



le chéile
MENTORING

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Inspiring hope,
believing in change

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An tSeirbhís Phromhaidh
The Probation Service



An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt,
Gnóthaí Baile agus Imirce
Department of Justice,
Home Affairs and Migration

Le Chéile Mentoring is funded by the Department of Justice through the Probation Service.

Introduction from Our Chairperson

Carin Bryans

As Chairperson of Le Chéile Mentoring, I am pleased to reflect on a year that marked an important period of transition and continued growth for the organisation.

In 2025, Laura Walsh stepped into the role of Chief Executive Officer, while I succeeded James Doorley as Chairperson after his many years of commitment and stewardship. I would also like to acknowledge our former CEO, Anne Conroy, whose dedication and leadership helped shape Le Chéile Mentoring over many years.

These transitions were managed in a smooth and thoughtful way, ensuring continuity for the young people, families, volunteers and communities we support. The Board also continued to focus strongly on good governance, succession planning and ensuring Le Chéile Mentoring is well positioned for the future.

Throughout the year, I was struck repeatedly by the passion and dedication of Le Chéile's staff and volunteers. We saw the continued growth of restorative justice alongside our mentoring programmes, while our conferences created opportunities to share learning and hear directly from those involved. The continued trust of our funders and stakeholders also helped us extend our services.

I would like to sincerely thank our staff, volunteers, Board members, funders and partners for their ongoing dedication and support. Most importantly, I want to acknowledge the young people, parents and families who place their trust in Le Chéile Mentoring every day.

As we look ahead, I am confident that Le Chéile Mentoring remains strongly positioned to continue delivering meaningful, compassionate and impactful work in communities across Ireland.



Carin Bryans
Chairperson

Welcome from our CEO

Laura Walsh

A Chairde,

I am honoured to share my first reflection as CEO of Le Chéile Mentoring for 2025. Over the past year, I have had the opportunity to get to know the organisation and build relationships with staff, volunteers, partners and funders.

First and foremost, I want to thank our volunteers. The time, consistency and relationships you bring to this work are at the centre of what Le Chéile Mentoring does and continue to make a real difference in communities across the country.

What has stood out to me most is the care both our staff and volunteers take in the work itself. Across mentoring, restorative justice and family support, there is a strong emphasis on trust, steadiness and responding properly to the needs of young people and families.

Our staff have offered clear-eyed and professional insights into the challenges Le Chéile Mentoring faces, but also into what our service gets right and where we excel. I also want to acknowledge the pressures facing those we support, including the rising cost of living and increasing strain on vital public services.

In 2025, we progressed the Family Support Research with Archways, continued to grow our restorative justice work and contributed to the European CoPPer Project. Our two national conferences also featured people who had experienced mentoring and restorative justice with us, bringing the work to life for attendees.

At times, the impact of this work can unfold quietly and its long-term effects can be difficult to see in the moment. This report includes first-hand accounts from mentors and participants about the role this work has played in their lives.

As you read through this report, I hope you come away with a sense of the care and persistence that directs the work we all do. I want to sincerely thank everyone who contributed to that work throughout 2025.

Laura Walsh
CEO



2025 In Numbers

323

Worked with



186

Young people mentored



74

Parents mentored



219

Total Volunteer mentors



75

New volunteers recruited in 2025



47

Family Support Interventions in 2025



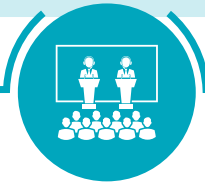
63

Restorative Justice Participants



4

Restorative Justice Training Events



10

Families graduated from Strengthening Families Programmes

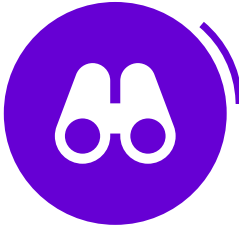


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Strengthening Families Programmes were supported in 2025 by Le Chéile Mentoring



Our Mission, Vision and Values



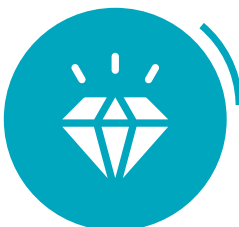
Vision

Our vision is that every child and young person Le Chéile Mentoring works with, will be supported and empowered to realise their hopes and dreams.



Mission

Le Chéile Mentoring is a national, volunteer mentoring, restorative justice and family support service, which supports children, young people and their families, where the child or young person is involved in or at risk of offending. We provide tailored supports, in partnership with other organisations, working alongside young people and their families, to enable them to reach their potential now and into the future.



Values

We believe in the rights and potential of every child and young person to make positive changes in their lives and to be actively involved in that process.

We believe in the power of volunteer mentoring.

We are committed to a restorative approach.

We value partnership with children, young people, families and other organisations.

We actively listen, respect and empower.

We understand the impact of trauma and we work with a trauma-informed approach.

We are committed to evidence-informed programmes and excellence in everything that we do.

We recognise the impact of socio-economic deprivation and believe in social justice and equality.

CoPPer Project

The CoPPer Project brought together organisations from across Europe to explore how volunteers and community-based organisations can play a stronger role in probation and reintegration work. Led by the Confederation of European Probation (CEP) and Portuguese organisation Aproximar, the project focused on developing training, research and practical tools to support volunteer involvement in criminal justice systems across Europe.

For Le Chéile Mentoring, participation offered an opportunity to share our experience and learn from approaches emerging across Europe and beyond. Partners came from Ireland, Portugal, the Netherlands and other European countries, with the project also drawing inspiration from international examples including Japan's long-established volunteer probation system.

