



# Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme

End of Year Case Studies 2018.



**\*The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018-2022 is funded by the Irish Government through the Department of Rural and Community Development and co-funded by the European Social Fund under the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020\***



Kindred has emerged from an informal collective of creative's who are from or have been drawn to Kilkenny city. Growing out of a city with a strong reputation for creativity and a strong presence of successful creative people Kindred has developed around people who feel distant from this creative reputation and in many cases distant from mainstream society. This loose social group was in the early stages (and still is), made up of people experimenting with digital media, experimental music and rap, creating art from waste, poetry as well as

more traditional forms.

A high proportion of membership are young (under 25), a good balance between male and female, and many are/were unemployed/under employed. From the beginning the group was very clear about the need to build a community of people not just to create a space to create but also an intimate community that was a supported environment where members could be. Initial meetings revealed a real consciousness of the vulnerabilities of many of the members and how having a community and a purpose (creating) could support all members to have 'bigger roles' in the community and fulfill their potential.

Moira Duggan (Goal 2 Development Officer SICAP), had been working with Young Irish Film Makers' on the recruitment of young people for the ETB funded Introduction to Multimedia Production. The programme is an excellent fit with some of the clients Moira worked with and who for a series of reasons, not progress on to higher third level programmes. It proved to be an important training, technical and social experience for the participants and many were drawn to the wider social and creative 'happenings' in the forming of Kindred. Seeing the potential in this group, and in particular the social and developmental impact it was having on her clients and relevance to the Goal 1 focus of SICAP, Moira requested in April a meeting between the Social Inclusion Programmes Manager and representatives of the group. An initial meeting was set up and a relationship was established.

This initial meeting revealed an already high level of connectivity between the members and a strong core group of informal leaders and organisers. The group outlined three ambitions; the building of a more organised network of creative people, access to a space to work in and to become influencers of policy and the direction of resources toward more marginal creative activity. The profile of the group's members was explored in the meeting. This revealed a healthy consciousness of the levels of mental health issues within the group, high participation levels of young people, LGBTI people and members at a big distance from the more mainstream arts/creative activities in the city and county. Further probing by KLP revealed that most of the members were under/unemployed. While the economic status of the members was not at this point a priority for the group it was suggested by KLP that building a work/business focus to the group would be worthwhile exploring. What emerged over the conversation was an alignment of the ambitions to gain access to space, to build collaborations across members which aligned itself well with the possibility of services/experiences being traded under an umbrella brand. It was agreed that KLP would strategically support the group in a process development using hands on facilitation of thinking, planning and structuring of the group while having regard to a visible but yet documented set of emerging values.

Over the course of a number of meetings KLP and the group sought to plot out a process that would shape Kindred in a way that responded to its members needs and prompted a new less mainstream set of creative activities in the city. What emerged was a low level tension between leading out the process and engagement with the members. Questions emerged in terms of

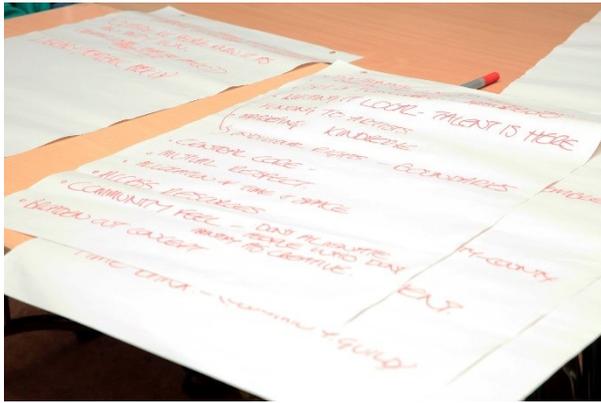


what was understood as members, how will this look going deeper into the development process? What do we mean in terms of engagement and consultation – how do members shape what this organization will look like? The tension existed between imagining a tangible process of involvement and getting on with the work. KLP suggested that they would lead out a process of engagement (wide), and follow out planning (working with the smaller core group), that would return in different formats to the wider group for testing and approval.

