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EVALUATION OF SICAP PRE-EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

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ABBREVIATIONS

ATT	average treatment effect on the treated
BTWEA	Back to Work Enterprise Allowance
CE	community employment
CES	Community Employment Scheme
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DRCDD	Department of Rural and Community Development
DEASP	Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection
ESF	European Social Fund
ET	education/training
ETB	Education and Training Board
IES	Institute of Employment Studies
IPA	interpretative phenomenological analysis
IRIS	Integrated Reporting and Information System
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee
LDC	Local Development Company
LES	Local Employment Service
LTU	long-term unemployed
PAP	personal action plan
PEIL	Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning
PES	Public Employment Support
PSM	propensity score matching
PtW	Pathways to Work
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
RSS	Rural Social Scheme
SICAP	Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme
YESS	Youth Employment Support Scheme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in Ireland continued to decline over the period from 2012 (where the highest rates were recorded at 15 per cent) to early 2020. The unemployment rate dropped below 5 per cent in August 2019 for the first time in over 12 years. At the completion of this study in January 2020, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in Ireland was 4.8 per cent with long-term unemployment (those unemployed for one year or more) accounting for approximately 30 per cent of total unemployment. Subsequently, the impact of the COVID-19 downturn on the Irish labour market was unprecedented, far exceeding that seen over the entirety of the financial crisis. A substantial number of employees were affected due to the necessary actions of the public authorities in the form of the administrative closures initiated during March 2020. In April, the unemployment rate increased to 28 per cent, up from 15.5 per cent in March and 4.8 per cent in February (Central Statistics Office, 2020). While we are likely to see some recovery as certain sectors of the economy reopen, employment in some sectors is likely to be constrained by the requirement to comply with public health measures and reduced demand.

Long-term unemployment can have serious negative consequences for the individual, society and the economy. People who are unemployed for long durations can find it increasingly difficult to gain employment as time goes by. Individuals who are long-term unemployed often have limited employability due to their low levels of educational attainment, depreciation of skills and the substantial investments necessary to restore these skills. They can also face significantly lower earnings and restricted career prospects. In Ireland, there is a suite of employment schemes and other supports which encourage long-term unemployed people to return to work. This research study explores the role played by pre-employment interventions provided by the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) to assist a subset of those who are furthest away from the labour market, i.e. individuals who are classified as very long-term unemployed and with low levels of educational attainment.

This mixed-methods study combines two main complementary elements. Firstly, beneficiaries of pre-employment supports provided by SICAP are compared with a similar group of claimants not receiving any employment-specific supports. The Integrated Reporting and Information System (IRIS) database is used to assess the rates of progression of these two groups into employment. Secondly, we surveyed all Local Development Companies (LDCs) implementing SICAP and carried out five in-depth case studies to analyse how programmes were implemented and the impact of participation on the development of soft skills (self-confidence, self-presentation, etc.) and progression to employability. Together, the two aspects of this study yield rich insights into the challenges for, and good practice in, the

provision of pre-employment supports in the current labour market context.

The vast majority of the LDCs reported that the increase in employment levels has meant that those who remain unemployed or outside the labour market tend to face multiple barriers, especially lack of self-confidence and motivation. This change in the profile of beneficiaries provides challenges in offering employment supports due to the need to work with beneficiaries on their underlying difficulties before more focused work on the progression to employment is possible. LDCs see SICAP employment supports as having distinctive features that enhance their work with more marginalised groups, including flexibility, a holistic approach, staff skills and links with other providers/services. Improving attitudinal skills is an important objective in one-to-one and group supports in response to the challenges faced by the target group. LDCs adopted varied methods in order to engage individuals requiring pre-employment supports, often co-ordinating with other bodies such as the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP), SOLAS, Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and local community groups.

For many LDCs, SICAP is part of a suite of employment supports they offer (along with Local Employment Services (LES) and Jobs Club). How SICAP is used appears to be shaped by this context. LDCs with other employment services tend to target SICAP supports towards those embarking on self-employment to a greater degree. Where LDCs have both LES and Jobs Club, they tend to focus SICAP supports on the groups with the most complex needs who require the most intensive supports. The importance of an integrated and holistic approach to beneficiary needs was also evident, with one-to-one employment supports seen as more successful in areas where there were better support services.

Our empirical analysis indicates a positive counterfactual impact on employment for both employment and self-employment interventions within SICAP. After taking account of a range of factors that would influence an unemployed person's likelihood of progressing into employment, the results indicate that beneficiaries of SICAP pre-employment supports were approximately 18 percentage points more likely to progress into employment, relative to the control group, in the short to medium term (after 3 to 6 months). Our findings show that the results are largely driven by one-to-one employment interventions that cover a range of activities, including encouragement and mentoring, job search assistance, CV preparation and facilitating help in areas of literacy and mental health, in addition to providing assistance in making phone calls or filling out job applications and aiding participants to overcome a wide range of practical barriers to employment and self-employment.

Findings from the interviews with LDC staff provided some insights into the processes underlying the positive counterfactual estimate. LDCs highlighted that the nature of provision is heavily client-led and strongly informed by the kinds of

employment available locally. For some groups, progression into employment is a long-term process, with a need for considerable work on softer skills initially. LDCs reported some difficulties in involving some groups (especially members of the Traveller and Roma community and migrants) in SICAP provision. Furthermore, despite engaging with SICAP, these groups are reported to face significant barriers in accessing employment. Transport also emerged as a significant barrier to accessing education, training and employment in rural areas, and can pose challenges in offering SICAP supports to those in more remote areas.

SICAP beneficiaries interviewed were very positive about the assistance they received, valuing the one-to-one support as well as the courses provided. All described a trajectory from low self-confidence to a renewed ability to engage with courses and/or apply for jobs, a pattern they attributed to the ongoing coaching provided by LDC staff. Interviewees mentioned the personal qualities of staff, especially their warmth and empathy, and most had remained in contact with the LDC for ongoing 'top-up' advice and support. While many participants had made the transition to employment or other education/training, all emphasised the impact of the support received on their personal development, especially their self-confidence.

Given the sharp rise in total unemployment in Q1 2020 due to the COVID-19 crisis, we expect an overall decrease in the share of long-term unemployment and an increase in the share of short-term unemployed as a share of total unemployment in the short-run. However, it is also likely that the total number experiencing long-term unemployment will rise into the future, increasing the importance of such pre-employment interventions going forward. A significant share of those who remain unemployed (or outside the labour market) for long durations are individuals who face multiple barriers and cannot be expected to progress to employment without intensive supports over a protracted period. This is likely to enhance the importance of SICAP in engaging hard-to-reach groups and working with them to increase their motivation and self-confidence.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 BACKGROUND

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate at the completion of this study in January 2020 was 4.8 per cent, which equated to 120,200 persons unemployed (Central Statistics Office (CSO), 2020). The rate had steadily fallen from a high of 16 per cent in early 2012. In January 2020, long-term unemployment (those unemployed for one year or more) accounted for approximately 30 per cent of total unemployment. Individuals remaining outside paid employment for long durations at this point were often those facing an array of disadvantages.

More recently, the COVID-19 health crisis has led to unprecedented disruption to the economy and society in Ireland. A substantial number of employees were affected due to the necessary actions of the public authorities in the form of the administrative closures initiated during March 2020. The latest figures, for Q1 2020, show that the unemployment rate has increased to 28 per cent (CSO, 2020). While we are likely to see some recovery as certain sectors of the economy reopen, employment in some sectors is likely to be constrained by the requirement to comply with public health measures and reduced demand. Previous research indicates that the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) plays an important role in providing supports to the most marginalised individuals and groups (McGuinness et al., 2016, 2018; Darmody and Smyth, 2018).

SICAP provides funding to tackle poverty, social exclusion and long-term unemployment through local engagement and partnerships between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies (Pobal, 2018). SICAP is administered by Pobal, funded by the Irish Government through the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) and co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) under the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014–2020. It aims to address high and persistent levels of deprivation through targeted and innovative locally led approaches. Disadvantaged communities and individuals (including, for example, unemployed people, people living in deprived areas, people with disabilities, single parent families, people on a low income, members of the Traveller and Roma community and other disadvantaged groups) are supported through the programme. Following a public procurement process, contracts for the implementation of the new programme have been awarded at a local level to 33 Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs), with support from local authorities, and actions are delivered by 45 Local Development Companies (LDCs), covering 50 geographic areas.

This research study explores the role played by the SICAP in assisting those who are furthest away from the labour market. The mixed-methods study combines two main complementary elements. Firstly, recipients of pre-employment supports are compared with a similar group of claimants not receiving such employment-specific supports using the Integrated Reporting and Information System (IRIS) database to assess their rates of progression into employment. Secondly, five in-depth case studies are used to unpack the impact of programme participation on the development of soft skills (self-confidence, self-presentation, etc.) and on participant plans and outcomes into the future.¹ Together, the two aspects of this study yield rich insights into the challenges for, and good practice in, the provision of pre-employment supports in the current labour market context.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE EVALUATION

The Pathways to Work (PtW) Strategy, initially from 2012–2015 and extended to 2016–2020, has played a key role in helping to reduce the unemployment figures in Ireland. However, job creation alone is not sufficient to ensure full employment. The rationale behind the new Pathways strategy has shifted from ‘activation in a time of recession’ to ‘activation in a time of recovery and growth’ (Department of Employment and Social Protection (DEASP), 2016). The Irish economy is now in the midst of a substantial downturn prompted by both COVID-19 itself and the necessary actions of the public authorities in the form of the administrative closures initiated in March 2020. The impact of the COVID-19 downturn on the Irish labour market is unprecedented, with the latest figures, for Q1 2020, showing that the unemployment rate has increased to 28 per cent (CSO, 2020). On 1 May the Government published a roadmap for easing restrictions. While we are likely to see some recovery as certain sectors of the economy reopen, employment in some sectors is likely to be constrained by the requirement to comply with public health measures and reduced demand.

Pre-employment programmes typically target individuals who are deemed to be further away from the labour market than other claimants. In terms of the IRIS database, pre-employment supports are identifiable through both bespoke programmes and ad-hoc supports delivered by LDCs to disadvantaged individuals. Two bespoke pre-employment initiatives delivered under SICAP are Kickstart and STEPS, which account for around 400 places annually at an estimated total cost of €278,337 (McGuinness et al., 2016). However, the total number of individuals receiving Pobal pre-employment supports, and therefore the total level of

¹ The SICAP programme has recently developed a tailored distance travelled tool (My Journey) to measure soft skills relevant to employment, education and personal development for service beneficiaries. It aims to support service users and staff to work together to identify personal goals for the client and show progress over time. My Journey measures five soft-skill areas: (i) literacy and numeracy confidence; (ii) confidence, goal setting and self-efficacy; (iii) communication skills; (iv) connection with others; and (v) general work readiness. In 2019, the tool was piloted in 15 LDCs. It will be introduced to all Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) and Local Development Companies (LDCs) in 2020 and was, unfortunately, therefore not available for inclusion in this study. For more information see: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/8dee88-my-journey-distance-traveled-tool/>

expenditure on these programmes, exceeds this figure substantially, since LDCs are known to develop ad-hoc initiatives to assist disadvantaged individuals to reintegrate into employment outside of these formal programmes.

Relative to more mainstream labour market activation programmes, the evaluation of pre-employment supports is a more complex exercise for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is very difficult to get data on a comparable control group to allow for the estimation of a counterfactual. Secondly, even when an appropriate control group is available, it is likely that the participants in the programme will have a complex and diverse range of issues (homelessness, physical or mental health problems, addiction issues, language difficulties, ageism, loss of confidence or motivation, etc.), meaning that employment is unlikely to be an immediate prospect for many of them. Consequently, it is unlikely that a quantitative approach alone will sufficiently capture the effects of such programmes. For this reason, the proposed study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining analyses of the IRIS dataset with in-depth surveys with LDC staff and participants in a range of settings. This mixed-methods approach allows us to obtain an initial indication of the short-run impact of programme participation on transitions to employment, while providing more qualitative evidence of programme impacts on other measures of progression such as inclusion, mental health, self-esteem and communication skills. The qualitative aspect of the study sheds light on the process by which individuals are referred to pre-employment supports, the extent of integration with other public sector organisations in relation to support provision, beneficiary reflections on programme participation and employer perceptions of the 'job readiness' of the target group.

While a quantitative approach can at best provide only a partial insight into pre-employment programme participation and the impact on labour market outcomes, such insights are vital to the overall evaluation of such supports. Pre-employment programmes are ultimately designed to move participants closer to the labour market and should be expected to have long-term impacts across a range of dimensions, including progression to employment, mainstream employment supports or other education and training courses. Therefore, it is essential that quantitative techniques form a central part of the overall mixed-methods evaluation strategy combined with strong qualitative components.

1.3 MEASURING PROGRAMME IMPACTS ON EMPLOYMENT

As with previous recent evaluations of Irish labour market programmes, it is important that a sufficient period is allowed to lapse between individuals' commencement in the programme and the assessment of their labour market status (Kelly et al., 2015). Consequently, despite the relatively short duration of certain pre-employment programmes, given the distance of most participants from the labour market and the data availability, we selected a treatment group of individuals entering Pobal-funded pre-employment programmes during 2018 and

assessed their current labour market status at various points in the following period (after three months and six months). While the approach ultimately relies on comparing the labour market outcomes of individuals in receipt of SICAP pre-employment supports (the treatment group) with those of individuals with similar characteristics not in receipt of pre-employment supports (the control group), we begin by analysing the data to identify the key characteristics of individuals who access such supports relative to individuals receiving assistance under other employment initiatives. Specifically, our control group in this study are individuals registered in the IRIS database (managed by Pobal) who have not received any employment interventions but may have received other non-employment interventions such as personal development or life-long learning interventions.

This empirical assessment allows us to identify formally, using econometric modelling techniques, the key attributes of the treatment group in terms of (1) individual characteristics such as age, education and gender, (2) barriers to inclusion such as disability, housing difficulties, belonging to an ethnic minority, being a lone parent and duration of unemployment, and (3) spatial factors such as small area level of deprivation, population density, urbanisation and geographic location. This profiling information is valuable in its own right, but it also helped us to inform the identification of a relevant control group and the qualitative aspect of the study of some of the main barriers faced by pre-employment recipients.

In order to measure the impact of pre-employment supports, we must have access to data that allow us to: (1) identify a 'treatment group' of individuals who have benefited from pre-employment supports under SICAP; (2) identify a 'control group' of individuals who are similar to the treatment group in terms of their key observable characteristics who did not receive any pre-employment supports; (3) compare the employment outcomes of the treatment and control groups after the pre-employment supports were administered to the treatment group; and (4) ensure that the estimated treatment impact is robust by eradicating any potential differences in observables between the control and treatment group that could also be correlated with the outcome variables.

Initially, our methodological approach intended to match a treatment group from the IRIS data to a suitable control group from the Live Register. Using the resulting dataset would have allowed us to measure the impact of SICAP pre-employment supports on subsequent progression to employment. However, as access to the Live Register data was not feasible within the timeframe, we sought to develop an alternative approach based solely on SICAP's IRIS database. Using the IRIS database allows us to identify formally the key attributes of the individuals, across a rich set of indicators, who receive pre-employment initiatives and match with a control group of similar individuals (based on characteristics such as age, gender, education, barriers faced, and other spatial factors).

As stated, within the SICAP programme there exist two ‘bespoke’ pre-employment initiatives called Kickstart and STEPS; however, it is widely recognised that such initiatives form only a small part of pre-employment interventions under SICAP, as many take place outside of the remit of formal structured programmes. We began by identifying our treatment group in the 2018 IRIS data using the following selection criteria, which broadly identify individuals some distance from the labour market in receipt of employment supports as: unemployed for two years or more; and educated to Leaving Certificate or below; and who have received at least one employment intervention in 2018. In contrast, the control group consists of individuals who were: unemployed for two years or more; and educated to Leaving Certificate or below; and had no record of receiving an employment intervention in 2017 or 2018.

The rationale for this approach is that the difference in the employment outcomes between the treatment and control groups will give us a measure of the treatment group’s likely progression rates into employment in the absence of employment supports, i.e. the counterfactual. Economically inactive individuals, who are not actively seeking work or subject to welfare payment conditionality, are excluded from the sample.

It should be noted that our methodological approach is focused on eradicating observable differences between the characteristics of the control and treatment groups. Nevertheless, our estimates could still be impacted by unobservable factors related, for instance, to case worker allocation to the treatment and control groups. If it is the case that case workers allocate clients to the treatment group on the basis of some trait unobserved in the data but related to the outcome variable – for instance, motivation – then our estimates will potentially be biased. Furthermore, we address the potential nature of such selection bias in our qualitative research, which seeks to uncover the range of factors underlying the process by which beneficiaries are allocated to the various employment options.

1.4 MEASURING PROGRAMME IMPACTS ON SOFTER OUTCOMES

In terms of the softer outcomes that can arise from programme participation, existing policy literature provides suggestions in terms of both potential outcome variables and methodological issues that evaluators should consider. The 2000 publication by the Institute of Employment Studies entitled *Guide to measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled* emphasises the importance of assessing soft outcomes in evaluations that focus on individuals facing particular barriers:

Hard outcomes such as jobs obtained, numbers of qualifications, and numbers progressing onto further education and training (though useful in some cases), do not show the success of the project as a whole. They are an insufficient indicator of a beneficiary’s increased

employability. Target groups that are facing multiple barriers to employment may be a long way from being able to acquire a qualification or employment. Consideration of soft outcomes for such groups is a crucial indicator of success. Measuring soft outcomes can also help with the national level evaluation to provide a fuller picture of the impact of the programme as a whole. (Dewson et al., 2000)

Such outcomes can be categorised under four headings: key work skills (teamwork, communication, literacy, timekeeping, etc.), attitudinal skills (motivation, confidence, responsibility, self-esteem, etc.), personal skills (appearance, attendance, timekeeping, etc) and practical skills (ability to complete forms, manage money, complete a CV, etc.). As outlined above, focusing on employment outcomes alone for such a marginalised group may give a misleading picture of programme impact. In this study, interviews with current and former programme participants are used to derive insights into the impact of pre-employment supports on soft skill development. These case-study interviews seek to present a comprehensive picture of individuals' experiences on the programme and the perceived impacts on their employability and personal/social development.

1.5 PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION

The primary data collection stage of this project was designed to identify the multifaceted barriers various groups experiencing long-term unemployment are subject to, the nature of their experiences and the impacts of the programme on both their employability and their wider personal development. The primary data collection involved two phases. Firstly, a short postal/email survey of LDCs was conducted to ascertain:

- the profile of those receiving pre-employment supports;
- the kinds of pre-employment supports offered at local area level;
- the extent of co-operation with other agencies and providers (such as DEASP);
- perceived outcomes (employment/progression and soft skill development) for participants;
- perceived gaps in current provision for this target group.

This questionnaire was sent to the LDC CEO. A very high response rate (91%) was achieved, meaning that we can generalise from the survey responses to the total population of LDCs. Data from this phase of the study, along with our analysis of the IRIS database, were used to inform the selection of five case-study areas for in-depth analysis. For example, the analysis of the survey data indicated significant variation in practice according to whether the LDC offered other employment services. The administrative data showed the importance of the emphasis on having an employment intervention (offering at least one such intervention and

the number of interventions offered). In addition, the case-study selection took account of variation in the following characteristics: levels of progression to employment/self-employment; the extent to which the LDC runs their own courses; area-level disadvantage; and whether the LDC was mostly rural or urban. Information on the kinds of supports available was used to inform the development of a typology of support for use in the quantitative analysis and information on the target group to help refine the parameters of the group identified as part of the treatment group for follow-up.

The second phase of the primary data collection involved in-depth interviews conducted in five case-study areas with:

- providers of pre-employment support services (LDCs);
- individuals who are currently participating or have participated in such supports (these interviews include representatives from a range of vulnerable groups);
- employers who have collaborated with the providers of support programmes in recruiting individuals who had experienced long-term unemployment;
- key policy stakeholders.

The providers of pre-employment support programmes (LDCs) were asked to identify individuals and employers for the in-depth interviews. This approach worked well in the evaluation study on SICAP goals and governance (Darmody and Smyth, 2018). Within each of the areas, interviews were conducted with LDC staff, current and former participants, and local employers.² Both participants and other stakeholders were accessed through the LDCs. LDCs were asked to facilitate interviews with a number of participants who had availed of individual and group supports for employment or self-employment. They were asked to ensure a diversity of profile among participants. There was a risk that LDCs would select their 'best' participants. However, in practice there was considerable diversity among the interviewees and many had experienced very challenging circumstances.

The semi-structured interview approach enabled us to explore specific themes across interviews while allowing sufficient flexibility to explore individual experiences. While the interviews were mainly conducted on a face-to-face basis, phone interviews were also utilised where necessary in order to ensure a wide representation of different groups. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and systematic analysis of interview data was carried out using NVivo software. The technique of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used in the

² Using in-depth semi-structured interviews has also proved successful in unpacking the rationale for support provision, perceptions of the effectiveness of provision, suitability of provision and challenges associated with provision of support programmes (see, for example, Smyth et al. (2015) on the School Completion Programme and McGuinness et al. (2014) on further education and training provision).

interviewing and analytic processes, centring on a detailed examination of the individual lived experience and how individuals make sense of that experience (Smith and Eatough, 2007). In line with Bazeley (2009), Bazeley and Jackson (2013), Marshall (2002) and Richards (2009), the focus was on interpretation and naming of categories; using comparison and pattern analysis to refine and relate categories or themes; using divergent views and negative cases to challenge generalisations; returning to the substantive, theoretical or methodological literature; creating displays using matrices, graphs, flow charts and models to further develop the qualitative data; and using writing itself to prompt deeper thinking.

The questions asked in the interviews covered three broad areas: (a) pre-employment programme provision for various target groups, (b) soft outcomes versus hard outcomes, and (c) overcoming the barriers associated with accessing education and employment.

In particular, the interviews with individuals seeking employment focused on:

- perceptions of pre-employment supports available in the area;
- perceived needs; aspirations;
- satisfaction with the breadth of the services provided; possible gaps in the provision (quality and range);
- personal development support versus employment-specific support;
- guidance and counselling;
- transition from support programmes to education/employment/ enterprise;
- engagement with the employer; continued support; training;
- barriers to education and employment.

Interviews with employers explored:

- collaboration with the providers of pre-employment services (job matching; client preparation);
- recruitment and retaining of employees who have been long-term unemployed;
- specific barriers to employment – skills, education, disability, language proficiency;
- in-work support;
- withdrawal of support if/when appropriate;
- inter-agency collaboration in ensuring continued support for the employee.

Interviews with LDCs explored:

- management and delivery of pre-employment programmes (range);
- recruitment of participants/clients and assessment of needs;
- recruitment of staff with appropriate skills;
- retention;
- personal development support versus employment-specific support;
- guidance and counselling;
- importance of soft outcomes (work skills, attitudes, personal and practical skills);
- soft outcomes and 'distance travelled'; how best to record progress;
- target group-specific outcomes (people with disabilities/mental health issues; new communities; disaffected youth; lone parents; Travellers; ex-offenders; drug/alcohol ex-users; the long-term unemployed, homeless people; women returning to work);
- referral process across lots;
- personalised versus group-based courses and support;
- collaboration with employers;
- job matching;
- follow-up with clients; continued support;
- withdrawal of support if/when appropriate;
- collaboration with other service providers (inter-agency approach) – Careers Service, further education colleges, skills training programmes, the Local Employment Service (LES), Seetec, and other employability projects delivered by the community & voluntary sector.

Additional interviews with key stakeholders (e.g. DEASP, LES, Tús) focused on:

- the nature of pre-employment programmes;
- perceived effectiveness of such programmes;
- perceived challenges associated with recruitment and retention;
- soft outcomes and 'distance travelled' versus hard outcomes;
- inter-agency collaboration.

A key aspect of any programme evaluation is to establish the systems and processes by which individuals are being referred to programmes and the quality and consistency of interactions with providers during the course of the intervention. Key informant interviews with representatives from LDCs and other stakeholders uncovered the nature, and consistency, of the referral process across lots and the extent of inter-agency co-ordination. Case-study interviews with programme participants provided qualitative evidence of the quality and relevance of the particular programmes to the needs and aspirations of participants.

Taken together, the methods used in the study provide a comprehensive view of the nature of SICAP pre-employment provision and its outcomes. The counterfactual analysis provides new insights into the effect of participation on beneficiary outcomes. The survey of LDCs offers insights into how pre-employment provision works in practice and what sources of variation are apparent across LDCs. The case studies go further to unpack the factors behind the effects identified in the quantitative analysis, indicating ‘what works’ on the ground in promoting participant outcomes and providing important insights into the role of provision in soft skill development.

