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“It’s very important to hear what everyone has to say”:

A Study Into teaching and learning in a Centre for Survivors of  
Institutional Abuse

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## Abstract

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of May 1999 the then Taoiseach Bertie Ahern apologised on behalf of the Irish State to those who had suffered in Irish institutions. The centre that forms the basis of this research was established as a part of this apology to provide education and support. It caters specifically to survivors of institutional abuse and their families. This research aims to examine what factors need to be considered when creating a training programme for tutors who are coming into the centre. Currently there is no provision for training new tutors entering into this environment. The first thing that needed to be done was to establish a need for training of tutors. This was done initially through casual conversations and then through interviews during the research process. Learners at the centre are vulnerable and have a uniquely dark past relationship with education. An awareness of this among tutors is important so that they can determine appropriate actions within classrooms at the centre.

This research was conducted through semi-structured interviews with both tutors and learners from the centre. Tutors come to the centre in one of two ways. Either they are sent by the local Education and Training Board (ETB) or they are volunteers who are directly recruited by the centre. From these interviews it became clear that communication is of key importance, whether it be between the centre and its learners, the centre and its tutors or between tutors and learners. Learners need to feel as though their opinions and thoughts are respected and that they are free from being judged, from both their tutors and from the centre itself. Tutors need to feel as though they are listened to. The need for tutor support was clear from the interviews. Working at the centre, although rewarding for its tutors, can be difficult and has the ability to affect personal lives negatively. A training programme and the provision of support for tutors would improve the experience of teaching at the centre.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

“On behalf of the state and all its citizens, the government wishes to make a sincere and long overdue apology to the victims of childhood abuse for our collective failure to intervene, to detect their pain, to come to their rescue... ‘all children need love and security’. Too many of our children were denied this love, care and security. Abuse ruined their childhoods and has been an ever present part of their adults lives reminding them of a time when they were helpless. I want to say to them that we believe they were gravely wronged, and that we must do all we can now to overcome the lasting effects of their ordeals” (Ahern, 1999).

### 1.1: Context for the Research

On the 11th of May 1999, the Irish government held a press conference. At the conference, then Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, issued an apology on behalf of the Irish State to those who had suffered in Irish Institutions. Before this event, a number of survivors had begun to come forward with their stories. This included the documentary *Dear Daughter* which was released in 1996 and followed Christine Buckley and others as they recounted their time in the Goldenbridge orphanage. This documentary encouraged other survivors to come forward and tell their stories (O’Carroll, 2014). It was the catalyst that set in motion the exposure of the horrific atrocities committed within the walls of Irish institutions.

In 2000 the *Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse* was established by the Irish government to investigate the extent of abuse on children from 1936 onwards. The report of this commission was published in May 2009. The commission’s remit was to investigate all forms of child abuse in the sixty Industrial and Reform schools run by the Catholic Church in Ireland. It took testimony from over 2000 former residents of these institutions and found that physical, emotional and sexual abuse were features of many of these institutions. Within the five volumes of the report it was found that religious orders had systematically covered up the abuse of children and “encouraged ritual beatings and consistently shielded their orders’ paedophiles from arrest amid a ‘culture of self-serving secrecy’” (BBC News, 2009).

The centre<sup>1</sup> was established as a part of the state's apology to those who had suffered abuse in Irish institutions. The aim of the centre is to provide a safe space for learners to improve their self-worth through education and support services. They are aware that the adult survivors of industrial schools and other historic institutions need support to deal with the trauma of the past and move on with their lives. They provide a congenial meeting place for survivors as well as acting as a centre for information. Staff at the centre provide clients with assistance in dealing with governmental and non-governmental agencies. They assist making claims for redress and tasks such as letter writing and making funeral arrangements. The centre believes that learning and a sense of self-worth can provide the key to a better life. Their aim is to provide their clients with the necessary tools to go out and take control of their own lives.

Education within the centre is, for the most part, outsourced to the local Education and Training Board (ETB), who recruit and pay tutors. The majority of tutors sent from the ETB have been there for a number of years and have no formal qualification in teaching. There are a diverse range of classes available including art, mindfulness, drama, literacy, computers and creative writing. The centre also has volunteer tutors who they recruit directly. As with ETB tutors, many of the volunteer tutors do not have any formal teaching qualifications.

### 1.2: Why this Research?

The centre is a very important place for me. I first became involved at a time when I was very lost in my life. I had been diagnosed with a chronic illness a few years prior. This caused me to isolate myself in my house. I was on a lot of medication and unable to walk independently for a lot of that time. I began to become afraid of going outside and talking to people. There is a significant portion of this time that I don't remember. I'm not entirely sure how it happened, but I decided that this could not be the rest of my life. Teaching was something I had intended to do when I finished my degree in 2013. After doing some further research I settled on adult education. I stumbled across the Higher Diploma in Further Education in Maynooth and decided that in order to be accepted onto that course, I should gain some experience first. The centre was one of the first places to reply to my enquiry. I credit the centre with a lot of the recovery I had prior to beginning the HDip in Further Education. It gave me much needed structure and continuity. It gave me a place where I could meet and talk to people. It was the thing that got me out of the house. Being able to do that gave me the confidence to take on

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<sup>1</sup> The Centre is the name that I have chosen to refer to the education centre that forms the basis of this research



other teaching positions, both paid and voluntary. It was the first stepping stone for me, to where I am now. I care about this place, about these people. This is why it was difficult for me during this research to hear about the inadequacies in the centre, from both its learners and tutors. I didn't expect it and it has significantly changed my view of the centre.

The overall aim of this research is to produce an induction for new tutors starting at the centre. Something that struck me very early in my time at the centre was the complete lack of any training for new tutors. When I started, my own teaching experience was limited to one-to-one computer classes and some tutoring in English and creative writing. I had a very short conversation with the volunteer coordinator at the time, where I was asked if I knew what the centre was, told about some of his experiences there and given a short tour. The specific needs of the clients were not discussed. I walked into the classroom completely unprepared. Working in the centre is deeply rewarding but it also presents its own set of unique challenges. Prior to beginning this research, I discussed the plan for it with a number of past and present tutors at the centre. These tutors identified a need for some form of training for tutors.

### 1.3: The Research Question

This was something I grappled with for a long time. What is it that I want to know at the end of this process? There were many things I wanted to find out, but time was a limitation and so I had to narrow down my focus. Eventually I came up with the following question:

*What approaches to teaching and learning would be useful for tutors working at a centre for adults who have experienced institutional abuse?*

### 1.4: Outline of the Thesis

In this first chapter, I have introduced the research topic and research question. I have also given some of the very personal reasons why I have decided to take on this research topic. I also introduced the research question and the aims of this research.

In Chapter Two, Ethics, I will discuss the ethical considerations that need to be taken into account for this research. Firstly, I was working with a vulnerable group of adults. It was important that I ensured that there were proper protections in place for them. Next it was important to acknowledge that I am researching a place with which I have a deep connection. I am both a volunteer and a paid ETB tutor at the centre. I also have a close and personal friendship with some of those who I interviewed and this needed to be addressed.

In Chapter 3, Methodology, I will discuss the methodology that I used to conduct my research. I will explore my own ontological and epistemological positions as well as laying out the data collection method that will be used in this research. I will also discuss reflexivity and research within this chapter. Your ontology is your worldview. As discussed in this chapter, my own worldview believes in equality of opportunity and that education can be a key to achieving this. Epistemology then discusses what the nature of knowledge is. Here I see knowledge as a social development involving many points of view and influences. This determines the subject's knowledge of reality, which then determines their interpretation of reality, not a strict definition of reality. Finally, I will discuss the importance of being reflexive in the research process.

Chapter 4 will be the Literature Review. Here, I will put forward the different theorists that I have used to back up my arguments for my research, namely Paulo Freire, Carl Rogers and Nel Noddings. When discussing Freire, we will examine his concept of emancipatory education. It applied very much to the centre as it sits very comfortably into their ethos. I will then discuss Rogers' person centred approach to education and finally I will discuss Nodding's concept of care and education.

In Chapter 5, Findings, I will highlight and give a voice to the tutors and learners who took part in this research. This section will look at teaching and learning under a number of different headings;

1. Preparedness to teach
2. Impact on the personal lives of tutors
3. The importance of being heard
4. The challenges of teaching in this environment
5. How to teach at the centre
6. 'Something for myself'

Finally, in Chapter 6, I will provide an analysis of the findings of the research and link it back into the theoretical framework outlined in the literature review.

In Chapter 7, conclusion, I will sum up what needs to go into the training programme for new tutors, give recommendations for where the centre should go from here and highlight some areas for further study.

## Chapter 2: Ethics

### 2.1: Introduction

In any research process it is important to consider the relationship between the means and ends of the research, as well as the main ethical considerations in the research process. Strict consideration of ethics has particular importance in this research for a number of reasons. Firstly, the learner group being interviewed for this research are vulnerable. They are survivors of institutional abuse who have had horrific experiences in their past. I was very aware that asking them questions about learning could potentially lead to memories being brought up. I tried my best to mitigate this issue by never directly asking about their past and ensuring that supports were available for them should they need it. I also gave details of supports to tutors as the topics discussed could be difficult for them also. Next, I am currently both a volunteer and a paid ETB tutor in the centre. As discussed in Chapter 1, the centre is a very special place for me. I have built up good relationships with the staff and clients of the centre. Therefore, the issue of insider researching also had to be addressed. Finally, I had to address the issue of interviewing learners who I teach as well as interviewing friends.

Ethics, in a broad sense, is an attempt to place a set of principles of behaviour that is considered normal. In the research process, this is allowing critical inquiry into how your own views and opinions shape the research; how your actions affect others, and the protection of participants. A definition of ethical problems in social research is given by John Barnes (1979). He defines the decisions we make during the research process as those which “arise when we try to decide between one course of action and another not in terms of expediency or efficiency but by reference to standards of what is morally right or wrong” (Barnes, 1979, pp.16). He is making a clear statement here that ethical decisions should be based on what is right or just and not what is advantageous to the researcher (May, 2011, pp. 61). However, ethical decisions will depend on the values of the researcher and the social sphere from which they come. It is therefore very important that those conducting research interrogate their own values and norms during the research process.

### 2.2: Researching Vulnerable Groups

Prior to the commencement of this research process there were a number of ethical considerations that needed to be taken into account. First, the learners at the centre are

vulnerable. A report by Mary Higgins, published in 2010 and which used the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse as its main source, found a clear link between institutionalisation and psychological and mental health problems later in life. These include anxiety disorders, difficulty maintaining relationships, depression, stress and anti-social behaviour (Higgins, 2010). Long term emotional and mental health problems were experienced by four out of five survivors. For men these difficulties tend to manifest in risk taking sex, delinquency, crime, violence and alcohol abuse. While for women they manifest in anxieties, depression, eating disorders, mood disorders and suicidal tendencies (Higgins, 2010). A number of steps were taken in order to ensure that participants felt safe, informed and heard. I was very aware that this research could bring up some potentially painful memories for those taking part. Therefore, I decided to put the numbers of counselling services on the information sheet for the research as well as on the consent form that each participant signed. I also had a discussion with each of the participants before beginning the interview in which I assured them that if a topic was too painful or they became upset in any way that it was no issue to stop the interview. The staff and management of the centre were informed of the dates that the interviews were to take place and the potential to cause upset to learners. Learners were also informed by me which staff member from the centre they could go to should they need support after the interview. Counselling numbers were also provided to tutors who were taking part in the research. Tutors were given my phone number and email address should they wish to contact me with questions or concerns. I was unable to give out contact details to learner participants due to an agreement I signed when I first started as a volunteer at the centre. Volunteers in the centre are not allowed to give contact details to clients of the centre. Although I am an ETB tutor the majority of the time I am there, I also volunteer regularly and am therefore governed by that original agreement. Neither the tutors, or learners interviewed for this research availed of the counselling made available or asked for the interview to be paused or stopped.

### 2.3: Informed Consent

One of the crucial factors of any research involving other people is informed consent. This means that research participants have freely given their consent to take part in the research. This consent is based on an understanding of the aims and process of the research as well as the potential consequences from publication of the research. This was an area of the research that I spent a long time thinking about. The learner group of adults who took part in this research are vulnerable and literacy levels are very mixed. For this reason, the information

sheet about the research was written in plain English and given well in advance of the interview to anyone who wished to take part. The information sheet was also printed in large type and double spaced to ensure that it would be easy to read. I read through the information sheet with each participant and asked them to repeat back to me in their own words what I had just told them to ensure understanding. I also made sure that learners knew when I would be present in the centre prior to the interviews so that they could ask any questions or raise any concerns. Tutors were emailed the information sheet in advance of their interviews and assured that I was more than willing to answer any questions or address any concerns. In advance of each interview, I once again sat and went through the information sheet with each participant, followed by going through the consent form. Again, I asked for the information to be repeated back to me in their own words. The information sheet was laid out in a question and answer format to ensure that participants could find the information they wanted quickly.

#### 2.4: Confidentiality

The researcher must make a conscientious effort to maintain the anonymity of the participants. This can be easier said than done. There are a lot of identifying features among participants in this research. The centre is the only one of its kind in Ireland and has a small staff, volunteer and tutor population. A similar issue arises with clients of the centre. Although there are more clients than staff, identities can be figured out by certain factors discussed during the interviews. I have made every effort to anonymise the interviews. I have removed any mentions of class subjects from them, I have removed colloquial speech and obvious identifying factors such as where a learner is from and the qualifications of certain tutors. Certain speech patterns were removed such as overuse of the words 'em', 'like' or 'you know'. The interviews were transcribed without names and participants were randomly assigned a name instead. None of the names used are of regular staff, volunteers, tutors or clients of the centre. The original audio of the interviews and the transcriptions will be held in an encrypted file on a password protected laptop and destroyed after 5 years. Although I was asked by the centre who had been interviewed, I do not believe they know which tutors were interviewed unless they disclosed it themselves. I believe the centre may know of at least two learners who were interviewed due to the location that the interviews took place. I am unsure of whether they could identify those learners from what they said in those interviews.

There are limitations to maintaining confidentiality however, and I am aware of that. In order to discuss certain topics effectively, I have had to include certain information about

learners and tutors that means it is possible to identify them. Information such as the amount of time a tutor has worked at the centre and the issues certain learners raise about the centre bring about a small possibility of those participants being identified. Participants were aware of the possibility of this research being published before the interview began.

### 2.5: Insider Researching and Power

The largest ethical consideration for me in this research is that I am known to all of the participants involved. I have been an active volunteer within the centre for almost 4 years and have been a paid tutor through the ETB for around 6 months. Mercer (2007) discusses the pros and cons of being an insider researcher. The first thing she discusses is access. Although access is generally more easily granted to a person known to an organisation, it can also be hard to ‘shut off’ when the research has concluded. Opinion is divided on the extent that an insider researcher who continues to perform their roles in the organisation will alter the research process. On the one hand it can be argued that should an insider researcher continue to perform their normal roles within an organisation, they will have more impact on the research process than an outside consultant. Conversely, Hockey maintains that insiders are able ‘to blend into situations, making them less likely to alter the research setting’ (Hockey, 1993, pp.204). I think this debate depends on the particular role you occupy within the organisation. I am a tutor at the centre, both paid by the ETB and volunteer. I am also friendly with the staff and management of the centre. I did not believe at the start of this process that it would have any adverse effect on the research process. However, when I was interviewing learners initially, I know they held back information from me. When one learner was giving his opinion, he expressed a fear of being barred from the centre. In the classroom and in conversation, the learners have told me things about the classes at the centre that were not expressed in the interviews. I believe this is because they see me as a part of the establishment of the centre. They believed that anything they said to me would be reported back to the centre, despite reassurances at the beginning and during the interviews that they would be anonymised. They appeared to be reassured when I returned to them with the transcripts and showed that I had removed any obvious identifying factors from them and that they could change or remove items from the transcripts if they wanted. This issue also came up with tutor interviews with one tutor asking me to remove a particular piece of information for fear of causing trouble for themselves with the centre.

