DUBLIN INNER CITY COMMUNITY CO-OPERATIVE EVALUATION

Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme 2018-2023

DUBLIN INNER CITY COMMUNITY CO-OPERATIVE EVALUATION

Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme 2018-2023

Table of Contents

Dublin City Community Co-operative, Unit 1 Killarney Court, Buckingham Street, Dublin 1.
Email: info@dublincitycommunitycoop.ie Ph: 01-8557015

1. INTRODUCTION

The Dublin Inner City Community Co-operative Society Limited (the Co-op) was established in November 2014 and is an alliance of 13 grassroots community development organisations which have come together to work towards the development and delivery of social, economic, environmental, and cultural services within the most disadvantaged areas of the inner city. The Co-op and its members are operational in all or parts of Dublin 1, 3, 7 and 8, as well as disadvantaged city areas in Dublin 2 and 4. All 13 members are partially funded by the National Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP). A full list and description of these member organisations is listed in Section 2.2.

In February 2023, the Co-op commissioned Think Tank for Action on Social Change (TASC) to carry out an evaluation of SICAP funded work. The purpose of this external evaluation is to provide an independent assessment of the impact of the work of the Co-op and its member organisations, as well as a review of the benefit and support provided by the Co-operative structure that the member organisations work under.

The Co-op gave TASC's independent reviewer access to all data held on the SICAP Integrated Reporting & Information System (IRIS) for analysis. In addition, TASC carried out 12 interviews with 13 service users, two focus groups with beneficiaries (one young adult group, one migrant group), and two focus groups with member organisations. While quantitative data held on IRIS was useful for understanding the impact of the work done by Co-op members, it also has several limitations when looked at in isolation. These limitations include a limited ability to capture the experience and perspectives of beneficiaries, an inability to explore secondary and additional outcomes, and an inability to explore difficult to quantify outcomes such as changes in attitudes and social capital. The combination of quantitative data and reflective qualitative approaches used in this evaluation aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of beneficiaries' experiences and to identify areas for improvement and future development.

The following sections of this report provide an overview of the evaluation process and methodology (Section 2) and outline key findings, firstly across key programmes and services provided by the Co-op (Section 3), and secondly across categories of impact (i.e., economic, social, cultural, environmental), and the impact of the cooperative structure as

an organisational model (Section 4). The final sections outline recommendations for improvement or expansion (Section 5) and concluding remarks (Section 6).

We want to thank all participants who engaged in this research, including staff of member organisations who participated in online focus groups, and/or assisted in the administration and organisation of data collection with beneficiaries. We also want to recognise and thank the individuals who contributed to this report by being interviewed or taking part in focus groups based on their experiences as service users. We sincerely appreciate the openness and the goodwill shown towards us.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Data collection methods

A combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches was chosen to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact and effectiveness of the Co-op's work. Quantitative data was taken from the IRIS reporting system, an integral SICAP tool used to monitor and evaluate the implementation and impact of projects and initiatives. The IRIS reporting system provides a structured framework for monitoring and evaluating projects. Through standardized data collection, analysis, and reporting, it aims to enable stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of interventions, track progress, and make informed decisions to further enhance social inclusion and community activation initiatives.

Although valuable, the IRIS data was found to be limited in its ability to capture qualitative information or rich narratives that provide a deeper understanding of the impact of the Co-op's work. Its standardized structure may also constrain organisations from fully capturing the breadth of their work or tailoring their reporting to their specific contexts and objectives. For this reason, qualitative data, in the form of interviews and focus groups, were collected and analysed to complement existing data from IRIS.

2.2 Sample and selection process

Participants were selected to ensure that the distinct needs, experiences, contributions, and situations of different types of beneficiaries are represented. Research with beneficiaries comprised two focus groups (one with six people and the other with seven people), and 12 interviews with 13 individuals. Of the 26 beneficiary participants, 17 were men and 9 were women. 19 of these beneficiaries sampled were Irish, seven were from across Asia and Africa (as part of the focus group with migrant men) and two Ukrainian women were interviewed separately.

Two separate online focus groups were conducted with 13 staff from Co-op member organisations. A full breakdown of participants is listed in Table 1.

Name of Co-Op Member Organisation	Description	Beneficiary Interview/ Focus Group	Member Focus Group
LYCS	**Lourdes Youth and Community Services** - an integrated community development organisation based in Dublin's Northeast Inner City.	2 women were interviewed separately on their participation in a community project to write, develop and perform in a play. 1 woman was Irish and 1 woman was from Ukraine.	Staff member attended focus group 2
SICCDA	**South Inner City Community Development Association** community development organisation based in the Liberties in Dublin's South Inner City.	1 member of their men's allotment group was interviewed.	
Northwest Inner City Network	Independent member-based forum of community and voluntary groups in the Northwest Inner City of Dublin.	2 women were interviewed who have participated in industry-certified training programmes.	
SWICN	**Southwest Inner-City Network** community organisation providing a range of services for adults and young people in Dublin 8.		Staff member attended focus group 1
NCP	**New Communities Partnership** an independent national network of 175 immigrant groups with offices in Dublin's inner city and Cork.	7 men from different countries in Africa and Asia who are now living in Dublin took part in a focus group on the support they received from NCP related to their migration status and other information supports.	Staff member attended focus group 2
ICON	**Inner City Organisations Network** community organisation in the northeast inner city tackling local disadvantage, social exclusion and long-term unemployment.	1 woman was interviewed who had received leadership/community development support from ICON	Staff member attended focus group 1
Daughters of Charity Community Services	Community-based organisation providing educational, training, and social care services for children, young people, and adults in Dublin's North Inner City.	5 young men and 1 young woman participated in a focus group.	Staff member attended focus group 2
ICE	**Inner City Enterprise** a charity which advises and assists unemployed people in Dublin's inner city to set up their own businesses or create self-employment.	2 men were interviewed separately, one who had received support into self-employment and one Social Entrepreneur who had founded the Grow Dome ecological project.	Staff member attended focus group 2
North Wall CDP	**North Wall Community Development Project** community development organisation based in Lower Sheriff Street and Seville Place, Dublin 1.		2 staff members attended focus group 1
Robert Emmet CDP	**Robert Emmett Community Development Project** grassroots organisation in Dublin's Southwest inner city.		Staff member attended focus group 1
CASPr	**Community After Schools project** provides educational services and childcare in the Northeast Inner City	1 woman from the QQI Level 5 Childcare course was interviewed	Staff member attended focus group 1
An Síol	Community Development Project in Stoneybatter.	2 people were interviewed separately. 1 man who participated in a Men's Shed in Cabra, Dublin 7, and 1 Ukrainian woman who had been supported to set up a group for Ukrainians in Dublin 7.	3 staff members attended focus group 1
Nascadh	Community Development Project in East Wall area of Dublin's inner city.		1 Staff member attended focus group 2
Dublin City Community Co-op	The Co-op is an alliance of 13 organisations working towards the development and delivery of social, economic, environmental, and cultural services within the most disadvantaged areas of the inner city.	Two members of a Ringsend residents' group were interviewed together, one man and one woman who had received urban planning and environmental supports from the Co-op's Urban Planner.	

