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# Facing Change Together

Annual Report 2022





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## 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 60 staff across our management, programmes, administration and maintenance. We are also supported in our work by over 20 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 work on a partnership basis with our service users and with other agencies and professionals from the statutory, voluntary and community sectors.

## Our Mission - What We Do

Through a caring response, Limerick Social Service Council CLG aims to promote the dignity and growth of individuals, families and groups.

Our services are designed to provide personal and practical support for children, young people and adults who need extra help at different times of their lives and in all stages of the family cycle.

We offer a comprehensive range of Programmes, covering prevention and early intervention, as well as intensive services and personalised packages of support for service users with more complex issues or whose lives have been disrupted by crisis situations.

These services are delivered through the CHILD & FAMILY SERVICE, the EARLY YEARS SERVICES, the SOUTHSIDE CHILD & FAMILY CENTRE, the COUNSELLING & PSYCHOTHERAPY SERVICE, and SERVICES FOR OLDER PEOPLE.

We deliver our services at the LSSC Centre in Henry Street, Limerick, at the Southside Education Campus 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 for self-help groups and charitable organisations to convene and engage in social care and community work. Our premises in Thomondgate is allocated to supported accommodation for homeless women in Limerick.

## Our Core Values

Limerick Social Service Council CLG (LSSC) 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.

## 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.

# Limerick - A Changing Population

**205,444**

Census figures show that the population of Limerick has increased by over 10,000 people since 2016 with the population of Limerick City and County recorded at 205,444 in April 2022.

**103,223**

The population included 103,223 females and 102,221 males.

**6,111**

The population change was made up of a natural increase (i.e. births minus deaths) of 6,111 and an estimated net inward migration (i.e. population change minus natural increase) of 4,434.

**5.2 persons**

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

**31-33.6 yrs**

The average age of mothers giving birth was 31 years in Limerick City and 33.6 years in Limerick County.



## Chair Welcome

As the chair of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present this Annual Report of the Limerick Social Service Council (LSSC) for 2022.

This report covers another year of change in society, the likes of which most of us have never seen. We live in a time of increasing global fragility and a historic period of heightened uncertainties. Even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, just over two years ago, there were concerns about the needs of many individuals and families in our own local communities, with disadvantage, marginalisation and poverty on the rise.

The pandemic and its aftermath accelerated these challenges and created increasing uncertainty not only for individuals but also for health and welfare services. In times when the lives of service users have become steadily precarious, there is a greater need for services to understand 'what works' and to adapt to the complex contingencies of people's lives.

It is therefore a testament to the commitment of LSSC staff that so many vulnerable individuals and families were reached during this time, especially through services that were entirely new for the LSSC. I want to pay tribute to all of those staff, to the communities they worked with, and also to our dedicated funders and partner agencies that help to strengthen the impact of the LSSC services.

I would also like to acknowledge the LSSC General Manager whose leadership guided the LSSC through another year of facing change. I would particularly like to express our appreciation to Ger Crowley as outgoing Chair and to my fellow board members for their time and expertise in helping to ensure the accountability, vitality and good governance of the organisation.

After another year of change, we enter 2023 energised and driven by the opportunities that lie ahead. As we look to the future needs of those we support, we know that the work of the LSSC has never been more relevant, nor more important. Our commitment to bringing quality services to bear on some of the biggest challenges that individuals and families face has never been stronger. With our resilient teams, partners and supporters, I am confident that the LSSC will deliver the best possible outcomes from our resources as we continue through the next stages of our journey to serve Limerick.

**Kevin O'Farrell**

**Chair**

**Board of Directors**

# Message from the General Manager

This report provides the annual overview to our funders, our service users and the public in respect of the LSSC's activities for 2022. It sets out in detail the work undertaken to support individuals, children, and families in the Limerick area, and provides an update on progress in achieving aims and dealing with the challenges that our staff and services users have experienced.

I am satisfied to report that at the end of a second year of the global pandemic associated with Covid-19, LSSC continued to provide invaluable services to individuals and families, supporting their specific circumstances, promoting their well-being and welfare, and offering practical assistance as required. We remain, however, profoundly aware of the impact that Covid-19 and other significant social changes have made on individuals, communities and our committed staff.

While our work at times is complex and made more so by the pressures around us, I am privileged to have worked on behalf of so many individuals and groups in Limerick in 2022 and I am proud of the achievements and the improvements our staff have made in this period. Some of those key achievements include:

- Operating the Henry Street Early Years' Service at full capacity with 49 children, including seven children with additional needs, who regularly attended services in the Pre-school and Toddler Rooms.
- Responding to over 200 referrals by our Child and Family Service (CFS), which offered almost 3,000 one-to-one client sessions/meetings in addition to parenting programmes, workshops and a range of other group sessions.
- Continuing to deliver a full suite of services from the Southside Child and Family Centre that included the CFS, the Early Years' Services, the Counselling & Psychotherapy service, the Schools' PHN service, the Speech & Language service, the Community Law service, Creative Therapies, and the Community Midwifery Services.
- Meeting the needs of children at the Early Years' Services at Southside Child and Family Centre, which was reported as either 'exemplary' or 'highly effective' through a TUSLA Regulatory inspection and a Department of Education Early Years Education inspection. These reports were also followed up by a parent feedback report that further indicated an overall positive satisfaction by parents.
- Arranging almost 1,800 sessions for adults and young people referred to the Counselling and Psychotherapy Service.
- Delivering a range of Older Persons' supports in a number of key communities in Limerick to enhance their wellbeing, to address their isolation, loneliness, and vulnerability, particularly those impacted by the effects of the pandemic.
- Continuing to strengthen our governance and management arrangements with the support from additional Board members, the establishment of Board sub-committees and a newly formed leadership level within our staff group.

