**Limerick City Children’s Services Committee Restorative Practices Project**

Limerick CityChildren’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. Nessan’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 2040 and a teaching staff of 165
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.

Since November 2013 we have run when training began, 81people from 28 schools and services have participated in accredited training across the community and education sectors in Limerick City. We have had teachers; youth workers, junior leaders, school completion workers, volunteers, social worker and social care leaders to name but a few.

Here, ***a couple of those participants*** who successfully completed the training Restorative Practices and Conference Skills Training and are now accredited Restorative Practices Facilitator’s give us their perspectives.

 ***Priscilla Sheehan*** is a ***Youth Worker*** for the ***Factory Southside Youth Space*** which is a Limerick Youth Service building. She is responsible for running clubs and groups for young people on the south side of Limerick as well as running the Laff Caff Youth Café and

***Gavin Doyle*** is a woodwork and construction studies teacher in St. Nessan’s Community College. He is also a class tutor to a second year group. As part of the school’s pastoral care programme, each class is assigned a class tutor, who on behalf of the school community undertakes the role of caring for a class group in order to promote learning at every level of the person. Part of Gavin’s duties includes monitoring the use of journals, building a relationship with the student, consulting with subject teachers to alleviate any source of difficulty and monitoring progress.

***Ingrid: What motivated you to take part in the training?***

***Gavin:***In my role as class tutor I experience a certain amount of conflict and small-scale incidents, so I felt that restorative practice would be very beneficial and useful in my everyday dealings with students.

***Priscilla: “***I took part in the one day Restorative Practices training and I wanted to gain a more in depth knowledge of Restorative Practices and how I could use it in my work”.

***Ingrid: What were the key learning’s that you took away from the training?***

***Gavin:*** The type of questions, which could be used. For me, not using the ‘Why’ questions was tricky initially, but I learned the key benefit of using affective statements *(brief comments someone’s behaviour and how it has affected others to show how others been affected by their choices and behaviour)* and restroative questions instead. Also the theory behind why we use these types of questions, such as Tomkins’ “Blueprint”, really broadened my understanding of concept of restorative practice and the importance of maximising positive affects, minimising negative affects and expressing emotion freely.

***Priscilla:*** I took away from the training were the particular needs of all involved in the restorative process. I also learned about the wide variety of situations in which the restorative process can be used.

***Ingrid: Would you recommend the training to other principals/deputy principals/teachers/youth workers and why?***

***Gavin:*** Yes I think the training is very worthwhile as it gives a structured approach to dealing with issues. It focuses on repairing the harm caused by the wrongdoer and gives all parties involved a voice, which sometimes isn’t the case in a school setting. I also feel that all teacher-training colleges should incorporate restorative practice within their programs as it could be used as a method to alleviate a lot of classroom issues.

***Priscilla:”*** I would absolutely recommend this training to other professionals. It provides a fool proof communications toolkit for resolving conflicts which takes into account the feelings of both parties”.

***Ingrid: How have you been using the training in your work?***

***Gavin:*** The use of affective statements and the restroative questions can be used in everyday teaching and I feel students respond very well to them. Small impromptu conferences are also very useful and are suitable for minor incidents which would not warrant a full conference.

***Priscilla: “***I have used this training for the resolution of minor conflicts with individuals I work with. I have also used the training to resolve disagreements and conflicts within the groups I work with”.

If you would like to hear more about what is happening in Limerick please contact Ingrid Colvin, Restorative Practice Development Officer at respracdevoff@gmail.com or on 087 9363010