



Strengthening Families Programme  
Galway City & County  
Annual Report 2014

# Foreword

I am delighted to present to you the Galway Strengthening Families Programme's 2014 annual report. 2014 was an extremely busy year for the programme in Galway and we continue to build on the successes of previous roll outs around the county.

SFP has a long history of successful programmes in Galway and taking up the reins has not been a difficult task given the passion and energy that has been brought to this programme locally thus far.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved in the programme locally; my management at Empowerment Plus, the Interagency Steering Committee who look to strategically develop the programme locally, the working groups around the county, the teams of facilitators who have delivered the programme, the families and young people who have participated and made this a fantastic programme locally. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all our funders who provide us with the capital to run programmes, the incentives to encourage families to attend and to those agencies who provide us with match funding through the provision of premises to run our programmes.

I look forward to 2015 and the plans in place for SFP and to all the families and young people that we are yet to meet.

Rachel Browne, Development Coordinator

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# Steering Committee



West Training  
& Development  
Ltd.



**Western Region**  
drugs task force  
Meitheal Drugaí an Iarthair



This project is assisted by the Maureen O Connell fund of the  
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# Working Groups

**GTM, Dochas  
don Oige,  
HSCL GCC,  
HSCL Colaiste  
Einde,  
Bohermore  
YDP, YAP,  
WRDTF,  
GRETB, Tusla  
Family  
Support**

Galway City

**Tusla Family  
Support,  
TreoNua,  
Tuam Youth  
Services,  
WRDTF,  
GRETB, SCP  
Tuam,  
Galway  
County  
Council,**

Tuam

**The Junction  
Project, GTM,  
GRETB,  
WRDTF, Garda  
Siochana,  
Tusla Family  
Support, HSCL  
Ard Scoil  
Mhuire,  
Involve Youth  
Services.  
volunteers**

Ballinasloe

**HSCL Carna,  
HSCL Clifden  
Community  
School, Forum  
Connemara,  
SCP  
Connemara,  
GRETB, WRDTF,  
TUSLA Social  
Work, Tusla  
Family Support,  
Galway County  
Council,  
volunteers**

North  
Connemara

# Background

- The Strengthening Families Program was initially developed in the U.S.A at the University of Utah by Karol L. Kumpfer, Ph.D in 1982.
- Since then it has become a nationally and internationally recognized family skills programme families at varying levels of risk.
- SFP is an evidence-based training programme for the whole family which has been found to significantly reduce problem behaviours, alcohol and drug use and furthermore works to improve social competencies and school performance.
- It has been running in Ireland since 2007.

# History of the Programme Galway



# Sample Programme Topics





# Objectives for 3 Year Funding Period

- Develop operational governance of the Steering Committee
- Reconvene and develop the working groups in four different areas
- Develop and maintain a database of trained group leaders across the county
- Run 3-4 programmes per year
- Engage a yearly training strategy to engage new recruits
- Increase public awareness of SFP around County Galway
- Increase agency awareness of SFP around County Galway
- Develop standard operating procedures and policies for the safe running of the programme
- Develop publications and information leaflets for the programme
- Engage young people in the recruitment of families
- Source funding for programmes
- Secure a sustainability plan for SFP post 2016
- Engage with research processes to work towards best practice

# Key Development Pieces 2014

3 programmes  
Opened up  
referrals to more  
organisations  
particularly Tusla  
SW, Tusla Family  
Support and other  
youth  
organisations  
Began process of  
training trainers  
Engaged with  
National Council



Devised  
workable policy  
and procedures  
Generated public  
interest in SFP  
Generated  
agency interest  
in SFP  
Sourced funding  
for three  
programmes  
Recruited three  
teams of group  
leaders

6 fathers

24 mothers

34 teenagers

24380e  
raised in  
funding

12,855 spent on  
programmes  
2014

88% of  
referrals  
have  
come  
through  
Tusla

Programmes:  
Galway City  
Tuam  
Connemara

26 group leaders  
participated in  
programmes

24 families have commenced  
programmes this year

# Referrers

“The Strengthening Families Programme has had a huge impact on a family that I have referred this year. The mother has learned that it is the parents that need to make the changes to themselves, to best support their teenagers wellbeing and growth. She always felt it was the teenager that needed to change, whereas now after taking part in SFP, she sees life through the teenagers eyes”

