CAVAN LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Social Inclusion Handbook

A Guide For Local Authority Staff & Elected Members 2009

CONTENTS

Forewards

Combating social exclusion and poverty is at the heart of the activities of local government. The central role is enshrined in our national legislative framework including the Local Government Act 2001. This specifically refers to the promotion of social inclusion as a function of the local authority. Local Government plays the central role in the local development arena both in its own actions and by leading inter agency cooperation through the County Development Board process. Such coordination is essential in combating social exclusion.

Cavan Local Authorities have named social inclusion as one of the seven cores values which underpin its Corporate Plan. A key objective is to "maintain and improve the quality of life for all the County's inhabitants through tackling social exclusion". All of our seventy five services have an influence on social inclusion, ranging from housing to planning, from road quality access to library/arts provisions and many more. Above all there has been an ongoing emphasis on adopting a positive attitude towards excluded groups and individuals. This handbook will broaden our understanding and commitment to equality principles and further enhance our flexibility, openness and effectiveness.

Delivering socially inclusive services is a task for everyone in the organisation. The role of the social inclusion unit is crucial in this process as planning, evaluation and change are required on an ongoing basis. I encourage all staff to use this booklet regularly and I am confident that they will find it beneficial in their everyday work.

J. Keyes,
County Manager.

This is a very welcome booklet because it sets out clearly an understanding of poverty and social exclusion. It shows how poverty and social exclusion may be interrelated but also that they are not always dependent on each other.

Cavan as a county has had its share of difficulties, traditionally coping with issues such as rural depopulation, a decline in farming, weak infrastructure and being a border county. Although Ireland has come through a period of relative prosperity, there remain many ways in which people are socially excluded. Our services must be flexible enough to adapt to change, so that everyone can avail of council services easily.

We hope that staff will find this handbook an invaluable tool that can help all of us to think about our services from the point of view of the customer. A broader understanding of social inclusion can encourage us to see things from the other side of the counter. It is a practical way for staff to get to grips with current thinking and best practice in this important area.

We welcome this booklet from the Social Inclusion Unit and thank in particular the members of the Social inclusion Working Group for overseeing its production.

Joe McLoughlin
Director of Service

1. Introduction

This booklet has been developed by the Social Inclusion Unit as part of its approach to the prevention and elimination of poverty and social exclusion. The purpose of this booklet is to familiarise all employees of Cavan Local Authorities with the concept of social inclusion and the new vocabulary associated with it. It is hoped that it will assist all staff in all areas and at all levels to recognise that their role within the Council has an impact on the circumstances of people across the county who live with exclusion on a daily basis.

This booklet is designed to be a significant step in ensuring that social inclusion and equality remain a high priority within Cavan Local Authorities.

Layout of the Booklet

This booklet begins by giving some basic explanations as to what is meant when people talk about poverty, social exclusion and social inclusion. It goes on to describe the policy context within which this work is set. It looks at the work of Local Authorities in relation to social inclusion and sets out a number of examples of socially inclusive activities which Cavan Local Authorities have undertaken to date in the delivery of services.

The last section of the booklet serves as a 'toolkit' for staff, focusing on what staff can do in their everyday work to ensure that the services of Cavan Local Authorities are delivered in a socially inclusive way.   Finally it finishes with a number of useful contact details of organisations and state agencies working within this area.

The Constant Risk …

"I used to think I was poor. Then they told me I wasn't poor, I was needy. Then they told me it was self-defeating to think of myself as needy. I was deprived. (Oh not deprived but rather underprivileged). Then they told me that underprivileged was overused. I was disadvantaged. I still don't have a dime. But I have a great vocabulary."

Jules Feiffer, American cartoonist in the 1960s

2. Some Basic Terms & Explanations

In this section we will look at some of the main terms, definitions and explanations which are used when it comes to describing poverty and social inclusion.

How is Poverty Defined?

The current widely accepted definition of poverty is that included in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy:

"People are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to prevent them from having a standard of living, which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society. As a result of inadequate income and resources people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities, which are considered the norm for other people in society."

How do we measure poverty?

Although it can be difficult we need to be able to quantify or measure what is poverty. This is especially important for organisations working within the public sector because often they are charged with having to reduce or tackle poverty. There are two ways in which poverty is measured. Briefly these are:

1. Relative income poverty or 'At risk of Poverty'

This is a purely income related measure used by the EU. It describes those who are below 60% of the median income as poor (the median smoothes out the effect of those households on extremely high incomes). In 2006, the medium was set at €202.49 a week for an adult. If a person's income is below this they are described as being 'at risk of poverty'.

Poverty is not the same everywhere and it will also change over time. It varies because each society's standard of living is different and also over time living standards change. The income level that might have indicated poverty 10 years ago is not the same income level today due to higher living standards. However while people may have more money than they had 10 years ago their position compared to average incomes in society may have deteriorated. If the incomes of the rest of society increase more than the incomes of people in poverty, people's relative poverty will have worsened.

In 2007, 16.5% of Ireland's population (that is 699,575 people) fell below this 60% line*

2. Consistent poverty

This measure is used by the Irish government. This is a combination of relative income poverty combined with the lack of two or more items from a list of eleven everyday living items, through necessity not choice. Those items or 'deprivation indicators' include:

1. Meals with chicken/meat/fish/equivalent every other day
2. A "roast"/equivalent once a week
3. Keep the home adequately warm
4. Two pairs of strong shoes
5. A warm, waterproof coat
6. Buy new, not second hand clothes
7. Had to go without heating during the last year through lack of money
8. Buy presents for family or friends at least once a year
9. Replace any worn out furniture
10. Have family or friends for a drink or meal once a month
11. Have a morning, afternoon or evening out in the last fortnight, for entertainment

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In 2007, 5.1% (that is 216,232 people) of Ireland's population had an income of less than 60% of the national median and experienced at least two of the eleven deprivation indicators*

* Source: EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC): CSO December 2007

Trends in Poverty over Time

Since the mid 1990's, economic growth in Ireland has lifted many people out of poverty. Unemployment, the main structural cause of poverty in the 1980's fell dramatically, and those who were in a position to take up a job were able to increase their incomes. It was generally assumed that if there was full employment, there would be no poverty. But as unemployment fell and wages grew, it became clear that employment was not the solution for all people. As employment grew, the incomes of people who were not in a position to enter the workforce for whatever reason fell behind the rest of society.

