



SHEP
Capacity for Personal
& Social Transformation

SHEP - The Social & Health Education Project CLG.

Annual Report

2020

1. Chairperson's Introduction

An Extraordinary Year

Welcome to our 2020 report. Because of the arrival of the COVID19 pandemic, 2020 was an extraordinary year. There were already considerable changes underway in the Project – and the pandemic has resulted in extraordinary disruption, adaptation and unprecedented levels of change. These changes include transitioning the entire SHEP programme to online; the need for staff to work remotely; significant programme changes to respond to the circumstances of the pandemic; important staff changes; and the introduction of new systems to allow both on-line work and remote working by staff.

Summary: We stepped up and proved ourselves to be responsive and adaptive

In 2020 we supported more than 1500 people – through training, counselling, advocacy and other supports. Our work was greatly disrupted by the pandemic but we continued most of our work and very little was postponed. Relatively small numbers dropped out – largely because we invested hugely in supporting our personnel and participants. We moved our training work on-line and all courses started were completed. In the Autumn we offered a programme which was similar in size to other years – though it took much more effort to organise each course and the numbers participating were smaller (because they were on-line). It was a huge team effort all round to keep the programme going and to respond to the emerging needs. There has been no year as challenging and as stressful since 1998 when the Project had to work hard for its survival. In summary, 2020 was a particularly demanding year but it has stretched the Project in good ways and opened up new perspectives and opportunities.

A more reflective Report

Despite being under enormous pressure and additional stress during 2020 we invested significantly during the year in processes of organisational reflection. We have decided that this Annual Report will have a more reflective focus than usual in order to capture and present the key learnings from our experience of what has been a truly extraordinary year. I hope you find it interesting and informative.

Deep gratitude

Finally, on behalf of the Management Committee of SHEP I want to say a huge thanks to everyone who has been involved or supported us during 2020. We really appreciate the generosity, hard work and commitment of so many. Our sense is that this worldwide crisis, though it has created pain, suffering, loss and disconnection on a massive scale, has nonetheless brought us together more together as a community in SHEP. We look forward to brighter days ahead.

Angela Murphy, Chairperson, SHEP



Members of the SHEP Management Committee, with Chairperson Angela Murphy (second from left at front) - and some staff - at the January 2020 board meeting at the office of Boston Scientific, prior to the COVID19 pandemic. The Management Committee is made up of Tutors and Counsellor nominees from the Project as well as people from the wider community.

2. Key Developments

The Pandemic caused huge disruption

The arrival of COVID19 had a huge and very disruptive impact on our programme. That disruption manifested in a number of ways; including the need to temporarily abandon in-person training, counselling and advocacy (and find alternative ways of working during the pandemic) and the need to run the programme with staff working mostly remotely.

Almost all SHEP Programme work temporarily moved on-line

Most of SHEP's community education and training work had to transition quickly to on-line. Twelve months ago such an idea would have been unthinkable. Our training approach is deeply personal and largely experiential – so it works best we people are together in person. But with the pandemic, we needed to find ways to support our trainees. It was amazing what happened with the support of our team and our facilitators. In the first part of the year we successfully moved more than 200 learners on-line. It wasn't what people wanted – but everyone realised we had no other choice. We were able to support the vast majority of our participants to finish their training – and many said what a wonderful support it was to them during the early stages of the pandemic.

We arranged important Special Actions in response to COVID19

Our Counselling and Advocacy Projects both offered special supports during the pandemic. With regard to the training programme – a number of support measures were agreed: a waiver/partial waiver on remaining courses fees for participants was provided to those who became unemployed or who experienced financial difficulties because of the COVID19/economic crisis; providing support to those who did not have equipment to participate in training on-line; and the provision of extra training and supervision for SHEP Facilitators.

We made the right decision about the Autumn Training Programme:

Over the summer, we thought we might be able to offer some training in person in the Autumn – but in the late summer it became clear that the situation was worsening. We stayed open to the possibilities for some time, and in the end decided that it was not feasible to start in-person or blended groups. We started more than thirty new training groups – all on-line – and this was an extraordinary feat. As we look back pensively on 2020 we acknowledge the many losses but also honour the great solidarity and adaptiveness that manifested in so many areas

There were significant changes in the staff team

2020 was also significant in terms of the staff team – we had three very significant retirements – Mary Mangan (after 15 years); Dolores McCashin (after 10 years); and Helen Godsell (after 21 years) with SHEP. All three made huge contributions to the life and work of SHEP. Unfortunately, because of COVID we had to say our goodbyes over zoom. After some uncertainty about how to proceed with staffing, the Project decided that some new positions needed to be created and some changes to the Training team were initiated. Towards the end of 2020 we also recruited someone with a lot of technical expertise to help us in 2021 to continue the work to improve our online systems, including applications and payments systems.

Once-off COVID19 Stability Funding proved essential

A very significant development in 2021 was the securing of almost €200,000 of additional government funding from the COVID 19 Stability Fund for Community and Voluntary Groups. This funding proved vital in paying for the additional costs of running the programme during the pandemic and mitigating the loss of income.

We developed new systems that have modernised our work

Before the pandemic we were introducing new systems to modernise our processes – but the pandemic accelerated the rate of change very significantly. We had to speed up the introduction of on-line payments, on-line applications and the use of on-line surveys. We also had to learn how to use Zoom as a platform both for meetings and training. We also invested significantly in up-grading our website.

