An Roinn Gnóthaí Fostaíochta
agus Coimirce Sóisialaí
Department of Employment Affairs
and Social Protection

Report of the Inter-Departmental Group to explore the most appropriate organisation arrangements, including which Department should host the Social Inclusion schemes.

Final Report

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Section 1: Purpose of the IDG

Following a proposal from the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the Government decided on 9th January 2019 to set up an interdepartmental group to explore the most appropriate organisation arrangements for social inclusion work schemes currently operated by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP).

DEASP has a broad span of responsibilities as evident from its mission statement which is 'to promote active participation and inclusion in society through the framework of employment rights and provision of income supports, employment services and other services'.

A primary focus of the Department, for people of working age, is to support people into employment.

The Department operates a number of employment support schemes including the Community Employment Scheme (CE), the Rural Social Scheme (RSS) and the (closed) Job Initiative (JI) scheme. These schemes have mixed objectives - part activation, part income support and part social inclusion.

Over time, as the numbers on the live register are falling the proportion of social inclusion placements on the schemes is increasing. This is because the schemes are increasingly supporting people 'who are most distant from the labour market' and also because the schemes are supporting communities isolated or disadvantaged in rural and urban areas.

The schemes are embedded in communities nationally and are engaged in significant levels of service support and delivery across various sectors such as rural development, health and social care related services. They therefore touch on many sectors which are the responsibility of Government Departments beyond the remit of DEASP.

The IDG was to consider the most appropriate organisation arrangements including which Department should host Community Employment (CE) social inclusion schemes, including Drug Rehabilitation and Childcare CE schemes, the Rural Social Scheme (RSS) and the (closed) Job Initiative (JI) scheme.

Section 2: Introduction

2.1 Background

The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection operates a number of employment support programmes. The Community Employment Programme (CE) has been running since 1994, the Jobs Initiative (JI) since 1996 and the Rural Social Scheme (RSS) since 2004. These schemes are delivered locally by local sponsoring groups, local development/partnership companies and by Údarás na Gaeltachta in Gaeltacht areas.

CE sponsor organisations are typically made up of groups wishing to benefit the local community, namely voluntary and community organisations and, to a lesser extent, public bodies involved in not-for-profit activities. A CE sponsor organisation is a legal entity with which the Department enters into an individual contract on an annual basis.

CE, JI and the RSS have a very significant social inclusion focus. All of these schemes are well embedded in community areas nationally and they are engaged in significant levels of service support and delivery. Virtually all participants on these schemes are engaged in some element of service support and delivery - including meals on wheels, tourist information, library assistants, work for tidy town committees, environmental work, youth work, support in resource centres, bus drivers, childcare and health and social care related services. CE participants are particularly active in the delivery of care of the elderly, services to people with disabilities and working alongside service providers such as the Irish Wheelchair Association, the Centre for Independent Living, and the Alzheimer's Association.

Government agreement was sought to establish the IDG to ensure that the scheme places are safeguarded into the future and to establish if the two distinctive categories (social inclusion and activation) should be governed by the same rules and eligibility criteria.

2.2 Employment Support Programmes

The Community Employment (CE) programme was established in 1994 by the Minister for Enterprise and Employment. It replaced two existing short term schemes. It was transferred from FÁS to DEASP in 2012. Since then CE has been subject to major programme change.

A review by DEASP in 2015 noted that over the years CE had developed into a programme with dual objectives. On the one hand it was an activation programme to support people who are long term unemployed to re-enter the labour market. However at the same time CE schemes provide a range of social and community services many of which are closely allied to statutory services and perform a vital role in service support.

The 2015 review recognised that CE is often the main response to addressing the needs of adults who are experiencing social exclusion or social isolation. The Department formalised a two strand approach to CE as a result of the 2015 review - an Activation strand and a Social Inclusion strand. The purpose of this categorisation is to acknowledge that not all CE places are the same with some places providing an opportunity for those who are very distant from the labour market to work and deliver services in their local communities.

The activation strand comprises of approx. 66% of places and the social inclusion strand comprises of 34%. Places within schemes are designated to either activation or social inclusion based on the type of placement. The two placement categories (activation and social inclusion) co-exist within CE schemes. Scheme participants are not themselves categorised as social inclusion participants. This allows for flexibility within the scheme for participants to progress, where feasible, and avoids labelling individuals. The budget for 2019 is €345.115m. There are currently 21,505 CE participants on 916 schemes across the country. Table 1 details trends in CE scheme expenditure and total Working Age Income Supports.

Table 1 - Trends in CE scheme and Total working age supports expenditure 2014 -2018

Programme	Expenditure (€ millions)				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Community Employment	359.4	364.9	356.3	350.4	353.0
Total Working Age Employment Supports - Social Assistance	1,025.3	1,066.5	996.1	904.5	796.1

Drugs Rehabilitation Programmes

The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection supports the objectives of the National Drugs Strategy with focused services for the re-integration into the labour market of people recovering from substance misuse. There are two services provided by DEASP.

1. The CE Drug Rehabilitation Programme is the main service within the Social Inclusion strand. It provides an inter-agency drug rehabilitation programme. The programme provides 1,000 ring-fenced places for people referred in addiction to CE. The CE Drug Rehabilitation Programme Framework was launched in 2015 and provides a model of an inter-agency integrated response. There are c.48 dedicated CE drug rehabilitation schemes nationwide. Referred participants can also access places on mainstream CE programmes. The ultimate aim of these schemes is to support people in recovery into training, education and employment.

It was clear from initial discussion at the IDG that the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection recognised the importance of the CE Rehabilitation Programme to support, and ultimately activate, people recovering from addiction. It was agreed that these schemes would remain with DEASP underpinned by the existing inter agency approach.

2. The Drugs Task Force mainstream projects are the second, and much smaller service. DEASP acts a 'mainstream' funding provider for 5 drugs projects. Other statutory agencies also fund similar projects. DEASP does not provide a direct service to participants on the Drug and Alcohol Task Force Projects. The funding of €600,000 annually from DEASP goes to salaries and overheads of the project promoters running the services. The taskforce projects are community-based addiction and treatment services with inputs from other statutory agencies, mainly the HSE. There have been ongoing proposals from DEASP to the Department of Health to change the source of funding to ensure "fitness for purpose" between the funding agency and the project promoter service provider.

Full details of the services under the Drugs Rehabilitation schemes are set out in **Appendix 3**.

CE Childcare Scheme

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs introduced regulations for the childcare sector in 2016 which stipulated the levels of qualifications for childcare workers and the ratios of carers to children in various settings. This is part of a rolling programme of regulation and reform in the sector. In general DCYA does not directly train or activate childcare workers, it does however provide funding/grants to support skills updating in childcare services.

DEASP has provided sectoral training and activation services for childcare workers through the CE childcare scheme since 2016. In 2016, following consultations with the DCYA and negotiations at divisional level within DEASP with CE childcare scheme sponsors, DEASP introduced a structured childcare programme leading to recognised training standards for CE childcare. Consistency was assured across the sector through the appointment of Childcare Lead Sponsors at Divisional level to support programme delivery with regard to participant recruitment, training and progression.

The approach focuses on both activation and social inclusion roles and involves access to QQI Major Awards L5 and L6 for participants in "dedicated" roles working directly with children, with additional "support" worker roles for those involved in the delivery of the childcare service (drivers, cooks etc.). Those working in support roles can access relevant qualifications as required, either minor or major awards.

It is important that the development and roll out of regulatory change by DCYA is done in conjunction with DEASP so that the training provided within the CE childcare programme is fit for purpose for both the sector and the participants.

The number of participants on the CE Childcare Scheme is currently 1,424 which are made up of 1,235 dedicated childcare CE places and 189 support staff such as cooks and drivers.

Full details of the CE Childcare Scheme are in **Appendix 3.**

The Rural Social Scheme

The Rural Social Scheme was established in 2004 by the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. It has two purposes - to provide income support to low-income farmers and fishermen and to provide social services of benefit to rural communities. It is not an activation scheme as the recipients are already engaged in part-time employment through farming or fishing activity and in receipt of means-tested support from the DEASP in the form of a Farm/Fish Assist payment. The scheme is not intended to progress these farmers or fishermen into paid employment. The budget for 2019 is €51.1m. There are currently 3,350 participant places available on the RSS. The scheme is mainly concentrated in rural communities on the western seaboard (see map in **Appendix 4**). Full details of the conditions for eligibility for the scheme, numbers and expenditure are also in **Appendix 4.**

The Job Initiative Programme (JI)

The Job Initiative programme was launched in 1996 by the then Minister for Enterprise Trade and Employment to provide three years full-time employment for people who on entry to the scheme were 35 years of age or over, unemployed for 5 years or more, and in receipt of social welfare payments over that period. Recruitment to JI effectively ceased with effect from 10 November 2004 when the then Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment announced that, following a review of FÁS employment schemes, there would be no compulsory lay-offs from JI and that those on JI would have their contracts renewed. This had the result that those already working on the scheme could remain on JI until they either resigned voluntarily or reached retirement age. However, employees have an obligation to fulfil the terms of their employment contracts and abide by the Managing Agent's procedures. The scheme no longer has an activation function. It provides full-time employment for people who were long-term unemployed. These participants are not subject to means reviews. Virtually all JI projects provide some element of service support to both urban and rural communities. The budget for 2019 is €17.49m. There are currently 666 participants on this scheme. Full details of the scheme are at **Appendix 5**.

Section 3 : IDG approach and issues identified

The Inter-Departmental Group was convened and held its inaugural meeting on 26 March 2019 with representatives from various Government Departments. The meeting was also attended by the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, the Minister for State at the Department of Health Promotion and the National Drugs Strategy.

The Terms of Reference are at **Appendix 1** and membership of the group is set out in **Appendix 2**.

In its initial discussions the IDG identified the themes which would guide its work and the best approach to fulfil the terms of reference and report to the Minister and Government in a timely fashion.

The IDG had regard to the following:

- The broad range of work schemes meant that the IDG's work would be best progressed through bilateral meetings with relevant individual Departments and their Agencies, with a report back to the plenary group.
- The CE schemes have mixed objectives - part activation, part income support and part social inclusion.
- The challenge of separating activation and social inclusion placements where they are combined within existing CE schemes, particularly within individual schemes where they are treated interchangeably at local level.
- While DEASP has a framework in place that does provide flexibility governing access and retention of placements, some schemes and participants are experiencing the need for greater flexibility on grounds such as age, service needs and location. Many CE/Tús schemes also provide services to disadvantaged or isolated communities and care is needed to avoid the risk of disruption to such services. Clear criteria are needed to deal with these situations.

- Cross-sectoral linkages to combat social exclusion were key, irrespective of the lead Department, for example, areas such as drugs rehabilitation.
- The IDG also had regard to the requirement in the Terms of Reference that all recommendations must be cost neutral.
- The IDG to also consider that all recommendations must support good governance and accountability.
- The IDG noted that as there was significant interest in its work, a consultation process with the relevant stakeholders was essential in a timely manner.

It was agreed that the DEASP would set up Bi-Lateral meetings with other Government Departments to further discuss and explore the most appropriate organisation arrangements, including which Department may be best placed to host the Social Inclusion schemes.

It was also agreed that submissions should be sought from relevant stakeholders including CE sponsors, ILDN and Local Development companies, Community and Voluntary Sector and relevant Social Partners; and that an online survey should be utilised to gather views to inform the group's deliberations.

3.1 Bilateral discussions with Government Departments and agencies

It was agreed at the first meeting of the IDG to set up Bi-Lateral meetings with other Government Departments. This proved a satisfactory way to progress matters across the various sectors. A range of meetings and discussions took place.

The bilateral discussions were guided by the need to find feasible, relevant and deliverable outcomes which minimised disruption to services, maintained good governance and ensured cost neutrality. The Group was mindful that all discussions were exploratory as any proposals or changes to the relevant schemes are subject to public expenditure rules and possibly subject to Ministerial and/or to a Government Decision.

3.1.1 DEASP and Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD)

Extensive discussions were held with the Department of Rural and Community Development.

However, it became clear during the discussions that the social inclusion element of CE was closely entwined within most CE programmes with the activation strand and it would be very difficult to separate the two without undermining the CE programmes. Participants are recruited to fill vacancies as they arise and can move between placements depending on their progression e.g. if a participant is placed to work in a community centre (social inclusion placement) and they then opt to undertake childcare training as part of their progression, they will move to a childcare place and commence training (activation placement). As participants on CE can move between social inclusion and activation places, attempting to disaggregate the schemes could be very disruptive even if it were feasible. The Group also noted that the respondents to the consultation process endorsed this view quite strongly with 75% in favour of every employment scheme having a mixture of social inclusion and activation, "especially for those with low levels of education and skill who are living in disadvantaged areas, and are a distance from the labour market". Those who were in favour of separating the two in general referred to drugs rehabilitative placements that were primarily social inclusion.

The discussions then focused on the Rural Social Scheme (RSS) and, to a lesser extent, the Jobs Initiative (JI) scheme. The discussions had regard to the role and function, geographic spread, and scale of the schemes.

