



ANNUAL REPORT 2020

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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 2020.

Normally my address focuses on our work to put social inclusion, equality and respect for diversity centre stage in all our programmes and activities. This remains central to our work, but 2020 will live long in the memory as the year of Covid 19 and its devastating impacts on people and communities.

While all of our programmes were severely impacted by the pandemic, WCD was able to react to the changed circumstances and maintain many services for individuals and communities through online provision and providing our staff with the necessary tools to work remotely during the various lockdowns.

As Directors we can be proud of the key role that WCD have played in the Westmeath Community Response Forum and the coordination of supports for vulnerable people during 2020. This support was provided weekly by WCD and was an essential service that demonstrated our true Community Development review which was so ably facilitated by Derek principles.

Along with our fellow members of the Irish Local Development Network (ILDN), the collaborative network of the 49 LDCs in Ireland, 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 are very aware that this will be a core and iterative part of our work for the years ahead.

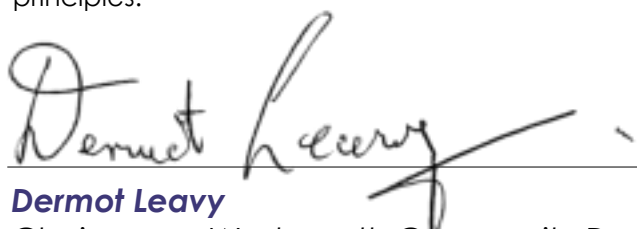
We said good bye to Board member Joan Scally who stepped down in 2020 and we thank Joan for her contributions to the organisation.

We welcomed Jim Sheridan and Paul Heduan to our Board and we look forward to working with them in the coming years.

For almost all of 2020 our Directors met online and we have missed the interactions and collaborations that happen at in person meetings, but I do want to thank you all for your contributions and commitment to WCD. Similarly, despite the difficulties of remote and online meetings, the role played by the various Directors and other members on Board Substructures is greatly valued.

We pay tribute too to our CEO, management team and staff on their work in a very challenging year.

Finally, 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.



Dermot Leavy

Chairperson Westmeath Community Development

MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

I have worked for over 20 years in Local Development, and if I work for another 20 I can't imagine a year as challenging as 2020. The Covid 19 pandemic's devastating impacts were first felt for us in March of 2020 with the first lockdown, and the unique challenges we faced continuing to bring services to clients and communities remotely. For many of us, working from home was a new challenge, not on our radar before 2020 and we had to adapt our homes, lives and ways of working in ways we could not have imagined just 3 months earlier.

We are very proud of the role we were able to play in Westmeath in responding to the pandemic with the mobilisation, combined with a flexible and innovative solutions allowed us to support communities and individuals during the worst of the pandemic.

The role our staff played in the Community Response was crucial for the smooth and professional delivery of supports to older, isolated and vulnerable people all over the county. That regular caller, with shopping or prescriptions in hand was

something we can be very proud of, and made such a meaningful difference in people's lives during 2020 in particular between April and June with over 1000 supports provided to people during that period.

Our Befriending Service, became one of the most high profile services delivered by WCD during the pandemic with staff making over 200 calls each week to people, many of these having minimal or no contact with others at the height of the lockdowns.

Our programmes and projects were all impacted by Covid 19. For some, training and meetings moved to remote, with Zoom and Microsoft Teams a daily means of working. For other projects, the impact was more profound, with schemes, education and childcare projects closed at various times.

Despite the pandemic, our SICAP programme continues to achieve and exceed its targets, including numbers into employment.

Our LEADER programme entered the final stages and despite the challenges of the pandemic and impact on Brexit the budget for Westmeath was fully allocated with a good pipeline of projects lined up for the LEADER Transitional Programme in 2021. Despite not being able to meet in person our Board and various Board Substructures continued their work and I thank you sincerely for your ongoing support and commitment. Finally, to the team in WCD, I thank you for all for your work in 2020. I know some of you had very difficult years, balancing work, home and caring responsibilities. The professional and empathetic approach to your work this year is something we can all be very proud of and has had a very meaningful impact in the lives of so many people in our 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 TUS, Rural Social Scheme, Community Employment, and Jobs Club. We manage Childcare, Healthcare, Education & Training and Volunteer programmes across the county.

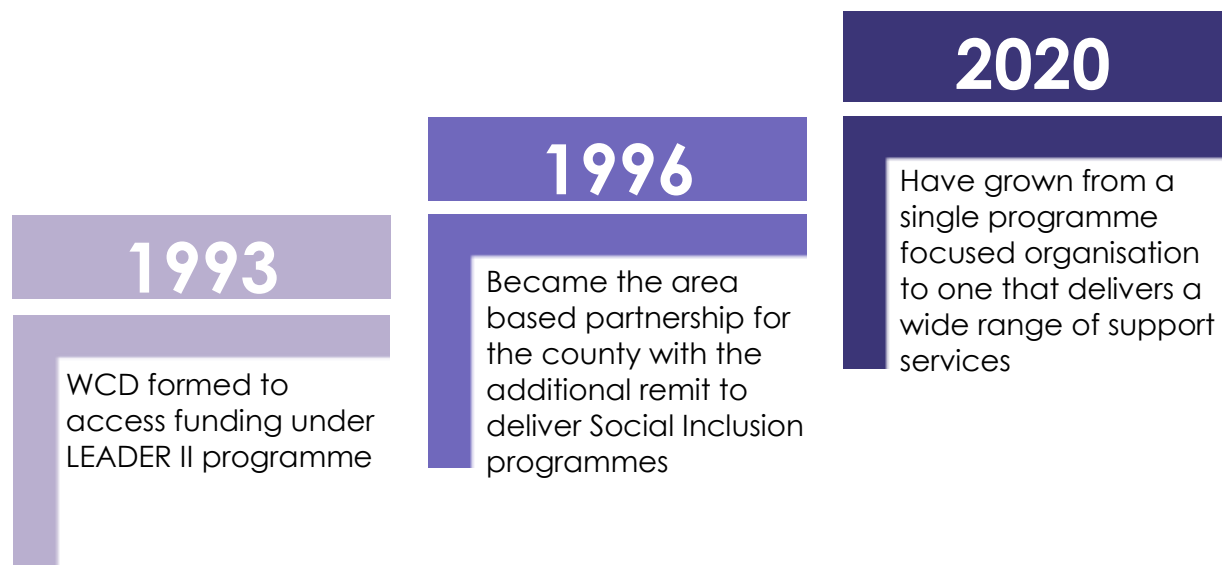
Our headquarters are located in the Enterprise & Innovation centre, Mullingar, with offices in Athlone and our horticultural training centre in Belvedere House & Gardens.

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..



Westmeath Community Response Forum

Its April 2020. "What do you do for a living?" . "Now? I shop".

You won't find that in the normal job specification for employees of a Local Development Company! But, for many of our team, April 2020 marked the start of a whole set of new relationships as we mobilised in support of those in our community who needed help.

Westmeath Community Response Forum was established in response to the Covid 19 pandemic and the Community Call Helpline set up at the same by Westmeath County Council. WCD, with staff in all parts of the county became the referral agency for all calls to helpline seeking support with shopping and basic errands. In most cases all it took was one phone call from the individual to start the process, with WCD staff making contact, sharing phone numbers and providing that service every week from April , and in some cases for all of 2020 and into 2021.

