



engage

Engage in Education

Inspiring and Supporting Educational Journeys

Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022

Our Vision

To improve life opportunities and significantly increase the participation in third-level education among parents and children from the communities of Southill, Moyross, St Mary's Park, Ballinacurra Weston in Limerick City, by developing in them a belief in and an understanding of the educational system.



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Foreword

Since its foundation in 1991, [Engage in Education](#), formally Limerick Community Based Education Initiative (LCBEI) has worked to inspire and support educational journeys and to foster access to education in designated communities in Limerick City Southill, Ballincurra Weston, St. Mary's Park and Moyross. It is a voluntary, not-for-profit organisation that includes a team of educators, business and community activists who support and encourage the development of potential.

We are committed to the belief that young people - from early childhood learners, through to students at primary and second-level - can be empowered to reach their potential through building and supporting coherent pathways to higher education. [Engage in Education](#) has played a central role in the provision of the highest quality services to facilitate these pathways and in promoting the right for all to progress to third-level education.

Inspiring and Supporting Education Journeys - Strategic Plan 2018 - 2022 builds on and seeks to expand on this work, responding to the continuing challenge and emerging issues impacting on access to education. This Strategy is underpinned by research, the voice of students and the contributions of other stakeholders. As a voluntary not-for-profit organisation, we are fully committed to attaining the objectives outlined in this Strategic Plan.

Although ambitious, we are confident that in partnership with our students, families, communities and other stakeholders, and through the commitment and initiative of our board members, staff, and volunteers, the aim and actions of this strategy will be achieved.

Patrick O'Connor
Chairperson



1. Mission

A well-established voluntary organisation with a clear focus and perspective, **Engage in Education** fosters access to education in designated communities of Southill, Moyross, St Mary's Park, Ballinacurra Weston in Limerick City.¹ We are unique in our role as we engage with students, parents, schools, higher education institutions and communities at primary, secondary and third-level. Through our work we reach into and support the development of potential among students as well as developing stronger communities. We passionately believe that students, parents and their communities can and should have more coherent pathways to higher education.

Our reputation has grown in Limerick City over the last 27 years as a trusted organisation which promotes opportunity and supports individual students and their families by empowering them to address deeper socio-economic and cultural issues that they face. Our belief in the talent and the potential of students to grow and develop has resulted in us **supporting 385 students attending Higher Education Institutions in Limerick, Dublin, Cork and Galway.**

Engage in Education as an organisation is totally committed to transparency, accountability and high standards of good practice for ourselves, our graduates and our communities.

Our Mission

To increase access to education in designated communities in Limerick City by:

- Enhancing a continuum of supports that foster equality and inclusion in early childhood learning, primary, secondary and third-level education.
- Providing information, encouragement, financial and emotional support to empower students and their families to make the commitment necessary to advance through all levels of the education system in Ireland.

1. *The inclusion of other areas will be considered in future years.*

2. Our Belief & Values

Belief

Our core belief is that young people – early childhood learners, students at primary, secondary and third-level - can be empowered to reach their potential through building and supporting coherent pathways to higher education. The reality in Ireland as a whole - and in Limerick City in particular - is that staying in education and going on to attend third-level institutions can involve overcoming major obstacles, especially if coming from a marginalised community. The Irish State has failed to significantly narrow the participation gap between high status social groups and the marginalised. Our belief and commitment is that **Engage in Education** can continue to facilitate students and their families going to Higher Education Institutions by helping them to reduce hidden barriers to participation in third-level education.

Values

- We value our students, parents and community for their capacity to **empower** themselves to participate, stay and thrive in the education system.
- We value our students, parents and community's **potential to develop** and participate in primary, secondary and third-level education.
- We value the **independence** of people's lives and the sense of community and **solidarity** that comes from people aspiring and achieving together.
- We value **partnership** with Schools, Teachers, Guidance Counsellors, Home School Liaison Teachers, School Completion Teams, Careers Officers, Third-level Administrators, and Higher Education Institutions in pursuit of our goals. Our valued partners in the community, business groups, Foundations and the Department of Education and Skills support our goals and objectives.
- We value **collaborative working** as a way of supporting, committing to and believing in the value and impact of our work and that of our students and parents.
- We value **transparency, accountability** and high standards of governance and practice within **Engage in Education** as we increase the scope of our work.
- We value **regulation** as it creates a framework for public and community trust and is sensitive to the needs of the community and the educational sector.

3. Context: The National Policy

Context & Student Voice

“Education is key to delivering on our ambitions as a nation. It is the engine that drives economic growth. It is a powerful tool in breaking down cycles of disadvantage and ensuring every person is given the opportunity to fulfil their full potential”.

Action Plan for Education 2018, Government of Ireland

The National Policy Context *

We know from research both national and international that education is highly predictive of future life chances. International research has clearly indicated that early intervention in children’s education, and early learning at primary and second-level to boost academic achievement, are key factors in retaining young people within full time education. Targeted intervention has formed the core of Irish policy addressing access to education and educational disadvantage. While there are strong arguments in favour of such an approach, it should be noted that a proportion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds attend non-DEIS Schools outside the designated areas and do not avail of the extra supports provided in these schools. Tracking and support will be offered to all students in this category in the **Engage in Education** programme.

Those who leave school early – before their Leaving Certificate - are more likely to be unemployed or lone parents, earn less if they have a job, and to have poorer health and higher crime levels. The latest research indicates that one in six young Irish people still leave school without reaching Leaving Certificate level, with a critical factor being their social background.²

Listening: Stories of Young People from Southill, Moyross, Ballinacurra Weston and St. Mary’s Park:

In recent years, there has been more focus on placing the student voice at the centre of research and programmes which seek to improve pathways to educational achievement and access to Higher Education Institutions. These voices provide important insights into the experiences of students themselves, their families and communities, within and across the educational system. Their reflections on their experiences, their educational choices made and their pathways through the system are of enormous value for the development of both policy and programmes.

* See Appendix 1 Context: The National Policy Context for full details

An important background document is the research carried out in Limerick City and Limerick's Regeneration Areas – "How are our Kids?" provides a context for the study carried out by LCBEI – Engage in Education on the 2015 / 2016 cohort of participants in the Third-level Programme for the then LCBEI programme.

LCBEI Student Voice. A Study of LCBEI Students 2015 / 2016 – telling their stories and what they see as helping to improve educational opportunities is detailed in Appendix 2.²

The voices of some of our students are included below. Details of their stories can be seen on our website www.engage-edu.ie



Robert O'Gorman

From: **Ballinacurra Weston, Limerick**

Joined our 3rd level programme: **2013**

College: **Limerick Institute of Technology, graduated 2017**

Course: **Multimedia Programming & Design**

Career: **W.P.Engine UK Premium Hosting Limerick: Support Technician**

“Without Engage, it would have been a lot easier to quit. With them, it's easier to finish.”

Robert O'Gorman



Rachel Mescall-Fitzpatrick

From: **Carew Park, Southill, Limerick**

Joined our 3rd level programme: **1991**

College: **Cork Institute of Technology, graduated 1995**

Course: **Certificate in Applied Biology**

Career: **Customer Service Manager & Nutritional Advisor, Carambola**

“Going to college changed my world”

Rachel Mescall-Fitzpatrick

4. Our Story So Far: 27 Years On

Southill, Limerick City, in the early 1990's had very high levels of unemployment and poverty as well as low levels of educational attainment. It was seen as one of the most deprived communities in Limerick City and in Ireland. **Limerick Community Based Education Initiative (LCBEI)** was founded in 1991 as an educational charity with the aim of increasing educational participation for young people in designated areas in Limerick City. These founding directors were Patrick O'Connor (who has been Project Director for 27 years) the first Principal of St. Enda's Community School, Galvone Dr Kevin Haugh, Principal St. Kiernan's Boys National School, Galvone; and Chris Butler a retired accountant and a member of St. Vincent de Paul. These founding directors were recognised the need for increased focus and support for third-level education in Southill. Their focus was on young people and their families who were prepared to accept the challenge. LCBEI was initially based in St Enda's Community School and Sports Complex.