These DEASP run schemes provide income support to households in rural communities and thereby assist those communities and tackle social exclusion. In principle, the goal of these schemes also aligns with the strategic focus of DRCD's Statement of Strategy to support communities and tackle social exclusion through community-led service provision.

The RSS scheme, since its inception in 2004 initially as a scheme of the Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DCRGA) has provided support to rural

communities; it tackles social exclusion and provides income support and employment opportunities to low income farming and fishing households. It transferred under Minister O'Cuiv to the Department of Social Protection (DSP now DEASP) when he moved from DCRGA to DSP. RSS is delivered through 35 Local Development Companies and Údarás Na Gaeltachta, collectively known as Implementing Bodies (IBs). Pobal is engaged by the Department to operate a central payroll system. The scheme is operated in accordance with the eligibility criteria and policy and guidelines operated by the DEASP. The DEASP also provide functions in relation to administration, supervisor recruitment, means reviews, control and monitoring for the RSS.

Unlike other employment support schemes provided by the DEASP, there is no activation requirement governing participation on the RSS. However the current scheme is directly linked to eligibility for social protection income support for individuals - access to the scheme is dependent on qualification for Farm Assist or Fish Assist which are in turn subject to means testing and reviews by DEASP.

DRCD generally funds direct payments to projects or groups in rural communities.

The discussions between DEASP and DRCD looked at the operational and system arrangements for the RSS and also considered the value added of transferring the scheme as is. The scheme is already successful in terms of financial and social gain for participants and also the benefits derived within communities by the services and activities supported in maintaining the fabric of rural communities. The transfer would be partial as DRCD does not have the expertise or scale to conduct means assessments and reviews and these would need to remain with DEASP. This was also the case when the scheme was developed and run by the then DCRGA up to 2010.

However DRCD has a very specific policy remit to support rural communities. DRCD indicated that it was willing to work with relevant Departments to examine how the RSS could be amended over time so that it might be more closely aligned with DRCD's policy objectives in the future. DEASP agreed that it would provide further technical and operational information on the existing scheme as it aligns with the social protection system.

Any policy proposals from DRCD would require approval from the department of Public Expenditure in the normal manner.

3.1.2 DEASP, HSE and the Department of Health

There were bilateral discussions with the Department of Health and the HSE on the drugs rehabilitation programmes.

As it had been agreed at the plenary discussions that the CE Drug Rehabilitation Programme, with its 1,000 ring fenced places in 48 dedicated CE schemes, should remain with DEASP the main focus was on the 5 Drugs and Alcohol Addiction Task Force projects (LDATF) (referred to as 'mainstream' projects). However there was also some discussion about the importance of ensuring that the integrated inter-agency approach to rehabilitation and recovery is maintained, specifically the requirements of an integrated treatment, educational and recovery framework response.

Responsibility for the funding of the salary and overhead costs of the five drug and alcohol addiction projects transferred to DEASP from FÁS in 2012.

DEASP does not provide a direct service to participants on the Local Drugs and Alcohol Taskforce (LDATF) approved Projects and is not involved in designing or delivering the service (which would be beyond its remit).

DEASP has strong financial governance in place to track and audit the funding for salaries and overheads. However, concerns over the clinical governance of service activities emerged as part of the meetings. Clinical governance is deemed to be under the remit of the HSE and not the DEASP. There have been ongoing proposals from DEASP to the Department of Health to transfer the funding of the projects to the health sector in line with the service which they are delivering.

There was a concern that from a governance perspective, accountability would be clearer if a single entity were both funding the staff and overheads and monitoring the delivery of the services to clients.

An issue in the discussions was whether the current arrangement is genuinely interagency, including the engagement of the LDATF's and if it could be considered good governance. However the discussions were also mindful that any changes should ensure the maintenance of the ongoing service into the future in line with the remit of the IDG.

In principle the Group considered that it would be simpler if these Drugs and Alcohol Task Force Projects were funded and administered by a single entity in the health sector. However this could only be achieved safely if the ground work was in place for a safe transfer and the HSE had the necessary capacity. It is important to ensure that while the disconnect between the funder and the provider remains, that there is strong and effective interagency engagement on the service being provided.

3.1.3 DEASP, Department of Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and Údarás na Gaeltachta

The role of work schemes in areas within the remit of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG) and Údarás na Gaeltachta and the associated benefits of CE to both the communities and the participants CE social inclusion placements were discussed with both organisations.

Department of Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht oversees the protection and presentation of Ireland's heritage and cultural assets. Community Employment and Rural Social Scheme participants are a valuable resource to the work of the Department and a link to local communities. These participants are generally involved in projects relating to not for profit cultural and heritage centres and in the promotion and protection of Ireland's heritage and culture, in advancing the use of the Irish language, in the promotion of the arts and in supporting the sustainable of the islands. Ireland has a number of unique heritage sites

which benefit the current generation and if maintained and developed will benefit future generations. Our heritage is also a valuable amenity for businesses and tourism. The services provided by the participants in both urban and rural Ireland could not be sustained in the absence of these schemes. CH&G is of the view that the linguistic needs of the Irish speaking communities in the Gaeltacht should be recognised and accommodated. This will entail, in line with Government policy, the employment of an increased number of Irish speakers across Government and in the community and voluntary sector in areas where interaction with Irish speaking communities is envisaged.

Údarás na Gaeltachta

Údarás is the regional authority responsible for the economic, social and cultural development of the Gaeltacht. At the end June 2019, there were a number of different work schemes operated by An tÚdarás which are set out in **Table 2**.

Table 2 - Active work scheme numbers in Údarás na Gaeltachta at the end of June 2019

Programme	Participants	Supervisors	Assistant Supervisors
Community Employment	377	17	3
Rural Social Scheme	495	20	0
Job Initiative	29	1	0

It has an active role in the economic, social and cultural development of their communities, largely through well-established groups such as 36 community cooperatives and community development companies. One of its objectives is to help these community groups become strong and have proactive structures which can deliver local services, promote local development initiatives, and in many instances manage and administer community or state assets such as enterprise centres.

An tÚdarás works in close partnership with community groups to administer employment schemes such as CE, RSS, JI and Tús. An tÚdarás advised that the majority of rural areas under their remit could be considered areas of deprivation. An tÚdarás works in some areas to manage childcare, youth clubs and pre-school groups and enhance the social

infrastructure through activities such as the provision of assistance for the elderly and the disadvantaged.

The benefits of these work schemes to both the communities and the participants represented by Údarás na Gaeltachta was highlighted and dependency on these schemes in some rural areas to maintain local services was conveyed. The provision of training for participants on CE with work experience was deemed to be one of the valuable functions and strengths of CE.

While CE may in some urban areas have a strong connection to jobseekers who are long-term unemployed clients it was also highlighted that CE social inclusion places should focus on the participation of adults who require additional supports.

3.1.4 DEASP and Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA)

The context of the discussions between DCYA and DEASP was to ensure that both organisations worked closely together so that the training programme provided under the CE childcare scheme aligned with the regulatory reform being undertaken by DCYA in the childcare sector. From 1st January 2016, the minimum professional qualification of FETAC level 5 in Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE) applied to all individuals working in the early year's sector and a minimum qualification of a level 6 for all pre-school leaders delivering the ECCE programme. Currently on CE, participants can access training and qualifications up to QQI level 5 and 6 major awards. This, combined with opportunities for supervised work experience provides a blended learning experience that is directly employment-led.

DCYA advised that while there continues to be actions taken to move towards a more professional workforce in early years there remains an important role to be played by CE scheme participants to train, obtain their qualification and gain valuable work experience.

The DCYA First 5 Strategy includes a number of relevant commitments in relation to the Early Years Childcare workforce. These include the preparation of a new Workforce

Development Plan. This plan will look at a graduate-led Early Learning and Care (ELC) workforce, in line with a recommendation in the EU Quality Framework for the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) that all staff will have career development opportunities. It is important to note that the Strategy intends the move to a graduate-led (as opposed to graduate-provided) ELC workforce, with at least 50% of staff (i.e. all room leaders, assistant manager and managers) working directly with children in centre-based ELC settings and coordinators supporting the work of childminders, holding an appropriate degree-level qualification (with an initial target of 30% reached by 2021).

The Workforce Development Plan will seek to ensure the appropriate number of ELC and school-age childcare staff at all levels in the sector. The Workforce Development Plan will also set out plans to raise the profile of careers in ELC and school-age childcare, establish a career framework and leadership development opportunities and will work towards building a more gender-balanced and diverse workforce. Consideration will also be given to broadening the ELC and school-age childcare workforce, including those in inspection, mentoring and training roles and support for those who facilitate practice placements.

It was agreed that both organisations had worked closely to ensure the roll out of qualification requirements was effectively managed with regard to participant recruitment, training and progression, that the structured childcare programme developed by DEASP led to recognised training standards for CE childcare workers and that this should be mirrored for the implementation of the DCYA's new Workforce Development Plan.

3.2 - Governance issues

3.2.1 Principle of Governance

For nearly 30 years since CE was established, voluntary organisations, some of whom are registered charities, and some public bodies (such as Údarás na Gaeltachta and Local authorities) have been CE and JI sponsor organisations. They sponsor CE projects which are for community and public benefit at local level. Volunteers have individually and collectively

contributed enormously to the management and operation of CE Schemes and this strong tradition of volunteerism and civic spirit is continuing to play such an important part in the running of CE schemes.

Good governance requires clarity about the purpose, value and vision of the organisation and making good use of resources to achieve these. In order to achieve the full potential of CE, Boards of Management must have a very clear understanding of their governance role and responsibilities and be fully aware of the importance of this. To discharge its duty in this regard, the Board should ensure that there is an adequate system of good corporate governance, control, delegation and accountability in place to ensure the smooth and efficient operation of CE. Board members should take care to ensure that they are seen to be acting independently and without personal interest. CE schemes which are registered charities should comply with the Charities Governance Code, as issued by the Charities Regulator.

An issue which arose in discussions is the dependency of the schemes on voluntary participation in communities. The age profile of CE sponsor boards and the duration of service of board members reflect the fact that many such board members have remained committed, over very long periods of time, to ensuring continuity of service by the sponsor group. This long service commitment by very many volunteers is to be highly commended. The IDG considers that, in accordance with good corporate governance principles, CE sponsors should seek to include new members on sponsor boards to ensure that the future management and governance of CE schemes will be in place. The Department of Rural and Community Development are currently developing a National Strategy on Volunteering which will consider this issue on how younger generations can be encouraged to volunteer in their communities. This work should inform the CE sector on how it can develop and enhance is contribution to community development.

The issue was not discussed in depth by the group and is somewhat beyond its remit. However it is worth flagging for consideration so that the sector can maintain its contribution into the future. The sector needs to develop long term strategic thinking on the implications of an aging population in the voluntary sector.

3.2.2 CE participation – Criteria, Limits and Extensions

CE has grown and expanded over the years since the commencement of the programme in 1994 and the eligibility criteria have changed in line with the needs of the customer and the Department. The current eligibility criteria are linked to the customer's social welfare status and the period of placement is linked to whether or not the participant is undertaking further education and training with the exception of those aged over 55, see below. Referrals are done through the Employment Support Case Officers in DEASP and are based on eligibility and the best match for the placement.

Eligibility Criteria

- The general qualifying age for CE participation is 21 years.

- In general all CE placements for new entrants aged between 21 and 55 years are for 1 year.

- CE participants working towards a major award/industry recognised standards can seek to extend participation by up to a further two years

- Those over 55 years of age can remain on CE for three years without the requirement that they are working towards a major award but can engage in training if desirable

- An overall lifetime limit of 6 years applies to all CE participants – 7 years in the case of persons in receipt of a qualifying disability-linked social welfare payment. The base year for calculating the lifetime limit is 2007.

- Participants over age 62 are allowed to participate on a continuous basis up to the State Pension age on the CE Service Support Stream (SSS), subject to availability of places on the SSS, satisfactory performance on the scheme and annual approval by the Department. The places allocated for these participants within each individual CE scheme are subject to limitation criteria.

Requests for exceptions to existing rules:

DEASP deals with at least 20 to 30 requests per year from participants who wish to extend their time on CE outside of the allowable parameters. There is no formal protocol for dealing with these requests but in practice an informal set of criteria are considered as follows:

- The applicant's age
- Whether the applicant needs an extension to complete some modules of training based on an assessment of their individual learning plan (ILP)
- The training the applicant has received during their time on CE and whether this should enable them to find work outside of CE
- Having regard to:
    - training and work experience gained, an assessment of the participant's capacity to progress to employment (or further relevant training)
    - an assessment of the benefit to a participant of remaining as a participant for a further period of time if the participant's capacity to progress to employment or further training is assessed as requiring further work experience

  Such assessments to be made by the CE Supervisor and in conjunction with the Department's Employment Support Servces.
- How long since the applicant last worked (apart from previous CE placements)
- What their work pattern has been like throughout their working life
- Whether they have had the benefit of other activation interventions through the services of an employment support case officer provided through the Intreo service or other employment support schemes such as Tús, JobsPlus, Back to Education Allowance (BTEA), Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA), Short-Term Enterprise Allowance (STEA)
- Whether the CE sponsor supports the request to retain the person.