KLP staff led a consultation workshop with 70 members and potential members of Kindred in St Canices' Neighbourhood Hall in Kilkenny. Using short films<sup>ii</sup>, inputs from the core group to open up the thinking the 2.5 hours session then led into workshops facilitated by KLP SICAP & RDP staff. The groups fed back into the larger audience to reveal a clearly connected set of ambitions which included;

- Set of principles – a manifesto, 'keeping it local' – the talent is here, build a community, collaboration, mutual respect, inclusion, ongoing broadening of the concept.
- Physical space and a forum for support, sharing ideas, connections and building collaboration.
- Build a community of people - a social network.
- Access resources, funding for artists, marketing of the collective offering.
- A platform for personal and collective development.
- Organisation – a dedicated committee – Support/development and training.
- Currently no umbrella to support organisation.
- Opportunities for upskilling. Create opportunities for members to sell individually or collaborate to respond to buyers.
- Influence a rebrand of the Kilkenny Arts scene/offering to include more marginal creative activities.
- Create a space for activism. Focus on the arts and wider social issues.





At the end of the meeting members of the group set small interviewing spaces which were digitally recorded to further evidence the work. KLP committed to taking away the evidence from the workshops, analysing same and the using these as the basis of the next phase of development work with the core group. A commitment was also made to returning regularly to the wider forum as the process evolved.

Quickly after the consultation meeting and workshops, KLP met with the smaller group to start to shape a formal group. In these sessions the group set out the following questions; what will the structure look like? How will projects be built/managed/curated? Look at short term opportunities and respond to same. This allows for experimenting with the Kindred model of working. Building and maintaining a strong set values – building inclusive creative communities.

The meetings were characterised by the expressions of wide ranging ambitions in terms how the aspirations of the members could be converted into the real-time delivery, the organisation and curation (standing over the quality) of the work, driving work/business opportunities and creating and maintaining a meaningful community of people. These debates it emerged were representative of the possibilities and tensions that lay ahead. The KLP facilitator observed no fear of the tension and that the group saw it and the possibilities as a necessary part of the process of building something relevant to the membership.

Moving into the summer the group was asked to focus on what the structure of the organisation would look like. There was a general agreement that the group would be membership based, the structure as flat as possible with room in for a paid team to drive it operationally. To support costs the group was encouraged to explore a social enterprise model. If Kindred is to build a digital resource of talent, provide space for collaboration, and support the growth of member's participation in the local economy through trade, a business focus would have to be built into the mission of the group/organisation. So, how do we do this and build an inclusive community that has in its current form been a place to gather for people and in particular those who might struggle more than others?

On a practical level through the contacts of members, links were made with corporates and other potential buyers of services. Using various media platforms the groups kept the conversation going through video, Twitter and events over the summer. SOS – a former care facility for people with disabilities on the edge of Kilkenny city – offer an excellent working space to Kindred on a peppercorn rent. These developments required a concentrated move toward some level of practical organisation. Carrigan O'Dwyer – KLP Accountants – agreed to advice on a non-profit CLG structure and insurance had to be secured which KLP agreed to support in terms of costs. While activity did slow down over the summer the group did meet and have decided to explore the Co-Op model. A resource – expertise - has been lined up through KLP to advise the group on how a Co-Op structure might work, what

benefits and drawbacks might surface, and with KLP allow the group to finally decide on 'what they will be'.

The outcomes delivered over a short process are;

- An emerging vision of what Kindred is and seeks to do. This has yet to be converted into an agreed mission.
- Energy and optimism. Approximately 100 people attached in various ways to the process.
- An approach and the resources to figure out the best structure – this should be completed over autumn.
- A facility – the building on the SOS site. Also, a view of the digital facility that might be built to hold and organise the group's talent – this should potentially be an RDP project.