Funding was provided for a five-year period by the Irish American Partnership with the encouragement of Philanthropist Charles Feeney. Support was to follow from the Department of Education. LCBEI developed a model of intervention based on a continuum of support and encouragement starting with the primary and secondary schools attended by students from Southill. Programmes were developed at primary, secondary and third-level. A Sports and Leisure Programme was also developed.

The Primary Level Programme included: Excellence Awards, Projects Support, Saturday Morning Club, a Parenting Programme (National College of Ireland Dublin) and the provision of reading laboratory materials (SRA labs).

The Second-level Programme involved the establishment of valuable links with Guidance Counsellors in all second-level schools in Limerick City. An Awards Scheme based on excellence in class work, improvement and project work was developed, and students and parents of award winners attended hotel-based award celebrations where they got to meet third-level undergraduates from their own community. Summer language bursaries were provided for enthusiastic students. Extra tuition was funded in Leaving Certificate year on the recommendation of Guidance Counsellors. When the University of Limerick (U.L.) joined the Board of Directors, visits to the University were arranged and places on the then very popular "Introduction to University" Summer Programme were provided. A night time study centre was provided in the Southill parish. While successful with third-level students in attendance, it proved difficult for students to come and go safely at night and did not continue after a few years of operation.

The Third-level Programme: Students from Southill entering Third-level courses, who met the eligibility criteria, were invited to join the LCBEI programme and received a participation grant. They were required to attend three meetings a year and participate in school mentoring visits in their communities.

Mutual support was encouraged among undergraduates who were given personal development and study skills support. Problems that students encountered between meetings were referred to the LCBEI office and the Project Director, where students received individual support and mentoring. The Board of Plassey Campus Company (U.L.) offered students in final year the option of college residency during their final semester to enable intensive study where home conditions did not permit. Thomond Rotary Club engaged with LCBEI during the 1990's, providing a Director to the Board of LCBEI. A mentoring scheme for undergraduates was provided by Thomond Rotary Club. A leadership and team building weekend was paid for by participating Rotary members.

In the early 1990's LCBEI established a Sports and Leisure Programme which offered unemployed young men and women with at least Intermediate Certificate the opportunity to attend a 30 week programme to become Sports and Leisure Complex Operatives. The programme used spare capacity in St. Enda's Sports Complex and was funded by FAS. Starting at 7.30am an intensive programme ran until 4pm. The course offered courses on Life Guard Certification, Advanced First Aid, Dance to Music (R.S.A.). Sports Complex Maintenance Certification as well as basic computer qualifications. Students were prepared in English and Mathematics for Scholastic Attainment Tests (S.A.T.) During the two years that this programme ran, it had an 80% success rate and reinvigorated participants lives and career paths.

In 1995 LCBEI was evaluated by Dr Mark Morgan, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra. This review recommended the continuation of LCBEI. In 2000 an independent study recommended that the work of LCBEI be extended to other areas of Limerick City. Demand had grown at this stage for LCBEI to expand the project to the Northside of the city supported by extra funding from the PAUL Partnership. Work began with Northside schools in Moyross and later extended to St. Mary's Park and Ballinacurra Weston on the Southside. Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT) appointed a member to the Board as did Thomond Community College (formerly St. Nessian's Community College) a community development officer from Moyross also joined the Board.

Within two years the PAUL project suffered funding cutbacks and as a result withdrew financial support from LCBEI. This left a funding deficit and LCBEI cut back on its activities in schools; priority support was given to those who had reached Third-level entry but it no longer supported LCBEI students at Post - Graduate level - Masters or PhD level.

The JP McManus Foundation has been a major contributor to our work since 2000. Limerick City Council through its Regeneration Office has also been a funder. The Department of Education and Skills has continued to support and contribute to the funding of LCBEI. In 2001 LCBEI moved to the Limerick Enterprise Development Park.

In 2017 the Board undertook a Strategic Review to help it prepare for a new phase of development and transition to a new organisational and funding model with a paid full time Project Director. This Strategic Review is detailed below.

LCBEI has an excellent track record. It has assisted 385 students from designated communities in Limerick City attending Third-level Colleges. This year, as the class of 2014/15 prepare to graduate, 94%, have made it to the final hurdle.

Strategic Review 2017

A thorough strategic review was undertaken by Board members and key community stakeholders in the winter of 2016/2017 under the guidance of Professor Joyce O'Connor.

Conclusions:

- That there was a pressing need to enhance belief in and support for educational achievement in the designated communities.
- That a dynamic restructured L.C. B.E.I. would be able to provide the relevant and effective support needed to enhance levels of educational achievement.
- That L.C.B.E.I. would focus on identifying and encouraging committed families, tracking and supporting their development at all stages in the educational process.

Actions:

The following actions were unanimously and enthusiastically approved by the Board as the means of reaching these goals:

- 4.1 The preparation of a strategic and financial plan 2018-2022 under the guidance of Professor Joyce O'Connor and Mr. David Conway.
- 4.2 The employment of a paid professional Project Director.
- 4.3 The Board of company directors would:
 - 4.3.1 Restructure the company Board and subcommittees
 - 4.3.2 Engage in succession planning and Board rotation in a more deliberate manner, recruit new directors as a priority.
 - 4.3.3 Maintain full compliance with the governance code for community, voluntary and charitable organisations; the statement of recommended practice (S.O.R.P.) for financial and activity reporting and the principal of good practice in fundraising and the new General Data Protection Regulation (G.D.P.R.)
 - 4.3.4 Further develop close working relationships with not just schools but Limericks third level colleges and relevant agencies and designated communities to provide an integrated service to families and students
- 4.4 Marketing and fundraising
 - 4.4.1 Rebrand L.C.B.E.I. as Engage in Education. L.C.B.E.I. T/A Engage in Education
 - 4.4.2 Establish a fundraising committee and engage in a full fundraising campaign backed by a fundraising strategy and plan.
- 4.5 Communications Strategy
 - 4.5.1 Redevelop our website to enhance our brand and activities. Providing a viable project access service for student's parents and community.
 - 4.5.2 Enhance communication techniques. Through a full media campaign and news letters
- 4.6 Goodwill and community credibility
 - 4.6.1 Build on the existing activities and goodwill established over many years by L.C.B.E.I. in the designated communities
 - 4.6.2 Based on the 385 undergraduate students assisted to date, develop an Alumni Association
- 4.6.3 Request the existing voluntary Project Director to remain on the board to assist the transition period
- 4.7 Outcomes based review:

All ongoing project based activities would be subject to outcomes based review with criteria established for their evaluation.

4.8 Phases of plan

Phase 1:

The plan at this stage would focus on building supports in the primary, secondary and third level sector

Phase 2:

A separate early learning initiative engaging preschool children and their families to develop belief in and support for a vision of educational success for their children, would follow the establishment of Phase 1



5. Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022: Themes Underpinning the Plan

The Four Themes that Underpin this Strategic Plan 2018 - 2022

1. Belief in Developing Potential
2. Supporting Students & Communities
3. Promoting Active Involvement
4. Being a Dynamic, Passionate and Focused Organisation

1. Belief in Developing Potential

We passionately believe that young people and their parents living in Southill, Moyross, St Mary's Park and Ballinacurra Weston⁴ have enormous potential and that this potential can be further developed by early childhood learning, increasing retention at primary and second-level and creating pathways to third-level education. Annual statistics show with startling clarity the scale of inequality in Ireland. These figures although limited in their capacity to highlight the underlying causes provide for a compelling case and for far more needs to be done to help bridge the gap in this social divide. We will build on our strong track record as a voice to ensure that these communities are given the attention, resources, analysis and understanding that helps create an ambience of support and practical interventions to empower students, parents and their communities in Limerick City to reach their potential.

