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Working **Together**  
for **Better Lives**

**Annual Report 2017**





## 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
- Services are evidence based, preventative and cost effective
- Services are affordable and accessible to those in need, or free of charge where appropriate
- Services are monitored and evaluated
- We work on a partnership basis with our service users and with other agencies and professionals from the statutory, voluntary and community sectors.

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## Who We Are

The LSSC employs over 60 staff and is supported by over 20 volunteers. The team is divided between management, programme staff, administration and maintenance staff.

The team is led by the LSSC General Manager, Brian Ryan, and overseen by the LSSC Board of Directors. The LSSC's Board of Directors provide strategic leadership for LSSC affairs in accordance with the organisation's Mission, Vision and Values and ensures accountability to the public. The Board is comprised of up to 12 members who serve voluntarily.

## 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 SOUTHSIDE CHILD and FAMILY CENTRE is currently in development.

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.

## Who We Support

The primary aim of LSSC is to support individuals, families and communities across Limerick City and County to reach their fully potential.

We support young and old, children and young people, individuals and families. Our services provide support to parents with new babies, pre-school children, teenagers, adults, older persons and families.

Our programmes are diverse, covering prevention and early intervention as well as intensive services for service users with more complex issues and in crisis situations.





## Our Service Model

Our model of service delivery is based on an integrated approach across our programmes within the LSSC and through partnerships with other agencies and organisations. Our current programmes and services are outlined below:

### 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

### 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



## Our Approach

Prevention & Early Intervention  
Universal, Targeted, Group & One-to-One Services  
Innovative, Flexible and Service User-focused

## Our Impact

Our Services create a tangible and positive impact on the lives of the people we care for. We do this by putting our service users at the heart of all our work.



Dear Friends,

For over five decades, the teams at the Limerick Social Service Council (LSSC) have worked tirelessly to honour the voices of the most vulnerable in our communities and have responded with expertise, professionalism and compassion to meet their needs.

Our message – to treat one another with dignity, respect, and kindness - has never mattered more than it does today. This message shines through our work as teams identify the needs of the most vulnerable of Limerick's communities and respond appropriately with services that clearly matter.

This Annual Report for 2017 is evidence of the LSSC work as it continues to invest in long established areas of need while also reviewing newly emerging situations and exploring ways of responding. This Report, which provides an insight into ongoing programmes and a summary of LSSC's outputs, also illustrates how the LSSC collaborates and partners with other agencies to give children, families and individuals the right support at the right time.

As a follow-on to last year's report, I am pleased to see a spotlight on the work of individual staff members within the LSSC. From this, you will get a sense of the personalities of our teams and the range of work undertaken within the LSSC to promote the well-being of our service users and to increase personal and community resilience across the City and County. I would like to acknowledge the longstanding work of these staff members as well as that of their colleagues. The work of LSSC would not be possible without their commitment and that of the LSSC General Manger, volunteers, donors and the organisations with whom we work in partnership.

This Annual Report 2017 marks another step in the LSSC's services of which I am proud to be a part. Our dedicated teams are supporting more children, young people and families and having a greater impact than ever before. As we face 2018, I am sure that we can build on this achievement and do even more in the future for communities in Limerick.

Mise le meas,  
Martin Golden, Chairman of the Board

# Welcome

**LSSC:** Working for  
Limerick's communities to support  
and assist those in need



# Update from the LSSC General Manager

People who work in social care services are motivated to improve the lives of children, young people, families and communities. As in many other services across Limerick, staff in the LSSC want to see children thrive, families grow and young people develop into happy adults. Accordingly, the LSSC staff are building on our past achievements and developing new approaches to give our service users the best chance of success.

During 2017, we continued to deliver an extensive range of programmes and services from our base at our Centre here in Henry Street and across the City and County. Many of our services are long-established and as in previous years, we have worked hard to make better use of existing resources to achieve improved outcomes. We have also sought to be more innovative through using our resources in new ways to create a greater impact.

## 2017 services offered

184

Parent Support & Outreach service Parents

241

Children intensive one-to-one support

115

Community Mothers

19

Meitheal assessments in collaboration with Tusla, the Child & Family Agency

5500

Counselling sessions provided to adults

71

Young people for specialised adolescent counselling

## 2017 referrals

114

Parenting Support

70

Teen Parent Support Programme

83

Relationships & Sexual Health Programme

10

Family Welfare Conference Service

26

Family Advocacy Service

850+

Counselling Services





## Some of the highlights from our work in 2017 are listed below:

### **Supporting parents, Promoting children's well-being:** Through a Range of Supports

At the LSSC, staff are committed to supporting parents in the belief that all families have strengths and capabilities, and that by identifying and building upon strengths rather than focusing on weaknesses, they can increase the chance of making a significant positive impact on the family and on children's well-being.

The nature of the LSSC parent support varies. Some supports are comprehensive and provide social, educational and recreational activities. Other supports provide a single service (e.g. parenting classes), serve specific populations (e.g. new parents, parents of children in care, members of the traveller community, etc.) or support families through specific life events (e.g. teen pregnancy).

In 2017, our Parent Support & Outreach service offered 184 parents and 241 children intensive one-to-one support and over 730 individual sessions of direct work with parents and children were arranged; 123 children within families received a community social work or family support service availing of 413 sessions of direct work; the Community Mothers' Programme dealt with 115 new referrals; 68 new referrals, involving young parents under 18 years of age availed of specialised services through the Teen Parent Support Programme; 10 support groups were run for parents of children in care on a monthly basis; and 200 households received information and 96 families were contacted within the City centre through the Family Support Initiative.

