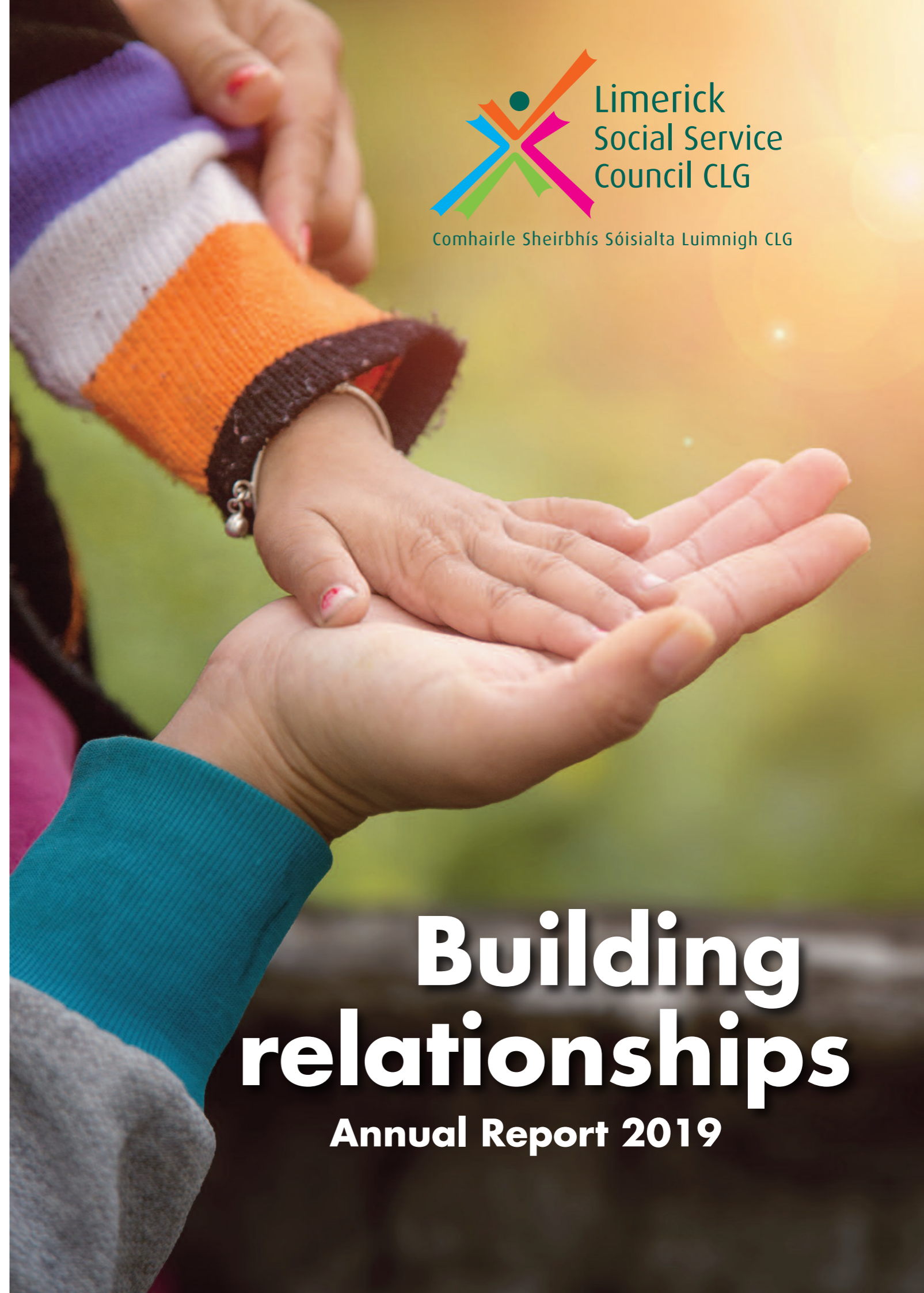




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# Building relationships

## Annual Report 2019





**Building  
relationships**  
Annual Report 2019



**Building  
relationships**

Annual Report 2019

# About Us

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

Our Mission Statement

## Our Values

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

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

## Who We Are

The LSSC employs over 65 staff. The team is divided between management, programme staff, administration and maintenance staff. The team is led by the LSSC General Manager, Brian Ryan, and overseen by the LSSC Board of Directors. The LSSC's Board of Directors provide strategic leadership for LSSC affairs in accordance with the organisation's mission, vision and values and ensures accountability to the public. The Board is comprised of up to 10 members who serve voluntarily.

## What We Do

The LIMERICK SOCIAL SERVICE COUNCIL (LSSC) is a leading voluntary service, working in communities in Limerick for five decades. The LSSC delivers its services at the LSSC Centre in Henry Street, Limerick, our new premises, the Child and Family Centre in Galvone and through outreach in a range of locations throughout Limerick City and County. The five main services areas are the CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICE, the EARLY YEARS SERVICES, the COUNSELLING SERVICE, SERVICES FOR OLDER PEOPLE and The SOUTHSIDE CHILD and FAMILY CENTRE. The LSSC also offers its rooms and facilities at the LSSC Centre to other agencies and organisations to enable them to serve their client groups within the community.

## Message from the Chairperson, Martin Golden

Limerick Social Service Council's 2019 Annual Report provides us an opportunity to reflect on the breadth and depth of the work we did across Limerick City and County as well as the challenges that we encountered. For LSSC, 2019 was a period of significant growth—the building of the Child and Family Centre in Galvone was completed; the service plans were developed; and we recruited the Operational Manager. Across the other service areas, the Child and Family Service, the Counselling and Psychotherapy Service, the Service for Older People and the Early Years' Service, there has been continued delivery of our core services while responding creatively to the changing needs of our clients.