2. Supporting Students & Communities

We will energetically support our students and their communities to engage to the maximum in their educational activities, to be as effective as possible in creating pathways to education and to promote in them a belief in their abilities to grow and develop. We will promote the importance of celebrating achievements, the importance of promoting and supporting leadership and of recognising students' strengths. Working with other partners we will emphasise the positive role(s) that our students are taking and encourage them to act as role models to share their understanding, sense of community and leadership. The message is "you can do it with our support and encouragement".

3. Promoting Active Involvement

We will lead the discussion and engage in conversations about building the kind of opportunity that young people, parents and community want to avail of. We will articulate clearly the link between educational opportunity and life chances. We will encourage and create opportunities for students, parents and community leaders to play their part as active citizens through their activities, to lead by example and to show others what can be achieved. We will encourage third-level links to such a degree that families see third-level as accessible, achievable and as a right they are entitled to.

4. Being a Dynamic, Passionate and Focused Organisation

We will ensure that [Engage in Education](#) continues to be well-run, relevant, responsive and effective. We will ensure that the voice of our students, parents, graduates and communities is strong in contributing to and shaping this Strategic Plan 2018 - 2022.



6. Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022: Objectives and Key Actions

These Strategic Objectives and Key Actions - systematically and carefully developed - are about facilitating our students, parents and communities to develop and maximise their potential by developing pathways to education, staying in education and gaining access to Higher Educational Institutions. Linking our endeavours with those of third-level colleges in a continuum of support, these objectives and actions reflect the four central drivers of our work.

Early Childhood Learning & Primary Level

Objective 1

To positively influence earlier childhood learners, young people, parents and community at primary level to realise that education opens up opportunity and creates pathways that will enable them to reach their potential. To convince and encourage students families that good routines and learning practices from a young age lay the foundations of a secure future for their children. Encouraging students and their families' efforts and creating possibilities by introducing them to role models from their community and from similar backgrounds who have achieved educational and career success. This objective is about enhancing belief and understanding and reducing fear of financial commitment, and inspiring and supporting effort from early years through to college.

Why is this important?

Our mission tasks us to support young people, parents and their communities to thrive and fulfil their potential by increasing access to education. The changes we seek in creating a culture where access to education is facilitated will be driven by the following:

- Developing an Early Learning Programme in 2018 / 2019
- Creating Role Models
- Celebration
- Awards ceremonies in third-level venues
- Connecting families
- Parent Support Programme
- Third Level Links
- Inspiring Programmes
- Encouraging Reading
- Transition to second-level summer programmes
- Spreading the Word Media Partnerships
- Evaluation and baseline research



Key Actions 2018

Inspiring the next generation – Setting early aspirations

Action 1

Develop an Early Learning Programme in 2018 / 2019 - Recent research emphasizes the fact that public funding for early childhood learning has the potential to mitigate the high cost of special education and of high drop-out rates and other poor educational outcomes. Investing in early childhood education is a solution that creates upward mobility through opportunity. Instead of costly and marginally successful programmes later in life, quality early childhood education helps prevent the achievement gap by building the cognitive and social skills necessary for school readiness.

- Planning the Early Learning Programme.
- Programme in partnership with families in the designated Communities.
- Prepare detailed plan with partners.
- Seek funding for 2019/2020.

Action 2

Creating Role Models - Engage in Education's Undergraduates to return to their former primary schools as role models in the designated DEIS Primary Schools of:

Le Chéile National School - Roxboro

Our Lady Queen of Peace National School - Janesboro

Corpus Christi National School - Moyross

St. Mary's National School - St. Mary's Park

- Two visits per year to each school by Engage in Education graduates and students.
- Visits by inspirational leaders from Limerick.
- Rewarding Engagement.

Action 3

Celebration - We recognise and celebrate students who are making a genuine effort. Class teachers identify their students who are then recognised for Achievement Awards under the general criteria of Effort, Improvement Project Work and Attendance.

- Book Tokens
- Family Photographs
- 4 Schools and 20 Students per school

Action 4

Award ceremonies in third-level venues - Parents are invited to attend Award Ceremonies with their children held in the third-level colleges – University of Limerick, Limerick Institute of Technology and Mary Immaculate College. College Access Officers are invited to link up with families and home school liaison Teachers (HSL).

- 4 Schools, 20 Students and parents per school.
- Transport provided to Third-level Colleges:
 - *University of Limerick*
 - *Mary Immaculate College of Education*
 - *Limerick Institute of Technology*

Action 5

Connecting families - Students and families participating in the Celebration of Student Awards and Achievements have the opportunity to meet and connect with other aspiring families and to engage with and support others in their educational journey. This integration and support is enabled by close support from Engage in Education Project Members. Working with guidance counsellors and home school liaison teachers.

- 20 Families meet once a term from all 4 Schools.

Action 6

Parent Support Programme - Creating a Support Network and developing Skills.

Parental Support Programme that facilitates the empowerment of parents such as Parents Plus Programmes established 2018 – 2019

- 6 Sessions with 80 parents (4 Schools, 20 families) Parents Plus Programme

Action 7

Third-level Links - Close integration of activities is encouraged between schools, colleges and **Engage in Education**, with a focus on creating aspiration, identifying and supporting achievement in individuals and families.

Students and parents are invited to the University of Limerick, Limerick Institute of Technology and Mary Immaculate College of Education, for informational events which promote accessibility and help break down of attitudes of exclusion from third level participation.

Parents and children will meet undergraduates and learn about third-level options and opportunities for their children they will learn about sources of financial support that help make college a possibility for them. Parents are invited back to colleges to view facilities and discuss career opportunities. An

unofficial process enabling ongoing support is created. Access offices to invite 4 Schools 20 students and parents to each third-level Institution.

- 4 Schools, 20 Students and families per school
- Transport provided
- Photographs
- Engage in Education – Newsletter

Action 8

Inspiring Programmes - Through the direction and support of School Principals and staffs after-school programmes that stimulate learning and aspiration will be introduced and encouraged and existing schemes supported.

Students are invited to stimulating programmes that open young minds to new ideas and learning such as:

<i>Lego Technico</i>	-	<i>programme to be established in 2018/19</i>
<i>Coder Dojo</i>	-	<i>programme to be established in 2018/19</i>
<i>Mindset Programme</i>	-	<i>programme to be established in 2018/19</i>

Each programme to be undertaken in 4 Schools, 20 students per school.

- Visit to Tech Week RDS, April 2019 Irish Computing Society, SFI Discovery Programme
- Recognition in Engage in Education – Newsletter
- Limerick Leader

Action 9

Encouraging Reading - The primacy of reading encouragement in educational achievement is recognised. We arrange for primary school students to visit book shops and libraries for fun and dramatic book readings. Activities in conjunction with the library service are connected to reading and mathematics support schemes.

- Visit Local Library 4 Schools
- 20 Students

Book Days:

Students are presented with book tokens so that they can own books and have them at home

- 80 Book tokens 4 Schools, 20 Students
- Transport to book shop

Accelerated Reading:

Parents from the Parents Plus Programme are supported in using pre ready / early reading computer apps such as Jolly Phonics. 4 Schools, 20 Parents.