In addition, through the Meitheal National Practice model, staff were trained to undertake specific assessments to ensure children and families receive relevant support and help in an integrated and coordinated way. In 2017, staff undertook 19 Meitheal assessments in collaboration with Tusla, the Child & Family Agency.

### **Challenging disadvantage and inequality:** Through high quality, affordable childcare

We have always advocated that quality child care positively affects children's overall well-being, social development, and physical health and that the benefits extend to parents and caregivers, too.

We know that there are better job prospects for parents, improved relationships within families, and between parents and children as a result of accessible child care. In terms of our concerns regarding disadvantage and inequality, we also know that quality child care and early education increases academic participation and achievement, and decreases the risks of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion.

In 2017, LSSC Early Years Service, which is acknowledged as one of the leading community Crèche and Pre-school services in Limerick City, provided quality care for 6 babies and 22 toddlers at the Crèche, and 22 children were enrolled at the Pre-school service.

### **Intervening early for adolescent mental health:** Through professional counselling

Our counselling and psychotherapy service has become increasingly important in addressing the emotional and mental health needs of young people in Limerick. The evidence increasingly demonstrates the importance of emotional resilience and good mental health as the key to the full range of life outcomes. The stark statistics about the increasing need to address young people's mental health speak for themselves. Census data shows high rates of male suicide in Limerick and that the rate of self-harm for young females aged 24 years and under in Limerick was recorded as one of the highest in State.

In addition to the 5,500 counselling sessions we provided to adults in 2017, our service provided an additional 460 sessions to 71 young people for specialised adolescent services.

### **Supporting older persons:** Through initiatives that address loneliness

Loneliness and social isolation can affect people at any stage of the life course. However, changes and transitions associated with ageing mean that older people can be particularly vulnerable as risk factors for loneliness and social isolation increase and converge. At LSSC, we believe that later life should represent a time of enjoyment and fulfilment when people are able to participate in the community, learn new skills or take up new activities. A vital aspect of creating an age friendly Limerick is to enable older people to play an active role in society by removing some of the barriers that can lead to social isolation.

In 2017, the LSSC arranged an extensive programme of social activities for a number of senior groups in Southill, Janesboro, St Mary's Park and Corbally. These activities included group visits to Glenstal Abbey, Our Lady Queen of Peace School, Youghal, the Limerick Prison, Thomond Park, Galway, Spanish Point and Knock. In addition, seniors participated in an Easter Bonnet Competition, a Community Safety Partnership talk, a cooking and dining event as well as weekly parish centre meals.

We believe that these activities, in addition to weekly home and hospital visits, have made a major impact to address isolation experienced by many in their later life and to improve the wellbeing and quality of life of senior people in our communities.





## Ensuring relevant responses: Through information sharing

To enhance the quality of responses to LSSC referrals, a centralised process, the Referral Hub, is in operation to assess referrals and to ensure the appropriate service or services are made available. This process involves service managers and co-ordinators coming together on a weekly basis to review referrals received by the LSSC. The idea is that, for every referral made, all the information available on a child, family or individual is fed into a centralised decision-making process. Once it is all collected, the group then makes the decision on what happens to that referral. The benefits of the Referral Hub is that we now have more accurate assessments of all referrals received based on more co-ordinated, accurate and timely information. Referrals are allocated to an LSSC service or a number of LSSC services. For example, a parent may require one-to-one parent support as well as the services of the Community Mothers Programme and access to the counselling service.

The impact of the Referral Hub is a more thorough management of our cases leading to enhanced and improved outcomes for our service users.

## Engaging meaningfully with our service users: Through feedback and collaboration

We believe that involving the views of our service users through feedback leads to more responsive and efficient services. It helps us to identify areas for improvement and transformation. While we have based our process for engagement on formal evaluations and structured feedback, we also view the process within the context of on-going conversations and collaborations. These conversations, with service users and with external agencies who represent the voices of our target groups, are acknowledged as a valuable resource when we come to annual service planning as well as in the on-going delivery of existing services.

## A Special Message of Thanks

The above is just a summary of the extensive work and activities the LSSC has undertaken in the past year. The achievements described are testament to the dedication, skill and energy of our staff, generous supporters and volunteers. I am proud to be a part of this team of people and to acknowledge that all their efforts have made a real difference to the lives of so many children, families and individuals in Limerick. I would also like to acknowledge the continuous support of our Board of Directors and to thank our partner agencies for helping us to make such a difference for the people and communities we serve.

As you can see in this report, the LSSC has been, and will continue to be, focused on the areas of greatest need in Limerick and on the ways in which we can do the most good. As we face into 2018, we will continue to work with compassion and dedication, and to build partnerships that bring together resources and expertise to identify needs and drive change for the most vulnerable in Limerick.

Mise le meas,  
Brian Ryan, LSSC General Manager

## What our service users say

While we are focused on measuring results and outcomes in numbers and statistics, we also assess our impact in methods beyond numbers.....that is by listening to what our service users tell us.

*' Meeting a group of people who had been through or going through the same problems helps me from going mad, sharing the load is great '*

*' We got excellent tools to deal with everyday challenges. '*

*' I tried the ideas out from the group, it helped me cope with all the stress and anxiety and guilt I have, it helped me cope. '*

*' Without the LSSC, I would have been lost. The caring and kind staff have given me so much help and encouragement. '*

*' The activities are something to look forward to every week as I have so little contact with anyone else. Being able to meet others like myself helps me cope with my loneliness. '*

*' It was nice to leave every week with another piece of problem solved and a plan of action, thank you. '*

*' Thanks to the TPSP, I am going from strength to strength since I had my baby. I am now looking forward to going back to college. I have hope that my baby will have a better future. '*