We developed new Vision and Mission statements

During 2020, despite the pressures caused by the pandemic, we nonetheless continued the work to prepare a new set of guiding vision and mission statements for the Project. Our Generative Dialogue group played a key role in this important process.

We marked the 20th Anniversary of establishment of SHEP's Advocacy service

2020 was the twentieth anniversary of the commencement of what was then called Cork Older People's Advocacy Service. It was established with the support of grant funding from Janssen.

We introduced the SHEP Programme to County Clare

An important development in 2020 was the introduction of the SHEP Community Education Programme to County Clare, with support from Healthy Ireland Funding.

Important new Collaborations emerged

One of the interesting things about this COVID pandemic is that it is created opportunities for new partnerships. For example, we collaborated with PSYCHED – which is a HSE supported Mental Health in the Workplace initiative to provide a new programme – a series of four sessions to support workers to explore the impact of COVID on their lives and to support them in caring for their well-being. This piece was done as part of our new collaboration with Ag Eisteacht – ‘Reconnecting the heart of Frontline Practice’.

We started an important discussion with the South East HSE SPHE Programme

In 2020 we commenced a new conversation with the HSE in the South East with a view to exploring opportunities for further collaboration in the South East around SPHE work.

Support from the Perry & Sandy Massie Foundation proved timely and crucial

Finally, during 2020 our connection with Perry and Sandy Massie Foundation deepened. The Foundation provided us with important funding for the Mid-West Programme in 2019 to address a funding shortfall. During 2020 the Foundation agreed to support us with a new two-year programme to help develop our internal system, to support the induction of new SHEP Facilitators and to help diversify the SHEP Facilitator base. This deepening partnership proved very timely in the context of an unexpected pandemic that required us to up our game considerably in terms of communication and electronic/paperless systems. And the new on-line work created unexpected opportunities for upskilling our facilitators.



Members of the SHEP Staff Team at Fota House Gardens in July 2020. This was the only time during the year, since March, when the SHEP team could gather – and even then we all kept two metres apart! Three of our staff members retired during the year – and for all three we were only able to have an on-line farewell lunch! There are fifteen staff members (all part-time except three) supported by six people on training/employment schemes.

3. Summary of Our Key Learnings

As an organisation we had the capacity to adapt

We learned that we can deal with a pandemic! We kept most of our work activities going. We proved that we work remotely, when necessary. The space was created to take risks. What we experienced was a lot of support and openness: we were encouraged and motivated by the expansion of mind and heart of our facilitators. In essence, 2020 was a time of growth, not survival.

It was a very stressful and challenging year – and this has taken a toll.

The pandemic made everything more complex and more stressful. All of the systems we engaged with, including our own, were stressed. And all of us had personal trials, losses, and worries to deal with. What proved very important was attending to the personal impact of the pandemic on us. It is also important that we gave the time to creating spaces to attend to our own well-being and to reflect together on the experience and impact of the pandemic on us.

We used financial resources wisely

The Management Committee committed quickly to funding special measures to support our work during the pandemic. There was organisational willingness to use SHEP own resources if necessary – but this wasn't needed in the end because we secured Stability Funding. The timely use of funding helped shore up and support the Project at a critical time.

It is possible to do experiential learning on-line

A key organisational belief was disrupted by the pandemic i.e. that our work could not be done on-line. We now know that if you invest in creating trust and safety that deep work is possible. We know now from our own experience that experiential training can be done on-line even though there are obvious limitations and losses. Supports and scaffolding are needed all round. We know that for the vast majority of people on-line is not their preference – but we know also that most people say that if the alternative is no training then they were willing to give the on-line a go.. We also know too that on-line training is a has advantages and disadvantages – for example, in some ways it is contributing to exclusion - while at the same time it is presenting new opportunities.

The pandemic has created new opportunities for SHEP

The pandemic has resulted in us connecting with new people, new collaborations, work in new areas, and the development of two new courses. Working on-line has presented the opportunity for new people to join in – especially for geographically remote areas. It has also created opportunities to have more mixed and diverse training groups. Importantly, it has also given us the opportunity for people involved in SHEP facilitation from different counties to meet and train together. And another important upside of working on-line has been a significantly lower organisational carbon footprint.

New ways of working have paid significant dividends

We adopted some new approaches to working, primarily because of the complexity of the challenges thrown up by COVID19 and the requirement for staff to work remotely. We have learned that we can tap into new levels of creativity and involvement through working in small cross sectoral teams.

We learned as an organisation

An important dimension of what happened during 2020 is that all of us involved in the Project were learning together. The organisation learned a lot over a short period of time because existing organisational structures supported such learning. The stretch has been very positive for SHEP as an organisation.

The pandemic has helped us build stronger community in SHEP

Though rarely met in person in 2019 (from early March on) - and while there has been a huge loss – we have nonetheless developed a stronger sense of community. We invested heavily in communicating widely and including as many people as possible in the decision making. The training workshops that we organised brought people together in new ways and the online format allowed SHEP personnel from different geographic areas to connect with each other.