All DEIS primary schools take part in the Accelerated Reader Programme

- License for 4 DEIS Primary Schools for 5 years
- Establish a library in first year for 4 DEIS Primary Schools
- Books purchased for 4 DEIS Primary Schools for 4 years

Action 10

Transition to second-level summer programmes:

- 3 week programme to prepare students for second-level school.
- 4 DEIS schools
- 20 students per school
- 20 students attending other schools

Action 11

Spreading the Word Media Partnerships - In partnership, develop an integrated awareness campaign targeted at students, parents and communities in Limerick City to enhance belief and understanding of how education can empower, develop potential and help create life's opportunities using traditional and social media.

Engage in Education Newsletter

Limerick Leader

Limerick Post

Limerick Chamber of Commerce

Limerick City and County Council

Limerick city (Regeneration)

Social Media

95fm

The importance of cross-community support and engagement is recognised. Ongoing briefing and engagement with city stakeholders will be vital. To be established 2018 / 2019.



Action 12

Evaluation and baseline research - Participation and Engagement Rates by target groups form a key indicator of growing aspiration and commitment. All programmes will be evaluated annually on their ongoing achievement and participation rates.

A survey of all students and their parents, teachers and principals will be undertaken to set a benchmark for measurement over the five-year period 2018/19. Key indicators will be established and measured.

A partnership will be established with a third-level college to undertake research and evaluation of the works of Engage in Education 2018 / 2019.

Impacts

On foot of these actions the following will be measured. We believe that primary school students, parents and their communities will become more aware of the opportunities that education brings, and will gain a belief that they can achieve and be inspired by role models and the support that they have around them.

Early Childhood Education

Builds cognitive and social skills necessary for school readiness.

Accelerated Reading

Targeted reading levels measured and achieved

- Transition to second-level summer programme
- Increased retention at second-level school

Baseline measurement including:

- Students, parents and their communities will become more aware of the opportunities that education brings
- Believe that they will achieve
- Increased access to reliable information on educational pathways and financial supports
- A core of mutually supportive families and students determined to break free from the expected mould will be created.
- Students and parents will fully engage with educational system

Second-level

Objective 2

Having helped to create the aspiration, awareness and understanding of educational pathways at primary level our task now is to inspire and support further educational achievement among second-level students to become more self-motivated and committed to their own goals. Transition to second-level is a key foundation stage in the development of vital study habits and routines and the ongoing development of a student's independent study capacity, and will be a key focused of intervention at second level.

Why is this important?

Engage in Education students identified transition to second-level as an important area. Research supports the fact that this transition period is critical to retention at second-level.

Fostering continued parental aspiration for students and ambition for them to progress to third-level is key. Belief among parents in the support they can give their children on their educational journey, and in the benefits as a long-term investment in the future of their family, are vital.

Mentors and role-models from their community are important in helping motivate and support belief in these goals.

As the intensity of study increases, we encourage students to develop disciplined study habits and career goals that make their efforts worthwhile and contribute to their future success.

Action 1

Engage School Educational Support Teams - **Engage in Education** has a long history of working closely with Guidance Counsellors in the target schools. This partnership now needs to include home school liaison teachers (HSL) and School Completion Teams.

ALL FOUR SECOND-LEVEL DEIS SCHOOLS (THOMOND CC, CBS Sexton Street, NANO NAGLE Sexton Street AND SCOIL MHUIRE) have a HSL teacher and School Completion Team.

The HSL TEACHER is employed full-time to support parents and encourage them to link with the school and local community support organisations to foster educational goals and aspirations for their children.

- Engage in Education will aim to work in partnership with Second-level DEIS schools through the HSL teacher and Guidance Counsellor and the School Completion Team as all have a role to play in targeting educational disadvantage.
- All DEIS schools are obliged to actively engage with parents and set targets for each phase of DEIS planning (2016-2020). Engaging parents means better support for children, and greater

awareness of educational support and opportunities available to the parents themselves and their children.

- **Engage in Education** (Project Director) will meet and work with the four DEIS schools Senior Management teams. HSL teachers to promote awareness of **Engage in Education** when they visit the parents at home, and make them aware of the many supports available, given that financial stress is a big factor, fear of failure is common, and that there is a perceived lack of encouragement in the target communities.

Department of Education and Skills Policy

“Schools are already strongly advised to identify the sources of support – Department of Education and Science support services, education organisations, statutory agencies, voluntary organisations, community groups, etc. – that are available to assist them in addressing the areas prioritised in DEIS”.

Action 2

Consultative Forum - An integrated approach by all stakeholders is essential if students from DEIS schools are to receive the support they deserve.

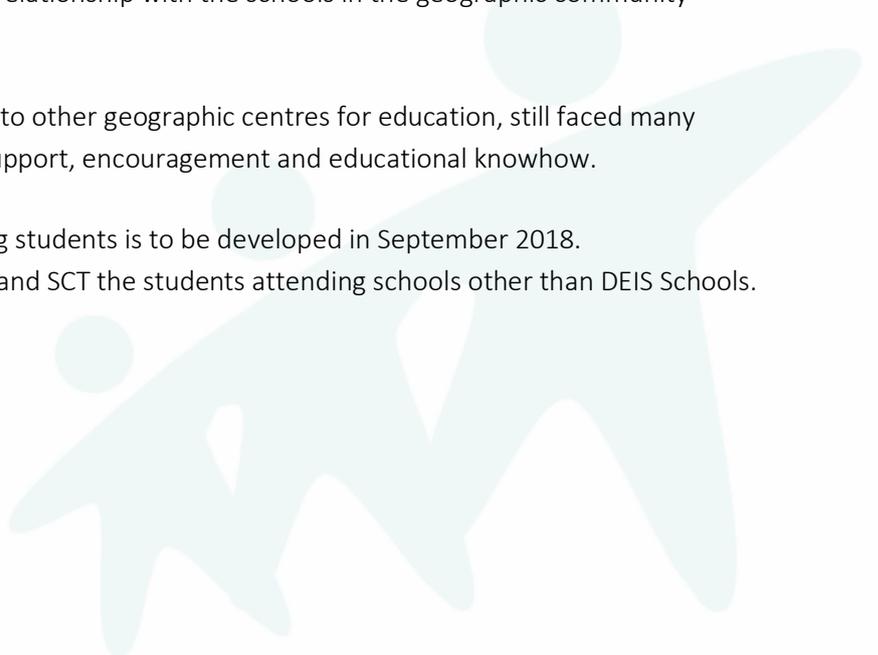
A major task will be to create an integrated support system in partnership with School Principals, teachers, Guidance Counsellors, Home School Liaison Teachers, School Completion Teams and third-level colleges. This is the function of the Consultative Forum. A Consultative Forum to be established September 2018 and to meet twice per year.

Action 3

Assisting All Students - LCBEI / **Engage in Education** assists and supports students from the designated communities listed in its Memorandum and Articles of Association regardless of which school they attended. It has however a special relationship with the schools in the geographic community covered by the project.

Students from the area that moved to other geographic centres for education, still faced many challenges; finance, lack of group support, encouragement and educational knowhow.

A system for identifying and tracking students is to be developed in September 2018. Identify in association with the HSL and SCT the students attending schools other than DEIS Schools.



Action 4

Study Skills - A short course on study skills leading to better learning outcomes will be initiated in all 4 DEIS Schools and also run in the designated communities. Belief among parents in the role they can play and in the support they can give will be enhanced. An understanding that effort and routine act as a long-term investment in the future of their family will be reinforced at every opportunity.

- 4 DEIS Schools
- 20 students per school
- 20 students attending other listed secondary schools, linked to study facilities in their communities September 2018.