*' I was at my wits end, I didn't know if I was going to end up homeless or if I would have enough in me to support my children. I was so glad to get the right information from staff at LSSC about so many things no-one else told me, they also told me about what other services can help me. We are now in our own home and I notice the children being more relaxed and happy. '*

*' Thanks so much to the staff that helped me get back on my feet again. I had gone through a tough time with no help from anyone else. '*

*' We had so much fun on our day away... the staff had everything organised. I can't remember the last time I was with people who genuinely cared. '*

*' It made such a difference that the project staff came to see me at home. I have no car - it's hard to get a lift anywhere so would be impossible if I had to make appointments outside my home. '*

*' I greatly appreciated the non-judgemental time afforded me when I had begun to doubt all my thoughts, feelings and consequent actions. They brought me good clarity to make good decisions. '*

*' I found my sessions very relieving, I always felt great after my sessions, and it was like a ton of bricks taken off my mind and chest. '*



# 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 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 below.



## ● 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: Incredible Years Parenting Programme, Parents Plus and Parents Plus Parenting When Separated Programme, Therapeutic Crisis Intervention along with other resources. These are used to provide parents with the information and skills they need to support their families and to meet the challenges of being a parent, including their own self-care. Interventions and resources are allocated following assessment through the Meitheal National Practice Model.

## ● 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.

## ● 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. The Programme also supports young people with additional life skills to support the existing Social Health and Personal Development Programme within their schools or training centres and to incorporate communication skills, self-esteem and confidence-building skills to the area of relationships and sexual health.

The Programme provides a forum for parents who had previously completed a Relationship and Sexual Health Parenting Programme, to meet and develop peer support networks and share their experiences regarding the parenting of their teenage children. It also links parents with other services for additional supports if required in the area of sexual health, communication and mental health services.

## ● The Community Mothers Programme

The Community Mothers Programme is a home visiting service for families with new babies and young children and aims to encourage parents to enjoy and participate more fully in their child's life. The Programme is designed so that parents are visited in their homes during the first year of their children's lives by experienced mothers who are trained by the Programme to offer support and non-directive information on parenting, child development, local services and supports. Community Mothers also facilitate Baby/toddler/parent groups, weaning classes, baby massage, baby reflexology and Incredible Years Parent programmes.

## ● 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 is located in a number of communities in Limerick's Regeneration areas covering Southill, Ballinacurra Weston and Prospect and the city centre.

## ● 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.

## ● 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.

## ● 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.

## ● 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.



# THE EARLY YEARS SERVICES

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 Early Years Service and a Pre-School Service five days a week.

The Service promotes Healthy Eating and participates in the national Healthy Ireland Programme. Meal times are viewed as a great opportunity to promote independence, good manners and appropriate social behaviour. Staff sit with the children when they are eating in order to assist them and model positive behaviours for the children. 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 from small babies to six years are present.

All staff are also Garda vetted prior to employment by the LSSC and receive regular training updates in Child Safeguarding and child care practices. The Centre operates in strict compliance with the Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations 2016 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 LSSC Counselling Service is the largest community-based counselling service outside of Dublin and provides compassionate, high quality, and effective counselling and psychotherapy, in a number of Limerick City and County locations.

The Counselling Service provides counselling and psychotherapy to adult and adolescent clients. The service receives referrals from TUSLA Child & Family Agency, HSE services, GPs and other services. Individuals may also self-refer to the service, thus making counselling and psychotherapy accessible to those who might otherwise be excluded from these 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 of 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.

Counselling and psychotherapy can also help people understand the root causes of certain challenging life circumstances. Becoming aware of these root causes often helps clients manage life situations that cause difficulty and distress for them in a more effective way. The key principles of the Counselling Service ensure that clients are free to explore their life situation in a confidential, safe, compassionate, and non-judgemental environment.

The service is a member of the Association for Agency-based Counselling and Psychotherapy in Ireland (AACPI) 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 professionally qualified and eligible for accreditation with the Irish Council for Psychotherapy (ICP). Furthermore, staff are required to undertake regular 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 services, the Counselling Service routinely collects data to monitor individual clinical outcomes and overall service performance. The Counselling Service at LSSC continues to produce positive outcomes when measured against relevant assessment benchmarks.

# THE COUNSELLING SERVICE





# 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 and 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 in Southill, Our Lady of Lourdes, Ballynanty and in St Mary's Parish, but also works 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.

# 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 approximately thirty 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 Public Health Nursing 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, 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 homelessness 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 2017



## THE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICE

### PARENT SUPPORT & OUTREACH SERVICE

The Parent Support and Outreach Service provided centre-based, home-based and community-based services designed to promote supports to parents and families that strengthen functioning and enhance the growth and development of children and young people.

Through the range of Parent Support and Outreach services, **184** parents and **241** children availed of intensive one-to-one support. **38** of these children were involved with the TUSLA Social Work Department, which reflected the nature of the cases with many requiring support across the continuum of care from early intervention and prevention to child protection and child welfare services.

**731** individual sessions of direct work with parents and children were arranged based on specific areas identified through the initial assessment process.

**123** children within families received a community social work service with **413** sessions of direct work. **19** Meitheals were also undertaken.

As the Parent Support Programme is available to families throughout Limerick City and County, appointments were facilitated at the family's home to increase accessibility, particularly as many families are geographically isolated and cannot attend appointments in the LSSC Centre.

Approximately **315** drop-ins and queries were directed to the service for parenting information and advice.

In addition to direct work, staff attended **154** multi-agency meetings, including child-protection conferences, family support plan meetings, as well as meetings with additional agencies such as schools and counselling services. The increase in families open to Child Protection Conferences significantly added to caseload duties, both in administration and contact hours, during 2017.

### RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUAL HEALTH PROGRAMME

In 2017, **181** referrals were made to the Relationships & Sexual Health Programme, **37** of which related to young people. The Programme provided one-to-one and group-work services.

