



Galway City Community Network CLG

Address: Westside Community Resource Centre
Seamus Quirke Road, Galway
Phone: +353 (0) 87 9326467 / (0) 87 4328489
Email: info@galwaycitycommunitynetwork.ie
Website: www.galwaycitycommunitynetwork.ie

Galway City Community Network Submission to the LECP 2023-2029 Consultation

Introduction

Established in 2014, Galway City Community Network is the Public Participation Network in Galway City. It represents over 160 groups and organisations in the community, voluntary and environmental sectors in Galway City. The twin objectives that GCCN pursues are to

- Advance the values of sustainability, equality, culture, community, empowerment, and inclusivity and embed these in the policies, programmes and practice of local government, state organisations, national government, and civil society.
- Develop and implement progressive models of, and approaches to representation, participation, and engagement for civil society in informing and shaping policy development and implementation.

Galway City Community Network fully supports the development of the Local Economic and Community Plan to guide the long-term strategic development and integration of local, community and economic development in Galway City and welcomes the opportunity to submit to this process. This submission to the LECP by GCCN is on behalf of member groups and organisations concerned with social inclusion, community development and equality; arts and culture; the environment, recreation, and heritage, planning and transport; accessibility and active travel; and economic development and enterprise.

In line with the principles and values underpinning our platform's function four principles underpin this submission. These are:

The Principle of Parity

Galway City Community Network maintains that equal weight needs to be given to the community and economic elements of the LECP. In fact, economic development cannot be separated from human and social development in the move towards a greener future¹.

Furthermore, public bodies and agencies should be required to engage with the actions emerging in the forthcoming LECP. In the previous LECP period progress on implementing the actions was greatest when actions were led by civil society organisations, who are least resourced to do so.

¹ [Mapping-the-social-dimension-of-the-circular-economy.pdf \(researchgate.net\)](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354111111)

The Principle of Social and Economic Inclusion

A clear definition of Social Inclusion should underpin the LECP. This definition should acknowledge the multi-dimensional aspect of social inclusion including full participation in economic, social, and cultural life, equality of opportunity, and vindication of rights².

Respect for Rights

An explicit statement of support for these rights should be included in the forthcoming LECP to draw public awareness to the importance of the plan in relation to the attainment of Public Sector Duty by Galway City Council.

In addition to this declaration, any actions identified within this plan should be proofed regarding rights, including International Human Rights Treaties are recognised and endorsed locally such as CERD³, CEDAW⁴, UNCRC⁵ and CRPD⁶. Furthermore, the full integration of the UN SDGs into the forthcoming LECP is crucial as the attainment of these goals are linked to the vindication of all rights.

GCCN also takes this opportunity to endorse the submissions of the Galway Traveller Movement, the LGBTI+ Interagency Group, Access for All, and the Sustainable Development Working Group. GCCN recommends that these submissions are given due regard in the development of the forthcoming LECP in order to move towards the vindication of rights in Galway City.

Meaningful Ongoing Participation

All planning and review activities relevant to the achievement of the goals of the forthcoming the LECP must include the relevant stakeholders from the communities and sectors that will be impacted by the actions. Collaboration is a key element of implementation; however, any collaborative effort must provide added value to the sector, rather than incorporating actions already underway by individual organisations or agencies.

This form of participation is in line with the values and principles for participation outlined in the *Local Economic and Community Plans Guidelines (2021)* which call for a collaborative approach enabling key stakeholders to contribute in meaningful ways and can see their views represented in the Plan. The principle of participation is as relevant to the roll out community programmes and supports, and evaluation of outcomes, as it is to the initial planning phase. This will ensure that the plan is progressive and makes a tangible difference to the communities and business interests of Galway.