Action 5

Retention at second-level:

- One week summer programme for first year students as they transfer to second year will be run with the aim of increasing students successful integration into the early second level years.
- 4 DEIS Schools
- 20 students per school
- 20 students attending other 'secondary schools'

Action 6

Awards and Encouragement - Working with Career Guidance Counsellors, HSL teachers and Year Heads to engage families and students, and to instil in them the need for belief, vision and routines if they are to reach their goals.

First and second year students will be the target group. Identifying students making a serious effort through achievement awards.

- 4 DEIS Schools
- 20 students per school
- 10 students attending other secondary schools



Action 7

Family Celebration - Family celebration is arranged in third-level colleges where parents are presented with opportunities to discuss issues relating to college attendance courses grants support structures. Parents will be invited to become part of a support network.

Awards Celebration

Book Tokens

Plaques and Certificates

Photographs

Engagement Newsletter

Media Coverage

- 4 DEIS Schools
- 20 students
- 10 students attending other schools

Action 8

Community Role-Models - The more students identify with role-models of educational success from their communities, the greater their belief in their own capability to achieve.

Engage in Education Undergraduates visit schools to discuss their personal college stories and future career plans. Focus is placed on the importance of regular study and career goal setting.

Engage in Education Undergraduates visit all 4 Schools in 5th and 6th year with a particular focus on laying the groundwork in First Year or Leaving Certificate.

- 4 DEIS Schools
- 20 students – each school 10 students identified from other schools and meet **Engage in Education** Students

Action 9

Study Facilities - Students are encouraged to attend quality study facilities, and the role that third-level outreach programmes can play is emphasised. The participation of third-level undergraduates as tutors cannot be under-estimated as a potential motivator. Study facilities to be identified for all students participating in the Engage in Education programme.

- Establish link with existing study facilities in September 2018.

Action 10

Third-level Initiatives - Students and their parents are encouraged to attend College Career programmes, open days and other initiatives by the Colleges.

- Transport for 5th + 6th year students and their parents to these events in University of Limerick, Mary Immaculate College of Education, and Limerick Institute of Technology
- 4 DEIS Schools
- 20 students each school 10 students from the listed secondary schools

Action 11

Language Summer School - Irish and European language course scholarships are provided based on recommendation from the Guidance Counsellors and HSL Staff in each school.

- Two Scholarships per school for each of the 4 DEIS Schools
- Six scholarships for area students attending other schools

Scholarships that are not taken up may be offered to the 4 DEIS Primary Schools

Action 12

Extra Tuition. Leaving Certificate Year - Career Guidance Counsellors identify students who would benefit from extra advanced subject tuition and support is provided for those students showing extra commitment and potential.

- 4 DEIS Schools, €4000 per school
- Other schools €1000 per school (applicable to students from the designated communities only).
- Support unclaimed in one school to be transferred for support in another school

Impact

Students will remain in school to complete their Leaving Certificate and gain entry to a third-level college.

<i>Second-level completion</i>	90%
<i>Transfer to Third-level, further education & apprenticeships</i>	90%
Evaluation and baseline research	

Third-level

Objective 3

Create a group identity as achievers against “all the odds” - empowered, motivated and supported in the ongoing struggle facing each student. We encourage Engage in Education students to participate fully in College life turning it into a rich and broad experience. At the same time we focus on their continuing personal development needs, future career options as well as academic success and one to one support.

Third-level can present a unique set of challenges for students from designated communities; the risk of isolation, geographic stigmatisation and financial anxieties are common. Our students sometimes lack the confidence and sense of entitlement of more affluent socio-economic groups, and they are often reluctant to seek help and advice available within college structures. Their lack of knowledge of onward career development pathways can slow or inhibit their potential development.

Creating a group identity is critical. Students come together to bond and support each other’s unique journey, and group support and sharing of information can further add to knowledge of college systems and encourage the transition to third-level.

Why it is important?

Students from the communities in Limerick City who reach third-level education do so against the prevailing culture, trends and pressures in their communities. Analysis of figures in the period 2012 – 2017 shows that **Engage in Education** (LCBEI) has encouraged well-above-average completion rates. There is a strong positive identity within the group and a strong sense of support from Engage, which has offered students individual assistance and the opportunity to become part of a mutually supportive group of students.

Action 1

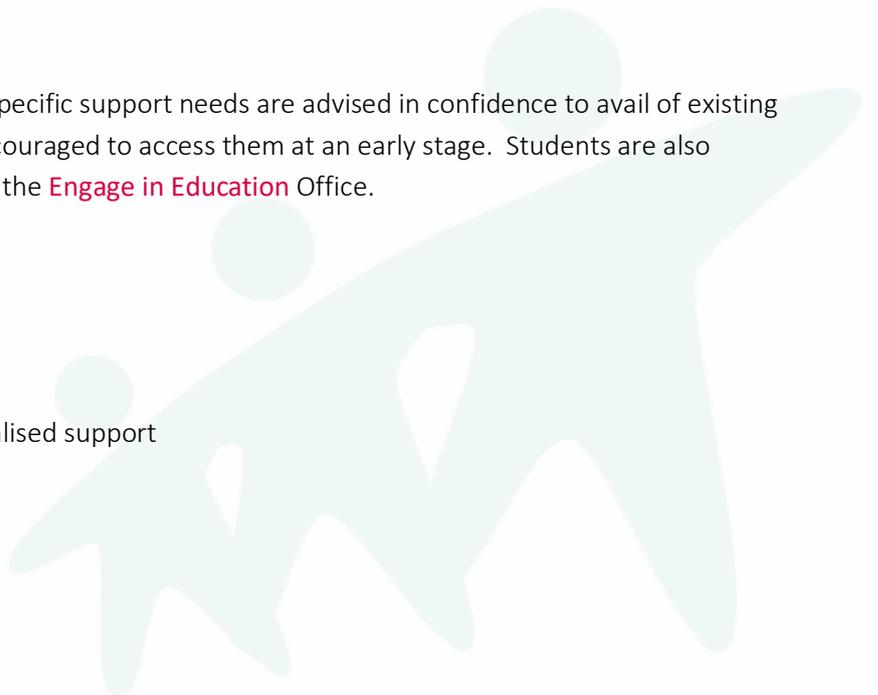
Individual Support - Students with specific support needs are advised in confidence to avail of existing supports in the colleges and are encouraged to access them at an early stage. Students are also encouraged to keep in contact with the **Engage in Education** Office.

Engage in Education Office

Open 9 – 1pm, 5 days a week

Mentoring

60 Students 2018 / 2019 – individualised support



Action 2

Developmental Programmes - Short seminars are held on personal and career planning issues; such topics as time management, motivation, study techniques, personal health and fitness financial planning are covered.

- Four workshops over 3 semesters
- Career Planning Workshop Students in 2nd year, 3rd year and 4th years of College Programmes.

Action 3

Participation Grants - Awarded to all students three times each year based on college attendance, participation in **Engage in Education** events, networking evenings and availability for school visits.

Year 1 Year 2

Year 3 Year 4

Action 4

Giving Back to their Communities - **Engage in Education** students visit their primary and secondary schools to act as role-models for their community and to encourage other students to embrace the educational system.

- 2 visits each year to 4 DEIS Schools arranged meetings with students from other listed schools
- Transport
- Photographs for school magazine
- Photographs for **Engage in Education** newsletter

Action 5

Celebration of Achievement - Graduating students' achievements are celebrated in a magazine circulated to all participating schools.

- Local celebrations with each community

Action 6

Alumni Association - As the number of successful graduates grows, the opportunity to develop an Alumni Association arises and this structure will emerge as part of the newly restructured project programme.

- Alumni to act as ambassadors for **Engage in Education**
- Workshop to develop plan September 2018, Implementation December 2018

Impact

90% of students will graduate from college and have a developed career plan. The track record of high retention rates will continue. They will become active members of the **Engage in Education** team, their community and Alumni, Ambassadors and role models for their communities.

