

EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF

# The Social & Health Education Programme

IN LIMERICK

JUNE  
2014



Northstar Family Support Project



Northstar Family Support Project



**MID WEST REGIONAL  
DRUGS & ALCOHOL FORUM**

Clare • Limerick • N Tipperary



**Limerick  
CITY & COUNTY  
COUNCIL**



**An tSeirbhís Phromhaidh  
The Probation Service**



**Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive**



**SHEP**  
CAPACITY FOR CHANGE



**etb**

Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna  
Luimnigh agus an Chláir  
Limerick and Clare  
Education and Training Board

# Foreword

As chairperson for Northstar Family Support Project I am delighted to introduce this summary of the evaluation on the Social Impact of The Social and Health Education Programme in Limerick as conducted by Exodea Consulting Europe Ltd in association with the committee, past and present staff of Northstar and past and present participants of the Programme.

This is a welcome document as it helps highlight the many layers and intensive effort that has made up this interagency initiative in Limerick over the last four years. It clearly shows how the combination of shared funding, resources, skills and interests can produce a wonderful asset for the people of Limerick city and beyond.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the original group of people who had the foresight to initiate this programme in Limerick, capitalising on funding opportunities available at the time and finding space within their work to ensure the Programme was available to people in Limerick. This group comprised Anita McNamara, Margaret O'Brien, Margaret Griffin, Mary Mangan and Jim Sheehan.

A special mention also has to go to the staff and trainers from The Social Health and Education Project who made this initiative possible through their dedication, flexibility and hard work. Their professionalism and experience has contributed greatly to the immense success and the longevity of the Programme in Limerick.

I must also take this opportunity to thank our funding partners, The Mid West Regional Drug And Alcohol Forum, The Office of Regeneration within Limerick City and County Council and also the HSE, through SHEP.

I would also like to commend the staff, both past and present of Northstar Family Support Project who have worked towards this shared goal to ensure that the Programme continued in Limerick despite the difficult economic environment experienced in recent times and acknowledge that their own project was operating at its full capacity in parallel to this initiative.


Finally, I would like to congratulate all participants of the programme in Limerick. Without their commitment to SHEP and their own Personal Development journey, the initiative would not be the thriving example of successful interagency work that it is today and hopefully. Hopefully this work will continue long into the future.



**Mary Fitzpatrick**

Chairperson Northstar Family Support Project





# Glossary

## **SHEP**

The Social and Health Education Project Ltd.

## **'The Programme'**

The Limerick Social and Health Education Programme.

## **SHEP Sub-Committee**

The interagency, community based steering committee which oversaw the collaboration under the governance of Northstar.

## **Foundation-level Training**

SHEP Certificate in Personal Development and the SHEP Certificate in Social Awareness and Community Empowerment.

## **SRoI**

Social Return on Investment.