The WCD staff member calling in, collecting shopping list and returning with the shopping was the only in person engagement some people had in the height of lockdown and friendships were formed and news shared – bit like the bygone era of "news from the front". Demand was particularly high in Athlone and Mullingar where the footprint of other community and voluntary groups was not as widespread and many groups had been forced into closure as result of lockdown. Typically clients were older, or had a mobility, transport or health issues, and while a most basic need for provisions was the purpose , the added value of a friendly face and a chat became as much a part of the service.

Some people also took the opportunity to avail of our Befriending Service as a result of the service, another lifeline during this most extraordinary period.

Over time, and with the easing of restrictions, many people were able to get out and about again and regain their independence, but between April and June 2020 nearly 300 people were supported by the staff in Westmeath Community Development with shopping support – a novel interpretation of "Any other duties..." line you find in the job spec!



Pictured is WCD staff member Tara Duignan and Bob Heath

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY REVIEW 2020

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)

SICAP is the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme, funded by Westmeath Local Community Development Committee, through the Department of Community and Rural Development.

The objective of the programme is to reduce poverty, while promoting social inclusion and equality in Ireland through supporting communities and individuals. A community development approach to engagement and collaboration underpins SICAP Goal 1.

Supporting Communities

Goal 1 specifically supports communities and target groups to engage with relevant stakeholders in identifying and addressing social exclusion and equality issues, developing the capacity of Local Community Groups [LCG] thus creating more sustainable communities.

Response to Challenges caused by Covid-19

During Lockdown, we focussed on providing one-to-one supports to the volunteers we could contact by phone email etc. and responding to needs as we became aware of them. We maintained contact with groups by phone, email WhatsApp, Facebook – whatever was available to both staff and members of LCGs or networks

Goal 1 adopted **online approaches** to training delivery, meetings with LCGs and network meetings. LCGs and SEs were supported to avail of new Covid-response oriented funding streams such as Covid Emergency Fund and Covid Stability Fund.

Once the initial lockdown was lifted, WCD staff were able to recommence meeting with groups in accordance with Covid 19 guidelines. Meetings in safe environments such as Cafés, hotels and in some cases using outdoor areas, enabled community support plans to be completed, and in a majority of cases implemented.

2020 SICAP Goal 1 Activities

Action 1: Development work in Disadvantaged Rural Areas

10 residents' groups in disadvantaged Rural areas were supported to identify their current needs,, compile annual action plans and access SICAP funding. Ongoing supports to sustain LCGs through 2020 and enable them to work effectively in their communities were provided.

Action 2: Empowering Communities: Training

Due to Covid restrictions the format of training delivery was radically changed – all training in 2020 was delivered online. .

- Funding workshops, one in Athlone and one in Mullingar, took place in March 2020, (immediately prior to the initial lockdown) supporting groups in funding submissions to WCC.
- A further 2 funding workshops were delivered online for WCC Covid Emergency Funding. Ten people participated in the sessions including 2 SICAP groups. F
- 8 groups, including 2 SICAP groups took part in funding workshops for the CEP grants.
- Committee skills training workshop was delivered by zoom over two sessions in Nov 2020, 6 people participated including 3 SICAP groups.

Funding Supports to Groups

- 10 LCGs availed of the SICAP grants for Disadvantaged Rural Areas under Action 1 in 2020 (€1,500 allocated each).
- Six groups operating in the Rapid areas in Athlone and Mullingar were also supported with SICAP grants of €1,500 each due to an underspend becoming available in the budget.

56 LCGs were supported to lever **€68,818** with **91** successful applications for non-SICAP grants.

Action 3: Athlone and Mullingar Rapid

Athlone and Mullingar Rapid programmes continued to connect in between lockdowns through RAPID AITs and community forums continued to connect through email and phone for most of 2020 until zoom training was provided to community reps, so that it became possible to re-establish meetings by zoom.. 6 RAPID groups were also allocated a grant of €1500.00 from SICAP in 2020..

113 local community groups were supported from disadvantaged urban areas including members of the Travelling community.
Towards the end of the year community members felt more confident in the use of online platforms.

Action 4: Enhancing Collaboration

- LCGs were supported to make submissions to the Municipal District via the PPN process.
- The CDYWG continued to connect during 2020 but by email as opposed to meetings. Disability Groups were supported to participate in Westmeath Annual Make Way Day a virtual event that took place in September.

In 2020 WCD received an allocation of €5,500 from **St Stephen's Green Trust** as 50% co-funding for activities for children and Young people in Direct provision under their Connecting Communities Programme. Activities Soccer Club memberships, swimming lessons. Uptake was curtailed somewhat due to Covid -19 restrictions but the funding was carried over into 2021.

Action 4: Enhancing Social Enterprise

Social Enterprises were badly hampered by the pandemic with many closed for most of 2020. Support was provided to 7 groups with 2 Social Enterprises received SICAP grant aid in 2020, and 5 others received funding from the DRCD Social Enterprise Capital Grant scheme.

Action 6: Older Persons Actions

WCD was fortunate that we had an established programme of support for Older People already in place when Covid struck. We were well placed to assist this vulnerable group, working with 22 older persons groups throughout Westmeath, supporting over **500** older individuals during Covid lockdown. The supports for older people involved intense collaboration between WCD, Westmeath County Council, Westmeath Volunteer Centre, HSE, WPPN, Age Action Ireland etc. Due to unprecedented times in 2020 with Covid pandemic, we had to diversify from Home Visiting to telephone communication with our older people.

Befriending Service

Due to Covid more older people groups' members also availed of the Befriending Service and WCD supported **142** older people on their current list availing of calls, some receiving two and more calls weekly (around 200 weekly calls). Thus in 2020 WCD supported approximately 10000 befriending calls to individuals during this pandemic year. WCD had made additional Sicap and non-Sicap Staff members available to the befriending action.

Care & Repair

Through the Care & Repair programme volunteers have completed 46 jobs during the Covid 2020 pandemic while keeping to Covid HSE guidelines. The jobs were essential to the safety of older persons as they mainly concerned safety hazards such as installation of safety rails, sweeping up leaves for the prevention of falls etc. New procedures were adopted to allow the jobs to be Covid-compliant.

