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Expand

Engage

Enhance

5 Year Strategic Plan

Capacity Building

2025 - 2029



Contents

Foreword	3
Our Vision	4
Our Mission	5
Values in Practice	6
Our Purpose	7
The Challenge	7
Our Response	8
Our Impact in numbers in 2024	10
What our Service Users say	11
Strategic Themes	14
- Expand	16
- Enhance	19
- Engage	22
How we will track our progress	26



Foreword

Limerick Social Service Council (LSSC) has taken part in an intensive strategic planning process over the last number of months and are delighted to now have a roadmap in place to guide the organisation over the next five years. It is called "Capacity Building 2025 – 2029".

As a leading voluntary service, working in communities across Limerick City and County for almost 60 years, we continue to provide a wide range of services to a very diverse population. Limerick has changed so much since LSSC first opened its doors. The population has increased and Limerick is now a multi-cultural society.

However, there has also been growth in areas and levels of socio-economic inequality and deprivation in Limerick, with an above average number of unemployment blackspots. Additionally, we know that 24% of the population is under the age of 18, meaning that there is an increased need for child, family and youth services. LSSC has evolved as an organisation so that we can respond to emerging needs across our communities. This type of agility is key in order to maximise our impact and support those who need us most into the future.

However, in the face of funding constraints, resource limitations, and increasing demand, it was crucial to develop a strategic plan that aligns our efforts and ensures our continued impact. Alongside our agility and responsiveness, this strategic plan allows us to build on our existing strengths, allowing us to leverage our experience as an established organisation, utilise our local expertise and knowledge and emphasise the benefits of our presence in the community. We have a dedicated and passionate team, which will be a key enabler for us working to achieve our mission.

The strategic planning process enabled us to really focus on what is important. We engaged extensively with our stakeholders and listened to our service users to understand their support needs. We are proud to have set out a new vision, mission and value statement to underpin our work as part of this process. This has given us clarity, which will help inform our decision making into the future. We believe in the power of potential and over the next number of years we will be building and unlocking potential for our service users, our organisation and our communities. This plan sets out details about our three key strategic pillars: Expand, Enhance and Engage. We want to expand access to our services, enhance how we tell the story of our work and engage in more strategic and meaningful ways with our teams, our partners, our communities, and our service users so that we can maximise our impact in Limerick.

Kevin O'Farrell
Chairperson
Limerick Social Service Council CLG



Our Vision

Our vision is a compassionate and inclusive Limerick, where every person has the opportunity and support to overcome life's challenges.

Our Mission

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

COMMUNITY

Values in Practice



Our strategic plan is anchored in four core values that define our organisation and guide our actions.



Empathy

Empathy: The Foundation of our Approach

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



Inclusion

Inclusion: Equality and Belonging

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



Quality

Quality: Collaboration and Improvement

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



Trust

Trust: Dependable and Reliable

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

Our Purpose

We exist to support people to overcome challenges that life brings their way.

Our services aim to:

- Bridge gaps in access to support
- Improve mental and physical health and well-being
- Reduce loneliness and isolation
- Enhance social inclusion
- Build individual and community capacity
- Improve life outcomes.

The Challenge

We know that the population in Limerick has increased and diversified, with the percentage of those aged under the age of 18 being significant. Social isolation, mental health, housing, addiction, parenting and domestic abuse are all real issues for Limerick, with ever increasing demands for services and supports.

Despite the presence of Statutory and Voluntary organisations, communities all over Limerick are struggling to support the diverse needs of their people across the life cycle.

There continue to be gaps, barriers to inclusion and people are falling between the cracks.



Our Response

LSSC has a rich history of serving communities of Limerick with a wide range of social service community-based supports. We exist to ensure that, when people are faced with life challenges, they get the right support at the right time.

Since opening our doors in 1966, LSSC has provided support to thousands of service users across the full life cycle. We have diverse programmes and services for babies, children, teens, adults and older people. We work across all races, ethnicities and cultures. We provide supports for those who are experiencing disadvantage or exclusion. We also partner with other organisations to improve outcomes for our service users and their communities.