I would like to say a special thank you to those who contribute to LSSC's success year after year:

- The individuals, families, and community members who access LSSC services and provide critical insights on how we can strengthen our approach to supporting individuals and families most in need.
- LSSC programme and administrative staff and volunteers who work diligently in our services in ensuring LSSC success.
- Our Board members for their leadership, feedback, valuable support, and expertise.
- Local agencies and professionals who work closely with LSSC programme staff, share indispensable knowledge and resources, and promote our programmes and services across Limerick.
- Our statutory and funding partners, whose commitment to the communities we serve ensures our work together reaches the families and communities who need the most support.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to Mr Ger Crowley as outgoing Chair, who has provided invaluable support in our work during the past year. I welcome Kevin O'Farrell as the new Chair and look forward to working alongside him in the year ahead.

As we publish this Annual Report, I am acutely aware that individuals and families across Limerick are struggling with a constantly changing social and economic environment. It is clear that our services are as necessary today as they were 50 years ago. As we continue to live in immensely uncertain times, the LSSC will do everything we can to work towards a positive future for the communities we serve. By the time we compile next year's annual report, we will also have a new strategy in place to drive our future work. I very much look forward to reporting then on the next chapter of LSSC's work in Limerick.

**Brian Ryan**  
LSSC General Manager





# Highlights from Services in 2022



## The Child and Family Service (CFS)

The Child and Family Service (CFS) works in partnership with families to support them to improve relationships and address any 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 CFS work. The CFS provides one to one and group supports to parents and carers, children, young people and extended family members. The CFS consists of the following individual programmes:

### The Community Social Work and Family Support Service

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 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 all services work together as an organisation to ensure the safety of children.

### The Teen Parent Support Programme (TPSP)

TPSP Limerick is part of the National Teen Parents Support Programme and 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.

Support is provided through one-to-one home visits and centre-based work, financial and non-financial assistance to enable the young parent to remain in education, group work programmes to support individuals in their parenting roles and in their own personal development. Group work include a weekly parent and toddler group, the City Slickers Programme, the Mellow Bumps Ante-Natal Programme and other ante-natal meetings.

### The Community Mothers Programme

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. Community Mothers 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.

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.

### The Relationships and Sexual Health Programme

The Relationships and Sexual Health Programme aims to increase parental capacity to communicate with their teenage children regarding 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.

## 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 the State. 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.

## Family Welfare Conferencing Service

The Family Welfare Conferencing (FWC) Service is a specialised service that supports family members to participate in the FWC process and to formulate plans for their children. It brings together family members, along with the child where appropriate, in a structured, family led, decision making meeting. The FWC Coordinator meets each family member in advance of the FWC to ensure that everyone has opportunities to express their views. The aim of these meetings is to assist families to formulate a safe family plan in the best interests of their children and is a method of family intervention that enables families to provide their own solutions to the difficulties they face.

## Activities and Developments in 2022

Intensive one to one work continued across all areas in 2022 as the CFS continued to receive high volumes of referrals from Tusla and the HSE, as well as referrals from other voluntary agencies, schools and self-referrals. The Team continued to deliver a busy schedule of parenting groups, programmes and workshops. While take-up for some programmes has been challenging post COVID, there has been considerable engagement from parents of children of different ages and across different levels of need.

### A summary of CFS activities and developments in 2022 are outlined below:

**200+**  
referrals

Over 200 referrals and nearly 400 drop-ins were made to the CFS service during the year with several thousand client contacts made in response by Programme staff. The number of referrals (209) marked a 14% increase on the number of referrals for the previous year.

**%**  
referrals

Community Mothers Programme - 44%  
The highest percentage of referrals were made to Community Social Work and Family Support Service- 31%  
Teen Parent Support Programme (14%) with 11% to the remaining programmes.

**261**  
families

received a one-to-one service, of which 35% of families were supported through the Community Mothers Programme,  
29% through the Community Social Work and Family Support Service and 24% were supported through the TPSP.

**15%**  
increase

The number of overall client contacts was almost 3,000 and marked a 15% increase on last year's data. These were divided between 41% through the Community Mothers Programme, 24% through the Community Social Work and Family Support Service and 18% through the TPSP. The CFS staff were involved in 10 Meitheals as Lead Practitioners.

**388**  
direct drop-ins

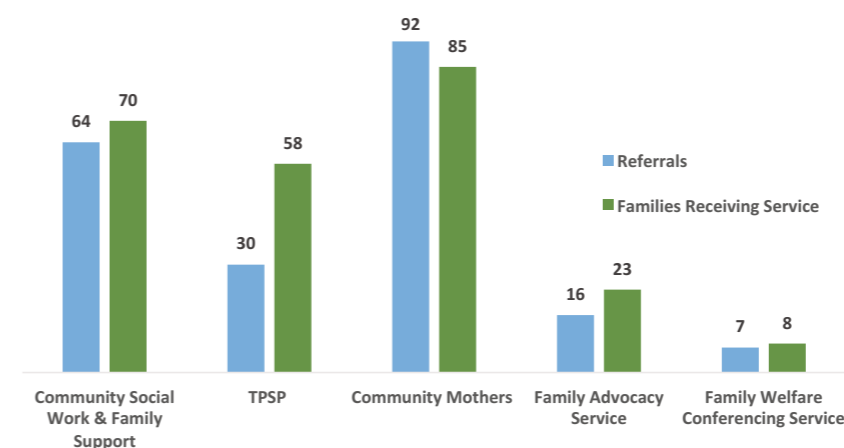
388 individuals also contacted the service through direct drop-ins and availed of advice, information or were signposted to other more relevant services. There were an additional 3 Relationship and Sexual Health Programmes for young people.