*Social Care Worker*

# Group Leaders

“The SFP programme that I took part in my opinion was a true success in transforming parent's lives. This would not have been possible without the work of an effective and supportive coordinator and willing volunteers. The transformations I am referring to relate to both my observations and to the voice of the parents. For example over the 14 weeks I saw a parent's outlook on life, their assertiveness and their parenting techniques vastly improve, taking the programme on board - decreasing their 'nagging' and using loss of privileges as techniques to deal with a teenager who is going through a difficult phase.

Further to this the true power of the programme was revealed as parents assisted each other and offered examples of techniques that they used that were effective. It is clear that increased levels of social support was also achieved. In our last parent session parents were asked to bring a symbol of their SFP journey - one parent brought a plant that was wilting when we started the programme and has come back to life as a representation of how she flourished over the 14 weeks. Another parent brought a worry stone - indicating that she was become less worried and more mindful as she takes actions to improve her whole family's life. Another parent brought a star as a symbol of hope as she has become more optimistic and confident in her parenting”.

Group Leader, December 2014

# Parents & Teens

“[the meal] was a tasty icebreaker each evening”.

“I thought it was very helpful for my family as we are not fighting as much as we used to. I liked the dinner I felt that it brought all the families together...I even made new friends”

“the lovely experience of the family sitting and eating together as a family as opposed to everyone on their own balancing food on their knees in front of the TV”.

“My home is calmer, with anger, shouting and aggression being replaced by calm discussion, respect and empathy”.

# Families

“Hi everybody, I have attended this programme with my wife and our son. We wanted to attend this programme because we felt that we had lost our son and no matter how we tried we could not get our views across to him. But for us to be here our son had to agree to be here as well, and he agreed, and it was good for us to know that he wanted to be here with us for over two hours for 14 weeks. Which is time I personally would not change for anything. My first thank you is to my son for agreeing to come and completing the 14 weeks, I believe over this period of time that the three of us have challenged ourselves and changed our ways of thinking and behaving towards each other. How I hear you ask? By using the natural tools that we were reminded we had but rarely used up until the 5<sup>th</sup> February. They are our ears for listening, our mouths for talking to one another and not at one another. Our eyes to let each other know that we respect what the other person is saying or that we see that the other person is listening. What was most important to me was while practising these natural assets that we all have, it made another emotion that had been buried under the stress, worry, anxiety, exasperation and despair re-surface. It is my and our love that was there the moment our son entered our lives and is still there and will be there for the duration of our lives. It is easy for me to say the next few lines and I hope my son hears them and remembers them and I also feel that every teenager on this programme has done the same. I feel my son and all of you have matured over the last 14 weeks and are all the better for coming here. Also the time I spent with the other parents has been wonderful and funny and a learning experience that I will remember with fondness. Personally speaking I feel that every person on this island would benefit from doing the Strengthening Families Programme. You have every reason to be proud of this programme...as I believe it is a gift put on our paths. Earlier I mentioned the heart. It is important for me that ye all know that my heart is in a grateful place and everybody in this room has had a part in that. Thank you”.

Parent, May 2014

# Plans for 2015

- Run a further three programmes
- Recruit group leaders for these three programmes and recruit for 2016 programmes
- Secure funding for four remaining programmes during funding period
- Work with external evaluators to look at the effectiveness of the Development Coordinator role in programme development and delivery
- Continue work with Community Knowledge Initiative @ NUI Galway
- Devise and deliver on a sustainability plan
- Publish annual report for 2014
- Hold an annual event for group leaders to acknowledge their involvement and capture the learning from local adaptations
- Look at manual adaptations
- Continue to run two trainings per year
- Continue to liaise with National Council
- Make a short promotional dvd for use in awareness raising
- Participate in parenting conference in Connemara



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