² Steven Davey & Sarah Gordon (2017): Definitions of social inclusion and social exclusion: the invisibility of mental illness and the social conditions of participation, International Journal of Culture and Mental Health: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17542863.2017.1295091>

³ International Convention on the Elimination of all Form of Racial Discrimination <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/>

⁴ UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

⁵ Convention on the Rights of the Child <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>

⁶ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml>

This requires the council to be proactive in its support for participation in collaboration with Galway City Community Network. *The Council of Europe's Code of Good Practice for Public Participation (2009)* outlines key local authority responsibilities at all stages of policy development and planning. Stakeholder engagement and ongoing communication processes are key in all processes including agenda setting, policy drafting, and decision-making to monitoring and reformulating policy if necessary. Local authorities must also take steps to be responsive to groups and representatives to ensure their active involvement by listening, reacting, and giving feedback to consultation responses and civil society input, including specific needs arising from circumstances around policy implementation⁷. To achieve this depth of participation it is recommended that Galway City Council develop and adhere to a transparent decision-making process, publishes clear, open, and accessible procedures for participation and for co-decision-making.

GCCN strongly recommends that engagement with the diverse communities of Galway is ongoing throughout the implementation of the forthcoming LECP. Representative organisations should be allowed to define appropriate approaches to consultation with their communities. *The Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities Strategy (2019-2024)* also highlights the importance of active participation, where marginalized groups identify their own interests and needs as being key to addressing issues of social inclusion, ensuring that policy is relevant and effective.

Recommendations relating to the LECP High Level Goals

Goal 1: A World-class, Creative City Region

GCCN welcomes the aim to expand access to new audiences and facilitate the engagement of marginalised communities in the creative and cultural sector of Galway. Cultural diversity is an essential requirement of sustainable development. "It increases the range of choices for people and communities by nurturing their capacities for creativity and innovation."⁸

GCCN supports the recognition of the rich and vibrant cultural heritage of the most diverse city in Ireland be reflected in the targeting of funds and programmes towards our new communities in Galway. Targeting supports for arts in this way can produce social benefits for Galway. A flow of cultural exchange is long recognised as a driver of social cohesion and respect for diversity in plural communities⁹, so the expansion of opportunities to diverse communities to participate in arts and educational opportunities and produce their own cultural expressions can only enrich our City of the Tribes.

The facilitation of cultural exchange should not only be targeted at new communities but should opportunities to showcase Traveller culture and language harnessing the intangible wealth of

⁷ [Code good practice en \(socialjustice.ie\)](https://socialjustice.ie/code-good-practice-en)

⁸ Mar, P., and I. Ang. 2015. Promoting Diversity of Cultural Expressions in Arts in Australia. Sydney: Australia Council for the Arts & UNESCO. 2005. The 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. Paris: Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

<https://en.unesco.org/creativity/sites/creativity/files/passeport-convention2005-web2.pdf>

⁹ Schreiber, F. and Carius, A., 2016. The inclusive city: urban planning for diversity and social cohesion. In *State of the World* (pp. 317-335). Island Press, Washington, DC.; Cabedo-Mas, A., Nethsinghe, R. and Forrest, D., 2017. The role of the arts in education for peacebuilding, diversity, and intercultural understanding: A comparative study of educational policies in Australia and Spain. *International Journal of education & the Arts*, 18(11).

traditional and indigenous knowledge (UNESCO, 2005). This can include support for the annual 3-day festival of Misleór, a celebration of the Traveller community. This provides a valuable opportunity for all our communities to learn about our own indigenous nomadic culture and its contribution to the arts and cultural landscape of Galway.

The development of Galway City as a creative hub should not neglect the local arts. Support should include plans, targeted initiatives and ring-fenced funds for initiatives that would support the participation of marginalised, or underrepresented groups. Ensuring the participation of various groups in our creative life can support wellbeing, awareness and acceptance of diversity, intergenerational and intercultural integration and cannot be overlooked as a social good¹⁰. In addition to the personal benefits of participation in creative and cultural activities, this focus on community arts, including voluntary, amateur, and collaborative arts can be a powerful tool in tackling social exclusion, supporting community capacity building and social capital and wellbeing¹¹.

It is also important to consider the issue of accessibility within the creative culture and economy of Galway City. Access to the arts and cultural participation provides critical social engagement for people with disability, enabling them to improve their rights to culture and quality of life. However, representation in the arts is of equal importance, allowing people to give voice to experience, and change perceptions, expectations, and attitudes by providing insight through cultural expression¹². This is vital given the high levels of discrimination¹³ and access issues generated by a lack of attention to the social dimension of disability¹⁴.