Former Probation Service official Gerry McNally described the project as 'innovative', representing the first major attempt to build a Europe-wide volunteer framework within probation and criminal justice. A central aim was to move organisations and volunteers away from working in isolation and create opportunities for shared learning, networking and collaboration across borders.

Ireland's established network of community-based organisations, including Le Chéile Mentoring, PACE and IASIO, had valuable experience to contribute in volunteer management, mentoring and training. Gerry highlighted the importance of ensuring volunteers are properly trained, monitored and

managed, particularly in countries where involving communities in reintegration work is still developing.

A major output was a European training manual and toolkit for organisations wishing to involve volunteers in probation and reintegration work. The project also produced an evidence review and practical guidance to help community organisations and probation services work together more effectively.

For João Mello of Aproximar, one of the most valuable aspects was the opportunity for genuine international exchange. Partners often faced similar obstacles, but the ways of responding differed according to each national context and culture. In Portugal, where involving volunteers in probation work was a new concept, the project helped establish the foundations, test materials and begin building experience.

Throughout the project, Le Chéile contributed practical experience from Ireland's mentoring and community justice sector while strengthening relationships with organisations across Europe. Although the formal project has concluded, CEP and its partners are exploring ways to expand the network and continue rolling out training and supports.

For Le Chéile Mentoring, the project reaffirmed something we see every day through mentoring and restorative justice work: communities have a vital role to play in supporting people to move forward, reconnect and build safer futures.



6 November 2025 - CoPPer Final Project Conference, Het Nutshuis in The Hague

Restorative Justice Conference 2025

Le Chéile Mentoring's Annual Restorative Justice Conference continued to grow in both scale and impact in 2025, bringing together practitioners, academics, advocates and people with lived experience to explore the theme *Empathy in Action: The Human Side of Harm*. Held in Thomond Park, Limerick, the conference created space for honest conversations about accountability, harm, empathy and repair.

For the first time, the conference brought together voices from either side of the restorative process in a joint panel discussion. In many ways, their participation reflected the restorative justice process itself: creating space for people with very different experiences of harm to speak openly, listen to one another and find understanding through dialogue.

Their willingness to share their stories grounded the themes of the day in lived experience and demonstrated the human reality behind restorative justice work.

The day opened with remarks from Minister of State at the Department of Justice and TD for Limerick County Niall Collins before Dr. Ian Marder, Associate Professor in Criminology at Maynooth University School of Law and Criminology, set the tone for the day as MC and Chair. A passionate advocate for restorative justice in Ireland and long-time friend of Le Chéile Mentoring, Dr. Marder guided discussions which moved between research, policy, practice and lived experience.

The morning sessions explored empathy from both academic and practical perspectives. Pat Dolan, Emeritus Professor at the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, reflected on empathy as both a personal and societal force, while Natalie Walsh examined how empathy can be actively embedded into systems and public life.

Later, Marina Cantacuzino, founder of The Forgiveness Project, explored the role storytelling can play in interrupting cycles of harm and creating space for understanding.

Following workshops and discussion over lunch, the afternoon saw Pete Wallis, a restorative justice practitioner with Oxfordshire's Youth Offending Service and author of several groundbreaking books reflect on more than two decades working in youth justice and restorative practice, offering insight into how restorative approaches can help bridge the gap created by crime and its impact.

The restorative justice panel discussion, hosted by Dr. Marder, brought the conference theme into particularly sharp focus. Speaking afterwards, panel participant and restorative justice advocate Janet O'Brien reflected on the importance of sharing lived experience publicly to help people better understand restorative justice and its potential.

"I always feel if I'm asked to come along to these events and share my story, it's important because so many people still don't fully understand restorative justice," she said. "People can really get a sense of the process then, what you can get from it and what you hope to achieve through it."

Janet also spoke about how supported she felt throughout her own restorative justice experience and the importance of careful, empathetic preparation.



Carin Bryans Le Chéile Mentoring (LCM), Alan Quinn (LCM), David Byrne (LCM), Minister Niall Collins, Thomas O'Sullivan (LCM), Lorna Walsh (LCM) and Simon Keating (LCM)

"I didn't realise what I was looking for was restorative justice," she explained. "But once I entered the process, I felt incredibly supported."

Fellow panel participant *Liam admitted he had initially felt nervous about speaking publicly but wanted people to better understand how restorative justice works in practice.

"I thought if it helps people understand how restorative justice actually works, then why not do it?" he said. "It helped me so much."

Liam also reflected on how the restorative process challenged him to think differently about the impact of his actions on others.

"The process helped me step back and realise how many people are affected when harm happens," he said. "It gets the point across in a different way."

Both speakers also highlighted the need for greater awareness of restorative justice across wider society and within the justice system itself.

"I didn't even know this process existed," Janet said.

"I didn't know what restorative justice was until it was mentioned in court," Liam added. "I think the opportunity should be there for anyone."

As the conference drew to a close, the panel discussion remained one of the clearest reflections of the day's central message: that empathy and honest dialogue can create the possibility of understanding in the aftermath of harm.

*Liam's name has been changed to protect his anonymity.

20th National Volunteer Conference 2025

Le Chéile Mentoring's 2025 National Volunteer Conference marked a significant milestone for the organisation as volunteers, staff, speakers and supporters gathered to celebrate 20 years of meaningful conversations, relationships and community impact. Held on 20 September 2025, the conference theme, Empowerment in Mentoring- The Importance of Meaningful Conversations reflected both our history and the long-term impact of supportive adult relationships in the lives of young people.

