

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION PROJECT CLG





Chairperson's Message

A great deal of important work was done by the Project in 2023. The Post Covid Recovery continued across the entire programme. We were delighted to see strong interest once again in the work of the Project across all our programme areas.

During the year, we continued to build on our commitment to prioritise environmental sustainability - and the management committee is excited about where this will take us.

We were guided by our new Strategic Plan and we worked hard with our funders, particularly our core funder the HSE, to secure some additional funding for the 2023 programme. We were delighted to be awarded additional monies from the HSE for 2023 for our Advocacy Programme and for the Lib Multicultural Counselling and

Outreach Programme.

A key highlight for me was SHEP joining into the Green Spaces for Health Programme – this is a very exciting development and an important expression of our commitment to environmental action.

As always there are challenges that arise in the work – in 2023 the main one was the loss of two Finance Team Staff the difficulty in finding replacements. We are really dependent on good finance and administration staff to enable us to do the programme work we wish to do.

As Chairperson I am extremely proud to see continued adaptability, personal strength and achievement right across the Project. On behalf of all the SHEP Management Committee I want to express my deep appreciation to all our staff, tutors and trainers, facilitators, counsellors, advocates and volunteers and to the many committed course participants and service users, all of whom make up the SHEP family.

Carrie Shanahan
SHEP Chairperson

Our Mission: In solidarity and partnership with others we seek to foster the well-being of people, families, communities and the wider world and to contribute to a healthy, loving, socially just and sustainable way of living

Key Developments

We built on our commitment to prioritise environmental sustainability

In 2021 SHEP Management Committee responded to the Climate Crisis by adopting a resolution to put “*environmental sustainability at the heart of all that we do*”. This continues to shape all our plans.



Sr Kathleen, Provincial leader, with some of the LTI participants and some SHEP staff celebrating an important milestone in the Dome & Garden Project

We continued to collaborate and build partnerships

Partnership and collaboration are fundamental to SHEP’s way of working both within our core programmes and the many additional activities we are involved in and support. Some notable activities in 2023 included: The Heart of Frontline Practice Seminar with Relationships in Practice: supporting the CESCA alliance, of which we are a proud member; an ever-growing closeness with the Horticultural Project at Ardfoyle; partnering with SPHE in the South East; the SHEP Community Choir; and supporting Cork Migrant Centre with the International Garden Project (based at Ardfoyle).

We had strong interest in our courses

Over 1300 people participated in our training programme both in person and on-line.

We were guided by our new Strategic Plan

The main decisions of SHEP’s internal inquiry/generative/planning process continued to form the basis for our rolling strategic plan for 2023-2026.

Strategic Plan 2022-26

Collaborate

Work in partnership with other organisations where possible

Connect

Deepen our connection to the wider community

Influence

Take a stronger stance regarding systemic exclusion, inequity and injustice

Learn & Strengthen

Further develop SHEP as a Community of Practice & strengthen Organisational Effectiveness



SHEP

Capacity for Personal & Social Transformation

Reconnect & Restore

Creatively attend to the impact on the Project of the Covid Pandemic

Create

Continue to create opportunities for personal & social transformation .

Sustain

Put environmental sustainability at the heart of all our endeavours

Respond

Respond creatively & appropriately to emerging needs



Carrie Shanahan (SHEP Chairperson), Rosarie Coleman (Trainer & Management Committee), Dolores McCashin (SHEP Company Secretary) with Sandy and Perry Massie at the Cork Certs Event at the Silver Springs Hotel, in May.

SHEP TRAINING PROGRAMME

Foundation Part I - SHEP Certificate in Personal Development (SCPD)

“I would recommend for everyone to do the Certificate in Personal Development. I have learnt so much about me. I did the course online through zoom. It gave me the opportunity to connect with people in a private and intimate space. It gave me the chance to be involved and to become engaged with people. The kindness, compassion, advice and support shown to everyone was so lovely to see. We created an online family where we connected so well with each other. It gave me the space to become a better communicator and listener, to grow in confidence but most of all to know how to show self - compassion. Attending the course through zoom has had such a positive outcome and impact on me. I had a safe place each week to process emotions and different situations that may have arisen. I have become better at speaking up for myself and not afraid to put myself first”. SCPD Course participant
2022-2023

In May 2023 8 Groups had completed the Shep Certificate in Personal Development, 4 in person in Cork City, 1 in person in Tralee, 1 in person in Limerick and 2 courses were offered online. This course consists of 105 hours of Experiential Groupwork facilitated by 2 SHEP facilitators who are also psychotherapists.

In October 2023, 7 new SCPD groups started, 4 in Cork City, 1 in Tralee, 1 in Limerick and 1 online course.

We offered one less course in October 2023 as funding that was available to us through the Department of Social Protection from the Activation and Family Support Program was no longer available. This funding had supported participants who were in receipt of a payment from the DSP for example Carers Allowance, Job Seekers, One Parent Family allowance, Disability Allowance etc to participate in the course as their fee was covered by the AFSP program. As a result of the funding being withdrawn we felt that we would have less applicants for the course. For the SCPD course 2022-2023 we applied on behalf of 31 applicants in Cork and 4 in Kerry to the DSP for funding to support their participation on the course.

SCPD Statistics 2022-2023

- Cork and Kerry – Completed 79 (66 women and 13 men)
- Limerick 18 started and 16 finished.