**One-to-one support** is offered by meeting parents in their homes, at the LSSC, by telephone contact and by linking parents into other relevant services. This aspect of the Programme aims to support parents and teenagers to build their capacity in the area of Relationships and Sexual Health, to build the parents and teenagers capacity for progression to group work at a later stage, and to link parents with other services for young people if required. **40** parents and 6 teenagers availed of one-to-one support.

**142** parents and **23** teenagers engaged in group-work programmes as follows:

**Programmes For Parents:** **10** programmes for parents were delivered in both Limerick City and County including Relationship and Sexual Health Programmes and Parenting When Separated. In



addition, **2** Summer Mental Health Programmes were organised for parents of teenage children over the course of the year. The Programme also provided a forum for parents who had previously completed a Relationship and Sexual Health Parenting Programme in the form of a monthly Parent Support Group in Limerick City and County. This enabled parents to meet and develop peer support networks and share their experiences regarding the parenting of their teenage children.

**Programmes For Teenagers:** Programmes for teenagers were delivered in a number of secondary schools and youth centres throughout Limerick City and County that aimed to improve self-esteem and self-confidence for adolescents in relation to their relationships and sexual health.

### THE TEEN PARENTS SUPPORT PROGRAMME (TPSP)

During 2017, the Programme received 68 new referrals, involving a number of young parents under 18 years of age. Referrals related to **68** children and does not include unborn babies in 2017. There were 11 young fathers/ expectant fathers included in the referrals. The majority of referrals were received from the University Maternity Hospital Limerick, PHNs, the HSE Maternity mid-wives, centres of education including Youthreach, secondary schools, as well as those received as self-referrals.

**64** young parents received intensive one to one support and **43** parents whose needs were on level 3 of the Hardiker range were supported. The TPSP also offered support to the partners and extended families of the young parents participating in the Programme.

**84** young parents received advocacy and outreach support in the form of advice and information in relation to ante-natal care, rights & entitlements, housing support, legal support, mediation, etc. A large amount of advocacy occurs each year through the provision of School Completion Funding provided by TPSP Limerick's SCP Tusla funding and 66 young people in full-time and part-time education have been financially supported through this Programme's Funding.

Other activities of note within the TPSP included:

**The City Slickers programmes - 22** young mothers aged between 15 and 21 years completed **3** City Slickers programmes. City Slickers is a ten week programme that supports the participants in their own personal development and in their role as parents. In consultation with Ceim ar Ceim Probation Service Limerick TPSP staff engaged with five young fathers to partake in a City Slickers Development Programme.

**The TPSP Parent and Baby/Toddler Group**, which continued to expand and develop.

**Day Trips: 14** Young Mothers and **14** babies/toddlers attended two very successful Summer Education Family Day Trip to Fota Wild Life Park.

**The LSSC Family Fun Day**, which was organised in July 2017 with over **80** families attending.

**TPSP Ante-Natal Programme: 21** young expectant mothers and **9** young dads-to-be attended **3** Ante-Natal Programmes run in conjunction with TPSP, the University Maternity Hospital Limerick and ABC Start Right. These programmes were designed to meet the specific needs of young expectant parents and classes covered ante-natal and post-natal care, signs of labour, pain relief, preparation for my new baby and care of a newborn baby.

**Baby Massage: 8** young parents including **2** young fathers attended and completed a baby massage class facilitated by TPSP staff in February 2017.

**TPSP Paediatric First Aid Courses:** A Paediatric First Aid Course was attended by **1** young expectant mother and **6** young mothers. This was facilitated by staff of ABC Start Right for young people who were pregnant or were parents receiving their accreditation in Paediatric First Aid.

### THE COMMUNITY MOTHERS PROGRAMME

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 2017, **120** referrals were received and followed up with **117** contacts by Community Mothers in mothers' homes with one-to-one and outreach support. **5** referrals were signposted to other services, **100** were allocated to Community Mothers and **96** took up the service.

In addition, the Programme supported a range of Groups over a **44** week period in 2017 and were attended by **3,611** participants. Some of these groups included the following:

- Parent, Baby & Toddler Groups that were attended by **98** parents with nearly **300** children;
- **120** parents and babies attended Weaning clinics;
- **20** parents with their babies attended Baby and Child reflexology programmes and **30** parents and babies attended Baby Massage programmes;
- **18** parents and **12** babies attended two Incredible Years Infant and Basic Parent Programmes.

### THE FAMILY SUPPORT INITIATIVE

The Programme continued to work with individuals and families through outreach support to households in Our Lady of Lourdes parish area and in disadvantaged areas in the City centre. The main activities included:

- Linking to families through existing parent and toddlers groups
- Outreach in apartments in the city centre – **200** households received information and **96** families contacted
- Developing capacity of the Furqan Group (mixed nationalities/ faith based women & children)
- Developing capacity of the Happiness Group who are mainly Sudanese with **22** parents and **35** children attending a parent & toddler group and **25** women and 11 children attending a Women's group
- Young People's Multi-Cultural Group attended by **28** young people
- Supporting involvement of children / youth / men from accessed communities with approximately **150-200** children involved in the various programmes and supports.

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 (THAP)

In 2017, THAP employed a Co-ordinator, 4 trained Traveller Health Advocates and 2 Health Assistants providing peer led health information door to door to around 150 families living primarily on halting sites in and around the City using a community development approach. Some of the Health Awareness initiatives delivered in 2017 included: National Cancer Screening Programmes; Speech and Language Nursery Rhyme Initiative; Mental Health and Alcohol; Cardio Vascular Health and Diabetes; Sunscreen Protection/Water Safety; Asthma; Dangers of Melatonin/Tanning injections.