**23**

parenting programmes

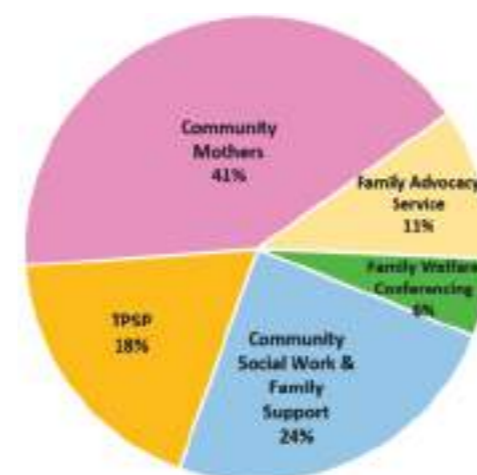
23 parenting programmes or ongoing groups were arranged in addition to 22 workshops. Approximately, 450 parents were in attendance which was a 57% increase on numbers for the previous year.

**Fig. 1 Numbers of Referrals & Families receiving CFS Services in 2022**

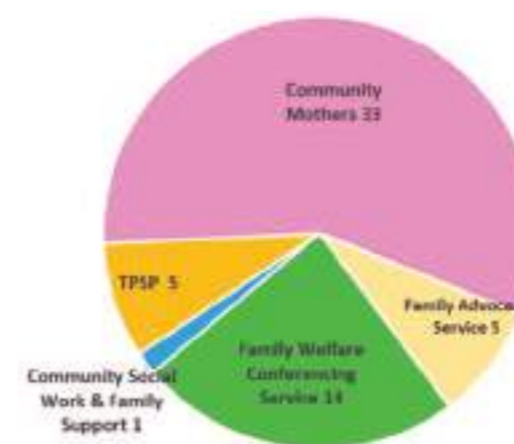


Note: The 7 Referrals to the Family Welfare Conferencing Service included 2 referrals for Meitheal.

**Fig. 2 One-to-One Sessions by CFC Services in 2022**

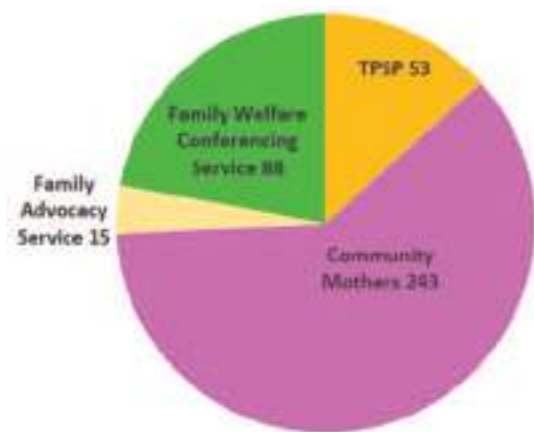


**Fig. 3 Parenting Programmes, Groupworks & Workshops in 2022**





**Fig. 4 Parents Attending Programmes, Groupwork & Workshops In 2022**



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

**Referral Processing & Data Protection**

The referral form and CFS database was revised and updated, providing a valuable resource for case management, effective and safe file storage and reporting requirements.

**Promoting Service Quality**

A Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) document was completed that provides a clear framework for how the CFS operates. Roll-out of the SOP is expected in 2023.

**The Community Mothers Programme**

The Programme continued to participate in a national initiative to develop a standardised model of community-based home visiting.

Locally, the team delivered seven weaning workshops, four Healthy Food Made Easy programmes, four Baby Massage Programmes, a Baby Reflexology Programme, a Baby Incredible Years Programme, three Parents Plus Early Years Programmes, an ante-natal workshop and a messy play workshop.

Two parent and toddler groups were facilitated in Henry Street and in the Southside CFC.

As part of the Limerick Lifelong Learning Festival, the Tuesday parent and toddler group in the CFC was expanded to become a campus wide celebration with children from Le Chéile and Gaelscoil Sheoirse Clancy participating. Activities included a mobile farm, story time with ABC Start Right, horticulture and outdoor and indoor play.

A trip to Dublin Zoo was co-organised with the TPSP involving twenty-two parents and twenty-eight children and an Easter celebration event included sixteen parents and fifteen children.

**Teen Parent Support Programme**

The TPSP programme continued to support the developmental, educational, and parenting needs of young parents through a range of interventions including one-to-one parenting and advocacy support; support with childcare and education costs; two Paediatric First Aid Workshops involving over 30 parents; two City Slickers programmes involving sixteen parents.

Nationally, the Programme developed a new centralised database, which is used for reporting, policy development, etc.

**Relationship and Sexual Health Programmes (RSH)**

The RSH facilitated three International Women’s Groups in addition to a Parents Plus Adolescents Programme in Newcastle West and a West Limerick Fathers Parenting Group. Three RSH programmes were arranged with Teenagers and Young Adults with Foróige, East Limerick Youth Clubs and Rathkeale Youth Space.

An outdoors West Limerick Parent Support Group meeting monthly up to July 2022 and a Women’s Group was organised in Newcastle West.

The number of participants included 46 teenagers and 60 adults in groupwork and 17 new families in one-to-one work.

**The Family Advocacy Service**

The Family Advocacy Service continued to support parents of children in care and actively supported the Tusla Parental Participation Seed Funding project. The Service led on the development and editing on the Family Advocacy Information Booklet, which included a video, and was formally launched at the end of 2022.

**The Family Welfare Conference Service**

The FWC Co-ordinator continued to support Special Care Family Welfare Conferences and Chairs internal Meitheal meetings, which has proved a valuable support in supporting more complex Meitheal cases. The Co-ordinator also supported the Tusla national survey of adults who attended Family Welfare Conferences in 2021.