As I reflect on the work of LSSC throughout 2019, I can see a common theme that unites all of our diverse work—it is founded on establishing strong connections and relationships with our clients, with our partners and with each other. Writing this in early 2020, when the nature of relationships and connections shifted radically in the wake of COVID-19, I'm struck by how vital these connections and relationships are. As an organization, we commit to constantly building and strengthening these connections, and I am proud to introduce this overview of what we have achieved in 2019.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank my fellow board members, who have provided time, expertise and great commitment to supporting growth and innovation where appropriate, and prudence and taking stock where this is the wisest path. I would also like to thank the staff of LSSC for committing their skills and energy to meeting the needs of our clients. We are grateful to the many people who have trusted us to support them over the past year and for sharing with us your thoughts, strengths and challenges.

## Message from the General Manager, Brian Ryan

The mission statement of Limerick Social Service Council underscores our commitment to care, respecting the dignity of the person and supporting growth. As a service, we support individuals, groups and communities, and, at the core of all of our work, is the dignity of the person. We know that, in order for individuals to grow and flourish, that they need to be connected in to strong communities, groups and families. Our role is to support people to make these connections. We work to create an open, welcoming space in our premises in Henry Street, in our new location, the Child and Family Centre in Galvone and in our many outreach locations. We work to ensure that people feel secure and welcome, whether they are coming in to take part in an Art or Irish class, to enjoy a shared meal in Southill, to spend the day in our Early Years' Service, to attend a Parent and Toddler Group or an individual family support or counselling session.

Our service has continued to grow and develop in line with changing needs of our clients and the communities that we serve. In 2019, we completed the building works and the service plans for the new Child and Family Centre. This has been an exciting time for LSSC and our partner agencies as we explore the possibilities of launching a service that is new and innovative while remaining committed to our core mission. And, while we now have two premises, there continues to be growing integration among all of LSSC's services.

We are delighted with this growth and development, but we are conscious that of the need to ensure that a commitment to quality, responsive service provision underpins all growth. We have been working on upgrading our data collection capacity and reviewing our policies and procedures. The Child and Family Service has introduced a new database that will ensure the accurate collection of data and assist with effective case management. The Counselling and Psychotherapy Service has introduced an in-house Clinical Coordinator to provide high quality and consistent clinical supervision to counsellors and psychotherapists. The Early Years Service, with its Síolta accreditation, has demonstrated its ongoing commitment to quality service provision, and the Older Person's Services continues to respond creatively to the needs of older people by supporting strong social, recreational and learning opportunities. Finally, the CFC service model has been built on a strong evidence base which places quality early years provision and family support at its centre.

We invite you to explore this report which provides an overview of the multi-faceted work we do. This year, we've also introduced a number of photo-stories that demonstrate the dedication and commitment of our staff and the resilience and creativity of our clients.



# About Us



## Child and Family Service

Programme	Total Number of Referrals	Total Number of Families Receiving a Service	Total Number of Client Contacts
Community Social Work and Family Support	<b>167</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>444</b>
Teen Parent Support Programme	<b>56</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>506</b>
Community Mothers	<b>100</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>408</b>
Relationships and Sexual Health Programme	<b>62</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>172</b>
Family Advocacy Service	<b>32</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>237</b>
Family Welfare Conferencing Service	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>106</b>

## Total Number of

Parenting Programmes Delivered (these are multi-session parenting programmes that are usually based on an evidence-based manualized programme): <b>15</b>	Parents Completing the Programmes: <b>128</b>	Parenting Groups Delivered (these are less formal groups such as parent and toddler groups and parent support groups): <b>11</b> groups with multiple sessions each	Workshops Delivered (1-2 session workshops such as baby first aid, weaning, etc.): <b>24</b>	Programmes for Young People: <b>5</b>	Young People Completing the Programme: <b>32</b>
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## Counselling and Psychotherapy Service:

Total Number of Referrals: <b>397</b>	Total Number of Referrals of Young People: <b>83</b>	Total Number of Sessions Delivered: <b>3940</b>
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## Older Person's Service:

Client Visits (in homes, nursing homes or hospitals): <b>690</b>	Social Events Planned, Coordinated and Supported: <b>20</b>	Numbers is Attendance at Events: <b>1,000+</b>
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## Early Years' Service:

Number of Play rooms: <b>3</b>	Number of Children in the Baby Room: <b>6</b> children from 6 months 18 months	Number of Children in the Toddler Room: <b>22</b> children from 18 months to 3 years
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Number of Children in the Pre-school: <b>22</b> children from 3 to 5 years.	There are a total of <b>50</b> children in the service 6 attend on a sessional basis and 44 are Full Time.
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## Traveller Health Advocacy Programme

Client Visits (in homes, nursing homes or hospitals): <b>690</b>	Social Events Planned, Coordinated and Supported: <b>20</b>	Numbers is Attendance at Events: <b>1,000+</b>
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# The Child and Family Service (CFS)

The Child and Family Service works in partnership with families to support them to improve relationships and address any concerns with the goal of meeting agreed outcomes for children and their families. Building positive relationships, both within families and between ourselves and families, is at the core of our work.

The CFS provides one to one and group supports to parents and carers, children, young people and extended family members. The Service consists of individual programmes, which are outlined below, but the CFS team work together and with other LSSC service areas to provide integrated supports to families. The CFS Team frequently refer clients, both parents and young people, to the Counselling and Psychotherapy Service and collaborate with the Early Years Team to support a number of children and their parents. During the final quarter of 2019, CFS staff began delivering some programmes in the Child and Family Centre, Galvone.

The Community Social Work and Family Support Service consists of professionally qualified social workers and family support workers, who work to support families to build stronger relationships, develop their parenting and communication skills and address a range of challenges that the family may be facing. These issues may include poverty, inadequate housing, acrimonious separations, education issues, domestic violence, addiction and other trauma related issues or simply a breakdown in family communication. The Community Social Workers and Family Support Workers maintain an active caseload and work closely with other services, externally, as well as those within LSSC to provide support to parents, carers and children. This work is done through home visits, centre-based work and phone contact. Targeted group interventions and workshops are also facilitated.

