



Case Study 2019

Title:	The University of the South End – Developing People, Changing Communities
Theme:	Goal 1
LCG featured:	South End Family FRC, Wexford Town
Primary Outcome:	G1-4:1 LCGs work with local service providers to develop and implement initiatives addressing social exclusion and inequality
Additional Outcomes:	G2-2:2 Participation in lifelong learning G2-5:1.1 Progression to employment

This video case study, featuring a Goal 1 project, tells the story of how SICAP has worked with a local Family Resource Centre to bring third level Community Development education directly into a disadvantaged area in Wexford town, providing on the job training opportunities for students and building the technological capacity of the centre to deliver an immersive learning experience. The **SICAP target group** featured are **people living in disadvantaged communities**.



This project began in 2016 when South End FRC reached out to An Cosán Virtual Community College and WWETB for support to provide access to further education within the centre on an outreach basis. Very few people from this area had previously gone on to third level – now however, 10 local people are attending college in the heart of this community, studying for a third level qualification in Community Development.

In the video we hear from three of the **students** on this course, **Emily O'Rourke**,



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Niamh Reynolds and **Mick Roche**. They tell the story of their differing journeys back to education and the impact going to college later in life has had on them, their families and their communities. **SICAP involvement** in this story has several strands and has had a number of **outcomes** with valuable **lessons learned** from this experience:

- South End are a long-standing LCG partner of Wexford Local Development which **facilitated local people to come together between 2002 and 2007 to form a group and apply for funding to start a Family Resource Centre** under the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme and RAPID.
- Waterford and Wexford ETB were the first partners on this project in 2016 and provided funding and development support to get the delivery of a Level 6 programme facilitated by An Cosán off the ground. At the end of this course, the students were eager to continue but the ETB's mandate does not extend beyond further education at this level. WLD was approached for support by the Board and Coordinator of South End FRC, Colm O'Muirí and **in September 2018 SICAP began to fund the delivery of modules at Level 7.**
- In late 2018, Wexford Local Development's SICAP Community Development team collaborated with An Cosán and South End FRC's Coordinator to **put together a successful application to Wexford LCDC's 'Smart Villages' initiative** under the Community Enhancement Fund which resulted in **the installation of state of the art technology** in the centre. This enables lectures to be delivered live on a big screen and facilitates interaction between students in Dublin and in Wexford.
- In July 2019, **WLD, under SICAP, offered 3 four month Community Development Project Officer traineeships to students of the course** for which Emily, Niamh and Mick were selected after an interview process. Since September, all three have been working within the Wexford Local Development SICAP Community Development team while continuing their studies, working in priority areas with target groups across the county. They are gaining valuable paid work experience in Community Development, applying their learning and providing leadership for SICAP community groups to develop projects in Wexford town, Enniscorthy, Bridgetown, Wellingtonbridge, Rosslare and Castlebridge. In the case study they speak about the impact that working in a paid capacity within SICAP has had on them and tell us what Community Development means to them now that they are seeing it from an 'inside' perspective.



Maria Flanagan from **An Cosán Virtual Community College** tells the story from the point of view of the training provider. She describes how local collaboration has helped to secure this project and how SICAP support has enabled it to continue to grow and thrive. It is difficult to access third level education outside the big centres of population and rural adult learners from disadvantaged areas face even more pronounced barriers in pursuing this dream. Maria hopes to continue to collaborate with WLD under



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SICAP to **explore other opportunities for SICAP target groups to avail of blended learning** via the internet, including developing partnerships with the Library Service.

Colm O’Muirí, Coordinator of South End FRC describes the history of this education project and the partnership with WLD that has enabled SICAP to play such a key role in its continued success. He explains the value of the blended learning approach which combines the advantages of using technology to deliver third level education remotely with the warmth and support of a Community Development approach, emphasising the **positive group dynamic and supportive environment that is created by embedding this programme in a community setting**.

Colm also reveals the small but very important details of how locating a training course like this within a local community centre has helped local people with different challenges to attend college in their own neighbourhood. Flexible times, a convenient location, the ability to catch up on missed lectures or log on from home if necessary as well as the warm welcome and hearty food provided in the centre during the course to students who are juggling childcare and other commitments – all of these are key ingredients in this novel and successful approach to lifelong learning.



This project **highlights the long-term nature of change in Community Development**. WLD began to work with volunteers in South End in 2002, meeting in their kitchens as there were no local facilities. 17 years later, their efforts have resulted in the delivery of third level education in a state of the art virtual classroom in the heart of this community. Little wonder therefore that they describe their centre with fondness and great pride as the ‘University of the South End’.

Background:

South End is an historic area of Wexford town located on the banks of the Slaney estuary. The area has a rich heritage of maritime activity but has suffered the effects of economic decline and inter-generational unemployment with the closure of manufacturing facilities going back over two decades. South End FRC was set up in 2007 with support from WLD and the RAPID programme by nurturing strong community activism.

In the intervening years it has gone from strength to strength as a vibrant centre for development, support and coming together in this community. It is located in a small area with a HP Deprivation Index score of -28.01. A further 5 small areas classified as disadvantaged are located a short distance from the centre.



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