This growing inequality was reflected in an upward trend in income poverty levels which persisted for almost a decade until 2004.

By 2006, Ireland had one of the highest rates of income poverty across all EU member states, with approximately one in six people at risk of poverty. Typically the groups most at risk share certain characteristics such as where they live, their age, the composition of their households and whether or not they have a job.

From Poverty to Social Exclusion

In modern Ireland the terms 'social exclusion' and 'poverty' are often used inter-changeably. They are strongly inter-related, however they are not the same thing.

> ▶ Not everyone who is poor is socially excluded
>
> &
>
> ▶ Not everyone who is socially excluded is poor

Social exclusion often stems from financial poverty however financial poverty is not the only thing that makes life difficult for many people. Social exclusion is a broader term and recognises that for many people life is difficult and not just because of the absence of money or resources.

What is Social Exclusion?

Social exclusion can be defined as the experience of social, cultural and economic inequalities. It is the process whereby certain individuals, groups or communities are pushed to the edge of society and cannot participate fully because of poverty, inadequate education or underdeveloped life-skills.

As a result people may be excluded from some, but not necessarily all, aspects of daily living which are considered normal for most of society. For example people can be excluded from:

- Production: not being able to access employment or education

- Consumption: unable to afford goods and services

- Social Networks: lack of access to social, sporting or cultural organisations

- Decision making: being without power to change personal or wider circumstances

- Very often this happens because of people's lack of money or resources, however it is also due to other influences. These can include:

- Direct discrimination against particular groups or categories of people.

- "Physical" barriers such as a lack of transport or the absence of services/facilities in areas/communities.

- People not having the confidence to literally step forward and participate in society and what it offers.

- People lacking the skills/qualifications which may be needed for them to progress within society.

- Organisations working on the basis of "one size fits all" and not being geared to the particular needs of people with particular problems.

Who is Socially Excluded?

People who are socially excluded are often referred to as target groups, as they are the groups towards whom the Government targets its social inclusion measures.

Examples of groups who are most at risk of poverty and social exclusion include: lone parent families and families with large numbers of children; the ill and persons with disabilities; the elderly; Travellers; migrants and members of ethnic minorities; homeless people; unemployed people; persons living in areas of urban or rural disadvantage. This list is not exhaustive. It is also often the case that persons experiencing extreme forms of poverty and exclusion are found to have multiple forms of vulnerability.

What are the Effects of Social Exclusion?

• Unemployment and/or low income

• Poor housing

• Ill-health

• Inadequate education

• Few recreational opportunities

Courtesy of Irish Traveller Movement

• Feeling powerless and marginalised

Some of the effects of social exclusion as listed above are also often found to be some of the main causes of social exclusion in the first place.

From the Other Side of the Counter …

"I don't know who you are … and you don't know who I am.
I don't know the County Council … nor your part in it.
You don't know what my life is like … nor what I do.
I don't know what the Council does … who's in it … nor how it's organised.
You don't know how my life and my community are organised … if they're organised at all.
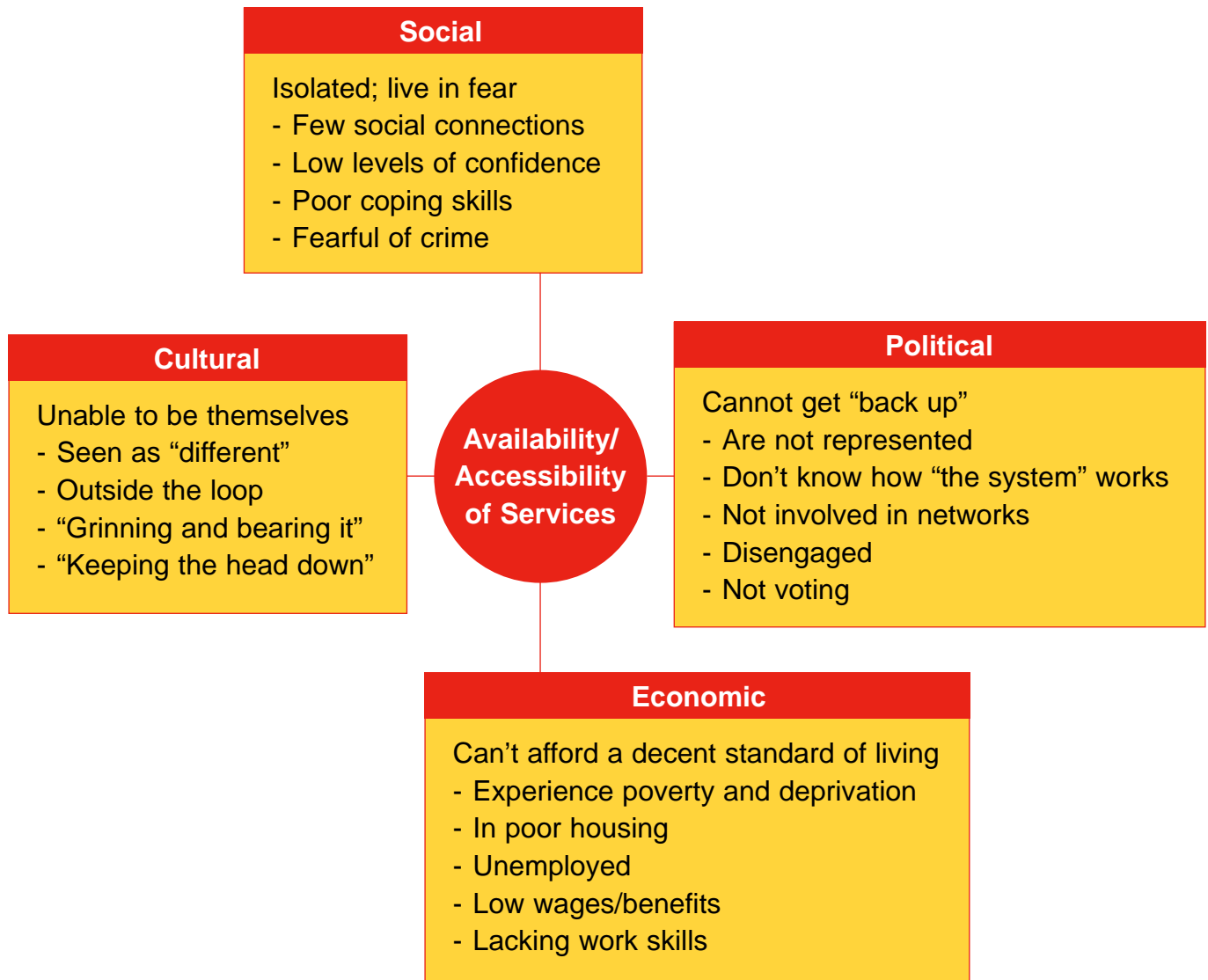You don't know what brought me here … nor how fearful I am.
I don't know what the Council stands for … how you'll treat me
I can't even read these words …
… so what's that about you sorting out my exclusion …?"