The issue of familiarity is one I have had to grapple with deeply. On the one hand, familiarity means that I have a good understanding of the learners and have knowledge of the social setting of the centre. I am familiar with the context and background of the learners and have knowledge of teaching practice among staff and volunteers. However, familiarity may also mean that I assume my own thoughts and opinions are more widespread than they are. That I might miss an obvious question, that a sensitive topic may not be raised, that shared prior experiences may not be explained, that shared norms may not be articulated and that this may result in thinner data than if the research had been carried out by an outsider (Mercer, 2007). To combat this, I have had a number of informal conversations about the research with learners and tutors within the centre prior to the interviews beginning. However, I believe that familiarity is possibly one of my strongest tools. I know how far participants can be pressed for information, I know the comfort level of the learners and am already familiar with their backgrounds and history so the risk of having a shocked reaction if something about their past is brought up at interview is lessened. I believe, despite knowing that learners did hold back at interview, I had a greater level of candour than an outsider would have received. Clients<sup>2</sup> of the centre tend to be suspicious of strangers. They like to know who is hearing what they are talking about and where that information could go. This was even mentioned by one learner in his interview. Mercer likens conducting insider researcher to “wielding a double edged sword” (Mercer, 2007, pp.7). It is for this reason that I believe insider researchers need to interrogate their own biases and knowledge of an organisation and seek to make the familiar strange. This was the case during this research. I had to leave behind my own feelings about the centre and stand in an objective space. One where I was able to listen to and take on board what others had to say and use that to form the findings from this research.

## 2.6: Interviewing Learners that I Teach

All of the learners interviewed for this research have attended a class I taught at one point in time. Two of them continue to attend my class every week. There is an inherent power dynamic in the tutor/learner relationship, despite my trying to mitigate this through my practice. However, in a setting like the centre, it is impossible to fully remove that power dynamic. The history of these learners means that they have a deep psychological association with teachers and no one tutor could ever solve that. In the classroom, I try to keep a democratic space and I am careful of where I sit and how I talk. For example, I never sit separated from the learners,

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<sup>2</sup> The Centre refers to those who avail of its services as clients



nor do I sit higher than they do or stand when they are all sitting. We generally sit in a circle and all on the same level. I tried to bring this idea into the interviews as well. We sat opposite each other in identical chairs with a small coffee table in between us. After going over the information sheet and the consent form, I made sure to tell the learners that they were in control. They could stop the interview at any point and they didn't have to answer a question if they didn't want to. This was their opportunity to give their opinion and share their experiences. It was completely up to them how much or little they wished to share. I tried to keep the interview conversational and calm, as though the questions were naturally stemming from each other rather than 'I need x, y and z' answered. This seemed to work well and learners seemed at ease discussing their experiences. As discussed earlier, I believe learners did hold back in those initial interviews. Showing them the transcripts, anonymised, seemed to mitigate this and some learners did add additional items after that.

### 2.7: Interviewing Friends

I am close friends with two of the tutors that I interviewed during this process. One of these was the first interview that I conducted and the other was the last. The question here is whether this can be a benefit or a hindrance to the research process. Both of these friendships stem from the centre but pre-dates the beginning of the research process. These are both close friendships and had the potential to shape the research. I had a lot of trouble finding works on negotiating close friendship with participants that pre-dates the beginning of the research. This is when I came across an article by Jodie Taylor about negotiating research and friendship (Taylor, 2011). As a close friendship exists, I am privy to a level of personal knowledge about these two participants and they have knowledge of my personal life. I have shared many experiences with these two participants including eating together, long conversations, staying at each other's homes and invitations to family events. I think it would be impossible for that not to affect the research process.

The advantage of intimate relationships such as these is that the data gathered from them was much more in depth than that from participants with whom I did not have a previous close relationship. These two friends already had a trusting relationship with me and therefore I believe that they felt more comfortable in sharing the impact that working at the centre has had on their personal lives. This sharing of personal factors from the two tutors presented an ethical dilemma for me. The nature of these disclosures were very personal and as stated earlier, although I have tried to ensure confidentiality, there are limits to that. The rules of friendship



would dictate that that information should never be shared (Taylor, 2001, pp. 13). I knew that this information had been shared due to the nature of our relationship and I was unsure whether I felt comfortable sharing it with the public. However, they knew that they were taking part in research when it was told and they have been given a chance to change the transcripts.

I was aware from the beginning that there was a possibility that I would ask these two particular friends to take part in this research. Therefore, I deliberately restricted how much I told them about the research. I did become concerned that I may have shared too much in any given moment. I wondered if they were more familiar with the research than other participants which would create an unfair advantage to them. If they knew what I was looking for, would they just tell me what I wanted to hear? I mitigated this as best I could. Looking back, I do not believe that I told them too much at any point, I was very careful with my words as at the time, they both worked at the centre as well. I wrote out the information sheet for the research in a deliberate fashion so that it stated exactly where I was with the research. It stated what the research was and what the aim of it was. There were no hidden bits of information. The opportunity to see the questions in advance was also offered to all tutors who were interviewed during this research process.

## 2.8: Conclusion

Ethical considerations have had to be at the forefront of this entire research process. The learner group I was interviewing are vulnerable. A significant number of clients at the centre have mental health issues and I was acutely aware that the research could trigger an unpleasant or upsetting memory. For this reason, counselling numbers were provided to all participants. Confidentiality was another very important aspect of ethics in this research, however, I do recognise the potential limitations to confidentiality. Following on from that the importance for participants to fully understand what they are taking part in is very important. Participants were given a detailed information sheet that explained exactly where I was at the time with the research, the potential implications of taking part in the research and the possibility that the research will be published. Next, we had to address that I was researching in an educational centre where I am actively involved and have been for some time. Although this can be an advantage, it can also be a significant disadvantage. Finally, I acknowledge the ethical considerations that had to be made after I decided to interview close friends for the research. Again, this can be an advantage, but it also presented unforeseen issues around the information that had been shared in interviews with me.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### 3.1: Introduction

This section will introduce the methodology and methods which will be applied over the course of this research. I will discuss the rationale for choosing a qualitative research method and outline my ontological and epistemological approaches. Finally, I will discuss the methods I will employ to gather the data. The overall aim of this research is to draft a proposal for a tutor training programme for the centre in which the research is conducted. This programme will be based on the interviews with tutors and learners within the centre which will focus on what helps and hinders learning within the unique environment of the centre. The ontological and epistemological positions outlined below sit firmly in the social constructivist paradigm. Social constructivists believe that people seek understanding of the world in which they live and work (Cresswell, 2014). These meanings can be varied and are often based on the interactions people have with one another. Rather than starting with a theory to be proven, social constructivist researchers generate meaning from the data generated in the research process.

### 3.2: Ontology

Establishing an ontological position for this research was not a particularly difficult task. Ontology is concerned with ‘what is’ the nature of existence and the structure of reality (Crotty, 1998). This research is about people, it follows therefore that the ontological position adopted should also be about people; their experiences and their opinions. I undertook this research because I care about the education of learners in the centre. I want them to succeed and to reach their goals and have too often seen them fall away from education because of an incident in the classroom. The incident that comes to mind first is a tutor who wrote notes on a flipchart in very small handwriting. The literacy level of the learners at the centre is very mixed, therefore this is not an ideal approach to take. Following on from that, during my time working there I have seen tutors leave due to the sometimes challenging and diverse needs of learners at the centre. I believe that providing the outline for a training programme specific for the needs of the centre will equip tutors with the necessary tools to thrive in such a challenging environment. Mason (2018) tells us that the question to ask yourself when establishing an ontological position is “what is the nature of the phenomena, or entities, or social world, that I

wish to investigate” (Mason, 2018). A question such as this asks us to interrogate what we think research is, on a fundamental level. It asks what we think makes up the social world. By analysing the perspectives, experiences and accounts of learners we can see what is working in the current system as well as what needs to be changed in order for the teaching and learning within the centre to be more effective.

I first became aware of issues of equality and social justice around 13 years ago. Before then, I’ll admit, I never particularly thought of them. I was brought up in a middle class household, in a relatively nice area. It started with watching the struggles of my parents to get help for my brother within the mental health system in Ireland. It seemed as though all the literature was saying he was entitled to assistance, but in practice none of these services were supplied. This is a struggle that continues to this day. Eight years ago I was diagnosed with a chronic illness. It was really my first experience of being disadvantaged. Being diagnosed with this illness caused me to seek out others who also had it. For this, I will be forever grateful to Facebook. As discussed earlier, I was unable to walk independently during this time and barely left the house. In groups found on social media, I began to have contact with others outside of my little middle class bubble. I saw the inequality in society for the first time. I saw people who were as ill as I was, but who couldn’t afford to not work and could not get disability allowance; killing themselves to try to earn a living. I heard about the inequality in the rental system and the difficulty of finding a rental home when in receipt of rent supplement. I heard about inequalities in the healthcare system. I’m very lucky in this regard, health insurance has always been maintained for me and therefore I have been able to access needed healthcare fast. I could afford to go see a consultant privately who prescribed the medication that brought my pain to a manageable level and could go privately to have the nerves blocked that were causing issues within a matter of weeks. I’ve seen friends, very dear friends, be on waiting lists for these procedures for years. It’s just so incredibly unfair. It’s for this reason that I want to see people thrive through education. I believe education is the ultimate equaliser. Education can open doors and provide opportunities.

I have spent much of my life aware of the importance of having a voice. My parents placed enormous importance on my imagination, opinions and thoughts, even as a very young child. This was not necessarily encouraged in school. I was a curious and imaginative child. My first primary school teacher, from ages five to seven, was definitely not someone who encouraged this. I distinctly remember at five years old being told that the roofs of houses could not be any colour but brown, water was always blue and grass was always green. In fact, I had

been scolded for colouring a roof purple. Skipping forward a few years, we were asked about a particular book in class. I stated an opinion on it, to which the teacher replied “Well, that’s not in the book”. The first experience in education I had of my opinion being valued was in college during the final year of an English degree. I vowed that when I was a teacher, I would value the opinions of my students. Having a voice, being heard and being understood is very important for learners. Those who enter adult education are often carrying a negative previous experience of school. It is important that they know I see them as equal to me, they are adults after all, with a voice and an opinion that is valuable.

To me education is about a lot of things. Above all else, our learners are humans. They are people with their own unique thoughts, feelings and experiences. It is important that we acknowledge this within the classroom. I believe that education should be learner centred. This is the approach that works best, particularly in this kind of an environment. Learners should always be treated as individuals and not part of one collective group. The ethos of the centre tells us that they aim to educate learners to step up and take control of their own lives. I believe that this kind of emancipatory education can only be achieved by encouraging and treating our learners as individuals and helping them to find their own voices.

### 3.3: Epistemology

It follows then that the epistemological position in this research would be described as interpretivist. Interpretivism emphasises the sense that people make of their own lives and experiences. Therefore, the researcher should seek out and interpret their participants’ meanings and interpretations (Mason, 2018). Questions about epistemological positions ask us to interrogate what we view as valid knowledge within the social world we are researching. The participants in this research are going to be sharing their lived experiences. What the world means to the participants of this research is critically important. My role in this is to interpret these experiences and create meaning and understanding from them.

Participants in this research are both learners and tutors at the centre. As discussed above, It was very important in this research that they be provided with a place to voice their opinions and experiences. Knowledge is generated from our own lived experiences. What we know therefore is subjective. There is no one in the world who knows the experiences of these people better than themselves. The knowledge that is generated through their experiences is valid and important. The centre is a unique place to teach and learn. The knowledge that I am seeking in

this research is context specific and I am aware of this. What I am asking in the interviews will not give me knowledge about places outside of the centre. Essentially, this research is a case study on one place at a particular point in time.

### 3.4: Participant Group

The participants in this research will be drawn from two distinct groups of people within the one education centre. First, we have the learners. The centre was established for the survivors of institutional abuse and their families. Thus, the client group is very diverse in terms of age, gender, sexuality and socio-economic background. This includes people who were in Industrial Schools, Magdalene Laundries and Mother and Baby Homes. The age range of clients at the centre is very diverse, from thirties to nineties. Literacy levels are very varied amongst the learners. Many of the learners have not attended any education outside of primary education and the centre. Others have gone to college. It was particularly important to talk to learners for this research. It is their centre and therefore their opinions and thoughts should be of the utmost importance.

The second group of participants are tutors at the centre. Tutors at the centre come from two sources. First there are tutors sent by the local Education and Training Board (ETB). These tutors are interviewed, hired and paid by the ETB. Secondly, there are volunteer tutors. Volunteer tutors are recruited by the centre directly. Generally, they contact the centre and are interviewed by one of the Centre's administrators. Volunteer tutors are Garda vetted by the centre, but there is no requirement for qualifications or experience.

### 3.5: Data Collection Method

The method of data collection I have chosen is semi-structured interviews. This fits best with the ontological and epistemological positions in which this research is situated. As outlined above, I wanted this research to be about people, their experiences and their views. I felt it would be impossible to achieve this through written forms of data collection or by asking structured questions. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to gather the information needed for the research while also generating new questions based on the comments of participants. This flexibility created a conversational style during the interviews. I believed written forms would alienate the learners within the centre who have a lower literacy level and structured questions would not allow the space to hear the opinions and views of participants. I had briefly considered focus groups as a method of data collection, but I decided this would be unsuitable.

I believed that focus groups could turn into a storytelling session where little or no usable information is gathered, or participants would be too shy to express opinions with others in the room. One-to-one interviews were best for both ensuring the ability to keep people 'on track' and making sure I heard each person's opinions and views on the questions being asked. Semi-structured interviews leave a lot of space for participants to talk openly while still providing some structure so that the interview does not go completely away from the research questions that need to be answered. The interviews with learners were all conducted within the centre. The centre administration was supportive of the research and therefore willing to provide a space where interviews could take place. It should be noted here that when I signed up as a volunteer at the centre I signed a document stating I would not meet up with clients outside of the centre, nor would I provide them with my personal contact details. Therefore, it was necessary to conduct the interviews with learners in the centre. The majority of tutor interviews also took place within the centre as it was the most convenient place for tutors. Tutors, however, were given the choice of location. I travelled to the location chosen by participants who wished to be interviewed outside the centre to ensure that I was being as amenable as possible to participants. I wanted to avoid people having to go out of their way or inconvenience themselves to take part in the research. I hoped that by allowing participants to choose a location, a sense of comfort would be created.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim with obvious identifying factors removed. Participants were given the chance to make changes to their transcripts. I found this particularly useful, as I believe learners may have been nervous to be honest in the initial interview in case they were identified. There are comments that had been said to me in a classroom, or in private by learners that were not mentioned in the interview. Seeing the transcript, anonymised, reassured them that I had taken all the possible steps I could to ensure that they could not be identified. This opened up learners to giving a little more information, although the fear of being identified and getting barred from the centre was still prevalent and openly expressed by one of the learners interviewed. A number of the tutors also made some changes to the transcripts of their interviews and kindly answered follow up questions via email. One tutor asked me to remove an item that they believed could get them in trouble with the centre; so the fear of 'being in trouble' seems to go across everyone in the centre, not just the learners.

Mason (2018) outlines four core features that all qualitative interviews should have. First, they must involve interactional exchange of dialogue. Second, they should be conducted

in a relatively informal style. Third, they should be thematic and topic centres. This is not only to allow the researcher to generate the data needed for the research but also to allow the researcher and participant to explore new themes which may come up in conversation. Finally, Mason states that the researcher must work from the assumption that knowledge is situational and contextual. Mason also states that knowledge in qualitative interviews is the co-production between the researcher and participant. ‘Qualitative interviewing tends to be seen as involving the construction or reconstruction of knowledge more than the excavation of it’ (Mason, 2018, pp. 111). I definitely found this to be the case during the research process. There were topics of conversation that came out in the interview process that I definitely did not anticipate. This new knowledge helped to steer the direction of the interviews that proceeded it and also changed the direction that I believed this research would go in. The aim of this research is to create an induction for tutors coming into the centre. During the research process, the need to provide ongoing support for tutors became clear.

