



Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí
Offaly County Council



Offaly Migrant Integration Strategy

2020 - 2024

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Forward



As Cathaoirleach of Offaly County Council, I am delighted to introduce the Offaly Migrant Integration Strategy 2020 – 2024 which sets out Offaly County Council's plan to ensure the integration of all those who live in Offaly.

Over the last two decades, the number of people moving to Offaly from all over the world has significantly increased. Those who have come to live here have enriched our society in terms of culture, language, friendships, new business ideas and social activities and it is crucial that they continue to feel welcome and have a sense of belonging and pride in Offaly.

This strategy and action plan demonstrates Offaly County Council's commitment to creating a sustainable response to the challenges and opportunities faced by Offaly's diverse population. This strategy is Offaly County Council's promise to all its citizens to continue working to improve their quality of life and I look forward to seeing the positive impact it will have on all our lives.

Councillor Peter Ormond

Cathaoirleach
Offaly County Council



I am delighted to present the Offaly Migrant Integration Strategy 2020 – 2024. This strategy was developed to ensure that Offaly County Council services meet the needs of our diverse population and it also sets out our commitment to promote migrant integration in the county.

This is an action focused strategy and it clearly sets out how we intend to meet the identified needs of migrants in Offaly over the next five years. We acknowledge the valuable work already achieved by service providers and community organisations throughout the county and this has laid a solid foundation for our work going forward.

Offaly County Council intends to take the lead with this strategy, while we look forward to working with a range of stakeholders through the Migrant Interagency Working Group to complete the actions necessary to deliver an inclusive and intercultural county, which champions diversity, and where all citizens are valued equally.

Anna Marie Delaney

Chief Executive
Offaly County Council

Introduction

Offaly, at the heart of Ireland, has become increasingly diverse over the last two decades, similar to the trend throughout Ireland. In response to this, a wide range of interagency and community initiatives have been developed to address the needs of Offaly's migrant population. This strategy aims to build on that work and put in place a framework in which integration work can be further developed.

The county's first Integration Strategy is underpinned by the goal of Offaly as an intercultural society and shares the vision of the National Migrant Integration Strategy 2017-2020 'A Blueprint for All' of an integrated society in which migrants are facilitated to play a full part in Irish society – a society in which migrants have the opportunities necessary to lead full lives, to enjoy the benefits of living in Ireland and to make a contribution to Irish life and society.

The migrant population is highly diverse in terms of nationality, ethnicity and religious belief and non-belief. It includes people of different ages, genders and sexual orientation. The situations of migrants in Offaly varies considerably including whether they have the right to work and the manner in which they came to the county.

Some migrants come to Offaly on a short-term basis, others have made their home here. The use of 'migrant' for the purpose of this Strategy is broad and includes people who have moved to Ireland, the Irish-born children of migrants as well as those who have become Irish citizens as they may continue to face challenges.

The aim of this Migrant Integration Strategy is to work towards creating an inclusive and intercultural society where all residents of the county are valued equally. The actions included in this strategy involve a range of stakeholders from statutory agencies, community and voluntary organisations and members of the migrant communities and they attempt to address some of the barriers to full participation identified by these stakeholders.

If Offaly, during Census 2016, was reduced to the size of a small village (100 people), 90 would have Irish nationality, 3 would be Polish, 2 would have UK nationality, 1 would be Lithuanian, 1 would be half Lithuanian and Latvian and the remaining 3 would have over 70 nationalities between them!



Census 2016: A Profile of Offaly’s Migrant Population

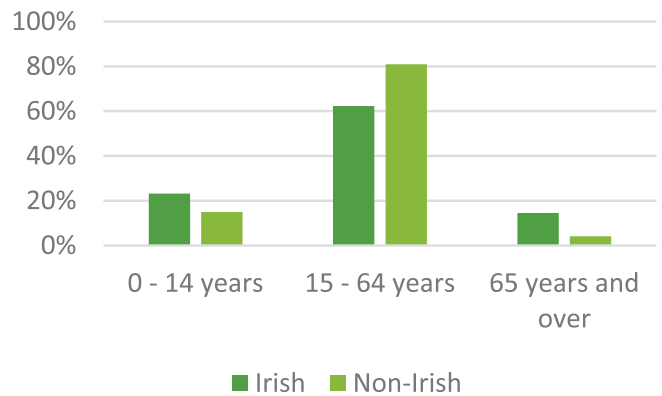
The 2016 Census of Population recorded the total usually resident population of Offaly as 77,750.