The IDG considers that as a general principle these criteria should be formalised, circulated to schemes and publicised so that a clear and consistent approach can be applied countrywide.

Respondents to the consultation were asked if they thought that participants over 62 should be entitled to remain on Community Employment up to State Pension Age without limitations. The response was overwhelming in favour (93%). The benefits of remaining on the scheme include participants maintaining "their sense of wellbeing and work activity" and how "older people on CE schemes can provide useful role models for other participants through their maturity and life experience". However, in some cases this view was tempered by the need to continue to adhere to participation end dates on CE in order to provide a place for another applicant and the need for "regular appraisal of their role as with any participant i.e. performance, attendance and training".

The IDG considers that there are a number of issues which could arise if an extension of time is granted without some conditions:

Over 62s - The age profile of CE participants is rising and the numbers over 62 will increase in the coming years. DEASP would need to ensure that cost neutrality does not become an issue although this seems unlikely at least in the short/medium term. Schemes should also retain the possibility of assessing the person's contribution and seek to avoid 'lock in' for both scheme and the individual.

Under 62s - There was some discussion of reducing the age as low as 55. This approach is also referenced in some of the responses to the consultation. State pension age is currently paid at age 66. This is due to increase to age 67 from 2021 and age 68 from 2028.

If it was decided to allow people over 55 years to remain on the CE programme until reaching State Pension age, it would effectively mean that those places would be closed to any new entrants, blocking access to the work experience, training and development opportunities afforded by the CE programme for people of all qualifying ages. This proposal would also mean that a person could potentially have at least 18 years participation on CE up to pension age. This is at least 11 years longer than the 7 years currently in place for people with disabilities and the 12 years for other participants.

There may be instances where some flexibility is needed - for example where schemes struggle to fill places or, conversely, in remote or disadvantaged areas where opportunities for people are scarce.

On the other hand fairness also dictates that, where there is competition for places, places should not be filled for years for particular individuals at the expense of others.

CE must also continue to be effective as an activation tool. Allowing those aged over 55 to participate on CE schemes on a continuous basis until they reach State Pension age would also be contrary to the evidence of international evaluation studies and advice. It is generally recognised that shorter duration schemes are more beneficial for individuals in getting people back into mainstream employment whereas longer duration schemes are seen to "lock-in" unemployed people and recycle most of them back into unemployment. Therefore any revision to the current rules for those who are deemed to be predominately Social Inclusion would need to have clear criteria in place, take into account how the void would be filled in the community if the place is vacated, build in cost control mechanisms and retain the normal means reviews.

3.3 - Consultation with Stakeholders

3.3.1 Summary of the consultation process

To inform its work, the IDG invited the views of key stakeholders and interested parties including the Community and Voluntary organisations through a number of consultative processes in line with the Terms of Reference. The IDG wanted to get views on whether the current programmes represent the best delivery model and also to seek to determine the impacts of any possible change on interested parties. Interested parties were invited to provide written submissions and/or complete an online survey. Responses were submitted by email or post to DEASP with a closing date for submissions of 28 May 2019. All submissions received were considered as part of the review process.

Approximately 80 written submissions were received as part of the general consultation and almost 670 online replies to the survey questionnaire. The breakdown of the type of organisation who replied to the consultation process is detailed in Appendix 9. In general, it was completed by service providers, experts and academics in the field and a small number of the general public. The response to the consultation process was very positive with a healthy response from the CE sponsor sector.

3.3.2 Common themes and suggestions

How participants and communities benefit from CE schemes were to the forefront in many of the responses. A number of overarching themes emerged from the consultation process. In relation to the key questions on the future of Social Inclusion placements, the following themes emerged:

- The current structure of the 'CE scheme' was regarded as best positioned in the DEASP.
- The need to sustain these schemes into the future in order to protect the valuable services provided in local areas. A reduction/loss in places will result in the loss of local services particularly in some sectors such as childcare and local services.
- Social Inclusion placements on work schemes require a distinct focus to ensure that those who are interested in working and delivering services in their local community have the opportunity to do so.
- The majority of responses recommended that participants over age 62 should remain on Community Employment (CE) up to State Pension age without limitations. It was also a majority view that there was no danger that prolonging time on a work scheme may reduce a person's likelihood of progressing to sustainable employment. This is contrary to evidence of international evaluation studies.
- The provision of supports such as training and development to CE scheme participants was identified as the schemes main strength.
- It was apparent that the importance of filling of the vacancies within communities outweighed the need to categorise the placement as either Social Inclusion and Activation;

- Although a number of similar themes were raised, there was not complete consensus that the same eligibility conditions should apply to both social inclusion and activation placements or that scheme participants should be categorised in either category.
- There is a need to encourage up-skilling and training of CE participants at all levels with an aim to seek to transition a person from a social inclusion placement to an activation placement;
- Continued resourcing for CE schemes in disadvantaged and rural areas are pressing issues which need to be highlighted;
- With the changes introduced by DCYA regarding qualifications for those working in the childcare sector, it is suggested that DEASP and DCYA strive to ensure a continued role for CE scheme participants on childcare schemes;
- There is a desire for greater support and governance of work scheme places with particular reference to age profile of some sponsor organisations in the volunteer sector;
- Current state-funded programmes such as CE, RSS and SICAP to be continually reviewed to ensure effectiveness to directly address Social Inclusion with appropriate resources in place to ensure quality provision to support the sustainability of the sector.

3.3.3 Examples of Feedback from Consultation Processes

The schemes were praised by a number of respondents as having positive outcomes for individuals furthest from the labour market and most agree that CE "*should stay within the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection".* Some emphasised that *'Moving CE to another Department may undermine the spirit and ethos of CE and may lead to it being demoted or financially starved within another Department".* While others recognised that *"CE is best placed within the remit of Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection".*

Although a number of similar themes were raised in both the submissions and surveys, there was not complete consensus across the issues raised and the priorities identified. A number

highlighted that *"Ageism is a reality in the Irish labour market, though as the State Pension age increases; it is a reality that the State has to properly address and ensure that older unemployed people can gain access to decent jobs. In the meantime if both the participant, the Supervisor and the sponsor deem it to be in the best interests of all concerned then older CE participants should be supported to participate fully in Community Employment"* and that *"If a person is over the age of 62, it may be more difficult for them to get employment especially if they were unemployed for a long time. While every effort must continue to be made to assist a person over the age of 62 into paid employment, very often employers may not want to take on an older person, especially if they were unemployed for a long period of time"***.** Although CE was praised as having positive outcomes for individuals furthest from the labour market some cited that they have experienced situations where **"***participants finish on CE at 61 years of age because they had exhausted their eligibility and that person was severely impacted as a result of this"* and thought that *"this category should be brought back to 55 and over".*

Most did not favour making a distinction between activation and social inclusion placements stating for example that *"For many schemes, the distinction between social inclusion and activation participants is felt to be an artificial one at project level- both sets of participants require intensive supports and training to enable them to enter/return to the world of work on an unsupported basis".* While another stated that *"It is imperative to ensure that the avoidance of two unintended consequences viz (1) candidates on the social inclusion strand must not be stigmatised and further disadvantaged by being confined to schemes that will potentially viewed as of lesser value and (2) the community sector must not be de-skilled; community and social inclusion projects may require skills input that are equal or greater to other projects".* It was also highlighted that *"Specific individuals may take longer to achieve goals identified. Should all be expected to complete in same time frame, is not realistic and/or achievable".*

In order for schemes to be run successfully some organisations welcomed a combination of both "w*e believe the 2 combine very well and in order to successfully run a scheme you must have a combination of both. If it was to be social inclusion only, more support or full time workers or supervisors would be needed as the challenges can be difficult and the*

participants need extra support. Also to separate the 2 is not our understanding of positive social inclusion and could isolate people even more. As we said earlier one peer group encourages the other". It is important not to *"differentiate between roles that are classified as social inclusion and activation. On our programme, each individual participant is provided with the support they require to develop the competencies needed to compete in the open labour market. This includes education, training, mentoring and relevant work experience".*

"If CE is to engage a more disadvantaged cohort, proper consideration has to be given as to whether sponsors have the capacity to support people with higher- level needs".

Some respondents highlighted the need to *"Increase the training budget to maximise the options for people to build their skills and knowledge base. The cost of coming to work needs to be factored into considerations around removing disincentives. The weekly top up of €22.50 is insufficient for participants who are financially challenged to meet travel, lunch, parking and/or childcare cost incurred. This can act as a barrier preventing people from putting themselves forward for vacancies".* and that the department *"should develop closer working relations with sponsor organisations to work collectively to address the barriers and gaps that prevent marginalised groups from accessing CE placements and to support their progression from social inclusion to activation".*

Section 4: Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Introduction

The terms of reference set for the Inter-Departmental Group focused on identifying practical steps to explore the most appropriate organisation arrangements, including which Department should host the Community (CE) Social Inclusion schemes including, Drug Rehabilitation and Childcare CE schemes; the Rural Social Scheme (RSS): and the Job Initiative (JI) scheme.

4.2 Conclusions and recommendations

The recommendations of the IDG are drawn from the work in the bilateral meetings with Departments and Agencies and the work of the Plenary Group. The key themes identified in the plenary discussions and set out in Section 3 (page 23) guided the recommendations.

The approach in the bilateral discussions was to identify recommendations that are guided by the need to find feasible, relevant and deliverable outcomes which minimised disruption to services and ensured good governance was maintained. As provided by the Terms of Reference all proposals to be cost neutral. The IDG of course is cognisant that some or many of the recommendations will have to be considered by DEASP and may require further consideration in the context of the Department's overall approach to employment support schemes and incentives.

Following consideration by Government of its recommendations, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection will prepare an implementation plan, in consultation with the IDG group of actions to be implemented by all relevant Departments. It is proposed that a further update of progress be made by end 2019 and submitted to Government in early 2020.

4.3 Recommendations

It is the view of the Inter-Departmental Group that implementation of the following recommendations would address the most appropriate organisation arrangements, including which Department should host social inclusion placements within Community Employment schemes including Drug Rehabilitation and Childcare CE schemes, the Rural Social Scheme (RSS).

4.3.1 Rural Social Scheme (RSS)

Recommendation

The IDG recommends that DRCD and DEASP complete their examination of the operational and systems issues involved in transferring the RSS. This examination can include any policy proposals under consideration by DRCD for revisions to the scheme where DEASP is in a position to provide technical advice. All of the issues arising should be fully considered before any final determination is made in relation to a transfer of the scheme.

4.3.2 Job Initiative Programme (JI)

As with RSS, the Job Initiative Programme provides some element of support for both urban and rural communities. It is an income support scheme and has a Social Inclusion focus. It provides full-time employment for people who were long-term unemployed. As the scheme is closed there is an argument against transferring it at this stage.

Recommendation

The IDG recommends that the Jobs Initiative scheme remain with DEASP having regard to the fact that the scheme is a closed scheme with no new entrants since November 2004.

4.3.3 Community Employment Scheme - Social Inclusion Remit

A key function of CE is supporting social inclusion and counteracting the drift into structural unemployment. The programme is targeted in the main at people over 21 who are long-term unemployed and very distant from the labour market. Participants on CE are in receipt

of specified social welfare payments for a minimum period of 1 year and include – people on the Live Register, lone parents, and people with a disability. Within these categories there are participants associated with long term disadvantage e.g. ex-offenders, people with drug dependency, and people from the travelling community. CE is a broad and flexible programme that has been utilised to address many social challenges presenting at individual and/or societal level e.g. rehabilitative programmes and supporting communities in the provision of services.

The social inclusion element of CE is closely entwined within most CE programmes with the activation strand and it would be very difficult to separate the two. Some sponsors highlighted their concern "if this review would distinguish participants and pigeonhole them as social inclusion or activation".

The CE programme is considered at the high support end on the continuum of provision for long term unemployed and other vulnerable groups who are very distant from the labour market. "It is a reality that some participants may never move into mainstream employment beyond CE but their employment on CE needs to be valued both for the way it enriches the participant's life and the community organisation in which they are based".

The structural nature of the social isolation facing many long-term unemployed, those parenting alone, and people with disabilities is broader than the issues any single programme can address. To this end it is important that the full range of services work together in an inter-agency approach.

It is recognised that CE has a large proportion of participants that can be described as social inclusion clients and for a number of reasons many of these will find it difficult to gain sustainable employment despite the best efforts of the scheme and the participants. Participants on CE move between social inclusion and activation places and attempting to disaggregate the schemes could be very disruptive even if it were feasible. While CE placements are categorised as activation or social inclusion, the participants are not categorised in this way. There is flexibility for participants to move within the schemes from one stream to the other without being labelled as such and by " having activation and social

inclusion places allows all CE participants to see what is involved in other roles, how people are gaining experience in their role and undertaking training to assist them with their future careers. Having both strands complement each other".

