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An Evaluation of the Core Training Programme

On behalf of:

The Social & Health Education Project

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Evaluation of Core Training Programme Contents

Section	Page
Executive Summary	3
Section 1 - Evaluation Rationale	5
1.1 Purpose of Evaluation	5
1.2 Evaluation Methodology	6
1.3 Evaluation Content	7
Section 2 - An Overview of SHEP as a Training Organisation	9
2.1 Summary of Purpose & Work Areas	9
2.2 An Explanation of the Core Training Programme	10
2.3 Influence of Organisational Culture on Activities	12
2.4 Influence of SHEP's Ethos & Value System on Training Activities	13
2.5 A Review of SHEP as a Training Organisation	15
2.6 Consideration of Previous Relevant SHEP reports	18
2.7 Analysis of other Pertinent Information	19
Section 3 - From Theory to Practice – A Review and Analysis of SHEP Applicants	22
3.1 Overview of the Core Training Programme	22
3.2 Applicant Identification & Engagement	23
3.3 Participant Profile	25
Section 4 – Analysis of Core Training Activity 2006 – 2009	27
4.1 Overview	27
4.2 Foundation 1	28
4.3 Foundation 2	46
4.4 Generic Facilitation Skills	55
4.5 Continuing Personal Development	59
4.6 Integrated Specialised Tutor Training	62
Section 5 – SHEP Course Trainers' Experience	68
5.1 Trainers' Review of their Experience	68
5.2 Review of Trainers' Survey Responses & Other Relevant Information	73
5.3. Overview of Trainers	73
Section 6 - Impact and Effectiveness of the Core Training Programme: The Participant View	75
Section 7 - Observations and Recommendations	83
7.1 Evaluation Questions	83
7.2 General Observations	87
7.3 Recommendations	88

Evaluation of Core Training Programme Executive Summary

The nature, delivery and perceived benefits of the SHEP Core Training Programme would seem to us to form a unique package unlike any other we have seen operating in the geographical region or related subject fields.

SHEP seems to demonstrate a distinct and positive ethos and dynamic as an organisation with a perceptible value system based around the individual within the context of community.

The level of satisfaction with courses is consistently high. SHEP seems to have identified a real need within a sector of the community and is meeting that need to a high degree. Courses continue to attract applicants year on year without appearing to have outlasted the demand for them.

The majority of course participants perceive a great benefit to themselves from the courses they undertake, particularly in personal development, outlook on life and relationships within their community and to other individuals.

For any organisation, regardless of present success, the key to future success is sustainability. Fundamental to that sustainability is strategic planning, and particularly so in times of recession with the potential for limited or reduced public funding. This evaluation provides the evidence of SHEP's success through the analysis of documentation and a series of consultations with key stakeholders. It also highlights key issues for the organisation which can be summarised as follows:

- We would recommend a review of communications mechanisms for their effectiveness. Paper, media, advertising and internet could reflect activity and outcomes more accurately and enhance the image of SHEP training.
- There could be better alignment of SHEP training activities and outcomes with published, or about to be revised, versions of the organisational Mission Statement, Aims and Objectives, Vision and Core Values and other published material.
- Based on observation and feedback from those involved in the evaluation process, we would recommend examining two possible areas of diversification which could be offered in partnership with other significant stakeholder organisations: Transition Year students and prison inmates.
- It is not precisely apparent exactly how 'environment' features in SHEP training activity. There is a perceived emphasis on green issues in published statements which could be construed as misleading.
- There would seem to be scope for some standardisation of SHEP systems of record-keeping across the board such as application processes, information on activity and evaluation processes and the in-house database.
- There could well be scope for SHEP to aim for increased partnership on the ground. SHEP might consider moving to establish 'Centres of Excellence' as a positive strategy for stronger local partnerships, for example entering into dialogue with localised organisations such as Family Resource Centres. Such local partners could

also play a vital role in identifying community needs and target groups.

- Although not a major concern, we would recommend giving thought to the re-branding of the Foundation 1 and Foundation 2 Courses to more accurately reflect what is involved.
- There would seem to be some scope for course accreditation but not universally across the Core Training spectrum. Some courses would not benefit from or be suitable for formal accreditation. We would therefore only recommend the exploration of formal accreditation for Generic Facilitation Skills and Integrated Specialised Tutor Training.
- The relationship between the organisation and the trainers is fundamentally important to the delivery and success of the whole training programme. Therefore, we would recommend that the SHEP should look at mechanisms for empowering trainers to participate as partners in taking the organisation forward, to retain its sustainability and relevance, and to help in planning any new developments.

These key issues are dealt with more fully in Section 7 - Observations and Recommendations, where there is also an outline basis for the next stage of strategic planning.

As demonstrated by the research undertaken by Kearney Consultants and outlined in this report, SHEP has a valued set of training products on offer which continue to attract participants who rate the programme very highly indeed.

Section 1 - Evaluation Rationale

1.1 Purpose of Evaluation

The specific aim of the evaluation was to provide an independent assessment of the **effectiveness** and **impact** of SHEP's Core Training Programme in order to assist the project **to learn from and improve the quality of the programme**. The particular objectives were to:

1. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the core training programme.
2. Establish the extent to which the core training programme demonstrates good practice.
3. Identify and analyse trends in the participation in the Core Training Programme for the years 2006-2009 (e.g. demographic and socio-economic profile)
4. Evaluate trainees' satisfaction with the total training experience, including their views on the initial contact and course administration, their views on the trainers, and their experience of the training provided. This aspect of the research was confined to individuals who participated in the Foundation training offered in September 2009 – May 2010 (7 groups), the GFS training offered in 2009 (two groups) and the most recent of each of the practitioner training courses.
5. Assess the immediate and long term impact of the training on the lives of participants and those around them
6. Assess trainers' satisfaction with the administration, delivery and supervision of the core training programme
7. Identify any other outcomes of the training programme
8. Assess the adequacy of the management and supervisory systems in place
9. Assess the adequacy of the policy framework within which the core training programme operates – (codes of practice, health and safety, etc.)
10. Assess cost-effectiveness
11. Identify ways to improve the training programme, taking into account the recommendations of the 2005 curriculum review

We believe that the value of the evaluation process is in its contribution to SHEP's ability to:

- Plan for the future based on a targeted assessment of activity and performance to date
- Assess the relevance of the Core Training Programme in moving into a new phase of delivery and adjust its operation accordingly where appropriate

- Operate effectively in delivering on its stated aims and objectives in difficult economic circumstances
- Continue to combat social exclusion

1.2 Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation approach and methodology were based on the following:

- Initial scoping and ongoing discussions with SHEP's representatives
- Review of relevant documentation provided by SHEP and available on-line from other sources
- Data collection through survey activity, discussions and focus groups with representative samples of both participants and trainers
- Key Issues presentation to relevant SHEP representatives
- Analysis and generation of necessary reports including the final report

The evaluation methodology was adjusted somewhat to take advantage of unexpected quality of information provided through both the participant application forms and the evaluation forms completed by participants at the end of courses in which they participated. Because of this, the range of courses and timelines involved also changed. This was agreed by relevant SHEP staff as it was seen to yield rich and useful information.

The final methodology included:

- Initial scoping and review of documentation as indicated above
- Data collection consisting of the following:
 - Analysis of range of participant application forms for 2008, 2009 for all Core Training courses
 - Analysis of range of participant evaluation forms for 2008, 2009 for all Core Training courses
 - Focus group discussions with range of participants involved in all Core Training courses (over several years)
 - Focus group discussion with representatives of trainers
 - Discussions with key SHEP staff involved in course administration
- Key issues presentation and analysis and generation of necessary reports as indicated above

The evaluation outcomes were somewhat constrained by a number of factors and adjustments had to be made to accommodate these. The factors included:

- Lack of information on those who had applied but had not been successful or who had decided not to go ahead with the course

- Inability to track people’s progress through courses as we could not match up initial applications for Foundation 1 with subsequent course applications
- Unavailability of participants in a planned focus group in Mallow due to inclement weather conditions

Despite these challenges, the unexpected richness of material in both application forms and evaluation forms more than compensated for this and yielded information on applicants’ profiles and reasons for applying and, in the case of the evaluation forms, provided information on participants’ experience of the courses and some recommendations for the future.

1.3 Evaluation Content

The evaluation content and its presentation have been shaped by the material available through discussions, surveys and analysis of paper documentation. It is presented in the following sections:

Section 2 - An Overview of SHEP as a Training Organisation

This is based on observation, discussion with SHEP staff, trainers and participants, and a review of documentation supplied by SHEP. This section consists of the following:

- 2.1 Summary of Purpose & Work Areas
- 2.2 An Explanation of the Core Training Programme
- 2.3 Influence of Organisational Culture on Activities
- 2.4 Influence of SHEP’s Ethos & Value System on Training Activities
- 2.5 A Review of SHEP as a Training Organisation
- 2.6 Consideration of Previous Relevant SHEP Reports
- 2.7 Analysis of other Pertinent Information

Section 3 - From Theory to Practice – a Review and Analysis of SHEP Applicants

This section is based on analysis of sample documentation relating to participants in the shape of application and evaluation forms and on discussion with key SHEP stakeholders.

- 3.1 Overview
- 3.2 Applicant Identification & Engagement
- 3.3 Participant Profile

Section 4 – Analysis of Core Training Activity 2006 - 2009

This section contains analysis of an array of documentation relating to courses and supplied by SHEP to the evaluation team.

- 4.1 Overview
- 4.2 Foundation 1
- 4.3 Foundation 2
- 4.4 Generic Facilitation Skills
- 4.5 Continuing Personal Development
- 4.6 Integrated Specialised Tutor Training

Section 5 – SHEP Course Trainers and Support

Material in this section is based on a questionnaire exercise carried out with trainers and consultation with them and other key stakeholders.

- 5.1 Trainers' Review of their Experience
- 5.2 Review of Trainers' Survey Responses & Other Relevant Information
- 5.3 Overview on Trainers

Section 6 - Impact and Effectiveness of the Core Training Programme: The Participant View

This section is based on consultation exercises carried out with participants and informed by analysis of paper records relating to courses.

Section 7 - Observations and Recommendations

This section synthesises observations from documentation analysis, consultation processes and desk research, relating them back to the evaluation objectives. It also contains an outline basis for further strategic planning.

- 7.1 Observations Based on Evaluation Objectives
- 7.2 Recommendations

Section 2 - An Overview of SHEP as a Training Organisation

The organisation's training programme – in this case its Core Training Programme – is influenced and guided by its Mission Statement and Strategic Aims. These were initially devised several years ago and have undergone some reworking particularly in the past 6 years. They are the guiding mechanisms which inform SHEP's work plan presented to funders (especially the HSE and the Department of Community, Equality & Gaeltacht Affairs) and are the measure by which progress is assessed externally and are also helpful to SHEP's management and staff.

2.1 Summary of Purpose & Work Areas

Mission Statement

SHEP is a values-led organisation that works together with individuals and communities to develop capacities for positive change, to enhance health and well-being and to promote social justice. We do this through a range of integrated personal, community, environmental and international development initiatives. (As stated in Draft Strategic Plan 2011-2014 and SHEP web site)

Strategic Aims (as stated in current Workplan 2009-2011)

- That people will achieve individual wellbeing through the competent and responsible management of their personal lives and relationships
- That people will contribute to the achievement of collective wellbeing through competent and responsible participation in the management of communal affairs
- That no person will be unwillingly or unnecessarily excluded from developing personal effectiveness at an individual or a collective level

These translate into a number of relevant key areas of work relevant for the evaluation of the Core Training Programme, which SHEP states as:

1. Capacity-building work to promote personal effectiveness at the individual level – (termed by SHEP "personal development training")
2. Capacity-building work to promote personal effectiveness at the collective level – (termed by SHEP "community development training")

In respect of Key Work Area No. 1, SHEP anticipates that those trained by the project will have a better understanding of their characteristic ways of feeling and thinking, a greater understanding of their authentic needs, a greater capacity to assertively articulate those needs to - and negotiate those needs with - others, a greater capacity to discern choices that will promote their wellbeing and a greater capacity to operationalise those choices in their daily lives.

The impact of these respective advances in self-awareness and personal effectiveness will be (according to SHEP) a reduction in behaviours which deprive them of personal power, compromise their health and wellbeing and distort their relationships with others. This, in turn, will lead to their fuller inclusion in society and an enhanced quality of life, both for themselves and for those with whom they are closely connected. The project also considers

enhanced self awareness to be a prerequisite for effective engagement in processes of collective governance (see Key Work Area No.2 above).

In respect of No. 2 - capacity-building work to promote personal effectiveness at the collective level – social development training - those who have been trained by the project will have a greater understanding of how individual experiences and choices are shaped by structuring influences of society, economy and polity.

They will also have greater awareness of the causes and the effects of social injustice, poverty and marginalisation, and how these impact on health and wellbeing both here in Ireland and in the wider world. They will be better able to participate as active citizens in inclusive processes of deliberative, democratic decision-making and collective action which promote individual and collective health and wellbeing.

Commentary on Section 2.1

Foundation 1 provides a strong basis for participants to come to grips with issues that block or constrain them in their daily lives but also has the capacity to bring them to a point of real understanding and power to make decisions and have choices of which they heretofore were not aware.

Our review of Foundation 1 has contributed in a very meaningful way to participants' lives. It would also have been interesting to have contact with participants in this course who do not have a relationship with SHEP to see what they have done that is qualitatively different from their lives before Foundation 1. Many participants in Foundation 1 progressed to Foundation 2 and further and this is indicative of their interest and changes in their lives which is compatible with the workplan objectives.

Foundation 2 opens the scope for delving into broader societal and community-based activities and can only be embarked upon once Foundation 1 is completed. Some people undertake Continuing Personal Development as a support for their personal progression too. Foundation 2's content is focused on building knowledge and skills in relation to issues and factors that exist in society and encourages participants to find responses and ways of dealing with these – both personally and professional – and this fits well with the objectives set out in the workplan.

Subsequent courses – largely focused on specific skills' development – build on this capacity to influence and change society for the better. So, SHEP remains faithful to its mission, aims and objectives through course design and delivery – and evidenced through participants' experience during and subsequent to involvement.

2.2 Explanation of the Core Training Programme

This section provides an overview of the Core Training Programme which is a synthesis of SHEP's published documentation and some additional material which we have collated to capture key elements of each course. The programme consists of the following:

- The Foundation Training Course – Parts 1 and 2
- The Facilitation Training Programme – Generic Facilitation Skills
- The Specialised Practitioner Training Programme– Integrated Specialised Tutor Training, Specialised Tutor Training, Specialised Advocate Training, Specialised Organisational Development Facilitator Training

- The Academic Training Programme – Diploma in Social and Personal Health Psychology

Course summaries

The focus of the *Foundation Training Programme* is on enabling participants to develop a capacity for personal effectiveness through their decision-making and action in both private and public spheres. The programme is divided into two separate parts. In Foundation Part One particular emphasis is laid on personal awareness and development. In Foundation Part Two this emphasis is extended to encompass the development of personal effectiveness in collective settings. In cases where participants might benefit from additional training in personal development, provision is made for them to undertake a programme of Continuing Personal Development.

The focus of the *Facilitation Training Programme* is on enabling participants to develop a capacity for engaging with others in a facilitative way, such that their personal effectiveness is enhanced. The programme consists of a training course in Generic Facilitation Skills through which participants are given the opportunity to develop essential competencies for facilitating in a range of settings.

Through the *Specialised Practitioner Training Programme*, participants are prepared for the specialist application of their facilitation skills, either as Community Tutors with The project's Community Training Programme, as Community Advocates with its Advocacy Programme, or as Organisational Development Mentors with its Community Governance Enhancement Programme.

In the *Academic Training Programme*, a two-year, part-time undergraduate Diploma in Social and Personal Health Psychology is offered by U.C.C. in collaboration with The Social and Health Education Project. The Diploma serves to provide a substantial theoretical grounding for those working in facilitative roles in the statutory, community and voluntary sectors.

Commentary on Section 2.2

While Foundation 1 can be undertaken as a "stand-alone" course, it also forms part of an integrated package, laying the basis for subsequent courses and being a pre-requisite for these courses if the potential participant does not have comparable experience elsewhere. Some participants finish at the end of Foundation 1 (data was not available to the evaluators on this). In 2005, an evaluator recommended a number of changes to Foundation 1's content which were instituted in the last number of years.

Some people progress to Foundation 2, while new entrants with appropriate experience, enter at this second level. On completion of Foundation 2, some people opt for/or are advised to undertake Continuing Personal Development, some leave SHEP and some decide to apply for Generic Facilitation Skills or Specialised Tutor Training as part of their progression.

For all courses, SHEP has requirements in respect of attendance. Participants must attend 80% and more of sessions to be considered for certification at the end of each course.

Generic Facilitation Skills can be the commencement of specific skills development in relation to facilitation, and advancement as either a tutor or a trainer within the SHEP context. Course work is required for Generic Facilitation Skills and Integrated Specialist

Tutor Training and besides basic attendance requirements participants must complete projects, must facilitate some sessions, and must work on small group projects.

While this evaluation did not specifically focus on course work requirements, it was mentioned in the focus groups by some involved in courses that the time commitment for SHEP work from Generic Facilitation Skills onwards was considerable but participants understood the reasons for this and did not see it as a drawback.

Throughout a person's interaction with SHEP they receive support, guidance and advice from SHEP staff. Some do not seek support from anyone other than the facilitator of their particular course. SHEP staff provide information through to course participants towards the end of their involvement in one course on future courses and people are given the opportunity to consider progressing further.

2.3 Influence of Organisational Culture on Activities

Organisations have cultures – or identities – which set them apart from others or facilitate their being part of commonly-based organisations. The culture is influenced by external factors and by those who promote it internally. Culture can be robust in a way that does not allow for change or can be capable of adaptation and inclusion. The organisational culture is often the “glue” which holds an organisation together, motivates those involved and contributes to long-term sustainability. Each organisation's culture is denoted by identifiers which distinguish it from others.

SHEP's Culture

We have examined the main identifiers of culture in SHEP's case as a way of assessing those “higher level” factors which are important in their role of affecting its relevance and sustainability.

Values & Beliefs

SHEP's origin and original *raison d'être* strongly influences and affects the approach taken to the design, establishment and delivery of its Core Training Programme. The organisation's culture is founded on a base of deeply held values, beliefs and assumptions which permeate all its subsequent activity. It is a major force in influencing behaviour of (those involved with and in the organisation).

Stable Culture

The organisation culture appears, apart from some reworking of structures and mechanisms in the past number of years, to be deep and stable. It is the primary motivational factor in drawing and retaining people, whether they are paid personnel or participants in its many training and support initiatives.

Shared Perception

In addition to its organisational culture, SHEP's training and support work appears to be characterised by a set of behaviour patterns, attitudes and feelings that typify life in the organisation, and shape the delivery of its core training programme.

We note, through information collected from staff and course participants, that there is a great deal of shared perception and common understanding which creates unanimity in terms of the purpose of training and support activities. Reichers & Schneider interpret this as “the shared perception of the way things are around here.”

Shared perception facilitates SHEP in mobilising staff in achieving its goals and in maximising performance and this is evident through the high degree of motivation, positive morale, loyalty and performance exhibited by all staff associated with the delivery of the core training programme. While SHEP as an organisation cannot remove every stressor in the work life of its staff, the management's awareness of likely stressors and their work on addressing these has, in our opinion, made a positive difference to the quality of work life of trainers and support staff and SHEP's overall ability to deliver on its organisational goals.

Individual Motivation

Shared perception translates to the individual level too and the degree of personal motivation of trainers is considerable as manifest through their responses to the survey and group discussion situation. This is further strengthened by trainers' own previous disposition to the core goals and value systems which SHEP emphasises and captures in its mission.

Many of the trainers are professional therapists and/or work(ed) in the social care sector and had already been motivated to work in situations which are focused on supporting and empowering others. So, their individual professional motivations are aligned to those of the organisation and this makes for a powerful and creative combination which promotes performance and achievement of organisational goals on a continuous basis.

Commentary on Section 2.3

SHEP has a clarity about those factors that make-up its culture and this has brought rewards to the organisation and to participants in training over the years. Professionals who have aligned themselves with SHEP recognise its value and bring their own experience which in turn adds to its solidity. Course participants benefit from this in the practicalities of their training but also in the overall atmosphere of mutual support, respect and motivation.

While SHEP's culture is robust, and those involved appear to be clear about why they are involved, there are issues in terms of how SHEP transmits this to people, to organisations and bodies, not directly involved as SHEP is a unique organisation not necessarily understood by mainstream society. Its origins, though rooted in people's deepest reasons for self-realisation and need to belong, are complex and sometimes difficult to capture in conventional language and explanations and we believe that this challenge to explain its purpose is one of the issues with which SHEP must deal in future promotional activity.

2.4 Influence of SHEP's Ethos & Value System on Training Activities

All organisations, businesses and working collectives of any kind have overt or implicit value systems which are either enablers or inhibitors in sum or in part. Because of SHEP's nature and underlying philosophy, ethos and values are of great importance to its functioning as a training organisation and its contribution to society. The following synthesises our reflections on ethos and value system based on the information which we analysed during the evaluation process.

Review

SHEP is genuinely founded on a set of values which place the individual's empowerment at the centre and the organisation's ethos is permeated by this core focus as demonstrated in all its activities.

The Core Training Programme adopts this focus and each training intervention and activity allows participating individuals to explore and deepen understanding of themselves and later

on, of society, so that the ultimate objective of empowerment can be realised or begin to be realised while people are involved directly in SHEP or when they move outside of the organisation's direct influence.

Through the design and delivery of the Core Training Programme, SHEP personnel appear to be strongly aware of, and committed to, the importance of positive values as a way of enabling people who avail of training supports.

Such values, which are interwoven with each other in the course of the delivery of all courses, exhibited through the delivery of the programme include in our opinion:

Respect – including an understanding of differences, an appreciation of the fact that everyone has meaningful, important lives, and that it involves treating others as you would like to be treated yourself. Respect involves leaving scope for choices and individuality. In the case of the Core Training Programme, while a course framework is necessary, there has to be scope for flexibility so that there is room for respect and difference

Trust and support – personnel and participants are given space to communicate with each other and to feel a sense of security. Listening skills are a key aspect of the communication process and contribute to building trust and support. This also adds to the sense of solidarity and unity of purpose which was manifest at different times in the evaluation process. Trust builds self-confidence and contributes to empowerment and change

Empowerment, choice and change – many prospective participants (particularly in Foundation 1) indicated that their lives were not as fulfilling as they wanted them to be, for reasons of lack of self-realisation and development and thus their ability to adapt and change was curtailed.