THAP also worked with Travellers in small groups alongside other organisations in Limerick City committed to the improvement of Traveller Health.

THE FAMILY ADVOCACY SERVICE

The one to one support provided by the Family Advocacy Service can be categorised as high, medium or low level support. High level support is where there are Child Protection Case Conference and /or Court proceedings or an issue arising with a particular client which requires intensive support. In 2017, there were 12 clients with high level support needs.

Medium support is where a client has ongoing meetings with the Tusla Social Work service, meetings to attend Children in Care reviews, or has an issue arising which requires some level of support. In 2017, there were 14 clients availing of support with such levels of need.

Low level support is where the client is not seeking support in relation to a specific issue arising, but contact can be maintained by phone or text, and they can attend the monthly parents group, if appropriate for them to do so. They can also drop in to the Advocate as needed. In 2017, there were 11 clients in this category.

It should also be noted that all cases were on Level 4 of the Hardiker scale.

There was also a support group for parents run on a monthly basis.

THE FAMILY WELFARE CONFERENCE SERVICE (FWC)

In 2017, 9 Family Welfare Conferences were planned and convened relating to 10 children aged between 12-16 years old. 3 children had needs relating to Level 4 of the Hardiker Scale. On average, 4 agencies were involved.

6 Review Family Welfare Conferences were also prepared and convened, and attended by 7 children.

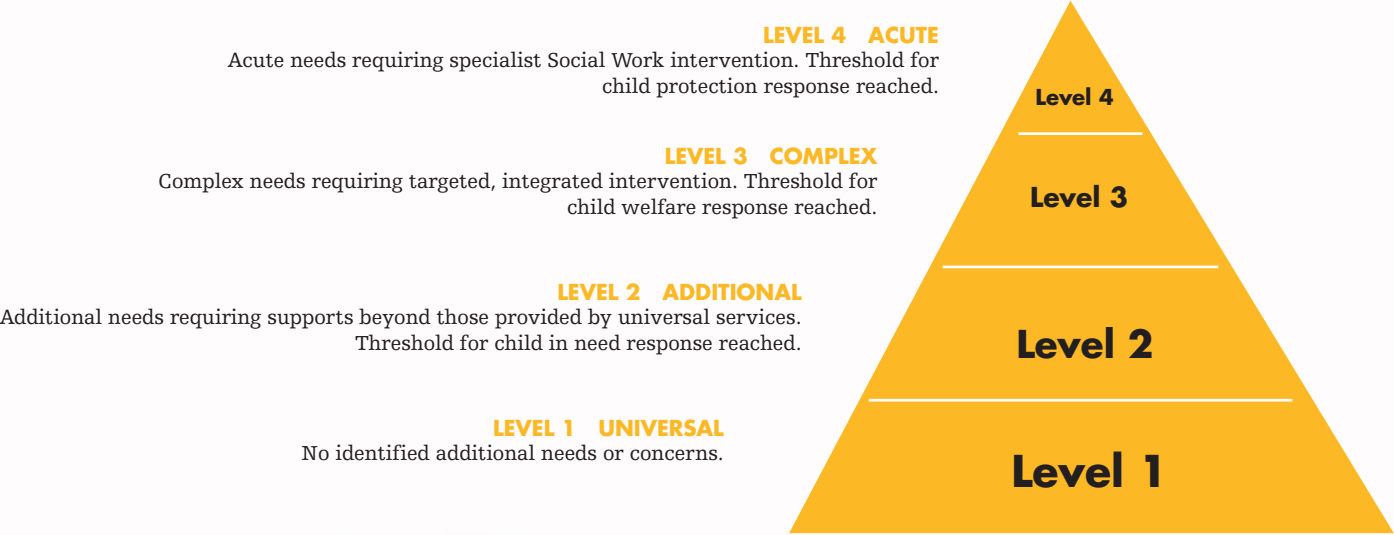
The FWC Coordinator received training as a Practice Leader in Signs of Safety and on-going training events are being continuously attended. Signs of Safety is the Tusla-led national approach to child protection casework. The FWC Service has been developing ways of integrating Signs of Safety into the FWC process.

The service was also involved in providing new information leaflets to Tusla service regarding making a referral to the FWC and to young people and the family network.

THE SUPERVISED ACCESS SERVICE

The Service supported nearly 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



ADAPTED from: Hardiker et al (1991)





# THE EARLY YEARS SERVICE

## ACTIVITIES & DEVELOPMENTS in 2017

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 2017 were:

- Participating in the Healthy Ireland program and receiving our award in August 2017, 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.



# SERVICES FOR OLDER PERSONS

## ACTIVITIES & DEVELOPMENTS in 2017

- The Service continued to support **12** Care of the Aged Groups in the Limerick Area. The 2017 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 a number of groups: 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, 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!”**



# THE COUNSELLING SERVICES

## ACTIVITIES & DEVELOPMENTS in 2017

- 2017 proved to be another busy yet rewarding year for the Counselling Service, with **867** new referrals engaging with the service, a slight increase on 2016 figures. A total of **5,492** sessions were offered with an 84% attendance rate.
- The main sources of referrals in 2017 were Tusla, the Child and Family Agency; the HSE's Primary Community and Continuing Care (PCCC) service and self-referrals. Other organisations such as the Probation Service, the HSE Adult Mental Health Service, Focus Ireland, and Novas also referred clients to the service during the year.
- The Adolescent Psychotherapy service recorded similar levels of activity as in previous years, with **71** young people attending over **460** sessions. All sessions were delivered by Psychotherapists with special training in Adolescent Psychotherapy. Young people being referred to the service are prioritised and receive an appointment within six weeks of their referral. Overall feedback from clients and their parents/guardians indicate that the service was accessible and receptive to the needs of young people.
- Key issues for clients attending the Counselling service during 2017 included anxiety, depression, stress, traumatic changes in personal relationships including bereavement, difficulties in marriage or family relationships, separation and divorce, and difficulties in other significant relationships. Other notable issues for referral related to drug, alcohol, and other substance abuse, financial difficulties, unemployment, social isolation, and dealing with life transitions.
- Staff training was also a particular focus for the Service in 2017. Staff participated in a seminar given by well-known Limerick GP and psychotherapist Dr Terry Lynch which focused on working therapeutically with clients who have received psychiatric diagnoses. Staff also received training during 2017 on the updated National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children.

