

Local Community Safety Partnerships Pilot Initiative Update

Background

In support of the roll out of Local Community Safety Partnerships in each local authority area as provided for in the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024, this information note highlights the progress and valuable insights gained from the Local Community Safety Partnership (LCSP) pilot initiative, launched in early 2021.

This initiative represents a cornerstone of our commitment to enhancing community safety through a whole-of-government approach, as recommended by the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland (CoFPI).

Key Achievements and Benefits

The LCSP model has successfully demonstrated that community safety extends beyond the remit of An Garda Síochána (AGS) and the Department of Justice. It embodies a collaborative effort that includes various government agencies, local services, the voluntary sector, and the community itself. This partnership approach ensures that responses to community safety issues are multi-faceted, effectively targeting resources to prevent crime and enhance the overall feeling of safety within our communities.

Developing Local Community Safety Plans (LCSPs)

A pilot initiative has been ongoing across three sites, namely Dublin North Inner City, Longford, and Waterford City over the past two years. Each of these pilots has been subject to independent monitoring and evaluation so as to inform best practice for the national rollout of the Local Community Safety Partnerships.

By the end of the two-year pilot phase, each of the three pilot locations successfully developed and launched their Community Safety Plans. These plans are pivotal in grounding the community safety priorities and actions tailored to local needs. For instance:

- The Dublin North Inner City Community Safety Plan 2023-2026 was launched by Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee, on 8th September 2023.

- The Longford Community Safety Plan 2022-2024 was launched in September 2022.
- The Waterford Community Safety Plan 2023-2028 was launched by then Minister Simon Harris on 27th March 2023.

Effective Collaboration and Engagement

The three pilot sites broadly achieved what they set out to do, despite the challenging start during COVID-19. All set up their LCSP structures and produced community safety plans, albeit at different times and in slightly different ways. This reflects the unique situations in each local area, and it is likely that this variability will be mirrored in the national rollout.

The LCSP model emphasises the importance of relationships and trust among all stakeholders, which include local councillors, community members, and statutory representatives. This relational model, where communities get to highlight issues and service providers hear them first hand, is vital to successful partnership.

In this regard, community safety moved from concept to practice through the formation and work of the LCSPs, building relationships and preparing for and implementing detailed local community safety plans.

This effort has been further supported financially by the introduction of the Community Safety Innovation Fund (CSIF), with projects funded such as:

- Longford LCSP Cornerstone Initiatives which contain six components based on extensive community consultation, including the Water Safety and Sport Introduction Initiative, the Boxing Integration Programme, and the Development of a Restorative Justice Community Approach. This approach includes education and training workshops for key stakeholders, staff, and community members.
- The Dublin North Inner City Community Safety Warden Scheme aims to provide on-street visibility, assist vulnerable community members, and collaborate with key partners and service providers such as An Garda Síochána and Dublin City Council.
- The Dungarvan Community Project is a collaborative initiative between WWETB and Waterford Council. It established a further education training

centre and an allotment training area aimed at diverting youths from anti-social behaviour towards further education.

- Bohemian Football Club North Inner City Sporting Alliance Programme targets crime reduction through sports collaboration by establishing a network of sports clubs to enhance community cohesion and safety in the NIC area.

Another open call for applications for the 2024 Community Safety Fund opened in June, and the fund will be increased to €3.75 million. The Department of Justice is keen to use this funding to develop community safety projects such that those with successful outcomes can be 'mainstreamed' and funded by relevant service providers; and where there are wider benefits, can be rolled out in other locations. The closing dates for this round is 26th July.

Examples of the benefits of the partnership approach from the Pilot Phase

Waterford LCSP:

The Waterford Community Safety Plan is a collaborative initiative between WWETB and Waterford Council, which established a Further Education training centre and allotment training area. This project with the collaboration of the Partners will give a meaningful reskilling option that emphasised education and lifelong learning in support of crime prevention initiatives. A key output was the establishment of community hubs that provide resources and support for residents, such as job training programs, mental health services, and recreational activities for young people.

These hubs serve as focal points for community engagement and support, fostering a sense of belonging and proactive community involvement. The collaborative efforts in Waterford also included environmental design improvements, such as better lighting and the refurbishment of public spaces, which have contributed to enhanced perceptions of safety and community pride.

The collaborative approach in Waterford extend further to initiatives like the North West Suburbs Community Action Plan. The project seeks to create a community action plan tied to the LCSP Community Safety Plan, the Local Economic & the Community Plan and Development Plan. The plan will include short, medium and long term actions and seeks to assess and extend services for communities, including targeting youth involved in anti-social behaviour in the North-West suburbs of Waterford City.

Additionally, the Consent Matters project, exemplifies a collaborative approach in addressing Sexual Violence and Harassment (SVH) by engaging educational, statutory and community stakeholders throughout Waterford City and County to tackle sexual violence and harassment through education and awareness programmes. The ultimate goal of this collaborative initiative of Waterford WLCSP and SETU is to raise awareness of sexual violence and harassment (consent), and foster a safe, respectful, and supportive culture in the community, whilst attempting to reduce assaults.