SCPD Statistics 2023-2024

- Cork and Kerry — 96 participants started
- Limerick – 15 participants started



John O'Mahony and Kay O'Regan (Course Facilitators) - back, right - with their group at the Cork Presentation of Certificates Ceremony in Cork in June.

Foundation Part II – SHEP Certificate in Social Awareness and Community Empowerment (‘Training for Transformation’)

Since the inclusion of ‘Training for Transformation’ in SHEP’ program in 2000, the ‘Training for Transformation’ has been offered on 78 occasions and it continues to be a core element of SHEPs Foundation Training in Social and Personal Health Education. Program.

The program in 2023 was one course in Cork, fully in-person, involving 78-hour over five weekends. There were 36 applicants, with 28 commencing and 26 completing the course (8 declined offers or withdrew their application).

The training team has changed significantly over recent years. Towards restoring the trainer panel, two new apprentice trainers commenced in 2023 and will be involved again in 2024.

24 evaluations were completed at course end. On a rating scale of 1-10 (poor to excellent)

- Overall course rating – 92% scored 7 or higher.
- Own Learning – 80% scored 7 or higher.
- Skills of the facilitators - 100% scored 7 or higher.

Some quotes participants were willing to share in annual report:

“Yes -if you are thinking about doing a course with SHEP and you are unsure, please do it. I promise you won’t regret it’ (Helen)

‘Definitely beyond my expectations. I have been challenged in relation to self, society and the world which created space for growth’

A challenging, enjoyable course where you have the opportunity to meet like-minded people” (Rose)

There is great power I this method of learning which comes from within yourself’ (Shane)



Kerry-based SHEP Trainers, Tutors and Facilitators, at a gathering in Tralee in May.

Continuing Personal Development

The Continuing Personal Development Course is intended for those who wish to continue with personal development work in a group setting. It is one of the key offerings of our On-going Personal Development Programme. The course involves 25 weekly sessions plus 6 weekend days. In 2023 one group commenced in-person with 11 participants.

SHEP Certificate in Facilitation

The training of facilitators is a core element of the Project's approach to personal and social transformation. The SHEP Certificate in Facilitation is a largely experiential **intermediate-level course in facilitation** which supports participants to develop a basic competence in the skills necessary to facilitate group processes in a variety of group settings.

This course is required to progress to further specialized groupwork practitioner training as a tutor on topics of health and wellbeing on SHEP's Community Education Program. It also serves practitioners beyond the SHEP context with 60% of participants citing benefit to their existing practice as a reason for undertaking the course (2023 and 2024 application forms).

In 2023 one blended SHEP Facilitation course was delivered, based physically in Cork, Ballintemple and on Zoom for online session. It was 65% in-person and 35% online (17 weekly evening online sessions and 10 in-person weekend days – 110 contact hours).

23 applied, 18 commenced- 12 received full certs, 4 receiving statements of attendance (between 60% and 80% attendance) and 2 dropped out.



Robert O'Herlihy, SHEP presenting Alison Kavanagh, Ardfoyle Horticulture LTI, with a number of laptops donated to the LTI from the SHEP Laptop Loan Scheme.

Community Education for Health & Wellbeing (short 20-hour courses over 8 weeks)

This program was strong in 2023. There were 56 courses organized (plus one Lets' Talk About Transition to Secondary School). These were typically 24 hours if online and 20 hours when in-person and generally of eight-week duration.

The profile of the course topics, participants starting and completing is shown in Table 1 below. On average there was an 82% (83% in 2022) completion rate, with an average of 11 participants starting and 9 completing each group (same as in 2022). (This compares with 2021 during height of pandemic,

where the average completion rates were 80% with an average group size of 10 commencing and 8 finishing)

Table 1 – Course Topics and Participation statistics

Course Name	Number of Courses	Participants Started	Participants Completed	Average Group Size Starting	Average Group Size Completing	Completion Rate
Introduction to Personal Development course	21	263	214	13	10	81%
Seasons for Growth – Living with Grief, Loss and Change course	10	99	80	10	8	81%
Caring for Our Wellbeing course	9	82	66	9	7	80%
Women’s Well-being course	5	56	44	11	9	79%
Effective Communication for Better Relationships course	3	38	28	13	9	74%
Managing Stress in Our Daily Lives course	2	22	22	11	11	100%
Growing Still – Facilitating Well-being & Empowerment in Older Adults course	2	19	16	10	8	84%
Tailored Community Course	1	12	12	12	12	100%
CWB & Managing Stress combined	1	12	12	12	12	100%
Connecting from the Heart - Courage to be Real together in the Present times	1	12	10	12	10	83%
Supporting Yourself as a Parent (Family Communication & Self-esteem) course	1	10	10	10	10	100%
Grand Total	56	625	514	11	9	82%

Geographically these were distributed 34 in Cork County (61%), 10 in County Kerry (18%), 11 in Mid-West (20%) and 1 in Other (2%)

Cork ETB, Kerry ETB, Community sector and Healthy Ireland grants primarily, supported the courses to be offered at no charge to participants.

11 or 20% (25% in 2022) were offered online reflecting the value of maintaining some online offerings to facilitate some dimensions of access and inclusion.

All SHEP programs are premised on a strong and active facilitator base. Currently there are 71 SHEP registered tutors for Community Education work across the work area. 8 community tutor apprenticeships were completed in 2023.