In the state as a whole, 535,475 people, 11.4% of the usually resident population, described themselves as non-Irish nationals. An additional 104,784 identify as dual Irish and other nationalities. The non-Irish national population of Offaly on Census night was 6,617, comprising 8.5% of the total usually resident population, and 1,143 people described themselves as dual Irish and other nationalities.

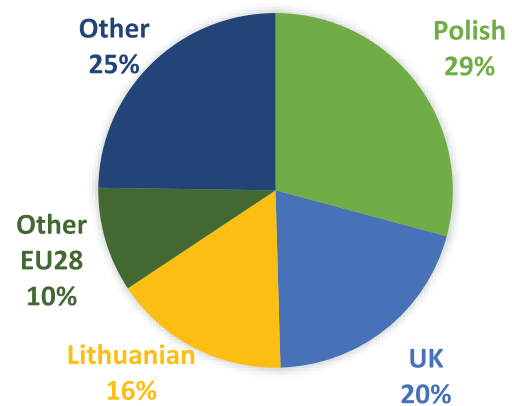
The age profile of migrants living in Offaly is different to the Irish population, with 80% of the non-Irish population aged between 15 and 64 years. Just 62% of the Irish population fall within this age bracket. Likewise, 14% of Irish born people are 65 and over but only 4% of migrants are to be found in the same age group.

The most common nationality in Offaly after Irish was Polish at 1,931 (29% of the non-Irish population), followed by UK citizens (1,348, 20% of the non-Irish population), Lithuanians (1,067 or 16% of the non-Irish population), 632 are from other members of the European Union and 1,639 (25% of the non-Irish population) are from outside of the European Union.

Census 2016: Population of Offaly by age



Census 2016: Non-Irish population in Offaly by nationality



Census 2016: Usually resident population by nationality

		Non-Irish Population	Dual Nationals	Total usually resident population	% of Non-Irish nationals
State	Persons	535,475	104,784	4,689,921	11.4%
	Male	267,088		2,320,460	
	Female	268,387		2,369,461	
Offaly	Persons	6,617	1,143	77,750	8.5%
	Male	3,386		38,660	
	Female	3,231		39,090	

Integration Policy

Integration Policy at European Level

The integration of migrants has been prioritised by the EU through the adoption in 2004 of the Common Basic Principles (CBPs) for Immigrant Integration Policy. The Principles offer a framework for the development of policy to promote the integration of third-country nationals, and were reaffirmed by the European Council Conclusions of 2014.

Common Basic Principles (CBPs) for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU

Integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States

Integration implies respect for the basic values of the European Union

Employment is a key part of the integration process and is central to the participation of immigrants, to the contributions immigrants make to the host society, and to making such contributions visible

Basic knowledge of the host society's language, history, and institutions is indispensable to integration; enabling immigrants to acquire this basic knowledge is essential to successful integration

Efforts in education are critical to preparing immigrants, and particularly their descendants, to be more successful and more active participants in society

Access for immigrants to institutions, as well as to public and private goods and services, on a basis equal to national citizens and in a non-discriminatory way is a critical foundation for better integration

Frequent interaction between immigrants and Member State citizens is a fundamental mechanism for integration. Shared forums, intercultural dialogue, education about immigrants and immigrant cultures, and stimulating living conditions in urban environments enhance the interactions between immigrants and Member State citizens

The practice of diverse cultures and religions is guaranteed under the Charter of Fundamental Rights and must be safeguarded, unless practices conflict with other inviolable European rights or with national law

The participation of immigrants in the democratic process and in the formulation of integration policies and measures, especially at the local level, supports their integration

Mainstreaming integration policies and measures in all relevant policy portfolios and levels of government and public services is an important consideration in public policy formation and implementation

Developing clear goals, indicators and evaluation mechanisms are necessary to adjust policy, evaluate progress on integration and to make the exchange of information more effective

Integration Policy at National Level

In February 2017, the government launched Ireland's first National Migrant Integration Strategy, 'A Blueprint for the Future'. The strategy was the first detailed policy on migrant integration since 2008 and it outlines 76 actions spread across government departments and agencies, six of which specifically mention Local Authorities.

The Migrant Integration Strategy defines integration as "the ability to participate to the extent that a person needs to and wishes in all of the major components of the society without having to relinquish his or her own cultural identity". The strategy states the necessity of a two-way process, where integration involves change for Irish society and institutions so that the benefits of greater diversity can be fully realised.

