

Limerick City Children's Services Committee

**Restorative Practices: A Whole Community Approach Towards Social Justice
in Limerick City.**

***8th International Conference of the European Forum on Restorative Justice:
"Beyond crime: pathways to desistance, social justice, and peacebuilding"***

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Introduction

Reflecting developments in other jurisdictions the emergence of Restorative Practices in Limerick City has evolved in parallel with the development of Restorative Justice (specifically in the area of Youth Justice). The purpose of this working paper is to outline the evolution of the Limerick City Children's Services Committee Restorative Practice Project from the implementation of Restorative Justice in the Young Persons Probation Services, through to the Le Chéile Restorative Justice Project and subsequently into the education and community sectors. Section one - background provides a brief introduction to the Limerick City Children's Services Committee and charts the development of Restorative Practices highlighting the work of Young Persons Probation Service, Le Chéile Restorative Justice Project and the work undertaken by the Department of Education and Skills. It introduces the communities of Moyross/Ballynanty and Southill in short community profiles. These communities are considered some of the most disadvantaged in the city and are the focus for continued support in embedding and nurturing Restorative Practices. It then moves on to Section two – defining Restorative Practices in the context of the Children's Services Committee Restorative Practice Project. It concludes with a specific note on Restorative Practices in schools highlighting developments in Coláiste Mhichíl. Section three - embedding and nurturing Restorative Practices outlines the current Restorative Practices work being undertaken by the Children's Services Committee Restorative Practice Project. It provides a snapshot of the multi agency approach to Restorative Practice across the city and exemplifies this as a key success factor in encouraging restorative practices in a broad range of services working with children, young people and families. Since the appointment of a Restorative Practice Development Officer one year ago capacity levels have been increased through targeted training and support for organisations to implement Restorative Practices in communities. It closes with a short description of Southill Area Centre and the steps they are taking towards becoming a Restorative Community Centre.

Background

The Limerick City Children's Services Committee (CSC) was established in 2007 by the then Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMC) as part of the *Working Together for Children Initiative*. It was one of four pilot committees, together with Dublin City, South County Dublin and Donegal. The Children's Services Committee Initiative is now being extended across the country.

The Limerick City CSC brings together senior level representatives¹ of all agencies that have a remit around delivering services to children and their families. It has a citywide remit around children, young people and their families. The CSC is charged with improving the well-being and safety of children by supporting and strengthening families, by facilitating collaboration within Limerick services to provide a safe and nurturing environment for all children and by progressing strategic planning and policy in relation to children's services. To this end, it has been assigned the following tasks:

- To facilitate, coordinate and maximise interagency collaboration in Limerick City in relation to child services
- To secure support for the joint implementation of policies and initiatives which require inter-agency action
- To assist the implementation of the National Children's Strategy and associated policies
- To foster cross-agency communication between the various associated agencies and service providers in Limerick City
- To evaluate and monitor the impact of interagency work

Introduction of Restorative Practices in Limerick City

The introduction and development of Restorative Practices in Limerick City built on the experience of a number of different projects; developing it under the auspices of the Children's Services Committee meant that a number of different strands were drawn together and coordinated.

¹ Service representatives on the CSC: Child and Family Services, Health Service Executive, An Garda Síochána, Probation Services, Department of Education and Skills, National Educational Welfare Board, Limerick City Council, City of Limerick VEC, PAUL Partnership, National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD), Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN).

Prior to 2009 a national working group within Young Persons Probation (YPP) Service was established to progress the integration of Restorative Justice approaches theory and practice promoting positive change through participation and engagement with victims, offenders and the wider community. This working group established an action plan to develop and embed a Restorative Practice approach in its engagement with young people and their families, an approach, which is now promoted across the wider Service. The Senior Probation Officer from Limerick City chaired this working group and was also representative on the CSC. Arising from this, work began on developing a proposal pilot Restorative Justice Project for Young People, which began on 2010.

In 2009, the CSC representatives from Young Persons Probation and the Department of Education and Skills proposed making Restorative Practices a priority project for the CSC. The members of the CSC agreed that a Restorative Practices project that spanned the justice, education and community sectors could have a significant impact in supporting those working with children and young people to deal more effectively with challenging behaviour and, in the longer term, to support organisations to develop a sense of community that prevents conflict and wrongdoing.

A scoping group was established to develop how this might work in Limerick City; the group drew on learning from the then Vocational Education Committee (VEC) schools in County Kerry, many of which had successfully introduced Restorative Practices. The group also learned a great deal from a local youth justice project, Céim ar Chéim, which had successfully embedded Restorative Practices into the culture of their centre. An Garda Síochanan were also represented on this group and made significant contributions through their support and the experience of the Juvenile Liaison Officers with who had all been trained extensively in Restorative Justice and Restorative Practices. They have also contributed significantly to the setting up of Victim Liaison Officers, later in the development of Restorative Justice.

By mid-2010, the Scoping Group had become a formal sub-group of the CSC, and the membership and Terms of Reference were agreed.

During this same period, the Children's Act Advisory Board (CAAB) and the International Institute for Restorative Practice (IIRP) ran an accredited training programme on Restorative

Practices for twenty-four professionals across the country. Two members of the YPP staff locally, the Senior Probation Officer and a Probation Officer, participated in this training. Both then went on to complete a “Training of Trainers” Programme, which significantly enhanced local capacity for supporting Restorative Practices in Limerick City.

Also during this period, the Senior Probation Officer submitted a funding application to the Limerick Regeneration Agency for a Restorative Justice Coordinator who would support the development of Restorative Justice across the justice and community sectors. This application was successful, and Le Chéile Youth Justice Mentoring and Support Service became the employer of the Coordinator. While this work focused on Restorative Justice and the justice sector primarily, it also allowed introductory training to be delivered to many people working in the wider youth and community sectors.