Evaluation and baseline research.



Engage in Education

Objective 4

Being a Dynamic, Passionate and Focused Organisation: ensure that Engage in Education has the structure, capacity and resources to deliver this strategic plan 2018 – 2022.

Why is it important?

Transformation requires leadership structure, capacity and resources. Transitioning to a new organisational and business model requires a clear mission and focus. We need to develop a pipeline of leaders – this new generation must be recruited, inspired and developed. For this to happen the appropriate supports, opportunities and resources must be available. We commit to facilitating and leading this crucial work. We need also to have an effective way of translating our ambition into tangible and measurable impacts. We will do this and meet the ambitious targets set for the five-year period in an efficient and effective fashion.

Key Actions

Ensure **Engage in Education** is a well-run, transparent and accountable organisation modelling good organisation practice.

Action 1

Maintain Full Compliance with the three good practices for charities the Governance Code, the Statement of good practice in Fundraising and the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) for finance and activity reporting.

Action 2

Ensure up to date Organisation Information is easily found in the “transparency” section of our website.

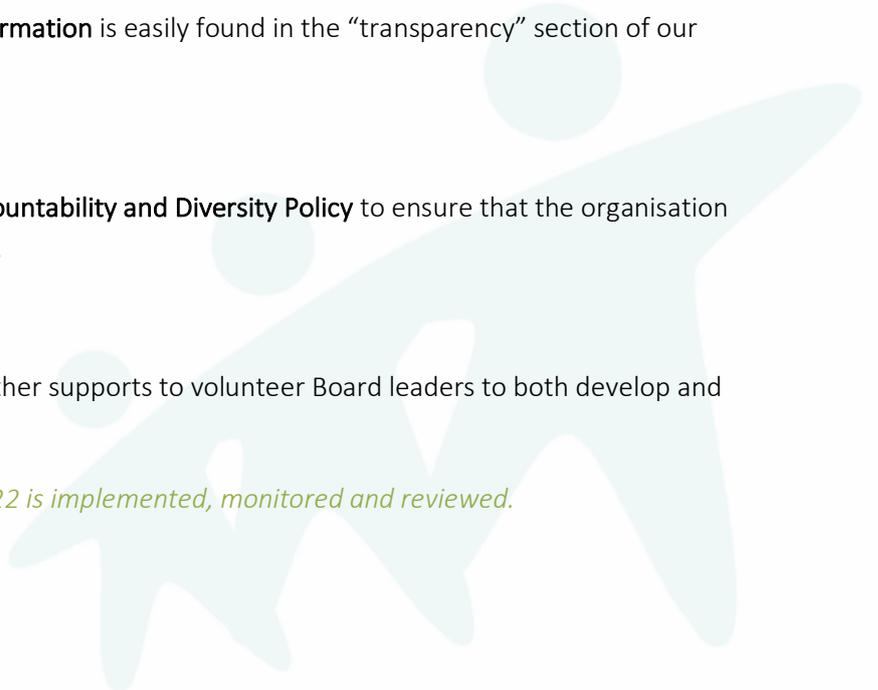
Action 3

Renew and Enhance our Board Accountability and Diversity Policy to ensure that the organisation remains rooted in our communities.

Action 4

Provide Governance Training and other supports to volunteer Board leaders to both develop and support this effective leadership.

Ensure our Strategic Plan 2018 - 2022 is implemented, monitored and reviewed.



Action 5

Develop, implement and monitor critical implementation plans which underpin the Strategic Plan 2018 -2022.

Action 6

Produce Annual Operation Plans and Budgets that underpin that plan.

Action 7

Develop and implement a framework and indicators for monitoring and assuring the effectiveness of this plan.

Action 8

Develop, implement and monitor the Fundraising implementation plan.

Action 9

Appointment of component, motivated Project Director to **implement Inspiring and Supporting Educational Journeys Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022 in 2018 / 2019**

Impact

As a result of these actions we will build greater financial diversity, effectiveness and independence. We will continue to develop as a best-practice learning organisation attracting committed staff and Board members. We will have a greater understanding of how to do our work in a sustainable way. A new generation of leaders will be inspired, recruited and developed we will be committed to openness, transparency and accountability. It will be the norm to have a published Strategic Plan.



8. Achieving Success

How will we know that we are successful? It is a challenge to monitor, measure and describe the benefits that [Engage in Education](#) delivers. However, it is critical for the effective consolidation and expansion of our work that we undertake this approach.

We will employ a best-practice, evidence-based approach to show what we do, why it is necessary and how it makes a difference to young peoples' lives in our communities in Limerick City. This is vitally important as it will help us do our work better and use our resources effectively.

A comprehensive listing of indicators and impacts is part of the implementation plan.

In essence, our work involves inspiring and supporting educational achievement. It is a long-term approach, working with young people and their parents, living in communities that have little belief or confidence in or understanding of the educational system and the learning process.

Our approach in this Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022 demonstrates how we can track and assess our own input by looking at a number of approaches both quantitative and qualitative.

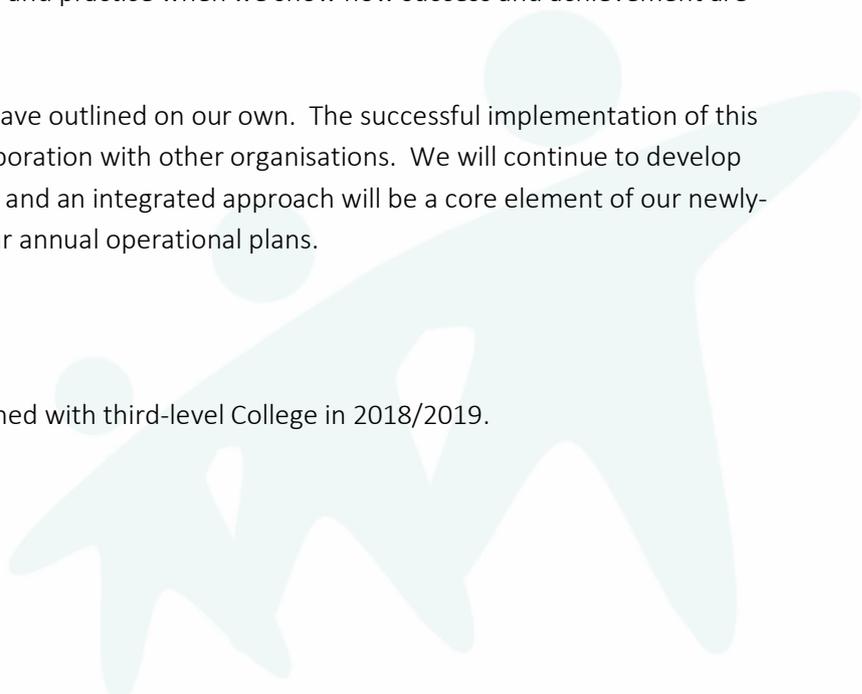
Young people and their parents tell us how they are empowered to reach their potential through the education system. This impact is critical because retention at primary and secondary level and access to third-level defines peoples' life chances. Good quality, reliable data, insight, understanding and knowledge are essential for this approach to be supported, and to build a critical mass of young people achieving their potential through the education system. Demonstration of what can be achieved is critical. Using quantitative and qualitative indicators together with baseline data will provide clear outcomes and learnings.

We can help change thinking, policy and practice when we show how success and achievement are accomplished.

We cannot achieve the impact we have outlined on our own. The successful implementation of this plan relies on partnership and collaboration with other organisations. We will continue to develop and consolidate these partnerships, and an integrated approach will be a core element of our newly-evolving work - programmes and our annual operational plans.

