Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme 2018-2022 (SICAP)

LDC Annual Progress Report 2020
LOT – Choose an item.

SICAP

Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme

1. Please describe how COVID-19 has impacted the needs of SICAP beneficiaries. (1 page)

2020 started off quite well for the programme in Co. Kilkenny. Targets had been reached comfortably in 2019. The Social Inclusion Team also felt that it had responded well to the needs as they presented from community groups, social enterprises and individuals driving good outcomes for same out of the supports delivered. The company moved in to 2020 with what we thought was a good grasp on where the needs were, what they looked like and what planning and support strategies would help to respond to these. This knowledge related to the ongoing research and profiling work that happens continuously in the County and at a National level, and particularly through discussion at local level on the knowledge that emerges from collaborative work which will often uncover unseen issues.

The arrival of COVID19 was a fundamental interruption to all of this and for approximately two weeks caused an almost stop not just to the work of the programme but also to the activities of our partners – who are essential to our work - and the withdrawal of communities and individuals to their homes as they sought to understand what was happening with the world. In week two of lockdown KLP (SICAP), was asked to join the Community Resilience Forum – the local community support response - under the framework that had been prepared by the local government sector working with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government; the Department of Rural and Community Development; the Department of Health; and the Department of The Taoiseach.

Also, in week two people began to re-emerge having lost their jobs or their businesses closed. One of the first tasks of the Community Resilience Forum carried was out an audit of the local response to the provision of support for isolated people. This rapid audit carried out by the SICAP team revealed an almost whole county level of coverage – particularly in the rural areas. This supported a coordinated approach through the Community Reasons helpline into the communities. Not long into the broad response individuals presented with challenges e.g., mental health and in need of practical supports where community groups felt it was beyond their capacity, they were directed to KLP; SICAP/RSS/Tus/CSP programmes. The KLP/HSE Traveller Community Healthcare Project were particularly concerned about Traveller families living on sites and housing schemes and who associated with one another closely. String levels of contact with the community, supported a clearer understanding of the grasp of the C19 health messages and meaning of the restrictions to the community – which were lower than the wider community.

SICAP Goal 2 support moved quickly into remote delivery. It became clear early that KLP SICAP enterprise clients and others new to the company because of C19 were unsure how to manage landlord, suppliers' creditors and customers and needed a reorganised set of supports around these. Other Goal 2 clients on external training and development programmes were content to wait for the provider to recommence while the KLP offer moved quickly online. Communities and Social Enterprises closed and withdrew but a new anxiety emerged as the restrictions were being lifted – how do we reopen for business? How do we service the ongoing costs attached to our community facilities and services? Direct contact with communities and collaborating with Kilkenny County Council and the PPN supported the design and delivery of C19 Reopening for Business training programme.

Through local collaboration a County Integration Strategy was completed in 2020. Also, feasibility studies on; a local Crisis Café (mental Health), the study; *An examination of the Barriers to Employment for Travellers in County Kilkenny. The Living Loughboy; Needs and Opportunities* research process was completed in 2020. The *Kilkenny One Parent Families; Voice, Visibility & Support for those Parenting Alone* was launched in 2020.

In a year dominated by COVID19, agility within the company, healthy collaborative working arrangements across agencies, voluntary and community organisations and strong connections with communities and individuals supported SICAP and other programmes within the company to stay appropriate to needs as they emerged and support the development of relevant and meaningful responses.

2. How did SICAP respond to these needs, what approaches were used? When providing your answer, please reflect on how the programmes Horizontal Principles underpinned the response. (2 - 4 pages)

The organization managed to maintain the supports that were being delivered pre COVID but delivered these – in the main - remotely. The profile of the Case load remained largely the same as those in the worst affected sectors – tourism, restaurants, bars etc. and would potentially be SICAP clients if other factors were to destabilize their jobs. Many of the people who presented were not from the most disadvantaged communities in the county but more dispersed. What many people needed was support to get on line i.e. access to devices that allow them to access training from KLP and other providers. The Programme 'kitted up' with good quality cameras and sound, Zoom accounts and a suite of laptops were purchased – the latter funded under the Rural Development Programme. The laptops have been key to allow a significant number of people to access training and to be involved in groups e.g. Lone Parents group. The organization ensured that individuals and community groups received high quality and current information in terms of health messages, COVID-19 payments etc. though the company website and newsletters.