1.6 STUDY OBJECTIVES

The study’s five key objectives are to:

- explore the role played by SICAP in assisting those who are further away from the labour market;
- provide a detailed profile of individuals participating in pre-employment programmes/initiatives;
- provide a counterfactual assessment of the impact of the pre-employment programmes/initiatives in assisting individuals who are further from the labour market to employment and further study/training;
- analyse the routes through which individuals access the pre-employment programmes/initiatives;
- access the experiences of programme participants.

The remainder of the report is structured as follows. Chapter 2 presents the findings from a survey of LDCs on the employment supports they offer. Chapter 3 presents the findings from the counterfactual analysis where recipients of pre-employment supports are compared with a similar group of beneficiaries not receiving such supports to assess their rates of progression into employment. Chapter 4 draws on interviews with LDC CEOs, staff and local stakeholders to document the nature of pre-employment provision at local area level. The experiences and views of participants are presented in Chapter 5. Finally, Chapter 6 presents a summary and

considers a number of policy implications arising from the research. Detailed tables on the compositional distribution of the control and treatment groups for the matched sample into employment/self-employment and the employment and self-employment outcomes (discussed in Chapter 3) are presented in Appendix 1, while Appendix 2 provides an outline of the semi-structured interviews that were conducted with SICAP participants, former participants, LDC CEO, LDC staff and other local stakeholders.

CHAPTER 2

Findings from the survey of Local Development Companies

2.1 INTRODUCTION

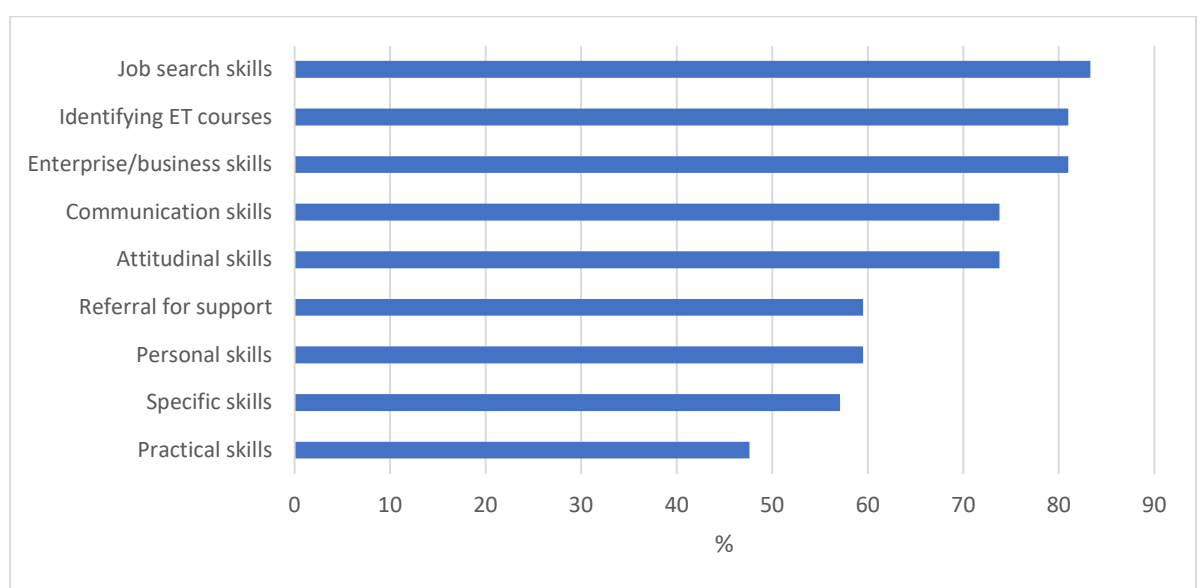
This chapter presents findings from a survey of Local Development Companies (LDCs) on the employment supports they offer. Questionnaires (see Appendix 3) were completed by the vast majority (91%) of LDCs and provided rich information to supplement Integrated Reporting and Information System (IRIS) data. Section 2.2 looks at one-to-one employment supports; Section 2.3 examines courses and group supports to assist the progression into employment or self-employment. Section 2.4 examines SICAP against the backdrop of other local services; Section 2.5 explores the challenges in assisting the progression to employment or self-employment for the long-term unemployed and the economically inactive.

2.2 ONE-TO-ONE SUPPORTS

All the LDCs provided one-to-one supports to the long-term unemployed or the economically inactive to assist their transition into self-employment, while all but one of them provided such supports to assist the transition into employment. In the latter case, the LDC reported that their employment services operated through the Local Employment Service (LES) and Jobs Club, with the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) focusing on enterprise support and personal development/wellbeing.

LDCs were asked to assess the importance of a specified set of objectives for their one-to-one supports (Figure 2.1). The most commonly mentioned objectives were to help with job search skills (such as CV or interview techniques), to identify education and training courses that could improve beneficiaries' skills and to improve their enterprise or business skills (e.g. dealing with banks, developing a business plan). Developing beneficiaries' practical skills or providing specific skills for employment were not considered as important, but were mentioned by a significant minority of LDCs. When asked to identify the single most important objective, the pattern of responses was somewhat different, with 38 per cent³ mentioning attitudinal skills (e.g. motivation and self-confidence) and 21 per cent citing job search skills.

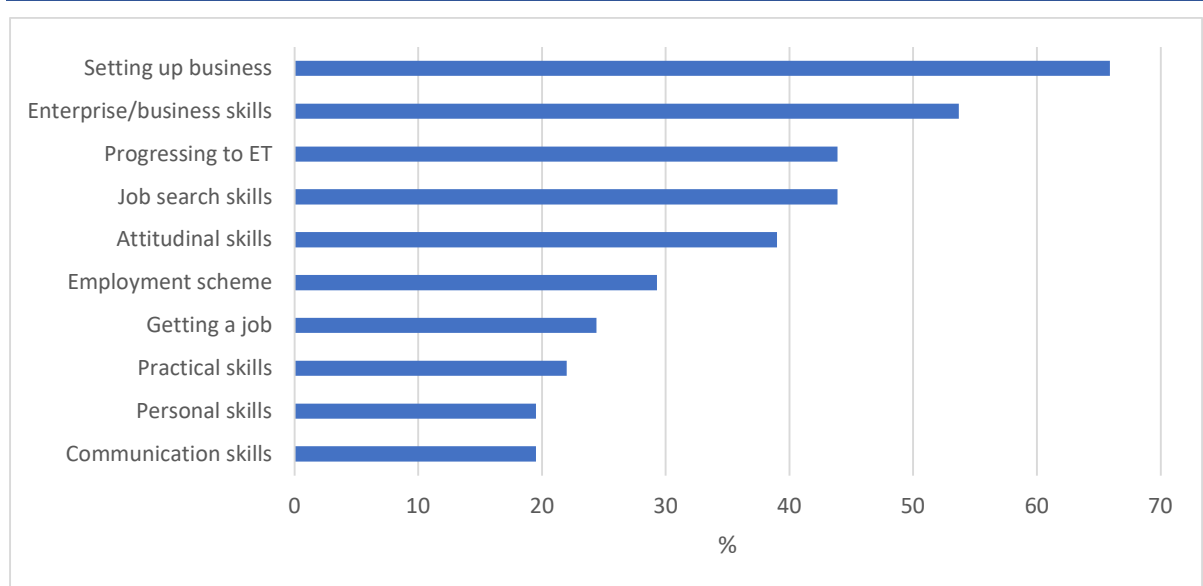
³ For ease of interpretation, percentages are used in reporting on the LDC survey. However, the figures are based on a total sample size of 42 LDCs so the differences in percentages should be interpreted with some caution.

FIGURE 2.1 LDC RATINGS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF OBJECTIVES OF ONE-TO-ONE EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS (% 'VERY IMPORTANT')

Source: ESRI Survey of LDCs, 2019.

Note: ET, education/training.

LDCs were asked about the perceived adequacy of one-to-one employment supports for the long-term unemployed and economically inactive under SICAP. Seventy-six per cent felt the number of people who could be seen was about right, with 14 per cent feeling it was too low and 10 per cent feeling it was too high. In terms of the number of times beneficiaries could be seen, over half (57%) felt it was about right with the remainder feeling it was too low. The perceived adequacy did not vary by the total size of the LDC caseload, but those who felt they were seeing too few people were more likely to be providing a greater number of interventions overall and of employment interventions.

FIGURE 2.2 SUCCESS OF ONE-TO-ONE EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS AS REPORTED BY LDCS (% 'VERY SUCCESSFUL')

Source: ESRI Survey of LDCs.

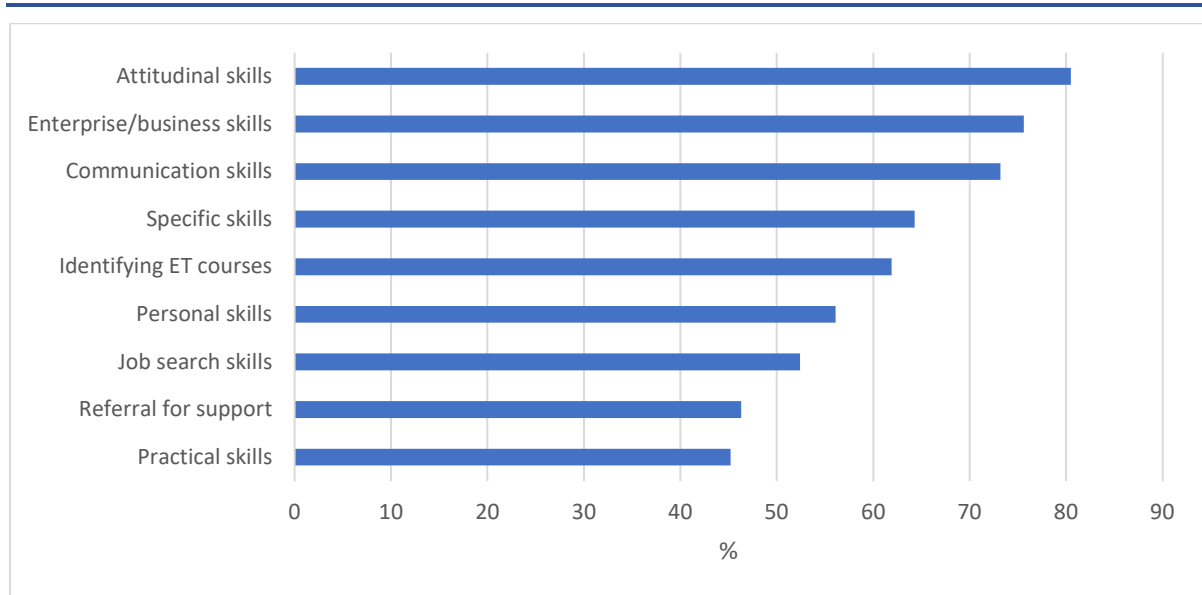
In terms of the perceived success of one-to-one employment supports, these were seen as most successful in relation to beneficiaries setting up their own business and improving their enterprise/business skills (Figure 2.2). The case-study analyses suggest that this pattern reflects the central role of one-to-one supports in helping beneficiaries develop and refine their business plan as well as ongoing advice throughout the process. These supports were seen as less successful in relation to enhancing the practical, personal or communication skills of beneficiaries or in helping them secure employment (either on the open market or through an employment scheme). This is likely to reflect the need for very intensive support for beneficiaries facing multiple challenges such that one-to-one supports will need to be supplemented with short or more extended education/training. LDCs with a higher proportion of beneficiaries living in disadvantaged areas were less likely to see the one-to-one employment supports as very successful, especially in relation to obtaining employment or improving attitudinal, communication or practical skills. Again, this is likely to reflect the greater barriers faced by beneficiaries living in more disadvantaged settings.

2.3 COURSE AND GROUP SESSIONS

Almost all of the LDCs provided courses/workshops or group sessions to assist the long-term unemployed or economically inactive into self-employment or employment.⁴ Where these were not provided, this reflected employment supports being provided through the LES or Jobs Club and in another case the LDC not wanting to duplicate course offerings by the local Education and Training Board (ETB).

All but three of the LDCs specified one or more courses being provided under SICAP which they had developed themselves. These courses were offered to a range of groups, usually the long-term unemployed (95%) but also the short-term unemployed (75%), the economically inactive (68%) and other groups (55%), including migrants and asylum seekers, young people, lone parents and those with disabilities.

⁴ For ease of survey completion, a distinction was made between one-to-one supports and group supports (including workshops and courses).

FIGURE 2.3 LDC RATINGS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF OBJECTIVES FOR COURSES AND GROUP SESSIONS (% 'VERY IMPORTANT')

Source: ESRI Survey of LDCs.

As with one-to-one supports, enhancing the enterprise/business skills of beneficiaries was deemed a very important objective of courses by the LDCs (Figure 2.3). In contrast to one-to-one supports, courses were more likely to be seen as enhancing attitudinal skills, which was mentioned as the single most important objective by 50 per cent of the LDCs. Improving communication and specific skills were also deemed important objectives of course provision. There was some variation in course objectives depending on the target group being worked with. Where LDCs worked with the economically inactive, they were more likely to emphasise personal and attitudinal skills as important objectives. For the long-term unemployed, a greater emphasis was placed on improving business/enterprise skills or referral on to other education/training courses, while there was a somewhat greater emphasis on specific skills where LDCs were working with the short-term unemployed or the inactive.

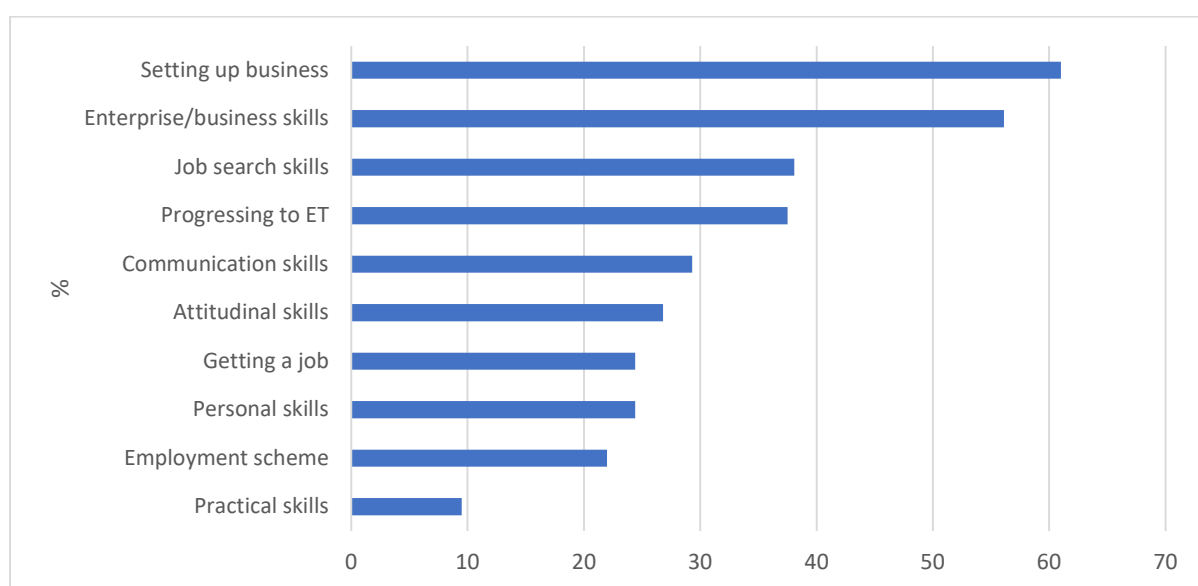
Fifty-nine per cent of LDCs felt the range of employment courses they could provide directly was about right, with 41 per cent feeling it was too little. LDCs working with the long-term unemployed were somewhat more critical of the range of courses they could offer, as were those providing more employment interventions and ones that were shorter in duration. Fifty-one per cent felt that the range of courses to which they could refer beneficiaries was about right, with just under half feeling there was too little provision. Those who were more critical of the range of courses to which they could refer beneficiaries specified a greater number of distinct courses being offered (an average of 63 compared with 52), suggesting that they were attempting to fill gaps in local provision. Sixty-two per cent felt that the number of places they could provide was about right, with 33 per cent feeling it was too low and two LDCs (5%) feeling it was too high. Those working

with the economically inactive were somewhat more satisfied with the number of places they could offer.

There was a good deal of commonality in the perceived success of different elements of group and one-to-one supports, with helping beneficiaries set up a business and improving their enterprise/business skills seen as the most successful aspects (Figure 2.4). This can be contrasted with lower perceived success levels in relation to the transition to employment (either on an employment scheme or on the open market). LDCs offering shorter duration courses saw provision as being more successful in improving personal and practical skills. LDCs with a greater average number of employment interventions saw courses as more successful in improving attitudinal skills, employment chances (on the open market) and progression to education/training. LDCs using non-SICAP funding (at least in part) saw provision as being more successful in improving personal and communication skills.

As with one-to-one supports, LDCs with a higher proportion of beneficiaries living in disadvantaged areas were less likely to see the course/group employment supports as very successful, especially in relation to improving attitudinal skills. Similarly, group supports were less likely to be seen as very successful, especially in relation to improving attitudinal or communication skills, where a higher proportion of beneficiaries had lower levels of education (Junior Certificate or less). It is worth noting that the latter pattern was not evident in relation to the perceived success of one-to-one support, suggesting there may be greater challenges in providing group supports to individuals with a range of educational backgrounds. Indeed, the case-study analysis points to the need to work intensively with some individuals before they are ready to engage with a group.

FIGURE 2.4 PERCEIVED SUCCESS OF COURSES AND GROUP SUPPORTS (% 'VERY SUCCESSFUL')



Source: ESRI Survey of LDCs.

The vast majority (86%) of the LDCs indicated that there were other group supports/courses they would like to provide for the long-term unemployed and/or the economically inactive. The most frequently mentioned needs were related to personal development, intensive job preparation and providing beneficiaries with the skills required for particular jobs or sectors.

A programme which incorporates personal development, planning and addresses the impact of mental health, promoting mental wellbeing, social connection and elements to focus on individuals' unique strengths/skills as a starting point for moving forward. (LDC response)

A very in-depth course for the very long-term unemployed. [I] think [it] would allow for a lot of one-on-one support – running for a number of months. (LDC response)

Additional training provision in office administration, personal development and developing provision that meets the needs of large employers setting up or sectors expanding in the county, e.g. hospitality, retail logistics, warehousing. (LDC response)

Seventy-four per cent of the LDCs indicated that they would need additional funding to be able to provide such courses, with some mentioning staffing needs, continuous professional development for staff and being able to co-operate with, or refer to, other providers.

2.4 LOCAL EMPLOYERS AND SERVICES

Over half (58%) of LDCs, especially in urban settings, strongly agreed or agreed that there are good employment opportunities in their local area. However, they reported challenges in accessing employment for some groups; around half (51%) felt that local employers were reluctant to take on people who had been out of work for a long time and only a quarter indicated that local employers were willing to recruit people with multiple disadvantages. Interestingly, educational qualifications were not seen as a barrier in all local areas, with only 43 per cent of LDCs agreeing that jobseekers need good qualifications to get a job locally. LDCs in urban areas were more likely to see qualifications as a barrier. Interestingly, LDCs tended to report more successful outcomes from one-to-one and group supports in areas where employers were seen as more willing to take on those who had been out of work for a long time and/or had multiple disadvantages.

Over a quarter (29%) reported frequent contact with employers (at least a few times a month), with the most common pattern (53%) being a few times a year. However, 16 per cent of LDCs said they had less frequent contact (less than once a year or never). Employer contact did not vary by perceived local employment opportunities. Slightly more frequent contact with employers was reported in

areas where employers were seen as willing to recruit those with multiple disadvantages and where qualifications were not seen as a barrier to employment. In keeping with this pattern, LDCs with higher levels of employer contact had lower proportions of those with multiple barriers or from jobless households in their caseload, suggesting that employers may be less open to taking on individuals with several difficulties even where they are generally willing to recruit the long-term unemployed or economically inactive.

Meetings with employers tended to focus on two sets of issues. Firstly, LDCs used these meetings to identify local job opportunities and potential skill gaps in order to tailor their provision and support.

Largely inputs in relation to QQI [Quality and Qualifications Ireland] training in areas such as healthcare and food/catering to ensure that our training provision in these areas is responding to the needs of the local labour market. (LDC response)

Secondly, LDCs tried to encourage employer willingness to recruit those without a recent employment history and to provide supports to assist that transition.

Local employers would state that they need loyal, local staff. The opportunities are there. However the employment rates have gone up so much that claim loads have drastically reduced. Clients remaining need a lot more social supports to be encouraged into employment versus those most eager. (LDC response)

Employers are generally very open to the idea of providing employment experience to clients – however there is a limit to the level of support that the employer is able/willing to offer to clients with greater needs. (LDC response)

Challenges in engaging with employers centred on constraints in the time employers had available and employer expectations of or attitudes towards the beneficiary group.

There is a sizeable gap between what employers expect and need and what SICAP clients can deliver. Employers often assume it is simply a matter of ‘matching’ their needs with the skills of SICAP clients on our system. However, they do not take into account the chaotic lives and multiple disadvantages that many of our clients are working through. (LDC response)

Their fear and reluctance to hire ‘atypical’ employees. (LDC response)

Look for ‘experienced’ and ‘qualified’ workers and are not prepared to take a risk on people who do not have a strong employment record. ...

Most of our unemployed clients are very distant from employment [so] the main challenge is to bridge this gap. (LDC response)

In addition, 26 per cent of the LDCs reported challenges relating to constraints on staff time to meet with employers.

Time + resources of SICAP. Staff have to engage with individuals who are KPIs [key performance indicators] of the programme as a priority. Engagement with employers is secondary to that priority. (LDC response)

SICAP was offered against the backdrop of other employment supports provided by the LDC; almost a third provided the LES and the Jobs Club while a further fifth provided one or other of these services. Rural LDCs were much less likely to provide employment services other than SICAP. Not surprisingly, LDCs with larger caseloads were more likely to have other employment services; over two-thirds of LDCs in the smallest third of caseload numbers had neither LES nor Jobs Club while 40 per cent of the largest LDCs offered both services. The provision of other employment services at LDC level appeared to shape the kinds of employment supports offered under SICAP. LDCs that had both services provided employment supports to a smaller proportion of their beneficiaries than did those with no other employment services. They also differed in their objectives in relation to one-to-one employment supports, with LDCs with both kinds of employment services more likely to mention improving enterprise/business skills as their most important objective. In contrast, LDCs without LES/Jobs Club (or with only of these services) tended to place somewhat greater emphasis on improving attitudinal skills. There was less of a difference in the objectives for course provision, with a strong emphasis on improving attitudinal skills across the groups; however, LDCs with other employment services were somewhat more likely to provide business-oriented courses.

Similar patterns were found in relation to the perceived success of the supports. LDCs providing both employment services were much more likely to see the one-to-one supports as very successful in improving enterprise/business skills (82% compared with 47% and 38%) and in beneficiaries setting up their own business. LDCs providing both employment services were more satisfied with the number of people who could be seen for one-to-one SICAP supports (91% compared with 63% of those with neither service and 75% of those with one service). They were also somewhat more satisfied with the intensity of one-to-one support they could offer.

LDCs highlighted a number of differences between SICAP employment supports and those offered under LES or Jobs Club. First, SICAP was seen as addressing beneficiaries with more complex needs, an issue that is discussed further in the following section.

SICAP tend to work with clients who are even more disadvantaged than LES, [it] often take years to engage with them through activities such as community activities, men's/women's groups, parents groups etc. before even working with them on employment options etc. The goal in SICAP is often to get the client to the point where they can be referred to specific support services such as LES or Jobs Club. (LDC response)

Jobs Club is more structured and aimed at people ready to return to work. SICAP is more one to one and longer-term interventions. (LDC response)

Secondly, SICAP employment supports were seen as more flexible and so could be tailored to the individual needs of beneficiaries.

LES model is very prescriptive and is primarily 1:1. SICAP working in parallel allows flexibility, more group and tailored approach. (LDC response)

SICAP was seen as complementary to other forms of employment support.

SICAP can support the work of the LES and Jobs Club participants. One clear example is where we offer participants of the LES and Jobs Club access to career guidance (funded under SICAP) and the STEPS programme (which works on personal development, motivation and self-belief). (LDC response)

SICAP doesn't offer employment support, clients are referred. LES doesn't offer self-employment supports, this is delivered through SICAP. Complementary programmes. SICAP provides support at early pre-employment stage. (LDC response)

It was also seen as offering more holistic supports and differed from other services in engaging with beneficiaries on a voluntary basis.