Evidence shows that participants may progress into employment and that "unnecessarily prolonging a person's engagement on social inclusion CE schemes can be fundamentally disrespectful to the participant. The vast majority of participants, with the right supports, will be able to progress to employment or at least mainstream CE within a two year period. A minority will of course require longer". Some of the responses to the survey have also commented on the extent to which the activation placements on CE support and assist the development of the more disadvantaged participants. "If there was a separation of the activation and social inclusion programmes we feel this could lead to barriers being put in the way of participants gaining employment as there could be a stigma attached to the social inclusion programme.

The programme is complex because it spans activation, income support, community services while also, for some participants aims to tackle social exclusion.

The IDG did not have the time or capacity to conduct research. However it would be interesting to see what research is available on the impact of social inclusion placements in schemes such as CE. The 2015 CE review cited considerable research on the labour market activation role of schemes such as CE by Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER), international evaluation studies and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). It would be useful to consider some research into the value and benefit of CE type schemes specifically from the perspective of social inclusion which could assist in any future review of these schemes.

Recommendations

Given the complexity of CE Schemes the IDG does not recommend that the schemes should be split. Attempting to separate the social inclusion element from the activation strand would be disruptive for the schemes, remove the support provided by activation participants

and also lessen the ease of progression from a social inclusion placement to an activation one. The schemes should remain within the remit of the DEASP.

The IDG does recommend that research be carried out into the contribution of schemes such as CE to assess their effectiveness in tackling social exclusion in comparison to similar programmes internationally.

4.3.4 CE participation limits

The IDG considers that the eligibility criteria for participation on CE schemes are satisfactory as they have regard to the importance of preparing participants for deeper engagement in the labour market. The IDG noted that the dual objectives of the scheme were;
i) to provide employment support, training and valuable work experience to people who are long-term unemployed to prepare them for re-entry into the labour market; and
ii) to provide a range of social and community services in local areas which provide a vital role in service supports. However, the IDG also noted that CE is often the main response to addressing the needs of adults who are experiencing social exclusion or social isolation and that it can, in some circumstances, take individuals some considerable amount of time to progress to a situation where re-entry to the formal labour market can be considered as a real option for them.

Recommendation

The IDG recommends that:

1. DEASP develop and formalise guidelines to deal with participants, experiencing social exclusion or social isolation, who could benefit from an extended period of participation on a CE scheme and, reflect the need for CE Supervisors to focus fully on supporting, training and activation for all of the participants from the first day they commence on the scheme. These guidelines should have regard to the criteria set out from page 19 of this report and;
   a. Ensure that the extended duration of participants on CE schemes is not “locking-in”

participants and inhibiting progression to employment in the labour market , and

b. Ensure that other potential participants are not excluded, and

c. that an assessment is made by the CE Supervisors and in conjunction with Department's employment support services

DEASP should circulate the guidelines to all relevant staff and CE sponsor organisations. A review should be conducted annually of the operation of the guidelines.

2. Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) are agreed for each CE participant and these plans should be reviewed and agreed between the CE Supervisor and Department Employment Support Service officials at the commencement of a new participant joining a CE Scheme. In addition to the ongoing and regular communication that takes place between the CE Supervisor and Department Employment Support Service officials, a formal review of each participant's progress against their respective ILP should be carried out between the CE Supervisor and Department Employment Support Service officials every 6 months.

3. Prior to a request for an extension being considered, the CE Supervisor and Department Employment Support Service officials will have undertaken a series of six -monthly formal reviews and will already be aware of a CE participant's progress and the impact that training and development undertaken is having on the progression of their ILPs.

The decision to permit an extension will be based on the success or otherwise of the interventions undertaken over the preceding period and per an individual's ILP. The subject of an extension will already have been discussed at these formal reviews, well in advance of the cessation of a participant on the CE Scheme.

Participants over 62 years of age

Existing scheme participants over age 62 are allowed to participate on a continuous basis up to the State Pension age on the CE Service Support Stream (SSS), subject to availability of

places on the SSS, satisfactory performance on the scheme and annual approval by the Department. The places allocated for these participants within each individual CE scheme are subject to limitation criteria.

In future, over 62s should be allowed to remain on the scheme up to state pension age subject to the schemes retaining the possibility of assessing the participant's contribution to avoid "lock in" for both the schemes and the individual.

4.3.5 CE Childcare Scheme

DCYA advised that while there continues to be actions taken to move towards a more professional workforce in early years there remains an important role to be played by CE scheme participants.

It was agreed that both organisations had worked closely to ensure the first roll out of qualification requirements was effectively managed and that this should be mirrored for the implementation of the DCYA's new Workforce Development Plan.

Recommendation

The IDG recommends that the CE Childcare places remain with DEASP. The Departments of Children and Youth Affairs and Employment Affairs and Social Protection work closely together so that the training programme provided under the CE childcare scheme aligns with the regulatory reform being undertaken by DCYA in the childcare and youth sector. This is particularly the case in respect of the DCYA Workforce Development Plan. Participants should continue to receive the training required and relevant work experiences through a programme implemented by DEASP and agreed with DCYA.

4.3.6 CE Drug Rehabilitation Placements

Recommendation

The IDG recommends that the CE Drug Rehabilitation Programme, as the main strand with the Social Inclusion stream of CE, remain with the overall CE programme under the remit of

DEASP and that continued focus remains on the existing inter-agency approach in place.

4.3.7 Mainstream Drug Addiction projects

There is a potential accountability gap in the way these projects are delivered with one agency funding staffing and overheads (DEASP) with another organisation (HSE) responsible for the service provided to people suffering from addiction. The IDG recognises that there is a need for interagency working as the basis of the projects and that both organisations need to engage in this cross sectoral approach.

In principle, it should be preferable from a governance perspective if these schemes were funded and administered by a single entity in the health sector. It is important that any transfer does not risk or undermine the service being provided on the ground. Therefore the ground work would have to be in place for a safe transfer including that the HSE had the necessary capacity.

Recommendation

The IDG recommends the transfer of the projects to the health sector provided both Departments can be satisfied that the service is not put at risk. Further discussions can continue at official level with all relevant Departments and Agencies.

4.3.8 Governance

Community and Voluntary Groups who are work schemes sponsors should adopt principles of governance and a code of practice for good governance that has been developed by the sector.

Since CE was established 25 years ago, voluntary organisations and some public bodies have been CE and JI sponsor organisations. They sponsor CE projects which are for community and public benefit at local level. Many volunteers have individually and collectively contributed enormously to the management and operation of CE Schemes and this strong tradition of volunteerism and civic spirit is continuing to play such an important part in the

running of CE schemes.

This governance principle is all about being clear about the purpose, value and vision of the organisation and making good use of resources to achieve these. In order to achieve the full potential of CE, Boards of Management must have a very clear understanding of their governance role and responsibilities and be fully aware of the importance of this. To discharge its duty in this regard, the Board should ensure that there is an adequate system of good corporate governance, control, delegation and accountability in place to ensure the smooth and efficient operation of CE. Board members should also take care to ensure that they are seen to be acting independently and without personal interest. There is a learning requirement within these organisations of what is required in terms of good governance.

Recommendation

One issue that needs to be considered is ageing in the voluntary sector. The sector needs to develop long term strategic thinking on the implications of an aging population for the voluntary sector. There have been amalgamations of CE schemes due to age demographics in this sector and this trend will continue. The sustainability of these organisations needs to be looked at in more detail across government and the policy of DEASP in this space aligned with other Departments.

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference

The purpose of the Inter-Departmental Group and the timeframe for conclusion of its work were set out in its terms of reference, as follows:

Interdepartmental Group to explore the most appropriate organisation arrangements, including which Department should host the CE Social Inclusion schemes

The recent Government decision (S180/20/10/0861) regarding Social Inclusion places on Community Employment (CE) approved the establishment of an interdepartmental group (IDG) to explore the most appropriate organisation arrangements, including which Department should host the CE Social Inclusion schemes, including Drug Rehabilitation and Childcare CE schemes, the Rural Social Scheme (RSS) and the Job Initiative (JI) scheme.

Objective:

The aim of the IDG is to establish the mechanisms by which persons who are most distant from the workplace can avail of work experience on social inclusion community employment scheme placements and also to support the delivery of services to local communities to ensure that these services can be maintained in the future.

Membership:

The membership of the IDG is set out in Appendix 2.

Terms of Reference:

The Terms of Reference of the IDG are to consider and make practical proposals on which Department/s is best placed to host the social inclusion schemes involved to fulfil the objective stated above and to ensure accountability. Proposals are to be on a cost neutral basis. The schemes are as follows:

1. CE Social Inclusion places:

- To consider how the service provision element of some Social Inclusion schemes can be linked to the appropriate Department in order to maintain and support the

continuity of valuable services into the future, and

- To have regard to how participants can be progressed from a Social Inclusion CE placement to an activation placement, where suitable, and to ensure the linkages are in place to facilitate this.
- To establish a Framework under which Social Inclusion placements and Activation placements should be governed.

2. Drugs Rehabilitation Places:

There are 1,000 CE Drug rehabilitation places. The primary emphasis for the participants is on rehabilitation. Participants have access to multiple supports and specialist inputs from additional social, education and health mainstream services as part of the programme offered under CE.

- To consider how the integrated inter-agency approach to rehabilitation, can be maintained, including the requirements of a treatment, educational and recovery framework response;
- To also consider how the development model of progression that reflects the different profiles of those in rehabilitation and recovery can be maintained; and how the ring-fenced places for referred clients will be safeguarded along with the referral mechanism.

3. Mainstream Drug Projects:

- To consider the most appropriate host Department for the administration of the funding associated with the 5 drug and alcohol mainstream response projects. DEASP has responsibility to administer funding to 5 addiction projects to cover the salary and overhead costs. These are addiction projects that provide treatment and day care services to a wide range of clients in addiction.

4. Rural Social Scheme (RSS) and Jobs Initiative (JI) schemes:

- The RSS is considered as a social inclusion scheme. RSS plays a key role in community action and development, sustaining rural communities and preventing social isolation; and
- The Jobs Initiative scheme - a scheme which has been closed to new entrants since

2004 - which provides its participants with 39 hours employment in areas providing social and community services and is not an activation scheme.

5. Governance & Accountability:

In the context of making practical proposals on which Department is best placed to host the above schemes, the following should also be considered to ensure good governance and accountability:

- How the schemes are administered, delivered, managed, monitored and controlled; and
- The impact of any transfer of operations for service delivery and current sponsors,
- Accountability and funding implications
- The IDG will not consider HR/IR issues.

Note:

Written submissions will be sought from key stakeholders and community groups.

The IDG to report to Cabinet Committee B, dealing with Social Policy and Public Services with the outcome of the deliberations of the IDG prior to a final decision by the Government, no later than May 2019.

Frequency of Meetings and Secretariat:

It is recommended that the IDG will meet regularly with a view to reporting to Cabinet by Q2 2019. The Secretariat to the IDG will be provided by DEASP.

Appendix 2: Membership of the Inter-Departmental group

The following Departments are represented on the Group at senior official level:

Simonetta Ryan	Chairperson
Shane Reynolds	Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Secretariat)
John Conlon	Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection
Gráinne McGuckin	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER)
Padraig McMahon	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM)
Bairbre Nic Aongusa	Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD)
Paul Fay	Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA)
Garrett Byrne	Department of Justice and Equality (DJE)
Jim Walsh	Department of Health
Seán Mac Eoin	Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG)
Diarmuid O Leary	Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG)
Nora Durcan	Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection
Cormac Judge	Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection
Miriam Conway	Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection
Tina Ward	Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection
Jim Lynch	Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection

Appendix 3: Community Employment Schemes

3.1 Back ground - Community Employment (CE) mainstream schemes

Community Employment (CE) was set up in 1994. At that time many individuals were long-term unemployed. This scheme acted as a resource for communities while also affording those who were long term unemployed the opportunity to work and develop themselves within their community. The scheme has since become a vital service to communities nationally. It is a unique scheme in that it is an employment intervention with a training element and it also benefits the community. Virtually all CE participants are engaged in some element of service support and delivery.

From the 1st January 2012 responsibility for Community Employment transferred from FÁS to the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP), as part of a wider transfer of employment services and programmes (prior to this CE was managed solely by FÁS since its inception in 1994).

The aim of CE is to enhance the employability and mobility of disadvantaged and unemployed persons by providing work experience and training opportunities for them within their communities. It also helps long-term unemployed people to re-enter the active workforce by breaking their experience of unemployment through a return to work routine. The referral point for entry to CE programmes is through the Department's Intreo centres.

CE schemes are typically sponsored by voluntary and community organisations wishing to benefit the local community. As the employers, these sponsoring organisations contract with the Department, on an annual basis, to provide job seekers and other vulnerable groups with good quality work experience and training qualifications to support their progression into employment.

CE participants work an average of 19.5 hours per week. CE placements are not full time sustainable jobs.

2017 changes

As the economic recovery took hold and the overall level of unemployment continued to fall, the Department recognised the need to adapt its schemes to the changing circumstances, opportunities and needs of jobseekers and others. An analysis of the CE Programme was completed by the Department in late 2015 and published, following Government approval, in April 2017.