Since March most of our meetings look like this – taking place on-line through zoom. This was a three way meeting between SHEP, Sahakarmi in Nepal, and staff from the Development Fund Norway (Norway and Kathmandu). From Left to Right: Jim Sheehan (SHEP), Aleks Rogulska (SHEP), Amar Air (Sahakarmi), Siv Helen Strømmand (Development Fund Norway); Pankaj Shahi (Sahakarmi) and Yogi Kayastha (DF Norway), Sahakarmi Samaj means interdependent community’ – and has been operating for twenty five years with very marginalised communities in Nepal using an empowerment approach. Our connection with Nepal is a key expression of our commitment to global development.

4. SHORT Courses (*community-based*)

The Autumn Programme benefited from our earlier experience in Spring 2020

Our experience with our short courses during the pandemic was somewhat different to the core training programme. In March and April so much effort was needed to support the Core Training courses that we simply had to postpone or pause our short courses. Once things settled down the team were able to start working on how to support short courses in the community in the context of COVID. Over the summer, we held out hope of resuming training in-person, with physical distancing, but as time went on it became clearer that organising fully on-line short courses would be most feasible – though obviously there would be a loss. Many of our Tutors got involved in SHEP’s programme of up-skilling and made huge efforts so as to get ready to facilitate on-line. We also agreed to secure or use additional funding to ensure that as much as possible all short courses are co-facilitated, which gave everybody extra support. In the Autumn term 20 short courses (all online) were delivered – across four counties – Cork, Kerry, Limerick and Clare (nine funded by Cork ETB, four funded by HI Limerick; three funded by Kerry ETB; and one funded by HI Clare. A huge effort was needed all round to make this happen.

We learned a great deal delivering the first round of Short Courses on-line

A number of key learnings can be identified from our experience of organising online short courses in 2020: there was strong demand for what we offered; Zoom facilitated spreading out to include people from other areas; it was wise to pilot one-to-one meetings before the courses began: and it was very appropriate that most of these courses were co-facilitated. It is also the case that organising such courses placed a significant burden on SHEP (there had to be extra contact with participants and extra contact with Tutors); and the special training provided by the Project was timely and very necessary.

We secured new funding to introduce SHEP Training to County Tipperary

In 2020 we were awarded nearly €5,000 from Tipperary Healthy Ireland to deliver four short SHEP courses in South Tipperary. We had already done some training work in Tipperary in 2018 and 2019 – but this the securing of HI funding was a significant development and will support the spreading of the SHEP approach to another county.

5. FOUNDATION Training (in personal & social transformation)

We successfully transitioned in-person courses to online

In March, with the start of lockdown – all of our core training courses had to move on-line. All eight Foundation One (PD) courses - in Cork, Mallow, Tralee & Limerick - were moved on-line and ultimately finished on-line. We lost just 15 people. 101 people successfully completed the course. We had hoped that the groups might have had a chance to meet up for a final get-together in September, but that wasn’t possible either. The feedback from the groups was still very positive – despite having to move on-line. While the majority would much preferred to have been able to meet in person, most people were very appreciative of our efforts to support them to stay in the training and to complete it.

We made the right decision to offer the Autumn programme only on-line

In the early summer we put a lot of effort into working out how to offer the programme in the autumn. Over the summer we offered three versions of our foundation courses (fully in-person, blended and fully on-line) – and we put a lot of effort into working on that, including trying to find big enough venues to allow for adequate physical distancing. We decided that the courses would have smaller numbers (about 12), would be shorter, and we have very significantly subsidised the training to incentivise people to try it out. We advertised the three options and it is interesting that there was significant interest in/openness to all three options. However, by the time autumn arrived it became clear that we would only be able to offer fully on-line. In the end we organised six fully on-line PD groups and three fully on-line new Social Awareness & Community Empowerment courses.

In summary we there has been a lot of extra work and a lot of extra cost to support a significantly smaller number of people to do foundation training in SHEP. The smaller numbers will have implications of course for training in the coming years but for the moment we need to take it year by year.



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS: COVID 19

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Our adaptation of the Foundation One (PD) course for online worked well

This was our first time running Foundation Part 1 (PD) fully on zoom. We shortened the course to 65 hours Total: (normally 120 contact hours) i.e. 18 weekly (2.5 hour) sessions; a shortened PD weekend of eight hours: and two shortened (4 hour) modules on Body Awareness and Expanding Awareness. A key development was that we piloted integrating the Effective Communication and Stress Management modules into the core programme and this worked well.

Our first fully on-line Foundation One (PD) groups all went very well

We engaged with 130 applicants and 74 participants (including 14 men) were allocated places. We had four groups of 12 participants and two groups of 13 participants. Overall attendance excellent: only 6 people dropped out. Moreover, there was very strong feedback at the end of the courses, including great appreciation by participant and a real sense that people got so much out of it. Our decision to limit the group size to 12 was a good decision. A general impression is that the profile of the participants is more eclectic and younger than previous years. And it also seems that the percentage of men participating has declined – dropping back to about 1 in 6.

‘I would recommend this course to anyone who is looking to learn about them-selves. The group dynamic is unexpectedly powerful. I came into it never having any experience of sharing my emotions with anyone, let alone a bunch of strangers, but ended up feeling comfortable sharing some of the hardest parts of my life. The experience has made me a stronger, more caring person.’