Social Exclusion: A Framework for Understanding

Social

Isolated; live in fear
- Few social connections
- Low levels of confidence
- Poor coping skills
- Fearful of crime

Cultural

Unable to be themselves
- Seen as "different"
- Outside the loop
- "Grinning and bearing it"
- "Keeping the head down"

Availability/ Accessibility of Services

Political

Cannot get "back up"
- Are not represented
- Don't know how "the system" works
- Not involved in networks
- Disengaged
- Not voting

Economic

Can't afford a decent standard of living
- Experience poverty and deprivation
- In poor housing
- Unemployed
- Low wages/benefits
- Lacking work skills

What do things look like in County Cavan?

According to the latest 2006 Census figures here are some examples of vulnerable groups living within the County in terms of population size. (Total population of County Cavan 64,000)

Travellers	212
Foreign Nationals	5,684
People with Disabilities	5,435
One-Parent Families	2,421
Older People (65 & over)	8,007

The following points can be made about County Cavan and the Border Region.*

• The Border Region is the most disadvantaged region in Ireland.

• Cavan is the second most disadvantaged local authority area within the border region.

• Rural parts of the county tend to be slightly more disadvantaged.

• Over the past 20 years, the population of Cavan grew by 21.2%, compared to a national growth rate of 20.3% in the same period.

• County Cavan has a higher 'age dependency' ratio compared to the national figure. This means that 35% of the County's population are either under 15 years of age or over 65 years of age compared to the national figure of 31%.

*Source: Trutz Haase & Jonathan Pratschke (2008) New Measures of Deprivation: An Inter-temporal and Spatial Analysis of Data from the Census of Population, 1991, 1996, 2002 and 2006.

What is Social Inclusion?

Social inclusion can be defined as a series of positive actions to achieve equality of access to goods and services, to assist all individuals participate in their community and society, to encourage the contribution of all persons to social and cultural life and to be aware of, and to challenge, all forms of discrimination.

Effective social inclusion results in each individual having an equal opportunity to make decisions that affect their quality of life. It ensures the fullest participation of all members of the community including minority groups such as Travellers, older people, disabled people, refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants, gay/lesbian/bisexual people etc. in decision making processes. By agencies (such as local authorities, health boards etc.) promoting and actively pursuing social inclusion policies, all people within a community can be supported and encouraged to participate in the life of their community.

Tactile Paving at Pedestrian Crossing in Cootehill

Public Consultations for the County Development Plan

3. The Main National Policy Responses

In this section we aim to present an overview of what is being done nationally at the strategic level in response to the realities of poverty and social exclusion in Ireland.

National policy initiatives clearly identify a role for local authorities in the elimination of poverty at local level.

Traditionally the main role of local government in tackling social exclusion was perceived to be related to accommodation provision. Local government in Ireland has undergone significant changes. This change was accelerated with the publication in 1996 of **'Better Local Government - A Programme for Change'**. This publication emphasised four key principles:

- Enhancing local democracy and widening participation
- Serving the customer better
- Developing efficiency in local government
- Providing proper resources to allow local government fulfil the role assigned to them

The role of local authorities was also expanded and elaborated with the introduction of the **National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS)** which was published in 1997. This was the first plan to be published at a national strategic level aimed at reducing poverty in Ireland. This plan was rolled forward in 2002 via the **"Building an Inclusive Society"** document. Since the publication of these documents it has become accepted that Local Authorities have to be central to how poverty and exclusion are addressed in Ireland.

There are clear and practical linkages between the NAPS and the work of local authorities, particularly in relation to housing and accommodation but also in relation to urban poverty, rural disadvantage and access to services in general. This is actually built into the **Local Government Act 2001** which identifies social inclusion as a core role that should be reflected in local government activities. This signifies that social inclusion became accepted as part of government's mainstream business and not just an "add on" to core programmes.

The acceptance of mainstreaming is very clear in the new **National Development Plan (NDP) 2007-13, "Transforming Ireland"**. Social Inclusion was included as one of the plan's five main priorities. Early 2007 also saw the launch of the **National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, 2007-13**, commonly known as 'NAPinclusion'. This follows the original NAPS and presents a series of high level goals in a manner which complements both the delivery of the latest NDP plan and the current **National Social Partnership Agreement: Towards 2016.**

4. How Can A Local Authority Reduce Poverty & Exclusion?

The term "Social Inclusion" is a relatively new one; however the process of social inclusion is not new to local authorities. In fact, in its broadest definition, social inclusion is a central part of what local authorities are all about. They play a key role in delivering programmes and services which contribute to the social, economic, cultural and political development of our society. On a daily basis they deliver services in areas such as housing, waste management, democratic participation, planning, recreation and transport, all which affect the welfare and quality of the lives of people within their jurisdiction and in particular to disadvantaged people and communities.

