



Comhairle Sheirbhís Sóisialta Luimnigh CLG

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Charity No. 19730

Supporting Individuals

Strengthening Families

Empowering Communities



Comhairle Sheirbhís Sóisialta Luimnigh CLG

Annual Report 2024



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Limerick Social Service Council CLG

Our Identity - Who We Are

LIMERICK SOCIAL SERVICE COUNCIL CLG (LSSC) is a leading voluntary service, working in Limerick for over five decades. We pride ourselves on being at the forefront of supporting individuals, families and communities, particularly those who are the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalised.

We employ over 80 staff across our management, programmes, administration and maintenance. We are also supported in our work by a number of volunteers.

Our team is led by our General Manager, Brian Ryan, and overseen by our Board of Directors which is composed of members from diverse professional backgrounds. The Board provides strategic leadership, direction and overall accountability and ensures that our organisation complies with our governing documents and relevant legislation.

We also partner with other organisations to improve outcomes for our service users and their communities.

Our Mission - What We Do

Our mission is to ensure that support is available for people at every stage of the life cycle, and at the moments when it is needed most. We do this by providing a range of timely and effective community-based services across Limerick, which respond to the diverse needs of our communities.

We have a range of programmes and services for babies, children, teens, adults and older people. We work across all races, ethnicities and cultures. We provide supports for those who are experiencing disadvantage or exclusion.

Our services are delivered through the CHILD & FAMILY SERVICE, the EARLY YEARS SERVICES, the COUNSELLING & PSYCHOTHERAPY SERVICE, SERVICES

FOR OLDER PEOPLE, and the TRAVELLER HEALTH PROGRAMME. Services are available at the LSSC Centre in Henry Street, Limerick, at the Southside Child and Family Centre in Galvone and through outreach in a range of locations throughout Limerick City and County.

In addition, we provide a professional and welcoming space at the LSSC Centre in Henry Street for self-help groups and charitable organisations to convene and engage in social care and community work.

Our Core Values

Four core values define the LSSC and guide our actions. These are as follows:



Empathy:

The Foundation of our Approach

We listen actively and approach every interaction with sensitivity to individual experiences. Our support begins with an empathetic understanding of each person's unique challenges and feelings.



Quality:

Collaboration and Improvement

We work with individuals, families, partner organisations, and funders to achieve the best possible outcomes. Through continuous improvement of our practices, we provide effective and professional support that meets their evolving needs.



Inclusion:

Equality and Belonging

We foster an inclusive environment where everyone feels welcomed, valued, and respected, ensuring people from all backgrounds can access our services and feel a sense of belonging and support.



Trust:

Dependable and Reliable

We uphold high standards of accountability, ensuring that our funders and service users feel secure in knowing that we are a trustworthy organisation.



Our Child Safeguarding Statement in Summary

In accordance with the requirements of the Children First Act 2015, the LSSC Child Safeguarding Statement specifies that the services being provided and the principles and procedures to be observed will ensure, as far as practicable, that a child availing of our services is safe from harm.

At the centre of service delivery within LSSC is the promotion of the general welfare, health, development and safety of children. Our organisation is committed to upholding the rights of every child and young person who attends our services, including the rights to be kept safe, listened to and heard.

These guiding principles apply to everyone in the organisation and all staff must conduct themselves in a way that reflects the child-centred principles of LSSC.



Strategic Plan 2025-2029

Through our strategic planning process 2025-2029, we have developed three core strategic goals for the LSSC for the coming years. These are: Expand, Enhance, Engage. Through this strategic plan we aim to

- Expand access to services;
- Enhance how we tell the story of our work and impact; and
- Engage in more strategic and meaningful ways with our teams, our partners, our communities, and our service users so that we can maximise our impact in Limerick.



Limerick - A Changing Population

According to the 2022 Census:

209,536

The population of Limerick City and County was 209,536 and shows an increase of over 10,000 since 2016

5.2

The population change showed an average natural increase of 5.2 persons per 1,000 of population per year between 2016 and 2022.

This increase is in line with the growth in the national population for the same period.

2,341

There were 2,341 births registered in 2022. The average age of mothers giving birth was 31 years and 37 babies were born to mothers under 20 years of age.

44.7%

were births to mothers outside of marriage.

9

Infant mortality was 9 deaths.

39.3

The average age of the population was 39.3 years, up from 37.7 years in 2016.

47,560

Children and young people under 18 years comprised 47,560 or 23.7% of the overall population.

6 33,588

persons aged 65 years and older or 16% of the overall population lived in Limerick. This was a 23% increase on data from the 2016 Census.

1,597

There were 1,597 deaths registered, with cancer being the cause in 469 deaths.

27

suicides were reported for Limerick. The suicide rate was 20.1 for Limerick City and 10.5 for Limerick County – the rate was 8.1 nationally.

90,623

people were employed which relates to 13,438 additional people (+17%) at work since 2016; 27% of the workforce worked from home at least one day a week.

104,452
105,084

The population was divided between 104,452 males and 105,084 females.

1%

White Irish Traveller comprised 1% of the overall population.

68%

Dual Irish citizenship increased by 68% from 3,258 to 5,487; non-Irish citizens accounted for 11% of the population.

Statement by the Chair of the Board of Directors



As the Chair of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the Annual Report of the Limerick Social Services Council (LSSC) for 2024.

In 2024, we witnessed both challenges and opportunities that stretched resources and tested the organisation's capacity. Nevertheless, amid evolving societal needs, the LSSC remained firmly committed to providing timely support to those who needed it most. By staying closely connected to the individuals and communities we serve, the LSSC was able to achieve meaningful and positive outcomes.

The success of any agency is not possible without the dedication of staff, volunteers, and partners. For the LSSC in 2024, this is particularly noteworthy. The tireless work of teams on the ground and behind the scenes created meaningful and tangible change where it really mattered. I would also like to express my deep gratitude to my fellow Board members, who have provided invaluable leadership, oversight, and guidance throughout the year.

One of our key achievements in 2024 was the development of our new Strategic Plan based on an extensive strategic planning process. This strategy is of great significance as it will guide the LSSC into the future as we work with increased clarity of purpose and a shared commitment to our values. It will intensify our commitment to empowering our service users, strengthening our organisation, and uplifting the communities we serve.

As we look ahead to 2025, the LSSC is poised to enter the future with renewed purpose. Going forward, this Strategic Plan will underpin every decision we make, every partnership we form, and every action we take. In addition, with the commitment and collective effort of our teams, our Board, and our partner agencies, I am confident that the LSSC will continue to achieve even more significant progress in the years to come.

Mise le meas,
Kevin O'Farrell
Chair Board of Directors



Message from the General Manager



2024 was an important year for the LSSC. It was a year of both growth and transformation. We continued to deliver core services throughout Limerick while closely reviewing the changing demographics of communities and the needs of people we serve.

This report provides an overview of key achievements by our various teams who worked so effectively to deliver services, improving the quality of support we provide, and ensuring that our work is inclusive and accessible to those who need it most. Some of the key achievements for the LSSC during 2024 include the following:

- **The Child and Family Service (CFS)** continued to provide one-to-one targeted support, home-visiting and groupwork programmes in the city and county. 225 families availed of almost 1,700 one-to-one support sessions, over 70 parents completed groupwork programmes and 111 attended a range of different workshops. The CFS also responded to enquiries from over 600 individuals and families who contacted the service for general information and who were signposted to other relevant services.
- **The Early Years Services (EYS)** operated at full capacity offering services to 124 children at Henry Street and at the Southside Child and Family Centre. Children came from a range of backgrounds and countries. The schedule of activities was devised to meet the core developmental needs of the children through child-led play and learning. Services ensured children enjoyed healthy meals and snacks, along with the promotion of hygiene, physical activity, and overall wellbeing.
- **The Counselling and Psychotherapy Service** arranged 2,428 sessions in response to referrals for 316 adults and young people. The Service provided vital support for individuals facing emotional, psychological, and social challenges. By addressing issues early, the Service plays a preventative role, reducing the likelihood of more serious mental health difficulties and the need for crisis intervention at a later stage.
- **The Services for Older Persons** were designed to support senior citizens to live independently within their own homes. In 2024, staff in the St. Mary's, Corbally and Southside areas of Limerick City played a crucial role in connecting with and empowering older people to build self-confidence and access relevant services. Through the provision of tailored support, the service is acknowledged as contributing significantly to improving the quality of life for many older adults, enabling them to navigate the challenges of aging while maintaining their independence and strengthening social connections.