We learned a number of important things from this piloting of Foundation Pt 1

Our experience of spring 2020 helped greatly: a strong emphasis on communication with everyone helped people feel included in the decision making. Our experience again was that our facilitators were very understanding of the challenges, were very open to trying out whatever was necessary; and quickly grew in confidence regarding on-line delivery. Our facilitators also grew in confidence regarding their capacity to hold participants while facilitating remotely. Our inclusion of new apprentices worked well, even in the context of on-line delivery. Finally, we learned that not requiring a deposit with the application simplified the administration of the course.

There were similar learnings from delivering Foundation Part 2

We had very strong participation by SACE trainers in modifying the course for on-line piloting. After a summer of uncertainty, we ultimately organized three groups started – 34. There was a very high retention rate: It was challenging work for trainers; and the experience was very rewarding for most participants. A key learning is that this type of training can be done on-line, though it is more complex and there are challenges and losses. We have also learned that we could lengthen the duration of the course for next round as a large number reported that it was a little too short. A key question now is - can we in future continue to offer a fully on-line version of this course?

We were still able to bring on the next generation of SHEP Facilitators

In 2020 we continued Part 1 of our new initiative to bring in new Facilitators to SHEP: six people were supported in this work. Two people completed a first year as new Trainers – working alongside an experienced Trainer. Three people completed an apprenticeship – working alongside two experienced Trainers. Because of COVID19 it was agreed not to include any new apprentices. We also supported people on this pathway to build up their co-facilitation experience through being involved in the short course programme.

The continued support of the MWRDAF is very important

Since 2010 the MWRDAF has been supporting the SHEP programme every year in the Mid-west. In 2020, they provided funding to support one Foundation Part 1 (PD) course and one Continuing PD course. Both courses were offered as fully-online.

6. SHEP Earth Aware

Extraordinary Growth of SHEP Earth Aware during 2020

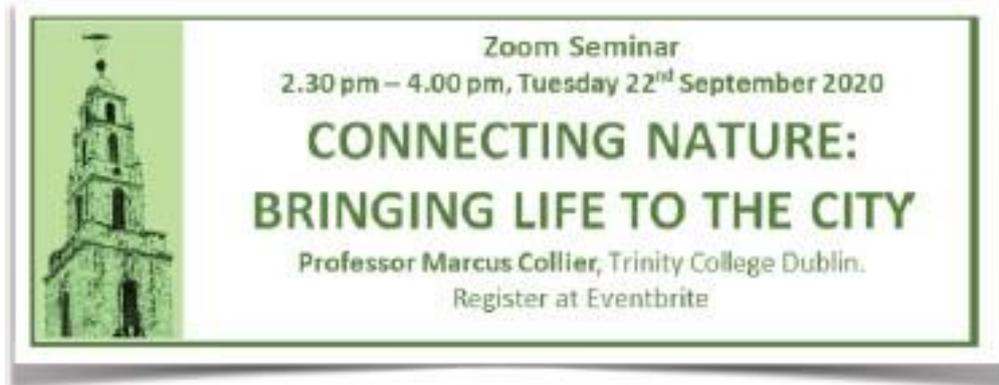
SHEP Earth Aware found a huge learning on how to communicate in an alternate way than we were used to, during COVID19. We were forced to find an alternative to our monthly in person events and our in person meetings. We were concerned about on-line accessibility and take up. However, contrary to our concern the online meetings, discussions, presentations happened with relative ease and we went on to host exceptional talks in a very successful series of webinars. We found it very advantageous to collaborate with other organisations on these webinar series because we could share technical resources, networks and contacts. In fact, collaboration became a lot easier, decisions were made democratically, it was a lot easier for everyone to attend than usual, there was a sense of solidarity amongst all our partners that we could really make a success of these talks if we combined our talents.

The success of the webinars far surpassed all our expectations.

The numbers attending were double, triple if not more than we could accommodate in our normal venue. We managed to secure international speakers, something absolutely unheard in the past. The consequences were immense, we could open up the discussion far beyond our own boundaries, in fact the world had no limits. The talks attracted an audience not just from Cork but nationally and internationally. It also provided a very strong sense of community where as in the past we sometimes felt our talks were in isolation to very few people. We also targeted strategically our audience, for example City Councillors, politicians, policy makers, etc. This wasn't nearly as possible in the past. So when looking back at this challenging time, the work and reach of SHEP Earth Aware increased dramatically.

2020 National Pride of Place Award

We are delighted also that SHEP Earth Aware and Elders for Earth won an award recently at the National 'Price of Place Competition' 2020. Frank Dorr and Eileen Lynch, both very active in SHEP Earth Aware, were also honoured in December by Cork Environmental Forum for their work to support environmental awareness.



The first of our series of zoom seminars is titled

GREENING OUR CITY

Presented by

SHEP Earth Aware, Green Spaces for Health, Cork Healthy Cities, Cork Chamber of Commerce
and the Environmental Research Institute, UCC

Next Sessions Tuesday, October 20 and Tuesday, November 24

Professor Marcus Collier is Coordinator of Connecting Nature <https://connectingnature.eu/urbanbynature> a consortium of 30 partners within 16 European countries and hubs in Brazil, China, Korea and the Caucasus. Connecting Nature works with local authorities, communities, industry partners, NGOs and academics who are investing in large scale implementation of nature based projects in urban settings. It measures the impacts of these initiatives on climate change adaptation, health and well being, social cohesion and sustainable economic development in these cities. It is also developing a diversity of innovative actions to nurture the start up and growth of commercial and social enterprises active in producing nature based solutions.