### 3.6: Reflexivity in Research

Reflexivity in the research process is the continuous reflection of researchers on their own values (Parahoo, 2006) and of recognising, examining, and understanding how their “social background, location and assumptions affect their research practice” (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 17). This reflection determines the filters through which researchers work and the “specific ways in which our own agenda affect the research at all points in the research process” (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 17). The research process should challenge the values and assumptions that the researcher holds about the world. It would be amiss to believe that the researcher could be unaffected by the research process. To practice reflexivity is a vital component of the qualitative research process. It follows therefore that this research process has changed me as a person.

This research started as a way of producing a training programme for new tutors coming in to the centre and it remains that. The initial topic was broader, I wanted to look at literacy and methodology and learning spaces. I quickly realised that a Master’s thesis is limited. I had nine months to conduct this research and produce this thesis. To have too broad a question would be unfeasible. I wanted to look, specifically, at the experiences of teaching and learning within the centre. I believed that by asking people for their experiences, I would be able to gather the required information to produce a training programme. Instead of being about the actions that were done, this research then became about the people and their experiences.



During the first two interviews, the issue of lack of support for tutors came up. Feeling unsupported in the environment of the centre had a significant impact on the two first tutors. They discussed the impact it had on their personal lives in terms of their relationships and their own faith. This seemed like an important topic to explore more. I was surprised when I started at the centre that tutors were not provided with any support. I had difficulty with the things that had been said to me in the classroom. As one of my participants said to me, it's different going from reading about the horrible things that happened in articles and reports than standing in front of a person who has been through it and hearing it directly from them. I believed I was the only one who had become upset by what I heard there. It took over a year and some counselling sessions before I could leave the centre and not allow the things I had heard there to affect my personal life. Hearing it from others legitimised my own experience. From these two initial interviews, I added questions in subsequent interviews about the provision of support and disclosures in the classroom. These extra questions have led to significant findings about the lack of support for tutors at the centre. I also discovered that, in its early days, supervision had been provided for tutors at the centre but this provision was no longer available. It made me somewhat resentful that this had been provided in the past and I had to seek help myself and at my own expense.

### 3.7: Conclusion

In this section, I have outlined the methodology for this research. I have discussed the rationale for placing it within a social constructivist paradigm, which stemmed from the ontological and epistemological positions I hold. I have also outlined the data collection method which was used for this research, namely semi-structured interviews, and the reasons behind that choice. I have also discussed reflexivity in research and its role in qualitative research.



## Chapter 4: Literature Review

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will examine some of the key theorists whose work applies to this research as well as some of the current research in this area. The aim of this research is to produce an induction for new tutors coming in to the centre. Therefore, it is essential to discuss different educational philosophies that can be applied to work within the centre. The centre in which this research is situated has one overarching aim. The aim is to provide support and education to those who were placed in institutions as children or adults. Their client list is composed of learners from different forms of institutions including Industrial Schools, Magdalene Laundries and Mother and Baby homes. The vast majority of clients have suffered some form of abuse within these institutions whether be it physical, mental, emotional or sexual. The centre believes that by providing support and education, as well as a safe meeting place for people with similar life experiences, a sense of self-worth can be fostered and survivors will be able to take control of their own lives. First, I will discuss Paulo Freire's ideas of emancipatory education whereby learners are given the tools to step up and take control of their own lives and free themselves from their 'oppressors'. Freire also emphasizes the importance of having an awareness of a learner's past and allowing them to use their past experiences to make sense of their present circumstances. This is achieved through dialogical education and contributes to a process Freire terms conscientisation. Next, I will discuss Carl Rogers' core conditions which he believes contribute to the creation of a safe learning space in which learners can flourish. Finally, I will discuss Nel Nodding's definition of care in education and its importance in education.

### 4.2: Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse

As discussed by some of the theorists below, in order to know about our learners we need to understand where they are coming from. Understanding the cultural context of our learners allows us to determine how one should behave within the classroom, essentially it ensures that one knows what is and is not appropriate within a certain learning environment. There have been a number of governmental investigations into child abuse in institutions. The most significant of these was the *Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse* (2009). The Commission's remit was to investigate all forms of child abuse in Irish institutions, the majority of which

were run by the Catholic Church and funded by the Department of Education. The report found that the schools were run in a regimented manner that placed unreasonable disciplinary expectations on children (Ryan, 2009). Emotional and physical abuse were features of the institutions. Sexual abuse did not occur in every institution. While it was more likely to occur in institutions for boys, girls in some institutions were sexually abused by male visitors and staff. A climate of fear was maintained in the schools, reinforced by the threat and use of corporal punishment (Ryan, 2009). Neglect was also a fixture of these institutions. Those interviewed for the commission reported being often hungry due to lack of food, cold due to lack of clothing and unsanitary living conditions (Ryan, 2009). It is important to have an awareness of this background.

Education, both in the institutions and outside of them, were investigated by the report. Those children who were held within the institutions were found to have a standard of education that was consistently poorer than in schools outside. Education inside industrial schools was not seen as a priority. Industrial schools were intended to provide a basic industrial education in order to get jobs. In reality, the nature of industrial education offered by the schools served the needs of the institution rather than the needs of the children (Ryan, 2009). This reinforces the need for the centre. A place that specialises in, and is for, people with these experiences. It also shows how important it is that the centre addresses the needs of its learners, treats them as individuals and listens to their opinions and thoughts.

A range of mental health issues were reported by the witnesses to the commission. These included suicidal thoughts and attempts, depression, alcohol and substance abuse and eating disorders. The rate of mental health issues is higher among survivors than in the general population. Long term emotional and mental health problems were experienced by four out of the five people interviewed (Higgins, 2010). This reinforces the need for some form of specialised training for tutors coming in to the centre. Learners at the centre are vulnerable and, at the very least, tutors should be aware of the kinds of issues that can come up in the classroom such as the disclosure of abuse suffered.

#### 4.3: Previous Research on Education and Survivors of Institutional Abuse

An article written by Maggie Feeley (2010) in *The Adult Learner* studied literacy and survivors of abuse in Irish industrial schools. The results of the study are from a three-year ethnographic case study on the role of care in learning literacy. There are a number of things

mentioned in her study that also came up in the course of this research. Firstly, she found that there was a culture of fear created within the classroom where children were judged by the perceived failing of their families; “regimentation was the pervasive order of the day in a culture where children were identified with the perceived failings of their families” (Feeley, 2010, p. 78). One of her interviewees is quoted as saying “nobody wanted you. How could you have any brains because nobody wants you? So how can you be clever?” (Feeley, 2010, p. 84). She also found that the trauma they suffered when younger has affected them to this day. Many of the survivors she interviewed are still very affected by the trauma they suffered when they were younger and have vivid memories of that time, “Nobody will ever know or be able to recreate the terror in those rooms – reign of terror every day. It was horrendous” (Feeley, 2010, p. 82).

Feeley also found that individuals and their learning were not valued within the industrial schools. Children were demonized for things that they had no control over; “individual learning styles were not facilitated. Those who were left-handed were demonized and those unable to learn reading and spelling through primarily auditory methods were additionally disadvantaged” (Feeley, 2010, p. 82). She states that on reflection, she realises that those who she interviewed wanted to be seen as individuals with learning needs that would be addressed; “They wanted to be treated with patience and care and to have a teacher who would ‘draw you out’ and find a way of compassionately enabling learning” (Feeley, 2010, p. 81).

She states that “it is hard for adults to unlearn their fear from formal education” (Feeley, 2010, p. 85). She notes that the survivors she worked with wince at sudden movements, have trouble with loud noises and with someone approaching them from behind. She tells us that as well as learning literacy, they were learning about building new relationships with others and with their past and that the learning process should make room for this; “tutors are constantly patrolling the borders between past and present, deflecting and disarming negative echoes and substituting them for positive learning experiences” (Feeley, 2010, p. 85).

#### 4.4: In their Own Words

##### 4.4.1: Significant Documentaries

When researching the background and context for this research, I looked at books, articles and documentaries about or by survivors of institutional abuse. One of the most well-known of these is the 1996 documentary directed by Louis Lentin, *Dear Daughter*. In the opening of

the documentary *Christine Buckley*, the now deceased campaigner for survivors of institutional abuse, can be heard saying “I wanted to find my parents and kill them” (Lentin, 1996). *Dear Daughter* follows Christine Buckley and others who were in Goldenbridge orphanage as they tell stories of the abuse they suffered at the hands of the Sisters of Mercy who ran the orphanage. The accounts of what is told in this documentary are truly shocking. There are tales of beatings, scaldings, being strapped to potties. One woman recalls breaking a statue of the Virgin Mary as a young child. As punishment for this, she was forced to stand in the pose of the statue overnight. The children in Goldenbridge were referred to by numbers, Christine Buckley herself was number eighty-nine. This level of dehumanisation was not uncommon in the institutions. This is why it is of particular importance to treat learners in this context as individuals with their own opinions and voices. *States of Fear*, a 1999 documentary by RTE had a special impact on the cultural zeitgeist. It detailed abuse suffered by children in Irish industrial and reformatory schools from the 1930s to the 1970s. It was produced and directed by Mary Rafferty and aired weekly for three weeks in 1999. *States of Fear* gained extensive coverage by other journalists and much was written about it during the time it was airing. Newspapers and radio were filled with discussion about the potential implications of this documentary. It was just before the airing of the final part that the government issued the 1999 apology to survivors of institutional child abuse mentioned in chapter 1, and established of the *Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse*.

#### 4.4.2: Books Written by Survivors

There are a number of books written by survivors about their experiences in the schools. They recount the abuses suffered at the hands of those who were there to care for them. In her book *Freedom of Angels: Childhood in Goldenbridge Orphanage*, Bernadette Fahy talks about her feelings of ‘otherness’ after leaving the orphanage. She felt as though she was different from those who were raised by their parents. She tells us that some of those who had been in the orphanage with her were so sensitive about questions such as ‘where are you from?’ that there was a tendency to over react to it out of panic and a need to protect themselves from the shame attached to having grown up in an orphanage;

“I sweated with panic as I tried to find a reply...I aggressively asked, ‘Did I ask you where you are from?’, then proceeded to verbally attack the unfortunate person for not minding his or her own business” (Fahy, 1999, p. 152).

She says that others pretended to be from different places or tailored their answer to the person asking. An awareness of this is important in classrooms at the centre. Learners, although

they are aware that you most likely know about their past, still carry that shame and stigma attached to having been raised away from their families. Being aware of the language you use and the topics you bring up is very important.

#### 4.4: Emancipatory Education

Paulo Freire, the Brazilian education philosopher, combines education with concepts of liberation in his most famous work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. This education for liberation idea sits comfortably within the overall ethos of the centre. The centre hopes that by providing a safe space for survivors to meet, as well as education and support, its clients will be able to take control of their own lives. Freire sees education as not simply the transfer of knowledge, but as an opportunity for teachers and students to learn together in a process he defines as critical pedagogy. "To teach is not to transfer knowledge but to create the possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge" (Freire, 1998, p.30). The aim is to create a collaborative relationship of equality and mutual learning between the learners and teacher. Following on from this, for Freire it is important that learners are able to break things down into their individual parts to understand how they work together and interact. In this way learners maintain a sense of self by symbolically preserving and integrating different parts of their past as thematic frameworks for understanding and living in the present. This concept of themes – thematics; the totality of people's "thematic universe" (Freire, 2017, p.69) - is an important starting point in uncovering the dimensions of the learner's realities. "The more active an attitude men and women take in regard to the exploration of their thematics, the more they deepen their critical awareness of reality and, in spelling out those thematic, take possession of that reality" (Freire, 2017, p. 79) through conscientisation. Freire states that teachers must work with the knowledge and experiences the learners are bringing into the room. The learners in the centre have been 'oppressed' for much of their educational lives. They had no control over their own learning while within these institutions. "Looking at the past must only be a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are so that they can more wisely build the future" (Freire, 2017, p.57). Essentially, he is saying that it is important to understand the background of your learners.

Freire's theories on education are based on his literacy work in Brazil and it is firmly situated within a context of poverty and oppression. This can be seen as a significant criticism of his work, that the specific conditions in which he works limit the overall validity of his theory in a wider context. However, Freire's work is relevant to this research as he was working with people who were socially disadvantaged, just like learners at the centre. Freire used his

work teaching literacy to propose a theory that would see education as a means of social change. He saw education as a means of the marginalised (or oppressed) freeing themselves from their oppressors. He believes that by making them aware of their oppression and engaging them in dialogical education, learners will be able to affect social change. Therefore, while there exist criticisms about the relevance of Freirian ideas to societies outside of this, the essence of this work is relevant to this research topic.

Freire believes that an open, dialogical kind of education can provide the catalyst for learners to engage in social action and liberation. This is achieved through a process of praxis; "liberation is praxis the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it" (Freire, 2017, p.52). Praxis is achieved through co-investigation between teachers and learners. Through problem posing, learners and teachers create meaning within their world. Praxis is a combination of social action and reflection; "There is no true word that is not at the same time praxis" (Freire, 2017, p.60). Praxis according to Freire is action and reflection on the structure to be transformed. This process empowers people to reflect and take action on their own lives instead of accepting the status quo and remaining 'oppressed'. He sees this form of education in stark contrast to, what can be seen as, traditional or familiar forms of education. He calls the methodology used in traditional form of education 'banking', whereby students are simply passive receivers of information that the teacher gives them. He asserts that instead of the teacher being the expert, authoritarian figure bestowing knowledge onto students, that learners and teachers should engage in dialogical education where learners and teachers learn together. "Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and student" (Freire, 2017, p. 59). These ideas are particularly relevant to this research as it has become clear during it that any attempt to teach in a traditional 'banking' manner at the centre will not work well. Learners at the centre like to be engaged and listened to. They like for their experiences and thoughts to be respected. Their past educational experiences are, for the most part, negative and a return to that formal style can invoke negative memories.

Taylor offers a criticism of this dialogical education proposed by Freire. He argues that it can be closer to the banking system than one would like it to be (Taylor, 1993, 148). It can be used by tutors to impose their own ideas and values on learners rather than allowing them the space to find their own; "the rhetoric which announced the importance of dialogue, engagement and equality, denounced silences, massification and oppression did not match in practice the subliminal messages and modes of a Banking System of Education. Albeit benign,

Freire's approach only differs in degree, but not in kind from the system he so eloquently criticises" (Taylor, 1993, p. 148). In an open, dialogical classroom setting, it can be very difficult to keep your own ideas and values out of the classroom and these could potentially be 'learned' by students. In my opinion, it poses interesting questions about whether a space can be truly dialogical without everyone, tutor included, freely expressing opinions. Without the back and forth, there is the creation of an unequal relationship in the classroom whereby learners must examine their own experiences pedagogically, but the teacher does not look at theirs. It seems to me as though the teacher is very much in possession of the power in this scenario, and therefore could be perpetuating the oppression of the learners. They are in control of the conversation so to speak. There is an inherent power relationship in the student-teacher relationship. This can be mitigated, but not completely removed. However, if a teacher does share their experiences, it does not make the relationship equal either. If one shares their own values, views, ideas and opinions, there is a possibility that your learners will pick them up as the ones that are 'right'. Thus, recreating the banking system.

Freire also believed that teachers were 'unfinished' (Freire, 1998, 58). However, as they have decided to intervene in the world, they must commit themselves to bring about transformative change. It can therefore be concluded that the identity of a teacher is being constantly forged and re-forged. Teaching therefore requires critical reflection. When teachers think critically about their current practice, their future practice benefits.

