



# ANNUAL REPORT 2022

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Auditors (2022):	Mazars Mayoralty House Flood Street Galway
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Company no:	215187

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all our staff and Board of Directors who contributed to producing this Annual Report



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Westmeath Community Development CLG



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## MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRPERSON

Welcome to Westmeath Community Development's Annual Report 2022.

I took over the role of Chair in April 2022, replacing the long-standing Dermot Leavy, a tough act to follow! My first year in the Chair has opened my eyes further to the important work that WCD does in the county- no sooner we were winding down our Covid supports that we were up and running with a myriad of supports for the displaced Ukrainians who arrived in Westmeath in March and throughout the year. As Directors we can be proud of the key role that WCD have played in response to this crisis, in addition to maintaining and ramping back up our services as the pandemic impacts began to wane.

2022 was also the year the Fleadh returned to the county – we had waited a long time for its return but it definitely exceeded all our expectations bringing huge crowds, excitement, entertainment and business to the county. WCD was once again key to the success of the Fleadh, from the financial supports of the LEADER programme, through the Rural Social and Tus Programme with the Tidy Towns and the Volunteer Centre in recruiting, training and coordinating activities with the Fleadh Committee before and during the event. That work and

success has definitely contributed to the FLEADH coming to Mullingar again this year, something the whole county is looking forward to. As we begin 2023 the work of WCD continues apace, but this year in particular will see the start of the next LEADER programme and the announcement of the successor programme for SICAP. While things can change over the years – the last SICAP programme began in a period of very high unemployment – our work over the last number of years leaves us in a strong position to be able to deliver these programmes in the next period, ensuring the viability of our organisation in the years ahead.

WCD are one of 49 Local Development Companies, and together we make up the Irish Local Development Network (ILDN). Across the country we work on developing and delivering innovative responses to local needs as well as delivering on state and local government initiatives and strange, our work in responding to the challenges of the pandemic due to our presence on the ground throughout the country has seen innovative, practical and effective, applying innovative solutions to local problems since the start of the pandemic

We continue our work at

enhancing our corporate governance structures and compliance obligations under the Charities Governance Code.

As a Board, we were able to meet in person again, some in our offices but also out in communities that we have supported, along with remote meetings when needed.

I would like to acknowledge and thank our funders and supporters for their support particularly this year, and the flexibility they gave us to allow us to respond to the needs of our communities throughout Westmeath.

As I mentioned above, Dermot Leavy stepped aside in 2022, as did another long serving and dedicated Board member, Liam Cahill. I thank you both sincerely for your work with WCD over many years.

Replacing Liam, Seamus McNamee stepped into the Treasurers role, bring a wealth of experience and sound thinking to our Board, an able replacement no doubt. I thank all our Directors for the input and work in the last year, be at Board level or on various substructures – without your commitment we would not have an organisation that we can all be proud of.

We pay tribute too to our CEO, management team and staff on their work during 2022 and know that your efforts and work and what it brings to communities and individuals cannot be overstated.

In our Annual Report you will find details on the work that WCD has done in 2022. I hope you find it informative, interesting and inspiring!

*Patrick Boyce*

**Patrick Boyce**

*Chairperson Westmeath Community Development*

## MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

2022 saw WCD continue to play a prominent economic and societal role in the county. While 2022 saw an end to the Covid Pandemic and Community Response Forum, the Russian invasion of Ukraine meant that the Forum was reconvened to organise the Westmeath response to ensuing humanitarian crisis. Once again WCD, and in particular, our SICAP and the Volunteer Centre were central to the efforts in Westmeath, with staff attending in the Creggan Court Athlone within days of people's arrival, and this continued throughout the year as the numbers grew to close on 1700 people in various locations throughout the county. Our nimbleness and willingness to go to each venue and build relationships with Ukrainians and hosts has been noted in many quarters, and the support we are providing across a range of fields is crucial. As we look to 2023 and beyond we believe that this will remain a core of our work and will be reflected in the next SICAP programme. Last year we also had the Fleadh in Mullingar, a momentous occasion for all, and WCD played its part in supporting the Fleadh, through LEADER funding, and the role of our Volunteer Centre and Tus participants being crucial to the success of the event. With the Fleadh returning in 2023 it is anticipated that WCD will be to the forefront again. Our core programmes, LEADER and SICAP continued uninterrupted during 2022.

Looking to the next LEADER programme WCD has partnered again with Westmeath Local Development Committee to develop the Local Development Strategy for the county. This will run until 2027. While the overall budget has been reduced, LEADER will continue to be an essential scheme for rural Ireland. 2023 also will see the new SICAP programme go to tender. It was hoped that this would be by commission, but will once again be by tender. Our SICAP programme has performed very well over the last number of years and we are confident that WCD will be selected to deliver the next programme. Our Rethink Ireland (SIFI) programme, that works side by side with SICAP continued apace will continue into 2023, the final year of the programme. 2022 was a significant year in childcare, with the continued roll out of the National Childcare Scheme. While we had some concerns about the viability of services earlier in the year the changes that came in in September has eased those concerns. Our various work placement programmes, CE, TUS, RSS and JI, and training programmes, LTI had good years. During summer 2022 Minister Simon Harris visited Belvedere and we have high hopes that an accredited School of Horticulture will be developed there. Changes to RSS eligibility, lobbied for by Irish Local Development Network (ILDN) are very welcome and having a forum for discussing matters with the Dept directly is important in shaping schemes and how they impact on the ground. 2022 saw the first full year of the

paid model of our Community Mothers programme, in line with the National Strategy. Funding for this has come from SICAP as we have been unable to secure additional funding as yet from TUSLA. As we look forward to the further rollout of the programme the financial supports do remain a concern as it has not as yet being included in TUSLA core budgets.

The Food and Health project came to an end for WCD in 2022, with the project being transferred to Athlone Family Resource centre under Sláintecare. We had no staff employed under the programme and the launch of Sláintecare was the opportune moment for the transfer to occur.

Our Traveller project had a busy year, particularly in the Blackberry Lane, Athlone, redevelopment planning and consultation. Our Primary Health Care Team were also able to get back out to one to one visits in 2022, supporting over 200 families.

I thank my Management Team and all the staff WCD for their ongoing efforts to deliver the different programmes and services that improve the quality of life for the people and communities of Westmeath.

To our Board of Directors and the members of our Board Substructures, thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to driving WCD forward and for retaining the vision to serve those most in need in the county.



**Frank Murtagh**

*Chief Executive Officer, Westmeath Community Development*

## COMPANY OVERVIEW

Westmeath Community Development (WCD) is the local development company Westmeath, and one of 49 Local Development Companies in Ireland and a member of the Irish Local Development Network. We administer a range of programmes and support services to individuals and community groups, to improve the quality of life through the provision of lifelong learning and labour market supports.

We are the delivery agent for the LEADER and SICAP in Westmeath as well as delivering employment activation schemes such as Tús, Rural Social Scheme and Community Employment. We manage Childcare, Healthcare, Education & Training and Volunteer programmes across the county.

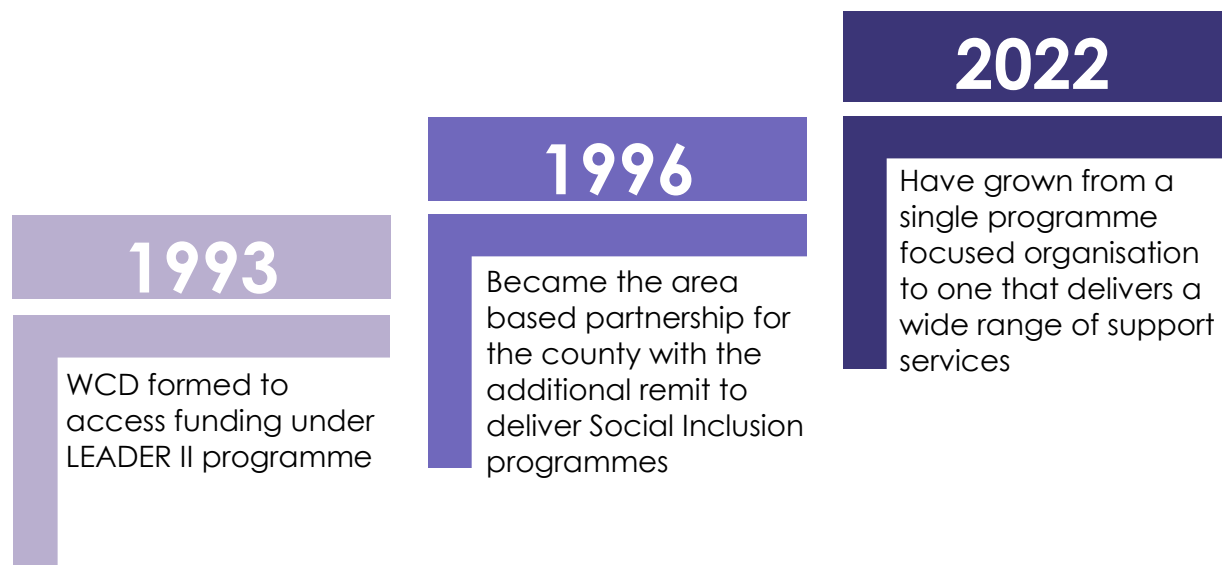
Our headquarters are located in the Enterprise & Innovation Centre, Mullingar, with an office in Athlone and our horticultural training centre in Belvedere House & Gardens.

*Providing support services to individuals and community groups within our county that improves the quality of lives through the provision of lifelong learning and labor market supports*

### Our core activities



## OUR HISTORY



## HOW WE WORK

Achieving our vision is not possible without the support of all our partners and collaborators. We use innovative partnership approaches to progress a social inclusion agenda and design programmes that address the needs of our service users.







2022 was a momentous year for Westmeath and Mullingar, with the hosting of Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2022. This was the first full Fleadh since 2019, and took place from 31 July to 7 August in Mullingar. Over 5,000 competitors took part in 230 competitions in a range of categories including traditional instruments; ceili and sean-nós dancing; singing in Irish and English; tune writing; duets, trios and ceili bands, and across all age groups.

Approximately 500,000 attended the Fleadh during the week, with figures for the Friday and Saturday of close to 150,000 people each day. The value to the local economy is estimated at approximately €30 million (Failte Ireland). Then in September we got the confirmation that Fleadh 2023 will be returning home to Mullingar. WCD was heavily involved in the preparation for and the running of the Fleadh.

### **Admin Support**

- WCD made our training rooms available for Volunteer training two to three times a week from May up to end of July. All volunteers who registered attended the training in our offices during the evening or Saturdays over the two months leading up the Fleadh
- Volunteer Committee also used our training rooms to allow them prepare schedules for all volunteers required throughout the week
- WCD staff time was given during the week of the Fleadh with staff also volunteering during the weekend of the Fleadh

### **Tús Support**

Tús scheme has 18 participants working with Mullingar Tidy Towns. The Tidy Towns group played a big role in preparing for the Fleadh for the last 3 years.

Before and during the Fleadh, the participants worked at:

- Developing sustainable flower beds at various locations around the town
- The establishment and maintenance of flowerbeds on roundabouts
- Liaising with Westmeath County Council's environmental team on tidy up in preparation for the fleadh
- During the fleadh, the workers started litter picking/tidying at 2pm and finished at 9pm. All 18 workers worked, on shift duty, for the 8 days on the fleadh. The workers were supervised by their supervisor, Rosie Monaghan, during the week
- Fifteen participants from outside Mullingar volunteered to work on the fleadh during the week.