Recently, there has been an increased awareness of the impact that services have on the quality of lives of disadvantaged and marginalised people. There is a need to develop an anti-poverty focus across all functional areas within local authorities. Virtually every council service impacts directly or indirectly on poverty and exclusion and how they are experienced by people.

When services are delivered in a socially inclusive way, they take account of barriers that people might experience, and modify the service to meet the needs of different people. This might mean making sure that buildings are fully accessible, that services are delivered in a gender sensitive way, or that the language needs of ethnic minority groups are considered as part of the service delivery.

Local Authorities can significantly impact on poverty/exclusion simply by being more aware of the circumstances and needs of their service users. Some examples include:

▶ Treating all service users with respect.

▶ Ensuring equal access and encouraging participation for all.

▶ Being aware of the cultural norms which are important for groups such as Travellers and ethnic minorities.

▶ Working to opening hours that better suit service users, particularly those on the social and economic margins.

▶ Recognising that one adult in four in Ireland has literacy difficulties and therefore taking this into account in terms of how the council communicates with its public.

▶ Looking closely at accessibility issues and providing more services on an outreach basis.

▶ Guaranteeing the rights of minorities especially through anti-discrimination measures.

▶ Engaging in appropriate consultative processes, especially with users of services.

▶ Actively involving the community & voluntary sector.

Very often it is by changing things on the margins (at no or minimal cost) or by paying close attention to "the way we do things around here" that councils can make the most impact on poverty and exclusion.

Increasingly local authorities can be seen to partner other agencies and organisations to deliver targets on health, education and unemployment. This is particularly evident in the context of their role with the County/City Development Boards, through the work of their Strategic Policy Committees, through the establishment of RAPID (Revitalising Areas by Planning Investment and Development) Implementation Teams and through support for community fora/platforms.

The Role of Elected Members

Local government has two main functions:

1)   The delivery of public services on behalf of the Government in counties and cities.
2)   Representing the interests of its communities at all levels of government.

Cavan County Council with its 25 elected members is the primary unit of Local Government in County Cavan, with a Town Council in each of Belturbet, Cootehill and Cavan Towns.

Each council area has an elected council consisting of representatives (councillors) from different political parties or independent candidates. Local elections to select council representatives are held every five years.

In their elected status local councillors have a very important role to play in combating social exclusion and poverty through highlighting issues facing their constituency members and representing them to the council as well as various other bodies. Elected members are often appointed as public representatives to public bodies such as the VECs, libraries, and regional authorities. As a result they provide a great opportunity in ensuring that public service delivery takes into account those who are the most socially excluded or impoverished in the delivery of services.

Background to the Setting up of the Social Inclusion Units

The multi-dimensional nature of poverty and social inclusion requires action across a range of functions and policy areas within the local authorities. In this context eight Pilot Local Authorities Social Inclusion Units were launched in 2002.

These units were based in Cork City, Waterford City, Louth County, Wicklow County, Limerick City, Dublin City, Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Council and South Dublin County.

A further nine Local Authorities have established Social Inclusion Units in late 2007, Cavan Local Authority being one of these. The remaining units are based in Donegal, Fingal, Galway City, Galway County, Meath, Monaghan, Roscommon and South Tipperary. The Department of Environment and Local Government co-funds the units.   The units are staffed by a Staff Officer and an Analyst.

What is the Social Inclusion Unit?

The Social Inclusion Unit is moving forward the process of bringing social inclusion into the core of Cavan Local Authorities policies. However it is all the Council's Directorates and Departments that are the drivers of this process.

The role of the Social Inclusion Unit is wide ranging and is typically seen as a mechanism for embedding the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) in local authority actions, policies and initiatives and for developing a strong anti-poverty focus within local government practice and policy. Improving access to and quality of services for people from disadvantaged communities is a key priority.

The Cavan Social Inclusion Unit will also have an external focus and will seek to compile a Local Anti-Poverty Strategy (LAPS) for the County. The LAPS will not only look at the services of Cavan Local Authorites but also of other outside agencies such as the HSE, the Department of Social and Family Affairs, VEC, FAS and local development bodies. The LAPS will set out what can be done at a local level to eliminate or overcome social exclusion and poverty within the County through the provision of resources and supports.

The key Objectives for the Social Inclusion Unit are:

1. Develop and oversee the implementation and evaluation of a social inclusion strategy for the local authority, in consultation with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, the Office for Social Inclusion in the Department of Social and Family Affairs, the Local Government Management Services Board and the Combat Poverty Agency.*

2. Assist the local authority to incorporate social inclusion objectives and follow through actions in the local authority corporate planning/business planning processes; (Current plans run from 2004-2009, the new plans will run from 2009 to 2014)

3. Support for the provision of enhanced customer services, particularly for disadvantaged communities and people with disabilities.

4. Identify existing data/establish baseline data on the extent, nature and causes of poverty within the local authority area, and by this means, develop local poverty profiles.

5. Ascertain the local authority's current activities relevant to social inclusion and assess their impact.

6. Promote an awareness of the social inclusion perspective, through staff training and the provision of information, and bring influence to bear across the breadth of the authority's functions.

7. Identify new and innovative opportunities in tackling social exclusion, including in relation to people with disabilities, having regard to relevant national policies, and foster their integration with the local authority's existing social inclusion activities.

8. Co-operate with other agencies involved in social inclusion and key stakeholders in the county/city to ensure a co-ordinated approach and to avoid displacement and duplication.

9. Feed into the work of the County/City Development Board and in particular, its Social Inclusion Measures Working Group in respect of the local authority's role in social inclusion, working in partnership with other relevant agencies.

10. Provide support as appropriate, in relation to the implementation of the RAPID Programme within the local authority's area.

