



**Social Inclusion &
Community Activation
Programme**

LDC Annual Progress Report 2025

**CAB – Waterford City &
County (24-1)**



**Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland**



Arna chomhchistiú ag
an Aontas Eorpach

Co-funded by the
European Union



pobal

government supporting communities

The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) is co-funded by the Irish Government, through the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, and the European Social Fund Plus under the Employment, Inclusion, Skills and Training (EIST) Programme 2021-2027

Purpose of the 2025 Annual Progress Report

The Annual Progress Report (APR) is an opportunity to critically reflect on SICAP work carried out in your CAB/Lot during 2025. It should provide high-level information on trends, emerging issues, challenges and good practice within SICAP. **It should *not* contain the same detail as the action progress reports on IRIS.**

The purpose of the 2025 Annual Progress Report is to capture the role that SICAP played in responding to the needs of SICAP target groups during the year. In doing so, this report will capture beneficiaries' needs in your CAB/Lot in 2025, and the approaches used by you to respond to these needs, alongside challenges faced and lessons learned during the year.

There is a dedicated section where you can outline the details of the supports that you have provided to the Ukrainian arrivals and/or people seeking International Protection in your CAB/Lot.

There is a section where you can detail your work in 2025 with your Local Priority Target Groups.

Space is also provided within the report to reflect on the supports provided by DRCDG and/or Pobal in 2025 and where you can outline any issues or concerns that you would like to raise.

Report size guide: 8-12 pages, excluding Appendix 1. A page number guide is provided for each question. This can be adapted to suit your reporting needs.

Two-three photographs may be included, **with the understanding that relevant permissions have been received and captions describing the photographs are provided.** We would strongly encourage you to include photos and/or links to short videos if possible.

Infographics are also encouraged.

Appendix 2 provides some tips on how to best complete the APR template.

1. Please describe the needs of SICAP beneficiaries in 2025 and, where applicable, your responses to these needs. (2-4 pages)

GUIDANCE: Please complete the below table.

Please do not include details on Ukrainians/International Protection applicants in this section as there is a dedicated New Arrivals section within this report where those details can be provided.

The following points may be useful to reflect on to inform your response:

- What types of supports did beneficiaries require during the year? What did these supports look like? Please consider **individuals, Local Community Groups (LCGs), Networks, Social Enterprises (SEs), children and families, and non-caseload individuals**, when providing your answer. Note that *Community Organisations* is used as an umbrella term for LCGs, SEs and Networks. If needs and responses were different for SEs, LCGs, Networks, please indicate this within your response below.

Beneficiary type	Identified needs in 2025	LDC Responses to needs
Individuals	Based on the 2025 Annual Plan and the summary of supports, the key needs of SICAP beneficiaries in Waterford City & County stem from socio-economic barriers, educational disadvantages, employment challenges, wellbeing issues, and integration hurdles for new arrivals. These are informed by data sources like Census 2022, ESRI reports, CSO statistics, and local strategies (e.g., Waterford Integration Strategy, Atelier Roma Project). Specific needs include: Educational and Literacy Gaps: High rates of low educational attainment (e.g., 10% of those aged 15+ completed education at primary level or below; 15% at lower secondary). Literacy/numeracy/digital skills deficits affect 21% of adults (up from 18% in 2013), with compounded barriers for groups like migrants, Roma (e.g., illiteracy in native languages), and those in disadvantaged areas. Early school-leaving risks for children in vulnerable families, including those with disabilities or from refugee/IPA backgrounds. Need for access to further education, lifelong learning, and pathways to qualifications to combat unemployment linked to low education. Employment and Labour Market Barriers: Prolonged unemployment influenced by factors like low education, poor health, lack of transport, age, literacy issues, and history of long-term joblessness or casual work. Disproportionate impacts on	Bu'ion Phort Láirge (Waterford Area Partnership, WAP/SICAP) responds through targeted, collaborative actions under Goal 2 (Individual Beneficiaries) in the 2025 plan, delivering 3,233 interventions (average 2.5 per client) via consultations with stakeholders (e.g., WWETB, DEASP, Healthy Waterford, UNESCO Learning City). Responses emphasize progression pathways, grants, workshops, and partnerships to fill service gaps, avoid duplication, and promote inclusion. Key responses by area: To Educational and Literacy Needs (Action 2.1): Information provision on learning opportunities (KPI: 70 non-caseload, 150 individuals); small grant scheme (up to €400) for further education access; referrals to literacy/numeracy/digital skills providers; representation on Waterford Wexford Literacy Coalition (WWLC) and collaboration with Adult Literacy for Life Strategy/UNESCO GNLC. Delivery of unaccredited/accredited programs (KPI: 110) like Driving Ambitions, re-use/recycling, creative education, horticulture. Supports for at-risk children/families (KPI: 50 non-caseload, 600) via family/recreational programs (e.g., autism-friendly events, summer camps), partnerships with Tusla, Barnardos, DEIS schools, and School Completion Programmes to engage parents and bridge gaps. To Employment Barriers (Action 2.2): Pre-employment pathways (KPI: 180) including industry training (retail/hospitality), CV/job search/interview workshops, soft skills programs, and training grants for immediate jobs. Collaboration with Workability,