The youth of Galway City must also be considered as the dynamic nature of youth culture has the potential to be a vital component of Galway's status as a creative hub. Furthermore, the involvement of youth in arts enhances learning in social education programmes, fosters empathy and interpersonal skills, and promotes community involvement¹⁵. A youth arts centre, which is central and accessible would provide a hub for the creative development of our city's young people, contributing to both the social, and economic fabric of Galway through the provision of technical training for the creative industry, social education, and community development. This can ensure that the LECP can address the recommendations of "*Everybody Matters – A Cultural Sustainability Strategy Framework for Galway 2016-2025*" by ensuring young people's access to cultural and creative activities to provision of appropriate spaces. This will support a "better understanding of the needs of children, young people and youth culture." This can help the development of supports and services to support them¹⁶. This would also support opportunities for continuous education, complementing existing measures under SICAP, by offering a range of options beyond job activation for young people and volunteers seeking to upskill.

There should be a focus on artist and community-led models of best practice. Projects should ensure spaces for community participation rather than just consumption, in line with the new draft Arts Strategy. The Arts Council names Public Engagement as one of its five goals in *Making Great Art Work*

¹⁰<https://researchrepository.murdoch.edu.au/id/eprint/20482/2/02Whole.pdf>

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Yoon, J. 2021. Cultural strategy for people with disability in Australia in [International Journal of Cultural Policy](#) 28(5):1-17.

¹³ [Discrimination in Ireland | Social Justice Ireland](#)

¹⁴ Yoon, J. 2021.

⁵ <https://www.youth.ie/articles/why-is-creativity-important-and-what-does-it-contribute>

¹⁶ Galway City Council, (2016), *Everybody Matters – A Cultural Sustainability Strategy Framework for Galway 2016-2025*, pp.24-25.

(2016 – 2025). order for this to be realistically reflected in Galway City Arts Strategy GCCN calls for community engagement to be resourced and recognised.

GCCN also advocates for the support of Outdoor Arts events. Outdoor Arts are supremely versatile and can take occur in a range of places and spaces, and take many different art forms including circus, theatre, contemporary dance, music, traditional dance, puppetry, comedy, visual art, and digital art¹⁷. Outdoor Arts have incredibly diverse audiences as they bring art to where people are and are generally free to access. They are open, accessible, engaging, democratic and universal. This highly international sector is increasingly being recognised for the role it plays in social cohesion, place-making, and community building¹⁸.

Goal 2. An Innovative City

Galway City Council should seek to recognise and celebrate the contribution to social, scientific, and technological knowledge that our educational institutions produce, and collaborate with those institutions to raise public awareness of this contributions, and so inspire a future generation to be part of this social progress. This should include a recognition of our innovative past, and our development to date.

Galway City funding should seek to establish accelerator programmes for start-ups and social enterprises that endeavour to address key social issues, including sustainable production in order to ensure that locally relevant solutions are delivered in a way that would promote growth in our economy¹⁹. For example, there is potential for businesses that to make provisions for employees facing challenges or discrimination in the workplace as employees through work with partner organisations in strategic partnerships to drive opportunities for employment. This can help address some of the systemic exclusion and discrimination faced in the employment market by Travellers, people with disabilities, minority groups and older people ²⁰. An example of this is the company Circular Blu which translates medical waste into tote bags, addressing both an environmental and social challenge²¹, or Bounce Back recycling in Galway City.

