



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities

A five-year strategy to support the community
and voluntary sector in Ireland
2019-2024



Prepared by the Department of Rural and Community Development supported by the
Cross Sectoral Group on Local and Community Development

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The Big Hello

Minister's Foreword

Community and voluntary organisations deliver a wide range of services across many sectors in Ireland. These organisations work in, and support, every community. They support people with disabilities and medical conditions, support children and young people, and support older people. They advocate for environmental causes, campaign for social justice and support people experiencing poverty. They support migrants, promote arts and culture, and advocate for climate justice. In many cases, they provide supports and services that Government is unable to provide.

It is difficult to imagine an area of Irish life where they do not have an impact. This Strategy to Support the Community and Voluntary Sector in Ireland recognises the importance of the community and voluntary sector to a healthy, just and prosperous society, and it sets out how Government will support the sector in the years to come.

The Strategy builds upon the Government's 2016 Framework Policy for Local and Community Development, serving as an implementation plan for that policy, and it meets the Programme for a Partnership Government commitment to develop a strategy to support the community and voluntary sector. It has been co-produced by national and local government in collaboration with the community and voluntary sector, and it is underpinned by shared principles and values that guided its development. These principles are as important, if not more important, than the actions underpinning the Strategy.

Our approach to the Strategy has ensured that the needs of communities and the organisations that support them are properly addressed. It has delivered an ambitious range of actions. Actions that will ensure communities are served by robust and sustainable community and voluntary organisations, that communities have the means and opportunity to participate in and shape decision-making that affects them and their members, and that the processes and structures in place to ensure these are fit-for-purpose.

Community and voluntary organisations deliver a wide range of services across many sectors in Ireland. These organisations work in, and support, every community.

Collaboration and partnership working have been key to getting us to this point. Continued collaboration will be critical to the successful delivery of the Strategy's actions. This will not be easy and there will be many challenges along the way. However, by building on the community-statutory partnership that has brought us this far, by ensuring communities and their representative organisations continue to be involved, and by ensuring an effective whole-of-government approach, I am confident we will rise to meet these challenges.

To this end, I intend to pursue and strengthen the positive working relationship we have developed with the community and voluntary sector. My Department, taking a lead role in implementing the Strategy, will bring all relevant Government Departments, State Agencies and local government together as a coherent whole. I know I can rely on my Government colleagues for their support and commitment in this regard.

I believe this is a very ambitious strategy. As such, it will take time to implement and, while all actions will start during the strategy period, there are some that will continue to be progressed and built upon in subsequent years. These actions are no less a priority simply because they will take a little longer to implement fully. On the contrary, we recognise that these actions are crucial to a sustainable community and voluntary sector and will underpin Government support for the sector for many years to come. So it is critical that we take the time to scope and develop them and, above all, get them right.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge all who helped co-produce this strategy. Beginning with the many contributors to the initial consultation on the Framework Policy, those who attended and participated in the National Forum on Community and Local Development in 2016 and, of course, the members of the Cross-Sectoral Group on Local and Community Development who contributed so much to the final strategy.

All have worked hard to produce what I firmly believe is an ambitious and ground-breaking roadmap to support our communities, the community and voluntary groups that work with and support them, and the broader community and voluntary sector. It has been a truly collaborative effort. A collaboration which, if nurtured and developed, will help us achieve our vision of sustainable, inclusive and empowered communities throughout Ireland.



Michael Ring TD,

Minister for Rural and Community Development

Key facts and figures



29,000

non-profit organisations
in Ireland



9,900

non-profits or
around one-third
currently registered
as charities with the
Regulator



Charities support some

290,000

employees, with 189,000 directly
employed in registered charities
and 100,000 of these directly
supported by public funding



The total direct, indirect and
induced value of work carried
out by charities in Ireland is
an estimated

€24bn

per annum



More than

1 million

people actively volunteer
annually in Ireland at an
estimated value of more
than €2bn per annum.



overall direct expenditure
of charitable organisations
estimated at

€16bn

per annum or 5.8% of GDP



50,000 +

unpaid volunteer trustees
and board members sit on
boards and management
committees of charitable
organisations



300,000+

people volunteer with
registered charities alone and
yield an economic value of
€649m per year (based on the
minimum wage)

Autonomy and Community Development:

Fatima Groups United Family Resource Centre

Fatima Groups United (FGU) Family Resource Centre (FRC) is the community organisation behind the regeneration project in Fatima in Dublin 8. Community development is the underpinning approach used by FGU. Joe Donohoe outlines the community work approach.

Community development has helped turn this area and this community around. Many people from the area that are involved in the project used to have all the classic signs of disadvantage – low education, unemployment, low self-esteem. Local people have been the driving force behind the regeneration project, many of which are centrally involved in running the F2 facility – a major community and conference facility. The facility transferred into local community ownership in 2019 and the voluntary board of management is made up of local people and projects. Community work supported these people to move into employment and leadership positions. These are people that came through a community work process.

Other local people are working in local projects such as the new National Children's Hospital. We need to be independent and autonomous to engage with these types of major projects and ensure there is a community dividend. FGU has managed to negotiate a Living Wage policy for those employed under these major contracts.

Independence is key to the work of FGU. The community organisation responds to issues in the community as they present themselves – no matter what these are – drugs, unemployment, poor health, and mental health issues – and we need to be independent to do this.

We can't have anyone outside of the community telling us what the priorities of the community are. We do an intensive consultation every three years and we work in the community, so we know what the issues are.

A community development approach gives people effective ownership and a real sense of achievement. People in this area feel like they own the community assets – and they do. We have a number of apartments and enterprise units, and the revenue from these is ring-fenced for interventions and responses to social and economic issues. Local people work and run the community projects. This helps to cut down on anti-social behaviour and, beyond that, gives local people a real sense of pride in their area.

What is of utmost importance to us is that everyone that works with us is driven by the values that govern the work and the organisation. We expect everyone to treat every member of the community with respect. There is a strong sense of identity and vision among staff and the voluntary board of management that translates to a collective effort in reaching goals.

Fatima Groups United FRC



The Strategy

This *Strategy to Support the Community & Voluntary Sector in Ireland* (the Strategy) sets out a long-term vision for our communities in Ireland. With actions to be implemented over the next five years, the Strategy sets a general direction of travel for Government policy in relation to community development, local development and the community and voluntary sector for the coming years. It also copper-fastens the renewed relationship and partnership between Government and the community and voluntary sector which has developed during the course of its preparation.¹

The Strategy realises the intent of the 2016 *Framework Policy for Local and Community Development* (Framework Policy) and fulfils the commitment in the Programme for a Partnership Government to –

produce a coherent policy framework and develop a strategy to support the community and voluntary sector and encourage a cooperative approach between public bodies and the community and voluntary sector.

Programme for a Partnership Government
Government of Ireland 2016

The Strategy has been co-produced by Government and people from the community development, local development, community and voluntary, and local government sectors. It is an ambitious strategy to support partnership and collaborative effort at all levels and between all stakeholders, comprising high level objectives and associated actions to support communities, their representative organisations, and the community and voluntary sector. More importantly, it articulates the values and principles that will guide and shape Government's support for communities and the community and voluntary sector in the coming years, and help realise our vision for communities by the end of the decade.

The Strategy will entail far reaching changes across Government and the community and voluntary sector, and will require an incremental building of supports over the strategy period and beyond. This will be the case particularly for those actions requiring larger-scale, sustained funding support. To this end, actions are grouped into three categories – short-term, medium-term, and long-term.

Short-term actions will commence immediately and will be completed by 2021. Medium-term actions will commence on a phased basis over the coming years and will be completed by the end of the strategy period in 2023.

While work on long-term actions may commence immediately, they involve significant change and will require time to scope, develop and implement. Accordingly, long-term actions will be progressed early in the strategy period and will continue to be developed and built upon beyond 2023.

Actions will be progressed through annual work plans. They will be prioritised on the basis of stakeholder input and available resources, with the rate of progress on some actions contingent on the budget process in each of the coming years. These include, for example, actions related to sustainable and core funding for the community and voluntary sector, supports for social and community enterprises, ring-fenced funding in programmes for marginalised communities, and funding to support training in communities and community and voluntary organisations.

The Strategy will be implemented jointly by Government Departments and stakeholders, led by the Department of Rural and Community Development (the Department). It will be monitored by the Cross-Sectoral Group on Local Development and Community Development (the Cross-Sectoral Group) with periodic progress reports provided to the relevant Government Cabinet Committee. A formal review of the Strategy will be carried out at least once during its lifetime.

1 For the purposes of the Strategy, and ease of reference, the term 'community and voluntary sector' also encompasses community development and local development, except where separate references are considered more appropriate.

An Overview

The Department of Rural and Community Development was established in June 2017 to bring a cross-government approach to rural and community development. The Department's mission is to "promote rural and community development and to support vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities throughout Ireland". It seeks to achieve this through a mix of policy initiatives and funding supports for communities, non-profit organisations and the community and voluntary sector, while also working with other Government Departments and agencies that support communities.

The Strategy is part of a suite of policy and strategy initiatives led by the Department and supporting not-for-profit organisations in the community development, local development, and community and voluntary sectors, and social enterprises. It complements the new *National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022* and the forthcoming *National Volunteering Strategy*.

There is also a mutual relationship between the Strategy and the policies and strategies of other Government Departments that impact on communities. While these provide a context for the Strategy, the Strategy in turn, provides an over-arching framework for their implementation (See Appendix 5 – Policy Context).



Boat Building

Supporting Communities

The community and voluntary sector is critical to a healthy, just and prosperous society in Ireland. An estimated 29,000 non-profit organisations², varying in scale, size and ethos, work in all communities to support them to grow and thrive. They contribute to social and economic cohesion and work to ensure communities, particularly the most marginalised, are included and can participate effectively in decisions affecting their future.

Community and voluntary organisations deliver an extensive range of social and community initiatives, supports and services in Ireland, with new bodies emerging regularly in response to changing needs and social challenges.

Community development and community workers work to empower, enable and support communities to improve their quality of life. They work to address poverty and social exclusion, and to achieve rights and equality for marginalised communities including Travellers, women, migrants, minorities and others that experience poverty, inequality and social exclusion. Local development bodies bring community members, local government, statutory agencies and social partners together to work with and empower communities to address socio-economic challenges in their areas.

Role of Government

Government's commitment to support the community and voluntary sector is set out in the Programme for a Partnership Government. The stated ambition is –

to deliver a fairer society, so that communities thrive, throughout both urban and rural Ireland... improving the quality of life and opportunities for all sections of the population, especially our younger and older people in the most disadvantaged communities.

Programme for a Partnership Government
Government of Ireland 2016

Government, both central and local, has an important role to play in supporting the work of the community and voluntary sector. While Government alone cannot provide all services and supports required by communities, its support is critical to a robust and sustainable community and voluntary sector that works to develop innovative responses to poverty, inequality and social exclusion, including educational, health, economic and cultural initiatives.

To this end, Government often provides funding for local programming, either delivered directly by central and local government or by the community and voluntary sector on Government's behalf, as well as funding for organisations to provide services appropriate to their mission. Government is also responsible for providing an enabling framework to support the sector to achieve positive societal change – for example, facilitating advocacy on behalf of communities, supporting dialogue contributing to programme design, and developing capacity in the sector to inform Government policy.