In the initial lock down a lot of the individuals presented were looking for reassurance. The broad fear experienced by the whole country was felt most acutely by those who lost their jobs, are older, had underlying health issues or who had dependents whose services were withdrawn. As an organization we were very conscious of those who were most isolated. One of the first actions Carried out was an audit of the response that rose out of communities to keep people connected though doing shopping and prescription collection runs. The audit showed an exceptionally good level of coverage. KLP and the Local Authority promoted a filing of the gaps through having conversation with contacts in communities. KLP staff took on clients for similar supports who might have been more challenging – mental health and/or addiction issues – for pension/payment collection, shopping etc. Most of these are still getting support through the Rural Social Schemes and Housing Aid (Community Services Programme). KLP (SICAP), took a place on the county response group and worked very closely with those coordinating the work coming from calls to the county help line.

KLP has had a key focus through the Programme and the Community Health Project on the Traveller Community. Due to how the families – in the city in particular – organize their lives, the threat of a widespread and rapid infection of the community was particularly high. Very clear health messaging, intense levels of contact with families and the 'social distance' Traveller's live from the wider community kept COVID away from the most vulnerable families until Christmas. Close working arrangements with the Traveller Health Unit (HSE), the housing section of Kilkenny County Council focused on – amongst other things - services such as providing and organising – Meals on Wheels, essential food supplies, assistance with solid fuel for the older generation and sanitising and HSE specific Care packs. The Project worked with the Local County Council to ensure families where overcrowding was an issue had access to appropriate toileting facilities or where accommodation needs were not suitable, advocacy was provided on behalf of the family. New relationships were established with older members of the Travelling Community and many others who self-referred seeking supports. Referrals to the Traveller Mental Health Nurse increased mainly due to the outreach and online work by the Traveller Well-being Awareness Worker.

By now we know that coronavirus does not affect everyone equally. As well as the physical health impacts, we also know that there are mental health consequences that have and will come from the Covid-19 pandemic. Traveller communities often have a very strong family culture, and many live in large, extended family groups. This culture is an important protective mechanism against the <u>*stigma and discrimination*</u> *they face in wider society*. (Traveller Well-being Awareness Worker). However, even within the same community group, there has been different experiences of living through the pandemic depending upon personal, social and environmental factors. A common thread is the increased mental

health challenges which we are seeing manifest in the form of addictions and violence in the home along with huge challenges in accessing online resources because of barriers with Literacy.

10 KLP staff were deployed part time to the ALONE Helpline from March to June. As communities withdrew this made room for this work under Goal 1 SICAP, Tus and RSS. Working in two 8-hour shifts per week. The team were able to offer ALONE a constant resource that their volunteers could be organised around. Like the work with the Travelling community the team heard quite a few challenging stories but in the main most people wanted to chat and be reassured that their efforts to stay safe were the right things to be doing. In one case our Trails Officer – Harry – sang the Fields of Athenry to a lonely woman in county Roscommon.

As the first period of lockdown closed communities start to remerge and most were concerned with how to 'reopen for business' and how the pandemic had impacted the viability of their business strategies to keep overheads covered, loans repaid etc. in their facilities. KLP, Kilkenny Co Co and the PPN worked to ensure groups with the greatest needs were able to access financial supports through the grants that were made available and worked with two separate health and safety companies to deliver COVID19 reopening for business training and to reasonably install good quality signage and sanitising units. The training and signage removed a significant level of stress from the groups, but most did not fully reopen or in any real way make a recovery on the financial losses from arising from the various periods of restrictions.

Social Enterprises were affected similarly. County Kilkenny has a healthy number of community owned childcare facilities. KLP worked with Kilkenny County Childcare Committee to support three services to reorganise in the context of the pandemic – this involved the relocation of one and the securing of funding from the DCYA to achieve this. The changed and generous funding programme put in place by the DCYA has secured much of these enterprises moving into a post COVID era. Other enterprises supported by the company such as the Outdoor Hub in Graiguenamangh and the School of Food in Thomastown (TSoF), continued to trade when they could and in the case of TSoF saw business grow as several micro food business emerged from the pandemic and started using the school's kitchens. COVID19 has had a significant impact on Kindred – a collective of under or unemployed creative young people. KLP has been moving this group toward the sale of services to local companies and organisations but an inability to meet and work in the same space has undermined this work.

Collaborative working is a cornerstone for the successful delivery of SICAP into Co. Kilkenny. Each action in the 2020 programme involved some level of cross sectoral work which extended from communities/ interest groups through the faciliatory activities of the SICAP to local community & voluntary groups and agencies to national funders. A positive culture of cooperation and collaboration is a key feature of the local development sector in Co. Kilkenny.