A Blueprint for the Future Vision:

The basic values of Irish society are respected by all.

Migrants are enabled and expected to participate in economic life – in employment and self-employment.

Migrants interact with the host community and participate with them in cultural, sporting and other activities while preserving also their own traditions as they wish.

Migrants have language skills sufficient to enable them to participate in economic life and in the wider society.

Migrants have a knowledge of Ireland, its history and culture.

Migrants, and particularly their children, benefit fully from the education system.

Migrants are enabled to celebrate their national, ethnic, cultural and religious identities, subject to the law.

Migrants participate in politics and public life as provided for by law.

Integration policies and measures are mainstreamed in the work of all Government Departments and agencies, local authorities and other public bodies and organisations.

Positive action measures are undertaken where appropriate to address the specific needs of migrant groups.

Migrants and migrant representative groups, contribute to policy and service development.

Migrants get support to access and navigate public services.

Department of Justice and Equality: 'The Migrant Integration Strategy, A Blueprint for the Future' p. 10.

Policy at County Level

The document 'This is Offaly: Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2016-2021', contains actions in the Empowering Community section which refer to engagement with new communities. The objective under the Plan is to monitor the emerging new communities across the county and where there are specific needs link the new communities to local supports.

This strategy aims to build on these actions.

Case Study of Offaly Sports Partnership's Integrated Academy for Athletic Performance

Offaly Sports Partnership established its first Integrated Academy for Athletic Performance (IAAP) project in Portarlington in 2011. The project set out to address what the Sports Partnership perceived was an under representation of migrant communities in the sport of athletics. It aimed to pilot the establishment of a safe and fun training space for migrant children and their friends; introduce the children on the programme to competitive athletics; and to transfer children interested in continuing to pursue the sport into established athletic clubs.



Offaly Sports Partnership planned and delivered track and field sporting initiatives designed explicitly to promote the integration and performance of migrant children. The Integrated Academy engaged with primary school pupils of migrant backgrounds. Through Offaly Sports Partnership's work, they became aware that some project participants and families experienced racially motivated discrimination within sport and the families needed the backup of the project to deal with this.

Though many of the project participants' families have limited means, most of the children are also striving for high academic achievement and the project has encouraged the holistic development of the athletes to achieve both sport and life success.

The project has resulted in children who participated in the project continuing to participate in sport in



secondary school and strive for third level academic and sports scholarships. The project has also created a pipeline of children transferring to established athletic clubs. A total of 54 national medals were won by participants of the Portarlington After School Project over the initial eight-year period and three participants have gone on to represent Ireland. In addition to increased participation and performance of athletes from migrant backgrounds, the project has also increased their visibility in the sport.



An independent review of the project concluded that it's long-term impact and legacy will be more migrants competing. This will lead to an increase in participation and, with higher levels of participation, an increase in the likelihood of discovering top-level talent with the possibility of a higher percentage of athletes from a migrant background representing Ireland at senior major championships in the future.

Integration Review

In addition to the policy review, consultation was carried out with service providers, community groups and members of the migrant community. Consultation was conducted in a variety of ways including two email surveys (one aimed at service providers and the other aimed at migrants) and one-to-one meetings. The experiences and views of both local service providers and local service users were collected in areas such as:

- Nature of services provided for migrants and key presenting issues
- Areas of notable success or achievement in promoting or implementing integration
- Obstacles to full participation in community life
- Staff training in intercultural competency, diversity and inclusion
- Consultation engagement with migrant communities
- Sections of migrant communities or integration activities that the organisation would like to support better
- What helps people to feel included and at home in Offaly

Review Outcomes and Strategy Development

Some of the issues identified in the consultation process include:

Language Barrier: Both service providers and migrants consulted view language barriers as a hindrance to migrants as it impacted them accessing services and employment.

Accessing Information: Even for migrants with a high level of English language, many stated that they found it difficult to navigate Irish services including healthcare and social protection.

Active Citizen Participation: Many migrants have limited knowledge of their voting entitlements.

Perceptions of migrants: Some migrants felt that there was misunderstandings and limited knowledge about other countries.

Access to Employment: Some migrants felt that a lack of recognition of education and employment from their home country were obstacles to accessing meaningful employment.