	target groups: 80% unemployment among Travellers; largest EU disability employment gap (38.6%, with <33% of disabled people employed); migrants/Roma in unskilled/manual/precarious roles due to discrimination, language barriers, and poverty. 12.6% of 0-59 year-olds in jobless households in the South-East. Demand for pre-employment skills, self-employment options, and industry-specific training (e.g., retail, hospitality). • Wellbeing and Soft Skills Deficits: Mental health/anxiety/depression affecting under-25s and those with chronic illnesses/disabilities (14.4% disability rate in Waterford, slightly above national 13.5%). Isolation, low confidence, and resilience needs in lone-parent households (23.5% of families with children under 15), carers, and those in bad/very bad health (1.6% of population). Broader inequalities for women, immigrants, renters, and single-parent households across wellbeing indicators. • Integration and Support for New Arrivals: Rising international protection applications (83.4% increase to 14,032 by August 2024); 3,028 TPAs/IPAs in Waterford, with trauma, mental health issues, and policy changes requiring flexible aid. Language proficiency barriers (e.g., conversational English for employment/integration); vocational training needs (e.g., Safe Pass, Manual Handling); social isolation; and access to education/employment for professionals (e.g., doctors needing certification). High demand in Direct Provision Centres (DPCs) and temporary accommodations, with 9-13% of TPAs leaving Ireland shortly after arrival. These needs prioritize disadvantaged/very disadvantaged areas with high concentrations of disabled people, lone parents, jobless households, low education, and new arrivals (e.g., all TPA/IPA centres, DEIS schools)	INTREO, and networks to monitor progression and provide wrap-around services. Self-employment supports (KPI: 180) via Business Fundamentals workshops, 1:1 mentoring (e.g., for BTWEA applicants), Start Your Own Business (SYOB) sessions, startup grants, and topic-specific workshops (e.g., digital strategy, AI in business). Protocol with DEASP/LEO for referrals, business planning, and networking through WAP Business Support Network. • To Wellbeing and Soft Skills Needs (Action 2.3): Health/wellbeing programs (KPI: 120) like mindful art, healthy cooking, yoga, mindfulness, breathwork, aromatherapy to reduce isolation, build networks, and promote integration (in collaboration with Healthy Waterford/Ireland). Motivation/resilience/confidence programs (KPI: 30) including self-care, life coaching, and personal action plans, with referrals from Social Prescribing. Focus on Healthy Ireland priorities (e.g., staying connected, minding mood/body). • To New Arrivals' Needs (Action 2.4): English language programs (e.g., Failte Isteach for 300+ students in 2024, extended to 1-year courses reaching B1-B2 levels; 11 classes for 150 students from beginner to IELTS). Information sessions on SYOB, living/working/studying in Ireland; targeted employment training (e.g., Manual Handling, HACCP, Security, Safe Pass with translations); wellbeing programs for integration; summer camps for children/families; progression to SICAP grants/mentoring/employability supports. Collaboration with Waterford Integration Team, WWETB, Red Cross, and others for coordinated services, outreach in DPCs/rest centres, and feedback via focus groups. Proposal for additional funding to expand language/vocational training amid rising arrivals (3,110 Ukrainians by Feb 2025).
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Community Organisations <i>(please include details for LCGs, SEs and Networks as appropriate)</i>	1. Community Centre for Dungarvan, Co Waterford identified by the community through 'Making the Link' Network events in 2024. Lack of community space is hindering community and social engagement. Community organisations and service providers are struggling with high rental costs, poor accessibility, limited availability at evenings and weekends and inadequate storage which is impacting on programme delivery 2. Disproportionate governance, compliance and administrative burdens for volunteer-led SICAP organisations and those who are registered charities. 3. Online grant applications and reporting are a barrier for SICAP registered groups as many experience low digital and literacy skills 4. Financial sustainability remains a challenge, particularly in accessing grants based on reimbursed costs. SICAP groups do not have access to unrestricted funding to support such grants or to cover essential operating expenses not allowed under some funding criteria. 5. Many community organisations are increasingly reliant on a small number of long-standing volunteers with ageing profiles. 6. Limited resources and supports for the Traveller community in Dungarvan & West Waterford, including concerns around housing, health, employment and low participation of Traveller men in community activity and the labour market 7. Community organisations highlighted themed networking to support peer support learning and coordination with a focus on Men's Sheds and Community Growers across city and county. Key issues include operational costs e.g. insurance, heating etc.	1. SICAP commissioned and funded a Feasibility Study to provide evidence of key needs. Over 20 community organisations and service providers are members of a Steering Group established, facilitated by SICAP with the next stage agreed with Waterford Council to develop a strategic plan in 2026 (funded by SICAP). 2. SICAP provides intensive governance and developmental supports including developing/reviewing Constitutions, committee skills, succession planning, conflict resolution, guidance on Charities Regulator Governance Code and grant application support. 3. Staff provide support with online applications and access to digital. Basic IT training was provided to rural community organisations to enhance skills and access to digital equipment 4. SICAP supported organisations to improve financial sustainability through grant application support, budgeting guidance and strategic planning. SICAP grant also helps groups to organise an activity or buy equipment that they may need if they cannot access other grants. 5. SICAP's ongoing developmental and administrative supports continue to sustain local community groups and address burnout and challenges in recruiting volunteers by implementing annual plans that are realistic to manage increasing workloads. 6. SICAP and Waterford Council co-funded a Traveller Needs Analysis in collaboration with Mincéirí Port Láirge which identified priority actions and gaps. SICAP supported delivery of Traveller Pride Day and Family Fun Day, strengthening cultural pride, visibility and engagement. 7. SICAP coordinated themed networks and events, laying groundwork for a structured network in 2026. Supported Men's Sheds in collaboration with the national Irish Men's Shed Association. Outcome report will be used to advocate nationally on identified issues
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	8. Building awareness with LCGs and individuals of the social & circular enterprise sector within Waterford communities and support the growth and development of the social and circular economy 9. Re-building a social & circular economy network to enable peer support and collaboration for success.	8 Awareness raising workshops and co-delivery of seminar on the potential of social enterprise to support rural development in the Comeragh area. 9. Collaboration with Waterford LEO and the Entrepreneurs Academy to deliver an 8-session blended programme to support development. Supporting participants to network with each other and engage with national networks. 1:1 mentoring to existing and emerging social and community enterprises 10 Establishment of Repair Café in Waterford
Children and families	The 2025 Annual Plan highlights several needs specific to children and their families, particularly those in SICAP target groups (e.g., disadvantaged communities, jobless/low-paid households, disabled people, refugees/IPAs, lone parents). These needs are driven by socio-economic barriers, educational exclusion, and integration challenges: • Risk of Early School Leaving: Children in vulnerable families face barriers to education progression, including low parental engagement, financial constraints, and lack of out-of-school opportunities. This is linked to broader issues like low parental literacy/skills, which reduce capacity to support children's learning. • Access to Social, Recreational, and Learning Opportunities: Families in target groups often lack means to access summer camps, cultural/recreational programs, or autism-friendly events, leading to isolation and reduced wellbeing/integration. Specific gaps exist for children with disabilities and those from refugee/IPA families. • Integration for New Arrivals' Children: Children of TPAs/IPAs (including Ukrainians) experience trauma, language barriers, and social exclusion in temporary accommodations (e.g., DPCs). Needs include fostering wellbeing, social networks, and integration through family-oriented activities.	Buíon Phort Láirge (WAP/SICAP) responds through targeted actions in the 2025 plan, focusing on collaboration, non-caseload supports, and filling service gaps. Key responses include: • Action 2.13: Supports to Children at Risk of Early School Leaving and Their Families (KPI: 50 caseload; 600 non-caseload): ○ Delivery of family, cultural, and recreational programmes (e.g., autism-friendly events, Summer Camp Access Programmes) to foster wellbeing and integration. ○ Targeted support for families unable to access out-of-school social/learning opportunities, including children with disabilities and those from refugee/IPA backgrounds (non-caseload focus). ○ Collaboration with Tusla, Barnardos, Respond Housing, DEIS schools, School Completion Programmes, and key networks to identify gaps and provide coordinated supports. ○ Programmes to engage parents in learning and skills development, enhancing their capacity to support children in staying in school. ○ Partnership with School Completion Programmes to ensure equality of opportunity across schools, identifying gaps in services for target groups and geographical areas,