Community-Statutory Partnership

Government support in the 1980s and 90s brought an increased focus on local social and economic development. There was an emphasis on partnerships of socio-economic interests (including the community and voluntary sector) and supporting the dynamic growth of the local development sector. At the same time, recognising the value of community work in addressing poverty, social exclusion and inequality, Government supported the development of an internationally recognised community development infrastructure and a vibrant community work sector. However, subsequent policy developments and funding reductions during the recession impacted the capacity of community development, local development and the broader community and voluntary sector to support communities (Appendix 4 – Historical Context).

More recently, Government has worked to renew the partnership with the community and voluntary sector to support the next phase of its development.

Socio-Economic Challenges

Ireland has one of the fastest growing and most diverse societies in the EU. The population continues to grow, with inward migration shaping more nationally and ethnically diverse communities. At the same time, Ireland is experiencing continued positive economic growth and growing rates of employment.

That said, while the number of people in employment continues to increase and the economy is growing, Ireland's poverty and deprivation rates remain a concern. Combined with the challenges imposed by Brexit and Climate Change – potentially more deeply felt by those living in poverty and with social exclusion and inequality – significant work is required to ensure all communities are afforded the opportunities economic growth provides (Appendix 3 – Current Socio-Economic Context).

² Benefacts Third Sector Analysis 2019, <https://analysis2019.benefacts.ie/>

The Impact of Local Development:

North Kerry

In North Kerry, Maura Sheehy was assisted by her local development company, North, East and West Kerry Development (NEWKD), to move from unemployment to self-employment under the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance scheme and the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP).

After consolidating her own employment in Maura's Cottage Flowers, she then successfully applied to NEWKD for a LEADER enterprise grant which enabled her to upgrade and develop land for her flower business. She now collaborates with NEWKD as a host farm under the Kerry Social Farming Project which facilitates the personal development of local people with intellectual disabilities.

This programme is also supported by the Rural Social Scheme. Maura's journey has brought about huge impacts, not just in her own life, but in the wider community in North Kerry through her participation in five integrated programmes managed by NEWKD.

NEWKD's integrated approach to community development is also evidenced by Ballyduff's Coast Road Community Café, a social enterprise which recently received the 2017–2019 Community Vibrancy Recognition Award.

The Café serves fresh food to the local community at its premises but is also a hub of social inclusion and environmental activity. The independent living of less mobile residents is supported by the delivery of several hundred meals per week. Volunteers work through Food Cloud, Foodshare Kerry, food retailers and producers to distribute surplus food to local people four nights a week.

NEWKD provides information services through the Rural Social Scheme and outreach services from their Listowel Jobs Club and Tralee Local Employment Service. NEWKD also provides development supports, capacity-building and training under SICAP and links to other supports such as the weekly Men's Breakfast morning which links to the Men's Shed. Since opening in 2009, NEWKD has supported the Coast Road Community Café to develop as a centre of excellence for rural social enterprise and community development.



Maura's Cottage Flowers

Our Vision for Communities

To create vibrant, sustainable, inclusive, empowered and self-determining communities that support the social, cultural and economic well-being of all members.

Cross Sectoral Group on Local and Community Development.
July 2019

The vision will be achieved through collaboration and engagement underpinned by sustainable partnerships that strengthen and empower communities, their supporting organisations and Government partners, through coherent, collaborative, integrated and multi-disciplinary approaches at national, local and neighbourhood levels.

To this end, the Strategy will promote, support and invest in activities that -

- bring communities together,
- empower them to identify their own needs, priorities and agendas,
- provide them with the skills, knowledge and experience to influence, shape and participate in decision-making processes that bring about change for the benefit of people within those communities.

All actions set out in this strategy have equal status, were agreed using a collaborative and participative approach, and are designed to encourage and facilitate ongoing application of this approach at national, regional and local levels.

They have been shaped by the considerations of a Cross-Sectoral Group which comprised people from community development, local development, and the broader community and voluntary sector, as well as central and local government.

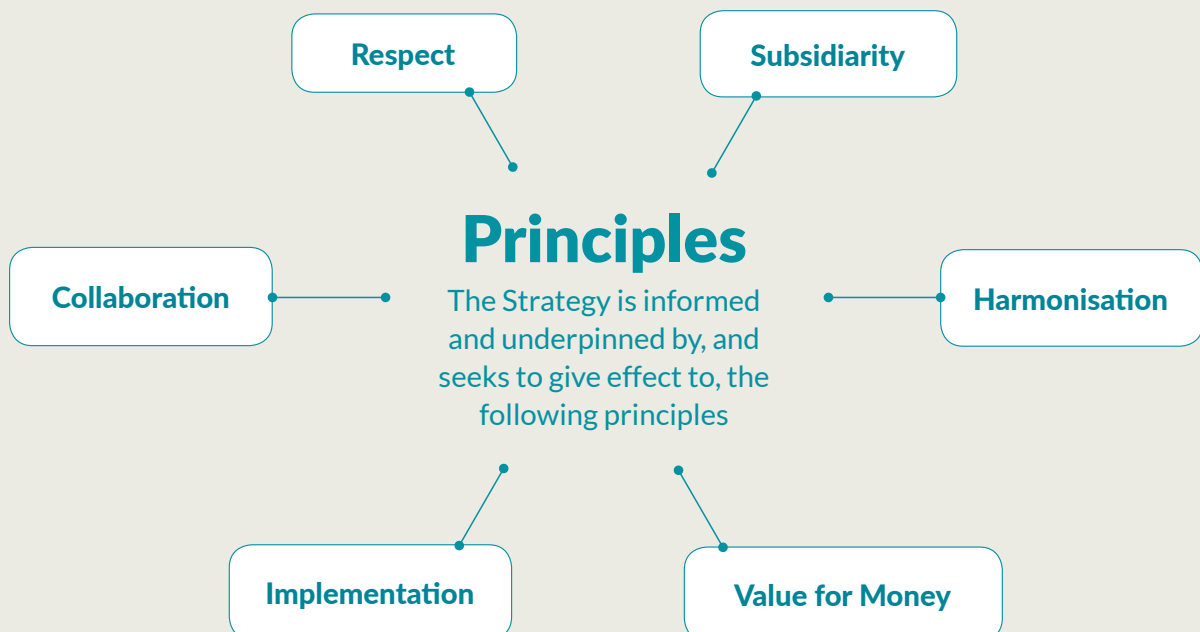
The Cross-Sectoral Group adopted the following ethos, values and principles to underpin its work and guide implementation of the actions in the coming years.

Ethos

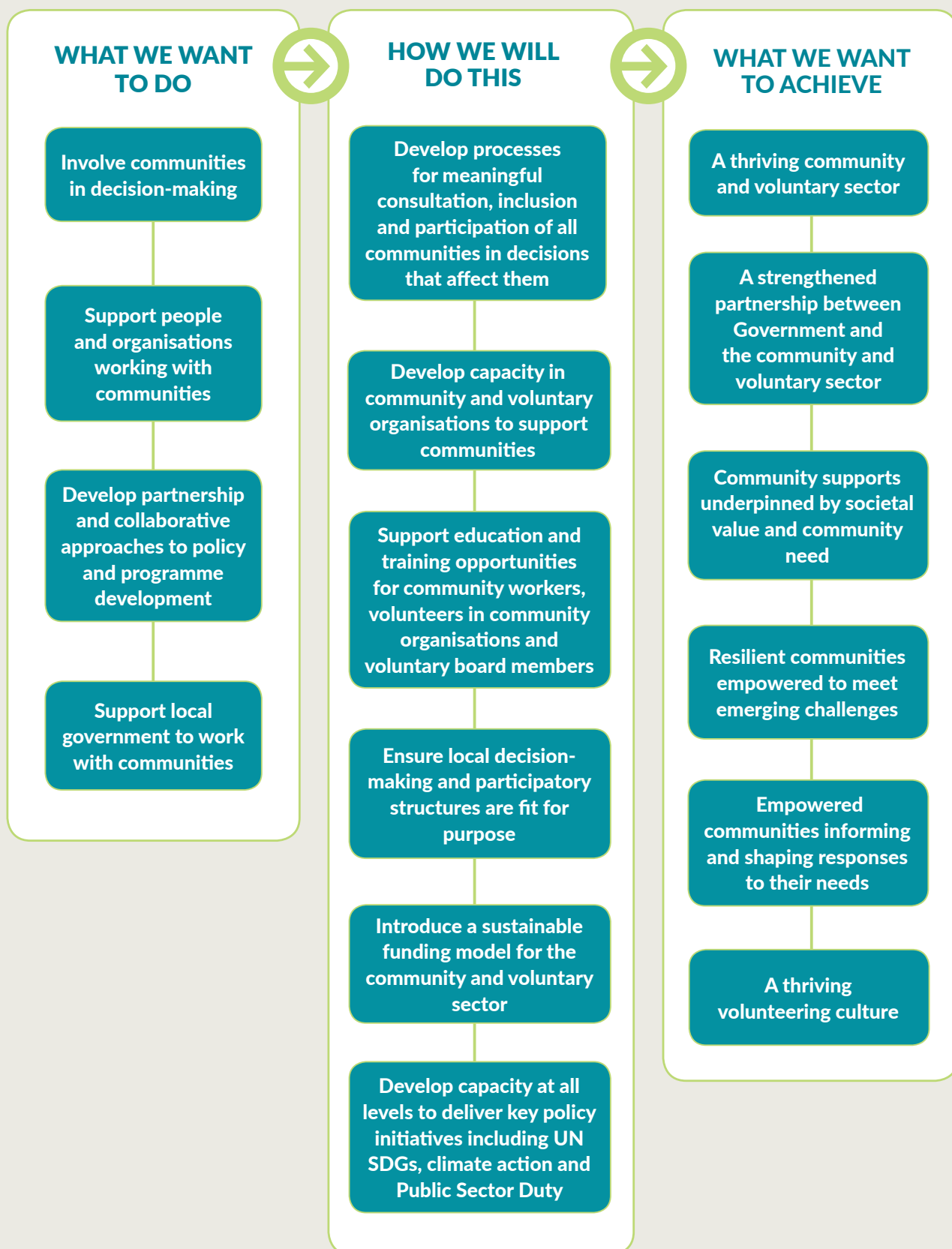
We support communities, in all their diversity, to build a shared understanding of their own needs and aspirations. We support enhancing and resourcing participative and local democracy that affords community members the opportunity to participate in, and influence, the decisions that affect their communities.

Skate Park, Westport





These values and principles are described in Appendix 2.



The community and voluntary sector comprises a diverse range of community, voluntary and charitable organisations with origins in the community.

Outdoor Gym, Mooneenroe, Kilkenny



The Importance of Community Development:

Galway Traveller Movement

Margaret Ó Riada, Bridget Kelly, Kathleen Sweeny and Martin Ward work with Galway Traveller Movement, a community development organisation in Galway City and County.

For us, community work is about empowering the community to take a stand for their rights. We can see many positive changes that have come about since the organisation began in the 1990s, but it is a slow process and people need to understand that community work is slow, but the changes achieved are long-lasting.

Key to our community work approach is a commitment to empowerment and participation – working with the Traveller community to analyse and take action in relation to their own issues. Galway Traveller Movement has established a number of Traveller Action Groups in the city and the county to support people in this.

For us, autonomy and the independence to be able to respond to the issues that present themselves is critical. In response to the high suicide rate amongst the Traveller community, for example, Galway Traveller Movement developed a whole community approach to mental health and well-being that has resulted in a resilience project. At the same time, we work with agencies to try to ensure their services are more responsive to the needs of the Traveller community.

Like many other Traveller projects, Galway Traveller Movement runs a Primary Health Programme, a peer-led programme for Travellers in the city and the county. What works here is the community work approach, using the social determinants of health as a framework and addressing health and well-being issues in a holistic way.