The main difference in supports offered is the difference in focus. LES/Jobs Club focus is on labour market progression, SICAP focus is about life planning and meeting the client at their starting place, which, in turn, enables clients to identify and address the barriers and form a realistic labour market plan. ... SICAP one-to-one supports provide the clients with a dedicated worker who will support them throughout their journey towards employment, by identifying and addressing the barriers they face. (LDC response)

The focus on social inclusion within SICAP helps to ensure that the programme is very different from LES/Job Club. SICAP fosters a community development and social inclusion purpose that ... allows a flexible range of individually tailored education and employment

supports to be delivered locally to those who are most impoverished and living within very disadvantaged communities. In addition, engagement with SICAP is on a voluntary basis and without the threat of sanction [or] penalty. (LDC response)

In a small number of cases, LDCs reported that there were no other local employment supports so SICAP was the sole provider in the area.

In relation to access to other services, over half (56%) disagreed that ‘there is good access to mental health/psychological services if required by SICAP beneficiaries’ with somewhat fewer (40%) disagreeing that there was good access to other supports (such as substance abuse or family support). LDCs working with beneficiaries living in disadvantaged areas were more likely to report access to the latter supports while those in rural areas were less likely to do so. Perceived access to mental health services did not vary by local area disadvantage or urban/rural location. One-to-one interventions to support the transition to employment were seen as more successful in areas where there were better support services.

2.5 STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

2.5.1 The perceived value of SICAP employment supports

LDCs were asked about the strengths of the employment supports provided through SICAP for those who are long-term unemployed or economically inactive. Three main features were highlighted by LDCs. First, 53 per cent of LDCs mentioned the flexibility to respond to individual needs and tailor one-to-one and group supports to address these needs.

The main strength of the programme is the individualised & personalised approach that the programme takes. We can work in an in-depth way with clients. We are also well connected to make effective referrals. (LDC response)

Employment Supports – main strength is its person-centred approach, improving self-esteem, confidence and motivation while also addressing the fears preventing individuals from progression. An array of options are explored suitable to the interests and ability of the individual. These options are developed into a personal action plan agreed in partnership with the individual, which creates ownership and promotes personal responsibility for the individual, where the individual understand[s] they are accountable for taking each step necessary to achieve their plan. (LDC response)

Supports can be provided/designed at a very basic pre-development level. Bespoke responses can apply to meet emerging needs quickly. (LDC response)

Secondly, 40 per cent highlighted the skills and qualities of the staff working with the most marginalised groups.

Experienced compassionate professional SICAP staff in LDCs. These staff know how to work with the most disadvantaged at an appropriate pace to support their progression rather than pushing them too soon and causing further long-term damage. (LDC response)

The SICAP staff, who: understand the backgrounds and issues which the people they are working with face; have the skill to be able to support and motivate individuals to move at their own pace and develop their own capabilities; have the knowledge and contacts for referrals. (LDC response)

Thirdly, 35 per cent pointed to the intensive support that could be provided through SICAP; such intensive support was seen as all the more necessary given the multiple challenges faced by beneficiaries.

1–1 support. Impartial. Responding to needs. Supportive. (LDC response)

Interestingly, LDCs reported that the changes to SICAP 2018–22 had resulted in a decrease in the number of beneficiaries they supported but an increase in the intensity of support they could provide.

When asked about whether SICAP provided distinctive employment supports, LDCs highlighted similar features. Fifty per cent mentioned the flexibility of the programme to tailor provision to the needs of the beneficiary, an approach that contrasted with other forms of employment supports.

We are all about the individual and we are very fluid – we have a good reputation for being supportive and making the client feel valued. (LDC response)

We have great flexibility to provide workshops in job skills and interview skills with the added advantage of being able to supplement these initiatives with additional supports such as confidence building, English language supports and mental health information as the needs arise in a particular group. We can respond very quickly to needs as evidenced recently by our work with a group of asylum seekers ... This agility and ability to respond is a great strength of the programme vs mainstream providers. (LDC response)

SICAP supports can be provided in a flexible manner that responds to local needs. Other supports are more structured, top-down, and narrowly focused on employment. SICAP can take a broader view that

*underlines soft skills which leads to better outcomes in the long term.
(LDC response)*

As above, the experience and skills of staff in engaging with more marginalised groups was emphasised.

Experienced SICAP staff strive to support clients to reach their full potential and contribute to their local area and economy in the most appropriate way for them. (LDC response)

The strong links established with other services and agencies in the local area was seen as a distinctive aspect of SICAP, with the programme able to act as a 'gatekeeper' in referring participants to appropriate provision.

As SICAP is delivered within an ecosystem of other programmes such as LES, Tús/RSS [Rural Social Scheme] and others addressing Traveller health, substance misuse etc. we have the unique advantage of being able to refer clients in house to address the multiple barriers that they face whilst managing their PAP [personal action plan] with them centrally to ensure streamlined supports and a single main point of contact. This client centred approach works well for those who present with multiple barriers. We have good partnerships in communities and outreach services and supports to the most disadvantaged areas and those in rural areas in a way that mainstream services cannot. (LDC response)

Staff that care, staff that have the right referral mechanisms and relationships, skill set. Understanding of where a person is at this point of their life and awareness of all the supports available to them. A practical support service through mentor support depending on the PAP and goals identified. (LDC response)

The focus on dealing with beneficiaries with complex needs was also viewed as a distinctive feature of the programme.

SICAP has a particular focus on people from disadvantaged and marginalised groups and with this, the staff have developed particular knowledge and skills, based on equality and empowerment, in working with people from these groups. SICAP takes a holistic approach with individuals so not only supports them around employment, but supports them around other issues such as housing, money issues, family, etc., referring them to specialist supports where appropriate. (LDC response)

Open to all possible clients. Inventive in terms of how to engage clients (least accessible). Creative in the type of supports provided / adding personal development and general interest subjects. Cross sectoral and programme links such as links with Tús, RSS, Peil, Rural

*Development Outreach services in areas with poor public transport.
(LDC response)*

2.5.2 The profile of the target groups

The majority (80%) of LDCs felt that the needs of the long-term unemployed had changed over the past three years, with equal numbers feeling they had changed to a great extent and to some extent. Among this group, 67 per cent felt that, with the overall rise in employment, those who remained unemployed had increasingly complex needs and were faced with multiple barriers.

The clients we are dealing with now have a lot more complex needs. Mental health. Low skill sets, poorer education, language issues. (LDC response)

Those remaining unemployed in an era of a suggested full employment can perceive their position as without hope and can lead to individuals becoming further removed from the labour market. Some of those with a history of long-term unemployment may be experiencing addiction or poor mental health and require a support network where open labour market participation might be part of a stepped progression pathway plan. Those moving out of long-term unemployment may require ongoing support to continue to upskill for the sector in which they have found work or to build competencies relevant for other sectors in terms of ensuring greater employability. (LDC response)

People presenting have multiple challenges that we now have to contend with. Most have a 'long' distance to travel. (LDC response)

Individuals who are more distant from the labour market are now presenting with secondary challenges, poor mental health, personal debt, housing and transport problems. (LDC response)

In addition, a number of LDCs singled out the increasing prevalence of mental health difficulties and/or substance abuse issues among the beneficiary group.

The profile of those LTU's [long-term unemployed] has changed quite dramatically, those still LTU have multiple barriers to their participation in the labour market and also within their communities. We are seeing much more issues of substance misuse, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety etc. Some of our client base will not in the short term in any way ready for labour market or formal training (LDC response)

Mental ill health is probably one of the most common issues presenting in one to one clinics. (LDC response)

Noticeable change in clients self-identifying as in need of mental health supports. Greater need for a more gradual move towards the labour market, pre-training supports, increased need for self-esteem, motivation supports and increase in need to access supports that promote mental health. With the upsurge in employment individuals' feedback has shown a notable feeling of being less worthy/capable than others who are gaining employment. (LDC response)

LDCs were less likely to report that the needs of the economically inactive had changed in the past three years, though 56 per cent did so. Among this latter group, the main issue mentioned was the increasing complexity of need among beneficiaries.

The majority are not nearly labour market ready, there is a need for pre-training, community education, life-long learning supports, accessing on the job training etc. Individuals' daily routines are not compatible with employment. A greater one to one support level is needed. A greater need also to provide a gradual, incremental move towards the labour market, accessing community life-long learning opportunities, increasing community and agency engagement, accessing volunteering opportunities to create structure and routine compatible with employment. (LDC response)

They are pushed further to the margins in the economic upturn as many jobs are taken up by those more recently unemployed. (LDC response)

Challenges for this group were sometimes seen as compounded by their lack of access to other employment supports.

As access to free supports such as training or schemes such as Tús or CE [community employment] is limited or non-existent for this group, over time their confidence and skills drop and they can develop a 'defeated' attitude. They feel as though they have no worth and mental health issues for many in this group are a real concern. (LDC response)

Over half (56%) of LDCs reported that there were individuals or groups not accessing SICAP supports who would benefit from such supports. A variety of groups were highlighted, but the most frequently mentioned were Travellers/Roma, those in isolated rural areas, migrants/asylum seekers and older people. The case-study analysis provides some insights into the challenges in engaging some groups.

People living in remote areas of [the county] – no access to transport. No local meeting spaces to meet with the individual. (LDC response)

It is hard to reach everyone. Large county and transport can be an issue for participation. (LDC response)

2.5.3 Challenges in accessing employment

LDCs were asked about the main challenges in accessing employment faced by the long-term unemployed. Forty-nine per cent highlighted difficulties around self-confidence and motivation among the group.

Reduced ability to progress both at a personal and vocational level. Prolonged absence from any engagement impacting on decreased self-esteem, confidence and motivation, feel lost and left behind and don't know how to get their life back on track. Over time they have developed a structure and routine not compatible with employment. No recent training, large gaps on CV. (LDC response)

A similar proportion pointed to low educational levels and poorer skills among the long-term unemployed.

As well as the challenge of being out of the labour market for some time, changes in the job market can make their specific skills irrelevant & they may not have the confidence / flexibility to adapt. (LDC response)

Transport was highlighted as a barrier to accessing employment, particularly for those in dispersed rural areas. In keeping with the responses in relation to employer views on the unemployed, not having a recent or, for some, any employment history was seen as a barrier, making it difficult to convince employers that they had the necessary skills for the job.

Some clients [have] been unemployed for a long period of time and have gaps in their CVs as a result. This can be viewed negatively by employers and people do not get the chance of an interview. Confidence, self-esteem and self-belief are issues for clients that have not been employed for a long period. This can be a slow process for people to realise their potential and gain the confidence to develop their careers. Furthermore, prospective employers are less likely to employ someone that has not been engaged in any work for some time. Furthermore, many clients have low levels of educational attainment, resulting in poor job outcomes. Intergenerational unemployment is also a factor for many of the most distant from the labour market. (LDC response)

Stigma attached to being long-term unemployed. Skills gap due to length out of work force. (LDC response)

Some of the long-term unemployed faced additional challenges, such as mental health difficulties or substance abuse, which were seen as a barrier to formal employment.

There are a range of structural and personal issues confronting individuals that include: Unmet basic needs such as lack of accommodation or insecure tenure; The level of qualifications required for employment positions; Existing skills to match current labour market requirements; The precarious nature of certain types of employment; Young first-time job seekers being confronted with the demand for experience requirement; Older workers not having and lacking confidence with respect to modern technologies; Lack of affordable childcare; Health and wellbeing issues; Language competency barriers; Criminal records; Appropriate job-seeking skills; Ability to present and compete within job selection processes. (LDC response)

In discussing the challenges for the economically inactive, LDCs mentioned a similar set of factors, but placed a greater emphasis on issues around lack of self-confidence and motivation and much less emphasis on mental health difficulties.

Motivation & willingness to change / lack of awareness of what is available & what is available to them. Often our clients need someone to advocate on their behalf. (LDC response)

Lack of qualifications or a recent employment history were also seen as barriers for this group.

Initially not knowing where to start, limited previous work history, little to no previous work experience or engagement with employment. Limited engagement within their communities. Gaps in access to education/ qualifications, training and previous employment, greater need for pre-training and engagement in community education or volunteering before progressing to further education and or employment. (LDC response)

For the long-term unemployed, lack of transport was an issue, especially in rural areas.

2.6 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has presented the findings from the survey of LDCs on employment supports for the long-term unemployed and economically inactive. The vast majority of the LDCs reported that the increase in employment levels has meant that those who remain unemployed or outside the labour market tend to face multiple barriers, especially lack of self-confidence and motivation. In many areas,

employers are viewed as reluctant to employ those who have been out of work for a long time. This change in profile poses challenges in offering employment supports due to the need to work with beneficiaries on their underlying difficulties before more focused work on the progression to employment is possible.

Transport emerges as a significant barrier to accessing education, training and employment in rural areas, and can also pose challenges in offering SICAP supports to those in more remote areas. In addition, LDCs report some difficulties in involving some groups (especially Travellers, Roma and migrants) in SICAP provision. The case-study analysis discusses this issue in greater detail and outlines the nature of outreach activities engaged in by LDCs.

SICAP employment supports are seen by LDCs as having distinctive features that enhance their work with more marginalised groups, including flexibility, a holistic approach, staff skills and links with other providers/services. Improving attitudinal skills is an important objective in one-to-one and group supports in response to the challenges faced by the target group. LDCs see both one-to-one and group supports as successful in achieving a range of objectives but are most positive about improving enterprise/business skills and beneficiaries setting up their own business. They see the supports as somewhat less successful, especially in relation to improving soft skills, in areas with a concentration of disadvantage, most likely because of the greater 'distance' to employment for many beneficiaries in these localities. The SICAP programme has recently developed a tailored distance travelled tool (My Journey) to measure soft skills relevant to employment, education and personal development for service beneficiaries. It aims to support service users and staff to work together to identify personal goals for the client and show progress over time. In 2019, the tool was piloted in 15 LDCs. It will be introduced to all Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) and LDCs in 2020 and was, unfortunately, therefore not available for inclusion in this study.⁵ The case-study analysis looks in greater detail at outcomes from the perspective of LDCs and beneficiaries themselves.

For many LDCs, SICAP is part of a suite of employment supports they offer (along with LES and Jobs Club). How SICAP is used appears to be shaped by this context. LDCs with other employment services tend to target SICAP supports towards those embarking on self-employment to a greater degree. Self-employment supports provided through LDCs have a strong legacy component. They also tend to provide more intensive supports where other provision is available, leaving LES and Jobs Club to deal with 'easier to reach' groups. The importance of an integrated and holistic approach to beneficiary needs was also evident, with one-to-one employment supports seen as more successful in areas where there were better

⁵ My Journey measures five soft skill areas: (i) literacy and numeracy confidence; (ii) confidence, goal setting and self-efficacy; (iii) communication skills; (iv) connection with others; and (v) general work readiness. For more information see: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/8dee88-my-journey-distance-traveled-tool/>.

support services. In terms of modelling interventions/supports into the future, a number of points are of importance: (i) all pre-employment supports are framed within the local context, (ii) the qualifications and skillsets of staff within LDCs, (iii) a community development approach is used.

CHAPTER 3

Findings from the counterfactual analysis

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings from the counterfactual analysis where recipients of pre-employment supports are compared with a similar group of beneficiaries not receiving such supports to assess their rates of progression into employment. Our approach allows us to analyse the effectiveness of pre-employment supports delivered through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) using the Integrated Reporting and Information System (IRIS) database.

Given the steady decline in unemployment levels from 2012 to early 2020, adults remaining outside paid employment during 2018–2019 often were those who faced an array of disadvantages (see Chapter 2). Long-term unemployment remains an issue for some individuals and groups who were not able to benefit from the labour market recovery from the period 2012 to early 2020. It is likely that these individuals have different profiles as well as complex and diverse needs and require appropriate preparation before they can be considered ‘employment-ready’. Previous research indicates that SICAP plays an important role in providing supports to the most marginalised individuals and groups (McGuinness et al., 2016, 2018; Darmody and Smyth, 2018; Whelan et al., 2019). This chapter explores further the role played by the programme in assisting those who are furthest away from the labour market (a subset of the long-term unemployed) into employment.

Section 3.2 describes the methodological approach, which ultimately relies on comparing the labour market outcomes of individuals in receipt of SICAP pre-employment supports (the treatment group) with those of individuals with similar characteristics not in receipt of pre-employment supports (the control group). Section 3.3 analyses information from the IRIS data to identify the key characteristics of individuals who access such supports relative to individuals receiving other assistance through SICAP.

This empirical assessment enables us to identify formally, using econometric modelling techniques, the key attributes of the treatment group in terms of (a) individual characteristics such as age, education and gender, (b) the barriers to inclusion faced by participants such as disability, housing difficulties, belonging to an ethnic minority, being a lone parent, duration of unemployment, and (c) spatial factors such as small area level of deprivation, population density, urbanisation and geographic location. Not only is this profiling information valuable in its own right, it was also used to inform the identification of a relevant control group and to inform the qualitative aspect of the study of some of the main barriers faced by

pre-employment recipients. Section 3.4 examines the results from the counterfactual analysis and Section 3.5 concludes.

3.2 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

In order to measure the impact of pre-employment supports, we must have access to data that allow us to:

- identify a ‘treatment group’ of individuals who have benefited from pre-employment supports under SICAP;
- identify a ‘control group’ of individuals who are similar to the treatment group in terms of their key observable characteristics and did not receive any pre-employment supports;
- compare the employment outcomes of the treatment and control groups after the pre-employment supports were administered to the treatment group;
- ensure that the estimated treatment impact is robust by eradicating any potential differences in observables between the control and treatment group that could also be correlated with the outcome variables.

Initially, our methodological approach intended to match a treatment group from the IRIS data to a suitable control group from the Live Register. Using the resulting dataset would have allowed us to measure the impact of SICAP pre-employment supports on subsequent progression to employment. However, as access to the Live Register data has not yet been achieved, we have sought to develop an alternative approach based solely on SICAP’s IRIS database. All participants in the SICAP programme complete a questionnaire during their initial meeting with SICAP support staff. Specific questions are asked regarding gender, age, principal economic status, nationality, ethnic/cultural background, educational attainment, household situation, etc.⁶ Using the IRIS database allows us to identify formally the key attributes of the individuals, across a rich set of indicators, who receive pre-employment initiatives and match with a control group of similar individuals (based on characteristics such as age, gender, education, barriers faced and other spatial factors).

Within the SICAP programme there are two ‘bespoke’ pre-employment initiatives called Kickstart and STEPS; however, it is widely recognised that such initiatives form only a small part of pre-employment interventions under SICAP as many take place outside the remit of formal structured programmes. We begin by identifying our treatment group in the 2018 IRIS data using the following selection criteria,

⁶ A copy of the questionnaire can be found at: <https://www.pobal.ie/app/uploads/2019/03/SICAP-2-Individual-template-March2019.pdf>.

which broadly identify individuals some distance from the labour market in receipt of employment supports as:

- unemployed for two years or more;
- educated to Leaving Certificate or below; and
- having received at least one employment intervention in 2018.

The control group consists of individuals who:

- were unemployed for two years or more;
- were educated to Leaving Certificate or below; and
- had no record of receiving an employment intervention in 2017 or 2018.

The rationale for this approach is that the difference in the employment outcomes between the treatment and control groups will give us a measure of the treatment group's likely progression rates into employment in the absence of employment supports, i.e. the counterfactual. Economically inactive individuals, who are not actively seeking work or subject to welfare payment conditionality, are excluded from the sample.

It should be noted that our methodological approach is focused on eradicating observable differences between the characteristics of the control and treatment groups. Nevertheless, our estimates could still be impacted by unobservable factors related, for instance, to case worker allocation to the treatment and control groups. Selection bias in a non-experimental context is often an issue. For instance, those who voluntarily sign up for an educational programme can be the more motivated individuals who are potentially more likely to perform well (in terms of test scores or employment outcomes) even in the absence of the intervention. In other cases, potential bias may not arise due to individuals self-selecting into the treatment programmes but being selected for treatment on the basis of an interview or evaluation of their willingness to co-operate with the intervention. Such issues can lead to self-selection bias or administrative/placement selection bias. In general, and in the case of the current interventions, such forms of sample selection will tend to exert an upwardly biased estimation of the impacts. It is extremely difficult to eradicate such biases in cross-sectional data; however, we believe that they have been minimised in the current study by virtue of the rich and comprehensive nature of the observable data in the study. The more comprehensive the observable controls, the lower is the risk of bias due to unobservables. Furthermore, we address the potential nature of such selection bias in our qualitative research, which seeks to uncover the range of factors underlying the process by which beneficiaries are allocated to the various employment options.

3.3 DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

Table 3.1 summarises the interventions received by the treatment and control groups during the 2018 observation period. It is important to note that participants in SICAP can, and typically do, receive more than one intervention. As a result of our data strategy, outlined above, we were able to identify 2758 treatment group members and 1554 control group members from a total SICAP population of 31,665. It is also important to note that as both the control and treatment group members are classified as unemployed, they will both be subject to conditionality and obliged to seek work in return for social welfare payments. Forty per cent of the control and almost 10 per cent of the treatment groups received personal development interventions over the period, which is likely to be a reflection of the disadvantaged characteristics of all individuals selected for the study.

The pre-employment programmes delivered under SICAP are focused on preparing people for either employment (SICAP goals G2.4 and G2.5) or self-employment/social entrepreneurship (SICAP goal G2.6). Approximately 60 per cent of the treatment group received employment supports, with the remaining 40 per cent receiving self-employment supports.⁷ A further key condition of the selection process is that no members of the control group undertook any of the employment interventions in the current or previous periods (2018 or 2017).

In addition to personal development interventions, two-thirds of the control group undertook life-long learning supports. The life-long learning opportunities received by the control group may themselves have positive employment impacts, suggesting that our counterfactual estimates may be somewhat downwardly biased.

TABLE 3.1 DISTRIBUTION OF HAVING AT LEAST ONE OF THE CLASSIFIED GOALS FROM G2.1 TO G2.6

Intervention goal	Overall (%)	Control (%)	Treated (%)
G2.1 – Promoting personal development and wellbeing	18.4	41.2	8.6
G2.2 – Providing life-long learning opportunities	34.7	66.7	0.0
G2.3 – Preventative supports for young people	1.2	0.8	0.0
G2.4 – Preparing people for employment and to remain in work	31.8	0.0	56.7
G2.5 – Promoting better-quality and sustainable employment	1.6	0.0	0.7
G2.6 – Providing a pathway to self-employment/social entrepreneurship	26.7	0.0	44.3
Total	31,665	1554	2758

Source: IRIS database, 2018.

Table 3.2 illustrates the principal combinations of interventions received by the treatment group. Everyone in the treatment group receives an average of two

⁷ The average number of employment interventions for the treated group is 2.35, the median number is 2 and the range is 17.

interventions (excluding the initial one-to-one meeting to develop the initial personal action plan (PAP) that everyone receives), typically involving a single or two consecutive self-employment or employment interventions.⁸ The remaining 9 per cent of interventions relate to other combinations, such as an employment intervention followed by a self-employment intervention. Forty-eight per cent of the treatment group received predominantly employment interventions; 43 per cent were predominantly in receipt of self-employment interventions.⁹

TABLE 3.2 COMMON PATHWAYS

Intervention 1	Intervention 2	%
Self-employment	Self-employment	29
Employment		27
Employment	Employment	21
Self-employment		14
Other		9
Total		2758

Source: IRIS Database, 2018.

Table 3.3 compares the observable characteristics of the control and treatment groups with each other and the total population of SICAP participants. Some differences are immediately obvious between both the treatment and control group vis-à-vis the entire SICAP sample. By definition, members of both the treatment and control groups have much lower levels of schooling and much higher incidences (and durations) of unemployment. They also have a much higher likelihood of belonging to a jobless household compared to the overall SICAP sample.

A few differences are shown to exist between the treatment and control groups. From the descriptive data, treatment group members are more likely to be male, and are less likely to be lone parents or to be impacted by homelessness or have a disability.¹⁰ These differences between the control and treatment groups can potentially lead to biased estimates if it proves to be the case, as is indicated by the descriptives, that the treatment group is less disadvantaged in ways that would improve their likelihood of achieving a successful progression to employment. In order to account for these influences, in addition to providing estimates of the treatment effect using standard multivariate models, we measure the treatment impact using propensity score matching (PSM) methods. PSM is a methodological approach that ensures that the control and treatment groups are approximately identical, in terms of their key characteristics, before the treatment effect is

⁸ Those availing of self-employment supports are slightly less likely to have a disability (4% vs 6%), to be a lone parent (13% vs 15%) or be of an ethnic minority (4% vs 5%) and are more likely to be from other EU countries (17% vs 12%). The large difference is that those who are availing of self-employment supports are much less likely to face a transport barrier (11% vs 23%).

⁹ This excludes the intervention denoted as a personal action plan.