- By continuously assessing and understanding the needs of the populations we serve, the LSSC is better positioned to allocate resources effectively and deliver impactful services. In 2024, as part of a strategic planning cycle, we completed a comprehensive Community Needs Assessment. The findings from this initiative served as a foundation for the development of our new Strategy for the next five years. We recognise that the needs of the people we serve continue to evolve and we are committed to staying agile and responsive to those needs. Of real importance, the new Strategy will support more proactive decision-making and adaptability in the face of changing circumstances, ensuring the LSSC remains resilient and responsive to those who need us most. The Strategy is thus widely welcomed as it will enable our teams to better prioritise service areas, align organisational goals with identified needs, and allocate resources more effectively. We envisage that this new strategic framework will also enhance our transparency and credibility with our funders, partners, and our communities.

Conclusion

It is with pride that I present the 2024 Annual Report, highlighting the meaningful impact of LSSC's work across Limerick. This year's achievements reflect the strength of our services and the dedication of our teams, who have remained responsive, adaptable, and committed to meeting the evolving needs of our communities.

Thanks to their efforts and the vital support of our funders and partners, we have continued to deliver services that create real, lasting change for individuals, families and communities. I am deeply grateful for this collective commitment, which remains at the heart of the LSSC mission. My appreciation also goes to the LSSC Board, under the leadership of Chair Kevin O'Farrell, for their ongoing guidance, governance, and strategic oversight.

Reflecting on the achievements and challenges of 2024, I am proud to be part of LSSC and the values it upholds. Our work is grounded in a deep commitment to the dignity of every individual and the belief that with the right support and opportunities, individuals and families can thrive. As we look to the future, we aim to broaden access to vital services, tell the story of our impact more powerfully, and deepen connections with our teams, partners, and community—so together, we can build a stronger, more inclusive Limerick.

Brian Ryan
LSSC General Manager



International Womens Day



Summer in the park time



Buggy Walk to Moyross Library



Highlights from Services in 2024



The Child & Family Service (CFS)

The Child and Family Service (CFS) works in partnership with families to support them to improve relationships and to address concerns with the goal of meeting agreed outcomes for their children and themselves. Building positive relationships, both within families and between CFS staff and families, is at the core of our work. The CFS team works with great care to ensure that the people who avail of our service feel secure and valued in their work with us.

The Service provides support to parents and children from the ante-natal stage through to 18 years of age, serving families from all areas of Limerick City and County. While some may require only short-term assistance, others may engage with the Service over an extended period.

Where possible, services are designed in accordance with individual preferences. For example, some families value the social interaction offered through group work, while others may prefer one-to-one engagement with CFS staff. Accordingly, support is tailored to meet the specific needs of each individual and may be delivered through home visits, centre-based sessions, phone contacts, or targeted group interventions and workshops.

The range of programmes within the CFS are as follows:

The Community Social Work and Family Support Service

The Community Social Work and Family Support Service comprises professionally qualified social workers and family support workers who assist families in addressing a wide range of challenges. These may include poverty, inadequate housing, high-conflict separations, educational difficulties, domestic violence, addiction, trauma-related issues, or breakdowns in family communication. Staff maintain active caseloads and collaborate closely with both internal LSSC services and external agencies to support parents, carers, and children.

The Community Social Workers also act as LSSC's Designated Liaison Person and Deputy Designated Liaison Person, and, in this role, they provide support across the organisation in ensuring that all staff understand their role under Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children and that all LSSC services work together to ensure the safety of children.

Teen Parent Support Programme

[Young Parent Support Programme since Nov 2024]

The Teen Parent Support Programme (TPSP) Limerick is part of the National Programme and provides a support service for young mothers, fathers and their families from pregnancy through the first 1000 days of the child's life. In November 2024, the TPSP was relaunched as the Young Parent Support Programme (YPSP).

The YPSP offers support, information and advocacy in all areas of a young parent's life including health, relationships, parenting, child care, social welfare entitlements, education, training and other issues which the mother or father is concerned. Financial and non-financial assistance and other supports are provided through groupwork and one-to-one meetings in home visits and centre-based work. This support is designed to help young parents stay in education, begin or return to work, while also strengthening their parenting skills and fostering personal development.

Community Mothers Programme

[Community Families Programme since 2024]

The Community Mothers Programme is a home visiting service for families with new babies and young children and aims to support positive parent/child relationships. The Programme was relaunched nationally as the Community Families Programme in October 2024. Programme visits are arranged during the early years of a child's life (generally up to the age of three) and parents are offered non-directive information on parenting, child development and local services and supports. The Programme offers a variety of group supports and facilitates Parent and Baby/Toddler Groups, weaning workshops, baby massage and baby reflexology programmes, the Incredible Years Programmes and the Peep Ante-Natal and Post Natal Programmes. The Programme supports building friendships and connections within a family's local area.

The Relationships and Sexual Health Programme

The Relationships and Sexual Health Programme (RSHP) aims to increase parental capacity to communicate with their children regarding relationships and sexual health through one to one and group supports. The Programme also provides a range of programmes to young people, based on "The Real U Programme", to provide them with the skills and knowledge to make positive choices and engage in healthy relationships. In line with the National Sexual Health Strategy, the programme works intensively with people from migrant backgrounds, young people with intellectual disabilities and young parents.

Family Advocacy Service

The Family Advocacy Service is a confidential and independent service for parents who have children either in care or in the process of being taken into the care of Tusla. The Service offers support to parents to continue positive involvement with their children while they are in care and assists them to participate in Child in Care reviews and child protection case conferences. The Family Advocacy Service provides one-to-one and group support through a weekly support group for parents.



Meitheal and the LSSC

Meitheal is a National Practice Model to ensure that the needs and strengths of children and their families are effectively identified and understood and responded to in a timely way so that children and families get the help and support needed to improve children's outcomes and realise their rights.... Meitheal is an early intervention, multi-agency (when necessary) response tailored to the needs of an individual child or young person.

Tusla developed the Meitheal approach to support children who require assistance from multiple services. Meitheal is a case coordination process designed for families with additional needs that do not meet the threshold for referral to the Social Work Department under Children First. Practitioners from various agencies, including the LSSC, can initiate and lead a Meitheal, facilitating more effective collaboration and communication among services. Within the LSSC Child and Family Service, the Team has been actively using the Meitheal approach to support families for a number of years. They have found that the strength of Meitheal as a process lies in its ability to bring together diverse expertise, knowledge, and skills to better address the unique needs of the child and family within their community.

CFS Activities and Developments in 2024

In 2024, the CFS delivered a broad range of intensive, family-centred services, responding to sustained high referral volumes from Tusla, HSE, voluntary agencies, schools, and self-referrals. This work was available through home visits, centre-based sessions, and group programmes, with a strong emphasis on Meitheal as a key model for improving family outcomes.

In 2024, the CFS in collaboration with leading academics Dr. Brid Featherstone and Dr. Kate Morris, made substantial progress in developing the new **Family Support Model**. This model is a values-led model of practice, aligned with the forthcoming LSSC Strategic Plan and Values in Action initiative and will guide service delivery into the future with a shared ethos across the LSSC.

A further milestone for the CFS was the national launch of **the Community Families Programme (CFP)** in October 2024. Developed over a seven-year period, CFP reflects best practices in early intervention and peer support. The LSSC Team played a significant role in the programme's promotion, by producing a video that highlighted the programme, for the national launch. With further support from Tusla, the programme has now extended its reach into Rathkeale and Askeaton, enabling more families to benefit from this model of informal, community-based care.

The **Teen Parent Support Programme (TPSP)** also underwent a national strategic relaunch under the new name: **Young Parent Support Programme**—a change designed to reflect a broader and more inclusive understanding of the needs of young parents. Marking its 25th year, the programme was celebrated through a national event that featured contributions from LSSC staff and two participating parents. Additional funding was secured for a new project worker, further strengthening the Team's capacity to engage young parents and their families. The Team also continued to run two 10-week City Slicker Programmes in the course of 2024.

Within the **Community Social Work and Family Support Service**, 2024 saw the appointment of three new Family Support Workers. This increased the Team's capacity to respond to referrals and allowed for a fuller integration of Meitheal within routine practice.

Collaboration between the Family Support Service in the CFC and the CFC Early Years Service continued to thrive, supported by joint service planning, a wrap-around approach to support, and the addition of a **Creative Therapist**. This new role, focused on early years intervention, is already demonstrating encouraging outcomes in its pilot phase.