There is a sense from our evaluation of responses, that they felt that their thoughts, feelings and opinions were valued. The Core Training Programme allows participants scope to share and listen with open minds, and can help bridge the gap between a person's current situation and what they would like to achieve in the future. Power is returned through working alongside them and enabling them to make their own choices. In addition to their being enabled on this journey, their contribution to course design and delivery is also an important component of empowerment so the course evaluation processes are a key element of this.

We recognise that part of the job of the facilitator is to make participants aware of choices that are available to them and to guide them where appropriate. Facilitators work to offer opportunities and enable change through empathy and encouragement. The group context – which offers a safe, secure and friendly atmosphere – allows participants to help each other out and can lead to opportunities which may not otherwise have presented themselves.

Non-judgemental approach – it is clear that SHEP makes every effort not to pre-judge other people and we did not discern any situations where personal prejudices or bias were used in approaches to participants on courses.

Safety and security – essential to the delivery of the Core Training Programme has been the emphasis on ensuring participants' safety and sense of security. The evaluation revealed no situations where the individual's safety was put at risk (though there were situations where some participants felt aggrieved or annoyed by others' taking up too much of the facilitator's time – see ... below). Facilitators created a safe environment and allowed

participants, who were often vulnerable in other respects, to have a feeling of belonging and thus scope to move onto other opportunities.

Safety and security are facilitated by personnel employing ground rules, consistency in approach, good communication and building trust.

Care and boundaries – it was evident from participants' responses that they genuinely felt "cared for" or supported by the facilitators and by SHEP as an organisation. While individuals embarked on or continued their own personal journeys while in SHEP courses, they knew that SHEP took an interest in their lives. In some cases, this was evident through facilitators or other SHEP personnel recommending other support options to participants e.g. individual counselling, participation in Continuing Personal Development.

Boundaries appear to be an important aspect of the delivery of the Core Training Programme too. Boundaries are a necessary means of defining what lies beyond the scope of the work to be undertaken and what is to be included. It also determines codes of behaviour which are necessary as a means to ensure safety, respect, building of trust and related values. Even the simple matter of turning off mobile 'phones is an action to achieve such ends. Positive listening – emphasised by facilitators – is another way of setting boundaries and enhancing support of the individual in the learning context.

Empathy – it is clear that SHEP personnel emphasise this as an active method of understanding that is more likely to culminate in encouraging decision-making and change. It is facilitated through communication and by maintaining an open mind. By attempting to understand participants, a more comfortable relationship is established and this makes offering help and encouragement easier

Confidentiality – SHEP emphasises this as a core value in all its activities. This relates to respect, safety and security of individual participants in particular but also extends to other aspects of the organisation

Positive values affect the way that staff and participants feel, and determine the effectiveness of the training in its attempts to achieve its objectives.

Commentary on Section 2.4

SHEP tries – and succeeds in large measure – to follow through on its ethos and value systems. We noted some issues among a minority of participants about some people being too vocal at times, about utility issues such as heating and access problems, but these were actually few and far between. SHEP respects applicants, participants and trainers. It is mindful of taking care in a supportive way of everyone involved in and with the organisation and this is one contributor to why people continue to be drawn to it, continue to be involved and to encourage others to get involved. It has considerable motivational potential and, among other factors, can contribute to SHEP's sustainability.

2.5 A Review of SHEP as a Training Organisation

It is apparent that SHEP, as an education project, is fundamentally aligned to the principle of empowerment through a series of training (education) and support activities which, it appears, have some of their roots at least in humanistic psychology and community education.

Overview of the Core Training Programme

SHEP's education and support activities are primarily focused on transformational processes whereby participants in activities are enabled to experience a shift in their emotional and psychological status to a more positive space for themselves. They are thereby enabled to make different decisions in their own lives and their quality of life is qualitatively different from before involvement.

This focus and approach contrasts with the objectives and approaches of most training organisations, which though they focus on tapping into and developing human potential, focus on build specific skill sets around different knowledge categories, many of which are oriented towards enhancement of progression opportunities for employment, enterprise or further skills' development. Other trainings frequently focus on hobby or leisure activities which though worthwhile and sought after are not focused on transformational purposes or processes in human psychology.

Education, from SHEP's perspective, is about personal development first and foremost which is the basis for any future contribution to society. Regardless of whether SHEP is about education or training, it still remains that if personal potential is curtailed, constrained or damaged, then it will have negative consequences for the individual and perhaps for society as a whole. In terms of therapy, education is about healing oneself, before casting around trying to please everyone else.

Influence of Humanistic Therapies

It is evident, though not directly from information gleaned from participants or from facilitators, but from discussions with the organisation's staff responsible for the Core Training Programme, that SHEP's overall approaches and implementations are largely influenced by humanistic therapies.

The main goals of humanistic psychology are to find out how individuals perceive themselves here and now and to recognise growth, self-direction and responsibilities. This method is optimistic and attempts to help individuals recognise their strengths by offering a non-judgemental, understanding experience¹.

Influence of Community Education

In terms of another key influence, it appears to us that both the design and approaches to delivery have resonances with the main principles of community education as originated by Freire and interpreted by many involved in development activities including those involved in Community Education or Training for Transformation. It is a fact that many people involved in international aid and development work particularly since the late 1960s devised and developed approaches which were based on empowerment development models rather than the dependency models which characterised such activities in the past.

¹ <http://www.counselling-directory.org.uk/humanistic.html> It appears that relevant influences – either explicit or implicit – could include the following: Client-centred (Rogerian after Carl Rogers) counselling (focusing on providing an environment in which the person does not feel under threat or judgement and so enables them to experience and accept more of who they are as a person, and reconnect with their own values and sense of self-worth. This reconnection with their inner resources enables them to find their own way to move forward); Gestalt Therapy (focusing on the whole environment and what is happening in the “here and now”); Transactional Analysis (focusing on explaining the connections to our past and how this influences decisions we make)

Freire believed that "education makes sense because women and men learn that through learning they can make and remake themselves, because women and men are able to take responsibility for themselves as beings capable of knowing — of knowing that they know and knowing that they don't" (Freire, 2004, p. 15)². Community Education draws on this thinking and subsequent reworkings and perspectives and puts the individual at the centre of her/his own development first and foremost with society benefiting thereafter.

Coalescence of major influencing factors

The Core Training Programme appears to be underpinned by quite a deep and thoughtful understanding of these and related concepts which are transformative, anti-establishment and liberating for the individual. It therefore runs contrary to the objectives of many mainstream education institutions and organisations and is, in many ways, contradictory to prevailing conventions in society.

Consequences of Coalescence

By providing scope and opportunity to participants (and to paid personnel), to identify and realise their potential, SHEP is facilitating them to be independent in their own thinking, to contribute to their own communities and society in ways that actually may not support the status quo in the long-term. Thus, it is potentially quite revolutionary as an organisation. This offers huge opportunities for SHEP in the future and also poses challenges which could be rewarding.

A Unique Package

The Core Training Programme is carefully thought out in its original conception, theoretical influences, practices and procedures and on-going development. It offers huge opportunities to participants whether they participate in one or several activities and interventions. There is no similar training programme in any other part of Ireland or in the UK. In preparing this evaluation, we undertook research to assess the comparability and compatibility of other organisations but found none similar. The essential differences as we see them include the following:

- The objectives of the Core Training Programme which are about personal empowerment and collective action as contributors to society.
- The progression possibilities within the Core Training Programme which is an integrated package supporting the person to develop their capacity to deal with their own self-development first and then work towards supporting others to build their capacities.
- The facilitatory style and approaches used in its delivery which acknowledges and respects the role of the participant in shaping and influencing discussion within the context of a learning framework.
- The expertise and understanding of the facilitators which allows them to be flexible, to adapt, to accommodate, to empathise and support participants on an individual and group basis as far as is possible.

² Freire, P. (12004). *Pedagogy of Indignation*. Boulder: Colorado, Paradigm.

- The holistic support offered to all involved in course design, delivery and review by facilitators and by other SHEP staff and including access to other support services either within SHEP itself or elsewhere e.g. counselling services.
- The organisation's constant commitment to open-minded review and adjustment.

Commentary on Section 2.5

The nature, delivery and perceived benefits of the Core Training Programme would seem to us to form a unique package unlike any other we have seen operating in the geographical region or related subject fields. It follows a model of education that is rooted in humanistic psychologies and community education and this is uncommon in the Irish education and training context. Indeed, it is not easy to identify others which offer similar training programmes in Ireland.

SHEP's courses follow a logic which is progressive and liberating and offers supports to participants if they need it outside of the training sessions. Trainers are appropriately skilled and have sufficient knowledge and understanding to support participants in building their personal capacities. The fact that many trainers have already progressed through the "SHEP system" is a help to retaining the focus and holistic approach that is evident in all courses.

While all of this is commendable and impressive, and works well in a context where sufficient resources are available, it is high-maintenance and requires considerable resource availability. We noted during the course of the evaluation that staff were under considerable pressure to keep the current level of support and training activities going and on track. Personnel work really hard to maintain course support and delivery not to mention thoughts about expansion in terms of course numbers and participant numbers. There is quite a workload associated with ensuring that trainers are also adequately supported. Administrative systems are somewhat under pressure by the volume of work involved at application, delivery and review stages. So, there is a need to be mindful of these stressors in future planning.

2.6 Consideration of Previous Relevant SHEP reports

SHEP has been open to continuous review and reflection as part of its *raison d'être* since its inception. Various individuals, teams and fora within SHEP meet on a regular basis to reflect on experience, to evaluate performance against objectives, to adjust and alter course content so that it continues to be relevant. In addition, SHEP has commissioned some reports which have focused on performance.

One of these includes the 2005 Evaluation of the Core Training Programme. The observations and recommendations of same include:

For the organisation:

- Increased support for Trainers including providing of opportunities for facilitated reflective sessions.
- Clarity around Trainers' terms and conditions.

- Creation of training of trainers' opportunities.
- End of course reviews and evaluations for all courses.
- Increasing cohesiveness of the organisation through increased interaction between key personnel involved in delivery of courses.
- Sustaining a spirit of critically reflective learning organisation through a variety of activities.

Foundation 1:

- That Foundation 1's content should remain essentially the same.
- That a minimum attendance requirement should be put in place.
- That theoretical influences should be integrated throughout the whole course.

Generic Facilitation (for which many recommendations were made):

- That a process of integrating key elements of competencies becomes stronger and more integral to the course and that SHEP articulates the value base underlying the course.
- That the course is identified by all as the first step in SHEP's training structure which emphasises the critical importance of appropriate training and methodologies as basis for SHEP being able to stand over its authorising of people who eventually will work in groups and communities.
- The key methodologies, approaches, exercises are further honed and built up to provide a course of sufficient quality and standard to build the skills' base of prospective facilitators.

2.7 Analysis of Other Pertinent Information

While collecting information for the evaluation, we noted a number of issues, the analysis of which we believe is useful for future planning of the Core Training Programme. These issues can limit the programme's potential impact and effectiveness but, if addressed could also contribute to enhancing its value and future sustainability.

Communication & Public Relations

In the course of our review of documentation, we note some inconsistencies between what the stated aims and activities are and the actual focus, delivery and participants' experience. It appears that the focus, delivery and participants' experience is very solid and does exactly what it sets out to do but this is not matched by the documentation. We believe that SHEP is not doing justice to itself in its material and this needs to be addressed.

The published material does not reflect the real experiences of participants and the real *foci* of the courses offered in the Core Training Programme. We believe the material needs some overhaul and alignment with what SHEP is actually about. We understand work is

being done on this at present (e.g. posters by Killarney-based groups) and this needs to be expanded in the context of an agreed promotional strategy.

Much of the published material is dense and the language used is somewhat inaccessible. We believe it does not help in understanding what SHEP is about and what it is offering. There is a need to simplify key messages and to use language which is less theoretical and abstract.

If SHEP is considering targeting more people including those living in disadvantaged communities, it may encounter new challenges in terms of getting its message across. These could include targeting people for whom English is not a first language, those with literacy difficulties, those with physical and mental difficulties. New methods of communication could be looked at to overcome obstacles in getting messages across.

It appears from our use of material in this evaluation that a number of people and groups have been involved in preparing material at different times. There is a need for editorial control and standardisation of material and for culling older information as this causes confusion and could be preventing growth in awareness.

In a related point, it is not precisely apparent exactly how "environment" features in SHEP training activity although we do acknowledge that Foundation 2 has some focus on this. We believe that some balance needs to be brought to the representation of SHEP in its published material. This is not a major issue as the project is successful on its own terms for now but needs to be mindful for the future.

Paper, media and internet could reflect activity and outcomes more accurately and enhance the image of SHEP's role as an education project.

Course Administration & Course Development

There would seem to be scope for some standardisation of SHEP systems of record-keeping across the board, particularly with application processes, information on activity and evaluation processes. Problems identified by us in this respect include:

- Lack of standardisation of application forms for courses with different questions being asked on forms in locations other than Cork city
- Lack of an obvious coding system for consistent and objective data entry onto the main data base
- Problems associated with lack of ability to quantify or measure some responses by applications which could be useful for review purposes

Besides these problems, the forms still allowed us to glean valuable information for this evaluation.

End-of-course evaluation forms were actually very valuable and useful for providing information on people's experience in the various courses.

SHEP's data-base, which we as evaluators had sight of towards the end of the research phase, appears to be quite a powerful tool and could be the focal point for this standardisation and rationalisation of material. Once developed further, it could generate valuable and meaningful management data. It would lead to better connectivity, better

connections, better information flow and a better image.

Local partnership

SHEP has been expanding its links with local partners to facilitate course delivery in other locations. This has reached the point in Co. Kerry that a local support officer is now in place and there are plans for strategic delivery of the Core Training Programme. There are positive indications that this is a well thought-out strategy and has involved good and relevant planning (including promotional tools such as posters and flyers to encourage participation).

Expansion has also happened in Co. Limerick (Limerick city and Kilfinane) and it appears, from discussions with facilitators working on the Limerick city courses that this is having a really strong impact. Partners in Limerick include PAUL partnership, local organisations, family resource centres, the VEC etc. Provided SHEP can remain faithful to its mission in these localised contexts and avail of the experience and expertise of facilitators and other personnel then there is great scope for expansion and dissemination of SHEP's key messages.

Effectiveness

The impact of SHEP's training courses has been positive in the lives of participants who completed evaluation forms and participated in focus groups. It appears that people are making qualitatively different – and more positive – decisions. This would imply that the Core Training Programme's effectiveness is valid. It remains to be seen whether there is a long-term effect in individual's lives and this could point to some kind of longitudinal survey in the future to assess effectiveness. Within the context of the evaluation, effectiveness appears to be a reasonable and anticipated outcome.

Section 3 - From Theory to Practice: A Review and Analysis of SHEP Applicants

The evaluation focused upon the way in which SHEP is able to carry through its culture, ethos, values and principles to the reality of delivering the Core Training Programme. As an outcome of our evaluation of the “higher level” issues and motivations, our analysis now shifts to a focus on the way in which SHEP has managed to incorporate its theoretical bases into the everyday implementation of the Core Training Programme.

3.1 Overview of the Core Training Programme

The analysis reviews the successes and challenges which the organisation has faced and points to learning paths for the future, which will be substantiated in the section on observations and recommendations.

The following discussion identifies a number of means through which this can be analysed. The detail in respect of each issue consists of an analysis of paper-based material (representative samples of application forms, evaluation forms); survey forms administered by the evaluators, discussions with key staff involved with the Core Training Programme’s overall delivery, focus group discussions with participants and discussions with facilitators.

Summary of Main Findings:

- The average age ranges are between 31 and 45 and 46 and 60 respectively, with the former having the greater number of participants.
- The age range of participants is slightly higher in rural applicants with more people in the 46-60 age range than in the comparable city-based courses.
- A small but significant number of older people (all women) who were either (or both) over 60 or retired featured in the city-based courses. There were some men over 60 in the rural-based courses.
- Based on the examination of the application forms for all Core Training courses, the vast majority of applicants are from Irish or other Anglophone backgrounds.
- Well in excess of 95% of applicants for any course apply on the basis of referral from friends, from friends who have already completed some/all of the courses, from relatives, from relatives who have already completed some/all of the courses, from referrals from CIT particularly those participating in counselling courses, from personal counsellors/psychotherapists.
- Applicants gave very thorough details in their application forms. The calibre, honesty and commitment of the applicants in their own lives and to the course were really impressive.
- All facilitators scored very highly! The praise for their professionalism, understanding, sensitivity, empathy, skills was, without exception, extremely positive.

- The approaches used by facilitators were also praised. There was a great subtlety and subtlety in their approaches which belied the complexity of some of the issues with which they had to deal. Facilitators appear to have been very well trained, very tuned in and very experienced in all respects.

3.2 Applicant Identification & Engagement

Because Foundation 1 is the principal and first means through which applicants have contact and start building a relationship with SHEP, it is the basis on which much of the analysis with regards to participant profiling is conducted. In addition, because applicants share quite a lot of personal information on their application forms, it is a source of descriptive information which is really rich and valuable for evaluation purposes. Foundation 1 application forms provide a range of information under the following general headings:

- Applicant's personal details including gender, age range, origin
- Applicant's previous training/course/education/employment history and current status
- Applicant's previous and current involvement in voluntary activity
- Applicant's reasons and motivations for applying and how they heard about SHEP and their expectations from the course

A selection of application forms was available for 2008 and 2009 respectively for Foundation 1 and for Foundation 2 (though fewer than for Foundation 1). We have reworked the information provided to allow for meaningful analysis and interpretation and for generating useful observations and recommendations paying due consideration to matters of confidentiality and respect for privacy.

Application forms for other courses were not as complete and did not yield as much information because people had already given this information in their first application forms. Nevertheless, we have managed to glean some valuable data which informs our analysis.

The great majority of course participants appear to become involved through personal recommendation or by enrolling for another SHEP course following their first or subsequent ones. Awareness through paper information, media coverage or internet seems to be relatively limited.

The use of such means of identification, albeit accidental in some cases, is a good example of the power and influence that SHEP has as a development-focused organisation. Those who have taken part in courses are committed and convinced of its validity and value and are enthusiastic in their recommendations to their peers and acquaintances.

As an outcome of their participation, their ability to influence others who they themselves know might be open to some personal learning has had a positive impact on application rates for the Core Training Programme and Foundation 1 in particular. More than 95% of applicants/participants heard about the courses through friends, relatives, previous participants, counsellors and professional staff.

Obviously, geography and proximity has a lot to do with it too, as Cork-city courses, for example, have had a good uptake on a year-on-year basis possibly because of the greater

ease of social networking than in more dispersed locations, especially among those who move in similar socio-economic circles.³

We note from our analysis that some prospective participants from more rural areas indicated that they did not know about SHEP through these personal channels possibly because of the greater geographical spread and different characteristics of social networking in non-urban areas.

Danger of Exclusion

While social networking is indeed a powerful means of engaging people and fits well with a motivational model of empowerment, there could be a potential for excluding others by default.

Others may not have the scope to know SHEP or its programmes for different reasons and so may not be able to access its services. This was pointed out a number of times by some participants living in more rural locations. It may also be relevant for some people who are at a greater disadvantage to others and who may not have access to information at the right time. While it was not possible within the confines of this evaluation to examine the socio-demographic background of participants to a large extent, it is clear that even from an analysis of initial application forms for Cork city based Foundation 1 very few were unemployed or experiencing physical disability for example.

While Foundation 1 courses in other locations exhibited a greater variety of applicants – with for example, more homemakers, more retirees – there is still little tangible evidence to suggest that people came from challenging or disadvantaged backgrounds. There is anecdotal evidence (i.e. evidence through discussions with appropriate SHEP personnel and some participants) that some people received support for participation from their respective VECs, Department of Community, Equality & Gaeltacht Affairs or the local development agency, it is clear that the majority of applicants did not receive such support.

Experience of non-Cork locations

There appears to be a shift in participant profile in newer areas such as Limerick, Tralee, Fermoy and Mallow where SHEP has created alliances with partner organisations to identify and target prospective participants. These partner organisations are very familiar with local communities and their local knowledge has helped in the identification process thereby increasing SHEP's ability to target those who are more disadvantaged either socially or economically. Facilitators working on Foundation 1 and other courses indicated in feedback from the focus group and in their survey forms that this was a positive development and one that they would want to continue.

Preaching to the Choir

Because SHEP applicants for the Core Training Programme (and particularly Foundation 1 because it is usually their first encounter with SHEP's main work) have been largely self-identifying (except in some of newer areas of work), there is a sense that SHEP is "preaching to the choir" – to those who already (even if they do not realise it in a conscious way) are disposed to getting involved in something to which they are already familiar.

³ This does not mean of course that everyone living in urban and peri-urban areas has equality of access to information and opportunities and future planning around promotion will need to take account of this if SHEP plans to alter its targeting strategy – see Section ...

While this is not necessarily a negative thing, it could be unconsciously exclusionist and discriminatory which runs contrary to some of SHEP's core values. SHEP needs to be mindful of this in future planning.

Other means of engagement

We understand from information provided that SHEP's Community Training Programme serves as a way of raising awareness of its Core Training activities and reaches into many communities which exhibit signs of disadvantage and that this can continue to be a vehicle of dissemination and, as with newer areas identified for Foundation 1, can be a valuable source of participants. Community Training courses were not mentioned by many applicants as their way of getting to know about SHEP's Core Training Programme.

Potentialities

We see scope and potential for SHEP broadening and extending its communication base to ensure that those who could benefit from participation can become aware of the Core Training Programme – and Foundation 1 in particular.

3.3 Participant Profile

Overview

Foundation 1 course participants in Cork City came from a variety of parts of the city and also some surrounding suburbs or – to a lesser extent – nearby towns. More than 85% of participants were female in both 2008 and 2009. The average age of participants was between 30 and 55 with more participants drawn from the 46 to 55 age category. Very few were over 65. A small proportion was in the 18 to 30 age group category.

Individual motivations

People's motivations for getting involved in Foundation 1 are primarily personal and range from personal development issues, assertiveness, managing stress, and relating better to other people to wanting to work more effectively with people, and to contribute to their community.

Some people undertaking Foundation 1 are aware of its value for their professional development. These were mainly people involved in social care and community development activity.

These latter motivations correlate with findings in relation to other educational and training spheres with some notable differences. Similarities include their mutual interest in advancement and development. Most people undertake courses of one kind or another for reasons of interest and progression, including career progression in some cases.

Reasons for getting involved in Foundation 2 and other courses are also personal but some participants tend to be also interested in greater skills' development and building capacity to perform better in their chosen fields whether these are of a voluntary or paid nature.

Applicant Backgrounds

Foundation 1 course participants came from a variety of backgrounds, although there was a relatively high proportion of those involved in education, counselling or caring occupations or were caring for others in a voluntary capacity.