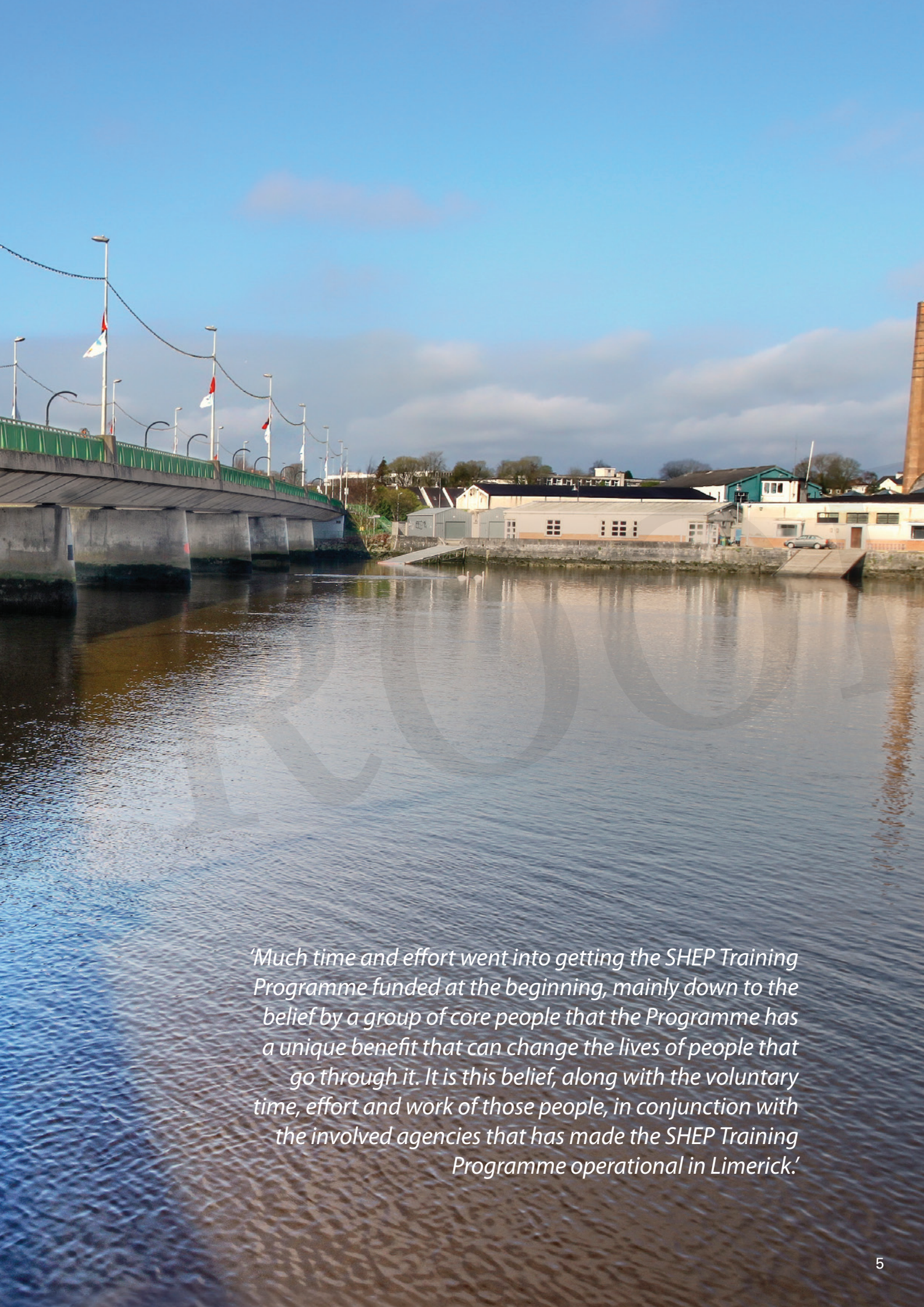
## **SHEP Trainer**

A person selected by, and registered with, SHEP to facilitate one or more of the SHEP courses.

## **SHEP Tutor**

A person trained by SHEP to facilitate short (20 hour) courses.





*'Much time and effort went into getting the SHEP Training Programme funded at the beginning, mainly down to the belief by a group of core people that the Programme has a unique benefit that can change the lives of people that go through it. It is this belief, along with the voluntary time, effort and work of those people, in conjunction with the involved agencies that has made the SHEP Training Programme operational in Limerick.'*





# Introduction



This evaluation aims to capture the social impact of the Social and Health Education Project Programme on participants in Limerick, which is facilitated and delivered by The Social Health and Education Project, with oversight and support from the Northstar Family Support Project in Limerick.

**Specifically, the aims of the evaluation are to: -**

- Document and analyse the impact of the Programme for individuals, families and communities;
- Determine the efficiency and effectiveness of the various structures supporting the delivery of the programme in Limerick;
- Analyse the key strengths and challenges of the Programme in Limerick;
- Analyse the key learning arising from the delivery of the Programme in Limerick to date;
- Establish the Social Return on Investment (SRoI) of the Programme; and
- Make recommendations for the future development and implementation of the Programme in Limerick.



# Overview



Northstar was established in 2008 and provides non-judgmental, confidential supports to family members and friends who are affected by drug and alcohol misuse.

SHEP is an Irish, not-for-profit, community based training and development organisation that was established in 1974. SHEP has been a pioneer in Ireland in the development and provision of structured experiential training and participatory group work in the areas of well being, health and community leadership.

A collaboration commenced in 2010 to make the SHEP Programme accessible to communities in Limerick City. This collaboration was initially championed by two local people from Limerick, Anita McNamara and Margaret O'Brien, who had participated in the Programme previously and were passionate about making it more widely available in the City. A steering group, which became known as the SHEP Sub-committee, oversaw this collaboration under the formal governance of Northstar. This group included Northstar, SHEP, Mid-West Regional Drug and Alcohol Forum, the Probation Services, The RAPID Programme (Limerick City and County Council) and Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board.

The Mid-West Regional Drugs and Alcohol Forum and the Office of Regeneration, have funded the Programme since its inception. The Programme has also been financially supported by the HSE through its core funding of SHEP. From 2012 participants have contributed a small fee to the delivery costs.