**Staff Training & Professional Development**

The Senior Community Social Worker continued to deliver enhanced Child Protection Training within LSSC and provided intensive support to staff when writing and submitting CPWFs / RARFs. Additional training and professional development availed of by staff included supervision, Trauma Informed Care, Parenting Under Pressure Therapeutic, Tusla Parenting Champions Initiative training, Baby Massage, Therapeutic Parenting, Level 5 training in Family Support, Baby Incredible Years, Parents Plus Early Years, Parents Plus Healthy Families, HSE Foundation in Sexual Health Promotion, GOSHH-Sexual Health and HIV and Working with LGPTQI+ training, Housing and Homeless Law training with Community Law and Mediation, DSGBV at ADAPT House, and Children First training. In addition, a Family Support Worker is supported with an MSc Systemic Psychotherapy Programme in UCD.

**Interagency Work**

Staff supported several inter-agency initiatives including the Child and Family Centre Consortium, ABC Start Right, the Incredible Years Limerick Management Group, the Limerick Homeless Alliance, Parenting Limerick, Tusla’s Parenting Support Champion Initiative, Limerick Childcare Committee, the Youth Housing Allocation Group, the Infant Mental Health Network, the IPAS Child and Family Network, and the East Limerick Family Support Network. Staff members participated on Interagency Fora in East Limerick and the Child and Family Network in West Limerick.

The CFS also collaborated regularly with other external agencies including Tusla, the HSE, the Child and Family Centre, Barnardos, Limerick Youth Service, UL, LIT, MIC, ISPCC, CAMHS, Family Resource Centres, PAUL Partnership, West Limerick Resources, Ballyhoura Development, Limerick City and County Council, the Peter McVerry Trust, Ana Liffey, Focus Ireland, NOVAS, Bedford Row Project and Coolmine TC.



# Is breá an rud an óige ach ní thagann sí faoi dhó.

Leo Varadkar  
AN TAOISEACH



## Southside Child and Family Centre (CFC)

The Southside Child and Family Centre (CFC) is designed to provide a safe, secure yet stimulating environment for children ranging from new-born to pre-school age. The aim of the Centre's services is to help children and their parents and guardians to engage with the educational system from an early stage in the child's development and thereby work to remove the barriers that have heretofore obstructed children from continuing in education. The Centre has committed to using the Meitheal process to assess strengths and needs, and to develop integrated plans around the children and families attending the CFC.

The CFC is located at the new Southside Education Campus in Galvone, Limerick City and is a state-of-the-art campus providing integrated and accessible service provision for children. It is anticipated that the Centre will play a valuable role in the social and physical regeneration of the area.

The Centre is supported by a consortium of agencies with the LSSC as lead agency in the management of the CFC and in the development of the Early Years Centre element of the campus. Agencies and partners represented in the consortium include the Diocese of Limerick, Tusla, the HSE, the Limerick City and County Council, the Department of Education, the Limerick Childcare Committee, the Limerick Enterprise Development Partnership, the Limerick and Clare ETB, Le Chéile N.S, and Gael Scoil Sheoirse Clancy.

### Activities and Developments in 2022

In 2022, the CFC continued to grow in numbers as many services were rolled out by staff and through the CFC partners. The Centre has committed to using the Meitheal process to assess strengths and needs and develop integrated plans around the children and families attending the CFC.

A summary of CFC activities and developments in 2022 are as follows:

#### Early Years' Service / Preschool

A new Early Years Manager joined the service and contributed to further developments of the service. Numbers in the Early Years' Service increased with the opening up of the Baby Room and Wobbler Room. This also allowed the CFC to access enhanced funding through the Core Funding Scheme.

By year end, 56 children were registered at the Service and related to 51 families – 47 children were from the Southside, 4 children came from the City Centre and 5 children came from other areas in Limerick. 16 children had additional needs (approved for five AIM workers).

There were 34 sponsored places allocated to Tusla (27), LCCC (2), HSE (4), and the Department of Education (1).

In addition to routine activities, numerous fun events were also arranged for children including an end of school year event with a mobile farm, an outdoor Halloween trick-or-treating experience, and a Santa grotto at Christmas.

#### Referrals

Referrals to the CFC were received from Tusla, Limerick City and County Council Homeless Action Team, Public Health Nurses, local community groups and through self-referral. Twelve children were referred to Better Start for AIMS support and the CFC have continued to develop positive working relationships with Better Start through various training support and mentoring input.

**Wrap-Around Services** Staff from the LSSC Community Social Work and Family Support Service have been available to children and families attending the Centre, with some families engaging in the Meitheal Process. To date, three referrals have been made to the Community Mothers Programme and five children were referred to the Community Social Work and Family Support service.

Counselling and Psychotherapy continued to be an integral part of service delivery with four counsellors covering adolescent and adult counselling, and Family Therapy. On average five clients per day were offered sessions.

The PHN Service operated through regular clinic sessions, undertaking child developmental assessments, sight and hearing assessments, and providing health promotion and safety awareness information. The availability of the PHN service was eased in during the second part of the year as access to schools was re-established.

Phoenix Creative Therapies provided music, art and play therapy in the CFC which is funded through ABC Start Right. Children referred from Southill FRC have also attended Play Therapy in the CFC. Since the beginning of the Early Years' Service, twelve children have been referred for creative therapies.

The Community Midwifery Services was available to parents from various parts of Limerick on a weekly basis and catered for approximately twelve appointments per week.

Planning for the establishment of the Speech and Language Service continued and it is envisaged that a collaborative approach with schools in the area and UL will result in clinical hours being available through 4th Year Speech and Language students in 2023.

A number of Access Visits were facilitated in the CFC and acknowledged as a positive experience and safe environment for the families involved.

The Traveller Health Worker was based in the Centre for part of the week and worked with children and families on other days. Three referrals have been made to the Early Years' Service.