	• Parental Capacity Building: Parents in target groups (e.g., lone parents, those with low education) need supports to engage in learning/skills development to better support their children's education and reduce intergenerational disadvantage. These needs are prioritized in disadvantaged areas, DEIS schools, and TPA/IPA centres, with references to Census 2022 (e.g., 23.5% lone-parent families) and partnerships with Tusla, Barnardos, and DEIS schools.	and offering SICAP programme support for children and families. • New Arrivals Supports (Action 2.4): ○ Support for SICAP summer camp programs to foster integration for children and families of New Arrivals (e.g., TPAs/IPAs), promoting social cohesion and wellbeing. These actions are needs-led, developed in consultation with stakeholders (e.g., WWETB, statutory/community organisations), and implemented from January 2025 onward, with mid-year reviews in May. They emphasize progression pathways, additionality, and avoiding duplication.
Non-caseload individuals	1. Some communities are experiencing challenges in delivering inclusive, co-designed community activities and non-caseload events to ensure under-represented groups can meaningfully participate in community life. 2. Ongoing levels of isolation, loneliness, and poor mental health are being reported with many communities, families and friends impacted by an increase in deaths by suicide. These issues particularly affect older people, lone parents, migrants, carers, and those living in remote rural areas. COs provide valuable social connections, peer support, and inclusive activities that reduce loneliness, isolation and promote increased health & wellbeing. 3. Increased cost-of-living pressures are impacting on household finances and financial stress. Anxiety and wellbeing are impacting in people's ability to participate in community life especially in volunteering due to out-of-pocket costs.	1. SICAP works with and creates collaborative approaches with COs and service providers in co-designing innovative and inclusive community activities and non-caseload events. SICAP supports communities to shape events that reflect their own priorities and needs. E.g. International Women's Day, Traveller Pride Event, Family Fun Days. SICAPs role includes planning support, administration, capacity building, event promotion etc. These activities and events enhance participation of non-caseload beneficiaries leading individuals to engage with their community and other supports and services including Goal 2. 2. SICAP organised a Community Mental Health and Wellness Event in collaboration with HSE Connecting for Life to coincide with World Suicide Prevention Day. This event brought together services, supports and the wider community to showcase available support services and to host talks and workshops under the theme of 'Changing the Narrative on Suicide'. The event will be replicated in the county in 2026 3. SICAP delivered and supported inclusive community wellbeing events. Information workshops on energy transition, grants and tips on saving costs are hosted by SICAP and SEAI with SICAP COs with practical supports.

2. Please provide an overview of SICAP supports that you provided to the New Arrivals. Please also provide details of how/if the additional funding enabled you to deliver these supports. (1-2 pages).

