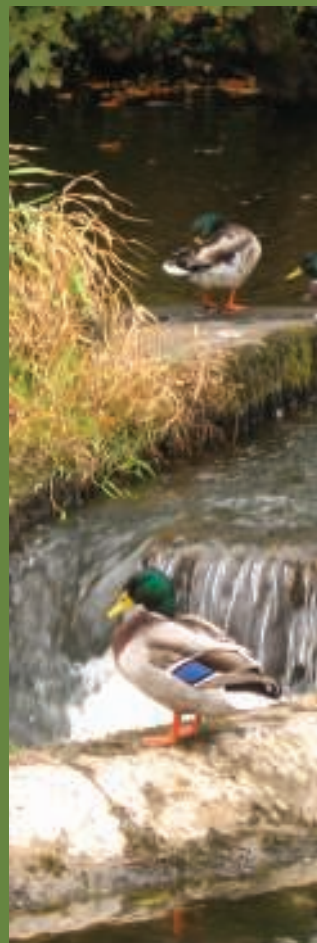


'Living Together in Longford'

Intercultural Strategic Plan for County Longford 2008 - 2011





WELCOME!

On behalf of the County Council and County Development Board, I am delighted to introduce the first Intercultural Strategic Plan for County Longford.

For a number of years, Longford has struggled to stem the flow of outward migration from the county. At the same time, it has become home to a diverse range of people from around the world, and well as having a significant Traveller community.

This plan will ensure that - for the first time - a cohesive, collaborative and inter-agency approach to promoting integration and interculturalism in Co Longford will be undertaken.

Our challenge is two-fold: to tackle racism, discrimination and prejudice wherever it exists, but also to celebrate the diversity of our minority ethnic communities and the benefits that they bring to our county.

The success of Longford's Intercultural Strategic Plan will depend upon us all working together - as organisations, as individuals and as local communities.

Longford County Council and County Development Board are committed to supporting the actions in this plan, and to working with and for all of our communities for the benefit of everyone in Co Longford.



Tim Caffrey
County Manager

"If I were to live here for 100 years people would still call me a refugee or a foreigner. Despite this, I love this country and would like to grow old here. I have all my rights here the same as an Irish citizen and wouldn't be treated so well at home. I want to give something big back to Ireland"

(Kurdistani man)



The winning entry of our Schools Art Competition
Drawing is by Dheya, aged 8 - St. Mary's National School, Edgeworthstown

'Immigrants'

I feel a quiet awe for them.
They come here armed to the teeth with smiles.
Their weapons are languages they learn.

They go about their business armoured
With the memory of who they are
And where they come from.

They seek the four-leaved clover of a job.
They come here young and green, grow mellow.
They honour us with every step they take.
They laugh, and drown the shamrock.

They do the humble, low paid things
That must be done by someone.
They work for everyone.

I salute the army of them here,
Unmilitarily.
They are life givers and preservers.

Their arms reach like bridges between peoples.
They add their flavours to our dish.
They are the salt of the earth.

Kieran Furey, Longford
May 2007



INTRODUCTION

"Socially, politically and economically we need to integrate to help advance the community. Sometimes we feel unwelcome. You cannot tell if you are acceptable or not"

(Ghanaian man)

Our county

Longford's Intercultural Strategic Plan 2008 - 2011 is the first attempt by the county to make a coherent, collaborative and inclusive response to the needs of the increasing cultural diversity of its population.

Longford has long been a culturally diverse county, with the 2nd highest Traveller population per head of both counties and towns in Ireland, and with a significant African community.

The accession of 8 countries (known as the A8) from the European Union on 1 May 2004 has resulted in significant numbers of East Europeans coming to Ireland, and Longford has largely followed national patterns in terms of the nationalities that have come to the county.

There are also a number of asylum seekers and refugees in County Longford, mostly in Longford Town. There is a 'direct provision' hostel for asylum seekers in Longford Town, housing people (95% male) from around the world. The availability of affordable housing in the county has resulted in many refugees staying in the county after being granted their refugee status.

Our approach

Longford has taken a community development approach to its intercultural plan. This approach has resulted in an action plan with:

- Identification of Longford-specific issues
- Widest possible consultation
- Community participation
- Practical & tangible actions
- Vision to effect change at a local & community level

Our aim

To provide strategic direction and leadership in countering racism and in developing a more inclusive, intercultural society in Longford

Our plan

Longford has taken a different thematic approach than many of its counterparts in other counties in developing an Intercultural Strategic Plan. Whilst our plan has ensured consistency with the National Action Plan Against Racism (NPAR) themes of Protection, Inclusion, Provision, Recognition and Participation, we have chosen to organise our actions around social themes. We have done this to support our community development approach and to try to ensure an accessible strategy which service providers and communities alike can respond to and support.

Our themes are:

- Justice & Legal
- Family, Community & Voluntary
- Business & Employment
- Education & Training
- Health & Welfare
- Culture, Leisure & Recreation
- Cross-cutting issues

Our hope

In producing this 3-year strategic plan, we acknowledge that there is much to do. The challenge of integration and interculturalism lies both in the tackling of racism, discrimination and prejudice, whilst also creating opportunities to celebrate our difference and diversity and to learn from each other.

We hope that you will support and endorse this plan and that together we can achieve a vibrant, tolerant and inclusive community for all who live, work and visit County Longford.