The overall aim of the Restorative Justice Project is to contribute to the development of social cohesion and harmony within communities in Limerick and surrounding areas. Specific goals of the project include: to reduce the incidence of youth crime and anti social behaviour, to reduce fear of crime and to promote community safety. The project endeavours to work with all stakeholders offering a balanced approach to repairing the harm caused to victims, community and family members, whilst holding the young person accountable for their behaviour. Restorative Justice approaches “explore the ways in which the young person can take responsibility for their behaviour and face the consequences of their actions, and if possible make amends to the victims.”²

Le Chéile offers a number of restorative models including Restorative Conferences, Victim Impact Panels, Victim Offender Mediation, Victim Empathy Programs and Reparation. Each case referred is dealt with on an individual basis and a restorative approach is devised in conjunction with the young person, their family and Young Persons Probation to ensure the best possible outcome for all stakeholders. Victim participation is encouraged at all stages in the process.

In order to deliver these services the project successfully completed the following:

1. Delivered Restorative Practices training accredited by the International Institute of Restorative Practices during 2011 -2013, and continues to deliver training as

² (Gavin and Joyce 2013)

required. To date over 90 people from 27 different organisations have taken part in Introduction to Restorative Practice training. A further 33 people went on to participate in Restorative Practices and Conferencing Skills Training.

2. 35 volunteers trained to support young people to complete reparation within their own community.
3. 10 victims of crime trained and supported to participate on victim impact panels. Le Chéile devised and implemented the training for victims to participate on victim impact panels. This training was validated by IIRP.
4. 15 host agents committed to work with the project to provide avenues for young people to carry out reparation within the community.
5. Nine victim liaison officers (Limerick and Clare divisions) designated to work with the project in supporting victims of crime to engage in restorative process.
6. Three annual Restorative Justice Conferences hosted by Le Chéile in Limerick City.
7. Le Chéile has established a Restorative Justice Advisory Group comprising of Probation and Justice Representatives and experts from other relevant backgrounds who can contribute to the project with advice, direction and contacts.

Le Chéile is a child-centred, non-judgemental service which works restoratively with all stakeholders. Le Chéile has embraced restorative practices throughout the services nationally and has committed to training volunteers, staff and members of the Board of Management. Le Chéile is Irish for “together” – and believes people can achieve more when they work together.

The Department of Education and Skills had secured a small budget to support training and support for introducing Restorative Practices in schools. A facilitator who had worked extensively with the County Kerry VEC schools was appointed to support this work. In 2011, six DEIS Post-Primary schools and St. Augustine’s Youth Encounter Project participated in training and a range of ongoing supports with the facilitator. A parallel process of awareness raising about Restorative Practices was taking place in schools and some youth services across Limerick City. During 2010 -2011 the Department of Education through the Limerick Education Centre, over 320 people from schools, Education and Welfare Services and youth services participated in Restorative Practices briefing and information session. Of these 177 were teaching staff from six DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools). In addition

15 teachers from these six schools trained to Restorative Practice Facilitator Skills³ level.

Taking the Next Step: Developing and Embedding Restorative Practices in Limerick City

The initial stage of training across the justice, education and community sectors was extremely well-received, but the Restorative Practices Sub-group recognised that the next step after training, embedding and sustaining Restorative Practices in settings, would prove to be more challenging.

To this end, the Sub-group developed a Resource Pack to support the ongoing use and development of Restorative Practices. This was originally developed for schools but was also adapted for community settings.

In late 2011, the Limerick City CSC was invited to become part of the Programme Innovation and Development Fund (PIDF) Programme, a funding initiative of Atlantic Philanthropies and Government. The overarching objective of this initiative is to support sustainable, systemic change. Together with three other partner agencies we are taking a cooperative and coordinated approach to the implementation of a number of interrelated initiatives, which can effect improved outcomes for children. Together with the other projects funded by the PIDF the Restorative Practice Project is an intentional effort to advance the achievement of the national outcomes for children: to contribute to improved health, learning, safety, economic well being and participation of children and their families.

The Limerick City CSC agreed that Restorative Practices would be one of the three strands of their funding proposal. There were some delays in drawing down the funding from this initiative, but final approval was received by mid-2012. This funding allowed for the appointment of a Restorative Practices Development Officer; it was envisioned that this would allow for the significant development and enhancement of the existing work across the community and education sectors. It would also be closely aligned with Le Cheile's work in the justice sector.

The Restorative Practices Sub-group began developing an Implementation Plan and a Job Specification for the Development Officer post. Invitations were sent to relevant organisations to tender for the management of the programme, and Céim ar Chéim was

³ Trained to facilitate formal restorative conferences

successful in this process. The Restorative Practices Development Officer took up post in June 2013. A mapping exercise of existing levels of training and engagement with Restorative Practices was completed, and as a result the communities of Moyross/Ballynanty and Southill were prioritised for the next phase of work. These communities have been designated as some of the most disadvantaged in the country. The profiles below give some indication of the history and issues facing these communities.

Table 1: Southill Community Profile

Southill is a local authority housing estate consisting of four estates, O'Malley Park, Keyes Park, Kincora Park and Carew Park. It is situated within two electoral areas on the Southside of Limerick city, Galvone B and Rathbane.

The four parks were built in stages between 1969 and 1971, at which time Southill was the largest Corporation estate in the city, with 1,201 houses containing 6,500 residents. The original tenants came from the working class areas of the city where people were living in poor and over-crowded conditions. A small percentage also came from rural areas to take advantage of the employment opportunities that were developing in the area at that time.

There were a number of companies drawing their main workforce from these working class communities, namely Ferenka in Annacotty, Krups in Southill and the Ranks Flour Mills on the Dock Road. Krups in particular was a large employer and at one time had a workforce of 1500, many of them drawn from the local area.