¹⁰ Please note that within the IRIS dataset, the majority (59 per cent) of those who report a disability are recorded as economically inactive and excluded for the quantitative analysis of this study.

measured. PSM thereby ensures that any estimate is not impacted by differences in the observable characteristics of the control and treatment groups.

TABLE 3.3 COMPOSITIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF FULL SAMPLE AND CONTROL AND TREATMENT GROUPS

	Full sample (%)	Control (%)	Treated (%)
Female	49	59	28
Age 15–24	16	13	8
Age 25–35	25	27	27
Age 36–45	26	25	29
Age 46–54	18	20	23
Age 55–65	12	13	12
Age 65+	3	2	0
Irish	78	81	83
Other EU	14	10	12
African	3	4	2
Other	4	4	3
Employed	23	0	0
Unemployed	57	100	100
Self-employed	4	0	0
Inactive	20	0	0
Unemployment duration: <1 year	26	0	0
Unemployment duration: 13–24 months	9	0	0
Unemployment duration: >2 years	22	100	100
Educational attainment: NFQ 0 1 2 3	29	56	50
Educational attainment: NFQ 4 5	33	44	50
Educational attainment: NFQ 6 7 8	33	0	0
Educational attainment: NFQ 9 10	5	0	0
Lone parent	14	26	15
Disability	9	13	6
Ethnic minority	6	12	5
Jobless household	43	75	68
Homeless/affected	6	11	5
Transport barrier	23	37	23
Observations	31,665	1554	2758

Source: IRIS Database, 2018.

Table 3.4 gives an indication of the differences in the referral routes of the treatment and control groups to SICAP. Perhaps not surprisingly, those in the treatment group are more likely to have heard about SICAP through the main Public Employment Support (PES) authority, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP). Members of the control group are more likely to have learned about SICAP through a local community group, family/friends or social media outlets.

TABLE 3.4 REFERRAL ROUTES INTO SICAP

How did you hear about SICAP?	Overall	Control	Treated
DEASP service or programme	27	14	44
Engagement in SICAP activity	5	5	3
Friends/family	20	22	16
Local community group	15	24	7
Other organisation	20	22	23
Publicity/social media/website	11	11	5
Requested but not provided	2	2	2
Observations	31,665	1554	2758

Source: IRIS Database, 2018.

It is necessary to ensure that a sufficient period has lapsed between the employment intervention and the measurement of employment outcomes. Table 3.5 confirms that over 40 days has lapsed between the last employment intervention and the measurement of employment outcomes. Therefore, our analysis captures the short-run impacts of the intervention. This is reasonable as the treatment interventions tend to be of very short durations, of typically 40 minutes for one-to-one interventions and one hour, on average, for group interventions (Table 3.5). The duration information recorded in the IRIS database relating to the interventions is likely to be a proxy for the range of supports provided.

Given their time-limited nature, we would expect any impacts of these focused, short and presumably highly intensive interventions to become apparent relatively quickly compared to, for instance, more lengthy training spells where the benefit of the interventions may be observed more gradually over time. Nevertheless, we also assess interventions at a more extended time point of six months post-treatment in order to ensure that any observed treatment effects have been sustained over time.¹¹

TABLE 3.5 DURATION (IN DAYS) FROM INTERVENTION TO EMPLOYMENT OUTCOME OBSERVATION

	All (mean)	Control (mean)	Treated (mean)
First intervention to employment	88.38	68.13	79.95
First employment intervention to employment	77.37	–	67.44
Last intervention to employment	46.55	32.83	42.86
Last employment intervention to employment	50.10	–	46.80
Observations	31,665	1554	2758

Source: IRIS Database, 2018.

¹¹ To fully examine longer-term impacts and/or sustainability, information over a longer period of time is necessary. It was not viable for this project due to the timeframe and data availability/accessibility.

Table 3.6 confirms that the control group also experienced short-term non-employment one-to-one interventions, predominantly life-long learning, of slightly longer duration relative to the treatment group, that had also been completed prior to the measurement of employment outcomes. It is likely that the number of interventions within the IRIS database is under-recorded, given the information we received from the case studies (staff and beneficiaries) regarding the often high level of intermittent calls and follow-up supports provided to beneficiaries. The group interventions of the control group are considerably shorter than those recorded for the treatment group. As can be seen from Tables 3.5 and 3.6, treatment group members also had non-employment, typically personal development related, interventions.

TABLE 3.6 NUMBER AND DURATION FOR ALL INTERVENTIONS

	All (mean)	Control (mean)	Treated (mean)
Total number of interventions			
Employment one-to-one	1.00	–	1.68
Employment group	0.37	–	0.67
Not employment one-to-one	1.66	2.32	1.10
Not employment group	0.48	1.17	0.07
Total duration (minutes)			
Employment one-to-one duration	41.78	–	69.26
Employment group duration	63.29	–	119.75
Not employment one-to-one duration	57.56	73.25	39.46
Not employment group duration	53.14	118.41	9.32
Observations	31,665	1554	2758

Source: IRIS Database, 2018.

TABLE 3.7 COURSE PARTICIPATION DESCRIPTIVES

	Control (%)	Treated (%)
Attended at least one course	58.6	38.2
Specific course	8.4	6.9
General course	24.2	15.8
Search course	0.0	6.7
Self-employment course	0.0	9.5
Not-employment-related course	28.2	3.9
Observations	1554	2758

Source: IRIS Database, 2018.

Note: The average number of weeks on a course was 9 overall, 12 for the control group and 5 for the treated group. The average number of hours per week on a course was 7 overall, 6 for the control and 7 for the treated group.

In terms of courses, shown in Table 3.7, we see that overall 86 per cent of the sample attended at least one course compared with 59 per cent of the control and 38 per cent of the treated sample. The greater likelihood of the control group being on a course compared to the treated group is most likely due to the fact that the control group is more likely to be receiving life-long learning interventions.

We categorised the courses into five types depending on the course title. A ‘specific’ course tends to be directly targeted at a specific job type or can be a short taster course, while other courses are more general and tend not to be targeted at specific occupations. For example, courses in care skills, hair and beauty, abrasive wheel, forklift training, culinary skills, beauty taster and introduction to hair care are considered specific while courses in manual handling, Safepass, internet skills, Failte Isteach, and English beginners are considered general. Search courses are defined as courses with a strong focus on preparation for work, such as CV preparation and interview skills. Self-employment courses include the Start Your Own Business programmes and courses in business planning, book-keeping and market research for your own business. The remainder of courses, while providing opportunities for personal development, engagement and social inclusion, tend not to fall into the categories specified above. Such courses include those related to ‘parenting’, ‘driver theory’, ‘mental wellbeing’, and ‘mindfulness and meditation’.

Our initial descriptive assessment of the treatment impact is given in Table 3.8, which compares the initial employment outcomes of the treatment and control groups. Almost 5 per cent of the treatment group progressed into employment compared to 1.5 per cent of the control group; 16.5 per cent of the treatment group progressed to self-employment in the period following the intervention, compared to less than 1 per cent of the control group. Treatment group outcomes for self-employment are also superior to the overall SICAP sample, which is notable given that the treatment sample is made up of individuals identified as further from the labour market.

TABLE 3.8 SHORT-TERM EMPLOYMENT PROGRESSION

	All (%)	Control (%)	Treated (%)
Progressed to employment/self-employment	14.7	1.9	21.3
Progressed to employment	5.1	1.5	4.8
Progressed to self-employment	9.7	0.4	16.5
Observations	31,665	1554	2758

Source: IRIS Database, 2018.

Note: The average number of weeks on a course was 9 overall, 12 for the control group and 5 for the treated group. The average number of hours per week on a course was 7 overall, 6 for the control group and 7 for the treated group.

3.4 MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS

Bivariate relationships between treatment status and progression to employment are potentially misleading and may be due, at least in part, to differences in the observable characteristics of the control and treatment groups that also determine employability. Consequently, we estimate a probit model for progression to: (1) employment or self-employment, (2) employment only and (3) self-employment only. Each model measures the impact of the treatment intervention while

simultaneously controlling for other personal characteristics that could also influence progression probabilities (Table 3.9).

3.4.1 Employment outcomes

The results indicate that, relative to the control group and controlling for all other relevant factors available in the data, treatment group members were 13 percentage points more likely to progress to any form of employment, 6 percentage points more likely to progress to employment only and 25 percentage points more likely to progress to self-employment only. The results seem to support the view that the pre-employment supports were effective in aiding individuals some distance from the labour market to reintegrate into employment.

Some other interesting aspects of the models reveal factors that act as further potential barriers to labour market reintegration (in addition to very long-term unemployment durations and low levels of educational attainment). Persons with disabilities were between 3 and 4 percentage points less likely to progress to the labour market; being female, living in a disadvantaged area and experiencing a transport barrier were also found to reduce the probability of progression to employment, by between 2 and 5 percentage points.

TABLE 3.9 EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES: ESTIMATED IMPACT RELATIVE TO CONTROL GROUP

Variable	(1) Employment/self-employment	(2) Employment only	(3) Self-employment only
Treated dummy	0.134*** (0.017)	0.060*** (0.014)	0.246*** (0.027)
Female	-0.033** (0.015)	0.003 (0.007)	-0.021 (0.015)
15 to 35 (ref = 36 to 54)	-0.004 (0.010)	0.001 (0.007)	-0.005 (0.008)
Age 55+	-0.022 (0.014)	0.003 (0.011)	-0.013 (0.009)
Irish	-0.031* (0.017)	-0.015 (0.012)	-0.010 (0.010)
Rural	0.044** (0.020)	0.013 (0.011)	0.010 (0.013)
Disadvantaged area (ref = average)	-0.027** (0.011)	-0.011 (0.010)	-0.007 (0.007)
Affluent area	-0.004 (0.012)	0.000 (0.012)	-0.006 (0.009)
Lone parent	-0.002 (0.014)	-0.000 (0.009)	-0.005 (0.010)
Disability	-0.043** (0.018)	-0.032*** (0.008)	0.001 (0.019)
Ethnic minority	-0.029 (0.021)	-0.015 (0.012)	-0.011 (0.014)
Jobless household	-0.001 (0.011)	-0.004 (0.009)	-0.003 (0.010)
Homeless/affected	0.006 (0.043)	0.003 (0.028)	0.037 (0.041)
Transport barrier	-0.041*** (0.013)	0.012 (0.009)	-0.037** (0.016)
Pseudo R-squared	0.1207	0.0842	0.3032
Wald chi-squared	188.87***	99.24***	218.24***
Observations	2744	2025	1735

Source: IRIS Database, 2018.

Notes: Average marginal effects reported. Robust standard errors clustered by LDC in parentheses; *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.10$.

3.4.2 Propensity score matching

In order to guard against the possibility that differences between the observable characteristics of the treatment and control groups are biasing the results, we re-estimate the treatment effects using PSM in Table 3.10. However, we find that the results from the PSM are in line with the probit models showing that the estimated average treatment effect on the treated (ATT) stands at 17.7 percentage points for progressing to any employment, 8 percentage points for progressing to employment only and 30.3 per cent for progressing to self-employment only.

Next, in order to ensure that the PSM results are reliable, we need to confirm that any important differences between the control and treatment groups have been eradicated during the matching process, i.e. that the data are balanced. There are two important tests for balancing: (1) that a model measuring the differences between the control and treatment group estimated on the matched sample is not statistically significant and generates a pseudo- R^2 statistic close to zero, and (2) that any descriptive-level differences between the two groups that were very apparent in Table 3.2 are no longer observable.¹² Following matching, the pseudo- R^2 statistics for all of the models were no longer statistically significant from zero when estimated on the balanced sample, allowing us to conclude that no important statistical differences exist between the control and treatment groups across all the models. This is further confirmed by our descriptive analysis of the matched sample (Appendix Table A1), which is now very close across all observable characteristics, with the previously observed differences in gender, lone parent status, barrier information, etc. that were reported in Table 3.2 no longer detectable.

It is possible that the positive treatment effects are being driven by a minority of providers. However, when we re-estimate the model to include individual LDC controls (Appendix Table A2), the treatment estimates remain unchanged, suggesting that the positive treatment effect is not being driven by a minority of providers.

It is likely that almost all individuals progressing to self-employment are receiving supports under the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) programme. Under the BTWEA, self-employed individuals can retain a proportion of their welfare payments for up to two years and are also eligible to apply for various additional funding grants. While it is difficult to ascertain at this point the long-term sustainability of these self-employment opportunities, the pre-employment supports seem to be particularly successful in moving disadvantaged individuals from unemployment to self-employment and simultaneously equipping them with new skills, such as business plan development.

With respect to those moving into employment, it is certainly the case that a proportion will enter community employment initiatives such as the Community Employment Scheme (CES) and Tús. In Appendix Table A3, when we re-estimate our employment-only model excluding those on community employment

¹² The fourth and fifth columns of Table 3.10 report the pseudo- R^2 statistics of the stage one PSM models, which identify the key characteristics distinguishing individuals pursuing an employment intervention from those in the control group. The pre-matching pseudo- R^2 is a measure of the difference in observable characteristics between the treated (employment interventions) and comparison group (no employment interventions) that exist prior to matching taking place. Effective matching implies that observable differences between the two groups are eradicated and should no longer be statistically significant when the stage one probit model is re-estimated on the matched sample. Thus, a strong indicator that important differences in observables between the treated and comparison groups have been eradicated is that the pseudo- R^2 of a probit model estimated on the matched sample should be close to zero and statistically insignificant. The post-matching pseudo- R^2 statistics are reported in the fifth column of Table 3.10 and indicate that the matching on observables was successful.

initiatives, we still find a positive treatment effect of 3.5 percentage points (down from 6), indicating that the pre-employment supports are also moving participants into standard employment pathways.¹³

TABLE 3.10 EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES USING PROPENSITY SCORE MATCHING: ESTIMATED IMPACT RELATIVE TO CONTROL GROUP

Variable	Probit	PSM (ATT)	Pseudo-R ² (pre)	Pseudo-R ² (post)	Mantel–Haenszel (MH) bound	N
Overall						
Employment/self-employment	0.134*** (0.017)	0.177*** (0.011)	0.100***	0.002	5.7	2744
Employment	0.060*** (0.014)	0.080*** (0.009)	0.070***	0.002	2.7	2025
Self-employment	0.246*** (0.027)	0.303*** (0.015)	0.199***	0.003	28	1735
Males						
Employment/self-employment	0.135*** (0.021)	0.189*** (0.0156)	0.053***	0.004	3.3	1652
Females						
Employment/self-employment	0.123*** (0.022)	0.151*** (0.016)	0.060***	0.003	6	1092
Jobless households						
Employment/self-employment	0.125*** (0.020)	0.169*** (0.013)	0.095***	0.001	4.4	1930
Irish nationals						
Employment/self-employment	0.124*** (0.017)	0.168*** (0.012)	0.109***	0.002	4.9	2286
Irish non-nationals						
Employment/self-employment	0.191*** (0.030)	0.217*** (0.058)	0.103***	0.017	3.8	452

Source: IRIS Database, 2018.

Notes: Robust standard errors clustered by LDC in parentheses; *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.10$.

In order to establish if the respective treatment effects vary by gender, nationality or level of household disadvantage, we re-estimate the PSM models for the pooled treatment effect (progression to employment or self-employment) for each sample group separately. Compared to the estimated treatment impact of 17.7 per cent for the total sample, we find no strong differences by gender or jobless households. Some differences are apparent by nationality, with a higher treatment effect among non-Irish nationals: 21.7 per cent compared to 16.8 per cent among Irish nationals (Table 3.10).

¹³ If we regard CE as a progression to another intervention and allow CE schemes to be measured as non-employment, this reduces the estimate to 3.4 per cent.

In Table 3.11 we restrict our samples further to individuals educated to Junior Certificate level or below, and find that our result of strong positive intervention impacts effects holds when the models are estimated for the most educationally disadvantaged sub-sample. Specifically, we find that individuals holding Junior Certificate or lower qualifications are 16.7 percentage points more likely to be in some form of employment (employment or self-employment), 6.7 percentage points more likely to be in employment and 30.8 percentage points more likely to be self-employed, when compared to a control group of SICAP clients with similar levels of schooling not in receipt of pre-employment supports.

TABLE 3.11 EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES USING PROPENSITY SCORE MATCHING AND JUNIOR CERTIFICATE AS HIGHEST EDUCATION LEVEL: ESTIMATED IMPACT RELATIVE TO CONTROL GROUP

Variable	Probit	PSM (ATT)	Pseudo-R ² (pre)	Pseudo-R ² (post)	MH bound	N
Employment/self-employment	0.127*** (0.021)	0.167*** (0.022)	0.141***	0.004	5.7	1433
Employment	0.051*** (0.015)	0.067*** (0.011)	0.104***	0.002	2.25	1103
Self-employment	0.244*** (0.035)	0.308*** (0.026)	0.264***	0.005	24.1	900

Source: IRIS Database.

Notes: Robust standard errors clustered by LDC in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.10$.

3.4.3 Determinants of progression into employment

We next attempt to get a better insight into the factors driving the positive treatment effect by re-estimating our basic model and replacing the treatment binary variable with a series of variables that further describe the attributes of the services delivered to SICAP clients receiving pre-employment supports. In this model we control for course type, which tends to fall into three broad categories (job search, general skills, specific skills), group supports and one-to-one supports. It is important to note that job search advice is also likely to have formed part of both the one-to-one and certain group supports. One-to-one supports can cover a range of activities, including encouragement and mentoring, job search assistance, CV preparation and facilitating help in areas of literacy and mental health, in addition to assistance in making phone calls or filling out job applications, allowing participants to overcome practical barriers to employment or self-employment.

In the models shown in Table 3.12, we control for the number of one-to-one supports each beneficiary received in the areas of employment and/or self-employment. As the number of one-to-one meetings will be correlated with the total duration of interventions, we do not control for duration explicitly. Furthermore, the number of one-to-one interventions recorded is likely to be a proxy for the overall range of supports provided. We find that the probability of

progression to either form of employment increases linearly with the number of one-to-one interventions, with the impacts particularly strong for self-employment supports. We find that progressions to employment were negatively related to job search assistance courses. This is a somewhat unusual result that may be explained by the nature of the intervention, which we will explore further in our qualitative analysis.

TABLE 3.12 DETERMINANTS OF PROGRESSION INTO EMPLOYMENT

Variable	Employment/self-employment	Employment only	Self-employment only
Female	-0.023* (0.013)	-0.000 (0.007)	-0.021* (0.013)
15 to 35 (ref = 36 to 54)	0.001 (0.010)	0.004 (0.007)	-0.003 (0.007)
Age 55+	-0.015 (0.016)	0.004 (0.011)	-0.015* (0.008)
Irish	-0.009 (0.014)	-0.009 (0.012)	-0.006 (0.009)
Rural	0.027* (0.016)	0.020* (0.012)	0.007 (0.012)
Disadvantaged area (ref = average)	-0.022** (0.009)	-0.012 (0.009)	-0.009 (0.006)
Affluent area	-0.005 (0.011)	-0.001 (0.010)	-0.003 (0.008)
Lone parent	-0.008 (0.012)	0.001 (0.008)	-0.006 (0.008)
Disability	-0.036** (0.016)	-0.029*** (0.007)	0.008 (0.017)
Ethnic minority	-0.038** (0.016)	-0.019* (0.011)	-0.018* (0.010)
Jobless household	-0.003 (0.011)	0.001 (0.008)	-0.006 (0.009)
Homeless/affected	0.014 (0.041)	0.002 (0.024)	0.029 (0.032)
Transport barrier	-0.012 (0.014)	0.014 (0.010)	-0.036*** (0.013)
General course (ref = no course)	0.014 (0.025)	0.018 (0.015)	-0.025 (0.016)
Specific course	0.021 (0.033)	0.015 (0.019)	-0.002 (0.028)
Search course	-0.051*** (0.016)	-0.024*** (0.007)	-0.007 (0.045)
Self-employment course	0.033 (0.035)	0.071 (0.101)	0.017 (0.021)
Non-employment course	0.012 (0.027)	0.016 (0.016)	-0.021 (0.017)
1 Employment intervention (ref = no employment interventions)	0.064** (0.028)	0.057*** (0.019)	0.005 (0.029)

Variable	Employment/self-employment	Employment only	Self-employment only
2 Employment interventions	0.171*** (0.052)	0.136*** (0.039)	0.153 (0.190)
≥3 Employment interventions	0.226*** (0.074)	0.208*** (0.058)	
1 Self-employment type intervention (ref = no self-employment interventions)	0.149*** (0.058)		0.135** (0.069)
2 Self-employment interventions	0.391*** (0.082)		0.362*** (0.118)
≥3 Self-employment interventions	0.474*** (0.073)	0.004 (0.034)	0.400*** (0.087)
Had an employment intervention in 2017	0.025 (0.037)	-0.007 (0.023)	0.025 (0.030)
Pseudo-R ²	0.225	0.125	0.368
Wald chi-squared	254.39***	138.87***	613.54
Observations	2546	1865	1629

Source: IRIS Database. Robust standard errors clustered by LDC in parentheses.

Note: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, $p < 0.10$

Finally, we assess the impact of the treatment effect six months after exiting SICAP. Case workers are required to collect six-month outcomes as part of the European Social Fund (ESF) requirements. The sample sizes for this robustness test are considerably lower than those of our previous models, as case workers reported that it can be difficult to get responses from former participants. There is considerable missing information in this variable which is classified as 'requested but not provided' in IRIS. Nevertheless, the coefficients in the model follow the expected sign and also indicate a statistically significant positive overall treatment effect of 14.6 per cent after 6 months (Table 3.13), which is similar to our short-run estimate of 13.4 per cent (Table 3.8).

TABLE 3.13 EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES SIX MONTHS AFTER LEAVING: ESTIMATED IMPACT RELATIVE TO CONTROL GROUP

Variable	Employment/self-employment six months after leaving
Treated dummy	0.146** (0.060)
Female	-0.018 (0.045)
15 to 35 (ref = 36 to 54)	-0.110*** (0.040)
Age 55+	-0.145*** (0.046)
Irish	-0.177** (0.088)
Rural	0.134** (0.058)
Disadvantaged area (ref = average)	0.026 (0.047)
Affluent area	0.128*** (0.044)
Lone parent	0.076 (0.062)
Disability	-0.159** (0.070)
Ethnic minority	-0.154** (0.065)
Jobless household	0.015 (0.049)
Homeless/affected	0.154 (0.126)
Transport barrier	-0.088** (0.043)
Pseudo-R ²	0.113
Wald chi-squared	130.56
Observations	473

Source: IRIS Database, 2018.

Notes: Robust standard errors clustered by LDC in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.10$

3.5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Our empirical analysis indicates a positive counterfactual impact on employment for both employment and self-employment interventions within SICAP. The estimated effects from our analysis show an increased probability of approximately 18 percentage points for progression to any employment, 8 percentage points for progression to employment only and 30 percentage points for progression to self-employment only, when compared to similar control group individuals. The estimated impacts overall for self-employment programmes are particularly strong. Compared to the overall estimated treatment impact of 18 percentage points for the total sample, we find no strong differences by gender or those living in jobless households. Some differences are apparent by nationality, with a higher treatment effect among non-Irish nationals at 22 percentage points compared to 17 percentage points among Irish nationals. Furthermore, the effects remain strong when we focus solely on those who are furthest from the labour market with very low levels of education, i.e. those with a Junior Certificate or less.

We find that the results are driven by one-to-one interventions rather than group supports. One-to-one supports cover a range of activities, including encouragement and mentoring, job search assistance, CV preparation, and facilitating help in areas of literacy and mental health, in addition to providing assistance in making phone calls or filling out job applications and aiding participants to overcome practical barriers to employment or self-employment. We find that the probability of progression to either form of employment (employment or self-employment) increases linearly with the number of one-to-one interventions, i.e. the probability of progressing to employment increases by 6 percentage points for a single one-to-one intervention, 17 percentage points for two one-to-one interventions, and 22 percentage points for three or more one-to-one interventions. Again, the impacts overall are strongest for self-employment supports.

Finally, the treatment effects are found to remain six months after exiting SICAP, using the information gathered as part of the European Social Fund (ESF) requirements. Moreover, the estimated impacts are of a similar magnitude to our short-run estimates, highlighting that the impacts are somewhat persistent, at least, in the short-to-medium term.