2.3 Limitations

The mixed methods approach used in this evaluation had a number of limitations which the following steps were taken to mitigate:

- **Time and Resource Intensiveness:** The external evaluator collaborated with Co-op staff to optimize resource allocation and streamline the process.
- **Balancing Depth and Breadth:** research questions for interviews and focus groups were designed based on an assessment of the gaps in the existing data available on IRIS. Participants were selected to give as representative a sample as possible across age and gender demographics and to represent the breadth of work done by Co-op members.
- **Bias and Interpretation Challenges:** The evaluator documented their own biases and assumptions in order to maintain reflexivity throughout the research process.

2.4 Ethical considerations

- **Informed consent:** A clear and concise explanation of the study's purpose, the participant's voluntary role in it, and what their participation will entail was provided to beneficiaries before each interview or focus group. Participants were given the option to decline the audio of their interview/focus group being recorded. Participants were informed of the purpose and use of research, including in what way any personal stories of their experience would be used. Any language needs of the individual and how this would affect their ability to give informed consent were considered.
- **Data protection and anonymity:** Only essential data were gathered. Names, addresses, or specific locations and specific dates were not collected unless essential.
- **Prevention of harm:** The purpose of the study was explained to participants, allowing them to raise any concerns that they may have had. Interview questions related mainly to participants' participation in community supports/initiatives but could touch on personal difficulties or challenges experienced by individuals and for this reason, the researcher was also careful to monitor for any signs of distress.
- **Position of researcher:** as an external evaluation, it was important to demonstrate that the researcher was trusted by the Co-op/member organisations. It was, however, also important that it was clear that the researcher was separate and independent from the Co-op/member organisations. This was so that participants could feel free to express their views and provide an accurate and useful evaluation. This was achieved through a clear and concise explanation of the goals of the research and the position of the researcher before any interview or focus group.

3. OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES

The following section analyses impact across key programmes and services provided by the Co-op using both quantitative data taken from IRIS and the qualitative analysis of interviews and focus groups. Table 2 documents the yearly SICAP Goal 2: Individual Beneficiaries Key Performance Indicator (KPI 2) Target, and the Co-op's performance (Actual) in this regard. Table 3 documents the yearly SICAP Goal 1: Local Community Groups (LCGs) Key Performance Indicator (KPI 1) Target, and the Co-op's performance (Actual) in this regard. Please note the group targets from 2018 are based on the final nine months of year.

Table 2. SICAP Goal 2 Individual Beneficiaries 2018-2022: KPI Targets and Actuals

Individual Beneficiaries			
Year	**Target**	**Actual**	**% of Target**
2018	745	897	120%
2019	994	1,212	122%
2020	994	1,306	131%
2021	994	1,232	124%
2022	994	1,388	140%
Total	**4,721**	**6,035**	**128%**

Table 3. SICAP Goal 1 Local Community Groups 2018-2022: KPI Targets and Actuals

Local CommunityGroups			
Year	**Target**	**Actual**	**% of Target**
2018	163	210	129%
2019	218	240	110%
2020	218	243	111%
2021	218	262	120%
2022	218	260	119%
Total	**1,035**	**1,215**	**117%**

3.1 Information provision

Since 2018, 3,596 individuals have received specific supports such as information, signposting, and referrals in relation to unemployment, educational disadvantage, homelessness, poor quality accommodation, poor health status, addiction, social exclusion, and marginalisation. Of these individuals, 1,041, or 29% had received support over a 3-year period or more. These one-to-one supports ranged from directing beneficiaries to social inclusion, well-being, and creative opportunities to address feelings of isolation and social exclusion.

One of the strengths of the Co-op model is its adaptability and flexibility in responding to issues as they arise. An example of this can be seen in the coordinated response to the needs of older people during Covid-19 cocooning; Co-op member organisations supported older people in relation to practical requirements e.g., renewing documents, filling prescriptions, and access to IT. A further example of this is that during 2022, the Co-op recorded a marked increase in the number of people seeking one-to-one support in relation to drug-related intimidation (DRI) due to a lack of existing targeted programmes in this area and was able to develop their individual supports to meet this need.

One of the strengths of the Co-op model is its adaptability and flexibility in responding to issues as they arise. An example of this can be seen in the coordinated response to the needs of older people during Covid-19 cocooning.

In the qualitative data analysis, it was revealed that information provision and one-to-one support forms a core part of many member organisations that work under the umbrella of the Co-op. While this support was a lesser-emphasised component of other member organisations, all programmes and services appeared to provide aspects of it. Beneficiaries discussed the benefit of having a person in the local community that they trusted and whom they could contact for advice or to direct them to external support when needed. An example of this is found in a comment from a young woman who has accessed training and employment support through NWICN since she was a teenager:

"It's local, it's, there's a certain level of trust built up over time, over cups of tea and open doors and repeated meetings."

Beneficiaries discussed the long-term nature of their relationship with staff and how they are usually reachable on the phone, including during office closures as part of Covid-19 restrictions.An older man who was part of a men's allotment group in Dublin 8 described his experience of seeking support from the project's coordinators despite the project having a more explicit focus on personal development and well-being support:

"...He's just very there. Like, if I need him, you know, that way? He puts you in the right direction for different things."

The breadth and depth of information provision and one-to-one support is also something that appears to be not fully captured through the IRIS system. This was expressed by a number of member organisations in focus groups as detailed in the example below:

"When people come in to talk to you it is often the start of something very intensive. I have a lot of people who I have seen over the years, 15 or 20 times maybe. They'll drop in when they need you to confirm something about a scheme they are eligible for and sometimes you're just someone they can pick up the phone to. A lot of this doesn't make its way into the SICAP system...you'd be as long recording it, but it's a big part of the job."

The below comment from a member of staff describes the intensity of providing information in a personalised way, but also its value for hard-to-reach groups and people who may be intimidated by, or otherwise reluctant to, engage with services:

"They're embarrassed to go into the big organisations where there's a screen in front of them, like the social welfare or citizens information. They sit down here over coffee, and it takes an enormous amount of time, sometimes to deal with people to get around to, you know, addressing their concerns. But it's just never going to happen somewhere like the citizen's information."

Case Study: New Communities Partnership (NCP) drop-in service

NCP is Ireland's largest independent migrant-led national network of more than 150 migrant-led groups comprising 65 nationalities. NCP offers a number of services that assist migrant individuals, families, and groups with social inclusion, child protection, education, training, employment, cultural understanding, and citizenship.

NCP provides a multi-lingual drop-in support service for migrants covering immigration, citizenship, and naturalization processes, as well as providing information on employment, healthcare, and other services when needed. This drop-in service is supported through SICAP funding. In 2022 NCP supported 110 individuals in this way.