During the 1980's there was a strong pattern of people moving out of the estates in Southill, and a very low level of take up of the tenant purchase scheme. Many of those who moved out took advantage of the surrender grant scheme, where people were given a monetary incentive to move out of their local authority homes in order to purchase homes in the private sector. This in turn freed up houses for the local authority to house families on the waiting list.

This is now recognised as being one of the de-stabilising influences on an area that was already disadvantaged. Those who had the most capacity to be upwardly mobile took advantage of the incentive schemes thus allowing those who were worse off to move into the area, this in turn had the effect of further depressing the profile of the four estates and leading to higher concentrations of poverty.

The Fitzgerald report of 2007 was ordered by the Government and was aimed at addressing social exclusion, crime, and disorder issues in Limerick. Fitzgerald reported that:

The conditions are stark, but on their own cannot fully bring home what I found to be the everyday reality faced by these local communities. The picture that emerged during visits to these estates, and discussions with residents and community workers was in many respects quite shocking. The quality of life for many people is extremely poor.

Latest figures from the Central Statistics Office show that there has been a large decline in the population of Southill, with the total population now numbering 2,445 at the 2011 census. This represents more than a 50% decrease, some of which is due to the Regeneration process and some can be explained by residents choosing to leave when the opportunity arose.

There is a large education gap between the population of the regeneration areas, of which Southill is one, and the rest of the populace of Limerick city. Fewer than 50% of adults in Southill have primary education as their highest level of qualification. This is in comparison to 16% in the State as a whole.

These estates have the highest levels of crime and anti-social behaviour in the city, the highest levels of disability, higher than average unemployment, higher than average single parent households and on a scale of 1 to 10 for deprivation, Southill rates as a 10, indicating a severe level of disadvantage.

Despite these findings, Southill has a higher than average level of older people being actively involved in their local community.

Table 2: Moyross Community Profile

The community of Moyross is situated to the north west of Limerick City. The local authority houses in Moyross were built between 1973 and 1987 and are located around 12 clearly identified areas and parks. In 2006 Moyross had 1,160 houses, 728 in the Ballynanty DED and 432 houses in the Limerick North Rural DED. By 2011, when all of Moyross had come within the boundaries of Limerick City Council, the number of houses had been reduced to 778, this is a very significant reduction of 32.8% in the period from 2006 to 2011. The regeneration process (which aimed to demolish all of the houses in Moyross and replace them with new houses) and the decision of a large number of families to move out of Moyross are the main reasons for the dramatic fall in the number of houses.

From the 1980's Moyross experienced extreme levels of poverty and disadvantage with an unemployment figure of 84% at that time. The community has had very high dependency on social welfare and a disproportionately young population. In 2001 Moyross, with Ballynanty and Kileely was designated one of the 25 most disadvantaged areas in Ireland under the RAPID programme.

The new Regeneration development which comprises 21 apartments and 14 family homes have been populated and are now part of the overall population numbers.

At the time of the Census of Population in April 2011 there were 2,183 people living in Moyross, which is less than half of the population of Moyross in 1992, when it stood at 4,448. The 2011 population is 34.5% less than the population in 2006 when it stood at 3,486. This is an incredible rate of out-migration with 1,203 people having left Moyross in the five year period between 2006 and 2011. In any community in Ireland the loss of over a third of its population in a five year period would present major challenges for community spirit, community cohesion and for community self-belief and confidence.

2012 and 2013 saw a paradigm shift in relation to the statistics for the Moyross area. While the population has decreased the levels of need within the community have become more complex and more prolific. The All Ireland Deprivation Index places Moyross with a score of -30 making it, along with Southill, one of the most deprived areas in the country. The unemployment rate in Moyross is running at over twice the national average and 84% of 17 to 25 year olds eligible for work are on the live register.

The migration of working families from the area and the narrowing of the social interaction range has created a social acceptance to certain types of activities in the locality such as teenage drinking and a reduction of positive parenting outcomes.

This has affected the retention rate for mainstream school in the locality and has shown the need to work with young people in the context of their family. The 2011 Census of Population states that the proportion of people who only have primary education across the 11 Small Areas which comprise Moyross ranges from 28.6% to 45.7%. This outcome is disturbing insofar as many families in Moyross have a history or tradition of leaving school at a very young age.

Southill and Moyross/Ballynanty, while different communities, share many of the same characteristics and social problems, they also share a strong sense of community and a willingness to work together to enhance their quality of life.

Defining Restorative Practices in the Context of the Children's Services Committee

Restorative Practices Project

Restorative Practices have their philosophical and methodological underpinnings in Restorative Justice; a progressive lens which considers crime as a violation of people and relationships, creating obligations to make things right⁴. The central focus is on the victim's needs and the offender's responsibility for repairing harm. This is in contrast to traditional justice, which considers: what laws have been broken? By whom? And what punishment is needed?

The development and application of Restorative Justice principles in other settings such as schools, social care settings, youth work, neighborhoods and work places has evolved beyond a focus on conflict and harm, it also supports connectedness in communities and building and maintaining relationships. This evolution encompasses a range of practices from informal communication and other restorative processes that supports the development of relationships to formal processes that address harm and conflict.

The Children's Services Committee Restorative Practices Project (hereafter known as the CSC Restorative Practices Project) is supporting the six secondary schools, and multiple services for children, young people and families from the communities of Moyross, Ballynanty and Southill. These services work with children, young people and families with diverse needs and include social care, youth work, alternative education, advocacy, drugs, sports and recreational services. In the communities of Moyross, Ballynanty, and Southill there are approximately 50 services identified for potential support from the project.

With this number of services, staff, volunteers and level of diversity of service providers it is important to have a shared framework and understanding of Restorative Practices in order to achieve some level of consistency in terminology and approach.