A greener city is not only more pleasant to live in, or to visit, it also improves the health, wellbeing and social cohesion of citizens, helps sustain biodiversity, mitigates the effects of climate change and provides opportunities for innovative and sustainable economic development.

A program of greening will be most effective if it involves a partnership of City Council, businesses, community groups and academics. It is hoped that this seminar and the further seminars in the series will contribute to building that partnership.

This seminar is free of charge. Booking is essential, to register please:

BOOK HERE



7. On-going Personal Development

We successfully transitioned two Continuing PD courses

Both Cork-based courses had started in person in February. With the onset of the pandemic both courses were moved on-line. The vast majority of the participants continued and completed the course – though five dropped out (for a number of reasons, but mostly to do with finding it challenging to do this type of personal work on-line).

We offered a fully on-line Continuing PD course for the first time

Based on the largely positive experience of facilitating this training online since March, we offered a new course to Limerick participants, starting in October, and fully on-line. 13 people signed up and started. A key learning is that starting a fully online course is much simpler than transitioning an in-person course to on-line.

We postponed our On-Going Development Seminars

In March 2021 we postponed our detailed programme planned for 2021 because of the pandemic. Though this was a loss it was nonetheless a wise decision as so much extra work was needed to transition training groups to on-line.

8. Group Facilitator Training

We transitioned two Facilitation Courses (Cork & Limerick) to Zoom

Both courses commenced in-person in February and were disrupted. Both were transitioned to zoom with the on-set of the pandemic – and ultimately both courses were completed on-line. The disruption and uncertainty was significant. A key learning was that it was appropriate to invest in communicating with participants as we struggled to figure out a path forward.

We developed an Innovative Tutor Training programme

In response to the pandemic, and the need to up-skill our Tutors, we organised a peer training programme for 12 SHEP Tutors in facilitating on-line. This programme has gone very well and we are considering a second group. The course also resulted in the development of a new SHEP community education courses (Connecting from the Heart).

We certified one facilitation training group through QQI

In 2020 the final group of learners received a QQI certificate – 14 participants completed the assessment for Level 6 Group-work theory and Practice (4 Distinctions & 10 Merit). The previous year SHEP Management Committee decided that SHEP would not re-apply to maintain our registration with QQI. The experience of being registered with QQI was positive and helpful, but the Management Committee agreed that going forward our focus is to continue offering experiential training largely without assessment and to emphasise the value of and strengthen SHEP certification.

9. UCC Diploma in Social & Psychological Health Studies

The two-year Level 7 course was moved fully on-line in March

In early March, the course was moved on line. All twenty three participants continued, though it proved challenging for some (particularly those whose home situations were challenging). 17 of the 23 successfully completed all first year modules. However, a total of seven did not transition to year two, which started in September 2020, and was entirely delivered on-line. A key learning was that there are additional complexities in delivering a fully assessed and accredited training online. Additional training and supports were provided to everyone involved.

10. Professional Development for Practitioners

We developed a new 'Reflect and Engage' Programme

In response to Kerry ETB who wanted to support their community education personnel during the pandemic we designed a new eight hour (four week) course. The first course was a great success. It was also offered to the HSE Mental Health in the Workplace Programme (PSYCHED) and the two courses run were also very well received.

We collaborated with Ag Eisteacht to Support Front-line Workers:

With the outbreak of the pandemic we partnered with Ag Eisteacht (out partner in the Heart of Frontline Practice Alliance) to offer a number of once-off reflective spaces to frontline workers.

We moved the Heart of Practice Conference to on-line

Our collaborating with Ag Eisteacht (Heart of Practice Alliance) deepened during 2020 despite the pandemic. A special, on-line seminar was arranged in May to support frontline workers and was very well attended. The second annual conference on 'Reconnecting with the Heart of Practice) was rescheduled to November and moved fully on-line (it was a great success).

We successfully completed our DCYA-funded Practitioner Training Programme

In 2020 we successfully completed our programme with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs - under their Quality and Capacity Building Initiative. We facilitated Practice Dissemination Workshops with Family Support Networks in Cork in the use of network practice tools for effective Inter-Agency working: we established a Reflective Practice Group in Cork as a support for teachers; and we ran three co-facilitated groups of 10 practitioners – mostly youth workers and family support workers (two in Waterford and one in Kilkenny).

We secured new Training Links funding for Reflective Practice

In 2020 we were successful in securing a new grant to scale up our Reflective Practice work to include further work in the South East, work at a national level, and the training in of new facilitators.

We secured a new Erasmus Plus KA2 Programme Grant

In 2020 we secured ERASMUS Plus funding for a new KA2 Programme on storytelling as a tool for Adult Education. This was our first time applying as Programme Coordinators.

We sent four more staff to Theory U Training – Berlin 2020

We sent four SHEP personnel the 'Theory U Foundation Programme' in Berlin in early March 2020, just before travel restrictions and lockdowns commenced. This brings to eight the number sent by SHEP to this important training programme.

Disruption to Erasmus KA2 Programme

The KA2 ExPROM exchange visit to Ireland, scheduled for May 2020, was postponed to April 2021 because of the pandemic.