Goal 1 - Local Community Groups



	Lot	National
Newly registered LCGs as % of KPI 1	6%	

Average number of Interventions per LCG	9.61	7.26
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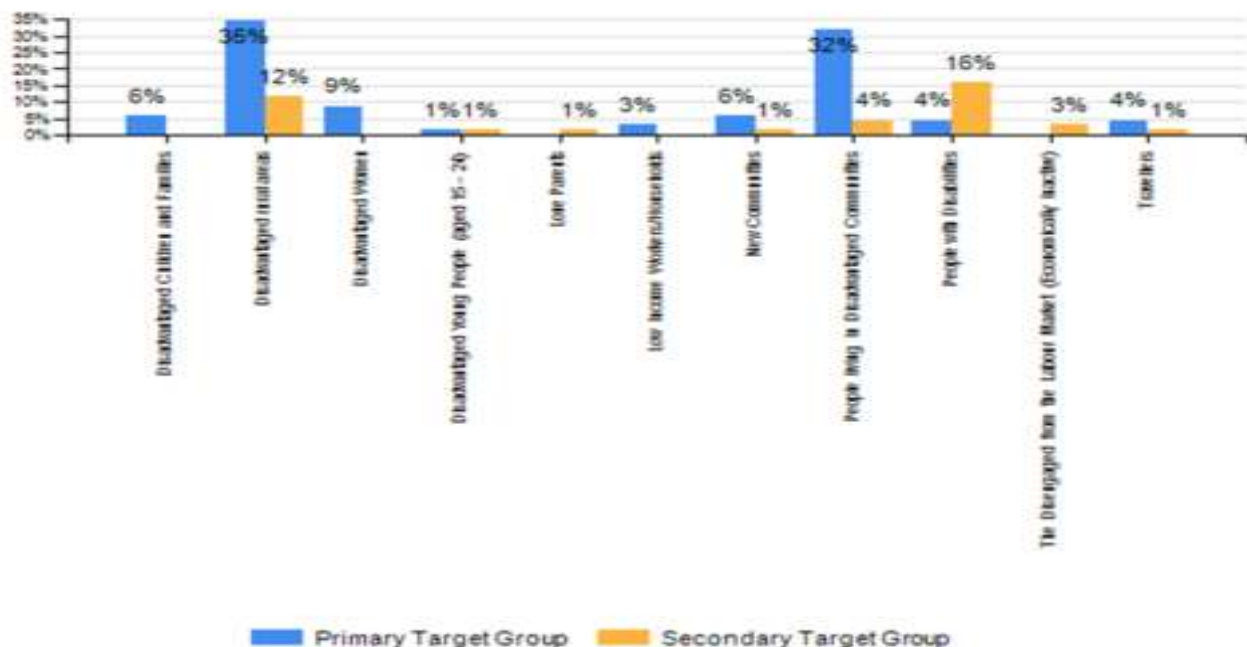
Average duration of Intervention	64 mins	67 mins
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Number of LCG Grants	16
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Total LCG Grant Amount	€24,000.00
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Total number of LCG interventions	663
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Percentage of LCGs (KPI 1) by Primary and Secondary Target Group



Quotes Re Zoom Training on CEP fund:

"I think it was kept on topic which I feel is always important. It was 90 minutes which felt like 30."

"This was my first zoom workshop. It was great to get ideas from other participants in the group. A lot of practical advice was given"

"It was an informative learning experience, thank you"

Sample of Goal 1 Covid Response work in photos

Photo of group's dinners/Lunches, squares already knitted and sewed together. Elderly/ Travellers Covid response packs



Sample of Goal 1 other SICAP work in photos

Castlegrove Residents painted each other's homes during Covid shutdowns



Ave Marie erection of safety fencing

Castletown Court & Clondone Estate Signs

Tower View & Carrickmore Clean-up day



Lighting the End of the Lockdown Tunnel with Westmeath Community Development's Employment Mediation Team

It's no question that the coronavirus pandemic threw us all in for a loop. The months that followed called everyone to adapt to a new way of operating, which for many people meant a world of screens, where virtual interaction reigned supreme and the outside found itself littered with barriers. Thankfully, just now, after the strangest year we may ever face in our lifetimes, we've been able to tear down some of the walls we had to set up for the sake of our safety, a new era dawning on us that feels quite like the calm after a storm.

No doubt we did our bit, weathering all calamities the storm shook upon us, tiptoeing around to keep to the restrictions and learning to work in a digitized realm. Here at WCD Employment Mediation Team, we had to adjust ourselves to these new conditions just like everyone else. We knew our work was important, perhaps more so than ever in a phase of great chaos, and together we resolved that a pandemic mustn't stop us, despite the hurdles we might have to pull ourselves over. We were determined to keep providing our services and do our very best to keep things operating as close to normal as possible.

Sacrifices definitely had to be made, but we committed to making the best of what we had. There are upsides to everything, and despite the many hardships the pandemic brought with it, it also brought some opportunities. Days of quarantine could be long and drawn out, but on a brighter note, the free time also gave the chance to invest in themselves, taking on new hobbies, working on their personal development, and, the key opportunity we took advantage of: upskilling. Maybe a course might just be the cure for the lockdown listlessness many people were feeling...

So, we quickly worked up some online courses, starting off in March of 2020 with a course we found especially relevant to the time we were in. During an epidemic health is at the front of everyone's focus, and it went without saying that skills in this field were in very high demand. While other job sectors sadly dwindled due to the necessary restrictions, the health sphere is one that will always be important. We therefore decided we would provide virtual healthcare training to those who were interested. Happily, as we'd anticipated, the course gathered great attention, and proved indeed to be very pertinent, with employment in the healthcare sector being the most commonly secured employment by our clients that year, as we engaged with over 15 healthcare employers. It was satisfying not just to aid our clients with finding work but also to support the recruitment for much needed healthcare assistants.

We were ultimately delighted to have managed to keep up our engagement throughout the difficult span of the pandemic, keeping productive and continuing to help people regardless of distance. Despite being contained to digital communications we kept up our rapport with our clients, steadily supplying one-to-one and group information, wellbeing services, mentoring, employability supports, and coaching. We believe we definitely achieved our goal of maintaining the steady delivery of support we'd sustained throughout the years, keeping our employability services running smoothly even as we drove over the rocky roads the upheaval of the pandemic settled us on.

The light at the end of the tunnel is oncoming, and we at the Employability Team are committed to help usher in this new phase with appropriate supports for our client base. The world is an altered place since 2020. The labour market has changed and will continue to do so. People's needs have also changed. The values of a community have come to the fore and expectations have changed for many people. It is our role to adapt and cater to these ever-evolving needs and values. We will embrace these challenges by being true to our spirit. As the ancient Chinese proverb goes... "When the winds of change blow, some people build walls, others build windmills." In WCD Employment Mediation, we build windmills.

Employment and Enterprise

New Approach

Covid-19 undeniably had a social and economic impact on both men and woman in Westmeath. However, job seekers were now experiencing additional barriers to accessing training and employment opportunities such as lack of childcare, this previously could be catered for by parents, childminders in their homes and childcare providers, now no longer an option. In addition both men and women now had increased care responsibilities, adding to the list of new barriers we saw how vast the lack of digital skills and access to equipment such as laptops and computers was to our clients. Now more than ever people were facing multiple hurdles to get over in addition to the traditional existing obstacles such as transport, confidence, childcare and motivation to engage in job seeking activities.

To add to the mounting disadvantage job seekers were experiencing the industries and roles that many of our clients initially gain employment in were now no longer an option with entire sectors such as retail and hospitality closed for business.

WCD recognised that we needed to have a solution-focused approach to providing job seekers and our clients from previous years a route out of their economic situation and develop more inclusive online supports and services. From March 2020 we decided that we would reach out to all 2019 clients whilst continuing to operate our enterprise and employment supports remotely. We supported hundreds of clients via phone, Zoom and email, helping them to apply for the Pandemic Unemployment Payment, providing over 1500 clients with weekly information bulletins to ensure they were aware of their entitlements.

Our strategy was to become an online remote service provider, this required us requesting all our training providers to develop online modules for the traditional classroom based training we contracted to them. This involved offering one to one and group information, wellbeing, mentoring, coaching and employability supports through Zoom and other online platforms. Our approach worked, we successfully supported over 1,000 clients in 2020 with the following outcomes.

Progressing to Employment and Self-Employment

- SICAP 800 clients – 156 progression to employment & 36 to self-employment
- PEIL – 24 progressing to employment (programme ended May 2020)
- Rethink Ireland – 36 progressing to employment
- Job Club 135 clients – 32 progressing to employment

**248 client's secured employment
in 2020**

**36 progressed to self-
employment**

Employment Sectors

22% Healthcare

18% Manufacturing

16% Hospitality (Q4)

10% Childcare

10% Retail

8% Construction

**Remaining % admin, education,
personal services**

Labour Market Training

In 2020 from March onwards all our labour market training was delivered through either online platforms or through a blended learning approach. Our progression to training saw many clients that traditionally worked in construction or retail industries now consider upskilling and transferring their years of work experience to jobs in the healthcare industry.

