

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024

SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION PROJECT CLG





## CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

I am delighted to present our Annual Report for 2024. In many ways it was an exceptional year – with many ups and downs. The year started with the passing of our dear Eileen Lynch whom we miss greatly and remember fondly. Her legacy in SHEP lives on in many ways and through us all. Throughout the year we celebrated an important milestone – the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Social and Health Education Programme. There were many important gatherings, not least the formal events in Cork and Kerry, the wonderful Cork Certs night and the visit to Ireland by our friends from Nepal. Great work continued throughout the year across all areas of the Project: Training and Development; Counselling; Advocacy; Environmental work; and International Partnership. A very important development in 2024 was our saying yes to the request to take over the management of the Horticulture LTI Project, which has been a wonderful addition to the SHEP programme, bringing us closer to nature in so many ways. We faced significant financial uncertainty in the autumn of 2024 caused by the restructuring of the HSE – again we were resilient in that storm though difficult decisions had to be made. So, it was a year of important celebrations, significant changes and a lot of good work done all in the context of growing tension and fracturing at the global level. I'm grateful to the more than 250 people, including volunteers, who helped us during 2024 to do the important work we do, and to our many supporters and partners, particularly the HSE who core-fund SHEP as a Section 39 Community & Voluntary Organisation. Thank you all.

**Carrie Shanahan, SHEP Chairperson**



## A VERY MEMORABLE YEAR

I want to say a huge thanks to everyone who has been involved or supported us during 2024. It was a special year. I am very proud to be involved in this Project which has, for over 50 years now, contributed very significantly to the lives of many. I feel very privileged to work in an organisation that has stayed very close to values of our founders and yet has evolved in an organic way over the years. The many events that took place during 2024 to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of SHEP in Cork in 1974 provided important opportunities to celebrate a remarkable story and a huge contribution to the social fabric of the region. We deeply appreciate the generosity, hard work and commitment of so many over five decades. SHEP remains a vibrant, dynamic and adaptive community organisation and we are proud of what has been achieved with the support of many. We start the next chapter with deep gratitude and great confidence holding fond memories of all those who have been part of the journey and gone before us.

**Jim Sheehan, Director**

SHEP is a Community Education & Development Project established in Ireland in 1974.

What started as a small, innovative and responsive project has evolved in unforeseen ways. Through the years we have remained a community of people committed to a particular vision and way of working.

## 1 KEY DEVELOPMENTS

### We marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of establishment of SHEP

The Social and Health Education Programme was established in Cork in 1974 as a programme of Ógra Chorcaí. During 2024, a number of formal and informal events were organised to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and to acknowledge the journey the Project has travelled over five decades. These included a formal event in Cork to which key supporters were invited, including the Project's core funder the HSE, and a formal event in Kerry hosted by Kerry Education and Training Board.



*SHEP was delighted to be awarded the Adult Education Category of the 2024 Cork Learning City Awards.*

### Continued core-funding support from HSE

During 2024 our work was again core-funded by the HSE - as SHEP is a Section 39 Community and Voluntary Organisation. The funding supported training, advocacy and counselling work in Counties Cork and Kerry. Significant match funding was leveraged by SHEP from other sources. We wish to acknowledge the particular efforts by HSE South-West to support funding arrangements for SHEP for the following year (2025) in the context of important changes in the structure of the HSE which took place in late 2024.

### SHEP took over management of the Ardfoyle Horticulture LTI

A very significant development during the year was SHEP's agreeing to take over the management of the Ardfoyle Horticulture LTI from September 2024. This development is informed by SHEP's commitment to doing more to promote environmental awareness, climate action and bio-diversity protection. The Long-term Training Initiative (LTI) is fully funded by Cork Education and Training Board. This development has meant that SHEP now has full-time students for the first time in its history.





*We were deeply saddened by the passing of Eileen Lynch at the start of the year, seen here at a SHEP Gathering in 2023 with her husband Frank Dorr.*



*Anita O'Shea (Mid-West Drug and Alcohol Forum & SHEP), Cora Foley (Clare and Limerick Education and Training Board), Helen Ryan (Mid-West Drug and Alcohol Forum) and Jim Sheehan at the Mid-West SHEP Presentation of Certificates event in Limerick on June 6<sup>th</sup>.*



### Continued support from the Perry & Sandy Massie Foundation

We are very grateful for the support of the Perry and Sandy Massie Foundation during 2024. Their generous funding supported SHEP to continue our work to modernise the organisation, to continue to offer training in the Mid-West Region, and to support a number of innovative projects (such as our work with parents and guardians of autistic children).

### We launched a new Strategic Plan

At the heart of our strategic plan (2024-2027) are seven strategic goals: put sustainability at the core of all our work; respond creatively and appropriately to emerging needs; work in partnership with other organisations where possible; further develop SHEP as a community of practice; deepen our connection to the wider community; take a stronger stance regarding systemic exclusion, inequity and injustice; and continue to strengthen organisational effectiveness.

### Re-sizing for Sustainability

In late 2024 the Management Committee agreed a plan to re-size some of our programme work in order to ensure that the work in 2025 and following years would be financially sustainable. While SHEP has been successful in securing significant additional funding from various sources, including the HSE, most of the additional funding has been temporary (rather than permanent) funding. With core costs increasing and core grants not keeping pace it was discerned that an appropriate re-sizing of the training and counselling programmes was necessary to ensure sustainability and quality assurance.



*Phil Heffernan (Cork Education and Training Board) and Keith Murphy (Cork Education and Training Board) making a presentation to SHEP at Ardfoy on May 28<sup>th</sup> to mark SHEP's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Also pictured; Liam McCarthy, STDO (SHEP) and Carrie Shanahan (SHEP Chairperson).*

## MISSION STATEMENT

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 building a healthy, loving, socially just and sustainable way of living.

## 2 OTHER DEVELOPMENTS



*The SHEP Staff team in early February with Sarah Harrington (CESCA Coordinator) at the Dome at Ardfoyle. Also on the team are Abigail Joffe (International Partnership) and Maria Young (Green Spaces for Health).*

### Strong demand for SHEP courses

Throughout 2024 there was sustained interest in and take up of the SHEP training courses offered. In the context of a post-Covid pandemic recovery, there continued to be a general strengthening of the SHEP in-person programme, with large numbers opting for fully in-person training. SHEP continued to offer both on-line and hybrid offerings which proved very popular.

### New climate action funding

We were delighted to secure funding from Cork City Council, as part of the Government's, Climate Action Programme, for a number of initiatives at SHEP Ardfoyle. These include energy conservation initiatives and an educational initiative around climate action and bio-diversity promotion. Planning work commenced on these new initiatives in Autumn 2024 to prepare for delivery in 2025.



### New five-year lease - Ardfoyle

SHEP moved to Ardfoyle in late 2019, from Ballincollig, just before the outbreak of the COVID pandemic. SHEP has been made very welcome in Ardfoyle by the OLA community. SHEP personnel rate the Ardfoyle premises highly and staff are very happy to be based there. We were delighted in the summer of 2024 that the OLA sisters renewed our lease for another five years to 2029.



*Sr Gabrielle and Sr Mary (OLA Sisters Leadership Team) with Jim Sheehan, Tatenda Zira and Fiona Devlin at Ardfoyle on May 28th. SHEP has been based for five years now at Ardfoyle. SHEP has had six homes over the fifty years: the previous homes of the SHEP are: Sheares Street; Grattan Street; Western Road; Bessborough; and Ballincollig.*

### Our involvement in Relationships in Practice concluded

In May 2024, after almost three years, our involvement in the Relationships in Practice Programme came to an end. Our own, programme of work to support practitioners across various settings, including our Reflective Practice programme, continues unaffected.