Over 30 Community collaborations were involved in the programme: Ballybunion Childcare Centre, Ballyhoura Dev, Ballyspillane FRC, Castletownbere FRC, Causeway, Cobh FRC, Cork City Partnership, Cork Traveller NW, Croom FRC, Educate Together NS, Good Shepard Limerick, Hospital FRC, Kerry Travellers, Kildarden House, Kilrush FRC, Lantern Community Project, Listowel FRC, Maine Valley FRC, North Cork Traveller NW, Phoenix Womens Centre, Respond, Roxboro FRC, SHEP Limerick, TEAMS Tralee, West Limerick Resources, Wexford FRC, LCETB, CETB, KETB, Healthy Ireland.



SHEP TRAINING SUPPORTS TO PRACTITIONERS

SHEP has and is committed to supporting practitioners for the last 50 years. Our commitment to the training and support of practitioners both internally and externally demonstrates our ability to build capacity and sustaining our vision and mission.

External Practitioner Supports 2023	Internal Practitioner Supports 2023
Total No. of Practitioners - 579	Total No. of Practitioners- 343

Relationships in Practice

Relationships in Practice is a programme to support frontline practitioners' relational and reflective capabilities: 298 practitioners were supported during 2023, through a number of initiatives including 3 day ABL Training, ABL for Educators, GP Registrars Training, Commissioned Trainings and facilitated screenings of 'The Biology of Stress and Science of Hope.'



Participants on an ABL training, held at Northridge House, with trainers Una King and Rose Crowley. Also included are Relationships in Practice programme staff members Robyn Pinkham and Norma Roche as well as Programme Manager, Fern Higgins Atkinson.

Reflective Practice

The aim of the programme is to co-create a space for twelve participants to reflect on their prior and current practice experiences using the 'Critical Reflection' model. The programme aims to enhance participants' capacity to engage in the critical reflective process and to enhance their capacity to co-create the conditions for learning from practice reflection. We aim for maximum of 12 per group running typically fortnightly for 30 hours in total.

- During 2022 3 groups completed (two online and one in person) – 32 participants commenced and 29 completed.
- During 2023 (Autumn) 2 groups commenced (one online and one in-person) – 15 practitioners commenced (nine and six)

UCC Diploma in Social and Psychological Health Studies Collaboration



Most of the students in the 2021-2023 SHEP-UCC Diploma in Psychological Health Studies in UCC in April, just before they completed their course. The group will have their graduation in November.

Collaborating with Slovakian Teachers around Experiential Learning

We started a new collaboration, as part of our Erasmus work, with the University of Exeter and The League of Mental Health in Slovakia. We delivered 1.5hr sessions x 5 online to explore health and well-being in the school setting. A group of ten Slovakian teachers/adult educators visited SHEP in September to get a better understanding of the SHEP experiential psycho-social approach. We then delivered training to 10 teachers in Slovakia in November 2023.

Heart of Frontline Practice

The Heart of Frontline Practice is a collaboration between Dr. Maeve Hurley, Dr. Nicola O’Sullivan and SHEP to provide reflective spaces for Frontline Practitioners. 103 practitioners were supported during 2023 through the annual Conference ‘Reconnecting with the Heart of Frontline Practice: Connecting with Compassion in Diverse and Complex Settings’, Two Touchpoints in 2023 and a Specialist workshop ‘An interactive workshop on Whole Person Care’

Youth Mental Health First Aid

22 practitioners were supported through the delivery of the YMHA training which is designed for adults who live with, work with or support young people aged between 12 and 18.



Participants on the Youth Mental Health First Aid Training organised in the Spring through SHEP and Mental Health First Aid Ireland, with Trainers Fern Higgins Atkinson and Lisa Fox.

Supports to SHEP Practitioners

Facilitators Gathering: Two in-person gatherings in April and November- exploring the strategic direction, supporting challenges that tutors are experiencing with groups post covid.

Certificate in Facilitation: 60% of participants were current practitioners with remainder aiming to develop some future practice benefiting from a substantial 110-hour intermediate level training in group facilitation.



Patricia Davoren, Marie O'Flynn, Pat McCarthy, Aine Finn, Una Good and Claire Barry – at the SHEP Facilitators' Gathering at SMA Wilton, in April.

Apprenticeships

All SHEP Programmes are based on maintaining a strong and active facilitator base. In 2023 we've supported 12 persons to participate in our apprenticeship programme: Community Education Tutors (8); SHEP Cert in Personal Development (2); Social Awareness and Community Empowerment (2)

Supervision

We consider supervision as an integral part of the training process in supporting our practitioners it's offered with a commitment to 'best practice' and safeguarding the needs of participants.

Practitioner Group Supervision	No's Attended	No of 2hr sessions
Community Tutor Group	58	12
SCPD Trainers (Pairs)	19	9
SCPD Group	6	4
Lib Counselling	6	6
Community Tutor Individual	4	4
OVERALL TOTAL	93	35

Seasons for Growth Training for Limerick Tutors

An opportunity was created for 13 Limerick Tutors to upskill in the *Seasons for Growth Coping with Grief, Loss and Change* to support their ongoing facilitation in Community Education Courses.

Insight for Connection and Being

The intention is to provide an opportunity for interested SHEP practitioners to come together on an experiential journey of curiosity and inquiry to being more fully in oneself and in the world (9 x 3hr) workshops. 24 SHEP personnel were involved in 2023.