In this time of societal adaption to the challenges of climate change and global uncertainty it is important to ensure that no-one is left behind in the transition to sustainable modes of working and living. Resources must be directed towards the reskilling of the work force, including measures targeted at disadvantaged groups. This is of utmost importance given the vulnerability of marginalised groups to environmental pollution, energy and transport poverty, and inefficient housing which can

¹⁷ [What are Outdoor Arts? – OutdoorArtsUK](#)

¹⁸ National Economic and Social Council (2007), The Arts, Cultural Inclusion and Social Cohesion

¹⁹ <https://www.eurokd.com/MBRQ/doi/10.32038/mbrq.2020.16.02%20%20.pdf>

²⁰ [Ireland and the Convention on Racial Discrimination, Submission to the United Nations Committee on Racial Discrimination on Ireland's Combined Fifth to Ninth Periodic Report & Who Experiences Discrimination in Ireland & National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2012](#)

²¹ Veleva (2018) Corporate-entrepreneur collaborations to advance a circular economy & Bruyère, S. & Filiberto, D. (2013). The green economy and job creation: Inclusion of people with disabilities. International Journal of Green Economics.

interact with other dimensions of marginalisation for example gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic marginalisation²².

The dissemination of information and supports to entrepreneurs would also ensure that Galway denizens can take advantage of future development opportunities in Green Technology, the Circular Economy, and local, slow enterprise and production.

The transition to Smart City has the potential to pose a challenge to some disabled, the elderly, and marginalised communities, due to the presumption of technological access, literacy and capacities that underpins this development. For this reason, principles of universal design and accessibility must be key considerations in the development of infrastructure and technology that will drive this transition. Collaboration between City Planners, technological partners and relevant stakeholders and community representatives should inform troubleshooting and underpin universal inclusive design to address this issue²³.

Goal 3. An Equal and Inclusive City

In developing strategies and actions, the interests of minorities and marginalised groups must be protected. We note the stated intention of the LECP to consider the potential impact of the plan on certain grounds, some relating to particular circumstances such as poverty, rurality, age, and disability. However, only four priority target groups have been identified including Travellers/Roma, Long Term Unemployed, People suffering poor mental health (including youth), and Older People.

It is recommended that these categories are expanded in order to uphold *Public Sector Duty (S42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014)* and ensure the elimination of discrimination; promotion of equality of opportunity and treatment; and the protection of human rights. Implementing the Duty is clearly aligned with the Government commitment to budget and policy proofing as a means of reducing poverty and strengthening economic and social rights²⁴. This process of “proofing” the LECP for social inclusion and rights should begin with the integration of protected characteristics identified with The Equal Status Acts 2000-2015 (‘ESA’), including gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, race, and religion.

There is good cause to expand the list of targeted groups mentioned in the Issues paper in line with the ESA requirements. In Quarter 1 2019, some of the highest rates of perceived discrimination were experienced by the following groups:

- Persons identifying as LGBTI+ (33.2%) compared with non-LGBTI+ persons (17.2%)
- Persons from non-white ethnic backgrounds (33.1%)
- Non-Irish nationals (26.7%)
- Disability (24.1%)

Only two of these protected categories are directly targeted by the LECP and it does not necessarily follow that a focus on categories such as mental health, or poverty will capture the intersectional nature of social exclusion in social, economic, educational, and/or cultural life, or when accessing

²² [Environmental Justice in Ireland: Key dimensions of environmental and climate injustice experienced by vulnerable and marginalised communities](#)

²³ [Creating an Accessible Society thanks to Inclusive Design \(inclusivitymaker.com\)](#)

²⁴ https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2019/03/IHREC_Public_Sector_Duty_Final_Eng_WEB.pdf

public services. This is a critical point as a lack of access to rights, resources, and opportunities is a major cause of vulnerability in certain demographics²⁵. As the LECP plans to increase the participation of marginalised groups in the creative economy and sustainable, innovative development, while supporting an equal and inclusive city, and the health and wellbeing, and safety of all citizens then ensuring their visibility in the public plans is crucial. This will encourage a full exposition of needs and experiences relevant to any action taken by a public body, or agency “proofing” future policies, plans and actions for inclusion and equality.