USEFUL DEFINITIONS

Term	Definitions
Asylum Seeker	A person seeking to be recognised as a refugee under the 1951 Geneva Convention; asylum seekers leave their home country because of violence or fear of persecution
Black	A term which is commonly used & accepted (and is not offensive); the term 'coloured' is generally considered offensive
Discrimination	The negative & unequal treatment of an individual, group or community
Minority Ethnic	A person / group of people with different religious, cultural or language characteristics to the main one in the area or country in which they live. The term 'ethnic minority' is also commonly used Minority ethnic communities include Travellers (see below)
Foreign National	A term which applies to someone who does not have Irish citizenship; the term 'non-national' is generally considered offensive as it suggests that the person does not have a nationality
Host Community	A term which refers to the community of the country 'hosting' minority ethnic communities e.g. Ireland; this term is usually well understood by service providers but frequently not by the generally public
Interculturalism	An approach which promotes interaction, equality, respect & understanding between all cultures and communities living in a country, whilst acknowledging issues such as racism; interculturalism has largely replaced a <i>multicultural</i> approach which emphasises the integration of the minority to integrate into the dominant society
Migrant Worker	"A person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a paid activity in a State of which he or she is not a national" (UN Convention on the Rights of Migrants)

Term	Definitions
New Communities	A term often referring to immigrants from the A8 countries - East European countries which achieved accession into the European Union in 2004 (e.g. Poland, Latvia & Lithuania); also refers to newcomers from elsewhere in the world
Racism	Racism is discrimination or prejudice based on the false belief that some races are inherently superior to others because of nationality, skin colour, ethnicity &/or cultural background
Refugee	An asylum seeker who has been granted refugee status under the 1951 Geneva Convention
Roma	A minority ethnic group who mostly originate from Eastern & Central Europe; about 90% of Roma in Ireland originate from Romania, although in Longford we believe that most Roma originate from the Czech Republic & Slovakia
Third Country National	A person who is a national of a non-EU state
Traveller	"Travellers are an indigenous minority, with their own language (Cant), customs & traditions" (Pavee Point). It is offensive to refer to a Traveller as a knacker, tinker, itinerant or gypsy

Our terminologies

For the purposes of this strategy, the term 'minority ethnic' includes all of the following:

- Traveller community
- New communities
- Asylum seekers & refugees (including those with Leave to Remain)
- Migrant workers
- 1st, 2nd or 3rd generation non-white Irish citizens
- Third country nationals
- All other minority ethnic communities

The issue of language and terminology was a key issue throughout the strategy development process. Many of the terms used by service providers, agencies and others are not liked or understood by the community concerned, e.g. 'migrant workers'.

There was also considerable - and fairly inconclusive - discussions about the 'host' community (see definition above). This is a term used by service providers, agencies and others, but often not understood by even the 'host' community themselves. 'Indigenous' is a term that was seen as 'belonging' to the Traveller community, whilst the use of the term 'Irish' only defined nationality, not ethnicity.

ALL ABOUT LONGFORD

Longford is a county in the Midlands of Ireland, bordered by counties Cavan, Leitrim, Roscommon and Westmeath. The county town is Longford, and there are four main towns - Ballymahon, Edgeworthstown, Granard and Lanesborough. It is a relatively small county with an area of 1,091 km² (421 square miles).



All data is from the 2006 Census, unless otherwise stated.

General population

The county has a population of 34,391, an increase of 10.7% from the 2002 Census. Longford Town has a population of 7,622. There is varied growth in the county, with significant increases to the environs of Longford Town and Edgeworthstown. Granard was the notable exception, showing a decrease of nearly 8% in the population.

“When I was a child in school nobody would play with me and everywhere I went I felt from people I was not wanted. I came here as an asylum seeker to hide myself. My children are in school here and nobody knows they are Roma. They are treated the same here as other children and have the same opportunities. This makes me happy and I also have Irish friends”

(Roma Woman)

County Longford attracted people because of its affordable housing and opportunities through the Rural Renewal Tax Incentive scheme. Asylum seekers are coming to the town simply because they have been allocated to the Longford Town Direct Provision Hostel (Richmond Court). It is likely that people granted refugee status will remain in the county because of its affordable housing and familiarity with the area. Significant employment in the construction and agriculture sector is also likely to have played a role in attracting newcomers to Longford.

Ethnicity

The largest minority ethnic group in the county is the Traveller community with 552 people (1.6% of the total population). The breakdown of all ethnicities is shown right:

Ethnicity	No.	%
White Irish	29,579	86.2%
White Irish Traveller	552	1.6%
Other White	2,409	7.1%
Black or Black Irish	477	1.4%
Asian or Asian Irish	187	0.5%
Other	351	1.0%
Not stated	740	2.2%
TOTAL	34,295	100%

Nationality

The nationality of people living in County Longford is made up as follows:

Nationality	No.	%
Irish	29,371	85.6%
UK	2,293	6.7%
Polish	714	2.1%
Lithuanian	308	0.9%
Other EU 25	695	2.0%
Rest of the World	823	2.4%
Not stated	91	0.3%
TOTAL	34,295	100%

This table shows the UK as being the single most significant nationality after Irish (6.7% of the population), with Polish 2nd (2.1% of the population), and Lithuanians 3rd (0.9% of the population).

Accuracy of figures

Some care needs to be taken with the figures quoted in the various sources, e.g. PPS compared to Census. It is widely accepted that the figures for ethnicity and nationality are significantly under reported in the Census. On ethnicity, Longford Traveller Movement estimate that there are approximately 1,500 members of the Traveller community in County Longford, nearly 3 times the Census estimate.

On nationality, it is again widely accepted the figures for people from the A8 so-called 'Accession' countries are significantly under reported. Indeed, according to the PPS statistics, over 1,000 Polish people living in County Longford applied for a PPS Number in 2006, as opposed to the 714 Polish people living in County Longford identified through the Census. Lithuanians are shown as the 3rd highest [non-Irish] nationality group (308 people) according to 2006 Census figures, although the population of for example Slovak's in County Longford is estimated (by the community themselves) to be in excess of 300.

It should be noted that many workers from A8 countries are transient and so while may register for a PPS number in County Longford, may not necessarily be living in the county.

Finally, it should also be noted that there are issues of identification involved in the accuracy of figures. For example, many people from the Traveller community do not identify themselves as such for fear of discrimination.

Traveller Community

As stated above, there is significant under-reporting of numbers of the Traveller community.

According to the 2006 Census, there are 542 people in County Longford who have identified themselves as Travellers. This represents 15.8 per 1,000 population, the 2nd highest in Ireland after Galway City (16.4 per 1,000 population).