The Counselling Service continues to be committed to working with clients from a variety of referral sources, all of whom present with a diversity of needs.

The importance of the service to individuals engaging with counselling was reflected in feedback received from clients during 2017:

*"I felt very much at ease, it also helped to build up my confidence a little".*

*"I found my counsellor to be very sympathetic and skilled and she has really helped me".*

*"My counsellor made me feel very comfortable and at ease with dealing with my issues".*

*"My counsellor was excellent, for someone I never met before I could let out everything to him".*

*"My counsellor was very suitable for me, very professional and a brilliant person to listen".*

*"Sessions with counsellor were very helpful. He was non-judgemental and helped me to dissipate the negative thoughts I had about myself and others. Wonderful service and within peoples price range. Very helpful to humans at a crossroads in life".*

Comments from clients compiled through Client Feedback and Evaluation Forms in 2017.







# Enda Keogh Project Worker

Relationships &  
Sexual Health Programme



For the past six years, Enda has worked extensively with the LSSC to support teenagers and parents of teenagers to have good information on healthy relationships and sexual health. She had previously worked at the LSSC's Altamira Apartments and was delighted to take up this new post as she says: **'I love working with young people and with parents.'** Enda has had extensive training in her role on issues in relation to relationships and sexual health, parenting, family support, child welfare and extensive experience in facilitation, information dissemination, working with young parents and with schools in support of their RSE policies.

The key challenge for her current project work is how to make life as healthy, happy and meaningful for young people as they progress through teenage years so that they can enjoy relationships with others at this point in their lives and later on as adults. Embedded in her approach is the message to young people that they are significant and unique individuals and that being informed and building healthy self-esteem are essential if they are to make sense of the multiplicity of messages they encounter and reduce unnecessary feelings of guilt and anxiety regarding sex and relationships.



Likewise for parents, Enda believes that building parents' self-confidence in how they cope with today's challenges of parenting is increasingly important. Technology, social media, pornography, etc. place additional pressures on young people, and parents are at times at a loss to keep up to date on what is relevant. However, as Enda also stresses, 'parents play the most important role in sex education, but need resources and support'. Being informed and aware about teenage sexual health and other issues relevant to young people are critical for parents so that they can understand their children. As parents' understanding deepens, they are then better placed to start discussions or be available to listen to what their child is saying to them when issues arise. As Enda says: **'We need to be beside them, not to try to control them.'**

## Why this project is needed:

Enda's work is funded through the HSE's Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme and the work is part of the delivery of the Department of Health's Sexual Health Strategy. The Sexual Health Strategy, **"acknowledges the importance of developing a healthy attitude to sexuality in young people and of building on that foundation for positive sexual health and wellbeing into adulthood and older age"**, and Enda works in line with the goals and priorities of this strategy.

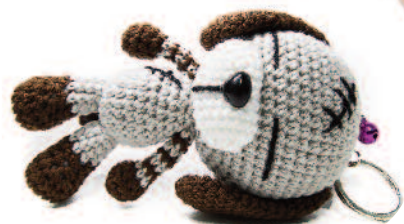
**Conclusion:** We know from experience that young people need information about sex, sexual health and relationships but what they get may not always be factual or good quality information.' She notes that if they do not get this information from appropriate and caring sources, they will turn to their peers who may be ill-informed or they may surf the internet at sites which may be inappropriate. Likewise, parents also need up-to-date and relevant information as well as the confidence to improve parent-child sexual health communication. As she says: 'I feel proud to be part of a project that helps to improve the quality of the conversations parents have with their children, and that young people have more trusted sources of accurate sexual health information. Parents should not fear the teenage years and young people should be confident to enjoy healthy and safe relationships at this age.' Enda

## Adolescent sexual behaviour is a normal developmental milestone.

Coping with puberty, sexual identity and sexual feelings is difficult for most young people particularly in the context of today's world. Enda believes many young people want to talk to their parents about sex and relationships, but many parents and carers feel they lack the skills, confidence and knowledge to talk to their children. Her work, therefore, is important as it aims to not only provide accurate and quality information but equally, it aims to strengthen communication between the young person and the parent. She believes that positive communication between parents and children greatly helps young people to establish self-esteem, individual values and to make healthy decisions. In addition, and as many youth health studies suggest, improved parent-child communication where parents are open, comfortable, and confident in discussions about sex and related issues may reduce sexual risk behaviours among adolescents.

## Enda's Working Week:

A typical week is never 'typical' and Enda can find herself co-facilitating a mental health programme for young people in Abbeyfeale, providing one-to-one support to parents at the LSSC Centre or delivering information sessions for parents at a secondary school in Limerick City. Last year alone, she had over 180 referrals to the service. However, as she says, **'I love working with young people and with parents. I learn so much from the people I interact with and I have the support of a great team here'**.





# Cara Sheedy Project Worker

The Early Years Service



Cara has been working in the LSSC for the past seventeen years and is one of the longest serving staff members in the organisation. Given her length of time working for the organisation, it is no surprise that she knows her work well and is widely acknowledged as a valued employee within the service. Her enthusiasm and commitment to children and to supporting parents is as strong today as it was when she first started.