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 every staff member understands their role under Children First and that we work together as an organisation to ensure the safety of children.

## A Client of the Community Social Work and Family Support Service shares his experience with the Community Social Work and Family Support Service:

I recently became a single father and took over the full time care of my two boys who are aged four and five. I was doing fairly okay and felt I was looking after my boys well. However, with the help of the Public Health Nurse, I applied for an Assessment of Needs for both of my children. This decision was made due to my boys showing certain signs of being on the Autism spectrum. This was all new to me and I felt I needed to seek assistance and advice as I had never dealt with Autism or the process of applying for an Assessment of Needs.

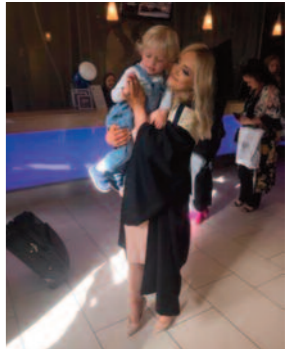
I contacted Limerick Social Service Council, and I was then contacted by one of the Community Social Workers, Fidelma. She was a great help to me as she helped me find the information I needed and put me in contact with local organisations and support groups. This has all helped me to grow and learn as a parent which is beneficial for my boys. What I liked about the help I received is that I was made to feel we were working as part of a team and I always felt listened to.

I feel that I can contact Limerick Social Service Council at any time if I need further help.

# The Teen Parent Support Programme (TPSP)

The Teen Parent Support Programme (TPSP) provides confidential support to young people who are pregnant or who are parents. Support is also available to the young person's partner and members of their extended families.

TPSP Limerick is part of the National Teen Parents Support Programme. Support to parents is provided through the provision of one to one home visits and centre-based work; a range of financial and non-financial supports for the young parent to remain in education; and provision of group work programmes to support parents both in their parenting role and in their own personal development. These include a weekly parent and toddler group, the City Slickers Programme, the Mellow Bumps Ante-Natal Programme and other ante-natal supports.



Kate and her son, Cullen, at her graduation from LCFE with a QQI Level 5 award in Marketing

## TPSP Client, Kate Davis, shares her experience of the Teen Parent Support Programme:

"I first became involved with TPSP when I was studying for my Leaving Certificate Applied in Limerick Youth Service. I had an assignment and was allowed to choose the topic, my teacher suggested I base the assignment on childcare and contacted Sandra [Burke, TPSP Coordinator at the time] to see if she could help. This was one of the best things to happen during my pregnancy.

TPSP have went above and beyond to financially and emotionally support me since meeting them in 2017. I would not be able to attend college if it wasn't for TPSP due to the amazing help with different college related costs. For example, TPSP have and continue to financially support me with creche fees and have even funded for a taxi during a very difficult timetable for a semester. Not only have they helped relating to education, they have also helped me with driving lessons and also my driving test. TPSP are a very important service to young parents and have really helped me along with others. TPSP are giving me the opportunity to achieve the future I want for my son Cullen and I. TPSP have also helped with the small things such as helping fill out paperwork when I was so exhausted I couldn't even understand the writing on the page or being there to help teach me about education, housing, rights and entitlements etc.

As a young parent there are many potential uncomfortable and judgmental situations. TPSP provided a safe space where I knew I would not be judged. TPSP also have mother and baby classes which are a lot less daunting when you know you won't get judged for your age nor will your parenting skills be judged based off what stage in life you're at. Because of TPSP I have become friends with other young parents which has been extremely helpful to have people that understand what I'm going through since parenting can be lonely and isolating at times.

My plans now are to finish out my undergraduate degree in Psychology and Media and continue to further my education with a Postgraduate Diploma in Adult Education. My main goal is to be the best role model for Cullen I can be and give him opportunities I never had."

# The Community Mothers Programme

The Community Mothers Programme is a home visiting service for families with new babies and young children. The programme aims to encourage parents to enjoy participating more fully in their child's life. Community Mothers visit parents in their home during the early years (generally up to the age of three) to offer and non-directive information on parenting, child development and local services and supports. Community Mothers support positive parent/child relationships.

Community Mothers also facilitate Baby/Toddler/ Parent Groups, weaning workshops, baby massage and baby reflexology programmes, Incredible Years Programmes and the Mellow Bumps Ante-Natal Programme. Supporting parents to access group work and develop natural support networks is a key part of the service.



Community Mother, Eithne Egan, and the Friday Parent and Toddler Group mark LSSC's official joining of the Breastfeeding Friendly Limerick campaign



Liz Dunworth, Community Mothers Programme, speaks at the launch of the National Community Mothers Programme, in the Richmond Education Centre, Dublin

# Relationships and Sexual Health Programme

The Relationships and Sexual Health Programme aims to increase parental capacity to communicate with their teenage children in the area of relationships and sexual health. The Programme also supports young people with additional life skills to support the existing Social Health and Personal Development Programme within their school or training centres and to incorporate communication skills, self-esteem and confidence-building skills to the area of relationships and sexual health.

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

# International Women's Group

As part of the celebrations of International Women's Day on March 8th, the Relationships and Sexual Health Project Worker set up an International Women's Group, and the group met on a regular basis throughout 2019. The aim of the group is to bring together women from different parts of the world, who now call Limerick their home. The group provides an opportunity for the members to take some time for themselves, meet other women, express themselves creatively and discuss issues that are affecting their lives. Parenting was an important part of the discussion in the group.