#### 4.5: Person-Centred Approach

Carl Rogers believes that people are social beings who need interaction to develop. According to him, if interaction is positive, a person can flourish, and when it is negative, it can have lifelong implications for the person. Rogers believed that the learning environment should not be a place "of lifeless, sterile, futile, quickly forgotten stuff which is crammed into the minds of individuals" (Rogers, 1969, p. 3). As teachers, it is important to create a space that will give an "insatiable curiosity which drives the learner to absorb everything they can see or hear or read about" (Rogers, 1969, p.3). When a learner feels as though the learning environment has a reduced threat level to them, there is potential for learning to be greatly increased.

Much of Roger's work is focused on therapy, but it can also be applied to the learning environment. Rogers' core conditions can be used in order to ensure that learners have trust in the learning environment and know that their personal experiences are being respected. These



core conditions are congruence, unconditional positive regard and empathic understanding. Congruence means to be genuine (Corey, 2005, p. 172), you present yourself without false front, essentially that your inner experience and outer expression match and you can openly express your feelings, reactions and thoughts with your learners. I believe this to be an essential part of building a relationship of trust with learners. Adults can normally tell if someone is not being genuine. There is nothing worse for an adult to be made feel insignificant or stupid and it has a particularly profound effect on this particular group of learners. Congruence is about being real and understanding that every person is different and it is because of this that the exact nature of the student-teacher relationship cannot be controlled or predicted in advance. Learners at the centre prefer tutors who are open and honest with them. They like when tutors are self-disclosing.

The next of the core conditions is unconditional positive regard. This is accepting the people in front of us just as they are, without any conditions of worth (Dryden & Mytton, 1999, p. 79). The importance of unconditional positive regard with your learners cannot be underestimated. By creating a safe space for learners to feel able to disclose their inner thoughts and feelings, you let them know that they will not be rejected or judged by you for expressing them. Rogers believed that for a person to grow they require this openness and to feel accepted. The final core condition is empathic understanding. This is not simply understanding the feelings a learner may be experiencing. It means sensing them as though they were your own feelings without getting completely lost within them (Corey, 2005, p. 173). Being able to get into the world of your learners allows you to see them more clearly and helps to contribute to a trusting and caring relationship. You need to maintain your own separateness and keep your emotions under control. It also falls under this condition that we accept that our learners are adults who are busy, often tired and have things going on within their own lives.

All three of these core conditions work together. Unconditional positive regard is facilitated by empathy for example. Each core condition facilitates the other (Dryden & Mytton, 1999, p. 83). The strength of Rogers' approach is in the relationship it creates between teacher and learner; "learning rests upon certain attitudinal qualities that exist in the personal relationship between facilitator and learner" (Rogers, 1969, p.105). It is vital that learners feel relaxed and comfortable in the learning environment, able to express their opinions and feel accepted regardless of the things that they might say. Again, this is particularly important with the learners within the centre. There is a lot of stigma and a culture of silence that has been created around the past of these learners. It is vital to not react shocked or angry to anything



that they may say within the classroom, particularly if they say anything about their past experiences.

#### 4.6: Care

The work of theorist Nel Noddings is also important to this research. Although I do not agree entirely with her model of care, it is an important work and I intend to use parts and build on the framework she has laid out. According to Noddings "as human beings we want to care and be cared for. Caring is important in itself" (Noddings, 2003, p.7). When Noddings talks about caring, she is not talking about it in the virtuous sense. She is not talking about people who profess to work hard at teaching in order to work towards certain goals for their learners (Noddings, 2005). She is talking about people who can form relationships of caring and trust with a person who she refers to as the 'cared for'. Noddings, who is an educator, feminist and philosopher, discusses this notion of care in her book *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (2003). She discusses what it means to care and be cared for, how caring for another person relates to how you envision morality and how caring functions within the educational context.

Noddings describes how caring, for her, does not start with reasoning, rather from an "intuitive or receptive mode with memories, feelings and capacities" (Noddings, 2003, p. 8). Necessary to her theory of care and education are engrossment and motivational displacement. Engrossment refers to thinking about someone and their personal narrative and history to gain a greater understanding of them. She hopes that by completing this process, a teacher will be able to determine the appropriateness of particular actions. She does say that it is essential to not develop a "deep fixation of the other" (Noddings, 2003, p. 69) but only give enough thought to gain an understanding of the other. Motivational displacement then occurs when the teachers' "behavior is largely determined by the person for whom she is caring" (Noddings, 2003, p. 49). Neither motivational displacement nor engrossment on their own can constitute caring in an educational context. They both need each other to occur. Noddings believes that the care relationship should be acknowledged in some way by the 'cared for'. She states that "the carer (one-caring) must exhibit engrossment and motivational displacement, and the person who is cared-for must respond in some way to the caring" (Noddings, 2003, p.69). I would argue, that although to care for one's learners is an essential part of teaching, this model of care is open to being used, to trap a teacher as a permanent care giver. The learners in the centre have, for the most part, very negative previous experiences of education. They

experienced no care in these situations. It is important that they feel cared for in order for them to thrive. However, teachers need to know their own limits. There is only so much of oneself that you can give over to caring about others, self-care is also incredibly important.

#### 4.7: Conclusion

The theories and research provided in this section highlight the importance of knowing one's learners and their past experiences and having an awareness of the same within the classroom. It also stresses the importance of open, dialogical spaces where learners feel that they can express their thoughts and opinions freely. Lastly, it tells us of the importance of the teacher-learner relationship. First to be aware of the inherent power relationship that exists and from that to be aware of the potential influence you can have over a learner.

In order to greater understand the background of learners at the centre, it was important for me to read not only official reports, but to seek out works written by survivors themselves or that would use their own words. *The Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse* was the first of these that I read. It is based off interviews with over 2000 former residents of Ireland's industrial and reform schools. It gives a clear picture that abuse and fear were widespread within these institutions. It also states that a culture of silence was carefully maintained around these institutions by those that ran them. It reinforces for me the importance of recognising learners at the centre as individuals with their own voices and opinions that deserve to be respected. This was reinforced by the two documentaries, *Dear Daughter* and *States of Fear*.

Bernadette Fahy's book also reinforces the need to understand the background of your learners in the classroom. She states that everyday questions can be potentially upsetting for those who were raised within these institutions and it is important to be aware of that. An awareness of background and current circumstances of our learners are also important in the works of Freire, Noddings and Rogers. Freire believes that our past can be used to build pedagogical experiences upon which we can build and free ourselves from oppression. Noddings believes that in order to create relationships of trust and care with our learners, we need to have a deep awareness of them and their background. Likewise for Rogers, knowing your learner's background means that we can create trusting relationships between tutor and learner.

## Chapter 5: Findings

### 5.1: Introduction

In this chapter, I will introduce the voices of tutors and learners from the centre. The aim of this research is to improve the teaching and learning experience in the centre through the proposing of a tutor induction programme. The first step in this process was to establish a need for it. This was achieved through observation and casual conversations with colleagues in corridors and at the lunch table. The aim of the interviews was to discover what aspects the new induction programme needed to cover. To do this, I decided to speak to both learners and tutors about their experiences in the centre.

The phrase ‘nihil de nobis, sine nobis’ (nothing about us without us) immediately came to mind when making this decision. It would be easy to talk to tutors about practice and classroom organisation and make a programme based on this. However, the people who are most impacted by learning in the centre are its learners. It was particularly important to me that their voices be a part of this research as their past has been shrouded in secrecy and silence. For a long time learners at the centre were unable to openly discuss what had happened to them in the institutions. A culture of silence had been carefully manufactured and maintained by the religious organisations who ran them. It wasn’t until the 1990s that the full extent of what happened in these places was entered into the public discourse.

In total ten interviews were conducted. Six of them were with tutors in the centre, three were volunteers and three were tutors sent by the local ETB. The three volunteers who were interviewed no longer teach at the centre. The three ETB tutors who were interviewed all still teach there. There were four learner interviews conducted. These were all with learners who still attend at least one class at the centre per week. Two of the learners had been taught by me in the past but no longer attend a class that I teach. Two are still in a class I teach every week. I will, in the course of writing these findings use a lot of direct quotation from the interviews. I feel it is necessary to see their words in this raw form as a lot of it speaks for itself.

Below I give a brief introduction to each of the people who were interviewed. Names have been changed to protect the anonymity of research participants and when speaking about tutors, I will not discuss the subjects that they teach/taught during their time at the centre.

**Ana**

Ana was a volunteer tutor at the centre for less than two years. She decided to try teaching after looking for volunteer positions and coming across the centre. She has a Bachelor's degree and a Master's but no formal teaching qualification. She did, however, have some experience teaching in secondary schools via a volunteer programme at her university.

**Lynn**

Lynn has been a tutor at the centre for more than 2 years. She was invited by the local ETB to "come and give it a go" (Lynn). She has various qualifications related to the topic she teaches as well as a Level six Train the Trainer qualification. She is the only tutor I spoke to who had a teaching qualification prior to beginning at the centre. She had some teaching experience before beginning at the centre.

**Matilda**

Matilda had been a volunteer tutor at the centre for more than two years. She decided to get into teaching after a significant health issue caused her to re-evaluate her career goals. Teaching seemed practical to her with the ability to work part time and short term. She wanted to gain some experience in the education field and sent out emails to a number of educational institutions. The centre was the first facility to reply to her. She had no formal teaching qualifications at this point and no experience teaching.

**Rachel**

Rachel has been a tutor at the centre for more than two years. She "fell into teaching quite accidentally actually" (Rachel). She has a degree in the topic she teaches and since beginning to teach at the centre has gained a Master's in a therapeutic area. She had worked in a school in Dublin and from there was told that the centre was looking for tutors.

**Kate**

Kate has been a tutor at the centre for more than two years. She also fell into teaching. She had started to teach on a course she participated in and from there was asked to teach in other places. She had no formal teaching qualifications but does have experience from a range of different centres around Dublin.

**Giles**

Giles was a volunteer tutor at the centre for less than two years. He decided to get into teaching as he benefited greatly from participating in adult education and credits it with taking him out of an unhappy situation. Before beginning to teach at the centre he had only a Leaving Certificate and no previous teaching experience. During his time teaching at the centre he gained a Level six Train the Trainer qualification. He has since gained a degree in education.

**Seamus**

Seamus was very new to the centre when he was interviewed for this research. He thinks it had only been about two weeks since he started attending classes there. He takes part in the drama class and the creative writing class every week.

**Enda**

Enda has been a learner at the centre since it opened in 1999. He has attended a number of classes over his time there but specifically mentions Irish, English and maths.

**Adam**

Adam has been a learner at the centre for about a year and a half. He attends art, mindfulness, yoga, drama and creative writing at the centre.

## Ciaran

Ciaran has been attending the centre for at least six years, but is unsure of the exact amount of time. He attends art, drama, mindfulness, holistics, mindfulness and personal development at the centre.

I decided to sort these findings under a number of themes. These themes were decided on after seeing common threads through the interviews:

1. Preparedness to teach
2. The importance of being heard
3. The challenges of teaching in this environment
4. How to teach at the centre
5. ‘Something for myself’

### 5.2: Preparedness to Teach

#### *5.2.1: Qualifications and Prior Experience of Teaching*

As discussed above, only one of the tutors spoken to during this research had any formal teaching qualification before beginning to teach at the centre. The majority of tutors interviewed did have some form of teaching experience in secondary schools and other adult education centres before joining the centre. However, two of the tutors interviewed had absolutely no prior teaching experience before beginning at the centre. Rachel and Kate both state that they just ‘fell’ into teaching. Kate started teaching on a course she had taken part in herself and was invited to start teaching in other locations;

“I didn’t decide, I fell into it. I left school with no qualifications. I worked in a factory. I had children. I left work. And when they went to school. I went back to education...I started teaching in the course that I participated in. And that’s how I got back to it” (Kate).

Rachel was offered work in a school in Dublin after completing her degree and was offered work in other places afterwards.

“I fell into teaching quite accidentally actually. When I finished college I was asked, at the beginning to go in and teach in a school in [Dublin], and then somebody, they said that they needed a teacher in the centre and I was asked would I go down, and I did” (Rachel).

Matilda states that teaching seemed practical to her following a significant illness that forced her to reassess her goals in life. She was looking for a job that could be done part time and that had the possibility of short term contracts.

“To be honest, it was kind of by accident. I had some health issues so I had to reassess my career, and teaching seemed practical. I researched teaching English as a foreign language, and it looked like there would be options to teach part time, temporary, short term, which would help me while I recovered...I researched that but didn't want to go straight into it. I wanted to try get some experience first.” (Matilda)

Lynn had a similar experience, after a health problem she decided to train in the topics that she now teaches. She is the only person interviewed who had any teaching qualification prior to beginning at the centre, having gained a level six Train the Trainer qualification;

“I had a health problem that led me to where I am now. I've an interest in writing and in [the subject she teaches]...I did a Train the Trainer course which would be about teaching” (Lynn)

Giles, like Matilda, had no teaching experience before starting at the centre. He got into teaching because he benefited from the adult education system;

“I benefitted greatly from education. It took me out of a situation that I wasn't happy in in terms of career...When I went back to learn, to study as an adult I found great opportunities came from it and I was happy” (Giles).

Before beginning as a tutor at the centre, Giles only had a Leaving Certificate;

“My educational background would have only been Leaving Certificate. I only had my Leaving Certificate so then I went on to get my Train the Trainer...It was done in conjunction while I was a tutor here (Giles).

He has since gained a Bachelor's degree in education.

Ana decided to teach after looking for a volunteer position and coming across the centre, she did have a Degree and a Master's but they were not in the topic she was teaching;

“I wanted to volunteer somewhere and I [pause] I looked up the Volunteer Ireland website and I knew I wanted to do something in education, I just didn’t know what, because I just have a real passion for, you know, for talking about things that I find interesting. And [pause] I felt that teaching allowed that” (Ana).

#### *5.2.2: Prior Knowledge of the Centre and its Clients*

Only one of the six tutors interviewed said that the “sensitivities of the clients” (Lynn), as she put it, were discussed with them prior to beginning to teach at the centre. This conversation was with a temporary manager who had been covering the maternity leave of the regular manager of the centre;

“I had a meeting with a young woman, I can’t remember her name. I think she replaced [Manager] who was on maternity leave at the time, then she went on Maternity leave herself and I have not seen her since. I had not known about the centre before being asked by [ETB] to consider doing a trial summer course with the clients there...[Administrator] was working there when I started and she mentioned that she would like me to try and get the clients to speak to each other in a nicer manner, through the personal development class” (Lynn).

She was the only one of three tutors that were sent from the ETB to say that she knew about the specific nature of the centre before starting there. The others, Rachel and Kate, report that there was no information of this sort given to them prior to beginning;

“No info given” (Rachel).

“I was asked if I was free to teach a class in [the centre] on Friday mornings. I did not know what type of centre it was. I presumed it was adult learning” (Kate).

The three volunteers interviewed did know the specific nature of the centre and that its clients were survivors and the families of those that had been institutionalised. This seems to be mainly due to the fact that they had been specifically seeking volunteer positions and the centre had advertised for volunteers. Volunteers were called into the centre for an interview prior to being allowed to begin teaching. However, Matilda reports that this was “less of an interview and more of a ‘this is what we are, would you like to get involved?’”. The conversation she had with the administrator consisted of being told how the centre came to be and a little about the experiences of the administrator she spoke to;



“I spoke to an administrator for maybe an hour? And he told me a bit about how the centre came into being and a little about his experience as he had also worked there for a short time as a tutor. Well, I am not sure if he was technically a tutor, but he had worked with [a particular group]” (Matilda).

