



Limerick Social Service Centre

annual report 2007



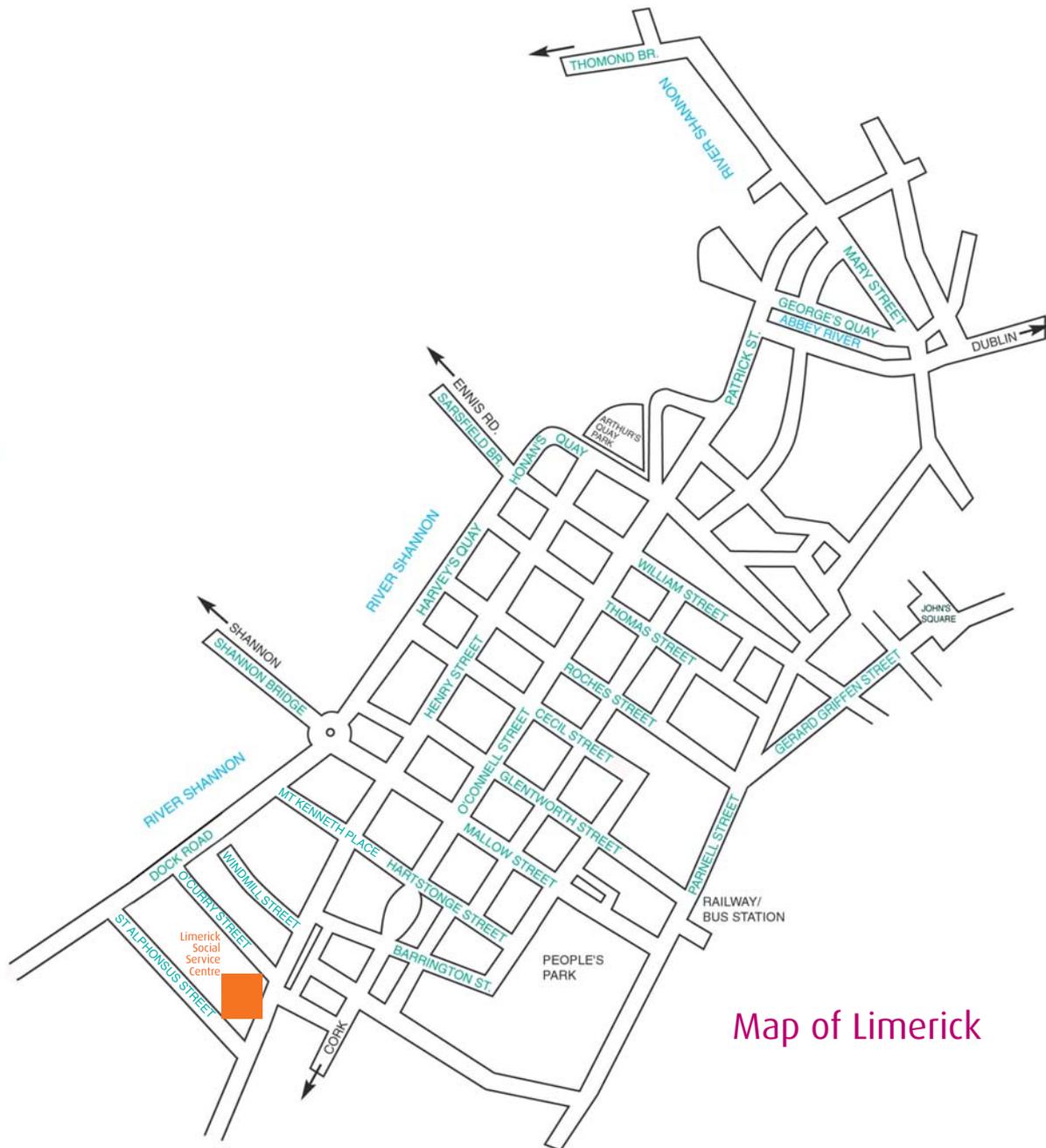
promoting dignity and growth of all people

2007

Centre Philosophy

Charitable enterprises can and should reach out to absolutely every person and every need. Wherever there are people in need of food and drink, clothing, housing, medicine, education: wherever people lack the facilities for living a truly human life, or are tormented by hardships, poor health, or suffer exile or imprisonment, Christian charity should seek them out.

Vatican Council II



Map of Limerick



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I am pleased to present our Annual Report for 2007. This has been another good year for Limerick Social Service Council with continuing developments in all our programmes. The LSSC provides an extensive range of services for families, children, young people, adults and older persons. In addition, a number of self-help groups meet at the LSSC Centre and the LSSC also shares its premises with other voluntary and statutory groups, including the HSE, which uses the centre as a local venue for the delivery of such services as aftercare and youth homelessness, family therapy and child psychiatry. A CURA service is also based at the LSSC Centre.

In 2006, and as part of our Strategic 5 year plan, the LSSC commenced a process of undertaking an evidence based approach to identify unmet needs in our catchment area. This is an important exercise to identify where gaps exist in service provision and how resources can be better used to support children and families in the years ahead. Our plan is to publish this research in 2008.

This year, with continued generous support from the HSE West, we have expanded our Family Advocacy Service. Initially set up in 1991 as the Family Rights Group, we have now changed the name to Family Advocacy Service. This is a support group for parents of children in care. This service operates in both City and County and is yet another sign of the continued expansion of our services in County Limerick.

During the year Lt. Col. John Phelan (Ret'd) went to his eternal reward. John was for many years a valued member of the Executive Council and was involved in the establishment of the Centre and its programmes. We extend our sympathies to his family.

Finally, I wish to sincerely thank the many people who helped us during the year with a special mention of our volunteers and staff, whose dedication and hard work plays a significant part in our continued success. I also wish to thank our Executive Council under the Chairmanship of Mr. Flan O'Neill who have contributed enormously to the further development of the work of the Council.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Ryan". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a thin horizontal line.