Based on the findings of the Review, three priority integration themes emerged:

1: Information, Communication and Services

2: Developing Inclusive Communities

3: Supporting Education, Training and Employment Opportunities

Under each of these identified priority themes, a corresponding action plan has been developed. A key consideration in drafting this action plan is that its goals should be realistic and achievable within the resources and accountabilities of Offaly County Council.



Case Study of the Edenderry Overseas Women's Group, supported by Offaly Local Development Company

Through individual meetings with an Offaly Local Development Company (OLDC) Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) worker, several women in Edenderry, attending English as a *Second Language* classes, expressed difficulty in relation to feeling part of the wider community. They found that they faced a language and cultural barrier, together with feeling no connection to the locality and locals. They had tried to form relationships and bonds through the schools that their children attend but had had no real success to date.

Through the meetings it became apparent that the women felt they were experiencing disadvantage as women. They were all primary care givers for young children and had no opportunity to advance their social needs. They welcomed the opportunity to participate in the wider community and make contact with others in the same situation as a social outlet.

The SICAP Worker brought the women together to explore the option of forming a group. At the meeting, the women decided that their aims were:

- To merge into and engage with the community by getting to work and learn with others from different nationalities and in time, to give something back to the community
- To use whatever funding/supports were available to practice English as part of a group process
- To socialise and feel part of a social network locally
- To progress educationally

The women explored ways that they might start to achieve their aims and decided that they wanted to practice English through the process of Yoga and Meditation. This would allow an opportunity for the use of English outside of the formalised classroom setting and equally relevant to the group was the fact that they struggled with feeling socially isolated and the choice of training reflected their wish to improve their mental health and wellbeing.

Through SICAP support weekly classes were organised at a time which did not clash with English

classes and while children were still in school. The yoga and meditation instructor was also from a non-Irish background and the women were delighted that she too understood the challenges in moving to a new country.

Through this initial SICAP intervention the group has continued to meet and to expand their activities including an Irish cookery course, funded by Healthy Ireland, which was an opportunity to learn more about Irish culture and have conversations about the similarities and differences in cultures. The group also shared yoga sessions with a Lone Parents group, supported by OLDC, and relationships developed between members of both groups, often based on humour around the yoga exercises!

The Overseas Women's Group members have shared how the group has helped to reduce their feelings of social isolation, allowed them to build relationships and to understand that there are others experiencing the same issues as them. Through the variety of activities, the women have been able to learn more about Irish culture as well as each other's cultures and to build relationships with both Irish and non-Irish women based in Edenderry.



Strategy Development

Theme 1: Information, Communication and Services

Access to information is fundamental to achieving integration in all aspects, including the ability to access services and participate in community life. This theme aims to address the barriers that some migrants face. Equally, for service providers to properly provide services for migrants, they need to have an understanding of the differing needs of diverse communities and to develop intercultural competencies to reasonably meet these needs.

Aims:

- Support improved access to information for migrant communities
- Improve access to translation services
- Strengthen service providers' promotion of integration objectives and values

Theme 2: Developing Inclusive Communities

Integration occurs when members of local and migrant communities can meet and interact, leading to respect and an appreciation of the advantages that diversity can bring to neighbourhoods, rural communities and the economy. Through enhancing migrant participation in community activities and engagement in democratic processes, community segregation can be combated and positive relationships will develop through the communities. By raising awareness among policymakers, the media and the wider community on the benefits and opportunities arising from integration and challenging misinformation, Offaly will become a more welcoming and inclusive society.

Aims:

- Promote intercultural participation and appreciation of integration
- Encourage diverse representation in community leadership
- Increase citizen engagement and political participation

Theme 3: Supporting Education, Training and Employment Opportunities

The ability to communicate and find employment are central to a person's wellbeing and economic prosperity as well as strengthening the economy. Fluency in English language is required to enable people to participate fully in the workforce. By tapping into the skills of migrants, Offaly has the potential to capitalise on 'diversity advantage' through providing the tools to allow migrants to use their skills and entrepreneurial experiences.