A number of activities linked to Le Chéile were arranged including a Drumming Workshop with students from Le Chéile, a Narrative 4 Workshops with two classes from Le Chéile, a Song Birds Workshop with Early Start, an Art Project with members of the Travelling community in Le Chéile, and an invitation to the Mobile Farm event was offered to both schools.

#### **Additional Support Programmes, Groups & Workshops**

Additional support programmes were offered from the Centre either through on-line consultations, groupwork or in person. Examples included: Baby Incredible Years, Baby Massage, TLC Kidz Programme through Barnardos, Parenting when Separated Programme, a Drumming Workshop arranged by the School Completion Programme and DEPS, Traveller Health Workshops, an Adolescent Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Group, the Helium Arts Mid-Term Programme, HSE Health Promotion Programmes, Parents Plus activities (Healthy Families and Healthy Food Made Easy), Mellow Bumps, a Baby Massage Class for women attending the Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Team, and a Traveller Women's group on an Oral History Programme.

#### **Engaging with Parents & Guardians**

The CFC team consulted and engaged on a range of initiatives with parents / guardians including through programmes such as Parent Plus, Songbirds, Paediatric First Aid classes, and has offered advice and information on accommodation, school access and other therapeutic supports. An external review of the Early Years' Service was conducted with parents and guardians.

#### **Staff Training & Development**

Staff participated in several information and training events including First Aid Response training, Manual Handling training, and HACCP training. Staff also attended various sessions offered by Limerick Childcare, Talk Boost, Lámh, GDPR Briefing, and Mentoring in Early Years.

**“Those working with babies, young children and their families are at the very heart of the early childhood system. They are central to delivering high-quality services, and play a crucial role in bringing about the changes necessary to realising the vision for early childhood.”**

**FIRST 5, A WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT STRATEGY FOR BABIES, YOUNG CHILDREN & THEIR FAMILIES**

**2019-2028**

# Early Years' Service, Henry Street

The LSSC Early Years' Service (EYS) is acknowledged as one of the leading community Crèche and Pre-school services in Limerick City that provides quality care for babies and young children. In its purpose-built facility in Henry Street, the EYS 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 EYS offers a full day Crèche Service and a Pre-School Service five days a week.

The Centre gained Validation in Síolta Standards, which is the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and is designed to support the improvement of quality across all aspects of practice in early childhood care and education settings where children aged birth to six years are present.

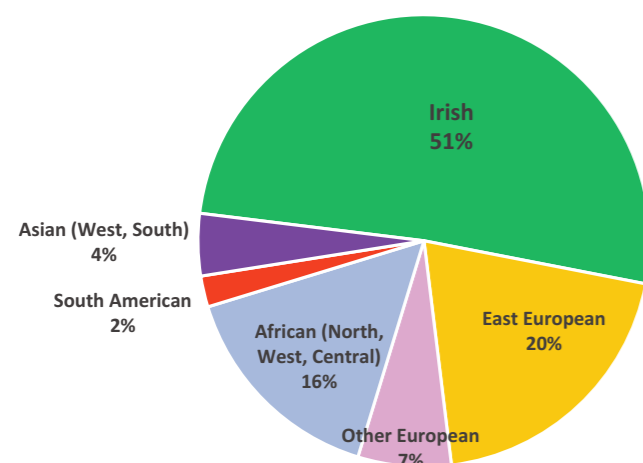
The EYS team are supported by the valuable input of 12 staff from the CE scheme through Paul Partnership.

## Activities and Developments in 2022

The EYS generally operated at full capacity during 2022 with a waiting list of people that wish to use the service. Daily routines were maintained with full day care, 8.30am to 5.00pm, five days a week. The Centre also offered the Preschool service from 9.00am to 12.00pm. In 2022, 49 children regularly attended services with 44 children in the two Pre-school rooms and five children in the Toddler room. Seven children with additional needs attended services with the assistance of two Aims support workers. Children also came from a range of nationalities.

Due to the COVID-19 lockdown, a number of parents worked from home, resulting in a decrease in demand for the Baby room. In response, the LSSC decided to close the Baby room and open a second Pre-school room. In the post-pandemic environment as most parents return to work, it is planned that the Baby room will re-open in August 2023 and a second Pre-school room will open upstairs in the building that will facilitate eleven additional ECCE children. It is envisaged that the LSSC will operate then with a capacity of 61 children aged six months to four years.

**Fig. 5 Nationality of Children Attending EYS in 2022**



## Programme of Care

Funding was acquired for a range of new outdoor equipment such as bikes, seesaws, swings and a new climbing frame to enhance the range of outside activities. ABC Start Right also provided for outdoor clothing which allowed the children to play outdoors for longer periods regardless of the weather.

Indoor activities were also complemented by personal hygiene activities and were guided by resources developed through national initiatives. Of particular enjoyment for the children was the personal hygiene programme through the Safefood 'Rufus' way including good handwashing habits.

Staff provided a range of activities from Dina, the Dinosaur Social Skills and Problem-Solving Curriculum. This training seeks to strengthen children's social, emotional, and academic competencies such as understanding and communicating feelings, using effective problem-solving strategies, managing anger, practicing friendship and conversational skills. Dina was provided from the Incredible Years Programme and also run through Paul Partnership.

As part of the EYS' commitment to supporting the needs of individual children and children who may have additional needs, Play Therapy was arranged to assist children to improve emotional literacy and alleviate behaviour and mental health problems. A Play Therapist was available to provide small group and one-to-one sessions on requests from parents.

Of particular benefit for children is the space offered to relax in the newly established sensory room. Staff reported benefits for the children that 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.

