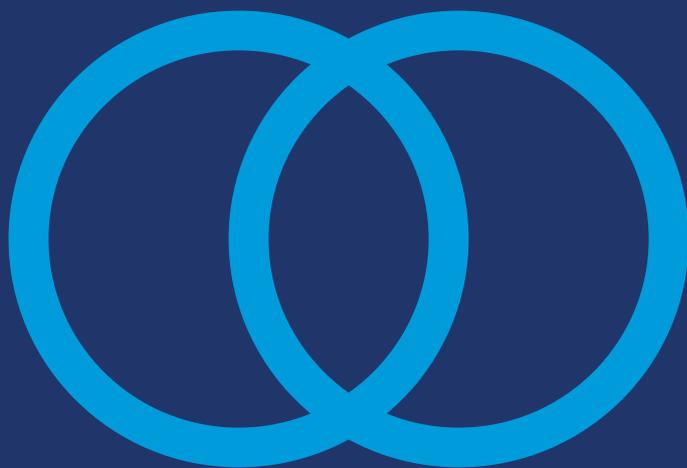


Keeping it Local 2

Local Authority migrant integration strategies: where we are, where we need to be and how to get there

April 2020

Working for **equality**



Keeping it Local 2

Local Authority migrant integration strategies: where we are, where we need to be and how to get there

April 2020

Acknowledgments

The Immigrant Council of Ireland would like to thank all the Local Authorities that participated in the survey. The report was led by Kensika Monshengwo, Integration Officer with the Immigrant Council of Ireland, with support from Integration Manager Teresa Buczkowska.

The report is funded under the EU Asylum Migration and Integration Fund via the Department of Justice and Equality.



Contents

Foreword — 04

- 05** Introduction
Methodology
- 06** Local Migrant Integration
Strategies Table
- 08** In-Date Migrant Integration
Strategies
- 09** Reasons for Adopting a Migrant
Integration Strategy
 - Keeping integration on the agenda*
 - Recognition of diversity*
 - Barrier removal mechanism*
 - Effective service delivery to a diverse population*
 - The Public Sector Duty*
- 10** Expired Migrant Integration
Strategies
- 11** Reasons for the absence of a Migrant
Integration Strategy
 - Expired strategies*
 - Lack of resources*
 - A matter of priority*
 - Difficulty in engaging with stakeholders*
- 12** Impact of *Keeping it Local*
- 13** Evaluation
- 14** Conclusion
- 15** Recommendations
- 16** Appendix 1

Foreword



In 2018 we launched our report *Keeping it Local*. It included a survey with local authorities, looking at current approaches to local integration strategies. It also included a framework plan for what an effective migrant integration strategy would look like.

We are delighted to see over the past two years a significant improvement in the number of local authorities which have launched new strategies or are in the process of updating existing ones. Eleven local authorities have a current integration strategy, compared with just three in 2018, and a further 15 are intending to update or publish one. Another strong indication of improved engagement is the fact nearly all local authorities (30 out of the total 31) have or have had an integration strategy, a significant improvement on the 21 in this position just two years ago.

We were delighted to hear our initial report, *Keeping it Local*, had proved useful to local authorities preparing or updating their integration strategies. We believe the practical recommendations included help in the development of a living action plan which supports communities to become friendlier, more welcoming and ultimately more inclusive places for migrants living in Ireland.

Small measures, like introducing an intercultural small grants scheme and facilitating community inclusion open days, go a long way towards embedding an intercultural identity within communities and celebrating diversity. Uniting communities in a common purpose and with a shared vision regarding diversity has the double positive of protecting against segregation and diminishing the risk of racial tensions, while also building a thriving, diverse society.

Central to an effective approach is the focus on 'local'. People live their lives in their local communities which is why having locally focused integration strategies is so important. It is where our children go to school, where we practice our hobbies – at the local sports club or craft groups, it is where we might worship and where we build enduring friendships with neighbours, local business owners and colleagues.