Postponement of UCC-SHEP Conference

A conference we were planning with UCC on Reflective Practice - for June 2022 - was postponed to 2021 because of the pandemic.



SHEP
CAPACITY FOR CHANGE



Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna Chiarraí
Kerry Education and Training Board

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Course Focus

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mhoulihan@kerryetb.ie

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www.socialandhealth.com



'The coronavirus situation provides an opportunity for all of us to pause, reset, and step up.'
Otto Scharmer

11. Training & Facilitation for Organisations, Groups & Communities

We deepened our collaboration with NYCI – National Youth Council of Ireland

We continued to work with the National Youth Council of Ireland who requested us to do a reflective practice training with them in Dublin. A Critical Reflective Practice Training was planned to commence in Dublin, in person, September 2020. Because of the pandemic we delayed the start to October and moved the programme fully-online.

Disruption to Erasmus KA1 (Staff Training Abroad) Programme

We were successful the previous year in securing a two new Erasmus KA1 education mobilities grant: one to support the SHEP Mid West Programme and one a consortium of five groups (with SHEP as the lead). However, both of these projects were disrupted by Coronavirus with no activity possible after March.

HSE Mid West Community Health Care Staff – Pilot initiative

This important and exciting pilot initiative commenced the previous year – but was suspended because of the pandemic.

12. Advocacy

Significant Disruption but important work continues

During 2020 we continued with the move away from providing individual advocacy to focusing more on facilitating advocacy in groups. COVID19 has made this work very challenging – but the service did some very important work during 2020 to support vulnerable people and groups, including in three residential settings. People continued to be interested in training with the project in advocacy and self-advocacy – and new initiatives continued to emerge, including a new pilot collaboration in self-advocacy with a group of service users from COPE in Cork.

We successfully transitioned the Advocacy course on-line

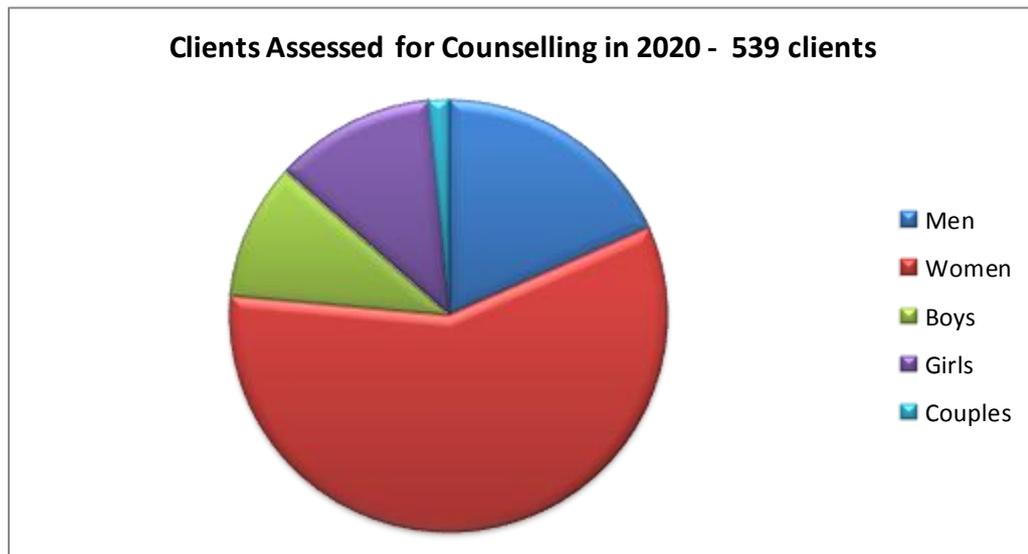
Our Introduction to Advocacy Course commenced in early 2020 as a fully in-person training. With COVID19 it had to be transitioned to on-line – which was not what people had were expecting when they signed up. This was challenging for everyone. Though there was significant disruption and uncertainty we were able to continue with the course and 18 participants finished (we lost just two participants). As with other courses there was a lot of appreciation from participants: they wanted to finish the course and many found it an important personal support to them during COVID19. The Learner groups continued to meet outside class time – and this too was an important support. Interestingly, we found that working on-line with this group supported group cohesion, with fewer opportunities for cliques. A key question for us now is might we be able to offer a blended version of this course in future, as well as a fully in-person course.

‘Usually the SHEP courses give much, often needed, downtime from busy lives. This downtime provides valuable growth and learning. This could not happen for everyone through Zoom. I suppose I just want to acknowledge how much easier it is to be more fully present when attending courses in person than participating remotely, in that there's easy distraction in a home setting - home being what it is and goes on no matter what we are trying to do.’

13. Coiscéim Counselling

An adaptive, Responsive Service

Coiscéim will be 20 years old in 2021 – and it has proved over those years to be a hugely important service. It has grown and evolved over the years – and in recent times the team have been working hard to expand the service to two important groups – young people and people living in direct provision. During 2020, the service was able to continue to provide counselling supports though significant adaptation to service delivery was needed because of the pandemic. A special support service was also provided as a special COVID19 response.



