Longford Community Resources clg

Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme
Goal 2 - Video Case Study 2026

SICAP
Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme

Enterprise supports from long-term unemployment to self-employment



Cab/Lot No. Longford County (9-1)

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Theme: Local Priority
Target Group - People who are Long Term Unemployed

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Arna chomhchistiú ag an Aontas Eorpach
Co-Funded by the European Union

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

Background

The aim of the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) is to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion and equality in Ireland through supporting communities and individuals using community development approaches, engagement and collaboration. One of the target groups of SICAP is people who are long-term unemployed.

Long-term unemployment and limited employment opportunities are among the challenges facing residents of County Longford. They can also be driving forces for individuals to seek out self-employment opportunities as an alternative pathway towards economic independence.

However, those furthest from the labour market may face barriers such as low confidence and self-esteem, language difficulties, limited financial resources, and a lack of knowledge about starting and running a business.

Longford Community Resources have produced a video case study to highlight how SICAP supports people who are long-term unemployed to explore and progress towards self-employment.

We are very thankful to the individuals and agencies who took part in this case study and look forward to working together to address the barriers impacting people who are long-term unemployed.

This Project is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union.

SICAP's Contribution

Through SICAP, Longford Community Resources CLG employs an Enterprise Officer who works with a range of target groups, including people who are long-term unemployed.

Individuals are identified through outreach and referrals, and receive tailored advice, information, training and mentoring based on their circumstances, skills, experience and ambitions. The Enterprise Officer works closely with local services and agencies to ensure that these individuals receive appropriate and coordinated support.

In collaboration with the Longford Local Enterprise Office, the Enterprise Officer organises a Start Your Own Business course, helping participants explore and develop their business ideas. Following the course, the SICAP Enterprise Officer provides further support with business planning and progressing the idea, as well as organizing a bookkeeping course.

Initial consultations may also identify individuals who are not yet ready for self-employment and who require support with personal, family or other challenges. Where appropriate, they are referred to relevant specialist services.

Conclusion

SICAP Enterprise Officer support can help individuals assess the viability of self-employment while building their knowledge, skills and confidence. This includes one-to-one guidance, identifying market opportunities, recognising strengths and development needs, and preparing realistic financial projections.

Ongoing support is available to early-stage entrepreneurs during their first two years of trading, helping them address challenges, build resilience and work towards sustainable business growth. Individuals can also be referred to the Longford Local Enterprise Office for additional mentoring and business supports.

For some individuals, the process may demonstrate that self-employment is not a viable option at that stage. The skills, knowledge, and confidence can nevertheless help them pursue alternative pathways, including employment.

The table below demonstrates the impact and importance of the work undertaken by SICAP and, in particular, the role of the Enterprise Officer in supporting individuals and businesses.

The figures highlight the significant level of engagement with the service, with 185 individuals receiving one-to-one business support. Of these, individuals were supported and referred to other appropriate services to address their specific needs, individuals engaged in the Start Your Own Business Course (SYOBC) and a bookkeeping course organised by LCRL. Individuals were also supported and helped develop the practical skills required to establish and manage a business effectively.

Importantly, the support provided has also contributed to tangible progression with many individuals progressing into self-employment during the period 1 January 2025 to 31 August, 2026. Support was also provided to existing businesses, demonstrating the Enterprise Officer's role not only in encouraging new enterprise but also in helping established businesses to develop, strengthen and sustain their operations.

Taken together, these figures demonstrate the varied and practical nature of the Enterprise Officer's contribution and the important role of SICAP in creating pathways towards self-employment, enterprise development, business sustainability and employment.

Supports Provided by Enterprise Officer 1 January 2025 to 31 August 2026	
	No of Individuals
Received one to one business supports	185
Referred to Other Services	97
Participated in SYOBC w/ LCRL	104
Participated in Bookkeeping Course w/ LCRL	23
Progressed into Self-Employment	48
Supports to Existing Businesses	30
No of interventions	916

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