The CFS continued to progress evidence-based interventions, notably through the **Parents Under Pressure (PuP)** programme with five staff members being trained toward full accreditation. PuP is aimed to support families where parental substance misuse or mental health challenges are present.

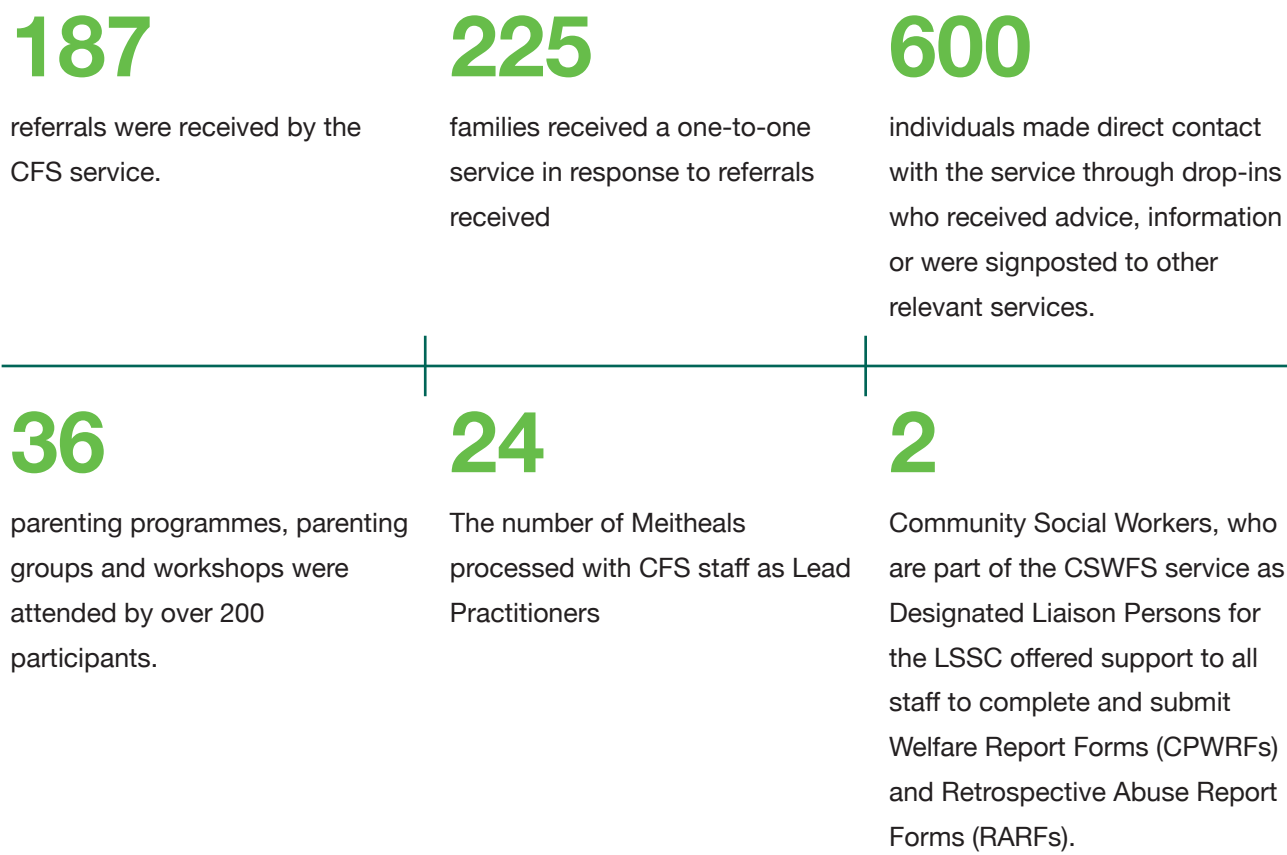
Group-based work remained central to service delivery despite some post-pandemic challenges in engagement and recruitment. A wide variety of parenting supports were delivered including parent and toddler groups, parent support groups, baby massage, child-led play sessions, breastfeeding support, parenting skills groups, and seasonal events in public spaces. Outdoor-based activities including the innovative "Forest Fridays," continued to gain momentum as part of the strategy to engage families in accessible, health-promoting environments.

The **Relationship and Sexual Health Programmes (RSHP)** delivered a range of activities through one-to-one support, group work, staff training, and interagency collaboration. One-to-one support was offered through 400 sessions in response to 42 referrals. Age-appropriate support was provided to young people using the Real U Programme and group initiatives like the International Women's Group and Friday Wellness Group focused on sexual health, cultural integration, and parenting issues. The workshops delivered to the community health workers of the Traveller Health Programme addressed topics covering Menopause, Contraception and STI Awareness. Despite cultural and language challenges, participation grew, fostering open discussions in promoting healthy relationships, cultural integration, and sexual health awareness.

The **Family Advocacy Service** continued to provide a valuable service to parents of children in care and worked intensively with parents to support them in their engagements with Tusla and other services. The Service responded to 5 new referrals and offered services to 11 families involving 61 sessions.

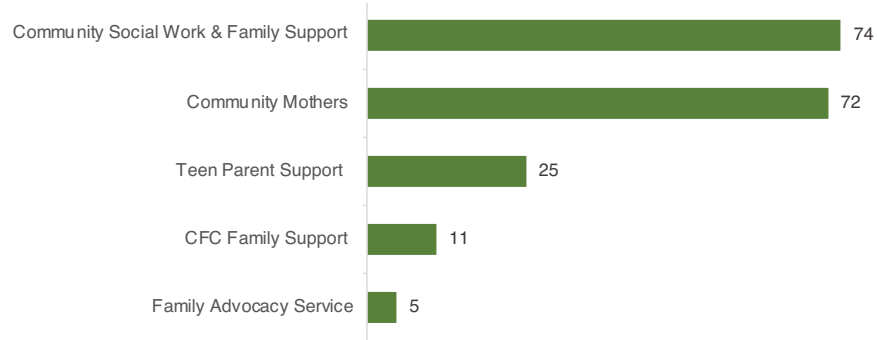
In addition to core service delivery, the CFS played an active role in community events and national dialogue. Easter and Christmas celebrations, CFC graduations, and participation in festivals and national conferences helped to maintain strong CFS community visibility and connection. Staff contributed to panel discussions and presentations, sharing insights and advocating for policies that reflect the lived realities of the families that the LSSC support.

A summary of CFS 2024 activities in numbers are outlined below:



- 187 referrals were received by the CFS service. The highest percentages of referrals were made to the Community Social Work and Family Support Service (40%), followed by the Community Mothers Programme (38%), the Teen Parent Support Programme (13%), the CFC Family Support (6%) and the Family Advocacy Service (3%).
- 225 families received a one-to-one service in response to referrals received, of which 33% of families were supported through the Community Social Work and Family Support Service, 32% were supported through the Community Mothers Programme, 23% were supported through the TPSP, 7% through the CFC Family Support Service and 5% through the Family Advocacy Service.
- Over 600 individuals made direct contact with the service through drop-ins who received advice, information or were signposted to other relevant services.
- 36 parenting programmes, parenting groups and workshops were attended by over 200 participants.
- The number of Meitheals processed with CFS staff as Lead Practitioners was 24.
- Two Community Social Workers, who are part of the CSWFS service as Designated Liaison Persons for the LSSC offered support to all staff to complete and submit Welfare Report Forms (CPWRFs) and Retrospective Abuse Report Forms (RARFs).

Fig. 1 Numbers of Referrals to the CFS Services in 2024*



*Note: Data between services are not comparable as some programmes have different levels of staffing.