Aims:

- Promote educational awareness among migrant communities
- Improve access to information and employment skills training for migrant communities
- Develop the entrepreneurship talents and potential of migrant communities



Action Plan

Theme 1: Information, Communication and Services

Action	Responsible Body	Timeline	Success Indicators
Establish a Migrant Interagency Working Group to advise and monitor the integration strategy	OCC	Q2 2020	Interagency group established Terms of reference agreed
Implement training for staff and elected representatives on diversity and intercultural awareness	OCC	Q2 2020	Frontline staff to have received training Elected representatives to have received training
Facilitate and support the information and services delivered through Offaly Citizens Information Centre	Citizens Information	Q4 2020	Increase in number of migrant clients engaging with Citizens Information
Use existing outreach channels to disseminate information to migrant communities	PPN, OLDC	Q4 2020	Increase in dissemination of information to migrant communities
Include migrant representation on the Joint-Policing Committee	An Garda Síochána	Q4 2020	Increase in migrant representation on the Joint-Policing Committee
Compile an accredited list of interpretation and translation services available within OCC to ensure information is accessible by migrants	OCC Community Section	Q4 2020	List of interpretation and translation services completed and circulated in OCC
Promote awareness of national health and wellbeing campaigns to migrant communities	OLDC	Q2 2020	Increase in knowledge of national health and wellbeing campaigns amongst migrant communities
To explore possible funding opportunities for integration work	OCC	Q4 2020	Funding opportunities considered

Theme 2: Developing Inclusive Communities

Action	Responsible Body	Timeline	Success Indicators
Support local residents associations to encourage participation by migrants	OCC Community Section	Q4 2020	Increase in migrant participation in residents associations
Establish a Migrant Integration Forum through existing Public Participation Network Structures	PPN	Q2 2020	Establishment of Migrant Integration Forum
Facilitate migrant groups in finding suitable meeting spaces	Offaly County Libraries	Q4 2020	Increase in the number of migrants using meeting spaces
Support initiatives that promote integration and team-building among young migrant and refugee groups	Comhairle na nÓg	Q2 2020	Number of young migrant people participating in Comhairle na nÓg
Develop a voter registration campaign to raise awareness within the migrant communities about the entitlement to vote and how to register to vote	OCC Community Section	Q3 2020	Increase in number of migrants on the voters register Increase in participation by eligible voters in democratic processes
Develop initiatives to promote and celebrate Offaly's diverse communities and actively encourage intercultural exchange	PPN	Q4 2020	Increase in intercultural events and intercultural exchange
Expand existing library service initiatives to encourage intercultural activities and promote a "sense of place" for all communities	Offaly County Libraries	Q4 2020	Increase in range of events which include migrants
Develop intercultural dialogue and celebrate cultural diversity through sports including the organisation of Diversity Games	Offaly Sports Partnership	Q4 2020	Sports initiatives developed and implemented
Develop sports interventions targeting asylum seekers and refugees	Offaly Sports Partnership, OLDC	Q2 2020	Sports interventions developed Participation of asylum seekers & refugees
Support the capacity of local community groups to seek new funding opportunities and enhance their organisational capacity	PPN, OLDC	Q4 2020	Increase in number of migrant-led organisations obtaining new funding
Promote and raise awareness of available opportunities to encourage and train migrant volunteers	Offaly Volunteer Centre	Q4 2020	Increase in number of migrant volunteers

Theme 3: Supporting Education, Training and Employment Opportunities

Action	Responsible Body	Timeline	Success Indicators
Promote the use of the Intercultural Education Guidelines for Primary and Post-Primary Schools produced by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment	Department of Education	Q4 2020	Increased awareness of the guidelines
Promote the formal and informal adult education programmes delivered throughout the county	LOETB, OLDC	Q4 2020	Increase in migrants participating in formal and informal adult education programmes
Promote the foreign qualification recognition services provided by Quality and Qualifications Ireland to support employment opportunities	LOETB, OLDC	Q4 2020	Increase awareness of foreign qualification recognition
Provide information on local enterprise supports, including the promotion of migrant entrepreneurship, at events	OLDC, LEO	Q4 2020	Increase in the number of migrant-run businesses
Promote the 'Business Development Programme' and other training programmes among migrant communities	OLDC, LEO	Q4 2020	Increase in number of migrants on the Business Development Programme
Facilitate engagement with the Chamber of Commerce and the Migrant Integration Forum	Chamber of Commerce, PPN	Q4 2020	Engagement between the Chamber of Commerce and the Migrant Integration Forum

Monitoring and Evaluation

Offaly Integration Strategy 2019-23 serves as a roadmap. It charts how the overarching vision for integration in Offaly will be implemented through the three thematic areas: Information, Communication and Services; Developing Inclusive Communities; and Supporting Education, Training and Employment Opportunities.