The review looked at CE, Tús, Gateway and the RSS. It was agreed by Government that the overall number of scheme places available in 2017 was to be 32,000. CE continued to be the largest programme in 2017 with 22,400 places available in over 950 schemes across the country. The balance was made up of placements in schemes such as the RSS and Tús.

Following a series of consultation workshops with stakeholders, on the proposed changes to CE, in every county during May/early June 2017, a number of changes were introduced with effect from 3rd July 2017. These changes are intended to broaden access to a wider range of people:

3.2 Qualifying Conditions

- The general qualifying age for CE places is 21 years;
- In general all CE placements for new entrants aged between 21 and 55 years is for 1 year – however CE participants, working towards a major award, can seek to extend participation by up to two years;
- Those over 55 years of age can remain on CE for three years;
- An overall lifetime limit of 6 years will applies to all CE participants. A person may re-qualify for CE after 12 months of being in receipt of a qualifying payment, provided they have not reached their 6 year limit. Persons in receipt of a qualifying disability-linked social welfare payment are eligible for an overall lifetime limit of 7 years.
- The base year for calculating the 6 year maximum participation is 2007;

3.3 Rate of payment for Participants

The basic participant weekly rate is based on maximum weekly rates payable for their underlying payment plus a top-up of €22.50 pw. An additional Increase for a Qualified Adult (IQA) is payable in cases where the participant has a qualifying dependent spouse/civil partner/co-habitant. An Increase for a Qualified Child (IQA) is also paid, where applicable, at either full-rate or half-rate depending on individual circumstances. The rates are set as follows:

Table 3 - CE rate of payment June 2019

	Weekly rates
Participant	€225.50
Participant with Adult Dependant	€360.20
Plus Each Child Dependant (full-rate)	€ 37.00
Plus Each Child Dependant (half-rate)	€ 18.50

3.4 Community Employment (CE) Drug Rehabilitation Programme

The Department continues to support the re-integration of participants referred to a CE place on a drug rehabilitation scheme through the delivery of the agreed inter-agency CE Drug Rehabilitation Programme within the CE Social Inclusion strand.

Rationale for the CE Drugs Rehabilitation Response as part of the Social Inclusion Strand

One of the key recommendations of CE Financial Review (2012) pointed to a "mis-match", in some instances, between the active labour market parameters of CE and the reality of people at the early stages of drug rehabilitation. The Review recommended that for those clients where the primary emphasis is on rehabilitation and where the provision of structure and coping strategies in everyday life is needed, a different type of programme was required.

It was recognised that drug misuse is a complex, psycho-social phenomenon. Accordingly, there is no single rehabilitation model which suits all individuals. A range of factors affect a participants progression towards recovery, with relapse and recidivism an acknowledged feature of the process. Under the national drugs strategy, it was also recognised that the response to substance misuse is a cross-cutting issue. No single agency has the range of competencies or expertise to provide all the supports needed to assist drug users to complete their rehabilitation. An effective response needed an integrated, collaborative effort across a range of stakeholders (statutory, community and voluntary) to ensure appropriate measures are in place to offer prevention, relapse and recovery supports with interventions from aligned support services.

To this end, the Department established a drug stakeholders working group, with representatives of key players to support the CE drug rehabilitation response. The CE Drug Rehabilitation Programme Framework was launched in 2015 and provides the model of an inter-agency integrated response.

The CE Drug Rehabilitation Programme

The CE drug rehabilitation programme is part of the Social Inclusion Strand for CE, focused on facilitating the participation of vulnerable adults who are very distant from the labour market and who need special supports. In the case of the drug rehabilitation programme framework, participants have access to multiple supports and specialist inputs from additional social, education and health mainstream services as part of the programme offered under CE.

There are circa 48 dedicated CE drug rehabilitation schemes, providing an integrated inter-agency service response for referred participants in rehabilitation. Referred participants can also access places on mainstream CE programmes. There are 978 drug referred participants on CE nationally. (see tables below)

For participants referred to a drugs rehabilitation place as a result of substance misuse, the designation of social inclusion recognises that the social inclusion programme has a primary emphasis on rehabilitation and training. Participants referred to a drug rehabilitation place do not take the traditional CE "work" roles associated with a mainstream CE placement as they are deemed to be in recovery from addiction and working under supervision as "trainees". Participation is designed to assist individuals towards a better quality lifestyle in order to enhance their life and career opportunities. This includes a focus on basic life and learning skills, including literacy and numeracy and other pre-vocational skills in preparation for engagement in more formal learning. Participants re-engage with education, which for many is the first step to re-integration into community and working life.

The programme offers an opportunity to work towards a recognised qualification. For those with literacy needs, this includes access to pre-employment standards at levels 3 or 4 on the QQI National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and working towards employment entry level qualifications. Consideration is also given to participant's who have abilities beyond this and wish to pursue higher levels but may still be in need of addiction and other rehabilitation supports. Training is delivered though the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in the first instance at low or no costs or other appropriate providers. Participants pathway to progression is mapped out though the Individual Learner Plan, which tracks, records and reports on progression outcomes. All learning plans are agreed with the CE Supervisor and approved in consultation with the DEASP Officer on a case by case basis. Where participants are further advanced in their rehabilitation and are ready to take on greater challenges, transfer to an activation place, including engagement in an active labour market mainstream programme is an option.

Conditions of Scheme Delivery

In recognition of the complex needs of referred individuals, a number of special conditions are in place to support the delivery of the drugs rehabilitation programme. These address issues relating to participant eligibility (the standard CE eligibility conditions are waived and age reduced to 18); referral (the referral protocol requires a referral from a recognised drug service); duration of participation for those in recovery (up to 4 years); reduced supervisor /participant ratios; and programme supports and expected outcomes as designated under the Social inclusion strand. As participants in recovery do not take CE work roles, a subsequent allocation of 25% mainstream "support" workers, was established to ensure the effective delivery of the scheme and to carry out the administration functions and support the supervisor. Participants in "support" roles access a place under the normal CE eligibility conditions. This ensures that only referred participants access the appropriate rehabilitation supports.

Key Features and Outcomes

This social inclusion programme combines the direct provision of personal and pre-vocational competencies with relevant training to support participants on their path to rehabilitation and recovery. This includes a comprehensive set of external supports

facilitating access to relevant specialised treatment services as required. The programme is designed to:

- Reflect the DEASP commitment to the national drugs strategy – Reducing Harm Supporting Recovery, 2017-2025. This includes supporting the D/Health led-action (# 2.1.19) to increase the range of progression options for recovering drug users (from all services) and to develop a new programme of support care and employment.

- Provide structured support to those on the journey of recovery and rehabilitation from substance misuse through the inter-agency programme delivery, where access to relapse and rehabilitation supports ensure the maximum potential of the participant is achieved.

Be learner-centred by providing an opportunity for participants to move through the 4 phases of the dedicated drug rehabilitation programme at their own pace with access to a range of personal and educational opportunities to support progression to further development or work. This includes completion of an individual learning plan (ILP) and access to national accreditation and qualifications on the NFQ L3-6 or industry related career options.

- Include regular monitoring of the ILP goals which in turn inform programme outcomes;

- Maintain contact with the initial referral practitioner and refer back when appropriate;

- Engage with the Drug and Alcohol Task Forces to support participants and projects.

- Prepare participants for progression options, including transfer to Activation/ mainstream programmes; further training and development opportunities and work options.

Indicators of Successful Outcomes as evidenced by CE Supervisors and Participants include:

- Greater success in maintaining a drugs free lifestyle.
- Engagement with and completion of the ILP.
- Regular attendance in addiction support services.
- Increase in life skills – time-keeping; adapting to a return to work routine; budgeting; improved work ethic; goal setting; family and community re-integration.
- Increase in educational skill –literacy; IT; addiction awareness; skills specific development.
- Increase in personal awareness – stabilisation; confidence building; motivation; empowerment.
- Increase in employment capability – improved work ethic; CV preparation; interview skills.
- Engagement in exit planning & progression planning.

- Completion of work placement.
- Achievement of qualifications and Accredited outcomes.
- Links with employers and support services.
- Access to the labour market.

3.5 DEASP Funded Drugs Task Force Mainstream Projects.

The Department of Social Protection continues to support the objectives of the National Drugs Strategy (with focused services for the re-integration of people recovering from substance misuse into the labour market). Primary amongst these remains the allocation of 1,000 ringfenced places for people referred in addiction to Community Employment.

In addition and along with other statutory agencies, DEASP acts as a "mainstream" funding provider for 5 mainstream drugs projects*. The 5 mainstream projects are currently located in two DEASP Divisions – Dublin South/Mid-Leinster (1) and Dublin Central (4).

The mainstream project funding is released to DEASP under the Cabinet Drugs Vote. Funding circa €600.000. The funding goes to salaries and overheads. The projects are community based addiction services with inputs from other statutory agencies, mainly the HSE. The engagement with DEASP is limited as the services provided are outside the remit of DEASP. There have been ongoing proposals to the D/Health to seek an alternative source of funding to ensure "fitness for purpose" between funding agency and the project promoter service provider.

Under the mainstream conditions, Project Promoters are required by to consult the LDATF prior to submitting their projects to their mainstream funders.

" *Mainstream projects make a significant on-going contribution to the response to substance misuse problems in LDTF areas. To maintain their strategic links to LDTF strategic priorities over time they should consult the LDTF prior to submitting their service level plans to their mainstream funders"* (Department of Health, Drug Policy Unit, draft Drugs Task Force Handbook July 2010).

The drugs mainstream projects are delivered under an annual Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Project Promoter for each project and the relevant Division of the Department with the funding allocation monitored by the Divisions. DEASP Officers undertake desk monitoring of project finances as per the MOU agreement financial returns.

The projects were the subject of an internal audit review in 2018. The audit examined the background surrounding DEASP funding in respect of the Drug Task Force Programme with the audit outcome reported as "effective " - *Controls evaluated are adequate, appropriate, and effective to provide reasonable assurance that risks are being managed and objectives should be met".*

*In 2012, with the transfer of FAS Community Services activities to DSP, the Department took over responsibility for the mainstream funding allocation of a number of drug mainstream projects. The 5 DEASP mainstream projects date back to 2002 (FAS), when the drug projects supported by the Local Drug Task Forces were "mainstreamed" into FAS following a formal evaluation process by the Department of Health. These projects were subsequently transferred as legacy projects to DEASP in 2012 and continue to be funded by DEASP.

3.6 Community Employment (CE) Child Care schemes

The Department of Social Protection (DSP) in collaboration with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) proposed to change and improve the provision of training and work experience for CE participants who wish to pursue a career in childcare. This was designed to reflect a need to ensure quality assured outcomes for participants, to increase activation opportunities and to address the proposed requirements of regulations in the childcare sector. This involved rationalised entry requirements, pre-defined standards of achievement, a career progression path and a structure for CE workers in Early Years Services.

These changes were designed to provide a more tailored and valuable support to the provision of community childcare and achieve greater coherence between participation on CE and the job market.

There are 2,200 dedicated places allocated to childcare places nationally. To date there are 1,424 places filled, including 1,236 dedicated childcare workers working directly with children with 189 CE support workers to assist the service delivery. Under the re-structured programme, participants working directly with children work towards a QQI L5 or 6 Major Award in Childcare.

The sectoral approach to the allocation of dedicated places in Childcare was launched with the support of Divisions through the nomination of Childcare Lead Sponsors to support recruitment, training and progression. The lead sponsors are recognised childcare services working to the quality assurance requirements and standards laid down by the DCYA, TUSLA and the HSE. In addition, many dedicated Childcare places are on mainstream CE schemes operating to the same standards. The CE Childcare Programme Guidelines detail the condition of programme delivery.

The programme is designed:

• to ensure that all Community Employment schemes with childcare places operate under the ECCE Framework 2 and use the Síolta standards as a developmental tool ;

• to provide CE participants on childcare places who work directly with children with quality work experience, training, a clear progression path and qualifications in the childcare sector; and

• to re-align childcare places on CE to reflect the increased demand for quality assurance in the childcare sector as outlined by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

The Structure and Delivery of the Childcare Strand on CE:

The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection worked to re-align the distribution and management of CE childcare places so that all places come under the management of childcare centres approved under the HSE Inspection System and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA).

Projects wanting to take-on CE childcare participants must ensure that the childcare facility adheres to the principles laid down by Síolta/Aistear. This applies to all childcare places provided on CE.

Participants interested in taking up a childcare place on CE are assessed regarding their suitability for the post. This is undertaken by the Manager of the childcare facility along with the Supervisor and Sponsor (following a referral from their local DSP/Intreo Office). The assessment of the adult/child relationship is carried out using the Síolta defined components and undertaken by a person with experience in the sector and knowledge of the requirements of the Síolta Programme.

CE participants follow a programme of formal learning while on CE for the duration of their placement leading to a QQI Level 5 Major Award. The maximum duration of the CE placement is for 3 years. This comprises 2 years of formal learning and one year work practice and is subject to the successful participation of the CE participant in the training and work experience programme provided.