In line with the job market we focused on healthcare courses to facilitate the needs of many local public and private healthcare employers. WCD engaged with over 15 healthcare employers in 2020 supporting their recruitment for much needed healthcare assistants.

400 lifelong learning opportunities were availed of in the modules below.

Training modules were delivered with 400 lifelong learning opportunities achieved, some clients engaged in two or more of the modules.

SNA 66 clients

First Aid Responder 41 clients

Infection HACCP 30 clients

Clean Pass 24 clients

**Healthcare Major Award 38
client**

Safe Pass 38 clients

Care Support 13 clients

People Moving & Handling 41 clients

Prevention Control 12 clients

Manual Handling 56 clients

MAPA 15 clients

Training Entrepreneurial Prog 34 clients

Employability 80% clients availed of

Target Group progression to employment statistics:

14% youth

17% migrant client's

24% aged 26 to 35 years

61% female

18% 36 to 45 years

39% male

Client Feedback

Hi Maria!

Just wanted to send an email to say thank you for sorting me out with the grant to help me pay for my course! It's been such a huge help to receive this support and I am very grateful for all the work you, Trish and Dan have done for me. I've actually moved into a bigger and better space now since we spoke last so would love for you guys to come see it! Obviously will look after you with some complimentary class's 😊. I hope you guys are doing great. Best wishes, Lorna

Hi Sinead I've been meaning to email you for a good while, excuse my ignorance... I've got a job working as an SNA in Killbegan secondary school since September gone and I'm enjoying it very much. It's completely changed my life and most of all my family's. I would like to thank you sincerely for your help in achieving this new career path.

I hope you and your family are well and happy in these funny times.

Regards for now,

God bless, Luke.

SNA Course Mullingar 2020 Mullingar Town Band Hall



Clean Pass Course Mullingar 2020





Client Feedback

Entrepreneurs are always looking for business opportunities even in the most difficult of circumstances. An ex – Trainee Entrepreneur Programme client Donal Coade identified an opportunity in February 2021 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Donal set up Sound Marketing Solutions Ltd. (SMS) to supply Hand Sanitizer Station to businesses with the support of the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance.

The unit he sourced enables businesses advertise the businesses, display logos and other information. The unit dispenses Hand Sanitizer automatically and excess sanitizer is circulated back into the unit. SMS Ltd supply replacement cartridges for the unit also which gives his company an extra income stream,
Photo shows one of the SMS Ltd Hand Sanitizer Units in place in Laois/Offaly ETB.

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 centers and childcare groups.

Brief description of what type of activity under each programme

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 is in one of these areas;

- Maintaining and enhancing walking routes and bog roads.
- Village and countryside enhancement projects as part of the Tidy Towns e.g. Stream-stown 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 care-taking 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 centers e.g. charity shop

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

Impact of Covid

The covid epidemic has had a big effect on the Rural Social Scheme. Many of the sponsor groups had to close down their facilities so we had to change the tasks that the participants were working at to fill their time on the scheme. WCD have a number of participants who work with older peoples groups, facilitating gatherings on a weekly basis. The members of the group get their dinner at these weekly gatherings. During the covid crises, the RSS participants delivered the dinners directly to their homes. Some other RSS participants carried out shopping and basic maintenance for vulnerable people in their areas. All participants helped maintain their sponsor groups facilities for the duration of the lockdown.

Case study

Name: Rosemount tidy towns

Measure: Village Enhancement

Summary: Rosemount tidy towns was formed in early 1995 by a group of local community activists who wanted to improve their area through interventions such as the development of community facilities and services. They received grant aid from the Leader+ and National Rural Development Programme towards the development of the local community hall. In early 2005 a participant on the RSS, Kevin O'Connell, was appointed to maintain and care take the Hall and the surrounding area. Kevin is now 16 years on the RSS. In that time, the local tidy towns group has increased their score in the tidy towns competition. In 2017, the group got an extra place with Seamus O'Rourke also joining the scheme. Seamus is primarily involved in maintaining the local graveyards.

Kathleen Grennan is the chairperson of the local tidy towns committee "The Rural Social Scheme has made a massive contribution to the whole look of the area. The hub of the community is the community center which is based on the same grounds as the GAA pitch. Every morning the scheme participants meet at the grounds and decide upon the days work which is based on the work plan that has been agreed between all the parties that are involved. The social aspect of the scheme is also important with the participants all taking their breaks together and having some banter. The local people are delighted with the schemes contribution to the greater Rosemount area and are very grateful to Westmeath Community Development" concluded Kathleen.



RSS participants hard at it in Rosemount!

Horticulture Programme

The Horticulture FETAC Level 5 programme is funded by the Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board, This is 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 FETAC Level 5 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 jAssistant Coordinators Valerie Beck and Aoife Joyce, supported by an RSS and 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 programmes.

The Course offers a unique educational/ practical environment in beautiful surroundings 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 2020/2021

The new course began on 23rd November 2020. Recruitment is carried out through the DEASP case officers and the LWETB. Some of the students are graduates of the ETB's level 4 course in Marlinstown in Mullingar.

It was a challenge to get the course up and running with the priority given to making sure that the participants were IT ready for remote training. The first modules of the course were delivered online with a return to classroom work as the restrictions were lifted.

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

Student Feedback

"I have had an interest in gardening and nature and wanted to know the science behind it. I had no idea this course existed! I couldn't recommend it more; the team are so knowledgeable and helpful having worked at such a broad range of disciplines. I found this very inspiring.

It was difficult completing so many modules but the mixture of outdoor practical work at Belvederes Walled Garden inspired us all.

Over the last year I learned how to propagate and develop sophisticated plants and designs. All the practical knowledge we learned over Winter and spring became real and understandable.

I have made some great friends and wish the staff who work so hard and for getting me through COVID 19, I wish them all the best".

Marcel Palm, Horticulture student 2020

Student Feedback

-I feel you lead a very good training course. The knowledge and experience I gained from the course will be invaluable in my future. The tutors are knowledgeable, professional, and kind. They've all been a joy to deal with throughout the year, even dealing with all the roadblocks Covid has thrown in the way this year. The walled garden in Belvedere is an amazing training space few will get the opportunity to learn in. The opportunities to clear, and re-plant whole borders as a team, was a huge learning experience – from why we choose the plants, which tools to use, planting schemes, and interacting as a team. The days we tackled big projects such as the Athlone Training Centre and Belvedere entrances stick in my mind as the closest to real world training you could hope to receive

I genuinely enjoyed and gained a lot from my time in the Horticulture course. I would hope to pursue a Level 6 qualification in Horticulture in the future once I've recovered from this course.

You've opened my eyes to the possibilities in Horticulture I would never have considered before, for which I'm hugely thankful.

Many thanks to Valerie, Aoife, Bernie, and yourself."

Student Feedback

"While I've always known that Belvedere is a wonderful place to visit, I now know that it was also an excitement place to learn.

The combination of well-structured modules delivered by experienced and enthusiastic Tutors makes this course, in my opinion one of the best courses in the Midlands.

