



le chéile
MENTORING

LE CHÉILE MENTORING STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2023

Inspiring hope, believing in change



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Le Cheile Mentoring is funded by the Irish Youth Justice Service through the Probation Service, as part of Ireland's European Structural and Investment Funds Programmes 2014-2020, which is co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Union



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An tSeirbhís Phromhaidh
The Probation Service



Irish Youth Justice Service
Seirbhís na hÉireann um Chosantas i leith an Aosa Óig

Foreword

Welcome to our new strategy, which has been developed after an extensive consultation process with young people, volunteers, staff within Le Chéile Mentoring, as well as consultation with the Probation Service and key agencies with whom we work. I want to thank all who contributed their knowledge and expertise and, on behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to commit to ensuring that this strategy is implemented and acts as a framework for the development of Le Chéile Mentoring over the next four years.

Le Chéile's mentoring is provided by volunteer mentors from local communities, who act as positive role models and provide a supportive relationship for young people and parents. Our staff team carry out the recruitment, training, support, and supervision of the mentors to ensure we provide high quality services and support young people to make the most of their lives. Our volunteers and staff team are central to our new strategy and achieving our goals.

I am delighted to present this strategy which works to further our vision: *For every young person at risk - the right supports at the right time, to make the most of their lives.*

Louise Callaghan

Chairperson

"I felt like I was actually cared for, not like the person on the other side of the table was just doing their job, it felt like there was actual care there."

Young Person

Introduction

This strategy focuses on hope and positive change. Our new slogan 'Inspiring hope, believing in change' sums up our commitment and belief that all young people have a right to develop to their full potential. In particular, young people involved in offending behaviour are entitled to the right supports at the right time, to make the most of their lives.

Youth involvement in offending behaviour is very much linked to disadvantaged communities, child poverty, early school leaving, substance abuse, and families under pressure. That is not to say that all young people who grow up in disadvantaged communities get involved in offending or anti-social behaviour. Absolutely not. However, a correlation exists between child poverty and socio-economic disadvantage and young people's involvement in offending.

Research has also shown that young people who offend share many features, such as impulsivity, indifferent attitudes to offending, low empathy, peer group enforcement, poor school attendance, mental health issues, poor supervision and minimizing attitudes by parents. Some children and young people, because of their vulnerability or family connections, are drawn into involvement in gangs. Youth crime and offending behaviour is complex and young people, their families and communities need particular support and interventions.

In this new strategy, Le Chéile Mentoring is setting out an ambitious framework for our service delivery and development over the next four years. Mentoring has been proven to be an effective intervention for young people actively involved in crime. We want to enhance mentoring for young people and for their parents and carers. We want to develop the parenting and family supports, which are pivotal to effective youth justice interventions. We want to strengthen working relationships with the Probation Service and other partners in the knowledge that effective coordination and collaboration between agencies is linked to better outcomes for young people. As a national charity, we will ensure proper governance, effective management, and staff and volunteer development.

Our strategy reflects our best current thinking, informed by evidence and expertise. However, the strategy has been developed during the Covid crisis of 2020, a time of unprecedented uncertainty and change. We acknowledge the importance of monitoring social and economic developments as we implement this strategy. We are also cognisant of the Youth Justice review underway and forthcoming strategy from the Department of Justice and Equality. It is imperative that the new Youth Justice Strategy provides a blueprint, resources, and ambitious targets to be achieved. Accordingly, the Le Chéile Mentoring strategy is a live document and we will need to be responsive to significant external developments, which may emerge during the lifetime of our strategy.

We in Le Chéile are optimistic about the future of youth justice in Ireland. We believe in young people and in the power of volunteer mentoring. Working in partnership with young people, their families, local communities and services, together we will achieve better outcomes for young people and families and safer communities for us all.