Race and ethnicity have been found to be a frequent variable in the experience of discrimination (26.7%)²⁶, so action is needed to make sure that this social problem is addressed in communities. As Galway City is a context of diversity, the integration of diverse communities needs a two-way process of cultural exchange, and a permanent marketplace may offer a way for communities to mingle, share culture, and host events while generating income for themselves, and the city. Continued and ongoing support for Intercultural events and celebrations can ensure that we recognise and celebrate the diversity of all Galway’s communities. Furthermore, organisations must be sustainably funded in order to support their efforts to ensure integration, including the provision of language support, and support and information that will help ensure employment and education are accessible. The provision of resources for grass root self-help activities, and groups in Galway will also promote social inclusion and positive action in our communities. Further actions identified by the forthcoming *Intercultural Strategy for Galway* must also be given due consideration in the forthcoming LECP.

To address the risk of discrimination in in the context of public service provision as is required by Public Sector duty, Intercultural Training should be part of induction for public servants to promote respect for diverse cultures in public services. This will ensure that public bodies promote equality, prevent discrimination, and protect the human rights of their employees, customers, service users and communities affected by their policies and plans. Furthermore, reporting requirements and accountability mechanisms must be developed in relation to the implementation of the Public Sector Duty. This should include the capture of ethnic identifiers across services and analysis of service use and outcomes. Further measures to support the attainment of public sector duty by Public Bodies and Agencies include the development, and implementation of employment diversity polices including an Employment Strategy for Traveller and Ethnic Minorities.

Public bodies and agencies must support improved access to language interpretation services to support equitable access to services²⁷. This includes support for accessible information in line with *Action 15 in the Migrant Integration Strategy* (“Information will be provided in language-appropriate formats and in a manner easily accessible by migrants”). Once implemented, this should be continually monitored and expanded to encompass new languages and formats as required. Furthermore, the *Irish Sign Language Act 2017* has been in force since 2020. This Act sets out requirements and obligations on public bodies for the provision of ISL services and all local public bodies and agencies should ensure access to ISL interpretation.

Accessibility is key to participation in public social and economic life however this is inextricably linked to the Galway City Development Plan highlighting the need for holistic systems thinking in public planning processes. Galway City must integrate universal, inclusive design, accessibility, and

²⁵ www.inworkproject.eu

²⁶ [Equality and Discrimination - CSO - Central Statistics Office](#)

²⁷ Action 18 of the Migrant Integration Strategy

sustainable transport as it seeks to grow, and expand, so that all residents, at various stages of the life course may participate in public life. The principle of universal design must be applied to public spaces, private dwellings, and sites of economic activity. In addition to this Disability and Equality Training should be integral to the induction of those in the employment of public services and community organisations given the often social generation of barriers to participation. This can promote the vindication of rights for this community and drive progress towards full participation and social inclusion. GCCN also recommends that all projects, initiatives, policies, programmes, and services in Galway City should be universally accessible enabling the full and equal participation of all people, regardless of disability, age, literacy, or linguistic considerations.

There is scant reference to youth in the current LECP Issues paper. Yet approximately 34% of the population of Galway City are under 25²⁸. The experience of young people in their formative years is of crucial importance and framed by many social variables such as social inclusion and the socio-economic status of their parents so will be relevant to actions identified under the plan²⁹. In addition to this consideration, the transition to adult life is become ever more challenging in this time of economic challenges and social change. This should be addressed through concrete plans including institutional collaboration and coordination among government, educational institutions, and employers to ensure that young people can develop the skills and competencies needed to participate in social and economic life. This should increase opportunities for young people not in full time education or employment by expanding non-formal education, and vocational skill training with the aim of promoting the technical and professional knowledge of young people as this enhances their career mobility and quality of life.

While some groups mentioned in this section share universal experiences that require targeted actions to address, there are other intersectional challenges that can affect communities' experiences. Addressing these challenges requires support for, and the adequate resourcing of inter-agency action as a response to the diverse needs. However, this collaboration needs support and resourcing so the collaborating bodies can identify and enact actions that will make meaningful strides towards that goal of an equal and inclusive society in Galway City.