Fig. 2 Numbers of Families/Individuals Receiving a One-to-One Service from the CFS Services in 2024

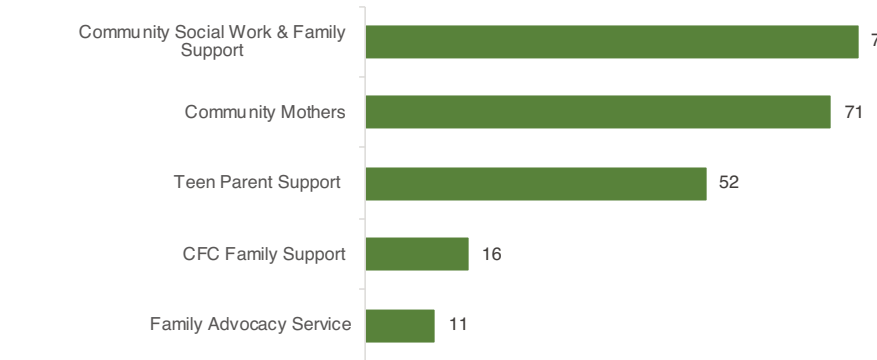


Fig. 3 One-to-One Sessions by CFS Services in 2024

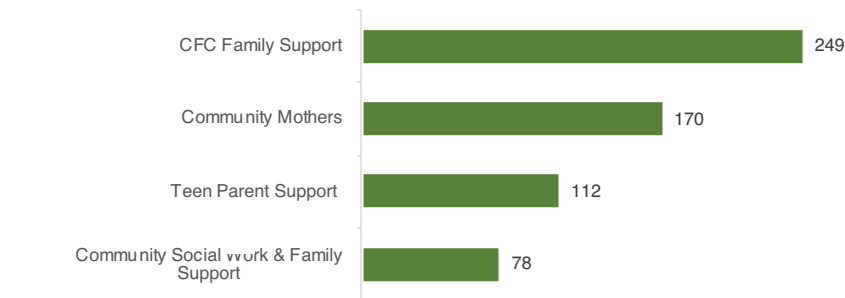


Fig. 4 Number of Professional Contacts in 2024

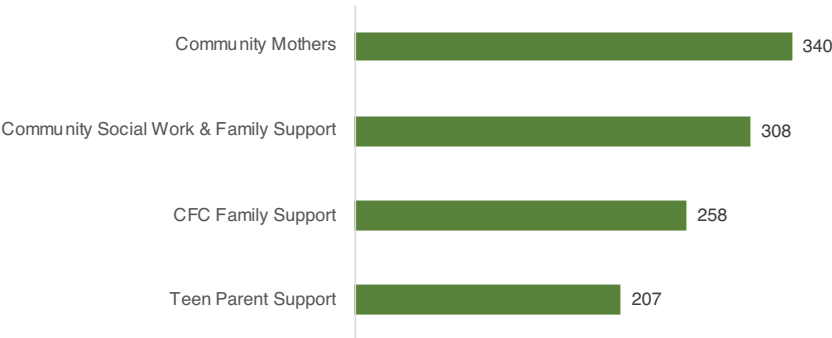


Fig. 5 Parenting Programmes, Groupwork & Workshops in 2024

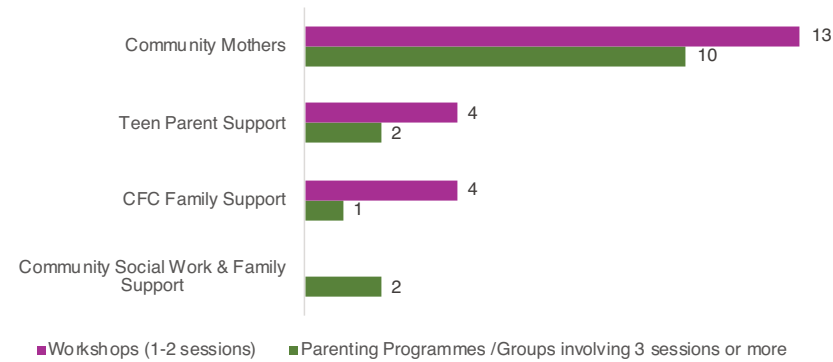


Fig. 6 Parents Attending Programmes, Groupwork & Workshops in 2024

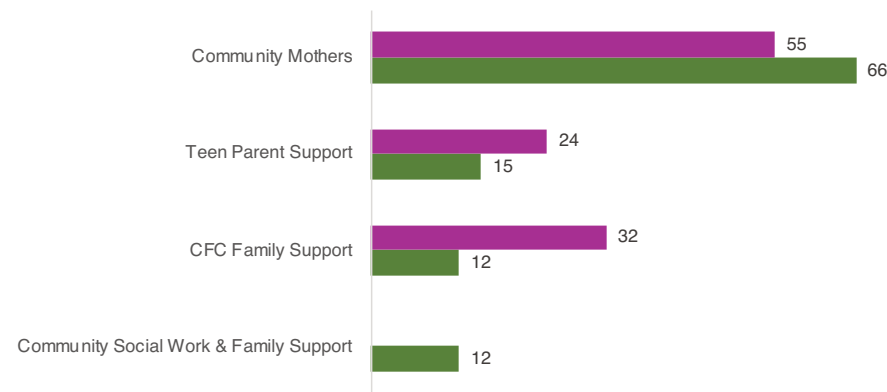
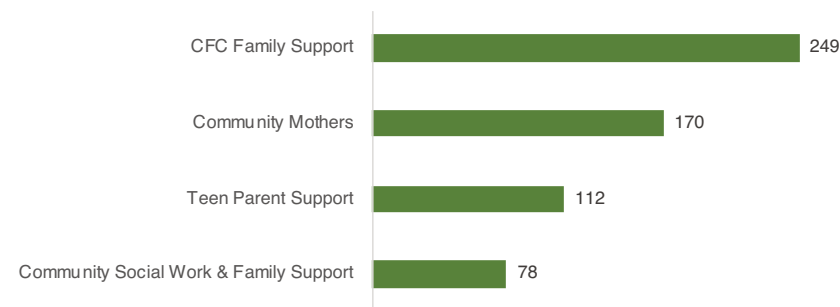


Fig. 7 Number of Drop-Ins/ Signposting in 2024



In addition to the above activities, a number of services developments are also noteworthy:

Staff Training & Professional Development

CFS staff engaged in a wide range of training to strengthen service delivery. All staff completed *Children First* and enhanced safeguarding training. Additional upskilling included PuP Practitioner Training (5 staff), Baby Massage (1 staff), PEEP (2 staff), Meitheal (5 staff), and ADAPT Domestic Abuse Training (4 staff). Training in relationship and parenting programmes included Real U (2 staff), Parents Plus Children’s (3 staff), and Parents Plus Adolescent (2 staff).

Staff also participated in key events such as the CYPSC conference on school refusal (4 staff), Tusla’s Trauma-Informed Practice conference (3 staff), and ADAPT’s seminar on coercive control (6 staff). One staff member became a Tusla Parenting Support Champion.

Interagency Work

The CFS Team actively participated in a wide range of inter-agency groups and networks, including multiple CFSNs, International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS) Network, Parenting Limerick, and the Infant Mental Health Network. LSSC regularly partnered with agencies such as Tusla, HSE, Limerick Childcare Committee, and ABC Start Right to deliver programmes. Additional partnerships included CAMHS, ISPC, Focus Ireland, and others. A collaboration with Coolmine has strengthened one-to-one parenting work through the PuP Programme.



Some Feedback from Service Users

“ Meeting with you was really beneficial. Just to talk to someone, to help me see the forest from the trees. I had been lost a bit with all the pressure. You have pointed me in the right direction for support and that's really great. Thank you for everything.”

“ Thanks so much for everything, all the support and talks and always on the other side for me. I'll be for ever grateful because of you.”

Parents participating in the Community Social Work and Family Support Service

“ I'm delighted to be able to say that working with my Community Mother and the service provided by the community outreach staff has really made a huge positive impact on my life over the past year. Coming out of Covid with two small children has been really challenging and knowing that I have the warm and knowledgeable support of my Community Mother has provided me with a sense of security and confidence navigating a difficult time. I am very grateful for all the practical advice and emotional support the service has offered. It has made a real difference to me and my family”.

Parent participating in Community Families Service (formerly Community Mothers)

“ When I first joined Community Mums/TPSP, I was just after having my first child and felt lost. Through chats, walks in the park and advice, they helped me find my way. Through workshops, programmes, I felt like part of the community. They helped me greatly with career guidance and helped me place my child in crèche. Due to this, I was able to go back to education. They also financially helped, which made it easier to stay in education as there were times where I was just scraping by. They have been very supportive with my children's assessments and have been a kind, listening ear. I am so grateful for their service and highly recommend them to every mother I know”.

Parent participating in Community Families Service (formerly Community Mothers), Young Parents Support Programme (formerly Teen Parent Support Programme), Southside Child & Family Centre

The Early Years' Services at Henry Street / Child & Family Centre Southside

The LSSC Early Years' Service (EYS) at **Henry Street**, Limerick is long acknowledged as one of the leading community Crèches and Pre-school services in Limerick City. It operates from a purpose-built facility in Henry Street, which 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 Centre gained Validation in Siolta Standards, which is the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education.