The day brought together mentors from across the country for a programme of speakers, workshops and discussion focused on trauma-informed practice, youth vulnerability, neurodiversity and the long-term impact of human connection. Workshops explored topics including Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN), Drug Related Intimidation and Violence Engagement (DRIVE), and understanding autism and neurodiversity through AslAm.

Former Governor of Mountjoy Prison, John Lonergan spoke powerfully about the importance of compassion, dignity and respect within systems

that can often become defined by punishment or labels. Drawing on his decades working within the prison system, he reflected on the importance of treating the men in his care as people first, even within difficult and complex environments. One of the strongest themes to emerge from his talk was the long memory people carry of how they were treated during difficult periods of their lives.

The message resonated strongly with volunteers and staff working in mentoring and restorative justice settings, where supportive relationships can have lasting impacts that are not always immediately visible.

One of the most moving moments of the conference came later in the day through a video conversation between long-term mentor Cathy and former mentee Gianina, who reflected on their mentoring relationship almost 20 years after they first met through Le Chéile.

Their story brought the conference theme to life in a very personal way and reminded attendees of the long-term ripple effect mentoring relationships can have.



National Volunteer Conference 2025

Reflecting on revisiting their shared experience, Cathy described the process as emotional and proud.

“It was lovely,” she said. “We went through a lot together and I think you nearly forget half the amount of stuff. We grew up together in a way. I matured as much as she matured in her life.”

She also reflected on how easy it can be, particularly in busy services and demanding work, to lose sight of the long-term impact of mentoring relationships.

“Sometimes you don’t realise what you’ve done or how you’ve done it because you get bogged down in so much,” she said. “It kind of gives you that energy again to keep going. It reminds you this is worthwhile.”

Gianina shared her gratitude openly during the conference celebrations.

“I was so happy to take part and say thank you to Cathy and thank you to Le Chéile,” she said.

Reflecting on the impact mentoring had on her own life, she added:

“I took so much from my experience that I still carry into my life and how I raise my children and the self-respect I have.

I am so grateful to Cathy and Le Chéile.”

For many attendees, the conversation highlighted how mentoring often extends far beyond immediate goals or interventions. Cathy reflected that the impact of mentoring can continue through families and future generations.

“She said to me before that we changed a whole generation,” Cathy explained. “Education became so important to her and now she makes sure that education is important for her children too. It’s not just that young person that has been impacted. It’s her family, her community, the wider net around them.”

As Le Chéile marked 20 years of mentoring, the conference served not only as a celebration of the organisation’s history, but as a reminder of the lasting influence that one supportive adult relationship can have over time.

National Volunteer Committee

The National Volunteer Committee is our forum for ensuring mentor participation in Le Chéile structures. Our Volunteer Committee continued to provide an important forum for volunteer feedback, participation, and shared learning throughout 2025. Committee members contributed insights from their mentoring experiences and supported ongoing discussions around volunteer engagement, training and development.

Key areas which the National Volunteer Committee worked on in 2025 included:

- Consultation on volunteer recruitment;
- Our processes, standards and volunteer policy.

Thank you to all committee members past, present and future. We would like to thank all the committee members in 2025, particularly Caroline Keane from the Meath region who took over the Chair position in 2025 from Debra Crawley from the Northeast project.



National Volunteer Committee (NVC) members Chris Donovan, Caroline Keane, Le Chéile Mentoring CEO, Laura Walsh, NVC members Jake Jeffrey and Emily Murphy

Family Support Research

Throughout 2025, Le Chéile Mentoring continued progressing its Family Support Research project in partnership with Archways and supported by St Stephen's Green Trust. Building on the findings from the interviews and research carried out during 2024, the focus shifted towards analysis, reflection, consultation, and service design discussions that will inform the project's final draft and future direction.

A number of feedback and workshop sessions were held during the year with Le Chéile managers and practitioners to explore the findings emerging from Strand 1 of the research and consider how these insights may shape future responses to increasingly complex family needs. The research and discussions highlighted themes including mental health, neurodevelopmental needs, family stress, barriers accessing services and the importance of maintaining clear boundaries within mentoring relationships, while also identifying opportunities for stronger partnership working and additional supports alongside mentoring.

The process throughout 2025 reinforced the importance of Le Chéile's mentoring model and the value of trusted, consistent relationships for young people and families. It also created space for honest discussion among staff and stakeholders about the pressures facing families and the challenges services are experiencing nationally.

We would like to sincerely thank all the staff, mentors, parents, and young people who participated in interviews, workshops and feedback sessions across 2024 and 2025. Their openness and lived experience have been central to the development of this work. We also extend thanks to our Research oversight group partners in Tusla, Probation and Oberstown, all led by the Chair Helen Fitzgerald, Research Evidence into Policy, Programmes and Practice (University of Limerick), alongside our research partners Archways and all participating stakeholders for their guidance, expertise and continued engagement throughout the process.

Our Services



Le Chéile Mentoring provides community-based youth and parent mentoring, restorative justice and family support services for young people and families across Ireland.

Our work is rooted in relationships, consistency and the belief that people are more than the challenges they face. During 2025, we supported established mentoring programmes across Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Clare, Meath, the Midlands and the Southeast, while expanding aspects of our restorative justice work into Galway.