What has been most encouraging to see in this update is the near universal recognition among local authorities of the importance of having an in-date, effective local integration strategy. The survey results show local authorities recognise the increasing diversity within their communities and the need to identify and overcome any barriers to inclusion they face.

We look forward to continued engagement with local authorities across Ireland to build on this excellent foundation and deliver even bigger and better local integration strategies which harness the full cultural and economic benefits Ireland's diverse population brings.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'BKilloran', followed by a horizontal line.

Brian Killoran
CEO
Immigrant Council of Ireland

Introduction

The Immigrant Council of Ireland, with financial support from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund 2017-2020, has been working to support local authorities to develop local migrant integration strategies. Among many activities we have delivered workshops, information seminars, and provided networking opportunities as well as tailored individual assistance. In July 2018 the Immigrant Council of Ireland published a discussion document and proposed actions for local authorities to develop local migrant integration strategies entitled *Keeping it Local*.¹

The report provided an overview of the situation and nature of existing local migrant integration plans, made suggestions regarding how future plans could be improved and divulged the findings of a survey conducted with local authorities.

Two years after our initial contact, we contacted all local authorities again to examine the status of their work pertaining to migrant integration strategies. Thirty local authorities (out of a total of 31) responded and filled in a short survey. By examining the answers to our questionnaire, we have been able to paint a brief picture of the progress achieved in the last two years.

The aim of this report is to evaluate the work put into facilitating local migrant integration strategies in recent years. In this report, we will examine progress in developing integration strategies by local authorities since our previous publication. We will also examine the direction in which most local authorities are heading when it comes to implementing local migrant integration strategies. Lastly the report will identify existing gaps and provide further recommendations to help bridge those gaps and complement the recommendations from the *Keeping it Local* 2018 report.

Methodology

We issued an online research survey to all 31 local authorities in January 2020. The questionnaire included six questions. They were a mix of closed and open-ended questions. Thirty out of 31 local authorities responded to our questionnaire (a response rate of 97%).² Whereas we encouraged the respondents to answer all questions there was no obligation to do so. Only a few respondents omitted questions in the survey. Please see Appendix 1 for a copy of the survey questionnaire.

1. <https://www.immigrantcouncil.ie/sites/default/files/2018-07/Keeping%20it%20local%20Report%20WEB%20version.pdf>

2. Appendix 1

Review of previous local migrant integration strategies

There are 31 Local Authorities in Ireland. At the time of publication 11 of these Local Authorities had in-date migrant integration strategies. The basis for this document review was Local Authorities which either currently have an in-date strategy or at some stage had a migrant integration strategy. Using this criterion there are a total of 30 Local Authorities which currently have or had some type of migrant integration strategy.

	Local Authority	Status on April 2020	Time period or publication date	Title/Name of Migrant Integration Strategy
1	Carlow County Council	YES	2020 - 2024	The County Carlow Migrant Integration and Intercultural Strategy 2020-2024
2	Cavan County Council	NO	In preparation	Previous - Face Value. An Integration Framework for County Cavan 2010
3	Clare County Council	NO	2009 -2012	Strategy for the Coordination of Services to Immigrant Communities in County Clare 2009-2012
4	Cork City Council	NO	2008-2011	Previous - Connecting Communities The Cork City Integration Strategy (CCIS) 2008-2011
5	Cork County Council	N/A	N/A	N/A
6	Donegal County Council	NO	In preparation	Previous - Donegal Diversity Plan 2011-2013
7	Dublin City Council	YES	2016 - 2020	Dublin City Council Integration Strategy 2016-2020
8	Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	NO	In preparation	Previous - 'The Future is Ours' - The County of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown's Integration Strategy and Action Plan 2012-2015
9	Fingal County Council	YES	2019 - 2024	Fingal County Council Migrant Integration & Social Cohesion Strategy 2019-2024
10	Galway City Council	NO	In preparation	Previous - A City of Equals - Promoting an Intercultural City
11	Galway County Council	NO	2013 - 2017	Previous- Galway County Integration and Diversity Strategy 2013-2017
12	Kerry County Council	NO	In preparation	Previous - Kerry Integration Strategy - Extension 2013-2014