Guidance: *What types of supports did New Arrivals require during the year? What did these supports look like? What challenges or barriers have you experienced? What has helped you overcome these barriers/challenges? If you have carried out any broader community-based integration initiatives, please provide details of those in this section.*

Integration through Orientation Programme

SICAP delivers weekly sessions for New Arrivals through English language to enhance integration and inclusion. In 2025 Waterford experienced many changes in residents across our 7 IPAS Centres which has an impact on people's well-being and sense of belonging when they are uprooted for another part of Ireland. Over the initial 6-8 weeks SICAP staff host sessions to support orientation – visiting libraries. An Post, DSP offices, local amenities e.g. heritage and parks.

This programme is delivered within local communities and includes awareness of Life in Ireland including making of St Brigid's Crosses, promotion of St Patrick's Day parades, Africa Day, celebration of cultural national events etc. Weekly contact strengthens community connections and links with existing services including LAIT team and LDC internal projects e.g. IEM, Intercultural Health etc.

SICAP supports several migrant COs including Ukrainian, Sudanese and Hungarian including developing their organisation, accessing funding and collaboration.

Grow Together Programme

Following on from one of the Community Growers events with Gracedieu Growers, a project emerged 'Grow Together Programme' for New Arrivals. A 10-week horticulture programme with 12 participants from diverse backgrounds was facilitated by the community growers with hands-on sessions in gardening, teamwork and shared learning. Through sharing of skills and knowledge participants confidence was strengthened, and created a stronger sense of belonging and shared purpose. The Grow Together Programme is more than just gardening. It reflects the core principles of community development including empowerment, inclusion, and sustainability, giving participants the skills and confidence to grow and contribute to their local community.

See video at: <https://www.instagram.com/buionphortlaire/reel/DPO97VNjMUg/>

Collaboration & Networking with Partners

SICAP hosted a network event of all service providers and state agencies with responsibility for supporting New Arrivals. The network event strengthened links between services, highlighted ongoing and emerging needs and provided opportunities for shared learning of current service provision.

To enhance community engagement and address isolation especially within rural IPAS Centres, SICAP coordinated activities and events with key partners including Waterford Branch of Irish Red Cross, Waterford Integration Service, LAIT, CYPSC and HSE. SICAP co-funded Waterford Anti-Racism Month in March with Waterford Council, led by Waterford Integration Service. A calendar of activities is promoted with community organisations, schools, service providers etc. hosting their own events. A symposium provides an opportunity for all to network and gain insights on national policy development through key speakers.

In Goal 2, The SICAP program offered comprehensive supports to New Arrivals, including those under temporary and international protection, focusing on integration, language acquisition, and employability. Key initiatives included the Failte Isteach English Language Programme, which provided conversational and proficiency-building classes to facilitate daily interactions and professional advancement, alongside tailored sessions for specific groups like professionals needing certification. Employment-focused supports encompassed workshops on starting a business in Ireland, living and working locally, and studying opportunities, as well as practical training in areas such as manual handling, food safety, CV preparation, interview skills, and security. Well-being programs promoted social integration through mindful activities and community events, while collaborations with local organizations enabled referrals to lifelong learning,

self-employment mentoring, and summer camps for families. These efforts emphasized rapid adaptation to policy changes and short-term needs, fostering cohesion across Waterford's accommodation centers.

Additional funding played a crucial role in scaling these supports amid rising arrivals, particularly from Ukraine. It allowed for expanded English classes with extended durations and resources like textbooks, as well as increased delivery of accredited vocational courses such as Safe Pass and barista training. This enhanced outreach to new centers, ensuring equitable access and addressing barriers like language proficiency to accelerate integration and job readiness without straining existing budgets.

3. Please provide an overview of your work to deepen engagement with your Local Priority Target Group(s) (LPTG) (1-2 pages)

Guidance: Please list your LPTG(s) below. Please outline your progress, challenges and successes (as applicable) in engaging with each LPTG in your area.

a. LPTG(s) list

1. **People Living in Disadvantaged Communities**
2. **People with a Disability**
3. **People living in households that are jobless or are in low-paid and/or precarious employment**

b. LPTG overview (please provide an overview for each LPTG)

People Living in Disadvantaged Communities:

SICAP Annual Support Plan process and ongoing outreach work ensures that registered CO actions are informed by local knowledge and lived experience, enabling communities to identify priorities and co-design responses that are relevant and accessible to their local communities. Many of our COs register as supporting People Living in Disadvantaged Communities as their communities include individuals and families experiencing persistent socio-economic disadvantage, low income, unemployment, social isolation and limited access to services. In Waterford, this includes a significant number of designated Disadvantaged, Very Disadvantaged and Extremely Disadvantaged small areas across both urban and rural locations, where barriers are often compounded by poor transport, digital exclusion, cost-of-living pressures and limited access to inclusive community infrastructure.

SICAP supported and co-delivered community wellbeing, social and cultural activities that reduced isolation and which offered opportunities for increased participation. This included community wellbeing & playful street events, mental health awareness event, Family Fun Days, Community Growers initiatives and Traveller Pride & Family Fun Day. These initiatives enabled SICAP to build trust, identify emerging needs and link individuals to further supports and services.

SICAP prioritises developmental supports for COs in disadvantaged areas. Many groups continue to face challenges relating to governance, volunteer recruitment, compliance and funding. During 2025, SICAP provided tailored developmental supports. These interventions strengthened organisational resilience and supported groups to remain operational and responsive to local needs.

The lack of affordable and accessible Community Space remains an issue in Dungarvan. SICAP responded by progressing a feasibility study to address this. The delivery of Energy Saving Workshops in disadvantaged communities has helped to contribute to energy efficiency and savings for some households.