Anne Conroy

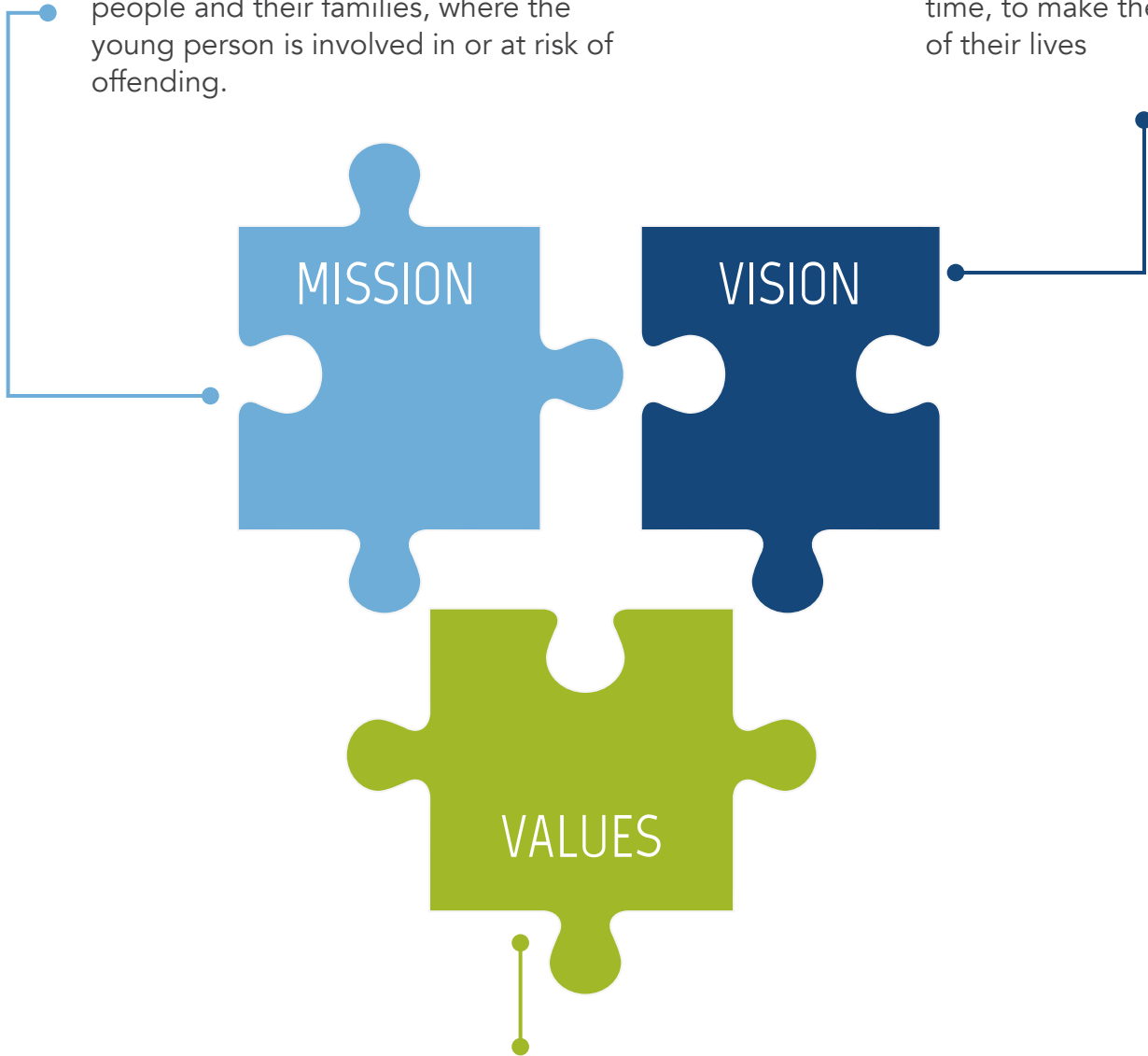
CEO

Our Mission

Le Chéile Mentoring is a national, volunteer mentoring and family support service, which works with young people and their families, where the young person is involved in or at risk of offending.

Our Vision

For every young person at risk - the right supports at the right time, to make the most of their lives



Our Values

We believe in the potential of every young person.

We are committed to a restorative approach.

We believe in volunteer mentoring.

We value partnership with young people, families and other agencies.

We listen – respect – empower.

We are committed to excellence in everything that we do.