So, right now it looks like this;



The guys from Hardy Bucks talking about Kindred;  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nlvcehANqfQ>

## **Business, Community Development & Social Inclusion led Regeneration of a Rural Town in Co. Kilkenny – Community Development & Social Enterprise Animators; a collaborative approach.**

Kilkenny County Council (KCC), and KLP, share a series of priorities of which the social, cultural, and economic development, and environmental protection of the counties rural towns are of particular importance. KLP has been active under both the SICAP and Rural Development programmes in Castlecomer and Graiguenamanagh at different levels of intensity and with different focus over time.

Both towns have seen significant economic decline and social challenges since the 1980's. However, development planning and work led out by KCC and KLP has not just looked at these challenges but also at the opportunities that are attached to these towns and the hinterlands they sit in. Both share tourism development potential and at different levels, healthy craft activity. The economic movement in Castlecomer is more diverse and moving at a faster pace. This growth places new urgencies on the structural challenges such as broadband, accommodation, transport, educational disadvantage, amongst others attached to these towns. Both also required the building of more coherence in to local community development and business structures to support movements in the local economy and widen its effects.

SICAP was very active in Castlecomer under Goal 2 and to a lesser extent under Goal 1 under the 2015 –2017 programme. KLP has an outreach office in the Community Hall and a childcare facility in the town since 2009. A Training & Education Development Officer (DO), and a Tus Supervisor are based in this office. The SICAP Enterprise DO uses it to offer services as do RDP Development Officers. Community development supports were offered through the Social Inclusion Programmes Manager. Castlecomer was a priority town under the last programme as it is under the current one.

A former mining town, Castlecomer has since the closure of the mines in the 1969 experienced series of economic shocks. This closure was followed by the establishment of large manufacturing employers in the town which included; Roadmaster, Ormonde Brick (Irish Clay), which were closed by the mid 1990's and Comer International by the early, 00's. The town has since experienced high levels of unemployment, scored persistently low in terms of educational attainment levels and has neighbourhoods with some of the highest levels of deprivation in the county. A consortium consisting of KLP, KCC and Barnardos have been chasing resources to bring much needed family support services to the town. The town itself has had a number of high profile drug related deaths which reflect a significant substance misuse problem.

During the 2015 – 2017 SICAP, KLP and KCC supported the development of a Community Development, Family Services and Jobs & Enterprise Plan for the town. The development of this flowed in to the Local Area Planning process and worked to build a level of focus in terms of the development of the town. A local Steering Committee was established with the support of KLP to oversee the implementation of the Community Development, Family Services and Jobs & Enterprise Plan, and support participation in the LAP process. The town has an active number of voluntary groups all with separate ambitions and all very poorly linked. Tensions also existed between some groups. In 2017 as we sought to progress the work around the plan, a significant level of conflict 'erupted' in the Steering Committee. KLP sought to mediate but soon became part of the subject matter as the conflict escalated. Flowing in from the relationship between local development groups and a project in the town, 'the row' completely stalled work on the plan and the refinement of the role and functioning of the Steering Committee. To support a move forward KLP supported the hiring of a Mediator who worked with the local Steering Group – at a remove from the agencies, KLP, KCC and the ETB – to work through the issues and to establish a mission for the group and how they would manage themselves going forward.

A three month process of mediation, formation and short term planning led to a de-escalation of the conflict, a refinement of the role of the committee, the strengthening of the jobs and business focus of the group (a very weak element of the Community Development, Family Services and Jobs & Enterprise Plan), and the emergence of the Synergy group. This group would now act as the connector between the various agencies in the town. It would seek to strengthen the business relationships and coalesce the towns focus around the business opportunities emerging in the town and the potential structural blockages that might hinder these. As KLP fully reengaged with the work the Synergy group worked to align the mutual opportunities that existed between local business, community and local people most distant from education, training and employment.