Cara has witnessed considerable changes for parents over the years and has welcomed all the developments in the Early Years sector. She is particularly pleased to see standards rise and that childcare staff receive training for their work. This is not only in the interest of children but also for the benefit of staff who, for the most part, want to do the best they can for the children in their care. She herself is continually updating her knowledge base and is currently completing her degree at Mary Immaculate College. As she says, **'It is a challenge but in this line of work, I cannot stress enough why it's so important to have up-to-date training. Staff in crèches and pre-schools have a key role in supporting a child's learning. Children learn right from birth. And the first few years of learning – at home with their parents and in a child care setting, shape how a child will learn in the future. Quality learning experiences in the early years lay good foundations for learning at school, and for the rest of a child's life. To do this important job well, staff need to be qualified and staff need to be recognised for what they do.'**

In addition to her degree course, Cara has had a range of other training opportunities and as each year passes, she will sign up for more courses and training. She mentioned how valuable her Leadership & Inclusion training was particularly in terms of the change in profile of children attending the service. In recent years, the LSSC Early Years Service has welcomed children from a range of nationalities, from all over the world and from different cultural backgrounds and traditions. **'I have learned so much from these children as we make a point of encouraging the children and their parents to share with us aspects of their cultures, be it in terms of language or food. And we are always happy to share in their traditional celebrations if possible.'**

She notes that it may be difficult for some children to settle into a new environment, particularly for children from non-English speaking homes. In these situations, staff will often learn a few words from the parents that they can use with the children to soothe or distract them. She stated that most children settle quite happily into the service within a few weeks.

## A typical week in Cara's work:

Cara's work is quite extensive but also fits within a regular and structured routine. Cara's mornings are usually a busy time settling the children in to their morning routine. There is usually a whirlwind of activities from snack time, playtime indoors, or if the weather is good, outdoor play or even a trip to the park. The lunch is an important time when staff will sit with children to chat and to promote healthy eating. The menu is

quite varied and will include food for any dietary requirement. In the afternoons, some children will need a nap. After this, Cara will have other activities for the children to do from drawing to playing music. The children may need another snack before they are collected. Cara also stresses how important the link with parents is at this stage in order to update them on their child's achievements and any upsets during the day. **'I feel that it is so valuable for any child to be praised but even more so if it comes from their parents. So, it's good for them to know even the smallest thing a child has achieved in a day so that they can mention it at home later in the day. It also ensures that there is continuity of care between our service and the child's family.'** After work, Cara will usually not have work to take home with her, but depending on what course she is involved with, there is always something to do.

## Conclusion:

The benefits of her work, Cara states, are too many to list. As she says: **'You get to experience things with the children for the first time. You are often the first witness to so many ground-breaking moments in their lives. You get to help children learn in new ways. It's also a great feeling you get when you help them overcome challenges. Through my training, through the support from the LSSC management and from an amazing team of colleagues, the work is genuinely rewarding and has enriched my life in so many ways. Also, knowing that you are taking care of the most vulnerable people among us, helping them learn and grow – and keeping them safe – is a big responsibility but one that I feel good about.'**







# Margaret Cadogan, Counsellor

The Counselling Service

'While much of her work is pitched at a very serious level, many have acknowledged that Margaret also brings her own good humour, warmth and liveliness to all her encounters and makes it possible for people to see a light beyond the darkness. As one colleague stated: 'You brighten the Counselling office with your presence.'

Margaret has been working in the LSSC Counselling Service for the past fourteen years as a professional counsellor and group therapist, and is one of the longest serving staff members in the Service. During this time, she has worked extensively to support people in crisis and/or with long-term problems to discuss their difficulties and explore ways of coping better or making positive changes.

Margaret has studied widely on a range of topics within counselling and psychotherapy and has built on her thesis for her Diploma in Counselling which was titled: "How Do I, in my Counselling, Encourage my Clients to be Honest with Themselves and Take Responsibility for their Lives." The underlying values within this research and within her work is to enable clients to be honest with themselves about their issues but she stresses this can only be done in a 'safe, warm and confidential environment'.

Over the years, she has had a particular focus on issues relating to addiction, domestic abuse and support for families of individuals experiencing addiction. She noted that the challenges faced by clients are changing with many individuals in today's society expressing increasing feelings of stress, anxiety and low esteem.

Margaret has been acknowledged for her work as a counsellor in her ability to be an excellent listener and in her commitment to practicing with respect, trust and confidentiality. As her supervisor stated: 'She actively listens to her clients' concerns in order to help them move towards a deeper understanding of their concerns, thus helping them to become confident in making decisions and choices regarding possible ways forward in their lives and work.'

## Why is the Service needed:

Margaret feels that the reasons people look for Counselling are as varied as the people themselves. Some people come in order to 'survive, to seek help merely to go on living'. Others have become aware that there is more to living than 'merely existing' and they too look for help to become happier and to live a more fulfilled life. But Margaret also notes that the challenges for people are changing and new issues are arising. Before 'addiction' for clients in Limerick related to primarily alcohol or drugs, now it could be anything. She notes that most everyone has someone in their life that suffers from an addiction problem, whether it be a dependence on drugs, alcohol, pornography, gambling, shopping or some other form of addiction. Many have a partner who suffers from one of these addictions or a family member who continually struggles with an activity or substance dependence. Margaret feels that her work in the Counselling Service can benefit those families and partners of people with addictions in the recovery process. While she believes that loved ones may not be able to change their addicted partner, there are things they can change about themselves that will benefit their loved one, their relationship, and greatly improve his or her chances of recovery.