My only wish is that I could stay long and advanced further into level 6 and 7 courses on the premises, with the same tutors. "

WESTMEATH TRAVELLER PROJECT

Westmeath Traveller project is funded by the HSE . It has 2 strands, Community Development and Primary Health Care. The aim of the project is to improve the quality of life of Travellers, as unfortunately their life expectancy is much lower than the settled population.

2020 was a very challenging year for the Traveller project. We had to completely re-evaluate how we did our work and serve the community. All of our work had to be done over the phone or through social media platforms such as Facebook messenger or What's APP , a very different way of working! It was not safe to meet in our usual face to face manner, calling to people's home and seeing first-hand the issues.

Project staff liaised with agencies such as Westmeath County Council, HSE, Department of Social Protection, Tusla & Department of Education to support families and address issues as best they could. Due to the housing crisis, the accommodation officer was extremely busy, but managed to support many families in accessing better quality housing.

Westmeath Traveller Project have 176 Families consented to the Primary Health Care Project. In 2020 the families received the following supports and information...

The priority work for 2020 was keeping people safe during the pandemic. Families were supported regarding the following:

- Organising tests for families re. Covid 19.
- Food essentials organised for families in isolation during Covid 19.
- Masks and sanitisers delivered to families.
- Home testing organised for families who had no transport.

Online/phone information was provided as follows ...

Topic	No of families	Topic	No of families
Mental Health	176	Child safety awareness	145
Cholesterol	157	Smoking	54
Meningitis	173	Diabetes	127
Asthma	32	Cancer awareness	170
MABS	67	Covid 19 information	176

Care Packs were put together and distributed to all Traveller Families who are consented to the Project in both Athlone and Mullingar before Christmas 2020.



Accommodation Work- 81 families supported

Housing/ Homeless/ evictions	Housing Assisting payment
Transfers	Completion of Housing, RAS and HAP
Rental accommodation scheme	Re-development of Blackberry Lane
Health issues	Social welfare queries
Education supports	Referrals to primary health care

Training/ information events

- All meetings were held on either Teams/zoom
- Staff participated in Westmeath PPN meetings
- Staff participated in the RAPID structures in Athlone/Mullingar and the Athlone RAPID AIT is chaired by a Traveller staff member
- Staff attended a number of meetings with Exchange House/Galway Traveller project with the view to developing a Diploma in Community Development for Travellers in the Midlands, in conjunction with NUIG.
- Staff linked in with relevant meetings organised by Irish Traveller Movement

Newsletter

The Traveller Project Newsletter was delivered to all 176 families in the project.

EMPLOYMENT PLACEMENT & SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

WCD hosts a number of employment activation and employment support programmes. Each programme provides a direct benefit to both urban and rural communities throughout Westmeath .

Community Employment

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 the 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. T

The Community Employment Programme is funded by the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection (DEASP).

Here at WCD our CE scheme is based between Mullingar and Athlone and we are currently approved for 48 places (18 of which are dedicated to the Trainee Entrepreneurship Programme).

2020 proved very challenging and like many schemes filling places during the pandemic was very challenging.

Our CE places are based in a variety of roles including:

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

Participant Feedback

"have immensely enjoyed my time on Community Employment. Since I started working with WCD I have learned a lot and continue to do so through my day to day work with the Community Development team under the direction of my line Manager and CE Supervisors , along with various courses which I have completed during my time on CE. I first joined CE In 2015 having completed a QQI Level 6 in Community Development. Working in WCD has really brought to life for me what I have learned in theory. As I am involved with community groups in my own life it is good to partake in the training which is on offer from the company such as committee skills training. Apart from what I am getting from CE on a work level I also enjoy coming in as I see it as a means of making new friends and creating contacts. Since March 2020 with the onset of Covid 19 when offices were forced to close we went on line through Microsoft team for meetings. I am currently completing a QQI Level 5 in Business and Tourism. Like my office work I was continuing my studies on Microsoft teams. While covid 19 has been a challenge on us all, having to complete work and study on line it has introduced me to another Microsoft package. "

ENTERPRISE SUPPORT PROGRAMME

The primary objective of WCD's employment services is to support people into work. No matter what our clients work history, educational experience or background, we support individuals to become job-ready, through working with them on a one to one basis and in a group setting. This is achieved by providing employability supports, labour market training, designing and delivering bespoke employer courses, and linking our clients with local employers.



71 people benefited from CE. All of them gaining valuable experience within the organisation, its sub sponsors and on the Trainee Entrepreneurship Programme.



33 people got to participate in the Trainee Entrepreneurship Programme, 18 in Mullingar and 15 in Athlone, resulting in 16 new start up business'.



9 people have taken up permanent full time employment.



Trainee Entrepreneurship Programme and Digital Monitoring

Participants also completed the Digital Monitoring Workshop, which is presented on Zoom by Gary Gleeson who completed the TEP in 2020..

Covid effects

2020 was a trying year for everyone not least of which was our CE scheme, like most places of work we were working from home most of the time and we were luckily to be able to do so easily. Most of our sub sponsors were able to organise staff to work from home also so we had as little disruption in service as possible. Of course projects like the after schools had to close completely, but DEASP continued to fund staff.

In many ways, the Lockdowns allowed us to push our boundaries, especially with technology, for zoom calls and meetings on teams. In times of adversity we get to test ourselves and I think we all came out better versions of ourselves, more understanding of each other and each other's need and far more tolerant.

The TEP was run on line during lockdowns and will now continue as a hybrid of on line and in class as it has worked out well and proven quite successful so far.

Unfortunately Lockdowns took their toll on training, and while some providers were ahead of the game and ready to provide training on line some were not and so training was very difficult to source. Likewise some participants were up and running with training offered on line while others refused to look at online training – mainly out of fear of the unknown and fear of failure. Others ran with the opportunities offered and took advantage of on line to look at training outside their own locality.

John Bawle's Testimony

My name is John Bawle at present I'm working with Mullingar Tidy Towns on a CE Scheme. My role on the scheme is to co-ordinate with the chairperson of Mullingar Tidy Town regarding what work need to be done and follow up on grants which needs to be applied.

At present Mullingar Tidy towns have Ten Tus worker and five EC Scheme working together in this group.

One of my other roles is to be a Team Leader for all workers working with Mullingar Tidy Town. Prior to me working with Mullingar Tidy Town I was a Tus worker working with the Mullingar YOYO Café programme up at the Columb Barracks. I started on the 22nd of October 2018 and finished up on the 18th October 2019.

How my story started with Tus

I fell into a difficult situation back in 2012 when I lost all I had while being self- employed in the bar trade. I personally went downhill, mentally, financial, self-esteem and didn't want to face anyone, talk to anyone never mind work for anyone. I fell deeper into depression without even knowing it. Luckily for me I sought help in 2017 and I got wonderful help in getting myself looked after.

While being unemployed for so long it was very hard to apply for any job as I felt so worthless, that I was no good, I was a failure. I got an interview for me to meet Rosie Mc Cormack TUS Supervisor in the Westmeath Community Development Office. I remember the day very well; I was scared out of my life of meeting this person and was thinking of what this person thinks of me and god knows what job she was going to offer me, until I heard a familiar voice coming from the corridor of the building and I remember saying to myself that voice sounds so familiar and I started to relax myself. When Rosie came through the hallway and called my name, I knew someone was looking out for me. That familiar smile from Rosie that I had known many years ago was a huge relief for me. We chatted and I explained my situation to Rosie and I have to say she was very professional, very understanding and knew she had a place for me to restart my life back in the work force. Rosie is amazing at her job without even knowing how good she is.