It's the same with enterprise. We know that getting a job is one of the key ways to improve standards of living. In response to the high unemployment rate amongst Travellers and the significant levels of discrimination still faced by Travellers when trying to access employment, we established a number of enterprises including a Women in Enterprise project and the highly successful First Class Insulation and Bounce Back recycling projects.

For us these are crucially important. Not only do they provide employment to Travellers in a safe, non-discriminatory work environment, they are busting the myth that Travellers do not want to work. Those employed are seen as role models and there are knock-on benefits to their families and the whole community.

Making changes externally is more challenging. We still cannot always disclose that we are Travellers when working in a house and we have had the experience of the homeowner refusing a service even though the service is backed-up and funded by Sustainable Energy Ireland. What people need to understand though is that Travellers still find it difficult to find work outside of projects such as these. Safe, non-discriminatory work places have to be established, for Travellers to avail of all sorts of employment opportunities, but Galway Traveller Movement on its own cannot create these.

Independence is also important because, at times, we need to be able to criticize agencies when they are not serving our community well. Sometimes we work in partnership with the local authority, but sometimes we need to call it when they are not doing what they are supposed to be doing.

For us, the values and principles of community work translate into the work we do with the community and on those that we employ. It is crucial that anyone who works with us is driven by the same values of participation, empowerment, anti-racism....in short it is about being able to respond to the needs of the community as they identify them and developing strategies based on social analysis to bring about collective change – that is change for the whole community not just for individuals. It is about moving from a charity approach to one that supports people to realise their rights.



Traveller Pride Event, Spanish Arch, Galway

The Stakeholders

There are an estimated 29,000 non-profit organisations in Ireland. These organisations work in every community, supporting people to live independent lives, supporting people with disabilities and medical conditions, and supporting older people, children and young people to realise their potential. They advocate for environmental causes, campaign for social justice and rights, support people experiencing poverty, support migrants, promote the arts and cultural activities, and work overseas for fair trade and climate justice.

The number of non-profits registered as charities has increased steadily since the Charities Regulator was established in 2014, with more than 9,900 non-profits or around one-third currently registered as charities with the Regulator. The total direct, indirect and induced value of work carried out by charities in Ireland is an estimated €24bn per annum, with overall direct expenditure of charitable organisations estimated at €16bn per annum or 5.8% of GDP. Charities support some 290,000 employees, with 189,000 directly employed in registered charities and 100,000 of these directly supported by public funding³.

More than a million people actively volunteer annually in Ireland at an estimated value of more than €2bn per annum⁴. Over 50,000 unpaid volunteer trustees and board members sit on boards and management committees of charitable organisations, while more than 300,000 people volunteer with registered charities alone and yield an economic value of €649m per year (based on the minimum wage)⁵.

While around 50% of the funding for the community, voluntary and charitable sector is provided by Government, the remainder is raised by the sector itself to support the cost of delivering services for communities. When income from Government and public funding is discounted, expenditure by the sector comes to an estimated €11.72bn and directly supports almost 136,000 employees – this is significant ‘added financial value’ contributed by the sector.

Community and Voluntary Sector

The community and voluntary sector comprises a diverse range of community, voluntary and charitable organisations with origins in the community. Community and voluntary organisations can vary significantly in size, scale and ethos, from the smallest community and voluntary groups to the largest charities.

Community and voluntary organisations typically share a common social purpose and features. They are –

- **organised**, as distinguished from informal or ad hoc, purely social or familial groupings, and they have an institutional presence or structure,
- **non-profit distributing**, insofar that they do not return profits to a set of managers or owners,
- **independent**, particularly from Government and other public authorities,
- **voluntary**, containing some element of voluntary or unpaid participation,
- **self-governing** and in control of their own affairs, and
- involved in **activity contributing to the public good**.

3 Registered Irish Charities Social and Economic Impact Report 2018, <https://www.charitiesregulator.ie/media/1564/indecon-social-and-economic-impact-report-2018.pdf>

4 CSO 2013, Q3 Quarterly National Household Survey, <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/q-vwb/qnhsvolunteeringandwellbeingq32013/>

5 Registered Irish Charities Social and Economic Impact Report 2018, <https://www.charitiesregulator.ie/media/1564/indecon-social-and-economic-impact-report-2018.pdf>

Community Development

The term 'community development' refers to both a sector within the broader community and voluntary sector, as well as a discipline underpinned by qualifications and professional standards. It involves a distinctive approach to working for social and economic development and change based on an internationally accepted set of principles. It is defined as –

a developmental activity comprised of both a task and a process. The task is social change to achieve equality, social justice and human rights, and the process is the application of principles of participation, empowerment and collective decision-making in a structured and coordinated way.

All Ireland Standards for Community Work,
Community Work Ireland for the All Ireland
Endorsement Body for Community Work
Education and Training
2016

The approach involves individual and collective empowerment, enabling and supporting members of a community (of place, identity or interest) to work collectively to improve the quality of their lives, their community and their society. It is often, but not exclusively, based on an understanding that those affected by poverty and disadvantage are frequently excluded from society due to discrimination, prejudice, lack of resources, skills, confidence, education or a combination of these.

Community workers work in, and with, communities with a critical focus on marginalisation and disadvantage. They work with communities to analyse the root causes of disadvantage and seek to develop collective responses. A central aspect of community work is supporting communities to ensure their voice is heard in relation to policies and decisions that affect them.

Community workers help to create the conditions where agencies, including local authorities, Government Departments and others, can engage meaningfully and directly with communities. They work with a range of issues and identity-based communities and groups, including, for example, communities in socio-economically disadvantaged urban and rural areas, with Travellers, disadvantaged women, long-term unemployed people, migrants and other minorities. They are employed in, for example, Community Development Projects, Local Development Companies, Family Resource Centres, and with a number of local authorities and the Health Service Executive in some areas.

Local Development

Local development promotes area-based, integrated, community-led interventions based on participative democracy to address long-term unemployment, economic marginalisation and social exclusion. It recognises the inter-dependence of economic, social and cultural issues in working for sustainable and inclusive growth and social cohesion.

Local development aims to provide the structure, funding and support for the partnership sectors to work together for the benefit of the area. It is about empowering local communities to sponsor innovative strategies and projects for enterprise, improving employment opportunities, education, training and community development. Central to the approach is the integration of services, meeting the multi-layered needs of individuals and families across the life-cycle, as well as of communities.

The sector includes 49 Local Development Companies operating in all urban and rural communities. The companies are governed by voluntary partnership boards and deliver a range of social and economic development programmes on behalf of Government and State Agencies.

A key feature of the companies is their integrated nature and capacity to offer a wraparound, holistic service. While a service user might present initially as a jobseeker, they will have access to integrated supports including training, childcare, self-employment, mental health, enterprise, recreational and personal development initiatives. The companies support communities with access to capital, training, capacity-building, advocacy, environmental enhancement, amenity, sports and social enterprise supports based on their own needs and supported by an integrated planning process.

Local Government

The local government sector comprises 31 local authorities operating within geographical areas aligned with county and city boundaries, with 26 County Councils, three City Councils and two City and County Councils. The Irish system of local government encompasses both democratic representation and public administration.

Local authorities provide an extensive range of infrastructural services and play an active role in community, social, industrial, business, arts, heritage and cultural development of their areas. They are also responsible for supporting economic development and enterprise at local level and providing “a forum for the democratic representation of the local community [and]...civic leadership for that community”⁶.

The *Local Government Act 2001* charges local authorities to represent the interests of the community in such manner as it thinks appropriate. This includes establishing and communicating the views of the community, and facilitating and promoting involvement in local government, including involving young people in democracy and local government. This role was strengthened on foot of Government’s policy document on local government reform, *Putting People First – Programme for Effective Local Government*, which outlined the vision for local government as –

the main vehicle of governance and public service at local level – leading economic, social and community development, delivering efficient and good value services, and representing citizens and local communities effectively and accountably.

Putting People First – Programme for Effective Local Government
Government of Ireland
2012

This role is underpinned by new local governance structures at local level, namely Local Community Development Committees and Local Economic and Community Plans, which seek to provide a framework for “developing, coordinating and implementing a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development”. In addition, the new Public Participation Networks (PPNs) provide the direct link between communities and Local Community Development Committees, facilitating and supporting engagement of communities in decision-making at local level (Appendix 4 – Historical Context).

Coupled with the breadth and strength of their democratic mandate and their ongoing work with multiple Government Departments and agencies, this role underpins the local authorities’ capability to support and cooperate with local participative democracy structures, as both systems seek to serve the common good.

Throughout the country, local authorities support and engage with communities through a variety of means. Initiatives vary according to city or county, but local authorities will engage with communities through support for initiatives such as Tidy Towns, Golden Mile, Best Kept Area and Community Awards. Co-operative Ireland, in association with local authorities, operates the annual Pride of Place competition. The competition is a unique opportunity for community groups to be recognised on an All-Ireland basis for valuable work undertaken in their local areas.

6 Section 63(1)(a), Local Government Act 2001.

Local Development:

Southside Partnership DLR

A woman from a migrant background comes to one of Southside Partnership's regular International Women's Breakfasts in a local community centre. She has been invited by a friend who recently completed an art class in our Women's Resource Centre near Dundrum in Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown (DLR).

At the breakfast, the woman meets people from many different backgrounds, including other migrants, Travellers, local women, women in business, a local Garda, a DLR Councillor and Southside Partnership DLR staff. She picks up some information flyers which catch her interest – flyers on our Healthy Food Made Easy course, our 'Well now' health literacy workshops, our English language classes and our Local Employment Service and Jobs Club.

She asked one of our staff members to help her sign up for the English language classes, funded by SICAP, and she starts attending the weekly classes in a local community centre. As part of these classes, the tutor discusses cultural matters relating to life in Ireland. She sees this as a win-win – that is, learning English and learning about Irish culture at the same time.

She is then contacted by our Local Employment Service, following a referral by a member of our SICAP team. The woman had been signing on for just over a year and had been unable to secure employment due to her poor English. She arranges a meeting with one of our Employment Guidance Officers, who listens to her story and suggests she could benefit from a 12-month placement on our Tús programme, before being ready to apply for employment opportunities that interest her.

One of our Tús Team Leaders secures her a placement in a local charity shop, which is within walking distance from her home, so she doesn't incur any transport costs getting to or from work. It gives her good retail experience and allows her to practice her English. She also gets paid a small top-up on her Jobseeker's Allowance each week.

As her Tús placement is part-time, she can continue attending the English classes. She has also signed up for a Healthy Food Made Easy course, with a group of other migrant women who meet in our local Women's Resource Centre. The course takes place on one morning per week for six weeks.

At the end of her Tús placement, she will go back to our Employment Guidance Officer in our Local Employment Service for support to progress into employment. This will probably include some CV preparation and interview skills training. In the meantime, she will be able to participate in relevant training courses and workshops being run by Southside Partnership DLR under the wide range of programmes that we have on offer.

With our support and guidance, we expect that this woman will reach her full potential and live with dignity in her local community.



Why this Strategy is Needed

The *National Development Plan 2018-2027*, encompassing the Urban and Rural Regeneration and Development Funds, will see unprecedented capital investment by Government in urban and rural communities. With a focus on infrastructural and economic development, funding will support among other things increased housing supply, transport infrastructure, cultural and leisure facilities, and town and city centre development.

Government recognises that infrastructural investment needs to be complemented by supports for social development, for building communities and enabling marginalised people and groups to become involved in their own communities, including in regeneration processes in their own communities and at a wider societal level.