Our core service areas include:

- **Youth Mentoring**
- **Parent Mentoring**
- **Restorative Justice**
- **Family Support**
- **Community and volunteer engagement**

Volunteers remain central to many of our services. Through training, supervision and support, mentors build consistent relationships with young people and parents, often becoming one stable and trusted adult presence during challenging periods.

Family Support Programmes & Measuring Outcomes

Family Support Interventions (FSI's):

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.

Strengthening Families Programme:

Le Chéile Mentoring 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.

Showing Impact & Measuring Outcomes

In 2025, Le Chéile Mentoring continued to utilise the Outcome Star as a core tool for measuring progress, outcomes, and impact across our services. This evidence-based tool supports our work in tracking personal development and positive change with young people, parents/carers, and those involved in restorative justice. We use one of three stars to work with our respective cohorts: the Youth Star, the Carer/ Parent Star and the Justice Star.

The following pages include outcome data alongside real stories and case studies that bring this impact to life—highlighting the personal journeys behind the numbers. All names and clearly identifying details have been changed to protect our service user's anonymity.*

Youth Mentoring

Youth mentoring remained at the heart of Le Chéile Mentoring's work throughout 2025. Volunteer mentors across the country continued to provide young people with consistent support, practical encouragement and space to talk openly.

Mentoring relationships often developed through ordinary shared activities including walks, coffee, sports, music and everyday conversation. These regular meetings helped create trust over time and allowed young people to explore challenges at their own pace.

Throughout the year, Le Chéile Mentoring continued to recruit and train new volunteer mentors across multiple regions, with particular focus on increasing the number of male mentors available for young men engaged with services.

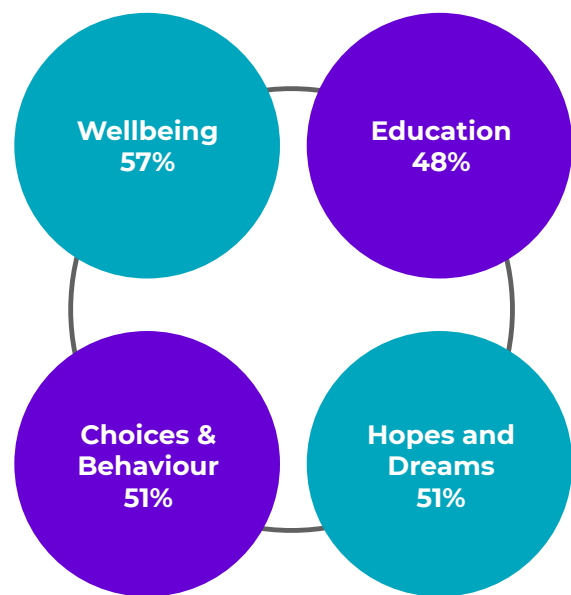
Training remained a key part of the mentoring journey, with volunteers consistently reporting that the experience challenged their perceptions and provided valuable practical skills they also carried into other parts of their lives.

Youth Star and Justice Star Mentoring Outcomes in 2025

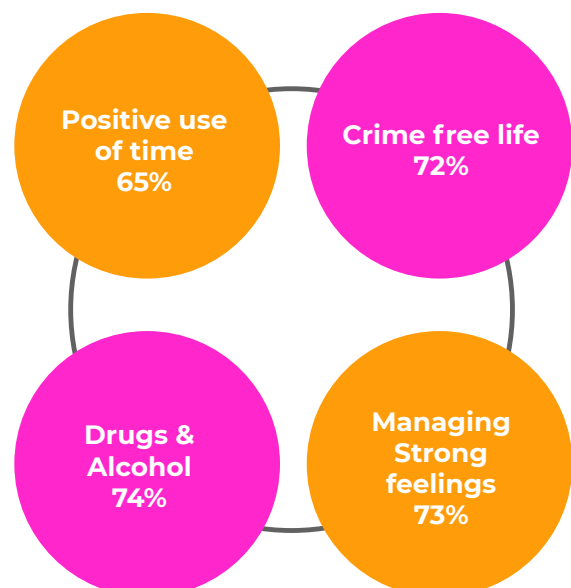
Le Chéile Mentoring uses the Outcomes Star tool to support the young people we work with in making positive changes in their lives. The Outcomes Star tool allows young people to score their progress in a specific area. Highlighting areas of strength but also areas of difficulty, where support may be

needed. Below are the top areas of progression made by young people. Le Chéile use the youth star with young people on our diversion projects specifically and the justice star is used for all other young people.

Top 4 areas of progression made by young people in youth mentoring in 2025 – youth star (diversion projects only)



Top 4 areas of progression by young people in youth mentoring in 2025 – justice star



Young Person's Story

At the time Nadia* first came into contact with Le Chéile Mentoring, she had left school during second year and had become increasingly isolated. Following a prolonged period of bullying and the wider social impact of the pandemic, even leaving the house had become difficult.

"The youth centre was having to try and coax me out of the house," she recalls. "I wasn't really having any of it at the time."

It was through that youth service that mentoring was suggested to her. Initially unsure about the idea, she eventually agreed to "give it a shot" after hearing that the programme could help her build confidence and get into different environments again.

What surprised her most at the beginning was how quickly the process moved. Within a matter of weeks, she had been matched with a mentor and had started meeting regularly.

"It was very rapid, I have to say. It was very good."

Now beginning a Masters in Youth Development and Community Skills, Nadia speaks openly about the impact mentoring had on her confidence, outlook and ability to reconnect socially.