Brian Ryan
General Manager



The 1972 Limerick Social Service Council's Annual Report documented that

Limerick is experiencing welcome progress in the commercial and industrial aspects of its life. This new prosperity, while benefitting many people, of its nature passes by the weak and the disadvantaged. Indeed, the welfare of these latter is very inadequately catered for in national social provisions. Voluntary effort has ever had the role of filling the gaps left in social policy and social provision.

Almost four decades later, the same introduction could be used. In an era of unprecedented growth and change, there are still those who are left in the shadows of this prosperity.

Limerick Social Service Centre aims to promote the dignity and growth of individuals, families and groups by ensuring that:

- the dignity of every person is respected
- quality practices 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

The work of the Centre is carried out by a dedicated team of over 90 staff and teams of volunteers through a range of individual services (detailed in this report), ranging from support for pre-school children to elderly people.



individual service reports



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Altamira Apartments

Support for first time mothers parenting alone

What we do

Altamira Apartments (Thomondgate) aim to offer a supportive service to first time mothers and their babies by providing quality transitional accommodation at low cost. The provision of accommodation is combined with an integrated, limited level of support.

Altamira aims to

- enable first time mothers to become confident and competent parents by promoting models of good practice
- assist mothers in availing of opportunities to become financially independent
- promote and develop links with existing community resources
- provide ongoing practical assistance, information, advice and support to former residents

Altamira consists of ten self-contained apartments, suitable for mothers with one child up to the age of two years. Each apartment has one bedroom, a kitchenette/living room and a bathroom with shower. They are all equipped with cable television, a gas heater and a night-storage heater, with central heating in the hallways.

Altamira also consists of a laundry room, a computer room, a sessional crèche and a communal room.

A snapshot of 2007

The main work of Altamira in 2007 could be divided into two categories: Referrals and outreach.

Referrals

During 2007, 15 new mothers availed of the service at Altamira. The age profile of those mothers was varied:

- 33% of mothers were aged between 16 and 19 years
- 27% were aged between 20 and 24
- 20% were aged between 25 and 30
- 20% were aged between 30 and 33

Similarly, the place of origin of the mothers was diverse: One third came from Limerick City, one third from Poland and the remaining one third represented a large demographic spread, ranging from Ireland (Tipperary, County Limerick and Longford) to abroad (Brazil and Somalia).

4 of the mothers came to Altamira through social work involvement, and the majority came through self-referral. 11 came from Sonas, having lived there during part of their pregnancy. Most of the mothers had a successful placement at Altamira and were supported to move into private rented accommodation. Some mothers may, inevitably, require more intense support, and avail of this through other services.

Outreach

Following on from a placement at Altamira Apartments each mother is offered outreach services, which enables her to move into a new community with the reassurance that she will be supported. Outreach covers a number of areas and is tailored to meet individual, specific needs. Some mothers may feel that they do not need it but for the majority it is an invaluable support base. Outreach enables the mother to avail of all entitlements, with guidance around community welfare issues. There is always the option to be linked in with other sections of the Limerick Social Service Centre, where the mother can avail of parent support, counselling, and advocacy support for parents who have a child in care. Initially, for some mothers, it is reassuring to have a familiar face calling to see them in their new home. The outreach worker can also help mothers to link into services within their new community.



Highlights of the year

- Altamira began 2007 under the guidance of a new Manager and a new crèche worker, with a part-time Project/Outreach Worker. The team changeover brought fresh energy and enthusiasm to the project.
- 2007 saw Altamira operate at full capacity, and all mothers and babies appear to have benefitted immensely from their placements.
- Increased multiculturalism was a key feature of the project, and introduced the staff and participants to a variety of different parenting styles.

Work plan for 2008

- To upgrade the existing apartments with new furnishings.
- In order to ensure that the needs of the target group are being served effectively and efficiently, a review of Altamira's purpose and function will be carried out.
- All policies and procedures will be updated.
- Staff will continue to be offered, and engage in, training to ensure that models of good practice are maintained.

Counselling Service

A confidential, respectful space for people to explore their life issues

What we do

The Counselling Service aspires to support individuals, couples and families in the Limerick City and County area. The Service provides a confidential, respectful space for people to explore their life issues, and offers a holistic approach to counselling by acknowledging that people have physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual needs.

The Counselling Service is directed primarily towards people who, due to various circumstances (financial and otherwise), are unable to access other counselling opportunities. Where appropriate, referrals to other services are made.

A snapshot of 2007

13 Counsellors worked with 278 people in Counselling in 2007. In total, 2267 counselling sessions were provided.

The life difficulties that people presented with were varied but could be categorised thematically as:

Presenting Problems	No. of Sessions Female Clients	No. of Sessions Male Clients	Total
Relationship Issues	311	36	347
Relationship/Couples Issues	638	21	659
Bereavement	200	86	286
Depression	226	69	295
Anxiety/Stress	60	18	78
Life Crises	185	34	219
Self-Esteem Issues	126	23	149
Abuse in its varied forms	170	29	199
Outreach O.L.L.	30	5	35
Total	1946	321	2267

Presenting Problems	Male	Female	Total
Adult	45	229	274
Adolescent	2	1	3
Child	1	0	1
Total	48	230	278

In the majority of situations, clients came through the Counselling Service through self-referral. A number of other agencies also made referrals, e.g. GPs in the City and County, HSE personnel, Brainwave, Doras Luimní, the Bedford Row Family Project, Sonas and Altamira Support Services.

In addition to the Limerick Social Services Centre, Henry Street, people availed of the Counselling Service off-site, at various venues at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Newcastle West, Abbeyfeale, Rathkeale and Kilmallock.

In 2007, a total of 126 new referrals were made to the Counselling Service.