## Community Activities

In addition to daily routines, a number of community activities were arranged for the children both at the Centre and at local venues. Children expressed considerable enjoyment with the visit from Limerick Gardaí who arrived in a Garda car and motorbike, which the children were allowed to experience close-up.

Children also enjoyed the road safety activities organized by staff on national 'Beep Beep' Day as they learned about road safety and the safe cross code in a fun way, and also received high vis vests from the RSA.

A Christmas singing event with older persons was arranged and children made cards to express their appreciation to the singers.

## Staff Training & Professional Development

The COVID-19 pandemic and corresponding restrictions affected the internal and external training calendars significantly. Nevertheless, the EYS team worked to ensure their training and professional development was maintained and updated. Staff training and development included two staff members were supported through 3rd level degrees, one member reached the final stage of Level 6 training, all staff participated in Child Safeguarding training, and eight staff completed First Aid training. In addition, four staff completed Lámh training, which is the manual or key word sign system used by children and adults with intellectual disability and communication needs in Ireland. Lámh is grant-aided by the HSE and is endorsed by the Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapists and Down Syndrome Ireland.

**“Travellers are an Irish minority ethnic group whose ethnicity was only formally acknowledged by the Irish State in 2017... Representing just over 1% of the population, Travellers in Ireland experience persistent racism and discrimination resulting in poorer outcomes in terms of health, education, employment and accommodation...”**

**NATIONAL TRAVELLER HEALTH ACTION PLAN (2022-2027)**

## **Traveller Health Advocacy Programme**

The Limerick City Traveller Health Advocacy Programme (THAP) has been operating in collaboration with the HSE Mid-West Traveller Health Unit since 2013. The Programme was developed in response to findings from the All Ireland Traveller Health Study (2010), which highlighted the significant health inequalities experienced by the Irish Travelling Community. The overarching aim of THAP is to improve the health status of Travellers in Limerick City

In 2021, THAP staff consisted of one Co-ordinator, four trained Traveller Health Advocates and two Traveller Health Assistants. The Team provided peer-led evidence-based health information to 150 families living on eight halting sites in Limerick City. The overall aim of this community development approach is to improve the health outcomes of Limerick City Travellers.

### **Activities and Developments in 2022**

As in previous years, THAP health messages were delivered in three priority subject areas: Cardiovascular Health, Diabetes and Mental Health.

Additional health information was also disseminated on topics including Covid 19, vaccines, National Cancer Screening Programmes, self-care / stress management, accessing crisis support, menopause, Melanotan, smoking cessation, water safety, active play, oral health, drug and alcohol awareness / supports, asthma signs and symptoms.

In 2022, the Traveller Health team focused on delivering evidence-based health messages locally, as well as updating their own skills, training and certification to required levels.

Planning took place for 2023 which aims to cover a wide range of Health and Wellbeing initiatives, as well as the continuation of the interagency work that supports Traveller uptake of services in Limerick. A key priority for the programme in 2023 will be the local implementation of the National Traveller Health Action Plan, which has been initiated to improve the health experiences and outcomes of Travellers.

### **Service User Feedback:**

**“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.”**



**“A clear evidence base exists that psychological therapies are effective for common mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression ....and are, as, or more, effective than medication ...with higher rates of treatment retention and more enduring effects.”**

**CHANGING LIVES FOR THE BETTER:  
A National Evaluation of the Counselling in Primary Care Service 2022**

## Counselling and Psychotherapy Service

The aim of the Counselling and Psychotherapy Service is to provide a professional, accessible service to adults and adolescents (14 years and over) 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 LSSC Counsellors and Psychotherapists support clients in a confidential, safe, compassionate and non-judgmental environment.

The Service is available to individuals in Limerick City and County. Referral pathways to access the Service are through Tusla the Child and Family Agency and through the HSE.

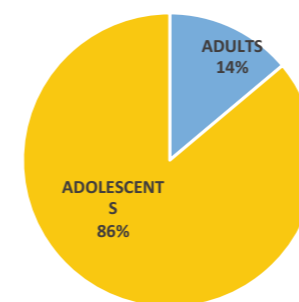
LSSC's Counselling and Psychotherapy Service is a member of the Association for Agency-based Counselling and Psychotherapy in Ireland (AACPI). All staff undergo stringent pre-employment assessments to ensure that each staff member is professionally qualified and eligible for accreditation with the Irish 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.

The range of issues presenting to the Counselling & Psychotherapy Service include: physical problems, anxiety/stress, abuse, self-esteem, anger, depression, relationships, trauma, domestic violence, conflict, unemployment, sexuality, work issues, suicide, self-harm, bereavement, living/welfare, food related issues.

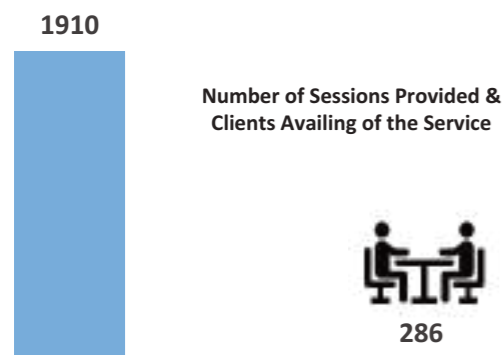
### Activities and Developments in 2022

Concerns about the impact of COVID-19 and its aftermath continued during 2022 with increased levels of psychological distress (e.g. anxiety, depression, etc.) particularly amongst young people and people in lower-income groups. In spite of a heightening in the seriousness and complexity of issues presenting, the Service continued to deliver Counselling and Psychotherapy sessions to adult and adolescent clients referred by the HSE and Tusla pathways. A summary of the Service's activities and developments in 2022 are as follows:

**Fig. 6 Adults & Adolescents Referrals to LSSC Counselling and Psychotherapy in 2022**



**Fig. 7 LSSC Counselling and Psychotherapy in 2022**



### Services for Adults & Adolescents

635 cases were screened/triaged of which 325 were undertaken on behalf of the HSE and 310 were undertaken on behalf of Tusla. The Service supported 313 clients and offered 1,790 sessions. In addition, the Service responded to individuals (Drop-ins) who contacted the Service for information or for signposting to other relevant services.