Our Services

Youth Mentoring

- Youth Mentoring is a one-to-one relationship-based support between a volunteer mentor and a young person. Mentors act as a positive role model, advisor and friendly supporter. They offer young people support, stability, general guidance and help them make choices, as well as set achievable goals and realistic challenges. They listen, care, give advice, and share information and life/career experience with them. They get involved with young people in various structured and planned activities and help them build self-esteem and self-confidence.
- An independent evaluation of Le Chéile's mentoring found that mentoring has significant positive impacts for young people who engage with the service, with the biggest gains made in the areas of self-confidence, hopefulness, communications, engagement in activities and, crucially, offending behaviour. The finding of a reduction in offending behaviour of 28 percent is significant given international experience.

"They don't treat you as if you are a bad person, they treat you as if you are the same as them."

Young Person speaking about their Mentor

"Le Chéile has taught me that I matter, that I must look after myself and seek happiness for myself and in myself"

Parent

Parent Mentoring

- Parent mentoring helps parents or carers develop their own parenting skills and gives support with parenting issues. Parent mentoring provides a non-judgemental time and space outside the family home to parents under pressure.
- Le Chéile provides mentoring for parents or carers of young people at risk of offending, on probation or in detention.
- In the evaluation of parent mentoring, the most significant benefits for parents were improved self-confidence and emotional well-being. Benefits also accrued in terms of improved self-esteem, hopefulness and ability to manage stress, improved parenting skills and family relationships, and greater involvement in activities outside the home.

Family Support

Le Chéile provides a range of parenting programmes and can link parents to locally available parenting programmes, such as Parenting Together, Strengthening Families Programme, and Parenting Plus.

1. Parenting Together

Parenting Together (also known as Non-Violent Resistance Parenting) is a programme for parents and carers experiencing child to parent abuse. The programme, which can be run in a group or one to one, aims to empower and support parents in preventing and responding to controlling and violent behaviour by children and young people.

"It was meeting [my Mentor] I think I realised I could still be something or somebody."

Parent

"I would honestly recommend Le Chéile to anyone who is struggling in any area of their lives."

Parent

2. Strengthening Families Programme

Le Chéile coordinates and funds Strengthening Families Programme (SFP) on behalf of the Probation Service, providing support and advice to local steering committees. SFP is an evidence-based, whole family skills training programme, designed to work with high stress families, including families with drug and alcohol issues. SFP has been proven to help build communication skills, decrease risk factors in families and reduce negative behaviours in children.

"These people go above and beyond what's required of them – all to better your life. You can be yourself, never be judged, just listened to. Just give them a chance and I bet you won't be sorry."

Parent

3. Family Support Interventions

Family Support Interventions are tailored supports designed for each individual family's needs, which complement the mentoring sessions. Family support interventions aim to improve communications within the family and promote the importance of family relationships. Examples might include family mediation or a family meal.

"They were patient, compassionate, kind, supportive and always looking for signs of my improving sense of self and wellness and happiness."

Parent

"It was good to get the opportunity to tell my parents I didn't mean to hurt them."

Young Person engaged in the Restorative Justice Project

"It feels like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders."

Young Person engaged in the Restorative Justice Project

Restorative Justice

- Le Chéile is committed to a restorative approach. We run a Restorative Justice Project in Counties Limerick and Clare.
- Restorative Justice brings together all people affected by the crime (offenders, victims, families and communities) and focuses on repairing the harm. We use a number of different approaches tailor-made to the needs of the young person and the victims. The project was independently evaluated in 2014 and was found to have significant benefits not only for young people but also for the families and the victims of crime.
- Le Chéile also provides training in Restorative Justice for professionals. Le Chéile's mentoring incorporates a restorative ethos and all volunteers are trained in restorative practice.

Our strategy has four goals

1. We will deliver quality services to young people and their families.
2. We will enhance and develop our services to meet new and changing needs.
3. We will increase public awareness of Le Chéile Mentoring.
4. We will ensure proper governance, effective management, and staff and volunteer development.

"It brought me out of the house, taught me that I have something to contribute and got me back to college for further study so it has been life changing."

Volunteer Mentor on the experience of mentoring

"No words can explain as a volunteer, to give 1-2 hours a week, the feeling you get when you see a person grow and want to make changes in their life because they have someone who meets with them and believes in them."