Highlights of the year

Recommendations made in the Review of LSSC Counselling Services (2006) were addressed in 2007. These included:

- Training and Accreditation of Counsellors: Counsellors working towards accreditation are assigned work with clients who present with a variety of problems. This work is done in a supportive environment where the Counselling Co-Ordinator is available to mentor with individual Counsellors on an ongoing basis.
- Three of the employed staff were afforded the opportunity by LSSC to do further in-service training in 2007. One Counsellor is currently participating in the Bereavement Support Course in Milford Hospice.
- Supervision of Counsellors.
- Support to Counsellors: An External Supervisor has been employed to provide group supervision to the employed Counsellors.
- Integrated Care: The establishment of a Line manager system with weekly meetings has led to 'an integrated framework' and increased 'staff information' (Review of the LSSC Counselling Service, 2006).

Work plan for 2008

- The Counselling team, in consultation with management, will continue to implement the recommendations of the 2006 review, with particular focus on the physical environment and information management.
- The Counselling Co-ordinator will assign time in which to meet counsellors on an individual basis fortnightly. She will be available as necessary at other times.
- A meeting of all Counsellors, employed and voluntary, will be arranged to give Counsellors an opportunity to meet collectively. A speaker could be engaged to give input relevant to the Counselling field.
- All employed Counsellors will avail of Suicide Assist training. Volunteer Counsellors will also be made aware of this training.
- A New Counselling Centre will be opened in Kilfinane.
- Further exploration will be undertaken regarding another Counselling Centre in Askeaton and Glin.

Crèche

Quality, affordable, developmental childcare

What we do

Limerick Social Services Centre Crèche aims to provide a quality, affordable, developmental childcare service in the inner city area for children aged four months to three years. Operational since 1998, the Crèche aims to

- continue to meet standards required to deliver a quality, regulated childcare service
- provide personalised, responsive care by engaging staff with qualifications and relevant experience in childcare
- provide a supportive and professional work environment for staff
- work in partnership with parents
- meet the needs of parents in service provision
- engage in ongoing service evaluation
- continue to provide affordable childcare to the most vulnerable in the community

The crèche is purpose-built and following inspection by the statutory Pre-School Services was approved to cater for 30 children (6 babies and 24 toddlers). Currently full day care is provided for children aged from 4 months to 3 years from 8.30am to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday. The crèche advocates working in partnership with parents acknowledging them as the primary carers of their children.

Entry to the crèche is by application and approval by the Admission Committee. Strict criterion for entry apply. This consists of priority being given to those; in receipt of a Social Welfare payment; referred by representatives of HSE West; from low income families; parenting alone; wishing to access education or training; entering employment; and who have special needs.

Current parental profile is as follows:

Third level training	4
Return to Education	4
Full-time employment	7
Part-time employment	2
Integration (asylum seekers/refugees)	2
Respite care (referral from H.S.E.)	7
Special needs	1

A snapshot of 2007

Continuous professional development: Currently our staffing levels are six full- time and one part-time staff. Qualifications for staff range from F.E.T.A.C. Levels 5 to 7, BA in Early Childhood Education and Diploma in Supervisory Management. Training and development for staff is a priority for the management committee of the crèche and all staff engage in reflective practice. Within the crèche there exists a culture of ongoing monitoring and review of experience of the service by children, staff and parents. Staff continue to update their skills through attendance at training provided by the Limerick Childcare Committee, the HSE West, National Children's Nursery Association (NCNA) and local colleges.

Cultural diversity: The changing social structure in the city is reflected with children of other nationalities attending. This has proved to be both enriching and challenging.



- Networking:** The crèche networks with other agencies in providing support for parents and children by providing childcare places on referral from the HSE West, the Community Mothers Programme, Sonas, Altamira Apartments, local colleges and third-level institutions.
- Financial changes:** Fees have been increased. The effects of the introduction of the new Subvention Scheme by the Minister for Children (with direct correlation between fees paid and staff salaries) remains to be seen.
- Expansion:** Service users have consistently voiced their desire for the service provision to be extended in terms of hours of provision and developmental grouping. Presently the crèche operates from 8.30am to 5.30pm. Service users would like longer hours and provision of care to be extended to cater for the three year plus age group. While recognising the importance of the consistency of care for children, implementation of these changes in provision presents challenges: Staff flexibility, relevant qualifications, developmental programmes and legal requirements for this age group, space, furniture, equipment and capital would all be required to meet the developing needs of the children. The possibility of pre-school provision is currently being examined.
- Monitoring:** Public access to Inspection Reports carried out by the Pre-School Inspectorate and Environmental Health Officer H.S.E. West serve to alleviate parental concerns regarding their child's welfare, while ensuring that standards continue to be met in the areas of play, provision, nutrition and health and safety. The crèche met required standards in these areas following the latest inspection.
- Staff practice is monitored daily to ensure that the programme of care is carried out. Staff are supported through regular mentoring, supervision and appraisal by the Crèche Manager.

Highlights of the year

- A pre-school previously operated by a private provider was amalgamated into the Centre.
- Employment of two staff members holding Bachelor Degrees in Early Childhood Care and Education.
- Securing continuation of the sponsored FÁS Community Employment (C.E) scheme within the crèche, through the high percentage of progression of participants on to employment in the childcare sector. The staff of the C.E scheme continue to make a valuable contribution to the running of the crèche by filling reception, catering, maintenance and cleaning posts. Those involved directly within the crèche enable the provision of quality care for the children by increasing staff ratios.

Work plan for 2008

- Continuous assessment of service provision.
- Endeavour to meet the changing needs of service users.
- Improve staff working environment.
- Forge strong links with relevant agencies in order to secure funding and to access expertise in the childcare field.