The Strategy articulates the Government's commitment to support the community and voluntary sector as key partners in Ireland's economic recovery "contribut[ing] to the economy and creat[ing] value for Irish society"⁷. It includes actions to implement measures under the Framework Policy while reaffirming Government's commitment to the principles of active citizenship, promoting equality of opportunity, respect for individual freedom in the pursuit of social goals, and promoting and strengthening social dialogue, as articulated in the *White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector*⁸.

At the same time, this strategy will complement measures in many government policies and strategies including, for example, Government's forthcoming strategy to address poverty and social exclusion.

Supporting Communities

The Strategy seeks to create a vibrant and active civil society, developing opportunities for all communities to contribute, engage and participate in decision-making and policy implementation. Participative structures and processes, developed in partnership with local government, and engaging other relevant bodies, including Children and Young People's Services Committees, Education and Training Boards, the HSE, Drugs Task Forces, County Childcare Committees and Older Peoples Councils, will secure stronger and enhanced inclusion and involvement in local decision-making structures. Over time, this may lead to a cultural change in how decisions are made for and about communities, resulting in a more robust and mature democracy, reducing the gap between participative and representative democracy, reducing power and resource differentials, and leading to better and longer-lasting outcomes for communities.

In particular, the Strategy will support communities in danger of being left behind by the economic recovery. It will secure a voice for the most marginalised communities, providing them the opportunity to identify the needs of their communities and to inform local and national responses that impact them and their well-being.

Community resilience will be strengthened, with communities supported to identify their own needs and develop actions based on these needs, and empowered to take ownership of initiatives that strengthen their capacity to meet emerging challenges. Community programmes will be based on a collaborative, partnership and whole-of-government ethos that prioritises societal value and community need. They will support long-term approaches that foster relationships built on trust, knowledge and experience, support community development and build community resilience.

7 Programme for a Partnership Government, 2016. Page 131, https://www.merrionstreet.ie/MerrionStreet/en/ImageLibrary/Programme_for_Partnership_Government.pdf

8 White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector, 2000. Pages 14-15, <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/eb9f99-white-paper-supporting-voluntary-activity-2000/>



Robust Supporting Infrastructure

Activating the power of, and devolving power to, communities will require robust community development and local development infrastructure assisted and supported by both central and local government. A robust infrastructure will provide a framework for community supports that will improve people's lives and community well-being, resilience and capacity to respond to emerging challenges including, for example, the economic uncertainties presented by Brexit.

It will also help Government to identify and address support deficits, secure more equitable and impactful services, bring about improved equity of access to those services, and contribute to Ireland meeting its human rights obligations. Again, supporting better outcomes for communities, social cohesion and a stronger democracy.

Renewed Community-Statutory Partnership

A renewed community-statutory partnership is essential for better outcomes for communities. The Strategy renews Government's commitment to support and work in partnership with the community and voluntary sector; to support community development as a long-acknowledged approach to addressing poverty, social exclusion and inequality; and to support local partnership structures as an integral approach to socio-economic disadvantage.

The partnership, underpinned by strong, autonomous community development and local development structures, can facilitate effective interventions for long-term change, with local organisations contributing in a way that Government acting alone cannot. For example, work by Local Development Companies with long-term unemployed people would be almost impossible for central government to replicate.

Autonomy ensures local organisations can be creative, innovative and flexible in responding quickly to issues as they emerge and evolve, supporting approaches that meet the needs of a diverse society and empowering communities to identify and shape responses to their needs.

How the Sector is Supported

A better use of resources, underpinned by a more strategic approach to planning and service provision and multi-annual funding models, will also contribute to better outcomes for disadvantaged communities. Annual funding approaches are less efficient and significantly limit the effectiveness of community development, for example, which requires long-term support and approaches to build effective local relationships between community workers and communities.

Effective government support is also critical for a thriving and sustainable community and voluntary infrastructure. More effective support is not just about more money. Existing resources will be used more effectively, while certainty of funding and sustainability will support more strategic approaches and eliminate short-term decision-making that contributes to unsustainable approaches and development.

The capacity of local authorities and Local Community Development Committees to support and engage with community development processes and approaches will be strengthened and consolidated. This will be done in collaboration with other relevant structures at a local level including Public Participation Networks and Children and Young People's Services Committees. In line with Putting People First, local government will be supported as enablers of economic, social and community development, gathering the analyses, lessons and recommendations from community development processes, and applying them to the design and implementation of effective policies and programmes to meet the needs of the communities they serve.

Community and voluntary organisations will be supported with appropriate funding models for the supports and services they deliver in partnership with Government, creating greater financial certainty and sustainability, improving

capacity and effectiveness, and ensuring viability of services for communities. Funding organisations for the 'additional marginal' service provided, rather than the actual cost of delivering the service, often requires organisations to provide public-funded services at a loss, threatening their sustainability and, ultimately, the services they deliver.

Governance and operational capacity in groups and organisations will be strengthened through a public-funded programmatic approach to locally delivered training in governance, management, strategy development and fund-raising, human resource management, and communications, marketing and social media. It will equip board members with the knowledge and skills required to lead community and voluntary organisations, plan more strategically and deliver better services for communities.

Climate Change

Climate change is having, and will continue to have, a profound effect on all aspects of human life. It is clear these effects are, and will be, felt most deeply by those living in poverty and with social exclusion and inequality. These are the people and communities traditionally least responsible for climate change, but they are also the people and communities without the resources required to adapt and respond to the effects of climate change.

Climate justice links human rights and development to achieve a human-centred approach, safeguarding the rights of the most vulnerable people and sharing the burdens of climate change and its impacts equitably and fairly⁹.

Community work has a unique contribution to make in relation to climate change and climate justice. It can raise awareness within communities, support the engagement of communities with climate change and climate justice, and ensure policy development in this area takes account of the fact that climate change policies are likely to have a disproportionate impact on those already struggling with poverty and disadvantage¹⁰.

9 The Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice, Principles of Climate Justice, <https://www.mrfcj.org/principles-of-climate-justice/>

10 Community workers' Co-operative, 2012. Towards Climate Justice: a strategy guide for the community sector in responding to climate change, <https://www.communityworkireland.ie/towards-climate-justice-a-strategy-guide-for-the-community-sector-in-responding-to-climate-change/>



Sustainable Development

The UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change by 2030. The SDGs are a call for action by all countries – poor, rich and middle-income – to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. They recognise that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that lead to sustained, sustainable and inclusive economic growth and address a range of social needs, including education, health, social protection and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection.

The final SDG, Goal 17, calls for strengthened partnerships and collaboration to implement the goals and achieve their targets. SDGs provide a critical framework for community development as they reflect the social justice, economic justice and environmental justice concerns of community work and community workers and designate the processes of participation, empowerment and collective action required to achieve change.

The SDGs will provide an important frame of reference for this strategy, and the Strategy will contribute to Ireland's *Sustainable Development National Implementation Plan 2018-2020* and subsequent plans.

Ambition

Our ambition over the strategy period is to ensure–

- communities are enabled to build a shared understanding of their own needs;
- community members are afforded the opportunity to participate in and influence the decisions that affect their communities;
- Government supports for communities, at central and local level, are underpinned by a consideration of societal value and community need;
- communities are supported by a vibrant and thriving community and voluntary sector and a thriving volunteering culture; and
- high quality services based on a community-statutory partnership and delivered by sustainable, autonomous community development and local development bodies.

Our ambition is a cultural shift in how decisions are made. Local democracy will be stronger with a space for all voices, including the most marginalised. Greater participation and engagement will reduce the gap between participative and representative democracy, reduce inequalities in decision-making, and reduce power and resource differentials.

Ultimately, the result will be better outcomes for communities (especially those worst hit by the recession), increased social harmony, enhanced individual and community well-being, and communities with the resilience to meet all emerging challenges.

Community Development and Integration

Helen Lowry is a community worker and Deputy Director of the Migrants Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI)

Established in 2001, MRCI works with people from a migrant background navigating their employment situations and the immigration system in Ireland. MRCI works with migrants, most likely to be employed in less-regulated sectors where low-pay, discrimination and exploitation are key features of working life, many of whom are undocumented.

MRCI's work is situated in the labour and migrant rights movement combining frontline services, policy, advocacy and campaigning, with a community work process that builds the critical participation of people we work with and seeks to support their leadership on migrant rights issues.

Our efforts are inspired by a community work approach which seeks to advance social justice goals by collectively challenging the root causes of poverty, inequality and exclusion. Community work is not all that we do – for example, we have a national drop-in centre and we also do legal advocacy work – but community development is at the heart of the work and informs MRCI organisational culture and values. It was always a key part of the MRCI campaign model (for example the Justice for the Undocumented Campaign) and is increasingly reflected in the organisation's project work in terms of power sharing and maintaining an empowerment focus.

For example, we have a European Social Fund financed social enterprise project on care that is piloting a different model of homecare in Ireland, and this is being led by a team of MRCI staff and experienced migrant carers.

Our Migrants Against Exploitation project is a 'train the trainers' programme, empowering migrant communities to know more about worker rights and prevent exploitation in their communities. My Fair Home is a community work approach supporting a network of migrant home care workers to come together, name the value contribution they make and together identify the critical issues facing migrant home carers in Ireland. Members want to address the paradox that is the difficulty that many migrant carers face in getting work permits in a country with an aging population and growing demand for care in the private home. There is a story that needs to be told by critically thinking, experienced people.

Community work underpins all this work. We acknowledge that expertise comes from the lived experience, and people with lived experience are best placed to identify their needs and the changes that are needed, whether these are changes in law or policy, or attitudinal change. MRCI invests in community work with people so that they can work for systemic change – change that is good for society.



Strategy Action Plan

Objective 1

Strengthen and develop participative approaches to the development of public policy and programming underpinned by an autonomous community and voluntary infrastructure.

Action No.	Action	Timeline	Responsibility
1.1	Develop and sustain national, regional and local structures and policies that facilitate and promote – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - effective local development, - autonomous community development, and - meaningful engagement of marginalised communities. 	Long-term	DRCD (Lead) Cross-Sectoral Cross-Government
1.2	Adopt an agreed set of values and principles for collaboration and 'partnership-working' at national and local level.	Short-term	DRCD (Lead) Cross-Sectoral
1.3	Develop long-term strategic community development and local development programming in partnership with national organisations and local government with – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - greater local flexibility, - ring-fenced funding streams for marginalised groups and communities, and - evaluation frameworks that secure an appropriate balance between quantitative and qualitative evaluation; measure outcomes, outputs and impacts; and are not overly burdensome. 	Long-term	DRCD (Lead) Cross-Government
1.4	Support participative and deliberative approaches for developing public policy, including establishing a Civic Forum for formal dialogue between the sector and local and central government.	Short-term	DRCD (Lead) Cross-Sectoral
1.5	Develop and support mechanisms that capture and share good practice.	Short-term	DRCD (Lead) Cross-Sectoral
1.6	Develop a volunteering strategy based on the <i>White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector</i> .	Short-term	DRCD

Outcomes

Stronger, sustainable and autonomous community and voluntary organisations delivering high quality outcomes for their communities.

A vibrant and thriving community and voluntary sector.

Effective partnerships between the community and voluntary sector and government at local, regional and national levels.

A thriving and sustainable volunteering culture.

Objective 2

Support and facilitate communities to participate in community development and local development.