## Conclusion:

Margaret loves her work and values it as a privilege to accompany so many clients along their way. She has learned to draw on her qualities of patience and consistency as she says that in order to work effectively, a Counsellor must give the client the time that the client needs.

Margaret credits her achievements to being part of a wonderful team of colleagues and having essential support from management and through regular supervision. She also notes some of her mentors who have inspired her in her work. In particular, she has learned from the work of Carl Rogers, who teaches that for a person to 'grow', they need an environment that provides them with genuineness, acceptance (being seen with unconditional positive regard), and empathy (being listened to and understood). She quotes: 'The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change'. Margaret believes that by creating the right environment for people at the LSSC Counselling Service, she helps clients to accept themselves and hopefully, they will achieve some of their goals, wishes, and desires in life.



# LOOKING TO THE FUTURE - PLANS FOR 2018

## THE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICE

The Child & Family Service continues to grow and develop in response to changing needs. Below are a few upcoming developments:

- Development of a **Community Social Work and Family Support Model**, which will enhance the delivery of a child and family centred service which incorporates Social Work values and ethical principles in assessing, planning, developing, implementing and reviewing interventions with parents and children;
- Continued **commitment to ongoing learning, training and capacity-building** of staff across all service areas. Staff members will have opportunities to engage in training such as Marte Meo, Circles of Security, Non-Violent Resistance and Mellow Bumps, which will ensure that LSSC continues to a highly qualified staff with the skills to continuously reflect on and improve practice;
- Continued **enhancement of quality and accountability** across all service areas to ensure that we are working as effectively as possible;
- Continued engagement with LSSC partners in the statutory, community and voluntary sector to provide coordinated and responsive services to children, families and groups;
- Enhanced emphasis on **ensuring the voices and views of service users are central** to all of the planning and development within LSSC.

## THE EARLY YEARS SERVICES

- The Service will be resubmitting its portfolio for **Síolta validation**, which is required every three years. It is hoped that the Service will be successful and receive accreditation again.
- A number of staff members will be supported to complete the **Degree Programme in Early Years Education** and one member of staff will be supported in the **LINC special award training**, illustrating LSSC's continued commitment to the training and professional development of staff to enable the Early Years Service to be more supportive of the needs of the children attending its services.
- **'Marte Meo'** is an approach which aims to transform how early childhood educators support children's social and emotional development through daily interactions and is noted as particularly helpful in working with children with additional needs. Several LSSC Early Years Services staff have already completed the Marte Meo Approach training and one of this staff group will progress their work with further training in the area to qualify to be a mentor. As a mentor, they will have the expertise to provide on-going support for Marte Meo practitioners across the LSSC services.
- The makeover of the **Outdoor Space** of the Early Years premises, which commenced in 2017, will be completed in 2018. It is envisaged that this will provide a more varied experience for the children with the use of more natural materials and by providing children with the opportunity to experience taking risks in their outdoor play.
- The needs of the families using the service will continue to be reviewed with a particular focus on the needs for **full time pre-school provision**. It is envisaged that this will be introduced on a trial basis in 2018.



## THE COUNSELLING SERVICES

The Service will continue in the following key areas:

- Continue to provide an early, responsive and accessible service for all people who wish to use the service;
- Further develop the adolescent service in response to growing trends and developments. This is enabled by our links with the CYPSC Child and Youth Mental Health Sub-group;
- Work on increasing access to funding to further develop counselling and psychotherapy services in the region;
- Continue to have a presence at the newly formed Mid-West Bereavement Network;
- Continue to work at the national level with the Association of Agency Based Counselling and Psychotherapy Ireland to further advanced the scope and breadth of community counselling in Ireland and secure funding from the statutory authorities to provide these vital services to communities;
- Develop an educational forum for the counsellors of this service with links into the professional community.

## THE SERVICES FOR OLDER PERSONS

The Service will continue in the following key areas:

- To continue to promote greater participation by older people in society, providing social outlets and opportunities whilst offering on-going participation in arts and crafts, conversational Irish, and 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.

**Together, we will continue to work to make a difference in the lives of many older people in Limerick. We will assist them to remain in their homes, making them more informed, more comfortable, more connected to others in their communities and helping to reduce loneliness.**

## OTHER 2018 DEVELOPMENTS

The LSSC will continue its focus on the development of the Child & Family Centre at the new Southside Education Campus, which will provide a safe and stimulating environment for children ranging from babies to pre-school age. The aim of the Centre will be to help children and their parents and guardians to achieve positive outcomes in all areas of child development and to support positive transitions to primary education.



# Supporting People & Communities Through Partnerships



# 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 2017, LSSC partnership working included the following agencies and groups:**

## Statutory agencies and Government Departments

TUSLA Child & Family Agency  
Department of Children & Youth Affairs  
Department of Education & Skills  
Department of Social Protection  
HSE West  
Limerick City & County Council

## Community and voluntary agencies

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

## Services that Aailed of The LSSC Centre In 2017

During 2017, the LSSC Centre offered its facilities to the TUSLA Aftercare Service, the HSE Public Health Nursing clinics, 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)  
Alcoholics Anonymous Groups  
Al-Anon Group  
AWARE  
Bruree House  
Cancer Support  
Diocesan Lourdes Pilgrimage Office  
Dyspraxia  
Emergency Response Group  
Gam-Anon  
Narcotics Anonymous  
MWM  
Older Persons' Groups  
Overeaters Anonymous  
Parent Support Groups  
Retired Civil Servants /Retired Gardaí  
SHINE  
Women's Groups

## Working Together for Better Lives

**A special thank you to our staff, volunteers, Board, partners and donors - with your help and commitment, the LSSC will continue to work together for better lives for the children, young people, adults, families and communities of Limerick.**