2.1. Please briefly describe the cross-programme, integrated approach that SICAP utilised during the COVID-19 response (half a page)

SICAP led the KLP response to the pandemic. Combing the resources of the various programmes in the company – Rural Social Scheme, Tus, Community Services Programme, the Traveller Community Health Project, the pilot Social Prescribing Project and funding from the Rural Development Programme facilitated a broad response to the crisis. As described above staff who were less busy due to schemes being stood down and community activities restricted worked with ALONE for a most 4 months. Funding was leveraged from the Rural Development Programme to funding equipment to allow individuals to access training online offered under SICAP and by other providers. Staff across the programmes supported delivery and

collection services for isolated vulnerable people in the city and county. The Social Prescribing Project has been a significant asset as it offers a specific set of supports that can sit alongside the work of the SICAP, RSS, Tus, and the Primary Healthcare Project. It also can map individuals not currently accessing services, into areas of support where these are required.

The key external relationships have been those with Kilkenny Co Co. – Community & Culture Section, Housing and Community Response effort – and with the Traveller Health Unit (HSE). The work here was used to identify vulnerable families and individuals, linking them to the available community supports or providing supports directly. Other organisations such as the Family Resource Centres in the city and voluntary organizations such as Immigrant Services and the Men's Shed helped also collaborate on the delivery of supports to key groups.

2.2.   What type of work did LCGs and SEs (supported by SICAP) undertake in the community in response to COVID-19? Please provide 1 or 2 examples. (half a page)

As described above in the first lockdown most communities withdrew from normal activities. However, through the very initial phase of the pandemic most communities organised themselves to identify and support individuals and families who needed to isolate- the particular focus here was older people. Much of this happened through sporting clubs – GAA and soccer mainly. An early audit of this activity enabled coordination with the county helpline managed by Kilkenny Co Co. Gaps were identified and filled in locally or picked up by KLP, FRC's and youth organisations such as Ossory Youth. This work gave a lot of people a sense of purpose and created new connections amongst people who might not otherwise have known one another. The community groups supported by SICAP – possibly have improved connections with other groups in their communities as they gathered to respond to the pandemic. Communities such as Travellers, have not benefitted in the same way.

The interruption to childcare services was significant and the stalling of Traveller Children's (and others), education will be the generator of further educational disadvantages for them. KLP works with the Kilkenny Traveller Community Movement to provide an Afterschool Service to city-based Traveller families. Reopening was critical to enabling some form of catch up on the school year – as families did not have the devices, the literacy or often not the room to support the families learning. Reopening meant a reduction of numbers and moving some children to another service (as one of the facilities housing the service was converted into an isolation unit). This meant a reduction from 56 children to 32. It also has facilitated room (more time), to invest in the quality of the service and commence the building of a stronger literacy, oral literacy and numeracy programme.

3. How did your ways of working change, following the outbreak of COVID-19? (half a page)
Guidance: reflect on operational changes (e.g. delivering supports online)

We closed our offices to the public on March 13th. We asked staff to work from home and stood down our RSS and Tus participants. Both childcare services (Deenside Early Years and the Kilkenny Traveller Community Movement Afterschools Service) linked to the company were closed and staff stood down also. The following week was spent trying to make sense of what was happening and trying to imagine a new way of working. By the following week, the company was swinging into action. Staff and clients (pre-Lockdown caseload) adjusted quickly to working through Zoom. New clients – manly small business owners started to present after a few weeks mainly looking for support on accessing state aid and around negotiating with landlords and creditors. The company purchased good quality equipment – cameras and sound - to deliver training programmes online and make the experience as good as could be for the

participants. Most responded well. A laptop suite funded by the Rural Development Programme opened access to these programmes to individuals who otherwise would not have been able to participate. Wellbeing Programmes – looking at fitness, cookery and eating well were delivered by SICAP & the RDP through School of Food. Some of the programmes were specific to people parenting alumni, older people and exercise programmes for people with disabilities.

As the restriction eased a level of access to the offices was given to staff and clients. This enabled some clients to be met face to face if necessary - where access to devices was limited or where levels of stress required it. It also helped with the administration of programmes. Staff were redeployed to other roles – Alone helpline, shopping, prescription and pension collection for isolated people in the city mainly. All board, sub committees and the evaluation committee meetings have taken place online. All meetings with other agencies and groups around projects e.g., Social Prescribing, Lone Parents Development Worker, Community Healthcare Project have taken place online. Of the core staff of which there is 50 – only 1 has contracted COVID19 and that infection can be traced to a family member. While the staff have responded extremely well to the new working arrangements, they miss the connectivity achieved in the office. At times, a level of introversion could be picked up on in the teams. Regular short team meetings were put on to allow people to update one another on work and unblock issues in the work. An independent facilitator was brought in to support thinking about adjustment and staying connected which has been fruitful. The camaraderie in the office – which is good in normal circumstances – is most missed by almost all staff.