Larchville & Lisduggan (adjacent communities with Very Disadvantaged status) are prioritised communities by Waterford LCDC with a Task Group established to explore key actions to address child poverty and low education attainment. Many SICAP target groups reside in the communities including older people, lone parents, young people, jobless households, carers and those with a disability.

In 2025, Waterford Area Partnership deepened engagement with people living in disadvantaged communities by prioritising small areas with high levels of deprivation, jobless households, lone-parent families, and educational disadvantage. We adopted a community development approach, actively reaching out through Local Community Groups (LCGs), Family Resource Centres (FRCs), DEIS schools, and other local voluntary organisations to build trust and identify emerging needs from the ground up.

Our work involved joint outreach between teams to deliver tailored programmes directly in these communities, including lifelong learning workshops, business fundamentals and self-employment awareness sessions, soft skills and wellbeing programmes (such as mindfulness and healthy living), and pre-employment pathways. We emphasised co-design, ensuring programmes responded to lived experiences rather than top-down assumptions. Regular networking events, information stands at community venues, awareness-raising workshops, and seamless progression pathways encouraged sustained participation and reduced barriers to access.

This relational, place-based approach strengthened community voice, improved service uptake, and supported individuals to move toward personal, educational, and employment goals.

People with a Disability: People with a disability and their families who are their primary carer continue to experience barriers to participation, access to services and inclusive community life. In 2025, SICAP supported specific COs such as Autism Support Dungarvan, Autism Friendly Dungarvan, The A Team, Carriglea Cairde Services and Autism Friendly Waterford. SICAP provides ongoing governance, administrative and organisational development supports including assistance with funding applications, strategic planning, committee skills, constitution development and compliance, strengthening the group's sustainability and capacity to respond to increasing demand for support and advocacy from the local community. This resulted in strengthened organisational sustainability and enhanced the capacity of groups to respond to increasing demand for support, information and advocacy from individuals and families within the local community.

Over the past year SICAP has supported Autism Friendly Dungarvan during their First Year of Participation in AsIAM Autism Friendly Town Programme. SICAP provided funding support towards the launch of the initiative and towards the facilitation of an Autism Town Plan for Dungarvan. This process supported a more coordinated, strategic and community-wide approach to autism inclusion, bringing together community organisations, service providers, local businesses and members of the local community. The planning process was underpinned by inclusive consultation, ensuring that autistic people, parents and carers could engage meaningfully and safely in shaping local responses.

In 2025, Waterford Area Partnership prioritised deepening engagement with people with disabilities, who represent a key SICAP target group facing significant barriers including the EU's largest disability employment gap (38.6%), compounded discrimination, and lower educational attainment. We focused on areas with higher-than-average disability prevalence (14.4% in Waterford, above the national 13.5%) and integrated supports across disadvantaged communities, DEIS schools, and all TPA/IPA centres.

Our approach centred on collaboration with statutory and community organisations, disability representative groups, and networks to identify specific needs and co-design responses. Outreach involved joint team efforts with local partners to deliver tailored programmes directly accessible to this group, including pre-employment pathways with soft skills, CV and interview workshops, industry-specific training (e.g., retail and hospitality), and self-employment supports such as Business Fundamentals workshops and mentoring. Lifelong learning initiatives provided small grants for Further Education access, while wellbeing programmes (mindfulness, healthy cooking, yoga) addressed isolation, built confidence, and promoted social networks. We ensured additionality by filling service gaps, offering progression pathways, and providing wrap-around supports to overcome barriers like transport, health, and literacy challenges.

This relational, needs-led strategy strengthened trust, increased participation, and supported individuals toward improved employability, personal development, and community inclusion.

People living in households that are jobless or are in low-paid and/or precarious employment:

Throughout 2025, Waterford Area Partnership concentrated efforts on building stronger connections with individuals and families in jobless households or those depending on low-paid and unstable work—groups

heavily concentrated in Waterford's most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. These households often contend with entrenched challenges such as prolonged unemployment, limited educational qualifications, literacy difficulties, lack of personal transport, health issues, and additional layers of disadvantage for groups including Travellers, Roma, migrants, and people with disabilities.

We strengthened engagement by embedding ourselves in local networks, working hand-in-hand with Family Resource Centres, Local Community Groups, DEIS schools, Intreo offices, the Local Enterprise Office, and community/voluntary partners to surface real-time needs and shape practical, responsive supports. Through coordinated outreach, we brought programmes straight into priority areas, offering pre-employment preparation (including job-search skills, interview techniques, soft-skills development, and sector-specific training in hospitality and retail), self-employment pathways (featuring group-based Business Fundamentals sessions, personalised mentoring, Start Your Own Business workshops, and modest start-up grants), and supportive transitions to accredited training or Further Education through targeted small grants.

We fostered ongoing involvement by hosting community information events, setting up stalls at local gatherings, facilitating networking opportunities, and creating clear progression routes that connected employment actions with wellbeing, literacy improvement, and lifelong learning opportunities. This grounded, trust-based method helped overcome immediate obstacles, reduced disconnection from services, and empowered participants to achieve more stable employment, better earnings, and long-term economic resilience.

4. Please outline the challenges faced and lessons learned in relation to the overall delivery of SICAP during 2025. Were you able to overcome any of the challenges? If so, please describe. (half a page - 1 page)

Key issues with delivery of Goal 1 actions:

Increased demand on SICAP staff and capacity to respond to community needs requires innovative approaches and planning with a stronger emphasis by the team in supporting COs to focus on collaborative approaches. This approach improved outcomes for SICAP target groups and reinforced the value of collaboration as a core SICAP principle.