LSSC is very proud of our service model:

1. The Child and Family Service
2. The Early Years Service
3. Counselling and Psychotherapy
4. Services for Older People
5. Traveller Health Programme

1



The Child and Family Service

We offer a broad range of support services that include the Community Social Work and Family Support Service, the Community Families Programme (formerly the Community Mothers Programme), the Young Parents Support Programme (formerly the Teen Parent Support Programme); the Southside CFC Family Support Service and the Family Advocacy Service.

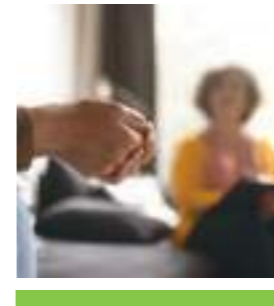
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The Early Years Service

We operate two community Early Years services that provide high quality early learning care and education to babies (6 months and above) and young children under the age of 6. The services are located in Henry Street, Limerick and in the Southside Child and Family Centre, Roxboro.

3



Counselling and Psychotherapy

We provide a professional, accessible and timely service to Adults and Adolescents (14 years and over) in Limerick City and County when they are in need of support.

4



Services for Older People

We seek to promote the well-being and mutual support of elderly people through various programmes which help them to positively use and enjoy their leisure time, build social networks and participate in community activities.

5



Traveller Health Programme

This Primary Health Care programme employs eight qualified Community Health Workers from the Traveller community. They deliver evidence-based health information directly to Travellers in Limerick City, aiming to improve their overall health outcomes.

Our impact in numbers in 2024

455

families supported

The Child and Family Service

61

children supported

The Early Years Service -
Henry Street

65

children supported

The Early Years Service -
Southside Child and
Family Centre

420

individuals supported

Counselling and
Psychotherapy

174

individuals supported

Services for Older People

150

families supported

Traveller Health Programme



What our service users say

"When I first attended counselling, I had been in a difficult place, overcome with grief. Words of mine could not adequately thank counsellor and all at LSSC for the wonderful support I received and I will be eternally grateful to you all for that".

Adult supported by the
Counselling and Psychotherapy Service

"My child has improved so much since attending LSSC Early Years Service regarding his Speech and Language".

Parent of Child in Early Years Service
(Henry Street)

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

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

"When it was suggested by a Family Support Worker that counselling would provide a private space for me to talk, I really did not think that it would help me as much as it did".

Parent participating in
Community Social Work and
Family Support and Counselling
and Psychotherapy Service

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

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

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

Parent participating in the Community Social Work and Family Support Service

"When I arrived for the first time, they welcomed me like a sister. They listened to my story and made it their own, they shared their stories and I made them mine. We travelled together, discovering places, even supporting events for our children. That gave it a plus since other groups do not allow children. We parade together, we cook together, more than a group for me it is a family. Although for work reasons, I cannot always be present, the group gave me refuge and identity in this beautiful country. I think we are lucky to remain in this group, I hope we can continue supporting each other and growing until we become a large group, contributing the good of our cultures, and integrating it into Limerick society. How sisters from different nations be light in this piece of the world that welcomed us!"

Parent participating in the International Women's Group

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

Parent participating in the Community Social Work and Family Support Service

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

Parent of Adolescent availing of the Counselling and Psychotherapy Service

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

Parent participating in Community Families Service (formerly Community Mothers)

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

Community Link Worker, Limerick City Traveller Health Programme

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

Parent of Child in Early Years Service (Henry Street)

"The highlight of the year are the beach trips. I would never get to the beach and see the sea without the summer beach trips. We feel rejuvenated after a day trip. The Project Worker tries to do an event at least once a month to keep us ticking over. This service is the life line to the community. The quality and service of our weekly meals are top notch. She makes an extra effort every December arranging an event every week on the lead up to Christmas eve, so those of us on our own are turnkeyed out of it".