### Clinical Supervision

The internal Clinical Supervisor continued to provide regular supervision to staff and support on case management to ensure the clinical governance of the therapeutic work. In this regard, internal supervision ensured that LSSC provided the highest quality counselling service to clients; that therapists were supported and guided in their work; and that the Service adhered to best practice guidelines and was compliant with the objectives of LSSC and funders.

A Peer Supervision Model was further developed.

### Counselling & Psychotherapy Database

The Database was regularly updated to provide an essential management resource in maintaining records, generating data and on day-to-day case management.

### Training & Professional Development

One or more members of the Team participated in the following training and workshops:

- Trauma Informed Practice
- Legal Studies for Psychotherapy
- Suicide Bereavement Conference
- Workshop on On-line Therapy
- Pandemic therapy with the Mindfulness Clinic
- Master Class in Supervision /Gestalt Centre
- Children's First, Child Safeguarding and Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Training (updated)
- QQI Level 6 Train the Trainers course
- Webinar with PCPSI: Introduction to Internal Family Systems Model

- On-line therapy course with Tusla/AACPI
- Certificate course in Suicide Bereavement, provided by the HSE
- Workshop with Dr. Alvina Grosu, Chartered Psychologist/ Integrative Psychotherapist on records and note keeping in therapeutic practice (Ethical, Legal & Clinical Aspects) (14 CPD points)
- Online course with PCPSI on Self Compassion: An antidote to shame with Christopher Germer PHD
- Workshop in understanding trauma and supporting the needs of people fleeing war/and or persecution
- Diploma in Gambling Addiction Treatment
- EMDR for Trauma Treatment
- Course in Cyber Psychotherapy sponsored by AACPI (one Therapist agreed to attend 100 hours of training).

### Interagency Work

The Service continued to engage with a range of other agencies and professionals such as the following:

- Participation in the Limerick Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC) Child and the Youth Mental Health Sub-group
- Participation in a multi service young person's mental health liaison group, involving LSSC, Limerick Youth Service, Jigsaw, Pieta House, CAMHS
- Participation in a multi service bereavement group involving LSSC, Milford Hospice, HSE, Children's Grief Project, Pieta House
- Facilitation of two on-line self-management courses for Migraine Ireland
- Delivery of a full module covering mental health (12 weeks of three-hour lectures) on Researching Social Change in the Department of Sociology, UL.

### Service User Feedback:

**“As a parent of a child attending CFC when it was suggested by a support worker that Counselling space would provide a private space for me to talk, I really did not think it would help me as much as it did.”** (Mother).

**“Couples' Counselling has opened up effective communication within the family and we are so grateful for the service”** (Couple in their 40s).

**A longer life brings with it opportunities, not only for older people and their families, but also for societies as a whole. Additional years provide the chance to pursue new activities such as further education, a new career or a long-neglected passion. Older people also contribute in many ways to their families and communities.**

**WHO: AGEING AND HEALTH KEY FACTS 2022**

## Services for Older People

Services for Older People is one of the smallest service areas in LSSC, however, its impact is deemed to be considerable for its size. The Service has two part-time staff, who work primarily in the Southill, St. Mary's Park and Corbally areas.

One core element of the Service is home visiting, which is valued as an important social link for many older people who may be living alone with limited or no family support locally. Through these visits, staff able to connect service users to relevant services, agencies and groups that are operating in the area and provide practical assistance, information and advice on how to access services and to fill in forms. In addition, staff offer supports through a range of social activities including weekly groups for the over 55s, dinner clubs, information events, dances and celebrations and day trips away.

Referrals to the Service are from HSE services, other community and voluntary agencies and by self-referral.

### Activities and Developments in 2022

The following outlines a summary of key activities and developments in 2022:

#### General Activities

Day-to-day support was arranged for elder persons in the target communities in relation to shopping, medication from pharmacies, laundry, personal alarms, services from electricians/plumbers, arranging appointments, grass cutting, keys cut, shoe repairs and attending socially distanced funerals.

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, etc. Some older people required assistance completing the Fair Deal Scheme form which can seem overwhelming for many.

Visits and social contacts were made to help to address the social isolation and anxiety arising from the absence of contacts with family members and friends, and due to the closure of community groups during the pandemic.

#### Southill

1,584 dinners were supplied amounting to 33 dinners each Wednesday over a 48 week period and 336 morning Teas were provided on Thursday mornings over a 48 week period.

A number of joint initiatives were also undertaken with other groups in the Southill area including an Afternoon Tea Dance, an International Women's Day event involving 100 attendees, participation at the Intergenerational Café, Bridging Generations held at UL Campus, an Easter Bonnet Tea Dance with over 70 attendees, a Day Trip to Galway with 63 attendees, a Day Trip to Listowel, Co. Kerry with 63 attendees, a Tea Dance at the Southill Hub, a Christmas event with Our Lady Queen of Peace School NS Janesboro, a Christmas party at The Hospitality Suite Roxboro and at the LSSC Henry Street.

#### St. Mary's/Corbally

Initiatives continued in the St Mary's/Corbally area as 22 referrals were received, and 28 referrals were made to other relevant agencies such as the HSE Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and to the Public Health Nurse and Community Nurse in Kings Island Health Centre.

432 one-to-one contacts and 165 professional contacts were made in relation to a range of support issues. Many of the contacts may have been the only contacts outside their homes that older people had due to their illness, vulnerability or the absence of visits by family members and friends from their social network.