Community Sisters

Enhancing lives through love, compassion and respect

What we do

The Sisters working in the community aim to enhance the lives of those to whom they minister, especially those who are experiencing hardship and difficulties. They offer particular support and encouragement to older people in the local community and organise appropriate responses to their needs. They also encourage the involvement of volunteers in the different areas of their work, which aim:

- To treat people with love, compassion and respect so that all may enjoy a better quality of life
- To work for a more just and fair society where human rights are respected and the environment is protected
- To encourage the facilitation of personal development and a positive attitude in individuals and in groups in each area
- To liaise with voluntary and statutory groups in order to support the development and integration of services within each area
- To link in with the Regeneration Agency in the relevant areas

Eight Community Sisters offer support services to meet the needs of families in eight parishes in Limerick City. These sisters live in the areas in which they work and are helped by local volunteers called Community Helpers. One person from the Social Service Centre acts as the Co-ordinator of the Family Support Services. The Sisters meet together three times a year in order to share experiences and to receive input on the various relevant services within the city and county.

The services are provided in the following parishes:

- St. Mary's Parish, King's Island;
- Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Rosbrien;
- Holy Family Parish, Southill;
- St. Munchin's Parish, Ballynanty;
- St. John's Parish;
- Corpus Christi Parish, Moyross;
- Queen of Peace Parish, Janesboro;
- St. Michael's Parish.

Specific Services/Programmes offered:

- Visitation of homes, hospitals and nursing homes
- Clubs for senior citizens where they received hot meals
- Regular outings for senior citizens
- Distribution and delivery of hot dinners for elderly in their homes
- Bereavement support on an ongoing basis as well as attendance at funerals
- Linking with schools for parenting programmes
- Advocacy on behalf of needy families
- Adult education classes in Art/Crafts/Needlework/Aromatherapy
- Distribution of food and fuel vouchers
- Work with asylum seekers and immigrants

A snapshot of 2007

During the year Sr. Anne Maria Ryan began work in St. Michael's Parish. She has visited the elderly and isolated in Tara Court, Mungret Court and the Market Area. She is doing therapeutic art with children who have been bereaved or whose parents are separated as well as doing parenting skills with young parents.



New needs that emerged over the year included:

- Linking with the Regeneration Programme in Southill and Moyross
- Illegal dumping of rubbish and lack of awareness of environmental issues
- Increase in violence against women
- Security equipment for senior citizens in their homes

Barriers to meeting needs were identified as:

- People afraid to disclose relevant information regarding anti-social behaviour for fear of reprisals
- Limited number of local people becoming involved in community development
- Lack of transport in some localities
- Senior citizens afraid to leave their homes because of anti-social behaviour

Family Support Service Statistics for 2007:

Average number per week	
Attendance at weekly clubs	150
Attendance at weekly dinners	96
Meals provided for home delivery	406
Home Visits	94
Bereavement and Hospital visits	57
Attendance at Art/Craft/Needlework	43
Attendance at Aromatherapy Class	30
Attendance at Women's Club	90
Therapeutic Art Class	6

The beneficiaries of these services include; senior citizens (especially those housebound, isolated and ill); families who are victims of anti-social behaviour; the bereaved; asylum seekers; and disadvantaged families.

Highlights of the year

- Involvement with the Regeneration Programme in Southill and Moyross.
- In the Queen of Peace Parish a member of the Hunt Museum Staff came to the Senior Citizen's Club to show slides of some of the treasures present in the museum. The senior citizens were encouraged to take time out to visit the museum themselves. The Community Guard also visited the Club before Halloween to allay fears of anti social behaviour during the celebrations. She assured members of protection during that night.
- The refurbishment of the kitchen in Our Lady of Lourdes Parish has facilitated the cooking of a larger number of meals and a new van has helped with the more efficient delivery of meals to the elderly.
- During the summer the Youth Clubs from St. Mary's Parish have participated in an environmental awareness programme.
- Under the Community Service Programme a mini-bus has been acquired and drivers secured in order to bring the senior citizens to local events.
- Evaluation: Services were evaluated through; Ongoing consultation and dialogue with service users; weekly club volunteers meetings to plan and evaluate what is being done; appreciation from local agencies, family members and local community guards.

Family Advocacy Service

Supporting families with children in care

What we do

The service was set up to support families with children in care in 1991. Initially it was the Family Rights Group. It was felt that that this title may have been misleading and that a change of name was necessary. During 2007, following discussions and consultation with other interested agencies, it was agreed to change the name to Family Advocacy Service. In addition, policies and procedures were reviewed and evaluated.

The Family Advocacy Service aims to:

- promote the rights of families whose children are in care or who may be going into care
- input into policy and practice regarding children in care and their families
- encourage the development of support services and other preventative services for families
- facilitate parents in understanding the difficulties that need to be addressed in order for positive changes to be made in relation to their child's care plans
- empower parents to participate fully in Child Care Reviews and Case Conferences and to ensure that they have been consulted on their child's care plans

Information shared with the Advocacy Workers by parents and family members is confidential unless the worker believes that such information constitutes a substantial risk to a family member or other person, in which case the worker will pass on the relevant information to the appropriate authority.

Involvement of parents and families with the service is voluntary, and advocacy only takes place at the request of the parent or family member. Referrals are open to all parents with children in the care of the HSE, whether long or short term; or where there is the possibility of a child going into care. The work is parent centred. The Advocacy Worker seeks no records or background information from any source prior to meeting the parent.

The service is funded by HSE but works independently.

A snapshot of 2007

During 2007 parents continued to make contact with the Family Advocacy Service. The main work this year has been with individual parents and couples who continued to avail of one-to-one support. There were eight monthly Parents' Support Group meetings which were attended by an average of six parents. These meetings were of great support to parents, offering them an opportunity to share concerns and insights.

The primary focus for 2007 was the re-publication of the original Information Booklet, produced a number of years ago by Family Rights and distributed widely to parents with children in care. The Information Booklet needed to be updated and this consultative process has been ongoing throughout the year, in conjunction with the Advocacy Workers in Clare and North Tipperary. The parents shared in the production of the Booklet which includes important information for parents when their child is taken into care. The Booklet explains court procedures, Care Orders, Care Plans, lists relevant contacts and offers much other relevant information. The parents involved offered very valuable insights to be considered in the publication. The document has almost been completed it is now in final draft. The publisher suggested that the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) proof the document to ensure the NALA Simple English mark would be awarded to it, prior to publication.