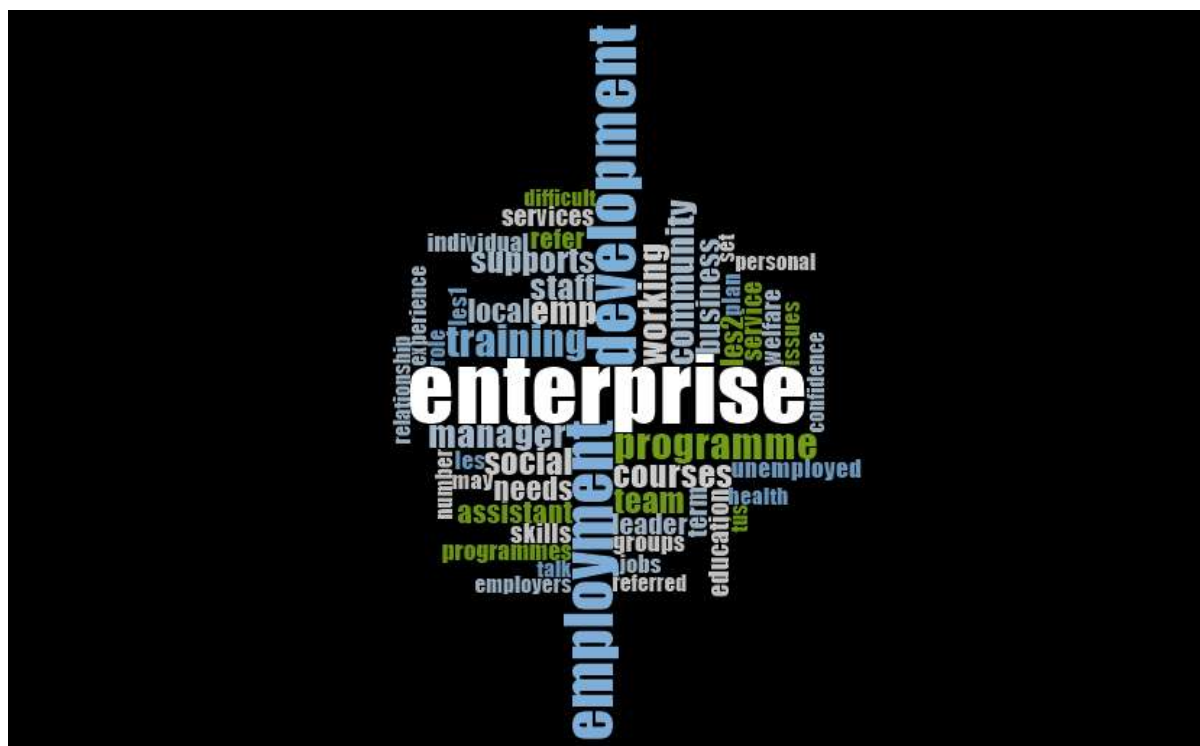
CHAPTER 4

Case studies of pre-employment supports at local level

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter draws on interviews with Local Development Company (LDC) CEOs, staff and local stakeholders to document the nature of pre-employment provision at local area level. The experiences and views of participants are presented in Chapter 5. The chapter begins by looking at the profile of groups with which the LDCs work and the barriers they are seen to experience. Section 4.3 examines the nature of provision at local level and the extent of contact with other employment services offered by the LDC and with other local services. Section 4.4 examines the perceived outcomes for the long-term unemployed and economically inactive; Section 4.5 concludes.

FIGURE 4.1 WORD CLOUD OF MOST COMMONLY USED WORDS BY LDC STAFF IN CASE-STUDY INTERVIEWS



Source: ESRI Interviews with LDC Staff, 2019.

4.2 THE PROFILE OF THE TARGET GROUP

The LDCs were asked specifically about pre-employment services for those who were long-term unemployed or had been economically inactive for some time. However, even within this group, LDC staff highlighted significant variation in terms of age and other characteristics such as housing circumstances. This was seen as resulting in very differing needs among the group. Staff in one LDC remarked on the difficulties in obtaining sustained engagement among younger people:

Young people ... it's not hard to reach them, it's hard to get the connection with them; it's hard to get them to continue to commit. ... It's to find courses or find ways that will link them with the partnership, and maybe then push them into the employment side. (Staff, LDC 1)

In contrast, the needs of the older age group often related to lack of familiarity with technology:

If we're looking up at the 55-year-olds, they maybe have lost out on the whole technological revolution, so they're finding they're in catch-up, you know what I mean? So then you're trying to teach them about Facebook and about Twitter and about Jobs Ireland and Jobs Plus and getting them online and getting profiles that match them or what, you know, it's like a whole new world. (Staff, LDC 2)

Those who had no work experience at all or had not worked for a protracted period were seen as experiencing the greatest difficulties alongside those who had experienced intergenerational unemployment.

There are long-term unemployed who have had work experience in the past and then long-term unemployed who never had work experience and they're a hard group, I think, to reach because they're coming to you and they might have basically done nothing for the last five or ten years or even longer, and they're a difficult group to work or maybe young people where there's generational [un]employment, so their parents or grandparents mightn't have worked, and they're quite a difficult group as well. (Staff, LDC 4)

In keeping with earlier analyses of Integrated Reporting and Information System (IRIS) data, those seeking self-employment supports were often more mixed in profile and less socio-economically disadvantaged than the other groups of participants.

Self-employment group is very mixed, and it's good to see: it's very mixed coming in here, and it's very mixed nationalities, age-groups, variation of work; very interesting what you get in the door. (Staff, LDC 1)

Many staff also reported that those seeking self-employment supports were almost solely referred through the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) rather than coming through other routes. The LDCs reported highly developed protocols with DEASP around the process of approving participants' receipt of the enterprise allowance.

Staff and other stakeholders emphasised low levels of confidence, across all regions, as a key barrier to engagement for many of the long-term unemployed and economically inactive groups.

I suppose one of the main barriers I would find would be lack of confidence. (Staff, LDC 1)

To actually engage them. Sometimes very gentle engagement out in the community is a first step; getting them in just to do a driver theory test is often really important because sometimes their confidence levels even coming into a room with other people can be difficult. That can be, you know, a big thing. (LDC Staff, LDC 4)

People really need intensive support and that's everything from preparing your CV to interview skills to how to look for a job, you know, the belief and understanding of your own skills, all that kind of stuff. (Other stakeholder, LDC 3)

Across all the case-study sites, staff emphasised the degree of multiple barriers faced by participants. It was often only by engaging with participants over a protracted period that the issues they were dealing with were revealed.

There's multiple barriers, and it's multi-layered, and it's generational, and I suppose we've pockets of huge deprivation, which is just generational, of people who have never worked and their parents haven't worked, and there's a lot of, I suppose, chaos in their lives. ... So, you think, you know, they're coming in and you're helping them with a CV, or you're helping them with a particular service, but there's so much else going on that you have no idea; it takes a while to get to the bottom of that. (Staff, LDC 1)

In rural areas or case-study areas serving a rural hinterland, transport emerged as a significant issue in participants accessing courses and/or employment.

Like, we've no access obviously in rural areas to public transport. So, you see it right across the board. Even on the likes of Tús schemes and everything. Even when people are referred in and there's local opportunities available, transport is a big issue. (Staff, LDC 4)

Again, you're dependent in places in their locality and I suppose one of the big things about [our location], particularly about the pockets that are so rural, I mean transport is crippling people. Like there's one of the areas that we work in and it's 12.50 return on the bus every day. Now, we have people, I certainly have people living there who would love to come into town and take up a position either in retail in a charity shop or something like that, but just they cannot afford that chunk out of their social welfare payment. (Other stakeholder, LDC 4)

However, even in urban areas, participants could adopt quite a narrow view of their 'comfort zone', making it challenging to access employment outside the immediate area.

They'll work within their own small area, but anything outside that is outside their comfort zone ... We will find, even if they're on the Luas line, if you have something for them, a job, or if you have training that's in the city centre, going back into the city, they'll work that way. But if you have something coming out, they don't know it, so they won't engage. (Staff, LDC 1)

As in the survey responses, the LDC staff and other stakeholders highlighted increasing challenges among the long-term unemployed and the economically inactive, challenges that had implications both for the nature or provision and for the additional supports required. A number of interviewees pointed to a significant increase in the prevalence of addiction issues among the client group.

I think there's been a significant change in the profile of people who are long-term unemployed. So from the start of the recession to maybe in the last two years coming up to fairly full employment, you were dealing with a different unemployed type of person. So they were more skilled, better educated, would have at least gone to Leaving Cert education, so the profile now of the clients that we're dealing with are entrenched unemployment, low levels of education, really bad experiences of education, a lot of prescription drug misuse at the minute, a lot of drug misuse, alcohol misuse. (Staff, LDC 5)

There's a lot of addiction ... around hash and, you know, cocaine use and the internet and porn, so that's a big thing. ... So you're tackling an addiction, like a mental health issue, before ... you're even getting into actually looking at the capacity for them to progress. So, with that addiction, it's very hard to progress anywhere, and sometimes the pre-employment work is to get them to realise that there is a problem that is causing this lethargy, or this lack of motivation or this lack of concentration, or this absentness and vacantness that there is out there. (Staff, LDC 2)

I suppose with the downturn, we had huge, huge numbers we had to deal with and then suddenly as things got to get a little better, we had people who really had a number of barriers that were the people who were left behind. So, it's probably a lot of our clients are older men, lower levels of education, sometimes alcohol dependency, might be drug dependency, a lot of mental health issues. (Other stakeholder, LDC 4)

Mental health difficulties were also apparent among the participant group:

Mental health is a big problem, and not in terms of mental health of maybe schizophrenia and psychosis, but people that have been isolated for a very long time, they have very poor social skills, they have very poor understanding, or even self-awareness. (Staff, LDC 1)

Other barriers including low levels of educational skills and poor language skills among some migrant groups were identified by LDC staff and other stakeholders.

I think a lot [of] our younger clients wouldn't necessarily have their Leaving Cert and our older clients wouldn't really have a high level of education attainment either. (Other stakeholder, LDC 3)

One of the things about the Roma community is that the English language is quite poor. (Staff, LDC 2)

In rural areas or case-study areas serving a rural hinterland, isolation emerged as a significant issue in participants engaging with Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) interventions, courses and/or employment.

I suppose the other hard-to-reach group for us was the isolated men in rural areas and the rural resource officer has been huge in, I suppose, attacking that whole problem. (Staff, LDC 1)

Provision was seen as responsive to emerging needs with the locality. For example, one LDC was assisting and working with refugees under the settlement programme due to the lack of other local supports.

In the survey, LDCs responded that there were some groups who could benefit from SICAP but were not currently accessing it. The case-study interviews suggested that this reflected significant barriers among some groups (such as the homeless) in engaging with services in general.

We're in that space where we're trying to connect with the people, and connect them back into the system, as such, but they don't trust or they stand back from or don't want to connect with, or want to keep their heads down, I suppose, and just don't want to connect with the system, as they see it, and the different departments and all the rest. And, I suppose, they're here, and we're trying to work in that space where if we can just get them to connect slowly but surely, and try and see can we move them on, then, in different ways. (Staff, LDC 1)

We've got a huge amount of people who are homeless, so it's very difficult to talk about people getting a job, when they have much bigger and greater needs. (Staff, LDC 3)

And of late as well in the last year definitely, we've had several referrals from clients on to Tús who were homeless, so that has become an issue, that's another kind of barrier that we wouldn't have been dealing with back in 2012. (Other stakeholder, LDC 4)

A similar point was raised in relation to Travellers, where previous bad experiences with local services made people reluctant to re-engage.

Travellers are really, really hard to reach. There's a lot of distrust in organisations, a lot of failed experiences with government programmes, low levels of literacy and really, really difficult to read. So SICAP is an annual programme, you have your targets for the year, but it doesn't suit that group because it takes at least six months for there to be any valid communication going on, for any reality to be happening. (Staff, LDC 5)

I think the programme, save for particular target groups, like Roma and traveller, isn't yet geared up for that, and some of that is around – for example, here we don't have a Roma or Traveller local organisation that you can work with to build the confidence. We don't have the peer-led sort of initiatives that would be necessary. We're trying to do some work on that. So that would be one thing. The programme is not a barrier to that, but it's certainly an impact in terms of those very disadvantaged subsets of individuals just aren't coming through the programme as we'd like them to. (Staff, LDC 2)

A focus on outreach on the part of LDCs was viewed as an effective way in working with hard-to-reach groups. Staff in LDC 2 were very proactive in engaging with local services for the homeless or the unemployed to try to attract people into SICAP provision.

The homeless guys were difficult to reach, until actually I went down to [one organisation] and absolutely convinced the manager that we could do something with those homeless men, and she wasn't hopeful because she thought, oh, they're not motivated ... And I said, 'Okay, well you know what it is, we're going to give them – we're going to put on some taster programmes'. ... There was a lot of addiction issues that I could see ... So, then I thought, you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to set up this group called [name]. So, we sat down as a team and we said, okay, we can't be doing this nine to five in the hours that suit us, what hours suit homeless people? (Staff, LDC 2)

The other way we'd recruit them was I'd go to the agency myself. I'd go down there and actually make an appointment with the manager of, say, the [organisations for the homeless, women's refuges and addiction programmes]. I'd actually go in there and make an appointment with the manager, and then I would tell the manager what I could give her, in the sense of that I have money for these programmes. What would she like to do? What is the gaps, and if it makes sense or if I can tailor it to make it something, you know, that would help progression then I'm prepared to sit down and work. (Staff, LDC 2)

Staff across the LDCs also engaged with statutory services in order to showcase SICAP provision and attract participants.

To spread the word of SICAP ... we do make the link with [the Education and Training Board (ETB)] so we do these roadshows in disadvantaged areas where we're saying, 'These are all the courses you can do'. (Staff, LDC 5)

We used to actually, years ago, go to social welfare on the signing days, and talk to everybody in the queue because my thinking on that was, well, we have a target audience here now, they're going nowhere for 40 minutes because they're in the queue, so I'm going to go up and down this queue and I'm going to talk to everybody. (Staff, LDC 2)

Providing 'high-interest' courses, such as driver theory, was seen as a useful way of engaging with some groups and providing them with a gateway to other services, across most of the LDCs.

It's high-interest courses is what we call it ... we're running the driver theory test at the moment, and that's brought in an awful lot of young people. We're trying to run it in our premises so that they're used to coming in the door, and that just gets them in, and suddenly then they're having a conversation with somebody here, and suddenly they're saying there's something across the road. (Staff, LDC 2)

We've got forklift courses for younger people, they're a lot more expensive, but we use them as a kind of incentive to get young people in. We've run apprenticeship events, because young people are quite interested in apprenticeship. ... We do Safe Pass and different things but we target young people in a different way, and we go to the youth clubs. (Staff, LDC 1)

The driving theory test was kind of an incentive to kind of get them in the door, and to build that relationship with them and as I said, the next step there for those kids would be a follow-up and say, 'Okay, what are you doing? What do you want to do? How can we help you to do that?' (Staff, LDC 1)

In another instance, staff were finding it difficult to engage with the Roma community but tried to 'find out where are they meeting, what is the way in there?' (Staff, LDC 2).

4.3 THE NATURE OF PROVISION

As in the survey responses, the significant features of SICAP provision highlighted by staff centred on the need to start from the needs of participants and be responsive to them as well as to provide a holistic approach to provision. In deciding which courses or supports to offer, LDCs took account of the needs of participants, existing education/training provision and the skills required by local employers.

We talk to our LES [Local Employment Service] colleagues and our Tús colleagues about who needs what on theirs, and ... we have waiting lists which are kind of like a wish list ... and if we see a trend building up for that, then we put on that course. And it's also done with market trends as well. Like, we know there's a huge need at the moment for people in healthcare, so we're working towards that. We know that everybody needs a manual handling cert, so we're hooking people in with that. (Staff, LDC 4)

You're looking at, I suppose, what the people that are presenting are looking for. You're looking for what employers and what the environment is looking for as well, and trying to match the skills. (Staff, LDC 1)

I suppose to some extent it's based on need, and it's also based on what supports are out there. So, there's really two things that determine it. So, you're looking at the supports that are out there in terms of, you know, advice, training, mentoring, whatever. And then we're also looking at the needs of the clients and we're also looking at what we have available in-house. (Staff, LDC 4)

Stakeholders expressed the importance of the ability of SICAP staff to build connections and high levels of trust with their clients throughout their engagement. So [the SICAP Support Worker] makes the connection with them, and that's what really works for people, is having that relationship; someone who believes in them when they believe they can't return to work or education. So that's key. I suppose you're dealing with really high-risk, vulnerable people as well, so I can't put a time on when they return to work. (Other stakeholder, LDC 3)

Really what they would do is usually see what the person's interests are, where their values are and their needs and then work from that because you can tell when somebody lights up, what type of areas that they would like to work in, so then they'll just explore that. (Other stakeholder, LDC 4)

In some instances, LDCs tried out different course options to see if they attracted participants and provided useful skills.

We would kind of hear from other areas, maybe that will run this course and we would, as I say, trial it in the area. ... One of the reasons for the Clean Pass was there is a demand for cleaners there ... In the catering in the kitchen, there's lots of, you know, deli jobs. So we're really looking at the jobs to kind of match the training to the jobs that are available and also the needs of people. (Staff, LDC 1)

At the core of SICAP pre-employment provision was the desire to be client-led and to offer the necessary supports to work around fundamental challenges such as lack of self-confidence.

Obviously ... we have to meet people where they're at and we have to work maybe a little bit longer with people and we have to work around the confidence building. Work a little bit with motivation and work a little bit about referring them on to other services if they ... need supports of a mental health or other issues that they're undergoing. So we need to be a little bit, I suppose, holistic in our approaches, I suppose if you like and that's where we've been trying to tailor some of our programmes that we have been running for a while to kind of meet those needs that we've identified. (Staff, LDC 4)

Courses and programmes were designed not just to provide specific skills to participants but to address broader personal development and specific barriers such as addiction. SICAP support workers stressed the need for wrap-around supports throughout the process to ensure higher levels of both engagement and completion.

A lot of people known to the Garda, young guys, and we had an 11-week programme and we were working with them and their personal development, but we bring in maths and spelling and ... they would get computer qualifications and would do a lot of stuff around addiction. And, you know, they're just completely different people, like social welfare come at the end, they just cannot believe that these people are the same people, but it is about treating them with respect, but it's also about being very clear, you know? (Staff, LDC 2)

Some of the courses that we've offered – the QQI [Quality and Qualifications Ireland] ones and that – we found difficult for, I suppose, somebody who has been out of the learning environment for a long time, for them to step in. You'd think, you know, they're there, and they're present, and they're learning, and they're quite interactive, but when it comes down to maybe doing coursework or whatever it is, they don't have the confidence or the skills or whatever. So, we've had to offer an awful lot of wrap-around support around that; so, you couldn't just offer an accredited course on its own. (Staff, LDC 1)

Many LDCs had developed their own programmes tailored to participant needs around CV preparation coupled with self-development.

I write programmes, I've written this PPP, Personal and Proactive Progression programme, so they come in and the first thing we look at is, what CV are you using at this moment in time? So, if they're unemployed for two or three years and there's nothing happening

with these CVs, trust me, it's a problem with the CV, and how they are actually targeting the market. ... So we would run this programme where we'd look at the CV and tailor it with the person. ... And then we would look at ... their confidence, their self-esteem, like, what it is, what do they think that they would like, and what do they think is holding them back from that? (Staff, LDC 2)

Stakeholders highlighted significant variations in the duration and number of interventions required as a result of the differing needs among the beneficiaries.

So, it could be a long journey for someone; and for most of our clients, it is. Or it could be quite a short journey, where they just need a good CV, and interviews, and then ... they're ready to go maybe to a production job. Or maybe they need just funding, for a course, a Safe Pass; that'll get them into a construction job. (Other stakeholder, LDC 2)

It was emphasised that such courses needed to be responsive to the needs of participants, for example in relation to their educational level.

I don't know what level it's going to be at until I get to speak, and my team get to speak, to the people, you know, because there's no point in actually pitching something at Leaving Cert standard if it should be below Junior Cert. (Staff, LDC 2)

Given the multiple barriers faced by participants, a good deal of the initial work with them focused on building up self-confidence and life skills.

We do an awful lot of life skills and life coaching, that kind of thing: we found just confidence levels, self-esteem was lacking in an awful lot of people; just to build that up a little bit first, and there would be one-to-ones with the life coach, and that sometimes kind of points them in the direction of whether they want to go on and maybe do some more training, or whether it's employment or what they want to do. (Staff, LDC 1)

One of the things I've changed over the course is that to bring in the CBT, the cognitive behavioural therapy, because if you can't change thinking, you can't change the behaviour. So, it's actually getting them to raise awareness about their behaviour and if they're from a family, maybe the father's in prison, the mother is absent, they're on the street or not, the young guys, they don't know any better. But, you know, it's just trying to find and navigate a route around that, you know, that you identify that and then we just talk about the consequences of behaviour. (Staff, LDC 2)

One-to-one supports were seen by staff and other stakeholders as crucial in engaging with participants who were very distant from employment and faced

multiple barriers, making it difficult for them to have the confidence to operate in a group setting.

The individual one-to-one, which narrows it down to the actual person; so it's a person-centred service. (Other stakeholder, LDC 2)

I definitely think the one-to-ones are good, you know, I think they're very beneficial because I think that, you know, it's the first time ever people feel listened to, and people, when they're coming in from long-term unemployment, they've got low confidence, low self-esteem, low self-worth. So, you know, they're not going to be talking openly in a group, but that may be a key issue or a key childhood experience that's holding them back. So, you'll probably get to know more about that on the one-to-one. (Staff, LDC 2)

And an awful lot of people, because maybe they're unemployed for so long, confidence building, sometimes through the one-to-one and then other group supports, that they get just to help people along, they really do need one-to-one support. (Other stakeholder, LDC 4)

The one-to-one connection with them it makes a huge difference, and ... some of our SICAP workers would just make that connection with people, and once that's made then they're comfortable to come back and keep coming back, even if something doesn't work; they might get their CV, but they'll come back a few weeks later again and say, 'Look, I have an interview coming up', or whatever, 'Can you help me out with this and that?', or language skills, or literacy or whatever, and they'll come back. So it's making that link, and them being comfortable with having someone one-to-one. (Staff, LDC 1)

For many participants, support involved intensive 'hand holding', helping to ease their transition into group provision and then following up to ensure they continued to attend.

Some of the people that I would meet would be too anxious and it would be something they wouldn't even consider, even walking into a classroom to be retrained. So you would have to meet them and actually bring them in, introduce them to the teacher, introduce them to another few participants and meet them afterwards and say how did that go, maybe give them a call, say were you okay, do you want to come back next Tuesday, how did you get on and all of this. (Staff, LDC 4)

The way SICAP was working previously, these clients are so far away from manual handling, Safe Pass or standard work ready courses, so you're doing a lot more capacity building with them, engaging in services, building trust, one-to-one. So one of the programmes hopefully we're going to be running is around home and garden, just

to look at kind of how your home impacts on your wellbeing, to try and get people to engage with us, to come out and move on to some mainstream courses. So, it's a whole different approach at the minute with the clients that we have now than it would have been even two or three years ago, because the ones that are able to work are working. (Staff, LDC 5)

Our mentors can keep track of where people are at and where people have referred, you know if they're referred in for training they know where they are and you know at what point they're starting their course and when they're finishing. So, then they would come back, you know they would be in contact with during when they're on the course. They would be in and out all the time. Our mentors would be in and out to the courses all the time. Sometimes they're very, very hands on, sometimes they're in and out and then when the person is finished. The group, the training, they would come back and sit down with their mentor and see well where next. (Staff, LDC 4)

We ring up people. We tell them how long the course is going to be. We tell them what to expect on the first day of the course and how to, I suppose, you know, prepare themselves a little bit for it and how many people maybe might be in the room with them and all that kind of stuff. So, we do a little bit of follow-up on that as well in these that if somebody doesn't turn up, myself or the mentor would be ringing them up and kind of asking, you know, how are they getting on ... in an encouraging way. You know, how come you didn't come today? And we find quite a lot of people, they're so nervous that they decide not to come on the first day, and they think then that that's okay, they don't have to come anymore. So then we ring them up and we say, oh, no, no, you can join next week. (Staff, LDC 4)

While SICAP 2 was generally seen as having facilitated more intensive individual-focused work with beneficiaries, a number of staff pointed to the need for even more intensive involvement with particular individuals and groups.

I suppose time is the big deal. ... We have people that really need intensive supports while they're on the courses even just to get them to stay in it. And that could require daily visits and all that you can't fit in. ... We've people that they tell you ... absolutely have to have Safe Pass, and when you look back over their file ... did not attend, could not contact, deferred, and you're going, you know, things are so bad in their lives that they can't commit to one day of training. (Staff, LDC 4)

For those aiming to move to self-employment, the approach across case-study LDCs generally involved a combination of one-to-one supports and workshops.

It's a lot of work around supporting Enterprise clients coming in, because it's a couple of visits, and you're preparing a plan, a business plan with them, and generally then they're struggling maybe around the financial aspect of it, or the tax and things like that, so we'll have to link them in, and we'd organise workshops. So, there's a lot of one-to-ones, plus there's workshops, and linking them into other people that can support them. (Staff, LDC 1)

Staff remained in contact with participants in order to deal with issues that arose and to offer additional supports.

