

## The History and Emergence of SHEP

How did the Project come into being and how did it develop? The (Cork) Social and Health Education Project was established in 1986 to continue work that had first been initiated in 1974 by a number of teachers, health professionals and others who shared a concern about the short and longer-term effects on people of health-threatening choices made during childhood and adolescence. Within this group it was recognised that a new approach to health education was required that would allow young people to explore and understand the psychological and social factors that lay behind their decisions and behaviours. From the outset, the work of the Project was associated with the use of participative, experiential education as a means of fostering a capacity to make informed and responsible choices. Whilst this was clearly seen as a pioneering approach in the early days of the Project, it came to be more generally accepted. Indeed, elements of the Project's early work were eventually mainstreamed through such initiatives as the Social, Personal and Health Education Programme (SPHE) programme in secondary schools. The training provided for teachers by the Project involved them in undergoing, as participants, similar exercises to those they would go on to facilitate with young people. In the course of doing so, they quickly came to realise that, as adults, they too could benefit from the opportunity to reflect on their lives and to consider how best to promote their wellbeing. This realisation resulted in an expansion of the vision of the Project to encompass meeting the training needs of adult groups. As the training of teachers was gradually subsumed under the national Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme, the Project proceeded to offer foundation training in social and health education to support adults from all backgrounds to enhance their capacity for personal effectiveness. Later, facilitation training and specialised tutor training were provided for those who wished to prepare themselves to help others to achieve personal effectiveness, either in the course of their existing professional work, or by working through the Project as personal development tutors in the community. In collaboration with University College Cork, academic training was also provided in social and health education so as to enable those who had already undertaken specialised tutor training to develop a strong theoretical foundation for their practice. These various elements are now delivered through the Project's Core Training Programme. Through its Community Training Programme, the Project went on to deploy those who had undertaken specialised tutor training to deliver a wide range of personal development courses to community groups across its work area. It later initiated a further community support programme - the Community Governance Enhancement Programme - in order to develop the capacity of community and voluntary organisations for values-led organisational change. Whilst the Project's mission continued to be advanced in these various ways through what are now collectively termed its Training and Development Services, over time it became clear that many people were facing such significant obstacles to the achievement of personal effectiveness that they were unable to benefit from regular training and development programmes. The Project therefore moved to put in place a complementary range of Therapeutic Support Services through which people are helped to overcome, or, at least, to limit the effects of these obstacles. These services include individual and group counselling, psychotherapist-supported training, facilitated support groups and peer/citizen advocacy. The Project's Coiscéim Counselling Programme is now a major provider of low-cost counselling, whilst its Cork Older People's Advocacy Service has received national recognition for its pioneering work in addressing the needs of vulnerable older people. From the outset, the Project has had a concern for the wider world. By helping people to develop their capacity for responsible global citizenship, has sought to promote social justice and environmental integrity. In 2006, it initiated its International Partnership Programme through which it provides support for organisations in other parts of the world that share its commitment to capacity building for personal and social transformation.