Longford Town also has the 2nd highest Traveller population in Ireland per head of population. The figures from the 2006 Census record 402 Travellers living in the town, which is 45.5 per 1,000 population, with the highest in Ireland being Tuam with 77.1 per 1,000 population.

Asylum Seekers & Refugees

According to the Reception & Integration Agency of the Irish government, for the period ending October 2007 (latest available), there were 98 people seeking asylum in the county. This represents 0.28% of the total population. This is one of the highest in Ireland - the highest being County Meath with 0.49% of the total population, with only counties Sligo, Mayo, Clare, Kerry, Waterford and Westmeath being higher than Longford.

Most asylum seekers in County Longford live in the Direct Provision Hostel, Richmond Court.

BACKGROUND

"I had a serious problem with English when I first arrived but life is so much easier now that I can speak it well"

(Latvian woman)

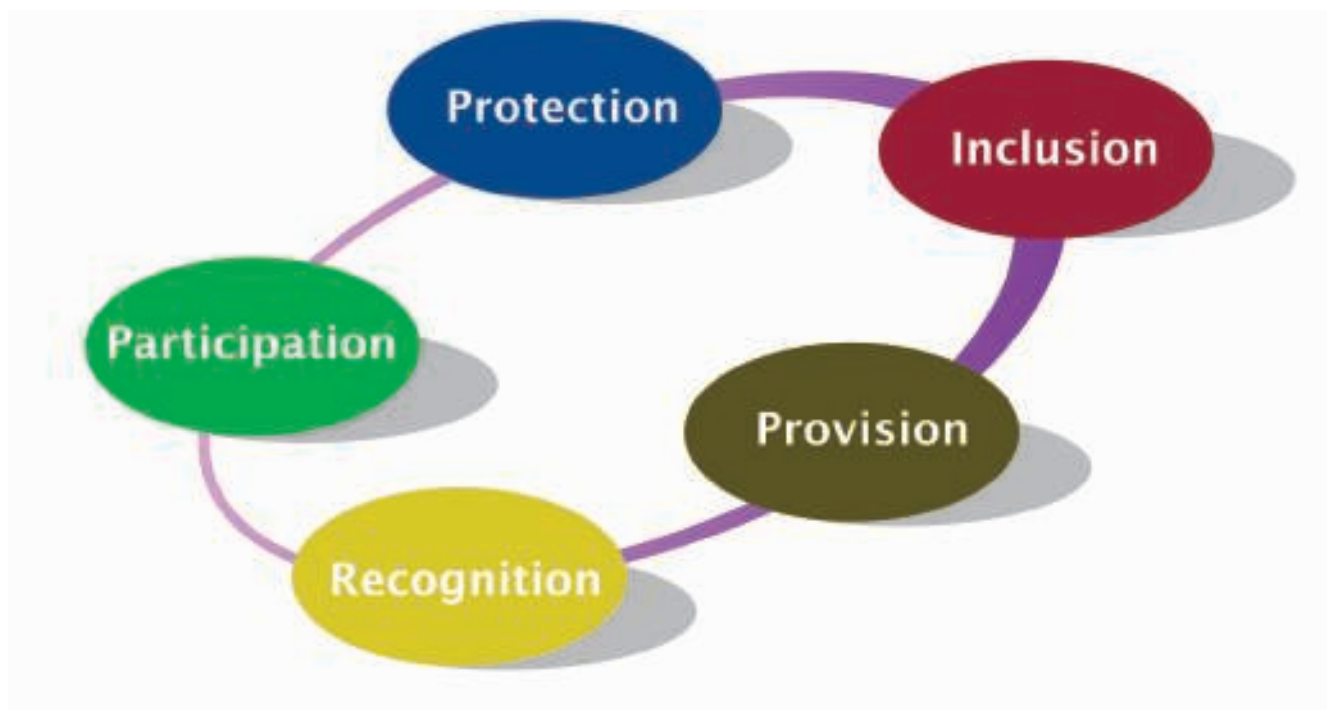
Summary

Ireland's National Action Plan Against Racism (NPAR) originates from commitments given by governments from all over the world at the United Nations World Conference Against Racism held in South Africa in 2001. NPAR was adopted by the Irish Government in 2005, under the heading of *Planning for Diversity*.

There is a 5-strand intercultural framework which underpins the NPAR:

Protection	Effective protection & redress against racism
Inclusion	Economic inclusion & equality of opportunity
Provision	Accommodating diversity in service provision
Recognition	Recognition & awareness of diversity
Participation	Full participation in Irish society

These themes are inter-related and interdependent:





NPAR Contexts

There are 5 key contexts in which the National Action Plan Against Racism will be developed. They are:

1. Welcoming cultural diversity in Ireland
2. Responding to the different forms of racism in Ireland
3. Policy developments at a European / International level
4. Policy developments at a national level
5. The economic and fiscal context

Racism

The National Action Plan Against Racism highlights different forms of racism which exist in Ireland including:

- Racism experienced by Travellers
- Racism experienced by recent migrants, including labour migrants and refugees and asylum seekers
- Racism experienced by Black and Minority Ethnic People
- Racism experienced by Jews and Muslims in the form of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia
- The intersection of racism with other forms of discrimination

Key messages

There are seven key messages from Ireland's National Action Plan Against Racism. They are:

- Ireland is increasingly a multi-cultural society
- Racism is a denial of human rights
- Minority & ethnic groups are a positive & integral part of Irish society
- Racism is a specific form of discrimination
- Racism is against the law
- Inward migration is not the cause of racism
- We all have a responsibility to tackle racism
- Irish people have been victims of racism & discrimination

POLICY CONTEXT

"People are very racist"
(Chinese man)

Summary

At the launch of the Report on Migration by the National Economic & Social Council (NESCC) in 2006, Bertie Ahern, Taoiseach, declared that

"We recognise that integration is much more than anti-racism measures and targeted initiatives. Essentially, integration is everyone's business"

The issue of integration of migrant communities is directly addressed in the government's Ten Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement (2006 - 2015) - 'Towards 2016' in integration. This document gives a commitment to develop a comprehensive national strategy for integration to include social inclusion and anti-racism initiatives, and firm commitment to support the Anti-Racist Workplace Week. There is also a distinct and separate response in this Agreement to tackle the exploitation of migrant and other vulnerable workers.

