

SHEP Nuacht

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THE NEWSLETTER FOR PARTICIPANTS, SERVICE-USERS, GROUP FACILITATORS, COUNSELLORS, ADVOCATES, VOLUNTEERS, COMMITTEE MEMBERS, STAFF AND FRIENDS OF SHEP.



Valerie Cowman (Cork ETB) presenting Larry Lynch (Coordinator, Ardfoy Horticulture LTI) with a 2026 Community Training Champions Award at an event in Bishopstown in February. Also included are Courtney Canning (Cork ETB) and Nollaig McMahon (LTI Assistant Coordinator). The Community Training Champions Award recognises the outstanding contribution of staff across Community Training projects at Cork College of FET – Bishopstown Campus. Learners are invited to nominate individuals who go above and beyond every day — those who support, encourage, and make a real difference in the lives of learners. Huge congratulations to Larry and all the 2026 Community Training Champions!

Dear SHEP Friends,

Welcome to our April Edition of SHEP Nuacht. We hope this newsletter will give you a flavour of some of the events and happenings in SHEP since the beginning of the year. As spring finally arrives we enter a very busy season with the conclusion of a large number of courses and the continuance of several important collaborations. In April, we will bring our second group of adult learners on an Erasmus Exchange to our partner project in Northern Spain (we hosted them two years ago); in May, we look forward to welcoming our friends Sandy and Perry Massie to SHEP; and in June we look forward to our Certificate Ceremonies in Cork, Kerry and Limerick. These are always uplifting events. In the meantime, wishing you all a very Happy Easter.

Dolores McCashin, Chairperson (SHEP)

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MEMORIAL FOR GEORGE



Derry Mohally, Sr Carmel Hamill, Rosarie Coleman, Sr Mary Malone, Ailbe Browne and Jim Sheehan with Cora Kelleher and members of the Wallace Family at the special gathering in Bessboro on Friday, 20th February to remember George and his contribution to SHEP over almost forty years. Others in attendance on the very special evening were representatives of the ISPCC, MTU and the Mahon Community, all of which were important parts of George's life.

IMPORTANT NEWS

SHEP now supporting Horizons Project (with Advocacy)

SHEP is now entering an exciting new chapter in our advocacy work: we will be working closely with Horizons (formerly Cope Foundation) to provide independent advocacy to a significant number of its service users as they prepare to move to new homes (as part of the process known as de-congregation). This is a very complex and delicate Project: the SHEP Management Committee believes that this is an excellent way to utilise the experience and expertise that is in our Advocacy Project which is now more than 25 years in existence.

Continued Support from the HSE

We had an important 'Service Level Agreement' (SLA) meeting with the HSE in February. Dolores McCashin (SHEP Chairperson) and Colm Walsh (Company Secretary) attended representing the Management Committee. David Lane, who is General Manager (Social Inclusion) continues to be very supportive of our work. There are very significant changes happening at the moment in the HSE, with new structures taking shape and many personnel moving positions.

Many new Courses off to a good start

Many courses started this Spring, including Facilitation, Continuing Personal Development and 'Insight into Connection and Being'. We had hoped to run an extra Foundation Part 2 course, but the numbers weren't strong enough. The SHEP Leadership Course has also started, though we have shortened it considerably as the group is smaller than usual. There continues to be strong interest in our Community Education (short courses) across Cork, Kerry and Limerick. In collaboration with the Horticulture LTI we offered for the first time a short course in Growing Your Own Food. The interest was such that we have organised two courses. These two short courses are offered at the Horticulture LTI in Ardfoyle.

ETB 'REACH' Funding

We have worked with the Education and Training Boards in both Cork and Kerry to access 'REACH' funding to support people to participate in SHEP Training. The funding is relatively small, but it is nonetheless important to support a number of learners to access Part One of our Foundation Programme in both Kerry and Cork.