Client of the Services for Older People

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

Adult availing of the Counselling and Psychotherapy Service

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

I have learnt so much in the last two and a half years working with TPSP. They helped me with returning to education. Previous to this I had completed Level 5 in healthcare and retail. I am hoping to again return to education when my son starts creche. They have shown me the importance of education and the benefits it will give to me and my boys in the future. They supported me with attending counselling following a relationship breakdown and I have attended many of their groups, my favourite being our City Slickers group.

Through this group I met a lot of other young moms in a similar situation to myself. Prior to joining this group I didn't have any friends that were pregnant or had kids and from going to this each week I have made friends for life".

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

Strategic Theme

We are embarking upon a “Capacity Building” strategy over the next number of years. We intend to build and strengthen the capacity of our **service users, our organisation and our communities.**

Capacity Building

For our service users this means:

- Promoting and supporting their personal development, self-awareness and growth
- Boosting their self-confidence and motivation
- Increasing their sense of belonging
- Improving and learning skills
- Recognising potential and opportunity

For our organisation this means:

- Enhancing overall efficiency and effectiveness and resource optimisation
- Maintaining the sustainability of LSSC
- Fostering a culture of innovation and adaptability
- Leadership development

For our communities this means:

- Gaining tools and knowledge to take charge of their development
- Strengthening networks, collaboration, reduced inequality and more social inclusion and cohesion
- Enhancing community resilience to environmental, economic and social challenges
- Building long-term community well-being

Within this strategy, we have developed 3 core strategic goals; **Expand, Enhance, Engage.** Each goal builds upon, supports and enables the other.



Over the next five years, we want to expand access to our services, enhance how we tell the story of our work and impact and engage in more strategic and meaningful ways with our teams, our partners, our communities, and our service users so that we can maximise our impact in Limerick.

GOAL 1

Expand

Each year, we will expand our reach and services

Why is this important?

Extending our reach to more people will enable LSSC to offer support where it is most needed in Limerick. To support this, we will need to build our presence, our brand and our profile.

What key actions will we take?

- 1.1 Increase outreach to underserved populations
- 1.2 Build brand awareness
- 1.3 Develop our services to establish LSSC as a hub of best practice

GOAL 1: EXPAND

1.1 Increase outreach to underserved populations

To achieve this we will:

- Identify geographical areas of need through the work completed on the Community Needs Assessment
- Identify service gaps in those areas of high need
- Prioritise one service gap area of focus per year where LSSC can provide targeted support
- Organise community workshops/events to engage with the local community and gather feedback
- Leverage existing partnerships and networks to collaborate and support expansion into new areas
- Develop plan or proposal for a pilot programme for the identified area of target
- Apply for new funding opportunities to pilot and test new initiatives
- Assess how technology can help reach those facing barriers to accessing services such as virtual outreach, counselling and online groups
- Plan and budget for regular collation of data to keep the Community Needs Assessment relevant and up to date.

1.2 Build brand awareness

We need to make sure that those who need our services know who we are and where we are. This will require us to build our brand awareness and reach.

To achieve this we will:

- Define our core messaging and develop a compelling narrative about our work and impact
- Build our following across social media
- Build an integrated communications plan to include a content plan for social media
- Establish brand consistency across our website and social media channels
- Run targeted public awareness campaigns
- Review all assets to ensure that they are as inclusive and accessible as possible
- Update website and social media profiles to be more visually engaging, user-friendly and representative of our service users in terms of imagery and content
- Empower staff to be brand ambassadors by sharing their experience of working with LSSC on social media to highlight the Human Resources of the organisation
- Engage with local media outlets to promote the individual and societal impact of our work (radio, print, podcast) and raise profile
- Collaborate with staff, service users, community groups to produce multi-media content.

1.3 Develop our services to establish LSSC as a hub of best practice

We have huge experience and expertise in child and family work and will leverage this experience to promote shared learning and skill building across the sector as we build our profile.