Goal 4. A Sustainable, Resilient Urban Environment that is the Regional Capital of the West

GCCN advocates for the expanded use of the SDGs in the LECP beyond the scope to which they have thus far been applied. Galway City Council should fully engage with the SDG National Implementation Plan, and the relevant stakeholders in the local area, including the SDG Working group to ensure that the implementation of the SDG's is successful at a local level through policy coherence and full integration into planning processes. Progress towards the attainment of the SDGs must be monitored and measured to ensure implementation given the urgency of climate change. Furthermore, the principle of participation in any processes that aim to progress the SDG's is crucial as this will ensure that all relevant interests buy into and support the SDGs at a local level.

²⁸ Galway Children and Young People's Services Committee, (2021) *Galway Children and Young People's Plan 2021-2023*, p.12. & Youth Work Act, 2001, p.6.

²⁹ [lse.ac.uk/storage/LIBRARY/Secondary/libfile/shared_repository/Content/Read,S/Social engagement from childhood to middle age Read Social engagement from childhood to middle age.pdf](https://lse.ac.uk/storage/LIBRARY/Secondary/libfile/shared_repository/Content/Read,S/Social%20engagement%20from%20childhood%20to%20middle%20age/Read%20Social%20engagement%20from%20childhood%20to%20middle%20age.pdf)

Collaborating with community-based organisations to oversee the implementation of climate adaptation measures is a crucial step in establishing wider, urgent and more democratised climate action at a community level among those who will be disproportionately affected by climate breakdown. The 2019 *Climate Adaptation Strategy* issued by Galway City Council allows for the establishment of an Adaptation Implementation Group within the council and a Climate Adaptation Monitoring Group as a sub-committee to the Climate Change, Monitoring and Recreation Strategic Policy Committee³⁰. These committees provide an opportunity for relevant local community actors to identify or engage with emerging actions that will contribute to Galway’s sustainability.

This collaboration with stakeholders must work towards the inclusion of young people. There is a growing body of literature expanding on the manifold causes and implications of climate anxiety among young people, most significantly a recent global study published in the *Lancet* outlining the growing prevalence of a mental health crisis among young people with 84% of respondents being moderately worried about climate change and 59% being very or extremely worried³¹. This study also links climate anxiety with perceived governmental response, with participants noting feeling more betrayed than reassured by government action on climate change and that “[t]o protect the mental health and wellbeing of young people, those in power can act to reduce stress and distress by recognising, understanding, and validating the fears and pain of young people, acknowledging their rights, and placing them at the centre of policy making”³². Participation in planning processes may offer a way to address this issue by focusing attention on the next generations and hopes for the future.

A slow and circular economy, and the development of holistic and complementary services and industries that are targeted to local needs and consumption patterns should be supported by Galway City Council through targeted funding as much as is possible³³. This can achieve the goal of decelerating and closing resource flows and extending product life cycles by emphasising reuse and recyclability³⁴. Two areas where this may be attainable is in the area of food production, and the recycling, repair and reconditioning of clothing, appliances, and materials. The localisation movement “Keep It Local” should be supported in relation to food security, (for example Grow Your Own and Grow It Yourself initiatives) with ethical sourcing principles including in relation to procurement processes. In addition to this municipal compost created from Brown Bin waste could be distributed locally to support community efforts to green their communities and support urban planting. For this reason, it would be very beneficial to have a permanent enclosed marketplace in Galway City that gave space to businesses that centred sustainably produced products, and recycled goods. This could serve the double purpose of enriching the retail landscape of Galway City and supporting its human and social development. A Resource Recovery Park would further enhance community engagement with recycling culture.

Climate literacy is a key component of a transition to a sustainable society³⁵, and this is something that should be considered in funding for programmes and activities. Education and awareness raising

³⁰ Galway City Council, (2019), *Climate Adaptation Strategy*. p.77.

³¹ Hickman, C, et al. (2021), “Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: a global survey”, *Lancet Planet Health* (5), pp. 863.

³² Ibid, p.871.