The nature of the centre was discussed with Giles. He knew that they were victims of institutional abuse but he had no idea of the scale of what he was getting involved in;

“I was told that they were victims of institutional abuse and that they were looking for a tutor, a volunteer tutor. I knew what abuse was, I knew what institutionalised was but I had no idea the scale of what I was getting involved in to be honest” (Giles).

### *5.2.3: Disclosures and Support for Tutors*

The possibility of disclosures within the classroom was not discussed with any of the tutors who were interviewed. This meant that they did not have a clear route to gain support for the clients should the disclosure be upsetting. Kate did say that if a learner told her something she couldn't deal with, she would speak to a member of staff;

“Nobody discussed disclosures with me or how to get support. Some people have spoken about past experience I have just replied as I would with anyone. I didn't feel it was anything I couldn't handle. I would avail of support if I felt I needed it. If anyone told me something I couldn't deal with I would ask a staff member for help” (Kate).

However, Giles reported that he had gone to his manager after disclosures and had not been offered or given any support. He had to seek support outside of the centre;

“I went to my manager at the time and told and to be honest I did not get what I needed and I wasn't given what I wanted so I had to go elsewhere and look for that help” (Giles).

All of the tutors interviewed have had people talk about their experiences of institutions or the behaviours of those who ran them, within the classroom. None of the tutors gave specifics about the types of disclosures made to them within the classroom. Ana states that, from discussions with her learners in the classroom, she knows that “a Christian Brother education was very dark, in the literal sense” (Ana). Lynn states that the behaviour of those who ran the institutions come up in general conversation within her class regularly. She has also had a student speak of suicidal thoughts. She felt that her background in therapy helped with this situation and she then referred the learner to the centre management.

“I haven't got disclosures but the participants would talk about behaviour of those in charge of institutions, in general conversations. One would have spoken of suicidal thoughts and I mentioned this to [manager], she took it up with him. He seems fine at the moment” (Lynn).

Matilda states that the possibility of disclosures was not something she thought about prior to beginning at the centre but with hindsight, she finds it surprising that volunteers were not prepared for this kind of situation. Disclosures were made to her in the classroom. When it happened she listened and tried to remain calm and composed. She states that she felt as though she had nowhere to go and she became upset by these discussions regularly;

“Perhaps it was naive but the idea of disclosures didn't even cross my mind when I started volunteering. At no point in time did anyone from the centre discuss the idea of disclosures with me or tell me what I should do if disclosures are made. Now I think about it, it is surprising that volunteers are not prepared for this kind of thing. There should be some kind of support available for the volunteers. But also tutors should know about supports in case students need help too. Unfortunately, by the end of my time there, it felt like the lack of interest in volunteers and tutors also travelled through to the students, and there was a demonstrable lack of interest in the student's education and wellbeing.

I worked one-to-one with the same student for nearly two years. A sense of trust built up. This really helped teaching wise as I was able to encourage him to try new things and he was OK saying if he did or did not want to do certain activities. Disclosures were made. When it happened, I just tried to be calm, relaxed and let him talk. I listened and tried to keep the lesson feeling comfortable but really, I still don't know if I did the right thing or how I should have reacted. There was no one I could talk to about these things and several times I became very upset. It also meant a lot to me that the student felt comfortable enough with me and in our classes to talk openly. This is one reason why I still feel bad, almost guilty, about the fact I had to stop volunteering” (Matilda).

According to Giles, disclosures were made in the classroom with him every day. He handled them respectfully and remained calm, he felt this was the most appropriate response at the time. These disclosures had a significant impact on his personal life which will be discussed later in this chapter;

“I was never shocked by anything, nothing ever made me jump out of my seat. I would have quite good emotional intelligence, I'd like to think, and I pride myself on remaining calm

and cool and respectful at all times when dealing with people who disclose something that other people might find shocking. It's always important to respect the learner and the person who's talking" (Giles).

The need for some sort of support for tutors was expressed by four of the tutors who were interviewed. Rachel, who has been working at the centre the longest, stated that in the beginning, when there were more tutors, they had group supervision once a week. They found this a great source of support. This service is no longer available;

"When there were a lot of teachers at the start of [the centre] we requested supervision and were provided with a counsellor from the HSE. We had a group session monthly and it provided support. This service was taken from us some years ago and was never reinstated" (Rachel).

Ana says that providing a chaplaincy service for tutors would provide some form of safety net for volunteers;

"It would be useful to even provide some kind of chaplaincy service or just saying 'look, if you hear or experience anything to tell somebody about it. You know like, we have staff available who actually help the students as well'. It's just providing that safety net for volunteers as well because some things were hard to process as a volunteer" (Ana).

This is shared by Matilda who states that there should be a support service for tutors and also a clear pathway of where to get support for learners if they become upset following a disclosure;

"Nobody offered or mentioned support of any kind, regarding disclosures or teaching. This is something I definitely could have used and would have taken advantage of given the chance. It is difficult to go from reading about the terrible things that happened to children in industrial schools - in reports and papers - and to then be sat next to someone you get on with and have developed a sense of trust with, and to know these things happened to that person, and at times to then hear about it directly. I wasn't even familiar with the terminology: survivors, disclosure, until quite recently" (Matilda).

Giles was surprised to find that there was no support structure in place for tutors, having gone to his manager at the time to seek support. He had to seek out support elsewhere, which did help him.

Lynn and Kate did not explicitly state that support for tutors should be in place. Lynn has a therapy background and therefore has contacts with places she can go for support, she does understand that others without her background would not have those kinds of contacts however;

“The fact that I am a therapist myself, I have contacts for this kind of support. I realize that others without my training may not have such support” (Lynn).

Kate stated that she has never felt the need to seek support but would if she ever needed it. She does not state where or how she would go about this.

#### *5.2.4: Provision of Training by the Centre*

Training was neither offered, nor provided to any of the tutors who were interviewed. All but Kate agreed that it would have been beneficial. To Kate “teaching is teaching” (Kate). Initially Ana, Lynn and Matilda were unsure about whether training would have been necessary. However, all stated later on that it would have been helpful and they would have taken it up had it been offered. Ana says that some form of training would have been helpful for learning how to structure things;

“I don’t think I need it, the training, for what I was doing so I was looking at [her subject] and I was looking at introducing different novels to adults so [pause] I suppose actually, when you think about it, it would have been helpful to have a bit of training. So, I’ve just totally backed up...Just to see if there were different ways of structuring things, making sure everything’s hitting, what’s it called, different targets” (Ana).

Lynn says that she had a wide range of experience with different groups and therefore did not feel unprepared walking into a class at the centre;

“No specific training for this place. I’m also experienced in different environments, so for instance, I would also teach a class in a women’s refuge, people living with violence, and in people with disability” (Lynn).

Training might have been helpful, according to Lynn, but it would need to take into account the changing dynamic of the classroom as the learner group is not consistent from week to week and if people are up to date on their subject, that is what is most important;

“It could possibly be helpful...depends on who comes in to the class you see there’s a different dynamic...Whether a formal training course would do it, I don’t know because you might do the formal training one week and the people that come in the next might be totally different than last week’s. I’d kind of leave an opening on that if people are taught to teach what they are teaching, being up to speed on your own subject would be my first priority, and then being able to communicate would be the second one. So, I certainly would be open. If there was training available I’d take it, if there isn’t I can manage and cope without it” (Lynn).

Matilda says that there was no training offered to her either, she was initially unsure of whether it would be needed;

“I’m not sure. I found learning on the job very helpful. I mainly worked one-to-one and I was lucky in that I had a very nice and patient student. And he probably taught me more about teaching than any education course I’ve since done. But I think definitely, if you were going to teach a group. I’ve also had other experiences since then with adult education that were a lot harder. So maybe, if I even had a handbook, or had spoken to someone else who had done it, or maybe a course as well, that could have been really useful. Because I suppose you’re thrown in the deep end, and you just hope things will work out. And also because of the nature of the centre, you’re extra nervous. So, you go through texts beforehand, because you don’t want something that could be upsetting. And, you’re aware that some people have had bad experiences so you go in really, really nervous thinking ‘Oh please, I just don’t want to mess this up’. So, the first few months, I was very nervous actually and help would have been good” (Matilda).

Both Rachel and Giles think training definitely should have been provided and Giles explicitly states that it should be mandatory before going to teach in this kind of an environment. He had done a course in community development which he feels helped to prepare him for tutoring at the centre;

“I was on a community development course so I was quite aware of the different groups that make up our societies, the vulnerable to the marginalised to the elite. I had a good idea about how I should approach people who had been abused, might have mistrust in authority. I felt the training from that course and intuition that I would have had [from previous career] with people prepared me perfectly” (Giles).

When asked if he have availed of training were it provided;

“Of course. I think it should be compulsory. I don’t think that they were really right to just let me start without any training. Down to my initiative and initiative is what saw me through it. I can imagine, and I’ve seen people start after me not do as well and that’s probably down to a lack of understanding of who they’re dealing with, what they’re dealing with and how they should deal with it. I definitely would have done the training and there should have been training offered to me” (Giles).

Rachel believes that training would have been especially helpful to tutors coming in with less life experience than she has. There is a lot of ‘unboundaried’ information being exchanged in the centre and it could be difficult for tutors to deal with. When asked why she thinks training would have been helpful;

“Because of the nature of the backgrounds of the clients come from. There would have been a lot of, I suppose, very unboundaried [sic] information being exchanged. I think had I been much younger, I would have found it far more difficult to cope with but I probably had a good bit of life experience so I was able to cope with that situation well” (Rachel).

#### *5.2.5: Impact on Personal Lives*

Working at the centre has had significant impact on the personal lives of two of the tutors who were interviewed in this research, Giles and Matilda. Matilda states that the lack of initial direction from the centre caused her to be very anxious. She was very afraid of performing inadequately in her one-to-one classes. As quoted above, she spent a significant amount of her personal time going through all of the materials she was planning to use in classes to try to ensure that they would not cause any upset to learners. She has become very upset by disclosures made in the classroom and has felt that she had nowhere to go with those feelings. She says that there seemed to be a general lack of interest in the volunteers and tutors that travelled through to the students and there was, by the end of her time there “a demonstrable lack of interest in the students’ education and wellbeing” (Matilda). It meant a lot to her that her students were comfortable enough in class to talk about these things, which is a sentiment shared by Ana. This is a big reason why she feels guilty about no longer volunteering at the centre. She had built a relationship of trust with her learner and it’s hard for her to not have contact anymore. Working at the centre also had an effect on Matilda’s own relationship with her faith; “my time at the centre had a knock on effect on the way I view the church, and my own relationship with faith has become much more complicated” (Matilda). She goes on to

state that “the centre is not the sort of place where you can just go in and out. Working there feels important and it has an effect on you” (Matilda).

Working at the centre also had a significant impact on the personal life of Giles. As stated earlier, disclosures of past experiences were a regular occurrence in Giles’s classroom. This had a significant effect on his own sexual relationships for the first few months that he worked there. He says he took it home with him. He went to his manager at the time seeking support and he says that he did not get the support he was looking for and was forced to look elsewhere for it;

“It affected my sexual relationships, the first couple of months I worked [at the centre]. I took a little bit of it home with me and particularly a couple of people who had told me about what had happened to them. It harmed my own personal life in a sexual nature, relationship nature”.

The question here is whether tutors who came into the centre were actually prepared effectively to teach there. Only one tutor had any teaching qualification and two had no prior experience. The centre is specialised and the client group are vulnerable. Not having an induction or clear support system has had an impact on the personal lives of tutors.

### 5.3: The Importance of Being Heard

#### 5.3.1: *Hear What I Have to Say*

In both learner and tutor interviews, the importance of being heard and having a voice was brought up. Ana stressed, at several points during her interview, that it was important for learners at the centre to tell their stories and for those stories to be heard. She believes that the flow of volunteers into the centre contributes to the telling of those stories. In fact, at one point in the interview she expressed a fear of expressing certain opinions in case it affected volunteers being allowed in and out of the centre;

“You don’t want to create blocks cause [sic] it’s so important that they allow volunteers in because people deserve their stories to be heard. Because the majority of these people, they can’t reach out to wider society as a whole. Their stories are only heard through the voluntary experience” (Ana).

Lynn also expressed the need to allow learners to be heard. She allows space in the classroom for learners to share. For those that do not feel comfortable sharing in front of the class, she deliberately leaves time before and after class to share;

“Give them space to share their input, or some of them don’t feel safe sharing with others present. That’s ok as well” (Lynn).

Matilda agrees with the importance of listening to learners and in particular, allowing them to make decisions about their own learning;

“The student has a bit more control over what they want to do, in that if a student in the centre were to say to me, ‘I just don’t want to do this’, I’m not going to force them” (Matilda).

Giles believes that conversation is of paramount importance in a classroom. He believes that allowing a space for learners to be heard and have their opinions respected is very important. Although he does state that you need to be a strong communicator in order to facilitate the discussion, he states it needs someone “who could maybe shape the direction of discussions if they were going off into areas that might trigger people in the classroom” (Giles).

The need to be heard was also communicated in learner interviews. Enda explains that he enjoys that the tutors at the centre are approachable. He likes that he can talk to them one-to-one rather than having to discuss issues outright in the classroom; “The teachers are very good. You know, you can talk to them one-to-one” (Enda).

He has also found that being able to talk to tutors about what is going on in his life, and making them aware, means that they are very compassionate and understanding when he has trouble concentrating in class;

“They’re very compassionate...My wife, she’s bipolar, with that I get upset...they’re very considerate” (Enda).

Adam stresses throughout his interview that he likes to be heard and expresses his frustration that he sometimes feels that he can’t be heard over other people in the classroom. He has a fear of expressing this frustration in the classroom. He says that this is due to a number of reasons. Firstly, where he’s from and his background, you learn to stay quiet;

“I was brought up in a very disciplined environment...The authorities, those in authority, it doesn’t matter if it was the nuns, or whoever it was, but even when I was down in [other



county], I felt the big, someone keeping me down like and denigrating me. I felt I never had an outlet to express myself and it has affected my life, like my family life...I live in a society, that I must keep my mouth shut. I was taught from the age of realisation to be seen and not heard” (Adam).

Secondly, he doesn't want to seem as though he is being disrespectful to the teacher. “I don't want to offend the teacher, I think it was because I was brought up in a very disciplined environment” (Adam).

Finally, he doesn't want to seem angry or get upset with other learners. He feels that he has to keep his anger under control and be very careful with his words within the centre, he never explicitly states why this is;

“I'm always conscious that, even though I might make a comment, I hope there's no reaction to this...I'm very careful about expressing myself out there [referring to the common room of the centre] because you don't know if you say the wrong word and you don't know how it can backfire on you” (Adam).

When he was interviewed for the Commission into Child Abuse, he found the experience incredibly intimidating. He says that the formality of it made him freeze up and he was unable to tell his story. He is very angry about this experience in particular as he believes it contributed to the fact that he got less compensation than others;

“These people, suits, and these couple of ladies were there, I think some Judge Murphy or something was at the head of the table, and it was so intimidating for me. I just froze...Then I heard some boys getting their compensation. They got twice as much as I did” (Adam).

### *5.3.2: Does the Centre Listen?*

Ciaran expresses his frustration at the centre and how it is run as a whole. He feels as though he is not listened to within one particular class. When he tries to express his ideas, he is ignored or others in the classroom talk over him. He feels that if he wants to express an opinion in that class he has to jump in over others and raise his voice. He wishes the situation was “I listen to you, you listen to me, so that way we're listening to each other and the communication is held open” (Ciaran). At several points he has expressed that “it's very important to hear what everyone has to say” (Ciaran). He has had an issue that the centre is supposed to be working on. At the time of the interview it had dragged on for several weeks and he has reminded those

running the centre several times but it does not appear to be progressing. He believes that “the whole system, I think, needs to be shaken up” (Ciaran). He believes that promises are not followed through on and gives an example of an art exhibition which had been promised to happen for quite some time. He’s reached the point where he will only “believe it when I see it” (Ciaran). “I don’t think that the people that come in here to support [the centre], their voices are not being heard” (Ciaran). He also said that “the clients, their voices are not being heard” (Ciaran). He believes that clients of the centre should be able to elect a representative who can attend meetings on their behalf, report back to the group and bring their voices into the meeting. At this point in the interview, he became afraid of getting barred from the centre for what he had said. He was reassured that the research would be anonymised, but did not speak anymore on his frustrations with the running of the centre.