An in-person focus group was conducted with seven men of different nationalities who had used the drop-in service. A common experience for these men was stress and anxiety over interacting with the Irish Immigration Service and the Department of Justice: "sometimes you don't know where to go to, don't know what to do".

This stress was attributed to unfamiliarity with the Irish system and processes, the perceived disconnection and at times hostility of officials, and difficulties communicating through English, particularly over the phone. By contrast, the NCP staff were "very kindly, respectful, […] you can get good treatment." The men described how NCP staff had helped them understand and navigate the Irish Immigration system, including helping them put together the necessary documentation and signposting relevant supports and services. A couple of men in the group had used the service intermittently over a number of years and had now been successfully granted Irish citizenship.

The value of this service was described in the focus group as being the only source of comprehensive information for migrants that participants were aware of in Dublin city centre. It was also key to participants that they could access advice in person, as they often found it difficult to communicate clearly in English over the phone. Another key aspect for participants was that the service was migrant-led and they felt that the person giving advice, even if they were a migrant of a different nationality, could relate to them:

> "I can see and feel like the person sitting there is with me. They know something of what it is like for me. It is so different from trying to deal with someone from the government."

Focus group participants saw the service as essential to them getting a decision on their immigration status and that this was central to all aspects of their lives and well-being:

> "I really have to thank them for everything in my life. When you are lost and feel helpless about what to do with your immigration status you can't start to build a community or find a proper job or anything. Really, they were the beginning of everything for me."

3.2 Supports for younger people

Since 2018, 596 young people aged 15-24 have received support through Co-op member organisations. In 2022, 230 young people received support, exceeding the annual target of 140 by 64%.

Co-op member groups run a variety of different initiatives for young people. These include English support for migrant young people (ages 15-17), engaging with residential homes for unaccompanied minors, youth clubs, employment supports, and educational supports such as extra tuition and/or mentoring to prevent early school leaving, education guidance regarding accessing 3rd level education and occupational training.

Case Study: Daughters of Charity Community Services (DoCCS)

DoCCS is a community-based organisation providing a range of educational, training, and social care services for children, young people, and adults in Dublin's North Inner City.

One of the initiatives run by DoCCS is St Vincent's Community Training Centre (CTC), which provides employment-focused training and support for young people. Young people have the option to do certified courses in hairdressing and beauty, healthcare, catering, woodwork, and property maintenance. Young people also receive training in English, Maths, and IT, and career guidance. Alongside these educational courses, DoCCS provide SICAP funded well-being support in the form of social football practice every week.

For this evaluation, a focus group was conducted with five young men and one young woman who were studying either hairdressing and beauty, or woodwork.

Everyone involved in the focus group attended the well-being support, with football matches proving to be a highlight of many people's week: "it's in the middle of the week so it's something to look forward to". The value which participants associated with the matches can be attributed to their positive impacts, in terms of group cohesion, mental and physical health, and confidence boosts.

The well-being initiative was a very important part of how the group bonded: "You get absolutely wrecked but it makes us feel like more of a team".

The weekly football matches were cited as a way to de-stress and unwind, buffering against the strain of leading otherwise busy lives: "It's good to get out […] and play […] for your mental health".

Moreover, games enhanced the physical health and fitness of many players:

> "Football actually got me […] I couldn't run for like 20 seconds in the first
> game. [I ran for] two and a half hours yesterday […] you'd never just run for
> two and a half hours."

Alongside the health benefits, the games appeared to serve as a confidence booster, both on an individual and a collective level:

> "It's very competitive. And that's a good thing. It's classic. Because it tells
> yourself like, how good we can actually play when we put our mind to it. […]
> like we work hard, we work stronger as a team."

These activities we're described as reducing stress, helping the young learners to form bonds with and trust one another, and promoting a positive attitude to learning. The well-being supports can be considered as aiding and leverage the success of existing education and training supports for young people.

3.3 Supporting social enterprise and self-employment

Since 2018, 26 social enterprises have been supported and 483 people have benefitted from self-employment supports. In 2022, 154 people benefitted from self-employment supports, exceeding the annual target of 130 by 18%.

Two men were interviewed for this project who had been supported by Inner City Enterprise (ICE). One had been supported into self-employment and another had set up a social enterprise. Both men noted that they received invaluable advice and information from ICE, particularly around writing a business plan, registering as self-employed, applying for loans and schemes, and managing finances. It was also noted that a major aspect of the support they received was improving their confidence, social networks, and social skills. This was done in part through involvement in a mentorship scheme. One man who was interviewed had been supported in setting up his own graphic and web design business, and detailed how the support he received had benefitted him:

> "There were all the practical things that I wouldn't have had a clue about, the intimidating stuff, do I have to do my own tax? What happens if I don't make any money for ages?... And you need that, but it was also having someone who you felt was just cheering you on… They asked me to go back as well,
> to talk to other people about my experience and that was great, getting to share that with people and feeling that you yourself have something valuable to share."

This improved confidence and self-belief is a difficult to quantify but important outcome of supporting people into self-employment.

Since 2018, 26 social enterprises have been supported and 483 people have benefitted from self-employment supports. In 2022, 154 people benefitted from self-employment supports, exceeding the annual target of 130 by 18%.

Case Study: Grow Dome Project supported by Inner City Enterprise (ICE)

ICE is a not-for-profit charity that supports unemployed people, young people and social enterprises to start and develop successful enterprises.

An example of a social enterprise supported by ICE is the Grow Dome Project in the Liberties area of Dublin 8, a 100-metre square geometric greenhouse structure that has become focal point of the community.

The dome grows vegetables and herbs, and provides for community meetings such as a mother and baby group every Wednesday, groups for older adults and tours for local schools. A partnership with the prison system provides ex-prisoners with jobs and training. The Dome works to address key environmental, economic, and social issues: unsustainable food production, unemployment and under-employment, and loss of community.

The social entrepreneur who founded Grow Dome described how the support available from ICE, allowed him to identify what was needed in his local area and develop an idea from inception into a viable project:

> "To show people that you can have an idea and really run with it is so important, that they can actually think in these ways and believe in their own creativity and potential, but you need to see that its possible".

He described how ICE had supported him to understand the needs and resources of the local community: "I would have known the area a bit myself but they put me in touch with a couple of people who could really give me a picture of what people needed and how to get the ball rolling". He detailed how ICE had helped him prepare a business plan and a budget and that "they were encouraging but also kept me realistic".

He described its extensive impact on the local community:

> "It's definitely given people pride in the area that wasn't there before. You had patches of land before that were kind of derelict or not being used for much. That brings anti-social behaviour and problems to an area. The Dome is a green space, and you really need it here, somewhere that you can meet."

He also mentioned how the Dome was utilised during Covid-19 restrictions. It gave people a space to meet in a large, well-ventilated space and has over time become a hub for the community. He described a ripple effect of the Dome in the wider surrounding community, which would not have been possible without external support: "There's been a knock-on effect as this kind of beautified area leaks into the surrounding streets. Just bit by bit, year by year […] it's directly coming from the success of the garden in the middle. So yeah, it's huge".