The second EYS operates from the **Child and Family Centre (CFC)** which is located at the Southside Education Campus in Galvone, Limerick City. The CFC is a state-of-the-art campus providing integrated and accessible service provision for children. Of great benefit for families is that the EYS and other support services are located on this shared campus with two primary schools, Le Chéile N.S, and Gaelscoil Sheoirse Clancy. This location means that it is easier for many parents and carers to drop off and collect children and their siblings at the EYS and at the primary schools at the same time.

Both Early Years' services at Henry Street and at the Southside Campus provide quality care for babies and young children, offering full day Crèche services and Pre-School services five days a week. The EYS Teams comprise 40 professionally qualified childcare staff, many who are trained with specific aspects of early childhood education and development. A number of staff have achieved or are studying towards their Masters /post-graduate level of qualifications. Staff are from a range of cultures.

Through their service delivery model and the supportive culture established by EYS staff, both services are recognised not only for providing high-quality child care but also for effectively fostering peer support among families. This support plays a vital role in reducing isolation, especially for marginalised groups such as lone parents, migrant families, and members of the Traveller Community.

Activities and Developments in 2024

Attendance

Both EYS services operated full day care, five days a week at full capacity during 2024 with 124 children availing of services. 59 children were enrolled at the Henry Street EYS and 65 children attended services at the Southside EYS.

A waiting list was also maintained for children who wished to use the service. Children with additional needs attended services with the assistance of Aims support workers. Children came from the local areas and from a range of backgrounds including from the Traveller community and from countries across the globe.

Fig. 8 Children Attending EYS in 2024

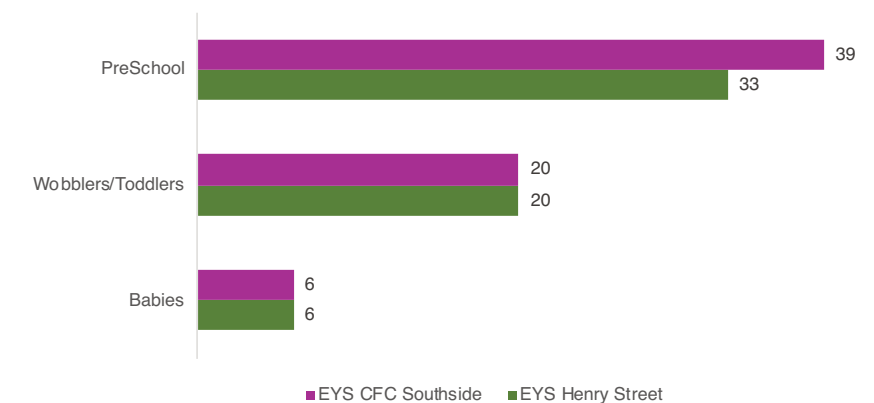
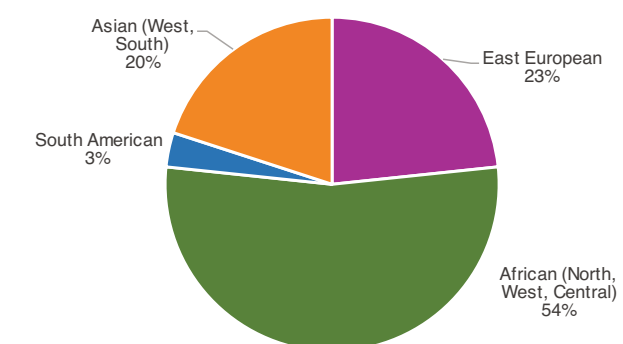


Fig. 9 Children from Non-Irish Populations Attending EYS Services in 2024



Programme of Care

Wraparound services were available to varying degrees from both EYS locations and offered significant benefits for children at the EYS and their families who need additional support. Having wraparound services in proximity to the EYS means that families and children can access multiple services in one familiar location thereby reducing the need for travel to other agencies. This has enabled more timely access to allied services and to the range of other LSSC services including the Child & Family Services, the LSSC Psychology & Counselling service, etc. At both locations, parents have also availed of parenting programmes and a range of support groups that empowered parents to build confidence and develop parenting skills.

At the EYS, **outdoor play** areas are seen to provide a dynamic environment that nurtures the physical health, emotional well-being, social skills, and cognitive growth of all children. During 2024, the outdoor area was further upgraded to enhance the range of outside activities and staff promoted frequent outdoor play whenever possible.

Linked with **ABC Start Right**, the EYS Teams devised a range of programmes such as Healthy Eating for Toddlers, Bringing Stories to life, dental hygiene and bedtime routines, etc. Programmes centred on social and problem-solving skills to strengthen children's social, emotional, and academic competencies such as understanding and communicating feelings, using effective problem-solving strategies, managing anger, and conversational skills.

The EYS recognise how **play** provides children with a valuable opportunity to explore and develop a range of skills and experiences. Through play, children begin to form a sense of identity while gaining an understanding that others may think, feel, or behave differently from themselves. It also serves as a foundation for building essential relationship skills, including trust, respect, empathy, sharing, and cooperation. In line with EYS's commitment to addressing the individual needs of all children, **Play Therapy** was implemented as a targeted intervention to help children, particularly those with identified additional needs, develop play skills and engage in therapeutic play. A qualified Play Therapist was available to deliver both small group and individual sessions as requested by parents.

The EYS also acknowledges how **Music Therapy** can offer a variety of developmental, emotional, and social benefits for preschool-aged children. At this critical stage of early childhood,

music can be an especially powerful therapeutic tool because it engages children in a fun and accessible way while supporting key areas of growth. **Music Therapy** sessions at the EYS were tailored to meet the needs of children with additional needs such as speech delays, sensory integration issues, and developmental delays. Staff have found that children who may be withdrawn or non-verbal often responded positively to music, making it a bridge for connection and learning. A qualified Music Therapist works with the EYS with groups of children three days a week and with individual children for one-to-one therapy sessions.

Of particular benefit for children are opportunities for relaxation in the **Sensory Rooms**. The sensory space is viewed as important for many children as it provides a place to retreat and reset when overwhelmed. Staff continued to report benefits for the children that availed of this space which included a decrease in levels of anxiety, distress, agitation, and physiological stress. They also reported increased levels of self-esteem and confidence in the children, and increased engagement when children returned to the wider group.

In promoting early literacy development, the EYS recognises that children's exposure to books supports language skills, vocabulary growth, and early reading readiness. During the year, the EYS opened a library for the children and parents. By allowing parents to access the library, the EYS supports home-school links by encouraging parents to actively participate in their child's learning journey.

Activities

In addition to daily routines, extra activities were arranged for the children at the EYS Centres. For example, children expressed considerable enjoyment with the **Rufus** programme, which helps children learn good handwashing habits in a fun way. On **Beep Beep Day**, as part of national Road Safety Week, the children practiced basic road safety skills with songs, games and activities. In collaboration with ABC Start Right, **Bringing Stories to Life** was used as a fun interactive circle of storytelling and rhyme, designed as an entertaining way to teach young children communication skills. As part of the **Lifelong Learning Festival**, a mobile farm was organised for the children and their families for a fun-filled day with the animals. Various activities were also hosted on the day by the Community Families programme.

A **family fun day** out for the children and parents was arranged to the Sean Choill sports complex with various activities including sport, play and a communal picnic.

A specific month in the calendar was allocated to **“All about me”**, when adults and children shared information and stories about each other’s cultures, families and their traditions.

While Christmas, St Patrick’s Day, Easter and Halloween were celebrated throughout the year with a range of colourful activities, the EYS also sought to reflect and respect the wide range of traditions of children attending the services.

**Staff
Training &
Professional
Development**

EYS teams continued to ensure their training and professional development was maintained and updated. Staff training and development included Children First, First Aid training, Occupational Therapy, and the Circle of Security Parenting programme. Two staff commenced the Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years (LINC) programme, and three staff members were supported through 3rd level degrees.



Some Feedback from Service Users

“ My Child has improved so much since attending LSSC regarding his Speech and Language”

“ It was difficult for my child at the start mixing with other children, but the staff were so kind and patient, I never thought he would settle but he now loves the time there.”

“ My child is thriving in the routine and is eating and sleeping better since he started at the creche.”

Parents of children attending the EYS Henry Street

“ The pre-school is a great stepping-stone for school.”