11. Keep abreast and input into policy developments in social inclusion at national and local level.

*   The Cavan Social Inclusion Unit will also seek to produce a Local Anti-Poverty Strategy (LAPS) for the County in partnership with key agencies.*

Cavan Local Authorities Social Inclusion Activities

Many council departments have developed initiatives or improved services to be more socially inclusive of customers. One of the first tasks carried out by the Social Inclusion Unit was to undertake an audit on all sections of Cavan Local Authorities in order to identify social inclusion activity already taking place in the delivery of services. A full and comprehensive report has been produced on this by the Social Inclusion Unit.

Sections	Social Inclusion Activity
Environment & Waste Management	Information leaflets printed up in Polish & Russian on litter management. 'Adopt a Road' Campaign - run in conjunction with community groups & local businesses. This involves these groups cleaning and maintaining the up-keep of a stretch of road in conjunction with the council. The Council actively try to involve other organisations in its anti-litter campaigns such as, local Chamber of Commerce, Farming Representatives, Residents Associations, Youth clubs, as part of the council's ongoing awareness raising initiatives. The environment section has its own communications protocol to assist with communicating information to the public. This has been carried out in an effort to make the service more

	accessible for people with literacy problems or the visually impaired.
Arts	The Bealtaine festival seeks to encourage greater participation in the arts by older people. The Arts office works in conjunction with the County Museum and the Social Inclusion Unit to run local events in Cavan.

The Percentage for Art Scheme. All directorates in the council who are undertaking capital projects funded directly by central government can apply for 'Percentage for Art' funding. Public consultations are carried with communities regarding the art piece and where it should be placed.

The Ramor Theatre:
Many of the performances put on focus on particular themes and raise awareness around certain issues such as Travellers, mental health, youth and suicide.

Run Youth Drama Workshops - explore social issues such as drug awareness.

Run films for Senior Citizen Groups and also offer discounted prices. |

| Community & Enterprise | A number of socially inclusive programmes and initiatives are run through the Community and Enterprise Section.

The Community and Enterprise Section takes a lead role in the County Development Board (CDB) process. A 10 year strategy for the economic, social and cultural development of Cavan was published in 2002 by the Board. This plan was developed in close co-operation with local community & voluntary groups, public agencies, employer's organisation and others. By setting out a shared vision it assists organisations and agencies to work together to tackle local issues, combat disadvantage and create a more inclusive society. Social inclusion is at the heart of the Strategy.

The CDB has also set up a Social Inclusion Measures Working Group. Its objective is to guide the co-ordination of social inclusion projects and programmes at local level.

Community & Voluntary Forum. The Forum comprises a wide range of issue based community & voluntary groups. Each of these groups is affiliated to the CDB. The Forum highlights concerns which are of relevance to its members and involves people in the social, cultural and economic activities in the county.

Research on various social exclusion issues in the county. |
|---|---|

	RAPID (Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment & Development) specifically targets disadvantaged areas of Cavan Town by prioritising funding from central and local government to these areas. Community Grants Scheme for community groups with a social inclusion focus. Sports Partnership has a Sports Inclusion Officer whose role is to increase the participation of people with a disability in sporting activities. 26 playgrounds have been provided within the County, many of which are based in rural towns and disadvantaged areas. Peace Funding – targets racism and sectarianism related exclusion.
Corporate Affairs	The provision of various training courses with a socially inclusive dimension such as, Disability, Equality, and Customer Services Training. A number of relevant surveys have been carried out including: - Employee Satisfaction Survey - Customer Satisfaction Survey & Action Plan produced

	Code of practice for employment of people with a disability; 3% target reached.

Promotes the concept of Life Long Learning by providing support to staff undertaking on a part-time basis further education relevant to their employment.

PMDS – Performance Management Development System. The PMDS process has brought about a growth and strengthening in the process of each department developing Business Plans and holding Team Meetings. Provides staff with the opportunity to feel included in the planning and delivery of services, as well as exchange and share information. |
| **Housing** | The provision of housing for rent for lower income households.

Employment of an Estate Liaison Officer who provides support, training and assistance to all residents of local authority housing.

The Estate Enhancement Programme provides grants to residents to get involved in the enhancement and upkeep of their own local residential areas.

Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee. |

	Lone Parents Housing Project - Information evening and a Housing Information Booklet produced for Lone Parents. Housing Grants available for essential repairs to accommodation based on need. Many elderly people or people with a disability avail of this.
Information & Communications Technology (ICT)	In conjunction with the Community & Voluntary Forum, provided a facility which enabled community groups to build their own websites. The council hosts the community websites. An Accessibility Audit was carried out on the council's website and it is now fully accessible for all users with any form of disability. 'BrowsAloud' is a service provided by a third party company to which the council subscribes annually. The software package can be downloaded from the council's website and allows users to have access to speech enabled websites which have been enabled for this service, including the council's own website.
County Museum	The 'Connecting People, Places and Heritage Project'. This was a cross border Peace Funded project which involved working with people with both physical & mental disabilities.

	Close links with FÁS and the CE Scheme, offer work placements to the long-term unemployed. Facilitate visits from all types of groups. Fully accessible building.
Planning	Social inclusion has been firmly included in the chapter 'Social Strategy & Community Facilities' of the new County Development Plan 2008-1014. Waiver of fees for planning applications from community groups, schools etc. Opportunities for individuals to voice their opinions on the Local Area Plans, the County Development Plan in the form of workshops and public meetings. Childcare guidelines are used in assessing planning applications.
Library	The provision of fully accessible library buildings and services helps to reduce geographical and social exclusion and inequality, enabling more citizens to take an active part in Cavan life.

Large selection of published resources for all ages and all literacy levels (including those with literacy and learning difficulties). This includes books / audio books / large print books/ Literacy materials/ DVDs / Newspapers and Online resources.

Adaptive and Assistive Technology Services developed such as:
- Large print viewer machine
- Large keyboard & mouse
- Zoomtext and Jaws Software - allows for material to be enlarged and read or material can be read back in audio format.