### *5.3.3: The Impact of Noise*

Noise within the classroom was reported as the biggest hindrance to learning by all of the learners who were interviewed. Enda reports that he finds it very difficult to concentrate when there are too many people talking in the class. He can concentrate when people are quiet “but if everybody’s talking and that I can’t. Like in [one particular class], I stopped coming to it because it does me [sic] head in altogether” (Enda). He leaves the class when it starts to annoy him because he doesn’t want to upset others. He finds that walking away helps to stop his ‘head from being done in.’ Adam also finds noise a particularly frustrating irritation;

“If you’re in [a class], [another learner] shouts, it sort of distracts me...I say to myself, ‘why do I have to concede my space because he has this problem?’. He can’t communicate without fucking shouting” (Adam).

One tutor deals with interruptions by ignoring them, which Adam feels works particularly well. Although he thinks maybe this would only work in particular subjects where you are not really encouraging people to talk. Ciaran has also stopped going to a class because of the noise. He finds he does the work better at home where it is quiet. He says that when people are talking in that particular class, the tutor’s voice tends to join them rather than trying to quiet down the noise. He says the noise level feels like;

“when you’re out drinking...and the pub starts getting busy and everyone starts talking and you’re trying to talk and you hear all the voices around you and you’re trying to get out what you want to say but nobody’s listening” (Ciaran).

## 5.4: The Challenges of Teaching in this Environment

### 5.4.1: *The Background of the Learners*

There are a number of challenges of teaching at the centre identified by tutors in interviews. Ana believes that the history of the learners has had a significant effect on their approach to work and their understanding of the student/teacher relationship. She states the history of the learners created barriers, particularly when it came to exploring particular topics or themes within the classroom;

“These people are well into their sixties and seventies, but they remember it like it was yesterday...It was a huge thing for them and it dictated their entire lives. They were still going through a healing process” (Ana).

Giles also believes that the learner’s backgrounds had an effect on them within the classroom. He says it was very difficult to ensure that learners did not get dragged back by their past;

“Although for weeks you might make lots of progress, I think there’s always something that will pull them back or drag them back to what they know best and that is institutionalisation” (Giles).

This was also expressed by learners within interviews. Enda tells us that he came to the centre because when he was a boy in an institution, everything was beaten into him and “you were always putting your hand up to stop them” (Enda). He states that he likes learning in the centre because “you’re not being told you’re no good and you’ll never be any good and your parents are no good” (Enda). There are a number of quotes from Enda’s interview that show that his past still has a significant impact on his life and his learning;

“It’s sixty years since I left [institution]...when I left there, I couldn’t even tell the time...I could never fill forms out. Then if the police wrongfully arrested you, they’d write a statement out. I couldn’t write a statement” (Enda).

Towards the end of his interview, I asked him if there was anything we could do to make learning easier for him. His reply was

“No, it goes back to when you were put in these places...everything was beaten into you...you’re never right, you’re always wrong” (Enda).

He describes that, when he was in the institution if “you laugh. What are you laughing at? I’m not laughing at anything. And then they give you a hiding” (Enda).

Adam thinks that the frustration he feels in classes when other learners are talking or being disrespectful stem from the fact that he was brought up in a very disciplined environment. He states that during his childhood “fear was my biggest, something that was fostered upon me” (Adam). He had no control over it and “those in authority...I felt the big, someone keeping me down and denigrating me” (Adam). Adam states that he was never really taught in the institution besides being taught how to knit;

“I was made to knit when I was in [the institution]. I love someone to be able to find out the reason was to why I was put to that task...That we weren’t educated as such. There was always, there was always a black mark. I’d love to know if somebody could answer that question. For the duration of five to nine what did I learn or was I formally taught or what?” (Adam).

Like Enda, Adam was hit in school. He states that this has created a fear of having anyone being behind him “there was this teacher and he hit me on the back of the head”; “that’s why I’m nervous of anyone behind me...when I was in the [institution], I had this constant hit from behind” (Adam). He says that this particular experience resonated with him so much, that one time a teacher leaned over him and he perceived it as a hit on the head from behind.

#### *5.4.2: The Shifting Dynamic of Classes*

A challenge identified by tutors Lynn and Kate was that class groups within the centre are not static. Kate says it is impossible for her to know who will be in her class from week to week. “You’ll have the same person coming for six weeks and other times you’ll have someone once and you’ll never see them again”. She says that this makes structuring classes very difficult.

#### *5.2.3: Attitudes Between Learners*

Lynn and Rachel identified attitudes between learners as a particular challenge. Rachel says; “because of their unmet needs, should I say, from childhood, many of them can be childlike in their reaction to each other” (Rachel). She says that minor jealousies and attention grabbing

can occur because of this. She says that when these jealousies occur, she ensures that she transfers attention to the person that needs it in that moment.

Lynn finds this the biggest challenge of working within the centre. She has been told before by learners that they won't attend the class if a particular learner is present in there. She has found ways of counteracting this;

“Attitudes between themselves can be a challenge. So they don't always respect each other. That I've had people, 'Oh, if she's going into the class, I'm not going into the class' and I just tell them that I can manage both and I have certain boundaries and you will not cross them” (Lynn).

She also says that the fact that the groups are not static can exacerbate this particular challenge. They can be uncomfortable around each other, rude to each other or not trust each other. This challenge, observed by tutors, is reinforced by Adam's interview. At several points he expressed his frustration with his fellow learners within the centre. He travels quite a distance to reach the centre every day. He states that this is to gain knowledge. He finds it frustrating when other learners do not understand his passion for a particular topic;

“Sometimes in the class, it's not the fault of the teacher, but I suppose it's got to do with some people's perception of life and how they exist” (Adam).

He says that some of his fellow learners can be “task masters to put up with” (Adam). He says he really values tutors but he would not be a tutor for “all the tea in China” with “that crowd”.

Adam says he feels the need to protect tutors because they are trying to be helpful. He describes an incident where someone told the tutor “you're talking too much and then they ramble on about their own crap” (Adam). He decided to interject and say that the teacher was there to teach and “I don't know why you're here” towards the other learner. He thinks this over sensitivity comes from being brought into a situation where he was being observed and watched without his knowledge and he “didn't have any control over it” (Adam). He states that a particular annoyance of his is when people ask questions in a class that are not directly relevant to that class. It annoys him that he travels so far for the classes and the time is taken up with people bringing up irrelevant topics. When he has an issue and it is not directly relevant to the class that is going on, he finds another staff member who he knows can solve it. He says that;

“they don’t seem to have the knowledge to realise that...they bring it up at the wrong time, they didn’t seem to understand when to bring up these kinds of things” (Adam).

He is frustrated that he rarely gets the chance to ask a question, when he does, he is careful to make sure its relevant “not something about me, me, me, me” (Adam). He thinks that one particular tutor is in a hostile environment with the people she has in her class. He specifically stated that he was not going to ask me about what I thought about the learners at the centre “because it’s dangerous” (Adam).

#### *5.4.4: Space and Layout*

Space and layout is another challenge that was identified by tutors during their interviews. The centre has recently moved from a large space with purpose built classrooms, into a space that is significantly smaller. The area in which Kate teaches her class is located at the end of a large open plan room where the clients who are not taking part in classes sit, have tea and chat. She says that the lack of a physical barrier, such as a door, means that other clients will come down and start talking to her learners during her class;

“You’re not in a separate space. If someone’s working [on their subject] and someone comes in they’ll just come down and talk to them, whereas if we were in a room, they’d be less likely to open the door and walk in. Plus, you can hear a lot of what’s happening around you so it can be distracting if someone is having a conversation and people turn around to see who it is or what they’re talking about” (Kate).

Rachel also feels that the move to the new centre, and its size, has had a significant effect on learners. There are very few private spaces for learners to go. The change in centre and the size of the new centre has had a significant impact on the numbers of learners attending according to her;

“The centre as it is laid out now is very small. It doesn’t have a lot of private spaces, and I think the clients, it certainly has impacted on them hugely. The numbers coming in and their ability to learn. Some of them find it quite difficult, and they will tell me that” (Rachel).

Giles found his classroom in the old centre to be excellently laid out for the subject he was teaching. Lynn also states that she is currently working within a small space and is therefore just having to work with what is there. Space is also an issue for the learners who were interviewed. Seamus notes that because there is a lack of space within the centre, they

have to leave the centre and go elsewhere for a certain subject. For that particular subject, he believes that “you need an open space to express yourself” (Seamus). When he is in the one small classroom that the centre has, he feels “like I’m all crushed. Crushed up” (Seamus). Space was also a big issue for Enda, who suffers from claustrophobia. The small classroom gets very full, quickly, and he gets upset and has to leave when that happens;

“I suffer from claustrophobia. I get claustrophobic. And if there’s too many people in there I get like that, so I have to stay out” (Enda).

Adam also talked about the current layout of the centre. He was taking part in a class in the open area and another client, who was not in the class, kept talking and interrupting the class. The use of the word enduring in the following quote is very telling; “It’s got to do with the setup. I’m telling [sic] about the setup we’re currently enduring” (Adam).

#### *5.4.5: Maintaining Boundaries*

Rachel states that holding boundaries with learners is a particular challenge for her;

“Biggest challenges would be holding boundaries...Clients can become over familiar with me or with other clients” (Rachel).

#### *5.4.6: The Lack of an ‘End Goal’*

Giles found it particularly challenging that there is no ‘end goal’ for learners at the centre. There is no accreditation or assessment. During his time there he had started entering learners into competitions and displaying their work and he feels this was an important form of assessment for them. He thinks that without any focus on assessment you’re just “going around in a circle” (Giles). He also stated that without assessment, there are no goals or accomplishment. He believes that the sense of accomplishment gained from handing in a final assessment is the pinnacle of your learning, how you measure or prove what you’ve learnt. He thinks that showing people what they will get out of a class will encourage higher attendance and people to sign up for new classes;

“If they know that, at the end, there’s something there for them to show their families, to show themselves, just even for themselves” (Giles).

He does not believe that the centre meets the educational needs of its learners. None of those at the top of the organisation have a background in education, it’s geared more towards

support. He appreciates that support is important but feels that an education centre must have an awareness of the delivery of classes and be held accountable for that. He says that there is no accountability from tutors, right up to management;

“There’s nobody coming in to check. These tutors are being paid a fortune there’s no accountability, there’s nothing” (Giles).

Ciaran expresses a similar frustration to Giles, in that education in the centre is just going around in a circle. He doesn’t specifically mention accreditation or assessment, but he does state that there is no connection between what is being learned in the centre and the outside world. There’s nothing to keep them going “and eventually moving on” (Ciaran). He says that the centre needs to “let them take the steps” (Ciaran).

## 5.5: How to Teach at the Centre

### 5.5.1: Awareness

The tutors interviewed were able to identify the areas of practice which worked well within the centre. Words such as ‘empathy’, ‘transformation’, ‘encouragement’ and ‘acceptance’ were used by tutors to have in mind while working at the centre. It is important, they believe, for tutors to know their learners, to accept them and to be aware of their backgrounds while working in the classroom. This is also a sentiment shared by the learners. At the end of the interviews with learners, they were asked what they’d like to tell tutors coming into the centre. Enda and Ciaran both stated that awareness was very important;

“They’ve got to realise about our childhood...about what we’ve been through” (Enda).

“Should they not be told of what kind of a place, of what kind of people come here before” (Ciaran).

Ciaran believes that it is very important that there is a meeting with new tutors coming in to the centre where they discuss the nature of the centre and the kinds of people that come there. He also thinks it’s very important that the clients be introduced to people who will be coming in and out of the centre; “There could be people there that want to talk or chat but then you have strangers there listening” (Ciaran).



### *5.5.2: Adapting to the Environment*

All of the tutors interviewed said that they taught differently in the centre than in other places. Giles stated that he doesn't think that "you should probably be in the position as a teacher" (Giles) if you do not treat all classrooms differently. Rachel and Lynn both adapt their materials to suit the group they're working with; "I might do the same topic in three places but it's presented differently to each of the three" (Lynn). All of the tutors, except Kate, state that they teach differently at the centre due to an awareness of the learner's backgrounds and sensitivities. Kate states that she does because the group changes from week to week and it becomes necessary. Matilda tells us that she avoids anything that could be seen as too 'teachery' within the centre;

"I went into the classroom and there was one of those boards with the A3 paper and markers. And it became clear very quickly that nothing like that would work because it was too 'teachery' and too much like being in school. And people would react badly to that, it could bring up bad memories" (Matilda).

### *5.5.3: Firm and Clear Boundaries*

Lynn states that it is very important to have firm boundaries within the centre and indeed Rachel states that she believes this to be the most challenging part of working at the centre. Lynn states that at the start of the term, she establishes how the group works, discusses respect towards each other and the importance of listening to everyone in the class and not monopolising the time. She finds that saying this from the outset works well and then if an issue arises learners can be reminded of the discussion they had in their first class. She also states that having these rules in place from the beginning mitigates the issues that learners can have amongst themselves in the classroom;

"When we start a term or when a new person joins the group, I tell them how the group works, we are going to respect each other, no insults, advice, or rude remark are acceptable. They offer their contribution through me, with respect. They are not invited to have an opinion on another client's contribution to the class. They are not allowed to monopolize the class, I let them know at the beginning what my stop sign is, when I wish to talk and ask them to listen" (Lynn).

#### *5.5.4: Bringing Outside Life into the Classroom*

Matilda has a number of areas of practice that she thinks work well within the centre. She states that incorporating the interests of the learners into the class helps to keep them engaged and interested;

“When you do a NALA training course for example, you’re taught about menus or travel guide and things like that. But then I found most people are just not interested in those things. So, it can take a very long time to try and find something that they’re interested in, and that will make them far more keen to keep going” (Matilda).

Ciaran also states that he wishes more classes within the centre would be applicable to life outside.

#### *5.5.5: Personal Space*

Matilda explains that she has noticed that personal space is an issue among learners. She gives the specific example of going to sit and read beside a learner and the learner moved around the table. She also noticed that some learners did not like eye contact or accidental touching such as both people reaching for the same book and banging hands;

“The learners, they’ve often had really horrendous experiences. Not just in education, but in their young lives that obviously travels through to your adult lives. So, for example, the first time I was going to sit and read a book with someone, I instantly went to sit next to the student. And then they moved around the table. So, we were not sat [sic] together. And they also don’t seem to like to be sat opposite either. Many people don’t like eye contact and they don’t like, not that you’d touch a student, but like accidental movement. So, if someone is going for a book, you’d let them do it rather than both go for the book in case you both accidentally brushed hands or something like that” (Matilda).

Enda and Adam also mentioned the importance of personal space. Both of them were hit in the classroom as children and therefore do not like teachers to get too close to them, as quoted above. Adam particularly does not like people walking or standing behind him.

#### *5.5.6: How Learners Want Tutors to be*

During the interviews, learners talked about the different things they liked about tutors in the centre. Seamus liked how helpful tutors are to him. He had been self-conscious about asking

to have words spelt for him in particular but “they’re there, they don’t say anything. They just spell it for you” (Seamus). As quoted earlier, Enda thinks that the tutors at the centre are compassionate and considerate and he enjoys this. His wife has a significant health issue and when it’s bad, he gets very down. The tutors at the centre are very understanding about it. Adam finds it calming when tutors are well spoken and clear. At this point of the interview, he mentioned that the way I talk in the classroom works particularly well for him; “the vibes come across from you there very well” (Adam). He says that he likes when tutors are self-disclosing about their own lives but he can become resentful when one particular tutor describes the happy childhood she had. “Why didn’t I have a da [sic] like that?” (Adam), was repeated by him while he was describing this. That same tutor has mentioned in class that she does not go to mass and that has made him realise some things about his own life, he does not specify what these are.