Action No.	Action	Timeline	Responsibility
2.1	Support community groups and organisations to identify and meet their training needs, and implement a formal programme of training (including governance training) to meet these needs and support capacity in groups and organisations.	Long-term	DRCD (Lead) Community and Voluntary Sector Local Government Cross-Government
2.2	Design, promote and implement a comprehensive programme to support capacity among leaders, board members and volunteers of community and voluntary organisations, including voluntary board members of local development and community development organisations.	Medium-term	
2.3	Support capacity in Public Participation Network social inclusion colleges.	Short-term	
2.4	Develop education and training mechanisms based on the All Ireland Standards for Community Work for those charged with implementing and monitoring community development.	Medium-term	DRCD (Lead) Cross-Sectoral
2.5	Develop and support a continuum of education and training opportunities for – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - those involved in community work on a voluntary basis, - people employed, but not qualified, in community work to acquire qualifications, - continuous professional development for qualified, employed community workers, and - other staff in organisations with a community development remit. 	Medium-term	DRCD (Lead) Cross-Sectoral

Outcomes

Improved participation by communities in local decision-making and policy and programme design, implementation and monitoring

Strengthened capacity in communities to fully engage in community development and local development initiatives.

Objective 3

Develop and strengthen processes and mechanisms to secure meaningful consultation, inclusion and participation in local, regional and national decision-making structures, particularly by non-engaging and marginalised communities and their representative organisations.

Action No.	Action	Timeline	Responsibility
3.1	Develop values and principles, and guidelines, protocols and benchmarks to promote good practice consultation, engagement and participation in the relevant processes of local (e.g. Local Community Development Committees, Children and Young People's Services Committees, Strategic Policy Committees and Joint Policing Committees), regional and national decision-making structures.	Short-term	DRCD (Lead) Cross-Government Cross-Sectoral
3.2	Develop guidelines and protocols to ensure diverse representation and equality, including gender-balanced representation (underpinned by revised Consultation Guidelines and Principles).	Short-term	DRCD (Lead) Cross-Sectoral
3.3	Develop mechanisms and protocols for progress reporting and feedback to communities.	Medium-term	DRCD (Lead) Cross-Sectoral
3.4	Government Departments and State Agencies will develop participatory mechanisms and processes in line with commitments in Our Public Service 2020 to improve engagement on the design and delivery of services.	Long-term	DRCD (Lead) Cross-Government
3.5	Ensure social inclusion, community and voluntary and environmental seats on local authority decision-making structures are nominated via the Public Participation Network as per – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public Participation Networks User Guide, and - Guidelines for the Operation of Local Community Development Committees. 	Short-term	DRCD Local Government
3.6	Implement a programme of process reviews to continually strengthen local engagement by communities with decision-making structures.	Medium-term	DRCD Cross-Sectoral
3.7	Provide public information and education programmes to enable people, particularly those from marginalised communities, to engage in national and local democratic processes.	Long-term	DRCD DHPLG Local Government Cross-Sectoral

Outcomes

Robust infrastructure in place to support communities and their representative organisations to engage and participate in local, regional and national decision-making structures.

More informed and more effective decision-making and outcomes.

Increased level and quality of participation, particularly by marginalised communities, in national and local decision-making structures.

Strengthened and enhanced community development practice.

Objective 4

Develop capacity of organisations supporting communities to participate in community development and local development, with a specific focus on marginalised communities.

Action No.	Action	Timeline	Responsibility
4.1	<p>Scope and develop a sustainable funding model to support the community and voluntary sector, recognising the importance of the following as key elements to be considered –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a multi-annual funding approach as the standard for community development, local development and community and voluntary programmes, and public-funded projects and programmes generally, - an appropriate cost-recovery model for public-funded programmes delivered by community and voluntary organisations, including costs of compliance and relevant overhead and administration costs, - core funding for autonomous community development and local development at local level, including employment of professional community workers, and - supports appropriate to their mission for social and community enterprises consistent with those available to business start-ups. 	Long-term	<p>DRCD (Lead)</p> <p>DPER</p> <p>Cross-Government</p>
4.2	<p>Develop appropriate compliance and monitoring arrangements and support capacity in the community development, local development and the broader community and voluntary sector to meet them, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reviewing the appropriateness of regulatory compliance requirements, - developing and implementing a strategy to reduce, streamline and standardise all public-funded programme and regulatory monitoring, reporting and compliance requirements, where appropriate, and - resource and support organisations to fulfil compliance requirements. 	Medium-term	<p>DRCD (Lead)</p> <p>Pobal</p> <p>Cross-Government</p> <p>Community and Voluntary Sector</p>
4.3	<p>Review the current national practice in relation to the commissioning model and develop a model reflecting a collaborative, partnership and whole-of-government ethos and prioritising societal value and community need.</p>	Medium-term	<p>DRCD (Lead)</p> <p>Cross-Government</p>

Outcomes

Stronger and more effective community and voluntary organisations.

Appropriate regulatory and compliance requirements and capacity in organisations to meet them.

Programmes promoting long-term strategic approaches informed by societal value and community need.

Objective 5

Supporting commitments in Our Public Service 2020, develop the strategic and operational capacity of Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs), including in coordinating, monitoring and supporting community development and local development.

Action No.	Action	Timeline	Responsibility
5.1	Implement the recommendations of the <i>Review of Local Community Development Committees (July 2019)</i> under the following areas – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - comprehensive training and support programme for LCDC Chief Officers, members and local authority support staff (including training for those supporting LCDCs on community development and local development), - effective communication of the LCDC role to relevant local and national stakeholders, and - streamlined supports for LCDCs to secure effective programme delivery and impact monitoring. 	Short-term	DRCD (Lead) Local Government Cross-Government Sectoral Interests
5.2	Provide training in monitoring and evaluation techniques and good practice and, where necessary, enhance approaches to programme and project assessment, monitoring and evaluation involving stakeholders, linking in with existing initiatives across Government.	Medium-term	

Outcome

Robust and strategically focused LCDCs with capacity to drive, monitor and support community development and local development.

Objective 6

Strengthen and build understanding and capacity to meet Public Sector Duty¹¹ obligations in local government and community and voluntary organisations.

Action No.	Action	Timeline	Responsibility
6.1	Develop a programme for Local Community Development Committees, local authorities, Government Departments and agencies to raise understanding and capacity to implement the Public Sector Duty.	Short-term	DRCD & IHREC Cross-Government Community & Voluntary Sector
6.2	Develop toolkits to develop and proof programmes and plans against the Public Sector Duty .	Short-term	
6.3	Support capacity in community and voluntary organisations in relation to the Public Sector Duty .	Short-term	
6.4	Provide supports to implement the Public Sector Duty across all sectors.	Medium-term	

Outcome

Increased awareness, understanding and application of Public Sector Duty obligations.

¹¹ Section 42, Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, imposes a 'positive duty' obligation on public sector bodies to 'have regard to' the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect human rights of its employees and service users.

Objective 7

Supporting commitments in Our Public Service 2020, continue to develop and strengthen Public Participation Networks as the primary mechanism for communities to engage with local government decision-making.

Action No.	Action	Timeline	Responsibility
7.1	Implement the recommendations of reviews conducted by the Public Participation Network Advisory Committee, as appropriate.	Long-term	DRCD (Lead) Local Government
7.2	Design and implement a strategy to develop Public Participation Networks, building on learning to date.	Medium-term	
7.3	Ensure adequate ring-fenced resources are provided to Public Participation Networks to – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - facilitate the independent delivery of their work, - facilitate participation in integrated planning and decision-making, and - support members of the three Public Participation Network colleges to engage with local authority decision-making structures and processes. 	Medium-term	

Outcome

Increased operational and representative capacity of Public Participation Networks.

Objective 8

Strengthen and build understanding and capacity to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) National Implementation Plan.

Action No.	Action	Timeline	Responsibility
8.1	Develop a programme to implement and raise awareness of SDGs for Local Community Development Committees, local authorities, Government Departments and agencies, community and voluntary organisations and local development bodies.	Short-term	DRCD & DCCAE Community & Voluntary Sector
8.2	Develop toolkits to develop and proof programmes and plans against SDGs.	Short-term	
8.3	Support capacity in community and voluntary organisations in relation to SDGs.	Short-term	
8.4	Provide supports, including funding, to all sectors to implement SDGs.	Short-term	

Outcome

Increased awareness, understanding and achievement of the SDGs.

Objective 9

Strengthen the Local Economic and Community Plan process, enhancing community participation in the development and implementation of plans and securing more effective collaboration and partnership working nationally, regionally and locally.

Action No.	Action	Timeline	Responsibility
Community Participation			
9.1	Audit Local Economic and Community Plan process to identify and showcase good practice and the challenges in consultation and engagement.	Short-term	DRCD (Lead) Local Government
9.2	Develop good practice guidelines, protocols and benchmarks based on partnership approaches for inclusion, participation and consultation in local economic and community planning, and support the capacity of local authority staff and others implementing local action plans.	Short-term	DRCD (Lead) Local Government Sectoral Interests
9.3	Ensure proactive opportunities are created and supported for communities to engage in integrated planning, monitoring and evaluation of the Local Economic and Community Plan process.	Medium-term	DRCD (Lead) Local Government Sectoral Interests
Collaboration and Partnership Working			
9.4	Establish the Local Economic and Community Plan process as the primary driver of integrated cross-sectoral and inter-agency planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation.	Medium-term	DRCD Cross-Sectoral
9.5	Identify, document and disseminate best practice in integrated cross-sectoral and inter-agency planning, including case studies and other methods.	Short-term	DRCD (Lead) Local Government
9.6	Secure budgetary and resource commitment to underpin integrated approaches to delivery of the Local Economic and Community Plan at local level.	Long-term	DRCD (Lead) Cross-Government Local Government
Outcomes <p>Local planning processes that proactively support, resource and encourage diverse communities to participate and engage at all stages.</p> <p>Stronger, more informed and more effective Local Economic and Community Plans addressing the concerns and meeting the needs of their communities.</p> <p>More effective and integrated planning and delivery of programmes and initiatives to address priorities.</p>			

Objective 10

Support, develop and enhance capacity in the local government sector in community development and local development.

Action No.	Action	Timeline	Responsibility
10.1	Support and facilitate capacity in the local government sector to work with communities and organisations in community development and local development.	Short-term	DRCD (Lead) Local Government
10.2	Provide and resource professional development for Local Community Development Committee and other local authority staff, and other local development agencies and bodies in relevant areas to engage with diverse communities.	Medium-term	

Outcome

Increased capacity in local government to consider and apply community development and local development principles to its work.

Objective 11

Support community development and local development to engage with Climate Change adaptation and mitigation strategies.

Action No.	Action	Timeline	Responsibility
11.1	<p>Linking with the Government's Climate Action Plan 2019</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provide training and capacity building in relation to Climate Change to community development and local development organisations, - pilot and develop models of good practice on Climate Change adaptation and mitigation at community level, and - include a focus on Climate Change in all community development and local development programmes and initiatives. 	Short-term	DRCD & DCCAE Community & Voluntary Sector

Outcome

Increased capacity in the community development and local development sectors to proactively engage with Climate Change adaptation and mitigation strategies and fully consider Climate Change in their work at a local level.

Local Authority Community Based Initiatives

Group Water Schemes (GWS), though conceived because of unfulfilled necessity, can be viewed as one of the most successful community-based local development initiatives.

For more than 50 years, local authorities in association with the then Department of Local Government, have worked with local community groups to facilitate locally-owned piped water schemes in rural Ireland. The provision of these supplies has served not only human need but also on-farm and off-farm rural development in these areas.