### Mercy Foundation funding for Reflective Practice & Community Education

We were very pleased to have secured funding once again from the Mercy Foundation to support our work. The Mercy Sisters have long been supporters of the SHEP work. In 2024 the Foundation committed funding to support the delivery of our Short Course Programme in Cork and also a number of Reflective Practice courses.

### Visit to Ireland – Sahakarmi Samaj, Nepal Project

A very significant event during 2024 was the visit to SHEP by a number of senior Sahakarmi Samaj staff along with two of the Mayors from the Sahakarmi Samaj work area. The visit was a great success and included a visit to Irish Aid in Limerick. Irish Aid have been co-funding Sahakarmi's work in Nepal since 2008.





*Some members of Donal Linehan's family at the SHEP gathering to unveil a portrait of Donal, who along with Nuala Rearden, co-founded the Social and Health Education Programme in 1974. Also in attendance were Sean McGann, former CEO of Ogra Chorcaí, Sheila Connolly (Cork Alliance) and Rosella Sheehan (Newbury House). SHEP, Cork Alliance and Newbury House are among the projects co-founded by Donal Linehan.*

### **Important changes on the team**

During 2024 Deirdre O'Sullivan, Senior Training & Development Officer, retired having worked on the staff team since 2010. Fern Higgins Atkinson was recruited as a new STDO. Toufik Messabih, founder of the LIB Outreach and Multicultural Programme, finished up with LIB and Sheila Kelleher took over as LIB Programme Coordinator.



*Liam McCarthy and Carmel Savage - making a presentation to Deirdre O'Sullivan from the SHEP Management Committee to mark her retirement from her role on the SHEP staff team, after fourteen years. The presentation is a framed hand-crafted version of John O'Donoghue's poem 'For Presence'.*



## OUR APPROACH

We work creatively and inclusively  
with people, community and systems.

**deepening**  
the **connection**  
with,  
& knowing of,  
ourselves & the  
world we live in

**inspiring,**  
& bringing about,  
**capacities for**  
**positive change &**  
growth (in  
communities &  
individuals)

**contributing**  
to the renewal of  
the broader **social,**  
**cultural &**  
**economic systems**  
that shape our  
world

## 3 KEY INNOVATIONS

### First Erasmus learner exchange

In 2024 we organised our first ever Erasmus Learner Exchange. In May we brought eleven of our participants to Slovenia for a five-day programme. In June we hosted a group of adult learners from both Slovenia and Spain. The exchange was a great success.

### First Erasmus Teacher Programme

In July 2024 we organised our first ever Erasmus Summer Teachers' Course. The five-day programme was very well received. Participants came from Hungary, Slovakia, and the Netherlands.



*Some of the participants on SHEP first's Erasmus Adult Learner Exchange – at a visit to UCC in June. SHEP hosted two groups of adult Learners, one from Slovenia and one from Spain. The visiting group was very international and included Spanish, Slovenian, Ukrainian, Peruvian, Cuban and Palestinian people.*

### New formats for SHEP training

During 2024 we piloted a hybrid version of Foundation Part 2 (Social Awareness and Community Empowerment) which catered for participants from Kerry and Limerick and was very well received.

### New 'REACH' funding

An innovation in the Autumn Foundation Part 2 (Social Awareness and Community Empowerment) in Cork was support by a Cork ETB REACH grant. In collaboration with Green Spaces for Health, four participants of the Green Spaces Community Gardens were supported to participate on the SHEP course in order to develop leadership capacity and social awareness.

### Seasons For Growth - Train the Trainer

In 2024 we offered Seasons for Growth 'Companion Training' to interested SHEP Tutors, and others, in the Mid-West region. This important initiative was supported by Healthy Ireland Limerick.



*Fiona Devlin, Frank Dorr, May Shanahan, and Jim Sheehan at SHEP on May 28<sup>th</sup>. May, who is a SHEP group facilitator (Community Education Programme), was one of a number of people who spoke about their journey with SHEP)*



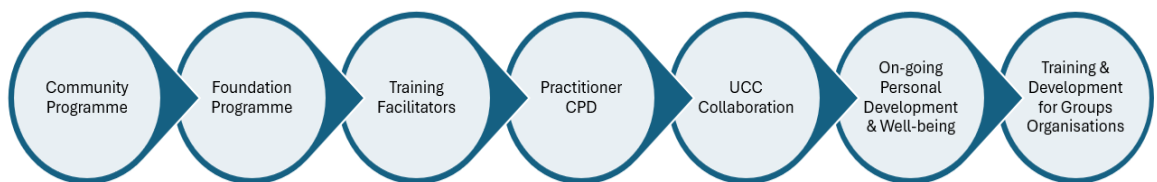
## SHEP's FIVE MAIN AREAS OF WORK

Reflecting the growth and development of Project over the decades, SHEP now has five main areas of work:



## 4 TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

Supporting Communities & Empowering Individuals



### Community Programme (short courses in the community)

Our community Programme mainly consists of personal development themed courses delivered by SHEP trained tutors. It also consists of specialist courses offered from time to time including courses around autism, self-advocacy and environmental awareness.

#### SHEP Community Education for Health & Well-being Programme

This programme was again strong in 2024: 53 short courses were organized. These were typically 24 hours (if online) and 20 hours when in-person. The courses were generally of eight-weeks' duration. The most popular courses were: Introduction to Personal Development; Seasons for Growth: Grief Loss and Change; and Caring for Our Well-being. On average there was a 76% completion rate, with an average of 12 participants starting and nine completing each group. In total, 487 participants completed their programme.

Geographically these courses were distributed as follows: 27 in Cork County (50%), 13 in County Kerry (25%), and 13 in the Mid-West region (25%). Cork ETB, Kerry ETB, Community sector grants and Healthy Ireland grants, supported SHEP to offer these courses at no charge to participants. All SHEP programmes are premised on a strong and active facilitator base. During 2024 there were 68 SHEP-registered tutors available for Community Education work across the work area.



*SHEP Kerry Facilitators at the Kerry Presentation of Certificates Event which took place in Tralee in June.*

### Other Short Courses Run by SHEP

#### Support Sessions for Parents or Caregivers Supporting Autistic Children, Teens and Adults

This 10-week structured support group is specially designed to help support parents and caregivers supporting autistic children, teens and adults. These sessions have developed since 2019 when two parents (participating in SHEP courses) expressed a need for this support. Over time, the two parents were supported by SHEP facilitators and staff and have now progressed to facilitating this course themselves on a yearly and sometimes bi-annual basis. The demand for the sessions is very high. In 2024, 23 parents and caregivers participated in the course. This course is held fully online with shorter than average sessions (this facilitates parents and caregivers to be able to participate fully whilst still being able to care for their child/ teen/ adult).

### **SHEP Foundation Programme (in personal & social Transformation)**

Our Foundation Programme comprises two parts: Foundation Part 1 - SHEP Certificate in Personal Development and Foundation Part 2 - SHEP Certificate in Social Awareness and Community Empowerment.

98	132	9	91%
Number who completed Foundation Part 1 (Personal Development)	Number of people who completed the Foundation Programme	Number of Foundation Level Courses completed by SHEP	Overall course rating by participants on Foundation Part 1 – Social Awareness & Community Empowerment



## Foundation Part I – SHEP Certificate in Personal Development

**Cork & Kerry Region:** From October 2023 to May 2024, six groups took part in the SHEP Certificate in Personal Development (SCPD). The SCPD is a foundation level, 105-hour, year-long course, co-facilitated by two SHEP facilitators. Two modules of this course are facilitated by external facilitators: Expanding Awareness and Body Awareness. The geographic spread was as follows: four (in person) in Cork City, one (in person) in Kerry and one fully online. 96 individuals commenced and 88 individuals completed. Of the 88 persons who completed, 78 received certificates and 12 received statements of attendance (Statements of Attendance are issued for those who did not meet the minimum 80% attendance). Two presentation of certificate events were held in June 2024 (Cork and Kerry).