³³ [The OECD Inventory of Circular Economy indicators](#)

³⁴ Bocken et al., 2016 in [Mapping-the-social-dimension-of-the-circular-economy.pdf \(researchgate.net\)](#)

³⁵ Alkaher, I., 2020. Climate Literacy and Environmental Activism. [Springer MRW: \[AU:0, IDX:0\] \(researchgate.net\)](#)

initiatives must be delivered that highlight sustainable lifestyle choices as both possible and desirable³⁶. GCCN notes the intention of Galway City Council to use the decarbonisation zone in Westside as an example of sustainable development. However, awareness and education must be delivered throughout Galway City rapidly in conjunction with this pilot project. An example of an action to support this would be to establish Galway as a *Biocide Free Zone* ceasing the spraying of verges, roundabouts, and trees, and supporting this action with public information campaigns to promote changes in our local community's practice in order to protect biodiversity and our waterways. The delivery of workshops and initiatives that promote a make do and mend lifestyle for communities, and also support for businesses that arise as a result of this activity would be beneficial. Social media campaigns, art competitions, and interactive public installations that highlight consumption patterns, and the reuse of materials would also help to make residents more aware of sustainable lifestyle choices.

Furthermore, in acknowledgement of the urgency of the situation, all facilities, programmes, grants, and residencies, funded by Galway City Council, should be sustainability proofed, addressing climate change, to meet national and international targets for local and national emissions reductions. This would promote engagement with sustainability practices across the different sectors supported by Galway City Council.

The interaction between the City Development Plan and the Local Economic and Community Development Plan is once again stressed as vitally important, as changing modes of production, and consumption must be supported with adequate infrastructure, including space for social initiatives and community activities to flourish, sites of production, to support a linked slow economy, and safe multi modal active travel routes at a local level. This will support changes in human behaviour that can reduce the carbon footprint of Galway City.

Goal 5. A City that Promotes the Health and Well-being of all its People

GCCN proposes that a health and well-being statement is incorporated into the strategies of all local public bodies and state agencies. This Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach to public policies systematically takes into account the health implications of decisions in order to improve population health and health equity. Taking this approach to local policy is important given the intersection between different social policies and the health of communities³⁷. An example of this issue arising in practice is the link between the failure of the housing system and poor health³⁸. This issue draws further attention to the link between the City Development Plan and the goals of the LECF.

Active travel can also contribute greatly to improved health outcomes linking place and public design to community health. This requires the provision of safe travelling routes to, work, schools, amenities, and recreational grounds are in place. This requires measures such as bike routes away from traffic, pedestrian crossings, traffic calming systems, lowering of speed limits and action to address 'rat runs' through the provision of safe routes in residential areas.

³⁶ <https://www.oecd.org/cfe/cities/InventoryCircularEconomyIndicators.pdf>

³⁷ [Health in All Policies: From rhetoric to action \(sagepub.com\)](https://www.sagepub.com)

³⁸ [Health and Homelessness - Health Snapshot Study of People using Simon Projects and Services in Ireland Dec 201](#)

Positive social relations and community belonging are key aspects of mental and physical health³⁹ and the widespread access to community supports, activities, and projects are needed to support this goal. However, the provision of social supports can be limited outside of SICAP areas. These means that groups in need of support may go without disadvantaged households tend to be concentrated in the private rented sector due to the nature of current housing strategies and policy provisions⁴⁰. Furthermore, it cannot be taken for granted that aging population, or parents in need of additional support can access services and programmes in their communities. For this reason, it is recommended that the provision of support be expanded beyond SICAP areas to facilitate universal access on the basis of need.

The public library is a beneficial resource to communities providing a site of social action, access to information and help to navigate such information, and access to technology for those disadvantaged groups that find themselves without. GCCN proposes that Library services be extended to reach those unable to access library buildings including isolated older people and people with disabilities, possibly through the use of mobile libraries.

In relation to young people, the Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC), notes in the recent publication "*Galway Children and Young People's Plan 2021 – 2023*" that young people ask for "more access to youth work style projects... Young people want more spaces to hang out with their friends...". This can have benefits for the positive development of youth and mitigate risk factors that could harm their mental and physical health while providing benefits for the community through increased social participation under the guidance of adults⁴¹. There is however a dearth of spaces within Galway City that are specifically dedicated to young people, and the agencies that provide services for them. As the population of Galway expands this is an action that must be considered. This will support Youth Work Organisations to expand their range of supports, and activities and enrich the lives and health of the young people in our city.