I got a number of calls from people who are in the process that struggle. It's usually around tax returns or VAT. So, what we've done instead of that, we've had our training, which was tax and bookkeeping. But what we've also done a kind of more basic level, which isn't as long, isn't as commitment, it was like a morning to come in and just ask all your questions around that, because even VAT seems to send people over the edge. (Staff, LDC 1)

Some LDCs used a combination of course work and individual mentoring with other groups as well. This was seen as allowing for a more efficient use of resources, while still providing one-to-one support.

We're working with them on a one-to-one basis – first of all in a class setting on their confidence and self-esteem and self-worth, then after the class, everybody has slots for individual mentoring which is a new model of engagement. That works really well, because then you get a real flavour of, well no, I always just wanted to do a part-time job in a chemist because I'm a lone parent and I only want to work from half nine to half twelve, so then we know what we're looking for. (Staff, LDC 2)

More importantly, working in a group was seen as a necessary part of the trajectory back to employment and peer-learning was viewed as a vital complement to staff/trainer input.

It's the fact that they're interacting with each other and obviously it's good principles of adult education that the group will learn from each other. (Staff, LDC 4)

But I think it's also very important that they're in the group, because unless they're going to be self-employed, working at home, that's not reality. So, even in a group, if they're not even comfortable, they learn how to work within a team and they learn to see, well, you know, I'm thinking this or he thinks that about me, but then you realise, no, you're thinking is all off, you know. So, they learn about dynamic, because sometimes long-term unemployed people, they're actually

out of their loop so much, so they spend time on their own if they've alienated themselves, so then the one-to-one isn't as effective, you know, with only that on its own, whereas sometimes when they're thrown into the pool, they'd say, 'Well, you see, everybody's got these issues and, you know, maybe I'm not as badly off as that other person', but they still have the safety of the one-to-one. (Staff, LDC 2)

Over that period of a week, they actually have built up a little bit more confidence than what they was when they first walked in the door. So when they walk in the door their confidence is a little lower, but when they actually meet other people there of similar kind of experience, finding that there are similar situations, that they're kind of like, 'Yes, okay, well, if he's able to do it, I'm able to do it'. Like, you know what I mean, maybe this actually can work. And then you see them progress a little bit more than that. (Staff, LDC 1)

They would learn communication skills, learn to share their own experiences with others because we do emphasise that when they come to workshops that they will learn from other people and people will learn from them, so social skills, interpersonal skills, communication skills, job-seeking skills, increasing confidence, increasing self-esteem, all of those I think they learn from the training and the involvement in looking for work with us, I think. (Staff, LDC 4)

As stated earlier, lack of self-confidence was seen as *the* main barrier among the long-term unemployed, and in this regard, staff highlighted the challenges in getting participants to acknowledge the need for personal development courses. In these cases, they often used 'high interest' or practical skills courses to attract participants and to address their broader needs.

There's massive need for personal development type courses. But they're a harder sell to people because normally people who need them don't know they need them and they don't know the benefit of them. So, for me, the important thing is to get someone in through the door as have the hook to get them in through the door. Driver theory preparation is a massive kind of course that has a lot of popularity and I normally use that as the hook and then discuss well, you know, what else do you think you need and we might try and direct them towards the other type of course as well. (Staff, LDC 4)

4.3.1 Role of LDC employment services

Having other employment services within the same organisation was seen as offering more seamless provision to participants.

Maybe they're not ready for employment, maybe the fact now is that they are really more suitable for a CE [community employment]

scheme. Maybe they're really long-term unemployed and their capabilities are more directed at this moment in time towards Tús, but we would have all the links because they're all different sections of our own company, (Staff, LDC 2)

LES to SICAP, and usually back again, because there's a mediator working with them one-to-one. So that service has already been offered, but they'd normally link in if there are particular training needs, or if there's something around that the mediator can't offer. (Staff, LDC 1)

We have the Employment Service and Jobs Club and Tús, and that there's constantly that connection going on between the whole lot of the teams. (Staff, LDC 1)

It's hugely important because it means when you can get it right and you can join everything up. It's seamless for the client but they can access [a] whole range of supports in ... a one stop shop. (Staff, LDC 4)

Participants taking courses provided by SICAP could also receive guidance from LES, providing a more holistic approach to meeting their needs.

If someone their career path seemed to be healthcare, we'd cover the healthcare courses, basic computers, ECDL [European Computer Driving Licence], all of the basic courses that SICAP offers and, again, in house we can do the referral. And they'll still be meeting the guidance officer within the LES while they're doing the course, so it's great and you can see how the course is going as well. (Staff, LDC 4)

The location of LES locally was also seen as facilitating outreach work to involve participants in SICAP.

Local Employment Services are based locally ... so it's only a matter of them walking across the road. Whereas, if they were to link in with SICAP – we could run clinics, we could probably go out, but we wouldn't have that connection; we wouldn't be there on a constant basis, whereas the Local Employment Service are right there on their doorsteps. (Staff, LDC 1)

LDC staff expressed some concerns around the nature of provision provided by JobPath and stressed that the SICAP model of intervention differed from it in key ways.

I suppose we would not have a favourable view of JobPath. And I think that's not just us. So, that's been an intrusive way of managing people, you know, off the Live Register, or otherwise ... It costs an absolute obscene amount of money to run JobPath. For the results it's driving out of it ... We would've had clients who would've gone to – who

would've been referred to JobPath from the DEASP and I suppose we would see the types of solutions that they were offering people were totally unsustainable. (Staff, LDC 3)

So, if you look at, say, employment services in the State, I mean, fundamentally, you have the Local Employment Service, you have JobPath, and then you have Intreo, which is the Department's own service. But there's elements of that service that don't do what we do here, and then we get people referred. (Staff, LDC 4)

I've linked in with them [JobPath]. I find a lot of our clients prefer to come to us as more of a personal approach with us they feel. But again, I link in with them. If I have spaces on a manual handling course, I will ring them and I'll say, 'Listen I have three spaces, would you like to send anyone?' and they do. They're always very polite to us; you know we do have a working relationship going there. But again I get the majority of their clients will come here for supports. (Staff, LDC 5)

Staff often mentioned the voluntary nature of engagement as a key positive feature of SICAP provision, contrasting it with other employment services where participants were required to take part.

It's very different to a Local Employment Service where they may be referred in through Intreo or say Intreo themselves, they have a case officer and the appointments are mandatory in a lot of other services where, I suppose, I'm lucky in a sense that if anyone comes to me, they're there because they want to be there. Now they may have been referred by one of those services but it's very nice for me to say, look, your time here is voluntary, you get what you put into it, but there's no pressure if the relationship is as long or as short as it needs to be. (Staff, LDC 4)

In one interview, a DEASP employment officer provided an example of a positive experience in their local area where they had worked closely with SICAP to build a programme for unemployed youth (aged under 24).

We use SICAP funding for various different things. There for instance last year we have a scheme called the youth employment support scheme for the under 24s so we noticed that some of our under 24s needed a little bit more support rather than going straight unto that scheme. So, we had a pre-, yes, scheme and we used funding from SICAP. So, we worked very closely with the SICAP co-ordinator there and she put together a lovely course for us. A short four-week course to prepare people for the YESS placement. So even though YESS is supported by the employers and it is only 24 hours per week and it is closely monitored, there was still a gap there so what we did with the pre-YESS course is we kind of put together ... teamwork skills, giving

them an awareness of what an employer is looking for, trying to get them to look at themselves and seeing where their own strengths are, and trying to build their confidence, a little few IT type skills, manual handling, first aid, you know, little bits and pieces like that to help them to have more confidence going into the YESS placement with the DEASP employment support scheme. (Other stakeholder, LDC 2)

Furthermore, SICAP was seen as providing a more holistic approach than other services.

SICAP ... has a broader remit and it's ... working with a broader number of benefactors, it's a more flexible programme. I see SICAP is the co-ordinating programme if you like, it's very much there to make the connections and to leverage support for people ... because you've got the community development piece and you've got the individual piece. And I think being able to draw on both of those is really important because people don't operate in isolation, they're part of communities and families and all the rest of it. (Staff, LDC 4)

Well, we're an employability programme, we're an employment programme [DEASP], whereas SICAP is a community-based development programme, with an element of employment to it. But our focus is – and should be – on employment, for the client. [SICAP is] More broader, yes, it's a broader parish. Yes, it takes on other people. And probably, to do some of the more – you know, the pre-employment stuff; the confidence building, and all of that. (Other stakeholder, LDC 2)

4.3.2 Links with other services

Across the case-study LDCs, staff had engaged with local services to attract participants, to provide access to necessary supports and to refer participants on to education/training provision. In LDC 2, where there were very good links with local services, staff were also proactive in engaging with DEASP and tailoring programmes to meet the needs of their clients.

I would then be liaising with the head of the activation unit and the Department of [Employment and] Social Protection [locally] ... and they would actually say to me, '[Name], we've got this new letter from government that just came in yesterday'. And, oh my God, now the focus is on lone parents, so we need a programme for lone parents and then we need you to come in and sell it, and I'd say, 'Okay, let's do that'. So, you know, then so that means that I don't have to recruit, because they've got 150 people, and they call them all in and they might have 40 and then, I go in there and do the big sell, and then I

then bring them back into the partnership, assess them and then write the programme. (Staff, LDC 2)

Very good contacts as I say on a district basis, the SICAP mentors that we have working individually with people would have a good relationship with the Intreo staff. And they would refer over and back quite a lot and obviously with the enterprise supports they would refer to people starting their own business as well. (Staff, LDC 4)

Staff usually reported good links with the local ETB and referred participants on to courses that would meet their needs.

We're lucky we have quite a lot of colleges locally ... and there's quite a variety of courses, you can go right in at QQI levels and that. So, yes, we're lucky enough with that, and then we have the ETBs offer courses. ETBs will come in and run courses for us if we want. (Staff, LDC 1)

We need some really basic courses. So we tend to use our training panel to get people to that level, and then we'll feed into [the ETB]. We use some private trainers as well, some private company trainers for forklift and those hard skills ... There's not a lot of places you can send somebody for confidence building, for that side of it. Customer service skills at that level where you're looking at somebody's personal hygiene, how they present, the clothes they wear, how you answer the phone, how you sit behind a desk, we have to build them to get them to a stage where they fit into a mainstream programme, and that's what SICAP does beautifully. We try anyway. (Staff, LDC 5)

We do absolutely everything then, you know, to work with them on a one-to-one basis, saying, 'Well, what is it you'd like?' 'Well, I'd like an apprenticeship'. So, then we'd go off down to the apprenticeship office in Solas, we'd find out what apprenticeship is available, we'd drive them down there. (Staff, LDC 2)

However, LDC staff working in rural areas or case-study areas serving rural hinterland cited a lack of courses available to their population and, again, lack of transport emerged as a significant issue in participants accessing a more diverse range of courses provided in the surrounding areas.

There's a certain amount offered here in our town and again as I've said transport is a massive problem for people. So, the next town to go to which have fantastic courses will be in [town name]. Which would be only about a 15 minutes' drive away but again they don't have transport. I'd say 90% of my clients here do not drive. And even the bus services here probably don't operate around the times they'd need them. There's a lot of evening courses that people would love to do and the bus times it just doesn't work. It doesn't work. But I suppose

for our town ... a kind of a medium size town, there's only one training centre here. It only offers a certain amount of courses and no it's not really great like for our clients, no. (Staff, CS 5)

Staff were often proactive in assisting participants in accessing other relevant services to meet their needs.

If I've identified in the last day any of the tutors, anyone with literacy issue, I will have [the ETB] down there talking about their literacy support service. ... If I see somebody in big financial difficulty, I'll have MABS [Money Advice and Budgeting Service] come over and talk about that. (Staff, LDC 2)

Some LDCs linked into local childcare services so that participants with dependent children could access courses.

We would provide childcare ... We wouldn't have a huge demand for it, but we would build it into all courses ... so we would link with the community service. (Staff, LDC 1)

Some LDCs also engaged with local employers or with planning processes that had implications for the location of new jobs.

We're linking in with the local authorities, so we know what's coming onstream as regards new enterprises and planning permissions and everything. So there'd be a lot of collaboration with other organisations; from that end. (Staff, LDC 1)

We set up ... an employers' network, just to try and link them in and see what's happening, just reinforce. So, we would provide some staff support to them to keep the network going; a little bit of training for employers to meet, that kind of thing. There might be only one once or twice a year, but it's just kind of a forum where local employers can feed in, and then we have that little bit of a link, a few people involved. (Staff, LDC 1)

Employers interviewed reported having an overall positive experience of working with the LDCs and their beneficiaries. Some also outlined the challenges they faced when employing people who have been out of the labour market for a significant period of time.

Our carers go into people's homes, they work in home care. ... I can't say definitively that we wouldn't have analysed the CVs of people who might have had difficulties or problems. Most of those people haven't actually worked for five years or ten years. We've never done that. But certainly, there can be very good reasons people haven't worked for a while and we're happy to take – and if they seem nice and they get

good references from their course and from work experience, we're happy to take them on. (Employer, LDC 4)

I mean if they have the qualifications and they've got experience, sure like one of the modules is work experience. So if they come with the qualifications and work experience, yes sure, we've taken on all sorts of people, who've been out of work for a long time who mightn't for family reasons or other reasons, mightn't have worked for a long time ... The staff have to have certain minimum qualifications, Level 5, and we also look for experience and personality. So, the bar is relatively high, in that, having qualifications alone isn't enough. They have to demonstrate empathy, caring and reliability and all that sort of stuff. (Employer, LDC 4)

I have found that through the [LDC name] ... I have told them what I want, and the position that I am looking for, and the type of person that I need. And they actually take out a lot of the back-breaking work for me because, you know, they can narrow it down, they are dealing with people, they are upskilling people and they narrow down. I could have 100 CVs and you never know from the CV what you are getting ... They are meeting them on a constant basis, putting them through a work placement, and advising them on courses and stuff like that. They will have interacted with them a fair amount. When someone is coming into you for an interview, you have only half an hour to size them up. (Employer, LDC 1)

LDC staff and other stakeholders outlined their experience with employers, with some variability in their level of engagement depending on the location and characteristics of both their beneficiaries and local employers.

People – and employers know we're there, and they have their own word of mouth, and a way of doing things themselves, so if an employer finds that they've had a good result with us they will pass other employers on to us; and that's the way it happens, you know? (Other stakeholder, LDC 2)

We'd also talk to employers about some of the supports that are there for them. Because obviously when they're coming to us, you know, it's long-term unemployed people. So, we would talk to them about their job plus grants. (Other stakeholder, LDC 2)

[We discuss] what the benefits are of taking on the long-term unemployed. Just legislation and what support is available. (Employer, LDC 2)

I think some employers, you know, maybe don't understand the benefit of what somebody has kind of gone through with us, maybe. If we work with somebody for a year and they kind of get that confidence

back and obviously on Tús, it is a part-time job, you're employed by the company, so we try to kind of instil the rules, I suppose, around an employment and try and make it as close to an employment in the private sector as we can that, you know, you have to turn up on time, you have to let people know if you're not coming in, all of that. But I think that, you know, people can make great strides and great changes in that year having come through the process and possibly that that's not understood. I don't know whether maybe we're not out there as much talking about it or whatever. But the success stories are there, we were just talking about them, coming up in the elevator, they are there. Sometimes I just wish more employees were on board because we've had so many good success stories and I know that can be replicated. (Other stakeholder, LDC 4)

Employers interviewed summarised the basic skills and personal characteristics that they currently look for when recruiting to include:

They need a good telephone manner, and if they are at the counter, or even van driving, or meeting with the public, they have to be of a pleasant disposition. Plus willing to learn, have a bit of a drive and cop-on basically. (Employer, LDC 1)

We are looking for people who are genuinely interested in ... the products that we sell, punctuality and just a bit of cop-on ... not smelling of alcohol ... clued in, not on their phones, or as we have had in the past putting on their headphones when they are on the shop floor, believe it or not (Employer, LDC 1)

Where fundamental personal issues were identified, surrounding addiction issues or mental health, for example, LDC staff and other stakeholders linked in with other service providers in their area, where available. However, some LDC staff reported challenges in dealing with beneficiaries with such complex needs in certain areas.

We refer into other agencies. So, maybe if they needed support, maybe with addiction, or something like that, we would – you know, use the local services; counselling, that kind of thing. You know, we're like at the centre at the hub of the wheel; and we just radiate out with our contacts. Both employers and agencies. (Staff, LDC 1)

Well, I mean we're always been off for different training courses. Again, a lot of issues come up. It's like they want to talk to you so there could be issues around drugs, suicide, abuse, anything. Literally anything can come up. Again, no I don't always feel that I'm equipped enough to help them with this. (Staff, LDC 5)

The recent decline in unemployment levels was seen by some as making employers more open to engage with LDCs in recruiting staff.

At the moment it's easier because the jobs market are looking for people, so it is probably a bit easier, they're coming to us a bit more. ... generally, it's the smaller businesses around the place that they know where to go and that. (Staff, LDC 1)

One employer felt that there was a need in his location and perhaps other locations for a mentoring service by business owners or other senior employees to directly assist the young unemployed and long-term unemployed to improve their interview skills and enhance their chances of securing employment.

I think ... a mentoring scenario where people within business, even though they are not going to take on the people, but if they mentor them for a week or two before they go for an interview, whether it be by phone or video conferencing. Like, just, sit up straight, answer the questions that are asked of you, not to waffle, just be professional. A lot of people do not know how to hold themselves in an interview ... I have seen in the States where my cousins are, they have these things where local business people do this kind of speed interviews. So people who have no idea of doing interviews, they can do eight interviews in one night, 10 minute things ... at least over an hour and a half they have done eight little interviews and then they get feedback the next day by email by each interviewer. (Employer, LDC 1)

4.4 PERCEIVED OUTCOMES FOR THE TARGET GROUP

Work with participants on preparation for the world of work was seen as successful:

We do massive interview preparation, because how they sell themselves and even how they turn out and their own personal hygiene are things that need to be looked at, and that takes just, you know, a few weeks to maybe get that all under control, but you know, we've had a lot of success. (Staff, LDC 2)

We've filled something like 45 full-time jobs on the system so far, and that's not even talking about – I think there's something like 20-something gone into other schemes. So, we're very focused on – and even though while this programme is not so focused on the employment, it's all about the pre-employment support. (Staff, LDC 2)

You would have really high outcomes [from one particular pre-employment course]. We're getting the sort of 60, 70 per cent into jobs and maybe very rarely out of a group of ten you might have one that you don't actually have success with. The rest will either get jobs or go back to education. (Staff, LDC 3)

And the feedback that we get from clients is extremely positive, we get them to evaluate it when they've finished it and the thing that comes back all the time is that they find it has increased their confidence, it has increased their self-esteem, they've enjoyed it and we'd have about a 24% progression into employment, which I don't think is too bad. (Staff, LDC 4)

I was just going to say about the follow-up calls, about three years ago, I was ringing two men that at that time had both gone into construction and, similar maybe, plastering and block laying or something, so I rang one man after the 12 months, oh, God, I'm flying, I'm flat out, he said, I can't, you know, I'm really, really busy and whatever, I'm working up in [location] now at the moment, flying. And then I rang the next man that was approved around the same time, ah, sure, there's no work out there at all. There's nothing out there. And that just gives you the, you know. (Staff, LDC 4)

However, some groups of participants were seen as facing barriers in making the transition to employment. First, it was seen as difficult to secure employment for people with disabilities, with employers sometimes seen as reluctant to put the necessary supports in place. Another key barrier discussed was personal financial constraints.

Disability organisations are really keen to be working with us, but then when it comes to real employment with real wages, it's really, really hard to place because the mainstream aren't kind of interested, they don't have the capacity to support [them]. (Staff, LDC 5)

One of the guys just had no money. He had the Safe Pass, the bells and whistles, all the – he had no money for work boots. So we bought a pair of work boots and he was full-time the next week. Simple barriers, you know. (Staff, LDC 5)

Second, in keeping with national research on low employment levels among Travellers (Watson et al., 2017), employers were described as reluctant to employ Travellers.

95% of employers are saying they don't employ Travellers so on an incidental basis what we're seeing is that the enterprise officer says the Travellers who he helped – that we helped go to college or went to college aren't getting jobs so they're back with him ... setting up a business power washing and we've heard incidentally then other younger travellers are saying, 'Well what's the point in doing this?' (Staff, LDC 5)

I think that's the thing with Travellers, new communities and disabled people. There's just nowhere for them to get employment so they have

those barriers of kind of just, yes, there's full employment in theory but they are facing long-term unemployment probably. (Staff, LDC 5)

There was variation across case-study areas in the availability and quality of employment.

The profile of jobs that are available [locally], do you know, sometimes they're the more precarious kind of jobs, they're in retail, there's a lot of in social care. (Staff, LDC 4)

In some cases, barriers around self-confidence and other difficulties made it challenging for participants to keep a job.

There's some other people then who they may get into employment but they haven't capacity to keep the job. So, they will lose employment after a short period of time and then they're back and they're back engaging and that happens quite a lot. (Staff, LDC 4)

The transition to employment or education/training was seen as a long road for participants facing multiple barriers, with very sustained involvement needed with some people before they are ready to progress.

Obviously, the holy grail is getting a job, and getting a sustainable job. Having said that, that's not for everybody; the fact of even engaging – sometimes just to come in, and sometimes it takes a couple of engagements before they move on; you see people keep popping up; I will see people coming in here, and a year later coming in here again, and eventually then, when the time is right, they'll move on. So, I suppose even to just get the engagement with them, and for them to link in and ... sometimes what would be the CE scheme, or Tús, or something, that they're actually, you know, doing some sort of work experience, it's getting them into the real world on a tentative basis where they're supported, and they have a chance of doing more training. (Staff, LDC 1)

Staff strongly emphasised that the development of soft skills among participants was an important goal in itself.

The ultimate is if somebody gets a job. Second to that ... if somebody develops as an individual, you know, and goes away from here with a greater sense of their own worth, greater confidence in themselves, learned a few skills and are more social and are a better citizen, I think that's the value. (Staff, LDC 4)

To watch somebody glow and flourish is a wonderful thing. You watch self-confidence rise, so all that stuff around positive mental health, good communication skills, even if they're verbal. So we have a young

woman working here as a changed woman, her capacity to express herself is different, how she sees the world is different because there's trust built up with her. (Staff, LDC 5)

If somebody doesn't get a job or doesn't go into accredited training does that mean their time with us was a failure in some way? So, a good outcome, I suppose, if there's a good outcome for us there's a good outcome for the individual. And for me it's about trying to establish what's the good outcome for the individual. So even if they're in a better frame of mind, that's a good outcome. (Staff, LDC 4)

A number of LDC staff highlighted the value of employment schemes as an outlet for people, especially older people, who were some distance from the labour market.

If you get somebody, kind of, 50-plus, 55-plus, you'll find that they're quite happy at CE ... Túis is the same: we find that they take a break and come back, and some people come back to us again. They're happy and they're comfortable in that zone, they're comfortable working locally with sponsor groups and that, they have that connection, and at their stage ... they're not going to conquer the world or to start a new career or whatever, they just want something to keep them tipping along, so they're not at home, they're not sitting at home. (Staff, LDC 1)

4.5 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has explored the management and rationale for pre-employment support provision, perceptions of the effectiveness and suitability of provision and the challenges associated with the provision of pre-employment support programmes from the perspectives of the LDC CEOs, staff and other local stakeholders. LDC staff reported growing complexity of need among beneficiaries of pre-employment supports at a local area level. The growing complexities and multiple barriers experienced by beneficiaries has implications for the kind and intensity of supports required. LDCs emphasised the significant variation of needs in terms of the age of their beneficiaries with the most profound needs (younger and older beneficiaries), those with little or no work experience, those who wished to enter self-employment, experiencing addiction and/or other mental health issues, those with low levels of educational attainment, language and literacy skills, and those experiencing homelessness.

Findings from the interviews with LDC staff provided some valuable insights into the processes underlying the positive counterfactual estimate (discussed in Chapter 2). LDCs highlighted that the nature of provision is heavily client-led and strongly informed by the kinds of employment available locally. For some groups,

progression into employment is a long-term process, with a need for considerable work on softer skills initially. LDCs who offer other employment services emphasised the flexibility that this provides to respond to particular needs and assist the progression of SICAP beneficiaries.

LDCs reported some difficulties in involving some groups (especially members of the Traveller and Roma community and migrants) in SICAP provision. Furthermore, despite engaging with SICAP, these groups are reported to face significant barriers in accessing employment. Transport also emerged as a significant barrier to accessing education, training and employment in rural areas, and can pose challenges in offering SICAP supports to those in more remote areas.