The Service has completed production of a new Information Leaflet. It is acknowledged that there are many parents out there who do not know that there is a support service there for them and it is hoped that the production of this leaflet will provide essential information about the Advocacy Service. The production of the leaflet was a great experience for all involved. Following suggestions from the parents the designer produced a draft leaflet and attended two of our Parent Support Meetings. The parents' suggestions and comments were vital in the production of a very special leaflet, to which the parents can claim ownership.

Together with the Advocacy workers from Clare and North Tipperary, the Family Advocacy Service gave input at two



Training Days for HSE staff (Social Workers and Care Workers). This was a learning experience for all concerned. The four Advocacy workers from Clare, North Tipperary and Limerick continue to network.

Highlights of the year

In October, a new Advocacy Worker was recruited on a half-time basis. The new worker has previously worked in Family Advocacy in the Clare area for five years. Since the new worker joined the Service, she has commenced working with new families.

Fifteen families have continued to avail of the service on an ongoing basis over the year.

Work plan for 2008

- Following the launch of the Leaflet and new Information Book, the Service will strive to ensure that information about the Service is disseminated as widely as possible.
- Implementation of a system to monitor more fully the referrals to the Service. This will provide information on areas of need not being addressed and local areas not availing of the Service.
- Continue to work closely with Social Workers and other relevant people involved in the lives of the parents.
- The Advocacy workers have been invited to give an input in the Foster Carer's Training; two parents from the group have agreed to also contribute to the input in person.
- Outreach: Parents continue to make contact with us from other parts of the country where there is no support service. Some parents keep in regular contact over a long period. This outreach support is very important for all parents (One parent from Kerry, for example, has attended several Support Meetings).

Parent Support Programme Limerick

Enabling parents to enjoy and participate more fully in their child's development

What we do

The Parent Support Programme Limerick is a structured programme aimed at enabling parents to enjoy and participate more fully in their child's development, and supporting them in their role by encouragement, sharing experiences and information with other parents. This mission statement anchors the programme in the belief that, through encouragement and positive affirmation, all parents will become more pro-active in their children's development.

Building on the success of 2006, the Parent Support Programme Limerick continued to expand and develop in 2007 with 754 families from Limerick City and County receiving direct support from programme staff. This number reflects the increased profile of the programme at a local level and the demand for such a service in Limerick City and County (this number does not include families who attended Parent and Baby/Toddler Groups, Parenting Courses or Parenting Seminars facilitated by programme staff).

Referrals to the Parent Support Programme Limerick continue to come from a variety of sources including Public Health Nurses, GPs, Community Welfare Officers, Social Workers (Maternity and Regional Hospitals, Child Protection, Fostering, Aftercare), Child Psychiatric Services, Home School Liaison Officers, School Principals, Doras Luimní, CURA, Respond, Barnardos, Limerick Youth Service, Probation Services, MABS, MILES (Men in Limerick Experiencing Separation) Community and Family Resources Centres, Citizens Information Centre, Homeless Persons Unit, Family Mediation Services and self-referral.

In 2007 there were a total of 564 recorded drop-in visits to the offices of the Parent Support Programme Limerick. During these visits a number of issues and crisis were dealt with including parenting, relationships, finance and budgeting, accommodation, childcare, crisis pregnancy, domestic violence, mental health, addiction, welfare rights and entitlements, Asylum Seekers, multi-cultural issues etc. The drop-in service has become a central part of the work of the Parent Support Programme Limerick and provides parents with an outlet for support in reassuring them in their role as parents.

The Parent Support Programme Limerick's activities are administered through three individual programmes: Community Mothers, the Teen Parent Support Programme, and the Lifelong Parenting Information and Support Programme.

Community Mothers: A Community Mother is an experienced mother who is trained to visit the parents of new babies in their own homes. The Community Mother shares information on many issues, including feeding, teething, talking and listening to your child and how to enjoy your child more. The Community Mother will have good knowledge of activities and services in the area. The programme will be adapted to suit the needs of the parents. The visits are usually monthly for the first year of the child's life, or more often if requested. Occasionally Community Mothers visit the parents of older children. There is no charge for this service.

The Teen Parent Support Programme: This is a programme for young people who are pregnant or who are parents. It offers support and information before and after the birth of the baby, including group peer support, one-to-one support, grinds and childcare support in school. The programme will support the young person to remain in education through pregnancy and after the birth, and provides information on relevant services and entitlements. Support is also available to the young person's partner and members of their extended family. Grandparents and extended family members are also offered information and support as part of the programme.

Lifelong Parenting Information and Support Programme: Where possible, the programme provides parents with information and support on all issues relevant to parenting. Information and support may be provided over the phone, one-to-one or in groups. Breastfeeding information and support is included.



A snapshot of 2007

The Community Mothers visited 449 families in 2007. At the end of 2007 there were 14 Community Mothers visiting families in Limerick City and County, 5 Employed Community Mothers and 9 Volunteer Community Mothers. 2 Volunteer Community Mothers completed the Child Protection HSE West *Keeping Safe* Training. The Community Dietician and Dental Hygienist from the Health Service Executive West gave presentations at Monthly Support Group Meetings which was of great benefit to both the Community Mothers and the families they visited.

The primary activities of the Community Mothers for the year could be categorised under:

- Home visits
- Parent and child groups
- Work with foreign nationals families
- Completion of an independent evaluation of the programme
- Monthly support meetings for all Community Mothers (staff and voluntary)

The Teen Parent Support Programme (TPSP) Limerick completed its fifth year as a mainstream project under the Teen Parent Support Initiative. The Teen Parents Support Programme is a Department of Health and Children Initiative supported by the Health Service Executive and the Crisis Pregnancy Agency.