In total, 27 women including children attended the group, with an average weekly attendance of 15. Children were welcome and there was an average of three children and babies present during all sessions. The group shared food, music and dance from their own cultures, took a turn on the ukulele, visited Bunratty Folk Park, visited Santa at Jetland and took a historical tour of Limerick City taking in the Frank McCourt Museum, King John's Castle and St. Mary's Cathedral among other sites. The Frank MC Court museum was a very sad experience for some of the women as the experience of living in the home of a young Frank MC Court reminded some of the women of the homes they left behind before they came to Ireland.

Enda Keogh, Project Worker with the Relationships and Sexual Health Programme and Coordinator of the group, noted that "It was clear to me that there was an emerging need to target a specific programme for parents from other international communities. Parents expressed a need for help in supporting their children to keep up the important values and traditions of their culture of origin but also integrating into Irish culture and society."

One member of the group said that, "I would, on behalf of all the women in the group, like to thank LSSC for forming the International Women's Group and giving us a platform to discuss, share, encourage, learn, understand our desires and most importantly be happy. Hip Hurray to Womanhood."



The International Women's Group enjoy learning about Limerick's history through a walking tour of the city and a visit to the Frank McCourt Museum.



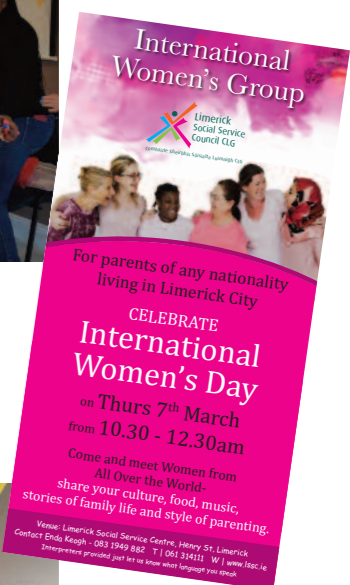
Members of the Group gather to share a meal



Learning the Ukulele with Music Generation



Members of the Group after a lively dance performance



# Family Advocacy Service

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

Community Social Worker, Sean Lynch presented findings from a research paper, entitled *Stability for Whom? An exploration of the experiences of parents who have children in care*, at the Irish Association of Social Workers' All Ireland Social Work Research Conference. Sean won the IASW's Breaking Boundaries Award for the Research. The paper was co-authored by Majella Hynan, Family Advocacy Service Project Worker with LSSC. The research paper was also published in the journal *Foster* and the peer-reviewed journal *Irish Social Worker*.

# The Family Welfare Conferencing Service

The Family Welfare Conferencing Service is a specialized service that supports family members to participate in the Family Welfare Conference process and plans for their children. It brings together as many family members as possible, along with the child where appropriate, to develop a family support plan in the best interests of the child. The Family Welfare Conference Coordinator meets each member of the family separately in advance of the FWC to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to express their views. This type of meeting assists the family in making a plan to help a child/young person within a family network to ensure that they are looked after and safe.



Members of the Group after a lively dance performance



# Counselling and Psychotherapy Service

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 they meet LSSC and professional standards. LSSC ensures 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.

The service supports adults and young people who may be struggling with personal, emotional or mental health difficulties, and 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 LSSC Counsellors and Psychotherapists support clients to explore their life situations in a confidential, safe, compassionate and non-judgmental environment.

In 2019, the Counselling and Psychotherapy Service at LSSC undertook a strategic reorganization, which streamlined its service in line with funding it receives from the HSE and Tusla. There were 397 overall referrals to the service during 2019, 185 in the Tusla category and 175 under HSE funding. Management at LSSC also decided to open the Counselling and Psychotherapy Service to clients paying for their own sessions. As private rates for counselling and psychotherapy are often beyond the means of those not eligible for a publicly funded service, the provision of a service at a rate lower than that of private practitioners proved to be a service welcomed and availed of by many in the community. In 2019, 37 clients availed of the Counselling and Psychotherapy Service through this pathway from its introduction in May 2019, and it is anticipated that this will continue to be a growing client group into 2020 and beyond.

The service offered

**3,940**

sessions to adult and adolescent clients during 2019 with an attendance rate of

**78%**



## Adolescent Psychotherapy

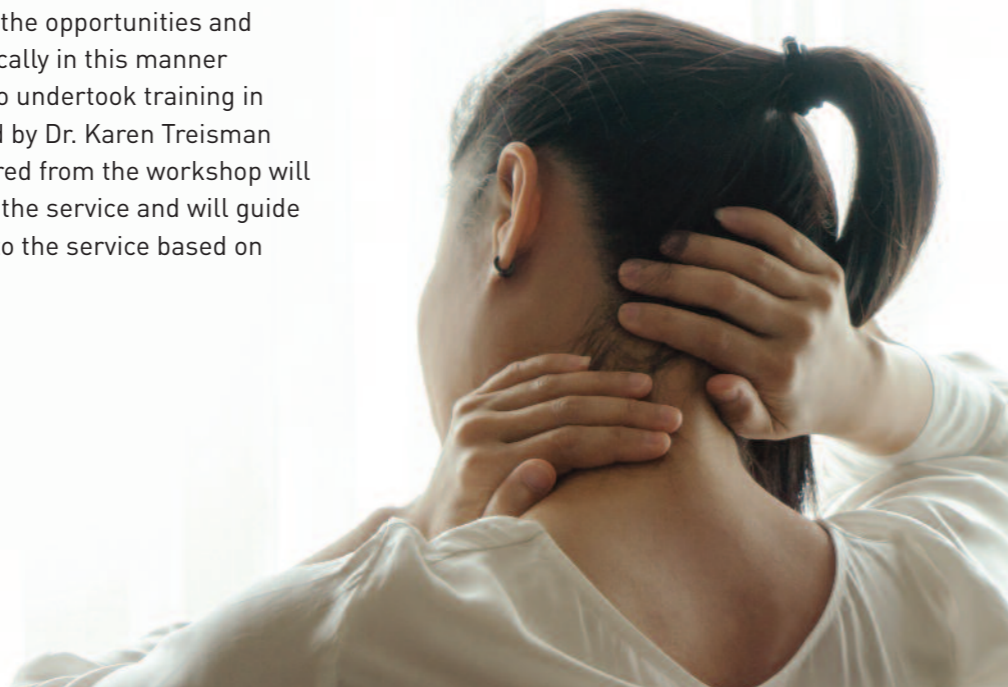
The Adolescent Psychotherapy service recorded a similar level of referrals compared to 2018, with 83 young people being referred to the service. The service provided 400 sessions to these young people, all delivered by psychotherapists with special training in Adolescent Psychotherapy. Young people being referred to the service are prioritised and receive an appointment within 6-8 weeks of their referral. Among the main presenting issues for this cohort of clients were anxiety, self-harm, relationships and family issues, and issues with school. The LSSC Counselling and Psychotherapy Service continued a process of collaboration with Limerick Youth Service and Jigsaw in relation to the mental health needs of young people in Limerick. The group expanded during 2020 to include representatives from Pieta House as well as the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The group met on a number of occasions during 2019 and continued to collaborate in order to share and disseminate best practices in relation to the mental health needs of young people and streamline referral pathways between the services.