Therefore in the context of the Limerick City CSC Restorative Practices Project Restorative Practices can be defined as:

⁴ Zehr, H. (1990). *Changing lenses: A new focus for crime and justice*. Scottsdale (pp 181), PA: Herald Press

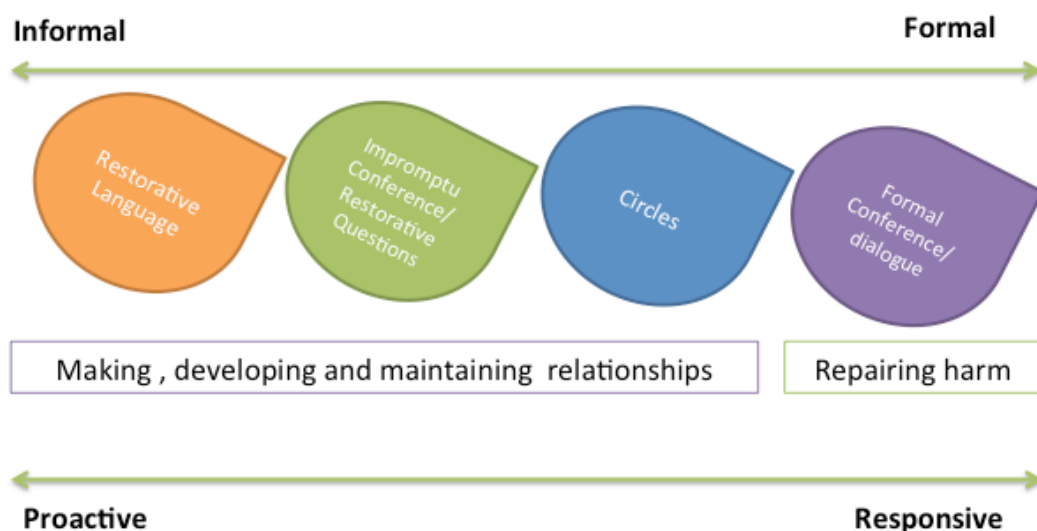
A framework for building, maintaining and strengthening relationships and responding to conflict through authentic conversations, that facilitates a shared understanding of what happened and how things can be made right.

This definition captures two key explicit features of Restorative Practices: proactive and responsive.

Proactive; building and maintaining relationships, and responsive; responding to harm caused by challenging behaviour or conflict. It embraces the vision of the project, which is embedding and nurturing Restorative Practices in all services working with children, young people and families. A consequence of the scope of the project is the diversity of settings, services and the broad range of target groups using restorative practices. The definition also highlights the range of Restorative Practice processes, which can be used informally and integrated into a diverse range of professional and volunteer work. It encompasses the potential for skills development with children, young people and families that reflect a restorative ethos and model of communication.

The International Institute of Restorative Practices Europe (IIRP) was identified as a provider of credible evidence based training and material that could provide consistency in training, terminology and restorative processes. Young Person’s Probation and Le Chéile had previously used their training programmes in Limerick. As a result the project has adopted some core restorative practice processes used by IIRP. These can be placed on a continuum of restorative practices from informal to formal.

Figure 1: Restorative Practices Continuum



In the context of this project, the continuum forms the basis of how we apply restorative practices with those whom we work. Based on our local experience and that in other areas we promote the philosophy that creating restorative environments and cultures through frequent use of informal practices (language, spontaneous conferences and circles) can contribute to improved outcomes in more formal restorative processes (restorative circles, conferencing/dialogues).

Restorative Language

A cornerstone of the implementation and integration of restorative practices relates to the language we use to communicate with each other. In the context of restorative approaches this relates to both how we speak to each other and how we listen to each other. Hopkins⁵ provides a useful framework for understanding restorative vocabulary and listening, including: everyone has their own unique and valued experience, thoughts influence emotions and emotions influence actions, empathy and consideration, needs and unmet needs and collective responsibility for problem solving and decision-making.

IIRP use the concept of affective statements and questions, the explicit and intentional use of short statements that connect a person's experience of another's behaviour and the emotional impact of this behaviour. The premise here is that when we tell someone how we feel we engender connection which helps build relationship.

A key component of restorative language is the use of restorative questions. Key characteristics of these questions include the opportunity for people to speak about what has happened from their perspective, what they were thinking and feeling at the time, who has been affected and how have they been affected and what needs to be done to repair the harm caused.

Spontaneous Restorative Conferences

Spontaneous restorative conferences refer to the use of affective or restorative questions with both the wrongdoer and those harmed to respond immediately to issues or behaviours that are inappropriate or are impacting others. These include thinking questions that allow people to reflect on how behaviour has affected them and others. They can be used in any setting, and adapted to the emotional literacy levels and understanding of any child or young

⁵ Hopkins, B. (2011). *The Restorative Classroom: Using Restorative approaches to foster effective learning*

person.

Restorative Circles

Circles can be the foundation of any restorative environment. They are the forum in which social and emotional skills can be developed and encouraged amongst people and can be modelled by staff and volunteers. They help to embed the key restorative themes and language in any community and ensure that teaching; learning and indeed day-to-day living and decision-making are informed by restorative values and principles.⁶

Restorative circles create a forum and culture in which all participants are equal, share responsibility for outcomes, and develop a sense of connectedness, trust and safety. They can be used proactively to build relationships and to respond to issues with a solution focus. Circles are flexible and can be used with children, young people and adults in a wide range of settings.

Formal Restorative Conferences or Dialogues

A Restorative Conference is a structured meeting between people who have caused harm, and those that have been harmed and others who may have been affected or who can support those present. These meetings deal with the consequences of harmful behaviour or wrong-doing and decide how best to repair the harm. Restorative conferencing can be used to address wrongdoing in various settings. The model used by IIRP Europe and subsequently by the Restorative Practices Project follows the “scripted model”. This model uses a series of prescribed open-ended questions, which encourage people to express how they were affected by the issue that they are meeting about. Following this, the script offers people an opportunity to share ideas and create a plan about how the conflict can be addressed and to repair the harm that has been caused by the incident. It requires a skilled and trained Restorative Practice Facilitator who prepares all those who have agreed to voluntarily take part in the dialogue.