Over the last two years there has been a surge in private sector led economic development in the town. A very significant investment in a local small supermarket has significantly changed the everyday retail offering of the town. An important town centre site – The former Creamery –for which a masterplan is currently being developed provides for an anchor retail tenant and parking. The *Avalon Hotel* – is currently being extended and renovated to a very high standard. An innovative modular building company has located in a disused factory and will have employed up to 160 people by mid-2019. Social enterprise activity has also made significant impact on the economic activity of the town. The *Castlecomer Discovery Park* attracts 120,000 visitors per year to an expanding high quality outdoor experience. The local enterprise centre has been the launch pad for a number of small enterprises now located long-term in the town’s business parks.

A further step was taken to support a response to movement in the local economy and the continuing needs in the town; the LEO, KCC (Community Section) and KLP (SICAP), agreed to outline a plan and fund a Community Development and Social Enterprise Animator (Development Officer), for the town from September 2017 – to end December 2018 with a view that this might have to be extended. A Development Worker with significant levels of experience in social inclusion work, urban generation and destination planning was recruited.

All combined have had an impact on the optimism of the community and a development of a shared ambition for the town. KLP, the *Kilkenny Local Enterprise Office* (LEO) and other sections of *Kilkenny County Council* have been working to support the development of this shared vision. There are evident high levels of cooperation and an understanding of the alignment of needs and opportunities in the town at present. It is with all of these in mind



that  
the

partners propose to embark on an 18 month process to support the growth in business activity and harvest opportunities to shape the appropriate physical regeneration of the town, growth in jobs, the development of people and community development activity.

The Development Officer, the SICAP 2 Goal DO, the Tus Supervisor and The manager of the Discovery Park quickly formed a town team. The team, drove projects that sought

to improve civic pride – Yulefest Event – 2,000+ people at a Festival of Light event that ended with a lantern lit walk to the Discovery Park from the town, looked at social enterprise projects – community kitchen/incubation unit, community run laundry. The DO worked with groups to resolve financial, title and management issues around facilities in their charge – The Hall. Through the expansion and focusing of Synergy the DO concreated discussion on a number of structural issues in the town – a bridge linking the town to the Discovery Park, supported the making of a large scale application under the Rural Regeneration & Development Fund will look at the disused spaces in the town for facilities and housing and the general connectivity – digital and physical of the town.

The Development Officer and team drew the town’s attention to the emerging opportunities in the town, the movement in the local economy and an optimism that had been missing from Castlecomer since the 1980’s. Events such as a Broadband Think Tank, Bank of Ireland Enterprise Towns competition were important events opportunities for the town to look at the changes that were occurring. Opportunities were ceased to build relationships across the local groups and improve communication and move on from underlying tensions.

KLP, LEO and the Community & Economic Sections of Kilkenny County Council worked through a Steering Committee to strategically support the focus of the work, leverage new resources and/or partnerships to support the building of the momentum of a changing town. The teams in KLP and Kilkenny Council worked to drive on projects – in reach to the local community school, tailored training programmes to respond to local employment demand, providing affordable childcare, delivery of labour market supports, leveraging funding to enhance the accessibility and overall quality of the town.



Graiguenamanagh shares a similar history with Castlecomer. The 1980 and 1990’s saw losses of a major agricultural merchants, the towns small traders, the massive job losses attached to Albatross and New Ross Shipping and in the 1990’s Cullen Steel. The town never fully recovered from these losses and has since had persistently high levels of unemployment. There is a lot of deprivation in Graiguenamanagh with two ‘very disadvantaged’ small areas and a

disadvantaged area (as well as one in Tinnahinch, Carlow on the other side of the county boundary). The 4<sup>th</sup> most deprived neighbourhood in County Kilkenny comprises of Woodland, Brandon Dale, Brandon Park and Tobar Bhríde (index of -22.9). The area has declined in population by 8% since 2011 leaving 343 residents. One third of households are lone parents and/or social housing. Very low education rates combined with severe unemployment, reaching 3.5 times (males) and 2.5 times (females) the county level. <sup>1</sup>