With the turn of the millennium and the advent of increasing regulatory standards, local and central government, together with the National Federation of Group Water Schemes, worked on a programme of water quality improvements and leakage reductions to allow Group Water Schemes to remain as viable, independent, community-based entities supplying water to their members.

In 2015, there was 11,000km of GWS piping across 387 schemes. The modern asset replacement value of these schemes would be considerably in excess of €1bn, which is a significant achievement for community-managed assets.

In terms of local governance, the County Rural Water Committees (with representatives from the local authority, County Federation of Group Water Schemes, along with the representatives from rural interest groups) monitor water quality outcomes. They influence, on a partnership basis, the priority of applications for national funding assistance for future approvals.

The Local Authority Waters and Community Office was established as a shared service in 2016 as part of the sector's response to River Basin Management¹². The sector operates a Community Water Development Fund (in association with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government) aimed at communities progressing water related projects locally from community engagement to river heritage and more. This is an example of how planning for community involvement is now being 'built into' programme delivery at design stage.

Anglers at Rossinver, Leitrim

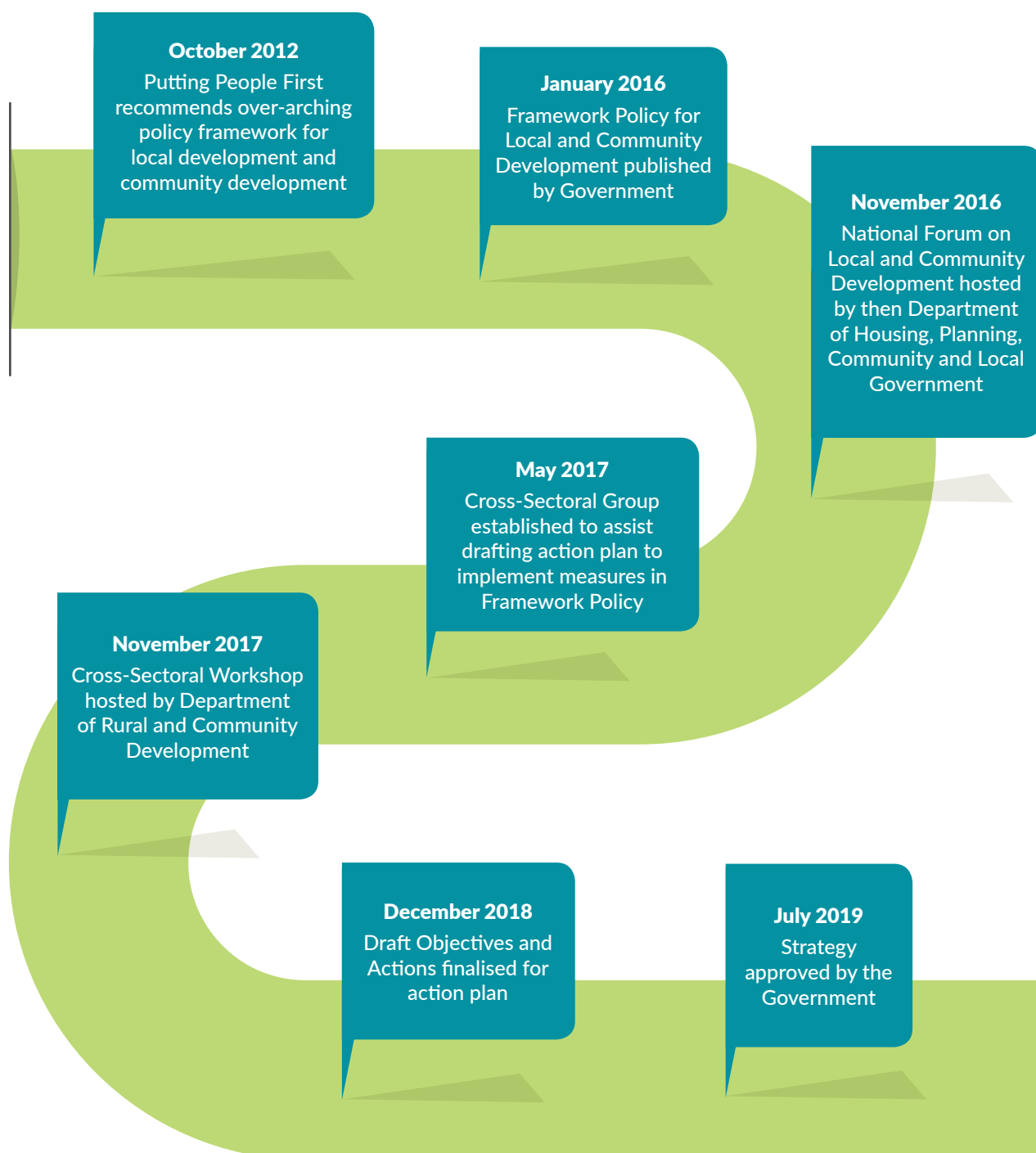


¹² Local Authority Waters Programme, <http://watersandcommunities.ie/>

Strategy Implementation

The Strategy has been co-produced by Government with community development, local development, the broader community and voluntary sector and the local government sector, with an approach underpinned by mutually agreed values and principles (see page 11).

It incorporates inputs from the original consultation on the Framework Policy and from the National Forum on Local Development and Community Development in November 2016. It is shaped by the considerations of the Cross-Sectoral Group on Local and Community Development, established for that purpose in May 2017, and a cross-sectoral workshop hosted by the Department of Rural and Community Development in late 2017. The key milestones in developing the strategy include –



The Strategy was not developed in isolation. It complements both international and national frameworks to support sustainable development, including the UN Sustainable Development Goals, a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. Although a five-year strategy, it establishes a 10-year vision complementing the 2030 target date set for reaching the Sustainable Development Goals. Implementation will seek to strengthen and develop synergies between both initiatives.

At national level, the Strategy is one of a number of policy frameworks developed and led by the Department to meet commitments under the *Programme for a Partnership Government* and the Department's strategic objectives. The Department will co-ordinate implementation of these frameworks to secure coherence of policy and supports available to all communities and to the continuum of not-for-profit and community and voluntary organisations.

Implementation plan

The Strategy will be implemented in partnership with sectoral stakeholders over the strategy period and beyond. Responsibility for implementing actions will rest, in many cases, with Government; however, many actions will also be scoped and implemented collaboratively with stakeholder sectors.

Cross-Government Delivery

The Department will work collaboratively with relevant Government Departments to scope, develop and implement cross-cutting actions. These will include, for example –

- the Departments of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Justice and Equality, Education and Skills, and Children and Youth Affairs on actions relating to greater local flexibility, sustainable and core-costing models, and ring-fenced funding for marginalised communities in community development and local development programmes;

World Community Development Conference, 2018



- Tusla, the HSE and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection on commissioning approaches underpinned by societal value and community need;
- relevant Government Departments and agencies to develop participatory structures, develop approaches to support local development and community development, and to secure meaningful engagement of marginalised communities in decision-making; and
- relevant Government Departments and agencies to secure meaningful consultation, inclusion and participation in local, regional and national decision-making structures including engagement by communities and the sector in Children and Young People's Services Committees, Education and Training Boards, the HSE, Drugs Task Forces, County Childcare Committees, Older Peoples Councils, etc.

The Department will also take the lead on many actions, but with support from relevant Departments and agencies as appropriate, including –

- the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and local government (through the City and County Management Association) on actions relating to Climate Action and Sustainable Development Goals;
- the Department of Justice and Equality and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission in relation to the Public Sector Duty;
- the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and local government on actions to develop and strengthen local governance arrangements; and
- the Department of Health and the HSE on actions to support community participation in the national drugs strategy and Healthy Ireland.

Cross-Sectoral Partnership

The consultation and engagement which underpinned development of the Strategy will continue through implementation with cross-sectoral support to implement actions including, for example, actions to –

- strengthen and develop participative approaches to developing public policy and programming;
- support and facilitate communities to participate in community development and local development;
- develop and strengthen process and mechanisms to secure meaningful consultation, inclusion and participation in local, regional and national decision-making structures; and
- build capacity in communities and community organisations to engage with Climate Change strategies, to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, and meet Public Sector Duty obligations.

The Role of the Cross Sectoral Group (CSG)

The current membership of the Cross-Sectoral Group, set out in Appendix 1, will be reviewed to ensure appropriate stakeholder participation during implementation. The Group will advise and input to annual work plans, monitor progress on implementation, contribute to the mid-term review of the Strategy, and advise on any changes to existing actions or new actions that might be needed.

Appendix 1

Cross Sectoral Group on Local and Community Development

Bairbre NicAongusa (Chair)	Department of Rural and Community Development
David Dalton	Department of Rural and Community Development
Deirdre Kelly	Department of Rural and Community Development
Declan Turnbull	Local Government
Donal Brennan	Local Government
Rachel Doyle	Community Work Ireland
Ann Irwin	Community Work Ireland
Ivan Cooper	Community and Voluntary Pillar
Ronnie Fay	Community and Voluntary Pillar
Ciaran Reid	Irish Local Development Network
Marie Price Bolger	Irish Local Development Network
Joe Saunders	Irish Local Development Network
Oonagh McArdle	National University of Ireland, Maynooth
Una Ní Dhubhghaill	Department of Justice and Equality
Greg Straton	Department of Health
Sarah O'Halloran	Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection
Mairéad Reilly	Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection

Appendix 2

Values and Principles

The Cross-Sectoral Group adopted values and principles to underpin it and to guide implementation of the Strategy.

Values

Active Participation

A commitment to active participation of all stakeholders, including citizens and non-citizens. Participation is rooted in the belief that communities have the right to identify their own needs and interests and the outcomes required to meet them. Building active participation involves a recognition that policies and programmes targeted at communities and groups will not and cannot be effective without the meaningful participation of those communities in their design, implementation and monitoring.

Empowering Communities

A commitment to empowering communities, increasing their knowledge, skills, consciousness and confidence to become critical, creative and active participants. It leads people and communities to be resilient, organised, included and influential.

Collectivity

A commitment to collectivity. A collective approach requires a focus on the potential benefits for communities rather than focusing only on benefits for individuals. It recognises the rights of communities and groups, including funded organisations, to work autonomously and maintain a critical voice. It involves seeking collective outcomes in pursuit of a just and equal society.

Social Justice

A commitment to social justice, including promoting policies and practices that challenge injustice and value diversity.

Sustainable Development

A commitment to sustainable development, including promoting cultural, environmental, economic and socially sustainable policies and practices.

Human Rights, Equality and Anti-discrimination

A commitment to human rights, equality and anti-discrimination, involving promoting human rights and equality in society and committing to addressing the multiple forms of discrimination experienced by many groups. Specifically, recognising the experiences of people in relation to gender-based issues and, in particular, the impact of gender inequality on women (including women from marginalised communities and minority groups) and on society as a whole. In accordance with the Public Sector Duty, we are committed to eliminating discrimination, promoting equality and protecting human rights¹³.

Social Inclusion

A commitment to social inclusion. Prioritising the needs of communities experiencing social or economic exclusion, including rural isolation, and recognising that promoting social and economic inclusion requires us to recognise and seek to address the root causes of exclusion as well as developing strategies and mechanisms to promote and ensure inclusion.

13 Section 42, Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, imposes a 'positive duty' obligation on public sector bodies to 'have regard to' the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect human rights of its employees and service users.

Principles

Respect

We will respect the diversity of knowledge, skills, views and experience brought to the process by all stakeholders and will seek to maximise the potential this diversity brings while managing any conflict or disagreements that may arise in a positive and inclusive way.

Collaboration

We will work collaboratively, engaging with a broad a range of stakeholders to ensure excellence of service.