To achieve this we will:

- Collaborate with academic institutions to conduct research on and evaluate the evidence-based interventions and supports we offer
- Host and run specialist training and development sessions for staff across the sector
- Run regular panel discussions with leading experts/organisations in the relevant fields
- Formalise a multidisciplinary approach to service delivery across functions at LSSC
- Facilitate shared learning opportunities across the teams
- Develop an in-house "meitheal" where pathways through services and supports are identified
- Recruit additional multidisciplinary supports through new funding opportunities
- Build a bank of content to share on best practice in child and family services
- Develop online self-help tools/resources for families
- Offer additional family-centered supports such as workshops and wellness groups based on needs identified by families.



Enhance

We are committed to enhancing how we communicate LSSC's work, promoting its impact, and ensuring the voices of our service users are heard and valued.

Why is this important?

Extending our reach to more people will enable LSSC to offer support where it is most needed in Limerick. To support this, we will need to build our presence, our brand and our profile.

What key actions will we take?

- 2.1 Amplify and integrate the voice of our service users
- 2.2 Incorporate a culture of story-telling
- 2.3 Improve impact measurement

GOAL 2: ENHANCE

2.1 Amplify and integrate the voice of our service users

We will provide regular and meaningful opportunities to hear what is important to our service users and show them that we value their input. This will help us to continuously shape our services to respond to their needs.

To achieve this we will:

- Establish formal and planned feedback mechanisms (surveys, questionnaires, focus groups)
- Create an advisory panel of diverse service users to provide targeted feedback and participate in decision making processes (twice yearly)
- Enable this panel to discuss and test new ideas before implementation.

- Resource service user engagement to overcome barriers to inclusion (childcare/transport/access etc)
- Provide workshops to build service user capacity and empower service users to voice their opinions
- Ensure that feedback from service users is systematically incorporated into planning processes
- Offer small incentives to encourage and acknowledge service user engagement
- Host meetings twice yearly where access to LSSC management is available for service users
- Publish service user feedback online
- Ensure there is a platform for our service user voice to be heard publicly.

GOAL 2: ENHANCE

2.2 Incorporate a culture of story-telling

Our service users have powerful stories of resilience and empowerment to share. Our staff hear, see and are part of these stories on a daily basis. We will highlight the impact of our work through those stories.

To achieve this we will:

- Ensure that the voice of service users are central to storytelling efforts
- Record stories that authentically reflect service user perspective, challenges and successes
- Enhance the use of social media platforms to share stories of impact
- Develop a plan to build a culture of in-house storytelling across teams, functions and all staff
- Introduce bi-monthly story-telling mini sessions for staff
- Provide training for staff members on effective storytelling techniques to convey LSSC's message authentically
- Update digital content with service user journeys
- Seek opportunities via local journalists and media outlets to share LSSC human interest stories that generate positive media coverage
- Include story-telling at board meetings with presentations from different staff/managers.

GOAL 2: ENHANCE

2.3 Improve impact measurement

At LSSC, we will improve how we measure the effectiveness of our services to inform service development.

To achieve this we will:

- Consult with a technical expert to leverage advances in technology for capturing and recording relevant data
- Build upon and refine the recording of existing services metrics to enable the data to be multipurpose (funding/learning/communications/advocacy) and which does not put additional demands on staff and management
- Develop a comprehensive monitoring system that tracks data on a monthly, quarterly and bi-annual basis
- Ensure a continuous service evaluation framework to evaluate existing services
- Create an inclusive service user consultation plan (surveys, focus groups, easy read forms) to gather regular feedback
- Conduct internal audits to ensure compliance with and track against regulatory standards and best practice
- Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) to track the reach, engagement, and impact of LSSC's communication efforts across various channels.

GOAL 3

Engage

We will future-proof LSSC and strengthen our organisational impact for better outcomes through effective engagement with our staff, our leadership team, our partners, our funders, our service-users and communities.

Why is this important?

Strengthening our engagement is vital for building trust, improving decision-making, securing support, managing risks, fostering community relations, ensuring accountability, driving innovation, achieving goals, and ensuring sustainable impact.

What key actions will we take?

- 3.1 Devise an external engagement strategy
- 3.2 Develop a people and culture plan
- 3.3 Nurture innovation and creativity

GOAL 3: ENGAGE

3.1 Devise an external engagement strategy

We will create an external engagement strategy to plan our engagement with funders, partners, other services and the communities where we work to maximise our impact.