Large Numbers of Adults supported during 2020

The total number of calls to the service was over 700. There were 340 adult clients assessed and referred for counselling in 2020. The vast majority were able to start and continue their counselling, despite the pandemic. Of these assessed, only 43 adults did not avail of counselling for various reasons mainly pandemic-related. The total number of counsellors referred to was 98 – and the total number of counselling hours provided by Coiscéim counsellors was 3,517. A counselling subsidy was provided to 224 adults (73 adults didn't receive a subsidy).

‘A recurring theme or word heard throughout the research for this review was the word human. Coiscéim, contained within the structure of SHEP, for twenty years has developed and nurtured a mature, creative human space that responds to the mental and emotional health needs of people from the community. It has enabled their voices to be heard supporting those who have met the services to make new generative choices about their lives.’

Independent Evaluation 2020

Important new TUSLA funding

It was agreed by the SHEP Management Committee, resources permitting, to expand our work with vulnerable young people seeking counselling support. We already provide such supports and this work is growing. The project is unable to address growing levels of demand. We are delighted that TUSLA agreed, after considerable negotiation, to give us an additional €20,000 per year for three years to support increased work with young people. We recruited a new part-time staff member at the end of the year to help with this new work.

Increasing Numbers of Young People supported

There were 191 clients from the ages of 7 to 25 years inclusive assessed in 2020 and 76% of these clients received a subsidy. Of the 3,505 total Coiscéim counselling hours - 789 hours were provide to clients in age group 7years – 25 years old by 33 counsellors in Cork City & County. During the first onset of COVID19 all children and adolescents switched to on-line counselling. The experience and feedback from counsellors indicated that after the first few weeks the majority of clients attendance dwindled especially with the younger children. There was a decline in numbers seeking counselling during this first wave, but once restrictions were eased the service got extremely busy. All children under the age of 12 were seen face to face since the first reopening of schools. All were seen in the SHEP Centre in Ballintemple as there is a large therapy space with adequate ventilation whilst also adhering to strict HSE Covid Guidelines. Counsellors also report that older children prefer face-to-face as they were tired of screen time due to on-line schooling.

Coisceim continued to collaborate with organisations & projects in 2020:

Coiscéim has always been a highly collaborative service – and 2020 was no exception. In spite of the pandemic we continued to work in partnership with Shine a Light, SVDP, Respond Housing, Barnardo's, WTC, and a growing number of Schools.

New HI Mental Health funding secured

In 2020, we secured €3,500 funding from Healthy Ireland Cork to support our counselling work.

Coiscéim independent evaluation completed

Anne McCarthy conducted an independent evaluation of the service in 2020. She concluded that the service is highly rated and effective and meets a very important need in the community.

‘Clients attending Coiscéim tend to be representative of the more marginalised sections in the community who struggle financially and who have not benefited from national economic growth. This is borne out by the referrers interviewed, who reported an increase in homelessness as an issue.

Other presenting issues affecting the client group include alcohol, drug problems and the impact of intergenerational poverty on families. It is evident from the client written feedback that the client group deeply appreciate the provision of safe spaces where they can access professional counselling.

The relational skills and culture of SHEP and Coiscéim.’

Independent Evaluation 2020

14. LIB Counselling

Continued Development of new counselling & outreach programme

It was agreed in 2019/2020 that the second area of development in our counselling work should be in providing supports to those seeking asylum. A new initiative – initially called CAIRDE Counselling – commenced with the support of a number of volunteer counsellors and pioneered by Toufik Messabih. The HSE provided some small start up funding to help with this, though we do need to find bigger and more sustainable funding for this very important work. It was agreed to rename the programme to Lib Counselling and Outreach Programme.

SEI National Award 2020

We are thrilled that the LIB Programme won the Social Entrepreneurs Ireland 2020 National Competition in the 'Ideas Academy' category. This was great recognition for both for the initiative and Toufik Messabih who founded it.

15. International Partnership

We deepened our collaboration with Sahakarmi

During 2020 SHEP's connection with Sahakarmi Samaj deepened because of the pandemic. Throughout the year we continued to support Sahakarmi Samaj to complete Year Two of the new Irish Aid and Development Norway Funded – in the context of the global pandemic. The current grant is the fourth three-year grant secured by SHEP from Irish Aid to support Sahakarmi Samaj's work with marginalised communities in South West Nepal. The NCESLG project is being implemented in five target districts: Kanchanpur, Kailali, Bardiya, Jajarkot and Dang - spanning three Provinces (Sudarpachim, Karnali & Province No.5) in South West Nepal and including some work at national level (in terms of training and advocacy).

We visited Nepal in early 2020

A Project Monitoring visit took place in January 2020 - with Jim Sheehan and Aleks Rogulska travelling to Nepal to work with the team there. A key focus of the visit was capacity development regarding results monitoring and report writing – particularly in the context of concluding Year 1. There was little sense of an imminent global pandemic at the time.

The Sahakarmi Project was also significantly disrupted by COVID19

Nepal too was affected by the COVID19 pandemic during 2020, though there were not as badly affected as Ireland in the first waves. The first six months of the year saw an intensive national lockdown restricting any kind of mobility nationally and internationally and the closure of public places and activities. By 31st December 2020 the Nepal Government had reported over 260,593 COVID-19 cases.