Offer unique and valued access to lifelong learning opportunities. For example, individuals use the library facilities to get their ECDL qualification.

Libraries act as key civic spaces and focal points for their communities bringing people together from all social groups.

Large selection of language learning materials and staff work with the VEC in the promotion of learning English targeted at foreign nationals.

A strong working relationship has been developed with Cavan Adult Learning Centre and the Library is very committed to outreach work with children and adults with literacy difficulties.

	School mobile library service to rural areas. Membership for the library and its facilities is free and open to all members of the public during convenient opening hours.
Fire Service & Civil Defence	Provide talks and information sessions on fire prevention and safety to community groups such as, Active Age, Foroige, etc. Delivered locally in community centres around the county. Have worked with the Community & Voluntary Forum to roll out the delivery of 500 smoke alarms to vulnerable people living within the county. The council has a waiver scheme in place for people who are unable to pay charges, based on the person's income. Staff members sit on the RAPID Community Safety Sub-Group which works on community safety and anti-social behaviour issues.
Motor Tax	Fully accessible office. Includes the following features; - On the ground floor, automatic doors - Deaf Loop System - One low counter top – accessible for wheelchair users - The public can apply for motor tax on-line or by post.

	Motor Tax Forms are available in 8 different languages.
Cavan Town Council	Link in with various groups and committees such as RAPID and the 'Anti-Social Policing Committee/Joint Policing Committee'. Involved with the Equality Steering Group and the CRAIC Team within Cavan Local Authorities. Run an annual 'Estate Awards Scheme' for the best youth project within an estate. Worked in conjunction with the Social Inclusion Unit and RAPID to produce a report entitled a 'Profile of Households Accommodated by Cavan Town Council'. This will assist with policy development and planning. The town theatre provides discounts for not for profit organisations wishing to use the venue.
Roads & Road Safety	Regular consultations held with groups representing persons with disabilities. Increased number of parking spaces for persons with disabilities provided within the county.

	Many traffic crossings have been made more disability friendly within the county. The Local Roads Improvements Scheme improves access and roads in rural isolated area. Road safety advertisement in Polish placed in the local paper. Drive for Life Programme – Road safety programme delivered to local schools and Youthreach Centres.
Inter-Departmental Teams	CRAIC Team. Seeks to embed accessibility into the work of the Council. Have produced a Disability Strategy (2009 to 2013) for Cavan County Council. Equality Action Group. Seek to address equality issues affecting the Council. Have produced an Equality Review and an Equality Action Plan. Communications Group – Have looked at how Cavan Local Authorities communicates and listens to its customers. Have produced a Communications & Information Strategy 2008-2010.

The Social Inclusion Unit will facilitate each service area within the council when drawing up their operational/business plans in order to highlight and build upon these initiatives as well as develop new initiatives.
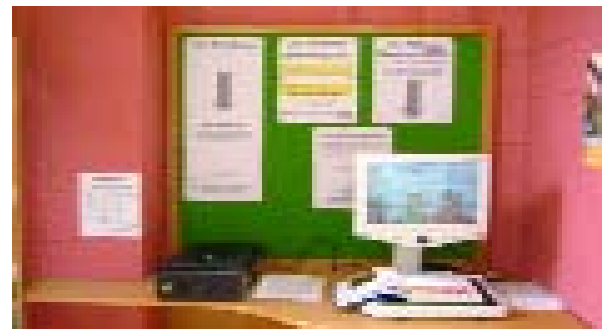
Bealtaine Festival Event 2009

Participants of the Cross Border Project
- County Museum

Belturbet Playground
Accessible picnic table & parking

Comhairle na nÓg Multi-Cultural Event 2009

Assistive & Adaptive Computer Technology Library

Launch of Cavan County Council Disability Strategy 2009

5. So What Can I Do? - Key Tips & Resources for Staff

This booklet is designed to act as a helpful informative tool for all members of staff. All staff have a responsibility for ensuring that the services of the Cavan Local Authorities are provided in a tolerant and respectful manner which meet the requirements of the equality and social inclusion agenda.

❖ **The Following Ideas May Be Useful For Staff In Their Day To Day Work:**

1- Consider what activities you undertake in your job and ask yourself:

- Which of your job activities have a direct impact on the lives of disadvantaged groups?
- Is there any practical way you could reinforce the impact of these activities?
- Which of your job activities do not directly impact on the lives of disadvantaged groups?
- Is there any way you could adapt these activities to meeting the needs of disadvantaged groups?
- Could you improve your job activities by consulting and approaching the support of external organisations/groups that represent the disadvantaged?
- Could you develop mechanisms (example: surveys) to get feedback from the service users, particularly those from disadvantaged groups, to improve services?
- What actions should be prioritised in your day to day work?
- How could your Department/Directorate change the way it delivers services? (e.g. provision of easily read materials to members of the public with reading difficulties, provision of translation services, reception facilities for people with disabilities)

2- *If you deal with the public directly:*

- Do you have any ideas on how to better communicate and reach out to those people who are most disadvantaged? (example: older people, homeless people, Travellers, etc).
- What methods could you use to achieve this?

3- *What supports are necessary for you to make a difference in implementing the social inclusion and equality agenda?*

- What types of training do you need to help you contribute to the social inclusion and equality agenda?
- How can information on social inclusion and equality issues reach all members of staff?

If members of staff have any ideas on how Cavan Local Authorities could be more socially inclusive where do they go?

- Share ideas with direct line managers and at team meetings

- Contact members/Directorate of the Social Inclusion Working Group

- Contact the Social Inclusion Unit

- Contact the Equality Officer

❖ Poverty Impact Assessments

A Poverty Impact Assessment is a process where bodies look at the impact a project, policy or programme is likely to have on people who are socially excluded or in poverty. Ideally it is applied at the design stage but it's equally valid to apply it to practices/policies that are already in place and well established.