The County Childcare Committees (CCCs) have an important role to play in supporting this new structure. The role of the County Childcare Committees includes advice with regard to quality and standards and with regard to approved childcare training providers in each area. The County Childcare Committees also have a key role in advising on the availability of training courses; and assisting and liaising with CE Schemes.

All applicants to the CE Childcare strand require Garda vetting to work or train to work with children.

Progression Path for CE Participants:

For CE participants who work directly with children (as distinct from other support roles i.e. cook or driver), a dedicated programme comprising formal learning and supervised work experience has become a mandatory part of participation. The formal learning programme leads to a FETAC Level 5/6 QQI Major Award.

It is desirable that the majority of training is provided by the Education and Training Boards (ETBs). Where there is a cost, either to a private provider or to an ETB, the cost of training provision must be approved by the relevant DEASP Division.

For **CE participants working in support roles** there are two options:

1. The achievement of a major award at QQI Level 4 or Level 5 in their chosen field

2. CE participants who provide support to the sector can pursue a generic qualification suitable to their support role, for example a FETAC Level 3 or Level 4 Major Award in Employability Skills or a relevant industry-related qualification.

For those support workers working towards an award, the duration of this programme is the same as that for CE childcare participants working directly with service users - a minimum of 1 year to 2 years to facilitate the achievement of a Major Award and an optional 3rd year, to assist weaker participants in achieving the major award or equivalent and to become 'job ready'. This will require the approval of the Community Employment Officer (DEASP).
The progress of all participants is recorded and approved on the Individual Learner Plan with progress and outcomes monitored by the local Community Services Officer.

Re-alignment of Childcare Places
1. All CE childcare places are co-ordinated and managed by a CE Sponsored Childcare Scheme. There can be no sponsoring organisation involved in childcare who is not a dedicated CE Sponsored Childcare Scheme.

2. CE childcare places are provided to quality assured Childcare Centres only. Projects taking on CE childcare participants must ensure that the childcare facility adheres to principles of Síolta/Aistear, and is approved under HSE Inspection System and by DCYA .

3. The CE Sponsored Childcare Scheme will be responsible for the co-ordinating of training and the Individual Learner Plan (ILP) for all participants.

Supervision
1. The Childcare Centre Manager is responsible for the day to day organisation of the childcare centre and ensures high standards of care, education, safety and well-being of the children.

2. The Manager is responsible for staffing and rostering of staff. The Manager offers support, supervision and direction to the staff team.

3. The CE Supervisor attached to the CE Childcare Sponsor Organisation organises and manages the delivery of the training and completes the ILP for each participant.

The Benefits of the Improvements to CE Childcare Provision:

The re-structured programme is designed to:

• Provide CE participants on dedicated childcare places with quality experience and training linked to the National Framework of Qualifications;
• Provide participants with a clear progression path and qualifications in the childcare sector;
• Achieve greater coherence between participation on CE and the job market;

• Re-align dedicated childcare places on CE with the increased demand for quality assurance in the childcare sector;

• Allow community childcare providers with early childhood care and education (ECCE) settings to better meet the needs of the young children in their care;
• Provide a more tailored and valuable support to the provision of community childcare;
• Bring activities provided through CE into line with Síolta and Aistear and DCYA and TÚSLA requirements.

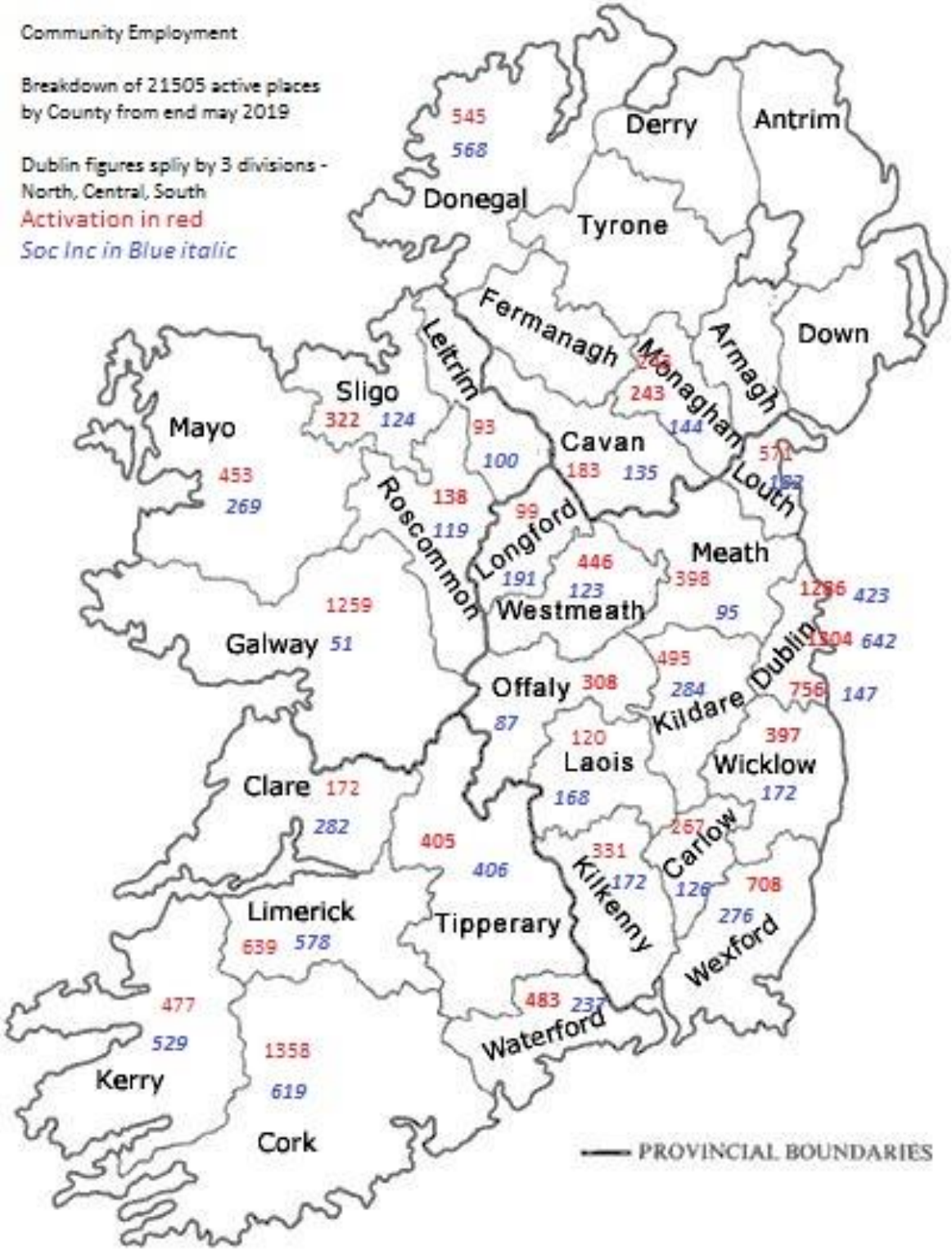
3.7 Current CE scheme numbers - CE Social Inclusion and Activation Statistics

Table 4 - Status of 21,505 CE participants at the end of June 2019.

Job Titles Classified by Social Inclusion or Activation per County					
COUNTY	ACTIVATION	SOCIAL INC	NOT CATEGORISED	TOTAL	% SOC INC
CARLOW	266	126	1	**393**	32.06%
CAVAN	181	135	2	**318**	42.45%
CLARE	171	280	3	**454**	61.67%
CORK	1355	619	3	**1977**	31.31%
DONEGAL	545	568	0	**1113**	51.03%
DUBLIN CENT.	1287	632	27	**1946**	32.48%
DUBLIN NORTH	1281	423	5	**1709**	24.75%
DUBLIN S.M.L	756	147	0	**903**	16.28%
GALWAY	1257	51	2	**1310**	3.89%
KERRY	475	529	2	**1006**	52.58%
KILDARE	495	284	0	**779**	36.46%
KILKENNY	331	172	0	**503**	34.19%
LAOIS	120	168	0	**288**	58.33%
LEITRIM	92	100	1	**193**	51.81%
LIMERICK	638	578	1	**1217**	47.49%
LONGFORD	99	191	0	**290**	65.86%
LOUTH	571	182	0	**753**	24.17%
MAYO	452	269	1	**722**	37.26%
MEATH	397	95	1	**493**	19.27%
MONAGHAN	243	144	0	**387**	37.21%
OFFALY	306	87	2	**395**	22.03%
ROSCOMMON	138	119	0	**257**	46.30%
SLIGO	322	124	0	**446**	27.80%
TIPPERARY	401	406	4	**811**	50.06%
WATERFORD	483	237	0	**720**	32.92%
WESTMEATH	445	123	1	**569**	21.62%
WEXFORD	704	276	4	**984**	28.05%
WICKLOW	396	172	1	**569**	30.23%

	14207	**7237**	**61**	**21505**	**33.65%**

Table 5 - Breakdown of active CE places at the end of June 2019



Appendix 4: Rural Social Scheme

4.1 Scheme Background

The Rural Social Scheme (RSS) was launched in May 2004 with the aim of addressing the provision of certain services of benefit to rural communities, by harnessing the skills and talents available among low income farmers and fishermen, while continuing to provide income support where eligible persons are in receipt of specified, primarily, long-term social welfare payments. Responsibility for the Scheme rested with the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs from its introduction to 31st August 2010 when responsibility transferred to the then Department of Social Protection.

The RSS is seen as an income support initiative to provide part-time employment opportunities in the community and voluntary organisations for farmers or fishermen in receipt of certain social welfare payments and underemployed in their primary occupation. The work undertaken is primarily to support local service provision via community, voluntary and not-for-profit organisations, provided that this does not displace existing service provision or employment. Communities in turn benefit from the skills and talents of local farmers and fisherpersons given that these are readily adaptable to most tasks. There are 3,350 participant places plus 139 supervisor places available on the scheme. Overall there has been an increase of just over 30% in the places available under the RSS in the past two years – from 2,600 to 3,350.

For communities, activities are being supported and in some cases stimulated, which are vital to maintaining the fabric of rural communities. The benefits accruing to individuals and their families are generating substantial quality of life improvements in rural communities, through increased income, increased social contact; increased social capital and greater access to training, advice and information.

4.2 Current scheme numbers and expenditure

At the end of May 2019, there were a total of 3,183 RSS Participants and 140 Supervisors engaged on RSS. There is a budget of €53.11m available for RSS in 2019.

4.3 Categories of work undertaken by the RSS

The work undertaken by Rural Social Scheme participants falls into the following broad categories:

- Maintaining and enhancing waymarked ways, agreed walks and bog roads,
- Energy conservation work for the elderly and the less well off,
- Village and countryside enhancement projects,
- Social care and care of the elderly, community care for both pre-school and after-school groups,

- Environmental maintenance work - maintenance and caretaking of community and sporting facilities,
- Projects relating to not for profit cultural and heritage centres,
- Community administration/Clerical Duties
- Any other appropriate community project identified during the course of the Scheme

From the information available, the most widely adopted category of work used by community and voluntary groups is maintenance and caretaking of community and sporting facilities with 51% of RSS participants in this role: 23% of participants are involved in environmental works such as village and countryside enhancement measures.

4.4 Operation of the scheme including selection process and duration

RSS is delivered through 35 Local Development Companies and Údarás Na Gaeltachta, collectively known as Implementing Bodies (IBs). The scheme is delivered in accordance with the eligibility criteria and policy and guidelines laid down by the Department. The places are allocated to each local area covered by the IB based in the main on the proportion of persons in receipt of Farm Assist in that area. The IBs recruit the participants and supervisors in line with procedures outlined by the Department.

Participation is by voluntary self-selection and is dependent on the availability of vacancies in the relevant locality. Participants work for 19 ½ hours a week. The rate of payment is linked to the customer's DEASP payment with a minimum weekly payment of €225.50 from March 2019. Participants may receive extra allowances in respect of a qualified adult dependent and qualified child dependents.

Since 1st February 2017, all new participants commencing on the RSS have to be over 25 years of age and a 6 year overall participation limit also applies. The new measures ensure that places become available to provide opportunities for other farmers and fishermen to take part in the scheme. Income support will still be available to eligible farmers and fishermen who are not on the RSS in the form of Farm or Fish Assist. RSS participants who commenced on the scheme prior to 1st February 2017 will remain on the scheme as long as they continue to satisfy the eligibility conditions of the scheme.

4.5 Eligibility conditions (pre and post DEASP transfer)

The IBs recruit the Participants in line with procedures outlined by the Department. Prior to a participant starting on the Scheme, their eligibility is verified by the local INTREO/branch office in DEASP. The participant must confirm their eligibility annually before their contract is renewed. The DEASP required all participants to declare their means prior to be offered re-engagement on the Scheme in 2019. The process of verifying these means is ongoing. Participants must continue to be actively farming/ fishing and retain entitlement to an underlying qualifying DEASP payment in order to retain eligibility for participation on RSS.