Volunteer Mentor

Goal 1: We will deliver quality services to young people and their families

Objective	Priorities
1.a Build effective partnerships and pathways so that Le Chéile Mentoring, working with the Probation Service, delivers excellent services and makes a difference in the lives of young people.	Ensure effective referral protocols and delivery pathways for young people and parents who will benefit from access to Le Chéile Mentoring's services.
	Define and monitor shared targets and indicators of effectiveness with the Probation Service, so that we are meeting the needs of young people, and working with their parents, families and carers.
1.b Plan our mentoring and family support services so that they are targeted, effective, and improve outcomes for young people.	Prepare, manage, monitor and assess annual service plans, which are prepared in line with this Strategy and consistent with national policy, as defined by the Youth Justice Strategy.
	Develop mentor and service capacity to respond to young people with more complex needs.
	Develop mentor and service capacity to respond to the needs of young people who are or have been in care.
	Develop the parent / family support approach in all services, including parents of young people in detention in Oberstown.
	Explore with the Probation Service a strategic, interagency approach to strengthen support to young people to participate in education and training.
1.c Review the Restorative Justice Service to ensure effective service delivery to young people and enhance the restorative approach throughout Le Chéile Mentoring.	Deliver effective Restorative Justice interventions to young people in Counties Limerick and Clare.
	Review of Restorative Justice policies and practice.
	Develop policy, training plans and evaluation methods to support embedding and integration of the restorative approach.

"I always leave the meeting feeling better and glad we met up."

Young Person

Goal 2: We will enhance and develop our services to meet new and changing needs

Objective	Priorities
2.a Reflect on our experience and best practice to build enhanced services to meet wider needs in the Youth Justice sector.	<p>Develop effective and robust plans with young people to support them following completion of Le Chéile Mentoring.</p> <p>Review and enhance support for young people who are parents.</p> <p>Explore with the Probation Service the potential for a joint approach to family supports, including younger siblings.</p> <p>Explore the potential for technology-based approaches in Le Chéile's services, in partnership with relevant ICT expertise.</p>
2.b Prepare for and participate in targeted interventions by the Probation Service or other state services where needs arise.	<p>Explore opportunities for Le Chéile's skills and services to support targeted interventions.</p> <p>Provide responsive and appropriate services and support based on the Le Chéile Mentoring model and the commitment to a restorative approach.</p>
2.c Replicate Le Chéile's success in trial initiatives which are proved effective.	<p>Work in partnership with the Probation Service, IYJS and other agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop / extend Le Chéile Mentoring within targeted youth projects. • Ensure access to mentoring for young people who are in juvenile and adult detention, and post-detention, on a planned basis.
2.d Develop greater access to our services and increase availability so that we reach all who can benefit.	<p>Work with the Probation Service to define needs nationwide to develop access to Le Chéile's services so that those young people, parents, and families who would benefit are reached.</p>

"The more I realised I needed it, the more it is after helping me, I love going now."

Young Person

Goal 3: We will increase public awareness of Le Chéile Mentoring

Objective	Priorities
3.a Promote the profile of Le Chéile Mentoring so that we are known for the quality and impact of our work.	<p>Develop a Communications Plan to inform and raise awareness of Le Chéile's services, impact and experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting all aspects of the work of Le Chéile. • Using all appropriate media to communicate. • Incorporating effective tracking and evaluation methods.
3.b Influence national policy and strategy so that our experience and expertise makes a difference.	<p>Report our work, its impact, our knowledge so that national strategy and wider policy is informed and responsive to the needs of young people and the strategies that work.</p>
	<p>Identify issues and engage in and use research that will build knowledge to inform policy and practice in the delivery of effective services and supports to young people.</p>

“My time with Le Chéile, has given me the chance to learn, not only by their training programs but also from the people you meet along the way. It is very rewarding to be able to help young adults or parents, to offer support and guidance.”

**Volunteer
Mentor**

Goal 4: We will ensure proper governance, effective management, and staff and volunteer development