**As a country we have known what it is to be hungry and to be forced to flee our homes... this memory of our past has shaped and has continued to shape our values and our sensibilities today, instilling in us a moral calling to help others in need.**

**Michael D. Higgins,  
President of Ireland**

## **Supporting Refugees and Asylum Seekers**

2022 has been a significant year globally for displaced families and children as millions of families have been forced to flee their homes in the months since Russia invaded Ukraine. Ireland has a long tradition of assisting some of the world's most vulnerable people either abroad or at home, and in 2022 in response to the Ukraine crisis, accommodation has been sourced for over 67,000 people fleeing the war. By end of 2022 in Limerick, there were approximately 2,000 arrivals from Ukraine based on PPSN allocations and CSO data. In addition, there were nearly 500 individuals in international protection accommodation. These figures do not include individuals who are living in neighbouring areas of Limerick and who access services in Limerick e.g. Knockalisheen, etc. as their nearest point of support.

As a key agency in Limerick that works with the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups, the LSSC reaches out to all individuals and families in need, irrespective of their city or country of origin. In recent years LSSC has welcomed 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 established a weekly International Women's Group and a Cooking Group where women from a range of countries can cook and share food from their native cultures. A number of qualified people seeking asylum have also contributed to the work of the LSSC as part of its staff group.

In 2022, the LSSC continued to support children and families from all backgrounds and was available to offer additional assistance to families affected by the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. For example, priority places were offered at the Early Years Service to assist Ukrainian children in the transitional phase of their families' settlement in Ireland; the CFS Programme collaborated with Paul Partnership and UMHL with the Limerick Baby Box programme; and all Ukrainian families were welcomed to avail of the full range of LSSC parent and family support services.





**Voluntary organisations play absolutely vital roles in providing frontline services to the most vulnerable in our society: people with disabilities, older people, those suffering from addiction, mental health problems and life-limiting illnesses. Many of these service providers have faced serious pressures in light of high inflation in 2022.**

**THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH, STEPHEN DONNELLY**

**Feb 2023**

## **2022 - A Year of Change and Uncertainty...**

This report is presented at a time of great change and uncertainty for Irish society. This time last year, the country was still dealing with the devastating impact of COVID-19. However, 2022 witnessed even more challenges for individuals and families who responded to the increased cost of living, the fuel crisis and issues relating to the geo-political instability of Eastern Europe.

These challenges affected the most vulnerable and marginalised households in society, particularly those who were already at risk of poverty, unemployment and disadvantage. In addition, housing affordability, accommodation availability and homelessness presented a more serious issue than previously seen with increasing numbers of people accessing emergency homeless accommodation.

In 2022 as in previous years, LSSC teams worked steadily to deliver services in order to support the most vulnerable at a time of such uncertainty and volatility. In their work, staff faced specific challenges in their daily work. Some of these key challenges are outlined below:

### **Some Key Challenges in 2022**

#### **Child & Family Services**

- Staff retention and recruitment continued to be a challenge with the loss of a Community Social Worker post from 2021 and the amalgamation of the TPSP and Community Mother Coordinator posts.
- While there are increasing pressures due to staff shortages, staff were also working more intensively in the CFC; this work is welcomed and appropriate but adds additional strains on resources.
- The general cost of living crisis and the housing crisis continued to present considerable challenges to families. It was difficult to engage with some families around parenting/child development when they were without access to adequate housing. Many families were living in long-term in hotels.
- Increasing numbers of referrals were received where domestic violence and poor parental relationships are adversely affecting children, particularly where parents continue to live in the same households due to the lack of alternative housing options. In addition, parental mental health was a significant issue and have impacted on the mental health of their children.
- Referrals covering children's school refusal and anxiety appeared to be increasingly common issues.

#### **Early Years Services**

- While the National Childcare Scheme has proved to be a positive development in terms of ensuring childcare is more affordable, there remains a lack of childcare places to meet demand.

#### **Counselling Services**

- Counselling staff were dealing with the challenge of working with clients with increasingly complex and high-level needs.
- There were challenges for the Service when clients struggled to attend sessions regularly and consistently due to personal circumstances.

#### **Older Person Services**

- There were additional challenges for staff as they supported clients to re-adjust to life in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, including clients' added fear of illness, isolation, and lack of access to services;
- Staff had to respond to clients who expressed anxiety and worries regarding the fuel crisis and power cuts as highlighted in the media, with some older persons not using electricity or seeking alternative means to stay warm e.g. staff were requested to purchase battery operated lights, hot water bottles, extra blankets and flasks, etc.

**As we reflect on 2022, we would like to take this opportunity to thank our funders and our partner organisations for their significant levels of cooperation over the past year. It has been a particularly challenging time, and we are grateful for the support and assistance we received from our whole community, without whom we would not have been able to make such a positive impact for individuals and families across Limerick.**

**A Note of Appreciation to our Partners and Funders**

## 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 2022 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 in 2022 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. 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, Barnardos, PAUL Partnership and ISPCC.

Staff in the Community Social Work and Family Support Service and the Teen Parent Support Programme 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.



## LSSC's Funders/Partner Agencies

Health Service Executive

Pobal

Limerick City and County Council

Limerick and Clare Education & Training Board

PAUL Partnership:

- ABC Start Right

- Incredible Years

Limerick Childcare Committee

Dept of Children and Youth Affairs

Dept of Education & Skills

Dept of Social Protection

Adapt Services

Age and Opportunity (Dublin)

Barnardos

Diocese of Limerick

Focus Ireland

Irish Foster Carers' Association

Limerick Institute of Technology

Community Law and Mediation

Doras Luimní

Limerick College of Further Education

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