Carrying out an assessment (often termed 'proofing') is essentially making a structured attempt at assessing the poverty impact of whatever it is that we're proofing. A very basic approach to Poverty Proofing could follow this simple template:

Assessment Questions	Responses
Project, programme or policy being assessed?	
Which group(s) will it particularly impact on?	
Will it: • Reduce poverty or exclusion? • Lessen their effects? • Help prevent people falling into poverty or exclusion? • Address issues which lead to poverty or exclusion? • Actually increase poverty or exclusion?	
What needs to be done in response to the issues raised above?	1 2. 3. Etc
Any other relevant issues?	

The Office for Social Inclusion (OSI) have drawn up a more detailed set of guidelines on carrying out a Poverty Impact Assessment. More information on this and a template is available on their website www.**socialinclusion**.ie.

❖ Community Development & Developing Effective Consultation Techniques

What is Community Development?

In recent years there has been a growing awareness both of the value of and the need for community development approaches across the public sector. Community development is a method of working which can be used very effectively to tackle inequalities. At the centre of all definitions of community development is the idea that it has the capacity to develop a voice for the voiceless; that those who experience isolation from the political process can be brought right into it and enabled to participate effectively in the democratic process.

The Combat Poverty Agency define Community Development as:

"Enabling or empowering people to actively work for social change which will improve the quality of their lives, the communities in which they live and/or the society of which they are a part. It is a collective process that recognises the interdependence of people. It helps people to identify and articulate their needs, and influence the decision-making processes and structures that affect them, their communities and wider society."

Community development should be central to anti-poverty work because it fights poverty and challenges inequalities and discrimination. Some of the *key principles* of a Community Development approach would include:

- Treating everybody as full and active citizens and operate as an empowering force.

- Challenging discrimination by race, disability, age, political or religious beliefs, gender and sexual orientation.

- Encouraging people to work together for community led, democratic action.

- Promoting participation in public affairs and gives people more power.

- Encouraging people to learn new skills and knowledge and develop confidence through taking action.

- Supporting joint work between government (and their statutory agents) and people (as special interest groups and communities).

- Focusing on public policy, putting policy into practice and drawing on practice to inform public policy.

The reform of local government has given a formal role to the community, including people living in poverty. The right of people, to participate in the formulation of public policy decisions is now generally uncontested. In fact, this right is supported by law in a number of areas. Community representatives have a formal role in participating on structures such as the County Development Board, RAPID, Strategic Policy Committees, and Peace Partnership. In this way they participate in decision making structures at local level.

The successful operation of this role has positively impacted on policy development and implementation at County level.

How to Hold Effective Consultations

Effective planning for Local Authority work requires a robust approach to consultation. Some of the principles of Community Development can inform a good consultation process because of their emphasis on participation, empowerment and equality.

Consultation helps you to plan services better for service users and also gives service users what they expect. Some tips for good practice in consultation would include:

- Clarify the boundaries at the outset.

- Know what it is you are consulting about: use the rule of thumb "I need to know that" rather than "It would be interesting to know that".

- Keep your consultation focused.

- Know who it is you need to consult.

- Choose an appropriate technique.

- Plan the consultation:

what	how	at what cost
when	by who	

- Provide feedback to consultees

- Take the results – both positives and negatives – seriously

- Be ready to show how the consultation made a difference

Making the Connection

One of the greatest challenges facing you may well be trying to identify who to involve in the process of consultation and how to contact them. At a local level here are some ideas of useful contacts which may be able to assist you:

- The Department of Community & Enterprise within the Council. They have a list of community groups operating within the County.

- The Community & Voluntary Forum. The forum has a large membership base made up of various community groups. It will be able to assist you in advertising and publicising the consultation.

- The local development sector will have contact details for issue or geographic-specific groups e.g. Breffni Intergrated Ltd, the County Childcare Committee and the local Community Development Programmes (CDPs).

- Links with local issue-specific groups can be made via their national networks e.g. National Disability Federation and OPEN (national lone parent's network).

- The local Citizens Information Centre.

• Local councillors are always a good source of information for local groups or contacts in their area.

Useful Resources for Involving Excluded Communities & Groups
Good practice guide to community participation (2008), Inner City Organisations Network/North West Inner City Network. Available at: www.iconnetwork.ie or www.nwcin.ie. *Reaching Out: A set of consultation guidelines for public sector bodies:* Available at: www.betterregulation.ie. Craig, Sarah (2000) *Involving communities in local government.* Dublin: Combat Poverty Agency

❖ Good Communication & Addressing Literacy Issues

Communication is key. As council staff we often communicate with people who are in poverty or who are excluded in some way. Many of those people may have literacy problems. Always be sure to use plain and simple English when producing any material which is going to be made available to the public. This will assist many people in many ways. For example, it will assist:

- People with literacy issues
- Foreign nationals who have only a little English
- Older people or people with a visual impairment

Using Plain English will assist people by making materials:

  - Faster to read
  - Getting your message across more easily and in a friendly manner.

Cavan County Council have drawn up a Communications Policy which should be adhered to in writing up documents/information/advertisements for the public.

Individuals who have low literacy levels can often feel ashamed and insecure. As a result they may not seek help and therefore can become excluded from society due to lack of access to resources.

Some Facts….!

- The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) found that 1 in 4 adults struggle with everyday reading material.
- Only 4% of readers will understand a 27 word sentence at the first reading.
- 75% will understand a 17 word sentence.
- 95% will understand an eight word sentence (e.g. one like this).
- Nearly 90% of those who have little or no literate skills are early school leavers.

Potential Pitfalls in Communicating with Customers

- Do not overload people with information that they do not need – this will make them less likely to read materials or attend meetings.

- Do not artificially raise people's expectations relating to services or provisions. This will break down any trust between clients and the local authority.

- Do not assume that people have access to information on the internet – many disadvantaged people do not have access to or know how to use information technologies.

- Do not assume that service users will understand the jargon about services and programmes. Use Plain English whenever possible both written and face-to-face communications.