South East Practitioners of SPHE Community of Practice

Four days training provided to a group of 12 practitioners.

Shep Cert in Personal Development (SCPD)

Two Refresher workshops for Trainers on *Stress Management and Effective Communication*

Coisceim

The Coisceim team continues to provide ongoing support for practitioners in *Cuanlee, Shine a Light Cork and the TVG*. Collaboration with *Cork Stroke Support Centre*.

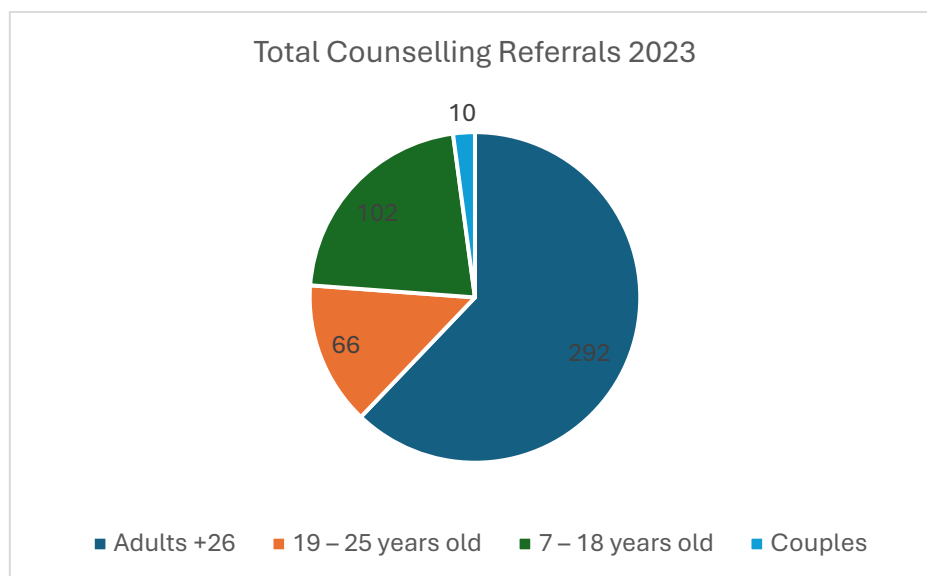


SHEP COUNSELLING PROGRAMMES

Counselling Service Activity 2023

Now in the post-Covid era, it appears that more people are seeking help for their mental health difficulties, particularly in the area of counselling. This heightened demand, coupled with a cost-of-living crisis and increased public waiting lists, is creating increased pressure on low-cost counselling services such as Coisceim Counselling. With this service being open to the public, it attempts to meet these demands in the most supportive, creative and time-efficient way possible, given its limited budget.

The following is a breakdown of the four counselling programmes available: Adult, Young Adult, Children and Couples.



Breakdown of Clients Referred to Counselling

	Individuals	Couples
Adults – 26 years and older	292	
19 – 25 years old	66	
7 – 18 years old	102	
Couples		10
Totals	459	10

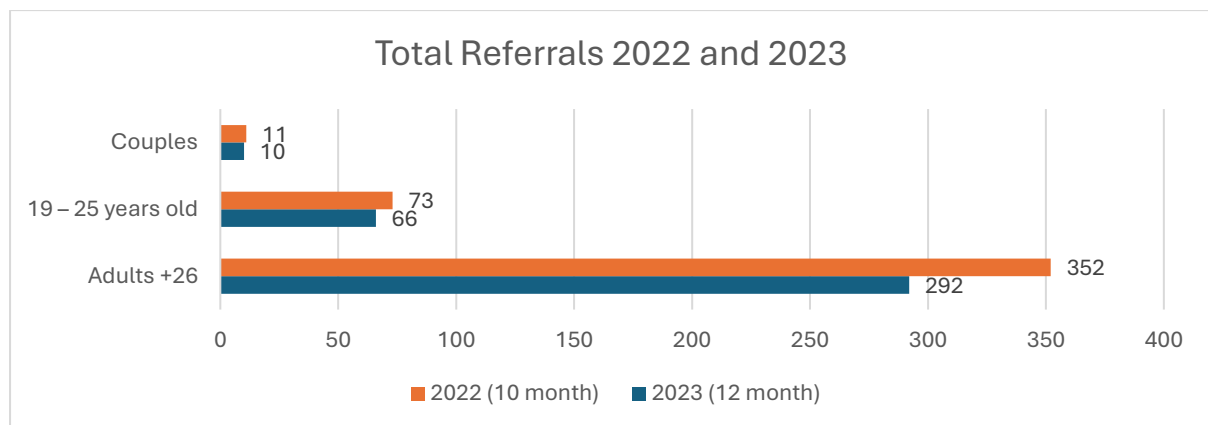
From January to December, 2023, there were **833 contacts** received via phone or email, requesting support and/or counselling. These enquiries were screened in a timely manner and where necessary, signposted to more appropriate local services or included in referrals. Urgent screenings are always given priority.

The process of referral involves a general consult and a more in-depth assessment whereby the client is suitably matched to one of the **118 counsellors** on our panel who work on a low-cost basis.