The establishment of the Migrant Working Group will bring together a wide range of stakeholders. The process of implementation and delivery for the county will involve these stakeholders working in collaboration. This strategy aims to be flexible enough to adapt to changing social and economic circumstances.

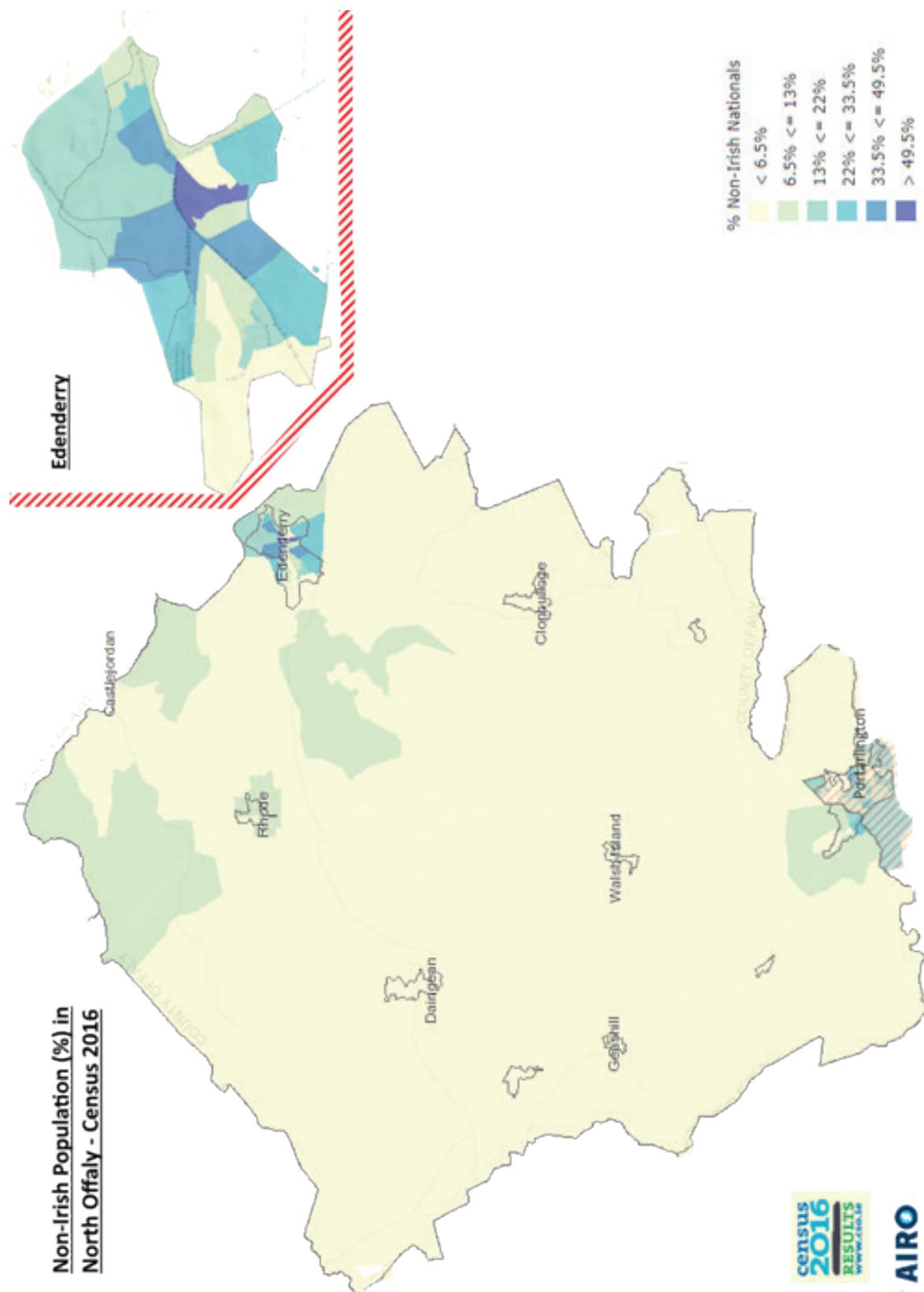


Offaly County Council Community & Culture Section will oversee, in consultation with a range of stakeholders, the delivery of the five-year strategy. The implementation of the strategy will be monitored and evaluated through annual progress reports, in addition to conducting a review of this integration strategy and developing a further follow-on strategy.



Appendices

Appendix 1: North Offaly Non-Irish population



Appendix 2: Mid-Offaly Non-Irish population