The policy context for each of the NPAR themes is set out in the appendix.



APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

Partners

There were four key partners involved in leading the strategic plan:

- Longford Community Resources Ltd - lead partner
- Longford County Development Board
- Longford Women's Link
- Longford EDI Centre for the Unemployed

Three of the partners - Longford Community Resources Ltd, Longford Women's Link & Longford EDI Centre for the Unemployed - successfully applied to Pobal, under the Fund for the Integration of Legally Resident Immigrants, to develop Longford's Intercultural Strategic Plan.

Methodology

The development of this strategy was undertaken through a wide-ranging and multi-layered methodology including:

- Desk research & literature review
- Presentations
- Participative public consultation workshops
- Focus groups
- Online & face-to-face surveys
- One-to-one interviews
- Phone & email questions
- Arts in schools
- Public submission
- Consultation on draft plan

Further information on the most participative areas of our consultation process are outlined below.

Participative public consultation workshops

An intensive series of participative public consultation workshops were held in November 2007. These workshops were designed to provide accessible forums for discussion on each of our themes, and although each workshop was open to anyone and everyone, we specifically targeted relevant groups for each session.

Over 250 groups, organisations, service providers, representatives and individuals were personally invited. In addition, the workshops were publicised in local press and media, and through a poster campaign. Participants were asked to consider both relevant issues and possible solutions for County Longford.

We ran 10 workshops as follows:

- Justice & Legal Services
- Family support, childcare, community & voluntary
- Individuals ('host' / Irish community)
- Employment & Business
- Traveller Community
- Individuals from minority ethnic communities - 2 sessions
- Education & Training
- Health & Welfare
- LARED (Longford Against Racism Embracing Diversity)

All sessions were held in Longford Town except one workshop for individuals, which was held in Granard.

Focus Groups

We also consulted with a range of focus groups to ensure broad representation in the plan. These groups were usually small informal groups. We talked to:

- Young people
- Older people
- Asylum seekers
- Polish mothers & toddlers group
- Polish construction workers
- Religious leaders
- Traveller Primary Healthcare Project
- Ghanians
- Muslim women
- Slovak forestry workers
- Slovak construction workers



Online & face-to-face surveys

We undertook a survey asking about experiences of racism, discrimination and experience of living in Longford. The survey was available online through the community portal www.longford.ie in three languages - English, Polish and Slovak. Links were set up through Longford Library and Longford Internet Café. The survey was mostly undertaken face-to-face, and included a Russian language version. These languages were chosen as the languages most commonly spoken in the county.

Additional surveys were completed on a one-to-one basis through translation in a number of languages and also to support those with literacy issues. Through these surveys, we consulted with 140 individuals from minority ethnic communities, representing 40 different countries. 30 of these are 3rd country nationals.

Another survey was undertaken about political participation with local Councillors representing both Longford Town and Longford County Council.

A third and final survey was undertaken following a gap analysis, which identified service providers and others who had either been poorly or unrepresented in the consultation process.

Total participation in strategy

In summary, the following groups of people contributed towards this strategy:

- Service providers
- Statutory agencies
- Community & voluntary organisations
- Businesses
- Local councillors
- Members of the public
- Religious leaders
- Individuals from minority ethnic communities including Travellers

A list of contributors to this plan can be found at the end of this document.

Launch of plan

Longford's Intercultural Strategic Plan 2008 - 2011 was launched on Thursday 27 March 2008 by the Minister of State for Integration, Conor Lenihan TD.

The launch was held at the Temperance Hall, Longford Town and reflected on and celebrated Longford's cultural diversity with musical, cultural and culinary contributions from various schools and community groups in the county.

KEY ISSUES FROM THE CONSULTATION

"I have some nice Irish friends now. People often come to me from my own community looking for help"
(Kurdish man)

There were a huge number of issues raised throughout the consultation period. This strategy has focussed on issues which can be tackled at county level, and the consultation focussed on the identification of these. There are, of course, a range of national issues which local or locally-based agencies or organisations can contribute towards e.g. through lobbying.

A summary of the main issues raised are set out below. The language used is that of the participants' own.

Justice & Legal

- High take up by minority ethnic communities of domestic violence services at Longford Women's Link - demonstrated need for support
- Lack of trained interpreters - both language skills and knowledge, e.g. court system
- 'Agents' acting on behalf of migrant workers & taking illegal payments
- Understanding of Irish law & procedures such as traffic and motoring offences, insurance, alcohol, drugs, safety belts, mobile phones, forged documentation



Family, Community & Voluntary

- Youth groups - lack of participation & mixing - ends up with single identity groups
- Older generation have no knowledge of immigrants, confused, fear, negative feelings towards them
- Childcare - number of places not enough, sometimes inappropriate & cost to access, availability to enable education
- Getting parents to attend English language classes is difficult

Business & Employment

- Exploitation of workers, particularly in construction
- Work placement for Travellers - have to hide identity / address
- Childcare/ nursing - difference in African community - very significant cultural attitude difference
- Cash-in-hand working is undercutting legitimate businesses, which creates ill-feeling & as economy changes; this will increase
- Some communities competing on labour costs - creating animosity between different migrant communities (e.g. Polish have a reputation for undercutting others from A8 countries)

Education & Training

- Gap between parents and schools is wide - don't know / understand system - knock-on effect to attendances etc
- Disruption of classes by transient nature of some non-English speaking communities
- Support for teachers dealing with language and cultural difference
- Engaging parents generally, particularly an issue for Traveller community where parents have little / no experience of system
- Pakistani/Muslim women particularly isolated - issue for lone male workers during daytime
- Young people just putting in time at school - teachers can't support - language (particularly learning Irish)
- Communication with parents - attendance at parents evening, letters home etc.