Improved Front of House Arrangements now in Place

We are delighted that Nora Howard and Diarmaid Galvin have joined our front of house team – and we are hoping a third person will join the team soon. We were very under-resourced over the last few months and covering front of house has been a real stretch for us. Thank you for bearing with us. We have much better and largely in-person arrangements in place now. Nora and Diarmaid are doing fabulous work. The Management Committee has also agreed a new plan to re-create the position of Programme Administrator (to oversee Front of House), albeit on a part-time basis. We are trying to do the best we can with the funds we have available.

Invitation

SHEP Facilitators' Gathering (In-Person)

Friday, 10th April 2026

NB: Change of Time to accommodate our meal: 6.30pm- 9.30pm

SHEP is inviting you to the next SHEP Facilitators' Gathering (all geographic areas) on Friday 10th April, 6.30pm to 9.30pm in-person in the Meditation Centre, Bessboro, Blackrock, Cork.

Please note the change of time to accommodate for our meal.

To help us plan for food, if you have not already done so, please register your intention to attend or send an apology by responding to the link in the email invitation sent to all SHEP Facilitators.

Many thanks to those who have responded already.

SHEP ADVOCACY



Niamh Findley, Mary Uí Bhroin, Mary O'Leary and Kristina Kutozova (UCC Masters Placement Student (at the Annual Independent Advocacy Gathering 2026 at Aula Maxima in UCC on February 25th. This important annual event is supported by SHEP's Advocacy Project, with Marge Lysaght, our Advocacy Coordinator, playing a key role.



Deirdre Lillis and Val Maguire (Self and UNCRPD Advocate) photographed at the launch of the Report on the role of Independent Group Advocacy in Decongregation at the Annual Independent Advocacy Gathering.

The Role of Independent Advocacy in Decongregation

This important report we have prepared documents nine years of independent advocacy by the SHEP Independent Advocacy Service (SIAS) supporting a group of women through the closure of a long-term institutional residence in Cork. Following a 2016 HIQA finding of serious non-compliance and financial irregularities, SIAS worked alongside the women to ensure their voices, rights, and choices were central to the decongregation process. Advocates built trust and addressed systemic issues including financial abuse, poor living conditions, and systemic challenges. The women developed a Charter of Rights and were empowered to self-advocate during their transition to community living, completed in December 2023. The report highlights the vital role that independent, adequately funded, advocacy plays in safeguarding rights and influencing cultural change.

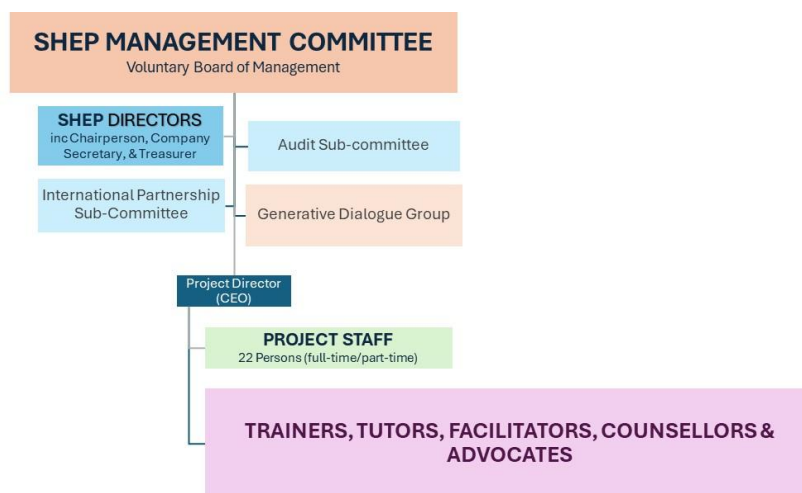
SHEP MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



Some of the members of the SHEP Management Committee at a recent meeting in Ardfoyle: Mary O’Leary; Tian Herbert (SHINE); Dolores McCashin (Chairperson); Colm Walsh (Company Secretary); Francis Cooley (Deputy Chairperson); Pat Sheehan Corbett; Nick Chisholm; and Nuala McDonnell. Also included is staff member Tatenda Zira (Finance Manager).

