**Objective**

The University of Limerick’s Local Leadership Programme (LLP) was developed to provide participants with the space and possibly new tools to re-look at what may have been to date intractable problems in their community or their area of work and to co-design better solutions. The programme offers places to professionals, usually preferencing frontline practitioners from the statutory and community and voluntary sector, with the demonstrable capacity to bring energy, critical thinking, imagination, leadership, and influence to addressing the problems they face. The problems in mind are those, which may be ‘wicked’ by nature and are not amenable to simple solutions[[1]](#footnote-1). At local level, wicked problems include criminal activity, community safety issues, drug and substance misuse, poor educational achievement or impaired community efficacy, often associated with modern ‘developed’ societies where existing policy and service infrastructures can be part of the problem.

**Methods**

The LLP takes a common-sense, but distinctively novel approach informed by the evidence advising on how to deal with complex problems. A central idea is that wicked problems cannot be addressed without reforming ways of thinking and practising and transforming systems. The transformation involves finding new ways to understand complex problems, and more effective ways to cooperate and collaborate up, down and horizontally across systems in addressing those problems.

Between 2019 and 2023, more than 150 professionals representing a wide variety of organisations from the statutory, community and voluntary and educational sectors have participated in the Local Leadership Programme. Programmes have been help in counties all over Ireland, in both urban and rural locations.

1. Rittel H and Webber M (1973) Dilemmas in a general theory of planning. *Policy Sciences* 4, 155-169. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)