For Foundation 1, the higher proportion of people involved with voluntary organisations, or working in social and caring professions points to their being disposed to humanistic and

developmental approaches to life which emphasise the importance of self-realisation and empowerment of others as core activities and mechanisms. In the comments on reasons for wanting to do Foundation 1 there was at once a statement around the person's desire for self-development and – in the majority of cases – statements about wanting to support others in their journeys towards self-realisation.

Commentary on Section 3

SHEP has been very successful to date in terms of attracting people to its courses and has done this without the extensive use of conventional promotional channels. This is unusual in itself. Because people have been largely self-selecting, they have already crossed the first barrier in terms of participation. This positive disposition is reinforced by the introductory and induction work which SHEP staff do in the first few weeks of contact, at which time, participants have the option to stay or leave. No changes in group size are allowed after this time (unless someone's circumstances necessitate this) so that the group dynamic is maintained and group trust etc. can be built. This is in line with SHEP's mission and ethos and is entirely appropriate.

We note a few areas of concern which could be somewhat exclusionist precisely because of the success of the current engagement model. If SHEP is keen to support people who experiencing disadvantage (as it states in its objectives) and those who may not be aware of its potential contribution to their personal development because they are outside of the current social network. This is a matter of concern in terms of long-term planning though there are shifts in this in other locations where local partners play a larger part in targeting potential participants.

SHEP has tapped into a particular demographic between the ages of 30 and 60 in the main who have expressed a desire for self-discovery and development. This is powerful and bodes well for both participants themselves in their own lives but also in how they are likely to affect others. The courage that people show in starting the journey with SHEP is impressive and encouraging.

However, we see the potential of engaging with younger people at a stage in their lives that might have substantial impact. If personal development work is undertaken at an earlier stage in a person's life this might be transformative for them and for society⁴.

Finally, SHEP has worked with local partners quite successfully in identifying prospective applicants (though we note some differences in approaches). Local partners generally know their constituency very well and know the practicalities in running training at local level. We believe that with agreed terms of reference and a common understanding of SHEP's objectives, ethos and philosophy then there is more scope to extend the SHEP training programme.

⁴ SHEP was the originator of the Social and Personal Health Education initiative in Irish schools which supports students in developing their awareness and understanding of psychological and physical health and there could be scope for a review of training provided by SHEP that could be appropriate for working with young people aged 15 and over

Section 4 - Analysis of Core Training Activity 2006 to 2009

4.1 Overview

We were provided with a vast array of material which we used to interpret data. We noted some inconsistencies in this which were not helpful at times. The following gives some sense of the extent of participation in the Core Training Programme since 2006. We believe that there is some overlap in some cases. The total number of participants is likely to be in excess of 1,000.

Summary Analysis of Class Lists 2006 to 2009	No. participants	
Foundation 1	417	
Foundation 2	229	
Generic Facilitation Skills	88	
Continuing Personal Development	59	
Integrated Specialised Tutor Training	48	
Specialised Family Communications	17	
Specialised Organisational Development	5	
Specialised Advocacy Training	13	
Specialised Assertive Training	12	
Total No. Participants	888	Overlap in some cases

Summary of Main Findings:

- The average age ranges are between 31 and 45 and 46 and 60 respectively, with the former having the greater number of participants.
- The age range of participants is slightly higher in rural applicants with more people in the 46-60 age range than in the comparable city-based courses.
- A small but significant number of older people (all women) who were either (or both) over 60 or retired featured in the city-based courses. There were some men over 60 in the rural-based courses.
- Based on the examination of the application forms for all Core Training courses, the vast majority of applicants are from Irish or other Anglophone backgrounds.
- Well in excess of 95% of applicants for any course apply on the basis of referral from friends, from friends who have already completed some/all of the courses, from relatives, from relatives who have already completed some/all of the courses, from referrals from CIT particularly those participating in counselling courses, from personal counsellors/psychotherapists.
- Applicants gave very thorough details in their application forms. The calibre, honesty and commitment of the applicants in their own lives and to the course were really impressive.

- All facilitators scored very highly! The praise for their professionalism, understanding, sensitivity, empathy, skills was, without exception, extremely positive.
- The approaches used by facilitators were also praised. There was a great subtlety and subtlety in their approaches which belied the complexity of some of the issues with which they had to deal. Facilitators appear to have been very well trained, very tuned in and very experienced in all respects.

4.2 Foundation 1 Evaluation

Course Summary (from SHEP material)

Part One of the Foundation Course in Social and Health Education provides an opportunity for participants to develop a greater awareness of the personal dimension to human development. They are helped to examine the way they think about themselves and those around them – (their "cognitive map"). They are also helped to recognise their emotional responses to given situations and the ways in which they typically manage these responses.

The aim of the Foundation Part One course is to enhance the coping strategies and the personal effectiveness of those who take part. Through the course, they develop the capacity and confidence to discern, and act on the basis of, thoughts and emotions which enhance their wellbeing, whilst recognising and choosing not to act on the basis of those which detract from this. They also develop skills in assertive communication which enable them to negotiate new and constructive ways of being with those around them.

No formal educational qualifications are required to participate in the course. Instead, a considerable amount of life-experience is normally considered important, as well as a willingness to explore with others one's feelings, attitudes and values. Although the course involves limited teaching inputs, the principal methodology used is that of experiential group-work. The concrete difficulties and challenges that arise for participants in the course of their everyday lives are also explored through discussion, dramatisation and role-play.

Participants are not required to undertake any written work and there are no formal assessments or examinations. However, for their own benefit, participants are encouraged to record their learning during the course in a personal learning journal. Those who complete this course become eligible to proceed to the Foundation Course in Social and Health Education – Part Two.

The course consists of weekly evening sessions of 2½ hours between September and the end of May (around 31 sessions in all), as well as 6 weekend day sessions of 7 hours (Saturdays or Sundays) and 2 half-day workshops. Normally there are around 16 participants in each group.

Foundation 1 Summary Analysis of 2006 to 2009 Class Lists

Course	2006	2007	2008	2009
1	14	16	14	17
2	15	14	16	14
3	12	16	17	17
4	15	15	17	17
5	11	14	16	17
6	16		15	11
7	9		14	18
8	7		15	
9	8			
Total	107	75	124	111
Average Participation per Course	12	15	16	16

[Note there is no narrative analysis of 2006 as application forms and evaluation forms were not available]

Analysis of 2008 Foundation 1 applications (based on analysis of available application forms)

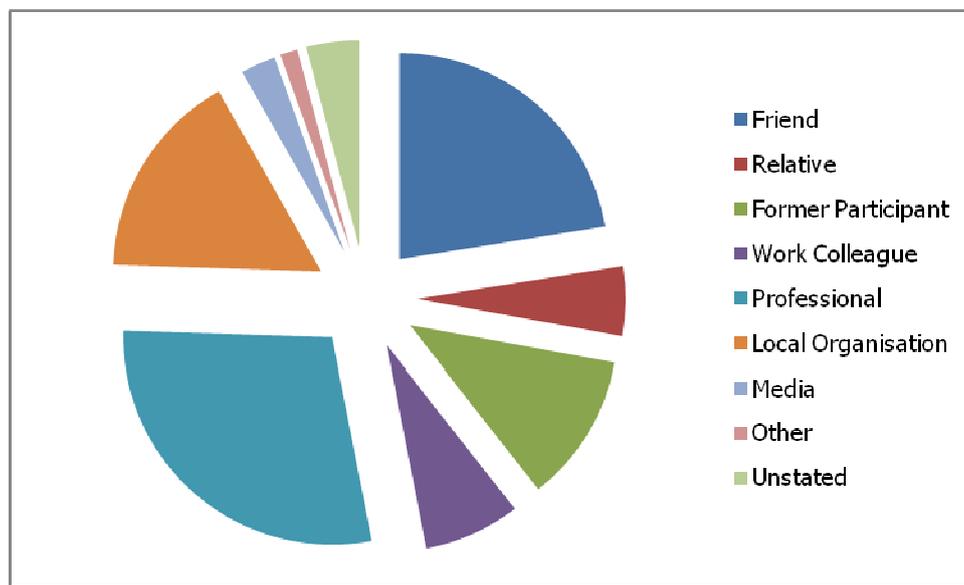
The following summarises some of the key aspects:

Total applicant nos. 2008	178
Average applicants per course	16.18
Men	14.04%
Women	74.72%
Unclear/unstated	11.23%
Age range	
Under 30	13.48%
31 to 45	51.12%
46 to 60	29.78%
60+	4.49%
Origin	
Cork city	38.76%
Cork city Ballincollig courses	58.97%
Cork county all courses	39.89%
Occupation category	
Student	3.37%
Homemaker	16.85%
Administrative/clerical	21.91%
Professional including teaching	10.67%
Social care inc. nursing/nursing management	24.16%

Operative or equivalent	7.30%
Not working	0.56%
Own business	4.49%
Other including disabled, retired, non-specified	2.25%
Balance is un-stated/unclear	8.43%

Identification & Engagement

Initial awareness about the course did not come through normal media or advertising channels which is the chosen means through which many courses are promoted by other training establishments. In 2008, applicants for Foundation 1 indicated in their forms that they had heard about the course largely through personal contact with people (both personal and professional). The following is a synthesis of the information provided by applicants in their forms which illustrates the point.



People's motivations (see below) illustrate their openness to the course and it appears that once they had discussed options with other people who had familiarity with Foundation 1, including contact with SHEP in some cases, they may have been sufficiently engaged to make the application.

The focus group discussions substantiated much of what was discovered from the documentary sources. There is a well-established relationship with CIT and a number of respondents had been referred to SHEP from psychology and counselling courses. For example, after one year of study at CIT students could be advised to take a year out to pursue personal development before resuming their course. Some also chose SHEP courses in preference to CIT courses, possibly on the basis that they seemed less academic in their content and demands.

Others stated that they came to the Foundation courses through personal recommendation, either from counsellors or family members or friends. In the case of one respondent, a friend had signed up for Foundation 1 and simply informed her that she would be coming too. The respondent concerned seemed quite happy about this and had been delighted with the course.

A number had progressed to Foundation 2 to from Foundation 1 or, in one case, from another SHEP course.

Very few seemed to have become aware of the courses through paper or media sources which bears out the findings from the application forms.

When we asked whether people were applying for the course because of a definite need, for those respondents referred to SHEP from CIT some of them were not completely sure that this was what they wanted but were willing to take the advice. All thought that Foundation 1 looked interesting and appropriate.

Other respondents seemed to simply be drawn to the courses: "...something clicked in my head," was one comment.

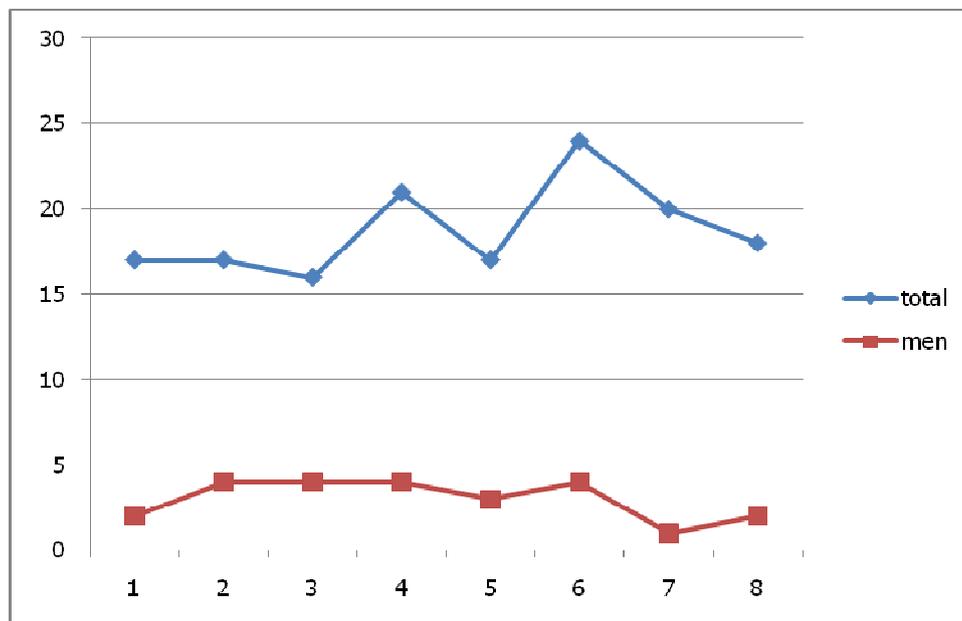
Another was that the respondent had "...a feeling that Foundation 2 would be right" for them.

The majority of respondents saw the SHEP courses as providing self-development.

Some respondents mentioned that they thought the information pack about the course that they were sent was helpful. Others said that they could not understand why these courses were not more widely advertised.

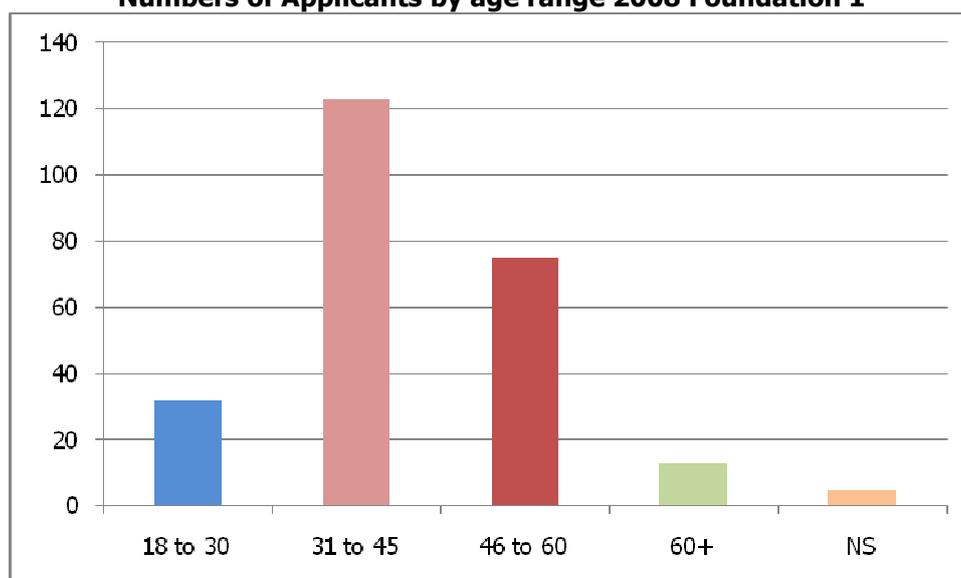
Demography

In the 2008 application process, the majority of applicants were female as appears to be the norm with all SHEP Core Training Courses. This was true of every Foundation 1 course no matter its location. Here is an overview of numbers of applicants in each of the eight courses in 2008:



The age profile of applicants illustrates the numbers considering Foundation 1 between the ages of 30 and 60 years of age, with the largest numbers being in the 31 to 45 years of age category. The summary below is useful in terms of illustrating the age ranges involved in the application process, based on the available sample of application forms.

Numbers of Applicants by age range 2008 Foundation 1



[NS = not stated or not available]

The statistics above are one aspect of the profile but so too are people's motivations and their history of involvement with personal development and/or community development activity. In analysing 2008 application forms data, it is clearly evident that the vast majority of applicants had been involved in voluntary activity to greater or lesser extents in the past or continued to do so. In three courses for example, with an average participation rate of 18 per course, 15 had been involved in voluntary activity in each case. Furthermore, when applicants stated their reasons for doing the course, many mentioned their interest in personal development together with their ambition to work with others in the future.

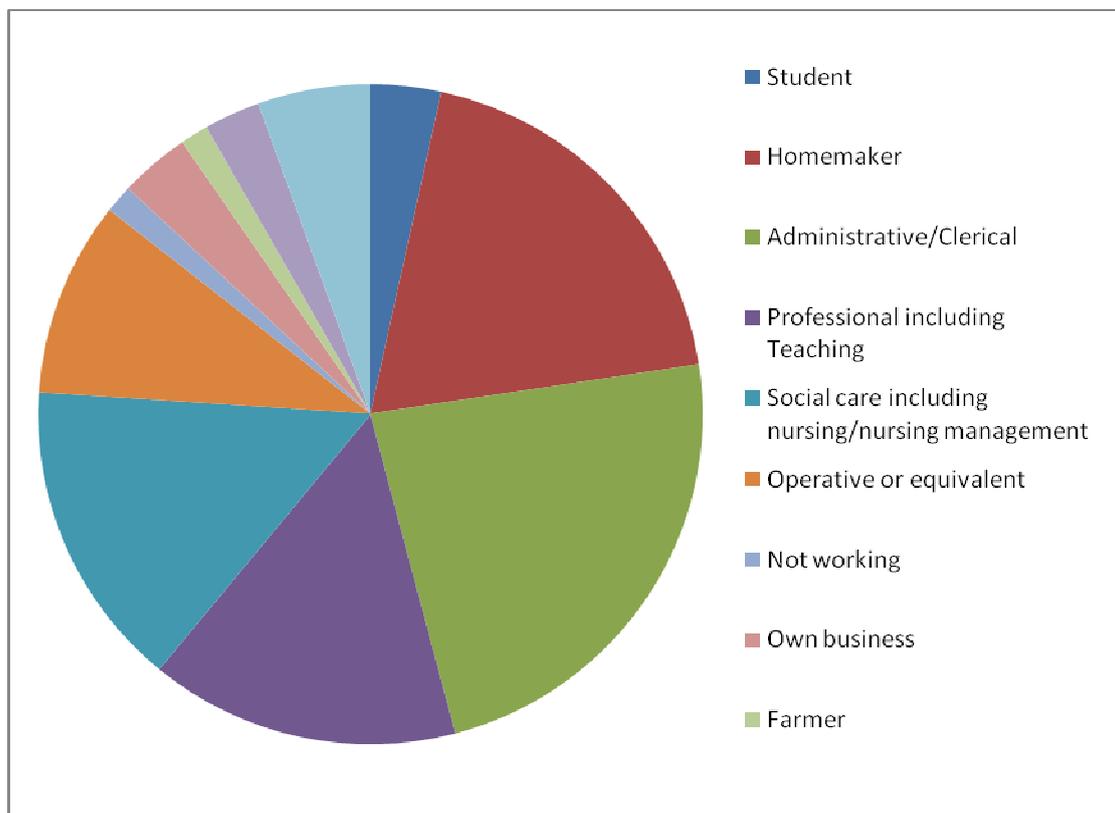
Geographic Origins

The table below summarises the origin of applicants for 2008 Foundation 1 courses, based on the available sample and on information provided in application forms.

Origin of Applicants	Cork-based Courses					Fermoy	Killarney	Limerick
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Cork City	5	10	8	11	7	1		
Co. Cork	11	7	7	10	9	7	2	1
Co. Kerry	1						9	1
Co. Tipperary			1					
Co. Waterford					1			
Fermoy						16		
Killarney							4	
Tralee							4	
Co. Kerry								
Co. Limerick							1	6
Limerick City								9
Co. Clare								1

Occupational Backgrounds

The following figure summarises the occupational profile for a range of applicants for 2008 based on the sample information available for this review.



Our analysis shows some differences in occupational profile between Cork-city based courses and those in other centres – with homemakers constituting a greater proportion for example in Fermoy (hence their proportionate representation in the above figure).

Motivations

People’s motivations for getting involved in Foundation 1 are primarily of an individual nature and range from personal development issues, assertiveness, managing stress, and relating better to other people to wanting to work more effectively with people, and to contribute to their community.

The following figure illustrates some of the main reasons for people becoming involved in Foundation 1. It is an extract of the analysis of all Foundation 1 applicants’ forms for 2008.

Motivations

An interest in human development, how we interact especially after traumatic events, more personal development & awareness

I want to work in group environment & then progress to other courses

To improve sense of self, meet people like-minded, what it is to be human

To build self-confidence, manage stress, deal with people who cause emotional pain

To improve personal development & assertiveness, more courses planned

To gain more confidence

To listen and communicate better, more confidence

To learn more about self, meet like minded people, personal development, health education and group work

To be more assertive, more confident, feel good about myself

Interested in meeting new people, develop self better

To find answers to mistakes, give leadership and example to kids

To develop self-confidence and self-worth

To open world to health, interest in all that will help me and others

For experience

Have done previous SHEP courses

For self development and awareness

To better myself as am training to be a community worker

To learn and be part of group

To build self-confidence, make good decisions, handle feelings

For learning new skills and being able to speak up

To get self-confidence

To become a leader and speaker and learn how to teach skills

To get to know self better, learn to listen and interact better

Some people undertaking Foundation 1 are aware of its value for their professional development, e.g. those in nursing or community development. Reasons for getting involved in Foundation 2 and other courses are also personal but tend to be about greater skills' development and building capacity to work better.

The majority of applicants want to do Foundation 1 for personal development reasons. Reasons cited include to improve self-esteem, grow in self-confidence, develop listening skills, become more assertive, deal with issues. Secondary reasons appear to include that after personal development people might want to work with or help others either in their workplace or community or in the future

Many of those involved in education, caring, social care and health-care mentioned skills' enhancement as a factor in their choice of Foundation 1 – either for their current work or future work e.g. teachers working with students to develop their listening skills.

A significant proportion has had previous experience of voluntary activity to greater or lesser extents. Some have been involved with voluntary organisations; some have volunteered to support particular voluntary events

In terms of people's experience of the application process no respondents felt that the application process had been difficult or badly organised. Most seemed to be anxious to gain a place once they had decided to apply and did not want to be disappointed. The decision-making process took a couple of weeks but did not seem too lengthy, and respondents were genuinely pleased to be accepted, their first impressions of the organisation were very favourable.

It was generally agreed that the SHEP courses did provide value for money, that the cost of the course was not a significant barrier and that the phased payment option was valuable.

There seemed to be no pre-conceptions before a course began, no formalised structure was apparent beyond the overall aims and content of the course as stated on SHEP's web site and paper material.

There was some level of apprehension about the possible make-up of the group of participants before the course started, although others said that they felt that tackling the course as a group was very important and a definite plus from their point of view.

Two Foundation 1 respondents said that they had not realised that the delivery of the courses would involve group therapy.

Others said that they felt that there was "something for everyone" in the course they undertook, and that the pace and content were "never forced."

There was some agreement that the Foundation 1 course was very much about personal development and the bringing together of the emerging group involved in the course. Foundation 2 was seen as concentrating more on the community, how it operates and the place of the individual within it.

There were also perceived benefits in the Foundation 2 course encompassing environmental issues and social justice, as well as promoting understanding of other cultures. This was seen to enhance the process of understanding how every individual contributes to their community and the importance of each and every individual in that process.