Emerging Governance Structures

We are currently working in SHEP on enhancing our governance structures. As a community and voluntary organisation, and as a registered charity, good governance arrangements are essential, as is adhering to best practice. The Management Committee is supported by a Directors’ Group, and an Audit Committee. To help oversee our work with Sahakarmi Samaj a new International Partnership Sub-committee has been established. Volunteers on this new structure include Nick Chisholm, Sofia Kalfa, Grace Kingston and Heather O’Connell.



Generative Dialogue Group: Artificial Intelligence

The Generative Dialogue Group has been supporting important work in the Project since 2017. It has been a key way in which as an organisation we have endeavoured to embed Theory U practices into SHEP. The group has been giving attention in recent months to the sensitive and complex issue of Artificial Intelligence (in SHEP). The group has now moved its focus to how we sustain the SHEP ethos (with all the various transitions) and how we might approach bringing new people into the Foundation Part 1 facilitation work. Members of the Generative Dialogue Group include Frank Dorr, Carmel Brosnan, Francis Cooley, Pat McCarthy, Deirdre O’Sullivan and Deirdre Lillis.

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

Big Changes in Nepal Political Landscape

Just as our new three year, Irish-Aid funded, programme with Sahakarmi starts Nepal has experienced a major political shake-up driven by public frustration with long-standing parties. A new generation of leaders - most notably Balen Shah (a 35 year old former Mayor of Kathmandu) and the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) - has surged in popularity, securing a landslide victory in the recent elections. This marks a decisive break from decades of dominance by traditional parties like the Nepali Congress and CPN-UML. Before the elections, Nepal was rocked by intense Gen-Z-led protests against corruption and a controversial social media ban. These protests turned deadly, ultimately forcing Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli to resign. The unrest exposed deep dissatisfaction with political elites and accelerated calls for change. With Balendra Shah now inaugurated as Nepal's 40th prime minister, expectations are high for reforms in governance, anti-corruption efforts, and public service delivery. The new leadership will face significant pressure to translate optimism into real progress.

International Community Development Conference 2026 - Glasgow

The 2026 International Community Development Conference will take place in Glasgow in late June. Ammar Badahur Air, Abigail Joffe and Jim Sheehan will be attending and presenting at the Conference. This is an important opportunity to showcase some aspects of the collaboration between SHEP and Sahakarmi Samaj over the last nineteen years, particularly our joint commitment to bottom-up, community development approaches. Sahakarmi's approach, the Facilitation for Empowerment and Social Transformation (FEST) is now a proven methodology which is increasingly being recognised, including in the academic literature and among other NGOs in Nepal.



Abigail Joffe (SHEP International Partnership Officer) and Jim Sheehan (SHEP) with Minister of State (International Development) Neale Richmond, at the Department of Foreign Affairs in Limerick in February. Also included are representatives of other NGOs based in Munster who are supported by Irish Aid's Civil Society Fund (Nepal Leprosy Trust, Brighter Communities Ireland, and SERVE). SHEP has been in receipt of Irish Aid funding for our International Learning Partnership work with Sahakarmi Samaj since 2007.

PRIORITIES 2026

Our priorities for the year ahead include: addressing needs in the community as best as possible; consolidation of the work (across all five programme areas); governance improvements; continue to support the development of the SHEP facilitators team; restoring front of house cover at SHEP Ardfoy; and preparation for next staff transitions which will happen in early 2027 with both Liam McCarthy and Nuala Burke intending to retire.

COLLABORATIONS

Innovative 'Community Conversations' in South Tipperary

SHEP is currently collaborating with South Tipperary Development Company to facilitate a series of five 'Community Conversations' in both Clonmel and Carrick-on-Suir. The focus of this innovative process is to create a space for people involved in the community to connect with each other, share experiences and inform local policy making and planning.