# Training Programme Pathway

SHEP delivers a unique Training Programme based on experiential group work approaches. The initial focus is on delivering intensive personal development with opportunities thereafter for participants to move along a progression pathway that develops and enhances leadership skills. It does this through the co-facilitation of the groups by registered psychotherapists. Its uniqueness and depth in personal development is also strengthened by the length of the programme which depends on the progression pathway chosen by participants.







# Methodology



This is the first time an evaluation of the Programme has been undertaken in Limerick.

A variety of research methods have been employed in the development of this report. These include the following:

Emerging trends and/or themes were identified and verified with the consultees.

- A desk review of relevant Northstar and SHEP Training Programme background documents;
- Consultations with the Northstar Board of Management; the SHEP Sub-Committee, SHEP management and trainers. These consultations were used to discuss the emergence of the SHEP Training Programme in Limerick, and identify the successes and challenges of the Programme to date; and
- Two structured focus groups with 26 SHEP Participants from Limerick which:
  - a. Identified the impact that the Programme had on them; and
  - b. Identified how the Social Return on Investment (SRoI) was generated by the Programme

*'In order for it to evolve, a stronger developmental emphasis and a change in structure needs to be engineered.'*



# Key Findings



The impact of the Programme is summarised under the following four headings:

1. Effectiveness of the Programme
2. Impact on Well-being
3. Community & Employment Impact
4. Social Return on Investment Analysis

*'SHEP has a long and successful history in delivering personal development training, and has been a pioneer in Ireland in the use of structured experiential training and participatory group work. The SHEP Core Training Programme and the SHEP Community Education Programme, both of which have evolved from this work, are considered to be unique.'*





# Key Findings 1

## Effectiveness

1

### Numbers Trained

In the period September 2010 - January 2013 173 persons completed training with SHEP

A further 60 people began in Autumn 2013.

(Source: SHEP).

2

### High participant satisfaction rating

85% of participants rated the training as very good or good.

82% rated the enjoyment of the training as very good.

3

### Collaborative Approach

The inter-agency relationship between SHEP and Northstar has been key to the Programme success rate and growth of the Programme in Limerick.

*This totals an average of 57 participants per year, which is an excellent output, given the voluntary and collaborative nature of SHEP Training Programme delivery.*

*'There was a very strong agreement that SHEP in Limerick was delivering a training programme that was unique and greatly valued.'*



*'It helped me to develop the ability to know my own needs'*

## 4

### **Facilitation Process**

The use of experiential group-work learning, the focus on confidentiality and the sharing of stories amongst participants are the key strengths in the success of the SHEP Training Programme.

## 5

### **Programme Structure and Duration**

Two fundamental characteristics of the programme are its structure and its length.

#### **Structure**

The programme comprises a number of experiential courses, at foundation and higher level, which allow the participants to progress along the training pathway at their own pace.

#### **Length**

The duration of the individual courses (most are year-long courses) together with the opportunity to remain engaged for up to four years, facilitate personal development at a deep level. This is a key feature of the programme.

## 6

### **Voluntary time**

The SHEP Sub-Committee and staff of both projects, Northstar and SHEP, committed time and resources free of charge in order to make the Programme available in Limerick.





*'I increased my social, listening, personal awareness and assertiveness skills'*

**7**

### **Programme Administration**

There is considerable administrative work necessary for the successful operation of the Programme in Limerick.

**8**

### **Value for Money**

The course duration is over 26 weeks which averages at €35 per week.

The average cost is €930 per participant.

This represents excellent value for money.

**9**

### **Programme Awareness**

There is a wide knowledge of the Programme in Limerick. Testament to its success is the growth in demand for the courses, which is spread mainly by word of mouth.

*'It assisted me in leading me back to the workplace'*



## Key Findings 2

### Impact on Well-being

#### Optimism and Positivity

Over the two-year period, participants' optimism about the future significantly increased.

Participants' personal positivity also significantly increased.

75% of participants reported a lessening of negative emotions, such as shame, guilt and loneliness

#### 2

#### Coping and Communication Skills

83% of participants said that as a result of developing better coping and communication skills there was less conflict within their families.

40% of participants reported a significant change in their ability to deal with Intimidation.

25% reported a moderate change in their ability to deal with manipulation.

81% reported a reduction in negative coping traits, such as smoking, using prescribed medicines, and alcohol consumption.

#### 3

#### Well-being and Self-care

82% of participants reported an increased ability for self-care.

93% of participants reported improved stress levels and improved mental health.

85% of participants reported reduced isolation.

*'It assisted in stress management and anger management'*

*'I can reflect on my experiences and how I managed them'*





# Key Findings 3

## Community & Employment Impact

1

### Progression to other SHEP Courses

There is a specific progression path for participants within the SHEP Training Programme (see pg.7).