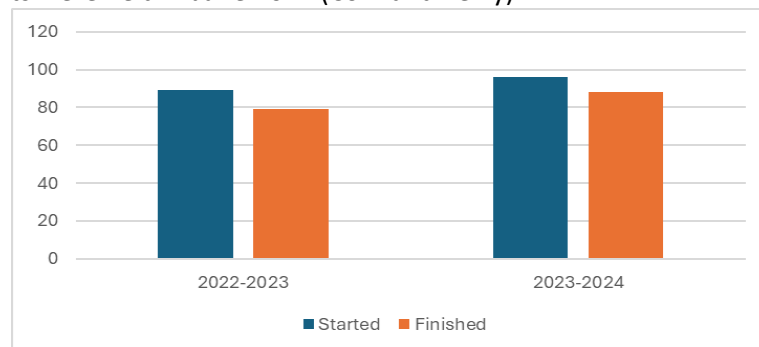


Chart 1: Numbers starting and finishing - Cork/Kerry SCPD 2022-2023 & 2023-2024

In October 2024, seven new groups started the SCPD (up one course on 2023), four in Cork, one in Mallow, one in Kerry and one fully online. A total of 107 individuals started these courses.

**Mid-West Region:** From October 2023 to May 2024, one group took part in the SHEP Certificate in Personal Development (SCPD) in Limerick. 15 individuals commenced and 11 individuals completed. Of the 15 who completed, 10 received certificates and one received a statement of attendance.

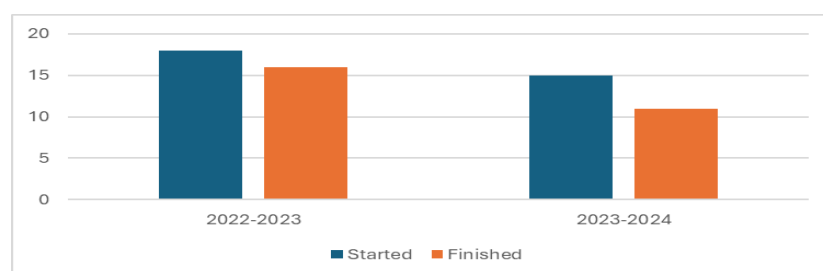


Chart 2: Numbers starting and finishing - Limerick SCPD 2022-2023 & 2023-2024

An important development in 2024 was that our SCPD facilitators undertook training to be able to facilitate the Expanding Awareness module. During the 2024-2025 SCPD courses, this module will be fully integrated to be facilitated by SHEP core facilitators during a one-day workshop.

‘Thank you so much to SHEP for offering this wonderful course - I'll be recommending it to everyone. I feel truly grateful to have been on this journey, the course came at the perfect time in my life and has benefited me greatly. I'm not finished with SHEP, looking forward to attending more courses in the future.’  
(SCPD Participant 2023-2024- Online).



*Pat McCarthy and Rebecca O'Mahony with some of the participants of their SHEP Training Group at the Cork Presentation of Certificates Event at the Silver Springs in June. This event was particularly special as it was an important celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the establishment of SHEP in 1974. There were over 200 people in attendance and it was a very enjoyable evening.*

## **Foundation Part II – SHEP Certificate in Social Awareness and Community**

*‘SHEP is something everyone should do in their lives. The [my] learning has been so rich and deep. Truly life changing and a wonderful experience.’  
(Kerry-Limerick participant, 2024)*

Since the inclusion of ‘Training for Transformation’ in SHEP’ program in 2000, the ‘Training for Transformation’ has been offered on 80 occasions. It continues to be a core element of SHEP’s Foundation Training in Social and Personal Health Education. The programme in 2024 comprised - one Autumn fully in-person course in Cork and one Spring Kerry-Limerick hybrid course. Each course involved 78 hours. In total 39 participants commenced and 34 participants completed the courses (87% completion rate). Between the two courses 35 evaluations were completed at course end. On a rating scale of 1-10 (poor to excellent) 91% of participants gave an overall course rating of 7 or higher.

With support from Cork ETB, and in collaboration with Green Spaces for Health, four Community Garden participants were supported to participate on the course to support the development of the community garden movement.

The SACE training team has changed significantly over recent years. Two new apprentice trainers completed their apprenticeship in 2024 and were deployed as trainers in Autumn. Another apprentice will commence training in 2025.



## Training Facilitators to work in the Community

The training of facilitators is a core element of the Project's approach to personal and social transformation. This area of work includes our facilitation training course, which is offered annually, and our training of people to work as Tutors/Facilitators in SHEP (through training and apprenticeship). It also includes our training in community leadership and community advocacy.

### SHEP Certificate in Facilitation

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 well-being on SHEP's Community Education Programme. It also serves practitioners beyond the SHEP context. Approximately 60% of participants cite the benefit to their existing practice as a reason for undertaking the course. In 2024 one fully in-person SHEP Facilitation course was delivered, based in Cork, Ballintemple. It involved 21 weekly evening sessions and 10 weekend days - 111 contact hours in total. 14 participants completed the course with certification.

### Pathway 1: Community Advocacy

Our Advocacy Training is offered by the SHEP Advocacy Programme. In 2024, 14 participants undertook the SHEP certified Introduction to Advocacy Course.

### Pathway 2: Community Leadership and Facilitation

Training in this area is offered only occasionally. The next training is planned for early 2026.



*Members of the SHEP team with Dolores McCashin (SHEP Director and Company Secretary) and Carrie Shanahan (SHEP Chairperson) at the Cork Certs Event at Silversprings in June.*

### Pathway 3: SHEP Tutor Training

To build capacity in the SHEP tutor base, an advanced level, specialized tutor training programme was developed in 2024 for delivery in 2025. The SHEP Specialised Tutor Training in 'Women's Wellbeing Across the Lifecycle: A journey through the seasons of life' builds upon the original women's well-being course of 1995. It was updated in response to a need in the community to support women through a short, community course. The design allows for up to 17 current tutors or RPL applicants to take part in this 9-month long course. The short, 8-week courses will then be rolled out, under the apprenticeship model, from 2026 onwards. SHEP's plan for this medium-term tutor training programme is that the 2025 Women's Wellbeing course will be followed in Autumn 2026 with the long awaited next Integrated Tutor Training course (covering three topics: Introduction to Personal Development, Managing Stress and Effective Communication).

### SHEP Seasons for Growth: Grief, Loss and Change [Companion Course]

The aim of the Season's for Growth (SFG) 'companion' course was to train people who will have the capacity to deliver the Adult Seasons for Growth programme, in contexts where there is endorsement for the work and to undertake that role. The training was held over two days, in person, followed by a short reconnector session. This companion training was supported by SHEP, Healthy Ireland and Kerry ETB. 18 SHEP facilitators, counsellors, educational practitioners and RPL applicants were supported to undertake this important training. This has prepared 18 facilitators to undertake paired apprenticeships over the 2025-2026 period in the Munster region.

'SHEP has empowered me. The change I see in myself over the last couple of years - the facilitators, the participants - I have learned from them all. It is never too late to learn to change and to partake in making change.'