4.6 Service Fee of Implementing Bodies.

The Department meets the general administration costs incurred by the IBs by way of payment of a service fee. Funding is paid on a per capita basis - €1,000 per placement allocated to the IB - and is advanced by DEASP in four tranches per annum.

4.7 Supervision

The ratio of participants to supervisor position is currently 25:1 and is largely determined by the terms of the public and employer liability insurances negotiated by implementing bodies.

Qualifying DEASP payments:

Persons are required to be actively farming or fishing and to be in receipt of one of the following payments:

- Farm / Fish Assist
- Jobseeker's Allowance
- One-Parent Family Payment
- Widow(er)/Surviving Civil Partner's Pension – (Contributory or Non-contributory)
- Disability Allowance
- Adult Dependents of Non-Contributory State Pensioners who themselves are under 66 years of age

4.8 Rate of payment for Participants

The basic participant weekly rate is based on maximum weekly rates payable for Farm Assist plus a top-up of €22.50 pw. An additional €134.70 Increase for a Qualified Adult (IQA) is payable in cases where the participant has a qualifying dependent spouse/civil partner/co-habitant. An Increase for a Qualified Child (IQA) is also paid, where applicable, at either full-rate or half-rate depending on individual circumstances. The rates are set as follows:

Table 6 - Rural Social scheme rate of payment February 2019

	Weekly rates
Participant (max Farm Assist plus €22.50)	€225.50
Participant with Adult Dependant	€360.20
Plus Each Child Dependant (full-rate)	€ 37.00
Plus Each Child Dependant (half-rate)	€ 18.50

4.9 Statistics

At the end of May 2019, there were 3,183 RSS Participants and 140 RSS Supervisors. There is an allocation of 3,350 places available.

Table 7 - RSS participant number by County at the end of May 2019

County	Number of Participants
Carlow	21
Cavan	105
Clare	153
Cork	193
Donegal	320
Dublin	1
Galway	396
Kerry	296
Kildare	28
Kilkenny	17
Laois	26
Leitrim	128
Limerick	101
Longford	60
Louth	15
Mayo	660
Meath	22
Monaghan	72
Offaly	54
Roscommon	179
Sligo	142
Tipperary	73
Waterford	13
Westmeath	41
Wexford	46
Wicklow	21
Grand Total	***3,183***

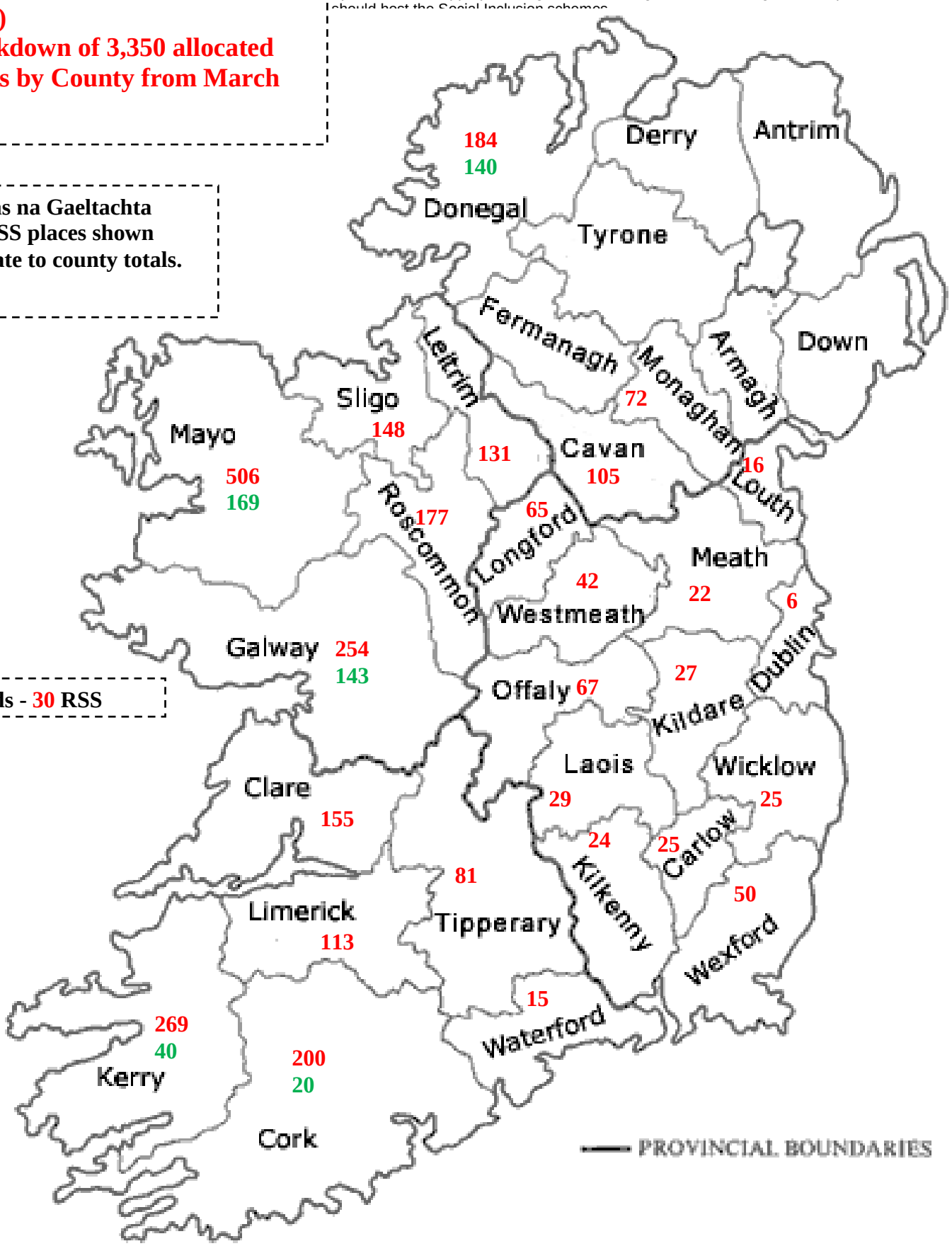
Table 8 - RSS age and gender breakdown at the end of January 2019.

Age of Participants	Rural Social Scheme		
	Male	Female	Total
18 to 24 years	0	0	0
25 to 29 years	29	8	37
30 to 34 years	56	15	71
35 to 39 years	90	28	118
40 to 44 years	189	59	248
45 to 49 years	330	83	413
50 to 54 years	481	107	588
55 to 59 years	622	146	768
60 to 64 years	675	146	821
65 years	107	12	119
			-
Total	**2,579**	**604**	**3,183**

Table 9 - Rural Social Scheme (RSS)
Breakdown of 3,350 allocated places by County from March 2018

explore the most appropriate organisation arrangements, including which Department should best the Social Inclusion schemes

Údaras na Gaeltachta
512 RSS places shown separate to county totals.



Islands - 30 RSS

Appendix 5: Job Initiative (JI)

5.1 Scheme Background

The Job Initiative (JI) programme was launched in 1996 and was intended to provide full-time employment for a fixed-term period of three years to persons who met the programme eligibility criteria.

Its main purpose was to assist long-term unemployed people to prepare for work opportunities and this was achieved by providing participants with work experience, training and development opportunities.

Similar to CE, the scheme is sponsored by local community groups/statutory organisations (called managing agents) wishing to benefit the local community, namely voluntary organisations and public bodies involved in not-for-profit activities, who were invited to bid to run a JI project.

As the employers, the managing agents contract with DEASP to provide job seekers with good quality work experience and training qualifications to support their progression into employment.

Virtually all JI projects are engaged in some element of service support and delivery e.g. childcare services, health and social care services, sports services and civic services.

Eligibility to participate on JI was linked to a person's social welfare status and age and was not based on a person's activation needs.

Participants were required to be 35 years of age or over and unemployed for five years or more and during that time must have been in receipt of a Social Welfare payment - Unemployment Benefit, Unemployment Assistance or a Lone Parents Allowance.

JI was originally set up to be limited to a maximum of three years participation, but following a Ministerial decision in 2004, those on the programme were allowed to remain until retirement age. Those already working on the programme remained on JI until they either voluntarily resigned or reached the State Pension age. Recruitment onto JI effectively ceased with effect from **10th November 2004**.

JI participants work on a full-time basis, 39hrs per week.

The scheme transferred from FÁS to the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) in January 2012.

5.2 Rates of payment

The current rate of payment for participants is €441.00 per week. The payment is unlike other work programmes as it is not linked to their current underlying SW payment and there is no payment in respect of qualified adults or children. Participants receive an increase in line with budget increases for other scheme participants. However as they work 39 hours per week, the rate of the budget increase for all other work scheme participants is doubled for those on JI.

A grant of €17.33 per participant is provided to sponsors for administration/materials and other overheads.

5.3 Current Numbers

At the end of June 2019 there were 52 JI projects with 666 participants and 35 supervisors/team leaders.

Table 10 - Breakdown of Job Initiative by County at the end of June 2019

County	Participants	Supervisors	Projects
CARLOW	15	0	**1**
CAVAN	14	1	**1**
CLARE	27	3	**3**
CORK	35	2	**3**
DONEGAL	27	1	**3**
DUBLIN	321	17	**19**
GALWAY	25	1	**2**
KILDARE	11	1	**1**
LEITRIM	6	0	**1**
LIMERICK	69	3	**6**
LOUTH	37	3	**2**
MAYO	10	1	**1**
MONAGHAN	20	1	**1**
OFFALY	12	0	**1**
SLIGO	6	0	**1**
TIPPERARY	1	0	**1**
WATERFORD	10	1	**1**
WESTMEATH	15	0	**3**
WEXFORD	5	0	**1**
Total	**666**	**35**	**52**

Appendix 6: Invite to Departments to IDG

Dear [FIRSTNAME],

As you know the Government has approved the establishment of an interdepartmental group (IDG) to explore the most appropriate organisational arrangements, including which Department should host Community Employment (CE) Social Inclusion schemes, including Drug Rehabilitation and Childcare CE schemes, the Rural Social Scheme (RSS) and the Job Initiative (JI) scheme (Government Decision S180/20/10/0861).

My Department operates a number of employment support programmes including CE, JI and the RSS. These schemes are delivered locally by local sponsoring groups, local development companies and by Údarás na Gaeltachta in Gaeltacht areas. The CE Programme has been running since 1994 and JI since 1996 and the RSS since 2004. These schemes are well embedded in community areas nationally and they are all engaged in some element of service support and delivery.

Following the review of CE scheme in 2015 https://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/PTW-ReviewOfCE-December2015-incl-exec-summary.pdf , a two strand approach was adopted for all CE placements. The placements were categorised as either a training/activation strand or a social inclusion strand. Given the nature of the work undertaken most schemes have a mixture of social inclusion and activation job placements depending on the type of work to be undertaken. The Social Inclusion placements include, e.g., meals on wheels, maintenance of community halls and tidy town activities. These social inclusion placements are more suited to vulnerable adults who need additional supports e.g. older unemployed workers, persons with a disability, travellers, homeless people, refugees, those requiring drug rehabilitation and ex-offenders. The activation placements are more directly related to employment opportunities for participants who are long-term unemployed with a view to providing them with more labour market relevant work experience e.g. childcare, health &

social care and administration.

There are currently just over 21,000 participants on CE with 30% – 40% of these placements categorised as Social Inclusion. There are a further 3,500 Social Inclusion places available on RSS and just under 700 Social Inclusion places on JI. As the level of unemployment continues to fall the recommended number of places on schemes nationally will reduce even further.

As a Public Employment Service (PES), the Department's main focus is on activation and progressing participants from CE into full-time employment. It is important to emphasise that CE is first and foremost an Active Labour Market Programme designed to assist targeted unemployed and disadvantaged individuals return to employment. Its aim is to provide excellent work experience and training that will assist a participant to enter the open labour market on exit from the scheme.

While CE is currently a valuable support to groups in the delivery of social services, this is not the primary purpose of the scheme or of my Department which is why I want the IDG to explore the most appropriate arrangements for hosting such delivery. I do however acknowledge the important role these social inclusion placements play in our society and the social benefits for participants along with the many benefits derived within our local communities. These social inclusion schemes are vital to local communities and we need to ensure that the services provided can be maintained in the future.

The interdepartmental group will convene shortly and I am asking now that you nominate an appropriate senior person, at PO level or above from your Department, to represent your Department.

I also would like to extend an invitation to you as Minister for [insert title of Minister] to make a submission to the IDG, and if you consider it appropriate, to make a presentation to the first meeting of the interdepartmental group. In this respect I am mindful of the discussion around extensions for participants on CE schemes that took place at the Government meeting when it was considering my Memorandum on the issue.

I would be grateful if your department would return the details of your nomination before the 6th March by email to Cormac Judge: Cormac.Judge@welfare.ie. or by phone @ 071-9672524.