He detailed how more broadly the Dome has had a wide-reaching impact on antisocial behaviour: "before it started, not exaggerating […] it was a very, very bad corner […] it's a little saving grace." These benefits are felt across the broader community: "all the community groups and associations who use it. But then there's just the 1000s of residents who kind of live in the area whose general existence is improved".

3.4 Personal skills, wellbeing and capabilities supports

Since 2018, 1,558 individuals have participated in a wide variety of projects to promote personal development, well-being, and capabilities through Co-op members. In 2022, 706 people received support in this way, exceeding the annual target of 450 by 57%. Two older men were interviewed who participated in projects with these broad goals, one man from a Men's Allotment group in Dublin 8 and another man who participated in a Men's Shed in Dublin 7. The Men's Shed, as well as having a social function, helped the men develop practical skills. Once a week, the group were supported by a skilled tradesman to work together for the local community, one example of this was making bird feeders for local primary schools.

Both men described how these projects benefitted the mental health of men in their local communities, with one man saying of the Men's Allotment Group:

> "The people who attend the group, there's just so many of them are kind of hanging on by, you know, by their fingernails, and that little bit of support they get is enough to make sure that they're kind of in there."

One man, now in his 70s, described how he had come out as gay later in life and had found acceptance through his local Men's Shed, with several men from the Shed accompanying him to the Pride festival the previous summer:

> "I never thought earlier in my life that I would have that, but it was really something that came really easy, it wasn't questioned at all."

Many projects with the aim of promoting personal development, improving capabilities, and well-being were found to benefit people in numerous ways, particularly in improving social inclusion and integration of different people and groups within communities.

Many projects with the aim of promoting personal development, improving capabilities, and well-being were found to benefit people in numerous ways, particularly in improving social inclusion and integration of different people and groups within communities.

Case Study: LYCS Drama Group

LYCS is an integrated community-based education, training, recreation, and development project.

The drama group is part of the LYCS's adult education programme. The group included both Irish people and migrants new to the community. With the help of a facilitator the group wrote, directed, and acted in an original play called "Threads", performing the play in The New Theatre in Dublin in February 2023. The play is set in the North Inner City and discusses the diverse range of issues experienced by those who live within the local area.

Two people involved in the drama group were interviewed separately for this evaluation, one Irish woman and one Ukrainian woman. Both participants described how being involved in the drama group offered a chance for connections to be built with others in the area that may not have been otherwise made, with one woman mentioning:

> "Having people of diverse backgrounds opened others to the realities that they experience and allowed empathy and understanding to develop in this natural way."

Both women described how the project had directly impacted their confidence, the woman from Ukraine felt it also had a major impact on her well-being:

> "I don't have a lot of positive emotions nowadays. But due to this project, I was distracted from war, from problems in my country. And it also was, of course, great to have this possibility to have normal life, and positive, exciting, and full of fun."

Participants described the broader impact of the project on their families and community, with one saying the play "told the story of people you don't usually sympathise with, showing them as complex characters" and that this was beneficial not only to participants but to the audiences. This may be seen as an example of how it is difficult to quantify secondary impact such as how a project like the LYCS Drama Group impacts the integration of migrants and the overall social cohesion of communities.

3.5 Employment and Training Supports

The Co-op plays a key role throughout Dublin's inner city in the provision of employment and training supports to socially, educationally, and economically disadvantaged people. Co-op members provide accredited and industry-certified training, and bespoke training to meet emerging needs within various communities. Since 2018, 969 individuals have received employment and training supports through Co-op members. In 2022, 459 people received support, exceeding the annual target of 200 by 129%.[1]

Two women were interviewed who had received employment support through Northwest Inner-City Network (NWICN). NWICN offers support to people in terms of education and assistance when trying to secure employment, and support to help those struggling to remain in employment. Both women had a long-standing relationship with NWICN staff lasting a number of years. The younger of the two women described how she felt very shy and suffered from anxiety due in part to being unemployed for a few years after she left school. She detailed how she felt, in her case, that the personal support she received to start a training course and later apply for jobs was essential:

> "I don't think I was ever going to do it any other way, I needed someone to make me think I could do it, to tell me what form I needed to get and where to go. I really needed someone to talk to when I was getting panicked that I couldn't do it"

The older of the two women had struggled with addiction throughout much of her life, but with the ongoing support of NWICN, had completed courses in social care and was now working in a job she really enjoyed. She also felt that this wouldn't have been possible without the more intensive, tailored support she had received:

> "I go by their office and think 'That's where it all began'. I really owe everything to them. I have since sent my sister and my niece to them; they couldn't do enough for you."

The Co-op plays a key role throughout Dublin's inner city in the provision of employment and training supports to socially, educationally, and economically disadvantaged people.

---

[1] This figure is the sum of individual beneficiaries who have received support under SICAP Thematic Area 2:4 – 'Preparing people for employment and to remain in work' and SICAP Thematic Area 2.5 – 'Promoting better quality & sustainable employment supports' from across Actions 5, 6, 8, 9, 12 and 13 (Ukrainian refugees). A total of 459 individuals is the aggregate number achieved.

Case Study: CASPr Community After Schools project

CASPr runs an after-school programme from three locations in the Northeast inner-city. CASPr supports the well-being and integration of children from across different schools in the area, catering for 150 primary school children.

CASPr delivers CDETB's QQI-Level 5 certified Childcare programme, alongside uncertified programmes, e.g., wellbeing programmes, and computer literacy courses for 36 local people.

A learner who had progressed through different levels of CASPR's childcare courses and is now studying for a QQI level 5 was interviewed for this evaluation. The young woman described how the programme involved her working in the afterschool programme and studying a couple of mornings a week. She felt how the course was structured and scaffolded had helped her gain confidence and stick with the programme:

> "Being able to do the courses bit by bit is great, you feel you've earned something each time you pass to the next module. I'm able to work while I get to study, being able to apply what you're learning as you go is great as well."

She described how the programme was different to her other experiences of education; she was supported on an ongoing basis to do assignments and received encouragement when struggling.

> "I didn't have problems with the practical parts but the academic part, writing essays and keeping deadlines felt scary, it's the support with assignments that I really needed and it feels a lot less scary now."

She saw the importance of a programme like this for the community she lived in and was motivated to keep studying and work in Childcare as a career.

> "You get lots of feedback but in a very encouraging way…I'd like to go to level 6 and see how far that would take me."

3.6 Building capacity of Local Community Groups (LCGS)

Since 2018, 139 groups have received community leadership support through Co-op members. In 2022, 104 LCGs had improved their capacity to address the social inclusion needs of the communities they serve or represent. Of the 260 LCG's the Co-op worked with throughout 2022, 121 LCG's were supported in relation to community engagement and 151 LCGs were supported in relation to building their capacity. The Co-op registered 38 new LCGs during 2022 and worked with 49 New Communities and/or Roma LCGs in 2022. In 2022, the Co-op worked with 260 local community groups offering a variety of community engagement and capacity-building supports.