Impact

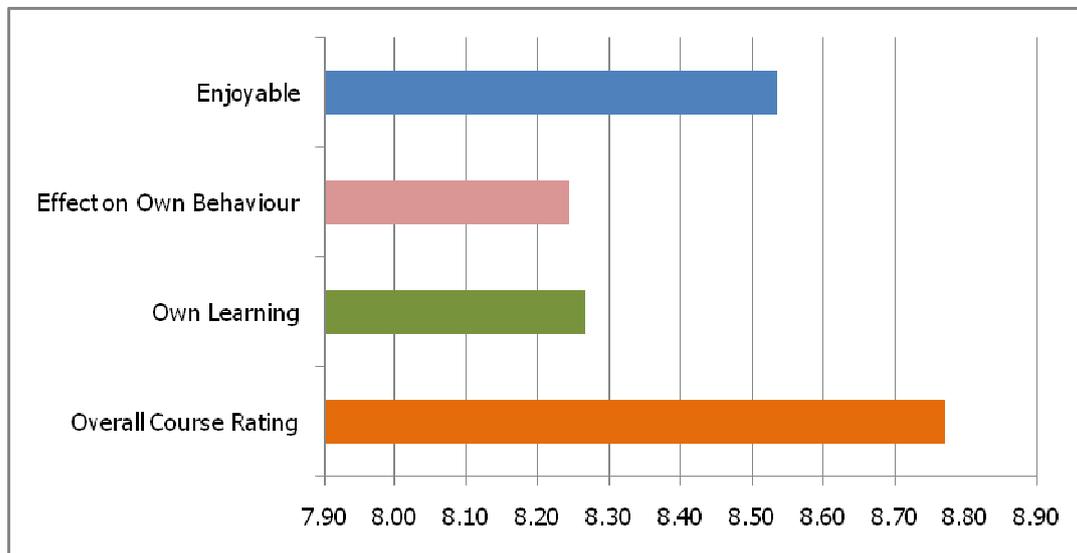
In terms of Foundation 1, participants' evaluation of their experience during the course (please note that the evaluation forms did not necessarily match up with the application forms so it was not possible to directly compare one participant's expectations with their experience), it is reasonable to say that there was a huge degree of unanimity and consistency in terms of people's overall evaluation of their experience. There was a large degree of satisfaction with the course, with the content, with the facilitators and with the outcomes for each person on an individual basis.

The following table summarises a selection of participants' feedback on their experience in respect of 7 key categories:

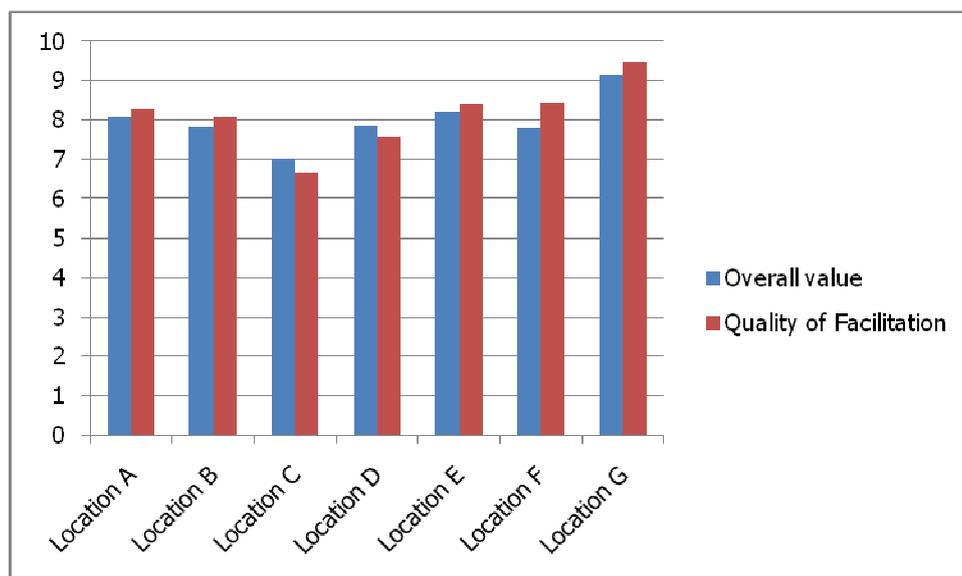
	No. of completed evaluations	Overall Course Rating	Own Learning	Effect on Own Behaviour	Enjoyable	Time with Trainers	
						Overall value	Quality of Facilitation
Location A	15	8.33	7.67	7.53	7.33	8.07	8.27
Location B	11	8.64	7.82	7.55	8.82	7.82	8.09
Location C	14	8.64	9.36	8.93	9.64	7.00	6.64
Location D	7	8.57	7.86	8.00	8.43	7.86	7.57
Location E	15	8.67	8.07	8.07	8.33	8.20	8.40
Location F	14	9.57	8.64	8.86	8.50	7.79	8.43
Location G	13	8.96	8.46	8.77	8.69	9.15	9.46

[Rating – where 10 is the maximum and 0 is the minimum]

Eighty nine participants returned evaluation forms. Most were complete; some people omitted answers or did not comment. The table above and supporting material demonstrate a considerable satisfaction with the course in overall terms. No score is below 8 in terms of overall course rating for example. The figure below describes this in graphic terms:



Participants' satisfaction with facilitators was also positive as illustrated below:



In terms of qualitative information (i.e. information provided by participants in sentence or note format), a great deal of interesting commentary was made which is helpful in the analysis of Foundation 1 delivery to date and useful for future planning. The following gives a flavour of responses to the question looking for comments:

Participants' Comments

Foundation 1 Location A

challenging, powerful, could have been seeing a counsellor during course,
very hard work but good
meditation hard, good fun, games, dance
felt supported, of great benefit
ability, courage of facilitators
brilliant facilitators but too short a time
slow moving, a bit more structure, but great

Foundation 1 Location B

excellent guidance
facilitation very good, group interaction
professional, natural, complementary

Foundation 1 Location C

gentle yet challenging facilitation
supported really well, need better balance between facilitators
liked smaller break out groups

Foundation 1 Location E

didn't always enjoy because it was new to me
great facilitators, very generous with time
safe, balanced, measured, kindness, warmth
gentleness, strength, humour

Foundation 1 Location F

excellent facilitators, supported in mindful manner
facilitators skilled, trustworthy

Foundation 1 Location G

more personal guidance, some members talked too much sometimes
excellent facilitators, good rapport
excellent course, use skills in my life now

When asked about their experience of the way in which the course actually ran, the majority of respondents commented favourably on the exercises each night and on the small group work: "They were never boring." One commented to general agreement that "groups are magic." There was a real sense of the communal awareness of each individual that was created within each group and a number of lasting friendships have obviously been formed.

One Foundation 2 respondent commented that she had not liked one specific exercise as she had found it hard to relate to it, she suggested that this could possibly have been due to

variation in facilitation skills possessed by the trainers.

The methodology was seen as a clever way of tapping in to personal issues. Individuals were not obliged to contribute; courses were very much seen as being about personal needs but also linking to others in the group. Individuals felt that they were learning from others as well as being guided by the facilitators who were able to push them forward in a positive way.

There was no perceived pressure to cover specific topics or meet a pre-set timetable. However, some respondents have since gone on to the facilitation course and said that they now appreciate that the F1 facilitators did have an agenda and a plan for what they would cover. One described their facilitation as 'very subtle' and meeting all levels of expectation.

The Foundation 1 courses were described as 'supportive' and also as 'giving skills' to people including social skills. Comments from some of those who progressed to F2 seemed to indicate that they did not experience quite the same support mechanisms, possibly owing to the content of the course, possibly as the make-up of the groups involved drew people together from widely different social backgrounds. However, they did indicate that any "emotional issues" that arose were given space to be dealt with.

Facilitators were able to set up small support networks for individuals within the context of the course and beyond it to assist those who came to feel challenged by their own process of personal development.

Respondents throughout felt that the facilitators had been "excellently trained" and created a "safe" environment for participants. They were not running counselling sessions as such but making personal development possible for individuals.

There was a degree of flexibility within F1 courses as they ran, but no prescribed programming which does not seem to have bothered respondents. On the contrary, there was a feeling that it didn't matter exactly what came next because the expectation was that it would be good.

This was somewhat tempered by the comments from the F2 respondents who seemed to feel that modifications were fine as long as they were within the context of an overall agenda, even if that agenda was not fully disclosed.

With specific regard to the Foundation 2 course, one respondent said that they had found the second part of the course to have been of most benefit to them, a comment that could well support the view that these courses are providing very specific learning and development at individual level.

When asked about benefits which they derived for their own lives, respondents had quite a lot to say and some comments included:

Perceived Benefits to Participants

Foundation 1 Location A

assertiveness, self-esteem, body awareness & stress management
listening to others, to inner self, to silences, assertiveness days good
weekly grounding, journaling
workshop days

Foundation 1 Location B

weekly sessions
assertiveness, self-esteem
body awareness, assertiveness, self-esteem, listening to other people
weekly sessions and "getting there"

Foundation 1 Location C

listening skills, assertiveness
being a member of a group, assertiveness workshop
being aware of myself, family life has changed for better

Foundation 1 Location D

assertiveness and self esteem
weekly sessions, sharing with others
great experience, sometimes hard to put into practice

Foundation 1 Location E

Assertiveness
loved weekly sessions, meditation
weekly sessions, assertiveness course
whole thing, the group work

Foundation 1 Location F

listening, getting courage, group support
whole course
self awareness, empathy, being kind to oneself
personal development, stress management, assertiveness
stand up for myself, sharing helped a lot

Foundation 1 Location G

link with another participant
Everything
1st weekend particularly revealing, group environment supportive
weekly sessions, supportive, informative
group listening

While the participants came from a variety of backgrounds, it was quite striking to find that they used the same terminology and vocabulary in respect of their experience (as evident through the Focus Groups). Regardless of background, all participants were hugely energised and motivated as a result of their experience. Many saw their participation in Foundation 1 as “life-changing” and transformational. No one appeared to have any regrets about having done the course – in fact, the very opposite of this, with one comment being that “it should be obligatory for everyone.”

In terms of issues to do with value for money, accreditation etc., there was complete agreement by focus group participants that the course was completely worthwhile, that it was not expensive, that the payment plan was an excellent means through which to pay on an affordable basis. For questions relating to accreditation, most thought that this was not an issue at all for Foundation 1.

Participants did not comment in the focus groups on handouts, supporting material which they may have been given. In the review of evaluation forms, only one of the forms (89 evaluations) mentioned hand-outs. It was also from the focus group evident that some people had not read the main Information Booklet. Only one respondent in the evaluation forms commented on SHEP’s Mission. Reference to the organisation’s mission and values did not seem to present in either the paperwork presented by applicants at the outset, in their subsequent evaluations or the Focus Groups which were held as part of this current evaluation process.

Participant Recommendations & Observations for future planning of courses

These will be referred to in more detail in the section on recommendations and observations. The following is a synthesis of the comments (with some paraphrasing to facilitate ease of presentation but without changing content):

- Would like the course to go on for longer
- More assertiveness and self-esteem days
- Better time management in some cases
- Make sure all voices are heard
- Create more feedback opportunities
- Make weekend workshop schedules available well in advance
- Provide an agenda for each session – more structure is needed
- Create opportunities for one-to-ones with trainers
- Run the course with smaller groups as the large groups are inhibiting
- Consider changing the location of courses (e.g. at more local community level)
- Introduce more activities and more fun into the experience
- Advertise courses more to ensure participation by others
- Consider full weekend sessions
- Create opportunities for independent feedback at the end of the course

While participants offered this feedback, it did not preclude them from stating that they had positive experiences.

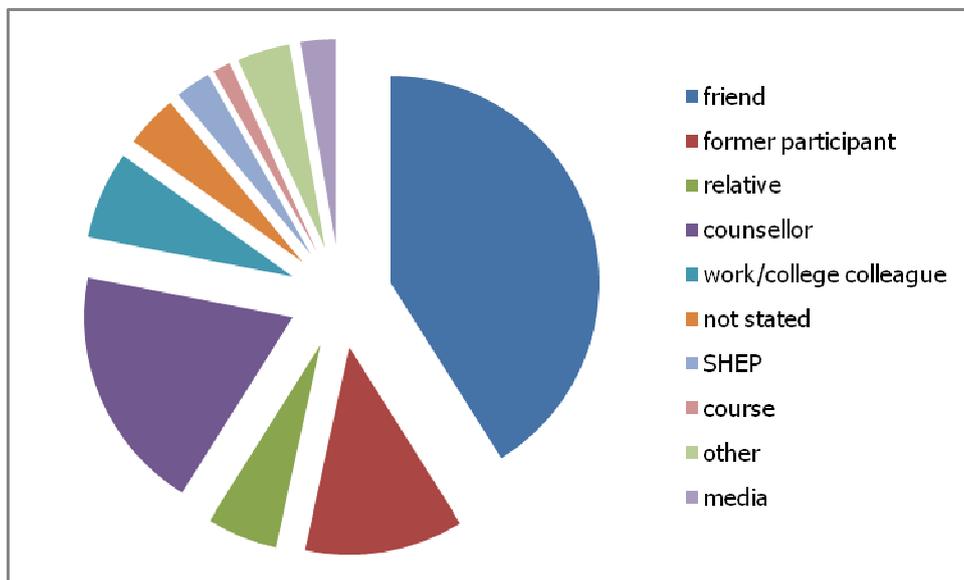
Analysis Foundation 1 Applicants 2009 (based on analysis of available application forms)

The following summarises the profile of applicants to Foundation 1 in 2009 based on the analysis of their application forms:

Total applicant Nos.	96
Average applicant no. per course	16
Men as proportion of applicants	19%
<u>Age Ranges</u>	
18 to 30	20%
31 to 45	43%
46 to 60	33%
60+	2%
Not stated	2%
<u>Origin</u>	
Cork city	25
City suburbs	18
Co. Cork	40
Co. Kerry	13
<u>Occupation category</u>	
Student	2%
Homemaker	7%
Administrative/clerical	14%
Professional including teaching	22%
Social care including nursing/nursing management	18%
Operative or equivalent	15%
Not working	7%
Own business	0%
Other including disabled, retired, non-specified	15%

Identification & Engagement

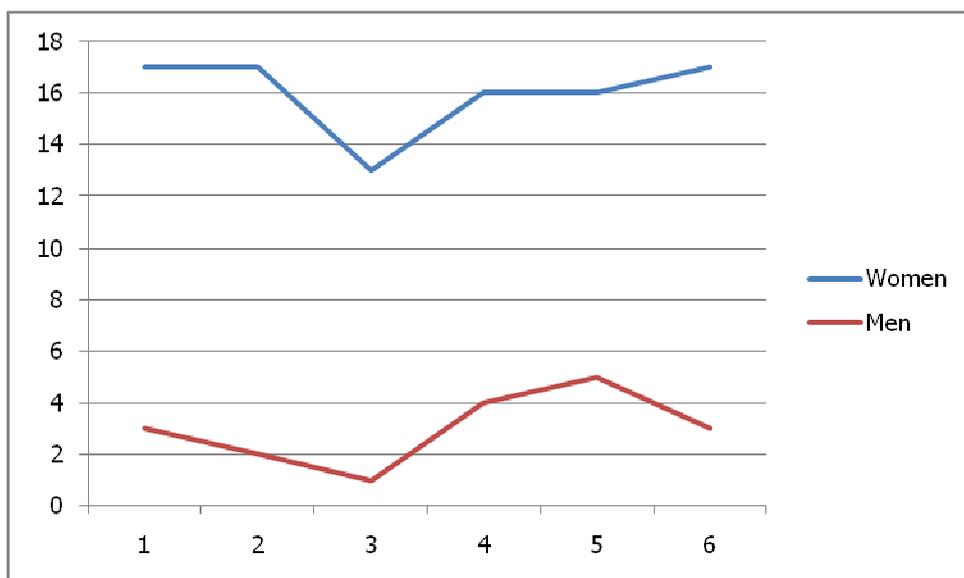
The following figure is based on an analysis of means through which potential applicants heard about Foundation 1, 2009:



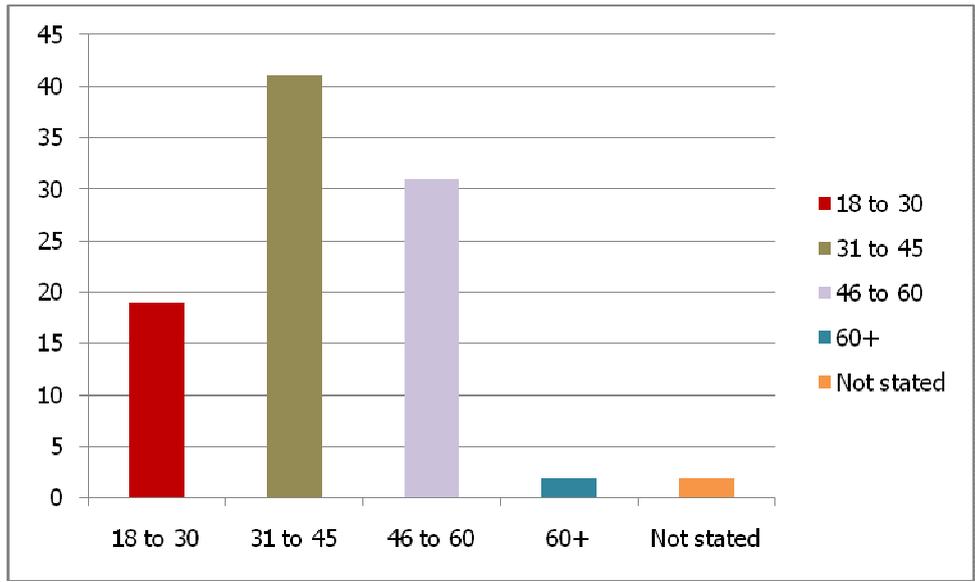
As illustrated, the predominant means through which people heard was through friends (41%), with counsellors being the next significant category (19%) and former participants being significant also at 12%. Media – press, radio, internet, local notices – accounted for 2%.

Demography

The gender spread in the course in 2009 reflects a similar pattern to the previous year's applicants and is as follows (based on 6 courses):

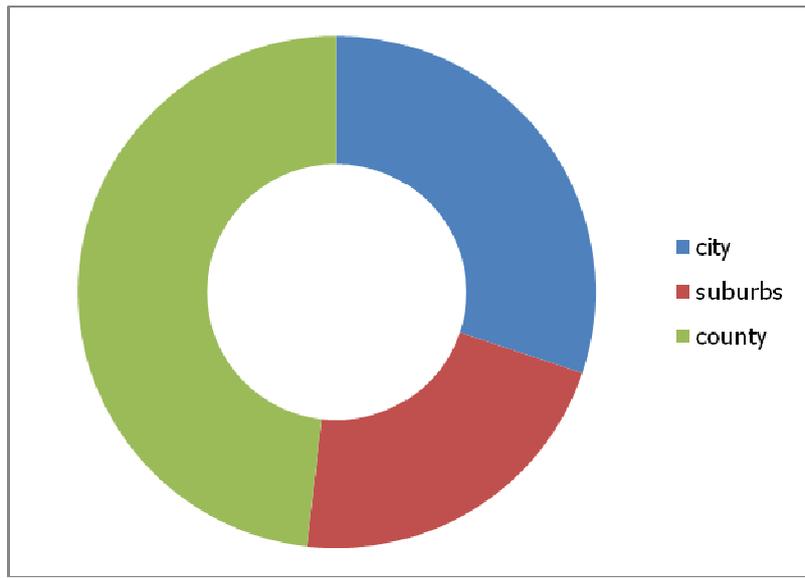


The age profile of applicants also shows greater application numbers from those in the age ranges 31 to 60, with a preponderance of applicants being aged between 31 and 45.



Geographical Origin

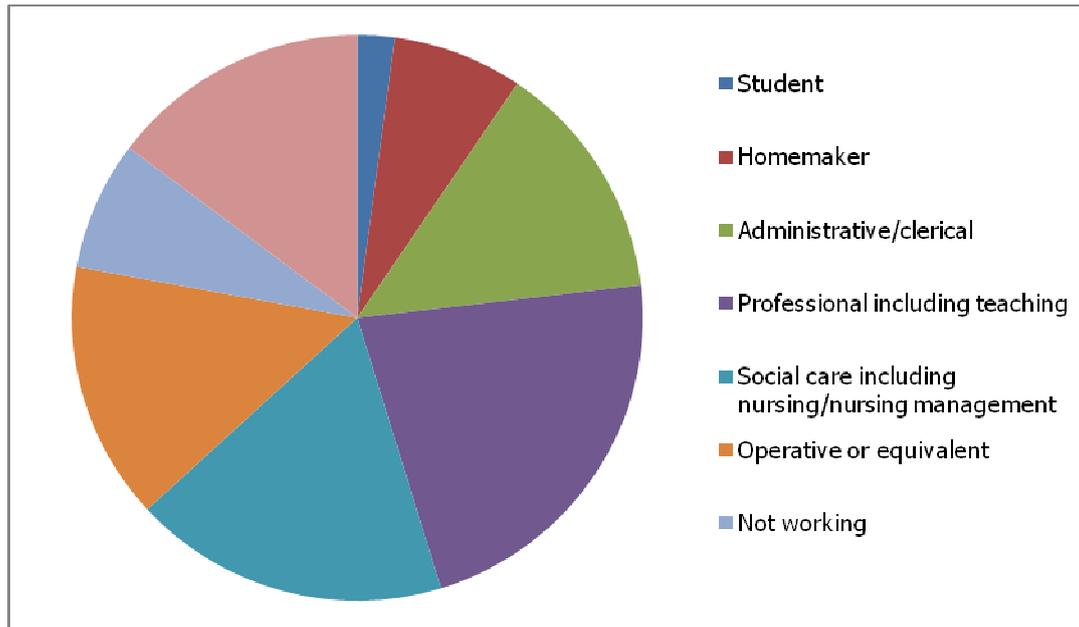
For Cork-based courses, applicants gave their primary address at the following locations:



For the Kerry course, 6 people came from Tralee, 6 from Killarney and 3 from Castleisland (based on available information).

Occupation & Relevant Background

Peoples' backgrounds, according to the information they supplied in their application forms were:



(This is based on a range of application forms made available for this review)

The largest proportion of applicants were those involved in the professional category (22%) and included teachers (secondary, primary, tutors), finance personnel, IT experts etc. The next largest category was social care including nursing, nursing management, caring roles, community development (18%). Seven per cent of people indicated that they were not working at the time of making their application. Some people did not specify their occupation.