One of the counselling rooms in Henry Street

## Training

The team at the Counselling and Psychotherapy Service undertook training in brief, solution focused therapy in June 2019. Almost 50% of clients referred to the service in 2019 were funded by the HSE for counselling of this type and so a workshop was provided to enhance the teams' skills in this area. All staff agreed that the training was of great value and it provided an opportunity to hear new ideas, and engage in critical reflection and discussion of the opportunities and challenges that working therapeutically in this manner presents. Members of the team also undertook training in trauma-informed practice delivered by Dr. Karen Treisman from the UK. The knowledge garnered from the workshop will inform procedures and practices in the service and will guide adjustments that need to be made to the service based on client needs.



## New Developments: Internal Clinical Supervision in the Counselling and Psychotherapy Service of LSSC

### What is Supervision?

Supervision in the counselling arena refers to a supporting and guiding role with a focus on delivery of quality skills and ethical safety to the client within the service.

The most quoted definition of professional counselling supervision is that of Inskipp & Proctor (1995):- "A working alliance between a supervisor and a counsellor in which the counsellor can offer an account or recording of his/her work; reflect on it; receive feedback, and where appropriate guidance. The object of this alliance is to enable the therapist to gain in ethical competence, confidence and creativity so as to give the best possible service to the clients".

Supervision is not a new concept to any of the psychotherapists working within LSSC. It is part of the culture of the profession, whether a student, pre accredited, or accredited therapist, to engage in supervision on a regular basis with a supervisor. However what is new to the psychotherapists in LSSC is that supervision is now provided internally by a member of the counselling team.

### How did Internal Supervision Come about within LSSC?

In 2018, the HSE carried out a clinical governance audit of the counselling and psychotherapy service. In response to the recommendations of that audit and to support the growth and development of the service according to best practice guidelines, an internal clinical supervisor was appointed. Supervision, in addition to supporting quality clinical practice, now had the added element of ensuring accountability to the organisation.

The objectives of internal supervision is to ensure that LSSC can provide the highest quality counselling service to clients; that therapists are supported and guided in their work; and that the counselling service is adhering to best practice guidelines and compliant with the objectives of LSSC and our funders. It also has a role in the clinical governance of the therapeutic work.

### The Setting Up of Internal Clinical Supervision

In establishment of this new service within LSSC, I, as the appointed supervisor, consulted with the General Manager, the Counselling Coordinator and the therapists to enable me to put in place a workable system that balances ethical issues of confidentiality and the organisational issues of accountability and governance.

Arising from these discussions, the supervision alliance was carefully contracted between the therapist, i.e. the supervisee, and the supervisor, which made provision as to how information could be shared. Other issues, such as timing, attendance and confidentiality were built in to the contract. The latter is vital, particularly in regard to the development of feedback loops within the organisation and to our funders. It is essential that supervisees perceive the supervision relationship as a safe and trusting space so that they are able to properly utilise their supervision for the betterment of the clients. This, in turn, adds significant value to the organisation.

### Looking Towards the Future

As the service continues to develop in line with the needs of clients and changing models of service delivery, I look forward to the internal clinical supervisor playing a key role in ensuring that LSSC offers both the highest quality therapeutic service to clients and a supportive, learning environment for our counselling team. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues and supporting them in their thoughtful, reflective and responsive practice.

# Services for Older People

LSSC's Services for Older People is the epitome of "small but mighty"! The services has two part-time workers, who work primarily in Southill, St. Mary's Park and Corbally. One core part of their work is home visiting, which also includes visits to care homes and hospitals. These visits are important social links for people who may be living alone without a huge amount of family support. The workers also help to connect people to relevant services, agencies and groups that are operating in the area. The workers provide practical information on advice on how to access services and fill in forms.

In addition to the home visits, the workers also support a range of social activities including weekly groups for the over 55s, dinner clubs, information events, dances and celebrations and day trips away. In Southill, for example 33 meals are prepared and served to a group of older people each week.

Some of the highlights of the 2019 social calendar in Southill included a night out at the Pery Hotel in January, with dinner, music and a raffle. Older people had a chance to teach 30 children from local after-school clubs about old style games such as hopscotch, skipping and marbles during an International Games Day in May, which was supported by a number of other groups in the area. There was great demand for the day trip to Galway with two buses needed for the trip in July. A Seniors group from Our Lady of Lourdes joined the Southill group for the trip.

A group of 15 women from the Seniors Group visited Limerick Prison to take part in an Afternoon of Beauty, which was hosted by a group of women prisoners who were doing courses in hair care, nail care and beauty. This was the first time that the women's wing was opened to members of the public, and it was a fantastic opportunity for both groups to learn from each other. The Older Person's Worker in Southill, Mary O'Hehir, noted that, "We have attended Limerick Prison many times before to help the male prisoners achieve the Gaisce Award, but this was something unique."