(Kerry-Limerick participant, 2024)

### Apprenticeship of new SHEP Tutors

During 2024 SHEP continued to induct new SHEP Tutors through our apprenticeship programme. The apprenticeship programme follows a Tutor Training course and is completed over a number of years by those wishing to facilitate SHEP's Community Education (short course) programme in the community.

### Apprenticeship/Induction of new SHEP Trainers

During 2024 we concluded a very successful and important four-year programme to induct and orient 14 new Foundation Part 1 (Personal Development) Trainers. The programme included apprenticeship, mentoring and supervision tailored to each individual's situation.

## Practitioner (CPD) Programme

Supporting Practitioners with Continuing Professional Development is a critical part of the SHEP Training and Development Programme. Many practitioners are supported through participating in our Foundation Training and Facilitation Programme, or in our Diploma Collaboration with UCC. Additionally, a number of specific CPD trainings are offered each year supporting both the SHEP Community of Practice and the wider practitioner field.



## PRACTITIONER (CPD) – OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

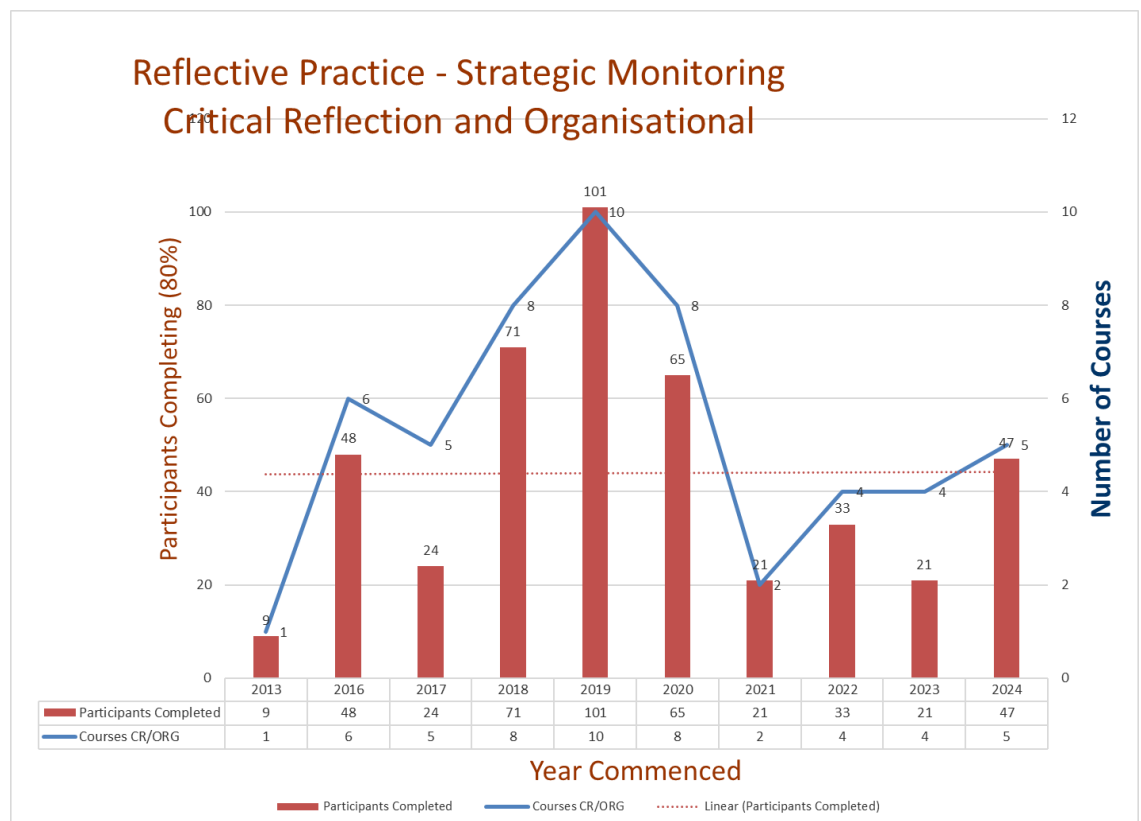
### SHEP Certificate in Reflective Practice

The aim of the programme is to co-create a space for 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 2024 the three groups that commenced in 2023 were completed (one online and two in person). 27 participants commenced and 20 participants completed (74% completion rate and average group size of nine). These were funded by SHEP and Healthy Ireland Waterford.

During 2024 three further groups commenced (two online and one in-person). 35 participants started (the average group size was 11). These were funded by SHEP and a grant from the Mercy Ministry Fund.

Since the commencement of the programme in 2013, there have been 61 offerings of which 53 are c30 hour courses, involving over 440 diverse practitioners. The other activities involved workshops on Reflective Practice with various practitioner groups (including teachers, principals, organisations, tutors, and community education facilitators). The graph below profiles the development of the programme since 2013:



### SHEP Youth Mental Health First Aid Course (Embedded Instructor)

The SHEP Youth Mental Health First Aid course runs over two full days, either online or in person. SHEP has two embedded instructors who deliver this course to SHEP associated

participants. This course has been running in SHEP since 2022 and is supported by the HSE through St John of Gods Hospital, Dublin. Four courses were delivered online in 2024, 45 participants commenced and 45 participants completed and received certificates. The SHEP YMHFA courses had the largest waitlists in the whole of Ireland in 2024 (among the embedded instructor groups- these include various ETBs, Tusla, An Garda Siochana, Regional Youth Services, NYCI and more). This demonstrates the demand for this supportive education in our community.

### **Collaborations**

A number of our Practitioner CPD initiatives are collaborative ventures. Some are ongoing initiatives that have been going for many years:

#### Cork Education Network

SHEP is a member of the Cork Education Network and a member of the steering group.

#### Facilitation for Health and Well-being

With support from Healthy Ireland Kilkenny, we delivered a 60-hour programme for practitioners entitled 'Facilitation for Health and Well-being'. This experiential programme was offered fully in person.

#### South-East SPHE Community of Practice

As part of an on-going programme of support to SPHE practitioners in the South-East Region four days of training, including a residential weekend, were provided to a group of 12 practitioners.

#### 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 in 2023 and this continued throughout 2024. The focus is on supporting a small group of Slovakian Teachers to develop their skills in experiential education, with a view to supporting improved mental health for teachers and students. This innovative training mostly consists of on-line workshops, usually each month, and is bi-lingual.

### **SHEP PERSONNEL/SHEP COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE (CPD)**

During 2024 SHEP invested significantly in supporting members of our own Community of Practice – through group supervision, community of practice workshops and through supporting learning spaces such as 'SHEP Insight into Connection and Being'.

#### Connecting with Heartfulness

This process has evolved over the years since it started in 2008 and now consists of two on-line workshops each year. This innovative process is facilitated by Dr Richard Wallstein.

#### SHEP Insight into Connection and Being

This initiative was piloted for the first time in 2022 for SHEP Practitioners and has been very well received. Two groups were supported in 2024 – with each group meeting for 8 half days per annum. A total of 26 SHEP personnel were involved in 2024. This is a supportive and positive initiative, building community of practice throughout the SHEP practitioner base.

#### Erasmus Programme

During 2024 we supported 23 Training and Job Shadow Mobilities for SHEP personnel. SHEP is now an accredited Erasmus Plus KA121 organisation.



SHEP 'Touchstone' Online CPD Workshops (SHEP Personnel Only)  
In 2024 we prepared for the relaunch of SHEP’s on-line CDP training for SHEP practitioners in 2025.

UCC Diploma Collaboration

The Diploma in Social and Psychological Health Studies is a unique Diploma and has been possible through an important partnership with Adult Continuing Education (ACE) at UCC for over twenty years.