New and emerging projects and staff is creating a sense of duplication with many communities struggling to understand the role of all the projects, service providers and state agencies. This can lead to fragmented provision, inefficient use of resources, and confusion among CO's and service users about where to access the most appropriate support. We all rely on local communities to support us to deliver on our programme outcomes however we are experiencing some projects leading on social inclusion initiatives with no consultation or collaboration with SICAP. SICAP has raised this issue with Waterford LCDC and other partners to mitigate against overload on local community groups and potential burn out.

Upskilling of staff in governance and compliance is ongoing to ensure we provide correct guidance and information. Governance requirements have expanded in recent years, often without an increase in volunteer capacity or skillsets. SICAP staff play a critical role in addressing this challenge by providing hands-on, tailored governance supports, essential in enabling COs to remain compliant. Other community groups have approached us for similar supports however we do not have the capacity for additional groups especially those who do not align with SICAPs programme requirements. While others provide workshops on some aspects of governance e.g. Waterford PPN, The Wheel, Carmicheal Centre etc there are no other local partners with the role of or knowledge and experience required to provide one-to-one group supports.

SICAP COs are challenged with the new approach to funding criteria of paying upfront and being reimbursed as they experience disadvantage and barriers with no access to reserve funding or fundraising opportunities.

Increased digitalisation is resulting in digital poverty and exclusion, especially among older volunteers in registration systems and reporting SICAP staff provide supports and access where needed.

1. Duplicates in IRIS and Data Management A persistent administrative challenge throughout 2025 was the duplicate identification and resolution process within the IRIS system. The manual verification and merging of records proved time-consuming and prone to errors, particularly when dealing with high volumes of New Arrivals and individuals accessing multiple supports. **Overcome?** Yes – the provision of a dedicated POBAL-generated Excel sheet listing potential duplicates significantly streamlined the process. By cross-referencing this list against our local records, we were able to systematically resolve duplicates more efficiently, reduce data inconsistencies, and improve reporting accuracy. **Lesson learned:** Centralised duplicate reports from the national team are invaluable; early and regular use of these tools prevents escalation of data quality issues.

2. Low Turnout and Engagement at Training Events Several pre-employment, self-employment, and skills workshops experienced lower-than-expected attendance, with some referrals from stakeholders not showing up on the day. This reduced programme efficiency, wasted preparation resources, and limited reach to priority groups. **Overcome?** Partially – we addressed this through direct follow-up conversations with referring stakeholders (e.g., Intreo, representative organisations, community groups) to ensure referred individuals were genuinely interested, available, and appropriately matched to the training content. We also shifted delivery toward more in-demand topics identified through participant and partner feedback (e.g., conversational English, practical vocational skills, and neurodivergence-aware sessions). **Lesson learned:** Stronger pre-engagement screening and needs-matching by referrers, combined with ongoing demand analysis, are critical to improving turnout and maximising impact. Building in reminder systems and flexible scheduling further helps.

3. Insufficient Funding to Meet Demand for English Language Provision Demand for English language support – particularly conversational classes and Failte Isteach delivery at accommodation centres and across the county – far exceeded available resources, driven by the continued high number of New Arrivals (especially Ukrainian beneficiaries of temporary protection and IPAs). Budget constraints meant we could not expand group sizes, extend class durations, or provide sufficient materials (e.g., textbooks, printed resources) to all who needed them. **Overcome?** Partially – we mitigated the shortfall by leveraging resources from other SICAP strands (e.g., wellbeing and community events for informal language practice), collaborating closely with WWETB and private providers for additional classes where possible, and prioritising the most vulnerable participants. However, these measures were not sufficient to fully meet the scale of need. **Lesson learned:** English language remains a foundational barrier to integration and employability for New Arrivals; dedicated, ring-fenced funding for this priority area is essential to avoid over-reliance on cross-programme stretching and to deliver the volume and quality required.

Overall Reflection While 2025 delivery achieved strong wrap-around support and progression for many beneficiaries, these challenges highlighted the importance of robust national tools for data management, proactive stakeholder alignment on referrals, and adequate resourcing for high-demand, evidence-based priorities like language provision. Where we could adapt locally (through better screening, demand-led programming, and creative resource-sharing), outcomes improved; however, systemic issues such as funding levels require national-level attention to enable full realisation of SICAP's potential in rapidly changing contexts like Waterford's.

5. Please describe an approach or project that worked well in 2025 that you think would be useful to share with other SICAP implementers. Why do you think this would be useful to share with others? (half a page)

Guidance: Please do not use the same project or approach that you used for your 2025 case study. This should be a different project.

Sustainable Energy Communities is a co-funded energy transition project by SICAP and SEAI. COs are supported with information and guidance on developing Energy Master Plans, accessing grants and updates on policy developments – these actions are coordinated with Waterford Council Climate Action Team and SEAI. The project commenced in April and in Q4 a number of information workshops were organised by SICAP with our COs to provide information on energy saving tips, guidance on heating and electricity bills and how to change tariffs etc. This action is a positive response to support SICAP target groups with cost of living, financial management and adapting lifestyle to reduce costs.

Co-development of The Social Foundry with Waterford LEO & the Entrepreneurs Academy. An 8 session blended learning programme focusing on social enterprise development fundamentals. Attendance by 9 individuals seeking to expand their S/E idea. All attendees engaged in 1:1 mentoring to develop a next stage business plan and supported to network for shared learning.