Health & Welfare

- A8 communities going home to access medical & dental treatment
- Temptation to prescribe drugs for depression when isolation might be more of an issue
- Getting access to communities can be difficult - development of forums? There is a need to develop closeness with specific communities to hear / learn about needs - 'participation' in the system
- Many migrant workers have several jobs - difficult to access GP's in normal hours

Culture, Recreation & Leisure

- Sports facilities - main sports have government funding but are hard to access - club-based, lack of outreach/community programme, transport, varies from GAA club to club
- Social opportunities in rural areas are very limited - very isolated
- Need for shared spaces particularly family ones
- Find ways to be creative in addressing diversity, e.g. use of arts



Cross-cutting Issues

- Housing behind Tesco is turning into a ghetto for Roma community
- Low level of voting across minority ethnic communities - do people know they can vote?
- Media representation is nearly always negative and creates a sense of 'other'
- Racism between & within minority ethnic communities e.g. some members of the Traveller community / African communities & some members of other East European communities / Polish community
- Negative myths propelled - knowledge of where to access correct information
- Lack of training for front-line service staff - customer charters/policies exist but are not filtered down - issues often have to be referred to managers/supervisors

VOICES OF LONGFORD

"Everlasting smiles, nice attitudes and tolerance but I am not able to judge whether it's true or false"
(Polish woman)

Through our survey we engaged with 140 individuals from minority ethnic communities living in County Longford. Some of these people completed the questionnaires themselves (in either English, Polish, Slovak or Russian), whilst many of them were completed through face-to-face interviews conducted either in English or in a number of different languages through an interpreter.

A copy of the survey can be found in the appendix.

Respondents

Nationality

- 40 different countries represented
- 21.2% of people are 3rd country nationals

Gender

- 46.7% of respondents are male & 53.3% female

Travelling / settled

- 5.8% of respondents are Travellers
- 3.6% of respondents are Roma
- 90.6% of respondents are settled

Age

- 47.4% aged between 16 & 30 years
- 49.6% aged between 31 & 50 years
- 2.9% aged 51+ years

The above shows a wide range of respondents across nationalities, ethnicities and legal status. It also indicates a relatively youthful population in terms of minority ethnic communities.

Main reasons for being in Ireland

We asked people what their main reason for being in Ireland was. This is what they said:

Reason for being in Ireland	%
I've always lived here	11.7%
Student	3.6%
Refugee	5.1%
Asylum seeker	13.9%
EU Migrant	39.4%
Green Card / Work permit holder	6.6%
Dependent	0.7%
Parent of Irish Born Child	8.8%
Other	10.2%
TOTAL	100%

The largest group by far surveyed are EU Migrants (39.4%). There is a good representation from other status', particularly asylum seekers.

"I feel at home here" (*Slovak man*)

"Some members of the community have a perceived notion about asylum seekers or ethnic minorities" (*Ghanaian man*)

"People here are very kind" (*Mozambican woman*)

"People in Longford are more helpful and polite than where I lived before"
(*Russian woman*)

"Teenagers shout 'f*** off refugee'. It happens to me in the street but it is ok, I am used to it" (*Kurdish man*)

"Irish people won't make friends with us. There is no place for people to get together"
(*Sudanese man*)

"Irish people are in general so kind and generous but employers are the complete opposite...there are what 21 Labour Inspectors in the country, half of those should be in Longford alone" (*Slovak man*)

"The law won't give us anything to do. We cannot do anything here. We feel like living in the present and we cannot in this hostel. We cannot get a drivers licence."
(*Palestinian man*)

"Community organisations are a great way of meeting new people" (*Irish woman*)

"Nigerian people are very suspicious of each other here. We would prefer to have Irish people as friends rather than our own community. There is a big level of mistrust"
(Nigerian Woman)

"A swimming pool was evacuated because a black child had gone in. I have been ostracised within a leisure centre" *(Ghanaian man)*

"I am very satisfied with VTOS course, VEC team of teachers and Adult Education Officer" *(Russian Woman)*

"There's always problems being paid. Our boss calls us names" *(Polish man)*

"Not being served in a pub. Cannot get hotels for weddings or parties"
(Traveller woman)

"If there is ever a problem in the night clubs it is also the foreign nationals that are thrown out. I have intervened to separate fights and have been thrown out!"
(Cameroonian man)

"I feel accepted by Irish people" *(Polish woman)*

"The Polish don't try to mix with the Irish, they just stick in their same language groups, sniggering at us" *(Irish teenager)*

"There is discrimination against Travellers" *(Traveller woman)*





"I don't have any connections with other people outside the hostel" (*Iraqi man*)

"We get on with the blacks like a house on fire because they speak English; but not with the Polish" (*Irish teenager*)

"I have no money or job; I just eat and sleep" (*Somalian woman*)

"When you go down town on a Friday night the East Europeans are all fighting. If you go down to the courthouse it is full of them as well" (*Irish teenager*)

"Bullying at school and racist remarks" (*English man*)

"In the supermarket they think you are stealing. You waste your time going to interviews. You don't even get a reply" (*Ghanaian woman*)

"It's like the Olympics, where all different nationalities come together" (*Robert, 12*)

"I think it means that everyone is equal and should value each other" (*Caoimhe, 10*)

"People in Co Longford are all different colours, shapes and size. Integration means we are all here together from a different kind of country" (*Samson, 8*)

"I think integration means coming together and not to be against people from other countries such as those in Africa, and not to call them names" (*Eoghan, 12*)

THE ACTION PLAN

"I would like to fit in but don't think we are fully accepted. It's people's attitudes and behaviour that make me feel like this"

(Traveller woman)

Format

The format of Longford's Intercultural Strategic Plan is reflective of its community development approach. Our action plan is set out in 6 social themes:

- Justice & Legal
- Family, Community & Voluntary
- Business & Employment
- Education & Training
- Health & Welfare
- Culture, Leisure & Recreation

In addition, there is a section which addresses cross-cutting themes. Each of our themes is linked to the 5 pillars identified within the NPAR - Protection, Inclusion, Provision, Recognition & Participation.