Each client is assigned up to ten subsidised sessions. In 2023, the total amount of counselling hours allocated was 4,690 hours. Up to the end of December 2023, 2,488 hours have been claimed for all of the programmes with outstanding hours due to be paid in the first quarter of 2024. The cost of these hours in mainstream counselling services would be €149,280 given an average of €60 per session.

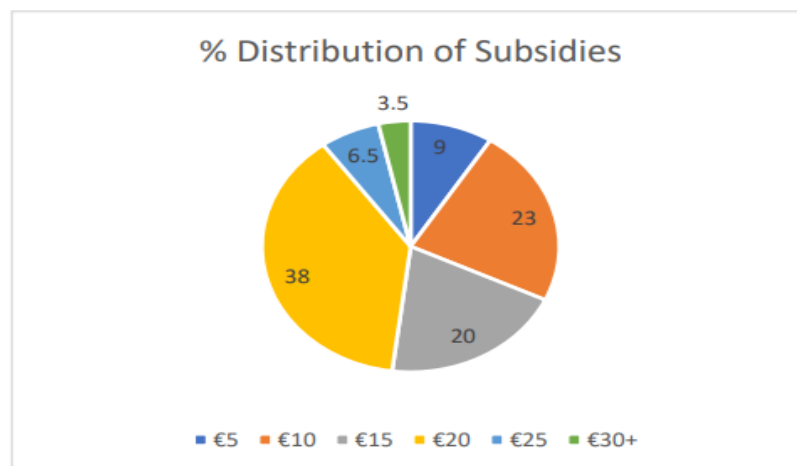
Budget Restrictions

Due to a budget deficit in 2022 which caused the service to close in late October, Coisceim Counselling subsidies were significantly impacted in 2023. Consequently, there was a marked decrease in all the adult programmes in 2023, with only 358 adults being referred over the full year in comparison with 425 adults that were referred in a ten month period in 2022. It is estimated that this results in over 100 adults not being able to access counselling in 2023. There were also three temporary closures of the waiting list during the year – April, June and October 2023 – for a period of three weeks each time as the waiting list reached its maximum capacity.



Subsidies:

As you can see from the chart below, subsidies ranged from €5 to €30 per session to clients, with the majority of clients receiving €20.



Community & Voluntary Collaborations

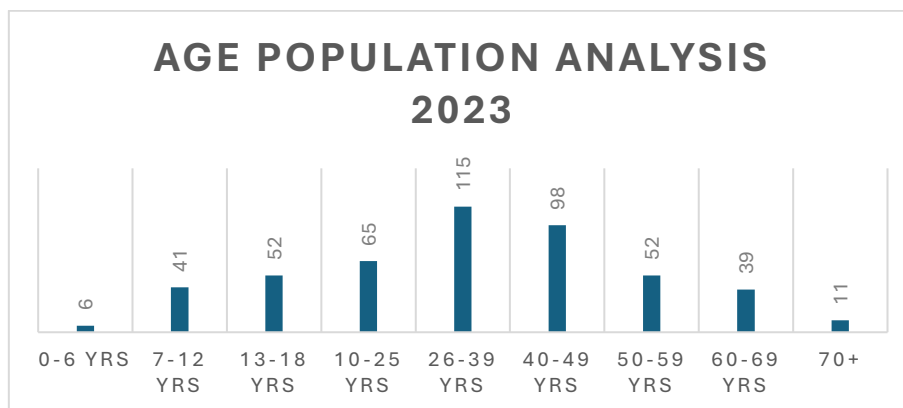
Coisceim Counselling supports a wide range of community and voluntary organisations as well as those from the HSE service, including GPs and those awaiting CAMHS assessments. These organisations include:

- (1) Cork Stroke Support Centre
- (2) Cuanlee Refuge
- (3) Mna Feasa
- (4) Respond Housing
- (5) Traveller Visibility Group
- (6) Shine A Light Suicide and Mental Health Awareness
- (7) Barnardos.

Through these collaborations, vulnerable adults in need of necessary support can be identified and supported in a timely manner.

Age Population

A breakdown of all clients referred to our service is as follows:



LIB MULTICULTURAL PROGRAMME

Lib was created in November 2019 with the support of SHEP. Lib is a counselling service for asylum seekers, refugees and individuals in temporary protection.

Mission

To support asylum seekers, refugees and individuals in temporary protection with their mental health. Lib is a trauma informed service driven by a strength-based approach to promote personal growth, resourcing, agency, self-efficacy and resilience.

Services

- One to one counselling/therapy for adults and children
- Amaris: 12 hours psycho-social intervention designed to promote resilience and being well through the exploration of key factors of coping skills and through practical self-regulation exercises and games.
- Roots: uses art-therapy to provide a safe space for children and adolescents living in Direct Provision, to engage in personal exploration and expression to nurture their inner strength. The 'Roots' workshops encourage peer support and connection through participatory engagement in a fun, creative and supportive environment.

Referral sources and process

Lib has been receiving referrals directly from individuals in temporary protection, asylum seekers and refugees and also from Nasc, Direct Provision management teams, various department of the HSE, Brij, Tusla, social workers, GPs, psychologists, National Learning Network and other various local support groups.

