

**Minutes of
 North Cork Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)
 Tuesday 14th February 2022 @ 2.00p.m.**

Present:

Name	Organisation	Public/Private
Cllr. Bernard Moynihan	Cork County Council	Public
Cllr. Gearóid Murphy	Cork County Council	Public
Cllr. Gerard Murphy	Cork County Council	Public
Cllr. Pat Hayes	Cork County Council	Public
Mr. James Fogarty	Divisional Manager North Cork	Public
Mr. Kevin Curran	LEO North Cork	Public
Ms. Tracie Williams	Dept. of Employment Affairs and Social Protection	Public
Ms. Maura Walsh	IRD Duhallow CLG	Private
Mr. Pdraig Casey	Ballyhoura Development CLG	Private
Mr. Sean Hegarty	Avondhu Blackwater Partnership CLG	Private
Mr. Bob Seward	Cork County PPN	Private

Apologies:

Ms. Geraldine Canning	Cork Education & Training Board	Public
Mr. Denis McNamara	Cork County PPN	Private
Mr. Michael Doyle	Environment Pillar	Private
Mr. Declan O'Leary	Foróige	Private
Mr. Julian O'Keeffe	IFA (ICMSA)	Private
Vacant	Respond! Housing	Private

Staff in Attendance:

Ms. Kay Keegan	LCDC Chief Officer	Cork County Council
Mr. Andrew Lewis	Finance Officer	Cork County Council
Mr. Jesse Dorrington	Staff Officer	Cork County Council

<p>Quorum=10 (50% of 17 rounded up + 1 = 10) In attendance= 11 (4 Private: 7 Public) Apologies= 6 Total membership= 17</p>

Welcome and Introduction

The LCD C was conducted through Microsoft Teams.
It was noted that a quorum was in place and the meeting commenced.

The Chair, Cllr. Bernard Moynihan welcomed new member Bob Seward to the LCD C.

1. Confirmation of Minutes of the Previous LCD C Meeting of 14th December 2021

The Minutes were adopted on the proposal of Cllr. Gerard Murphy and seconded by Cllr. Gearóid Murphy.

Matters arising

None.

2. LCD C Annual Report 2021

The Chief Officer presented the LCD C Annual Report for 2021.

The report was proposed by Cllr. Pat Hayes and seconded by Kevin Curran.

3. SICAP – Presentation of Case Study for IRD Duhallow CLG by Triona Dennehy Title: IRD Duhallow’s Job Centre

IRD Duhallow’s Job Centre

- SICAP has played an important role in providing support for unemployed individuals who are distant from the labour market.
- The Job Centre has placed a special focus on long-term intergenerational unemployment, which has been evidenced by jobless households in the region.
- The emphasis is on working with people who are least likely to find employment. This involves self-referrals, internal LDC referrals and the direct referral of unemployed people to IRD Duhallow by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection with the objective of providing a range of services and facilities to assist unemployed persons to enter employment or return to work.
- The Job Centre also assists people who are already employed to explore and gain better quality, better paid and more secure employment opportunities.
- IRD Duhallow’s Job Centre also engages with other (non-activation) SICAP individuals including people who have a disability, lone parents, early school leavers, ex-offenders, the long-term unemployed, low income smallholders etc.
- These unemployed are not on the Live Register but IRD Duhallow’s Job Centre engages with them regardless of their Live Register status.
- The rise in the number of unemployed workers due to COVID-19 has meant IRD Duhallow’s Job Centre has been extremely busy both virtually and in person.
- Development Officers working on the delivery of the service carry out consistent research into relevant changes to recruitment processes in order to ensure that

offerings are current and in line with labour market requirements at any given time. For example, staff attends regular training events by the INOU.