CHAPTER 5

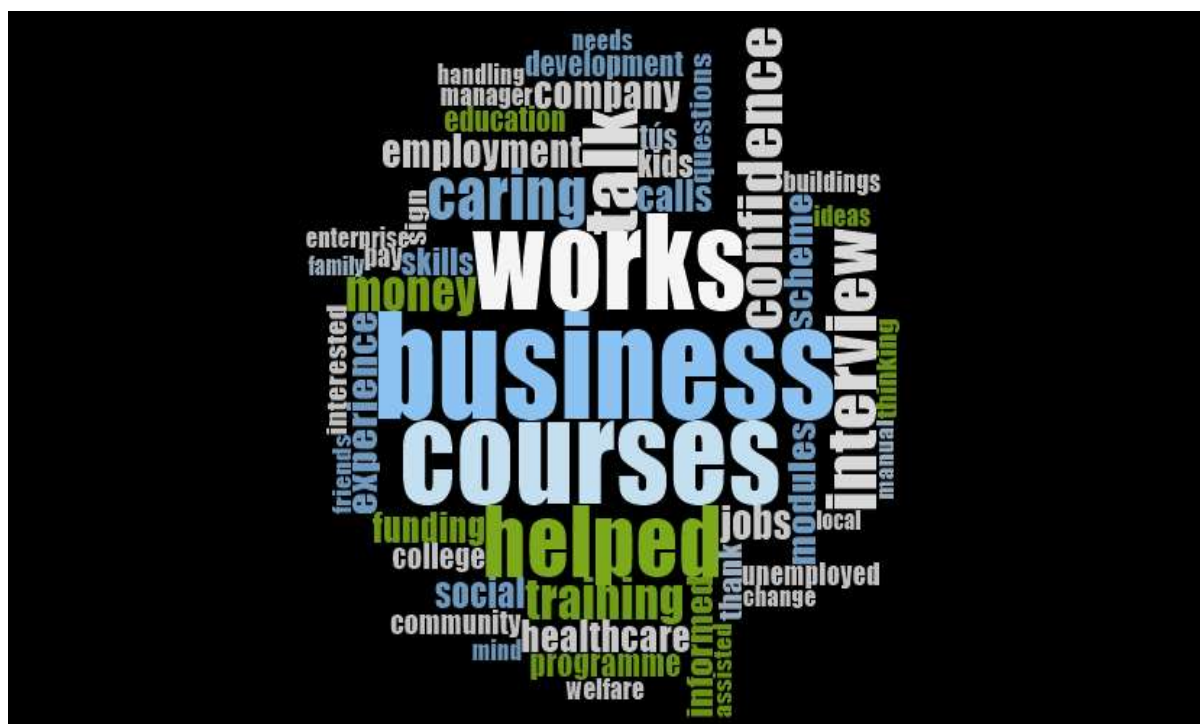
Participant perspectives on pre-employment supports

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter draws on interviews with participants conducted in the five case-study areas. The chapter begins by looking at the pathways into provision taken by participants as well the barriers they described. Section 5.3 looks at participant views on the nature of supports; Section 5.4 looks at their perceived outcomes.

The chapter is relatively short for a number of reasons. Firstly, many respondents spoke in detail about their personal history and the pathway that led them to involvement with the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP). Their accounts contained a lot of personal detail, so some quotes could not be used without being disclosive. Secondly, there was a remarkable degree of commonality in the accounts of interviewees. To avoid repetition, selected quotes were used to illustrate the main themes emerging from the interviews. Thirty-five participants in total were successfully contacted and interviewed across the five case-study areas. Most of the interviews were conducted face to face (71 per cent), with the remainder conducted by phone (29 per cent) when it was deemed more suitable for the candidate. Despite its relative brevity, the chapter shows the value of including participant voices in discussing the outcomes of SICAP provision and provides a valuable counterpart to the information from Local Development Companies (LDCs).

FIGURE 5.1 WORD CLOUD OF WORDS MOST COMMONLY USED BY BENEFICIARIES IN THE CASE-STUDY INTERVIEWS



Source: ESRI Interviews with beneficiaries, 2019.

5.2 BARRIERS AND PATHWAYS INTO PROVISION

Participants described a number of barriers they faced in accessing employment or even education/training. Lack of work experience was described as a significant barrier by several participants.

If you don't have that experience, they don't kind of seem to want to take you on. I found that was a challenge I had, no matter what job you're going for, if you don't have the experience, they're not willing to train you. (LDC3, P3)

Many interviewees highlighted lack of educational qualifications and/or poor literacy skills as constraints on accessing employment.

I finished school when I was young, I didn't have the Leaving Cert ... one of the first things that will hold you back is no Leaving Cert. (LDC4, P1)

One participant described the lack of supports (other than through SICAP) for women wishing to return to employment after an extended period of full-time care in the home.

There is actually no niche open for my age group women. ... I hadn't signed, I had no stamps, so I wasn't in any system and I just wanted to

go back to work and I couldn't get anywhere to help me retrain or show me how to get back into work. (LDC3, P5)

For those living in rural areas, transport and its associated costs were seen as barriers to engaging with courses and supports.

There would have been one or two courses come up and you had to sit down and say well, right, that's a nice course but it's going to cost you €20–25 to come in and then parking and get lunch, that's maybe €60–70 gone out of what you have. (LDC3, P1)

As with SICAP participants as a whole, participants heard about employment supports through a range of channels, including their social networks ('my brother ... told me about it', LDC2, P1; 'my relation told me', LDC2, P4) as well as formal contacts such as the local Education and Training Board (ETB). Those accessing self-employment supports tended to be referred through Intreo offices.

I was starting up my own business and I went in just to see with the dole office, was there any help I could get. They said that I could do the start your own enterprise course. They put me onto [the LDC]. (LDC2, P2)

5.3 VIEWS ON THE NATURE OF PROVISION

Most of the participants interviewed had engaged in courses or workshops as well as receiving one-to-one support. Like the LDC staff, participants highlighted the value of one-to-one sessions in building up their self-confidence and providing them with bespoke support.

The fact that if you go into a group and especially if they're neighbours and stuff like that, you were terrified of asking questions, like we're on a one-to-one, it's grand, but if there was a few others here, to ask questions would be very, very hard. (LDC3, P1)

[It's] huge in [building] confidence because when you're coming in to someone and they don't know what you have been through, right, because for three or four years, we have been through huge nightmares and your confidence is gone, every ounce of dignity is gone from you. (LDC3, P1)

Coaching in relation to interview preparation emerged as an important dimension of the one-to-one supports.

[Name] was updating my CV constantly with me and meeting with me and going through different interview questions, stuff like that, applying for jobs the whole time. (LDC3, P3)

I was in for an interview and she used to help me get ready for interviews when I was going for a job or she'd try and help me get through such a thing, if I wanted to get on to a course, she'd try and help me get on to it. She'd help me get ready for it. (LDC3, P2)

Staff were viewed as very helpful in identifying courses that would be useful to the participants.

I came down here and met her and then they put me through and then I met [name] and it was the very same, 'we know exactly what you want' ... the [employment programme] was actually what I needed. It showed me how to update CVs, it showed me how to do different interview techniques, like from the beginning [name] knew our names, they knew all around what we had done like they had done their homework before we did the first day. (LDC3, P5)

She was telling me all different courses that I could go on, she was saying this'll be good for you or this'll be good for you, she was helping me out through it all. (LDC3, P2)

Staff were also seen as proactive in mentoring course participants and encouraging them to stay in the course.

When I kind of said to her on the first day or two I'm out of my depth, I don't know what I am doing here, I can't, I'm not qualified to do this and she said 'yes, you are. You're confident to do it, just step back, write it down in steps, go through it, ask for help'. (LDC3, P5)

The way in which the LDC staff valued and respected participants was seen as a core aspect of the support received.

I'm from the Traveller community ... So my self-esteem wouldn't have been very high, you know. And sometimes you don't see yourself as equal as the general population, and when I walked through there, I was made to feel equal. I was made to feel, 'You can do it!' (LDC5, P4)

The staff are lovely and they're willing to help you, especially with CVs and cover letters and applications and things like that, I know they've been very good to me anyway, so I really appreciated them. (LDC3, P3)

Encouragement and friendliness, openness, approachable, you know what I mean? And empathy. (LDC5, P4)

I would say he was the only one who cared whether I succeeded or not. Everyone else was just a ticking the box exercise. (LDC3, P6)

Many participants reported that while intensive support had ceased, they still remained in contact with LDC staff for advice some time later.

The girls allowed me to be self-independent, self-selective, but they were there for me if I needed anything. 'So, look like, the door is always open, you know just ring the bell'. (LDC5, P4)

When I was really, really stuck, I'd ring and ask to speak to [name], come in and meet him and say look, what am I doing wrong, you know that kind of way, and what should I be doing that I'm not doing, you know, in that kind of way. (LDC3, P1)

You're not...sent on the course for a few weeks and then left high and dry again and there's – no, there's a good follow-up. (LDC4, P1)

And any question I had [name] was able to answer them for me and put me right if I wasn't too sure of anything. You know I would always ask him if I wasn't too sure. (LDC3, P4)

The potential for ongoing support and advice was viewed by participants as enhancing their confidence, especially in dealing with difficult situations that might arise.

It makes me confident, that I know that wherever I go, they're always there to give me that support, which is important for me. I really feel that that's not a problem. (LDC5, P7)

5.4 PERCEIVED OUTCOMES

Despite differences in their profiles and experiences, there was a consensus among participants that engaging with employment supports had boosted their self-confidence.

It's given me confidence to not be afraid to kind of push myself and do things; if it goes wrong, there is some way back out of it. (LDC3, P1)

It gives you that confidence to say well, I can apply for this job now because I have done the course. (LDC4, P1)

I mean if somebody told me 11 years ago you'd be able to send emails, I'd say not a hope in hell. If somebody told me you'd be able to go online and do farm stuff, I'd say no. (LDC3, P1)

From the time I started here until now, I think it has a big difference on me, I've got to know more people, I know who to go to now if I need help. Confidence is a big thing for me because I don't have great confidence. Being able to communicate with people is a good thing as well. (LDC3, P2)

Many of those who had obtained employment attributed this to the support of the LDC.

I don't think I'd have a job without it. (LDC3, P2)

Those embarking on self-employment felt that the supports received enabled them to develop and refine their business ideas as well as providing the practical skills (such as completing tax returns) they needed.

It's been invaluable, like. It's all like, you know, you're sort of starting off, you don't really know where you are. You have an idea, but you need someone to sort of help you pull it together, you know? (LDC1, P3)

Very helpful. He was very good. He went through absolutely everything with me; all the paperwork we did, he kind of went through the business plan and then I'd go home and do it and go back in to him. He was always on the other end of the phone if I had any other questions. (LDC2, P1)

5.5 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has explored the experiences and perspectives of participants engaging with employment and self-employment supports through SICAP. Those interviewed were very positive about the assistance they received, valuing the one-to-one support as well as the courses provided. All described a trajectory from low self-confidence to a renewed ability to engage with courses and/or apply for jobs, a pattern they attributed to the ongoing coaching provided by LDC staff. Interviewees mentioned the personal qualities of staff, especially their warmth and empathy, and most had remained in contact with the LDC for ongoing 'top-up' advice and support. While many participants had made the transition to employment or other education/training, all emphasised the impact of the support received on their personal development, especially their self-confidence.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusions

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This mixed-methods study examines employment supports provided under the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) programme for those furthest removed from the labour market, namely, a subset of the long-term unemployed. In Ireland, there is a suite of employment schemes and other supports which encourage long-term unemployed people to return to work. This study draws on a survey of Local Development Companies (LDCs) to document the type of supports provided, the needs of the target group and the challenges they face. Survey information is supplemented by analysis of the Integrated Reporting and Information System (IRIS) database that assesses the extent to which receiving employment supports and enhances rates of progression to (self-)employment. These insights are complemented with in-depth case-studies of five LDCs selected to capture key dimensions of variation in provision and practice. Within these case-study areas, interviews were conducted with LDC staff, local stakeholders and beneficiaries themselves to provide further insights into the patterns revealed by the survey data. Interviews with staff and beneficiaries explored the idea of what constitutes successful outcomes for those availing of employment supports.

6.2 MAIN FINDINGS

For many LDCs, SICAP employment supports are part of a broader suite of employment supports (such as the Local Employment Service and Jobs Club) as well as taking place against the backdrop of supports provided or funded by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP). SICAP emerges as occupying a distinctive place in this context, with its emphasis on flexible and personalised supports (both individual and group), its holistic approach and the voluntary nature of engagement. This approach was seen by LDCs, stakeholders and beneficiaries as especially important in working with individuals most distant from the labour market. In addition, SICAP has evolved to provide important niche services by collaborating with DEASP to offer supports for those wishing to move into self-employment. In the context of falling unemployment rates during the period from 2012 to early 2020, an increasing share of the long-term unemployed and economically inactive were those facing multiple barriers, with LDCs highlighting a lack of self-confidence alongside more challenging issues such as poor mental health, substance abuse and homelessness among the target group. Furthermore, in rural areas, access to and costs of transport were seen as persistent barriers to the target group engaging with education, training and employment.

One-to-one supports were viewed as a crucial dimension of provision, with LDC staff working with individuals on developing their self-confidence and motivation as well as assisting with job search and/or identifying suitable education/training courses. The interviews with staff and beneficiaries revealed the intensity and protracted nature of such support, with contact maintained over a significant period to support beneficiaries in engaging with and remaining on courses or finding and staying in employment. LDCs were generally satisfied with the number of people they could see, but a significant minority indicated the need for more frequent interventions with some groups.

Almost all LDCs provided group supports or courses for the target group and had developed at least some of these courses themselves. Courses were often used in supplementing one-to-one support in two main domains: workshops on issues such as tax returns or social media for those moving into self-employment; and courses designed to enhance personal development/attitudinal skills among the target group, often embedded in 'high-interest' courses (such as driver test theory) to attract participants. The vast majority of LDCs reported that there are other courses they would like to be able to offer, especially personal development, intensive job preparation and providing beneficiaries with the skills required for particular jobs or sectors.

In addition to working directly with individuals, LDCs played a key role in providing a connection to local services and stakeholders. Where the LDC provided Local Employment Service (LES) and/or Jobs Club, this was seen as offering a more seamless transition between supports. The provision of other employment services at LDC level also appeared to shape the kinds of employment supports offered under SICAP. LDCs that had both LES and Jobs Club services available in the local area tended to focus more on improving enterprise/business skills, allowing LES to provide other employment supports, at least to some extent. LDCs providing both employment services were also more satisfied with the number of people they could work with and the intensity of one-to-one SICAP supports. Contact with employers was used to help encourage them to take on members of the target group and to gauge local demand in planning courses and other provision. However, there was a good deal of variation in the level of contact with employers across LDCs, with those with a caseload facing multiple barriers reporting greater challenges in engaging with employers. LDCs also varied in the extent to which they were linked to other local services and their level of satisfaction with such services. Over half (56%) highlighted the lack of mental health/psychological services locally while 40 per cent indicated the absence of other supports (such as substance abuse or family support), the latter being a greater issue in rural areas. One-to-one interventions to support the transition to employment were seen by LDCs as more successful in areas where there were better support services.

LDCs were more likely to rate self-employment supports as successful. This perception is supported by the counterfactual analysis, which indicated that participation had a larger positive effect on the transition to self-employment than to employment. IRIS data were used to provide a systematic comparison of the labour market outcomes of long-term unemployed individuals with low levels of education (Leaving Certificate or less) in receipt of SICAP employment supports (the treatment group) with those of unemployed individuals with similar characteristics not in receipt of employment supports (the control group). The richness of the IRIS data meant that this analysis could take account not only of factors such as gender and age but also the barriers facing individuals (such as disability, housing difficulties, belonging to an ethnic minority, being a lone parent, duration of unemployment) and the characteristics of the area in which they lived. The analysis indicated a positive counterfactual impact on employment for both employment and self-employment interventions within SICAP. There was an increased probability of approximately 18 percentage points for progression to any employment, 8 percentage points for progression to employment only and 30 percentage points for progression to self-employment only, when compared to similar control group individuals. Furthermore, the effects remained strong even when the treatment and control groups were limited to individuals with very low levels of education (Junior Certificate or less).

In keeping with the strong emphasis on such supports reported in the LDC survey and case-study interviews, the empirical results are found to be driven by one-to-one interventions rather than group supports. The probability of progressing either form of employment (employment or self-employment) increases linearly with the number of one-to-one interventions (from 6% for a single intervention to 22% for three or more interventions). These effects are found to persist six months after finishing SICAP supports.

The interviews with staff and beneficiaries offered further insights into the perceived success of SICAP supports. As well as discussing the progression to education, training and employment, staff strongly emphasised the personal progression of beneficiaries, especially the way in which their motivation and confidence had developed as a result of the supports. Beneficiaries themselves placed a significant weight on the impact of participation on their self-confidence, feeling supported in engaging with courses and/or employment. The supportive relationship with staff was seen as a crucial aspect of the provision's success.

6.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

SICAP emerges as occupying a distinctive position in the landscape of employment supports, characterised by its emphasis on one-to-one supports, tailored provision and adoption of a holistic approach to meeting the needs of beneficiaries. One-to-one interventions and ongoing follow-up emerge as crucial in enhancing

beneficiary self-confidence, assisting with the development and refinement of a business plan, and supporting planning for the progression to employment. The counterfactual analysis indicates that intensive one-to-one supports significantly enhance the likelihood of progression to employment and self-employment. SICAP 2 is seen by LDCs as having facilitated a shift away from a larger volume caseload towards more intensive supports. However, staff point to the need for even more intensive supports for groups that are furthest from the labour market and face multiple barriers in order to understand the individual's particular circumstances and provide them with the appropriate information, support, and referrals that are reflective of their specific barriers to entering employment. Furthermore, they highlighted the lack of wraparound services (particularly, mental health and psychological services) locally. SICAP appears to be one of the few employment services open to women wishing to return to employment after a period of full-time care in the home. There seems to be considerable potential for SICAP to continue to fill this gap and such provision may ultimately assist in the reduction of household joblessness. LDCs highlight that some groups (including Travellers, the homeless and migrant groups) could avail of SICAP supports but are not currently doing so. This is seen as reflecting the reluctance of these groups to engage with formal services more generally. Outreach work has been successfully used by many LDCs to engage harder to reach groups and there is potential for this work to be extended (and resourced). However, even where hard-to-reach groups such as Travellers and older people avail of employment supports, they often face significant barriers in accessing employment. Transport emerges as a key barrier for those in rural areas and suggests the need for resourcing for outreach centres and/or subsidised travel for beneficiaries.

Most LDCs are closely embedded in their community and serve as information conduits about, and gateways to, local services. However, many report challenges in accessing the necessary mental health or other services to support beneficiaries. Furthermore, there appears to be scope to strengthen links with employers either directly or through increased interaction with the regional skills fora, DEASP job fairs, etc. (though many LDCs are proactive in doing so). LDCs are led by market sentiment and the sectors where individuals are eventually placed are often those with characteristics such as low pay and part-time, temporary contacts.

Given the sharp rise in total unemployment in Q1 2020 due to the COVID-19 crisis, we expect an overall decrease in the share of long-term unemployment and an increase in the share of short-term unemployed as a share of total unemployment in the short-run. However, it is also likely that the total number experiencing long-term unemployment will rise into the future, increasing the importance of such pre-employment interventions going forward. A significant share of those who remain unemployed (or outside the labour market) for long durations are individuals who face multiple barriers and cannot be expected to progress to employment without intensive supports over a protracted period. This is likely to enhance the importance of SICAP in engaging hard-to-reach groups and working

with them to enhance their motivation and self-confidence. It is important to note at this point that there appears to be scope to strengthen the level of awareness of the supports provided by SICAP to individuals who could potentially benefit from such supports.

Finally, there is a need for more extended tracking of individuals accessing SICAP employment supports. There is a level of resistance from some beneficiaries to being contacted after three months, six months, 12 months, etc. LDC staff reported that once they are out of the system that they are much more difficult to contact. This pattern provides further support for the need for more extended tracking of individuals accessing SICAP employment supports. This tracking could ideally be optimised by linking into official administrative datasets. This would allow the medium- and long-run impacts of employment and self-employment supports to be more clearly identified.

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APPENDIX 1: SUPPLEMENTARY TABLES

TABLE A1 COMPOSITIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF CONTROL AND TREATMENT GROUPS FOR THE MATCHED SAMPLE FOR PROGRESSION INTO EMPLOYMENT/SELF-EMPLOYMENT

	Control group (%)	Treated group (%)
Female	29.5	29.4
Age: 15 to 35	35.2	35.1
Age: 36 to 54	51.5	51.5
Age: 55+	13.3	13.3
Nationality: Irish	84.1	84.1
Rural	31.5	31.5
HP deprivation (marginally below average)	34.6	34.6
HP deprivation (disadvantaged)	38.2	38.2
HP deprivation (affluent)	27.2	27.2
Lone parent	15.0	15.0
Disability	6.0	5.9
Ethnic minority	5.5	5.4
Jobless household	67.8	67.8
Homeless/affected	4.7	4.7
Transport barrier	24.6	24.5
Observations	993	1751

Source: IRIS Database, 2018.

Note: 'HP deprivation' refers to the Haase & Pratschke deprivation index.

TABLE A2 EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES CONTROLLING FOR LDC: ESTIMATED IMPACT RELATIVE TO THE CONTROL GROUP

Variable	(1) Employment/Self -employment	(2) Employment only	(3) Self- employment only
Treated dummy	0.147*** (0.010)	0.081*** (0.013)	0.267*** (0.022)
Female	-0.032** (0.013)	0.002 (0.008)	-0.014 (0.010)
Age 15 to 35 (ref = 36 to 54)	-0.003 (0.010)	0.000 (0.007)	-0.007 (0.006)
Age 55+	-0.015 (0.015)	0.003 (0.011)	-0.004 (0.007)
Irish	-0.028 (0.018)	-0.019 (0.016)	-0.008 (0.008)
Rural	0.011 (0.017)	0.005 (0.010)	-0.004 (0.009)
Disadvantaged area (ref = average)	-0.018* (0.011)	-0.003 (0.011)	-0.002 (0.005)
Affluent area	0.001 (0.012)	0.005 (0.014)	-0.001 (0.006)
Lone parent	0.001 (0.013)	0.001 (0.009)	0.003 (0.007)
Disability	-0.036** (0.016)	-0.029*** (0.007)	0.009 (0.015)
Ethnic minority	-0.037** (0.019)	-0.019** (0.010)	-0.010 (0.009)
Jobless household	-0.002 (0.011)	-0.003 (0.009)	-0.002 (0.006)
Homeless/affected	-0.010 (0.034)	-0.011 (0.016)	0.014 (0.026)
Transport barrier	-0.047*** (0.011)	0.001 (0.008)	-0.026** (0.013)
Avondhu/Blackwater Partnership CLG (ref = South Dublin County Partnership Ltd)	0.570*** (0.030)	0.492*** (0.053)	0.163*** (0.036)
Ballyhoura Development Ltd	0.049** (0.021)	0.030* (0.016)	
Bray Area Partnership Ltd	0.229*** (0.026)	0.241*** (0.054)	-0.001 (0.002)
Breffni Integrated Ltd	0.027** (0.012)	0.156*** (0.048)	-0.009 (0.006)
Carlow County Development Partnership Ltd	-0.047*** (0.004)		0.017 (0.012)
Clare Local Development Company Ltd	0.117*** (0.016)	0.003 (0.007)	0.092** (0.041)
Cork City Partnership CLG	-0.025*** (0.003)	-0.023*** (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)
County Kildare LEADER Partnership	0.119*** (0.009)	0.032** (0.013)	0.103*** (0.030)
County Kilkenny LEADER Partnership Company Ltd	0.116*** (0.017)	0.051*** (0.016)	0.045** (0.022)
County Wicklow Community Partnership Ltd	0.082*** (0.012)		0.115*** (0.031)

Variable	(1) Employment/Self -employment	(2) Employment only	(3) Self- employment only
Donegal Local Development Company Ltd	0.217*** (0.028)	-0.021*** (0.003)	0.186*** (0.066)
Dublin Inner City Community Co-operative Society Ltd	0.033*** (0.010)	-0.017*** (0.005)	0.220*** (0.045)
Dublin North West Area Partnership	-0.011*** (0.003)	-0.013*** (0.001)	0.022** (0.009)
Dublin South City Partnership	-0.046*** (0.003)	-0.027*** (0.003)	0.051*** (0.019)
Empower	-0.041*** (0.003)	-0.008 (0.006)	-0.018** (0.009)
Galway City Partnership Ltd	0.085*** (0.013)	0.048*** (0.013)	0.034** (0.017)
Galway Rural Development Company Ltd	-0.014* (0.007)	-0.018*** (0.004)	0.045** (0.021)
Inishowen Development Partnership	-0.023*** (0.007)	-0.004 (0.005)	
Laois Community and Enterprise Development Company Ltd	0.162*** (0.011)	-0.000 (0.007)	0.187*** (0.030)
Leitrim Integrated Development Company CLG	0.687*** (0.042)	0.499*** (0.101)	0.424*** (0.104)
Longford Community Resources CLG	0.046*** (0.015)	-0.012* (0.006)	0.064* (0.033)
Louth LEADER Partnership	0.030*** (0.006)	-0.011*** (0.004)	0.111*** (0.038)
Mayo North East Leader Partnership Company Teo.	0.059*** (0.019)	0.000 (0.011)	0.037 (0.023)
Meath Community Rural and Social Development Partnership CLG	0.122*** (0.014)		0.180*** (0.041)
Monaghan Integrated Development CLG	-0.027*** (0.006)	-0.015** (0.006)	-0.010* (0.005)
North Tipperary LEADER Partnership	0.039*** (0.009)	0.013* (0.008)	0.016 (0.011)
North and East Kerry LEADER Partnership Teoranta	0.314*** (0.032)	0.166*** (0.048)	0.139** (0.060)
Northside Partnership Ltd	0.025*** (0.005)		0.006* (0.003)
PAUL Partnership Limerick CLG	0.234*** (0.033)		0.314*** (0.064)
Roscommon Integrated Development Company Ltd	0.056*** (0.020)		0.073* (0.038)
SECAD Partnership CLG	0.031*** (0.011)	-0.014** (0.006)	0.375*** (0.098)
South Kerry Development Partnership CLG	0.196*** (0.028)	0.067** (0.030)	0.091** (0.039)
South Tipperary Development Company Ltd	0.024*** (0.006)		0.109*** (0.038)
South West Mayo Development Company Ltd	0.141*** (0.025)		0.099** (0.045)
Southside Partnership DLR CLG	0.058*** (0.009)	-0.007 (0.004)	0.037*** (0.011)

Variable	(1) Employment/Self -employment	(2) Employment only	(3) Self- employment only
The Ballyfermot/Chapelizod Partnership Company Ltd	0.039*** (0.007)		0.014* (0.007)
West Cork Development Partnership Ltd	0.061*** (0.012)	0.040*** (0.015)	0.004 (0.007)
West Limerick Resources CLG	0.075*** (0.026)	0.059*** (0.019)	0.019 (0.021)
Westmeath Community Development	0.183*** (0.022)	0.073*** (0.014)	0.231*** (0.061)
Wexford Local Development	0.185*** (0.019)	0.081*** (0.026)	0.059** (0.025)
Pseudo-R ²	0.1939	0.1927	0.1918
Observations	2604	1647	1636

Source: IRIS Database, 2018.