In 2025, Buíon Phort Láirge (formerly Waterford Area Partnership) delivered a highly effective, integrated model under SICAP that systematically leveraged all programme strands to create comprehensive wrap-around support for beneficiaries. Rather than operating actions in isolation, we intentionally aligned and interconnected initiatives across lifelong learning, employability, soft skills/wellbeing, and New Arrivals supports. This holistic approach ensured individuals received seamless, multi-faceted assistance tailored to their evolving needs, addressing barriers in education, employment, language, confidence, family wellbeing, and social integration.

Exemplary elements included summer camp access programmes enabling children from disadvantaged and New Arrival families to participate in out-of-school activities; strong self-employment partnerships with the Local Enterprise Office, featuring co-referrals, joint mentoring, and Business Fundamentals workshops; county-wide Failte Isteach English language delivery, including extended conversational classes at accommodation centres; targeted neurodivergence training to build inclusive employability pathways; and employment supports customised to the priorities of clients referred by representative groups (e.g., disability, Traveller, migrant, or Roma organisations).

This interconnected delivery proved particularly successful because it reduced fragmentation, minimised drop-off between services, built deeper trust through consistent relationships, and accelerated progression toward sustainable outcomes like job entry, business start-up, or educational advancement. Sharing this model with other SICAP implementers would be valuable as it demonstrates practical ways to maximise additionality, enhance collaboration across strands and partners, and deliver greater impact for priority groups amid rising demands (e.g., from New Arrivals or long-term unemployed). It offers a replicable framework for turning individual actions into a cohesive ecosystem, improving efficiency, participant retention, and overall programme effectiveness without requiring entirely new resources

6. Please outline how you incorporated SICAP's horizontal principles into your work? (1-2 pages)

Guidance: Use this space to describe how your work is shaped and underpinned by SICAP horizontal principles (i.e., promoting a human rights and equality framework, applying quality community development approaches, developing collaborative approaches with stakeholders and promoting climate justice).

Promoting a Human Rights and Equality Framework: a positive example is the Grow Together Programme strengthening human rights and equality framework through inclusive, community-led action that supported social inclusion, integration and participation. With SICAP support, CO progressed to co-design and deliver a structured 10-week programme grounded in shared activity, participation and mutual learning. The programme created a safe, informal and non-stigmatising space where people from diverse backgrounds could engage together through practical gardening activity, reducing barriers linked to language, confidence and social isolation.

The programme delivered clear equality and inclusion outcomes, including increased confidence and leadership capacity among local community volunteers, improved social inclusion and integration for migrant participants, strengthened social connections and wellbeing, and the development of practical skills in a supportive environment.

Buíon Phort Láirge embedded a human rights and equality lens across all 2025 SICAP activities, ensuring non-discriminatory, inclusive delivery with particular attention to gender equality and anti-discrimination. We prioritised target groups facing compounded disadvantage—such as people with disabilities (14.4% of Waterford's population), Travellers (high unemployment rates), Roma, migrants, refugees, International Protection Applicants, and those in jobless or low-paid households—through tailored, barrier-reducing supports. Programmes actively countered exclusion by offering accessible small grants for Further Education, neurodivergence-aware employment training, and targeted English language provision (Failte Isteach) at accommodation centres, enabling equitable access to opportunities. Wellbeing initiatives addressed isolation and mental health inequalities, while self-employment and employability pathways challenged occupational segregation and discrimination, aligning with equality commitments and supporting progressive outcomes for marginalised individuals and families.

Applying quality community development approaches: our day-to-day work is embedded in quality community development practice with a strong emphasis on participation, empowerment, capacity building and collective action. SICAP staff worked alongside communities using needs led and strength-based approaches, informed by continuous consultation through Annual Support Plans and ongoing engagement with groups.

A key learning during 2025 was the need to meet community organisations at their current level of capacity. Many LCGs required pre-development supports in governance, committee skills, financial management and digital skills. SICAP responded with tailored, one to one supports rather than overly complex training courses, enabling groups to build confidence and sustainability over time.

SICAP is actively engaged in supporting the development of the national SIACP QSF for Community Development Practices with our national network. It is envisaged that this QSF will be piloted in Q1 2026 by DRCDG and Pobal

We applied quality community development principles throughout 2025 by working bottom-up, building on lived experiences, and fostering active participation of disadvantaged and marginalised communities. Outreach was rooted in priority small areas and disadvantaged neighbourhoods, involving co-design and co-delivery with Local Community Groups, Family Resource Centres, DEIS schools, and representative organisations. This ensured programmes—ranging from lifelong learning workshops and summer camp access for children to soft skills, wellbeing sessions, and pre-employment pathways—responded directly to identified needs rather than imposing top-down solutions. Relational engagement, joint outreach by Goal 1 and Goal 2 teams, awareness events, and progression pathways empowered participants, combated poverty as a barrier to inclusion, and strengthened community voice, ownership, and sustained involvement in personal and collective development.



Walk in my Shoes- A Creative Arts Project created by younger members of the Traveller Community in Dungarvan, funded by SICAP, was launched at the Traveller Pride Event in Dungarvan in September.