As a follow up to the visit to the prison, the Group attended the "Open Hearts" exhibition, which showcased creative work by students in prison.



"Oh we do like to be beside the seaside": Members of the Active Age Group enjoy the sunshine in Galway



"She wears an Easter Bonnet with all the Ribbons on it": The very deserving winner of the Easter Bonnet Competition



Enjoying the Garda Social at the Maldron Hotel

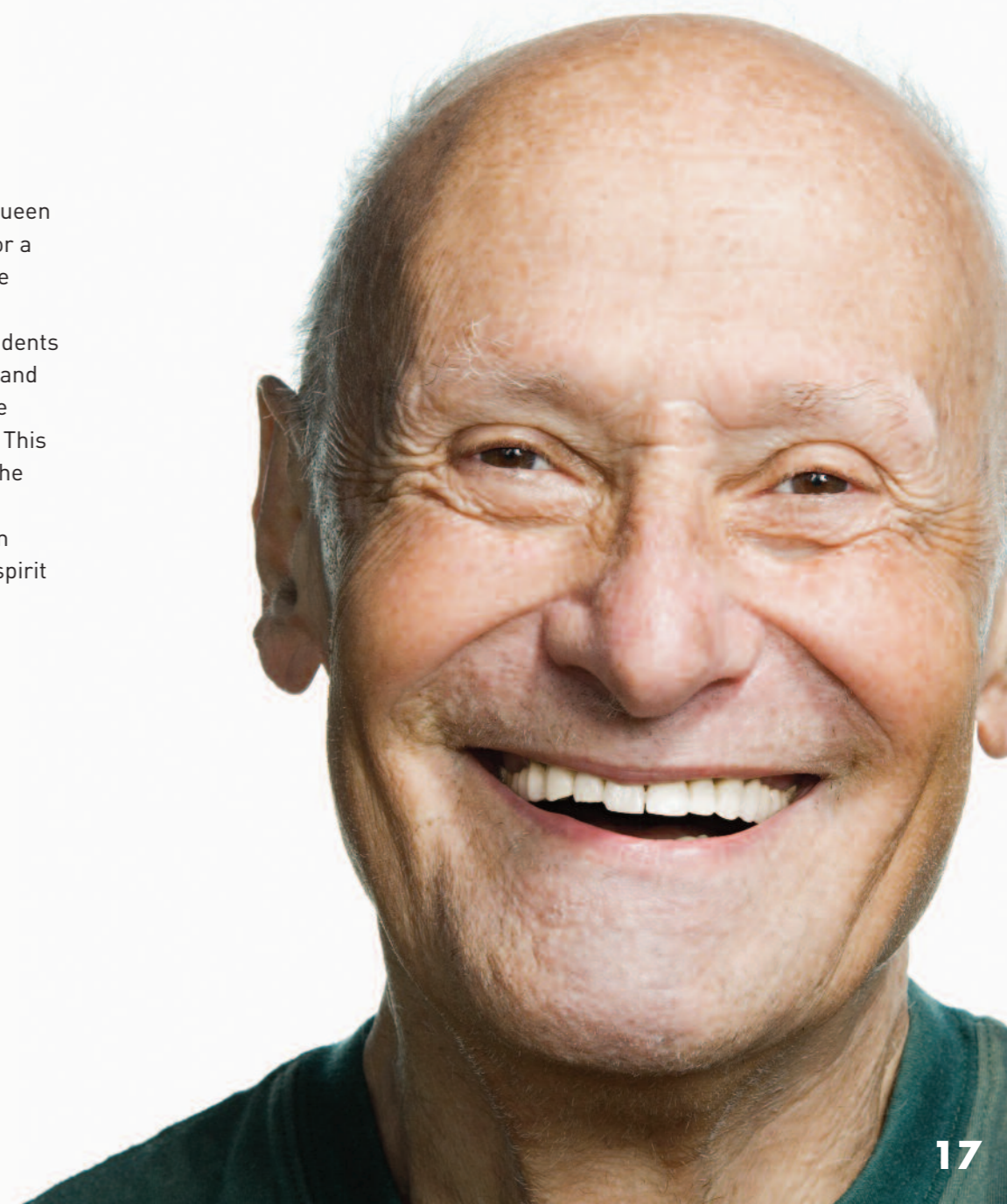
Finally, in early December, 67 older people, 50 children and 5 teachers from Our Lady Queen of Peace School gathered for a Christmas celebration in the Child and Family Centre in Galvone. The sixth class students cooked dinner, entertained and provided a gift to each of the older people in attendance. This was a wonder way to start the holiday period and brought together young and old from across the community in a spirit of giving.



The group visiting the "Open Minds" exhibition in the Hunt Museum



The Roses of Tralee: Members of the group relax during a trip to Tralee



## Early Year's Service

The LSSC Early Years' Service offers a full day Early Years Service and a Pre-school Service five days a week. The Service is committed to providing the highest quality childcare for babies and young children. The Early Year's Service has a very highly qualified, committed staff who are committed to ongoing professional development so that they can provide the highest standard of care and early education. All staff members are trained in Early Childhood Care and Education to provide a happy, positive, caring learning and care environment that is led by the interests and needs of the children and focuses on play.

The LSSC Early Years Services is committed to the highest standards of quality, and the service is delivered in line with Síolta Quality Standards and the Aistear Curriculum Framework. The service gained Validation in Síolta Standards, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education, which are designed to support quality across all aspects of practice in early childhood care and education settings. This is a significant achievement and underlines the ongoing commitment to quality provision.

The service works in close partnership with parents and is committed to supporting positive transitions from the home to the service, between each of the different rooms and from the pre-school to primary school. Early Years Practitioners recognize that parents are the first and most important educators of their children and work to support the home/early year's service connections.