Longford LCSP:

This pilot set a successful foundation for improved collaboration and holistic responses to community safety. The Longford Community Safety Plan focused on a range of issues including crime prevention, youth engagement, and community development. It highlighted the importance of shifting towards a culture of prevention and early intervention.

The collaborative approach in Longford saw various agencies community organisations and other local and regional inter-agency structures sharing responsibilities, leading to more integrated and effective community safety measures.

For example the working group 'Trauma Informed Care - Taking Action Collectively (TicTac)' has been established to develop an interagency and collaborative approach to implementing trauma informed care and practices in services across Longford and Westmeath. This will include the provision of training to front line staff in organisations where trauma-Informed care is not standard, such as local authorities and An Garda Síochána.

In conjunction with the Drug Driving Awareness project, Longford LCSP are working in collaboration with the Midlands Drug and Alcohol Task Force and An Garda Síochána to develop an information campaign to raise awareness of the dangers of driving under the influence of drugs.

Furthermore, as part of the First Fridays Night Time Economy Project, Longford LCSP, in collaboration with the Arts Office and Backstage Theatre, has received €80,000 in funding from the Arts Council for a six-month late night events project 'First Fridays'. This project provides arts and culture acts for free to venues in Longford town.

In support of this project, Longford LCSP are working with An Garda Síochána to provide increased Garda visibility on event nights, to tackle the 'fear of safety' expressed during consultation. The LCSP Coordinator was on patrol with An Garda

Síochána for the first event and it is intended that other partners such as the Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, will patrol with the LCSP at future events.

As part of their broader efforts Longford LCSP is also engaging with Traveller and other minority communities to improve integration, increased youth engagement programs, and targeted education initiatives aimed at reducing crime and improving community cohesion.

Dublin North Inner City LCSP:

The Dublin North Inner City LCSP focused on themes such as environment, integration, inclusion, and Garda visibility.

One notable initiative within this LCSP is the Community Safety Warden Scheme. This initiative aims to enhance feelings of safety and address issues of anti-social behaviour in two pilot areas: Wolfe Tone Square and O'Connell Street. The wardens provide a visible presence, foster communication with stakeholders, and signpost relevant services. The scheme also establishes effective grassroots communication with state and community services, including detached youth workers, An Garda Síochána, local drug and alcohol programmes, and Dublin City Council in its management.

Another collaborative effort under the LCSP is the Bridge Project, which offers an alternative to custody for adult male offenders. Collaborating with Gardaí and youth workers, the project targets anti-social behaviour among young people, facilitating connections with communities to deter involvement. Diversions like bike workshops and internships have proved successful, with initiatives like a football match and offshore rowing further engaging participants.

For context, this group emerged in response to a series of anti-social and violent incidents involving two rival factions, symbolically representing the youth from both the north and south sides of the city centre. The Gardaí and Youth Workers from both sides of the river spearheaded the efforts, while the LCSP provided support for researching effective distractions from the concerning activities.

Initiatives like the proposed football match between Gardaí and young people proved highly successful. Additionally, offshore rowing and various other pro-social activities were undertaken with positive outcomes.

In addition to the work involving the LCSP, the Community Safety Innovation Fund has also funded projects that have further advanced community safety efforts in the LCSP

area. One such initiative is the Bohemian Football Club North Inner City Sporting Alliance Programme, which aims to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in the NIC area by establishing a formal network of sports clubs and organisations focused on crime reduction through sports.

By integrating multicultural educational resources for children aged 9-12, club workshops, and community showcase events, the program seeks to foster collaboration among sports clubs, enhancing community cohesion and safety in the NIC area.

Key Learnings and Future Considerations: Conclusion

While the pilot has shown many positive outcomes, the learnings to date from the independent evaluation informs us that the role of the Chairperson, particularly in terms of leadership and experience, is central to the Partnership. It is a significant high-level role, within their own community/county, which will require dedication and time. In addition, the pilot also highlighted areas that require attention as we prepare for the national rollout. Some key considerations include:

- **Recruitment and Retention:** Ensuring the recruitment and retention of volunteer chairpersons, coordinators, and key staff.
- **Engagement:** Achieving appropriate levels of involvement from relevant agencies and community representatives.
- **Oversight and Alignment:** Aligning LCSPs with other partnership structures to maximize shared impact and avoid duplication.
- **Community Involvement:** Inclusively engaging the community to inform LCSP development and implementation.

Conclusion

The LCSP model aligns with the Government's vision for building stronger, safer communities. It underscores the importance of a whole-of-government responsibility, with community involvement as a core feature. The pilot has shown that the LCSP can work effectively across different settings, and with your support, we can ensure its successful rollout nationally.

The contemporary context is complex and dynamic, requiring a robust response that brings together multiple partners in collaboration. As we transition from pilot to national implementation, it will be essential to maintain ongoing monitoring and evaluation to inform good practice partnership working.

In this regard, the newly established National Office for Community Safety shall where required provide training, guidance and support to safety partnerships in their operation and in the performance of their functions.

It is in this context, that we look forward to working with you and other newly elected councillors to continue building on these successes and addressing any challenges that arise.