# MULLINGAR FLEADH CHEOIL 2022

## Horticulture Project

The horticulture trainers and participants were involved in significant enhancement work in Belvedere, for the last 6 months, in preparation for the fleadh. This included the planting of many new flower beds and shrubs.

On behalf of the project, John Smyth presented John Bawle, Mullingar Tidy Towns, with 20 hanging baskets that were used to decorate the Green Bridge in Mullingar.

## LEADER

The Fleadh Cheoil Committee made an application for Leader Funding in March 2022. The application was for the purchase and hire of Barriers, Portable Toilets and Floodlights and was approved at the March LCDC meeting.



The table sets out the specific costs which were funded under the LEADER Programme 2014-2022 for the project:

Nature of Contract/ Goods/ Item/Element	Supplier	Cost (ex VAT)	Cost (inc VAT)
Barriers	Sunbelt Rentals Ltd.	€59,614.00	€73,325.22
Portable Toilets	Envira Ltd	€98,420.00	€121,056.60
Floodlights	Navan Hire & Hardware	€9,200.00	€11,031.00
<b>Total cost of project</b>		<b>€167,234.00</b>	<b>€205,412.82</b>

Funding Approved was €150,000, or 73% grant aid – note that is the maximum amount allowed under the current programme.

## Volunteer Centre

### September 2021

- Sub Committee Set up and set out a plan for the year. Chaired by Julia Dalton and Peter Ormond represented the Volunteer Centre on the committee. The sub-committee worked well and the positivity from day one was excellent. We had weekly meetings and What's App meetings/calls and never was there a moment of negativity

### December 2021

- Volunteer Centre set up a Google Document and commenced advertising it on social media and on our website. We had total responsibility for this document and to ensure that the emails went out to acknowledge the expression of interest
- Numbers grew organically over that period and we met and reviewed our operations during the months of January to April

# MULLINGAR FLEADH CHEOIL 2022

## April 2022

- Volunteer Centre purchased T Shirts for all Volunteers (Westmeath Volunteer Centre and Westmeath Community Development Logo's on all T Shirts)
- Training Commenced for all Volunteers in the Training Rooms of WCD

## July 2022

- Sub Committee commenced scheduling of Volunteers
- Emails with schedules sent out to all volunteers (Given the volume, the scheduling and the emails took approximately 11 days working from 8am to 10pm)

## July 30<sup>th</sup>

- Sub Committee moved into Volunteer Head Quarters (Bishop's Gate Street, Mullingar)

## July 31<sup>st</sup> to August 8<sup>th</sup>

- Westmeath Volunteer Staff were involved in the day to day running of HQ and dealing with queries
- Approximately 1200 volunteers assisted us over the week from coordinators, team leaders to volunteers
- Staff from Westmeath Community Development (Mullingar Office) volunteered on many occasions

## Feedback

- Very Positive from Volunteer Centre and from Volunteers
- Everyone brought great energy to the week and all thoroughly enjoyed it
- Positive branding for the Volunteer Centre and Westmeath Community Development
- Great Learning curve that can only be gained by doing



## Quotes from Volunteers

"It was an amazing week. Thank God for giving me an opportunity to work alongside wonderful personalities. Great organisation skills...Julia and the Volunteer Coordinator committee!"

"Just want to say thanks to all involved with Fleadh. What a week it was meeting so many lovely volunteers and musicians. Really enjoyed it and the best part we will do it all again in 2023."

"It's been a pleasure been part of the Fleadh and volunteering with you all. I never expected it to be this good. Got to meet and know so many wonderful people. Thanks for giving me the opportunity and making it a grand success."

# UKRAINIAN COMMUNITY REPORT

## Services for Ukrainian Nationals

In 2022 Westmeath welcomed 1700 new Ukrainian men, woman and children to our communities across the county. The main focus of WCD's role was to help people immediately on their arrival offering them information, practical hands on support and services to ensure they could access services we all take for granted such as schools, education, healthcare, benefits and employment opportunities. The key to achieving this was to go out to each host location and provide information and support days and within one to two weeks create English classes for people to further aid them find their feet as they began their life in Westmeath.

It is comforting to see how well our Ukrainian community members have settled into our communities, with the majority taking up English classes, additional labour market training with WCD in both English and Ukrainian and their children successfully and happily entering our local schools and clubs.

WCD has been offering English classes to the Ukrainian community in the 18 host centres it currently supports throughout Westmeath reaching out to over 600 learners. The need for learning English was identified early on as a critical element in fostering social inclusion and active participation in the local community. Classes are mainly aimed at the beginner and intermediate levels and help learners to build confidence and feel comfortable engaging in everyday conversational English. Classes are relaxed and fun and allow Ukrainians to come together and form friendships. Lessons also cover writing, listening and grammar skills and have helped many individuals with access to the labour market as well as education and training.



Many have joined local art, social, cultural and sporting clubs, some are engaged in local tidy towns and sharing their skills, expertise and interests with all members of our communities. To further help the children WCD created two homework clubs where Ukrainian and Irish children can work and play together whilst gaining additional learning and skills.

All we met were extremely grateful and happy to receive our support with many giving back in kind immediately. An example of this is Tetiana who was one of the first Ukrainians to come to Athlone in March 2022, within two days of arriving she was helping WCD with translation and interpretation at our information sessions. Tetiana then went on to support people with many other organisations such as INTREO and the local Family Resource Centre and was instrumental in helping mother and toddler groups set up and engage with family supports in the local area.

On a daily basis our dedicated integration officers and employment officers began receiving and responding to queries from our Ukrainians helping with a variety of their needs from securing doctors appointments, gaining access to other agencies services via our referral system, providing school supplies and providing a signposting service to ensure people's needs and issues were dealt with.



# UKRAINIAN COMMUNITY REPORT

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WCD's response along with all local agencies involved in Westmeath County Councils Community Response Forum helped to shape and expand all our services to offer timely information, support, practical help and advice to our new residents at a very crucial time for them. This forum hosted by WCC brings a range of partner's together working at local level with all Ukrainians to ensure they can access and avail of the support they need whilst planning for the future for all families settling in Westmeath.

WCD also created two Ukrainian Networks to represent Ukrainians living in the north and south of Westmeath. The purpose of these networks are to give a voice to our Ukrainian community and initially advocate on their behalf, leading to the networks becoming a key player in the local community/voluntary sector of Westmeath. The groups are made up of representatives from the 20+ host locations, they come together on a monthly basis to discuss their issues, inform us of what their needs are, share with us their talents, skills, expertise, goals, coming up with their ideas and solutions that will help them not only settle into our communities but also be further recognised as active valued members of our society.

## **WCD provided the following practical direct services under our SICAP Programme:**

- Information helpline and wellbeing supports
- English language classes and homework clubs
- Translation and interpreter services and community and social links
- Labour market training courses in English with some in Ukrainian/Russian language
- Job seeking services, CVs, interviews, links to employers and jobs
- Signposting services with referrals to all other agencies and government departments

## **Social, Cultural and Community**

WCD engaged with people as a group and as a community offering social, cultural and wellbeing activities. In May over 100 Ukrainians engaged in the National Play Day a WCC initiative was held in Athlone Sports Centre. There was over 200 from across the county in attendance with basketball, soccer, tennis, GAA and many more sporting activities to engage in whilst a DJ played in the background and a magician and face painters entertained all throughout the day. Westmeath County Council, Athlone Family Resource Centre and WCD worked together to make a fun day full of activities and play for the children of Athlone and the Ukrainian children living in the county.

# UKRAINIAN COMMUNITY REPORT

## Homework Clubs

To assist young people WCD tendered for Homework Clubs in Athlone in September and Castlepollard in December. In Athlone, St Marys National School was the venue and the service was integrated into other Homework Services being run in the school. In Castlepollard, St Michaels National School was the venue with the Homework Club commencing in January 2023.



## Christmas

On 21 December 2022, WCD was involved with Mullingar Chamber of Commerce in organising a Christmas celebration for the Ukrainian community in Mullingar. This entailed a Christmas carol service in All Saint's Church followed by a social evening with mulled wine and mince pies in the Greville Arms Hotel. Buses were organised to transport everyone there and back with over 150 Ukrainians in attendance. A special appearance was made at the event by Santa Claus and his two elves! Santa and the elves were kept very busy throughout the evening distributing presents to all the children. The evening was a great success full of festive cheer and was a wonderful opportunity for the Ukrainian community to come together and meet each other despite the on-going situation in Ukraine.

The following day Santa and his elves made a visit to each of the host locations in Athlone delivering gifts to all the Ukrainian children there. Again, there was great excitement when 'Svaty Mikolay' (as Ukrainians call Santa Claus) arrived to deliver the presents and the children celebrated by performing songs, poems and dances.





# UKRAINIAN COMMUNITY REPORT

## Quotes from Ukrainian people that we have helped plus photos of events.

“Thanks WCD for reaching out for my family and helping us with finding English courses and breaking the language barrier. Friendly staff with warm hearts and personal approach to solving problems.”

“WCD had become my first and so needed supporter in this hard time. The highly qualified staff members helped me to make an excellent CV and find a job that suited my skills and preferences.”



I am writing to express my sincere gratitude for the invaluable support and assistance you (Westmeath Community Development) have provided to the Ukrainian residents of Maple Court, Castlepollard. Your dedication in helping them create resumes, find employment, and obtain basic training and certificates has made a significant impact on their lives. Your efforts have empowered us to overcome barriers and build a prosperous future in our new community. The Westmeath Community Development has not only supported the Ukrainian residents but has also contributed to the overall growth of Castlepollard. Thank you for your unwavering support and for making a difference in the lives of the Ukrainian community.



Westmeath Community Development has been a great help to the Ukrainian Community in Mullingar, especially when it comes to organizing a community unit that serves common values and negotiating with local governmental bodies and initiatives. They provided us with a local phone helpline, scheduled monthly community meetings and training in CV preparation, and held several local job fairs, as well as recreational events. When it comes to the Ukrainian community, they really HELP, and it matters.” — Viktoriia Hurska.