❖ 'Mind Your Language'……Getting the Terminology Right

Social Inclusion covers a wide range of issues and therefore has tended to develop a language and terminology of its own. We've covered some of the terms earlier in the booklet, but here are a few other common terms and concepts you should be aware of also:

Deprivation

Deprivation is defined by the Office for Social Inclusion as unmet basic human needs. Deprivation is different to poverty, in that it also refers to physical and social conditions rather than just income level.

Diversity

The differences among people in terms of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community. By harnessing these differences we can create a productive environment in which everybody feels valued and everyone's talents are fully used.

Equality

In day-to-day terms, this means providing equal opportunity in terms of access to employment, training, promotion and career development to all employees and job applicants across what are known as the "nine grounds", these are gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community. It's now "the law of the land".

Inequality

Inequality is a comparative or relative concept. It does not measure deprivation or poverty and does not require a threshold. It is possible for inequality to exist with or without poverty. Similarly, poverty can exist with or without inequality.

Ethnicity

Shared characteristics such as language, religion and traditions which contribute to a person or group's identity. We can see ourselves as an ethnic group or be seen by others as such. Typically members of an ethnic group will develop symbolic markers of their ethnicity, eg eating habits, clothing or customs.

Race

Contrary to belief, there is no biological dimension to race. It is instead a social construct used to classify people.

Racism

Racism is a specific form of discrimination and exclusion faced by minority ethnic groups. It is based on the false belief that some 'races' are inherently superior to others because of different skin colour, nationality, ethnic or cultural background.

Interculturalism

This term is essentially about interaction between majority and minority cultures to foster understanding and respect. It is about ensuring that cultural diversity is acknowledged and catered for. Developing a more inclusive and intercultural society is about inclusion by design, not as an add-on or afterthought. It is essentially about creating the conditions for interaction, equality of opportunity, understanding and respect.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism acknowledges the need for recognition and celebration of different cultures in a society. The status of several different ethnic, racial, religious or cultural groups co-existing in harmony in the same society.

Fuel Poverty

Being unable to afford adequate levels of heating. This is one of a number of indicators of deprivation used to define consistent poverty.

Social Cohesion

The "condition" of having individuals and communities all enjoying an acceptable standard of living whilst being free from poverty, discrimination and exclusion. This is a core, stated aim of the EU.

Empowerment

Sharing power between stakeholders. The process of transferring decision-making power from influential sectors to poor communities and individuals that have traditionally been excluded. Thus the process contributes to skills development, confidence building and people being more informed.

Marginalisation

The process whereby certain groups suffering deprivation, e.g. the impoverished, unemployed, single parents and those with limited formal education are pushed to the edge of society where they have little say in decision making and are denied the means to improve their position.

Members of Cavan Local Authority Social Inclusion Working Group

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Orla Brady	Community & Enterprise	8578
Rhonda Tidy	Arts	8547
Sinead Gibbs	Planning	8620
Emma Breiden	Access Officer	8392
Deidre Donnelly	Housing	8319
Jim Lyng	Partnership Facilitator	8655
Michael Mussi	Environment	8416
Savina Donohoe	County Museum	049 8544070
Seamus Mc Loughlin	Engineer	049 437 8703
Martin Lynch	Housing Liaison Officer	087 917 3374
Tom Sullivan	Library	8510
Gerry Maguire	Rates	8481
Pat Farrelly	Caretaker	049 8547013

Staff Members of the Social Inclusion Unit

Emer Coveney, Social Inclusion Officer	Ext. 8581
Gráinne Boyle, Social Inclusion Analyst	8586

Potential Stakeholders & Sources of Information

At Local Level	At National Level
The Health Service Executive	Department of Health & Children
Vocational Education Committees	Department of Education & Science
Social Welfare Offices	Office for Social Inclusion, Department of Social & Family Affairs (Combat Poverty Agency)
Resource Centres for the Unemployed	
Money Advice & Budgeting Service (MABS)	FAS
The Society of St. Vincent de Paul	Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government
RAPID Initiatives	Pobal
Breffni Integrated Ltd.	Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform
County Childcare Committee	Equality Authority
The Gardai	Simon Community
Local Community Development Projects & Family Resource Centres	Central Statistics Office
Local Advocacy Groups	National Advocacy Groups

Useful Contacts

Age and Opportunity
Tel: 01 8057709
Email: info@olderinireland.ie Website: www.olderinireland.ie

Comhairle Citizens Information
Tel: 01 6059000
Email: info@comhairle.ie Website: www.comhairle.ie

Equality Authority
Tel: 01 4173333
Email: info@equality.ie Website: www.equality.ie

Forum of People with Disabilities
Tel: 01 8786077
Email: inforum@indigo.ie Website: www.inforum.ie

Irish Traveller Movement
Tel: 01 6796577
Email: itmtrav@indigo.ie Website: www.itmtrav.com

National Disability Authority
Tel: 01 6080400
Email: nda@nda.ie Website: www.nda.ie

National Women's Council of Ireland
Tel: 01 8787248
Email: info@nwci.ie Website: www.nwci.ie

Pavee Point
Tel: 01 8780255
Email: pavee@iol.ie Website: www.paveepoint.ie
National Council for The Blind of Ireland
Website: www.ncbi.ie

National Association of Deaf People
Tel: 01 8723800
E-mail: nad@iol.ie Website: www.nadp.ie

Focus Ireland
Website: www.focusireland.ie

Online Access to Services, Information & Support (OASIS)
Website: www.oasis.gov.ie/

European Social Network (ESN)
E-mail: info@socialeurope.com Website: www.socialeurope.com

Office For Social Inclusion (OSI)
Tel: 01 7043851
E-mail: osi@welfare.ie Website: www.socialinclusion.ie

Combat Poverty Agency

Tel: 01-6706746

E-mail: info@combatpoverty.ie Website: www.cpa.ie

(This agency will be integrated within the Department of Social & Family Affairs in June 2009)

National Adult Literacy Association (NALA)

Tel: 01 8554332

E-mail: literacy@nala.ie Website: www.nala.ie

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