Education programmes is to increase the educational capacities of older people thereby positively impacting on their sense of esteem and self worth while helping to overcome isolation commonly associated with older age. The Community Education programmes were co-ordinated by LSSC and supported by the LCETB with Class Tutors. Weekly classes included: Irish, Art (Beginners & Intermediate), Crafts, Local History and Computers (beginners), Computers (Advanced).

Members of the Outreach Team visited communities where the most vulnerable and isolated older adults live and involved themselves in: Parish Councils, Parish Community Groups, Meals on Wheels Sub Groups, Bereavement Support Groups, visits to housebound older adults and those in hospitals/ care/ nursing homes, organisation of weekly clubs for older adults, involvement in funerals for older adults and support to family and friends.

Several outings were arranged by the Southill Project Coordinator to Bunratty Castle, Killaloe, Killarney, Galway, Knock, Caherconlish and Lisdoonvarna. Groups also enjoyed an Easter Bonnet Day at the Savoy Hotel, a drama event at the Belltable, an Information event at the Tait Business Centre organised by Safe Communities, participation in the Bealtaine Festival whereby 70 participants dressed up in period costumes, a Halloween event at Thomond Park, a seniors Parish social event at the Pery Hotel and a Garda social event at the Maldron Hotel. The number of places arranged throughout all these events was approximately 1,350 and related to an average of 70 older persons per month.

One of the most significant events were 2 visits to Limerick Prison where prisoners participating in the Gaisce Awards, cooked, served dinner and provided entertainment to 75 older persons. This was seen as a remarkable event as it was the first time in the history of Limerick prison that a visiting group was entertained by prisoners. Its success was due to the openness of the Governor of the Prison and the innovation of the LSSC Project Co-ordinator. It was viewed positively by both the prisoners and the older people; as one senior lady commented: "the dinner and entertainment was better than in any hotel...ever!"



Staff

spotlight



STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Mary O'Hehir

Project Worker Older Persons Service Southill



As Mary says,

'research tells us that being isolated and lonely has a significant and lasting effect on health and well-being; if we know that lonely and socially excluded individuals have poorer health than their less lonely peers, then we must do everything we can so that isolated people are less isolated and less lonely. It's a basic, simple formula'.

For the past four years, Mary has worked extensively with the LSSC to support older people in the local Southill community. The key challenge for her work is how to make life as healthy, happy and meaningful for older persons by addressing social isolation and loneliness.

She believes that she can do this through one-to-one support and group activities that maximise the social inclusion of older adults which in turn helps to combat not only social isolation and loneliness but also related problems including illness, anxiety and depression.

A typical week in Mary's work:

In addition to helping to prepare meals for 30 seniors at the Dining Club on Wednesdays and the tea for the Church Group on Thursdays, Mary's week is non-stop making home and hospital visits, writing newsletters and arranging monthly social outings. In 2016, she organised more than 12 trips to a number of locations outside of Limerick including Knock, Lisdoonvarna, Killaloe and Galway. A trip to Killarney included a non-stop sing-song to Kate Kearney's Cottage and a Summer Party in Caherconlish included dinner and dancing. Some of the occasions included other senior groups, which meant extra connections with other seniors and invariably, greater fun.

In addition to organising social occasions, a core part of Mary's work is offering older people practical assistance with filling in forms, making appointments, accessing information on entitlements and contacting services. Mary says that assistance with form-filling might seem so basic but if the right form is not completed and submitted at the right time, it can result in major drawbacks for vulnerable adults if they cannot access their entitlements or the services they need.

As Mary says: *'I don't know how anyone can manage the number of forms that are required to access support and services. Most people that I meet want to fill in the forms and to be able to make those phone-calls themselves. But trying to read pages of forms and to dial numbers and listen to an answering machine, can be a major challenge for people who did not grow up in the digital age. Older people are certainly not stupid, their eyesight or hearing may not be as good as it was previously.....but many younger people are also challenged by forms, inaccessible phone messages and trying to make contact with the right person in a large organisation. You don't have to be old to get frustrated about bureaucracy – but it hits older vulnerable people much harder. That is why assistance with form filling and phoning for appointments might seem basic but it can make a major difference in their lives.'*

Mary believes that there are a large number of agencies and supports in the wider community who can help and who provide information and advice free. She avails of every opportunity to access this information and advice on behalf of the older population she supports. Moreover, linking people

in with other agencies and working together can maximise on resources and efforts. As Mary says, 'we can do so much on our own but working with other agencies means that benefits for older people go far beyond the narrow focus of a particular service.'

Highlight of the year:

There were many highlights but the two visits to Limerick Prison, where young prisoners participating in the Gaisce Awards, cooked and served dinner and entertained 75 of her seniors, was a very special project. It was innovative and brave, broke down barriers on a number of different levels and so rewarding for everyone involved.

Conclusion:

Mary loves her work and believes that we owe our elders respect and support so that they are less dependent and can age with dignity. And she adds that everyone will benefit: In reality, assisting people to keep doing things for themselves for as long as possible and offering them enjoyable opportunities outside of the isolation of their homes would actually be much more beneficial for them and would delay the demand for care from families or health and social services, thereby saving money, reducing stress and improving quality of life.



STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Jean Ryan

LSSC Administrator & Office Manager

‘Mother of the LSSC’

As Jean says,

After over 20 years of working for the LSSC, I am proud to be part of a team that has a genuine sense of commitment to alleviating the suffering of others and is always seeking ways to improve services for the well-being of individuals and families. I have been so fortunate to work with amazing people whose main goal is to help others.

Working in this team has been so rewarding and even when there are challenging times, the integrity and kindness of my colleagues has given me the energy and belief that any obstacle can be easily overcome.

A typical week in Jean’s work:

Jean has been working in the LSSC administration for over twenty years and is currently the longest serving staff member in the organisation. It may be no surprise therefore that one staff member named her the ‘Mother of the LSSC’ and stated, ‘this is not just because she is long-serving here but because she is also one of the calmest and caring people within the organisation. She starts work before everyone else; and it is lovely to arrive in each morning and someone already has the kettle on! Jean creates that homely environment but is also one of hardest working staff I have ever known. I don’t think she leaves before 7.30pm most days and 9.00pm on Thursday!’

Hard work, kindness and a strong belief in the aims of the organisation reflects Jean’s work ethic. Her commitment to the LSSC has been unwavering in spite of resource challenges faced by agencies like the LSSC in recent decades. She notes that there have been added pressures on management and administrators in the voluntary sector and the experience for the LSSC has been no different.

Since she started working 23 years ago, there has been increased accountability and reporting requirements to funders which has meant revising reporting templates and refining procedures to ensure more efficient accounting practices and data systems. Statutory requirements have also meant closer attention to HR, health and safety, building regulations, etc. that in turn have resulted in additional administration work for all agencies. However, there have also been positive changes including enhanced computerisation and management practices that have all aided her work as an Administrator and helped to improve the overall quality and efficiency of the work.



Strengthening the LSSC foundations:

Jean's area of work covers support for the teams within each Programme and project. This includes compiling and reporting on income and expenditure; monitoring grants schemes, Counselling donations and Crèche/Pre-school fees; preparing bank lodgements, and monthly and quarterly returns; processing employee payroll, updating changes and checking staff related expenses including travel claims, etc.; ensuring facilities and building charges are paid and reconciling of creditors. In addition, Jean oversees a number of HR requirements including recording of leave, TOIL, pensions, Garda vetting and Reception cover as well as support for the Counselling Service.

The list, as Jean states, is as varied and as long as her day. *'I am never bored. I love my work and really appreciate the calibre and kindness of people working here. There is a great team spirit and most importantly, we know that we are making a huge difference in the lives of people we serve. As a Limerick woman, this is particularly significant.'*

Strengthening the LSSC foundations: Behind the scenes, Jean and her team work closely together and with members of the other LSSC teams to ensure that in an era of increasing accountability, the LSSC is also positioned to respond appropriately and efficiently to the changing needs of service users.

As Jean states: *We constantly review our work so that we can streamline our administration and financial systems – this helps in the overall delivery of quality and cost-effective services. Integral to our improvements in recent years has been the enhancing of our information management and IT systems. These improvements, I believe, have resulted in significant efficiencies across the LSSC organisation. Having more robust internal systems means that staff are better able to assess needs, plan services, report on our activities and to be accountable to those who fund us.*

However, as Jean also points out, the LSSC is not just about 'systems' alone but that staff are at the heart of improving service quality. She believes that the LSSC teams work continually to drive a culture of quality to ensure that the people they support receive the best services possible.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE PLANS FOR 2017

THE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICE

- To establish and strengthen the weekly Referral Hub as a forum to discuss referrals, provide information on referrals received, ensure relevant support is provided and sign-posting to relevant services is developed.
- To develop the common referral form and to disseminate the form to relevant agencies.
- To develop new Parent & Toddler initiatives through the FSI Inner City Programme, and to include one new group on Saturdays with families from migrant backgrounds.
- To launch the Community Mother booklet as part of the Community Mothers' Programme
- To continue to support the TUSLA Meitheal National Practice Model within the Service.
- To ensure the newly introduced Child and Family Service Database is an integral part of the service to support staff to better assess and analyse the needs of children and families availing of LSSC services and to build an evidence base on the causes that impact on the target group.
- To develop a common referral form for all programmes of the Service, in order to support the common case file.
- To focus on Early Intervention and Prevention and to continue work with the ABC Start Right programme in order to meet the ever changing needs of children and families.
- To work within the National Framework of Better Outcomes, Better Futures so that by using the outcomes and transformational goals, the Service will be supported in planning and practice.
- To maintain the close working relationships with the HSE Public Health Nursing Service through the Community Mothers Programme, with the TUSLA Social Work Departments and other relevant agencies in the community.
- To continue and develop the Service's work with refugees, non-Irish nationals and City Centre migrant communities.

THE EARLY YEARS SERVICES

- To arrange to bring back some of the children's favourite activities such as the Garda visit, the visit from the Limerick Fire Service and the visit to the Farm to see all the animals.
- To support staff as they continue with their training, which is vital to maintain and improve the quality of the service we deliver.
- To establish a team from our staff to work on Siolta as another inspection visit is due in 2018, in order to maintain our quality mark.