# SICAP GOAL 1: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

## Identified Needs in 2022 (Number of groups supported in 2022 : KPI 63 Actual 70)

1. A persistent need for LCGs to re-group and continue to re-build capacity and recovery post the pandemic. The residents' associations that were formed in 2020, and 2021 (when the impact of restrictions was severe) in the newer Action 1 disadvantaged rural estates, were particularly badly impacted as they never gained experience and confidence or numbers of members that would come from operating in normal circumstances.
2. Need for Residents Associations to re-connect with their local Communities. Many of the residents' associations highlighted that residents were slow to take part in their activities and/or attend committee meetings etc. A disconnect between themselves and their residents was reported.
3. Need for in-person social interaction. Post pandemic we identified a lack of confidence and a hesitancy for individuals and groups to reform and this led to a lack of engagement that we felt needed to be addressed by providing more opportunities for social interactions.
4. Committees comprising of brand-new inexperienced members have arisen in some cases where LCGs were on the brink of collapse and a SICAP staff member needed to intervene to build capacity within an area/recruit new member. i.e. Battery Heights, Ashdale, Woodland Grove This resulted in a urgent need for training in committee skills.
5. The Digital Divide was identified in 2020 and IT tuition and supports were provided to help meet that need in 2021. This continued to be a need in 2022. Training provided continued to build on the skill set of older people.
6. CSPs completed in early January 2022 identified training needs e.g. funding supports, understanding conflict, committee skills and media skills. Other needs identified was Disability awareness training and further IT/ Tablet training for the elderly.
7. Ongoing need to continue supporting LCGs accessing funding
8. Athlone and Mullingar RAPID continue to need support for the on-going implementation of the programme
9. Support new and existing social enterprises
10. Children and families
  - i. The need for supports for young asylum seekers in direct provision accommodation centre in Athlone.
  - ii. Residents Associations identified a need for new or upgraded play facilities.
  - iii. Need for the Community Mothers Programmes to be supported under SICAP identified

## Responses to needs

1. Ongoing support, development and capacity building was required with the majority of our LCGs. Help was provided in applying for and managing grants, organising and holding meetings, building their profile within their community, taking stock of their current situation e.g. SWOT analysis. In some cases, it was necessary to provide admin support with minute-taking etc. due to low capacity, all new volunteers (no hand over from outgoing committee. Sustaining the motivation of LCG volunteers was an ongoing challenge throughout 2022. This took up considerable resources of the SICAP staff. Support, capacity building and "hand-holding" was most intensive for the newer Action 1 LCGs. The emphasis was on ensuring these groups' survival. The current needs of 16 residents' groups in disadvantaged areas were identified and supported in completing annual action plans of which 14 Groups availed of SICAP funding to complete those actions. Ongoing supports to LCGs to enable them to work effectively in their communities in 2022.
2. Towards the end of 2022 we commenced a process of Community Consultation based on the Participatory Research model we used during the pre-development phase of Action 1 (Development Work in Disadvantaged Rural Areas). We have started to roll this out in Rapid estates i.e. Ashdale/Woodland Grove, Blackberry Lane, Battery Heights in Athlone. Questionnaires have been re-designed by residents, distributed and collected, while in Mullingar in the Grange estate a questionnaire has been re-designed and a group of residents have agreed to carry out the distribution and collection of questionnaires. This process will also be rolled out in the Action 1 areas.

## SICAP GOAL 1: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

3. Re-introduction of the Older Persons and Disability Services Information Event as a physical event held in a hotel venue was a response to the isolation felt by many members of LCGs in the aftermath of the Pandemic. A SICAP staff member supported Older persons LCGs to recruit participants and transport was organised, in partnership with Local Link.
4. Committee Skills Training was delivered that was targeted solely at the new members of these re-formed committees. This allowed the delivery to be extremely focussed on the specific priorities of the LCGs in question.
5. In March IT Training was provided to 61 older people in 5 venues. This involved transport to and from the programme, IT training, lunch and entertainment.
6. All mentioned training identified was delivered
7. Groups were supported to apply for funding
8. Local community groups were supported from disadvantaged urban areas including members of the Travelling community. Mullingar and Athlone RAPID programmes continued to function in 2022 with Community Forum and AIT meetings being organised in the local community and hotels. Rapid Tours went ahead in both areas.

**Horizontal Themes:** In responding to the needs of LCGs, SICAP Goal 1 staff ensured that the horizontal themes underpinned the work.

**Community Development Approaches:** Commitment to this theme underpins the WCD's entire approach to implementation of SICAP. It can be seen in adoption of participatory research methodologies to engagement with residents of disadvantaged areas, which includes the residents at every stage in the consultation process, targeted delivery of training and other supports in convenient locations and times, including blended meetings, etc.

**Equality Framework** WCD ensured some of the most vulnerable communities were supported.

Efforts were ongoing to ensure the most marginalised groups were supported e.g. African Group, support for residents of direct provision through linking with the New Horizon support group and co-funded activities for young asylum seekers. Disability access groups and the Disability Working Group were supported. Commitment to having the most marginalised voices heard in inputs into PPN submissions, Rapid programme etc and national campaigns such as Make Way Day. Travellers and Roma are our Lot Priority Groups as of 2021—see question 5.

### **Collaborative Approaches**

This principle cuts across all our Goal 1 work. We are constantly supporting LCGs to engage constructively with other agencies to address their identified needs either through direct contacts or via decision making structures such as the Rapid Programme.

Commitment to this principle is demonstrated by our support of Disability Working group and Community Development and Youth Working Group and other activities in Action 4 Enhancing Collaborative Engagement

The supports for older people involved collaboration between WCD, Westmeath County Council, Westmeath Volunteer Centre, HSE, WPPN, Age Action Ireland, Alone.

9. Two social enterprises supported. One social enterprise was engaged to deliver IT training and Befriending Service. A second Social Enterprise operating as an Enterprise Centre was supported under SICAP in the promotion of its Remote Working Hub project.

## SICAP GOAL 1: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### 10. Children and families

- i. Two social enterprises supported. One social enterprise was engaged to deliver IT training and Befriending Service. A second Social Enterprise operating as an Enterprise Centre was supported under SICAP in the promotion of its Remote Working Hub project. Need for activities for young people were identified. Stephens Green Trust fund funded supports for Youth in the direct provision accommodation centre, which is part of an ongoing support to asylum seekers. This was again co-funded by SICAP in 2022.
- ii. SICAP supported a Residents Group through the LEADER funding process for a new play area in a SICAP identified area. The opening of this happened in 2022 (see picture below)
- iii. Additional staff employed under SICAP as Community Mothers in Athlone and Mullingar.



### The type of work LCGs undertook in the community in response to the needs of SICAP target groups

There was a continued emphasis on maintaining the physical environments of estates among LCGs in Action 1 and Rapid areas. Activities included community clean-ups, clearance of rivers, painting, power washing, mowing of green areas, flower planting, upgrade of community facilities, clearance of large deposits of rubbish, the purchase and erection of Christmas lights, installation of new fencing to enhance child safety in green areas and new sheds. In the case of Action 1, some of these activities were supported by our SICAP Small areas Grants of €1500 per disadvantaged area.

In some disadvantaged rural estates, there was a focus on providing events and activities for children and young people, most notably in the Relic Road Estates in Kilbeggan and Castlegrove Estate in Castlepollard. These included Family Fun Days, Summer camps, Easter event, Halloween Party, Christmas Disco and Christmas Market.

Some LCGs were supported to address issues of social isolation e.g. Men's/ Women's Sheds, Women's groups and the Active Age groups. These provided their members opportunities for social engagement and acquisition of new skills.





# SICAP GOAL 1: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

## Some LCGs operated on a strategic level

**Castlepollard:** SICAP was instrumental in supporting Castlepollard Local Area Development group to transition from an ad hoc steering group to a fully-fledged local development group. This group was a critical partner in the accessing Rural Regeneration and Development funding of €3.8 million for the area. The empowerment resulting from being part of this process became the catalyst for the group becoming community activists and being successful in the lobbying to have Social Protection office re-instated, the installation of a ATM and the selection of being 1 of the 21 rural areas to participate in a new pilot Hackey service scheme for their town in 2022/23.

**Raharney:** Residents Groups of disadvantaged estates in Raharney, which have undergone development work via SICAP since 2020, have matured into an active Local Area Development group and have been instrumental in uniting the village in joint projects e.g., National Bike Week, village fund raising and secured funding of €15,000 for the development of small community hall in the village, working in partnership with local business men /GAA etc.

Provision or upgrade of community facilities was a priority of some communities. For example, Kilbeggan Community Enhancement Group were supported to continue their work towards the opening of a new community hub. This project was catalysed by development work in Relic Road.

## The challenges faced and lessons learned in relation to the overall delivery of SICAP during 2022

With regard to engaging with Roma some HSE staff are working with the community at the moment and have reported people are not in a position to engage in programmes yet as their basic needs are only in the process of being met. They will let us know when that changes.

Post pandemic many people in the community continued feeling socially isolation. This together with the loss of community members led to: a loss of confidence, reduced physical mobility, and social anxiety. Older people in particular still struggled to re-emerge into the community.



LCG's/individual's confidence building /engagement/regrouping. A need for LCGs to re-group and continue to re-build capacity and recovery post the pandemic. Many of our LCGs report having reduced memberships, less support from their communities and the effects of broken routines e.g. lack of regular pattern of meetings and the lingering impact of Covid restrictions on the interpersonal relationships within the groups. Some experienced a difficulty in keeping track of grants which were obtained and the resulting reporting commitments. This was addressed by ongoing support, development and capacity building was required with the majority of our LCGs. (see Question 1.1 response above)

In Mullingar RAPID Programme, changes of personnel and lack of clarity regarding roles became an issue. This was addressed in 2022 by providing training to members of the AIT and Community Forum.

## SICAP GOAL 2: ENTERPRISE, TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT

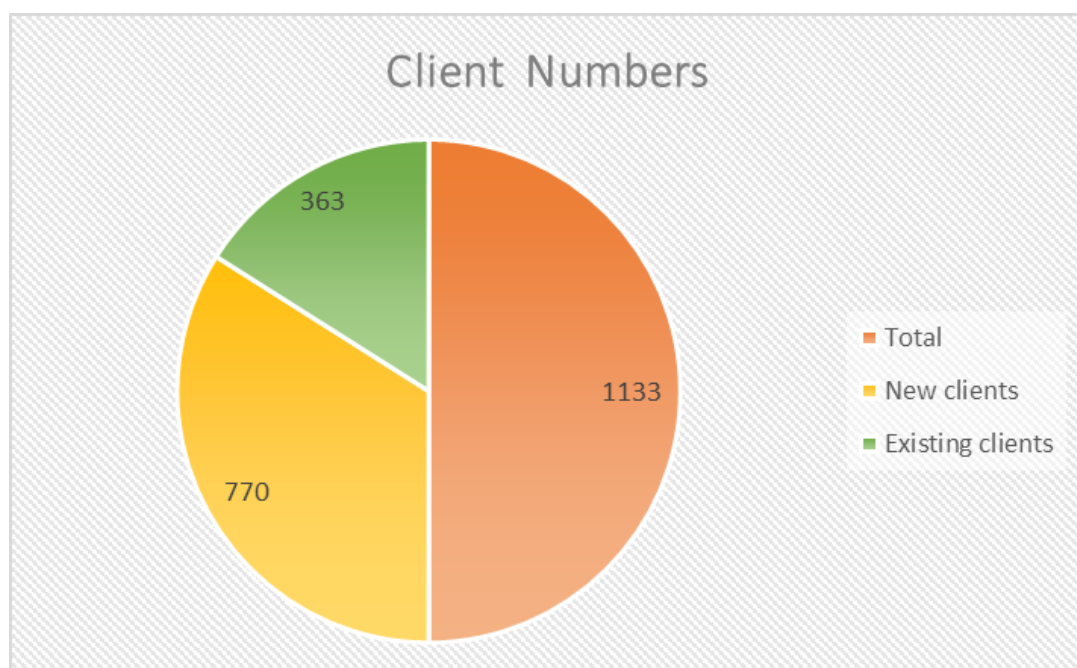
In 2022 we emerged out of Covid and back into the workplace. For some of our clients two years at home and away from the workplace created significant changes in their lives and had an impact on them from a social, wellbeing and economic stance. Loss of income along with loss of lifestyle created stress and uncertainty which resulted in many from the retail and hospitality industries demonstrating an interest in upskilling and changing careers entirely.

Engaging one to one with clients in late 2021 and early 2022 many expressed their wish to find jobs that offered more meaning and greater financial security. To this end we worked one to one with clients carrying out career guidance and training needs audits. This resulted in many participating in our courses, such as healthcare and construction. A total of 885 training opportunities were delivered in 2022 with 30% in the healthcare field and 10% in construction.

With the continuous growth in 2022 of the healthcare and construction industries and the uncertainty that surrounded jobs in the hospitality industry, coupled with the fact that the majority of our clients are entering or re-entering the workforce at level entry jobs, we felt it key to offer training in these areas.