A note on Restorative Practices in Schools

The CSC Restorative Practices Project recognises that a restorative school focuses on the importance of relationships for maintaining emotional wellbeing, resolving conflict and

⁶ Transforming Conflict: The National Centre for Restorative Approaches in Youth Settings, *Supporting staff team work with vulnerable people*

preventing harm.⁷ We promote the ideal that Restorative Practices in schools are based on restorative justice principles concentrating on:

Building classroom communities that are supported by clear agreements, authentic communication and specific tools to bring issues and conflicts forward in a helpful way. They provide specific pathways to repair harm by bringing together those affected by misbehaviour into dialogue to address concerns, achieve understanding and come to agreement about setting things right⁸

Restorative Practices support in schools is based on the premise that:

The more young people feel included, respected, encouraged and challenged appropriately the more they will learn and the less they will choose to engage in anti-social or disruptive behaviours.⁹

Restorative approaches are not merely viewed as a way of responding to negative or challenging behaviour, they are embraced as a way of teaching and promoting pro-social behaviours in the context of relationships. The journey of embedding and nurturing restorative practices in our schools is a long one and the CSC project embraces the concept of a “whole school approach’ where restorative practices are part of the day-to-day norm and culture of every classroom and teacher. Working together with schools on an individual basis the project supports schools to cultivate their own strategy for working towards a whole school approach. The project is also supporting schools and community groups to identify ways that they can support each other in “joining up the restorative dots” in order to strengthen and support children’s and young people’s experience and understanding of Restorative Practice. One example of this has been where a community project working with young children at risk of early school leaving has supported a local primary school to introduce restorative practices to a group of sixth class students who will be starting post primary school in September. As part of this programme a teacher and Schools Completion Project Worker (who have both been trained in Restorative Practices) were invited to one of the sessions to begin to build restorative relationships in advance of their transfer to post primary school.

⁷ Restorative Justice Council. (2014), *How to become a Restorative School*, London

⁸ Centre for Restorative Process. (2013). *Introduction to teaching restorative practices with classroom circles*. San Francisco

⁹ Hopkins, B. (2011). *The Restorative Classroom: Using Restorative approaches to foster effective learning*.

Coláiste Mhichíl: Snapshots of our Restorative Journey – a school’s perspective

Coláiste Mhichíl, CBS Sexton Street is an all-boys voluntary secondary school in the heart of Limerick City, under the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST). It serves a community of 440 children from all over the city with 66% of students coming from regeneration areas including Moyross/Ballynanty and Southill. The school has 36 teachers.

Coláiste Mhichíl is supported by the Limerick City Children’s Service Committee to develop restorative practices in the school. Leading this development is a core group of teachers and staff who have trained in Restorative Practices including the Acting Deputy Principal, the Home School Liaison teacher, the Social, Personal and Health Education teacher and five other teachers.

The Principal is wholly supportive of embedding restorative practice in the school, and we embrace restorative approaches as an expression of the school’s charter, which promotes partnership in the school community and creating a caring school community. Central to this, is the belief that the school *“community lives and grows where people share a common vision and mission, feel they belong, are allowed to contribute are recognised and consulted and have a say in determining their direction”*. Restorative principles, values and processes can make a significant contribution to bringing the school charter to life. In addition, restorative processes can support the implementation of National Education Welfare Board Guidelines and the Department of Education and Skills, Anti Bully Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools. A core component of these procedures are creating a positive school climate and culture and restorative approaches offer a framework for supporting this.

Capacity building

A key factor in the school’s restorative journey has been our participation in awareness raising and training. To date, the school has participated in whole school awareness raising and refresher sessions. In a short period of time five teachers have been trained to run formal restorative conferences addressing conflict and challenging behaviour. A further three teachers have taken part in introductory training. This is a significant undertaking by the school, as it requires the good will not only of the teachers who are attending the training but also their colleagues who provide substitution cover for their classes.

Making our own of restorative practices

Using the emerging Restorative Practice knowledge and skills in the teaching community we have begun adopting restorative principles, values and processes in a few key areas:

We have reviewed our positive code of behaviour to reflect a restorative approach. At the core of this approach is the teacher/student relationship. Each student is encouraged to grow and take increasing responsibility. Towards supporting this code of behaviour the school is committed to implementing Restorative Practices to resolve any issues in a calm and respectful manner.

Impromptu conferences are being used on a regular basis to address harm caused by bullying, name-calling and fighting amongst other behaviour. Students who have been involved in these have generally responded well and have bought into the processes, participating well and responding to repairing the harm caused. Those students who experience challenges expressing themselves are encouraged to participate in ways that they can.

We have developed reflection sheets, which students use to help them reflect on their behaviour after an incident. These are proving useful tools in giving students time to think about what has happened and how their behaviour has affected others.

The school is creating a restorative space by revamping what has formally been known as the “interrogation room” into a student and restorative friendly space. This has been repainted, made more welcoming, restorative questions, values and guidelines are displayed on the wall as reminders,

a circular table has been put into the room and student achievements are presented on the wall. It is quickly becoming known by the whole school community as the “conference room”.

Challenges and rewards

One of the key challenges we’ve experienced in the school is time. Time taken to train staff and then implement the approaches in school has to be prioritised and this is always at the expense of something else. It depends on the goodwill of teachers and colleagues to make themselves available to free colleagues up to prepare and implement restorative practices.

While in its infancy in the school, management, teachers and parents are recognising the benefits of restorative approaches. The school Principal notes “We have found that using restorative questions or having impromptu conferences and conversations about small issues and conflicts between students during school have not only resolved the issue but has also prevented the issue escalating in the school. Where previously these issues may have been played out in communities and on Facebook, this has not happened in situations when restorative approaches has been used”.