Individuals are met by Toufik Messabih⁽¹⁾ for an initial assessment of needs and then referred to a Lib therapist. Therapists include counsellors, psychotherapists, a play-therapist, art-therapists, a reflexologist and an NLP/Capacitar therapist. Currently there are 14 therapists on the team respectively meeting 1 or more Lib clients. Languages spoken by therapists are French, German, Russian, Lithuanian, Portuguese and Spanish. Languages of Lib interpreters include Arabic, Georgian, Somali and Ukrainian. Lib also contracts 2 supervisors for therapists group supervision. Interpreters are also offered support.

(1) Toufik Messabih is a psychotherapist (MTU, Cork) born in France, with Algerian roots and creator of Lib. He is the 2020 Social Entrepreneurs Ireland (SEI) winner in the Ideas Academy category and selected participant in the SEI Action Lab 2022 for the creation of Lib. Toufik created the Amaris resilience programme which was the object of his thesis for the Masters in Applied Psychology (UCC).

In 2023 Lib supported around 100 individuals, men, women, and children in one-to-one therapy or in group personal development. This is on par with the year 2022. A significant difference was a reduction in the number of Amaris programme delivery and steadying in the number of Roots programme delivery. In 2022, 4 Amaris programmes were facilitated while there was 1 Amaris in 2023. This can be explained by a combination of 3 variables:

1. Amaris was favoured as a development tool by an outreach worker who had a very good understanding of the positive impact of Amaris on participants' wellbeing. Since she has

moved to a different organisation in 2023 there was little drive within the local community group to promote and organise Amaris programmes.

2. In 2023 there seemed to be a significant change amongst the asylum seeking, refugee and temporary protection population in terms of professional activity. Our understanding from discussing the subject directly with those individuals showed an increased pressure in terms of accommodation. Many were threatened with losing their temporary accommodation (accommodation centres, emergency centres) and therefore were actively looking to move to private dwellings. The housing market being extremely tense with higher rental fees, many asylum seekers, refugees and individuals in temporary protection were forced to seek paid work. Amaris was usually run during the day, but in 2023 expression of interests for a day run Amaris were insufficient to organise its delivery. Another impact of the “need to work” was around the unavailability of interpreters especially Ukrainian/Russian interpreters.
3. Amaris is a 12-hour psychosocial intervention that can be done over 6 weeks or condensed into 4 weeks. In either format there is commitment in terms of attendance. The second variable described above complexifies the capacity to attend for 4 or 6 weeks.

It is possible to reconsider a resourcing intervention that would require less commitment from participants. A G-Rep (Group Resource Enhancement Protocol, part of the EMDR tool kit) is a 90-minute intervention that, like Amaris focuses solely on strength. The social dimension of Amaris will not be activated (peer-support) but the installation of core resources necessary to improve resilience would be addressed.

The Roots programme remains popular with schools and direct provision accommodation centres. The challenge remains the isolation of some centres like Drishane Castle for example or the distance that needs to be covered by the facilitators. Saying that, a Macroom secondary school has expressed a very strong interest in supporting their migrant population and Roots has been chosen in 2023 as one avenue to support them.

There was a project with the Social Inclusion group in East Cork to create a group to support Syrian men who were showing signs of maladaptive behaviour (possible consequence of struggling with culture shock, being unemployed or PTSD) like depressive symptoms, physical health problems or anger issues with family members. Again, the expression of interest was low (only 2/3 men showed an mitigated interest), forcing the project to be paused.

A significant change in terms of Lib structure was the employment of an administration staff for ½ day per week. It was a positive and well needed addition in terms of support for Toufik Messabih.



The full Coiscéim and LIB teams – Sheila, Carmel, Lorraine, Zilma, Nuala and Toufik. In addition to working for Coiscéim, Sheila now works a half-day per week with Toufik on the LIB programme

SHEP ADVOCACY PROGRAMME

SHEP has been involved in advocacy since 2000 and was to the forefront in the development of advocacy for older people through a project called Cork Older People's Advocacy Service. In the years since, the Advocacy Program has developed and adapted to the growing demands for advocacy services for people with disabilities, for training and group facilitation and particularly supporting people through decongregation processes.

Across 2023, the advocacy programme continued to undergo change and transition while also facing increasing demands for the services we offer across the three strands of the advocacy program

The programme currently has a team of 12 volunteer advocates and contracted facilitators. The previous Advocacy Program Coordinator remains involved in the program as an Advocacy Consultant for 27 hours work a month, ensuring her extensive experience and knowledge remain accessible to the program and the team.

There are currently two part time Advocacy Program Coordinators (APC) with the coordinator post currently being covered for 2 days a week as one APC is on maternity leave until April 2024. Additional funding in 2023 enabled the APC role to be enhanced to oversee the programme during difficult periods of transition and change. We are working towards a time when the APC post will work on a job share basis and the working week will have cover. This will ensure greater oversight of the work involved and continuity of service.

This busy programme now has three distinct aspects.

Group Advocacy Facilitation.

We are involved in Group Advocacy Facilitation in three settings currently, Cobh Community Hospital, St Raphael's in Youghal and St. Vincents Centre in Cork.