She found a place for me to work with the Mullingar EYE Youth project which I was placed up at the Columb Barracks in Mullingar. This was the dream job for me working with some disadvantage young people who were dealing with their challenges in life. I still believe they help me as much as they say I helped them. It was I have to say what saved me and got me my self-esteem back. I have to say what saved and got me my self-esteem back.

I learned a lot through courses which Rosie and set up for us throughout my year on the Tus Scheme and I have the certs to prove it. I was just getting comfortable being back at work when I got the word my year was coming to an end that I could no longer be on a Tus scheme.



I fully believe Mullingar Tidy Towns would not be functioning at its level without the wonderful assistance from the Westmeath Community Development Tus workers and especially Tus Supervisor Rosie McCormack.

Westmeath Community Development Tus provides Mullingar Tidy Towns with the most up to date equipment, tools, and safety gear and litter pickers and garbage sacks which Rosie has provided to Mullingar Tidy Towns whenever the call is given to her.

I would highly recommend Tus to any person looking at a fresh start or looking to get back to the workplace on a good stepping stone. I am very grateful to Tus for believing in me and giving me a start to rebuild myself in the workplace.

Again along comes Rosie to the rescue to inform me of the CE Scheme and that she was aware of two places that she would recommend me for. One was to stay on in the Youth work and the second one was with Mullingar Tidy Towns. Again Rosie and I spoke for hours thinking of which would suit me going forward and for me to try and get a fulltime job in the future and again Rosie's expertise came to play and she said that she put forward many people over the years to Mullingar Tidy Towns and she believe I'd be best suited at Mullingar Tidy Towns. Again, I had no clue of the role being asked of me but I believed Rosie knew that the job was best suited for me and I went for it

Forward to today and here we are working together for Mullingar Tidy Towns where Chairperson Bill Collentine and myself meet Rosie providing more Tus workers to Mullingar tidy Towns.

Graham Moran's Testimony

I am really enjoying my time as a Tus participant with Mullingar Tidy Towns and I hope to go on to CE after my year to continue doing what I am doing. It has improved my Mental Health and getting out of the house and going to work has done wonders for me. I am learning so much since I started working on the TUS scheme and the support I have gotten from my TUS supervisor Rosie and John in Mullingar Tidy Towns has been amazing. Rosie is always there to support me and the other lads and makes sure we have all the PPE gear and tools we need to do our job improving the community.

The only bad thing I have to say is 1 year is not long enough on TUS and I wish I could continue the work we started helping to maintain all the areas we have worked on.



RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Leader 2014-2020 Programme

LEADER is a community led approach to local development funded through Ireland's Rural Development Programme 2014-2020. It supports locally identified initiatives that seek to address locally identified needs and challenges. LEADER 2014-2020 covers the entire geographically area of County Westmeath including the two main towns of Mullingar and Athlone. Funding of €7,384,205 has been allocated to Westmeath for the duration of the programme. 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.

Project Approvals and payments in 2020

Project Approvals and payments in 2020

28 projects were approved across the various themes of the Programme for grant aid in 2020 to the value of **€1,895,023.58**. A total of **€1,874,789.64** was made to project promoters in 2020.



LEADER Engagement with Communities and Individuals in 2020

Animation activity continued throughout 2020, though the delivery was somewhat different. With the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic in March, many meetings were held on-line and although somewhat challenging at first, promoters embraced this new way of interaction and became very comfortable with using on-line platforms for meeting purposes.

This included meetings with project promoters from Athlone, Mullingar, Moate, Horseleap, Streamstown, Tang, Killucan, Delvin & Crookedwood where a total of 80 people were in attendance. These are predominately new groups who would have not engaged with LEADER previously. In addition a number would have been from the hard to reach areas.

LEADER delivers despite the COVID 19 pandemic.

A key achievement for 2020 was the number of applications received and that went forward for approval; at a time when COVID was emerging and the country was going into lockdown. 22 applications were received in March alone and the LEADER team worked with project promoters to ensure that their applications were completed and they had the capacity to deliver the projects.

One of the achievements of the year was to receive projects from groups in rural areas such as Ringtown and Bunbrosna in the north of the county and from Hard to Reach Communities such as Mount Carmel Residents in Moate and Sarsfield Square Residents Association, in Athlone. The LEADER team worked with these groups over a period and co-ordinated their efforts with other programme providers such as SICAP to build capacity in these groups.

Despite the interruptions posed by COVID in general, communities continued to show resilience and with the on-going assistance from LEADER staff they succeeded in bringing project applications to fruition with approvals circa €1.895m for the year. This resilience could also be witnessed in bringing projects to fruition which resulted in €1.874m being paid out in respect of completed and partially completed projects throughout the county.

PROJECT APPROVALS IN 2020

Project Promoter	Project	LEADER Grant Aid €
Castletown Finea Coole Whitehall GAA	Development of a walking track at the GAA pitch in Castletown Finea	51,518.02
Ballinagore GAA	Enhancement of facilities at the GAA grounds including upgrading of Clubhouse and walking track	36,559.67
Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (IWAI), Athlone	Fit out of IWAI's new facility at Dunrovin to include archive storage, furniture, equipment including audio visual.	35,522.11
Westmeath Comhaltas Ceoiltoiri Eireann (CCE)	Support for Mullingar Fleadh 2020 including event management, marketing and promotion, hire of equipment and signage.	180,032.06
Irish Rural Link, Moate	Purchase of IT equipment to assist IRL to assist in digitally upskilling communities	4,699.00
Milltownpass Community Action Group	Purchase of equipment and furniture to for office hub fit out	3,919.70
Athlone Women's Forum	Purchase of IT equipment to assist the group in carrying out its activities	1,311.44
Rosemount Community Centre	Purchase of IT equipment to include video projector, screen & &PA system	5,400.00
Streamstown Tidy Village	Construction of a Heritage Display Store at the Old Rail Greenway in Streamstown which will be used to house farm machinery artefacts	11,321.25

Tang GAA	Upgrading of facilities at the grounds to include enhancement of walking track, civil works and new LED lights.	12,481.90
Castletown Geoghegan Hurling Club	Construction of multi-purpose Community Hall in Castletown Geoghegan	400,000.00
Delvin Sports & Leisure	Installation of Exercise equipment at the Walking Track in Delvin	13,152.00
Tang Muintir Community Council	Upgrading of Community Centre in Tang to include enhancement of kitchen toilets and new floors.	35,909.25
Horseleap Streamstown Community Dev Association	Development of community field adjacent to community center for recreational purposes.	144,542.00
Shandonagh GAA, Ballinea, Mullingar	Development of new pitch with walking track and lights at the GAA grounds	150,000.00
Moate Action Group	Promotional and heritage project for Moate town	26,177.51
Mullingar Equestrian Centre	Purchase of portable stables for use at events at the centre and for hiring out to other venues	150,000.00
Ringtown GAA	Development of an astro pitch for use by the wider community in Whitehall/Ringtown	133,364.48

Midland Amenity Park, Dun na Si Moate.	Development of Plan for Dun na Si Heritage and Amenity Park	7,343.10
Sarsfield Square, Athlone	Development of a playground	37,360.48
Mullingar Enhancement Group	Purchase of festive lighting and equipment	84,946.56
Killucan GAA	Installation of Astro Turf pitch with lights at the grounds in Killucan	88,874.75
Bunbrosna Community Services	Development of a playground	37,244.46
Athlone Town AFC	Upgrading of pitch	28,785.00
Mount Carmel Drive Residents Association, Moate	Development of Playground and amenity works	69,256.83
Westmeath GAA, Mullingar	Upgrading of spectator facilities at the grounds	127,168.56
Athlone Squash Club	Feasibility Study to examine the development of squash courts and ancillary facilities in Athlone	14,944.50
Drumraney Community Centre	Upgrades at the community centre to include insulation and LED lights	3,188.95
Total		1,895,023.58

LEADER Co-operation Element;

One additional project on behalf of St.Colmcille's Sports Park, Ballinahown was approved for funding through the Co-operation Element of the Programme. This brought the total to 6 projects to the value of €242,977 through this additional strand of LEADER funding.