The External Context

- The COVID-19 pandemic radically affected the labour market with the closure of entire sections of the economy.
- The changing social and economic landscape as a result of the Covid Pandemic has had a profound impact on IRD Duhallow’s Job Centre SICAP action with new job seeker needs emerging.
- The need for social distancing has meant SICAP Job Centre supports including the usual engagement involving face-to-face interaction were more safely delivered on-line during periods of restrictions. However, not everyone was able to get online so digital exclusion was identified as a barrier for vulnerable groups.
- A number of important measures were put in place by Government to protect incomes for those whose employment was impacted by COVID-19 restrictions including the Pandemic Unemployment Payment and Wage Subsidy Scheme. Furthermore, the July Jobs Stimulus measures including a new Work Placement Experience Programme, 35,000 further Education and Training and Higher Education places, an increase in places on the CE and Tús schemes and expanded access to and funding for JobsPlus, Back to Education Allowance and Back to Work Enterprise Allowance all benefited the long-term unemployed as well as those impacted by COVID-19 public health restrictions.
- It has been reported that the Pandemic Unemployment Payment was acting as a disincentive to getting a job for some. Some people who were receiving the PUP payment were reluctant to return to work and employers faced difficulties in re-hiring personnel.

Services Offered through IRD Duhallow’s SICAP funded Job Centre

- In the absence of an LES or Jobs Club IRD Duhallow provides a person-centred approach in delivering a comprehensive rural employment services to those who are “job ready”.
- These services include: career guidance, vacancy matching, assistance with CV’s, job application forms and mock interviews.
- In order to determine an individuals required supports a Personal Action Plan is created for each individual who seeks supports through the Job Centre. These plans take into account the individuals progression pathways in relation to training and employment as well as taking the clients individual needs into consideration allowing them to inform their own career decisions.
- Progression planning includes referrals to education, training or development opportunities within the context of an individuals Personal Action Plan.

- The mentoring support provided by the Job Centre enhances the service provision and focuses on the individual's strengths, resources and ability to seek employment in the face of life's inevitable challenges.
- Development Officers engage closely with Tús, Kickstart and CE Scheme participants as well as participants from the Local Training Initiative in order to prepare them to seek employment upon exit from the various programmes and schemes.
- Finding suitable employment for some long-term unemployed can be challenging, due to complex needs e.g. literacy difficulties, alcohol misuse and drug addiction, lack of life skills, etc.
- The Job Centre also supports local employers who may have job vacancies by offering a shortlist of local candidates from the database of Job seekers ensuring a smooth, accurate and confidential recruitment service. Employers are also offered advice and guidance on options open to them through wage and tax reliefs etc.

Covid 19 Job Centre Demands & Virtual Supports

- The delivery of Job Centre offerings was successfully pivoted to online delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Staff quickly adapted to the use of virtual communication platforms, all while becoming points of support for those in the communities struggling with same.
- The offering of virtual appointments has been a major success with remarkable uptake.
- IRD Duhallow is in the fortunate position to be able to offer face to face appointments, where required, as the premises it is operating out of is very spacious and all COVID-19 social distancing can be adhered to.
- Not only did IRD Duhallow provide assistance with the use of virtual communication platforms but also promoted inclusion by loaning laptops to those in need for example to attend a virtual interview, in order to facilitate for our actions meeting the needs of individuals.
- Since the very beginning of the Pandemic, the gap between those with good internet connection and digital technology and those lacking such tools (which have suddenly become primary goods) has become even more apparent.
- The digital divide was further heightened with inadequate access to broadband in Duhallow. There was a focus on enabling the investment in building the digital infrastructure to ensure that online provision met the complex needs of all learners. With the assistance of the Mitigating Against Disadvantage Fund IRD Duhallow purchased ICT equipment which has been made available to loan for the purposes of assisting disadvantaged individuals to access supports remotely either at home or in their local community centre remote hub.

Promotion of IRD Duhallow's Job Centre

- IRD Duhallow's Job Centre actively promotes its services using several outlets of advertising. These include the IRD Duhallow website including with a designated Job Centre page, monthly IRD Duhallow newsletter's reaching homes across Duhallow, the Discover Duhallow magazine with 4000 fortnightly editions, the IRD Duhallow Facebook page and training brochures.
- The publication of fortnightly articles in the Discover Duhallow magazine has had a positive impact on promoting the service by providing topical advice supporting the service in reaching a diverse pool of candidates.