She describes the relationship as informal and pressure-free. Meetings often involved going out for food, trying new places or simply sitting down for a chat. For her, that more relaxed environment made opening up easier than in more formal support settings.

"It was more casual and you were able to open up a bit more freely than usual," she explains.

One of the strongest themes running through Nadia's experience is the value of having a trusted adult outside of family or friendship dynamics. Mentoring offered her something different: perspective, objectivity and a space where conversations felt honest and non-judgmental.

"Sometimes when you're asking your family and your friends, they're saying to a degree what you

want to hear, not what you need to hear," she says.

Instead, she found that her mentor was able to help her look at situations more clearly and calmly.

"You get more of an outside perspective than someone in your family," she explains. "It's not just someone saying, 'You're right and you did nothing wrong.'"

She also felt her mentor had a way of challenging her thinking without making her feel criticised or attacked.

"With the mentoring, they have a better way of putting things into perspective for you."

Over time, the consistency of those conversations helped her move past some of the anger and bitterness she had carried following her experiences in school.

"You kind of learn to let go of that bitterness after a while," she says. "Because I finally had someone to talk to about it."

For Nadia, mentoring became more than simply having somebody to meet each week. It became part of rebuilding confidence, routine and social connection at a time when all three had broken down.

"The benefits it's given me, being able to get out somewhere, whether it's every week or every second week, it gets you into a routine."

Looking back now, she is clear about the role services around her played in helping her move forward.

"Without the youth centre and especially Le Chéile Mentoring, I actually don't know where I would have been," she says. "They helped you get back up on your feet, communicate, socialise. After that, I knew this was what I wanted to do with my life."

Nadia's* name has been changed to protect her privacy and anonymity

Restorative Justice

Restorative justice (RJ) continued to grow as a core part of Le Chéile Mentoring's work throughout 2025.

Restorative processes create opportunities for people - both RJ participants and victims - affected by harm to communicate safely, acknowledge impact and explore ways of moving forward. The work is grounded in accountability, participation and the belief that meaningful dialogue can support healing and repair harm.

Le Chéile Mentoring's restorative justice services continued to support referrals from a range of community and criminal justice settings during the year, with practitioners working carefully alongside participants throughout each process.

Alongside direct casework, the organisation continued contributing to national conversations around restorative practice through training, conferences and collaboration with community and statutory partners.

The experiences shared by participants throughout 2025 reinforced the importance of being listened to without judgement and having space to reflect on harm, responsibility and change.

Victim Empathy Programmes, helping people understand the impact of their actions and developing greater compassion.

Restorative Justice Meetings, where people, victims (or proxies), families, and professionals come together in a structured space to discuss the offence and agree steps forward.

Victim/Offender Mediation, facilitated in a safe, supportive environment, often through indirect communication, to ensure that all parties feel heard.

Reparative Actions, such as written apologies, community activities, or personal reflection projects aimed at making amends and restoring trust.

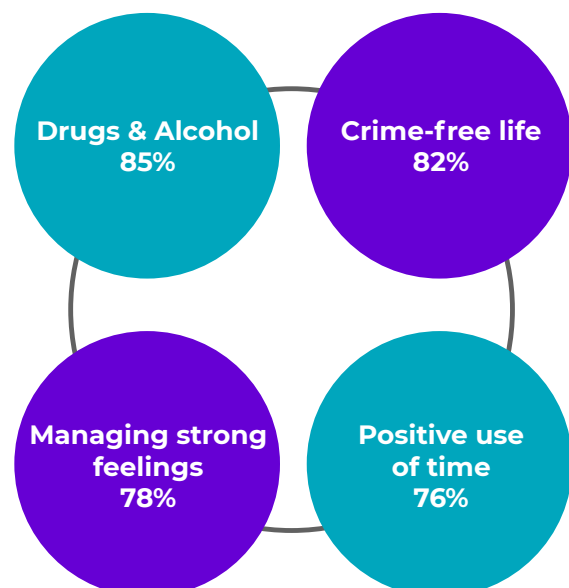
Restorative Justice Participants 2025

- **Victim Empathy Programmes = 41 programmes completed in 2025**
- **Reparation Interventions = 8 reparation pieces of work**
- **Restorative Justice Meetings: 11**
- **Victim/Offender Mediation = 2**
- **New referrals received in 2025 = 53**

Restorative Justice Outcomes 2025

The Justice Star is the Outcome Star tool we use to measure the journey of change of our participants who have engaged in restorative justice.

**Top areas of progress made
by Restorative Justice Participants
in 2025 – justice star**



Restorative Justice Story

Lucy* began her story with this: "I lost my son."

Lucy's son was not yet twenty years old and expecting his first child with his long-term partner.

The circumstances surrounding his death set off a long and complex legal battle that, in her words, made her lose faith in the judicial system.

"I don't want to go into the details of why I lost my faith, but I couldn't believe the injustice I was facing. All these complications I couldn't wrap my head around led me to have a complete breakdown."

It was during this period of grief and crisis that Lucy became involved in the restorative justice process with Le Chéile Mentoring.

"I had never been in trouble in my life, but I was in a very bad place. I'd gone out for a drink with friends; I drank whiskey which I'd never touched before and the next thing I remember was waking up in the local Garda Station. I have no recollection of this, but I was told that when I was there, I got very aggressive and violent."

At the time, Lucy says she was carrying an enormous amount of anger, grief and mistrust. The incident led to her becoming involved with the criminal justice system at a time when, by her own account, she already felt failed by it.