LEADER Co-operation 2020

St. Colmcille's Sports Park Ballinahown	Development of an astro turf pitch with lights at this community facility in Ballinahown (in conjunction with Offaly LAG)	151,023.58
Total		151,023.58

Mullingar Town Band Hall re-opens

Following extensive refurbishments, Mullingar Town Band re-opened their newly enhanced facilities in July 2020.

The Town Band's journey with LEADER commenced in 2017 when the committee approached WCD with a view to securing LEADER funding to undertake renovations to their outdated premises, a building which they had occupied for over 40 years. LEADER officers provided advice and guidance which enabled the Town Band committee to put forward their application which was successful in securing a large capital grant in the amount of €401,624.32 representing 75% of the costs to undertake the renovations which were valued at €535,499.10.

Through the provision of LEADER funding, the Band Hall has been transformed. The refurbishments included the replacement of the asbestos roof, upgrade the heating system and windows to improve energy efficiency, changes to internal structure to facilitate additional tuition and meeting rooms as well as upgrading of the toilet and kitchen facilities. The transformation has provided the Town Band with a fit for purpose facility, an achievement for all to be proud of.

The Town Band has a long history and association with Mullingar and is deeply embedded in the culture of the town. Its mission statement is to educate, elevate and entertain through the art of music. It forms a core part of Mullingar's community heritage with participation at numerous community events over the years. Its attendance at competition events both nationally and internationally has helped to promote Mullingar and its rich music heritage. This newly enhanced facility will assist the Band to continue its role as a leading Irish marching band. It will enable them to increase their membership and continue to provide music tuition and entertainment to the people of Mullingar and surrounding areas, many of whom are young people, thus creating a positive social impact on its members and the wider community.

"Our application to LEADER was a success thanks to Theresa Geoghegan and Bernie Leavy of Westmeath Community Development who guided Mullingar Town Band through the application process step by step. We received a grant of €401,000. The Band is thrilled and privileged to own this premises and is delighted to welcome local groups to avail of this community facility". **Patricia Magee, Mullingar Town Band**



At the opening of the newly refurbished Mullingar Town Band Hall
In July 2020 were L to R; Theresa Geoghegan, LEADER Programme WCD,
Dermot Leavy, Chairman WCD, Bernie Leavy LEADER Programme, WCD &
Patricia Magee, Mullingar Town Band.



Outside image of the premises. Inside the newly refurbished premises of Mullingar Town Band

Westmeath Volunteer Centre

2020 will be a year best remembered for the influence of Covid-19 and despite restrictions, it continued to be a busy and productive year for Westmeath Volunteer Centre.

Westmeath Community Development promotes the value of volunteering by offering a range of quality volunteering opportunities in the county, delivered through Westmeath Volunteer Centre. (WVC). WVC is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development and are affiliated with Volunteer Ireland <https://www.volunteer.ie/>

WVC provide quality volunteer placement service to the non-profit and community & voluntary sector in the county. We also offer 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:

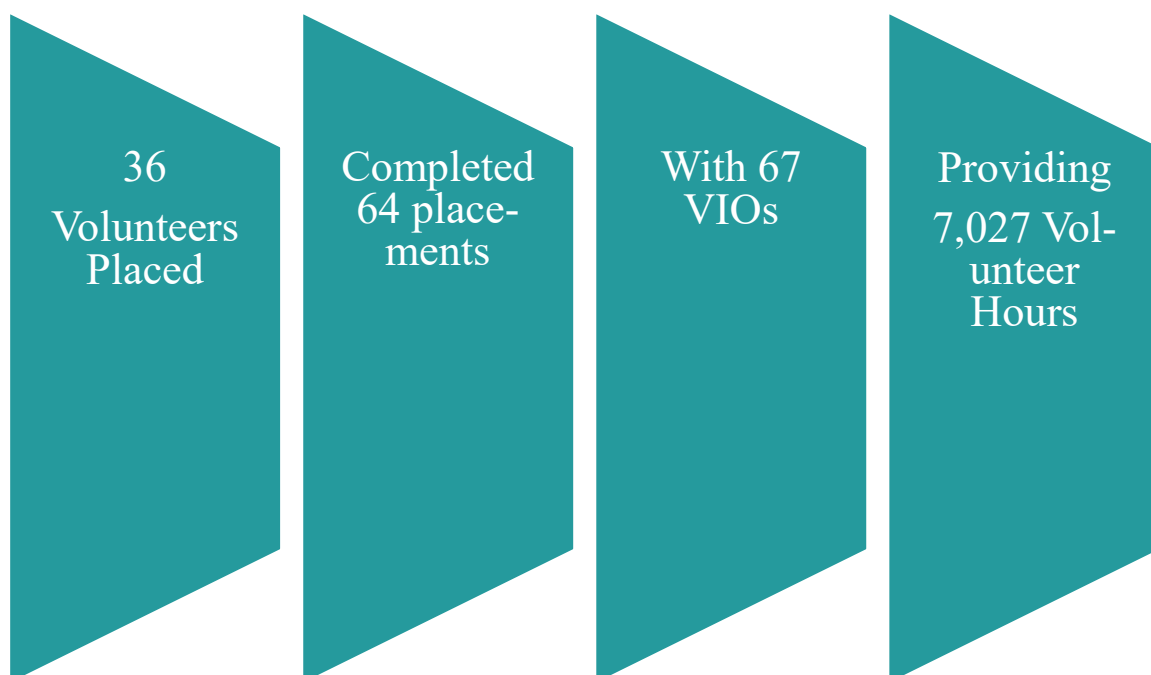
"To promote the value of volunteering and increase the range and quality of volunteering in County Westmeath"



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

Metrics:



Feedback from volunteers and Organisations:

An Organisation Story

"We started meals on wheels at the beginning of Covid. As well as people receiving a nice meal they were glad to see someone to chat to even if it was only for a few minutes. It was, and still is good to do something for someone".

Martha

A Volunteer Story

"During the lockdown when everywhere was closed and grounded to a halt. Westmeath Community Development worked with the County Council to assist people who were elderly, alone, or compromised in some way. I was asked to take part in assisting with shopping and collecting prescriptions during this time and while at times it could be challenging it was an honour to help the people I was assigned to. While in the greater scheme of things shopping might seem to be a minor task but to some people it was a lifeline. The people I assisted were a pleasure to know and help".

Deirdre.

Thanks To A Volunteer

"During the Covid-19 lockdown we had a family member living in Westmeath and we lived in another County. Our relative is elderly and needed to cocoon. We got through to the Volunteer Centre via the Covid Helpline. The Volunteer was a Godsend, she was so easy to communicate with and had a real understanding of the needs of our relative. She provided shopping and hot meal service, and ensured he had information on all other relevant services available to him. I don't know what we would have done without her".