Impact

In terms of Foundation 1 2009 participants' evaluation of their experience during the course (please note that the evaluation forms did not necessarily match up with the application forms so it was not possible to directly compare one participant's expectations with their experience), it is reasonable to say that, as for 2008 evaluations, there was a huge degree of unanimity and consistency in terms of people's overall evaluation of their experience. There was a large degree of satisfaction with the course, with the content, with the facilitators and with the outcomes for each person on an individual basis.

The following table summarises participants' feedback on their experience in respect of 7 key categories for each of the five locations:

	No. of Completed Evaluations	Overall Course Rating	Own Learning	Effect on Own Behaviour	Time with Trainers		
					Enjoyable	Value	Quality
Location A	10	9.70	9.50	9.30	9.60	9.70	9.90
Location B	15	9.87	9.13	8.80	9.80	9.87	10.00
Location C	10	8.70	8.30	8.50	8.20	9.20	9.60
Location D	12	7.58	6.58	7.25	7.67	7.50	0.00
Location E	15	8.8	7.93	7.87	8.4	8.73	8.93
Location F	11	8.36	8.09	8.05	8.00	8.36	8.73

[Rating – where 10 is the maximum and 0 is the minimum]

We had access to 73 participants' evaluations. Most of these were completed while some people omitted answers or did not comment on their experiences.

The table above and the supporting material used in its compilation demonstrate a considerable degree of satisfaction with the course in overall terms. No score is below 8 in terms of overall course rating for example. The figure below describes this in graphic terms:

Foundation 1 Participant Recommendations 2008

Participants' Recommendations for future courses

Foundation 1 Location A

would like the course to go on for longer, more time for assertiveness
longer course duration
give everyone chance to say something
more on assertiveness and self-esteem days
equal time for everyone
improved time management
better time keeping, smaller groups perhaps
spread assertiveness over 4 days
Assertiveness
one night only needed on confidentiality contract
more direct feedback would be helpful, dates to be firmed up well in advance of workshops
far too much time on contract
more feedback opportunities, smaller group
thought course was great
like to know agenda in advance, more workshop days

Foundation 1 Location B

course timing
one to one time with trainers
assertiveness body awareness stress management could be run evenings as hard to juggle
weekend time
more meditation classes
longer courses, local delivery
area to deal with relationships
smaller groups

Foundation 1 Location C

smaller classes perhaps
smaller classes perhaps
advertise the course
more time
more on stress management
more assertiveness days
facilitators should not go on holidays - we have to attend all sessions
change content of stress day to make it more light-hearted
smaller groups, more chance for more to talk, better agendas
group is very big
maybe more weekends

Foundation 1 Location D

safe spaces weren't created often enough
city centre location would be better

Foundation 1 Location E

quality control seems to be a problem, needs accreditation as a must, feedback should taken earlier in year too
more structure needed
give time to de-stressing techniques
smaller groups e.g. 10 people
more exercises to get to know people, group was too big
facilitators are true to vision, but more activities
stress workshops were too rushed
some explanations at outset as to how conflict would be handled would be good

Foundation 1 Location F

big group was a problem sometimes
advertise it
more fun
advertise courses more
find ways to make it cheaper so that more people can benefit
all people should respect need to actively listen
some scope for one to one
smaller groups would encourage more sharing

Foundation 1 Location G

more preparation at start, list of counsellors would be good
swap seating more often, everyone has to have space to speak
pace slow at beginning and reasons for this need to be explained
same facilitators for weekends too
more topics covered e.g. Scenarios on listening
shorten some courses, maybe get together elsewhere for variety and to break intensity
stress management could be less like school
retreats to stay with the group
helpful to have independent feedback at end of course

4.3 Foundation 2 Evaluation

Course Summary (from SHEP material)

Part Two of the Foundation Course in Social and Health Education provides an opportunity for participants to develop a greater awareness of the collective dimension of human development. They are helped to explore the challenge of reconciling personal needs with the needs of other people, be they in the family, the workplace, the local community or the wider world. They examine the different ways in which power operates in society and explore the extent to which people's perception of their needs and interests is shaped by social forces. They consider the meaning and the significance of the concept of social justice at all levels, from the local to the global. They are orientated to the principles of active citizenship and participatory democracy, as well as to the institutional mechanisms for citizen participation in contemporary Ireland. They are helped to understand the challenge of achieving democratic consensus in a context of legitimate values diversity.

The aim of the Foundation Part Two course is to enhance participants' personal effectiveness in collective settings, especially their ability to engage with other people to limit the effect of oppressive social forces and to move towards relationships marked by social justice. Through the course, they develop the capacity and confidence to discern and act in ways that represent a balanced response to both individual and group needs ('intra-interpersonal discernment'). They also develop the awareness and skills required for effective participation as active citizens in inclusive processes of democratic deliberation.

Normally, completion of the Foundation Part One course (or its equivalent) will be considered an entry requirement for the Foundation Part Two course. The principal training methodology used is again that of experiential group-work. Some elements of the Foundation Part Two course are drawn from the 'Training for Transformation' programme (Hope, Timmel and Hodzi; 1992).

Participants are not required to undertake any written work and there are no formal assessments or examinations. However, for their own benefit, they are encouraged to record their learning during the course in a personal learning journal. Those who complete this course become eligible to apply for a place on the Generic Facilitation Skills Course - (the first course in the Facilitation Training Programme).

The course runs from September to December and consists of an evening introductory session and five weekend (2 x 7.5-hour day) workshops. Normally there will be around 25 participants in each group.

Foundation 2 Summary Analysis of 2006 to 2009 Class Lists

No. of Courses	2006	2007	2008	2009
1	19	22	19	23
2	18		22	30
3	16		17	28
4	15			
Total	68	22	58	81
Average Participation per Course	17	22	19	27

Analysis of Foundation 2 2008 (based on analysis of available application forms)

The information available from the 2008 application forms for the Cork-based courses is limited in parts and so it has been difficult to analyse in the same way as that for Foundation 1 2008. Applicants for the Mallow course gave more information on their application forms which is helpful in terms of analysis.

The following table summarises our numerical analysis based on information provided by applicants:

Summary Table of applicants for Foundation 2, 2008

Course Location	No. applicants	No. Men	Main age categories	Primary Origin	Occupation Profile	Reasons for applying	Heard
Cork A	24	3	46-60 = 3 31-45 = 3 Not stated = others	City & suburbs = 11 County = 9 Co. Kerry = 3	Unstated	Part 1 = 12 Become tutor, find out more about self and help others = balance mixture	Part 1 = 19 Friend = 1 Not stated = 2
Cork B	21	4	18-30 = 1 31-45 = 2 46-60 = 4 Not stated = balance	City & suburbs = 15 County = 6	Not stated = 13 Youth work = 1 Job hunting = 1 Counsellor = 3 Nursing = 1 Service = 1	Part One = 14 Progression to Generic Facilitation, Career, Group Facilitation = others	Part 1 = 13 Friend = 1 CIT = 1 Colleague = 1 Former Participant = 1
Mallow	21	3 or 4	60 + = 5 46-60 = 8 31-45 = 3 18-30 = 1	11 Mallow 1 City 7 Other county areas close to Mallow	Homemaker = 3 Retired = 3 Farming = 1 Social care inc. Nursing = 6 Not stated = 6	Part 1 = 4 Assist others = 6 Career Progression = 10 Not stated = 3	ADG = 9 RAPID = 2 SHEP = 5 Friend = 1 Radio 1 Library 1

Three Foundation 2 courses were held in 2008 – two in Cork city (Ballincollig and The Granary) and one in Mallow. Twenty four people applied for one Cork course, twenty one for the other and twenty two people in Mallow. Final numbers of participants were 19, 22 and 17 respectively (based on the Class Lists).

The application forms for Foundation 2 in Cork city were of a different format than those for Foundation 1. While this is understandable in some respects it has made it difficult to track progress between one course and the other and to profile and analyse participants in terms of their expectations, experience and course impact. This would also have been useful to analyse the cumulative impact of learning on those who had participated in Foundation 1 and were now focusing on Foundation 2 as a progression in their learning.

The application forms used for the Mallow-based course in 2008 were different and have allowed for some further analysis which is useful and the outcomes of this analysis are presented below.

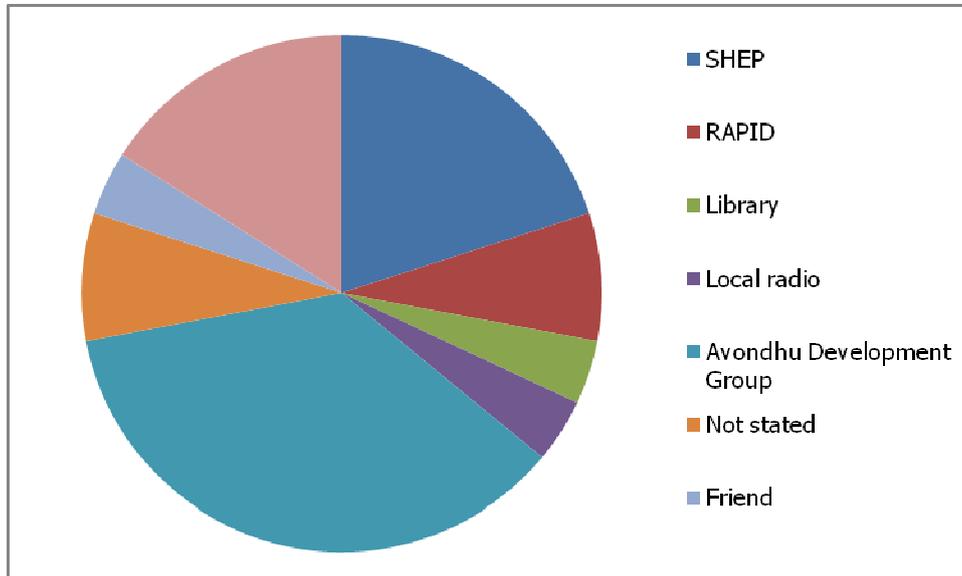
Identification & Engagement

A number of prospective participants (12 or 19 – this is not quite clear) for Foundation 2 in Cork city heard about it through their previous participation in Foundation 1 (mostly in Cork city).

For one Cork city course, 6 people mentioned that they had been made aware of the course by counsellors/guidance counsellors or colleagues including hearing from CIT. The course applicants for the other course did not comment on their reasons for applying. One person

from the first course mentioned that they wanted to continue their personal development among others doing the same thing.

The following illustrates the means through which Mallow applicants heard about the course:



[There are some cross-overs in this diagram as some people put a number of sources on their form. It is important to reflect all channels of communication in our opinion as this will help with future planning]

Applicants for Foundation 2 in Mallow heard about it from a number of sources – Avondhu Development Group (9 people), RAPID meetings (2 people), SHEP facilitators (5 people), friend (1), local radio (1) and the local library notice board (1). Remaining applicants did not respond to this question. Four Mallow Foundation 2 applicants stated that they came from the Foundation 1 on their forms.

Demography

Information provided by applicants for the Cork city courses on age profiles was limited. For one course, 3 people stated they were between 46 and 60 years of age, and the same number for those between 31 and 45. For the other course, 4 people stated they were between 46 and 60, one stated they were between 18 and 30 and 2 stated they were between 31 and 45. Many of the Cork city applicants would have completed Foundation 1 in previous years and would have probably given this information at that time.

More Mallow applicants gave information in respect of ages. Five were over 60, 8 were between 46 and 60, 3 were between 31 and 45 and 1 was aged under 30.

The number of men in each course was low – in Cork while total applicant numbers were 24 and 21 respectively, the corresponding numbers of men were 3 and 4 respectively. For Mallow, out of 21 applicants, 3 or 4 were men (application form is obscured in one case so gender cannot be confirmed).

In terms of age ranges, the majority applicants for Foundation 2 in Cork city were in the age categories 31 to 45 and 46 to 60.

Geographic Origins

For the two Cork-city based courses, 21 people came from the city or suburbs (9 in one group, 12 in the other). Fifteen people came from areas outside the city including one person for Co. Kerry for one course. Seven came from outside the city in the other course. Some did not complete this question.

For the Mallow-based course, four people came from the town of Mallow, while the balance came from surrounding town lands, villages and towns.

Occupation Backgrounds

This information was not present in the one of Cork-based courses. For the Mallow course, some information was provided – with applicants being involved in job-hunting, youth work, counselling or related, nursing and social care, the service industry, homemakers and some retirees.

In Mallow, 8 people were involved in voluntary activity of one kind or another, either currently or in the past (though the precise timing is not completely clear from application forms)

Motivations

For Foundation 2, 2008 - the Cork courses – 12 people for one course stated they had completed Foundation 1 and other reasons from applicants including progression to tutor level, to find out more about oneself and to help others. For the other course, 14 people stated it was because of their involvement in Foundation 1 and others indicated a mixture include a desire to progress to Generic Facilitation, career progression, group facilitation skills.

It was not always easy to establish people's reasons for undertaking Foundation 2 but some of the reasons provided by applicants included advancing to another focus besides the wholly personal. Foundation 2's content (see Introduction to this section) is significantly different from Foundation 1 and prospective participants involved in Foundation 1 were informed of this towards the end of their participation in Foundation 1 through a presentation by SHEP and it is fair to assume that in some cases, prospective participants would have made their decision to apply based on this knowledge.

It is not clear from available data how potential participants who had no previous involvement with SHEP in Cork city made their decision to undertake the Foundation 2 course though it is likely that some had already participated in Foundation 1 and others would have undertaken other courses or heard about the course.

In Mallow, 4 applicants indicated that they had completed Foundation 1 and wanted to continue – although 6 people indicated they had completed Foundation 1 in another part of the form. Six stated it was for career progression reasons while 3 did not state anything.

Other reasons expressed by applicants in Mallow in other parts of their forms for doing the course included wanting to continue personal development, getting involved in the community, and/or possibly go on to do further training as tutors or facilitators.

Impact

Participation Foundation 2 drew a variety of responses from participants in Cork city in their evaluation forms. Some people commented that the "gap" between Foundation 1 and Foundation 2 was "wide". It was a "surprise" to some people as stated in their forms.

Some participants (less than 5) in Cork city were happy with not knowing what was ahead of them in the particular session while others thought that an “agenda” would be sometimes useful. Some suggestions were made that a short meditation exercise could be carried out before a session commenced.

It was recommended by some participants (3 people) who completed the evaluations that all participants should be encouraged to participate in the group more completely. Quieter people sometimes found it hard to do this. In some cases, there was an expression of a need for smaller groups. While there was no overall criticism of content, some thought that some topics, ideas and approaches (e.g. Wheel of Fundamental Need) could have been delved into more completely.

Specific suggestions were made in relation to two areas – that more information was needed on how to influence organisations and groups – and that if international groups are introduced (to the group) difficulties in understanding them should be addressed.

The following is a summary of responses in evaluations completed by participants in two Cork-based courses:

	Average Total Scores		Analysis		
	Group A	Group B	Methods	Content	Impact/Learning
Overall rating	8	9.19	✓	✓	✓
Learning acquired	8	8.6			✓
Methods used	8.2	8.75	✓		
Facilitation Skills	9	9.44	✓		
Awareness	8.1	8.69			✓
Understanding	7.85	8.5			✓
Issues	7.8	8.5		✓	
Questioning	8.05	8.5			✓
Ability	8.2	8.5			✓
Experience	8.15	8.375			✓
Challenging	7.2	8			✓
Intercultural focus	6.6	7.82		✓	
Development	6.75	7.63		✓	
Valuing	7.6	8.44			✓
	<i>N = 20</i>	<i>N = 16</i>			

The summary of participants’ ratings clearly shows a high degree of satisfaction with the courses in overall terms and in relation to the different foci in each course. In terms of methods, participants scored these well with the facilitators scoring really well in both cases. This reflects participants’ evaluation of all facilitation in courses which they pursue in SHEP. In terms of content, though scores are still high, participants’ evaluation of the intercultural focus and of development are comparatively lower than in other areas and this may be a focus for discussion in the future since Foundation 2 has collective involvement in development as one of its priority learning areas. Nevertheless, respondents all experienced an impact from their time in Foundation 2 and learning was enhanced.

Participants' individual comments about their experience in Foundation 2 2008 were interesting. The following summarises some of these:

- *(It dealt with)* issues of justice and injustice
- *(It had an)* element of fun
- Learning about my limits
- Confidence and responsibility
- Questioning and examining things
- One person can make a difference
- I found my voice!
- The exercises challenged me
- Enjoyed the facilitating
- *(Enjoyed)* the group work
- Great personal learning
- *(It)* blew me away

Other useful comments (some of which are negative) for future planning included:

- I hated the Star Power exercise
- I hated dressing up and acting
- I did not like the role play
- The weekends were not spread out in the right way (paraphrase)
- *(I would have preferred)* smaller groups sometimes
- *(I would have liked)* an agenda before the course's commencement

Analysis 2009 Foundation 2 (based on analysis of available evaluation forms)

The table below summarises the ratings which participants in two course locations gave to their respective experiences of their participation:

	Average Total Scores		Analysis		
	Course A	Course B	Methods	Content	Learning/Impact
Overall rating	9.19	8	✓		
Own learning	8.63	8			✓
Usefulness of methods	8.75	8.2	✓		
Facilitators' Skills	9.44	9	✓		
Expansion of Personal Awareness of wider issues	8.69	8.1			✓
Deepening of understanding of Systems' affecting personal experiences	8.50	7.85			✓
Usefulness in exploring in/justice issues	8.50	7.8			✓
Usefulness in becoming questioner about world/communities	8.50	8.05			✓
Usefulness in developing active listening for issues in group	8.50	8.2			✓
Usefulness in exploring experiences on way power operates	8.38	8.15			✓
Usefulness in developing understanding/knowledge of opportunities in collective decision-making	8.00	7.2			✓
Usefulness in deepening awareness/understanding of issues re. intercultural trends	7.81	6.6			✓
Usefulness in exploring meanings of development & resource limits	7.63	6.75			✓
Usefulness in valuing/believing impact of each person in their community	8.44	7.6			✓
	N = 16	N = 20			

In terms of commentary on the above, participants' rated their overall experience highly in both locations (with Course A having a higher rating). Methods scored highly too, including facilitators' skills and the usefulness of the methods chosen. Course B participants rated their learning/impact at a slightly lower level than Course A participants.

Lower scores are evident for learning/impact in relation to: developing understanding/knowledge of opportunities in collective decision-making; deepening awareness/understanding of issues regarding intercultural trends and usefulness in valuing/believing impact of each person in their community. Course B exhibits lower scores than Course A in these respects also. These proportionately overall lower scores in these three categories may need to be focused on in the future. They also were highlighted in the 2008 experience.

Participants were invited in their evaluation forms to comment on what they found most interesting about the course. The following summarises some of their comments:

Course A participants' comments on most interesting aspects of Foundation 2, 2009	Course B participants' comments on most interesting aspects of Foundation 2, 2009
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (I identified) my lack of questioning authority (in the past?) • (I heard about) other people's experiences • (It was) uplifting and great learning • (I enjoyed) everything especially (the work we did on) sexuality • (I enjoyed) the Power of One (exercise) • (I am) pleased to have woken up to what is happening in the world • (It) allowed me the opportunity to be myself • (I discovered about) learning by experience • (The) facilitators (were) brilliant. (I) learned so much • (I enjoyed) taking part in dramas • (I) recognised my personality type • (It was) mind opening • (It) opened up my mind to how communities work • (Increased) awareness, challenged me and helped me to grow • The experiential method is (the) best (way) • (It was) challenging but wonderful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning about group dynamics – after a while it began to make sense • (The) Star Power exercise • (The visit by) the Nepalese people • Broadening my perspective – I have caught the bug! • The role play and the Star Power exercise (3 people) • I really enjoyed the codes • The psycho-social methods were very interesting • All aspects worked for me

Some recommendations made by participants who completed the evaluation forms for Course A and B included:

- *(The entire)* Al Gore DVD should be shown
- The "Script" exercise was confusing
- *(I found)* the days were long – shorten them and make the *(course)* duration longer
- *(The ritual)* on the last day could be longer
- *(Better)* advertising – I would have liked to have been contacted by SHEP to let me know when the course *(would be)* on
- *(It would have been)* better to have one dedicated room (for the training)
- There's too much! – Not enough time to go through it all!
- *(Possibly have)* more active exercises on a Saturday
- More work needs to be done on ensuring that non-English speaking visitors to the project are understandable and can understand. This was the case with the Nepalese visitors who visited Course B. Though their visit was welcomed, a number of people were frustrated that communication was less than it could have been.
- More efforts need to be made that some people do not "cling onto the group" or leave it to others to drive the group – all should participate
- *(A)* plan of intention should be in place *(so that)* everyone knows what is going on

4.4 Generic Facilitation Skills' Evaluation

Course Summary (from SHEP material)

The Generic Facilitation Skills' Course provides an opportunity for participants to develop awareness of the principles of effective group facilitation, as well as basic competence in the skills necessary to facilitate group processes.

The aim of the Generic Facilitation Skills Course is to allow participants to gain experience of playing the facilitator role and to develop in them a capacity to operate effectively and safely as generic group facilitators. At the same time as developing skills, participants are helped to identify and work on personal factors which serve as obstacles to their being 'present' to other people in the role of facilitator.

As a 'generic' course, this training is intended to serve as a foundation for a range of specialist facilitation applications, such as the delivery of personal development courses, the provision of advocacy support and the mentoring of organisations in the community and voluntary sector.

Normally, completion of the Foundation Programme (or its equivalent) will be considered an entry requirement for the Generic Facilitation Skills Course. Applicants are encouraged to be clear that, in taking part in any training in the Facilitation Training Programme, they are expressing a commitment to the support of others in their development and growth.

A variety of training methodologies are used during this course, including formal teaching, experiential exercises, practice sessions, personal development workshops and collaborative learning in small working groups.

Some written work is generally required of participants undertaking this course and they are asked to record their learning during the course in a personal learning journal. Ongoing self-, peer- and trainer-assessment takes place during the course. Those who successfully complete the course become eligible to apply for a place on any of the Project's Specialised Training Courses.

The course consists of weekly evening sessions of 2½ hours between January and December (around 31 sessions in all), as well as 7 weekend day workshops of 7 hours (Saturdays or Sundays). Over the course of the year, participants will also be expected to undertake a total of 16 hours' collaborative learning in small groups.

Generic Facilitation Skills 2006 to 2009 Summary Analysis of Class Lists

Course	2006	2007	2008	2009
1	14	15	15	16
2	11		17	
Total	25	15	32	16
Average Participation Rate Per Course	12.5	15	16	16

Analysis of Generic Facilitation Skills 2009 (based on analysis of available application forms)

The analysis has not been as thorough as we would like it to be because of the lack of consistency in information supply due to the considerable variation in application forms and lack of evaluation forms. We had access to 13 application forms for 2009 and supplemented by the focus group discussion.