A factor KLP staff do well - is events. Obviously, there is a strong focus on content but also on ensuring that the constituency of the company is represented well in the attendees. This year's Smarter Villages present in August was attended by 110 people. Held in Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre, the event sought to explore what types of connectivity, linking and networking will support the sustaining of services and business activity in rural communities. A carefully 'COVID19 managed' and welcoming event was outlined, and the opportunity created to feel connected.

4. Please outline the challenges faced this year, as a result of COVID-19. Were you able to overcome any of these challenges? If so, please describe. (half a page)

Apart from the wide community effort to support the isolated or isolating people community development came almost to a full stop the weekend of March 13th. Communities closed their facilities and interest groups stopped meeting. As we emerged from Lockdown in summer communities struggled to reopen for business and understand how people could be brought back together again safely. A reopening for business training programme and supports for C19 equipping of facilities enabled many communities to reopen with some level of confidence.

Community development supports and the supports offered to individuals under Goal 2 are best delivered face to face. While the team has adjusted well to remote working and as the programme clients adjusted to receiving support and training online it is envisaged most will welcome a return to face-to-face interactions. Of the caseload worked with, only 20.51% came from disadvantaged areas, the target was 26%. While these communities were prioritised – they were not presenting. Also, many new people from other communities had lost their jobs because of the restrictions on sectors – hospitality, retail etc. meant that they fitted the profile of the SICAP target groups. All other targets were reached or exceeded.

St Patricks Centre - In response to Covid-19 we developed a close relationship with St Patricks to help deliver recruitment & training of new and existing staff to cope with increased demand. 36 people were upskilled and 10 new moved into jobs that supported better COVID 19 practice.

However, there has been a few gains, meetings with partners and collaborators are shorter and more focused. Travel time has been removed. Savings on overheads, T & S have been diverted into action funding.

Of significant concerns is the ground lost by some of the most disadvantaged people in the county. The closing of schools, childcare settings, day care services for people with disabilities and older people will create even greater disadvantages as bigger gaps appear in children's learning journeys, as behaviours regress and mental health issues are driven by isolation – the question for organisations like ours, and larger institutions – is how are these new compounding disadvantages addressed in a post COVID19 world?

5. Has your experience of implementing SICAP in the context of COVID-19 highlighted any gaps in programme design that need to be reflected on? If so, please briefly describe. (half a page)

Implementing SICAP through COVID19 has brought many new experiences both to staff and participants. The online digital platform has proved successful in many ways, KLP were still able to engage with people and offer digital training via Zoom. The COVID PAP was simplified, which was refreshing especially for Goal 2 as there was less repetition than the overall 4-page PAP hardcopy. Reflecting on the 'need' for the same amount of detail required for the future? As everything turned digital, Development Officers were recording more detail on the individuals IRIS file in the comments section of the Interventions etc. (This proved much more efficient and requires less repetition).

When completing IRIS database, there was a missed opportunity to really capture the work the SICAP team completed to support LCGs and Individuals through the COVID19 period. There was nowhere to record if a person was in receipt of PUP – or temporarily unemployed – or those that worked in hospitality and other hospitality sectors, people were 'on and off' the welfare schemes (TWSS) as the country went in and out of lockdown periods. The work the SICAP team completed supporting 'Alone' during the first few months was only captured through narrative reports.

The SICAP target group is rapidly changing as those who were what they thought in secure employment, now find themselves unemployed and very unsure of their future. Will they get another job in the same field, do they need to upskill or take a different career direction? These are people who have gone to college, got qualifications but would be very unaware of the employment market and job search skills required today, especially in a COVID19 world of work. These people would appear on the system as non-SICAP target groups prior to the pandemic so how do we record this in the future to get an accurate picture of who we are working with? Mental Health issues are becoming very prevalent and indicative to a person's ability to progress along any education, training, or employment without intensive 1-1 supports, advice and guidance.

6. Please suggest potential programme supports that DRCD and/or Pobal could deliver to LDCs in 2021. (half a page)

Guidance: This could involve technical or programme supports. Please be specific in terms of the topics / areas of focus and the preferred method of delivery e.g., online learning workshops, capacity building webinars etc.