LCGs were supported to develop and build capacity, through technical assistance in relation to information, and advice regarding planning and local infrastructure developments. Moreover, some LCGs (e.g., older people and resident associations) were supported to advocate on their own behalf, and to participate in local decision-making structures. The 23 LCGs that are recorded against Action 3 are mostly Residents and Tenants groups. These are being supported by the Co-op to engage with statutory bodies in the context of advocacy around improving accommodation and facilities, and/or in relation to planning issues in the local area. Two members of the Ringsend resident's group who received support from the Co-op urban planner, were interviewed together for this evaluation. The resident's group organised and campaigned for more affordable housing in Dublin 4. The two residents interviewed felt empowered by the help they received:

> "Without her help I wouldn't have known where to begin, she knew the steps we should take and put us in contact with local councillors who could help. It really helps us get up and going."

Through education and support, the man and woman involved felt they had been able to organise people in the local area to form committees. The campaign has succeeded in ensuring that 550 homes, or 15% of new units in the surrounding area, would be aa mix of affordable and social housing.

LCGs were supported to develop and build capacity, through technical assistance in relation to information, and advice regarding planning and local infrastructure developments. Moreover, some LCGs were supported to advocate on their own behalf, and to participate in local decision-making structures.

---

[2] The development of Bridgefoot Street Park won the Landezine International Landscape Award (LILA) in the Public Landscapes category in 2023. The project was praised as being; "a story about public space, community participation, circular economy, and ecological measures, and, above all, it is a project that well reflects our growing care for social and environmental issues of urban open space in the 21st century." For more information please see https://www.dublincity.ie/news/dublin-city-councils-bridgefoot-street-park-wins-prestigious-international-landscape-award

Other groups that are recorded under Action 3 are local networks or structures that have been created to deal with specific issues e.g., supporting women in recovery, and 'guerrilla' gardening in Dublin 8 which galvanized community action, eventually resulting in the development of Bridgefoot Street Park.1F2 ICON (Inner City Organisations Network) is a Co-op member community organisation in the Northeast inner city working against local disadvantage, social exclusion and long-term unemployment.

A women interviewed was supported by ICON staff to organise community projects during Covid-19 restrictions, including community barbeques and bingo games. She also worked to organise activities and day trips for local children and teenagers, giving them the opportunity to visit places outside of their local areas. This woman described that this was facilitated through her contact with ICON staff:

> "And that's only through the impact that she's had and the training she's given me, and the information she's given me that I've been able to do any of it."

This evaluation found that LCGs being supported by the Co-op and its members have a great capacity to address the social inclusion needs of the communities they serve or represent. Individuals who are embedded and trusted in the community are in a position to understand need and get buy-in from the local community.

This evaluation found that LCGs being supported by the Co-op and its members have a great capacity to address the social inclusion needs of the communities they serve or represent.

23Case Study: A community group for Ukrainian refugees in Dublin 7.

An Síol CDP (Community Development Project) is a community-based organisation based in Stoneybatter, Dublin 7. An Síol provides a range of services including programmes for older people in the community, homework clubs and educational supports, advocacy for local residents, a Welfare to Work information service and organisational and management supports to other community projects.

Many of the Co-op members who participated in focus groups have been working to engage with refugee populations to support their successful integration into Irish society. A Ukrainian woman was interviewed as part of this evaluation who has been supported by An Síol to set up a community group in Dublin 7 for Ukrainian refugees. She describes how difficult it was in the time immediately after she arrived in Dublin:

> "I was very traumatized because I had to leave everything. My daughter just had a baby last month, and I still haven't seen her. When I moved to Stoneybatter, I felt so lonely. I didn't know anybody in the area. And it was very difficult. I was afraid what if I will be sick, I cannot ask anybody for help or to buy groceries for me."

An Síol staff have supported her by directing her to English language supports and a counsellor who could speak Ukrainian. She also notes that once she got support herself and started to build her community, her mental health improved greatly, noting her sleep improved and her panic attacks lessened.

She went on to describe how she found the An Síol centre and setting up a group with their support:

> "One day, I knocked in to the centre and I thought maybe there is some Ukrainian group here, maybe conversation classes. And I came here and asked and they said they didn't have any groups for Ukrainians yet but that they could help me to create a group of people myself, so that's how it started."

She describes the ways in which An Síol provides her with guidance and support:

> "I have some ideas to find ways for Ukrainians who want to start a business from scratch in Ireland and also to have more social activities like barbeques during the summer. He's (An Síol Co-ordinator) a huge help for me. We discuss everything together and he helps me see how I can make my ideas into reality."

She also described how she received guidance on how to promote and grow her weekly groups through networks, social media, and other means. This woman can now help others in ways that she felt she needed help when she first came to Ireland. The development and fostering of projects like this create a model of peer support to deal with trauma and empower people to rebuild their lives.

> "My life changed. People are calling me asking for help I have shown that I can lead something for people who need it, because I never saw myself in this role and I can say 'no, hold on, maybe it can be me to do it'"

4. OVERALL IMPACT

4.1 Co-op's structure

One crucial aspect of the Co-op's work revolves around engaging "hard-to-reach" target groups. These groups are typically considered difficult to engage due to their specific social circumstances, characteristics, behaviours, and limited institutional relationships, such as not utilizing health or other services. Hard-to-reach communities and individuals encompass a diverse range of people who face various barriers to participation, including economic and social obstacles such as class, income/wealth, geographic location, language, age, gender, ethnicity, education, residential status, health, and religion. It is important to note that the needs of these groups are diverse, and successful interventions should be tailored to address the specific needs, characteristics, and local circumstances of the hard-to-reach population. The Co-op's 13 local community organisations work in a cooperative structure which involves providing them with various resources, assistance, and frameworks to enhance their effectiveness and sustainability.

In the member focus groups the following key supports were mentioned as most valuable to members:

- **Funding and Grants:** the cooperative structure allowed members to be eligible for different grant programmes, including SICAP, with this facilitating the recruitment and retention of key staff. This, in turn, allowed members to focus on longer-term initiatives, and helped organisations to develop their capacity.

One crucial aspect of the Co-op's work revolves around engaging "hard-to-reach" target groups.

- **Networking and Collaboration:** the cooperative structure facilitated networking opportunities for members to connect with each other, share experiences, and collaborate on joint projects. This was done through regular practitioners' meetings and dedicated working groups where organisations can exchange ideas, best practices, and resources.
- **Technical Support:** the Co-op provided guidance in areas such as financial management and reporting, strategic planning, governance and organisational development.

Shared Resources: members were enabled to pool their resources and share common facilities, such as office spaces, meeting rooms, equipment, and technology infrastructure. This reduced individual members' costs and fostered collaboration and synergy among groups.