One of our new approaches and methods of engagement designed during COVID was to offer mentoring support on a weekly basis to clients participating in online training, this was very effective and as a result we continued to focus on the check ins with clients through mentoring and engagement weekly to help them identify and progress through their career plans and training plans at a pace that worked for them. During our Covid years we carried out extensive one to one mentoring supports, this has continued - not only as there is a need for it but it has proven to facilitate more positive engagement and rapport building with our clients.

WCD worked with 1133 people from Westmeath under goal 2 in 2022 with nearly two thirds of them being first time recipients of our SICAP services. The new clients were for the most part people who heard about our SICAP services from our online promotional activities and family and friends who were already working with us.



## SICAP GOAL 2: ENTERPRISE, TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT

### Client Outcomes

This was a very successful year for our clients, over 600 achieved a new QQI or labour market qualification, 200 people secured a new job and 51 set up their own business and commenced self-employment.

Training was delivered far and wide across the county from Kinnegad, Castlepollard, Moate, Moyvore, to Athlone and Mullingar urban areas. Our courses helped people upskill and secure the necessary and compulsory training required to work in the healthcare, construction and childcare industries. A total of 74 SICAP courses with over 600 participating and successfully completing was achieved in 2022.



SNA Mullingar Course

### Social Farming Course 2022

WCD had 10 people take part in the Social Farming Course, this programme has seen people return year after year to take part due to how much they enjoy it and gain from it. Focusing on working with people with disabilities, WCD recognises the many benefits this has for participants from increased confidence, capacity to communicate and interact with others to learning new skills whilst working outside with a local farmer and enjoying nature and all it has to offer.

### Self Employment

Self-employment now became a more attractive alternative for many people as they felt that it could offer them greater financial security whilst pursuing a career in a role that they enjoyed and were extremely talented in.

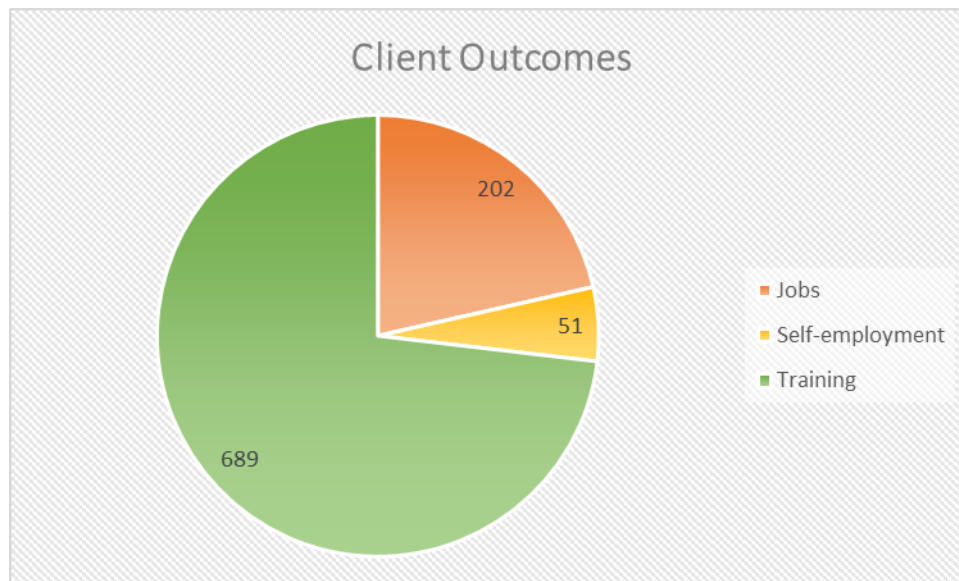
Some of our clients who had never before considered working for themselves now felt that self-employment could offer them a greater degree of freedom, control over their work decisions and independence.

We had many very talented people set up as bakers, artists, online promotional businesses, podcasters along with the traditional trades and services type business. In most cases, availing of the Back To Work Enterprise Allowance, giving them a financial cushion for two years as they build and develop.



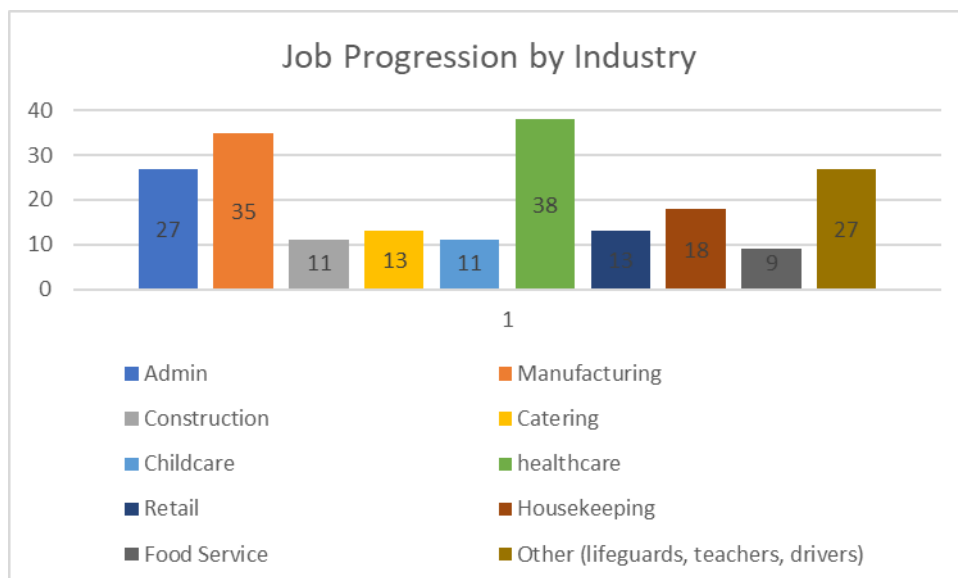
## SCICAP GOAL 2: ENTERPRISE, TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT

### SICAP Client Outcomes



WCD work at the a pace that suits the client, over 780 + clients have received up to 6 interventions, including support and training in job readiness, CV and interview preparation. All clients who were job ready were placed on our Skills Database. From this database we refer clients to local employers seeking their skills and talents, this is a resource for both clients and employers that has proved very effective for WCD over the years and has helped us forward skilled jobseekers to employers for vacancies they need filled.

Over 200 people securing a new job in 2022, here is a breakdown of the progression by job type:



## RETHINK IRELAND: ENTERPRISE, TRAINING



Over the past 3 years our 'Here Comes the Girls' programme has achieved great success. In its final year now, over 900 females have participated and engaged with our dedicated employment officers, with 500 taking part in QQI and labour market training achieving qualifications for work in the healthcare, childcare, administration, retail and hospitality industries.

This programme was created to remove the many barriers that existed for women from childcare costs, lack of transport to inability to access mainstream training and education opportunities due to their family commitments. Working with our team over the 3 year period 300 ladies removed these barriers and entered employment, many for the first time and some after long periods of working from the home as the primary caregiver. They achieved this by upskilling themselves by taking part in our many courses delivered one or two days a week during school hours in their local communities. Many friendships were formed, great fun and learning was gained and most of all each woman was able to show off their much sought after talents and skills and match them to jobs and roles employers required.

To show how proud WCD were of our participants we held a showcase last November in Belvedere House. The theme of the night and celebration was 'See **Me, I'm Magic**', as it gave many who had taken part and their family members an opportunity to see the magic of these amazing women as they displayed their skills through a unique showcase of the work they do, listening to their stories of their own journey, and hear about the supports that have helped them unlock their potential.

Woman from all across Westmeath took part in the event just as our programme 'Here Comes the Girls' engaged with women from every corner of the county. Much of our delivery over the past three years has taken place in local communities with lessons starting at ten am and finishing at two or three pm allowing mothers to drop and collect their children and not incur childcare difficulties.



## RETHINK IRELAND: ENTERPRISE, TRAINING

The focus of our programme was to increase the number of females in the workplace in Westmeath. It is common that women with children experience lower employment rates as they are deemed the natural caregiver in the home, there is a clear link and relationship between motherhood and lower labour market participation rates of women. Many take a career break and returning to work after a long period of time absent can become daunting and difficult for many. Some experience a lack of confidence as technology and many of the skills and workplace behaviours have changed since they were last in a job, this leads to insecurities and uncertainty regarding where they can focus their skills, experience and talents.



WCD recognised this and created a programme specifically focusing on women returning to the workplace or first time entrants to the labour market. This involved offering training in new technologies, skills, information and knowledge in jobs and industries of growth, such as healthcare, retail, hospitality, administration and child-care.

Our approach allowed women to prepare over a three year period for their return to work by slowly taking up training that they could commit to, whilst continuing to be the primary caregiver in the home. Links to employers seeking both full and part time staff were made for our clients along with extensive job seeking skills, interview skills and capacity building training.

This programme has been a wonderful success for all the women who took part in our training and engaged with our employability services not only from an employment perspective but equally important it brought many unintended positive benefits to so many women with friendships being formed, confidence increase, wellbeing positively improved and many women finding the strength to say 'See me I'm Magic'.



# RURAL SOCIAL SCHEME

The Rural Social Scheme (RSS) is funded from the Department of Social Protection. Westmeath Community Development administers the scheme for County Westmeath.

## Objective of programme

The objective of the RSS is to provide income support for farmers who are in receipt of long term social welfare payments. They in turn carry out services that benefit rural communities. Participants on the scheme are placed with local community groups such as sports clubs, tidy towns groups, community centres and childcare groups.

The Rural Social Scheme (RSS) was introduced by the Department of Social Protection in 2004 as the Department recognized that there were many participants on various employment schemes who were underemployed rather than unemployed. As a result of this, farmers who could prove that they were actively farming i.e. in receipt of a qualifying social welfare payment and that they were completing the BPS application every year, could join the Rural Social Scheme. If the participants' father, mother, brother or sister are actively farming, then they can use their BPS application to qualify for the scheme.

The type of work carried out by RSS participants includes:

- Maintaining and enhancing walking routes and bog roads
- Village and countryside enhancement projects as part of the Tidy Towns e.g. Streamstown Tidy Towns
- Energy conservation work for older people and those at risk of poverty
- Social care and care of older people, including Community Childcare facilities
- Environmental maintenance work - maintenance and caretaking of community and sporting facilities such as Street Parish Park, Castledaly Community Centre, Moate GAA club and Athlone GAA club
- Projects relating to not-for-profit cultural and heritage centres e.g. charity shop

WCD were allocated 33 places at the commencement of the scheme but this increased to 42 in 2018.

## Case study

**Name:** Castledaly Development, Castledaly, Co. Westmeath

### Castledaly Older Peoples Group

Emer Holloway, one of the RSS participants with Castledaly development.

"This group was formed fifteen years ago by Castledaly Development. There are fourteen members in the group. We meet every Wednesday morning, partaking in an arts and craft programme, enjoying a mid-morning cup of tea and then dinner afterwards.

In March 2020 covid turned the table on us, and staying home became the order of the day as a lockdown was ordered. The Hall doors were locked, and like the whole country almost everywhere was shutdown. From that week, and all throughout 2021, what helped keep us together and in contact as a group, was regular phone calls to all members of the group. The committee members continued to make dinners for the members of the group and these were delivered in person to their houses.

In 2022, when we were given the all clear from the HSE, our group recommenced meeting every Wednesday. Any members that are not able to attend, are visited by some of the committee for social purposes and are also given dinner and dessert.

Every Wednesday morning the Hall is a buzz of activity. The committee arrive at 9 o'clock to prepare the dinner, set the tables and plan the day's activities. The members are collected by a local bus and brought to the hall at about 12. The main purpose of the gathering is social so they can all mingle and chat so they have a cup of tea. Dinner is served at about 2 o'clock. Music is played, card games and board games are played by many of the members. Any birthdays or wedding anniversaries are celebrated. The group go to local hotels on occasions such as Christmas and Easter.