“ I am so glad I picked the CFC to put my child into. I couldn’t imagine a more supportive place with so many fun events indoors and outdoors.”

“No suggestions on improvements. They are brilliant and so incredible with the children; my child is so comfortable coming in here and absolutely loves the staff. This place is beyond everything I could ask for.”

Parents of children attending the Southside EYS

“I completed my internship at LSSC Early Years' Service. It was an unforgettable and enriching experience that brought me a lot both professionally and personally. I was warmly welcomed by the team and immediately felt comfortable and integrated in the work. The way of working differs from that in my country, I was particularly impressed by the playful and creative approach to early childhood education. The children are encouraged to contribute their own ideas and interests, which makes learning very individual. Overall, the internship was an inspiring time.”

Feedback from one of the students on placement during 2024

Traveller Health Programme

The Traveller Community in Ireland

From the Census of Population 2022, there were 32,949 White Irish Travellers usually resident in Ireland, an increase of 6% from 30,987 in the 2016 census. Six out of 1,000 people in the State were Irish Travellers which equates to approximately 0.65% of the total population. Looking at the overall population in Ireland, 15% were aged 65 years and over compared with just 5% of Irish Travellers. Within Limerick City and suburbs, data showed that the percentage of White Irish Traveller amounted to 1%.

Travellers are recognised as having a distinct culture in Ireland; however, they frequently report experiencing discrimination and often live on the margins of society. This marginalisation contributes to significant health inequalities. According to the All-Ireland Traveller Health Study (2010), life expectancy for Traveller men is 15.1 years shorter, and for Traveller women 11.5 years shorter, than the general population. Furthermore, the rate of death by suicide among Traveller men is six times higher than the national average.

The Limerick City Traveller Health Programme

As part of its commitment to tackling marginalisation and disadvantage in Limerick, the LSSC recognised that many Travellers—similar to those in other regions of Ireland—experience poverty and exist as one of the most marginalised communities with reports highlighting significant health disparities, including elevated mortality rates and reduced life expectancy.

The Limerick City Traveller Health Programme (LCTHP) was established in response to findings from the *All-Ireland Traveller Health Study* (2010), with the overarching aim of to improve the health status of Travellers in Limerick City.

Now in its 12th year, the Programme, which is funded by the HSE and hosted by the LSSC, continues to play a vital role in supporting the health and wellbeing of 150 Traveller families across Limerick City. At its heart is a commitment to improving health outcomes by increasing awareness of physical and mental health, and by making healthcare services more accessible and inclusive.

A cornerstone of the programme is its peer-led approach. Eight trained Community Health Workers from the Traveller community, deliver culturally appropriate, evidence-based health education and outreach.

Activities and Developments in 2024

National Traveller Health Action Plan (2022-2027)

- In line with the National Traveller Health Action Plan (2022-2027), the Programme continued to focus on three key goals:
- Enhancing health knowledge and awareness of available services
 - Encouraging healthier behaviours and lifestyles
 - Breaking down barriers to healthcare access

2024 saw measurable progress as more Travellers engaged in national screening programmes, reported healthier eating habits, participated in regular physical activity, and felt more comfortable discussing both physical and mental health challenges with the appropriate health services.

Community Activities

Key campaigns in 2024 included Road to Hope and Change (mental health awareness), heart health awareness, diabetes awareness, sexual orientation and gender diversity (in collaboration with GOSHH), oral health promotion, lung and skin cancer education, dementia awareness, men’s health, and domestic abuse support (in partnership with ADAPT House).

Inter-agency Collaboration

Collaboration remained central to the programme’s success. In 2024, partnerships with Limerick City and County Council, the HSE, and various regional and national agencies were strengthened. The Team co-developed and distributed a range of co-created health resources in partnership with HSE Health Promotion, HSE Disability Services, and the Mid-West Regional Drug and Alcohol Forum.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation continued to inform programme development. Through surveys, baseline data collection, and active involvement in national research—such as the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) study with IPSOS and Pavee Point.

Staff Training & Professional Development

The Team proved high levels of commitment to the Programme and to continuing to work collaboratively with LSSC, enhancing their skills through continuous professional development, and ensuring the delivery of services at the highest standards possible.



Some Feedback from Service Users

“I told the Traveller health worker that my mental health was bad after I lost someone in my family and she was able to get me counselling, which really helped me.”

Adult supported by the Traveller Health Programme and Counselling and Psychotherapy Service



“In 2022 I took part in the Traveller Wellbeing through Creativity project through the Limerick City Traveller Health Programme. The art was exhibited in the Belltable and also in City Hall. I spoke at both events about my experience as a participant. This gave me a lot of confidence and after it was over I took part in a carer’s support Level 7 training programme. After that, I felt confident enough to apply for a job with the Limerick City Traveller Health Programme. I got the job and I have been there for a year now, and I have taken part in loads of events and training workshops. This gave me an appetite for more learning and now I am doing a Diploma course (CWEELL) with the University of Limerick in community development. I would never have done all this if it hadn’t been for taking part in a Traveller Health Programme initiative. It has all had a really positive effect on my mental health. I am learning all the time. I am proud of myself and want to be a role model for my kids and other Travellers to see that there is more out there”.

Traveller woman who engaged with the Limerick City Traveller Health Programme

Counselling and Psychotherapy Service

World Health Organisation 2022

Mental health is an integral part of our general health and well-being and a basic human right. Everyone, whoever and wherever they are, has a deserving and inherent right to the highest attainable standard of mental health.

Counselling and Psychotherapy Service

The aim of the Counselling and Psychotherapy Service is to provide a professional, accessible service to adults and young people who may be struggling with personal, emotional or mental health difficulties. The Service works with clients so that they can understand the root causes of challenging circumstances, manage difficult situations and distress, develop positive, healthy coping mechanisms and live happier lives. The Team ensures that clients are supported in a confidential, safe, compassionate and non-judgmental environment.

The Service is available to individuals in Limerick City and County with sessions offered in the LSSC main centre at Upper Henry Street, Limerick City, in The Child and Family Centre, Southside Campus, Limerick City, and at locations in Newcastle West and Kilmallock.

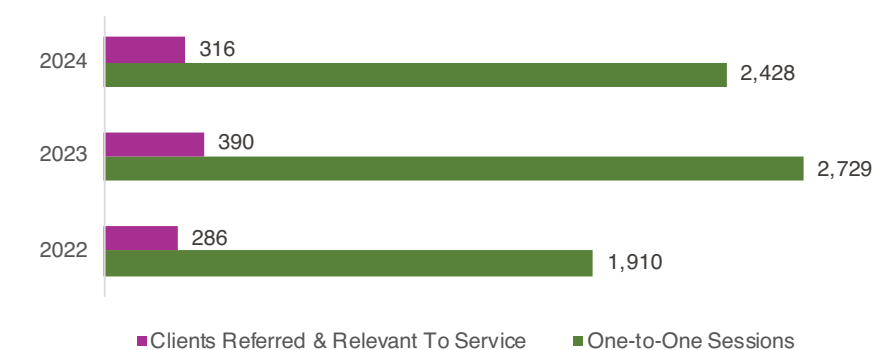
Referral pathways to access the Service are through Tusla, the Child and Family Agency and through the HSE.

LSSC's Counselling and Psychotherapy Service is a member of the Association for Agency-based Counselling and Psychotherapy in Ireland (AACPI). All staff undergo stringent pre-employment assessments to ensure that each staff member is professionally qualified and eligible for accreditation with the Irish Council for Psychotherapy (ICP). Staff are also required to undertake regular professional supervision of their practice, which ensures that staff continue to work to the highest professional standards.

Activities and Developments in 2024

A summary of the Service's activities and developments in 2024 are as follows:

Fig. 10 Number of Clients Referred & Availing of One-to-One Sessions in 2022 – 2024



Services for Adults & Adolescents

The number of referrals suitable for service was 316 clients and 2,428 one-to-one sessions were delivered. Both were increases on 2022 data as outlined in the above figure. In addition, the Service responded to individuals (Drop-in contacts) who called to the Service for information or for signposting to other relevant services.

People attending the Service commonly presented with a range of issues such as: anxiety, stress, depression, trauma and PTSD; relationship and family issues including conflict, communication problems, separation, and attachment concerns; sexual violence and childhood sexual abuse; grief, loss and bereavement; neurodevelopmental issues, low self-esteem, and identity concerns; substance and alcohol mis-use and behavioural addictions. Additionally, clients sought support for self-harm, suicidal thoughts, and challenges adjusting to major life changes. A significant increase in referrals involving domestic abuse and coercive control was reported. An increase in young adults presenting with underlying eating disorders and disordered eating was also noted.