Youth Unemployment

- Another important strand of our activation work through SICAP is with young unemployed people.
- Traditionally in Duhallow, there was always a proportion of young people who left school early opting to work or train in the workplace instead of doing their Leaving Certificate.
- However, for that generation of school leavers there were far more options for unskilled work in construction and manufacturing and high numbers of apprenticeships which allowed them to learn a skill on the job.
- IRD Duhallow has successfully engaged with young people through SICAP utilising a strengths based approach.
- Supports have included: one to one employability options, planning and guidance supports as well as providing clear signposting to related support provision. Participants have availed of tailored training including: Manual Handling, Health and Safety in the Workplace, Digital Skills Training, Personal Development, Apprenticeship information, CV building/CV cover letter preparation, interview techniques, job search strategies and continuous one to one mentoring.
- We have also supported a number of young people to obtain their drivers licences through Broadening Your Horizons and other youth focused programmes that we have levered in to support the work of SICAP.
- IRD Duhallow has excellent working relationships with local DSP Case Officers and with their assistance referrals have been made to their YESS Programme. The top up on social welfare payments has been a major incentive for the young people.

Emotional Support Service for Job Seekers

- IRD Duhallow offers an Emotional Support Service which is funded through SICAP and available by appointment to anyone over the age of 18, affected by mental ill health. The support service is completely confidential, non-judgmental and non-discriminatory.

- Very often people with lower incomes cannot afford counselling fees and therefore go without. Job Centre clients often avail of this valuable service. This voluntary service was set up in April 2014 to offer an Emotional Support & Counselling service to the community.
- The service currently has seven voluntary Counsellors/Psychotherapists (made up of student and pre-accredited therapists) who offer one-to-one emotional support & Counselling/Psychotherapy to individuals in need within the community.
- In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, in addition to individual support, group peer support is offered (approx. every six weeks) online via zoom as an additional support for all of the therapists currently volunteering for this service.
- In order to adapt and broaden the service all therapists were strongly advised to undertake an 80 hour CPD course in Online and Telephone Counselling to enable them to be more competent in providing therapy remotely. All therapists willingly undertook (or are currently undertaking) this training and have been offering therapy services to clients remotely since March of 2020.

Supported Work Opportunities through Social Enterprise

- Mainstream employment isn't always a realistic option for individuals accessing supports through IRD Duhallow's Job Centre.
- IRD Duhallow has facilitated, established, supported and developed the social enterprise sector across Duhallow since the late 1980's.
- Over this time excellent working relationships and networks have developed with the boards and management of the various social enterprises. These social enterprise businesses primarily have philanthropic aims but are delivered through standard business methods.
- The network of social enterprises is often used to provide supported work experience and work placements with the support of IRD Duhallow's Job Centre.
- The social enterprises are flexible in that they respond to diversity and the varying capacities and interests of employees.
- These services are socially motivated and therefore most disposed to recruiting those who are distant from the labour market.

Outputs & Outcomes

- G2:1 – SICAP clients receive information about opportunities for lifelong learning.
- G2:2 Provide lifelong learning opportunities
- G2-1:2 – SICAP clients increase their participation in civic life, education and/or employment. G2:1 Promoting personal development and wellbeing
- G2-7:1 Gaps in labour market and education provision are identified and addressed through joint planning and service delivery. G2:7 Addressing barriers and gaps in lifelong learning and employment

- G2-7:1 More joined up referral system are developed to help individuals access the right services
- G2-4:1 SICAP clients are better prepared to enter the labour market
- G-4:2 SICAP clients are supported to remain in work through receipt of ongoing in work supports
- G2-4.3 Local Employers are supported to have a more inclusive approach to recruitment
- G2-5:1 SICAP clients, particularly those on low incomes, move into more sustainable and better quality employment