So far, a total of 66 participants have progressed to other courses within the Programme.

In response to the particular and complex individual needs in Limerick there has been significant demand for the Continuing Personal Development course. 47 people have been supported to participate in this year-long, more intensive Personal Development Course.

12 people have also advanced to the SHEP Certificate in Facilitation which is seen as a critical component for developing leadership skills.

2

### Progression to other Courses and Work

There is good progression to other courses running in Limerick, such as the Community Addiction Studies Course and the Certificate in Youth and Community Work.

This progression has enhanced participants' skills development and readiness for employment.

Some participants in employment stated they felt more confident in their role and reported increased assertiveness.

3

### Active Citizenship

The Programme increased participants' skill levels and gave them the courage they needed to become active and engaged citizens in their community.

Many participants became involved in their communities where they have never done so previously. This was on a volunteer basis or by joining boards of community/voluntary organisations in their area.



## Key Findings 4

### Social Return on Investment Analysis

‘Social Return on Investment is an approach to understanding and managing the value of the social, economic and environmental outcomes created by an activity or an organisation’ (SRoI Network). It is an analytic tool for measuring and accounting for a much broader concept of value, outside of the usual cost-benefit analysis and is a relatively new assessment tool in the Republic of Ireland.

Social Return on Investment uses financial proxies to understand the value of changes that the stakeholders have experienced. It is only by valuing changes, and by valuing them from the perspective of the individual that experiences the change, that we can decide which of these changes are the most important. Social Return on Investment is a framework for measuring and accounting for this much broader concept of value. The study focuses exclusively on the outcomes for the selected participants who attended the focus group discussions in Limerick city, and it does not take into account the outcomes specific to SHEP Training delivered in other locations.

#### 1

#### Significant Return on investment

Overall, the SHEP Training Programme is showing a significant return on investment.

The study found that for each €1 invested in SHEP Personal Development training, €11.54 of added social and economic value is created.

*‘The life changing aspects of the Programme have a far-reaching effect not only on the participants, but also on the communities and the society of Limerick.’*







# Recommendations



## 1

### **A change in governance structure needs to be engineered**

The report outlines the evolution of the Programme in Limerick and the various people, and eventually agencies, that are involved in the management and operations of the Programme. SHEP has been a key player from the beginning, and displayed an openness and willingness to collaborate with the agencies in Limerick. SHEP are also very cognisant of the fact that their Programme represents a unique approach to Personal Development, and years of work and experience makes it the successful Programme that it is today. Bearing this in mind, SHEP worked closely with the agencies in Limerick to accommodate the specific needs identified in Limerick. The consultation process concluded that there were three principal structural options that might help to ensure the sustainable development of the Programme in Limerick, given the identified needs of the area, and the impact of the current fiscal challenges that face the community and voluntary sector:

1. Establish a new organisation with a new board and new governance structure.
2. Remove the potential ambiguity of the relationship between SHEP and the SHEP Sub-Committee structure by clearly aligning the Programme under the direct governance of either Northstar or SHEP.
3. Tighten up the current partnership structure.

*'One of the key successes of the SHEP Training Programme in Limerick has been the collaborative approach that each of the organisations has taken to make the Programme available to the people of Limerick.'*





## 2

### **Source funding for and appoint a Project Officer**

The appointment of a Project Officer to undertake the Project Management of the SHEP Training Programme in Limerick, either on a part-time basis or a contractual basis, is considered crucial to the further development of the Programme in Limerick. The Project Officer could take up a number of key roles that both SHEP and Northstar are currently undertaking. In conjunction with this, a gradual removal of the core Northstar staff as the key administration and financial hosts of the SHEP Training Programme should evolve. This should naturally transfer to the Project Officer role.

## 3

### **Develop a multi-dimensional and sustainable funding strategy**

It is evidenced from consultation with the key funders of the SHEP Training Programme in Limerick that dependency on them for future core funding is less than assured. To address this key issue, it is clear that a short and long-term funding strategy needs to be developed with some urgency. The SHEP Sub-Committee, the current funders and SHEP have links to a plethora of potential funders, along with links to key agencies on the ground. The role of the Project Officer could be to explore and develop these links, and in doing so, oversee and execute the development of a multi-dimensional and sustainable funding strategy.