73 young people made contact with the Teen Parents Support Programme Limerick for the first time in 2007, with 146 young people who were already in contact with the programme in 2006 continuing to receive information and/or support. The Teen Parent Support Programme Limerick facilitated and supported 31 young people to remain in education and training in the 2006/2007 academic year. This work would not be possible without the funding provided by the Department of Education and Science, under the School Completion Programme: In June 2007, 12 second level students sat their Leaving Certificate Examinations, 3 sat their Leaving Certificate Applied Examinations and 2 young parents sat their Junior Certificate.

Primary activities of 2007:

- Direct support for pregnant teenagers, young parents and their families
- Intensive one-to-one support for pregnant teenagers, young parents and their families
- Peer support and group activities
- Education-related activities (i.e. childcare, grinds support, etc.)
- National Pilot Development
- Additional work (funding applications, antenatal classes, Christmas toys and hampers, etc.)

The Lifelong Parenting Information and Support Programme has continued to expand with personnel continuing to respond to requests for broader parenting information and support. One-to-One Parenting Support was provided to 72 families in 2007. The programme directly provided 7 parenting courses to parents in Limerick City and County. Six courses were held in Limerick City and one was held in County Limerick. 6 Information Seminars on Parenting were provided to parents/groups.

Primary activities of 2007:

- One-to-one information and support
- Work with fathers separated from their families
- Group activities (i.e. parenting courses)
- Parenting seminars
- Incredible Years Parenting Programme (uses techniques designed to promote educational and social competence and prevent, reduce and treat behavioural and emotional problems in young children)

Parent Support Programme Limerick

Enabling parents to enjoy and participate more fully in their child's development

- Parent Support Programme HSE West
- Breastfeeding information and support

Networking, programme promotion and training remain integral components of the work carried out by the Parent Support Programme Limerick. In 2007, staff and volunteers attended and participated in training that covered a diversity of topics such as child protection, challenging behaviour, drugs, report-writing, sexual violence disclosure

Highlights of the year

Key positive developments included the awarding of additional funding to the programme by the Health Service Executive West, which facilitated the recruitment and employment of a Parent Support Worker for the Abbeyfeale area. This has been a very positive experience, both in terms of staff and programme development, and as a growing recognition of the value of the work of the programme in terms of promoting positive parenting.

Other highlights include:

- The establishment of a new Parent and Baby/Toddler Groups in Murroe and Askeaton.
- The facilitation and completion of the Evaluation of the Community Mothers Programme by an independent researcher.
- The nomination and election of the Programme Manager to Treoir's National Council.
- The successful application for funding submitted to the Crisis Pregnancy Agency for the establishment of a facilitated group for young parents living in Limerick City.
- As part of the inter-agency work of the programme the Co-ordinator of the Community Mothers Programme completed a three-day facilitators training course in *The Incredible Year Parent Training Programme*.
- Requests for copies of *The Guidelines for Best Practice in Supporting Students who are Pregnant and those who are Parents within our Education System* publication continue to come from both local and national level. Due to the phenomenal demand for this publication throughout the country the National Co-ordinator of the Teen Parents Support Programme secured additional funding for the publication and distribution of copies of this document. In the first quarter of 2008 this document will be distributed to all Second Level Schools and Centres of Education both within and outside the Teen Parents Support Programmes catchment areas throughout the country. This development highlights the value of this publication and is an acknowledgement of the work of all involved in producing such a valuable resource.

Work plan for 2008

The priorities of the Teen Parent Support Programme Limerick can be divided into two main categories; programme level and training.

At programme level, the priority is to:

- Develop a vision for the Parent Support Programme Limerick, including the desired balance of programme activities between preventive early intervention with parents and crisis intervention with parents.
- Engage with more fathers – establishment of a Pilot Parenting Course for Fathers.
- Engage with the communities of the Regeneration Areas of Limerick City.
- Recruit participants for the City Slickers Group, and establishment and evaluation of same.
- Support communities to develop Parent and Baby/Toddler Groups.
- Advocate for improvement in access to childcare for all parents.
- Liaise with Parent Support Programme HSE West regarding the provision of parenting support and increased resources being made available to the programme.



In terms of training, the Programme aims to secure adequate ongoing and once-off training for staff and volunteers, including:

- *Keeping Safe* training for new Volunteer Community Mothers
- Substance Abuse and Addiction
- Effective communication
- Addressing the needs of foreign national families living in Ireland
- Co-Parenting and Parents Parenting Alone
- Group facilitation and developmental activities for Parent and Baby/Toddler groups



Pre-school Service

Advising, supporting and assisting community pre-school management committees

What we do

The Pre-School Service was founded in 1970. It aims to provide accessible, affordable pre-school services for children aged between 3 and 5 years in disadvantaged areas of Limerick City and County as part of the LSSC early intervention family support programme.

The Pre-school Service targets areas of greatest need, based on the principle that education is a key in breaking the cycle of deprivation, and that appropriate early intervention should be available to young people who are at risk of educational failure for reasons of socio-economic disadvantage.

Over the last 37 years the Pre-school Service has developed from the provision of pre-schools to a range of services and activities:

- Advisory / Developmental support service to eleven community pre-school management committees
- City Centre Crèche
- Advisory / Developmental / support service to two community-based crèches
- information service to providers and general public
- Childminding Advisor for Limerick City and County
- Administration and in-service training

Pre-School Service for Children 3 years to 5 years:	
Location	Number of sessions
Moyross	2 sessions
Ballynanty	2 sessions
St. Mary's	1 session
St. Senan's	1 session
St. John's Parish	3 sessions
Southill	2 sessions
Kileely	1 session
Kilmallock	2 sessions
St. Patrick's	1 session
Newcastlewest	1 session

A snapshot of 2007

Throughout 2007 the Pre-school Service continued to provide support and assistance to each of the eleven pre-school management committees. That support included:

- The Pre-school Advisor, in her role as LSSC representative, attended the monthly meetings of the management committees and supported them in the development of their policies and procedures.
- Assistance in the recruitment of staff.
- Induction training for staff, where required.
- Advice regarding submissions to POBAL and quarterly reporting of accounts.
- Facilitated networking of the eleven management committees.
- Research, planning and provision of 20-week blocks of in-service training for all thirty two pre-school staff in Language Development.
- Substitution was provided for absent pre-school staff on 30 days over this period.