The *strategic issues* which this plan seeks to address are those which have been raised through our consultation process. The issues have been identified at a local level by service providers, statutory agencies, the community & voluntary sector and individuals.

The *key actions* are solutions and potential solutions which have been suggested, proposed, and developed through the consultation process.

The *potential key partners* are organisations, agencies &/or groups who have been identified as being best placed to deliver the action. A lead partner and timescale for each action will be agreed at the earliest possible opportunity following the appointment of a lead implementation officer for the strategy. Additional partners may be identified through the pre-implementation and implementation phase.

This strategic plan is intended to be a living document which can grow and adapt to the changing face of Longford. It aims to provide a framework which is responsive to local needs and context.

Existing activities in Longford

This plan acknowledges that there is already considerable work being undertaken in the county. There are a number of organisations leading the way in tailored service provision and delivering specific services, projects, activities or programmes for minority ethnic communities.

JUSTICE & LEGAL

NPAR Themes: Protection, Provision

What needs addressing? STRATEGIC ISSUE	How can we tackle this in Longford? KEY ACTIONS
Ensure adequate protection & legal redress for those experiencing racism	<p>Encourage the reporting of racist incidents in County Longford</p> <p>Develop consistent local approach to recording & monitoring of racist incidents</p> <p>Collect data on racist incidents locally</p>
Increase access to information on Rights & advocacy services	<p>Review locally available leaflets on range of Rights & update, develop & include new additional languages as appropriate</p> <p>Produce local version of NCCRI guidelines on Racist Incidents Reporting Procedure</p> <p>Design & deliver regular workshops on 'Rights' for new arrivals</p>
Address issues of violence against women & children	<p>Information on where to get help, support & protection on domestic violence, prostitution & sex trafficking</p> <p>Contribute to multi-agency response to domestic violence, prostitution & sex trafficking</p> <p>Secure resources for a dedicated independently-based support & advocacy worker</p>
Improve access to interpretation for family law cases	<p>Initiate community interpreters training pilot project</p>
Build understanding of Irish law for new arrivals	<p>Build links between communities & Ethnic Liaison Officer / Community Gardaí</p> <p>Ensure information on motoring, road & traffic regulations are included in 'Welcome Packs'</p> <p>Deliver information sessions on Irish law for new arrivals</p>

FAMILY, COMMUNITY & VOLUNTARY

NPAR Themes: Protection, Inclusion, Provision, Recognition, Participation

What needs addressing? STRATEGIC ISSUE	How can we tackle this in Longford? KEY ACTIONS
Encourage use of places of worship to support minority ethnic communities	<p>Ensure religious leaders are represented at LARED & other key intercultural forums</p> <p>Increase use of churches as ways to disseminate information to communities & build support network</p> <p>Continue to promote non-English language church services & multi-denomination services or gatherings</p>
Engage with young people to increase awareness of diversity, build tolerance & prevent racism	<p>Support the National Youth Council of Ireland's Intercultural Strategy</p> <p>Develop youth anti-racism & diversity initiatives e.g. Fermanagh youth film project</p> <p>Increase access to youth services by young people from minority ethnic communities</p>
Increase access to online community information & resources translated	<p>Investigate instant translation software for community websites like longford.ie e.g. Alta Vista Babel Fish</p>
Encourage leadership of & from minority ethnic communities	<p>Design & deliver local community leadership programme to encourage participation in community & voluntary organisations, school governing bodies, boards of management, advocacy services etc.</p> <p>Promote positive role models from & within minority ethnic communities</p>
Establish single representative forum for minority ethnic communities for statutory agencies to engage with	<p>Establish & support network group to share issues, undertake lobbying & advocacy, provide support & be a representative consultative body</p>

What needs addressing? STRATEGIC ISSUE	How can we tackle this in Longford? KEY ACTIONS
Create opportunities for meaningful volunteering by newcomers providing integration, confidence, skills & language benefits	Initiate volunteering programme for asylum seekers Provide local volunteer work experience placements for newcomers
Provide introduction for newcomers to life in County Longford	Establish a 'Welcome to Longford' friendship / buddy scheme with local volunteers matched to newcomers to provide support in beginning life in Longford Design & deliver a training support programme for 'Welcome to Longford' volunteers
Promote the full participation of Travellers in Longford society	Support the Longford Traveller Movement Strategic Plan (2007 - 2010) Support Traveller Focus Week (December annually)
Ensure access to affordable & culturally sensitive childcare	Initiate a childcare network or club providing informal childcare to help increase opportunities for women's employment



BUSINESS & EMPLOYMENT

NPAR Themes: Protection, Inclusion

What needs addressing? STRATEGIC ISSUE	How can we tackle this in Longford? KEY ACTIONS
Encourage employees & potential employees to localise their skills & expertise	<p>Provide Health & Safety training for a range of sectors (e.g. driving, food hygiene)</p> <p>Deliver English for Business language training</p> <p>Provide training in culturally appropriate (Irish) childcare & nursing</p>
Provide support for entrepreneurs from minority ethnic communities	<p>Initiate business start-up courses in either languages other than English or with language support</p>
Improve employee relations through understanding & empathy of cultural differences	<p>Design & deliver cultural diversity / awareness workshops for the workplace</p> <p>Develop workplace mentoring / buddy system for newcomers</p>
Improve employment opportunities for people from minority ethnic communities	<p>Further develop & promote work placements for minority ethnic communities</p>
Work to end employment discrimination	<p>Support the establishment of a Traveller Employment Advocacy Worker</p> <p>Encourage employees & potential employees to report racism and discrimination</p>
Build understanding of trades, sectors & employment opportunities for the Traveller community	<p>Introduce workplace tours, visits & skills demonstrations</p> <p>Increase participation in training programmes, particularly by men</p>