This is a very important local service that would not be possible without the support of RSS."

# TÚS PROGRAMME

## Funder

The Tús programme is funded by the Department of Social Protection. Westmeath Community Development administers the scheme for County Westmeath.

## Objective

The Tús initiative is a community work placement scheme providing short-term working opportunities for unemployed people. All participants receive 12 month contracts. The work opportunities are to benefit the community and are provided by community and voluntary organisations in both urban and rural areas.

Unemployed people who are eligible to participate in the scheme are selected by the Department of Social Protection.

## Brief description of the type of activities that are undertaken by the Tús programme

All the work carried out by participants in the Tús scheme will be community-based. The types of project eligible for the scheme may include:

- Environmental services (for example, conservation and maintenance of national walkways) e.g. Mullingar, Athlone and Moate tidy towns
- Caring services (for example, childcare, care of older people) e.g. Dalton Park Community crèche.
- General community services (for example, newsletters or information provision for communities) e.g. Athlone CIC
- Heritage and cultural services (for example, local heritage project)
- Para-educational services (for example, community playgroups) e.g. Kinnegad playground

## Allocation of places

The places on the scheme are allocated to community and voluntary organisations involved in the delivery of local services in urban and rural areas. The allocation is based on the numbers of eligible unemployed people in each local area. There are 80 participants based in the greater Mullingar area and 40 in Athlone. Over 75% are placed in urban settings.

## Participants

To be eligible to participate in the Tús scheme you must:

- Have been continuously unemployed for at least 12 months and "signing on" on a full-time basis; and
- Have been receiving a jobseeker's payment (Jobseeker's Benefit or Jobseeker's Allowance) from the Department of Social Protection for at least 12 months; and
- Be currently receiving Jobseeker's Allowance

Unemployed people who are eligible for the scheme are identified and contacted by their social welfare local office or Intreo centre and offered the opportunity to participate in the scheme. If they agree to participate in the Tús scheme they will be referred to Westmeath Community Development where they will be recruited for a suitable placement when it becomes available. As there are only limited places available on the scheme, not all eligible unemployed people will be contacted.

## Other work

Participants on Tús can take up other part-time employment provided it does not interfere with the work and times of the Tús work placement. If participants are offered full-time alternative work they may terminate their work placement contract. Every year WCD have a number of participants who suspend their time on Tús for seasonal work.

# TÚS PROGRAMME

## Outcomes

There were 280 people referred to Tus in 2022. There was no obligation for any Tus participants to leave the scheme in 2021 because of a change in the eligibility rules, due to Covid. In the latter part of 2022, extensions were given to 30% of participants finishing on Tus in any given month.

WCD currently have 120 places and 5 supervisors. Every participant receives induction training with 15 participants availing of extra training either through the Tus training budget or are helped to apply for other Department of Social Protection training funding by their supervisors. In 2022, eight participants progressed to employment.

All participants on Tus are encouraged to avail of all the different employment supports available through WCD and this has led to excellent progression to employment.

## Case study

The National Learning Network (NLN) is an independent voluntary organisation supporting people with disabilities. Its purpose is to empower those they support to lead more independent lives and play an active and meaningful role in our communities through the provision of high quality, flexible training. The NLN have a branch in Mullingar and they have been taking Tus workers for the last 5 years. One of these placements is Niamh Timmons, who is now working full time for the NLN.

### The following is the testimony from Tina Leonard, NLN Coordinator, Mullingar:

"Firstly, I would just like to say that both TUS workers, Matt Charles and Niamh Timmons, that work on placement here at National learning Network Mullingar, engaged excellently from the moment they entered the premises.

Matt for example, works on the Skills bridge Programme which is a HSE funded programme catering for young students with general learning difficulties. Matt integrated himself excellently with both staff and students alike. His patience, dedication and work ethic working in this field has been second to none and he is a credit to both himself and Westmeath Community Development TUS programme.

Niamh was another success story regarding her placement here with NLN Mullingar. Niamh covered a range of programme we have on offer here funded by both the HSE and LWETB including rehabilitate training and Vocational training. Niamh proved herself so much that having applied for a fulltime position with NLN Mullingar she successfully attained the position and is now working with the Skills bridge programme".

### Niamh's Testimony:

"Coming home from nearly 4 years in Australia and back to a shutdown country due to Covid 19, it was hard to find my feet and get back working. I was fortunate enough to meet Rosie who got me on a TUS scheme I was apprehensive at first but Rosie ensured me she had a placement well suited for me.

Rosie didn't let me down and got me into the National Learning Network (NLN) where I could do a job I loved, helping people reach their own goals and wishes. I have to thank Rosie and the TUS scheme as not only did they help me find my feet but they also helped with me with my education, I was extremely eager to learn more and up skill and Rosie couldn't have been any more accommodating and shown any more kindness in helping me further my education.

I have so much to thank the TUS and Rosie for, not only for letting me up skill and to grow my confidence but I now have a job as an instructor within the NLN and a career focus.

On a side note, Rosie's dedication, her friendly manner and her kindness really made all the difference when participating on this scheme, I felt I could call or ask for help at any time she was so approachable throughout my time with Tús."



# COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME



Community Employment (CE) is designed to help people who are long-term unemployed and in receipt of a Social Welfare payment to get back to work by offering part-time and temporary placements in jobs based within local communities. Part of the ethos of CE is for participants to partake in training to upskill in order to be better equipped for job seeking after CE placements. After their placement, participants are supported to seek permanent part-time and full-time jobs elsewhere based on the experience and new skills they have gained while on a CE scheme.

CEPs are funded by the Department of Social Protection

Here at WCD our CE scheme is based between Mullingar and Athlone and we are currently approved for 38 places (12 of which are dedicated to the Trainee Entrepreneurship Programme).

The remaining places are based in a variety of roles including:

- Childcare Workers
- Community Development Support
- Reception & Information Officers
- Administration Roles
- Maintenance/Caretaking
- Catering Assistant

## **In 2022 we had:**

A total of **45 people** benefited from CE. All of them gaining valuable experience within the organisation, its sub sponsors and on the Trainee Entrepreneurship Programme. 5 Participants left to take up full time employment in 2022

In total **17 people** got to participate in the Trainee Entrepreneurship Programme this year,.

## **Training undertaken in 2022 includes:**

- Childcare level 6,
- SNA levels 5
- Adult Literacy,
- Business and tourism.
- Business Administration
- Business Programme
- Manual Handling
- Book Keeping
- Digital Marketing

# COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME

## Case Study on Athlone Community Taskforce (ACT)

ACT are based in Ball Alley Lane in Athlone. It was established in 1992 in order to stimulate employment generating activities in Athlone. The company is not for profit and has charitable status. In 1992, ACT purchased their premises in Ball Alley Lane to provide incubation space for new enterprise. Westmeath Community Development support ACT through CE, and currently have 4 CE participants placed with ACT.

### ACT Manager Alan Coffey

“Following on from the turmoil created by the Covid 19 pandemic, 2022 was another challenging year for organisations like ACT due to the surge in the costs of energy, insurance, refuse and recycling, cleaning materials and renovations. I am happy to say that we are managing to deal with the latest additional costs and at the same time, improving the services and facilities that we offer to the Community of Athlone.

In 2022, ACT completed the renovations of 1,000 sq ft at the Centre. This allows ACT to offer additional Training - Meeting Room space and we have also developed a 10 desk Co-Working facility, which was officially opened on the 24<sup>th</sup> November 2022 by Minister Heather Humphreys.

The CE at the ACT Centre plays an integral part in what we deliver to the Community of Athlone. The additional footfall and activity, due to Training and Hot Desking is being handled very well by our CE Receptionists. The increased square footage available at the Centre has put extra demands on our CE Maintenance and Security personnel. They have taken it in their stride and this has resulted in numerous positive compliments on the state of Hygiene and Cleanliness at the Centre, from our customers and the general public.

It is projected that 2023 will be our busiest in over a decade, and our day to day operations would not be possible without the hard work of the CE staff. The Board and I would like to express our gratitude to Madeleine, Eddie, Catriona, Georgina and to the WCD CE Supervisor, Geraldine for their continued support”.

### Testimonial

“My name is Malgorzata Bujel. I’m on CE scheme from 10<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

This program gave me a great opportunity to learn new skills and experience. I got chance to changes my qualification. I used to work over 6 years in retail but due to my current health condition I’m no longer able to do it. CE Scheme allow me to gain experience in administration and community development sector.

I’m really happy to be a part of Westmeath Community Development. My work colleagues are helpful and kind. I’m always feel free to asking questions. It makes me feel a part of the team. I’m learning a many new skills by working here such as CV preparation, updating paper files and data base. Also, I’m finished Frontline desk and office skills training and I attend for Spreadsheets course.

Geraldine is really lovely person. She is always helpful in course advising and when I have any questions. I’m glad to be here. “

# HORTICULTURE PROGRAMME

The Horticulture FETAC Level 5 programme is funded by the Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board (LWETB), and provides a 1- year course in Belvedere House and Gardens. It is funded as a Local Training Initiative. WCD have been running the programme since 2009.

## Objective of programme

The Horticulture programme caters for students aged between 16 and 35 years of age. Participants receive a training allowance from the LWETB whilst on the programme. The project is staffed by LTI Coordinator John Smyth and Assistant Coordinator, Aoife Joyce, supported by a TUS participant. The Coordinators provide almost all the tutor hours of the programme.

## Brief description of what type of activity under the horticulture programme

The entry to the programme includes those experiencing barriers accessing the labour market, mainstream training or education programme.

The Course offers a unique educational/ practical environment in the beautiful surroundings of Belvedere gardens for students to learn. The Level 5 in Horticulture is based on completing the following modules- Garden Design, Work Practice, Team Working, Plant Protection, Plant Science, Soil Science and Growing Media, Plant identification and Use, Plant Propagation, Fruit and Vegetable production.

## Horticulture Course 2021/2022

The new course begun in September 2022 and will finish in August 2023. The last Level 5 course finished in December 2021. Between December 2021 and August 2022, a series of Level 4 modules were delivered. Recruitment is carried out through the Dept of Social Protection case officers and the LWETB. Some of the students are graduates of the LWETB's level 4 course in Marlinstown. The current course is a blended course with a mixture of classroom and online teaching.

Significant capital investment has been carried out on the project. This includes investment in IT resources that allows the tutors to communicate effectively with the students.

There is a requirement that a high percentage of the participants are under 35. This year 4 of the 14 participants are under 35.

## Ministerial recognition

In February 2021, the ETB nominated the Belvedere Horticulture project to represent it in a meeting with Minister Simon Harris, who has responsibility for higher education. The one hour zoom session involved the minister interviewing John Smith and Valerie Beck, tutors on the course, two students and Frank Murtagh, WCD CEO. The discussion was mainly about working remotely during Covid and the future of the project. The Minister was invited to visit the projects when the Covid crisis has abated.

In February 2022, Minister Harris visited the Belvedere project. He was accompanied by Minister, Peter Burke, the Minister of State for European Affairs and Minister of State at the Department of Defence. They were accompanied by staff from WCD, Westmeath County Council and LWETB. The Minister was brought on a tour of the facilities and gardens. He was also briefed on the future plans of the project.

As a result of this recognition, plans are in place to develop a school of horticulture so that it will deliver more courses in Belvedere.