A parent has reported to the Deputy Principal that her son appeared “more confident in himself” after he took part in a small impromptu conference. She also expressed her appreciation and recognition that the school was addressing the “bullying” issues her son was experiencing.

One teacher using restorative approaches describes feeling a greater sense of closure on issues, feeling like she has done all she can when she has used a restorative approach in relation to harmful behaviour.

So what’s next?

We recognise that embedding and nurturing Restorative Practices in the school takes time and will happen gradually. Our next steps towards this include:

1. Working with the CSC Restorative Practices Development Officer to plan and implement whole school training for all teaching staff. We also hope to have a briefing session for the school Board of Management.
2. Using restorative approaches to consult with students on integrated curriculum development. We are exploring how we might use circles to support this process.
3. Where possible (with acknowledged limitations) we hope to include time for restorative practices in the timetable for designated and restorative practice trained teachers.

We take encouragement from the potential that restorative approaches make towards improving the learning and teaching environment of our students and staff.

Embedding and Nurturing Restorative Practices

The capacity building work of YPP, Le Chéile Restorative Justice Project and the Department of Education and Skills ensured a firm foundation, which the CSC Restorative Practice Project could continue to develop.

It is this work and international evidence on the benefits of Restorative Practices, which led to consolidating the need to embed and nurture a restorative practices philosophy and principles in services, schools and communities. The development of the Children’s Services Committee Restorative Practices Project is a response to this need.

Local Vision

The Children's Services Committee Restorative Practices Project aims to embed and nurture Restorative Practices in services working with children, young people and families in Limerick City. The initial starting point for the CSC Restorative Practice Project is:

1. Supporting the six DEIS schools (St. Nessian's Community College, Coláiste Mhichíl (CBS), Ardscoil Mhuire, St. Enda's Community School, Presentation Secondary School, Salesian Secondary School). Together these schools represent a student population of 2040¹⁰ and a teaching staff of 165¹¹
2. Supporting services for children, young people and families from the communities of Moyross, Ballynanty and Southill. These services work with children, young people and families with diverse needs and include social care, youth work, alternative education, advocacy, drugs, sports and recreational services. In the communities of Moyross, Ballynanty, and Southill there are approximately 50 services identified for potential support.

The project encourages each school and service to apply restorative principals, values, skills and processes in a manner that is meaningful and most appropriate to the people they are working with.

Shared Responsibility and Collaboration

A key factor in the success of the project to date has been collaboration between statutory and voluntary services who have committed time and resources to ensuring that the project meets community and education needs.

The Children's Services Committee has overall responsibility for the project and four key groups contribute to the implementation of the project. These consist of key decision makers and influencers from statutory and voluntary services within the community and education sectors. They include; education and community working groups, an implementation group and the restorative practices sub group. Each group meets once every two months in a cycle that facilitated the education and community working groups to feed

¹⁰ Based on 2012-2013 enrolment figures

¹¹ Based on 2013-2013 aggregated staffing levels

into the implementation group which in turn feeds into the CSC Restorative practice sub group. Each representative participates in a voluntary capacity.

Figure 2: Project Management Representatives

Representative	Education Working Group	Community Working Group	Implementation Group	CSC Restorative Practice Sub Group
An Garda Síochána Gardaí Inspector				✓
An Garda Síochána Gardaí Sergeant			✓	
Ceim ar Chéim Manager	✓	✓	✓	✓
CSC Coordinator		✓	✓	✓
CSC Restorative Practice Development Officer	✓	✓	✓	✓
Department Education and Skills Assistant Principal Officer			✓	
Department Education and Skills Social Higher Executive Officer				✓
Further Education & Training Division Education and Training Officer				✓
Le Chéile Mentoring and Youth Justice Support Services Regional Coordinator		✓	✓	✓
Limerick City Adult Education Service Youth Officer		✓		
Limerick Clare Education Training Board Educational Officer	✓			
Limerick Education Centre Director	✓		✓	
Tusla Child and Family Agency Project Manger				✓
Young Persons Probation Service Senior Probation Officer			✓	✓

The Education and Community Working Groups have a mandate to assist in planning and support the implementation of the Restorative Practices Project in their respective sectors. Each group has specific objectives, which are set out below.

Figure 3: Working Group Objectives

Community	Education
1. To ensure that the services for children, young people and families in Moyross/Ballynanty and Southill which the project targets are the focus of implementation.	1. To ensure that the schools which the project supports are the focus of implementation.
2. To ensure that the project is supported and embraced by services for children, young people and families in Moyross/Ballynanty and Southill	2. To make every effort to ensure that the project is supported and embraced by Principals and RP core teams within schools
3. To support the development of the capacity with services for children, young people and families in Moyross/Ballynanty and Southill to work toward a whole service approach	3. To support the development of the capacity with school principals, core RP staff to work toward a whole school approach to Restorative Practices
4. To support the monitoring and evaluation of the project	4. To support the monitoring and evaluation of the project
5. To ensure that the benefits and impact of the project are sustained within the communities of Moyross/Ballynanty and Southill	5. To ensure that the benefits and impact of the project are sustained within schools

The Implementation Group oversees the day-to-day operations of the project, makes key decisions, and garners support from other statutory and voluntary services not directly associated with the project. The Restorative Practice Development Officer makes reports based on the implementation plan every two months.

Line Management of Project Staff

The project has one paid employee, the Restorative Practices Development Officer. She is employed by Céim ar Chéim (Irish Youth Justice/Probation Service) who provide line management, office and administrative support voluntarily.