Objective	Priorities
<p>4.a Invest in and develop Le Chéile people so that we are the best at what we do.</p>	<p><i>Young people</i> - Deliver a Le Chéile Young People's Participation Plan so that young people with direct experience of our services are our advisors and advocates.</p> <p><i>Volunteer mentors</i> - Enhance our Volunteer Strategy to build diversity and provide ongoing training and support to enable volunteer mentors to provide quality mentoring.</p> <p><i>Staff</i> – Develop the skills and capacity of our staff to deliver excellent services and support and respond to changing needs.</p> <p><i>Board</i> – Maintain our high-quality Board and enhancing recruitment, induction, training, and performance to deliver excellent governance.</p>
<p>4.b Develop our operational systems so that we deliver and build quality services and are publicly accountable for our work.</p>	<p>Continuously improve our case management and reporting systems to inform planning and day to day delivery of excellent services and supports.</p> <p>Utilise our data input and analysis to inform ongoing service delivery and development, influence policy and communications work.</p> <p>Identify opportunities and develop digital capacity so that we make maximum use of technology and are using appropriate tools and infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In mentoring and related service delivery. • In delivering the Communications Plan. • In Le Chéile's operations.
<p>4.c Ensure compliance across Le Chéile's systems so that we meet the highest standards.</p>	<p>Maintain embedding of good practice.</p> <p>Enhance the skills and systems that provide the Board and management team with the ability to deliver consistent governance oversight.</p> <p>Maintain compliance with the Governance Code of the Charities Regulatory Authority.</p>



Objective	Priorities
4.d Establish financial/funding support so that we deliver sustainable and responsive services.	<p>Manage and develop funder relationships with the Probation Service and other agencies to support the delivery of the services in this Strategic Plan.</p> <p>Pursue new funding opportunities which align with the Strategy.</p>
4.e Maintaining a dynamic and responsive Strategy.	<p>In response to the publication of the new Youth Justice Strategy, the management team to identify any implications for Le Chéile Mentoring.</p> <p>Board led formal review of the Strategic Plan at the mid-point to ensure that the needs of young people and families are being met through effective responses and service development.</p>

“I find Le Chéile a really good organisation to volunteer for, as they are very appreciative of my work, and I feel very supported by my coordinator.”

Volunteer Mentor

The Impact of the Le Chéile Mentoring Model

In 2017 we published the findings of an independent evaluation of our youth and parent mentoring service¹. Key findings are as follows:

1. Mentoring has significant positive impacts for young people who engage with the service, with gains made in the areas of self-confidence, hopefulness, communications, engagement in activities and, crucially, offending behaviour.
2. Le Chéile's mentoring service gives a social return on investment of €4.35 for every €1 invested.
3. The current model of mentoring for young people and parents is robust and fit for purpose.
4. The fact that mentors are volunteers is a key strength of the Le Chéile model.
5. A number of young people and their parents commented that they would have benefitted from earlier access to mentoring.
6. Mentoring was seen as having a valuable role in providing support for young people from care backgrounds.
7. Young people and their families appreciated the support during detention and mentors commented that it strengthened the basis for mentoring after release.
8. Parents who are mentored are better placed to deal with the child who is in trouble and to restore and develop a healthier home environment for themselves and any siblings.

"I feel wrecked from talking, but positive that I'm doing the right thing."

**Young
Person**

¹Dr Kieran O'Dwyer, 2017, Reducing Youth Crime in Ireland - An Evaluation of Le Chéile Mentoring

About Le Chéile Mentoring

Le Chéile Mentoring is a national organisation which works to make positive changes in the lives of young people who offend and their families, through the provision of Mentoring, Family Support and Restorative Justice services. We provide tailored and flexible services with young people at the core. We work in partnership with the Probation Service and other agencies to reduce the level of crime in the community.

Established in 2005 in North County Dublin, we were set up to fulfil the requirements of the Mentor (Family Support) Order of the Children Act 2001, to provide mentoring services to children under the age of 18 who are involved with the Probation Service. In 2008, Le Chéile expanded our service to work with parents or carers of young people who offend. We provide a range of family support services to the family of the young person, including parent mentoring, parenting programmes and individualised family support interventions - all designed to meet each family's needs.

Le Chéile currently provides services in counties Dublin, Kildare, Offaly, Laois, Meath, Waterford, Tipperary, Limerick, Clare, Kerry, Cork, and we have increased the age range of young people with whom we work up to 23.

Le Chéile Mentoring is an NGO, governed by a Board of Directors, and is structured as a company limited by guarantee and registered with the Charity Regulator.

Le Chéile is funded by the Department of Justice and Equality through the Probation Service, as part of Ireland's European Structural and Investment Funds Programmes 2014-2020, which is co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Union. Our Restorative Justice Project receives funding from the Probation Service and Limerick City and County Council.

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Registered Charity No. 20066000
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CHY 17621