Highlights of 2007

- The Pre-School Advisor arranged two blocks of in-service training for LSSC staff, one training session was in Stress Management. As a trainer in the Keeping Safe Programme, the pre-School Advisor facilitated two training sessions of that programme in-house for staff.
- The Pre-School Advisor took on the role of Childminding Advisory Officer for Limerick City and Limerick County Childcare Committees as part of the Childminding Initiative (2006). The CMAO role included attending meetings, hosting network meetings, providing anti-discrimination information to providers, providing practical support to childminders, encouraging childminders to avail of grants, dissemination of the Notification Pack for Childminders (based on the National Guidelines for Childminders published by the Office of The Minister for Children in 2007), etc.

Work plan for 2008

The Pre-Schools are now being fully administered by the eleven management committees, having been previously supported by LSSC. From June 2008 that support will no longer be available and the committees will have to resolve staffing issues without support from LSSC. They will also have to administer the new funding system and take on board the Revised Regulations which came into effect in November 2007.

From September 2008 LSSC hope to develop a pre-school within the building in order to facilitate a seam-free childcare service for children aged from birth to four years. This would enable clients to access other LSSC services, such as prenatal care in Sonas, residential care in Altamira, and crèche and pre-school services at Henry Street.

Services for Older People

Developing a new and positive vision of ageing in Ireland

What we do

Services for Older People work towards developing a new and positive vision of ageing in Ireland so that through inclusion, recognition and representation, the rights and needs of older people are asserted in all aspects of Irish society.

The focus of the Service is; to be open to new ideas, by encouraging creativity and identifying positive opportunities to engage older adults in activities of their choice; to build their self esteem by active participation; and to respond to them holistically. The work, therefore, tends to be theoretical and practical, with the demands of the moment often taking precedence over study and analysis.

There are in excess of fifty Active Retirement Associations in the mid-west region with a Development Officer employed to advance the work of the association. They have constitutional status and are affiliated to the national association and hold an AGM at the beginning of each year. In addition, there are Senior Citizens' Clubs, Active Age Groups, Day Care Centres and voluntary groups in various parishes, each with its core of helpers and volunteers who give their free time to ensure the success and continuity of these groups. Some groups like to retain independence, others like to lobby on behalf of their elderly while others like to be self-directing. While respecting all these initiatives there is also very good communication between various groupings and members. At times some require help to keep functioning. Others are helped to take on new tasks so that groups may remain viable. Classes and activities cannot be maintained if numbers fall away. This is inevitable with older age. At the same time, it is imperative to keep classes going as they facilitate vital social contact.

Contact with older people is generally made through visits to a particular group, to a hospital/hospice, a nursing home or to the person's home. The reasons for this contact/intervention are varied, and can include:

- Security needs
- Isolation and loneliness
- Loss of friends/partner/spouse
- Health and social needs
- Education and leisure resources
- Volunteering

A Snapshot of 2007

In 2007 the Service had 180 enquiries and 91 referrals. The majority of these referrals came from older people themselves, while others were made by family members, association/club members, relevant agencies or neighbours.

Active Age groups participated in several coordinated projects and exhibitions during the year and extended invitations to other groups for tea etc. At the Limerick Show, for example, Active Retirement Associations and other senior groups won prizes for their exhibits.

Limerick Community Education Network (LCEN) is a citywide network of community groups and statutory agencies involved in the provision and delivery of community education in Limerick City. Active Age Groups are represented on the network by a member of LSSC. It means that older persons are integrated into the lifelong learning process with equal educational opportunities as other groups. The VEC has allocated in excess of 800 teaching hours to pursue activities of their choice.

In 2007, training days for LCEN members were held and an information pack with classes in local areas was up-dated and streamlined, based on feedback from coordinators and service users. In addition, an evaluation of the service was undertaken; hence the development of a 'Learn Local' Plan 2006-2009. The key ideas are to listen to learners, improve information and communication, share ideas and resources and encourage new learners. It offers friendly, affordable, adult learning opportunities in local settings. The Limerick Social Service Centre management, for example, afforded us the opportunity of learning and accessing e-mail/internet as a new goal, thus enabling people to maintain contact with their families abroad.



Over recent years, the volume of work related to community education has impinged on the everyday schedule of the Service for Older People. A successful outcome of lobbying at local level in 2007 is reflected in increased resources for the coordination of community education. To date the work was done on a voluntary basis. Funding for the employment of coordinators by LCEN was prioritised by RAPID in 2007, supported by the Regeneration Agency and is in place.

Highlights of the Year

The Bealtaine Arts Festival, with the theme 'forever begin', marked the highlight for Services for Older People in 2007. The annual festival:

- Celebrates creativity in older age
- Challenges negative attitudes to ageing
- Promotes the participation of older people in the arts throughout the year
- Culminates in May in a month long national festival

The Service aims to bring about attitudinal changes by studying best practice in order to create opportunities for older people to participate fully and meaningfully in the arts and accordingly, many parish groups took part in this festival. There were exhibitions (Dooradoyle Library, national patchwork quilt exhibition, etc.), concerts, dances, drama, poetry reading, storytelling, reminiscence, clip art, word art and computer workshops. Groups displayed literature relating to their aims and objectives at an open day at the University of Limerick, where volunteers were present to answer questions. The festival finished with a tour of County Hall, beginning in the council chambers and ending with a beautiful meal and concert, hosted by the Limerick County Arts Officer and staff.

Work plan for 2008

- Continue to organise meetings and group contact, using the feedback from participants to generate new ideas.
- Study current research and documentation on elder care to keep up-to-date with best practice.
- Liaise with other service providers in response to need and engage in various surveys, as appropriate.
- Ongoing networking with Limerick Community Education Network and meetings with VEC.
- Training days with VEC.
- Continuation of computer skills sessions for older persons (as a necessary component of social interaction).
- Baseline survey of groups of older persons in parishes.