Impact

Research partnership to be established with third-level College in 2018/2019.



9. Partnership

One of the core values of **Engage in Education** is partnership. Working with other stakeholders to maximise the effectiveness of our operations is critical to our work.

Our key partners are listed below– we intend to deepen our relationship with these organisations and groups and to identify other partners with whom we can co-operate so as to enhance our work.

DEIS Primary Schools

Principals, Teachers, Home School Liaison Teachers and School Completion Teams

Le Chéile National School – Roxboro
 Our Lady Queen of Peace National School - Janesboro
 Corpus Christi National School – Moyross
 St Mary’s National School – St. Mary’s Park

DEIS Secondary Schools

Principals, Teachers, Guidance Counsellors, Home School Liaison Teachers and School Completion Teams

Thomond Community College
 CBS Sexton Street
 Nano Nagle School Sexton Street
 St. Mary’s Secondary School Corbolly

Other Secondary Schools*

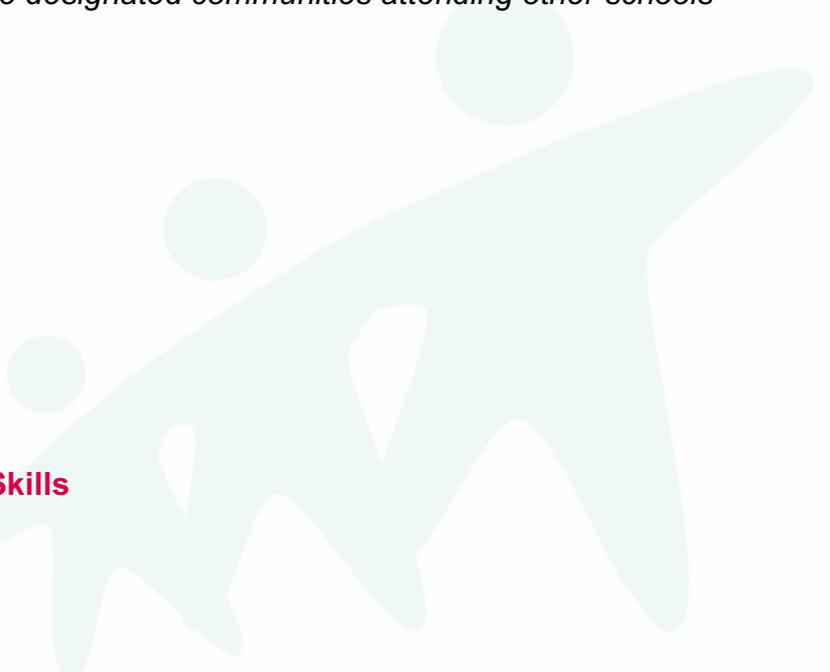
The inclusion of Students from the designated communities attending other schools

Colaiste Chiarain Croom
 Castletroy College
 Crescent College Comprehensive
 Laurel Hill
 Ard Scoil Ris
 St. Clements College

IScoil

Department of Education and Skills

Higher Education Equity Access Section



Higher Education Institutions

Limerick Institute of Technology

University of Limerick

University of Limerick Access Office, Limerick Enterprise Development Park

Mary Immaculate College of Education

The Higher Education Authority

JP McManus Charitable Foundation

Limerick City and County Council

Limerick City Regeneration

Limerick Chamber of Commerce

CRH plc

Maverick

Price Waterhouse Coopers

Rotary International

Limerick Enterprise Development Park

Business in the Community

Community / Voluntary Groups including

Southill

Southill House

Youth Interventions

The Factory Southside Youth Space

Southill Area Centre – Generic Youth Services

Le Chéile Restorative Justice Project

Youth Space

Southill Outreach (Youth Probation)

Southill Youth Intervention Project (LYS...targeted Programmes...Tusla...Service level agreements)

Extern - Garda Youth Diversion

Barnardos

Southill Area Centre



Southill Afterschools Club
 Southill Estate Management Office
 Southill School Completion Programme
 Le Chéile School & Gaelscoil
 Southill Family Resource Centre
 Limerick City Community Development Project (Southill)
 Limerick Social Service Centre (Southill Family Support Initiative)
 Limerick Social Service Council Ltd.
 Roxboro
 Our Lady Queen of Peace Community Development Group

Our Lady of Lourdes; Ballinacurra Weston

Limerick City CDP – Our Lady of Lourdes Office:
 Weston/Prospect Family Support Initiative
 Our Lady of Lourdes Community Services Group Limited
 STEPS School Completion Programme
 West End Youth Centre

Moyross

BARNARDOS Family Support Service
 EXTERN
 Northside Youth Space
 Moyross Residents Forum Limited
 Céim ar Chéim – Youth Justice/Probation Service Education Programme
 Moyross Community Enterprise Centre Ltd
 Northside Youth Space
 Moyross Residents Forum Limited
 Céim ar Chéim – Youth Justice/Probation Service Education Programme
 Moyross Community Enterprise Centre Ltd
 Moyross Adult Education Group
 Northstar Family Support Project
 Suaimhneas , Respond,
 Youth Advocates Programme, Ireland

St Mary's

St. Mary's Community & Adult Education Centre
 St Mary's Aid
 Kings Island Community Creche
 St Mary's Youthwork



Other Communities

Garryowen Community Development Project
St Munchin's Community Centre
St Munchins Family Resource Centre
Learning Hub Limerick



9. Board of Directors

Chairperson Patrick O'Connor	Founder of LCBEI now Engage in Education , former Principal St. Enda's Community School, Galvone
Michael Ryan	Primary Principal, Our Lady Queen of Peace Primary School - Janesboro
University of Limerick	Vacancy to be filled
Linda Barry	Academic Administration & Student Affairs Manager – Limerick Institute of Technology
Gerry O'Doherty	Rotary International
Geraldine Clohessy	Volunteer Community Development Work, Moyross, Our Lady Queen of Peace – Roxboro, Limerick Community Development Project Vice-Chairperson
Mary O'Sullivan	Guidance Counsellor, Thomond Community College
Noel Earlie	Former Principal CBS Sexton Street, Vice-Chairperson
Nuala Rennisson	Enterprise Support Worker Limerick Community Development Project
Sean Heffernan	Student Representative
Rachel Mescall-Fitzpatrick	Alumni Representative
David Conway	Accountant



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Company Number: 178548



APPENDIX 1

Context: The National Policy Context

“Education is key to delivering on our ambitions as a nation. It is the engine that drives economic growth. It is a powerful tool in breaking down cycles of disadvantage and ensuring every person is given the opportunity to fulfil their full potential”.

Action Plan for Education 2018, Government of Ireland

We know from research both national and international that education is highly predictive of future life chances and that this applies in the Irish context. International research has clearly indicated that early intervention in children’s education, and early learning at primary and second-level to boost academic achievement are key factors in retaining young people within full time education. Targeted intervention has formed the core of Irish policy addressing access to education and educational disadvantage. However, as research undertaken by the ESRI clearly states “while there are strong arguments in favour of such an approach, it should be noted that a considerable proportion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds attend non-DEIS Schools. School targeting alone cannot therefore address the needs of all children in the relevant groups and a tapered approach to allocating additional resources to schools according to the number of disadvantaged students – their population has some merit. Finally, schools do not exist in isolation”.

Those who leave school early - before their Leaving Certificate - are more likely to be unemployed or lone parents, earn less if they have a job, have poorer health and higher crime levels. The latest research indicates that one in six young Irish people still leave school without reaching Leaving Certificate level, with a critical factor being their social background. This has substantial costs for the young people themselves, their community and for Irish Society as a whole. Higher rates of early school-leaving result in higher future expenditure on welfare, health, prisons and reduce tax revenue and come at a major social political and economic cost. Data released on feeder schools to higher education shows with total clarity the scale of inequality in Ireland. While more than 90 per cent of school leavers in affluent areas such as Dublin 4 and Dublin 6 are going to Higher Education Institutions this falls to as low as 1% per cent in the areas of such as Southill, Moyross, St. Mary’s Park and Ballinacurra Weston.