Identification & Engagement

The main route for participation in this course is completion of Foundation 1 and 2 and Continuous Personal Development (8 who answered had completed Foundation 1 and Foundation 2).

This is borne out by the evidence of applications in 2009 as examined above.

Some comments by applicants in 2009 included:

- Having completed Continuous Personal Development I want to learn more, to learn facilitation skills
- To develop understanding of counselling and related areas and especially for more training in group skills
- Current work requires me to facilitate different kinds of teams and groups and students in the education context
- I want to work on my awareness of others, to be "present", to gain more confidence and speak more comfortably in groups
- I want to work with people in learning about themselves in a safe environment
- I want to broaden experience to support others in making positive changes and choices
- Foundation 2 rekindled my passion and I want to continue learning
- It would help me to differentiate between my own processes and those of the group

According to participants in the focus group, the interview process for entry was fair and professional and gave them every opportunity to explore all questions and issues prior to doing the course.

They indicated that they had been given excellent information before committing and were thoroughly supported from the outset.

Participant Profile

Thirteen people applied to do the course in 2009, including one man. Six people came from city locations, 7 came from towns within 25 miles of the city. Of those who gave information in their application forms, (7 out of 12) most were in caring work (home or paid), and teaching

Motivation

Sixteen people gave information as to their previous experience or motivations for doing this course. Six of these stated they had completed Foundation 1, 5 out of these same 6 people stated they had completed Foundation 2 also. Two of this same group stated they had completed Continuing Personal Development. Two others (who as it happens did not state that they had done any other SHEP courses) stated that they had completed counselling to certificate level in CIT.

Applicants saw skills development for employment progression or for broadening the breadth of tools in their current work as being the main benefits of participation (10 out of 12 responses). Comments included (some paraphrasing to protect identity):

- To develop an understanding of basic applied counselling
- To be properly training to facilitate groups
- To develop awareness of effective group facilitation ...
- To help me in my job which involves a lot of working with teams or with people in difficult situations

Some of the applicants (8 responded to the question on reasons for doing this course) stated that they want to broaden their experience, to improve their employment chances, to become better at what they do.

Impact (based on analysis of available evaluation forms)

The course evaluations completed by some participants in 2008 and 2009 are very useful. Some notable outcomes are in summary based on a maximum score of 10:

Year	Responses	Overall Rating	Own Learning	Effectiveness for working with People	Providing a Solid Foundation	Degree of Enjoyment	Trainers & Facilitation
2008	13	9.23	9.23	9	8.53	8.53	9.38
	12	8.33	7.67	8.25	7.75	8.33	8.5
2009	8	9.63	8.88	8.75	7.88	9	8.56

Different respondents provided comments and feedback on their experiences in their evaluation forms in addition to their rating of the course. The following is not exhaustive but helpful:

- Any part of this course benefited me and helped me to grow
- *(For me)*, most learning happened at the end
- It would be better if the small *(study)* groups would be from the same area *(logistics)*
- *(I liked)* the emphasis on coming back to "the now"
- *(I found)* the course very difficult and challenging in a good way
- *(The)* personal development weekends were very valuable
- *(For me)* the study group and presentation *(were of)* most benefit
- *(I would have liked)* the chance for more practical sessions, more chances to facilitate
- *(I overcame)* huge challenges by doing the presentation
- Breaking the group into smaller groups was difficult and could have been better thought out

In our review of the three course evaluations, it is apparent that the facilitators were well thought of. They showed empathy, understanding and wisdom and very sensitive to everybody. No negative comments were made at any time about them.

The practice of journaling received mixed reactions with some people really liking them and some not seeing their value or not having time to complete them on top of everything else.

Weekend workshops were seen as valuable though some people had difficulties in organising themselves to attend due to other commitments (about 3 people mentioned this). It is observed that participants in the focus group were very focused and clear in their evaluation of their experience and how they have applied their learning since course completion. Other material provided by focus group participants is as follows:

- One of the biggest assets in course participation was that of being able to mix with people from a wide range of backgrounds which gave richness and energy to the whole experience.
- The course had excellent boundaries, good supporting material. (The Combat Poverty Facilitation Skills' Book was used and those interviewed use it continually in their work)
- The participants thought that the non-academic nature of the course was perfect and was pitched just right and allowed for great participation by all.
- Courses were "so personal" and there was no sense of people competing with each other.
- When issues or conflicts arose the facilitators – who were utterly professional – managed these very well.
- The feedback component of the course was very useful.
- Approach included breaking the group into smaller groups and these latter made presentations which received feedback from other large group members – very participative, very challenging.
- According to participants the facilitators were very wise, experienced, empathetic and humorous at times.
- Study groups had to meet over the summer (4 times, 4 hours each time) and to prepare a small presentation on 4 topics. They were not told which specific topic they would finally be presenting on one of the first nights back.
- They had to prepare all aspects of the topic's presentation and then receive feedback on same.
- Workload was considerable and included journaling, our doing facilitation, lots of meetings, keeping notes, every Tuesday night and workshops – so it was quite intensive.
- The weekend workshops (on Saturdays) provided scope to interact with facilitators on a less structured basis and this was really useful. They were also less structured which provided another dimension to the course. They provided a lot of opportunity for more relaxed interaction and built up the trust in the group. The facilitators stood back and let the group organise itself by and large. This was an excellent approach.
- As part of their course, participants were asked to work in teams on a range of topics and to meet over the summer period to plan presentations. They then had to make

a presentation on one of the topics selected by the facilitator on a particular date in the Autumn. This meant that the course's continuity was maintained although there was a bit of pressure getting the teams together during the summer. Part of the pressure was due to the fact that participants did not necessarily come from adjacent locations to each other so it was harder to organise in some cases.

- Respondents saw a value in accreditation (even though the lack of same did not prevent them from doing the course) – not only for putting a value on it for their own sakes but also for their employers and professional development in general. On the other hand, the lack of academic focus meant that it encouraged people of different backgrounds to get involved.
- The course was excellent value for money and the participants in the focus group saw the value of the instalment plan payment system.
- The facilitators were extremely professional and competent. They were sensitive and empathetic and humour was part of the mix which was great.
- There was a real connection between what participants learned in their course and what they needed to do in their work – real value.

4.5 Continuing Personal Development Evaluation

Course Summary (from SHEP material)

The Continuing Personal Development Course is provided for those who feel a need to consolidate the learning arising from their participation in Parts One and Two of the Foundation Training Programme. They may apply to take this course after they have completed the Foundation Part Two course. The course involves intensive exploration of personal issues.

The course consists of weekly evening sessions of 2½ hours between January and early December (around 31 sessions in all), as well as 6 weekend day workshops of 7 hours (Saturdays or Sundays). Normally there are around 16 participants in each group.

Continuing Personal Development 2006 to 2009 Summary Analysis of Class Lists

No. of Courses	2006	2007	2008	2009
Total	16	16	13	14
Average Participation Per Course	As above	As above	As above	As above

Continuing Personal Development 2009 (based on analysis of available application forms)

Identification & Engagement

In 2009, 15 people applied including one man. They identified the course largely because of their previous involvement in other SHEP Core Training activity. Eight people had completed Foundation 1 and 2 respectively. One person had completed Foundation 1 and Training for Transformation (is this not Foundation 2). Five people had completed both foundation courses and the Generic Facilitation Course

Participant Profile

Fourteen women and one man applied. No information is available on the age range of applicants. Eight people came from the city and suburbs; others came from towns close to the city except one who came from North Cork. No information was given on the forms about people's occupational status

Motivation

Six people indicated on their application forms that they thought they would benefit from participation, two people indicated they had done previous courses (see next point) and one stated that this was "essential for me".

Impact (based on analysis of focus group discussions)

- Of those interviewed in the focus group, five were women and one was a man.
- All had been involved with SHEP for considerable periods – 4, 5 and up to 6 years in one case and all had completed Foundation 1 and Foundation 2.
- Their initial contact with SHEP was through a mixture of means including its recommendation through counsellor (2 people) through CIT, through a Social Worker, through a friend and through – in one case – picking up a brochure.
- One person in the focus group came from county area and stated that it was harder to get information on SHEP which is an issue for future planning.
- The group met every Thursday and over 4 weekends – "the weekends were great."
- Everyone stated they were on their own personal journey, which had begun with their involvement in Foundation 1. Two people in the group stated this was their second time to do Continuous Personal Development.
- According to participants the course is purely about personal work (unlike other courses and especially Foundation 2).
- The group fluctuated in size – from 16 to 18 in the group and reducing to 14 in the end. The participants thought that the reasons for leaving were not to do with the course but to do with practicalities.
- The course "got very deep" very quickly – on the first night!
- The facilitators (a team of two, one man, one woman) were very compassionate, skilful, respectful, and brought huge experience to the course. They were tuned into each other which helped a lot. The facilitators "minded" participants and this brought great healing in that people had a sense of being listened to with respect and in a loving way. Participants had to find their own answers and saw this as being the only way to do things.
- The role play work in the group went very well, smooth and the facilitators were very aware of everyone and helped them all to participate.
- There was no agenda as such, but issues were covered. Opportunities were always created for reflection.

- There was no pressure, a great honesty, safe feeling, genuine interest and a sense of feeling comfortable. There was no question of equality being compromised.
- The focus was on where you are right now in your own life and focused on real issues which affected people.
- The time limit of 2 ½ hours was sometimes hard and there was no contact in summer (2 months) which was difficult for one or two people as (one) could be holding on to issues for a long time.
- The course was about so much more than facilitation – it was a form of “therapy” (Consultants’ word but agreed by participants).
- Participants knew about the counselling service Coischéim but did not indicate if they had availed of it.
- There was great trust in the group and friendships too – a social aspect to this.
- SHEP is necessary for healing, for awareness, for knowing what’s going on around me, for me. Participants all agreed they are in a much better place now than before. It is enjoyable and involves getting to know yourself really well in a safe environment. It is “soul” work.
- It would be good if there was a better balance in the genders it would bring different perspectives into play (latter are Consultants’ words).
- It is affordable “where else would you get this kind of support at such a low price?” One can’t put a price on the work – it is great value for money. The instalment plan is great. We never got a sense from SHEP that it was ever about the money.
- In terms of accreditation, the participants agreed that while Generic Facilitation Skills could be accredited, this course would not be right for accreditation. Foundation 1 should not be accredited both as this would put likely participants off and since it is about the personal journey in Foundation 1 this would not be constructive.
- SHEP has two dimensions according to respondents – one for progression for employment and the other for personal development.
- Some participants – including others not interviewed are now involved with Friends of SHEP.
- Some quotations from the group:

Thank God for SHEP ... like soul food ... absolute necessity, would be at a loss if it wasn't there ... improved my outlook ... helped me to be a better parent ... relationships have changed ... more true to myself ... hard work, but you're motivated ... healing, breaks multi-generational cycle ... like winning the Lotto ... good timing ... powers of reflection ... my priorities are different now ... thinking about changes ... self-respect and dignity ... slow changes but good, healthy balance ... free to be open ... spiritual journey ... start to feel life

- Foundation 2 was hard, and there was no scope to discuss it (with SHEP? Not clear). The transition between F1 and F2 was hard.
- The Training for Transformation weekends (4) were useful and very well run. The facilitators were outstanding and were the “essence of respect.”
- As a result of involvement in this course, we can celebrate our own uniqueness, are in touch with ourselves more, take more responsibility and have a greater acceptance of the self. “The victim mentality disappears.”
- We understand that some people would be fearful of getting involved.
- In terms of telling other people about SHEP we wouldn’t necessarily talk to everyone about SHEP’s value – “it really depends on who I’m talking to” as some people may not understand.
- SHEP needs to be careful about how it promotes itself in the future (in that it’s not for everyone – it’s for those who are at a particular place in their lives).

4.6 Integrated Specialised Tutor Training Evaluation

Course Summary (from SHEP material)

An extended Integrated Specialised Tutor Training programme is available through which participants are prepared for the delivery of a range of community courses, including Introduction to Personal Development, Assertive Communication for Better Relationships and Managing Stress in Our Daily Lives. This substantial course runs over 15 months and consists of weekly evening sessions of 2½ hours (around 47 sessions in all), as well as 7 weekend workshops (each comprising 2 x 7 hours) and 8 weekend day workshops of 7 hours (Saturdays or Sundays). Participants are also expected to undertake a total of 44 hours of collaborative study, design and practice work in small groups.

Integrated Specialised Tutor Training 2006 to 2009 Summary Analysis of Class Lists

One course held each year (2007, 2008, and 2009) with an average of 16 participants in each course. Each course lasts for 18 months and starts every second year.

Analysis Integrated Specialised Tutor Training 2009 Impact (based on analysis of available application forms)

Seventeen people applied for the 2009 course, of which two were men. Two applicants came from Cork city, 4 from the suburbs and 11 from Cork County. All had completed Foundation 1, Foundation 2 and Generic Facilitation Skills and stated in most cases that their attendance at each of these courses was in excess of 95% (some had 100% attendance).

Twelve stated that they had done other courses and two of this number stated that they work specifically with people so that the course would be of direct benefit to them.

In terms of their motivation to do the course, the average score was 9.17 (out of 10). Among the comments made by applicants, the following are examples:

- I want to work in the area, want to be trained; I am open and willing to learn more.

- I have a fire in my belly after the last course and I want to see where it takes me!
- I want to be more focused, in tune with myself, to continue training.
- I see this as the next step in my career and I would benefit from the training.

Impact (based on analysis of available evaluation forms)

Fifteen people completed evaluation forms. Some outcomes from this are as follows:

Category	Rating
Personal Development	9.20
Learning on Stress	9.20
Learning on Self Esteem	8.87
Tutor Communication	8.80
Trainer Capacity	8.87

*N = 15 (1 non respondent)
Scoring based on 10 being highest rating*

The rating given by these participants for the course in overall terms was between 8.6 and 10. The average rating for course design was 7.6, for trainers was 9.4 and for the main anchor trainer 8.2.

The course also involved a focus on role play which participants scored their experience at an average of 9. They also did work on stress management and scored this at an average of 9.2.

Some comments, made by participants on their evaluation forms included:

Some comments in respect of design ...

More interaction to lift the energy
 Took a while to get the hang of it
 Very thorough and a lot of preparation work
 A bit overwhelming
 Very good even though I was struggling
 Very worthwhile
 Attention to detail was exhausting at times

Some comments in respect of trainers ...

Caring and compassionate
 Great connection with the group
 Calmness and humour
 Comfortable, challenging, feedback not critical enough
 Very helpful and balanced
 Hugely encouraging

Some comments in respect of anchor trainers ...

She was amazing, supportive and fair
 Open, supportive and available

Very high standard
A true professional
Compassionate and understanding

The following represents a range of comments by participants in addition to those already presented above:

Positive Experience	Challenging Experience	Recommendation
Inspiring & fulfilling	Very time consuming	More practice at facilitation X 4
Support was fantastic	Lots of time pressure	Digital version of handouts better than paper version
Trainers' compassion was fantastic	Some people had "loud voices"	More time needed for quieter individuals to interact
I was sorry when it finished	Huge amount covered in a short time – more time needs to be given	More time needed
Well structured & challenging		
Very important part of my life		
Incredible facilitation		
I liked the way the facilitators complemented each other		
Out of my comfort zone - brilliant		
I feel confident that I could run a course		
Loved training and working with them		

[Note: The comments in each column do not necessarily correlate with individual responses. They are presented in tabular form for ease of presentation]

Feedback on various workshops was also positive. For the Stress Management Workshop, the overall score given by participants was 9.27 (out of 10), with comments including "well organised", "gentle and peaceful" and "great team" with a few comments about doing more facilitation skills and "less rounds". For the Role Play workshop, the average score (out of 10) was 9, with comments including "a safe environment", "expertly taught", but also an expressed need for more exercises and more time to practice.

Analysis Integrated Specialised Tutor Training (based on analysis of focus group discussions)

- Of those interviewed in the focus group (4 people), three were women.
- All had completed other SHEP courses – three had completed Foundation 1, Foundation 2 and Generic Facilitation Skills, one of the four had also done

Continuous Personal Development.

- Three had initially contacted SHEP through recommendations from friends and one through a work colleague. Their initial interest was in their own personal development and some curiosity and taking on new challenges without necessarily knowing the outcomes.
- In their view, SHEP is a unique organisation, has its own ethos and particular way of doing things which is very positive. Its main focus is certainly on looking after people and it offers a caring environment for everyone.
- The core value of SHEP as an organisation (which dates back to thinking in earlier days of SHEP's existence) is the conviction that people can change and that proof is there in people's actions.
- The application process for this course (and other SHEP courses) is not based on academic criteria and this is a considerable strength (as it allows more people to participate).
- Before undertaking this course, participants had a one-to-one discussion with facilitator to help them with decision-making (January – after completion of Generic Facilitation Skills' course by some (it wasn't clear if all had completed Generic Facilitation Skills' course either from the focus group or the statistics)). They started the course a short time later in February.
- It is essential to have done other SHEP courses. The Integrated Specialised Tutor Training Course is a progression from others. It was stated that Foundation 1 is very valuable for anyone and is a good basis from which to start.
- There were some unfinished issues arising out of some people's participation in Generic Facilitation Skills previous to this course which the facilitators' dealt with very well.
- There was some emphasis on group forming at the outset of the course.
- Group context provides energy, the creation of emotional space which is comfortable and allows for individual learning in a group environment.
- There is great value in group learning approach through participative learning and skills' acquisition was considerable.
- The course was progressive and quite challenging in a constructive way.
- The focus group participants indicated that there were three or four processes happening through the course and that this was "amazing". It focused on three main areas – Personal development (3 months), Stress management (3 months), Assertive communication (3 months) – in blocks of 6 to 8 weeks.
- There were weekend workshops too and if issues arose at these, the SHEP Training Coordinator would follow up with individuals and indeed, she would input during each rotation as mentioned above.

- It might be useful to extend the weekend workshops to two nights to give more space for reflection and build relationships although participants recognised that this may not be possible for some people.
- The facilitators showed compassion, put a value on people, and made no judgements.
- The group had 16 people and then sub-groups (4 people) which were randomly formed to focus on project presentations.
- Course participants were asked to do some journaling though this did not appear to be obligatory. Two of the four indicated they did this and found it useful, one "didn't bother" and the fourth person didn't indicate if they had maintained a journal.
- The participants indicated that a possible recommendation could be that there could be more time to practice skills learned– to learn the content and understand it.
- The course was long and intensive but participants in the Focus Group did not "resent this". One participant did not realise the time commitment at the outset and this caused some problems in scheduling but they still managed to have almost 100% attendance. Participants experienced some relief at the end but also some sense of loss. It was a "home from home" in many respects as so much time was spent here and some also continue to come to SHEP.
- While there was an experience of attachment (during the course) and loss (after the course), they were motivated to move on to something else.
- Participants going into sessions did not know what the agenda was going to be for that night but that was not a problem and the experience was more organic and dynamic because of this (Consultants' words).
- Participants interviewed liked the humanistic and experiential approach more than anything else.
- It would have been useful to have worked with all 16 in the group but it is also clear that this was not possible.
- Turns were taken within the groups to facilitate and use their skills in a practical way. People learned from each other and this was "an enriching experience."
- Everyone was treated equally and respectfully. The small groups at times created safety. There was deep honesty and trust within the group and friendships have lasted. Some people have signed up to a Facebook page organised by one of the participants on this course.
- The course was "great value for money" and "great value for people". There was "no question about this."
- Participants were somewhat in awe of the SHEP facilitators (their conclusion) e.g. the way they dealt with conflict – they were very grounded, very courageous, fearless, took risks.

- SHEP is essential in life and elements could be mainstreamed into other areas e.g. teachers working with children, or young people in Transition Year.
- Positive experiences have a ripple effect in relationship building – both personally and professionally.

Three of the four in the Focus Group are starting apprenticeships (as Tutors) (one has already done some, one starting tonight, one waiting for identification of main tutor) with a focus on one of the 3 core areas. The latter person a bit frustrated that they had identified a group to work with but now had to wait for a main tutor and to take a “back seat.”

Section 5 - Course Trainers' Experience

Trainers involved in the Core Training Course received a survey in December 2010 as part of this evaluation process. Seventeen responses were received and the following describes our analysis of these responses.

5.1 Trainers' Review of their Experience

Question 1: What courses have you facilitated?

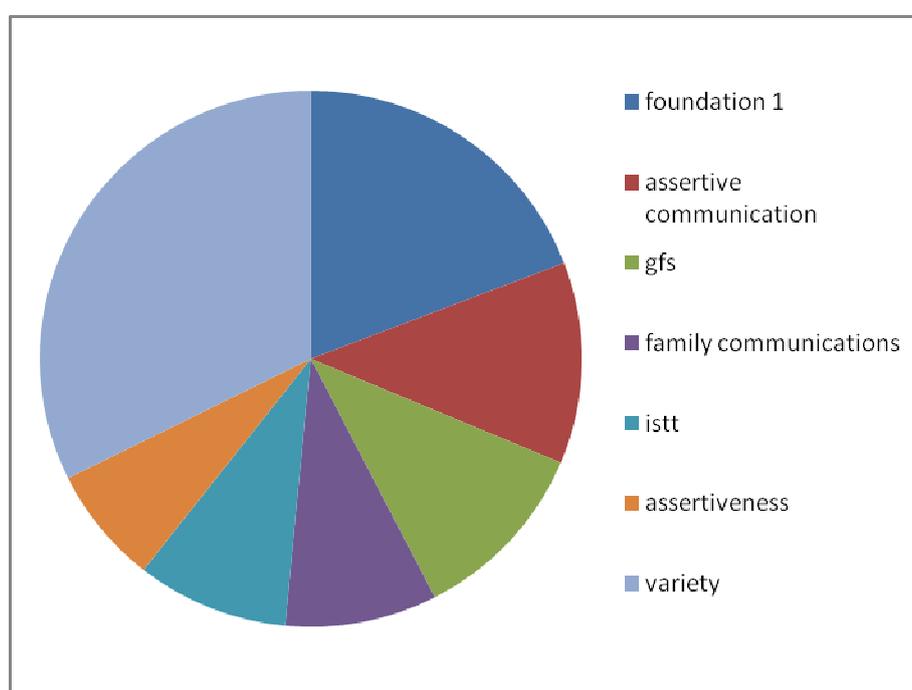
I. Range of courses & Facilitators involved in their delivery

Course Title	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
Assertive Communication & Self Esteem	✓										✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	7
Assertiveness		✓						✓	✓	✓								4
Body awareness & assertiveness						✓												1
Continuing Personal Development				✓														1
Family Communications		✓	✓	✓		✓											✓	5
Foundation 1			✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	11
Foundation 2										✓						✓		2
Generic Facilitation Skills			✓	✓	✓				✓				✓		✓			6
Health, well-being & empowerment			✓															1
Integrated Specialised Tutor Training			✓	✓					✓	✓	✓							5
Intercultural awareness						✓												1
Introduction to Personal Development					✓													1
Lifewise		✓																1
Relationship & sexuality						✓												1
Trainer & Tutor Supervision						✓												1
Transformation Game																✓		1
Tutor Training			✓	✓														2
Volunteer advocacy training			✓	✓														2
Women's health			✓															1
Women's health & well-being		✓																1
Working with older people				✓														1
WRAP									✓									1
Total	1	4	8	8	2	5	1	2	5	4	3	1	3	2	3	2	3	57

II. Number of facilitators involved in variety of courses

17 respondents are involved in the delivery of 57 courses either in their entirety or in part
2 respondents involved in delivery of 8 courses in their entirety or in part
2 respondents involved in delivery of 5 courses in their entirety or in part
2 respondents involved in delivery of 4 courses in their entirety or in part
4 respondents involved in delivery of 3 courses in their entirety or in part
4 respondents involved in delivery of 2 courses in their entirety or in part
2 respondents involved in delivery of 1 course in its entirety or in part

III. Proportion of Facilitators involved in course delivery



[gfs = generic facilitation course; istt = integrated specialised tutor training programme]

Question 2: To what extent do you feel your work as a trainer is valued by participants?