Number of Individuals supported: 45
Female: 31
Male: 14
Total Interventions with individuals in 2021 to date: 111
Outputs: 33
Progressed into employment: 7 almost 20 % (17 %)
Progressed into the participation of training courses: 26
Only 8 individuals with no output at this stage

Learnings From this Action

- Unfortunately, the social and economic consequences of the pandemic has resulted in more pronounced levels of social exclusion in the region and has manifested itself into higher rates of unemployment.
- There is no 'one size fits all' Job Centre service solution to the complex issues that are present themselves as a result of this unemployment but IRD Duhallow strives to operate in a collaborative and flexible manner which is tailored to the social circumstances of vulnerable individuals from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds.
- IRD Duhallow's Job Centre service has helped people to grow in confidence in their own employability, acquire new job seeking skills and engage more effectively with the labour market whilst also positively attributing to more positive mental health in some cases.
- Job Centre engagement has been intensive and long-term for some SICAP clients. Some of the SICAP beneficiaries who registered in 2018 are still on our caseload and remain long term unemployed.

- Goal 2 includes a broad spectrum of supports bearing in mind that individuals may not be ready for employment supports in the short-term but need access to other types of “softer” supports in the interim.
- IRD Duhallow’s Job Centre incorporates the provision of job-search assistance and training options, not designed solely to address labour market and employment issues, per se but, also informed by actions to assist individuals with other matters including their emotional wellbeing.
- A wraparound approach underpins the SICAP action as engagement with the service often serves as a gateway for individuals and their families by improving their access to other SICAP supports/services as well as the integrated suite of other programmes delivered by IRD Duhallow.
- This holistic approach adopted by IRD Duhallow’s Job Centre ensures that the individual is supported in every way possible.
- Interventions are made available through an integrated system of support that includes education and training, employment, housing, family support and other SICAP support services.
- Depending on the complexity of need a person accessing IRD Duhallow’s Job Centre may require supports from a range of other statutory, voluntary and community service providers. IRD Duhallow continues to apply an integrated approach across all areas of work which has proven effective.

Testimonial from Job Centre Beneficiary: John Lynch

“I am delighted to inform you that I got the job. This would not be possible only for IRD Duhallow’s help at interview stage. It was like I knew the questions I was going to be asked, I was ready for them. The Development Officer who assisted me instilled that I was the right person for the job and I had a positive mental attitude facing the panel. Things like how to dress, my background for the zoom interview, talking about the strong points of my career to date. Having a glass of water on standby which bought me a few seconds to gather my thoughts. All of this information that I didn’t have before our interview. I can certainly say that without IRD Duhallow’s help I would not have got this job”.

Cllr. Gearóid Murphy thanked Triona Dennehy for the presentation and said that the economic development of rural areas should be a priority for Cork County Council and all elected members. He acknowledged the positive social impact of increased employment. The Chair, Cllr. Bernard Moynihan commended the work being done by IRD Duhallow CLG.

Kevin Curran commented that there was a significant uptake in employment by women during the pandemic due to the widespread introduction of working from home and flexible working. Triona Dennehy said that IRD Duhallow CLG has experienced an uptake in evening classes by women because they take place online and are recorded so they do not clash as strongly with caring duties as physical meetings do. Triona Dennehy said that a lot of workplaces are increasingly expecting staff to return to the office and so it is unclear if women with caring duties will gain significant employment.

4. Healthy Ireland – Replacement of PPN Rep to Healthy Ireland Sub-Group: Bob Seward

Proposed by Cllr. Bernard Moynihan and seconded by Maura Walsh.

4. AOB

N/A

5. Date of Next Meeting

The date for the next meeting is 21st March 2022.

Meeting Concluded

Signed:	<u>Bernard Moynihan</u> CHAIRPERSON
Dated:	<u>21st March 2022</u>