Over the years it has offered many SHEP participants the opportunity to continue their studies, often for the first time, in the formal, third-level sector. The Diploma is offered every two years on a two-year cycle. Each year of the programme has six modules (with a total of 30 credits per year) and the modules represent the key themes important to the Social and Health Education Project.



*Some of the students on the SHEP UCC Diploma in Social and Psychological Health Studies, with Orna Hayes, Course Coordinator, (left) and Celine Griffin, Course Tutor, (right) and Jim Sheehan on UCC Main Campus in May.*

In 2024, the group which commenced the programme in autumn 2023 completed their first year of studies. Fourteen of the group continued to Year Two of the programme in September 2024.

12	183	11	67%
Number of two-year Diploma <b>Courses</b> delivered in partnership with UCC	Number of people awarded UCC <b>Diploma</b> (Level 7)	Number of people awarded UCC <b>Certificate</b> (Level 6)	Percentage of graduates who <b>progressed</b> to UCC Diploma from SHEP non-formal programmes.

## ON-GOING PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT & WELL-BEING

SHEP works each year to support the on-going Personal Development of participants and practitioners. We offer courses, once off workshops. The SHEP Choir is an important part of this programme.

### SHEP Certificate in Continuing Personal Development

The Continuing Personal Development (Continuing PD) Course is intended for those who wish to continue with personal development work in a group setting. The course involves 25 weekly sessions plus six weekend days. The SHEP Continuing PD course is heavily subscribed every year. In 2024 we piloted a larger group: the facilitators agreed to start with 17 participants and the larger group proved to be successful. 15 participants completed the course.

*'All I can say is this course is so worthwhile to do. It really is life changing and not only impacts on the person doing the course but also impacts positively on one's family.'*  
2024 Participant

### SHEP Choir

The SHEP Choir is led by Choir Leader, Pat Sheehan Corbett. The choir meets 10 times yearly and celebrates the joy of using natural voice to promote health and wellbeing. The choir also sings for community activism and supports SHEP events such as the annual Cork Certs night. In January 2024, the SHEP Choir enrolled 42 members. The choir also enables both in person and on-line attendance for greater accessibility.

### Personal Development Workshop Series

We had to significantly scale back our on-going personal development workshops for 2024 due mainly to other work commitments. For the first time a Seasons for Growth programme was offered over four weekends and this proved very popular.



Lord Mayor of Cork Cllr Kieran McCarthy at the SHEP Training Centre, Ballintemple, on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> February with some members of the SHEP Management Committee and Mr David Lane (HSE Cork & Kerry) as part of the celebrating of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Social and Health Education Programme in 1974.



## TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT for Communities, Groups and Organisations

Our work in this area involves providing specialist technical support, consultation and independent facilitation. We can provide customized training and customized facilitation. We also support a number of important networks.

### Supporting Groups and Organisations

Our capacity to provide customized training and customized facilitation work to other Groups and Organisations was significantly curtailed in 2024 mainly because of other training and development commitments which had to be prioritized.

### Supporting Communities

Our capacity to provide support to communities was significantly curtailed in 2024 because of other training and development commitments which had to be prioritized.

### Supporting Networks

Our work in this area during 2024 included supporting Cork Education Network and Cork Community Health Network. SHEP is the host organisation for CESCA – Cork Equal and Sustainable Communities Alliance. SHEP is also the host/employer organisation for the Green Spaces for Health Project.

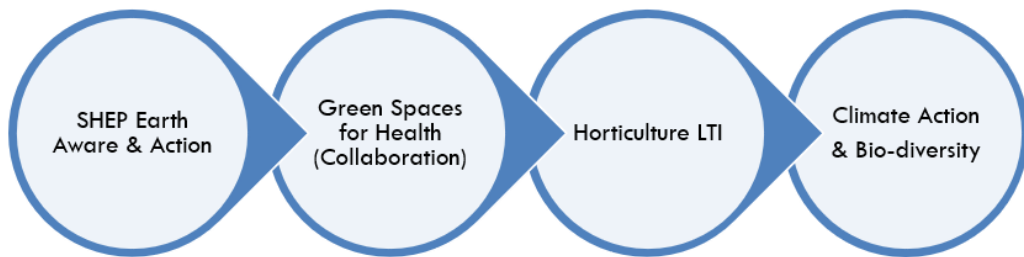
Our Advocacy and Counselling Programmes also, separately, provide support to a significant number of groups and organisations each year (see sections 6 & 7).



*Participants on the first SHEP Erasmus Course for Teachers – which took place in July. The course was on Caring for our Well-being as Teachers – and was facilitated by Patsy Hannan and Mai Kerins. There were participants from our Erasmus partners in Hungary, the Netherlands and Slovakia.*

## 5 ENVIRONMENT FOR HEALTH

Collaborating with others to help people face, and respond to, the crisis facing the world because of our current unsustainable way of life.



### Horticulture LTI

In 2024 SHEP became the 'second provider' or sponsor of the Ardfoyle Horticulture Long-term Training Initiative. This training initiative is fully funded by Cork ETB. Twelve students commenced the Level 4 full time course in September. The programme is delivered by a small team.



*Some of the new trainees for the 2024-2025 Level 4 programme in Horticulture, with Nollaig McMahon, Assistant Coordinator (front, centre).*





*Niamh Findley and Viktoria Minaieva helping out with the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event for Project Supporters*

### **Green Spaces for Health (Collaboration)**

SHEP was invited to join the Green Spaces for Health Collaboration in 2023. This important initiative has been supporting community-based environment work for a number of years with the support of a number of partners including Cork Healthy Cities, The Lantern Project, and Cork Environmental Forum. The funding partners include Cork City Council, the HSE and Healthy Ireland. During 2024 SHEP continued to host the programme and employ the Project Coordinator, Maria Young, on behalf of the Programme.

### **Climate Action and Bio-diversity**

During 2024 SHEP secured funding from Cork City Council to support a small number of climate action initiatives at SHEP Ardfoyle. These will be delivered in 2025.

### **SHEP Earth Aware**

A planning workshop of those involved in SHEP Earth Aware took place in late 2024. It remains unclear if there is a rationale for continuing SHEP Earth Aware given SHEP's involvement now in other, new environmental projects such as Green Spaces for Health.

6

ADVOCACY

Providing independent advocacy to people who through difficulties of health, disability or ageing are struggling to get their voices heard.



While the year 2024 brought many challenges including staffing, demand for services and financial concerns, the innovative SHEP Advocacy Programme delivered and performed excellently across its three programme areas, Training, Advocacy Support & Project Work.

A team of 11 members delivered our 2024 advocacy programme. Four members are SHEP employees, amounting to 1.2 whole time equivalent staff for the year. The remaining seven are advocates and facilitators who work on voluntary and contracted basis on specific elements of the programme.

75	168	442
Number of recorded enquiries to the service requiring information provision and advice, advocacy need evaluation, signposting and referral, as well as advocacy empowerment.	Number of people who engaged in our training programme. Learner Profiles included self-advocates and professionals where advocacy is part of the role,	Contacts were made by SHEP Advocates with people living in residential services for older people and people with disabilities through our group advocacy services across three residential services

Group Advocacy Facilitation

During 2024 we continued to provide Group Advocacy Facilitation across three residential institutions. SHEP is the only independent advocacy service providing independent group advocacy supports and facilitation.

**Cobh Community Hospital:** On average we have 12-14 residents attend our monthly advocacy meetings with space to raise any collective or individual issues of concern.

**St. Raphael's Centre in Youghal:** We have been providing support to residents since 2012. Two members of our team visit residents in the community houses monthly on a rotational basis.