"I lost so much trust in the Gardaí and the justice system. I felt ashamed, isolated in myself and embarrassed of my behaviour. If I do something wrong, I have got to say sorry, so for me, taking part in restorative justice was the right thing to do."

Through the restorative justice process, Lucy met with a liaison officer and our Restorative Justice Coordinator here at Le Chéile Mentoring. What she remembered most about those initial meetings was an absence of judgement.

"That's what you need, to know you're not being judged," she says. "When I met my Coordinator, I just bawled my eyes out."

Lucy describes the process as one of the first times

she felt she was truly able to speak openly about what had happened and the emotional state she had been in at the time.

"You don't really get to speak in court," she says. "I got to explain where I was at mentally and emotionally. The meetings helped get me out again because I'd become very recluse."

As the process continued, Lucy says she began to see the incident from another perspective, including the impact her actions had on the Gardaí involved.

"I went into it feeling like a victim because that's how I felt at the time. Then I started to see the other side as well. Meeting the Gardaí involved was great for me. They were very understanding and very kind about my situation."

While Lucy is clear that restorative justice did not erase the grief she continues to carry, she says it helped her begin to move forward and rebuild some of the trust she had lost.

"It restored my faith in the justice system a little bit," she says. "It changed me completely. Before that, I had become isolated from everyone. I couldn't see a way out of anything."

Now, she describes herself as entering a new chapter in her life.

"That whole process helped me close a chapter and move on. I still have my grief and I still fight for justice for my son, but restorative justice helped me heal parts of myself that had completely shut down."

Lucy believes more people should know restorative justice exists, particularly people who may feel overwhelmed or defined by a mistake they have made during a difficult period in their lives.

"It gave me a second chance," she says. "If hearing my story helps even one person, then it's worth telling."

*Lucy's name has been changed to protect her privacy.

Parent Mentoring

Parent mentoring offers valuable support to parents and carers facing the complexities of family life. Participation is completely voluntary and involves the parent being matched with a volunteer mentor. As with youth mentoring, the relationship that develops between the mentor and parent is central to helping parents feel supported and empowered to make changes in their lives. Parent mentoring helps develop parenting skills and navigate challenges in a non-judgmental environment outside the home.

Through reflective discussions with mentors, parents can build confidence and feel more equipped to tackle life's hurdles. Similar to youth mentoring, parent mentoring matches parents with mentors based on shared interests and compatibility.

Parent mentoring can lead to significant benefits for parents, including improved self-confidence, emotional wellbeing and family relationships. It can also support better stress management and increased engagement in activities beyond the home.

Parent mentoring is available to parents and carers of young people on probation or at risk of offending. It is also available to parents who are on probation in their own right.

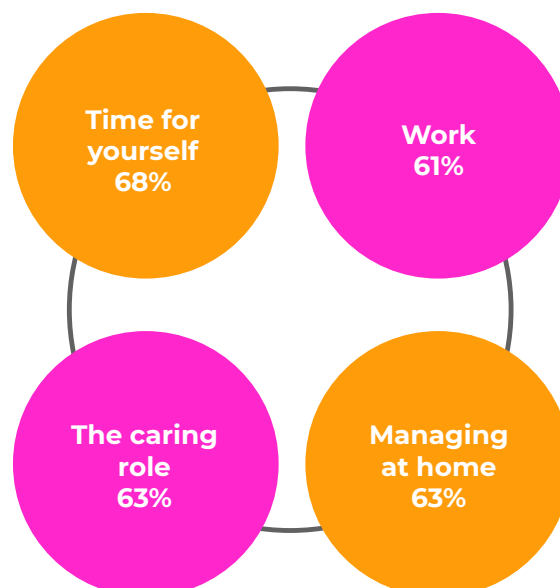
A unique aspect of our programme is the parent mentoring initiative delivered in collaboration with Oberstown Children Detention Campus, which offers support to parents and carers while their child is in detention, as well as post-detention support.

Parent Mentoring Outcomes in 2025

The Outcome Star tool is also used in parent mentoring. Parents can record their progress across seven different areas under the Carers Star.

The outcome areas of progression for parent/caregivers in 2025 are detailed below, showing the average percentage increase in each area.

Top 4 areas of progression made by parents in 2025 - carers star



Parent's Story

When Cara's* son became involved in the criminal justice system, all her energy went into trying to support him through that difficult period. Between Garda callouts, worry, emotional strain and trying to hold everything together at home, she says she lost sight of herself completely.

"When everything was happening, all my focus was on my son," she explained. "Then suddenly he was gone and I was left sitting with all the stress and worry that had built up over that time."

Cara was referred to Le Chéile Mentoring's Parent Mentoring service during this period. At first, she admits she felt emotionally exhausted and unsure about opening up to someone new. However, after being matched with a volunteer mentor, she gradually began to feel more comfortable.

"She [the mentor] was just very easy to talk to," Cara said. "The biggest thing was having someone who would listen. I could speak about what was going on for me, separate from everything else that was happening."

Over time, the weekly meetings became an important source of support and routine. Looking back now, Cara believes those conversations helped her begin reconnecting with herself after a long period of crisis and survival mode.

"It's only now, looking back, that I realise how much I needed that support," she said. "For so long, all my energy had gone into worrying about my son and trying to manage everything around us."

Cara also reflected on how isolating the experience can be for parents and carers, particularly once a young person enters detention or formal systems of support.

"There's a huge emotional impact on families," she explained. "Sometimes parents are carrying all of that stress on their own. Having somebody there to listen and check in can make such a difference."