See 5 regarding recording of work in changed circumstances.

7. Please describe any non-COVID related actions or projects that took place in 2020. How has this work contributed to improved social inclusion and equality in your Lot? (1-2 pages)
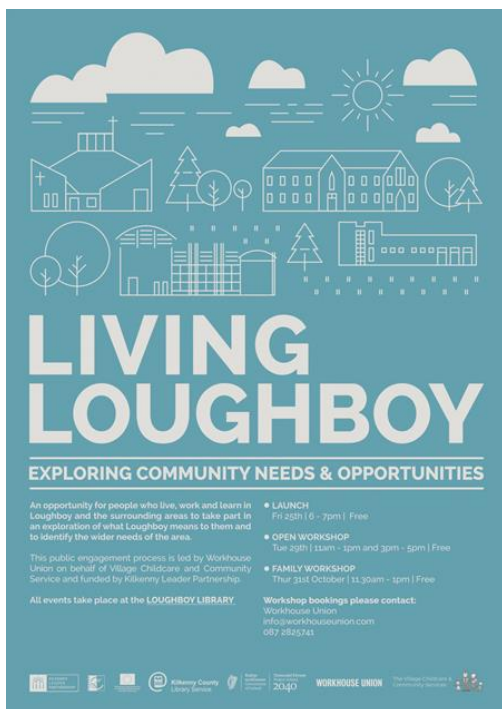
Under Action 1.1 several research processes were completed. These included the Loughboy Living; an analysis of need and opportunities and the development of plan of a large community in Kilkenny City, a mental health focused analysis and development process around a Criss Café in Kilkenny city, funding was obtained from the Irish Human Right Commission (IHRC) to complete an analysis of the experience of members of the Traveller community participating in education and employment and the Development of an Integration Strategy for the county. These will inform wider strategies in the county and the focus of the work of attached groups and communities and the focus of investment of agencies.

Non Covid work continued with community organisations under 1.2 in terms of building organisational capacity and the delivery of projects. Beneficiary groups included the KTCM, TransLIfe, The Men's Sheds, Kilkenny One Parent Community, Falite Isteach & Immigrant Services plus area based fucus in Loughboy in the city, Ferrybank and Castlecomer.

A key outcome of 2020 was a local agreement to reconvene the Kilkenny Traveller Interagency Group. This group stopped meeting at the start of the economic crisis as other issues were prioritised. Investment in the development of new leadership in the KTCM will support a strengthened Traveller presence on this forum. Work with the Kilkenny One Parent Family Community has strengthened the presence of parents in the wider structure built around the Lone Parent work over the past two years. KLP continues to work with local new communities' groups Failte Isteach each and Immigrant Services to identify on going funding to secure the service in the county. Having had some success with short-term funding a real focus on more sustainable sources must be prioritised for 2021.

Collaboration for the development and resourcing of projects has always been a cornerstone of the KLP approach. Much of these are built through the gathering of interested parties, the identification of need, the development of a plan and a local call for funding which in some cases will be a matching exercise to national funding. For 2020 projects it included the Social Prescribing Pilot, One Parent Family Network; in both cases a local coordinator was employed. KLP worked very closely with Kilkenny County Council to find 'homes' for Men's Sheds groups. KLP has secured €2m from Tomar Trust to support the development of community projects in co-funding arrangements between the Rural Development Programme and other funding streams that are delivered through the Local Authority such as Town & Village renewal and the Community Enhancement Programme.

Under 1.5 – supporting social enterprises; Slieverue Community Play Group was supported to relocate in Lockdown. This is a key resource for some of the most disadvantaged families in this community. Capital funding was from the DCYA to support the move. Thomastown School of Food was supported to reopen. A long-term tenant for one of the kitchens moved into the school. 4 new micro food business have accessed the hub kitchen. KLP delivered training programmes on dysphagia, healthy eating, and cookery skills for lockdown between March and December. A community garden has also been established at the school. The Community Services Programme was secured for the Outdoor Hub in Graiguenamangh by KLP. KLP supported recruitment of manager and other staff. Two community shops were supported one in Windgap which is established but required business supports and in Muckalee – where they are making application to the RDP and the Local Authority to develop a shop in their community.

Under 2.1 Referrals into programme supports overall were strong in 2020. 61% of these were newly registered. In the 12 months. Of these only 20.5% were from the most disadvantaged areas. Reflecting the fallout from the pandemic. Otherwise, all targets were met or exceeded in Goal 2. Programmes of work – training and development – continued as planned but online. Two programmes of Personal Ongoing Development (POD) were delivered between July and December of 2020. The POD programme was part funded by RDP and SICAP.