The members who participated in focus groups recognised a huge degree of benefit in being in a Co-operative structure:

> "it's so refreshing to be part of this network. In the Co-op we feel that we are a partner and as a member we have a kind of an equal voice in the conversation. We're really listened to and respected and there's mutual respect for everybody, I think you have to work in another kind of structure to realise how valuable that is"

One of the core strengths of the cooperative structure is that each of the organisations in the Co-op is embedded in the community, many for the last 25-30 years. As a result of this, these smaller organisations are trusted by the community and can implement flexible, nuanced responses to local issues as they emerge in a way many larger organisations will not be able to. The importance of the independent and local nature of the work Co-op members do is described by one of the member organisations:

One of the core strengths of the cooperative structure is that each of the organisations in the Co-op is embedded in the community, many for the last 25-30 years. As a result of this, these smaller organisations are trusted by the community.

> "We are independent organisations deeply embedded within the community, we all have that independence, but we also come together in a collective way, under the Co-op, so there are huge benefits in that."

Another strength of the structure is that each organisation can draw on the knowledge, skills, and networks of the other Co-op organisations. Consultations with members and beneficiaries reveal examples of several member organisations coming together to respond to a common issue for a specific target group they have in common. An example of the responsiveness and adaptability of the Co-op structure is the Co-op Older Persons Working Group (OPWG), which had 9 member organisations working together to develop initiatives to support older people during Covid-19. These 9 organisations work directly with older people at risk of isolation, and collaborated during Covid-19 to organise and prepare activity gift packs for older people. During 2020 and 2021 the OPWG delivered 4,240 activity packs. One member remarked that it was in part, the structure of the Co-op that facilitated the organisation of this initiative:

> "But it was only when we could use a central body that we could all come together and do one thing."

The below quote comes from a member of staff who had recently joined one of the Co-op member organisations and believed it had key strengths in comparison to other models of working he had experienced previously:

> "I do believe that the Co-op model is a strength and untapped strength. I think it's worth reflecting further on the Co-op model and how that is an embodiment of the principles of human development. And, and how it, I don't know, how you could extract the opportunities that provides, you know, good, much greater cohesion among services among areas, with greater integration and less competition."

4.2 Economic impact

The work of the Co-op has wide-reaching economic impacts in the communities in which they operate. People are supported with a variety of employment-related needs, including being prepared to enter the labour market; being supported to remain in work through the receipt of on-going in-work support; and low-income individuals being supported to move into more sustainable and better-quality employment. In the area of Community and Adult Education the Co-op is in a position to respond to the training needs of people who often need additional support in this area and consultations with beneficiaries revealed instances of people who had started on a long-term education trajectory as a result of contact with the Co-op's members.

In addition to this, the Co-op supports the establishment and growth of social enterprise by offering resources, mentorship, and shared facilities. This support fosters entrepreneurship, encourages small business development, and contributes to the diversification of the local economy.

By offering volunteer opportunities, the Co-op and its members help individuals develop new skills, gain valuable work experience, and contribute to their community. This promotes personal growth, builds social networks, and enhances community resilience.

The Co-op contributes to community wealth building by developing resources within the community and empowering individuals to actively participate in the local economy. A critical element of the work of the Co-op is with 'hard to reach' target groups. The 'hard-to-reach' are those perceived as difficult to engage due to their social circumstances, characteristics, and behaviours. In terms of economic impact, the Co-op and its members engage with individuals who for various reasons need additional support into employment or who require targeted and individual intervention to improve their economic situations.

The work of the Co-op has wide-reaching economic impacts in the communities in which they operate.

The Co-op contributes to community wealth building by developing resources within the community and empowering individuals to actively participate in the local economy.

27

The social impact of the work of the Co-op is significant and wide-ranging, as member organisations focus, in varied ways, on addressing social needs and improving the well-being of the community as a whole.

For this evaluation, four beneficiaries were interviewed who had received specific support toward their employment needs. These beneficiaries were two men who had received self-employment supports and had founded their own businesses or social enterprise, and two women had received employment and training supports and were now working in jobs they enjoyed. The below comment is from one of these women:

"Other routes, the main routes were never going to work for me. If I hadn't been supported by NWICN no one else was going to take a chance on me…but I love what I do, I really do and there's no going back"

4.3 Social Impact

The social impact of the work of the Co-op is significant and wide-ranging, as member organisations focus, in varied ways, on addressing social needs and improving the well-being of the community as a whole. In particular, the work of member organisations benefitted individuals who were socially isolated, or who had mental health or other needs that inhibited them receiving supports from statutory services or larger organisations

The Co-op actively involves community members in decision-making processes, giving them a sense of ownership and empowerment.

The Co-op actively involves community members in decision-making processes, giving them a sense of ownership and empowerment. By engaging residents in projects and initiatives, the Co-op and its members foster a stronger sense of community, promote active citizenship, and build social cohesion in the communities in which they work. The Co-op and its members provide a range of services and support, tailored to the specific needs of the community. These include education and training opportunities, personal development, advice and support, childcare services, and recreational activities. By addressing these needs, the Co-op enhances the quality of life of residents, and contributes to social well-being. The Co-op's initiatives promote equal access to resources, reduce social barriers, and foster a sense of belonging for all community members, including those from migrant backgrounds.

The Co-op collaborates with different community organisations and projects, local businesses, and government bodies. This collaborative approach strengthens the social fabric of the community by promoting cooperation, sharing resources, and leveraging collective expertise to address complex social challenges.

Loneliness and isolation are persistent problems for many people, including the beneficiaries involved in this evaluation. Many spoke openly about ongoing mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression. Projects run through the Co-op support people experiencing these issues. One example of this is a Men's Shed project run by one of the Co-op's members. Part of the social impact of this initiative is described below:

> "The people who attend the group, there's just so many of them are kind of hanging on by, you know, by their fingernails, and that little bit of support they get is enough to make sure that they're kind of in there."

Another project supported by SICAP is the CASPr programme, which runs an afterschool club and provides training for those looking to work in childcare. As well as its primary functions the initiative supports the integration of children from across different schools in the area. The below quote is from a staff member, who outlines this wide-reaching social impact:

> "When people perceive what we do, sometimes it can seem like we are just an afterschool programme, homework support and that kind of thing, but we're not, we're doing psychological, emotional, social, cultural inclusion services and that's not something you can fully demonstrate."

4.4 Cultural impact

The Co-op engages in initiatives that aim to preserve and celebrate local culture.

The Co-op engages in initiatives that aim to preserve and celebrate local culture. This includes organising events and workshops that contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage, and strengthen community identity. The Co-op also supports artistic and creative expression within the community. An example of this is the LYCS drama group. This project also facilitates intercultural exchange between Irish and migrant residents by bringing together people from diverse cultural backgrounds to share their traditions, stories, and experiences. Projects like this and the wider Co-op Refugee Support Programme can foster understanding, respect, and appreciation for cultural diversity within the community.