Today, Cara says the experience has changed how she thinks about support, mental health and community connection. It has also led her to taking on a course in addiction studies. She hopes that by sharing her story, other parents might feel less alone in seeking help.

"I was lucky that I had somebody I could talk to," she said. "Without that support, I honestly don't know what I would have done."

*Cara's name has been changed to safeguard her privacy and anonymity.

Our Volunteers

Le Chéile Mentoring's cohort of 250+ volunteers across Ireland consistently inspire us with their dedication to the young people and families we support. Mentoring is a community-based, restorative practice underpinned by our vision that any person we work with can be empowered to realise their hopes and dreams.

In 2025, we welcomed 75 new volunteers to our organisation. We are heartened by the number of people willing to show up for their communities and give their time and lived experience to support others. To ensure our volunteers feel confident and supported in their role, Le Chéile Mentoring provides comprehensive training, one-to-one support with staff and opportunities for group supervision and reflection. We are deeply committed to fostering an environment where volunteers feel valued,

supported, and empowered as mentors to young people and parents across the country.

We extend our gratitude to each and every volunteer for their invaluable experience, commitment, kindness, and time. Without their unwavering support, Le Chéile Mentoring would not be able to achieve the significant impact we have with young people and families in communities across Ireland. This dedication and hard work deserve recognition, and we continually aim to acknowledge the expertise, passion and diligence our volunteers bring to the role.

Thank you to all of our volunteers for the care, encouragement, and consistency you bring to the lives of others every day.

Volunteer Story

After retiring from a 25-year career in social care, Michael knew he still wanted to contribute in some way. Having spent much of his working life supporting young people in residential services and respite settings, volunteering as a mentor with Le Chéile felt like a natural next step.

"I wanted to do something, like give something back," he says simply.

Although he came into mentoring with professional experience, he quickly found that the role was less about "solving" problems and more about listening carefully, building trust and understanding what a young person wanted from the relationship.

"It was listening to what they were saying and sometimes what they were not saying," he explains.

For Michael, mentoring often centered around ordinary activities that gradually opened the door to deeper conversations. One young person he worked with had become interested in climbing

walls after seeing videos online. Although initially hesitant, he eventually agreed to try it with Michael alongside him.

"It was more than just the climbing wall," Michael says. "It was the climbing wall plus the coffee, plus the social part of it as well."

Those pro-social and shared activities became opportunities to talk through larger worries and anxieties that might otherwise have felt overwhelming. Michael recalls one young person becoming extremely anxious about the idea of interviews and employment.

"He was looking at the huge, huge, huge thing of 'How am I going to do interviews? How am I going to do this?'"

Rather than trying to tackle everything at once, Michael focused on helping him break things down into manageable steps.

"I would say, 'No, no, no, take it one step at a time.'"

That practical, steady approach runs throughout the way Michael describes mentoring. He speaks often about helping young people move forward gradually rather than expecting immediate change or dramatic breakthroughs.

“The positives are that you’re making a difference, a small difference,” he says.

Training and support also played an important role in shaping his understanding of mentoring. Initially, Michael admits he wondered about the backgrounds of the young people he would meet and what circumstances had brought them to the service. However, over time his perspective shifted.

“To be honest with you, that doesn’t really matter,” he says now. “The young person’s history doesn’t matter. It’s more that they’re here now.”

That focus on the present relationship rather than the past became central to how he approached mentoring.

Michael also speaks candidly about the reality that mentors do not always immediately know whether progress is happening. Young people may not openly express appreciation or give regular

feedback, making coordinator support especially important.

“Some young people give very little feedback,” he says.

At times when he questioned whether the mentoring was helping, his Coordinator was able to offer reassurance and perspective, particularly through supervision and feedback on reports.

“She [the Coordinator] was able to phone me and say it was very positive, the way this young person was opening up.”

For Michael, that support reinforced the idea that mentoring is not something volunteers are expected to navigate alone. It is a supported process built around consistency, reflection, patience and collaboration.

Asked what he would say to someone considering mentoring, particularly men who may doubt whether they are suited to the role, his answer is straightforward.

“Give it a go and see.”

Our Partners

We believe in the power of collaboration and partnering with other agencies to meet the needs of young people and their families. Our collective impact is greater and more effective than anything we could achieve alone.

Probation Service

We have a longstanding partnership with the Probation Service. We are funded by the Department of Justice through the Probation Service and work closely with them to deliver mentoring to young people on probation, parents/carers of young people on probation, and parents on probation. We also run a unique restorative justice service with the Probation Service in Counties Kerry, Limerick, Clare and Cork.

Community Safety Fund

Le Chéile Mentoring piloted a new mentoring and restorative service in Galway in 2025. This project was launched with funding from the Community Safety Fund.

Youth Diversion Projects

We provide mentoring for young people referred by Youth Diversion Projects (YDPs) in Dublin, Waterford, and parts of Tipperary. In Dublin, we have a strong partnership with Crosscare, while in the South-East we work closely with Waterford and South Tipperary Community Youth Service. Tailored mentoring is provided to young people or parents/carers of young people who are at risk of offending or becoming more involved in crime/anti-social behaviour. YDP Projects and mentoring challenge young people to divert from offending behaviour and empower them to make some positive changes in their lives.