Developing Collaborative Approaches with Stakeholders: In the delivery of 2025 actions, SICAP played a lead role in co-ordinating and bringing together community organisations, services providers and key agencies to address social inclusion challenges and reduce duplication. This was reflected in the delivery of collaborative events/actions, support for networks such as Dungarvan Community Centre Steering Group, Community Growers and participation on local and national structures such as Traveller or Migrant interagency group. Other networking approaches such as Making the Link event in Dungarvan, provided an opportunity for COs, Local services and agencies to meet, network and share information and co-design responses to identified gaps. This approach helps to strengthen referral pathways, improved access to services for SICAP target groups and enhances the collective capacity of communities and organisations to respond to emerging needs in the local community.

Collaboration underpinned our entire 2025 delivery, with strong partnerships across statutory, community, and voluntary sectors to fill service gaps and enhance mainstream provision. We maintained protocols and co-referral systems with Intreo/DEASP, Waterford Local Enterprise Office (for self-employment mentoring and Business Fundamentals), WWETB, Healthy Waterford, Tusla, Barnardos, Respond Housing, disability/Traveller/migrant representative groups, and UNESCO Learning City networks. This enabled integrated wrap-around supports—such as combined English language classes at centres, joint employability training, and family programmes—avoiding duplication while maximising additionality. Regular stakeholder consultations, mid-year reviews, and networking events ensured responsive, cohesive service delivery that improved outcomes for SICAP target groups and influenced broader policy impact.

Promoting Climate Justice: SICAP co-funds a part time Sustainable Energy Communities Development Worker with SEAI. This position supports SICAP in working with COs to explore energy transition, grants, information on energy saving tips etc. Strong collaborations with Waterford Council Climate Action Team and SEAI in delivery of the project.

Community Growers activities including networking and peer support strengthens and promotes sustainable food, wellbeing and social connection

Building practical outcomes from The People's Transition: Larchville & Lisduggan Report: 8 monthly Repair Cafes delivered in collaboration with local residents association to promote the circular economy and reduce landfill waste.

In line with SICAP's 2024-2028 emphasis on climate justice, we integrated a just transition perspective by embedding environmental awareness, sustainable practices, and practical climate-friendly skills into programmes for disadvantaged and vulnerable participants. Lifelong learning and community-based actions included hands-on workshops on furniture upcycling, small home upcycling projects, clothes upcycling, and the Repair Café initiative, where community members brought broken items (electronics, clothing, small appliances) for repair rather than disposal. These initiatives equipped individuals with reusable skills that reduce waste, lower household costs, extend product lifespans, and promote circular economy principles. They were deliberately targeted at priority groups most at risk of climate-related inequalities (e.g., low-income households, jobless families, and New Arrivals), ensuring they could benefit from low-cost, empowering activities without added financial burden. Through needs-led design and partnerships, we facilitated equitable access to these initiatives, supporting a fair and inclusive shift toward sustainability and environmental resilience in Waterford's disadvantaged communities.

7. Please reflect on the programme supports that DRCDG and/or Pobal provided to LDCs in 2025. Were they helpful? Would you recommend any changes in approach or content? (quarter of a page)

Guidance: Please consider the SICAP Climate Justice support events, IRIS training, engagement meetings, guidance provided etc.

Attended Pobal regional workshops on the programme requirements and priority target groups

Presented at Pobal's Climate Action Seminar in Dublin to present on the Larchville & Lisduggan People's Transition Project we collaborated with TASC and the community in developing. This report has led to monthly Repair Café sessions and Waterford LCDC prioritisation of the communities through the establishment of a task group to develop a coordinated approach with LCDC members and local community.

8. Please provide any more comments or information that you think DRCDG/Pobal should be aware of around SICAP (quarter of a page)

Guidance: This may include details of concerns/challenges around your KPI achievement, details around your experience using My Journey or any other matters relevant to the programme.

SICAP programme implementers with Pobal and DRCDG must advocate to support community organisations strengthen their access to funding and limit the grants requiring payment in advance and then reimbursement. SICAP is aimed at programme beneficiaries who experience poverty and exclusion with this approach to funding embedding exclusion and limiting their opportunities to deliver key activities within their communities. Propose that Pobal include this matter on workshop agendas in 2026

Appendix 1 – Updates to the IRIS database

Please confirm that you have completed the following end-of-year requirements:

✓	A narrative for each of the 2025 Actions has been input in the 'End of year update' field on the Progress Report tab of the action record and updates provided on LDC collaboration records. The <i>Action Progress Report</i> and <i>LDC Collaboration Updates</i> report can be generated to view the updates for each action as well as the updates on LDC collaborations. Please note that for CABs which contain offshore Island communities, but are not Island specific CABs/Lots, LDCs are required to provide details of work carried out with Islands in their action progress narrative.
✓	2025 financial and beneficiary data input is complete.
✓	2025 data quality issues identified on system dashboards and views have been rectified.
✓	Potential duplicate records have been reviewed and deactivated if appropriate.
✓	2025 data follow-up has been carried out, as appropriate (e.g., LLL activity outcomes, still in employment/self-employment).
✓	ESF exit data has been recorded promptly for relevant Individual records (as per the LDC's caseload management policy and EIST requirements).
✓	ESF 6-month follow-up data has been recorded for Individuals who have been selected for the representative sample. The 'EIST LT result sample follow up due' system view should be blank.
✓	LDC contact information and the list of LDC staff members are up to date.
✓	Pobal has been notified to deactivate the IRIS user account for any staff member no longer involved in SICAP.
✓	2025 End of Year Financial and Monitoring report has been submitted on IRIS (including upload of the signed Lot Cost Charged report and Monitoring report to the SICAP SharePoint library).