Notes: Robust standard errors clustered by LDC in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.10$. Please note that the coefficients on the LDC variable show, for each LDC, how much more or less likely all individuals in the sample (both treated and control) in that LDC are to transition in to employment relative to the South Dublin City Partnership LDC (used as the base case). CLG, company limited by guarantee; DLR, Dún Laoghaire Rathdown.

TABLE A3 EMPLOYMENT-ONLY OUTCOMES (WITHOUT SCHEMES): ESTIMATED IMPACT RELATIVE TO THE CONTROL GROUP

Variable	Employment	Employment (no scheme)
Treated dummy	0.060***	0.035***
	(0.014)	(0.009)
Female	0.003	-0.003
	(0.007)	(0.005)
15 to 35 (ref = 36 to 54)	0.001	-0.003
	(0.007)	(0.006)
Age 55+	0.003	-0.007
	(0.011)	(0.007)
Irish	-0.015	-0.012
	(0.012)	(0.009)
Rural	0.013	0.008
	(0.011)	(0.006)
Disadvantaged area (ref = average)	-0.011	-0.006
	(0.010)	(0.008)
Affluent area	0.000	0.009
	(0.012)	(0.011)
Lone parent	-0.000	-0.000
	(0.009)	(0.008)
Disability	-0.032***	-0.021***
	(0.008)	(0.006)
Ethnic minority	-0.015	-0.010
	(0.012)	(0.007)
Jobless household	-0.004	-0.001
	(0.009)	(0.005)
Homeless/affected	0.003	-0.012
	(0.028)	(0.008)
Transport barrier	0.012	0.001
	(0.009)	(0.006)
Pseudo-R ²	0.0843	0.0879
Wald chi-squared	99.37***	93.25***
Observations	2025	1988

Source: IRIS Database, 2018.

Notes: Robust standard errors clustered by LDC in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.10$. Allowing Community Employment Schemes to be measured as non-employment reduces the estimate to 3.4%.

APPENDIX 2: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

A2.1 SICAP PARTICIPANTS/FORMER PARTICIPANTS

- How did you first hear about this local development company? What did you hear?
- How did you get involved in this course or programme? (What were you doing before that? Had you been involved in any courses or programmes here before?)
- Were there other courses or programmes you could have gone to locally? If so, what made you think of coming here?
- What are you currently participating in here (have participated in)? What does/did it involve? Probe: did you have one-to-one sessions? Group sessions or workshops? Courses? Employment or self-employment supports?
- What do you think of the project/programme? (Probe re kinds of activities, length, staff) If you received more than one type of support, which supports did you find most helpful? (Probe re skills developed)
- What do you think were the main benefits of the one-to-one meetings? What were the main challenges discussed? (Probe: individual- or support-led?) What additional skills or knowledge did you get from the one-to-one meetings, if any?
- What have you been doing since you finished the programme? What do you hope to do next?
- Is there anything that made it difficult to get involved in doing a course or programme here? (probe: time/childcare/transport/not enough projects available)
- Looking back, what do you feel you have got out of your time on this course/programme? Do you think it's made a difference to you? (Probe: going about getting a job? Your self-confidence? Your skills?) What would you have liked to get from it?
- Do you think there's a sense of community in this area? Do you think there are good work opportunities? Are there many courses available?
- Would it make a difference if the partnership group was not in the area?
- Are there any projects or programmes you would like to see introduced locally?
- Is there anything else you think should be done for people living in your area?

A2.2 LDC CEO

Participants

- Do you think the needs of the long-term unemployed in your area have changed in the last few years? In what way? What implications does this have for your work under SICAP?
- How would long-term unemployed people tend to get involved in SICAP?
- Are there individuals/groups that are difficult to reach? How do you go about trying to get them involved? Are there other groups you'd like to be working with?

Employment supports

- How is it decided what employment supports you offer? Probe: What courses? What group supports? How is it decided whether to focus on the transition to employment or self-employment? (Probe: individual- or support-led?)
- Have you ever developed your own courses or programmes?
- What happens when a long-term unemployed person first approaches your organisation?
- How is it decided what supports they need? If they are referred to a course run by your LDC, how is it decided what course they take? How happy are you with the range of courses offered by other providers you are able to refer participants to?
- Are there other supports you would like to be able to offer?
- What would you see as a 'good' outcome for that person?
- What kind of supports for the long-term unemployed do you think are most helpful? For those out of the labour market?

Other employment supports

IF OFFER LES AND/OR JOB CLUB:

- Does LES and/or Job Club ever refer people onto SICAP supports? Which groups would they refer?
- Do you ever refer people from SICAP to LES and/or Job Club?
- What do you see as the role of SICAP as opposed to LES/Job Club? Does it make a difference to have the different services offered by your organisation?

IF DO NOT OFFER LES OR JOB CLUB:

- Does LES and/or Job Club ever refer people onto SICAP supports? Which groups would they refer?

- Do you ever refer people from SICAP to LES and/or Job Club?
- What do you see as the role of SICAP as opposed to LES/Job Club? Do you have much contact with these services?
- If not provided locally, does it make a difference to you not to have these provided locally?
- How much contact would you have with the local Intreo/DEASP office? What is the focus of this contact? Would they refer people on to SICAP?
- How much contact would you have with the local Job Path provider? What is the focus of this contact? Would they refer people on to SICAP?

Other supports

- Would you have contact with the ETB or other education/training providers locally? How often? What issues do you discuss? Do they refer participants to you? Do you refer participants to them? In what instances?
- How much contact would you have with other support services locally (e.g. mental health)? How satisfied are you with existing services for the long-term unemployed/those out of the labour market?
- How much contact would you have with local employers? What issues would you discuss? How open are they to recruiting those who have been unemployed/out of work?

Overall perception of SICAP

- How happy are you with the employment supports you can provide under SICAP? Probe re number of people, intensity of support, balance between one-to-one and group activities.
- What else would you like to be able to put in place?
- Has SICAP 2 made any difference to your organisation (e.g. structure of teams)? Has it made any difference to the work you can do under SICAP?
- Finally, are there any additional comments/views that you would like to express regarding employment supports under SICAP?

A2.3 OTHER STAFF

LDC employment support manager/staff interview

Participants

- Do you think the needs of the long-term unemployed in your area have changed in the last few years? In what way? What implications does this have for your work under SICAP?

- How would long-term unemployed people tend to get involved in SICAP?
- Are there individuals/groups that are difficult to reach? How do you go about trying to get them involved? Are there other groups you'd like to be working with?

Employment supports

- How is it decided what employment supports you offer? (Probe: What courses? What group supports?) How is it decided whether to focus on the transition to employment or self-employment? (Probe: individual- or support-led?)
- Have you ever developed your own courses or programmes?
- What happens when a long-term unemployed person first approaches your organisation?
- How is it decided what supports they need? (Probe: number/intensity of interventions)
- How is it decided whether employment or self-employment supports are offered? (Probe: individual- or support-led?)
- What kind of work do you do with them? How much contact would you have with specific people or groups? What happens to them next? (Probe: employment versus self-employment strands)
- What are the main benefits of the one-to-one interventions? What are the key issues that are addressed during these meetings? (Probe: individual- or support-led?) What are the main challenges? What are the main skills developed during one-to-one interventions?
- What are the main benefits of the group supports or courses you run? What are the main challenges?
- Would people tend to receive multiple supports (e.g. a combination of courses and one-to-ones) one after the other? Is there a particular sequence of activities that works best?
- If they are referred to a course run by your LDC, how is it decided what course they take?
- How happy are you with the range of courses offered by other providers you are able to refer participants to?
- What seems to be the most effective approach in supporting participants who are long-term unemployed? What are the main challenges? Is there anything you think would make your work more effective?
- What seems to be the most effective approach in supporting participants who have been out of the labour market? What are the main challenges? Is there anything you think would make your work more effective?

- Are there other supports you would like to be able to offer?
- How is your work with an individual 'concluded'? What would you see as a 'good' outcome for that person?

Other employment supports

IF OFFER LES AND/OR JOB CLUB:

- Does LES and/or Job Club ever refer people onto SICAP supports? Which groups would they refer?
- Do you ever refer people from SICAP to LES and/or Job Club?
- What do you see as the role of SICAP as opposed to LES/Job Club? Does it make a difference to have the different services offered by your organisation?

IF DO NOT OFFER LES OR JOB CLUB:

- Does LES and/or Job Club ever refer people onto SICAP supports? Which groups would they refer?
- Do you ever refer people from SICAP to LES and/or Job Club?
- What do you see as the role of SICAP as opposed to LES/Job Club? Do you have much contact with these services?
- If not provided locally, does it make a difference to you not to have these provided locally?
- How much contact would you have with the local Intreo/DEASP office? What is the focus of this contact? Would they refer people on to SICAP?
- How much contact would you have with the local Job Path provider? What is the focus of this contact? Would they refer people on to SICAP?

Other supports

- Would you have contact with the ETB or other education/training providers locally? How often? What issues do you discuss? Do they refer participants to you? Do you refer participants to them? In what instances?
- How much contact would you have with other support services locally (e.g. mental health)? How satisfied are you with existing services for the long-term unemployed/those out of the labour market?
- How much contact would you have with local employers? What issues would you discuss? How open are they to recruiting those who have been unemployed/out of work?

Overall perception of SICAP

- How happy are you with the employment supports you can provide under SICAP? Probe re number of people, intensity of support, balance between one-to-one and group activities.

- What else would you like to be able to put in place?
- Has SICAP 2 made any difference to your organisation (e.g. structure of teams)? Has it made any difference to the work you can do under SICAP?
- Finally, are there any additional comments/views that you would like to express regarding employment supports under SICAP?

A2.4 LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

LES/Job Club/Tús stakeholders

- Do you think the needs of the long-term unemployed in your area have changed in the last few years? In what way? What implications does this have for your work?
- How would long-term unemployed people tend to get involved in LES/Job Club/Tús?
- How is it decided what employment supports you offer?
- What happens when a long-term unemployed person first approaches your organisation? How is it decided what supports they need? (Probe: employment versus self-employment supports) What kind of work do you do with them? How much contact would you have with specific people or groups? What happens to them next?
- Are there other supports you would like to be able to offer?
- How is your work with an individual 'concluded'? What would you see as a 'good' outcome for that person?
- Do you ever refer people onto SICAP supports? Which groups do you refer?
- Do you ever have people referred from SICAP?
- What do you see as the role of SICAP as opposed to LES/Job Club/Tús?
- How much contact would you have with local employers? What issues would you discuss? How open are they to recruiting those who have been unemployed/out of work?
- Are there any other comments you'd like to make about supports for the long-term unemployed or those out of the labour market?

Intreo/DEASP stakeholders

- Do you think the needs of the long-term unemployed in your area have changed in the last few years? In what way? What implications does this have for your work?

- What happens when a long-term unemployed person first approaches your organisation? What kind of work do you do with them? What happens to them next? (Probe: employment versus self-employment supports)
- How is your work with an individual 'concluded'? What would you see as a 'good' outcome for that person?
- Do you ever refer people onto SICAP supports? Which groups do you refer?
- Do you ever have people referred from SICAP?
- What do you see as the role of SICAP as opposed to other employment supports?
- How much contact would you have with local employers? What issues would you discuss? How open are they to recruiting those who have been unemployed/out of work?
- Are there any other comments you'd like to make about supports for the long-term unemployed or those out of the labour market?

Employers

- Have you recruited any staff over the last two or three years?
- How do you go about recruiting?
- What kinds of qualities do you look for in staff?
- How difficult or easy is it to get the staff you want?
- If not mentioned above: Would you ever go to the Intreo or the local development company to help look for staff? Was this helpful?
- Would you have any contact with the local development company (SICAP, LES or Job Club)? What kinds of things would you discuss?
- Have you ever taken on someone who was out of work for a long time? How was this?
- Would you be willing to take on someone who had been out of work for a long time? If yes, do you think there would be any challenges for you? If no, why do you say this?
- From your point of view, are there any courses or programmes you'd like to see locally?

APPENDIX 3: SURVEY ON SICAP EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

We are looking for information on the one-to-one supports and group programmes or courses your organisation provides under SICAP to assist the **transition into employment or self-employment** of those who have been **unemployed for 2 or more years** and of **those who are economically inactive** (excluding the retired or students).

One-to-one supports

1. (a) Do you provide one-to-one supports through SICAP to the **long-term unemployed or the economically inactive** to assist their transition into self-employment?

Yes, currently ₁ → Q2

Yes, in the past ₂

No

₃

(b) What is the main reason for not currently providing such supports?

Please go to Q2.

2. (a) Do you provide one-to-one supports through SICAP to the **long-term unemployed or the economically inactive** to assist their transition into employment?

Yes, currently ₁ → Q3

Yes, in the past ₂

No

₃

(b) What is the main reason for not currently providing such supports?

Please go to Q3 if you provide self-employment supports only. If you do not provide any one-to-one employment supports, please go to Q7.

3. (a) How important are each of these objectives in your one-to-one employment/self-employment work with those who are long-term unemployed or economically inactive (excluding retired/students)? Please tick one box on each line.

	Very important	Important	Not sure	Not very important	Not at all important	Not applicable
Helping with job search skills (e.g. CV, interview techniques)	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
Improving personal skills (timekeeping, appearance, engagement)	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
Improving attitudinal skills (motivation, self-confidence)	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
Improving communication skills	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
Improving enterprise/business skills (e.g. dealing with banks, developing business plan)	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
Improving practical skills (e.g. completing forms, managing money)	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
Providing specific skills which will help get them a job	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
Identifying education/training courses which would improve their skills	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
Referring them to other support services (e.g. mental health, substance abuse)	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆

- (b) Of all these objectives, which is the most important one? Please tick one box only.

Helping with job search skills (e.g. CV, interview techniques)

₁

- Improving personal skills (timekeeping, appearance, engagement) ₂
- Improving attitudinal skills (motivation, self-confidence) ₃
- Improving communication skills ₄
- Improving enterprise/ business skills (e.g. dealing with banks, developing business plan) ₅
- Improving practical skills (e.g. completing forms, managing money) ₆
- Providing specific skills which will help get them a job ₇
- Identifying education/training courses which would improve their skills ₈
- Referring them to other support services (e.g. mental health, substance abuse) ₉

4. How do you record progress relative to the goals set in the individualised personal action plan for the long-term unemployed/economically inactive?

5. How adequate do you think the current level of provision under SICAP 2018-22 for the long-term unemployed and the economically inactive is in relation to local need?

	Too little	About right	Too much
The number of people who can be seen for one-to-one employment/self-employment support	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃
The number of times participants can be seen for one-to-one employment/self-employment support	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃

6. How successful do you think one-to-one supports under SICAP are in achieving the following outcomes for the long-term unemployed and the economically inactive (excluding retired/students)? Please tick one box on each line.

	Very successful	Successful	Not sure	Not very successful	Not at all successful	Not applicable

Improving job search skills	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Improving personal skills (timekeeping, appearance, engagement)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Improving attitudinal skills (motivation, self- confidence)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Improving communication skills	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Improving enterprise/ business skills (e.g. dealing with banks, developing business plan)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Improving practical skills (e.g. completing forms, managing money)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Participants obtaining a place on an employment scheme (CE or Tús)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Participants obtaining a job (on the open market)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Participant setting up their own business	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Participants progressing to education/training courses	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

Courses and group sessions

7. (a) Do you provide courses/workshops or group sessions through SICAP to the long-term unemployed or the economically inactive to assist their transition into self-employment?

Yes, currently ₁ → Q8 Yes, in the past ₂ No ₃

(b) What is the main reason for not currently providing such supports?

Please go to Q8.

8. (a) Do you provide courses/workshops or group sessions through SICAP to the long-term unemployed or the economically inactive into employment?

Yes, currently ₁ → Q9 Yes, in the past ₂ No ₃

(b) What is the main reason for not currently providing such supports?

Please go to Q9 if you provide group supports to assist the transition to self-employment only.
If you do not provide any employment group supports/courses, please go to Q14.

9. (a) Please list any courses you provide under SICAP which your organisation has developed itself. If you have not developed your own courses, please write 'Not applicable'.

(b) Towards what group(s) are these courses you developed targeted? Please tick all that apply.

- Long-term unemployed ₁
- Short-term unemployed ₂
- Inactive ₃
- Other (specify) ₄

10. (a) How important are each of these objectives in the courses/group sessions you provide for the long-term unemployed and the economically inactive (excluding retired/students)? Please tick one box on each line.

	Very important	Important	Not sure	Not very important	Not at all important	Not applicable
Helping with job search skills (e.g. CV, interview techniques)	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
Improving personal skills (timekeeping, appearance, engagement)	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
Improving attitudinal skills (motivation, self-confidence)	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
Improving communication skills	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
Improving enterprise/business skills (e.g. dealing with banks, developing business plan)	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
Improving practical skills (e.g. completing forms, managing money)	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
Providing specific skills which will help get them a job	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
Identifying education/training courses which would improve their skills	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
Referring them to other support services (e.g. mental health, substance abuse)	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆

(b) Of all these objectives, which is the most important one? Please tick one box only.

Helping with job search skills (e.g. CV, interview techniques)

₁

- Improving personal skills (timekeeping, appearance, engagement) ₂
- Improving attitudinal skills (motivation, self-confidence) ₃
- Improving communication skills ₄
- Improving enterprise/ business skills (e.g. dealing with banks, developing business plan) ₅
- Improving practical skills (e.g. completing forms, managing money) ₆
- Providing specific skills which will help get them a job ₇
- Identifying education/training courses which would improve their skills ₈
- Referring them to other support services (e.g. mental health, substance abuse) ₉

11. How adequate do you think the current level of provision for the long-term unemployed and the economically inactive (excluding retired/students) under SICAP 2018-22 is in relation to local need? Please tick one box on each line.

	Too little	About right	Too much
The range of employment courses your organisation can provide directly	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃
The range of employment courses to which you can refer participants	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃
The number of people for whom places can be provided	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃

12. How successful do you think courses/group sessions under SICAP are in achieving the following outcomes for the long-term unemployed and the economically inactive (excluding retired/students)? Please tick one box on each line.

	Very successful	Successful	Not sure	Not very successful	Not at all successful	Not applicable
Improving job search skills	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
Improving personal skills (timekeeping, appearance, engagement)	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆

Improving attitudinal skills (motivation, self-confidence)	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
Improving communication skills	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
Improving enterprise/business skills (e.g. dealing with banks, developing business plan)	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
Improving practical skills (e.g. completing forms, managing money)	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
Participants obtaining a place on an employment scheme (CE or Tús)	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
Participants obtaining a job (on the open market)	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
Participant setting up their own business	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
Participants progressing to education/training courses	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆

13. (a) Are there any other courses you would like to be able to provide for the long-term unemployed and/or the economically inactive?

(b) If Yes, what would be needed to be able to provide these courses?

Contact with employers and local services

14. Please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by ticking one box on each line.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
There are good employment opportunities locally.	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅

Local employers are reluctant to take on people who have been out of work for a long time.	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
Local employers are willing to recruit people with multiple disadvantages.	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
Jobseekers need good qualifications to get a job locally.	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
There is good access to mental health/psychological services if required by SICAP participants.	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
There is good access to other supports (e.g. substance abuse, family support) if required by SICAP participants.	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅

15. (a) How often would you or your staff meet with local employers as part of SICAP?

- Every week ₁
- A few times a month ₂
- A few times a year ₃
- Once a year or less ₄
- Never ₅

(b) What are the main issues discussed at these meetings?

(c) What are the main challenges, if any, in engaging with employers?

16. (a) Does your organisation provide the following:

Local Employment Service (LES)
Jobs Club

Yes 1
Yes 1

No 2
No 2 → Q17

(b) Approximately what percentage of participants who receive employment/self-employment supports do so through the different programmes?

	Short-term unemployed	Long-term unemployed	Economically inactive
SICAP			
LES			
Jobs Club			
	100%	100%	100%

(c) What are the main differences, if any, between employment supports offered under SICAP and those offered under LES or Jobs Club? If there are none, please write 'None'.

Challenges and barriers

17. (a) What are the main strengths of current employment/self-employment supports under SICAP for those who are long-term unemployed or economically inactive?

(b) What, if anything, does SICAP facilitate in terms of employment/self-employment supports that other services do not?

18. What are the main challenges faced by **your participants who are long-term unemployed** in accessing employment?

19. What are the main challenges faced by **your participants who are economically inactive** in accessing employment?

20. (a) Have the needs of the long-term unemployed changed over the past three years?

Yes, to a great extent ₁ Yes, to some extent ₂ No ₃

(b) If Yes, in what way?

21. (a) Have the needs of the economically inactive (excluding retired/students) changed over the past three years?

Yes, to a great extent ₁ Yes, to some extent ₂ No ₃

(b) If Yes, in what way?

22. (a) Are there individuals or groups who are currently not accessing supports through SICAP that would benefit from such support?

Yes ₁ No ₂

(b) If Yes, what groups?

(c) What are the main barriers to them accessing supports?

23. (a) Has SICAP 2018-22 resulted in changes in the following in comparison with SICAP 1? Please tick one box on each line.

	Increased	About the same	Decreased
The number of employees funded under SICAP	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃
The SICAP funding you receive	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃

The range of different kinds of support you can provide under SICAP	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃
The number of SICAP participants you work with	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃
The intensity of support you can provide under SICAP	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃
Your recording of PPSN information on participants	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃
The other information you record on registration	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃
The information you record on progress/outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃
The reporting of information under SICAP	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃

(b) To what extent has SICAP 2018-22 resulted in changes in the organisation of your teams (e.g. grouping around goals) compared with SICAP 1?

To a great extent	To some extent	Not to any great extent	Not at all	Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅

24. Are there any other comments you would like to make on employment/self-employment supports under SICAP, particularly for those who are long-term unemployed or economically inactive? Please continue on additional pages if necessary.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP

If you would prefer to complete a Word version of the questionnaire or have any queries about the survey, please contact Judith Delaney (judith.delaney@esri.ie) 01-863 2000.

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