# HORTICULTURE PROGRAMME

## Case study/testimonials

"This course has given me incredible confidence to join the workforce. I have started work full time. Everything was superb within the course. The teachers made us all feel very welcome and dedicate their time to help us all amazingly. It's a fantastic course and I definitely would recommend it."

**Gavan Brady, Class of 2022**

"I learned a lot from the tutors. I have found part time work. I would like to be self employed eventually. The course should consider to have as much outside experience as possible. Overall, it is a great course and great tutors."

**Ian Kinney, Class of 2022**

"I think that the course has improved my chances of full- time work. I have got full time work in the sector.

In order to improve the course Liam thinks that "having a place for students to do their own practical work in a polytunnel or glasshouse would help."

**Liam Walsh, Class of 2022**





# WESTMEATH TRAVELLER PROJECT

The Traveller Project works with Travellers in Westmeath, and consists of Community Development Support, along with the Primary Healthcare Programme (PHCP)

2022 saw the resumption resumed outreach with Families in Westmeath in 2022, including the establishment of a drop in clinic in Athlone and Mullingar for one to one private meetings with Travellers.

The project is funded by the HSE, through the Traveller Health Unit, and there are six staff working on the programme, Caroline Nevin, Community Development Worker, Christine Joyce, PHCP Coordinator, and the PHCP team, Teresa Nevin, Bridget Nevin, Christine Joyce and Mary Myers.

The Traveller Project works with a variety of agencies to address issues of concern in the community including Westmeath County Council, HSE, Dept of Social Protection, Tulsa, Department of Education.

In 2022 we worked with 200 families , providing the following supports and information on health and other topics.

Housing crisis has also impacted on the Traveller Community, and w continued to work closely with WCC and other relevant agencies to address this, and supported households to access RAS and HAP.

**Blackberry Lane:** There has been progress with the redevelopment of Blackberry lane. There has been a lot of consultation with families in Blackberry lane and Westmeath County Council with regards to plans for the redevelopment. There have been 3 meetings with heads of families and WCC with regards to issues and changes made to draft plans. Draft plan agreed and submitted to the Department.

**Michaels Park:** Residents group established 2 meetings held. Clean up of area completed. Discussions with residents and WCC re proposed play area and refurbishment of transient area.

**NUIG Diploma:** There are 5 Traveller Women who applied to take part in NUIG Diploma Course which started in September 2022.

**Newsletter:** A newsletter was designed to advertise all services available. The newsletter is delivered Quarterly to all consented families.

## Traveller Pride Event

Westmeath Traveller Project organised an Annual Traveller Pride Event that took place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July, in Grange in Mullingar.

The event included Bender Tent, wagon on display, a tin-smith giving a demonstration of the making of his craft, and a collection of old photographs. There was a display of Art work created by young Traveller girls, A Traveller man and woman singing and playing traditional Traveller songs.



This year we invited services along to set up an information stand and food and refreshments were provided throughout the day. The Event was a huge success with close to 200 Travellers in attendance. Agencies represented included Irish Heart Foundation, Community Mothers, Westmeath Volunteer Service, Mullingar Mental Health, P.P.N (Public Participation Network), SICAP Goal 2, Health Promotion, T.M.S (Traveller Mediation Services), WCD Care and Repair, Health Promotion, LWETB Guidance Counsellors (Longford and Westmeath Education and Training Board), and Travelling Fostering Services.

Pictured above at Traveller Pride 2022 are left to right: Linda Jo Quinn Caroline Nevin Christine Joyce , all WCD, Pat Boyce (Chair WCD),Bridget Nevin, Christine Joyce, Mary Myers, all WCD, Jimmy Todd (HSE) and Teresa Nevin, WCD.

# RURAL DEVELOPMENT LEADER PROGRAMME 2014-2022

## *“Links between Actions for the Development of the Rural Economy”*

The LEADER Programme has been supporting local communities and businesses since the mid-1990s in County Westmeath. The Programme supports initiatives that seek to address locally identified needs and challenges of an area. The Programme includes a number of themes and sub themes that reflect the overarching needs of rural Ireland which include **Economic Development, Enterprise Development & Job Creation, Social Inclusion and the Rural Environment.**



### **LEADER Transitional Programme & EURI 2021-2022**

The Transitional LEADER Programme was introduced to bridge the gap between the LEADER 2014-2020 Programme and the new LEADER Programme commencing in 2023. A total budget of €2,181,697 was allocated to County Westmeath under the Transitional Programme and the European Union Recovery Instrument (EURI) (part of the EU National Recovery and Resiliency fund). The funding was aimed at supporting the recovery of rural communities and private enterprises from the effects caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Table 1 below outlines the breakdown of allocation for the Programme budget.

*Table 1 – LEADER Transitional & EURI Budget Allocations*

Programme	Project Budget (75%)	Administration/ Animation (25%)	Total
LEADER Transitional	1,132,804	377,601	1,510,405
EURI	503,469	167,823	671,292
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,636,273</b>	<b>545,424</b>	<b>2,181,697</b>

### **Aim of the Programme:**

The aim of the Transitional Programme was to allow locally-led rural development projects to continue to be delivered using the LEADER model until the new EU LEADER programme commences in 2023. The themes and sub-themes for the Transitional Programme under which projects would be delivered are in line with those set out in the Westmeath Local Development Strategy for the 2014-2020 Programme.

### **Priorities for the Transitional Programme**

The Transitional LEADER Programme addressed the challenges facing rural Ireland during 2021/2022 and the following actions were set out for the Programme:

1. Support rural businesses seeking to reach new markets, expand, innovate and/or diversify in response to the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic and/or Brexit, with a particular emphasis on providing support to businesses in the food sector.
2. Community based projects that seek to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Support and capacity building for communities that had not previously received assistance under LEADER or other rural programmes, using the Transitional Programme to engage with new applicants to develop and enhance collaboration within communities.
4. Support for new and innovative projects in the area of climate change, environmental protection and the green economy.
5. Maximising the potential of broadband and the digital economy in communities, including through skills development and building awareness and usage of available remote working facilities.
6. Projects that develop the concept of the Smart Village initiative or Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZ) which could serve as proof-of-concept for more substantial in the context of the next EU-funded LEADER Programme.



## RURAL DEVELOPMENT LEADER PROGRAMME 2014-2022

### Priorities for EURI Funding

EURI funding provided local communities and enterprises with an opportunity to respond to emerging challenges, through rural development grant aid, supporting measures that encourage employment and job creation while also providing resources for communities and community groups to respond, recover and adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic. EURI was available for the following areas:

1. Support rural businesses seeking to reach new markets, expand, innovate or diversify in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Community based projects that seek to address emerging challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, promoting greater social inclusion.
3. Support for new and innovative projects in the areas of climate change, environmental protection and the green, bio and circular economy within the LAG area.
4. Maximising the potential of broadband and the digital economy in communities, including through skills development and building awareness and usage of available remote working facilities.

### Animation of the Transitional & EURI Programme

In 2022, LEADER Staff continued to animate the Programme through working directly with communities and individuals as well as linking in with other relevant agencies to promote the Programme across all sub-themes. The Programme was also publicised through advertisements and press releases in local press as well as through WCD's website and social media. Specific targeted initiatives to assist project development under biodiversity and water resources were undertaken. This included events, workshops and on-site consultancy with specialist advice from ecology consultants.

41 Expressions of Interest were received from communities and individuals interested in grant aid across the various sub-themes of the Programme. 15 were from existing promoters and 26 were from new promoters.

### Project Approvals under the Transitional & EURI Programme

15 projects were approved to the value of €743,264.02 under the Transitional Programme (Table 2) & 13 projects were approved to the value of €500,716.07 under the EURI element (see Table 3)

Project Promoter	Project	LEADER Grant Aid
Bell Lane Coffee Ltd., Mullingar	Purchase of new roastery and ancillary works	144283.00
Tyrrellspass GAA	Development of community walking track	122251.41
Westmeath CCE	Support for Mullingar Fleadh 2022	150000.00
Ballymore Tidy Towns	Drover Sculpture Heritage project	6902.28
Ballymore Tidy Towns	Development of Biodiversity project	1766.68
Chris Murtagh, Ballynacargy	Feasibility Study for tourism project	8302.50
Mullingar Sub Aqua	Purchase of additional equipment	60368.88
Westmeath Community Development	Festival and Events Training Programme	18687.60
Slanemore Apartments Ltd, Slanemore, Mullingar	Development of Tourist Apartments & Holistic Therapy Centre	148222.68
Midland Polish Community CLG, Athlone	Community TV Training Programme	4949.52
Athlone Canal Heritage Committee	Feasibility Study on enhancement of Athlone canal.	11678.85
Mullingar Shamrocks GAA	Development of Biodiversity project	8916.9
Moate Community Development Association	Renewable Energy Installation at Tuar Ard	48212.54
Bunbrosna Community Services	Development of a Biodiversity project	4213.68
Kilbeggan Tidy Towns	Development of a biodiversity project	4507.50
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>743264.02</b>

## RURAL DEVELOPMENT LEADER PROGRAMME 2014-2022

**Table 3: EURI Project Approvals in 2022**

Project Promoter	Project	LEADER Grant Aid
Westmeath Bachelor Competition Ltd	Support for the Westmeath Bachelor Festival	47,028.75
Caithriona Devine, Crookedwood	Development of Artist studio/workshop space	134,034.26
Lough Sewdy & Ballymore Amenity CLG	Feasibility Study – Tourism and Amenity potential of Lough Sewdy	22,056.97
Mellowes Adventure Centre, Clonmellon	Enhancement of facilities at Adventure centre	150,000.00
Rochfortbridge Community Centre CLG	Provision of IT equipment for community centre	2,346.93
Castlepollard Local Development	Upgrading of Castlepollard website	2,860.91
Ballinahown Community Development	Preparation of Water Management Plan	20,258.10
Horseleap Streamstown Comm Dev	Development of Biodiversity project	4,194.53
Lough Ennell Trout Preservation Association	Development of Lough Ennell Catchment Management Plan	30,000.00
Mullingar Sustainable Energy Community	Solar Farm Feasibility Study	30,000.00
Milltown GAA	Installation of Solar Panels at community centre	14,131.12
Castlepollard Hurling Club	Installation of Solar Panels & Stage	43,804.50
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>500,716.07</b>

### Project Payments in 2022

A total of €923,390.54 was made to project promoters in 2022. This includes payments to projects funded through the 2014-2020 Programme as well as the Transitional Programme.

### CASE STUDY – MULLINGAR GYMNASTICS CLUB

Mullingar Gymnastics Club was successful in being awarded grant aid towards the purchase of additional equipment under the LEADER Transitional Programme.

Established in August 2019, Mullingar Gymnastics Club provides a service for children, young people and adults in Mullingar town and surrounding areas who are interested in pursuing gymnastics as a sport and recreational activity. The Club group consists of qualified coaches in gymnastics and recreation, including those with specialised training for children with extra additional needs. The team also have members who are experienced in grant administration, accounts and IT. Other committee members have many years of experience working with Primary and Secondary schools and on other committee boards and in management roles within sport, the public sector and social care working with children with special needs.