Cork/Kerry Traveller Trauma Project

SHEP continues our work in this significant collaboration with the HSE and the Traveller Health Units. This Cork/Kerry Initiative seeks to support Traveller Health Workers to deal with the significant trauma that they experience in their work. SHEP has significant expertise to bring to this delicate work.

SHEP supporting CESCA

SHEP has been a member of CESCA – Cork Equal and Sustainable Communities Alliance – since its foundation in 2014. In recent years we have taken on the administration responsibilities for the Alliance, employing and hosting its Coordinator, Sarah Harrington, holding and administering the Alliance's finances, and overseeing all compliance requirements. This is an important contribution to a unique alliance.



Emma Howell, Geraldine Flanagan and Sarah Harrington, with Collette Kelleher who facilitated a review workshop for CESCA members recently at Mahon CDP.

Kate Moynihan, Liz Aherne, Tian Herbert (SHINE Community Work), who were among the participants at the CESCA review workshop.

SHEP COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

SHEP 'Touchstone' CPD Workshops

There has been strong interest in our new 'Touchstone' CPD online workshop series which we commenced last Autumn. The Touchstone in January looked at Artificial Intelligence, which presents significant challenges and opportunities for projects involved in adult education. The most recent Touchstone (in March) was an Introduction to Neuro-Affirmative Practice, with John Fleming. This two-hour CPD workshop introduced the foundations of neuro-affirmative practice and explored what it means to support neurodivergent people respectfully, inclusively, and empoweringly. Designed for SHEP practitioners who facilitate groups across the SHEP Project, the session offered an accessible introduction to neurodiversity and the shift from deficit-based thinking toward neuro-affirmative approaches. The next Touchstone CDP online workshop will take place before the Summer Break.

SHEP COUNSELLING PROGRAMMES

SHEP Counselling Programmes

With core funding provided by the HSE, the Coiscéim Counselling Service has delivered low-cost counselling to 530 adults, young adults, children, and couples throughout the Cork and Kerry region. In 2025, demand for our services increased significantly, reflecting the rising need for mental health support in the region. Over the course of the year, the Service received a total of 982 enquiries via calls and emails from members of the public, as well as from statutory, community, and voluntary organisations across Cork and Kerry. Responses included appropriate signposting where required.

Lib Multicultural Counselling and Support Programme – over 40% increase in those supported

Lib's mission is to support adults and children who are 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. In 2025 Lib supported 97 individuals: 87 adults and 10 children in one-to-one counselling. In 2025 the Lib panel was increased from 16 to 23 professionals including psychotherapists, art-therapists, and a reflexologist. There are 9 interpreters working with Lib who speak the following languages: Arabic, Georgian, Somali, Russian, Urdu, Amharic, and Ukrainian.

OTHER NEWS



Some of the 1st year students on the Film, TV & Video Production course at Cork College of FET (Douglas Street Campus) preparing to film Maria Young, Coordinator of the Green Spaces Project. Veronica, Darragh, Jack, Vic, Sarah & Tony did this work as part of a two week placement with SHEP recently with the aim of using their skills to help document some of various aspects of the SHEP programme.



Some of the members of the recent SHEP Women’s Well-Being Tutor Training Course (with Trainer, Rose Crowley) at a recent CPD workshop organised by the group on Neurodiversity. The Workshop was co-facilitated by SHEP Tutors Lisa Calnan and Su Sexton.



Some of the members of the SHEP team at a Staff Workshop in SHEP Ardfoyle. The two newest members of the team are Stefan Macovei, who is ICT officer, and Mary Uí Bhroin who is the new Advocacy Project officer, working primarily on the new Horizons Project (formerly Cope Foundation). There are 22 persons employed by SHEP, the majority of whom work part-time. Liam McCarthy and Geraldine Flanagan have both been part of the SHEP team for more than twenty one years. Liam McCarthy and Nuala Burke both intend to retire in early 2027.

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