**St. Vincent's Centre:** Since 2017 we have been supporting a group to advocate for their rights in respect of their accommodation, finances, their care and their future living arrangements. Some members of this group are still only temporarily housed and advocacy issues remain, including access to the redress scheme for those who lived in Magdalene Laundries.



## Advocacy Training

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 people with disabilities and delivering our SHEP certified Introduction to Advocacy Course in September 2024:

**168** people engaged in our training programme. Learner profiles included self-advocates, professionals where advocacy is part of their role in working with older people and people with disabilities.

**104** of hours of training were delivered over 5 different programmes.

**60** practitioners engaged in our advocacy awareness training in 2024

**16** self-advocates participated in training courses with the advocacy programme

**14** participants undertook the SHEP certified Introduction to Advocacy Course

HIQA praised the work of SHEP advocacy Programme and the valued of independent advocacy in relation to a group we supported. And they noted that they would raise awareness of our service at national level'

SHEP Advocacy Co-Coordinator

## Advocacy Project Work

The Advocacy programme is the space holder for two distinct pieces of project work, namely:

**The Annual Independent Advocacy Gathering, (IAG)** supporting networking, peer support and advocacy practice development.

**The Our Rights and Medication (ORAM) group.** ORAM is a network of experts by experience, advocates, academics and practitioners. The group is working to raise awareness of the importance of rights and medication in the context of the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015. **100 participants attended the annual IAG** in November 2024 in the Aula Maxima in U.C.C. The gathering provided an opportunity for self-advocates and professionals to come together to share experiences, learning and to network. In 2024 ORAM developed a website explaining more about the work of ORAM. ORAM delivered a workshop to participants on the UCC Nurse Prescribers course and reengaged with the HSE National Dementia Office to explore ways in which existing guidance on the prescribing of psychotropic medication can be broadened to include all healthcare settings.

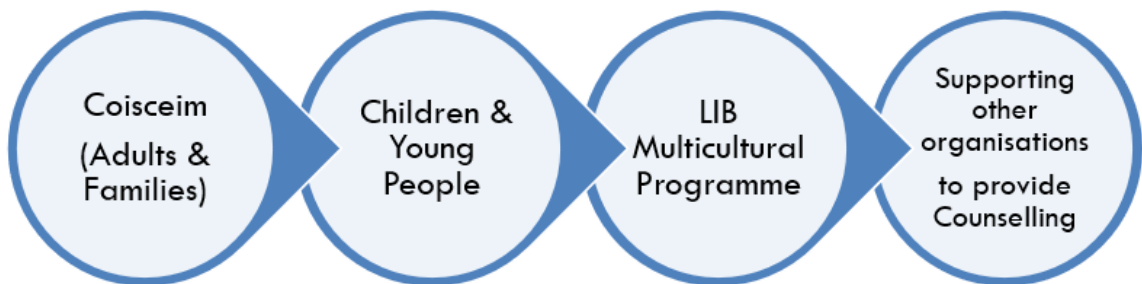
'They did a lot of hard work with us to be fair. They were fighting for our rights all the time. They'd fight hard to get us the things we wanted. They'd fight hard to get what was owed to us.'

Former Resident in St Vincents



## 7 COUNSELLING & OUTREACH

Low-cost counselling for those in need



### Coisceim Low-Cost Counselling

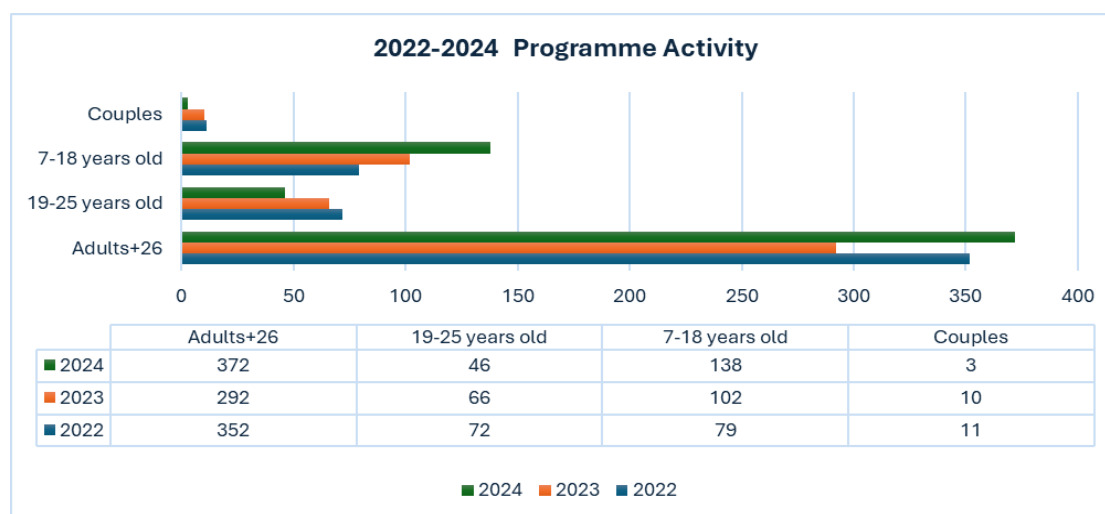
2024 was a testament to the resilience and dedication of our service in providing essential mental health support to our community. Despite facing substantial challenges, including increased referrals and significant personnel changes, our commitment to delivering high-quality counselling and art therapy/play therapy services has remained steadfast.

In 2024, we saw a substantial rise in the number of individuals seeking our services, reflecting the growing need for mental health support in our society. Our team worked tirelessly to ensure that each of the 485 service users received the care they needed, with 54 of these benefiting from extended sessions to support their journey towards well-being. Of note, 45 additional referrals were completed for clients who subsequently decided not to avail at the time of referral due to various reasons, thus bringing the total number of referrals to 530. To support these referrals, 11 new counsellors and art therapists were added to our counselling panel in order to ensure the reliability and effective functioning of our referral system. Overall, 4,850 counselling hours were allocated without the inclusion of extension sessions. This report highlights our activities, the geographic spread of our clients, the sources of our referrals as well as the subsidies distribution. It also sheds light on the collaborative efforts with local organisations that enable us to reach and support vulnerable adults effectively.

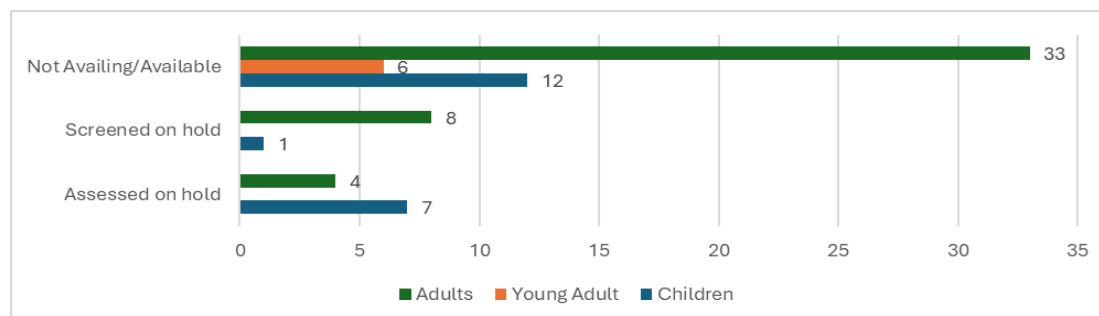
530	4850	128	138
People received Counselling Support In 2024	Hours of counselling provided	Counsellors involved	7–18 year-olds supported

**Counsellor's Panel:** To maintain the reliability and effective functioning of our counselling panel in 2024, 11 new counsellors and art therapists were added to our panel. This was to compensate for the loss of some of the wonderful and generous counsellors who had to step back from the panel, owing to various personal reasons such as childcare issues, retirement, illness, etc. Interviews were held twice this year, in March and in August and subsequently, all were vetted and are now active on our panel. Currently, there are 128 therapists on the Coisceim panel, available across the Cork and Kerry region.