#### 5.6: ‘Something for Myself’

The learners were asked in the interviews why they wanted to attend classes at the centre. The reasons behind coming to the centre were all very similar and focus around the need to want something for themselves. Seamus is a carer for his mother. He came to the centre to do something for himself;

“I’m just bored at home, not doing anything and my mother is in her day centre Monday, Tuesday and Friday and I said I might as well do something for myself” (Seamus).

Enda has a similar reason. He wanted to gain the knowledge he missed out on as a child. He left the institution not being able to read, write or tell the time;

“When I was a boy in [institution], everything was beaten into you. And you’re always putting your hand up to stop them” (Enda).

Adam, likewise, came to get the knowledge he had missed out on and to improve his general wellbeing. He finds learning a very positive experience at the centre and thinks he appreciates it more now because of his age. He has isolated himself where he lives;

“My neighbours, the majority of them are [a different religion to him] but they’re decent folk...they are decent but I don’t interact with them” (Adam).

The centre provides not only the knowledge he had been seeking, but also regular social interaction. Ciaran had also isolated himself for a number of years. He had built up barriers and had been to counselling but it alone was not enough. He thinks that the combination of the

counselling and regularly attending the centre is what has opened him up to explore new things. The classes at the centre, particularly the creative ones, have broken down his barriers and made him more comfortable to sit down and talk to others. Previously, he would not make eye contact.

### 5.7: Conclusion

These findings were divided up under a number of headings. The first of which seeks to establish whether tutors were prepared to teach within the centre. Only one of the six tutors had any teaching qualification prior to beginning at the centre. The tutors who did have prior experience mainly had very little and two tutors had absolutely no teaching experience at all. The 'sensitivities' of the clients were only discussed with one tutor before they began at the centre. None of the tutors had the possibility of disclosures discussed with them or were given a clear route to gain support for themselves or their learners. This moved onto an examination of the impact that working at the centre has had on the personal lives of the tutors. Two of the tutors interviewed reported that working at the centre had a significant impact on their personal lives. It has caused upset and complicated the relationship she had with her faith in one and has had a significant impact on the sexual relationships of the other. Neither of these tutors felt they got any support for the centre. Matilda states that she did not know where to go and Giles says that he sought support and none was given. The next heading discusses the importance of being heard. Tutors and learners both stated that this was very important. These learners come from an environment where they were to be seen and not heard. It is important that their opinions are respected and heard within the classroom and they have a say in their own learning.

Next, the challenges of teaching in this environment were discussed. A number of these were identified. The history of the learners can create barriers to the learning within the centre and awareness of the same is very important. Attitudes among learners can be very difficult to deal with, this was reported by tutors and backed up in the interviews with learners where they expressed their frustration with fellow learners. Space and layout were identified as a significant challenge by tutors and learners. The centre has moved from a significantly larger property to one that is roughly half the size and only has one dedicated classroom which is quite small. Rachel believes that this lack of space has had a significant effect on the numbers of learners coming in to the centre. The size of the classroom in particular has a significant effect on the comfort level of learners.

Next, I looked at some of the good practices identified by learners and tutors within the centre. Both learners and tutors felt that awareness is important. Understanding your learners, their motivations and what their goals are is particularly important. Keeping an open space while maintaining boundaries is also important. Incorporating interests and topics relevant to learners' lives into their learning and avoiding tools like flip charts which are too 'teachery' are among the advice given by tutors. Learners stated that they liked tutors who were compassionate and understanding. Adam likes when tutors are well spoken and self-disclosing. However, there needs to be an awareness about what tutors are disclosing as one tutor's description of her happy childhood has made Adam resentful.

It is important to note that the centre is very important for its learners. Many of them are isolated outside of the centre and the centre provides much needed social interaction. Finally, noise was reported by learners as the biggest hindrance to their learning. They reported that it is very difficult for them to concentrate when there is a lot of noise in the classroom. Two of the learners interviewed said that it had caused them to stop attending certain classes. Ciaran also felt that he wasn't being heard in that class due to all the noise as discussed earlier. Being heard is particularly important in this centre.

## Chapter 6: Analysis & Discussion

### 6.1: Introduction

In the previous chapter, I laid out the findings from interviews with learners and tutors from the centre. In this chapter, I will discuss those findings, their implications and their relevance to the literature laid out in chapter 4. One of the most significant things to come up in interviews was the importance of communication and understanding, whether it be between the centre and its tutors or tutors and learners. It is so important, I decided that a quote about communication from one of the learner interviews would be the best title for this research. The aim of this research is to write a programme for training new tutors. This was borne out of my own experience within the centre but I also used the initial stages of the research to establish that there was indeed a need for some form of induction or training for tutors. Understanding was also important to both learners and tutors. A number of tutors interviewed stressed the importance of not being afraid or shocked by the past of the learners. Learners likewise stressed it was important for them that their tutors know and understand their past as well as their current circumstances.

The lack of support for tutors was a very significant finding within this. Working at the centre has had a significant effect on its tutors and has affected them in their personal lives. It could be used to outline a clear route for tutors who are affected by their time working in the centre to seek support when they need it. It can also be used as a means to establish a peer support network. I also believe that with training around the nature of the centre, its learners and the shared areas of good practice that the tutors who already work there have shared, it has the potential to alleviate some of the stress of an unexpected experience such as a learner disclosing something that happened to them within the institutions. Forewarned is forearmed, as the saying goes.

### 6.2: Establishing a Need for Training

To begin, it was essential to establish that there was a need for training within the centre. This research originated in my own experiences working in the centre. It is deeply rooted in my own desire to see the learners at the centre thrive. I had wanted to investigate how the experience of teaching and learning is at the centre and how it could be improved. Deciding to explore what needs to be in place in order to establish a training programme for tutors initially

came from casual discussions with colleagues and management within the centre. It became clear that there was a need there for it from these kinds of discussions. This was reinforced by the interviews I carried out at the centre. As stated in chapter 5 only one of the tutors who I spoke to at the centre had any formal teaching qualifications, although all but two did have prior teaching experience. I believe, that it is particularly vital in this environment to have a qualification and experience in teaching adult learners. The learners at the centre are vulnerable. For people unfamiliar with adult education and its practices, education takes on the traditional banking method that Freire talks about whereby the teacher is bestowing knowledge and the learners are passive receivers of that knowledge. Rogers also believed that the learning environment should not be a place of “lifeless, sterile, futile, quickly forgotten stuff which is crammed into the minds of individuals” (Rogers, 1969, p. 3). He, like Freire, believed that education spaces should not follow the traditional model of teacher forcing knowledge into the learners’ minds and them just being expected to absorb it. Similarly, Maggie Feeley notes that those children who could not learn literacy through the traditionally predominantly oral method used within institutions were disadvantaged. Those without experience or training in adult education are more likely to fall back into this ‘traditional’ style of teaching as it is what is familiar to them. Education at the centre cannot be conducted in this manner. These learners have very negative memories of formal education, it is important that tutors at the centre do not reproduce that experience for them. Matilda told us this in her interview about the need to avoid things that are too ‘teachery’ because people could “react badly to that, it could bring up bad memories” (Matilda). I believe an induction programme with clear information about the nature of the centre and its clients; how to teach at the centre and where tutors can gain support, could ensure that tutors feel more confident when coming in to teach at the centre. Giles stated that training for teaching at the centre should be compulsory and that he doesn’t “think that they were really right to just let me start without any training” (Giles).

### 6.3: The Importance of Knowing our Learners

#### 6.3.1: *Knowing Their Background and its Effects*

“Tutors are constantly patrolling the borders between past and present, deflecting and disarming negative echoes and substituting them for positive learning experiences” (Feeley, 2010, p. 85).

Now that I have established that there is a need for training in the first place, we must begin to discuss what elements need to be in such a programme. Something that was mentioned as

being particularly important by both learners and tutors was awareness. This I believe should be the very first thing in any training programme for tutors in the centre. The history of these learners is dark and complicated. They have had particularly traumatic experiences in education and from those who were supposed to care for them. The effects of this still last to this day. Learners vividly recall their times in the institutions, this was noted by tutors in interviews. In particular Ana noted that “these people are well into their 60s and 70s, but they remember it like it was yesterday” (Ana). Likewise, Giles states that he believes that the learners’ background affects how they act within the classroom. He states that one of the big difficulties of teaching in the centre is trying to prevent learners from being dragged back into their past. “I think there’s always something that will pull them back or drag them back to what they know best and that is institutionalisation” (Giles). Rachel also states that the unmet needs of the learners from childhood mean that they can act in particular ways within the classroom. She says that they can be “childlike” (Rachel) in their reactions to each other. Minor jealousies and attention grabbing are quite common occurrences within the classroom for her.

This was also highlighted by learners in their interviews. Both Enda and Adam discuss being beaten in school. Enda states that “everything was beaten into you” (Enda). This attempt at forcing him to learn was unsuccessful. When he left the institution he couldn’t read, write or tell the time. These beatings in school have left Adam with a fear of anyone walking behind him because “I had this constant hit from behind” (Adam). Maggie Feeley (2010) observed, in the course of her own research, that this is a common cause of nervousness for survivors of institutional abuse. She also noted that learners had issues with noise and sudden movement as well. Noise was reported by learners as one of their main difficulties in learning at the centre. Loud noise is distracting and can cause anger and frustration in the learners. Ciaran describes the feeling of how the noise takes over as thus;

“when you’re out drinking...and the pub starts getting busy and everyone starts talking and you’re trying to talk and hear all the voices around you and you’re trying to get out what you want to say but nobody’s listening” (Ciaran).

As discussed in Chapter 4 Freire, Rogers and Noddings all believe that a deep understanding of the background of your learners is essential to be effective at teaching them. Freire believes that learners need to examine their own past in order for them to build their future; “looking at the past must only be a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are so that they can more wisely build the future” (Freire, 2017, p. 57). In order for the past to be used as a pedagogical experience, the tutors also need to be aware of it. Rogers also believed that by being able to access the world of your learners, you can see them more clearly



and build a better relationship. He calls this empathetic understanding. Noddings also asserts the importance of understanding your learners and where they are coming from. For her, this is done through a process of engrossment and motivational displacement. Engrossment means to familiarise yourself with the personal narrative and history of the learners that one is teaching. This is done in order to gain a better understanding of them and to help determine the appropriateness of a particular action with that group. Motivational displacement then occurs when we allow one's behaviour to be determined by the group we are teaching.

Knowing the background of your learners allows you to decide on the appropriateness of a particular set of actions. An awareness of one's learners, their backgrounds and their current circumstances means that you can determine what is appropriate and inappropriate when one is teaching them. For example, Adam, when he was interviewed spoke about how upset he felt after hearing a tutor talk about her father. The particular tutor talked about how her father used to take them out as children and while recounting this to me, he repeated "why didn't I have a da [sic] like that?" (Adam). Some learners at the centre were raised solely in Mother and Baby homes, orphanages or industrial schools and never lived with their biological families at all. It is important to keep this in mind while teaching at the centre. Although learners tend to like when tutors are self-disclosing and use examples from their own lives, it is important to remain aware of any potential feelings this could bring up in our learners. This was also discussed in *Freedom of Angels: Childhood in Goldenbridge Orphanage*, mentioned in Chapter 4. She says that she, and many others she knew, really struggled with everyday questions such as asking about where people come from. She stated that she had a tendency to over react and become angry by it as an attempt to protect herself from having to disclose that she had been raised in an orphanage.

Two of the learners interviewed, Enda and Ciaran, also expressed the importance of their tutors having an awareness about their past;

"they've got to realise about our childhood...about what we've been through" (Enda).

"Should they not be told what kind of place, of what kind of people come here before" (Ciaran).

Only one of the tutors who had been sent from the ETB knew the exact nature of the centre before beginning to teach there. She had had a meeting with a manager who was there covering maternity leave. The others stated that no information had been given to them prior to beginning at the centre. The volunteer tutors were more aware about the nature of the centre but reported not having enough information prior to going in to teach at the centre. Matilda

states that she had an interview, that was more like an informal chat. It was about an hour in length and it consisted of;

“I spoke to an administrator for maybe an hour? And he told me a bit about how the centre came into being and a little about his experience there” (Matilda).

Giles also spoke about the inadequate amount of information that was given to him;

“I knew they were victims of institutional abuse...I knew what abuse was, I knew what institutionalised was but I had no idea the scale of what I was getting involved in” (Giles).

This is clearly not an adequate introduction to the complexities of working with such a vulnerable group. This is why any induction programme must, in the first instance, contain information about the backgrounds of the learners at the centre, including what institutionalisation was, what happened in them and the effects that this can have to this day for those who experienced it and their families.

### *6.3.2: Meeting You Where You Are*

Learners stated in interview that they liked that the tutors at the centre were compassionate and willing to allow them to talk. This was also highlighted by tutors as an important factor in teaching at the centre. Enda tells us that he feels as though he is able to approach tutors at the centre in order to discuss what is going on in his life and that they are compassionate and understanding when he has trouble concentrating in class because of this. He states that “they’re very compassionate...My wife, she’s bipolar, with that I get upset...they’re very considerate” (Enda). Adam expresses in his interview that he is often frustrated in classes because he does not feel as though he can express his opinions freely in classes at the centre. This is where Rogers’ core conditions come into effect. Rogers’ theories on education are about meeting people where they are at the moment in time. He believed that a learning environment should be created where learners know that their personal experiences are being respected. The first of his core conditions, unconditional positive regard is of particular importance here. This essentially means that we accept people as they are, where they are in that particular moment in time without imposing conditions on that acceptance. Rogers believed that for a person to grow, they need to feel that they can be open and be accepted. The other two core conditions; congruence – to be genuine – and empathic understanding, work with unconditional positive regard in order to create this type of learning environment. It is important that new tutors coming in are told that they need to meet their learners where they are at that particular moment in time. As with all education, learners at the centre have a life outside of it. There are things

going on in their lives that can have an effect on their behaviour or performance in class and allowances need to be made.

#### 6.4: Individualism and Being Heard

The importance of being heard and having a voice was stressed by both learners and tutors in interviews. In her interview, Ana stressed at several points the importance of hearing what these learners had to say. She believes that the stories of the learners need to be heard by as many people as possible and a flow of volunteers into the centre can ensure this. Lynn and Matilda also discuss the importance of listening to learners and allowing them to make decisions about their own learning. Lynn states that space should be given for learners to share their input. Matilda tells us that it is important to listen to learners and allow them to make decisions about their own learning. Likewise, Giles believes that allowing a space for learners to share their opinions is very important. It is particularly important that these opinions are respected within the classroom. Rogers (1996) also agrees with this. According to him we should practice unconditional positive regard with our learners. This means to accept people as they are without imposing conditions of worth on them (Dryden & Mytton, 1999, p. 79). The importance of unconditional positive regard cannot be underestimated when teaching within the centre. Rogers believed that for a person to grow, they need to feel that they can be open and be accepted for who they are. This is why it is essential to create a learning environment where learners feel comfortable and are confident in the fact that they will not be rejected or judged for expressing their opinions on particular topics.