Kilkenny’s 10<sup>th</sup> most deprived community lives on High St., Newpark, Mill Road, Duiske Crescent, Main St., Cottage Row and Cottage Gardens (index of -20.1). Over one-fifth of households rent from Kilkenny Local Authority and/or are lone parent households, there is above-average age dependency, low education rates and very high male unemployment in particular (over twice the county average) along with high female unemployment (1.5 times). Neighbouring Goresbridge holds the 19<sup>th</sup> most deprived neighbourhood in County Kilkenny, around Cluain Mhuire, Barrack St., and High Bridge St. There among a population of 145 inhabitants, two of every five households are lone parents, over one fifth

---

<sup>1</sup> SICAP 2018 -2022 Area Profiling (2017).

are living in social housing and there are low education rates. Very high unemployment rates prevail at 2.5 times (among males) and 1.5 times (among females) the county averages.<sup>2</sup> The town is very poorly connected in terms of transport but has reasonable levels of services – Post Office, banks, supermarkets etc.

Located at an important strategic point in the Barrow Valley the town is located in an area of outstanding beauty. The community is very aware of this and is something that they take great pride in and contributes to healthy levels of good community self-esteem. The local community groups relate well to one another but are not very well organised. While there are a number of derelict buildings in the town recent works have improved the streetscape and some of buildings have drawn the attention of small scale developers.

KLP and key groups in the town have sought to develop the town’s tourism potential while not degrading the quality of the place or environment. The ambition is to build sustainable tourism products and experiences that stretch along the Barrow Valley and outward to the Blackstairs Mountains and surrounding villages and towns. KLP under the Rural Development Programme and Kilkenny County Council supported the construction of an Outdoor Activities Hub with Barrow Valley Community Development (BVCD), as the local lead. The construction process was complicated by a builder ‘going bust’ and a change in budget as a new construction company was brought on. The whole process brought significant pressure on BVCD. In 2017 as above, KLP and LEO, KCC agreed to fund a Community Development & Social Enterprise Animator – Development Officer. The role in



**A foundation programme in  
Tourism, Outdoor Activities & the Workplace**

<p><b>DETAILS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 week programme – 4.5 days per week</li> <li>• Includes work placement in a local tourism business</li> <li>• Accredited work placement and activity modules</li> <li>• Based in the Outdoor Hub in Graiguenamanagh, Co Kilkenny</li> </ul>	<p><b>TO APPLY:</b></p> <p>Contact Kilkenny LEADER Partnership Alison Iremonger E: alison.iremonger@eklp.ie T: 056 7752111</p> <p><b>BOOK EARLY TO SECURE YOUR PLACE!</b></p>
---	---



So, what was delivered? A dwindling board was rebuilt and a wider committee of supporters around it who helped to drive the practical work of opening the centre, running fundraising events and supporting the community festivals that ran from the centre. The Activities Hub was open in December 2017. The finances situation of the group was clarified and largely stabilised. A view of the experience that could be delivered from The Activities Hub began to emerge. These included; a mainstream training and education offering (QQI), Field Studies – engaging with the ecosystem of the Barrow valley, the outdoors’ - facilitating the visitor into the environment and town and villages. In the initial stages at least it is envisaged that these would be delivered by partners/activities providers – such as ETB and possibly and anchor tenant providing services to the state and the corporate sector and occasional hirers (activities providers). A month of festivals operated from the hub in August of this year.

Graiguenamanagh had a much more tactical/operational focus. The immediate task being to support the group to get construction work finished, get the facility open and populated with activity providers and training programmes. Others elements of the work such as supporting the building of a mission for the group was support by SICAP under Goal 1 and delivered by the Programme manager. Starting in August 2017 all three organisations agreed to fund the role to the end of 2018.