Yours sincerely,

_____

Regina Doherty, TD

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection

Appendix 7: Letter to CE Sponsor Organisations

February

Dear Chairperson

Re: Interdepartmental Group an interdepartmental group (IDG) to explore the most appropriate organisation arrangements, including which Department should host the CE Social Inclusion schemes, including Drug Rehabilitation and Childcare CE schemes

The purpose of this letter is to update you on the purpose of the IDG which is being established to explore the most appropriate organisation arrangements, including which Department should host the CE Social Inclusion schemes, including Drug Rehabilitation and Childcare CE schemes.

As you are aware the Department undertook a review of the CE scheme in 2015. Following that review a two strand approach was adopted for all CE placements and they were categorised as either a training/activation strand or a social inclusion strand. This was to acknowledge that not all CE places were the same, the Social Inclusion placements provide an opportunity for those who are very distant from the labour market to gain employment and deliver services in their local communities while the activation placements are more directly related to employment opportunities for participants who are long-term unemployed with a view to providing them with more labour market relevant work experience.

The Department and the Minister are very conscious that all of these schemes are well embedded in community areas nationally and they are engaged in significant levels of service support and delivery.

Recognising that, as unemployment lowers, there will be less demand for activation schemes, the Minister wishes to draw a strong distinction between the activation category and the social inclusion category within the Community Employment scheme to protect

those social inclusion placements which are very much valued within their communities.

It is the Minister's view that these Social Inclusion placements require a separate focus to ensure that those who are very distant from the labour market and who are interested in working and delivering services in their local community have the opportunity to do so. The work they provide within their communities is essential and work participants may include adults who need additional supports – including older unemployed workers and persons with a disability.

That is why the Minister sought the agreement of Government to establish an Interdepartmental Group to explore the most appropriate arrangements to sustain these vital services, including which Department should hold policy responsibility for Community Social Inclusion schemes including, Drug Rehabilitation and Childcare schemes. I am pleased to advise that Ms Simonetta Ryan has agreed to act as chair of this group and it is expected that a first report will be received from the group by the end of May 2019.

The views of people directly involved in the provision of Community Employment schemes will obviously be of critical importance in informing the Groups deliberations. Therefore, the Department will be inviting submissions from sponsor groups. This will be the subject of a further communication to you from the Department following the commencement of the Department's deliberations.

Yours sincerely

Nora Durcan
Principal Officer

Appendix 8: Survey and request for Submissions

Letter to Stakeholders on Consultation and Online survey - May 2019

10th May 2019

Re: Interdepartmental Group on Community Employment Social Inclusion Schemes

Consultation by online survey and written submission.

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Government has established an Interdepartmental Group (IDG) to explore the most appropriate organisational arrangements for employment schemes with social inclusion places and the services delivered by these schemes.

Community Employment (CE) is the largest employment programme administered by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. It was initially established to enhance the employability of unemployed persons by providing work experience and training opportunities within their communities. In doing so, it's objective was, and remains, to help long-term unemployed people to re-enter the active workforce.

Following a review of CE in 2015, the programme was categorised into two strands - Social Inclusion and Activation. This was to acknowledge that not all placements are the same. Social Inclusion placements are more suited to adults who need additional supports, for example older unemployed workers, people with a disability, travellers, homeless people, refugees, those requiring drug rehabilitation and ex-offenders whereas the Activation placements are more directly related to labour market-relevant work experience. The Activation and Social Inclusion placements are currently governed under the same rules, eligibility criteria and period of placement.

The Rural Social Scheme (RSS) and Job Initiative (JI) are also considered to be social inclusion placements.

The Interdepartmental Group (IDG) is being charged with the task of examining the options for these schemes and is expected to report to Government by the end of June 2019. The

Group is committed to ensuring that its recommendations will remain in line with the current levels of expenditure on these schemes.

The first meeting of the IDG was held on 26 March 2019 and it was agreed that consultation with stakeholders will be a key element in the deliberation process. To ensure that maximum stakeholder input is received at this crucial stage of the IDG, the consultation process will be conducted by way of online questionnaire as well as an invitation for written submissions. The Group is inviting comments and proposals on any additional considerations which you feel may further inform the deliberations of the group. All submissions will be assessed and key issues and proposals identified. The feedback received will inform the deliberations of the IDG on key topics under consideration.

In addition to this process the Department will also hold bilateral meetings with relevant Government Departments. Feedback from the consultation process will inform the outcome of the deliberations of the IDG.

As an identified Stakeholder, I am now asking that you take a few minutes to complete this online survey. The link to the online survey is as follows;

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/9NGVM5W

If you are making a written submission we would ask you to consider how sectors such as community and rural development, drugs rehabilitation, sports, arts, heritage, tourism, health and social care can be sustained into the future taking into account the improving labour market and the corresponding difficulty in filling places.

If you wish to make a written submission, this should be addressed to:

Community Employment Policy Unit,
Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection,
Shannon Lodge,
Carrick on Shannon,
Co Leitrim
N41 KD81

The closing date for the online survey and submissions is 5pm on Tuesday, 28th May 2019.

Please note that all materials received by the Department will be subject to the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act. This means that all materials submitted during the consultation process could be released to a wider audience on request.

Thanking you for your continued co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

Nora Durcan
Principal Officer/Head of Unit
Work Programmes Policy
CEPolicy@welfare.ie

Stakeholder Consultation Survey - Interdepartmental Group on Social Inclusion Work Scheme places

Welcome to our survey.

A recent Government decision established an Interdepartmental Group (IDG) regarding Social Inclusion places and the most appropriate organisational arrangements for these work scheme places funded by the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection. These include Community Employment (CE), Rural Social Scheme (RSS) and Jobs Initiative (JI). It was agreed by IDG that consultation with relevant stakeholders will be a key element of the deliberation process. This online survey is an important part of that process.

The answers to the survey are confidential and will only be used for the purpose of stakeholder input to the IDG.

If you'd prefer to answer the survey in Irish, please contact us (cepolicy@welfare.ie) and we will arrange this for you.

Please complete all questions and comment if appropriate.

1. Please enter the name of your organisation:

2. In what County is your organisation based?

3. What is the best description of your organisation?

✓(tick as appropriate)

	Community Employment Scheme
	Local Development Company
	Community, Voluntary and Not for Profit Group
	Social Partner
	Government Body or State Agency
	Other (please specify):

4. What is your role within your Organisation?

✓(tick as appropriate)

	Individual Contributor
	CE Scheme - Management committee
	CEO/Manager
	Work scheme supervisor

	Volunteer
	Other (please specify):

5. Do you think that Social Inclusion places on work schemes require a distinct focus to ensure that those who are interested in working and delivering services in their local community have the opportunity to do so?

✓(tick as appropriate)

	Yes
	No
	Not sure

Comment

6. Do you think the same eligibility conditions should apply to social inclusion and activation placements?

✓(tick as appropriate)

	Yes
	No
	Not sure

Comment

7. Do you think potential scheme participants should be categorised as activation or social inclusion?

✓(tick as appropriate)

	Yes
	No
	Not sure

If Yes - What criteria do you think should be used?

8. Do you think a social inclusion place should be filled by a person suited to activation?

✓(tick as appropriate)

	Yes
	No
	Not sure

Comment:

9. Do you think participants over 62 should be entitled to remain on Community Employment (CE) up to State Pension age without limitations?

✓(tick as appropriate)

	Yes
	No
	Not sure

Comment

10. The aim of Community Employment (CE) is to prepare the participant for full time employment, or to progress them closer to employment.

Do you think there is a danger that this aim may be weakened by prolonging their time spent on the scheme?

✓(tick as appropriate)

	Yes

	No
	Not sure

Comment

11. Do you think it is important for every employment scheme to have a mixture of social inclusion and activation?

✓(tick as appropriate)

	Yes
	No
	Not sure

Comment

12. These work schemes support sectors such as community, rural development, drugs rehabilitation, sports, arts, heritage, tourism, health and social care.

How do you think these services could be sustained into the future if Community Employment (CE) places cannot be filled?

13. How can a person on a social inclusion placement be supported to transition to an activation place?

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey.

Appendix 9: Consultation process and analysis of responses

(A) An analysis of the responses to the online survey are as follows:

Q3. What is the best description of your organisation?

Community Employment Scheme	456
Local Development Company	40
Community, Voluntary and Not for Profit Group	134
Social Partner	5
Government Body or State Agency	8
Other (please specify):	24
Blanks	11
TOTAL Responses	**667**

Q4. What is your role within your organisation?

Individual Contributor	5
CE Scheme - Management committee	293
CEO/Manager	115
Work scheme supervisor	179
Volunteer	15
Other (please specify):	61
TOTAL Responses	**668**

Q5. Do you think that Social Inclusion places on work schemes require a distinct focus to ensure that those who are interested in working and delivering services in their local community have the opportunity to do so? ***(Total 678 Answered 656 Skipped 22)***

	No of Responses	% Responses	No of Comments	***Desc of Organisation***	No of Responses	No of Comments
Yes	519	79%	179	***CE***	345	125
				C,V & NFP	107	30
				LDC's	37	16
No	80	12%	54	***CE***	62	42
				C,V & NFP	14	9
				LDC's	0	0
Not sure	57	9%	37	***CE***	36	20
				C,V & NFP	12	8
				LDC's	3	3
TOTAL Responses	656	100%	275		630	258

Q6. Do you think the same eligibility conditions should apply to social inclusion and activation placements? ***(Total 678 Answered 653 Skipped 25)***

	No of Responses	% Responses	No of Comments	***Desc of Organisation***	No of Responses	No of Comments
Yes	237	36%	93	***CE***	172	68
				C,V & NFP	53	19
				LDC's	4	3
No	316	48%	199	***CE***	213	138
				C,V & NFP	54	27
				LDC's	29	22
Not sure	100	16%	44	***CE***	57	28
				C,V & NFP	25	8
				LDC's	6	2
TOTAL Responses	653	100%	336		630	318

Q7. Do you think potential scheme participants should be categorised as activation or social inclusion? ***(Total 678 Answered 646 Skipped 32)***

	No of Responses	% Responses	No of Comments	***Desc of Organisation***	No of Responses	No of Comments
Yes	236	36%	178	***CE***	153	111
				C,V & NFP	53	40
				LDC's	16	16
No	276	43%	104	***CE***	196	77
				C,V & NFP	52	18
				LDC's	15	5
Not sure	134	21%	45	***CE***	90	31
				C,V & NFP	27	8
				LDC's	6	0
TOTAL Responses	646	100%				

Q8. Do you think a social inclusion place should be filled by a person suited to activation? ***(Total 678 Answered 636 Skipped 42)***

	No of Responses	% Responses	No of Comments	***Desc of Organisation***	No of Responses	No of Comments
Yes	298	46%	175	***CE***	205	125
				C,V & NFP	60	29
				LDC's	15	12
No	143	23%	62	***CE***	99	41
				C,V & NFP	23	10
				LDC's	14	9
Not sure	195	31%	109	***CE***	126	69
				C,V & NFP	48	26

				LDC's	10	7
TOTAL Responses	636	100%	346			

Q9. Do you think participants over 62 should be entitled to remain on Community Employment (CE) up to State Pension age without limitations? ***(Total 678 Answered 653 Skipped 25)***

	No of Responses	% Responses	No of Comments	***Desc of Organisation***	No of Responses	No of Comments
Yes	611	93%	310	***CE***	420	222
				C,V & NFP	122	55
				LDC's	36	18
No	25	4%	20	***CE***	17	12
				C,V & NFP	5	5
				LDC's	1	1
Not sure	17	3%	11	***CE***	6	4
				C,V & NFP	6	4
				LDC's	2	1
Total Responses	653	100%	341			

Q10. The aim of Community Employment (CE) is to prepare the participant for full time employment, or to progress them closer to employment. Do you think there is a danger that this aim may be weakened by prolonging their time spent on the scheme? ***(Total 678 Answered 652 Skipped 26)***

	No of Responses	% Responses	No of Comments	***Desc of Organisation***	No of Responses	No of Comments
Yes	69	11%	42	***CE***	38	25
				C,V & NFP	17	11
				LDC's	8	5
No	515	79%	350	***CE***	357	254
				C,V & NFP	104	61
				LDC's	27	19
Not sure	68	10%	50	***CE***	49	36
				C,V & NFP	10	7
				LDC's	4	3
TOTAL Responses	652	100%				

Q11. Do you think it is important for every employment scheme to have a mixture of social inclusion and activation? ***(Total 678 Answered 650 Skipped 28)***

	No of Responses	% Responses	No of Comments	***Desc of Organisation***	No of Responses	No of Comments
Yes	489	75%	258	***CE***	338	189
				C,V & NFP	97	41
				LDC's	28	15
No	86	13%	46	***CE***	51	27
				C,V & NFP	20	11
				LDC's	4	3
Not sure	75	12%	39	***CE***	51	24
				C,V & NFP	14	10
				LDC's	7	4
TOTAL Responses	650	100%				

(B) A summary of groups/organisations who returned <u>written submissions</u> as part of the consultation process to DEASP is detailed in the table below;

Community Employment Scheme	56
Local Development Company	3
Community, Voluntary and Not for Profit Group	7
Social Partner	2
Government Body or State Agency	2
Other (please specify):	10
TOTAL Written Responses	**80**