- 1.1 In Cobh Community Hospital two members of our team, facilitate a group advocacy meeting once a month in the Hospital for the residents. On average we have 12 residents present each month and provide a space to raise any collective or individual issues of concern. We also provide information and support around advocacy awareness, rights and entitlements. In 2023 we raised matters with management from 6 of our 11 meetings. These issues related to peoples will and preference around their care, their preferred living arrangements and access to appropriate OT support. This model of advocacy support has been praised by HIQA.
- 1.2 In St. Raphael's Centre in Youghal we have had a long-standing relationship in supporting the residents with independent advocacy support, beginning in 2012 when we accessed genio funding to start an advocacy group to support people to express their will and preference as part of a decongregation process. Since then, the large institution has closed but residents are now living in community houses. Two members of our team visit residents in the houses monthly on a rotational basis. In 2023 we had approximately 99 individual interactions with residents. Much of work is focused on ascertaining the will and preferences of the people involved, which often entails overcoming communication differences. In 2023 we have had ongoing conversations with staff in the houses about the will and preferences of the residents on each of our visits and we have supported one individual to access the National Advocacy

Service for people with disabilities and another to seek a conclusion on a safeguarding concern raised in 2022. St Raphael's have requested more intensive support from our advocacy program in 2024 following concerns raised during HIQA inspections. This piece will be overseen by the APC and will centre on determining the will and preference of a number of residents in specific locations.

- 1.3 St. Vincents Centre This has been a substantial piece of work supporting the women involved to advocate for their rights in respect of their finances, their care and their future living arrangements. Advocacy support began in 2017 when the residents were advised that the building would be closing and in December 2023 the women finally moved out of the Victorian institution into their own homes with 8 women continuing to living in a 'temporary' situation whilst houses are sought for purchase. We will continue to provide independent advocacy support to the women for a further 12 months as has been requested by them in order to assist in this major transition in their lives.
- 1.4 Enquiries and one to one advocacy support We still have some one-to-one advocacy supports that remain from when we also included this work in our advocacy program. We successfully supported two people in 2023 to move into their own accommodation of their choosing with the right supports. In 2023 we received over 30 enquiries from members of the public and professionals seeking advocacy support for their clients.

Training and Advocacy Awareness.

This is an increasingly busy aspect of the programme, delivering advocacy awareness sessions and training to staff in residential and day services, facilitating self-advocacy training for service users and planning to deliver our SHEP certified Introduction to Advocacy Course in September 2024

In 2023 we focused our training on advocacy awareness sessions for staff working within disability services. These sessions provide an opportunity for those who work within services to reflect on their own roles, the different types of advocacy and rights and entitlements. These sessions have been well received with training delivered to 42 staff across two services in 2023. We have plans to expand this offering in 2024 with sessions booked in with 26 staff expected to be present.



Project work. The Advocacy programme is the space holder for two distinct pieces of project work, namely an annual Independent Advocacy Gathering, (IAG) supporting networking, peer support and advocacy practice development and the Our Rights and Medication (ORAM) group.





3.1 IAG In April 2023 we successfully hosted an online advocacy gathering with 40 participants in attendance on the day. The gathering provides an opportunity for self-advocates and professionals to come together to share experiences, learning and to network. This year our guest speaker was Aine Flynn from the Decision Support Service, and we used the event as an opportunity to mark the full commencement of the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015.

3.2 ORAM has been a past recipient of the IHREC grant and is working to raise awareness of the importance of rights in the context of the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015 and want people to know more about rights and medication. The advocacy group is a network of experts by experience, advocates, academics and practitioners hosted by the SHEP Advocacy Program. There are 20 members in total.



In 2023 we delivered workshops within two settings to people with disabilities on their rights around medication. We also developed a video explaining more about the work we do. We have plans for 2024 to build an online presence and engage in discussions around culture change and consent. <https://socialandhealth.com/oram/>

Plans for 2024 and beyond

- Our plans for 2024 are based on the prediction that as per the additional funding made available to the program last year we will be in a position for the APC role to be covered for 4.5 days a week, upon the return of one Coordinator from Maternity Leave. This will ensure the program will be more sustainable and better positioned for growth and development.
- We will deliver our SHEP certified Introduction to Advocacy Course in September 2024
- We are seeking to expand our advocacy training and development offering to engage with more services. It is a unique and valuable training offering, given its grounding in day-to-day advocacy practice setting it apart from anything else available as this time. We are also receiving requests to deliver training outside of traditional disability settings and welcome this opportunity to bring the concept of advocacy to other groups.
- We have requests from existing service providers to expand our group facilitation offerings and plan to expand our offerings in this area to more services.
- Our advocacy consultant will continue to co-ordinate independent advocacy support to the women moving out of St Vincents for a period of up to 6 -12 months and provide a case study report on this experience from our Advocacy Programme perspective. The consultancy work will continue to include involvement in developing the SHEP offerings to parents of children with autism, the 'Lost Voices' advocacy work with the Critical Voices Network and the Advocates for Human Rights in Mental Health work that is seeking to influence the review of the Mental Health Act. We intend to avail of her expertise in training and team development.
- ORAM will launch a new website and strategic plan in early 2024 and will seek to engage with medical professionals and academics to further their work.

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME

Sahakarmi International Learning Partnership Reflections

2023 was a positive year for the International Partnership as the first year of the current Irish Aid funded programme '*Shakti*' got off the ground. SHEP staff made two monitoring visits to Nepal during the year; Abigail (SHEP/SS Partnership Co-Ordinator) in March, and Jim (SHEP Director) in April. Quarterly review meetings and regular contact took place online throughout the year. SHEP's Annual Nepal Fundraising Raffle was launched online and with help from staff, volunteers, SHEP choir and the Horticulture Project, it succeeded in raising over €5,000. This meets our commitment to match funding and also feeds into our Irish Aid benchmark of a having a fundraising strategy in place.