Subsidiarity

We will develop approaches that safeguard the ability of communities, whether communities of interest or geographic communities, to influence and, where possible, take decisions and actions, promoting power sharing and the exercise of power as close to communities as possible.

Harmonisation

We will secure consistency with existing strategies and implement agreed objectives and actions relevant to community development and local development. We will develop approaches promoting harmonisation and common standards of good practice in community development and local development programmes, policies and processes throughout the country.

Value for Money

We will develop strategies and approaches that promote and ensure best value-for-money, underpinned by a collaborative, partnership and whole-of-government ethos that prioritises societal value and community need.

Implementation

We will leverage the structures already in place, locally and nationally, and seek to maximise their potential.

Appendix 3

Current Socio-Economic Context

Ireland has one of the fastest growing and most diverse societies in the EU despite significant social and economic challenges as a result of the economic recession in 2008. The population increased by 3.8% to 4.76 million between the 2011 and 2016 censuses, a yearly increase of 1.6%. While this has been influenced by a decrease in births and an increase in population of those over 65 years, it is also impacted by the nature of migration in and out of the country.

Historically, our experience of migration has been one of emigration and population loss. This trend has changed in recent decades and Ireland's population has become more nationally and ethnically diverse.

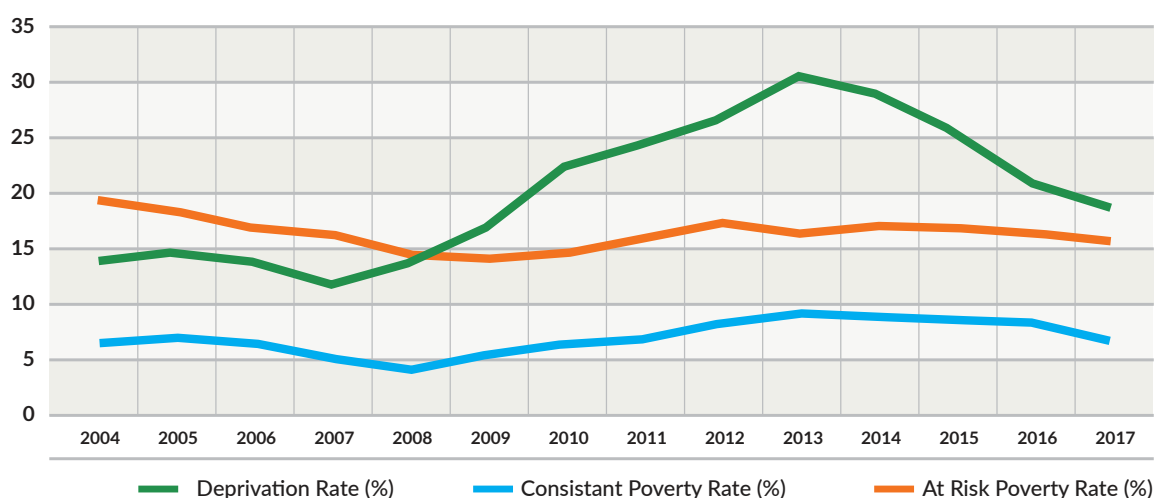
According to the 2016 census, 17.3% of Irish residents or approx. 810,000 people were born outside the country, with more than 15% claiming an ethnic or cultural background other than white Irish. The unemployment rate was almost 3% higher for non-nationals than Irish nationals.

While there has been significant growth and progress since the recession, achieving inclusive growth, particularly for those communities worst hit by the recession, remains a challenge. Unemployment rates have decreased significantly to 4.5% in June 2019. However, despite improvement in recent years, Ireland continues to experience significant levels of poverty and deprivation.

Figure 1:
Breakdown of Irish population Census 2016

Background	Number	%
All ethnic or cultural backgrounds	4,689,921	
White Irish	3,854,226	82.2
White Irish Traveller	30,987	0.7
Any other White background	446,727	9.5
Black or Black Irish - African	57,850	1.2
Black or Black Irish - any other Black background	6,789	0.1
Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese	19,447	0.4
Asian or Asian Irish - any other Asian background	79,273	1.7
Other including mixed background	70,603	1.5
Not stated	124,019	2.6

Figure 2:
EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions 2004-2017



In 2016, 16.5% of the population was at risk of poverty with 8.3% living in consistent poverty. According to the latest Survey on Income and Living Conditions in 2017 (Figure 2) published in December 2018, 15.7% of the population are 'at risk of poverty'¹⁴. In terms of deprivation, 18.8% of the population experienced two or more types of enforced deprivation in 2017, while the consistent poverty rate stands at 8.3%¹⁵.

Ireland is a diverse society, with a growing population, positive economic growth and growing rates of employment. However, the poverty and deprivation rates remain high. It shows significant work is required to ensure such economic growth is inclusive and affords all members of society the opportunities it provides. Continued investment in communities will also be important as we deal with the direct and indirect fall-out from Brexit in the coming years and the economic uncertainty it will bring. Community development, with its ability to respond to emerging needs and its capacity to develop initiatives to address new challenges, will be a critical consideration when designing and delivering projects to address the negative impacts of Brexit on already marginalised communities.

¹⁴ Poverty data is collected by the Central Statistics Office using the Survey on Income and Living Conditions which is conducted annually. The measures most commonly used by the CSO to calculate the number of people in poverty are those at-risk-of poverty, material deprivation and consistent poverty. Using a combination of these measures gives a comprehensive picture of poverty in Ireland. https://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/methods/surveyonincomeandlivingconditions/At_Risk_of_Poverty_Explained.pdf

¹⁵ A household is said to be experiencing enforced deprivation when it cannot afford two or more of a set of 11 items that range from food to clothing to ability to socialise.

Appendix 4

Historical Context

Community Development

In the Irish context, community development originated in the rural co-operative movement and was promoted by Muintir na Tíre, leading on to a wide variety of community self-help groups in the 1960s. In urban areas, community development, in the form of community action groups, development associations and community resource centres, grew out of local responses to high levels of unemployment, educational disadvantage, poor housing and lack of public services in the 1970s and 80s.

Community development also led to, and was in turn influenced by, the dynamic growth in women's groups from the 1980s, in response to the women's liberation movement, the changing nature of the labour market, the need for childcare and the isolation of women in deprived urban satellite communities. Community development influenced, and was influenced by, the growth of Travellers' rights and disability rights organisations, anti-drugs support groups and, more recently, migrant rights groups. During the late 1970s and 80s a number of health boards and local authorities employed community workers as distinct from social workers. In 1986, Government established the Combat Poverty Agency to promote and resource community development as a strategy to respond to poverty and social exclusion.

The EU funded European Poverty Programmes, and the Community Initiative programmes, including HORIZON and NOW in the 1970s, 80s and 90s, had a major influence on community development and the wider community and voluntary sector. It supported the increase in the number of community and voluntary organisations, professionalisation of the sector, recognition of the important role of the sector in working with marginalised and disadvantaged groups, the role of the sector in confronting policy issues and contributing to policy development, and led to better standards of governance, management and administration.

The first public funded Community Development Programme was established in 1990 and supported independent community development groups working with the most disadvantaged communities. The community development approach, with its emphasis on participation and collective

responsibility for problem identification, analysis and solutions, has been adopted in a variety of settings within the wider voluntary sector and the statutory sector.

Community work has been a significant feature of Irish social inclusion policy and has been at the centre of several national programmes addressing poverty and social exclusion. With Government support, Ireland developed an internationally recognised community development infrastructure and a vibrant community work sector. Community work has been, and remains, a critical feature of work to achieve equality for Travellers, women, migrants and others, and in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. More recent policy decisions and resource cuts have had a considerable impact on this.

Local Development

The late 1980s and 90s saw an increased focus on local economic development involving a partnership of local public and private socio-economic interests, including the community and voluntary sector. The growing focus on local social partnership was influenced by the experience of community development in the previous decade and significant changes in EU policy. The Single European Act (1986) provided a context for more effective approaches to dealing with the problems of persistent disadvantage. There were growing concerns that economic growth was not being evenly spread, concentrations of deprivation were developing, and in the rural context, that the Common Agricultural Policy was not equipped to address growing inequalities.

In 1991, the LEADER Community Initiative, co-funded by the EU, provided for rural Local Action Groups established on a community-statutory partnership basis to join together to implement multi-sectoral, integrated development plans for their areas. Ireland vested the lead partner role of these groups in independent companies called LEADER groups. Successive LEADER programmes saw an increase in the number of these groups to 38 as they developed as key deliverers of local development programmes for rural areas over the period 1994–2006 and became a central feature of national policy on rural development.

The Programme for Economic and Social Progress 1991-1993 provided for the establishment of partnerships in areas of high socio-economic disadvantage, in response to long term unemployment. These area-based partnership companies built on the anti-poverty community development programmes of the 1980s. The number of partnerships increased to more than 60 by 2004.

Between 2005 and 2008, Government embarked on a Cohesion Process with a stated aim of securing a more integrated approach to service delivery at local level and improving democratic legitimacy, public accountability, governance, statutory agency participation, social partnership and local involvement. One of the results of this process was a significant reduction in the number of Partnership and LEADER companies.

Subsequently, implementation of the newly designed Local and Community Development Programme resulted in an integrated delivery model, with up to 140 groups funded under the former Community Development Programme integrating with the newly established Local Development Companies. It is strongly argued, by the community development sector in particular, that this precipitated the loss of local community development infrastructure that had supported the most marginalised communities, resulting in fewer opportunities for these communities to be actively involved in local planning and decision-making.

Local Government Reform

Local Community Development Committees

Proposals for a more coordinated approach to planning, oversight and management of community development and local development were set out in *Putting People First – Action Programme for Effective Local Government (2012)*, the Government's policy document on local government reform and development. *Putting People First* outlined the vision for local government as the main vehicle of governance at local level.

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 gave legal effect to *Putting People First* and provided for Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) in all local authority areas, as well as new six-year Local Economic and Community Plans, with the economic elements developed and implemented by local authorities and the community elements by LCDCs.

The community function of local authorities has expanded significantly on foot of the local government reform process. LCDCs are central to that role and are responsible for “developing, coordinating and implementing a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development”. They draw on the expertise and experience of public and private actors in the relevant local authority area to ensure more joined-up and integrated services for communities, primarily through the community elements of the Local Economic and Community Plan.

LCDCs have assumed oversight and management responsibility for key national development programmes, including SICAP and the LEADER programme. They also deliver or oversee elements of other programmes including, for example, the Healthy Ireland Fund. These responsibilities will grow and evolve in the coming years.

Public Participation Networks

Public Participation Networks (PPNs) emerged on foot of the report of the Working Group on Citizen Engagement with Local Government published in 2013, which recommended greater input by communities into decision-making at local government level. To this end, the Local Government Reform Act 2014 provided for the formal establishment of PPNs, with one now established in each local authority area. They comprise three pillars or colleges including the –

- community and voluntary college,
- social inclusion college, and
- environmental college.

Their main role is to facilitate participation and representation of communities in a fair, equitable and transparent manner, through the environmental, social inclusion, and community and voluntary sectors, on decision-making bodies including LCDCs and Strategic Policy Committees.

Although PPNs are hosted by the relevant local authority, they work independently and carry out their work according to defined principles including participation, diversity, transparency, accountability and inclusivity. They are overseen by a national advisory group chaired by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

Appendix 5

Policy Context

The Department of Rural and Community Development has overall policy responsibility for supporting the community and voluntary sector; however, many government Departments have policies and strategies that impact on communities. There is a mutual relationship between these and the Strategy; they provide the context for the Strategy, and the Strategy, in turn, provides an over-arching framework for their implementation.