The increase in adult and children's referrals this year is very significant and concerning as the number of service users surpass the number of referrals our service experienced in 2022 as a direct impact of Covid.



Included in these activities are 71 service users – six of whom were not available for counselling when contacted for assessment, nine were placed on hold at the pre-referral stage and at the end of 2024 and an additional 11 were assessed and waiting to be referred in January 2025. Also, 45 service users, when referred for counselling, did not start due to various personal circumstances. A breakdown across our three programmes (couples excluded) is provided below:

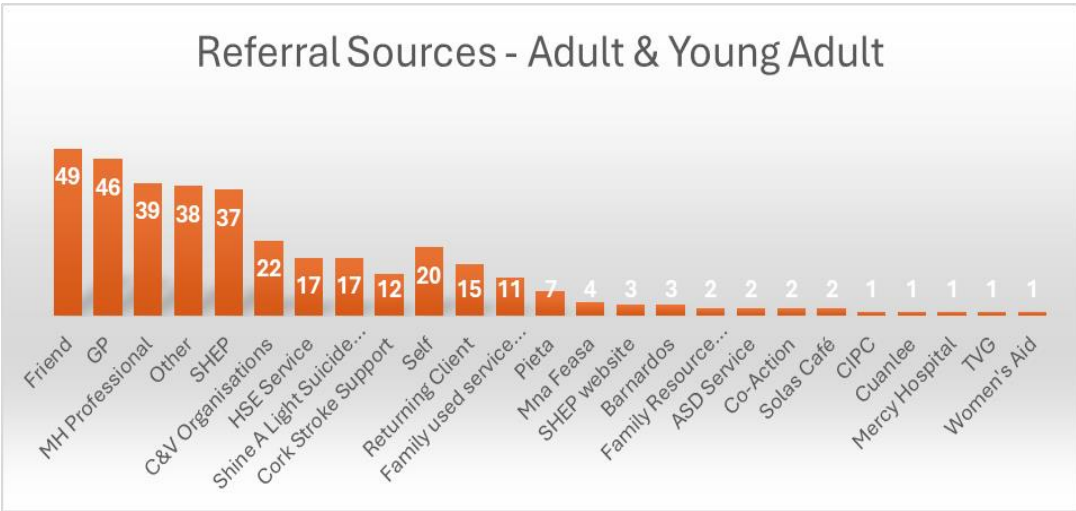


## Counselling for Children and Young Adults

2024 was a period of significant growth for Coisceim Counselling, particularly in terms of our Children's Programme. This programme receives a small annual budget for subsidies from Tusla as well as funding for assessment and referral hours for our Child and Adolescent Referral Counsellor. During 2024, there was a substantial increase in the number of children referred to our services, rising from 102 referrals in 2023 to 138 referrals in 2024. Of this number, direct referrals from Tusla increased fivefold, from eight in 2023 to 40 in 2024. The fortunate addition of funding in the amount of €10,000 received from Tusla/Dormant Account Funds was instrumental in ensuring that all of our referrals could be supported. The counselling hours pledged to support these children were 1,380 based on allocated sessions of up to 10 sessions per service user. Of note, the 1,380 counselling hours pledged does not include additional extension sessions granted on a case-by-case basis. The Children's programme has increased year on year in the post-Covid era and starkly reflects the critical need for our counselling/art/play therapy support for vulnerable children aged 5 to 18 years.



Referral Sources for Adult and Young Adult Programme (excl. couples)



### LIB Multicultural Counselling & Outreach

For the past five years, Lib Counselling has been providing a trauma informed service driven by a strength-based approach to promote personal growth and resilience in adults and children who are asylum seekers, refugees as well as to people in temporary protection. Lib covers Cork and Kerry and receives referrals from asylum seekers directly as well as from many community organisations and local support groups. In addition to these, referrals are also received from the HSE, Tusla, GPs, and the National Learning Network. This service has developed significantly since 2020 and performs remarkably well, having supported 50 adults in one-to-one counselling and 18 children in one-to-one therapy/group personal development in 2024. It is forecasted that, with Lib attracting more attention as a migrant health support service in the Cork and Kerry Region, the rate of referrals will continue to increase in 2025. This will undoubtedly pose many challenges to the service, given the complexity of the work involved.

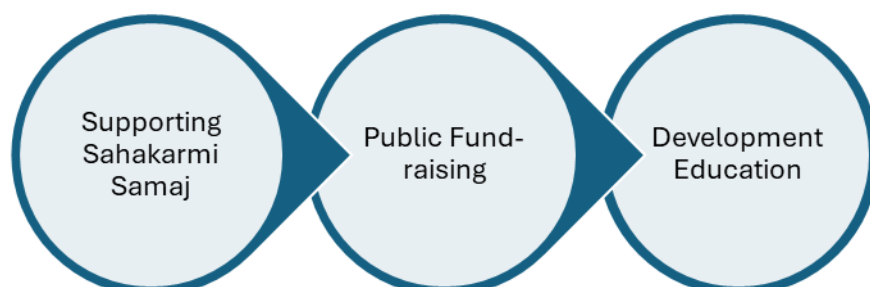
'May I kindly take this opportunity to thank you so much for providing me with a therapist and for all the therapy seasons. It has worked wonders in my life and giving me new life. My therapist was more than an answer from God. The time we had together has been amazing. Thank you so much for reaching out for me. I could have been history now but had been now shaped anew with love and new hope. God bless you all and again thank you.'

### Supporting other Organisations

Coiscéim has always been a highly collaborative service and 2024 was no exception. Coiscéim continues to collaborate with local organisations which helps to ensure timely support for vulnerable adults. The service remains committed to providing essential mental health support to the community. Over 90+ referrals were received from the community and voluntary sector. Some of these include: Cork Stroke Support Centre; Shine A Light Suicide and Mental Health Awareness; St. Vincent DePaul; Traveller Visibility Group; Pieta House; Barnardos; Respond Housing; Cuanlee Refuge; and Mna Feasa.

## 8 INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

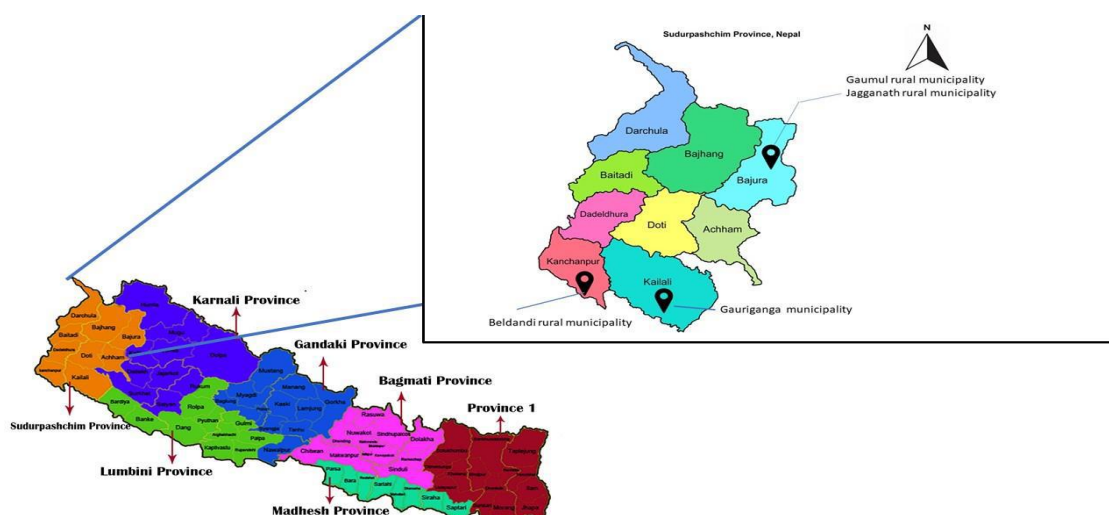
Deepening ties of mutual learning and support with our partner in Nepal, Sahakarmi Samaj.