So, what was delivered? A dwindling board was rebuilt and a wider committee of supporters around it who helped to drive the practical work of opening the centre, running fundraising events and supporting the community festivals that ran from the centre. The Activities Hub was open in December 2017. The finances situation of the group was clarified and largely stabilised. A view of the experience that could be delivered from The Activities Hub began to emerge. These included; a mainstream training and education

<sup>2</sup> SICAP 2018 -2022 Area Profiling (2017).

What have these processes delivered from the perspective of a programme that is primarily concerned with driving changes through social inclusion strategies and community activation? The projects are focused on seeing opportunities and supporting towns to organise themselves around these. To ensure a 'whole town' approach. That the steering groups are representative of the various interests groups in the town – with particular social inclusion strategies and agendas built in to their work. Hands on tangible social inclusion focused training and development programmes/processes are put in place to link particular cohorts to the movements in the town. Civic pride is built and shared by all the residents of the area. That an alignment occurs between the more mainstream social and economic interests in the town and a wider set of social inclusion ambitions and that these are converted into opportunities as the capacities of groups and individuals are grown over time.

### **'What's Next?' Programme**

The '*What's Next?*' programme concept originated in 2016 under the previous SICAP 2014-17 programme. KLP Development Officers (DO's), observed there was a 'gap' in service provision for young people leaving second level education and who were not progressing onto third level education or PLC programmes. The period of time for young people to register with the Department of Employment & Social Protection at that time was 4 months after exiting school. This was highlighted further when Development Officers received referrals from agencies or by young people presenting themselves for supports on average 6-12 months after leaving school with the potential of moving toward long term unemployment. Young people identified, through initial SICAP 1-1 supports, the barriers to progression were mainly a lack of knowledge and information of the options and opportunities available to them when they left school.

Careers guidance in schools is limited and generally delivered to a large class of students. Addressing individual needs and taking into account personal circumstances of students who required more intensive 1-1 supports. Working with KLP staff, school guidance teachers were able to identify a cohort of individuals who needed additional supports. Whilst acknowledging career guidance was part of the school curriculum, they indicated full support for working with those 'at risk' of early school leaving and leaving cert applied students who would benefit from the additional external inputs from SICAP, including ongoing 1-1 supports outside of school hours. In response to this, the '*What's Next?*' programme was designed, coordinated and piloted to students in three schools; Grennan College Thomastown, Castlecomer Community School and Kilkenny City Vocational School.

The report "Creating a Future for Young Jobseekers" in 2011 recommended that the Irish Government should examine the introduction of a Youth Guarantee scheme<sup>3</sup>. The individual needs assessment and career plan is at the centre of the Youth Guarantee. It's vital that young jobseekers are centrally involved in shaping and deciding that plan. KLP's work with young jobseekers through SICAP indicates they are not finding out about options until they have been unemployed for a period of time. '*What's Next?*' was delivered prior to an individual leaving school as opposed to waiting for young people to enter the Welfare System and be referred to external services, which can be some months after school exit. According to INOU data, Jobseekers Allowance (JA) applications accounted for 65% of young people on the register in October 2008 whilst in October 2014, this figure rose to 94.3%. Over the same period the rate of young people (under 25 years) in receipt of JA has increased by 36%.

SICAP Headline Indicator Stats for Kilkenny 2016 showed KLP engaged and delivered educational supports to 112 individuals (15-24 years), of these 95.54% had educational attainment of leaving certificate or lower, and employment supports to 95 individuals (15-24yrs), of these 89.47% have educational attainment of leaving certificate or lower. The youth unemployment rate in Ireland was

---

<sup>3</sup> ([www.thejournal.ie](http://www.thejournal.ie) - accessed 3.4.17).

14.5% in February 2017<sup>4</sup>. In response to this, KLP Development Officers recognised the importance of engaging with these young people before they exited education. From here, contact was made with the School Guidance officers of three secondary schools (DEIS Castlecomer currently applying for DEIS status) in geographical areas identified as 'very disadvantaged' in County Kilkenny.