Many individuals presented with multiple, overlapping concerns requiring a holistic and tailored therapeutic approach.

The provision of services for both adults and young people continued to be delivered in Limerick City at the Southside CFC, LSSC Henry Street sites, at Our Lady of Lourdes Community Centre, Ballinacurra Weston and in Limerick County in Kilmallock and Newcastle West.

Clinical Supervision

The internal Clinical Supervisor provided regular supervision to staff to ensure the clinical governance of their therapeutic work. In this regard, ongoing supportive supervision was provided to the Team by offering feedback, mentorship, and skill-building to help maintain high standards of care by reviewing cases, supporting clinical decision-making, and identifying areas for improvement. The Supervisor also offered support and guidance to the Team members to help them process challenging cases, manage stress, and prevent burnout. By offering a second perspective, the Supervisor has helped individual Team members to identify potential risks, reducing the likelihood of clinical error or harm. The supervision process has thus enhanced the overall quality, safety, and effectiveness of the Service, ensuring that LSSC maintains a consistently high standard of care for both clients and staff. A Peer Supervision Model was further developed.

Counselling & Psychotherapy Database

The Database was regularly updated to ensure the secure and organised storage of client information, case notes, and session histories. The Database helped to track client appointments and follow-ups and facilitated coordination among Team members by providing access to up-to-date client information. It was also utilised for data analysis and reporting by providing the generation of statistics and reports for monitoring service demand, outcomes, and trends. Having a well-maintained Database was thus viewed to strengthen the overall efficiency, transparency, and quality of the service delivery.

Training & Professional Development

All counselling staff completed a CPD day workshop on *Working Therapeutically with Eating Disorders* with Fierna Kennedy and attended the ADAPT Seminar, *Supporting Survivors of Domestic Abuse/Coercive Control By Understanding Complex Trauma*. The Service Manager completed IACP approved supervision training.

Training & Professional Development

Participation continued in a number of liaison groups and partnership work involving JIGSAW, PIETA House, LYS, CAMHS, CSMT, UL and TUS, TUSLA and the HSE.



Some Feedback from Service Users

“I attended counselling in the hope that someone could help me. My GP referred me to LSSC. I’m so grateful for the service. The therapist and atmosphere and welcome in Henry Street was unreal”.

Adult availing of the Counselling and Psychotherapy Service

“My daughter’s therapist was very supportive, non judgemental and collaborative. I, as a parent, also received great clarity. My daughter is self motivated again”.

Parent of Adolescent availing of the Counselling and Psychotherapy Service

Services for Older People

Supporting Age-Friendly Environments

The Services for Older Persons is guided by the principle of supporting age-friendly environments. According to the WHO, age-friendly environments enable all people to:

- age well in a place that is right for them
- continue to develop personally
- be included
- contribute to their communities
- enjoy independence and good health

Services for Older People

People worldwide are living longer. Today most people can expect to live into their sixties and beyond. According to WHO, by 2030, 1 in 6 people in the world will be aged 60 years or over and by 2050, the population of people aged 60 years and older will double. From recent Census data, approximately 33,600 persons aged 65 years and older live in Limerick City and County. This was a 23% increase on data from the 2016 Census and was approximately 16% of the overall population in Limerick.

The LSSC Service for Older Persons provides vital support throughout the year to a number of older people in Limerick. It works to promote social connection, reduce isolation, and strengthen the wellbeing of individuals in the target areas. The Service enables access to essential resources such as healthcare, counselling, transport, and housing supports, while also encouraging independence and dignity among the client group. By offering emotional, practical, and preventative support, the Service can enhance both the physical and mental wellbeing of service users. It can therefore provide valuable assistance to families and caregivers, helping to reduce stress and improve overall quality of life for all those involved.

The Services for Older People is one of the smallest service areas in LSSC and has only two part-time staff. Nevertheless, feedback from service users and agencies recognise that its impact is considerable. While many older Irish people now generally live healthier lives than in previous decades, many older people receiving

LSSC services are affected by ill-health, frailty or social isolation. Many are struggling with financial hardships and how to meet day-to-day living costs such as food and heating, or capital costs such as home repairs and general maintenance.

Staff are available to individuals through home visits, telephone calls, nursing home and hospital visits. The Service has also arranged a variety of group events through friendship clubs and local fun activities including weekly groups for the over 55s, dinner clubs, information events, dances and celebrations, and day outings. Some older people suffer from chronic illness and a community bus is offered to enable them to attend events, this link is seen as vital in keeping many older persons connected with society and their community.

The Services for Older Persons works primarily in the Southill, St. Mary's Park and Corbally areas. Referrals to the Service are from HSE services, other community and voluntary agencies and by self-referral.



Activities and Developments in 2024

The following outlines a summary of key activities and developments in 2024:

General & Ongoing Activities

Day-to-day support was arranged for older persons in the target communities in relation to shopping, medication from pharmacies etc.

Individual visits were arranged to assist older people with online services including applications for bin-waivers, renewal of medical cards, processing property tax, applying for Social Welfare benefits, completing Housing Aid forms, making referrals to Slainte Care, Contributory pension, living alone allowance, the fuel allowance etc. Some older people required assistance completing the Fair Deal Scheme form which can seem overwhelming for many.

Southill

1,584 dinners were supplied amounting to 33 dinners weekly and 288 morning Teas were provided weekly over a 48-week period. There were also 192 weekly home visits and drop-in contacts at the office in addition to 25 hospital visits.

An inter-generational initiative was arranged as part of a year-long Gaisce project. Six students from the College of Further Education & Training, Kilmallock Road Campus, participated in weekly sessions with older adults. Each Wednesday, the students engaged in activities such as bingo and sharing stories which facilitated the fostering of meaningful connections between generations. As a culmination of their involvement, the students will host a special dinner party for the older participants at the college, contributing to their final Gaisce award.

Throughout the year, a wide range of social and seasonal events were organised to support community connection and wellbeing among the older persons’ group. The Service participated in the celebration of International Women’s Day in Southill and the event welcomed groups from across Limerick, highlighting the importance of interagency cooperation in delivering community events. The Easter Bonnet Tea Dance brought together over 70 participants for an afternoon of celebration. A day trip to Galway Bay Hotel and the Summer Break-Up Dinner were other highlights to enjoy the company of each other. A day trip to Tralee marked the end of the autumn outings and the Halloween Seniors Spooky Tea Dance was delivered in partnership with the Southill Family Resource Centre and the Dining Club. Christmas celebrations included a series of festive events: Afternoon Tea and a

performance of A Christmas Carol at Our Lady Queen of Peace School; the Fáilte Ireland Christmas Dinner; and the Southill Seniors Christmas Dinner at the Southill Hub. These gatherings provided opportunities for connection and recognition of the older members in the Community.

St. Mary’s/ Corbally

Initiatives continued in the St Mary’s/Corbally area as 24 referrals were received, and 18 referrals were made to other relevant agencies such as Chime (hearing support), Community Law and Mediation, chiropody services, ALONE, and meal delivery services such as Kings Island Community Partners and Master Chefs. Referrals have also been made to Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, and both the Public Health Nurse and Community Nurse based in Kings Island Health Centre. Over 370 one-to-one contacts and 140 professional contacts were made in relation to the range of support issues.

Following the discontinuation of one local Over 55 Club post-COVID-19, alternative referrals have been made to other day services, including Pennywell Day Care Centre, St. Munchin’s Community Centre, and the Northside Family Resource Centre, to ensure continued social engagement and support for older persons in the area.



Supporting Refugees & Asylum Seekers

According to the UN:

For migrants and asylum seekers in an irregular situation, their vulnerability is compounded because access to remedies is often unavailable as a result of their status.

Supporting Refugees & Asylum Seekers

As a key agency in Limerick that works with the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups, the LSSC continued to support vulnerable individuals and families in need, irrespective of their city or country of origin. In response to the migrant and asylum seeker crisis, LSSC has continued to welcome parents and children to its Parent and Toddler groups and offered places in the Early Years Services to children from Asia, Europe, Africa and South America. The LSSC continued to support a weekly International Women's Group.