Most of our families live in the local area of the city centre with some travelling to the city for work or study. We work closely with the LSSC Child and Family Service, and some of our families are referred through the Teen Parent Support Programme, Community Mothers or the Community Social Work and Family Support Service.

The Early Year's Service is almost always operating at full capacity with a waiting list of families wishing to use the service.

We have had some new changes to our Preschool Room over the past year, but we now operate a full-time Preschool service with 16 children availing of this service.

We have also made some changes to enhance how we engage and support the children- we set up a sensory room in the pre-school so the children can relax if they are feeling overwhelmed.

We have three staff members who qualified this year with a degree in Early Childhood Practice. This was a fantastic achievement for the staff members and illustrates their commitment to their practice. Four staff members are in the process of completing Marte Meo training, which supports positive interactions and interventions between children and their carers. Four staff members are in the process of completing their Level 6 training.



Parents and Children enjoying Culture Day



A Visit from the Local Guards



The Christmas Party Sing Song

## Limerick City Traveller Health Advocacy Programme (THAP)

The Limerick City Traveller Health Advocacy Programme (THAP) has been operating since 2013 in conjunction with the Traveller Health Unit within the HSE. The programme was developed in response to findings from the 2010 All Ireland Traveller Health Study which highlighted significant health inequalities experienced by the Traveller community in Ireland. The overall aim of the THAP is to improve the health status of Travellers in Limerick City.

In 2019, THAP staff consisted of a part time Coordinator, 4 part time trained Traveller Health Advocates and 2 part time Health Assistants. The team provided health information door to door to approximately 150 families (350 individuals) living primarily on halting sites in and around the City. The THAP use a peer education and community development approach to deliver public health information in a culturally appropriate manner.

THAP works on a number of health issues but there are three priority areas that underpin their work:

- Diabetes
- Cardiovascular Health
- Mental Health.

THAP organized a men's health day, which was supported by the Irish Heart Foundation Bus. This event which successful in providing a full health check-up and onward referral for members of the travelling community. In addition, two Diabetes Awareness Mornings were facilitated and there was a high turnout of Traveller Men.

To support mental health, THAP organised a Suicide Awareness event on September 10th, which coincided with nationwide events as part of the preventing suicide together campaign.



Members of the THAP team at the Traveller Pride Event in Limerick City and County Council

In 2019, the THAP team engaged in a peer research project. The team surveyed 100 members of the community on what health services they are accessing, their experiences of these services and the barriers to accessing services. THAP continues to promote Cancer Screening programmes including cervical, bowel and breast cancers, and their research has shown an increased uptake in screening services as well as improvements in attitudes to diet and exercise. The team presented their project at a Traveller pride event hosted by Limerick City Council on June 6th. The event was well attended by members of both the travelling community and the settled community, and it was a positive affirmation of the work being done by THAP in Limerick city.

# Southside Child and Family Centre

We were delighted to complete the building work on LSSC's newest project, the Child and Family Centre in 2019. The Child and Family Centre is located on the Southside Education Campus in Galvone—just look for the rainbows and you'll find it.

The building is a bright, sunny, child friendly building that will support innovative work with children and families. We are looking forward to bringing the service plans, developed in 2019, to life and creating a home for high-quality child and family services. These services will be developed in partnership with the community and statutory and community partners. The services will include an early year's service as well as wrap-around supports for parents and children. These may include counselling and therapeutic supports, childhood health services, parent and toddler groups and family support programmes.

We were also delighted to recruit the Operational Manager for the CFC, who will work with the partners involved in the project to bring the service plans to fruition. In the latter half of 2019, we began to engage with parents and children and to begin the initial delivery of some programmes. LSSC's counselling service is providing counselling to adults and young people on site; The Community Mothers also delivered an Incredible Years Baby Programme in the centre. Throughout 2020, these services will be expanded and extended.

We would like to thank our many partners in the CFC, who have shown great commitment and dedication in bringing the project to this stage: Limerick City and County Council, Tusla, the Diocese of Limerick, HSE, LCETB, DES, LEDP and the two campus schools (Le Cheile Primary School and Gaelscoil Sheoirse Clancy).

We would like to thank the families and the wider community of the Southside for engaging with us and supporting the development of this exciting project.

Below are some of the beautiful photos of the centre. The building featured in Open House Limerick, which invites members of the public to visit buildings of interest.