While universally accessible supports are important, certain groups as mentioned under the Equal Status Act (2014) may have needs for support around health and wellbeing that are particular for their needs and experiences of minority stress⁴². For example, Travellers, LGBTIQ+ groups and those in direct provision may face experiences of discrimination in their everyday lives and require safe spaces to access support and take collective action in relation to their lived experience. Pre-existing services and supports must have sustainable core funding⁴³ in order to plan for the future and ensure that their work is making progress over the long term. This will enable the retention of experienced staff, and long-term planning which will better facilitate the development of services and supports over time.

The Covid 19 pandemic has increased the risk of mental health conditions, particularly in low-income groups and young people. This situation is concerning as mental health is critical for individual wellbeing, which interacts with social and economic inclusion⁴⁴. The World Health Organisation advocates for community-based mental health services that promote person-centred, recovery-

³⁹ Michalski, C.A., Diemert, L.M., Helliwell, J.F., Goel, V., Rosella, L.C. (2020) Relationship between sense of community belonging and self-rated health across life stages in Population Health (12)

⁴⁰ [Discrimination and Inequality in Housing in Ireland Set Out in New Research - IHREC - Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission](#)

⁴¹ <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/afterschool-programs/benefits-youth-families-and-communities>

⁴² <https://www.urccp.org/article.cfm?ArticleNumber=69>

⁴³ [ff380490589a4f9ab9cd9bb3f53b5493.pdf \(assets.gov.ie\)](https://www.assets.gov.ie/pdfs/ff380490589a4f9ab9cd9bb3f53b5493.pdf)

⁴⁴ <https://www.socialjustice.ie/article/mental-health-ireland>

oriented and rights-based services⁴⁵. In particular GCCN advocates for community participation in any community initiative to tackle this issue, given the well documented benefits both for service users and organisations⁴⁶, the complex interplay of mental health and social conditions that affect people's wellbeing⁴⁷ and recommend that support be provided for a Mental Health Consumer Panel so that a holistic approach appropriate to need can be considered. This can be linked to opportunities for peer support that can be accessed through Galway Community Café.

Access to recreational activities is important for physical health so GCCN proposes that there is a need for the establishment of additional recreation grounds, community centres and amenities to meet the needs of a growing population and ensure accessibility for underserved communities. These facilities must be accessible, affordable, and available for use by all members of the community, particularly those who are socio-economically, culturally, and otherwise marginalised. It is important that these community facilities are not privatised but supported as sustainable social enterprises in order to ensure that they are accessible for all. This could include the development of a fully accessible municipal community owned sports area catering for different sports including minority/non-mainstream sports to maximise community engagement. In addition to this a Galway Horse Project similar to those developed by Traveller organisations and community groups in other parts of the country can provide social benefits including the development of wellbeing, and empathy, recovery, and diversion⁴⁸.

It is important that fully accessible playgrounds for all children are provided throughout the city in order to promote their health through play. This should also include facilities for older children (10-18 years). At present limited accessible features are only present in four playgrounds throughout the city. All children deserve the right to play under Article 31 of the UNCRC (1989) and this is something that should be given due attention in the new plan.

Conclusion

GCCN welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the forthcoming LECP. It is recommended that the ongoing development of this plan, including its actions, the identification of KPI's, and the evaluation of progress is conducted in collaboration with key stakeholders in the community, and with the public participation network. This will ensure that any actions identified will be meaningful to the communities and interests affected, the rights of marginalised groups will be vindicated, and no one is left behind in this phase of Galway's development.

⁴⁵ World Health Organization (2021) Guidance on community mental health services: promoting person-centred and rights-based approaches. Geneva.

⁴⁶ [The participation of adult service users, including older people, in developing social care - Meaning and importance of participation: Outcomes of participation \(scie.org.uk\)](#)

⁴⁷ World Health Organization (2021) Guidance on community mental health services: promoting person-centred and rights-based approaches. Geneva.

⁴⁸ [Why Horses? — Project Horse Empowerment Center](#)