The LYCS drama project helped migrants and refugees to integrate within the community they now reside in. It helps them improve their English and communication skills in a safe space. For the audience, this project humanised the war in Ukraine, as well as humanising community members who have experienced addiction and homelessness in the past.

The Co-op works towards making arts and cultural experiences more accessible.

> "It's hard to see past the numbers when hearing the stories of refugees and homeless people. Having a first-hand perspective on these issues opened the eyes of the audience, fellow cast members, and the wider community."

The Co-op works towards making arts and cultural experiences more accessible. Members and beneficiaries who participated in this research described organising or participating in free or low-cost cultural events, or developing inclusive programmes that cater to individuals with diverse abilities.

4.5 Environmental impact

The Co-op incorporates environmental sustainability into their work, by implementing initiatives such as urban regeneration projects and community gardens. The Co-op raises environmental awareness, promotes eco-friendly practices, and contributes to a more sustainable future for the community. The Co-op is currently researching and designing a Climate Change & Just Transition Roadmap and Policy to guide its work over the coming years.

Dublin's inner city has many derelict and underused spaces, and one of the lowest levels of tree cover and green space available anywhere within the country. This has significant effects on the well-being of inner-city communities. A number of the beneficiaries involved in this evaluation mentioned that the environment that they lived in has negatively affected them, particularly during Covid-19. The existence of derelict and underused spaces creates a feeling of not being safe, and contributed to residents' perceptions that they had no green space to socialise in when movement was restricted.

The Grow Dome and Bridgefoot Street Park projects are examples of the reclamation of derelict and underused land by local communities for positive community use, for the enjoyment of children, families, and older people, and for local communities to gather in.

The Co-op is currently researching and designing a Climate Change & Just Transition Roadmap and Policy to guide its work over the coming years.

5. POTENTIAL AREAS FOR LEARNING, IMPROVEMENT OR EXPANSION

The Co-op plays an important role in the local infrastructures and networks of the communities where they work, and have both formal and informal links with statutory providers, other local agencies, and bodies.

The Co-op plays an important role in the local infrastructures and networks of the communities where they work, and have both formal and informal links with statutory providers, other local agencies, and bodies. The below recommendations aim to build on the strengths and successes highlighted in the report, while also identifying areas where further focus and investment can enhance the overall impact of the Co-op's work.

5.1 For the Co-op

5.1.1 Strengthen Cooperative Structure:

- Continue providing resources, assistance, and frameworks to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the cooperative structure.
- Foster a sense of equal voice, respect, and mutual support among members, ensuring that each organisation feels valued and empowered within the cooperative structure.
- Facilitate knowledge-sharing, collaboration, and networking opportunities among member organisations to leverage collective expertise and address common issues.

5.2 For Member Organisations

5.2.1 Enhance Economic Impact:

- Continue supporting employment-related needs by providing ongoing in-work support and facilitating access to sustainable and better-quality employment opportunities.
- Promote micro and social enterprise development by offering resources, mentorship, and shared facilities to foster entrepreneurship and small business growth.
- Expand volunteer opportunities to help individuals develop new skills, gain work experience, and contribute to the local economy.

5.2.2 Maximize Social Impact:

- Continue actively involving community members in decision-making processes to foster a sense of ownership and empowerment.
- Tailor services and support to address specific social needs, such as education and training opportunities, language/literacy, personal development, advice and support, childcare services, and recreational activities.
- Strengthen collaboration with community organisations, local businesses, and government bodies to leverage collective expertise and resources in addressing social challenges.
- Focus on supporting 'hard-to-reach' target groups by providing tailored interventions to improve their economic situations and employment prospects.

5.2.3 Promote Cultural Impact:

- Continue organizing events, workshops, and initiatives that preserve and celebrate local culture, promoting community identity and pride.
- Support artistic and creative expression within the community, fostering intercultural exchange and appreciation for diversity.
- Make arts and cultural experiences more accessible, particularly for individuals with diverse abilities.
- Prioritize youth engagement and cultural education, providing mentorship, workshops, and initiatives that expose young individuals to diverse cultural experiences and develop their creative talents.

5.2.4 Enhance Environmental Impact:

- Continue implementing initiatives such as urban regeneration projects and community gardens to raise environmental awareness and promote eco-friendly practices.
- Expand efforts to reclaim and repurpose derelict and underused land, improving the urban environment and contributing to community well-being.
- Collaborate with local communities to create positive and sustainable uses for urban spaces, addressing climate change and promoting a sense of safety and well-being.
- Finalise the Co-op's Climate Change & Just Transition Roadmap & Policy
- Ensure the voice of Dublin's inner-city communities is heard and listened to as part of the dialogue, discussion and policy development around climate change & environmental planning.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this report highlights the overall impact of SICAP-funded work carried out the Co-op and its members, and provides insights into the benefits this work brings to the community. The cooperative structure, comprising 13 local community organisations, has proven to be a key strength, fostering a sense of equality, respect, and mutual support among members. This structure allows for flexibility and responsiveness in addressing local issues, as well as the sharing of knowledge, skills, and networks among member organisations.

The economic impact of the Co-op's work is significant, with a focus on supporting employment-related needs and the establishment and growth of micro and social enterprises. By providing funding, networking opportunities, technical support, and shared resources, the Co-op enables members to develop their capacity, create sustainable employment, and contribute to the local economy. The cooperative model offers unique strengths compared to other working models, promoting cohesion, integration, and less competition among services and areas.

Socially, the Co-op plays a vital role in addressing community needs and improving well-being. By actively involving community members in decision-making processes, the cooperative empowers individuals, fosters a sense of ownership, and promotes active citizenship. Through tailored services, such as education and training, personal development, and support programs, the Co-op enhances the quality of life of residents and contributes to social well-being. Collaboration with other community organisations, local businesses, and government bodies strengthens the social fabric, promotes cooperation, and addresses complex social challenges.

Culturally, the Co-op's initiatives contribute to the preservation, celebration, and accessibility of local culture (both traditional and new). By organizing events, workshops, and programs that highlight cultural heritage, promote artistic expression, and facilitate intercultural exchange, the Co-op fosters understanding, respect, and appreciation for diversity within the community. The Cooperative's efforts also help to build community identity and pride, encourage interdisciplinary collaboration, and engage young people in cultural education.

The Co-op is committed to environmental sustainability and incorporates it into its work. Through initiatives such as urban regeneration projects, community gardens, and the reclamation of derelict and underused land, the Co-op raises environmental awareness, promotes eco-friendly practices, and contributes to a more sustainable future for the community. These efforts not only enhance the physical environment but also improve the well-being and safety of residents.