Aodhan.

Childcare Services

WCD Childcare Services operates from 7 Childcare and After-school centres, 6 in Athlone and 1 in Mullingar. Our After-school Service is funded through the National Childcare Investment Programme, under the new National Childcare Scheme, from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. Supports such as school meals is funded by the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection and Westmeath County Childcare Committee.

Our 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. After-school services are available 4 hours a day from Monday-Friday during the school year, and includes a homemade hot snack, homework supports, art and cultural activities, sports, and games.

WCD Childcare Service had many challenges in 2020, with closures of all services during the first lockdown. Teachers delivered their classes through zoom, whilst our Childcare Staff Team was at hand to support parents and children with homework and activity support through WhatsApp groups.

Eventually childcare centres reopened however, only to parents who were back working as frontline workers. This has seen a significant fall in numbers of children attending in comparison to 2019 figures.

2018-2019	189 Children Registered	2019-2020	73 Children Registered
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Westmeath Care and Repair Service

Westmeath Care and Repair Service Westmeath is operated through Westmeath Community Development under the umbrella of Age Action. The programme aims to support older people to remain living in their homes as long as possible. It is not a funded programme and is supported through SICAP as part of our role in the Westmeath Age Friendly Strategy, with a small amount of funding received annually from Mullingar Credit Union.



The service has three elements; providing volunteer support to carry out small repair works; providing volunteers for home visits; and Befriending calls service.

Repair Service

Small household jobs, from fitting a light bulb to fitting smoke alarms, shelving; painting; installing security locks; light gardening chores; mowing lawns; and general home maintenance work.

. In 2020, due to the impact of Covid 19 Care and Repair and trusted trades jobs figures were down considerably from 324 in the previous year to 60 for older people in Westmeath, essential work such as fitting handrails, shower seats and grab rails continued along with some outside gardening work.

Home Visits

Carried out by volunteers this is a service for isolated older people in our community. Older people would normally receive a weekly home visit from our volunteers. In 2020, home visits all but ceased, again a casualty of Covid 19, however our eldest client a lady of 105 years continued to receive her visits as her befrienders were part of her bubble.

Befriending Service.

This is where an older person receives a daily or regular phone call.

WCD have delivered the Befriending Service for many years but no-one could have foreseen what an invaluable service this would evolve into during the Covid crisis. D

Having the service already in place, promoted widely through the Community Response Forum established by Westmeath County Council meant we were in an ideal position to respond to the challenge. Along with the willing support of WCD staff in different projects, nearly 250 calls were being made each week and we estimate that up to 10,000 calls were made during 2020 .

The service had already become a critical and very valuable service to older people who had very little social contact with others, in 2020 it became a vital service.

One staff member John commented "it has been a pleasure to make the calls, a privilege to do it, and great to have been a part of helping in this way during Covid 19".

Food & Health

The Food and Health Programme is HSE funded initiative aimed at supporting people who are interested in eating a healthier diet with a limited budget. 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 life.

This is a joint initiative between WCD and HSE Midlands area in the Westmeath Longford area.

The programme has the following courses;

Health Food Made Easy (HFME)

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.



Able to Cook for Health (A2C4H)

6 Session course aimed at individuals with an intellectual disability. Each session has a practical cookery element with all participants encouraged to get involved in both preparation and cooking of simple healthy dishes.

Cool Dude Food Programme (CDFFP)

5 Session course targeting younger people between 8 and 14 years to introduce them to healthy eating through fun and practical activities. This course is popular as a school activity.

Community Health Health (CHH)

This is designed for groups that have already completed healthy food made easy course and focuses on nutrition, stress management and physical activity.

Food and Health was severely disrupted by the pandemic with the hands on model not easily transferrable to remote learning. During 2020 we completed 2 HFME Courses, 3 A2C4H, 3 Cool Dude Courses, with all other scheduled courses postponed due to Covid-19.

In December we took part in an initiative with Westmeath County Council Keep Well Campaign, to distribute food parcels to the elderly in our community. We provided perishable food items along with information leaflet on dietary requirements from Irish Nutrition & Dietetic Institution, to over 1,000 households.

Towards the end of the year we also hosted two online cookery demonstrations on our website and social media platforms after Christmas aimed at using Christmas Leftover and the other designed to help people shed the pounds after Christmas! .

GOVERNANCE & FINANCIAL REVIEW 2020

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 2020.

Board of Directors / Trustees of Westmeath Community Development in 2020

Name	Position
Dermot Leavy	Director/Chairperson
Liam Cahill	Director/Treasurer (IBEC)
Pat Boyce	Director (ICTU)
Marion Garry	Director (PPN)
Seamus Browne	Director (PPN)
Paddy Corcoran	Director (PPN)
Geraldine Lacey	Director (PPN)
Helen Donnelly	Director (PPN)
Augustina Adagun	Director (PPN)
Emily Wallace	Director (Environmental Pillar)
Joan Scally	Director (ICTU) [Appointed in 2019]
Jim Sheridan	Director (ICTU) Appointed 20/05/2020
Mary Lennon	Director (PPN) [Retired in 2019]
Paul Heduan	Director (PPN) Appointed 4/09/2020
John Mangan	Director (PPN) [Appointed in 2019]
Julia Dalton	Director [Appointed in 2019]
Michelle Smith	Company Secretary

Our Board of Directors met 8 times in 2020 with a 75% attendance rate. AGM was hosted on 28th May 2020. 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.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Schedule of Income and Expenditure for the financial year ended 31st December 2020

<u>Schedule of Income</u>	€
Department of Rural and Community Development	
Volunteer Centre & Dormant Accounts Social Innovation	158,700
Pobal – National Childcare Investment Programme	158,700
Longford Westmeath Education Training Board – Horticulture	127,660
Westmeath County Council	
SICAP	741,085
LEADER 2014-2020	379,183
Resettlement	20,079
Various (Healthy Ireland, Horticulture, Disability projects)	360
Tulsa – Community Mothers Programme	78,912
HSE – Traveler, Food & Health projects	211,481
Department of Justice – PEIL	26,126
Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection	
RSS & TUS Programmes	121,164
Job Club	109,755
Community Employment & Jobs Initiative	776,046
School Meals & SICAP related	6,264
St Stephens Green Trust	850
Other Income- Admin course fees and parent's fees	<u>105,101</u>
Total Income	3,123,717
<u>Expenditure</u>	€
Staff Costs	2,418,585
Project Specific costs	347,206
Admin and overhead costs	372,580
Total Expenditure	<u>3,138,371</u>
Deficit for the financial year	<u>(14,654)</u>

Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2020

<u>Fixed Assets</u>	€	€
Tangible assets		162,900
Current Assets		
Debtors	213,680	
Cash and cash equivalents	<u>899,411</u>	
	1,113,091	
Creditors:		678,180
Amounts falling due within one year	<u>(618,180)</u>	
Net Current Assets		<u>434,911</u>
Total Assets less Current Liabilities		<u>597,811</u>
Reserves		
Income and expenditure account		<u>597,811</u>
Total Funds		<u>597,811</u>

FUNDERS

LEADER



Childcare programme



Tus Programme



Community Employment



Volunteer Centre



Westmeath Traveller Project



Horticulture programme



Rural Social Scheme



FUNDERS

Social Innovation Fund



Live Longer & Prosper programme



Resettlement programme/ DAF/ PEIL



Community Mothers



Westmeath Care & Repair Service



Food & Health Programme



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