13	Kildare County Council	YES	In preparation	Previous - County Kildare Integration Strategy 2014-2019
14	Kilkenny County Council	NO	In preparation	<i>Kilkenny Integration Strategy 2020-2022?</i>
15	Laois County Council	YES	2019 - 2023	Laois Integration Strategy 2019-2023
16	Leitrim County Council	NO	In preparation	N/A
17	Limerick City and County	YES	2018 - 2022	Belonging to Limerick - Migrant Integration Strategy 2018-2022
18	Longford County Council	YES	2018 - 2022	Intercultural Strategic Plan, Longford County Council 2018-2022
19	Louth County Council	YES	In preparation	Louth Meath Migrant Integration Strategy
20	Mayo County Council	NO	In preparation	N/A
21	Meath County Council	YES	In preparation	Louth Meath Migrant Integration Strategy
22	Monaghan County Council	NO	In preparation	Strategy was due for completion in late February 2020
23	Offaly County Council	YES	2020 - 2024	The Offaly Migrant Integration Strategy 2020-2024
24	Roscommon County Council	NO	In preparation	Previous - Roscommon Intercultural Strategy 2007-2010
25	Sligo County Council	NO	In preparation	N/A
26	South Dublin County Council	YES	2019 - 2023	A More Inclusive County South Dublin Integration Strategy 2019-2023
27	Tipperary County Council	NO	In preparation	Previous - Diverse Tipperary Initiative 2018
28	Waterford City & County	NO	In preparation	Draft Migrant Integration Strategy
29	Westmeath County Council	NO	2014 – 2017	Westmeath Integration and Diversity Strategy 2014-2017
30	Wexford County Council	NO	In preparation	N/A
31	Wicklow County Council	NO	In preparation	<i>Wicklow Integration Strategy 2020-2022?</i>

1.

In-Date Migrant Integration Strategies

Does your county/city have a migrant integration strategy?

When asked whether the local authority had a current strategy for the integration of migrants, 11 out of 30 respondents (36.6%) had one, while 19 did not (63.4%). This is a marked increase in the number of current local integration strategies compared with two years ago, when only three local authorities had a current migrant integration strategy. At the time of conducting both surveys some local integration strategies had expired, yet a total of 30 (out of 31) local authorities either have a current migrant integration strategy, or have had one at some point, which is significant progress. It represents an increase from the 2018 report finding, where the total number of current and previous integration strategies was 21.

This is encouraging, implying a much better understanding of the need for a local strategy, and a commitment to facilitating migrant integration at a local level. The message regarding the importance of such a strategy seems to have been well received and above all heeded.

2.

Reasons for Adopting a Migrant Integration Strategy

In your view, what would be the rationale for adopting a migrant integration strategy?

KEEPING INTEGRATION ON THE AGENDA

The most common reason given for the adoption of an integration strategy is the desire to support migrant integration at a local level. The strategy for the integration of migrants is an important document which sends a positive message to migrants regarding inclusion in society and also confirms the commitment of local authorities to promote a cohesive society. Evidence from the surveys show local authorities are generally committed to improving the quality of life for all residents of the county.

RECOGNITION OF DIVERSITY

In recent years many counties have experienced population growth which has resulted in greater cultural and ethnic diversity, and this is being recognised as the new reality and norm by local authorities. Recognition of diversity is about meeting the needs of a growing migrant community. Some local authorities acknowledged a growing migrant community can also present challenges. Strategies must therefore be put in place to promote better social integration of migrants in the county in which they live and to mitigate the challenges.

For local authorities, meeting the needs of the growing migrant population and ensuring that people can contribute to and benefit from being valued members of Irish society is one of the key drivers for having an effective local migrant integration strategy. The process of consultation with migrant groups as well as associated research is a form of needs analysis.