17 respondents – 1 no answer, average for remaining 16 respondents = 4.30 (with 5 being highest value)

Question 3: To what extent do you feel your work as a trainer is valued by SHEP?

17 respondents – 17 answers, average out of 5 (being highest value) = 4.53

Question 4: How would you describe the impact of the training work on participants?

17 respondents – 3 no answer, average out of 14 (5 being the highest value) = 4.24

Question 5: How would you describe the impact of the work on yourself?

With 5 being the maximum impact, 17 respondents, average value of response = 4.06

Question 6: What support have you needed in your role as trainer?

With 0 being no support needed at all, 5 being considerable support needed – 17 respondents, average value of response = 2.06

Question 7: When support was needed, to what extent was the support available?

17 respondents, a score of 5 being respondents' perception of great degree of support, average answer = 4.67

Question 8: Have you asked for support and not received it?

17 respondents, all of whom stated that if/when they sought, indicated that they could receive it without any problem

Question 9: If yes, have you received a satisfactory reason for not getting support?

Because no one had been refused support, 15 out of 17 gave no answer and 2 answers were "not applicable"

Question 10: Does the course need changing?

Thirteen respondents stated that the course(s) did not need changing, one gave no answer and 3 indicated that some changes were necessary (see Question 11 and 12 responses)

Question 11: If yes, have you specific ideas about what changes need to be undertaken?

When we asked for more ideas from respondents on changes, 11 gave either no answer or answers were not available. Of the remaining 6 responses, the following is a summary of the suggested changes:

- Assertive Communications carried over 4 weekends rather than 3 weekends, based on feedback from participants.
- Capture learning from participants so that they could apply for accreditation in the future should it be available.
- Use of video/audio tapes, journaling with named learning in areas of personal process, and skills & educational/information component.
- Annual peer review meetings could be held as a way to exchange ideas and experience.
- Clear guidelines/criteria when working with other agencies.
- Prior to group composition being finalised at the start of courses - opportunities for discussions with trainers could be held so that issues could be discussed.
- Some restructuring of Generic Facilitation Skills is required.
- More structure is needed for Foundation 1.
- Presentation section on Climate Change is too long and too complex and an alternative needs to be identified.

- Consideration of the availability of a 3rd facilitator at Foundation 1 sessions to support individuals who may become upset in the session to allow other two facilitators to remain with the group. This additional facilitator could be in training and it could be used as an experiential learning opportunity.

Question 12: Do you have any other ideas regarding your specific training role in SHEP?

Responses to this question were given by 7 respondents. Others did not complete or give input. Answers included:

- Having the scope to work with young people in schools.
- Creating space at the Trainers' Forum to discuss how each part of the training fits with other parts and also time to discuss the values and the nature of the work which SHEP does.
- (It would be useful for) trainers to look at how a strong support base could be built for trainees/participants as they journey through SHEP (courses) especially for more vulnerable participants.
- (It would be useful to have) a gathering of body awareness personnel and sharing of resources, approaches as well as contact with other supervisors for tutors and trainers.
- This is a proper method for bringing about positive change in all areas of society. The respondent believes that as this work continues to spread the people trained will continue the work in their families and in local communities.
- The work is of particular benefit in disadvantaged communities. Another respondent believes that SHEP offers a variety of courses and that there are many people who are in need of up-skilling. The respondent further states that the management are open to them as a trainer to suggest new ideas around training.
- One respondent indicated that they are quite happy with their role as a trainer in SHEP. It is rewarding work and they get as much as they give. Though they stated they are over-extended, they are happy.
- Another respondent stated that they are always happy with the support they receive from all staff in SHEP – the latter are both helpful and supportive, regardless of their position in SHEP.
- One respondent stated they would be concerned if the numbers participating in Foundation 1 exceeded 17. Furthermore, it is important to have trainers involved in discussions at all times.

Question 13: Would you like to add up to 3 comments/sentences that you feel are useful in this evaluation?

Ten out of the 17 respondents gave feedback on this question. One stated that they found this question difficult to answer. Other responses are presented below by means of the various points being extracted from, in some cases, longer responses by respondents. Some changes have been made by the evaluators to remove identifiers.

- I greatly value the review and hope to learn from recommendations, value the staff's work and support they offer and their availability to me.
- I believe SHEP needs to expand into secondary schools.
- SHEP is congruent - the spirit and culture of the organisation is a reflection of the values it promotes, the personal well-being and self-esteem of trainers is valued and supported.
- I have spent many years working in the secondary school system ... SHEP offers a model of experiential learning that can be used in schools and in all areas of community life.
- I worked specifically with the most "at risk" young people in Cork city. This type of work can help greatly in this area. Communities need locally based facilitators for the work to continue. Individuals need both personal and community support.
- Word of mouth is (a good mechanism for spreading the word).
- (The availability of financial support – and for this to be made known) would allow this endeavour to grow.
- Foundation 1 is such a good experience and enhances people's lives. I (regularly) refer people to undertake Foundation 1 and (they benefit from this experience).
- (The) selection process for Foundation 1 (cannot be) too rigid... as therapists we need to be skilled enough to deal with people who have ongoing mental health difficulties – I believe these are the very people who need this kind of group environment/experience. They are already marginalised with little hope of moving forward with what is on offer (elsewhere).
- I believe SHEP's therapeutically-based approach & its training is very valuable but I think it could be enhanced/balanced at times by an approach that is more of an adult education nature.
- I love the work – I'm proud to work for SHEP.
- I sometimes got complaints from participants in groups who later became my clients about the inappropriate facilitation of some therapists (KC – it is not clear who these latter therapists are – whether they are SHEP trainers or others).
- I believe this project's work needs to be supported and safeguarded because of the positive impact on the individual lives of participants, on their relationships and further contribution to society as a whole. Personal awareness and development is the core of this.
- I value highly the support which SHEP staff provide to one as a trainer. I value the support of other fellow trainers.

5.2 Review of Trainers' Survey Responses

Many of the trainers have worked with SHEP for more than 10 years and all of the trainers have many years of experience in training work, in psychotherapy work, in counselling and personal support work according to information gathered during the course of research. Trainers are highly trained, experienced and competent.

Responses to *Question 1* demonstrate that several are involved in a wide ranging of training activities (No. II at 5.1.), with 6 respondents being involved in the delivery of 17 courses for example. Two of the respondents are involved in delivery of one course (Foundation 1) only. So, trainers are capable of inputting into different courses in different ways because of their competence and experience. Though not evident from responses, it is clear to us from other information gathered that some trainers have worked for a long time with SHEP and have amassed considerable knowledge through the breadth and range of their experience.

Trainers believe that their work is valued by SHEP to a very large extent (*Question 3*). They also indicate that where they have needed additional support to fulfil their responsibilities (their need for support is relatively low in fact – *Question 6*) this was very forthcoming (*Question 7*). They saw SHEP as always being helpful and supportive (*Questions 8, 9*). This points to the fact that SHEP provides a very supportive environment for those involved with it as trainers and while it is inevitable that there may be some issues at different times, the responses were very encouraging.

Trainers also see that their training work is valued by participants (*Question 2*) to a significant extent and that it has an impact on the participants (*Question 4*). At the same time, it also impacts on the trainers themselves in a positive way (*Question 5*).

In answering questions about changes to approaches to courses, about content of courses and other related matters, the responses are extremely useful for SHEP's future planning (*Questions 12, 13*) and need to be considered in the light of the evaluation's recommendations.

5.3 Overview of Trainers

Participants' views of non-training staff

The back-up support from SHEP administrative and managerial staff was excellent and very thorough in participants' opinions too as presented in participants' evaluation forms and in focus group discussions. SHEP staff were always approachable, helpful and supportive. The reality for many participants was that once they were involved in courses their need to contact staff other than facilitators was very little. Some SHEP staff had contact with those involved in Generic Facilitation and Integrated Specialised Tutor Training around specific questions including options for future progression paths.

Participants' Views of Trainers

Participants in all the courses praised their respective facilitators (See [Section 4](#)). They were regarded as being very accomplished and thoroughly professional in every respect. In cases (most session work) where facilitators worked in teams of two, participants' feedback was also complimentary. They valued contrasting styles, saw the value in different voices and realised that this added a strong dynamic to each session. There were no complaints whatsoever about the length of sessions, the facilitators' inputs and support at the sessions.

Other comments included the fact that some participants would have liked to have access to facilitators outside of course time, to have longer sessions on some topics e.g. stress management. There were some comments by a small number of people about the weekend workshops which pointed to a need for better facilitation of some sessions.

Trainers' Importance in SHEP's Current and Future Role

Based on experience and observation across a wide range of training situations and organisations as well as the feedback generated by this evaluation, we cannot emphasise too strongly the key role that the trainers play in the design and delivery of the Core Training Programme.

Their experience is invaluable. They know how sessions go, how participants react, what is needed and what is not, what is successful and what brings challenges and it is important to continue to capture this through the regular feedback and review sessions which trainers have with SHEP staff, the end-of-course evaluations (participants' evaluations and debriefing with SHEP staff) and information which they provide informally or through the Trainers' Forum for example.

In terms of delivery, **Sections 3 and 4** reflect participants' experience and their views of Trainers, while **Section 5** demonstrates the Trainers' depth of involvement in the course delivery. Without the Trainers, the Core Training Programme's future would be compromised, its quality severely undermined, and participants would be poorly served and the programme would not have a future.

Trainers are the public face of SHEP, the immediate representatives of the organisation to course participants and others.

Because of their role and contribution, it is vital to the productive relationship between SHEP and its trainers that those trainers should feel:

- Supported by the organisation in overall terms and in respect of their individual involvement with specific course delivery
- Able to recognise potential difficulties in the design, structure and delivery of courses
- Able to identify and deploy appropriate strategies in difficult or potentially dangerous situations should these begin to develop

SHEP depends on its trainers to provide the effective interface with course participants, and they can make or break the success of the Core Training Programme. Given the nature of that Programme as demonstrated during the course of this evaluation, any breakdown would have the potential to be extremely damaging.

In developing the strategic planning for the future of the Programme, the trainers have a vital role to play, and any of the recommendations of this evaluation which are taken up by SHEP will require that the Trainers are fully engaged in and committed to the process.

Section 6 - Impact and Effectiveness of the Core Training Programme: The Participant View

While the application forms and aspects of the focus group discussions provide valuable insights into people's reasons and motivations for getting involved with SHEP, the evaluation forms and other aspects of the focus group discussions provide information on participants' experiences and perspectives on their time in individual or several courses and in some cases their views on SHEP as an organisation. This combines with the information that people shared in the various focus groups which asked people about their experiences of the various courses in which they have been involved over the years.

Impact is measured in a number of ways expressed by participants in both their evaluation forms where completed and through focus group discussions. Summary findings include:

- Great degree of satisfaction with facilitation approach, content and style for all courses.
- High levels of attendance at all courses – in many cases 100% attendance.
- Relevance of topics and issues covered in all courses including weekend workshops which afforded more opportunities for in depth work in some cases.
- Participants' assertions at end of courses that their perspectives have been enhanced and that they were now in "better places" than previously.
- Participants' awareness that they were well-supported by facilitators and by relevant SHEP staff as needed within the context of courses and also from other support services that SHEP offers (including Coischéim counselling service and for some, the Continuing Personal Development course).
- Some participants' decisions to progress to other SHEP courses, and for those who had already progressed to the more formal skills' development courses – Generic Facilitation Course and Integrated Specialised Tutor Training Course – a clear identification of future development paths including possibly becoming facilitators/tutors in their own right.

Levels of Satisfaction

The level of satisfaction with participation in all Core Training courses is consistently high. SHEP seems to have identified a real need within a sector of the community and is meeting that need to a very high degree. Courses continue to attract applicants year on year without appearing to have outlasted the demand for them.

The majority of course participants perceive a great benefit to themselves from the courses they undertake, particularly in personal development, outlook on life and relationships within their community and to other individuals.

Foundation 1 is clearly seen by participants as an opportunity for personal growth. In the evaluations examined, many have experienced positive change in themselves and are highly motivated to move to further courses. Foundation 2 and other courses result in people's continuing focus on greater personal, interpersonal and professional skills development.

Once participants complete Foundation 1, many remain to progress to other courses which demonstrates the programme's relevance and impact.

Course Accreditation

Very few undertaking Foundation 1 and those who completed it sought external accreditation or saw it as a necessary outcome. Some did indicate that Foundation 1 was the start of a new phase in their lives but did not specifically seek certification for their involvement. Foundation 1 is largely seen by people as being about personal development which may account in part for this lack of interest in accreditation.

There was little interest in accreditation for Foundation 2 participants and no interest expressed in accreditation by participants in Continuing Personal Development. In summary for participants in this range of courses, external accreditation was not relevant and was not seen as providing no positive advantages according to those involved in the focus groups.

Accreditation emerged as an issue for some involved in more specialised courses (Generic Facilitation and Integrated Specialised Tutor Training), though this was not universally sought by any means. It was seen as a legitimate element and one which external employers might value, for example.

We note that participants' workload in the courses increases as courses become more specialised and they complete many components which in themselves are potentially capable of being graded and could lead to overall accreditation in a manner similar to that adopted through FETAC or HETAC progression routes.

All participants in all courses valued the Core Training for what it brought to them and the annual award of SHEP certificates was enjoyed by them for its own intrinsic value.

Course Content & Approach

Each course in the Core Training Programme has substantial content and participants were expected to progress through each of these before moving to the next stage. It is clear that content is well-thought out by the course organisers and SHEP's commitment to review and evaluation provides them with the opportunity to adjust and alter content to suit participants' needs and course objectives at appropriate times.

In summary, Foundation 1 is primarily about personal development and so has the necessary content to facilitate this as well as approaches which have humanistic psychological influences. Foundation 2 is about moving to an understanding of social and community issues and working on a collective basis and, it appears to us, to base much of its content on Training for Transformation and principles of community education.

Continuing Personal Development has its bases in humanistic psychological content and approaches. Generic Facilitation Skills incorporates facilitative approaches as both methods of teaching and learning and also focuses on key facilitation techniques such as communication skills, group theories, conflict resolution etc.

Integrated Specialised Tutor Training builds on skills acquired through Generic Facilitation but also incorporates specific skills development in relation to teaching and training. It also has an apprenticeship element to provide trainee tutors with opportunities to practice their skills with the guidance of experienced facilitators. The university diploma is more advanced and has to fit in with the NUI certification criteria and standards.

All courses have a considerable emphasis on facilitative methods which complements SHEP's mission, ethos and values and taps into the significant skill levels of facilitators. Besides the course content, space is provided for participants to input, to reflect, to process ideas and issues. Group discussion is strongly encouraged and consensus in course sessions is emphasised.

Individual journaling is encouraged in all courses, though our analysis revealed that this was less successful than SHEP might have thought it would be. Responses were low/absent in participants' evaluation forms when asked about this and confirmed by some in the focus groups. Some people said that they found journaling beneficial. Some found it arduous on top of an already heavy workload. We are not able to glean a meaningful consensus on this from responses but it would be worth reviewing in the future in terms of its value and impact.

Some participants did indicate in their evaluation forms and in focus group discussions that there was sometimes a problem with more vocal people dominating session times and so quieter people were not contributing or benefiting as much as they could. At the same time, participants thought that facilitators handled these difficulties very well.

SHEP Foundation Courses Focus Group Overview December 2010

The following is a synthesis of the Focus Groups that were held with respondents from the Foundation 1 and Foundation 2 courses during October and November of 2010. The questions were used as prompts for discussion which was allowed to develop freely. No respondent was asked to disclose any personal or confidential information as part of this process.

1. Did you become aware of the course in any other way than by personal referral?

There is a well-established relationship with CIT and a number of respondents had been referred to SHEP from psychology and counselling courses. For example, after one year of study at CIT students could be advised to take a year out to pursue personal development before resuming their course. Some also chose SHEP courses in preference to CIT courses, possibly on the basis that they seemed less academic in their content and demands.

Others came to the Foundation courses through personal recommendation, either from counsellors or family members or friends. In the case of one respondent, a friend had signed up for Foundation 1 and simply informed her that she would be coming too. The respondent concerned seemed quite happy about this and had been delighted with the course.

A number had progressed to Foundation 2 to from Foundation 1 or, in one case, from another SHEP course.

Very few seemed to have become aware of the courses through paper or media sources.

2. Did you have a definite need in mind when deciding to apply for this course or was it a more general interest? Bearing that in mind, how did you decide that this SHEP course was the one for you?

For respondents referred to SHEP from CIT, some were not completely sure that

this was what they wanted but were willing to take the advice. All thought that F1 looked interesting and appropriate.

Other respondents seemed to simply be drawn to the courses: "...something clicked in my head," was one comment.

Another was that the respondent had "...a feeling that F2 would be right" for them.

The majority of respondents saw the SHEP courses as providing self-development.

Some respondents mentioned that they thought the information pack about the course that they were sent was helpful. Others said that they could not understand why these courses were not more widely advertised.

3. What was your experience of the application process?

No respondents felt that the application process had been difficult or badly organised. Most seemed to be anxious to gain a place once they had decided to apply and did not want to be disappointed. The decision-making process took a couple of weeks but did not seem too lengthy, and respondents were genuinely pleased to be accepted, their first impressions of the organisation were very favourable.

It was generally agreed that the SHEP courses did provide value for money, that the cost of the course was not a significant barrier and that the phased payment option was valuable.

4. Before it began, did you know how the course was going to run? Did you have a definite course outline that you thought you would follow?

There seemed to be no pre-conceptions before a course began, no formalised structure was apparent beyond the overall aims and content of the course as stated on SHEP's web site and paper material.

There was some level of apprehension about the possible make-up of the group of participants before the course started, although others said that they felt that tackling the course as a group was very important and a definite plus from their point of view.

Two F1 respondents said that they had not realised that the delivery of the courses would involve group therapy.

Others said that they felt that there was "something for everyone" in the course they undertook, and that the pace and content were "never forced."

There was some agreement that the F1 course was very much about personal development and the bringing together of the emerging group involved in the course. F2 was seen as concentrating more on the community, how it operates and the place of the individual within it.

There were also perceived benefits in the F2 course encompassing environmental issues and social justice, as well as promoting understanding of other cultures. This

was seen to enhance the process of understanding how every individual contributes to their community and the importance of each and every individual in that process.

5. *What was your experience of the way in which the course actually ran? Were there changes or modifications as you went along? How did you feel about that?*

The majority of respondents commented favourably on the exercises each night and on the small group work: "They were never boring." One commented to general agreement that "groups are magic." There was a real sense of the communal awareness of each individual that was created within each group and a number of lasting friendships have obviously been formed.

One F2 respondent commented that she had not liked one specific exercise as she had found it hard to relate to it, she suggested that this could possibly have been due to variation in facilitation skills possessed by the trainers.

The methodology was seen as a clever way of tapping in to personal issues. Individuals were not obliged to contribute; courses were very much seen as being about personal needs but also linking to others in the group. Individuals felt that they were learning from others as well as being guided by the facilitators who were able to push them forward in a positive way.

There was no perceived pressure to cover specific topics or meet a pre-set timetable. However, some respondents have since gone on to the facilitation course and said that they now appreciate that the F1 facilitators did have an agenda and a plan for what they would cover. One described their facilitation as 'very subtle' and meeting all levels of expectation.

The F1 courses were described as 'supportive' and also as 'giving skills' to people including social skills. Comments from some of those who progressed to F2 seemed to indicate that they did not experience quite the same support mechanisms, possibly owing to the content of the course, possibly as the make-up of the groups involved drew people together from widely different social backgrounds. However, they did indicate that any "emotional issues" that arose were given space to be dealt with.

Facilitators were able to set up small support networks for individuals within the context of the course and beyond it to assist those who came to feel challenged by their own process of personal development.

Respondents throughout felt that the facilitators had been "excellently trained" and created a "safe" environment for participants. They were not running counselling sessions as such but making personal development possible for individuals.

There was a degree of flexibility within F1 courses as they ran, but no prescribed programming which does not seem to have bothered respondents. On the contrary, there was a feeling that it didn't matter exactly what came next because the expectation was that it would be good. This was somewhat tempered by the comments from the F2 respondents who seemed to feel that modifications were fine as long as they were within the context of an overall agenda, even if that agenda was not fully disclosed.

With specific regard to the F2 course, one respondent said that they had found the second part of the course to have been of most benefit to them, a comment that could well support the view that these courses are providing very specific learning and development at individual level.

6. *What was the value of the workshops? What was your experience of the way in which they ran?*

Respondents enjoyed and valued the workshops and saw them as providing "me time." Value was perceived in gaining better stress management techniques, coping skills and "adding dimensions" to personal development.

Facilitators were seen as skilled in keeping the momentum of the workshop going and in involving everyone, for example, initiating 'energiser' exercises if individuals seemed to be flagging or disengaging. There was also skilled use of silences which were positive elements, not negative ones.

Respondents who have gone on to do the facilitation course seem to feel that there was actually a structure beneath the workshop activity all the time although this might not have been apparent to the participants.

Some respondents found the stress management part of the course somewhat stressful in itself. In one instance the facilitator themselves seemed rather stressed as their co-facilitator had not turned up. Some respondents felt that more could have been made of the stress management elements of the course. Others found the assertiveness training very valuable.