The importance of the Co-op's work on developing and delivering social, economic, environmental and cultural services within the most disadvantaged areas of Dublin cannot be understated. Historically, inner-city Dublin has been a poverty hub, with high rates of unemployment, intergenerational poverty, poor-quality accommodation, homelessness, high rates of drug use, and low levels of educational attainment[2][3][4]. While an influx of higher income, more affluent residents has contributed to an appearance of reduced poverty in more recent years, in reality the inner-city population is characterised by stark spatial segregation, with highly affluent and highly deprived communities living alongside one another[4][5][6]. Addressing cycles of poverty in inner-city Dublin necessitates a focus on the myriad, intersecting issues which disadvantaged communities face, and thus tackling difficulties across economic, social, cultural and environmental domains.

In conclusion, the report demonstrates the positive impact of Dublin City Community Cooperative across multiple dimensions. By fostering a cooperative structure, supporting economic development, addressing social needs, promoting cultural diversity, and embracing environmental sustainability, the Co-op plays a crucial role in enhancing the overall quality of life for the community it serves. The recommendations arising from the report aim to build upon these successes, further maximizing the cooperative's impact and benefiting the community in the years to come.

The importance of the Co-op's work on developing and delivering social, economic, environmental and cultural services within the most disadvantaged areas of Dublin cannot be understated.

By fostering a cooperative structure, supporting economic development, addressing social needs, promoting cultural diversity, and embracing environmental sustainability, the Co-op plays a crucial role in enhancing the overall quality of life for the community it serves.

---

[3] MacVeigh, T. (2006). Employment problems and social unrest in inner city Dublin*Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review, 95*(379), 269-277. https://www.jstor.org/stable/30095842
[4] Wilson, J. (2023, June 22). Drug crime in Dublin 'worse than ever' inner city campaigner. *Newstalk.* https://www.newstalk.com/news/drug-crime-in-dublin-worse-than-ever-inner-city-campaigner-1478236
[5] Haase, T. (2009)*Divided city: The changing face of Dublin's Inner City.* Dublin Inner City Partnership. http://trutzhaase.eu/publications/divided-city/
[6] Dublin City Community Co-Op (n.d.) National and international commitments to children and young people. https://dublincitycommunitycoop.ie/reports/consultation-children-youth-strategy-a-statement-to-government/

Focus Group Questions: Member Organisations

Hi, I'm Sara. I work for TASC, a think tank and research organisation based in Dublin. We are carrying out an evaluation of the value SICAP funding received by Dublin City Community Co-op. This piece of work is an important part of the Co-op's SICAP Tender preparation. As well as this focus group, the evaluation will be based on an analysis of the data on IRIS, interviews with 6 -8 SICAP beneficiaries and a focus group with younger beneficiaries.

This focus group does not intend to evaluate the work of the Co-op office but of SICAP funding. Its purpose is to capture and celebrate the scope of the work achieved through this funding, looking beyond the numbers and what is recorded in the IRIS system to the depth of impact your work has. The session today will look at what you see as the impact of the funding for your work, as well as the potential impact of losing the funding.

The focus group will last approximately one hour and 15 minutes. Just to let you know that the audio will be recorded if that is OK with everyone. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

1. **What is the most important thing that funding from SICAP has helped your organisation/project achieve?**
2. **Does SICAP funding impact the ability of your organisation/project to plan for the long-term?**
3. **Does anyone have experience of working in your current organisation or project before receiving SICAP funding? What was that like?**
4. **What else do you know about the fundings impact the communities you work in?**
5. **Would there be any negative effects on the community if the funding stopped?**
6. **Would it benefit your community to have funded extended?**
7. **Is there any way you feel the funding model could be improved?**
8. **Do you have anything you would like to add?**

Appendix 2
Focus Group Questions: Young Adult

Hi, I'm Sara. I work for TASC, a think tank and research organisation based in Dublin. We are carrying out an evaluation of the value SICAP funding received Dublin City Community COOP. SICAP (Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme) provides funding for community projects across Ireland. One of the projects that receive this funding is ⟨project name⟩ which this group takes part in.

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the value of ⟨project name⟩ as perceived by yourselves, including any concerns you have and anything you feel could be improved.
I'd like to talk to you about your personal experience of the project, how you've been involved, and its impact on you. The interview should take approximately 45 mins. Would it be OK if I recorded the audio of this focus group? Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Note the age, gender, and nationality of the participants

1. **What motivated you to get involved with ⟨project name⟩?**
2. **Do you feel a project like this is needed for younger people in your community? Why?**
3. **What was/is your favorite part of participating in the project?**
4. **How would you describe this project's impact on your life?**
5. **What else do you know about the project's impact on others in the community?**
6. **Would there be any negative effects on the community if the project stopped?**
7. **Would it benefit you and your community to have this project expanded?**
8. **Is there any way you feel the project could be improved?**
9. **Do you have anything you would like to add?**

Appendix 3

Focus Group Questions: Migrant Group

Hi, I'm Sara. I work for TASC, a think tank and research organisation based in Dublin. We are carrying out an evaluation of the value SICAP funding received Dublin City Community COOP. SICAP (Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme) provides funding for community projects across Ireland. One of the projects that receive this funding is <NCP project name> which this group takes part in.

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the value of <NCP project name> as perceived by yourselves, including any concerns you have and anything you feel could be improved.
I'd like to talk to you about your personal experience of the project, how you've been involved, and its impact on you. This focus group should take approximately 1 hour. Would it be OK if I recorded the audio of this focus group? Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Note the age, gender, and nationality of the participants

1. **What motivated you to get involved with <NCP project name>?**
2. **Do you feel a project like this is needed for migrants living in your community? Why?**
3. **What was/is your favorite part of participating in the project?**
4. **How would you describe this project's impact on your life?**
5. **What else do you know about the project's impact on others in the community?**
6. **Would there be any negative effects on the community if the project stopped?**
7. **Would it benefit you and your community to have this project expanded?**
8. **Is there any way you feel the project could be improved?**
9. **Do you have anything you would like to add?**

Appendix 4
Interview Questions

Hi, I'm Sara. I work for TASC, a think tank and research organisation based in Dublin. We are carrying out an evaluation of the value SICAP funding received Dublin City Community COOP. SICAP (Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme) provides funding for community projects across Ireland. One of the projects that receive this funding is ⟨project name⟩.

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the value of ⟨project name⟩ as perceived by yourself, including any concerns you have and anything you feel could be improved.
I'd like to talk to you about your personal experience of the project, how you've been involved, and its impact on you. The interview should take approximately 45 mins. Would it be OK if I recorded the audio of this interview? Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Note the age, gender, and nationality of the interviewee

1. **Can you tell me a bit about your involvement with ⟨project name⟩? (Prompts: How long have you been involved? How often you are engaged with the project?)**
2. **What motivated you to get involved with ⟨project name⟩?**
3. **What was your favorite part of participating in the project?**
4. **How would you describe this project's impact on your life?**
5. **What else do you know about the project's impact on others in the community?**
6. **Would there be any negative effects on the community if the project stopped?**
7. **Would it benefit you and your community to have this project expanded?**
8. **Is there any way you feel the project could be improved?**
9. **Do you have anything you would like to add?**

NOTES