Some local authorities perceive the migrant integration strategy as the best framework for liaising with migrant communities. Through various integration initiatives listed in their strategies they are building networks and maintaining connections with migrant communities that may sometimes be hard to reach.

BARRIER REMOVAL MECHANISM

Breaking down barriers to migrant participation is another common reason given by local authorities for developing a migrant integration strategy. After analysing migrant communities' needs, integration strategies offer a plan to address any barriers to integration.

Adopting a migrant integration strategy is seen as providing a structured framework to effectively support migrant communities and to facilitate social cohesion.

EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY TO A DIVERSE POPULATION

Setting objectives which ensure community services are catering for the increasingly diverse population and contributing to making the county a place in which all those who live and work are valued is also cited as an important reason for adopting a migrant integration strategy.

THE PUBLIC SECTOR DUTY³

Meeting the requirements of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty has also been identified as a rationale for putting in place a migrant integration strategy. As stated in the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 (Section 42), a public body must, in the performance of its functions, work towards eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity and treatment of persons to whom it provides services.

³ <https://www.ihrec.ie/our-work/public-sector-duty/>

3.

Expired Migrant Integration Strategies

If your county's migrant integration strategy has expired, are you planning on updating it?

We wanted to find out whether or not the subject was still on the agenda for local authorities whose strategies had expired and whether they had a longstanding commitment to migrant integration.

Out of 19 local authorities with migrant integration strategies which have expired, 15 have expressed an intention to update them. Some local authorities have already secured funding for this endeavour; others have begun to develop a new strategy. These respondents confirmed the new strategies are either currently being developed or about to be published.

Among the survey respondents there are currently four local authorities which have neither a current migrant integration strategy nor a current plan to implement such a strategy. Just one local authority does not, nor has ever had, a migrant integration strategy.

4.

Reasons for the Absence of a Migrant Integration Strategy

*If the answer to the first question is No, please clarify.
(Multiple answers possible)*

The 19 local authorities without a current local integration strategy explained the absence:

EXPIRED STRATEGIES

Eleven local authorities explained their integration strategies had simply expired, since all such strategies have a time limit of four or five years for the most part. Some local authorities which have expired strategies said they were implementing various projects promoting the integration of migrants in collaboration with other stakeholders and therefore were maintaining their commitment in this way.

LACK OF RESOURCES

Only three local authorities cited a lack of resources as the reason for the non-existence of a current integration strategy. Recognising the production of a strategy requires investment of staff time, resources and budget, it is encouraging to see the majority of local authorities are willing to commit their resources to advance migrant integration in their local area.

A MATTER OF PRIORITY

Two local authorities explained the lack of a migrant integration strategy was because other county priorities had taken precedence over the issue of migrant integration; here the lack of an integration strategy is explained by lack of priority afforded to this sector of activity. Each local authority is dealing with a lot of competing priorities, however again it is encouraging to see that having a local migrant integration strategy is being seen as a norm not a luxury.

DIFFICULTY IN ENGAGING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Two other respondents said they faced difficulty engaging stakeholder organisations, resulting in limited engagement with migrants, and therefore the consultation process was not very successful. Engaging a variety of stakeholders, from migrant groups to businesses and state agencies, is key to the successful design and implementation of an integration strategy. The result of the survey shows that the majority of local authorities have well established networks for engaging with new communities.

5.

Impact of *Keeping it Local*

If your county's migrant integration strategy was launched in 2019, did you take into account the recommended key principles and the proposed migrant integration actions for local authorities from the Immigrant Council of Ireland's booklet: Keeping it Local?

Question number 5 was a way of gauging the impact of our report and practical guide *Keeping it Local* on local authorities, and in particular whether our recommendations were helpful in the development of local migrant integration strategies.

Half those who responded (15) said they had used the recommendations from the report when developing their integration strategy. Eight local authorities with current integration strategies used the recommendations and a further seven are planning to take them into account when preparing their upcoming integration strategies. One local authority confirmed its tender brief for the development of its local migrant integration strategy was prepared using the key principles included in the *Keeping it Local* report.