The reality in Ireland and in those areas in Limerick City is that going to third-level involves major obstacles and confirms that the social divide continues to exist. Despite “free education” in the 1960’s and the introduction of “free fees” introduced to HEI’S some 20 years ago, and numerous

access initiatives, we have failed to significantly narrow the participation gap. Policy makers are continuously trying to address this issue. The government's National Access Plan for Higher Education 2015 – 2019 aims to boost the number of students from areas of disadvantage at third-level. The Action Plan for 2018 is the latest plan in this regard. A significant focus in this latest Action Plan 2018 is the emphasis on partnership and acknowledging the role of parents and community.

As stated in the Action Plan for Education 2018:

“Education improves our society, boosts our children’s potential and is integral to our economic success. Our approach to education is about giving every child an equal opportunity in life, and that’s why the Government is determined to build the best education and training system in Europe by 2026”.

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‘Impacts of Early Childhood Education on Medium and Long-Term Educational Outcomes’, Education Researcher Vol. 46, No. 8, pp 474-487 2017

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McCoy, S., A. Quail, E. Smyth 'The effects of school social mix: unpacking the differences', *Irish Educational Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 3, pp. 307-330. 2014

Smyth, E., S. McCoy, *Investing in Education: Combating Educational Disadvantage*, Dublin: ESRI/Barnardos. 2009

All of the publications relating to the Post-Primary Longitudinal Study deal with the issue of social background and school social mix, including but not limited to the following:

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Smyth, E., J. Banks, E. Calvert, *From Leaving Certificate to Leaving School: A Longitudinal Study of Sixth Year Students*. Dublin: Liffey Press. 2011



APPENDIX 2

Context: Listening to Students: The Student Voice Survey

Listening: Stories of Young People from Southill, Moyross, Ballinacurra Weston and St. Mary's Park:

In recent years there has been more focus on placing the student voice at the centre of the research and programmes that focus on pathways to educational achievement and access to HEI'S. This work provides important insights into the experiences of students, their families and communities, within and across the educational system. Their reflections on their experiences, choices made and their pathways are of enormous value for both policy and programmes development. An important background document is the research carried out in Limerick City and Limerick's Regeneration Areas – "How are our Kids?" provides a context for the study carried out by LCBEI – Engage in Education on the 2015 / 2016 cohort of participants in the Third-level Programme for the then LCBEI programme.

LCBEI Student Voice. A Study of LCBEI Students 2015 / 2016 – telling their stories and what they see as helping to improve educational opportunities.

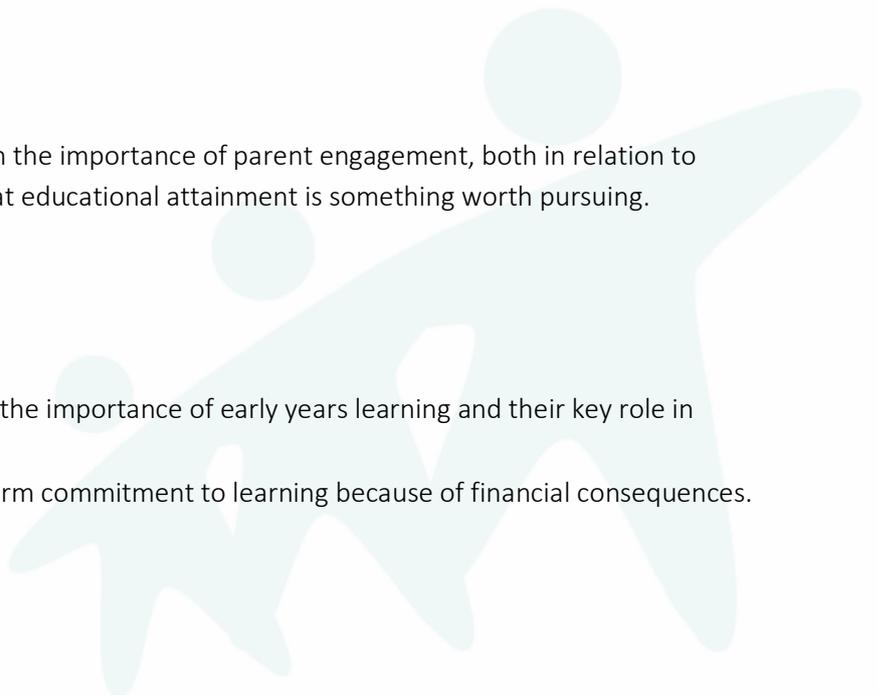
The class of 2015 / 2016 identified a range of activities as critical to facilitating participation at Third-level. Below is a summary of their key inputs to the LCBEI Programme at Primary, Secondary and Third-level.

Primary School

Emphasis was placed by students on the importance of parent engagement, both in relation to learning and in assuring children that educational attainment is something worth pursuing.

Parent Engagement:

- Parents vital supportive role.
- Belief in and understanding of the importance of early years learning and their key role in encouraging and supporting it.
- Overcoming the fear of long term commitment to learning because of financial consequences.



They also emphasised:

- The power of community role-models (undergraduates and post graduates).
- Reading encouragement.
- Overcoming subculture negatives.
- Quality sports-club membership in aiding formation.

Actions proposed for LCBEI:

- Linking of all agencies to support committed families.
- LCBEI linking achievements awards with third-level colleges.
- Actor / Authors enhancing book days.
- Identification and support of parents prepared to engage fully with the learning process.

Second-level

While similar issues arose as in Primary school, students emphasised:

- A good early start (Transition) to second-level was a key factor.
- Parental support creating a vision and motivation for parents was important from the commencement of second-level.
- Guidance Counsellor interaction with students / parents was important at an early stage.
- Engage in Education / LCBEI undergraduates creating local role-models to follow would encourage families.
- Tuition and grinds at key stages in support of committed students.
- Engage in Education / LCBEI undergraduates to focus on student vision and motivation in the First Year of Leaving Certificate.

What Engage in Education / LCBEI students said was important:

Celebration:

Re-institute achievement awards and celebration in first and second year or secondary school.

Identity:

Identify and support committed families.

Tuition / Grinds:

Provide more tuition and grinds for committed students at key stages.



Mentor:

Undergraduate role-models and mentors introduced in First Year of Leaving Certificate.

- Encourage and support individual families.

Third-level

Meetings:

The sense of group support provided by Engage in Education / LCBEI meetings and Facebook page was a valuable way to reduce the sense of isolation and increase onward motivation.

Finance:

Financial worries were ever-present and any financial support reduced this worry.

Engage / LCBEI Office:

The knowledge that the Engage in Education / LCBEI office would provide support and channel advice from the groups volunteer members enhanced motivation.

Career and Life Skills Development:

Undergraduate programming often included little by way of these skills. Undergraduates were often reluctant to use the supports available in colleges as these were seen as under-resourced and under pressure.

Final Year Students

Final year students acknowledge the excellent work done by a project volunteer but cited the need for onward career planning.

Engage in Education / LCBEI Undergraduates would benefit from a greater emphasis on and provision are the following:

College Option Choices:

Study Skills: Choosing the most relevant options.
Advanced study skills and time management Skills.

Personal Development Programmes:

Covering such topics as Assertiveness Training, Presentation Skills, Finance and Budgeting Skills.

Life and Career Planning:

Individual support in the area would greatly enhance opportunities after graduation among final year students.