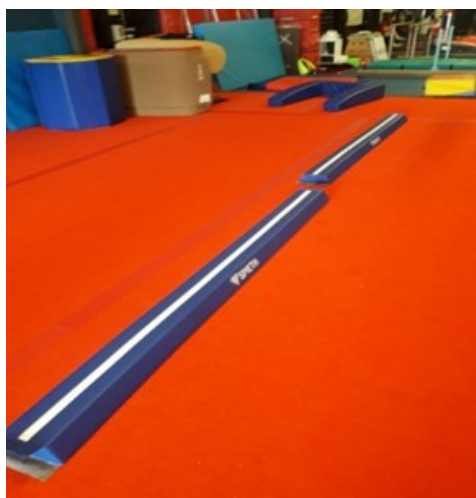


## RURAL DEVELOPMENT LEADER PROGRAMME 2014-2022

As part of Mullingar Gymnastics efforts to counter social isolation during the pandemic it provided classes online. During this time the Club received an unprecedented increase in requests for activities for persons with additional needs from across the wider Westmeath area. In address this need, the Club approached LEADER seeking funds for the purchase of a range of equipment suitable for people with additional needs. The total project cost was €33,761.66 with the Club receiving €25,321.24 or 75% of the costs from LEADER with the Club themselves providing the remaining match funds.

The project involved the purchase of 20 pieces of specialized equipment including soft play tunnels, arches, foam trampoline access steps, frames, balancing beams, parallel bars, wobble boards and spring boards. The provision of this equipment has greatly enhanced the Club's capacity to address an urgent need for recreation activity within the community.

Amongst the long-term benefits of the project are increased emotional, mental and physical benefits, while also promoting social interaction and integration which in turn will have a positive effect on the daily lives of participants, care supporters and their extended organisations. Mullingar Gymnastics Club are delighted to be able to offer this specialised service to Mullingar and the wider Westmeath area. Approximately 600 people are currently benefitting from the project.



**Mullingar Gymnastics Club's Club Secretary, Mairead Kelly, commented:**

*"The new Additional Needs Equipment has greatly enhanced our Club's capacity to address the urgent requirement for individuals seeking additional recreational and training facilities, supporting a long-term development goal that promotes essential social and nurturing impacts for participants in a safe and secure local location. Westmeath Community Development's support and LEADER grant aid has provided invaluable support in the process of achieving this."*



# Westmeath Volunteer Centre

Ionad d'Obair Dheonach Iarmhí

2022 continued to be a busy and productive year for Westmeath Volunteer Centre. Throughout 2022, volunteers have shown tremendous dedication and commitment and made many valuable contributions supporting organisations and individuals around the county.

2022 was a year of great change for the county. It commenced with the lifting of restrictions due to Covid-19 and this followed the outbreak of the War in Ukraine. The war in Ukraine saw new communities come to Westmeath and the volunteer centre has played a role in welcoming and assisting people from Ukraine. We also played an active role in providing volunteer opportunities for people living in direct provision sites.

Westmeath Community Centre continued in 2022 to promote the value of volunteering by offering a range of quality volunteering opportunities in the county, delivered through Westmeath Volunteer Centre. (WVC). During the year, the Fleadh Cheoil returned home to Mullingar and WVC played an important role in providing volunteers and co-ordinating their activities. There was approximately 1200 volunteers assisting with the Fleadh Cheoil over the week from Volunteer Co-ordinators, Team leaders to Volunteers.

WVC is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development and are affiliated with Volunteer Ireland.

[www.volunteer.ie](http://www.volunteer.ie)

WVC provided quality volunteer placement service to the non-profit and community & voluntary sector in the county. We also offered support and guidance to individuals and Organisations (VIOs) in County Westmeath to reach their individual and collective goals while making a significant contribution to their local community and society.

## **Mission**

“To promote the value of volunteering and increase the range and quality of volunteering in County Westmeath”

## **Volunteer Centre Services and Impact**

- Referral Service for Volunteers to non-profit groups that need volunteers
- Support Volunteers to access quality roles that suits their needs and skills
- Provide a follow up service to volunteers to assist their progression through the process
- Supporting organisations to develop best practice guidelines when working with volunteers
- Assisting organisations to create roles that helps build their capacity and attract volunteers
- Provide training to organisations that will best assist them to attract, manage and retain volunteers
- Facilitate productive links between organisations
- Provide Garda Vetting Service and Garda Vetting training

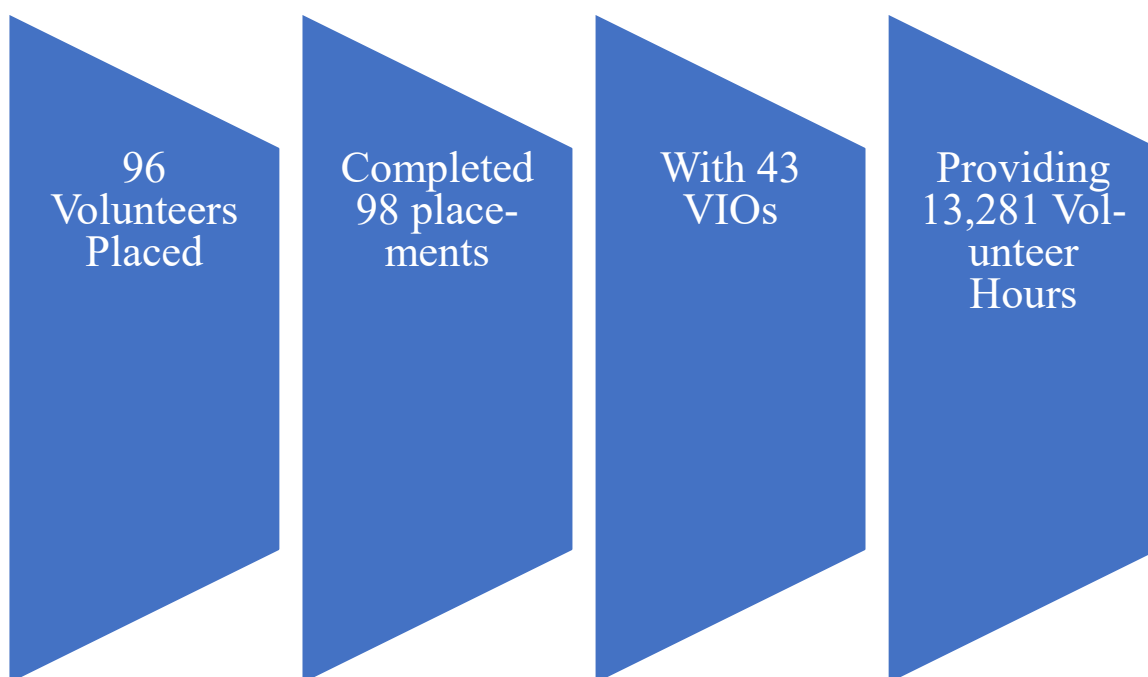




# Westmeath Volunteer Centre

Ionad d'Obair Dheonach Iarmhí

## Metrics:



## Feedback from volunteers and Organisations

### Organisation Feedback

- "We have had amazing success with the volunteers, it is what keeps us open"
- "Without the volunteers this event would not take place".
- "The Volunteers are a great asset to our organisation".

### Feedback from Volunteers at Fleadh Cheoil

"Just want to say thanks to all involved with Fleadh. What a week it was meeting so many lovely volunteers and musicians. Really enjoyed it and the best part we will do it all again in 2023."

"It's been a pleasure been part of the Fleadh and volunteering with you all. I never expected it to be this good. Got to meet and know so many wonderful people. Thanks for giving me the opportunity and making it a grand success"

### A Volunteer Story

"I have increased my circle of friends and my confidence has grown. I am able to use the experience and learning from the group in my full-time job which I would never had the confidence to even apply for before I started to volunteer" - Anne

"I have been volunteering since 2018 with a group that supports women and men who have had a traumatic experience. I have learned so much about myself and gained so much knowledge from the ongoing training I receive." - Jane

## COMMUNITY MOTHERS

Longford/Westmeath Community Mother is a community home visiting programme home which puts Parents first, empowering them through trusted relationships with a Home Visitor.

It provides information and support and it builds friendships and connectivity in local communities. The programme is for families that have at least one child aged under 5 years.

Community Mothers sets out to ensure that all children have the best start in life through secure and trusted relationships with their parents and families; in safe and loving homes, where their health, wellbeing and learning can thrive.

The programme is funded by TUSLA, and in Westmeath Co-funded by SICAP.

Our Community Mothers team is Caitriona Corcoran, Cordinator, and Community Mothers, Carol Liston, Claire Mullally and Katarina Gazova

2022 was a challenging year as the needs of families continues to become more complex. We are seeing increases in families with children with additional needs; parents with mental health difficulties; families with very little support around them. - all set against Increased migration into the country, lack of suitable/affordable accommodation and the rise in cost of living. We also received the highest amount of referrals since our amalgamation.

For the first time in our 14 year history, we started two parent & toddler groups, one in Mullingar and secondly we took over the running of the parent & toddler in Edgeworthstown. This was in direct response to coming out of Covid and recognising that there was a need for a group that emphasises the importance of play with parents/carers in a stimulating and fun way. Both groups are going extremely well and the feedback and attendance is very positive.

### Feedback from Service Users

“Working with my community mother has helped me so much the past year. As a single parent, it is so good to have a support that does not judge me and will always listen to me. She has helped me prepare for many meetings I have in regards my son’s additional needs.” - Mother living in Athlone with four year old son.

“I found these visits really helped with my mental health. Carol never once made us feel like it was just work but treated me as a friend. The love and support that was shown towards myself and my son was incredible and I always felt safe, happy and a sense of trust. Whenever I needed help or information with anything Carol and Catriona were quick to find solutions for me. Being a single mother is not easy especially when you are not around your family and friends. My visits with Carol felt like having family while being away from home and I am truly grateful and appreciative for everything and I will miss our weekly visits so much”. - Mother of 11 month old living in emergency accommodation.

### Group Activities in 2022

#### Baby Café Mullingar and Athlone

Our Baby Café are very popular and run in Athlone and Mullingar. It is an opportunity for first time mums to meet other mums, share experience of being a parent and finding out what is going on locally. The group is facilitated by a community mother.

Photo: An open air Baby Café, Athlone summer 2022



## COMMUNITY MOTHERS

### Baby Massage

During January our three home visitors trained with the International Association of Infant Massage as infant massage instructors. All three home visitors now deliver classes in all three major locations as well as incorporating it into our daily visits with parents with young babies.

Photo: Mums and tots at Baby Massage in Mullingar



### Parent and Toddler Groups



Community Mothers jointly facilitated the group in Edgeworthstown with Longford Community Resources. The funding that supports the smooth running of the group was provided by Longford /Westmeath CYPSE and Longford Childcare Committee. This is the first time Community Mothers has facilitated a parent & toddler group in Longford and see it as an integral part of our work as many of our client families enjoy attending.

Poster (left) and Parent and Toddler Group (right)



### Community Mothers 2022 Statistics

<b>Home Visiting Service</b>	
<b>Total Number of Home Visits in 2022</b>	747
<b>No of referrals to Home visiting service</b>	78 families 92 children
<b>Total number of families that received a home visit during 2022</b>	70 families 95 children
<b>Baby Massage Classes</b>	
<b>Baby massage Mullingar</b>	53 Families 54 babies
<b>Baby massage Athlone</b>	65 Families 65 babies
<b>Baby massage Longford</b>	57 Families 58 babies
<b>Baby Cafe</b>	
<b>Baby Café Mullingar</b>	67 parents 70 babies
<b>Baby Café Athlone</b>	50 parents 50 babies
<b>Parent and Toddler</b>	
<b>Parent &amp; Toddler Group Mullingar (Started May 2022 weekly group)</b>	184 female adults 5 male adults 131 female children 117 male children
<b>*Parent &amp; toddler group Edgeworthstown (started October 22 fortnightly group)</b>	20 female adults 3 male adults 27 children



## CHILDCARE SERVICES

WCD Childcare Services operates from 6 Childcare After-school centres, 5 in Athlone and 1 in Mullingar. Our After-school Service is funded through the National Childcare Investment Programme, under the National Childcare Scheme, from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and locally supported by Westmeath County Childcare Committee.