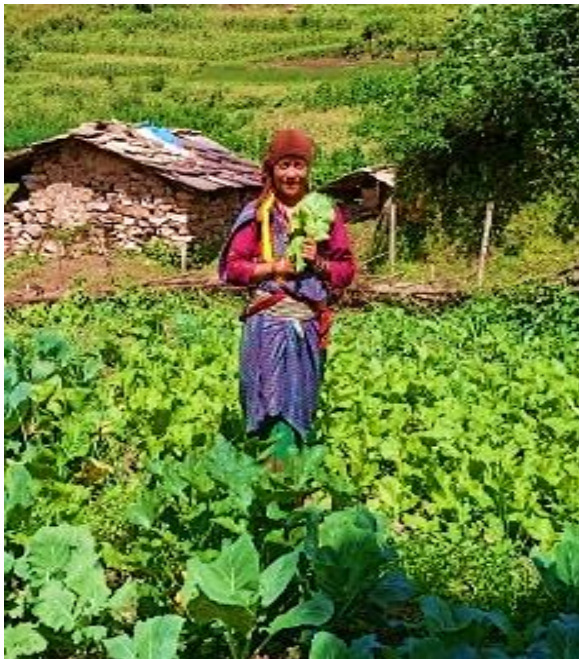
During the March visit Abigail, in collaboration with Raksha (SS MEAL Officer) and Champa (Shakti Programme Director), spent a number of days completely reviewing and learning about the *Shakti* Monitoring and Evaluation system, as agreed with Irish Aid in the benchmarks. This important relationship building exercise gave Abigail a deeper insight into the workings of the programme as well as an assurance that proper systems are in place and being carried out effectively. She and the team also conducted the first quarterly review of the programme and set up systems and meetings for the coming year. She also observed a training programme and got to know participants, all of which demonstrate the value of in-person visits.



Whilst in Kohalpur Abigail facilitated a Zoom Finance Training session with Aleksandra, SHEP's Finance Officer, and the Sahakarmi Finance team as per another agreed benchmark for capacity building and training for financial reporting.

The field visit to the new working areas in Bajura meant a long trip up to this remote mountainous region of Western Nepal. Whilst the flight to Bajura is only 20 minutes it is expensive and can be unreliable. From here it is an hour's rough road drive in a jeep to Jagannath Municipality administrative headquarters and a day's drive on similarly inhospitable terrain to Gaumul, the other project working area. From both Municipality headquarters it can be one to five hours walk to the villages. The jeep drive back to Kohalpur takes 14 hours. The strong working relationship with Sahakarmi Samaj of these remote areas is evident – indeed they are match funders for the programme – and there is clearly a strong need here for community organisation, social inclusion, food security

and climate change mitigation, all of which form part of *Shakti*. The inaccessibility of the region has been one of the big learnings for Sahakarmi, as it has led to an unexpected increase in logistical costs. That said, in its first year *Shakti* has remained on track with its programme targets.



Both Abigail and Jim's visits provided invaluable opportunities to strengthen the international learning partnership with Sahakarmi Samaj by spending time with core staff and to see first-hand the innovative and inspiring work that is being done. Visiting gave us the chance to meet local staff, community group members and dignitaries and our presence was also useful to Sahakarmi as a show of international confidence in and solidarity with their work.

Whilst in March the project was still largely in the setting up phase, by November Jim was able to see the results of new kitchen gardens, active community groups and other community initiatives. 101 new community development groups have been formed with the involvement of over 2,000 people. We look forward to the continuing success of *Shakti* in 2024 as well as a visit to Ireland from Sahakarmi

PRIORITIES 2024

- Continue to support the continued integration of the 'Relationships in Practice' Programme into SHEP
- Celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of SHEP in 1974
- Work with our partners in the Mid-West to secure long-term funding to sustain the SHEP Training Programme in the region into the future
- 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.
- 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.

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 2023. Total income in grants and fees received this year was €1,655,148. Total expenditure by SHEP in 2023 was €1,637,704. Total expenditure of HSE funds in 2023 was €777,986. The support of our main funders - the HSE in particular - is greatly appreciated. The HSE provide core funding for SHEP through a Section 39 Grant and in 2023 granted an extra €132,000 towards the extra cost of the work we are supporting. We are grateful to Ag Eisteacht Foundation for their support of the Relationships in Practice Programme and to The Department of Foreign Affairs (Irish Aid) for supporting of international partnership with Sahakarmi. We are also very appreciative of the support of the Perry and Sandy Massie Foundation which very generously donated \$US75,000 to our work in 2023.

We are grateful to the following partners for their on-going support: TUSLA, the Cork Education and Training Board, Kerry Education and Training Board, The Mid-West Regional Drug and Alcohol Forum, and The Department of Social Protection - all of whom played an important role in enabling SHEP to deliver our extensive programme of work for 2023. We are also very appreciative of grant funding made available by Healthy Ireland and Bon Secours to support our community training projects during 2023. Finally, we acknowledge the support of the SHEP Community and the general public who helped fund-raise for our Solidarity Bursary Fund and to support our International Learning Partnership with Sahakarmi in Nepal.

Copies of our 2023 audited annual accounts are available on our website www.socialandhealth.com. Thank you for your interest and support.