"I'm not being paid properly for overtime and being verbal abused by my employer" (Polish man)

What needs addressing?
STRATEGIC ISSUE

How can we tackle this in Longford?
KEY ACTIONS

Encourage participation in workplace-related events

Encourage participation in Anti-Racism in the Workplace Week (November annually)

Improve knowledge of employment & equality law for both employers & employees

Review locally available leaflets on employment rights & equality law, updating where necessary & dissemination across wide range of sectors

Ensure inclusion of employment & equality law in proposed workshops on Irish law

Link in with national business & employment initiatives

Support Fáilte Ireland's Cultural Diversity Strategy

Support relevant FÁS programmes



EDUCATION & TRAINING

NPAR Themes: Protection, Inclusion, Provision, Recognition, Participation

What needs addressing? STRATEGIC ISSUE	How can we tackle this in Longford? KEY ACTIONS
Improve understanding of Irish education system	<p>Develop an education welcome pack for newcomers to include information for parents on the system, sources of support & advice</p> <p>Disseminate currently available translated support material from Department of Education & Science</p>
Support initiatives to improve Traveller Education	<p>Support the National Traveller Education Strategy</p> <p>Establish support group for parents</p>
Increase access to English language classes in rural areas	<p>Provide crèches for parents attending English language classes</p> <p>Increase number of English language classes delivered outside of Longford Town</p>
Provide culturally appropriate educational family support	<p>Ensure access to female Education Liaison Officer (or accompanying officer) for Muslim mothers</p>
Develop mutual understanding of cultural diversity in schools	<p>Develop a programme of workshops to tackle racism, explore & build understanding of difference & cultural diversity</p> <p>Promote participation in initiatives such as Anti-Racism Week & European Year of Intercultural Dialogue</p>
Promote diversity of schools' Board of Management	<p>Undertake campaign to encourage parents from minority ethnic communities to stand on schools' Boards of Management</p> <p>Provide appropriate induction & support for parents sitting on schools' Boards of Management</p>

"I feel safe in Ireland and that the children are.
Systems are all so different though" (Pakistani woman)

What needs addressing?
STRATEGIC ISSUE

How can we tackle this in Longford?
KEY ACTIONS

Provide support, information
& advice for teachers

Develop local version of National Council for Curriculum
& Assessment (NCCA) guidelines on Intercultural
Education in the Primary School

Identify key issues & needs for children with learning
disabilities

Provide adult literacy support

Deliver basic adult literacy classes for speakers of others
language, targeting parents

Strengthen links between
education providers

Develop education fora & initiate joint activities to share
knowledge, resources & dissemination of information



HEALTH & WELFARE

NPAR Themes: Protection, Provision, Recognition

What needs addressing? STRATEGIC ISSUE	How can we tackle this in Longford? KEY ACTIONS
Improve general health of minority ethnic communities	Ensure local delivery consistency with HSE National Intercultural Health Strategy Link to Population Health Strategy when published (end of 2009)
Continue to improve health of Travellers	Link to National Traveller Health Strategy Explore new health & welfare initiatives to sustain success of Traveller Healthcare Project
Develop better understanding of health needs	Undertake local health needs assessment of minority ethnic communities
Increase access to out of hours GP service	Increase no. of out of hours GP sessions
Tackle specialist health issues locally	Improve access to female GP's for women Investigate 'leisure prescription' project to tackle depression & mental health issues amongst asylum seekers Research men's health issues amongst the African communities
Improve understanding of the Irish health & welfare systems	Develop relevant material on access to & information on health & welfare for inclusion in the proposed 'Welcome Pack'

"Social welfare is bad, especially waiting times for benefits" (Polish man)



CULTURE, LEISURE & RECREATION

NPAR Themes: Protection, Inclusion, Recognition, Participation

What needs addressing? STRATEGIC ISSUE	How can we tackle this in Longford? KEY ACTIONS
Promote sport to bring people together (particularly young people)	<p>Initiate major annual sports event e.g. Longford World Cup (soccer) for adults & children</p> <p>Support Football Association of Ireland's Soccer Blitz Tournament</p> <p>Support 'Show Racism the Red Card' initiative</p> <p>Encourage participation in 'international' sports (e.g. soccer, basketball, boxing) by newcomers</p>
Increase access to sports by minority ethnic communities	<p>Encourage sports clubs to run open days, taster sessions & trial membership periods</p> <p>Encourage participation in gaelic games by minority ethnic communities</p> <p>Promote free access to sport for asylum seekers</p>
Increase cultural / leisure opportunities, particularly in rural areas	<p>Investigate a mobile cinema project for towns & villages in County Longford</p> <p>Explore idea of annual film festival for Longford, perhaps drawing on Polish, Czech Republic or Nigerian ('Nollywood') film industries</p>
Build understanding, appreciation & participation in religious & cultural festivals	<p>Increase diversity of participants in St Patrick's Day parade</p> <p>Mainstream & encourage wider and general participation in festivals such as Diwali, Eid & Chinese New Year</p>
Find creative ways to promote diversity	<p>Develop an annual programme of arts events which use arts (theatre, music, public art, storytelling, festivals, carnival & street arts etc.) to celebrate diversity</p>

"A swimming pool was evacuated because a black child had gone in. I have been ostracised within a leisure centre" (*Ghanaian man*)

What needs addressing?
STRATEGIC ISSUE

Promote interest & pride in County Longford's culture

Create shared spaces to enable people to come together

How can we tackle this in Longford?
KEY ACTIONS

Support cultural heritage of the county in line with the Heritage Plan (2004-2009)

Raise the profile of the cultural heritage of the Traveller community

Identify & develop use of shared community spaces for cross-community & inter-generational recreational use e.g. children's playgrounds, meeting space in libraries



CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

NPAR Themes: Protection, Inclusion, Provision, Recognition, Participation

What needs addressing? STRATEGIC ISSUE	How can we tackle this in Longford? KEY ACTIONS
Ensure full commitment to this Intercultural Strategic Plan	<p>Adopt a Whole System Approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Mainstreaming: Building an intercultural approach into policy planning and service provisionTargeting: Developing specific policy priorities tailored to meet the needs of different groups based on evidence of inequality/disadvantageBenchmarking: Developing data/statistics programmes through which progress can be measured in meeting targets and timescales.Engagement: Consultation with and the participation of key stakeholders <p>Identify & resource a lead organisation & dedicated post to implement the plan</p> <p>Ensure sign up to strategy of all key partners & agree priorities and timescale</p> <p>Ensure robust monitoring & evaluation process put in place from the outset</p> <p>Encourage integration of actions from strategy into organisational planning cycles & processes</p>
Develop LARED as the Intercultural Forum for Longford	<p>Identify appropriate structure & constitution</p> <p>Develop a strategy for LARED</p> <p>Support, capacity-build & resource the organisation to enable this strategy to reach its full potential</p>
Provide access to general & basic information about living in County Longford for newcomers	<p>Introduce 'Welcome Pack' in range of languages</p> <p>Create online & downloadable versions of 'Welcome Pack'</p> <p>Support 'Welcome Pack' with contact database of minority ethnic community support groups</p> <p>Deliver annual awareness raising workshops of services & support available</p>

“The Gardaí helped us very quickly when our bicycle was stolen” *(Polish woman)*

What needs addressing? STRATEGIC ISSUE	How can we tackle this in Longford? KEY ACTIONS
Access to fully trained translators & interpreters	<p>Pilot Community Interpreters Project</p> <p>Support recruitment, training, induction & promotion of community interpreters</p>
Provide local leadership across specialist service provision	<p>Establish service providers forum / network to share best practice & identify ways to improve access & service delivery</p> <p>Explore establishing a One Stop Shop for minority ethnic communities providing advice, advocacy & information across full range of services</p>
Increase political representation from minority ethnic communities	<p>Actively encourage minority ethnic communities to participate in local politics</p> <p>Offer opportunities to shadow town & county councillors</p> <p>Promote positive political role models</p>
Increase voting by minority ethnic communities	<p>Actively encourage voter register through campaigns</p> <p>Raise awareness of voting rights amongst newcomers</p>
Link to relevant major national & European initiatives	<p>Actively support European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008)</p> <p>Actively support Anti-Racism Week (March annually)</p>
Ensure co-ordination of public services to & for Traveller community	<p>Support Longford CDB Traveller Inter-Agency Plan 2007 & subsequent plans</p>

What needs addressing? STRATEGIC ISSUE	How can we tackle this in Longford? KEY ACTIONS
Challenge myths & misinformation about minority ethnic communities	<p>Promote positive role models & representation of minority ethnic communities</p> <p>Report success stories from minority ethnic communities & cross-community initiatives</p>
Develop Longford Library as a town centre focal point for minority ethnic communities	<p>Increase use of library as major service provider to minority ethnic communities</p> <p>Encourage use of library as a meeting venue, internet access, non-English language books & source of information</p>
Develop better understanding of minority ethnic communities in County Longford	<p>Undertake research of minority ethnic communities in county to include needs analysis, mapping & documenting communities</p>
Access to updates on services, initiatives, projects & news for speakers of other languages	<p>Introduce Polish / multi-lingual newsletter</p> <p>Initiate column on life by a newcomer or minority ethnic community journalist in local press</p>
Recognise & celebrate Best / Good Practice delivered locally	<p>Initiate a 'Longford Welcomes Everyone' award for service providers, businesses, community organisations etc.</p>
Reduce rural isolation of minority ethnic communities	<p>Investigate feasibility of a mobile information &/or library service to rural areas</p> <p>Increase access to IT in rural areas</p>

ACRONYMS

"Longford has different people, nobody is better, we are all friends"

(Daniel, 8)

CEB	County Enterprise Board
CIS	Citizens Information Service
ELO	Ethnic Liaison Officer
FAI	Football Association of Ireland
FÁS	Foras Áiseanna Saothair (Irish National Training & Employment Authority)
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
HSE	Health Service Executive
ICA	Irish Countrywomens Association
LARED	Longford Against Racism Embracing Diversity
LCDB	Longford County Development Board
LCC	Longford County Council
LCCC	Longford County Childcare Committee
LCRL	Longford Community Resources Ltd (Longford LEADER)
LEAP	Longford Enabling Action Project
LTM	Longford Traveller Movement
LWL	Longford Women's Link
NCCRI	National Consultative Committee on Racism & Interculturalism
NPAR	National Action Plan Against Racism
VEC	Vocational Education Committee

CONTRIBUTORS

The following organisations / groups contributed to the development of this strategy:

Acorn CDP
An Garda Síochána
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College Medical Centre
County Longford VEC
Diocese of Ardagh & Clonmacnois
East European Mini-market
FAI Longford
Ghanian Group
Global Longford
HSE Dublin Mid Leinster
ICA Longford
LEAP Project
LARED
Longford CEB
Longford CIS
Longford Community Games
Longford Community Resources Ltd
Longford County Childcare Committee
Longford County Council
Longford County Development Board
Longford County Youth Service
Longford EDI Centre for the Unemployed
Longford EQUAL
Longford Library
Longford Methodist Church
Longford Older People's Network
Longford Pastoral Council
Longford Rapid
Longford Tidy Towns
Longford Town FC
Longford Traveller Movement
Longford Traveller Primary Healthcare Project
Longford Women's Link
Melview National School
Bríd Mimmagh & Associates Solicitors
Oasis Foodstore
Polish construction workers
Polish mother & toddler group
Rathmhuire Resource Centre
SIPTU (Services, Industrial, Professional & Technical Union)
Slovak construction workers
Slovak forestry workers
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NCCRI

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