## 4

### **Further increase the SHEP trainer panel in Limerick**

SHEP has invested significantly since 2011 to build SHEP training capacity in Limerick. To ensure the future sustainability of the SHEP Training Programme in Limerick, the panel of SHEP trainers based in the Mid-West Region needs to be further developed. As SHEP has a very defined trainer recruitment process, this would need to be managed very closely by SHEP and would take some time. Previous participants could be contacted to promote and encourage this path. In order to facilitate this process, and if this proved to be viable, the full range of SHEP courses should be made available in Limerick for those who wish to follow the progression path.

## 5

### **Implement a formative evaluation approach**

As part of the focus groups with participants, questions were derived from the European Social Survey 'National accounts of wellbeing'. SHEP participants were asked to answer a number of wellbeing questions related to how they felt two years ago and now. One of the problems of utilising this approach is that memory bias and selectiveness comes into play. One of the suggestions the evaluators feel could significantly benefit the SHEP Training Programme and capture the attitude and behavioural change that participants undergo would be achieved by the implementation of a formative evaluation approach that captures:

- Where participants are on the scale at the beginning of the Programme (a baseline);
- At the mid-way point of the Programme (to ensure there is progress, and if not, to address the reasons blocking it); and
- At the end of the Programme.

The questions utilised can be derived from validated assessment tools or the development of bespoke ones and the data captured in a database for manipulation.

Only in this way will the SHEP Training Programme really begin to formatively capture and reflect the change in participants as a result of the SHEP Training Programme. Furthermore, part of SHEP's Monitoring and Evaluation processes should capture the reasons for people leaving courses. The reasons should be documented, monitored and analysed.





## 6

### **Strengthen programme planning & coordination**

The role of the Project Officer should extend to forward planning and central coordination of the courses, well in advance. This may assist in preventing last minute rushes to get people into courses. The Project Officer might also facilitate open information evenings for those who may be interested in the courses, and allow them to obtain a stronger sense of the deep personal development work that is involved. The arrangement with the low-cost counselling services should be expanded and perhaps a direct referral mechanism between the SHEP Training Programme and counselling services could be developed. The Project Officer could manage this referral process.

## 7

### **Further develop the SHEP sub-committee structure**

It is suggested, pending the outcome of the individual decisions by the Northstar and SHEP Board of Management respectively, that the name, operations and Terms of Reference of the committee is developed and agreed. The name of the Sub-Committee should be updated to reflect what organisation's governance it will sit under. The SHEP Sub-Committee membership should evolve with links to strategic funders and local agencies.

## 8

### **Strengthen feedback processes**

It is suggested that a formalised, yet simple feedback process is put in place to allow participants, trainers or other parties to submit feedback to SHEP in a structured way. This will allow grievances and other feedback to be channelled in the right direction in a confidential manner.

*'The programme also demonstrates that it has achieved the objective of reaching those most vulnerable in Limerick's society.'*



# Conclusion



Based on evidence collected at every level in the evaluation process it is clear that the SHEP Training Programme portfolio is achieving real and meaningful change in the lives of many of the training participants.

SHEP has a long and successful history in delivering personal development training, and has been a pioneer in Ireland in the use of structured experiential training and participatory group work. The SHEP Core Training Programme and the SHEP Community Education Programme, both of which have evolved from this work, are considered to be unique.

The profile of the agencies engaged in supporting the SHEP Training Programme in Limerick is extensive. The Programme also demonstrates that it has achieved the objective of reaching those most vulnerable in Limerick's society.

The growth of the SHEP Training Programme in Limerick has evolved over time with the input of many resources and time on a voluntary basis.

Whilst Northstar has held the funding responsibilities for the SHEP Training Programme, the administrative and coordination load of the Programme in Limerick has been shared by members of the SHEP Sub-Committee, Northstar and SHEP.

The Impact Evaluation outcomes point towards the need for a more structured organisation for the delivery of the SHEP Training Programme in Limerick. It is unreasonable that the administration of the Programme in Limerick should continue to depend on the voluntary time of Northstar, SHEP and the SHEP Sub-Committee members. Additionally, SHEP has been effectively placed in the position of operating key administrative functions remotely from Cork. It is strongly recommended, therefore, that in order to ensure the sustainability and growth of the SHEP Training Programme in Limerick, key project administration and functional changes need to be effected.

The Limerick Social and Health Education Programme has been a tremendous success. It is an excellent example of how inter-agency working can achieve real and meaningful change in people's lives. With continued support, this programme has the potential to contribute in a significant way to the further development of effective community leadership in the region.





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## Evaluation Summary

This document summarises the findings and recommendations of the Evaluation of The Social and Health Education Programme in Limerick (2010-2013) completed by Bill Thorne and Maria Carr of Exodea Europe Consulting Limited in June 2014.