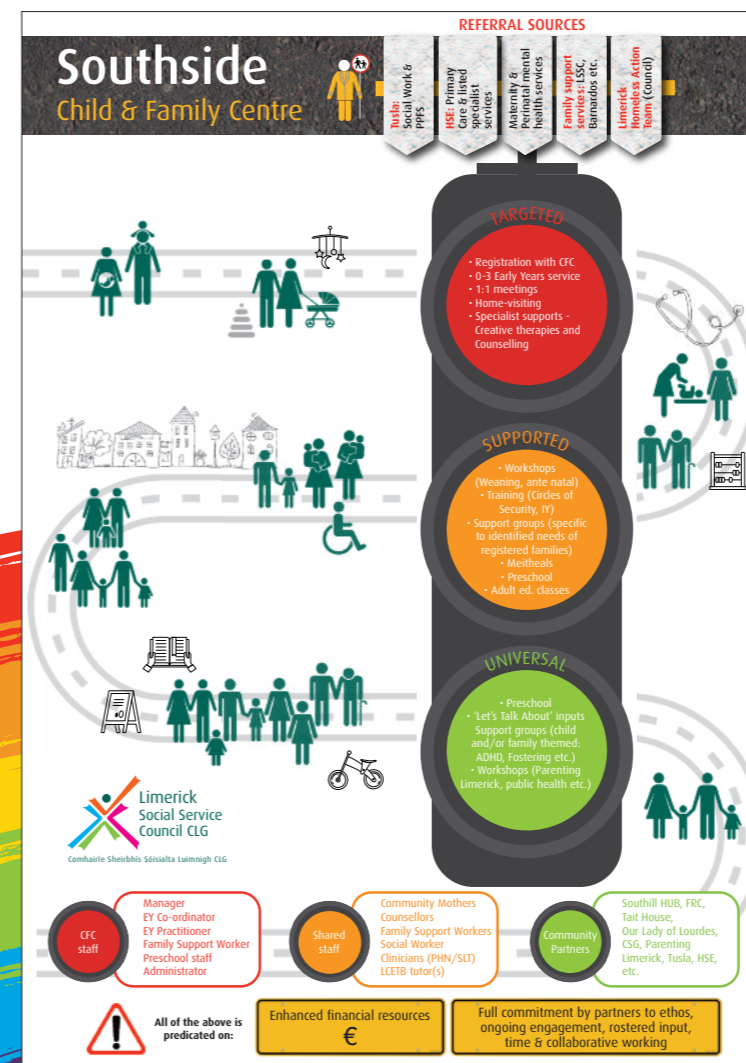


Aerial View of the CFC and the surrounding campus and community

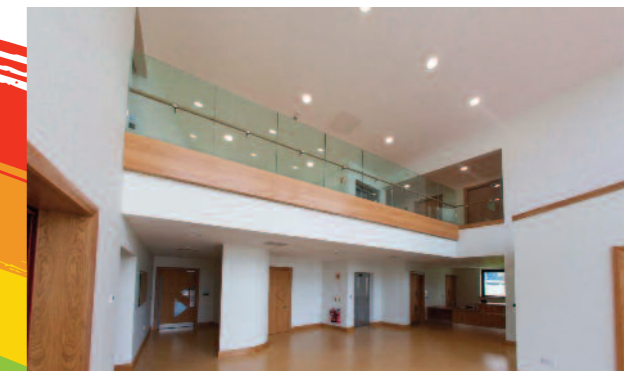
# A Model of Quality Early Years and Family Support Provision

While the builders were hard at work bringing the beautiful CFC building to life, there was also significant work going on in the background to develop a model of service provision for the CFC. It is the vision of the Consortium that children in the south side of Limerick achieve outcomes in line with their peers across Limerick City and that they have the same opportunities to realize their potential. Given that there are areas of significant disadvantage and economic and social inequality on the south side of Limerick City, it was agreed that we need to develop an innovative model of service that can be delivered in partnership with the local community and be responsive to changing needs.

LSSC, along with many of our consortium partners, developed a model of service provision based on progressive universalism, which ensures that services are provided to everyone in the community while recognizing that some families and some children may require additional supports. Below is a model of what this might look like, and we look forward to working with the local community, parents, carers, children and our partners to bring this model to life.



The Rainbow view from the back entrance



Internal View of the CFC

# Connections with Partners

A core part of the work of LSSC is working in partnership with other agencies to deliver our services. These include government agencies and departments, schools, colleges of further education, universities, community and voluntary organisations, community centres, hospitals, GPs and philanthropic organisations. These organisations have provided a range of supports—funding, expertise, collaborative delivery—that has enhanced the quality of the service that we provide to our clients. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our funders, in particular, and all of our partner organisations for their significant levels of support over the past year. We look forward to ongoing engagement with all of the services.

## LSSC's Funders

Tusla, Child and Family Agency  
Health Service Executive  
Pobal  
Limerick City and County Council  
Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board  
PAUL Partnership:  
- ABC Start Right  
- Incredible Years  
Limerick Childcare Committee

Department of Children and Youth Affairs  
Department of Education and Skills  
Department of Social Protection

## Partner Agencies

Adapt Services  
Age and Opportunity (Dublin)  
Barnardos  
Diocese of Limerick  
Focus Ireland  
Irish Foster Carer's Association  
Limerick Institute of Technology  
Community Law and Mediation  
Doras Luimni  
Limerick College of Further Education  
Limerick Enterprise Development Park (LEDP)  
Limerick Youth Service  
Mary Immaculate College  
Mid-West Simon Community  
Novas  
Family Resource Centres  
University of Limerick  
University Hospital Limerick  
University Maternity Hospital, Limerick  
Treoir

In addition, staff across Limerick Social Service Council support a number of inter-agency initiatives including the Child and Family Centre Consortium, ABC Start Right, the Limerick Homeless Alliance, CYPSC's Parenting Limerick, CYPSC's Youth Mental Health Sub-group, Limerick Childcare Committee Tusla's Parenting Support Champion Initiative, the Incredible Years Limerick Management Group and the Youth Housing Allocation Group.

LSSC collaborates regularly with other agencies in the delivery of programmes and workshops. Partners include Tusla; HSE officers such as PHNs, psychologists and Medical Social Workers; Barnardos; PAUL Partnership and ISPCC.

Staff in the Community Social Work and Family Support Service and Teen Parent Support Programme are leading on a number of Meitheals and actively engaging with other agencies to support families to achieve the outcomes identified through the Meitheal Process. Staff also participate actively in Family Welfare, Child Protection and Children in Care conferences, meetings and reviews as required.

## Services that Availed of the LSSC Centre in 2019

During 2019, the Tusla Aftercare Service, HSE Public Health Nursing Clinics, Limerick Community Law and Mediation Service, Phoenix Creative Therapy, Epilepsy Ireland and the Limerick Childcare Committee offered services from their base in LSSC. In addition, a number of other organisations, agencies and groups availed of the Centre to deliver programmes, consultations and meetings with clients.

### These included the following:

- Alcoholics Anonymous
- An-Anon
- AWARE
- Bruree House
- Cancer Support
- Diocesan Lourdes Pilgrimage Office
- Emergency Response Group
- Gam-Anon
- Narcotics Anonymous
- Overeaters Anonymous
- SHINE
- MOVE