THE COUNSELLING SERVICES

- To continue to offer services to the adolescent population of the city and county. To support the engagement of parents/ guardians and all referring agencies to ensure the best possible service to the young target group.
- To grow and develop group work with an existing cohort of service users. This is an attachment based model of group experiential work.
- To continue to develop relationship with other counselling services locally and nationally through our membership of the The Association for Agency-based Counselling in Ireland (AACI).
- Through discussions with management and counselling staff, the Counselling Service will now be referred to as the LSSC Counselling & Psychotherapy Service.

THE SERVICES FOR OLDER PERSONS

- To continue to promote greater participation by older people in society, providing social outlets and opportunities whilst offering on-going participation in Arts, Conversational Irish, Local History Classes.
- To continue to provide companion services to relieve loneliness and increase social connections. These will be delivered through phone calls, visits, outings and social groups, enabling older people to feel more connected to their local community.
- To continue to develop strategic partnerships to help us reach new audiences and to access additional resources and supports for our target groups.
- To comply with the Educational and Training Board Community Education Programmes updated systems (PLSS) and to raise learner awareness of changes to process.



Comhairle Sheirbhís Sóisialta Luimnigh Teo

NEW LSSC DEVELOPMENTS

The LSSC will develop the management of the Child & Family Centre at the new Southside Education Campus which will be a state of the art campus providing integrated and accessible service provision for children.

At its essence, the primary function of the Child & Family Centre will be to provide a safe, secure yet stimulating environment for children ranging from new-born to pre-school age through the development of the Early Years Centre element of the campus. The aim of the Centre will be to help children and their parents and guardians to engage with the educational system from an early stage in the child's development and thereby work to remove the barriers that have heretofore obstructed children from continuing in education.

It is anticipated that the Southside Education Campus will play a key role in the social and physical regeneration of the area.



Supporting People & Communities through Partnerships

Making the best
use of existing
services by pooling
& targeting
resources

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Over the past 50 years, the LSSC has built a foundation of collaborative working in Limerick that has led to valuable partnerships with so many organisations and groups across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors. These include government agencies, schools, colleges, hospitals, GPs, social work services, community centres, and other non-profit agencies. Together, the LSSC has worked with these agencies so that problems are addressed and changes are made on a scale that no single agency could have accomplished alone.

The partnership working model is based on the LSSC commitment to

- Sharing expertise and knowledge
- Making the best use of existing services by pooling and targeting resources to reduce duplication
- Acknowledging that service users and vulnerable groups may need the help of more than one agency.

In 2016, LSSC partnership working included the following agencies and groups:

Statutory agencies and Government Departments

TUSLA Child & Family Agency	Limerick City & County Council
Department of Children & Youth Affairs	POBAL
Department of Education & Skills	MABS (Money & Budgeting Advice Service)
Department of Social Protection	Community Welfare Offices
HSE West	

Community and voluntary agencies

ADAPT Services	Limerick Youth Service
Age and Opportunity (Dublin)	Limerick Local Employment Service
Barnardos Mid-West	Mary Immaculate College
Centre for the Unemployed	NCVA
Credit Unions	Novas
CURA (regional and national)	Older Women's Network
Diocese of Limerick	Parish Clergy
Doras Luimní	PAUL Partnership
Focus Ireland	The Associated Charities Trust
Foster Carer's Association	Victim Support
Limerick Institute of Technology	Limerick City AES V.T.O.S.
Limerick Pastoral Centre	University of Limerick
Limerick College of Further Education	

Services that Aailed of The LSSC Centre In 2016

During 2016, the LSSC Centre offered its facilities to the TUSLA Aftercare Service, the HSE Primary Care Service, the Family Therapy Service, Limerick Community Law & Mediation Centre, Epilepsy Ireland, and EPIC. In addition, a number of other organisations, agencies and groups availed of the Centre to deliver programmes, consultations and meet with clients. These included the following:

ACOA (Adult Children of Alcoholics)	Diocesan Lourdes Pilgrimage Office	Older Persons' Groups
Alcoholics Anonymous Groups	Dyspraxia	Overeaters Anonymous
Al-Anon Group	Emergency Response Group	Parent Support Groups
AWARE	Gam-Anon	Retired Civil Servants /Retired Gardaí
Bruree House	Narcotics Anonymous	SHINE
Cancer Support	MWM	Women's Groups

A photograph of a bridge over a river at sunset. The sky is filled with soft, orange and yellow clouds. The bridge has a concrete structure with a metal railing and several tall, thin light poles. The water reflects the bridge and the sky. A green semi-transparent box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing white text.

To our staff,
volunteers, Board,
partners & donors –
with your help and
commitment,
the Limerick Social
Service Council will
continue
to
Care for and
Strengthen Resilience
in
Individuals, Families
and Communities
of Limerick.

Thank You



Comhairle Sheirbhís Sóisialta Luimnigh Teo





Comhairle Sheirbhís Sóisialta Luimnigh Teo

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