The learners expressed a desperate need to be heard. This is not surprising considering their past was shrouded in silence and shame. As Maggie Feeley found in her research, individuals were not valued within the industrial school system. In fact, children were stripped of all individuality in the Goldenbridge orphanage and their names were replaced with numbers (Lentin, 1996). Children were not listened to and were demonised for things that they could not control, such as being left handed. Ciaran in particular stresses this. He feels as though he is not listened to at the moment in one of his classes or by the centre. He has found that when he tries to express an idea or an opinion, he is ignored, or others talk over him. He is finding it very frustrating. He believes that the centre's clients should have more of a say in how it is run and that the whole system needs to be 'shaken up'. He states that "the clients, their voices are not being heard" (Ciaran). He expressed the opinion that the clients should be able to elect a representative for themselves. This representative would be able to attend

meetings and express the views of the clients of the centre as well as report back to the clients what is being discussed at meetings. Considering the learners at the centre had little or no control over their own experiences while institutionalised and the fact that the centre is for them, this idea may be a good one. It would give the centre's clients the opportunity to express their feelings directly to the management and help to ensure that the communication between the board and management of the centre and its clients can remain open.

Space and layout was an important factor that was discussed in the interviews with both tutors and learners. The centre has moved from a larger place to a significantly smaller one. Due to this move, they have lost a significant amount of the private and teaching spaces that once existed there. This has had a significant effect on the learners at the centre. Many of whom cannot feel comfortable within small spaces. Enda, Adam and Seamus all stated that the current set up of the centre is affecting them. Enda states that he has had to stay out of one of his classes due to it now taking part in a small classroom. He finds that this is a trigger for his claustrophobia. Adam states that the fact that a number of his classes now take part in the open area of the centre, his concentration gets broken and the class keeps being interrupted. Seamus feels as though he is "all crushed. Crushed up" (Seamus) within the small spaces at the centre. The space was also an issue highlighted by tutors. They state that not only does it interrupt their classes, but they believe that it is also having an effect on the numbers attending;

"the centre as it is laid out now is very small. It doesn't have a lot of private spaces, and I think the clients, it certainly has impacted hugely. The numbers coming in and their ability to learn. Some of them find it quite difficult, and they will tell me that" (Rachel).

#### 6.5: Who Cares for the Carers

The centre has an ethos of care and support for its clients. It wants to see them thrive and provide them with the tools to enable them to take control of their own lives. Unfortunately, it does not appear that this ethos extends to its tutors. The possibility of disclosures by learners about their past was not discussed with tutors prior to them beginning to teach there. All of the tutors interviewed have had disclosures within the classroom about specific experiences in institutions or the behaviours of those who ran the institutions. Kate had stated that had something been disclosed to her she would approach a member of staff for help. However, Giles states that he had taken that route and he "did not get what I needed and I wasn't given what I wanted so I had to go elsewhere for help" (Giles). Matilda found it surprising looking back, that tutors were not prepared for these sorts of conversations. She states that when the topic came up she remained calm and relaxed and let the learner talk but "I still don't know if

I did the right thing or how I should have reacted. There was no one I could talk to about these things and several times I became very upset” (Matilda).

It was clear from interviews that working at the centre has had a profound effect on the lives of the tutors who have worked there. In particular two of the tutors described how it significantly affected their personal lives. For Giles, he began to bring home what was said to him within the classroom. This had a significant effect on his sexual relationships for the first couple of months he worked there. Similarly, initially working at the centre caused Matilda quite a bit of anxiety. She was more worried than she normally would be about the materials being used in the classroom. She had a deep fear of messing it up. Working at the centre also caused her to question her own relationship with her faith. The need for support for tutors was expressed in four of the tutor interviews that were conducted for this research. According to Rachel, who has worked at the centre the longest out of those interviewed, tutors used to be provided with supervision once a month which offered them support. This service is now unavailable. It begs the question, why was it provided before and not now? The centre is for survivors of institutional abuse and always has been, this hasn't changed. If it was deemed necessary in the past to provide supervision for tutors, it should still be deemed as necessary by the centre.

As stated earlier, I think if the centre was upfront and honest about the potential topics that could come up with learners in the classroom, these tutors may have found it easier to deal with. An induction programme can be used to show a clear route of where tutors who become upset by things that happen within the classroom can go to seek support or help. This could be a peer support system with other tutors. I do believe that some form of counselling should be offered to anyone working in this environment. Not only can it be difficult to hear about what has happened to these people, it also has the potential to bring up unexpected feelings in the tutors. As Matilda noted, it is one thing to read about the things that happened in institutions from reports and articles, it is another to be in a room with someone telling you what happened to them. In order to teach these learners, it is essential to build a relationship of trust and care with them. You become fond of the learners you work with over time. It is hard therefore to fathom that someone would hurt them in that way. It can be difficult to deal with those feelings and it takes a long time to be able to go home and not take it with you. Matilda tells us in her interview that by the end of her time in the centre there was a general lack of interest in the centre's volunteers and tutors.

Noddings tells us about the importance of care in her book *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (2003). She states that caring for our learners is

essential to create a relationship of trust with them. She also talks about how important it is that learners acknowledge the caring that is being done in some way. I would argue that although to care for our learners is essential, this model of care could lead to the tutor being trapped as a permanent care giver. Learners at the centre are vulnerable and have experienced trauma in their past educational experiences. They did not experience any care in these situations. It is possible that, when tutors exhibit care to learners in the centre, that there will be an expectation of more and more care and therefore a dependence can be created. It is for this reason that Lynn believes that firm boundaries are a must within the centre. It should be established from the beginning where the lines are within the learning space. Rachel states that this is a particular challenge for her; “clients can become over familiar with me” (Rachel). The importance of holding firm boundaries should be discussed with new learners starting at the centre. The importance of self-care should also be discussed. Tutors are not infallible. As Matilda tells us “it is difficult to go from reading about the terrible things that happened to children in industrial schools- in reports and papers- and to then be sat next to someone you get on with and have developed a sense of trust with, and to know these things happened to this person, and at times to then hear about it directly” (Matilda). It becomes difficult to not take that home and allow it to affect your own personal life as it had with Matilda and Giles. The centre should, in its role as a support organisation, recognise that its tutors also require support. Any training programme that is to be established needs to make tutors aware of a clear route they can take to gain support for themselves.

#### 6.6: Conclusion

Communication and Awareness are two vital components for anyone who is taking up teaching at the centre. The lines of communication should always remain open. The learners at the centre have a past where they were silenced and taught to be seen and not heard. Therefore, it is even more important that we respect their opinions and ensure that their voices and stories are being heard. Learners at the centre should be given the opportunities to make decisions about their own learning and decide on the boundaries that are set within the classroom. They should be consulted for their opinions on any changes also. It would follow therefore that it is important their voices are heard within the training programme for new tutors at the centre. There are a number of ways that this could be possible, but the most simple and effective would be to have learners volunteer to come into the training with tutors. Learners from the centre are experts in their own needs.

The other vital thing is awareness. Awareness of the past and of where the learners are now. Learners at the centre have a difficult past. They have experienced institutionalisation in places such as Industrial Schools, Magdalene Laundries and Mother and Baby Homes. These institutions had a culture of fear and a constant presence of corporal punishment. Abuse was present in them, whether physical, mental or neglect. Sexual abuse was also common, although not present in all institutions. This past has had a significant impact on the learners at the centre and tutors who work there need to be aware of it. It is also important that we are aware of where our learners are at this moment in time. Adult education in general requires that we recognise that our learners are grown-ups with lives and problems outside the place of education. This should always be kept in mind when working at the centre.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations

### 7.1: Conclusion

This piece of research aimed to examine the factors that need to be considered when writing a training programme for new tutors coming in to teach in a centre for survivors of institutional abuse. It is hoped that by providing this training, the experience of teaching and learning within the centre can be enhanced. From interviews, it was clear that there are a number of things that need to be considered when writing the training programme for tutors. Many of these have already been discussed in the previous chapter. First, we need to be aware. Aware not only of our learner's histories, but of where they are right now as well. It is important that learners at the centre feel supported and are free from a fear of rejection. Tutors who were interviewed shared a number of areas of good practice. The first of these was to adapt to the environment. Teaching materials used at the centre should be adapted to suit the group you are working with. This stems from awareness as discussed by Freire, Noddings and Rogers. To know your learners is vital in knowing how best to teach them. Next, it is important that we can show that we have firm and clear boundaries. As it is particularly important to learners at the centre to feel heard, this process should be completed in consultation with your group. It would be unfair to establish rules and guidelines that the learners had no say in but were expected to obey regardless. This could possibly be in the form of a class agreement. This would also help with the potential minor jealousies and childlike reactions that tutors mentioned in Chapter 5. Establishing an agreement as a group could ensure that learners learn to treat each other with respect within the learning space.

Being aware of our learners and their lives means that we can use their life experiences within the classroom. It also means that we can take into account what is happening in their lives. However, it is important for care to be taken with this. Engaging people who have had negative experiences in learning can be quite difficult. If you can make the learning relevant to their lives or incorporate their interests, it can assist with this process. Learners at the centre said that they enjoyed when their tutors were patient and compassionate and listened to them. Enda discusses that when his wife, who has a significant health issue, is not well that his mood deteriorates. He likes that the tutors at the centre are understanding and helpful during these times. Seamus talked about being self-conscious asking to have words spelt for him. He realised after some time that the tutors don't mind doing tasks such as this.



In any training programme for tutors at the centre, it is of paramount importance to include the voices of the learners. I would propose that learners who are willing, should be allowed to join the tutors who are training. In this way, they not only are allowed to speak their minds but also know exactly what is being said to the incoming tutors. An issue that was raised throughout this process was communication. The learners at the centre want to be listened to. The centre is for them and no one knows what they need more than they do. Therefore, I believe this should be an important aspect of any training programme.

Finally, any training programme for tutors at the centre needs to provide a clear route by which tutors can gain support for themselves. The centre can be a difficult environment to work in. Learners there have had particularly bad experiences. Many of them have experienced physical, emotional and sexual abuse. It is not uncommon for learners to recount this abuse in the classroom. It can be incredibly difficult to hear, not only because it was traumatic, but you care about these people and know them. It becomes very difficult to fathom that anyone would ever want to hurt them in that way. It can be difficult in the beginning to not bring those conversations home with you. Hearing about these horrible experiences can have a significant impact on you as a person and on your personal life. Therefore, I believe not only should a clear route to support be shown, but it should be actively encouraged for tutors to avail of it.

## 7.2: Recommendations

It is essential to discuss where we go from here. It is clear that there is a need for a training programme for tutors. This programme should be enacted as soon as possible. It is essential that learners and current tutors are given the opportunity to come and take part in training sessions for new tutors. Tutors who are already teaching at the centre have a deep knowledge of the learners and their needs. They have found ways of teaching there that are effective and that learners report to be good. Peer support is very important in this line of work. Being able to have open dialogue with others in the same role is essential for the mental health of tutors. Learners should also be given the opportunity to speak. There is nobody who knows what they need from a tutor better than themselves. It is also wise that they have the opportunity to meet with new tutors prior to classes beginning when there can be a suspicion about strangers. As Ciaran mentioned in his interview, you can't be expected to talk openly with a stranger sitting there.

Next, support needs to be put in place for tutors. Tutors at the centre are working with a vulnerable group who have had particularly traumatic experiences in their lives. The possibility of disclosures has not, to this point been discussed with tutors beginning at the centre. However, disclosures are a common occurrence in the classroom and can have a profound effect on the lives of the tutors. Support was provided in the past through a HSE counsellor once a month, but this was taken away some time ago. If it was deemed as needed before, then it is surely still needed now. The results of this research would certainly demonstrate that.

Next, space and layout within the centre needs to be thought about. The centre has recently moved from a larger location into one that is less than half the size. Much of the teaching now takes place in an open area. Beside this area, clients who are not taking part in the class sit and have tea and chat to each other. It was reported by both learners and tutors as an issue for them. Learners at the centre do not like to feel confined in the small classroom and tutors are frustrated with the carrying noise and interruptions that come from teaching in an open area.

### 7.3: Possible Areas for Further Study

There are a number of areas of further study that I would suggest could be investigated. First, I believe an investigation into ethos in practice could yield some interesting results. I believe literacy and survivors could be investigated further. Maggie Feeley looked at this from a care perspective, but I think investigating literacy levels could be a good area for study. Finally, a further study into the effects that teaching has on the lives of tutors could be interesting. It is a known fact that teaching is a stressful job. This is exacerbated when working within an environment that presents extra challenges such as the one in this research.

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## Appendices

### 1.1: Informed Consent for Tutors

#### **Informed Consent for Participation in Research**

##### **About the Research:**

This research aims to explore the factors affecting teaching and learning in a centre for survivors of industrial abuse. Tutors will be asked about their experience of teaching within the centre, their practice and how they organise a classroom. All of the information gathered will be used to create a proposal for a training workshop for new tutors coming in to the centre. This research complies with the ethical guidelines of the Department of Adult and Community Education, Maynooth University.

##### **About your Involvement in the research:**

Should you choose to take part in the research, please be aware that:

- Your participation is voluntary
- Your involvement and identity will be held in strict confidence by the researcher
- You have the right to withdraw from the research any time
- Interviews will last approximately 60 minutes
- Interviews will be held in a location that is convenient to the participant
- Interviews will be audio recorded. These recordings will be held securely by the researcher and destroyed 5 years after the completion of the research in accordance with GDPR guidelines

**Should you require it, counselling is available from:**



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

HSE Counselling in Primary Care (CIPC) is a short-term counselling service that provides up to 8 counselling sessions with a professionally qualified and accredited Counsellor/Therapist.

It is a service for medical card holders, who are 18 years of age or over, and who want help with psychological problems that are appropriate for time limited counselling in primary care.

- **Website:** <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/counsellingpc/>
- **Phone:** 1850 24 1850



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At Insight Matters we provide a service that is affordable and accessible to all. Depending on your personal circumstances, you may wish to avail of our low cost counselling service in Dublin city centre. This allows all individuals the opportunity to avail of counselling and psychotherapy. Please inform us if you wish to avail of the scheme and it will be discussed and explained during the initial phone call and consultation.

- **Website:** <https://www.insightmatters.ie/low-cost-counselling/>
- **Phone:** 01 891 0703

#### **About the Researcher:**

- Name: Ciara Byrne
- Course: Med in Adult and Community Education, Maynooth University
- Contact: Ciara.Byrne.2018@mumail.ie

- Supervisor: Michael Murray

- Supervisor Contact: [Michael.J.Murray@mu.ie](mailto:Michael.J.Murray@mu.ie)

I agree to take part in this research

Print Name

Signature:

Date:



## 1.2: Informed Consent for Learners

**Informed Consent for Participation in Research****About the Research:**

This research aims to explore the factors affecting teaching and learning in a centre for survivors of industrial abuse. Learners will be asked about their experience of learning within the centre. The information gathered will be used to enhance the learning experience within the centre. This research complies with the ethical guidelines of the Department of Adult and Community Education in Maynooth University.

**About your Involvement in the research:**

Should you chose to take part in the research, please be aware that:

- Your participation is voluntary
- Your involvement and identity will be held in strict confidence by the researcher
- You have the right to withdraw from the research any time
- Interviews will last approximately 60 minutes
- Interviews will be held in a location that is convenient to the participant
- Interviews will be audio recorded. These recordings will be held securely by the researcher and destroyed 5 years after the completion of the research in accordance with GDPR guidelines

**Should you require it counselling is available from:**

- Connect is a free telephone counselling and support service for any adult who has experienced abuse, trauma or neglect in childhood. You can talk in confidence with a trained counsellor who can listen or help with questions you have.
- Freephone: 1800 477 477
- From the UK or Nothern Ireland: 00800 477 477 77
- Open Wednesday – Sunday, 6pm-10pm



The HSE National Counselling Service (NCS) is a professional, confidential counselling and psychotherapy service available free of charge in all regions of the HSE; for adults who have experienced trauma and abuse in childhood with priority given to adult survivors of institutional abuse in Ireland.

- **Website:** <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/national-counselling-service/>
- **Phone:** 1850 24 1850

#### About the Researcher:

- **Name:** Ciara Byrne
- **Course:** Med in Adult and Community Education, Maynooth University
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