Workshops were seen as being very different from the evening sessions and a whole day was not too long for the work covered.

7. *What happened as a result of doing the course? Did you have another interaction with SHEP or some other organisation?*

Respondents expressed a sense of achievement, of feeling "better equipped" for life, of being positive and calm. Another comment was that the training had been "...very positive and had moved me on."

A significant number had gone on from Foundation 1 to Foundation 2, in some cases because they simply wanted more of the same, but some respondents felt that F2 had not been quite so effective for them because the facilitators had been different. Some thought that F2 should be renamed as it was not a direct follow-on for F1.

One respondent did not return to CIT for the second year of their original course but went on to F2 and then the facilitation course. She is still considering options, could return to CIT, or go to UCC, or continue with SHEP. It seems likely that this is not a unique situation for course participants.

Respondents typically seem willing to develop in whatever direction is going to be most appropriate for them, not in an aimless way, but with a sense of real confidence in being able to continue to develop and select the right path. They variously describe themselves as less stressed and able to make their own decisions.

Respondents seem firmly convinced of the benefits of personal development as demonstrated by SHEP and a number will return for continuing personal development for as long as SHEP continues to offer it.

The training process throughout was seen by the majority in terms of being "...life-changing," "a personal journey," "getting me back on track," and "a turning point in relationships." Indeed, many lasting friendships appear to have been formed between participants.

At the close of F1, participants are provided with details of other SHEP courses, but respondents did not think that everyone went on to do more, although they did describe the experience of SHEP training as "addictive" and "of real importance" although it is difficult to pin down exactly why that is.

The skills learned from SHEP training were also seen as being of benefit to other organisations and individuals that participants would come into contact with in future. To general agreement, one respondent commented: "I love passing on what I've learned."

8. *Would accreditation have been a good thing for this course? Would that have added value for you?*

Respondents were not sure that outside accreditation would be of value in the context of F1 or F2. While accreditation could have benefits this should not be at the expense of fundamentally changing the content or delivery of courses.

Participants do receive a certificate on completion of F1 and this was seen to have a real value in itself for the individual. It was a mark of personal achievement, a mechanism for closure and also moving on.

It was felt that the actual hours put in to courses should be seen as a positive element in personal CV's showing commitment, development and ability to see things through. Those who are aware of SHEP tend to value its work and therefore recognise the value of course participation. However, it should not be forgotten that not everyone is aware of SHEP's work and may not perceive specific benefit from participation in F1 or F2.

9. *Are there any other comments that you would like to make that you think would be helpful?*

Respondents seemed to feel that they had been able to cover all of the things they wanted to say about SHEP and the courses they had undertaken in the general discussion.

The only additional elements suggested were:

1. Offering short courses or taster sessions for people to see for themselves if SHEP courses would be of benefit to them without committing to a full-blown course at the outset.
2. Setting up small networks for additional support for course participants is particularly valuable.

What was striking in this consultation exercise was the sense of confidence and of being at ease with themselves that the respondents demonstrated throughout.

The Foundation courses and the other SHEP courses mentioned were seen as positive and life-changing experiences with real content and benefits to offer. In no way could this process be said to have been, for the participants, in any way airy-fairy, unstructured, vague or empty.

Whatever effects and changes respondents have seen in their personal outlook and attitudes seem to have been both positive and permanent. One respondent simply summed the experience up in the words, "I changed."

Section 7 - Observations & Recommendations

The specific aim of the evaluation was to provide an independent assessment of the **effectiveness** and **impact** of SHEP's Core Training Programme in order to assist the project **to learn from and improve the quality of the programme.**

7.1. Evaluation Questions

The evaluation has addressed the evaluation questions and the following observations are relevant.

Evaluation Objective No. 1: To identify the strengths and weaknesses of the core training programme

Strengths

- SHEP's Core Training Programme is a unique, integrated education and training programme based on well-thought principles of empowerment and self-determination which stands apart from the activities of other training organisations in the region and elsewhere
- SHEP's ability to engage with prospective participants, and its lack of use of conventional promotional vehicles is striking in this time when publicity is needed for most initiatives
- The organisation's support of participants, trainers and administrative personnel is honest, genuine and is a strong motivational factor in retaining involvement
- Course content has been carefully thought-out and is appropriate to people's needs and expectations in terms of personal development and empowerment
- Facilitators are very motivated, experienced and skilled and participants had universal praise for them
- SHEP's support to participants extends beyond courses and into areas such as personal counselling and guidance
- The organisation has an-going commitment to course review by participants, by facilitators and by SHEP's management and is open to critical reflection and adjustment

Weaknesses

- SHEP runs the risk of excluding some people from participating because so much of its successful engagement is on self-identification and social networking – avenues which may not be accessible to others in society
 - SHEP needs to consider ways of engaging with new groups of people who experience disadvantage so that it can truly deliver on all of its objectives
 - Systems appear to lack some coherency and consistency which increases the ongoing workload needed
 - Promotional material is confusing and at times written in quite inaccessible language which is off-putting and exclusionist. Core messages are not clear and often hidden in a vast array of text
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Evaluation Objective No. 2: To establish the extent to which the Core Training Programme demonstrates good practice

The programme's courses were demonstrably well-thought and considered and are clearly the outcome of many years of theoretical and practical experience in humanistic psychological theories and influences from community education. The content is under constant review and critical reflection by management within the context of the agreed mission, values and organisational ethos. Personal empowerment remains at the core of each training intervention and trainers' methods and approaches to each session, to each course, to each workshop reflect this. The only reservation we have is that of not engaging with a wider constituency so that they too could benefit from the training activity.

Evaluation Objective No. 3: To identify and analyse trends in the participation in the Core Training Programme for the years 2006-2009 (e.g. demographic and socio-economic profile)

We examined class lists for 2006, 2007 respectively as these were available in summary format. A number of application forms and class lists were available for subsequent years and these really helped in the examination of applicant profiles and are the basis of much of the analysis in this report. Some demographic data was also available which we also examined. It was not possible to delve into social class details other than to review geographical origin of applicants for whom we had application forms. This is a matter for work in the future.

Evaluation Objective No. 4: To evaluate trainees' satisfaction with the total training experience, including their views on the initial contact and course administration, their views on the trainers, and their experience of the training provided. It is proposed to confine this aspect of the research to individuals who participated in the Foundation training offered in September 2009 – May 2010 (7 groups), the GFS training offered in 2009 (two groups) and the most recent of each of the practitioner training courses

As explained at the Evaluation Methodology, there were some changes in the approach and focus primarily because the availability of a range of application forms and evaluation forms made it valid to incorporate material in the analysis. This reduced the need for participant surveys and also allowed for more exploration of a broader range of material. Focus groups – of various course participants – became a stronger feature than anticipated also, though the non-attendance at Mallow was a disappointment. Nevertheless there was quite a degree of unanimity and uniformity about responses in evaluation forms and focus groups and it is likely that participants would have had similar responses in locations other than Cork city which was the focus of most of the analysis in the focus groups.

Evaluation Objective No. 5: To assess the immediate and long term impact of the training on the lives of participants and those around them

The discussion in previous sections has focused upon the training impact and effectiveness and it is clear from the evaluation forms which we analysed and focus group discussions which we held that the courses had been a qualitatively positive experience for the vast majority of participants. Many participants had progressed to other SHEP courses and all indicated that their lives were different after their involvement.

It has been difficult to get a broad consensus as to whether participants' involvement in courses has affected their relationship with others. Some people did say they relate better to people, have a better quality of life, are making decisions which have a good impact on others but people did not respond in large numbers to this question or variations on the question in either the evaluation forms or the focus groups. It remains a question for another time.

Evaluation Objective No. 6: To assess trainers' satisfaction with the administration, delivery and supervision of the Core Training Programme

The trainers were asked in a group discussion about this and were also asked questions in the paper survey. It is clear, that from responses received by us, that trainers were very happy with the support which they received before, during and after their delivery of whatever course or courses they facilitated. They gave no further comment or recommendations on how this could be improved. The response to the survey was less than anticipated and perhaps other responses would have yielded alternative answers to consider.

Evaluation Objective No. 7: To identify any other outcomes of the training programme

The Core Training Programme delivers well on its own objectives and supports SHEP's mission and objectives. The training outcomes were focused on personal development and capacity building and as far as participants were concerned in their feedback they were satisfied in what they experienced and received. Trainers were satisfied with their facilitation experience. All involved remained motivated and excited by SHEP's purpose and mission. No other outcomes are likely as the breadth of what happened is sufficient in itself.

Evaluation Objective No. 8: To assess the adequacy of the management and supervisory systems in place

We saw no difficulties with the nature and type of management and supervision provided by SHEP's staff and committees. This seemed entirely appropriate to the context. We think that staff are very busy and have heavy workloads and perhaps this is an issue for management to consider in terms of future support and motivation. Too few people are doing too many things and we fear that this is not sustainable in the long-term. While this discussion is not directly relevant to the Core Training Programme, it does impact on people's ability to support the programme adequately.

In terms of operational systems, our observations lead us to believe that SHEP could streamline some of these to a. cut down on workload and b. be in a position to generate useful information for future planning. The organisation is very paper-dependent and this needs to be examined in terms of its value and need. We also noted lack of consistency in how application forms and evaluation forms are formatted and coded and this could be reviewed to optimise efficiencies.

We have referred to the under-use of common promotional channels and this needs to be addressed. Consistency of image, key messages, use of accessible language are all matters for review and need to be addressed in a way that makes sense for the agreed mission and purpose of the organisation.

Evaluation Objective No. 9: To assess the adequacy of the policy framework within which the Core Training Programme operates – (codes of practice, health and safety, etc.)

SHEP has been revisiting and reshaping policies that allow it to deliver on its mission in an appropriate and safe way for both its own personnel and for participants in each of the courses. Its attention to this has been commendable and will be helpful in the future. In our experience of community-based projects, there are many which try to develop and implement appropriate policies but sometimes the commitment and capacity is lacking. SHEP management is focused on proper policy development and delivery as a priority.

Evaluation Objective No. 10: To assess cost-effectiveness

Each course in the Core Training Programme is costed separately by SHEP in accordance with the administrative, management and facilitation costs involved. Costs are recouped through participant fees and supports from funding bodies. SHEP receives annual funding from the HSE to run the courses and from the Department of Community, Equality & Gaeltacht Affairs, funding to cover some core costs. Because of the number of courses which the organisation runs (including community training and once-off courses) and other services which it provides and supports, its resources are well-used and we have been advised that budgeting is a constant issue and source of anxiety, particularly at a time when SHEP's funding could be reduced. This would have a detrimental impact on their entire current service.

For participants, course cost was not actually an issue. Most respondents in the focus groups thought that the course offered great value for money. The monthly instalment plan was a real advantage for some people too. Others received support for their participation from the VEC, Department of Community, Equality & Gaeltacht Affairs or Partnership Companies/local community organisation and this facilitated their involvement. It was not possible to assess the full extent of subsidised training.

Evaluation Objective No. 11: To identify ways to improve the training programme, taking into account the recommendations of the 2005 Curriculum Review

The 2005 recommended that Foundation 1's content would remain substantially the same. It also recommended that a clearer difference be made between Foundation 1's focus and Foundation 2's focus. We still believe work needs to be done on this. Many participants did not appear to have a deep or committed understanding of the rationale behind the shift from Foundation 1 to Foundation 2. Some expressed this as not understanding why Foundation 2 did not appear to be a continuation of Foundation 1, when this is clearly not its primary purpose.

7.2 General Observations

The nature, delivery and perceived benefits of the Core Training Programme would seem to us to form **a unique package** unlike any other we have seen operating in the geographical region or related subject fields.

SHEP appears to demonstrate **a distinct and positive ethos and dynamic as an organisation** with a perceptible value system based around the individual within the context of community.

The level **of satisfaction is consistently high**. SHEP seems to have identified a real need within a sector of the community and is meeting that need to a high degree. Courses continue to attract applicants year on year without appearing to have outlasted the demand for them.

The majority of course participants perceive **a great benefit to themselves** from the courses they undertake, particularly in personal development, outlook on life and relationships within their community and to other individuals.

SHEP trainers feel valued and believe they are making a positive contribution to the lives of participants. **All SHEP staff exhibit a high degree of satisfaction and commitment in and to their work**. This comes across in every interaction and in how they relate to each other, to participants and to others with whom they have contact.

SHEP is a singular organisation offering a range of core training programmes unlike that offered in any other context in Ireland. Underpinned by a well-thought out vision and set of principles it is an empowering model of change and a positive vehicle of transformation in peoples' lives.

SHEP – in common with other evolving organisations – **faces challenges** in the delivery of its Core Training Programme which need to be addressed to ensure that it continues to achieve its vision.

These include:

- Simplifying and refining its communication methods and use of tools to convey key messages and to target prospective participants and supporting organisations and to adjust these to suit contexts other than Cork city.
- Developing a strategy in relation to identifying other groups and individuals to be targeted in line with its stated vision and purpose.
- Ensuring that trainers are at the centre of on-going planning and development of the overall programme and of specific aspects of course content.
- Maintaining its relevance to its core funders – the HSE, the Department of Community, Equality & Gaeltacht Affairs and FÁS (and its successor).

7.3 Recommendations

It is in the light of these observations that we offer the following recommendations to SHEP in developing the strategic planning for sustainability that the coming years will demand:

- 1. Communications:** We would recommend a review of communications mechanisms for their effectiveness. Paper, media, advertising and internet could reflect activity and outcomes more accurately and enhance the image of SHEP training.

A large number of course participants become involved with SHEP by personal recommendation. However, more targeted awareness and ongoing communication strategies could widen the target base for training.

At the same time, there is a definite value in being able to demonstrate in a dynamic fashion through organisational communications the values, activities and benefit of the Core Training Programme to existing and potential funders and partners.

- 2. Alignment to Purpose:** There could be better alignment of SHEP training activities and outcomes with published, or about to be revised, versions of the organisational Mission Statement, Aims and Objectives, Vision and Core Values and other published material. The present economic climate will force publicly-funded organisations to justify themselves in as robust a way as possible and it may well be that SHEP could present the benefits of its activities in a fashion which is more beneficial to itself.
- 3. Targeting & Relevance:** The value of SHEP's training depends on the organisation's ability to maintain the relevance and immediacy of its programme, by being able to keep a finger on the pulse of community needs and priorities. If the type and profile of participants changes then there is a need to be prepared to alter approaches and content and possibly offer variations in the delivery of Foundation Courses or even in the content of the Community Training Programme.

Although Core Training Courses continue to attract people, part of the holistic procedure of managing that programme is about *monitoring and assessing* which target groups need to be included in the recruitment process.

Based on observation and feedback from those involved in the evaluation process, we would recommend examining two possible areas of diversification which could be offered in partnership with other significant stakeholder organisations: Transition Year students and prison inmates.

Participants from these target groups could be offered, for example, elements taken from the Foundation 1 Course and the Continuing Personal Development Course. Such initiatives would need to be carefully planned and prepared, and piloted with selected partner institutions to ensure maximum benefit from such significant new areas of operation.

At the same time, there would be great value in adding two State-funded Public Departments to SHEP's partners in training delivery.

- 4. Environment:** It is not precisely apparent exactly how 'environment' features in SHEP training activity. There is a perceived emphasis on green issues in published statements which could be construed as misleading. This is not a major issue, but it

could lead to confusion and misinterpretation of the value of SHEP's operations if and when public funding comes under the next round of robust scrutiny.

- 5. Record-keeping:** There would seem to be scope for some standardisation of SHEP systems of record-keeping across the board such as application processes, information on activity and evaluation processes. The use of the SHEP database is a key element here and could help considerably in the easier compilation of statistics and information that in some cases need to be gathered manually at present.

Once set up, such systems could not only save some staff time in processing but also generate valuable and meaningful management data. Better connectivity does lead to better connections, a better information flow and a better image.

- 6. Partnership:** There could well be scope for SHEP to aim for increased partnership on the ground. Provision away from the centre does not always appear to be consistent; for example, Fermoy activity seems patchy from the information available. SHEP might consider moving to establish 'Centres of Excellence' as a positive strategy for stronger local partnerships, for example entering into dialogue with localised organisations such as Family Resource Centres. Such local partners could also play a vital role in identifying community needs and target groups.

Such a process could also help to produce an integrated strategy involving the Community Training initiative and bringing it to the standards of the Core Training Programme.

- 7. Re-branding:** Although not a major concern, we would recommend giving thought to the re-branding of the Foundation 1 and Foundation 2 Courses to more accurately reflect what is involved. It is demonstrably not necessary to undertake these two courses in sequence. At the same time, some participants felt that F2 would be more of the style and content of F1 and were a little surprised at the nature of F2 when they began it. Possibly F1 could become The Foundation Course and F2 have a new title more accurately reflecting its ethos.

- 8. Accreditation:** There would seem to be some scope for course accreditation but not universally across the Core Training spectrum. Some courses would not benefit from or be suitable for formal accreditation. We would therefore only recommend the exploration of formal accreditation for Generic Facilitation Skills and Integrated Specialised Tutor Training.

- 9. Trainers' Role:** The relationship between the organisation and the trainers is fundamentally important to the delivery and success of the whole training programme. Therefore, we would recommend that the SHEP should look at mechanisms for empowering trainers to participate as partners in taking the organisation forward, to retain its sustainability and relevance, and to help in planning any new developments.

For example, if SHEP were to spend time on developing training products related to any of the potential target groups mentioned above, the process of research and planning for that could involve a select number of trainers in those processes in order to contribute to the necessary work, gather vital data, and create a sense of ownership and partnership.

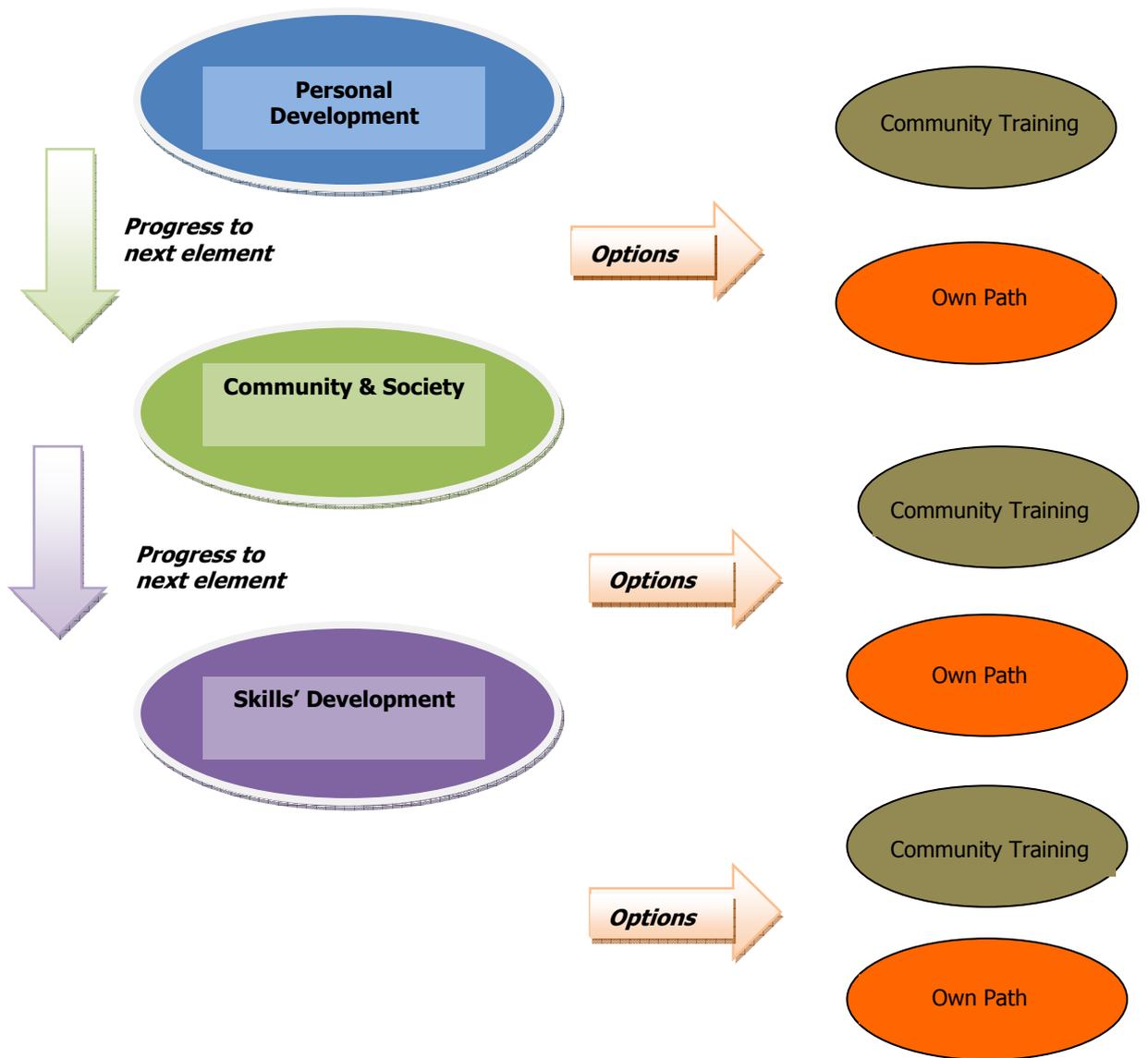
10. Strategic Planning: A time of evaluation is also an opportune time for considering the strategic planning for the future of the Core Training Programme. As demonstrated by the research undertaken by Kearney Consultants and outlined in this report, SHEP has a valued set of training products on offer which continue to attract participants who rate the programme very highly indeed.

In the light of that success, we would offer the following recommendations around the strategic planning process:

- The separate elements of the Core Training Programme can be seen to fall naturally into three main areas of work – 2 of those are concerned with personal development, 1 with society and community, and 3 with specific skills’ development.
- Integrated Specialised Tutor Training, Generic Facilitation Skills, and the UCC Diploma stand together, and the first two of these should be looked at in the light of gaining formal accreditation.
- The Foundation Course can be delivered in its present totality, or as derivatives for specific target groups. This can either be done as part of the Core Training Programme or as a basis for Personal Development Training based in the community.
- Foundation 2 has scope for development in its own right and could then be re-branded under a new title. Derivatives from the existing and/or reworked F2 could also become part of the Community Training Programme.
- Therefore, SHEP strategic planning around the Core Training Programme can be seen in terms of 3 main elements – Personal Development, Community and Society, and Specific Skills’ Development.

As is the case currently, one has the ability to opt out at any of the three elements. This can be clearly explained to participants. There are also interfaces between these three elements which could also inform the future of the Community Training Programme.

This can be described figuratively as follows:



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