Local Leaders and Advocates

As a first step in building on the work which had begun prior to the appointment of the Restorative Practice Development Officer, the project employed a strategy of identifying local Restorative Practice leaders and advocates already trained and using Restorative Practices in their day - to - day work. In July 2013, eight people from six organisations were identified and trained as Restorative Practices Trainer of Trainers through IIRP Europe. Each trainer and their respective organisation have given a voluntary commitment to support the development of the project over the next two years. This voluntary commitment is primarily human resources. To date this has included making staff available to participate in training as trainers, a collective contribution of 35 working days. A subsequent contribution of over

23 working days to deliver training has also been given voluntarily. This is in addition to staff participation in trainers Community of Practice meetings and some additional continuous professional development events. The trainers include:

Table 3: Restorative Practice Trainers

Manager	Céim ar Chéim	Moyross
Outreach Worker	Céim ar Chéim	Moyross
Restorative Practice Development Officer	Children’s Service Committee	City Wide
Coordinator	Corpus Christi Gardaí Youth Diversionary Programme	Moyross
Mentoring Coordinator	Le Chéile Mentoring and Youth Justice Support Services	City Wide
Youth Officer	Limerick Clare Education training Board	City Wide
Manager	Southill Area Centre	Southill
Manager	Southill Outreach	Southill

In addition four people from services across Limerick were trained as assessors for IIRP Europe, increasing the sustainability of local training capacity.

Table 4: IIRP Assessors

Garda Sergeant	An Garda Síochána
Regional Manager	Le Chéile Mentoring and Youth Justice Support Services
Senior Probation Officer	Young People Probation Service
Probation Officer	Young People Probation Service

Key Support Elements

There are three key support elements to the project; **training, support for implementation and local resource development.** Training has been a priority in the first 12 months of the project. This focused on increasing capacity in schools and organisations identified as having a strong motivation towards Restorative Practices. Following training collective and individual support for implementing Restorative Practices has taken place. Through this

support examples of the use of restorative practices in specific organisations and schools are identified and being developed as local resources for promoting the benefits, modeling practice and sharing resources.



Training

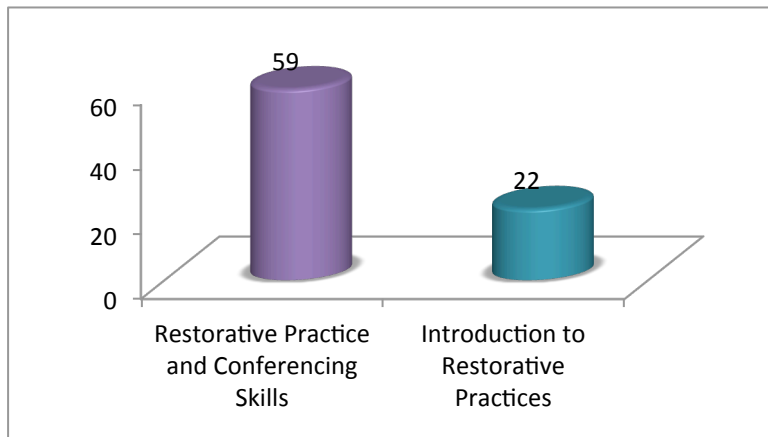
In keeping with training already started in the city the project's primary model of training is the International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP). In addition the project can provide a level of bespoke training, which meets organisations specific needs, and training which focuses on using a restorative process in parenting.

Since November 2013, when training began, 81¹² people from 28 schools and services have participated in IIRP accredited training. This has included:

1. Introduction to Restorative Practices, which provides the participants with background knowledge, and the skills to use informal restorative practice in their day to day work.
2. Restorative Practice and Conferencing Skills, which provides participants with the knowledge and practical skills to run a formal restorative process. Participants in this training are introduced to, and given the opportunity to practice the skills they have learned.

¹² Figures based on training completed up to April 2014

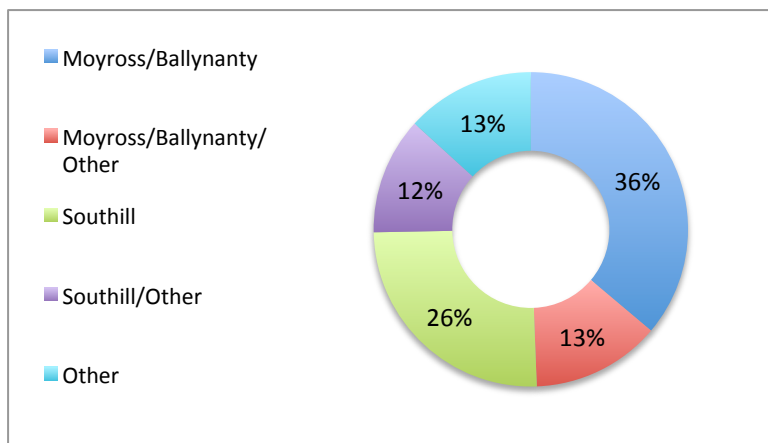
Figure 4: Number of People Trained



Focus Community of Services

Of these training participants 49% were working with services supporting children, young people or families in the communities of Moyross and Ballynanty and other communities. 38 % were working in services supporting children, young people or families in the communities specifically in Southill and other communities. 13% were working in services in other communities across the city.