Too often young jobseekers are sent on a course because there is a place without any regard to whether that opportunity will assist them or not. Through the *What's Next?* programme KLP take on board the feedback from individuals and propose the introduction of a "reasons why" rationale for the career plan, that both individual and Development Officer are clear why and how the options taken will assist them as a jobseeker. The evaluation of *What's Next?* influence the development of training programmes for this target group in forthcoming SICAP Plan of Action. KLP focus in particular on the most disadvantaged young people who have limited qualifications and are 'at risk' of long term unemployed. There is a danger that this group will be left behind if additional supports and specific measures are not implemented. KLP refer to 'other' agencies according to individual need and support.

KLP recognise in addition to supporting and strengthening local communities, there is a requirement for greater investment in people, focussing on lowering barriers to education and employment and improving the quality of their current status as the effective route out of poverty. Through the delivery of SICAP, KLP identify and work with those potentially experiencing social exclusion and support in particular vulnerable groups who are unable or less likely to access mainstream supports.



KLP acknowledge certain attributes or characteristics linked to identity or group membership can increase the risk of social exclusion and support individuals and communities using community development approaches, engagement and collaboration. KLP respect the horizontal themes incorporated into the strategic planning and delivery of SICAP.

The objective of the programme was to bridge the gap of those leaving school with no progression route before registering with the welfare system.

---

<sup>4</sup> (<http://www.trading economics.com/Ireland/youth-unemployment-rate>)

There were two main aims of the programme;

- to increase the knowledge and awareness of options available to young people before exiting the education system
- to increase the aspirations of young people who felt many of their peers had a 'plan' and they were being left behind



Guidance Teachers identified the participants based on their individual knowledge of pupils and encouraged their participation to attend the programme, providing classrooms and ICT resources as required. The 'What's Next?' programme is an inclusive programme for anyone in 6th class education that is not going onto third level education, this may be for a variety of reasons (not just academic) and further supports on an individual basis is required.



The programme consisted of two x 3 hour structured information sessions, delivered by two Development Officers. Lessons plans focussed on communication, individual assessments, personality tests and research into the options available on leaving school. A guest speaker (young man of 24 years) spoke on *What's Next? - Who Cares?* Telling his story about leaving school, barely passing his Leaving Cert and how he took up a variety of opportunities that has led to him gaining full-time employment. Engagement of participants was crucial, and the delivery methods were

short, brief and interactive. A key component on completion of the two days in house training was for the group to participate in outdoor team building activities with Active Connections organisation<sup>5</sup>.

The programme has to be delivered in a collaborative way between KLP and the Schools to ensure delivery of the programme targets the right cohort of students. Parents are involved also in cases where school attendance is poor and have attended 1-1 meetings with a Development Officer outside of the Education system. Parents sign consent forms for participation.



---

<sup>5</sup> Active Connections offer activity courses that are designed to replace the often negative challenges of the teen years with extremely positive ones. The participants' experience "unfamiliar territory" which instils confidence, builds strength and helps teens develop new perspectives and skills for the transition to adulthood. <http://www.activeconnections.ie/>

SICAP Development Officers initiated the project from conception to delivery. Including planning, assessment of individual needs and responses to current labour market opportunities within Kilkenny city and rural communities. Development officers worked in collaboration with the school principle and guidance teachers in tracking needs, establishing lesson plans for implementation, developing budgets, overseeing and tracking project progress, and produce reports for evaluation and monitoring purposes. This included the recording onto IRIS system. In many instances, the programme worked in tandem with other individual supports being provided under Goal 2 of SICAP. Skillset of SICAP staff broadly reflected their knowledge and understanding of opportunities available within the education, training and labour market and the ability to communicate this information to participants.



Taking a collective approach in the design and delivery of What's Next? Programme was based on working with and supporting groups of people to enable them to develop knowledge, skills and confidence so that they can develop and identify individual priority needs and issues and address these through collective action.