A number of qualified people seeking asylum have also contributed to the work of the LSSC as part of its staff group. The LSSC has also collaborated with a range of agencies to support the migrant and asylum seeker population including Paul Partnership, TUSLA, UMHL, Limerick City & County Council, local schools, welfare and health services.



Feedback from Service User

“ When I arrived for the first time, they welcomed me like a sister. They listened to my story and made it their own, they shared their stories and I made them mine. We travelled together, discovering places, even supporting events for our children. That gave it a plus since other groups do not allow children. We parade together, we cook together, more than a group for me it is a family.

Although for work reasons, I cannot always be present, the group gave me refuge and identity in this beautiful country. I think we are lucky to remain in this group, I hope we can continue supporting each other and growing until we become a large group, contributing the good of our cultures, and integrating it into Limerick society.

How sisters from different nations be light in this piece of the world that welcomed us!"

Parent participating in the International Women's Group

LSSC Facilities



Henry Street, Limerick

The main LSSC centre is located at the Henry Street building in Limerick. From this location, the LSSC management and administration are located. In addition, several services including the CFS, the Counselling and Psychotherapy Service, the Relationships and Sexual Health Programme (RSHP) and the Family Advocacy Service operate from here. The Early Years Service is located adjacent to the main building in a purpose-built facility. Facilities and rooms are also made available at the LSSC Centre to external organisations, agencies and groups from the statutory, community and voluntary sectors on a regular basis to deliver programmes, consultations and meet with clients.



Southside Child and Family Centre (CFC)

The Child and Family Centre (CFC) is located at the Southside Education Campus in Galvone, Limerick City and is a state-of-the-art campus providing integrated and accessible service provision for children. In addition to the Early Years Service, a number of LSSC services (CFS, Counselling and Psychotherapy services) and external agencies operate in rooms within the CFC. The HSE has utilised the CFC for services such as the Community Mid Wifery Service and the HSE Psychology Services. The CFC has been used for the delivery of programmes such as weaning and baby massage from the Peri-natal Mental Health Team. Additional support programmes were offered from the Centre including: Baby Incredible Years, an after-school service (Barnardos); Phoenix Creative Therapies provided music, art and play therapy in the CFC three days per week; Blue Box Creative Therapy Services used the space one day per week to facilitate clients from Le Chéile School; other parenting courses and classes were delivered on First Aid, nutrition and health, arts in addition to therapy workshops for children and young people. Access visits are also facilitated in the CFC and acknowledged as a positive experience and safe environment for the families involved. The number of services available at the CFC enables services to be provided on an individual basis or as a package of 'wrap-around' services where families can more easily avail of a range of supports in one location as required.

Feedback from Service User

“When I first linked in with TPSP, I was homeless and couch surfing while pregnant. I had little family support at the time and was struggling financially and with my mental health. I was referred to Teen Parent support by the social worker in the maternity and was nervous and not interested in linking in with another service. I had previously had a bad experience and felt judged but when I met the girls, they were so welcoming to me. They made me feel so comfortable and at ease. They re-assured me that I would be able to overcome my fears and helped me gain my confidence again and become the mother I am today.

I have learnt so much in the last two and a half years working with TPSP. They helped me with returning to education, Previous to this I had completed Level 5 in healthcare and retail. I am hoping to again return to education when my son starts creche. They have shown me the importance of education and the benefits it will give to me and my boys in the future.

They supported me with attending counselling following a relationship breakdown and I have attended many of their groups, my favourite being our City Slickers group. Through this group I met a lot of other young moms in a similar situation to myself. Prior to joining this group, I didn't have any friends that were pregnant or had kids and from going to this each week I have made friends for life”.

Parent participating in Young Parents Support Programme (formerly Teen Parent Support Programme) & Southside Child & Family Centre

2024

Challenges for LSSC Services

In 2024 as in previous years, LSSC teams worked steadily to deliver services in order to support the most vulnerable at a time of uncertainty and volatility. In their work, staff faced specific challenges in their daily work. Some of these key challenges are outlined below:

Emerging Trends & Challenges in 2024

Emerging and ongoing challenges for families in the community included the following:

- The impact of poverty on children remains a persistent and worsening concern, with many families supported by LSSC struggling to afford basic necessities and adequately heat their homes.
- The homelessness crisis, though not new, continues to place immense pressure on families, particularly those living in unsuitable or overcrowded accommodation, including long-term stays in hotels. Such living conditions severely limit meaningful engagement around parenting and child development.
- The rising cost of living has significantly affected families' ability to meet their basic needs, contributing to heightened levels of stress.
- Community instability and violence are increasingly impacting families, affecting housing security, school attendance, mental health, physical safety, and overall economic stability.
- There is a noted rise in parental substance misuse, often resulting in increased financial debt and adverse outcomes for both parents and children.
- Additionally, migrant families attending services frequently experience social isolation and limited peer support.

- Fuel poverty has become a growing issue across income levels, with many families unable to maintain homes at an acceptable temperature, particularly for infants.
- A critical gap remains in early intervention services for families facing developmental delays or additional needs. This places substantial strain on both families and community services attempting to bridge these gaps while awaiting statutory supports.
- Referral pathways are often unclear or fragmented, leading some families to engage with multiple services for overlapping interventions. This can result in confusion, reluctance to engage, and delays in receiving timely support.
- While the National Childcare Scheme (NCS), including sponsored places, has made childcare more affordable, a shortage of available places persists.
- Referrals increasingly cite domestic abuse and conflictual parental relationships, sometimes exacerbated by cohabitation due to the lack of affordable housing, as having detrimental effects on children.
- Parental mental health concerns are also impacting children's wellbeing, while school refusal and anxiety among children are becoming more prevalent.
- Access to timely and appropriate supports for families before they reach crisis remains a significant challenge, despite clear indicators of escalating need.
- Staff recruitment and retention continue to be difficult due to challenges in offering competitive terms and conditions, impacting the sustainability of high-quality service provision.

Partnership and Collaborative Working

Partnership working has always been at the heart of the LSSC agenda for improving outcomes and making local services cost effective. A critical part of the work of the LSSC in 2024 was to continue to work in partnership with other agencies to deliver services. These agencies included government organisations and departments, schools, colleges of further education, universities, community and voluntary organisations, community centres, hospitals, GPs and philanthropic organisations. Through partnership working, these organisations have provided a range of supports through funding, expertise, and collaborative delivery of services that has enhanced the quality of LSSC work for service users.

As in previous years, LSSC staff supported a number of inter-agency initiatives including ABC Start Right, the Limerick Homeless Alliance, Tusla's Community and Family Support Networks (CFSNs), CYPSC's Parenting Limerick, CYPSC's Youth Mental Health Sub-group, Tusla's Parenting Support Champion Initiative, and the Youth Housing Allocation Group. Staff also collaborated regularly with other agencies in the delivery of programmes and workshops. Partners included Tusla, HSE officers such as PHNs, Psychologists and Medical Social Workers, PAUL Partnership and the ISPC.

Staff in the Community Social Work and Family Support Service, the Young Parent's Support Programme and the CFC Family Support Service led on a number of Meitheals and actively engaged with other agencies to support families to achieve the outcomes identified through the Meitheal Process. Staff also participated actively in Family Welfare, Child Protection and Children in Care conferences, meetings and reviews as required.

A Note of Appreciation to our Partners and Funders

As we reflect on 2024, we extend our sincere gratitude to all our partners and funders for their continued support, collaboration, and commitment to the LSSC work. Your contributions—whether through financial support, resource sharing, or active partnership—have been instrumental in enabling our Teams to deliver vital services to individuals and families in Limerick. Together, we have strengthened our ability to respond to growing needs, promote wellbeing, and create meaningful, lasting impact.

LSSC's Funders/Partner Agencies



- Tusla, Child & Family Agency
- Health Service Executive
- Pobal
- Limerick City & County Council
- Dept of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth
- Dept of Education & Skills
- Dept of Social Protection
- TUS
- Mary Immaculate College
- LCETB
- Limerick College of Further Education
- Mid-West Simon Community
- University of Limerick
- University Hospital Limerick
- University Maternity Hospital Limerick
- Accord
- Adapt Services
- Age & Opportunity (Dublin)
- Barnardos
- Community Law & Mediation
- Diocese of Limerick
- Doras Luimní
- Family Resource Centres
- Focus Ireland
- LEDP
- Limerick Childcare Committee
- Limerick Youth Service
- Novas
- PAUL Partnership: ABC Start Right
- Treoir