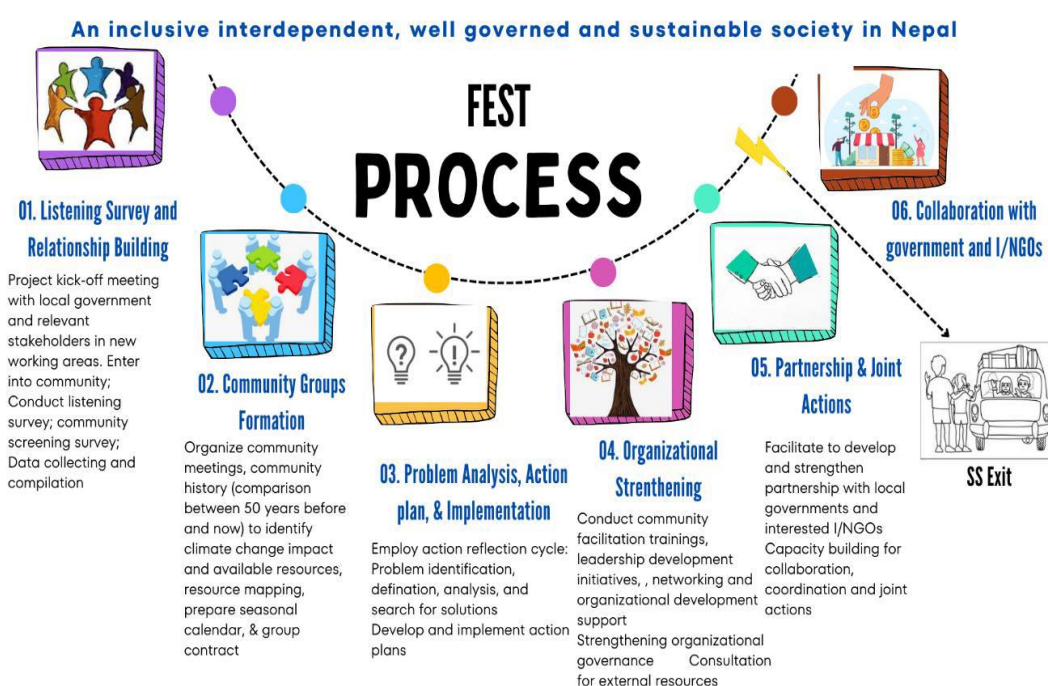
### Supporting Sahakarmi Samaj

During 2024, SHEP continued its support for Sahakarmi Samaj's work in South West Nepal, with the assistance of Irish Aid. Year Two of the three-year Shakti Programme was successfully completed. The *SHAKTI* project aims to contribute to empowering civil society by mobilizing marginalized people in three districts of Nepal: Bajura (one of the remote districts of South-West Nepal), Kailali, and Kanchanpur. Its objectives are:

- To build the capacity of 4 CBNOS and 138 CDGs to organise, be socially inclusive, engage with government and claim legal rights and entitlements
- To enhance food security and climate resilience & engage youth in Agro-ecology and green entrepreneurship
- To revise policies, procedures and working practices of four Municipalities (Gaumul, Jagannath, Beldandi, and Gauriganga) in line with rural communities' needs, rights and priorities related to GESI, Youth, Climate Resilience and Food Security
- To establish cooperation and dialogue between local and provincial government, in order to improve local service delivery and ensure reflection of local needs in programme and policies viz. GESI, Youth, Food Security and Climate Change Resilience.



The project follows the FEST (Facilitation for Empowerment and Social Transformation) approach to promote community development, engaging marginalized members through community group formation. Local municipalities provide matching funds for interventions. The project focuses on initiatives such as promoting gender equality and social inclusion, building resilience to climate change, advocating for agro-ecology, ensuring food security and civil rights. It also supports agro-ecology-based kitchen gardens, preservation of indigenous seeds, civic education, organic vegetable farming, and youth empowerment through legal rights awareness. Social accountability tools are used in local government planning, and the project contributes to policy development, including GESI-responsive and climate-responsive budgeting.



Since its inception, the project has made significant progress in achieving its expected results which has positively impacted local communities and strengthened governance structures. The project directly reached 4,380 beneficiaries, from 162 Community Development Groups (CDGs) across Bajura, Kailali, and Kanchanpur districts. 88 community development groups successfully implemented action plans by claiming resources from local governments, demonstrating their improved understanding of civic rights and responsibilities. In terms of food security and climate resilience, the project trained 58 youths in civic education related to agriculture and climate change and 51 youths were also trained in agroecology and green entrepreneurship. This led to the creation of green enterprises such as animal husbandry and vegetable farming. The project also facilitated the discussion and training on the promotion of local seeds and use of organic pesticides.

As a result, 880 CDG members established kitchen gardens, and communities became more engaged in climate resilience activities, such as tree planting and use of Jhol- mol (organic pesticide). On governance, the project facilitated the adoption of more inclusive policies in all four municipalities (Gaumul, Jagannath, Beldandi, and Gauriganga), including GESI-responsive budgets and gender audits. A total of 122 women and marginalized groups have taken on leadership roles within CDGs and governance structures





*The Nepali Visitors Group at Irish Aid Head Office in Limerick following a meeting with Irish Aid Staff including the Head of the Civil Society Department, Mary Ryan. Irish Aid has been co-funding SHEP's partnership with Sahakarmi almost continuously since 2007.*

Local governments have also implemented the Right to Food & Food Sovereignty Act, which has promoted sustainable farming and food security. Furthermore, the project strengthened dialogue between local and provincial governments, improving collaboration on inclusive budgeting and climate-resilient policies.

Overall, the project has empowered local communities, fostered sustainable agricultural practices, improved governance, and enhanced civic engagement, leading to tangible improvements in social inequality, food security, climate resilience, and local governance

### **Fundraising**

In 2024 SHEP continued its work to publicly fund-raise for our International Partnership work with Sahakarmi Samaj. The SHEP Choir kindly organized a Christmas Event which was very well attended. The Annual SHEP Raffle raised a great deal of awareness of the Project. In total the fundraising target of €5000 was surpassed.

### **Awareness Raising & Development Education**

SHEP has had the intention to seek funding and support for a Development Education initiative, but this was not progressed in 2024 as the Project had to prioritise other areas of work.

## 9 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 2024. The support of our main funders - the HSE in particular - is greatly appreciated. Total funding in grants and fees received that year was €1,768,682. Total expenditure by SHEP in 2024 was €1,761,746.

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 2024 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 the Perry & Sandy Massie Foundation, Healthy Ireland, Mercy Solidarity Fund, and Bon Secours Health System to support a range of community projects during 2024. Copies of our 2024 audited annual accounts are available on our website [www.socialandhealth.com](http://www.socialandhealth.com). Thank you for your interest and support.



*The SHEP Mural (2020) – Community Art Project facilitated by Spark Deeley.*



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Social and Health Education Project CLG

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