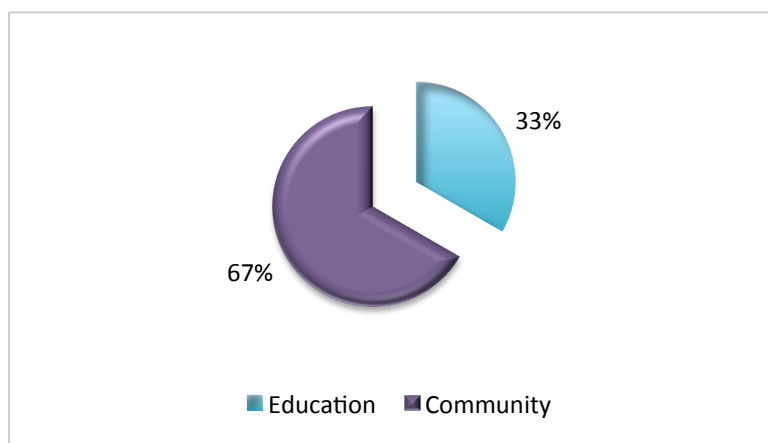
Figure 5: Services community focus



Sectors

Of those trained 33% were working in the education sector either as teachers in one of the six DEIS schools supported by the project or in services such as the Schools Completion Programme

Figure 6: Breakdown of sectors in which training participants work



Support for Implementation

Six to eight weeks after each Restorative Practices and Conferencing Skills training programme all participants are invited to a sharing and learning session, which provides an opportunity for people to:

1. Reflect on their restorative practice by sharing their experience on how they have been implementing Restorative Practices in their day-to-day work.
2. Share resources and tools that they are using in their work environment.
3. Reflect and grow as restorative practitioners.
4. Networking and encourage each other.

In addition to this each organisation is provided with additional support through on site support visits from the Restorative Practice Development Officer. These support visits focus on the bespoke application of restorative practices. The plan is to supplement these supports with community of practice meetings in the future.

Local Resource and Practice Development

Call back sessions and on site support visits are used to identify demonstration or local practices models and include Southill Area Centre which is working towards being a restorative community centre (detailed below), integrating circles into youth work, teaching restorative practices through classroom circles and integrating circles into anger management programmes. Staff and practitioners are offered support to write their practices up to share with other services.

Table 5: Example of Local Practice Development

Towards a Restorative Community Centre: Southill Area Centre the story so far

The Southill Area Centre is a new purpose built area centre for the Southill Community that since its opening in September 2008 has enhanced the lives of the local residents by providing them with a community centre where local groups meet and plan their activities.

This hub in the community developed as the result of a needs assessment which was carried out in the local area and identified that there was a need for a one stop centre offering a 'cradle to the grave' approach to community care. Tenants in the centre include the Family Resource Centre Crèche, Limerick Youth Service, Southill After Schools Club and the Community Youth Work Team.

It also offers a range of outreach services; the Local Employment Service, Welfare Rights Officer, Al Jeff Drug Treatment Agency, the Educational Welfare Board and Limerick City Council (Housing Department). At the core of the centre is The Community Cafe, which is open to the public.

It has developed as a safe space for the people of Southill to meet, socialise, take part in the many different educational courses on offer and to be a part of the community in an informal and relaxed environment.

The Area Centre's restorative journey started when the manager and three youth work staff took part in Restorative Practice training run by Le Chéile Mentoring and Youth Justice Support Services in 2011. The Manager trained to Restorative Practices and Conferencing Skills level and the three youth workers completed the one-day Introduction to Restorative Practices. Recognising the potential that Restorative Practices could bring to the work of the center and in addressing community conflict the Manager has become a strong advocate for Restorative Practices. With the emergence of the CSC Restorative Practices project she was identified as a potential Restorative Practice Trainer and took part in the five day Training of Trainers in August 2013 and has been certified and approved as an IIRP Europe trainer.

During the three-month period of November 2013 to January 2014 the Youth Work Team have extended their skills and have completed the Restorative Practice and Conferencing Skills training programme. This training has been supplemented with support visits from the Restorative Practice Development Officer. The youth work team is now integrating restorative practices informally in their youth work using impromptu conferences to resolve issues. They also use circles to build and maintain relationships with the children and young people using their services. They are also working on a restorative model of Youth Work, which will integrate the National Quality Standards Framework for Youth Work.

Evolving out of this the Area Centre's Voluntary Board of Management have been briefed on Restorative Practices and are committed to the training of all Area Centre staff on a phased basis and plans are in place to complete introductory training for all staff in August this year.

Other elements

In addition to the core elements outlined above the project is also contributing to the national policy dialogue in relation to restorative justice and practice by making submission to the Joint Committee on Justice, through representation on the Restorative Practice Strategic Forum and contributing to local and national conferences.

What's next?

Moving into the second year of the project we will be focusing on consolidating the capacity already developed by ensuring that the experiences of schools, services and individuals are shared through communities of practice, local case studies and materials developed.

We are also developing ways to spread awareness to support schools in their progress. One of the ways we are doing this is by offering training through the Limerick Education Centre to Primary School teachers.

Conclusion

Limerick city has embarked upon a significant and ambitious programme in it's efforts to introduce and secure restorative practice as an ethos and philosophy that informs and guides all services for children and young people. Whilst the project has achieved a number of milestones to date, it's full potential to create real and lasting positive change becomes clearer at every juncture.

A number of critical success factors have emerged along the way

1. The twin track development of Restorative Justice and Restorative Practice. This approach has allowed for greater awareness in services and schools, generated greater interest and understanding across the justice, education and community sectors of the of the applications of restorative principals, values and processes.
2. The ongoing identification of leaders and champions at every stage and at every level both within and across agencies and organisations. The passion and commitment these individuals bring has been invaluable.
3. The collaboration of statutory and voluntary services in envisioning a whole community approach to restorative practices, developing and using existing structures and relationships to plan, draw down funding and implement a project of the size and scale of what is been undertaken in Limerick City.
4. A strong teamwork approach embodied in a real sense of shared and joint endeavour in the pursuit of mutually beneficial goals. This has been harnessed and sustained by the promotion of inclusion and ownership amongst everyone involved in the project.
5. The voluntary commitment of time, expertise and resources from people responsible for managing services/schools at senior levels to people who are working on the ground who have taken on additional responsibilities and duties to bring about change in the way services work.

6. The dedicated human resource of a Restorative Practice Development Officer, which creates momentum and focused energy.

Our experience thus far suggests emphatically that restorative practice offers an easy and accessible approach that very simply makes sense in all aspects of our work and we would encourage other areas of the country to follow our example.

To request a copy of the paper please email

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