When the crisis started SS worked with local and provincial government to support local preparedness to face the escalating rate of infection and respond to the socio-economic impact of the enduring lockdown on the most vulnerable in society. In addition,

Sahakarmi's staff swiftly adapted to remote working and the use of Zoom facilitated greater interaction with SHEP. Despite the year's challenges almost all outputs were on target. The team worked exceptionally hard to make up ground and ensure that training and meetings were able to take place between October and December, once restrictions eased. Significant learning from 2019 was taken on board and much new learning took place.

The resilience and sustainability of the Sahakarmi Project was proven

Although the COVID 19 pandemic brought about tremendous challenges it also demonstrated the sustainability and resilience of SS's work, in that many community organisations were able to continue their local work, even in the absence of SS's field staff being able to visit due to lockdown and the work from home/station policy. In addition, there have been some unexpected positive outcomes such as improved contact between the learning and funding partners than had previously been considered possible.

Perhaps more than anything, what this extraordinary second year of the project demonstrated, is its resilience. In 2020 Sahakarmi & SHEP proved that the community infrastructure they have built up as a result of this programme (and those that preceded it), works effectively, even in the face of a global crisis such as the COVID 19 pandemic. The Nepal Community Empowerment for Strengthening Local Governance Project (NCESLG) is the embodiment of Irish Aid's Goal 3 for 'Better Governance, Human Rights and Accountability' and shows the positive knock-on effect this has in terms of social inclusion, health and economic welfare of those who are most marginalised. During the six-month long lockdown Sahakarmi's CBNOs (Community Based Networking Organisations) became the vital link between local government and the local population, uniquely positioned on the ground to deliver COVID relief, monitoring and awareness raising and to facilitate community meetings and action planning.



Aleks Rogulska, SHEP, with some members of the Sahakarmi team at the Sahakarmi Office in Kohalpur in January 2020. SHEP has been supporting Sahakarmi's work in South West Nepal since 2008. Most of the communities Sahakarmi supports live in marginalised, often isolated, rural communities. We have secured significant Irish Aid funding for their work over twelve years.

16. OTHER

SHEP Choir continues to sing despite COVID19 – but remotely

The SHEP Choir was severely disrupted because of COVID19. The Choir continued to meet and practice regularly albeit on-line. The members remain very committed and are waiting patiently to resume singing together in person, and performing when possible.

Staff Health and Well-being

The pandemic significantly increased the stress on Project Staff: one of the new teams established as a Staff health & well-being group. One of their actions in 2019 was to organise a full team review session, which was very much appreciated, and was facilitated by Dr Maeve Hurley (Ag Eisteacht) and Dr Nicola O’Sullivan.

Regional Meetings of SHEP Facilitators

During 2020, despite COVID19, our new approach to regional meetings of SHEP Facilitators continued – though all of the meetings took place on-line, bar one (the South East meeting took place, in person, Clonmel in February 2020). What was unforeseen at the beginning of the year was the number of other meetings that would be organised (to work through issues for COVID19). All of these meetings were on-line and therefore allowed SHEP personnel from different counties to work together. This has been a very positive development and we will want to continue some element of this type of working and gathering into the future.

SHEP management committee

SHEP is a community and voluntary group – and we are very proud to be part of the voluntary sector. Our Management Committee is the governing structure and holds the Project on behalf of the community. The following were serving on the committee during 2020: Angela Murphy (Chairperson); Dolores McCashin, Rosarie Coleman, Bernadette Nolan, Lorna Rice Davis, Rebecca O’Mahony; Eithne Sparling (all coming from the Facilitators); Liam McCarthy (staff nominee); and externally co-opted -Carrie Whitty; Stephen Griffin; Roy Kelleher; and Jim Murphy.

17. Priorities 2021

In addition to delivering all the actions set out in our 2020 work-plan we have identified eight key priorities for 2020 as follows:

- To continue to consult widely throughout the Project regarding adaptations necessary to respond to the COVID19 pandemic.
- Continue to create opportunities and spaces for organisational learning, particularly in the context of the COVID19 pandemic.
- Continue to strengthen and modernise internal systems in the Project

- Provide continued support to SHEP Personnel (& Facilitators) to deliver SHEP Training on-line and in blended formats.
- Supporting the introduction of the SHEP Programme to Tipperary
- Further development of SHEP's Practitioner Development Programme
- Continue the selection and induction of new SHEP Facilitators with increased emphasis on improving diversity
- Liaise closely with Project funders to address funding shortfalls arising as the Project grows in response to emerging needs.

18. Appreciation of Support

The Management Committee and staff of The Social and Health Education Project would like to sincerely thank everyone who supported our work in 2020. The support of our main funders - the HSE in particular - is greatly appreciated. Total funding in grants and fees received that year was **€1,310,423**. Total expenditure by SHEP in 2020 was **€1,138,560**. Total expenditure of HSE funds in 2020 was **€743,138**.

On-going support from the Cork Education and Training Board, Kerry Education and Training Board, TUSLA, The Department of Social Protection, and The Mid-West Regional Drug and Alcohol Forum all played an important role in enabling SHEP to deliver our extensive programme of work for 2020 in support of a wide range of people from a wide range of backgrounds. We are also very appreciative of grant funding made available by Perry & Sandie Massie Foundation, Healthy Ireland, Mercy Solidarity Fund, Bon Secours Health System, and The Wheel to support a range of community projects during 2020.

Copies of our 2020 audited annual accounts are available on our website www.socialandhealth.com. Thank you for your interest and support.