2022 saw the continued rollout of the National Childcare Scheme and some of the concerns raised by community and voluntary childcare providers have been addressed, but some other issues remain to be resolved.

Our Childcare Services are managed by Sinead Casey. We have Supervisors in 4 services and hope to appoint supervisors to our remaining services in 2022, supported by Community Employment Scheme staff.

SERVICE	STAFF
St Pauls NS , Athlone	Eileen Cooper, Supervisor and Samantha Speck
Dean Kelly, Athlone	Bernie Mee, Supervisor, Sandy Cullen and Helen Harney
St Marys NS, Athlone	Liz Dignan and Melanie Dunne, Carina MURPHY
Brawny, Athlone	Laura Quinn and Angela Murray, Clare Feeley
Willow Pk, Athlone	Carol Muldoon, Ann Judge
Educate Together NS, Mullingar	Hillary Mc Comb , Supervisor, Gina Carroll and Sharon Quinn

Some of our services date back to the late 1990's and yes, we have reached a third generation of children attending our services!

Our Childcare services operate from the start of the school year until July, and includes full day camps at Halloween, Easter and during the month of July when the schools are closed.

Services are available 4 hours a day from Monday to Friday during the school year, and includes a snack, homework supports, art and cultural activities, sports, and games.

In 2022/2023 approximately 80 children used the services daily.

A highlight of the year is our camps and days away, enjoyed by the team almost as much as the children.



St Pauls , Mid-term Camp



Brawny Afterschool enjoying musical chairs.



Brawny Afterschool children enjoying gymnastics outdoors



Our little ladies practicing their make up skills

## WESTMEATH CARE & REPAIR AND BEFRIENDING

The Westmeath Care and Repair Service is operated through Westmeath Community Development (WCD) under the umbrella of Age Action. The programme's objective is to aid older persons to feel supported, and prolong comfort in living independently, in their own home. This service is available to people over the age of 60 years old and is funded through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Program (SICAP).

The 'Care and repair service' has two parts. The 'Care' element includes a regular, friendly phone call and/ or a regular house visit, by one/two of our volunteers. The 'Repair' element involves one of our volunteers, free of charge, carrying out a small task in the client's home. Tasks should be completed in less than 60 minutes. The majority of work implemented from this service is carried out by volunteers all of which have dedicated their time to enhancing the quality of life of an older person.

In 2022, WCD had 110 people receiving weekly calls from the befriending service. This service was carried out by WCD employees and a tendered service to South Westmeath, Employment, Education and Training Services in Kilbeggan. The befriending service is a social support that aims to create companionship, provide encouragement and extend kindness to an individual that could be faced with isolation and/or loneliness. This support was particularly crucial during the covid-19 crisis and continued to be hugely beneficial in encouraging older people back into their community. The nature of the calls stem from a 5-minute check-in call to a 20minute friendly chat. It is estimated that 5,200 calls were made in the year 2022.

In 2022, the Repair figures were the highest on record for WCD. 193 requests came in and from those requests 282 jobs were completed. An example of some of the work completed are as follows: fitting handrails, shower seats, Personal alarm referrals, Signposting or information provided, Referrals to Ann Moran Healthy Homes Co Ordinator, Rubbish removal/room clearance for hospital bed, Meals on Wheels referral, Odd Jobs, CO2 Monitors, Smoke Alarms for Seniors referrals, and assistance with Travel Passes Renewals. This service is particularly important as what might be referred to as a small job to one individual could make a huge difference in the life of another.

As we start 2023, one of our big hopes is to recommence our Home Visit service, which had shut down since the pandemic, and progress with new volunteers had started on this. Home visit's, similar to the befriending phone call, is a social support but differs in that two volunteers will visit an older person in their own home. 2022 also saw us start an engagement with some Westmeath GAA clubs, and initiative we hope to build on in 2023 , accessing volunteers for both sides of the service.

Other ways in which WCD provided support/assistance:

- 22 older persons groups were supported by WCD staff Sharon Timothy and Martha McMahon. Form this support 20 grant applications have been made with their assistance so far this year.  
61 Older People attended our Live Longer and Prosper Training in 2022, held in Coole, Moate, Killucan, Ath-lone and Mullingar. In March and April. This consisted of IT training, information and entertainment.
- WCD staff organised transport for WCC Technology for Older persons and people with a disability on 21/11/2022, WCD helped to promote the event and representatives from 52 groups were invited to hear about technology that is available to enhance lives as we grow older.
- WCD staff organised transport for a sports taster event in December and Disability & Older Persons information and services day in May.  
At Christmas, WCD organised and delivered care packs to over 100 older people in the community.

For more information on our services to older people, please contact Rachelle Morgan on 044-9348571 or email [rmorgan@westcd.ie](mailto:rmorgan@westcd.ie).

## FOOD & HEALTH

The Food and Health programme is aimed at supporting people who are interested in eating a healthier diet. All our courses are designed to be user friendly and deliver the message of healthy eating in a practical fun way. The main goal is to help improve people's access to good quality information on healthy eating that can be applied to everyday lifestyle choices. This programme is a joint initiative with HSE CH08 Area.

During 2022, the primary focus was on Healthy Food Made Easy Courses in the Slaintecare Healthy Communities Area of Athlone.

### Health Food Made Easy (HFME)

This is a 6-week course, where individuals gain hands-on experience of preparing and cooking healthy dishes that are affordable. Learning about the food pyramid, balanced diets and shopping tips is central to this course.

The target was to deliver 14 HFME courses in the Athlone plus 14 other courses throughout the county. We delivered 21 HFME courses throughout the county. In addition to HFME we delivered 8 Able to Cook for Health Course (A2C4H), 7 Cool Dude and 3 Healthy Heart courses, with 337 participants completing these courses.

In conjunction with HSE, WCD and Athlone FRC a decision was taken towards end of 2022, that the Food & Health programme would be a better fit under the umbrella of Athlone FRC, from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023 Athlone FRC have taken over this programme and will run same in conjunction with the HSE.

For information on previous course please email us on [info@westcd.ie](mailto:info@westcd.ie).

For queries on current Food and Health Programme please contact Athlone FRC, 090646455.



## ST. STEPHEN'S GREEN TRUST

**SSGT Connecting Communities and SICAP co-funded Sport and Fitness activities for young asylum seekers.**



A programme of activities for children and Young people in Direct provision co-funded by SICAP and the St Stephen's Green Trust (SSGT) Connecting Communities Programme was continued in 2022. The activities included soccer club memberships, , gym memberships and swimming lessons. The majority of the children were residents of the Direct provision accommodation centre in in Lissywollen though a handful were from the new smaller accommodation centres. This partnership with SSGT is now in its eighth year.

There was a strong Integration element to the project from the outset. All the funded activities enabled children to join with existing groups and projects in the broader community which most children would take for granted. This allowed them to experience some level of normality in their lives and provided a break from the institutionalised lifestyle of Direct Provision. The project was run by a SICAP Goal 1 Community Development Worker and a contracted coordinator with a long association with the company

# **GOVERNANCE & FINANCIAL REVIEW 2022**



## GOVERNANCE & COMPLIANCE

Good governance is the cornerstone of a successful and sustainable organisation. At WCD, we strive to meet the best governance standards driven by the principles of transparency, openness and accountability. We are committed to adopting the [Principles of the Charities Governance Code](#) and are currently working towards compliance in 2022.

### Board of Directors / Trustees of Westmeath Community Development in 2022

Name	Position
Dermot Leavy	Director/Chairperson (Retired: 29/04/22)
Liam Cahill	Director/Treasurer (IBEC) (Retired: 29/04/22)
Pat Boyce	Director/Chairperson
Marion Garry	Director (PPN)
Seamus Browne	Director (PPN)
Paddy Corcoran	Director (PPN)
Geraldine Lacey	Director (PPN)
Helen Donnelly	Director (PPN)
Emily Wallace	Director (Environmental Pillar)
Augustina Adagun	Director (PPN)
John Mangan	Director (PPN)
Paul Heduan	Director (PPN)
Sinita Sheridan	Director (SIPTU)
Seamus McNamee	Director( Co-Option) (Appointed 26/01/22)
Michelle Smith	Company Secretary

Our Board of Directors met eight times in 2022 with a 67% attendance rate. AGM was hosted on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2022. The Board appoints a number of sub-committees to oversee the organisations compliance and operational obligations. Membership of the sub-committees is drawn from the board.

Sub-committees include:

- Human Resource subcommittee
- Finance/Audit subcommittee
- Community Development subcommittee
- Enterprise & Employment subcommittee
- Disability Working Group

WCD is a company limited by guarantee with Charitable status. We are fully compliant with annual reporting requirements to the Charities Regulator. Our Charity Regulator profile can be found on [www.charitiesregulator.ie](http://www.charitiesregulator.ie).

# FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

## Schedule of Income and Expenditure for the financial year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022

<u>Schedule of Income</u>	€
<b>Department of Rural and Community Development</b>	
Volunteer Centre, Dormant Account	154,599
<b>Pobal</b> – National Childcare Investment Programme	327,165
<b>Longford Westmeath Education Training Board</b> – Horticulture	154,164
<b>Westmeath County Council</b>	
SICAP	948,791
LEADER 2014-2020	340,529
Various (Healthy Ireland, Horticulture, Disability projects)	25,798
<b>Tulsa</b> – Community Mothers Programme	86,014
<b>HSE</b> – Traveller, Community Mothers, Food & Health projects	238,679
<b>Department of Social Protection</b>	
RSS & Tús Programmes	140,175
Community Employment & Jobs Initiative	612,349
SICAP Related Match Funds	4,245
<b>Rethink Ireland SIFI</b>	85,505
<b>Other Income</b> - Admin course fees and parent's fees & EWSS	<u>108,742</u>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>3,226,755</b>
<u><b>Expenditure</b></u>	€
Staff Costs	2,288,357
Project Specific costs	431,322
Admin and overhead costs	411,033
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b><u>3,130,712</u></b>
<b>Surplus for the financial year</b>	<b><u>96,043</u></b>

## BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2022

<b>Fixed Assets</b>	€	€
Tangible assets		118,271
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Debtors	164,564	
Cash and cash equivalents	<u>1,000,855</u>	
	1,165,419	
<b>Creditors:</b>		
Amounts falling due within one year	<u>(606,317)</u>	
<b>Net Current Assets</b>		<u>559,102</u>
<b>Total Assets less Current Liabilities</b>		<u>677,373</u>
<b>Reserves</b>		
Income and expenditure account		<u>677,373</u>
<b>Total Funds</b>		<u>677,373</u>

# FUNDERS

## LEADER



## Childcare programme



## Tús Programme



Funded by the Department of Social Protection

## Community Employment



Supported by the Department of Social Protection which is funded by the Irish Government

## Volunteer Centre



## Horticulture programme



## Westmeath Traveller Project



## Rural Social Scheme



Supported by the Department of Social Protection, which is funded by the Irish Government



# FUNDERS

## Social Innovation Fund



## Live Longer & Prosper programme



## Resettlement programme/ DAF/ PEIL



## Community Mothers



## Westmeath Care & Repair Service



## Food & Health Programme



## Healthy Ireland Fund/RAPID/Horticulture



## Community Development, Employment & Enterprise



*The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018-2022 is funded by the Irish Government through the Department of Rural and Community Development and co-funded by the European Social Fund under the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020*