To achieve this we will:

- Conduct a stakeholder mapping exercise to identify and prioritise key stakeholders
- Document the needs, interests and expectations of each stakeholder group
- Nurture and strengthen existing relationships and partnerships
- Establish new relationships and engage in cross-sectoral collaborations to benefit the community

- Identify specific objectives for external engagement (awareness, building partnerships, community involvement)
- Outline activities to take place (e.g. meetings, events, campaigns)
- Set measurable goals (e.g. number of new partnerships, increased community participation rates)
- Establish clear timelines for each activity and assign responsibilities across the LSSC team
- Organise workshops/events on topics that are relevant to the community
- Increase networking time for staff and leadership team.

GOAL 3: ENGAGE

3.2 Develop a people and culture plan

We will develop a new people and culture plan that aligns all our teams and reflects LSSC's shared vision and mission.

To achieve this we will:

- Gather input from employees through surveys/focus groups to understand their perspective on the current culture
- Review existing HR data related to turnover and retention
- Identify strengths and weaknesses
- Broaden the leadership team to include representation from each department
- Conduct a roles and responsibilities exercise for the leadership team
- Develop a Terms of Reference for the leadership team
- Arrange twice yearly cross departmental team building sessions
- Structure regular communication updates to all staff (e.g. newsletter, townhalls, all staff meetings)
- Integrate staff well-being initiatives
- Protect reflective practice time across teams
- Offer staff shadowing opportunities for staff to learn about other services at LSSC
- Continue to invest in staff development, team training, capacity building and succession planning for staff.

GOAL 3: ENGAGE

3.3 Nurture innovation and creativity

We will encourage and nurture innovation and creativity within LSSC to help develop new solutions, improve service delivery, adapt to changing needs and enhance impact.

To achieve this we will:

- Establish innovation champions across all staff levels and teams
- Conduct quarterly cross departmental creative thinking sessions with staff
- Implement an idea management system where staff can submit, track, and vote on innovative ideas and solutions
- Establish an internal micro-fund to support piloting initiatives proposed by staff
- Create 'lunch and learn' opportunities to invite industry experts, thought leaders, and innovators to share insights and best practices
- Communicate regularly with staff on emerging trends or newly published and relevant research
- Protect time for the leadership team to explore and plan for funding diversification
- Consider social enterprise opportunities as a new form of income generation and community engagement.





Limerick
Social Service
Council CLG

Comhairle Sheirbhís Sóisialta Luimnigh CLG

How we will track our progress

GOAL 1: EXPAND

- # Community workshops
- # Geographic areas identified
- # Pilots initiated
- # Funding secured
- # Research involvement
- # Evaluations underway
- # Panel discussions
- # In-house meitheals
- # Training and development sessions

- New imagery and content
- Web and socials updated
- Bank of rolling content
- Bank of best practice content
- Community needs assessment updated
- Review of assets
- Communication and brand strategy
- Online resources on website

GOAL 2: ENHANCE

- # Service user advisory panel meetings
- # Opportunities for feedback
- # Incentives allocated
- # Service user feedback published
- # Service user access to management
- # Story-telling sessions
- # Local media engagements
- # Internal audits on metrics

- Service user advisory panel established
- Feedback mechanisms in place
- Budget line and allocation for service user involvement
- Story-telling plan detailed and implemented
- Staff story-telling training completed
- Integration of story-telling at board meetings
- Impact measurement framework
- Key performer indicators (KPIs) established for communications

GOAL 3: ENGAGE

- # New partnerships
- # Workshops
- # Input opportunities for staff
- # Team building sessions
- # Communications to staff
- # Staff development
- # Staff shadowing opportunities
- # Innovation champions
- # Micro-fund applications
- # Lunch and learn opportunities

- Stakeholder mapping exercise completed
- External engagement strategy in place
- People and culture plan established
- Extend leadership team
- New funding opportunities and areas of growth