What we do

Sonas aims to provide accommodation for women who need support during pregnancy outside their homes, in an atmosphere that is welcoming, respectful, safe, encouraging, supportive and confidential.

Sonas aims to respond to the needs of women who require support and accommodation during pregnancy, through:

- the provision of a secure space where women are free to reflect on issues that need to be addressed, while availing of appropriate counselling services
- ensuring that women are facilitated to avail of appropriate services, including clinics / doctors appointments.
- referral to Social Work Department, Regional Maternity Hospital
- referral to the Adoption Department of the Health Service Executive when requested.

A snapshot of 2007

23 women availed of accommodation during 2007. Their age profile was diverse:

Age	No. of women
15-17 years	4
18-20	5
21-30	11
30+	3

1,476 bed nights were availed of during this year.

The needs of some residents required a high level of support. Residents with personal needs were offered appropriate support in availing of ongoing additional services with the HSE. 2 women were referred from homeless hostels, and Sonas staff worked closely with the relevant Social Workers and Social Worker Team Leaders, as necessary.

3 women continued to work or attend third level education until it was necessary to take maternity leave. A high level of funding for one resident to complete her ECDL Computer Course was accessed by Sonas.

Profile of residents: 4 girls were aged between 15 and 17 years. 8 residents were non-Irish citizens; they were from Estonia, Africa, Bangladesh and Poland. Only 4 of these women had been living in Ireland for some years. There were additional issues for non- Irish citizens, including:

- Access to financial support
- Language barriers
- Appropriate legal advice and support
- Forward planning for themselves and their babies

In responding to the needs of those who are not Irish citizens, Sonas networks closely with many other agencies, both statutory and voluntary, enabling the provision of a wide range of supports including translation, advocacy and referral to Legal Aid.

The Centre's accommodation is offered on close liaison with both the Social Worker at the Regional Maternity Hospital, and the Social Worker at the Adoption Section of the appropriate Health Service Executive Area:

- 19 women gave birth to their babies, the other babies are due in early 2008.
- 3 girls initially placed their babies in Foster Care to allow personal space in which to make informed decisions in relation to the future. During this time access with their babies was facilitated at Sonas.



- 5 women moved to the centre's post-natal Altamira Apartments with their babies.
- 10 mothers in all moved to supportive accommodation.
- 2 mothers moved to a high support service following the birth of their babies.

The residents who leave Sonas are always welcomed back to visit with their babies - it is a positive experience for residents to meet with other women who have moved on successfully with their lives. It is also good to be aware of the challenges ahead and the many supports available to those with a young baby. Sonas continues to offer an appropriate outreach support service to former residents. In 2007 Sonas integrated its outreach support programme with that being offered by the Altamira Apartments service. Sonas also works closely with the Community Mother's Programme and the LSSC Crèche.

Highlights of the year

- Increasing the number of part-time workers has greatly reduced the dependence of Sonas on volunteers to provide night and weekend cover. It has also reduced the necessity for regular staff to do additional (unsocial hours) cover.
- Return visits by former residents and their children, some after a number of years.

Work plan for 2008

- One of the main issues emerging in 2007 was the difficulty for some non-Irish citizens in accessing financial entitlements. This issue also applies to members of the European Union. Sonas plans to address the associated issues with the relevant statutory agencies in the year ahead.
- Review and evaluate the service being offered by Sonas.



The LSSC links with many agencies at local, regional and national level. In 2007, these key contacts included:

- HSE West
- Limerick Pastoral Centre
- Government Departments, including the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Department of Education and Science
- POBAL
- The Family Support Agency
- Limerick City Council
- PAUL Partnership
- FÁS
- VTOS
- NCVA
- CURA (regional and national)
- Parish clergy
- Limerick Senior College
- Limerick Youth Service
- Limerick Institute of Technology
- Mary Immaculate College
- Community Welfare Office
- Adapt services
- Barnardos Mid-West
- Centre for the Unemployed
- Local Employment Service
- Mount St. Vincent's Child Care Centre
- Foster Carer's Association
- Local media
- Age and Opportunity (Dublin)
- Credit unions
- MABS (Money Advice and Budgeting Service)
- Victim Support
- Older Women's Network
- Doras Luimní
- Clare Care



The life of the Social Service Centre continues after usual office hours due to the large number of voluntary groups who have access to the Centre. Every evening during the week, between four and six groups hold meetings at the Centre.

30 Community and Voluntary Groups used the Social Service Centre for meetings during 2007. The majority of those were night meetings, with a few meeting in the day.

Voluntary Groups using the LSSC for meetings in 2007:

- Aisiri
- Alcoholics Anonymous Groups
- Al-Anon Group
- Arthritis Foundation of Ireland
- Attention-Deficit Disorder (A.D.D.) Parents Support Group
- Asthma Society
- AWARE (*for sufferers of depression and their families*)
- Bodywhys Groups (*for people with eating disorders and for their relatives and friends*)
- Bruree House (*for people with addiction problems and their families*)
- Cancer Support
- Carer's Support Group
- Coeliac Society
- Debtors Anonymous
- Down Syndrome Association
- Dyslexia Awareness Association
- Gam-Anon
- Inner Wheel
- Irish Countrywoman's Association (I.C.A)
- Irish Foster Carers Association
- Irish Pre-school Play Association (I.P.P.A.)
- Lourdes Pilgrimage
- Maguire Programme (*for people with a stammer*)
- Multiple Sclerosis (M.S.) Ireland
- Narcotics Anonymous
- Older Persons Group
- Overeaters Anonymous
- Parents for Mentally Handicapped
- Parent Support Group
- Schizophrenia Ireland
- Miles (*Men in Limerick Experiencing Separation*)

The Centre also rents out rooms to both voluntary and statutory organisations for services that are in line with LSSC objectives (HSE West Family Therapy training, counselling training, St. Joseph's Community Pre-school etc).



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