KPI 2
498 Individuals

240
120   360

106%
⁰ **96 Individuals**⁴⁶⁸

Under 2.2 KLP developed an ETB funded Foundation Programme in Outdoor Tourism commenced Sept - Nov 2020. The mixed cohort of this group includes young people 17 years +, all with significant support needs. 10 started the 8-week course and 9 successfully completed.

14
7   21

KLP have developed and run online courses.

20.51%
0   26.00%

- Driving Ambitions
- Kickstart module programmes – CV workshops and LinkedIn bootcamps
- Dysphagia training (Training for Chefs/cooks in the preparation of food for people with 'swallowing difficulties')
- Healthy Food Made Easy (HSE programme)
- Fit2Work modules – MS Word and Excel workshops (2 programmes of each)
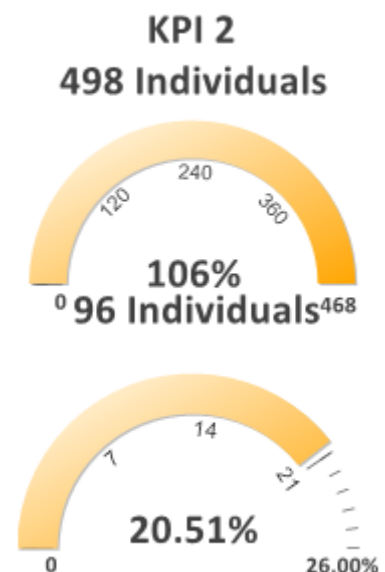
2.3 working with young people; the referral system from TUSLA is working well now (this increased after SICAP presentation to TUSLA good practice event held in Nov 2019) the programme is currently working with 14 clients. These are referrals that have either moved into Aftercare or are due to move when they turn 18, from Children in Care or Outreach. This is labour intensive work as often the client has had a chaotic educational life (along with personal life) so finding c solutions to suit their needs can be

challenging. Clients also move location regularly so linking in with DO's of other LDC's is an important part of the work

Aiséirí Adolescent Residential Addiction Treatment Centre – 30 residents were supported in 2020 on 1-1 basis where they were encouraged to explore their options and link them in with SICAP contacts (in sister organisations), so they have continued supports & options in their locality when they leave the centre.

In addition to 1-1 supports offered SICAP also contracted various agencies to deliver a range of programmes which resulted in 16 Youth projects been delivered across the county over the year which targeted all age groups, engaging over 1600 children & Young People in these activities and events

Under 2.4; The delivery of the mainstream Kickstart Programme was unhinged after the first wave of COVID19 in March 2020. For the second part of 2020, Kickstart had to be redesigned. Identifying IT skills to be important to all people who are looking for work so participants were linked back to the online Fit2Work programmes delivered under Action 2.2. 4 x CV workshops were delivered with a total of 32 participants as well as Job search Workshops.

Although there was clearly a heavy impact on the self-employment sector from of the pandemic and associated restrictions, there were also signs of a strong sense of resilience and an ability to adjust business plans or services, which was demonstrated by clients in a range of sectors. We continued to work closely with the INTREO case officers and communication has been regular around impact of the restrictions and business progression plans for clients. The change in DEASP policy that allowed BTWEA clients to accept some self-employment work (120 per week) and not lose the PUP payment was a welcome change for many clients who felt caught between wanting to start working again and fear of losing the payment for the sake of intermittent work.

Annex 1 – Updates to the IRIS database

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

☐	A narrative for each of the 2020 Actions has been input in the **Update on Progress** field under the End of Year report section of the action record. The *Action Progress Report* can be generated to view the updates for each action.
☐	2020 financial and beneficiary data input is complete.
☐	2020 data quality issues identified on system dashboards and views have been rectified.
☐	Potential duplicate records have been reviewed and deactivated if appropriate.
☐	2020 data follow-up has been carried out, as appropriate (e.g., LLL activity outcomes, still in employment/self-employment).
☐	ESF exit data has been recorded for Individuals who exited SICAP in 2020.
☐	ESF 6-month follow-up has been recorded for Individuals who exited SICAP up to end May 2020.
☐	LDC contact information and staff member listing are up to date.
☐	2020 End of Year Financial and Monitoring report (including the signed costs charged report, Lot Summary Report and goal outcome reports) has been uploaded to IRIS.