Oberstown Children Detention Campus

Since 2017, we have partnered with Oberstown to run a unique initiative supporting parents where their child is in detention. The first of its kind internationally, parent mentoring is voluntary and seeks to provide support, a listening ear, and build confidence in different skills that a parent may find useful in relating to their child. It aims to offer support to these parents/carers that will help them when their child is released from Oberstown. Mentoring is also offered to young people so that they have a supportive adult to turn to when they leave Oberstown.

Archways

Le Chéile Mentoring and Archways have been in partnership since 2021, working on an interagency family support project. The project is a pilot developed following extensive research undertaken by the University of Limerick, part of the Greentown initiative. It is an evidence-informed programme that works with young people, their families, and the community. Our role in the project is to provide a mentoring service to young people to support them in making choices that promote positive changes in their lives.

Funding & Financial Report

Le Chéile's Mentoring Services and Restorative Justice Programmes are funded by the Department of Justice, through the Probation Service.

Le Chéile also receives funding for mentoring with Youth Diversion Projects from the Department of Justice via Waterford & South Tipperary Community Youth Service and Crosscare.

The Oberstown Mentoring project is funded by Oberstown Children Detention Campus.

Le Chéile receives some financial support from Cuan, a statutory agency under the remit of the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, towards the national annual Restorative Justice Conference.

Statement of Financial Activities

(Incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account) for the financial year ended 31 December 2025

	Unrestricted Funds 2025 €	Restricted Funds 2025 €	Total 2025 €	Total 2024 €
Income				
Donations and legacies	2,249	-	2,249	354
Charitable activities				
Grants from governments and other co-funders	-	1,713,189	1,713,189	1,517,997
Other income	19	-	19	19
Total income	2,268	1,713,189	1,715,457	1,518,370
Expenditure				
Charitable activities	(2,249)	(1,722,371)	(1,724,620)	(1,530,224)
Net income/(expenditure)	19	(9,182)	(9,163)	(11,854)
Transfers between funds	10,500	(10,500)	-	-
Net movement in funds for the financial year	10,519	(19,684)	(9,163)	(11,854)
Reconciliation of funds				
Balances brought forward at 1 January 2025	82,057	19,684	101,740	113,595
Balances carried forward at 31 December 2025	92,577	-	92,577	101,740

Balance Sheet

as at 31 December 2025

	2025	2024
	€	€
Fixed Assets		
Tangible assets	<u>9,365</u>	<u>1</u>
Current Assets		
Debtors	27,581	23,918
Cash at bank and in hand	<u>841,196</u>	<u>529,665</u>
	<u>878,142</u>	<u>553,585</u>
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	<u>(785,565)</u>	<u>(451,843)</u>
Net Current Assets	<u>92,577</u>	<u>101,740</u>
Total Assets less Current Liabilities	<u><u>92,577</u></u>	<u><u>101,741</u></u>
Funds		
Restricted funds	-	19,684
General fund (unrestricted)	<u>92,577</u>	<u>82,057</u>
Total funds	<u><u>92,577</u></u>	<u><u>101,741</u></u>

Our People

Board of Directors in 2025:

Carin Bryans	Chairperson (from July 2025) and Director
Catherine Bond	Vice Chairperson (from July 2025) and Director
Mary Byrne	Company Secretary and Director
Brian McDonald	Director
Sarah Jane Judge	Director
Ronan McLoughlin	Director
Claire Walsh	Director
Deirdre Macklin	Director
Mairead Seymour	Director

Board meeting attendance 2026:

Carin Bryans	7/8
Catherine Bond	7/8
Mary Byrne	6/8
Brian McDonald	6/8
Sarah Jane Judge	4/8
Ronan McLoughlin	8/8
Claire Walsh	6/8
Dee Macklin	1/3
Mairead Seymour	7/8

Stepped Down during 2025:

James Doorley	Chairperson and Director	James Doorley	5/5
Andrew Bray	Director	Andrew Bray	1/5

Staff:

Laura Walsh	CEO
Claudio Marmo	Accounts and Corporate Services Manager
Mary Daly	Eastern Regional Manager
Alan Quinn	Southern Regional Manager
Aideen Curran	Accounts and Finance Administrator
Ailbe Coleman	Cork North & East Mentor Coordinator
Allison Gordon	Cork South & West Mentor Coordinator
Carol Doyle	Administrator
Conor Byrne	Oberstown Mentor Coordinator
Cormac Ryan	YDP Dublin Mentor Coordinator
David Byrne	Galway Mentor & RJ Coordinator
Heather Sinnott	Southeast Team Leader
Helen Mc Carthy	Midlands Mentor Coordinator
Ingrid Cooney	Dublin North Mentor Coordinator
Jenny Croke	YDP Southeast Project Officer
Josephine Gibney	Communications and Information Coordinator
Laureen Christie	Whitetown Mentor Coordinator
Lorna Walsh	Limerick and Clare Mentor Coordinator
Lyndsey McCabe	Meath Mentor Coordinator
Maartje Van Stokkem	Dublin North Mentor Coordinator
Marie Vanasova	Dublin South Team Leader
Mark Turner	YDP Dublin Project Officer
Sara McDonnell	National Volunteer Development Coordinator
Simon Keating	RJ Coordinator
Thomas O Sullivan	RJ Coordinator

Stepped Down during 2025:

Anne Conroy	CEO
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le chéile
MENTORING

Inspiring hope,
believing in change

Le Chéile Mentoring, Tivoli Training Centre,
24 Tivoli Terrace South, Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, A96 K522

T: 01 214 4351 | E: info@lechéile.ie | W: www.lechéile.ie

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Registered Charity No. 20066000
Company No. 424299 | CHY 17621