In working for equality, Development Officers work from the starting point that while individuals are not the same, they are all of equal worth and importance and are, therefore, equally worthy of respect and acknowledgement. The 'What's Next?' Programme enabled workers to challenge the exclusion of individuals and groups through its offering and encourage participation and involvement of groups who experience social exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination in decision making, planning and action at varying levels. Participation can be viewed as a continuum of activity that can start from information sharing through capacity building and empowerment to active engagement and meaningful participation in decision making processes.



Feedback forms are completed by students and teachers on completion of the programme. These have enabled KLP to evaluate and complete a report on findings. It is anticipated the continuation of KLP 1-1 supports outside of school hours, in particular when a student has left school, will be critical to the progression onto further training/education or employment opportunities. Monitoring and evaluating the programme, individual progression routes and general participation will be ongoing and form an integral part of the work delivered.

The teachers feedback has been extremely positive and indicate they would like the 'What's Next?' Programme to be offered on an annual basis as part of the Careers Curriculum.

***“Excellent working with KLP, wonderful to meet people who are willing to work with our most disaffected students”***

*Mr Derek Dooley, Careers Guidance Teacher, Grennan College*

***“The involvement of KLP has been of huge benefit, not only to students but also Teachers and Parents, we hope to continue to work with KLP in the future”***

*Mrs Theresa Manning, LCA Coordinator, Castlecomer Community College*

The students' feedback was that they really found the information useful and different to what they had been doing in Career Guidance lessons. The teachers and students both expressed they have a clearer idea of the opportunities available to those with no progression plan on school exit. They also have a KLP contact and can receive continued support from a Development Officer when students leave school, this will bridge the gap of becoming dependent on the 'welfare system'.

***“the programme educated me on the other options that are available to me, apart from doing a PLC”***

*Grennan College*

***“I like the fact that you helped us and there was a lot of information and everything was very helpful”***

*KCVS*

The What's Next? programme is an inclusive programme for anyone in 6th class education that is not going onto third level education, this may be for a variety of reasons (not just academic) and where further supports on an individual basis is required. KLP would like to be able to offer the programme to all secondary schools in Kilkenny. At the early part of 2018, KLP applied for leverage funding, however, this was unsuccessful and KLP had to scale down the supports offered due to staff and funding resources available.

The lesson plans and resources have been designed and can be replicated in the delivery of programme, regardless of location. 'What's Next?' is a KLP initiative and has been delivered through the SICAP Programme and the model/resources would be scalable and available to other service providers.

Through the delivery of SICAP 2018, KLP have worked with 3 x secondary schools; **Castlecomer Community School, Coláiste Mhuire Johnstown and Abbey Community College Ferrybank.**

KLP have linked in with the many students who left school in June 2018. An example of positive outcomes in Castlecomer; 9 students progressed as follows:

- 3 are now working (2 on apprenticeship programmes)
- 6 have gone on to PLC courses in Carlow or Kilkenny
- 1 is still undecided but I am still in contact with her and she is considering a part time programme

Since September 2018, Castlecomer have identified 3 students on LCA 2018/19 academic year and the Development Officer has met them to discuss and assist with work experience placements for the year as well as offering support in applying for SUSI when they leave school.

Taking the findings of the pilot programme, KLP are working with Foroige and Ossory Youth and the schools to collaborate the offering and to avoid duplication. The school have also signposted 10 students who they feel would benefit from assistance and although they are planning to sit their leaving certificate don't have any plans to progress on to 3<sup>rd</sup> level. KLP will be meeting these students over the coming months. The school have also identified poor attenders and asked KLP to meet the students and their parents to discuss alternative progression routes.

KLP aim to continue to deliver the programme over the SICAP 2018-2022 programme.



---

<sup>i</sup> <https://yifm.com/>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=genVfHL-bqQ>