6.

Evaluation

Has a formal evaluation of your migrant integration strategy been carried out?

The last question was posed to find out if an evaluation of the integration strategies was carried out. Nine respondents did not answer this question. Twenty local authorities confirmed they had not conducted an evaluation of their previous integration strategies. Just one local authority had undertaken a review of its previous strategy prior to developing its current strategy.

Lack of monitoring, evaluation and reporting is a significant omission in relation to any strategy. Without evidence it cannot be concluded whether all of the activities, resources and investments have any impact on the target group and whether they helped in achieving the strategy goals. Monitoring and evaluation are also key elements for further planning and implementation of future, effective strategies.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates there is a good level of understanding regarding the need to have a local migrant integration strategy. We have noted an increase in the number of current and planned integration strategies since our 2018 research. Overall, 26 local authorities out of 31 either have a current migrant integration strategy or are working towards the adoption of one in the near future. Further, all local authorities bar one have had a migrant integration strategy at some point in time. Therefore, we can conclude that the majority of local authorities are committed to facilitating social cohesion and positively promoting migrant integration. However, it is important local authorities demonstrate an ongoing commitment to local integration with regular renewal of their strategies and by dedicating appropriate resources to the development and implementation of the programme of work supporting the strategy.

It is evident from the responses to our survey that the *Keeping it Local 2018* report raised awareness on the need to adopt a migrant integration strategy, and was also a useful reference during the development of many current integration strategies by local authorities.

The research report revealed the biggest challenge faced by local authorities in relation to migrant local integration strategies is monitoring, evaluation and reporting. While putting in place a strategy for the integration of migrants is important, assessing the effectiveness of the strategy to monitor progress, identify good practices and any gaps in the strategy is essential. This is a subject that would need to be explored more assiduously in the future.

Recommendations

- Local authorities need to maintain a long-standing commitment to migrant integration by reviewing and renewing their strategies on a regular basis;
- Increased ethnic and religious diversity needs to be recognised as the new social reality and migrant integration strategies should be seen as a norm not a luxury;
- The commitment to migrant integration needs to be supported by appropriate resources and investment;
- Local authorities should seek support and advice on best practice approaches to outreach and partnership formation with minority groups during all stages of inception, planning and delivery of migrant integration strategies;
- Monitoring, evaluation and reporting need to become key elements of migrant integration practices applied by any local authority.

Appendix 1

2020 Survey for local authorities on the development of local migrant integration strategies

SURVEY

The Immigrant Council of Ireland has received funding via the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund through the Department of Justice and Equality to support local authorities in the development of migrant integration strategies. This short survey is an information gathering exercise to identify the key challenges facing local authorities in developing and implementing migrant integration strategies.

QUESTIONS

1. Does your county/city have a migrant integration strategy?

Yes No

If yes, please provide the name and time frame of the most recent migrant integration strategy that your county/city has been involved in.

2. If the answer to the first question is No, please clarify. (Multiple answers possible)

- The strategy has expired
 - Lack of resources
 - Difficulty engaging stakeholder organisations
 - Other priorities
 - Other (please specify) _____
-

3. If your county's migrant integration strategy has expired, are you planning on updating it?

Yes No

If yes, please provide details if available.

4. In your view, what would be the rationale for adopting a migrant integration strategy?

5. If your county's migrant integration strategy was launched in 2019, did you take into account the recommended key principles and the proposed migrant integration actions for local authorities from the Immigrant Council of Ireland's booklet: *Keeping it Local?* (Page 13)

Yes No

Please provide details

6. Has a formal evaluation of your migrant integration strategy been carried out?

Yes No

If yes, please provide reference of the document.

immigrantcouncil.ie



Immigrant
Council of
Ireland

2 St Andrew Street, Dublin 2, Ireland
Information Service (01) 674 0200
Administration (01) 674 0202

 /ImmigrantCouncil
 @immigrationIRL