An overview of the role of the Department of Rural and Community Development is set out below, together with some of these extant and emerging policies and strategies. Many of these will expire within the timeframe of this strategy and their successors will form the evolving context for implementation.

Department of Rural and Community Development

The Department of Rural and Community Development was established in July 2017 to progress Government's commitment to bring the economic recovery to every community in Ireland, and to "facilitate economic development and support communities to become sustainable and desirable places to live"¹⁶. Its mission is –

[to] promote rural and community development and to support vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities throughout Ireland.

Statement of Strategy 2017-2020,
Department of Rural and Community
Development, 2017

To this end, the Department works to increase economic opportunities and local employment, to revitalise towns and villages, to improve access to services and social networks that ensure better quality of life, to support communities challenged by location or social issues to reach their potential, and to empower communities to shape their future and address common goals. It seeks to do this through its own policy initiatives and actions, but also by working across Government to join-up the work of other Government Departments and State Agencies that impact on communities¹⁷.

The Department's work is underpinned by many policy documents which include the Government's 2016 Framework Policy for Local and Community Development, the National Social Enterprise Policy in Ireland 2019-2022 and the Action Plan for Rural Development.¹⁸ These will be complemented in the short-term by a new *National Strategy on Volunteering*.

16 Department of Rural and Community Development, Annual Report 2018, Page 6. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/4977ca-2018-annual-report-department-of-rural-and-community-development/>

17 Department of Rural and Community Development – Statement of Strategy 2017-2020. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b03501-department-of-rural-and-community-development-statement-of-strategy-/>

18 The Action Plan for Rural Development was published in January 2017 and runs to the end of 2019. A new all-of-government policy framework is now being developed to succeed the APRD and it is anticipated this new rural development policy will be in place by early 2020.

White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector (September 2000)

The White Paper reflects Government's commitment to support the community and voluntary sector as an element of a healthy society and democracy. It outlines a cohesive framework of support for the community and voluntary sector across Government Departments and agencies, and promotes principles and best practice models for an effective relationship between the State and the sector. It also details practical measures to improve supports for community and voluntary groups and build capacity in the sector to serve individuals and communities.

The main features of the White Paper include establishing mechanisms for consultation with community and voluntary groups and communities, multi-annual funding for priority services, voluntary activity units in relevant Government Departments, policy fora for wider consultation with the sector in the policy-making process, and best practice guidelines on consultation. It also provides for a funding framework for national networks and federations and community and voluntary infrastructure, as well as supports for community and voluntary fora in each local authority area.

Framework Policy for Local and Community Development (January 2016)

Government's *Framework Policy for Local and Community Development* provides an over-arching framework for community development and local development, underpinning the State's relationship with the sector and setting out "national priorities and a framework for the realisation of a cross-government approach at local [and national] level".

The Framework Policy sets out five core objectives – engaging with communities, working with partners, planning for community development and local development, multi-agency delivery, and participative evaluation, monitoring and review.

The intent is to provide communities with a voice and power to influence, shape, implement and plan policies and actions that affect them, and to involve them in capturing learning and feedback from performance and outcomes.

This strategy realises this intent and together, with Government's 2019 *National Social Enterprise Policy* and the proposed new *National Strategy on Volunteering*, will ensure a holistic suite of supports for not-for-profit organisations in community development, local development, and the broader community and voluntary sector, as well as for social enterprises.

National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022 (July 2019)

A Social Enterprise is an enterprise whose objective is to achieve a social, societal or environmental impact, rather than maximising profit for its owners or shareholders. It pursues its objectives by trading on an ongoing basis through the provision of goods and/or services, and by reinvesting surpluses into achieving social objectives.

The *National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland* meets the Government's commitment in the *Action Plan for Rural Development* to "develop and publish a National Policy on Social Enterprise which will encompass the full range of activity in this sector"¹⁹. The Policy sets out a series of commitments on the part of Government to develop social enterprise over the period 2019-2022 under the following three objectives:

Policy Objective 1:

Building Awareness of Social Enterprise

Policy Objective 2:

Growing and Strengthening Social Enterprise

Policy Objective 3:

Achieving Better Policy Alignment

The policy will be implemented in collaboration with social enterprise stakeholders.

19 Action Plan for Rural Development, 2017. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/091dba-realising-our-rural-potential-action-plan-for-rural-development/>

National Strategy on Volunteering (In Preparation)

The proposed new *National Strategy on Volunteering* will, when finalised, realise Government's commitment to recognise, expand and support the role of volunteers in civil society. Led by the Department of Rural and Community Development, and developed in partnership with stakeholders and civil society, it will be a roadmap for achieving a shared vision for the future of Irish volunteering that recognises and enables the contribution of volunteering to supporting vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities throughout Ireland.

The strategy will focus on both formal and informal volunteering. It will form part of a continuum of policy supports for the not-for-profit, community and voluntary sector that include the Government's *Strategy to Support the Community and Voluntary Sector in Ireland* and the *National Social Enterprise Policy* and is included as a specific action in the strategy.

Roadmap for Social Inclusion (In Preparation)

The Government's proposed new social inclusion roadmap, when finalised, will bring together policy measures from across Government Departments that seek to address social exclusion. It will comprise commitments that, individually and combined, seek to bring about improvements for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.

These commitments will build on the work being delivered by existing programmes and initiatives and, over the life of the roadmap will inform policy development and new initiatives, with the latter emerging primarily from cross-government collaboration and implementation.

The commitments will focus on fostering economic growth, quality employment and labour market activation, securing appropriate welfare rates particularly for those at risk of poverty and families with low income, improving access to quality services, and encouraging active citizenship and participation. They recognise that employment is one of the main determinants of economic and social well-being, that not everybody has the opportunity to take-up employment, that individual welfare and social exclusion are multifaceted, and that a person's sense of well-being is closely linked to a sense of community.

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014

Recent developments in Ireland's human rights and equality infrastructure are of key relevance to community development, local development and local government structures and processes. The *Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014* is particularly important. It imposes a 'Positive Duty' obligation on the public sector to 'have regard to' the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect human rights of its employees and service users. It reflects the State's commitment to fulfilling the requirement for equivalence of protection of rights with Northern Ireland established in the *Good Friday Agreement* and the *Programme for National Recovery 2011-2016*.

Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018-2020

The *Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018-2020* is a direct response to the UN's *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. It establishes a whole-of-government approach to implementing the 17 SDGs, which cover –

social, economic and environmental requirements for a sustainable future...[they] are unique because they apply equally to every country and are based on the idea that ending poverty, protecting the environment and strengthening human rights, are mutually beneficial and reliant on each other for success, and cannot be achieved separately..

Sustainable Development Goals
National Implementation Plan 2018-2020
Government of Ireland
2018

The National Implementation Plan is a framework for implementing the goals between 2018 and 2020 and is the first of a number of implementation plans for the period to 2030.

National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021

The *National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021* was published in June 2017. It considers the impacts of previous strategies and a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of structures in place for consultation with, and for delivering better outcomes for, Traveller and Roma communities in Ireland. It includes a range of actions focused on better outcomes for Traveller and Roma communities across a range of themes including cultural identity; education; employment and the Traveller economy; children and youth; health; gender equality; anti-discrimination and equality; accommodation; and, Traveller and Roma communities and public services.

Migrant Integration Strategy (2017)

The *Migrant Integration Strategy* builds on existing policy on integration and seeks to support the successful integration of migrants and their Irish-born children into Irish society. Ireland's integration policy is intercultural in nature. It seeks to promote the engagement of migrants, address their specific needs and ensure respect for their distinct identities. It combines access to mainstream services for migrants with targeted positive action programmes to address specific needs.

The strategy covers EEA and non-EEA nationals including economic migrants, refugees and those with legal status to remain in Ireland. It contains actions under a range of thematic objectives including, but not limited to education; employment and pathways to work; health; integration into the community; political participation; promoting intercultural awareness and combating racism and xenophobia; and volunteering.

National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2022: creating a better society for all

The *National Strategy for Women and Girls* seeks to secure equality between women and men and to ensure women and girls can achieve their full potential while enjoying a safe and fulfilling life. The strategy seeks to change attitudes and practices preventing women's and girls' full participation in education, employment and public life, while improving services for women and girls with priority given to the needs of those experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, the poorest outcomes. It identifies a number of high level objectives, including advancing socio-economic equality for women and girls; advancing physical and mental health and well-being of women and girls; ensuring visibility in society of women and girls, and their equal and active citizenship; advancing women in leadership at all levels; combating violence against women; and embedding gender equality in decision-making.

Women, Peace and Security: Ireland's third National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions 2019-2024 (2019)

The third *National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security Agenda* is relevant to all people on the island of Ireland who have been affected by conflict. Although UN resolutions use the term 'women', the plan considers all those on the island who come from or have lived in a conflict or post-conflict affected country as important stakeholders, regardless of their gender identity. This has particular relevance in the Ireland-Northern Ireland context as well as migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and others.

The plan provides further outreach with communities and individuals to better engage women and girls, men and boys, and LGBTQI+ people from conflict affected areas. Those living in Ireland who are not direct stakeholders still have a role to play in supporting and implementing the plan. While the plan interlinks with other Government policy documents, it is a stand-alone document specifically relevant to *Women, Peace and Security Agenda*.

The *Women, Peace and Security Agenda* is also a central dimension in achieving Sustainable Development Goals 5 (Gender Equality) and 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and applies to objective 8 of this strategy.

Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery: A health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025 (2017)

Building the capacity of communities to respond to the drugs situation is a key goal of the strategy. It seeks to enable communities to participate in shaping the decisions that affect them, through providing opportunities for meaningful participation and engagement in decision-making and service delivery. This is in keeping with the Healthy Ireland Framework, which highlights the role of communities in improving health and wellbeing.

Building social capital is particularly important in those communities that are most impacted by socio-economic disadvantage and exclusion, as such communities may require more targeted interventions to address the issues they face. Community organisations in disadvantaged areas give a voice to the marginalised and build the capacity of communities to achieve positive social change.

Partnership between the statutory and community and voluntary sectors is the cornerstone of the new strategy. Communities participate in partnership structures at local and regional level through the drug and alcohol task forces. The task forces support and fund community initiatives, harness the efforts of community groups, families and local residents and coordinate the actions of community, voluntary and statutory service providers.

Climate Action Plan 2019 – To Tackle Climate Breakdown (2019)

The Climate Action Plan identifies how Ireland will achieve its 2030 targets for greenhouse gas emissions and puts us on a trajectory to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. The far-reaching plan sets out over 180 actions, together with hundreds of sub-actions and embraces every relevant sector: electricity, enterprise, housing, heating, transport, agriculture, waste and the public sector.

Reflecting the central priority Climate Change will have in our political and administrative systems into the future, the plan sets out governance arrangements including carbon-proofing our policies, establishing carbon budgets, strengthening the Climate Change Advisory Council and giving greater accountability to the Oireachtas.

The plan, which will be annually updated and reported on quarterly, also includes actions to ensure that all of us as citizens become engaged and mobilised to take climate action, while ensuring that the necessary societal and economic transition that we have to make is fair, nationally and internationally.

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Marc O’Sullivan

Fatima Groups United FRC

Kilkenny LEADER Partnership

North East and West Kerry Development

South West Mayo Development Company

Galway Traveller Movement

Southside Partnership DLR

Migrants Rights Centre of Ireland

Water Communities Office

Community Work Ireland, Derek Speirs

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Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland