



COUNTY GALWAY LOCAL AUTHORITIES

SOCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY

2006 – 2009



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Message from Cllr. Pat Hynes, Mayor of the County of Galway



As Mayor of the County of Galway I am very pleased to welcome the publication of our first Social Inclusion Strategy for the years 2006 – 2009. The Plan presents our overall commitment to addressing social exclusion and disadvantage across the County and outlines how we intend to address some of the issues that affect our citizens. Local Government plays a very significant part in the life of local communities and is an integral part of the democratic process. Our activities have an important economic and social impact. Increasingly, local authorities are expected to respond in a more co-ordinated manner to social and cultural issues.

Our Corporate Plan has placed a high degree of importance on addressing social inclusion and we must now take the necessary steps to ensure that our actions result in an inclusive service for citizens. This Strategy will guide the work of the Council in meeting its commitments and obligations under national policy and legislation enacted in recent years.

On behalf of the elected representative of County Galway Local Authorities I wish to reinforce the commitment of the members to ensuring that the Strategy is appropriately delivered and monitored over the next four years and wish to commend the County Manager and his staff in the preparation of the action plan.

Cllr. Pat Hynes - Mayor of the County of Galway

Message from Mr. Pat Gallagher, County Manager, Galway County Council



I am pleased to present the first formal Social Inclusion Strategy for the period 2006 – 2009 outlining this Council's corporate commitment to addressing social inclusion in a targeted and integrated manner. The document clearly outlines the range of activities that this authority is currently undertaking and proposes to introduce in order to address social exclusion and disadvantage in the County. Social exclusion occurs when certain groups of people are pushed to the margins of society and prevented from playing a full and active part in normal activities because of poverty, poor access to services, low education levels or inadequate life skills.

We are conscious that there remain areas in our County that are still experiencing disadvantage and exclusion and that certain groups in society do not have the same level of access to services that they deserve. This Strategy seeks to ensure that our services become more accessible, that we target investment into disadvantaged areas, focus on building strong and vibrant communities, seek to enhance access to decision-making and social networks and enable all our citizens play an active part in their communities. Furthermore, through this Strategy we will ensure that the concept of social inclusion is embedded into our overall corporate planning process. Galway County Council will also work with other members of the County Development Board to address social inclusion on an integrated basis across all public services.

I wish to acknowledge the active participation of staff, elected members and the Management Team in the preparation of this Strategy and I wish to compliment the Director of Services, Community, Enterprise & Economic Development for leading on this initiative and in ensuring that this local authority is positioned to meet the challenges arising in proactively addressing social exclusion in our County.

Pat Gallagher - County Manager

SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

In recent years, there have been several national commitments to social inclusion and anti-poverty issues. This commitment is reflected among others in the publication of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy and the adoption of Social Inclusion as one of the four key objectives in the National Development Plan 2000-2006. In addition, the Local Government Act 2001 places an obligation on the local authority to consider social inclusion in the design and delivery of local services and to develop local strategies to address social inclusion. Demographic changes such as the county's population, age profile, the increase in the number of households, trends towards smaller household size and an increasingly diverse multi-ethnic community will continue to significantly affect the scope and scale of demand for local authority services.

Local Government plays a very significant part in the life of the County. It is an integral part of the democratic process. Furthermore, the activities of the local authority have an important economic and social impact. Increasingly, the Authority is being asked to respond in a more co-ordinated manner to social and cultural issues. It is working closer with communities in addressing social exclusion, developing participatory planning models and in developing social capital. The National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) states that social inclusiveness and equality of opportunity can be fostered through a renewed system of local government.

THE NAPS PRINCIPLES ARE:

- ensuring equal access and encouraging participation for all
- guaranteeing the rights of minorities especially through anti-discrimination measures
- the reduction of inequalities and, in particular, addressing the gender dimensions of poverty
- the development of the partnership approach, building on local and national partnership processes
- actively involving the community and voluntary sector
- encouraging self reliance through respecting individual dignity and promoting empowerment
- engaging in appropriate consultative processes, especially with users of services.

WHAT IS SOCIAL INCLUSION?

The term 'Social Inclusion' is a relatively new one, however the process of social inclusion is not new to local authorities. In fact, in its broadest definition, social inclusion is a central part of what local authorities are all about; local authorities play a key role in delivering programmes and services which contribute to the social, economic, cultural and political development of our society. In areas such as housing, waste management, democratic participation, planning, recreation and transport, local authorities deliver programmes which, on a daily basis, affect the quality of the lives of the people of their catchment areas.

The definition of social exclusion defined by Partnership 2000 was as follows:

Cumulative marginalisation: from production (employment), from consumption (income poverty), from social networks (community, family and neighbours), from decision-making and from an adequate quality of life.

Social exclusion occurs when certain groups of people are pushed to the margins of society and prevented from playing a full and active part in normal activities because of poverty, low education levels or inadequate life skills.

This makes it difficult for them to access jobs, income and education opportunities, or to play a normal role in society and community networks. It means they have little access to power, little chance of influencing decisions or policies that affect them and little chance of bettering their standard of living. (Combat Poverty Agency 'Action on Poverty Today' 2004)

The definition of poverty used by NAPS is as follows:

People are living in poverty, if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living, which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and resources, people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities which are considered the norm for other people in society.

ROLE OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

The role of local authorities in tackling poverty and exclusion extends beyond the traditional areas such as housing and is, in fact, corporate-wide. At another level, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) notes the local government sector as instrumental in targeting resources to those most in need. It contains a series of key targets for a range of groups and issues, and gives local authorities the responsibility for advancing these at local level. It also requires local authorities to consider the impact of their policies on poverty and to devise responses to poverty and social exclusion as part of their work - i.e. it requires local authorities to "poverty proof".

Clearly central to the establishment of NAPS was the need to ensure that every local authority had a formal commitment to tackling social exclusion and anti-poverty issues. Finally, the local authority's lead role in the County Development Board process, which includes a focus on community development and social inclusion, further underpins a widening role in tackling poverty and exclusion.

Traditionally housing and accommodation, recreation and amenity were seen as the primary services delivered by local authorities that had anything to do with 'social inclusion'. In more recent years, however, it has been recognised through for example, Better Local Government, NAPS and the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF), that social inclusion policies and practices must span all local authority functional areas. The new form of local governance outlined in BLG promotes good relationships with the local community, delivering quality services and consensus in planning and implementation across all functional areas. Therefore, while local authorities have a significant role to play in anti-poverty work through the provision of housing and recreational amenities such as libraries, they equally have responsibilities across the other functions. (Review of CPA LGAPLN Fitzpatrick's 2003)

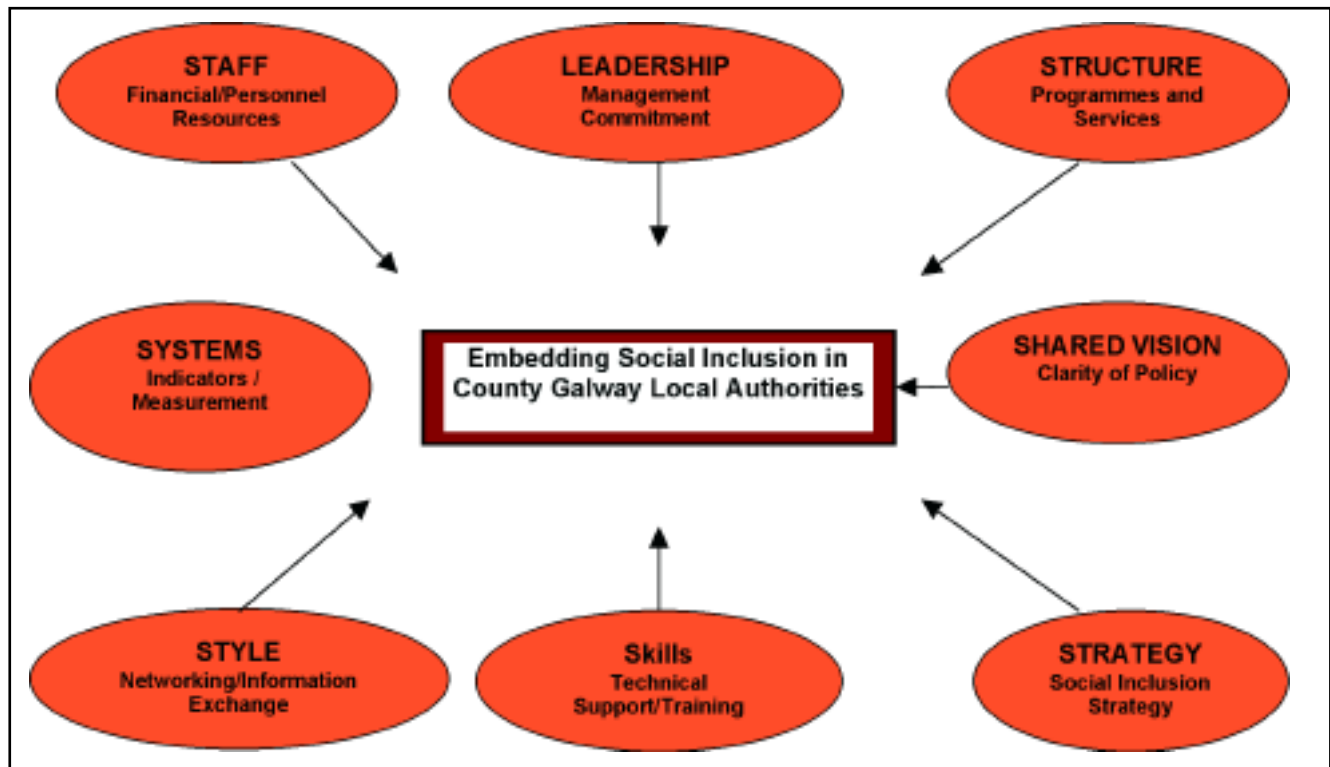
Although the original NAPS mentioned that all government departments and agencies would have a role in its implementation, Building an Inclusive Society specifically mentions local authorities as having a role in achieving the targets it sets. It requires local authorities to consider their role in this and also to poverty proof all of their policies. The specific requirements of local authorities outlined, includes:

'The key remit now given to County and City Development Boards in relation to the preparation of county and city strategies will lead to a key role for local authorities in the setting of strategic development objectives across the full range of public services. The setting of these strategic development objectives will take account of the principles, targets and objectives set out in the NAPS and, over time, local authorities will develop appropriate social inclusion strategies at local level which will underpin and strengthen the national actions being taken' (Building an Inclusive Society).

EMBEDDING SOCIAL INCLUSION INTO THE WORK OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

The provision of quality and accessible local authority services is the mark of a successful modern society. The provision of such services is particularly important in promoting social inclusion for low-income groups and those who find themselves in vulnerable situations.

FACTORS NECESSARY TO EMBED NAPS AT LOCAL LEVEL



PURPOSE OF A SOCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY

Local authorities provide a crucial forum for the democratic representation of local communities, giving expression to local identity, identifying local concerns and setting local priorities. Local authorities are more than service providers. As democratically elected and accountable bodies they have the authority and legitimacy to speak and act on behalf of their communities. According to the National Economic & Social Forum, direct and meaningful consultation with people, partnership between all sectors of society, consensus, transparency, institutional openness, and political accountability, are essential elements in 'social wellbeing'.

Social exclusion has been defined as cumulative marginalisation from production, consumption, social networks, decision-making and from an adequate quality of life. The Social Inclusion Strategy identifies a series of practical objectives and actions that can be progressed over the life-span of the Strategy that can positively impact on disadvantage, poverty and quality of life issues.

This document contains the County Galway Local Authorities statement of strategy in relation to addressing social inclusion in the context of achieving the social inclusion objectives outlined in the Corporate Plan 2005 – 2009.

SECTION 2 THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

A range of recent policy and legislative instruments outline the role of local authorities in addressing issues of social inclusion and poverty at local level. The challenge being confronted is to determine the Councils contribution not just in combating social exclusion, but the ways in which it reinforces social inclusion, builds citizenship and social capital. Current reform processes have led to significant change within local government, involving new demands, new roles and new structures.

THE NATIONAL ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY

The National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) contains a specific recommendation that Local Authorities '**develop appropriate social inclusion strategies at local level**'. NAPS was launched in 1997 and was the first strategic attempt by the Irish Government to tackle poverty in the medium to long term. It was based on the principles of prioritising poverty and its elimination and involving those directly affected by poverty in that elimination. It spoke about tackling, not just the symptoms of poverty but the underlying causes of poverty and about the fact that *all* government departments would have a role in the implementation of NAPS.

NAPS also recognised that an understanding of poverty in the Ireland of the late 1990's meant adopting a relative definition of poverty. In other words that people could be considered to be living in poverty relative to what was considered the norm in Irish society. NAPS also recognised that the term *poverty* was not inclusive of all those experiencing disadvantage and so included the term *social exclusion* in the strategy. The notion of social exclusion relates to barriers to participation such as discrimination; physical barriers such as lack of transport or accessible amenities; people lacking in the skills etc. required to fully participate in society or other barriers to full participation in society.

NAPS measured the national extent of poverty mostly based on information from ESRI survey '*Poverty in the 1990's: evidence from the 1994 Living in Ireland Survey*'. This survey estimated that 34% of the population were living on disposable incomes below 60% of the national average. NAPS then identified those groups of people who account for a substantial proportion of those living in poverty and those who may be subject to a high risk of poverty. The groups identified as being at greatest risk of poverty were:

- The unemployed, particularly the long-term unemployed;
- Children, particularly those living in large families;
- Single adult households and households headed by someone working in the home;
- Lone parents;
- People with disabilities.

It was also recognised that though people living in poverty can be found anywhere, there are certain areas where large clusters of people living in poverty can be found. Three such areas were identified:

- Decaying inner city areas
- Large public housing estates on city and town peripheries and
- Isolated and underdeveloped rural areas.

NAPS also examined the causes of poverty and concluded that unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment, is one of the fundamental causes of poverty. In addition, the education system, the tax system and the social welfare system, if not targeted at those most in need, could become contributing factors. NAPS

outlined three very important factors in the way it was to address poverty. Firstly, addressing poverty needs to be based on an understanding of the multidimensional nature of poverty. The need to build responsibility for tackling poverty into the strategic objectives of all government departments and agencies was recognised. Secondly, addressing poverty involves tackling the deep-seated underlying structural inequalities that create and perpetuate it. Thirdly, there is a need to give particular attention to a number of key areas if any significant advance on the tackling of poverty is to be achieved. These were identified as follows:

- Educational disadvantage;
- Unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment;
- Income adequacy;
- Disadvantaged urban areas; and rural poverty.

In 2000, *Planning For a More Inclusive Society: An Initial Assessment of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy* was published by the Combat Poverty Agency. This assessment, agreed by the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness, reviewed the progress of NAPS from 1997 to the end of 1999. Based on this, *Building an Inclusive Society* was launched, which was essentially an updated version of NAPS. It looked at the notion of *consistent poverty*, which was defined as being below 50-60% of average disposable income and experiencing enforced basic deprivation¹. The themes to be addressed were also updated and are now:

- Educational Disadvantage
- Unemployment
- Income Adequacy
- Disadvantaged Urban Dwellers
- Disadvantaged Rural Dwellers
- Housing/Accommodation
- Health

Cross-Cutting Themes

- Child Poverty
- Women's Poverty
- Older People
- Ethnic Minorities
- People with Disabilities.

The key target set out in *Building an Inclusive Society* is to:

Reduce the numbers of those who are 'consistently poor' below 2% and, if possible, eliminate consistent poverty, under the current definition of consistent poverty. Specific attention will be paid to vulnerable groups in the pursuit of this objective.

NATIONAL ACTION PLAN AGAINST POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

The National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion (NAPS/incl) is part of a drive to meet the EU objective set by the European Council in Lisbon in 2000 'to make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion by 2010'.

¹ Basic deprivation refers to a set of eight indicators, which are regarded as necessities and possessed by a majority of those in the *Living in Ireland* survey conducted by the ESRI. According to *Building an Inclusive Society*, consistent poverty has fallen from 15.1% in 1994 to 6.2% in 2000.

BETTER LOCAL GOVERNMENT: A PROGRAMME FOR CHANGE

Better Local Government: A Programme for Change was published in 1996 and was the policy document on which the subsequent reform of local government was based. It considered the role of local authorities and local government in Ireland and considered how that role could be expanded to enhance local democracy. Better Local Government was based on the following principles:

- Enhancing local democracy, which included involving local communities and their representatives in the decision-making processes of local councils
- Serving the customer better
- Developing efficiency
- Providing proper resources.

Chapter three of Better Local Government outlines the vision for local authorities in relation to a wider role in local development. It states 'there is a strong case therefore, for greater integration, simplification and reorganisation on a way which retains and strengthens the essence of the local development experience. Accordingly, the Government has decided that from 1 January 2000, an integrated local government and local development system will come into place.' As local development is primarily, though not exclusively, involved in working with those living in poverty and disadvantage, there are obvious implications for the future direction of the work of the Local Authorities.

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001

The Local Government Act, 2001, sets out the legislative framework for the implementation of the reform envisaged in Better Local Government. Part 13 outlines the role of the Local Authority and the Local Community and Part 14 outlines the Local Government Service. Specifically:

- Section 69(g) refers to the 'need to promote social inclusion'.
- Section 134 refers to the drawing up of the Corporate Plan and specifically mentions that section 69 has to be taken into account – 134(7) In preparing its corporate plan a local authority shall take account of such policies and objectives in relation to any of its functional programmes as are set out in any other plan, statement, strategy or other document prepared by it under any other provision of this or of any other enactment and shall comply with sections 69, 71 and 129.

GALWAY COUNTY STRATEGY FOR ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT 2002-2012

Working Together Shaping Our Future: Galway County Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development 2002-2012 is the plan drawn up by the Galway County Development Board. The Strategy contains a number of objectives that can be interpreted as relating to social inclusion. The strategy outlines a number of goals, objectives and associated actions and although it is important to point out that this is a strategy for the County Development Board as opposed to Galway County Council, Galway County Council must take the strategy into account in its activities.

SECTION 3 SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN COUNTY GALWAY

According to the Census of Population 2002, County Galway has a population of 143,245 people, 51.2% of whom are male and 48.8% of whom are female. There are a total of 33,868 family units in County Galway. Galway is still a predominantly rural county, with just 15.4% of the population living in aggregate urban areas (clusters of more than 1,500 people), 21% of the population living in towns with populations of over 500 persons and 3.4% of the population living in towns of under 500 persons. A total of 2.5% of the population in County Galway lives on an island. The population of County Galway increased by 8.8% between 1996 and 2002, slightly above the national average for population increase at 8%.

In constructing a poverty profile of County Galway, a number of indicators and domains were chosen for study. These were chosen because, especially when taken together, they indicate the highest levels of poverty and disadvantage in the County Galway area. For almost all the indicators chosen for the 2005 County Galway Local Poverty Profile, the county fares worse than the national average. This would indicate that County Galway is not performing well in comparison to the average for the country.

DEPENDENCY AND UNEMPLOYMENT

The County Galway Local Poverty Profile looked at two dependency indicators - age dependency and economic dependency. For both the dependency indicators County Galway fares worse than the national average. The national age dependency rate is 47.6%. The rate for County Galway is substantially higher at 55.3%. This means that there are substantially more young and older people dependant on those of working age in County Galway. Looking at the other dependency ratio used, the Economic Dependency Ratio (EDR), the national EDR is 1.4. The EDR for County Galway is 1.5. This means that at national level there are 1.4 inactive people dependant on every 1 active person. In County Galway the ratio is higher at 1.5 inactive people dependant on every 1 active person.

According to the 2002 Census, the unemployment rate in County Galway was 8.7%, which was slightly below the national unemployment rate at 8.8%. However, if the data from the social class indicator is taken into account, it would suggest that a larger than average proportion of people are at work in the skilled and unskilled manual occupations. Furthermore, the 2002 census identified 6 unemployment blackspots in County Galway, which included Lettermore, Skannive and Gorumna, the fourth, fifth and sixth worst blackspots identified nationally. All of the unemployment blackspots identified are in the Gaeltacht. Moreover, if the total labour force participation rate is scrutinised, the rate is lower for County Galway at 56.5% than the national figure of 58.3%. In terms of income inadequacy, using 2001 figures, it is possible to approximate that there are 31,514 people living below 60% of average disposable income (i.e. in relative poverty) in County Galway. Furthermore it is possible to estimate that there are approximately 2,149 people living in consistent poverty in County Galway.

SOCIAL CLASS AND EDUCATION

With regard to both of these domains, County Galway does not perform well. In terms of social class, County Galway has a lower number of people in the combined higher and lower professional classes and a higher number of people in the unskilled manual classes than the national average, indicating that overall social class in County Galway is lower than nationally.

Similarly, in relation to education, County Galway has a higher proportion of people who ceased education with no education or primary school education only, and a higher number of people who ceased education at 15 years

or younger than the national average. Conversely, there is a lower than average proportion of people with a third level education in County Galway and a lower number of people who ceased full-time education at aged 20 years or over. Based on this data, it is reasonable to conclude that, in comparison with the average for the state, County Galway is educationally disadvantaged. It is possible to estimate that there are 27,630 adults in County Galway with literacy difficulties and only 3.5% of whom are receiving VEC tuition.

HOUSING AND ACCOMMODATION

County Galway has a higher than average number of houses that are owner occupied and a lower figure for local authority rented accommodation. However, this is not surprising in a predominantly rural area. According to the County Galway Local Authorities's Social and Affordable Housing Action Plan 2004-2008, there are a total of 1,683 claims or claims waiting to be processed for accommodation from Galway County Council and from Ballinasloe Town Council. In addition, a total of 1,434 people or 1% of the population live in temporary dwellings. However, one of the most disquieting statistics uncovered by the County Galway Local Poverty Profile is that almost 17% of households do not have central heating in County Galway.

VULNERABLE GROUPS

County Galway has the third largest proportion of members of the Irish Traveller community nationally. Members of the Irish Traveller community represent 0.6% of the national population. In County Galway, the figure is more than double at 1.4% of the population.

The number of people with a disability is also higher than the national average in County Galway at 8.5%, compared to 8.3% nationally. Nationally, 16.6% of families are headed by a lone parent. In County Galway the figure is lower at 14% of all family units. It is possible to estimate that there are 2,127 children living in consistent poverty and 7,657 children living in relative poverty in County Galway.

County Galway has a substantially higher number of older people at 12.8% compared to the national figure for those aged 65 and over at 11.1%. Approximately a quarter of this population live alone, with a significant number (4,326) of two person households where the youngest person is at least 65 years. It is possible to estimate that there are approximately 714 older people living in consistent poverty in County Galway. Nationally, small farmers make up 0.7% of those at work. In County Galway, the figure is more than double at 1.6%. Nationally, the percentage of the population made up of non-nationals is 7.0%. In County Galway, that percentage is 6.2%. The gender dimension to poverty must not be ignored and the County Galway Local Poverty Profile acknowledges that women must be considered to be at a greater risk of poverty than men.

RESOURCES

Access to personal transport is higher in County Galway than the average for the state. This is not surprising given the rural nature of much of County Galway. The percentage of households with a PC is lower in County Galway than in the state, as is the percentage of households that have Internet access.

IRISH LANGUAGE

There are a substantial number of people whose community language is Irish. These communities are concentrated in a small number of DED's.

AREAS

Urban/Rural Area Level

At Urban/Rural Area level, the areas that appear consistently as the most disadvantaged are the Glenamaddy Rural Area and the Clifden Rural Area. These areas display amongst the highest levels of population decline, age dependency, economic dependency and unemployment rate. In addition, Clifden Rural Area has the lowest percentage of higher and lower professional classes and the highest percentage of unskilled manual class. Glenamaddy Rural Area is the most educationally disadvantaged of the urban/rural areas. Both areas have the highest levels of lone parents, older people and small farmers. Galway Rural Area is the least deprived of all the urban/rural areas, consistently displaying the lowest levels of disadvantage.

DISTRICT ELECTORAL DIVISION LEVEL

Although, at county level, it is clear that County Galway scores relatively high in relation to deprivation and disadvantage, and at Urban/Rural Level Glenamaddy and Clifden Rural Areas deviate even more from the average, it is at DED level that the deviations are seen most starkly. The areas that consistently present themselves as being the most disadvantaged are Gorumna, Skannive, Owengowla, Turlough, Lettermore and Inishbofin. The level of disadvantage being endured by these areas is illustrated by the following examples.

SUMMARY OF INDICATORS

Area	Indicator					
	Economic Dependency Rate	Unemployment Rate	Combined higher social class	Unskilled manual class	Low education	Third level education
State	1.4	8.8%	31.6%	5.6%	21.1%	24.7%
County Galway	1.5	8.7%	29.9%	5.8%	26.2%	21.5%
Gorumna	3.1	35.0%	12.0%	13.5%	52.1%	7.4%
Skannive	3.1	35.3%	16.8%	9.7%	44.6%	12.5%
Owengowla	2.4	34.6%	15.5%	12.6%	50.0%	9.6%
Turlough	2.4	29.8%	15.1%	13.0%	38.2%	9.2%
Lettermore	2.6	36.4%	14.2%	8.1%	41.8%	9.6%
Inishbofin	2.4	31.2%	23.6%	25.8%	46.5%	19.4%

In all of the indicators presented these areas perform consistently worse in comparison with the national average and the average for County Galway.

THE TRUTZ HAASE INDEX OF AFFLUENCE AND DEPRIVATION

This new deprivation index for the Republic of Ireland is based on an innovative and powerful approach to the construction of deprivation indices, which builds on the best elements of existing approaches to index construction whilst simultaneously pushing out the boundaries in favour of greater conceptual clarity and precision. It is based on three dimensions of social disadvantage: Demographic Decline, Social Class Disadvantage and Labour Market Deprivation. Positive scores on the overall index denote situations of affluence and negative scores indicate disadvantage. A more detailed outline of the index and the way in which it was constructed is to be found in the author's own words in appendix three.

The data is considered in two ways. Firstly, an absolute score is attributed to an area and secondly, a relative score is attributed to an area. The relative score is derived from the absolute score minus the underlying trend. The underlying trend is the average national growth between 1991 and 2002, in this case 15.2. Therefore, the relative score is the absolute score minus 15.2. The relative score is useful because it indicates how well or how badly an area is doing relative to the overall trend.

Therefore, a particular area may have changed by +10 between 1991 and 2002 (and this would indicate a lower level of deprivation in 2002 than in 1991) but in relative terms the area would have actually declined by –5, indicating that the relative position of this area has declined.

The scores in the index range from –50 to 50, with –50 being extremely disadvantaged and 50 being extremely affluent. Table 2.2 presents the absolute scores for 1991, 1996 and 2002, the relative scores for 1991, 1996 and 2002 and the change in the absolute scores between 1991 and 2002 for the State and for County Galway.

AFFLUENCE AND DEPRIVATION 1991 – 2002

	Absolute Affluence/Deprivation			Change in Deprivation Score 1991 - 2002	Relative Affluence/Deprivation		
	2002	1996	1991		2002	1996	1991
State	17.4	9.1	1.9	15.4	2.2	2.2	1.9
County Galway	15.5	6.8	0.1	15.4	0.3	-0.1	0.1

Source: County Galway Baseline Data Report 2002, GAMMA.

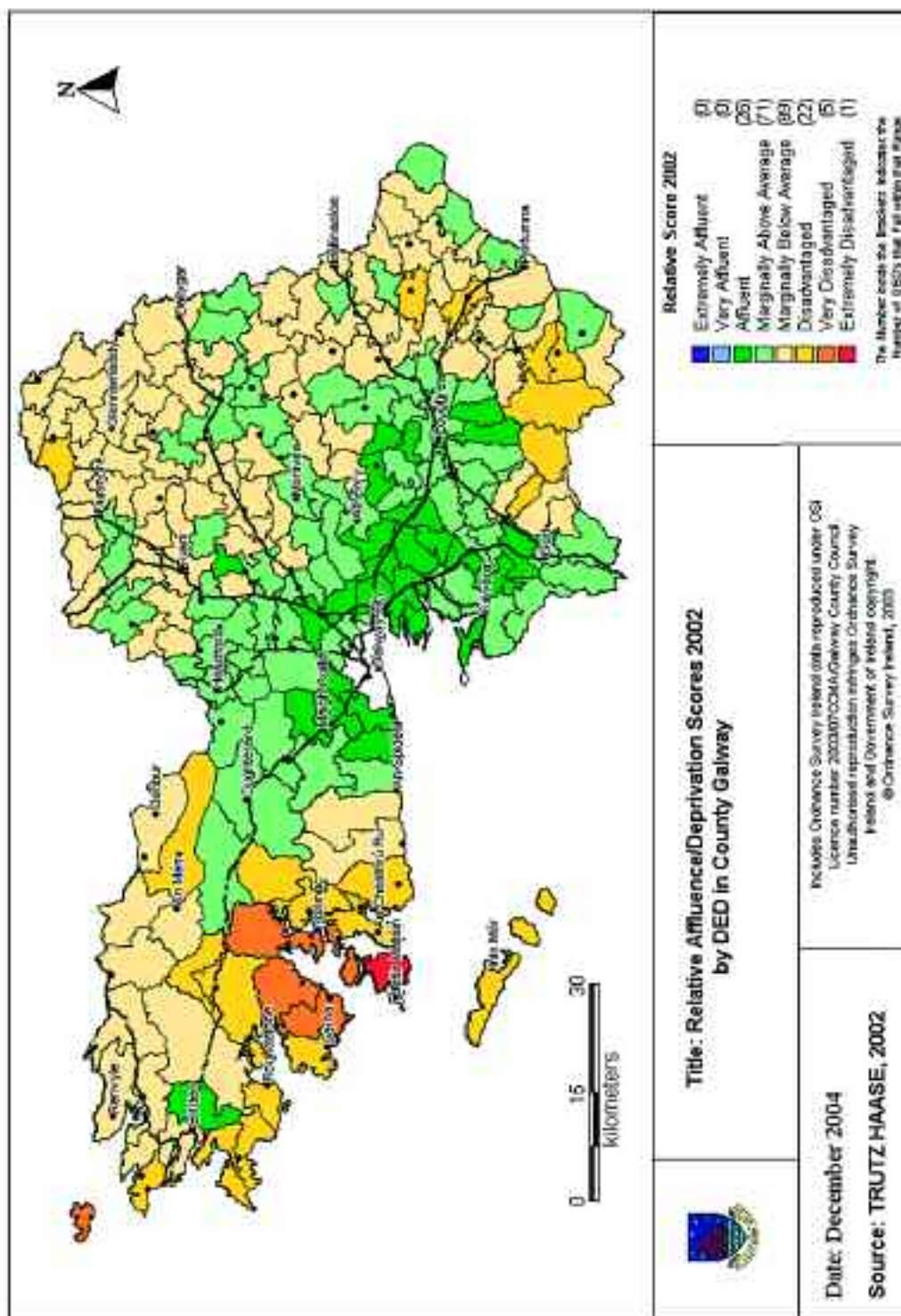
There was an improvement in relation to absolute affluence in County Galway between 1991 and 2002. This is indicated by a positive change of 15.4 in the Affluence/Deprivation Score. This is the same improvement as the State.

Comparing County Galway to the State, however, shows that County Galway is still falling behind the national Affluence/Deprivation Score with the State score being 17.4 and the score for County Galway being 15.5.

Further statistical information on poverty can be found in the
County Galway Local Poverty Profile 2005
or on www.galway.ie

² 15.4 indicates the score after the figure is rounded up

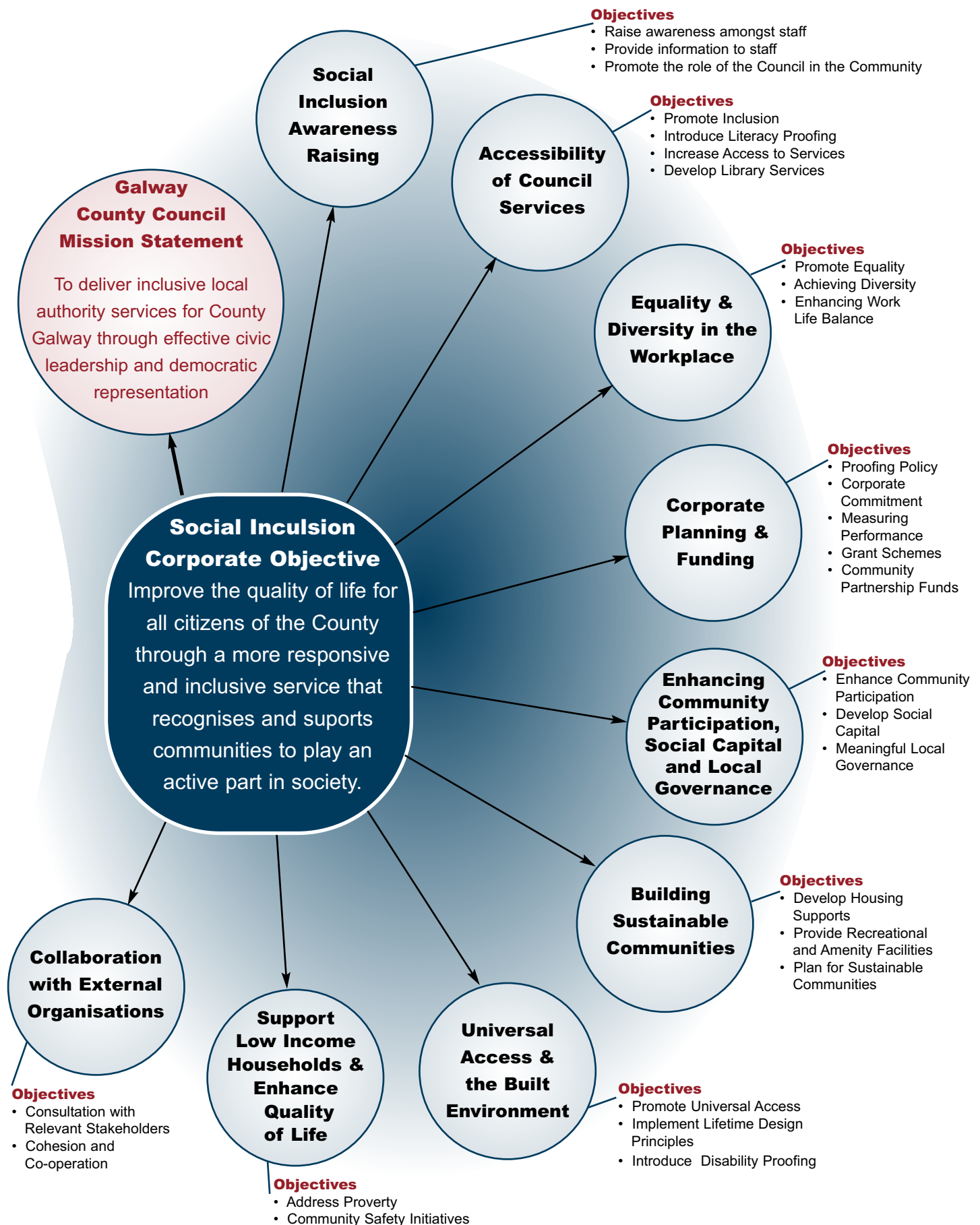
RELATIVE AFFLUENCE AND DEPRIVATION 2002



At DED level, the DEDs with the lowest Affluence/Deprivation Score (and therefore the most deprived) were Gorumna, Skannive, Owengowla, Turlough, Lettermore and Inishbofin. The most affluent DEDs are those in closest proximity to Galway City. Using the relative score there are no Extremely Affluent or Very Affluent Areas in County Galway.



SECTION 4 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES



SOCIAL INCLUSION CORPORATE OBJECTIVE

Improve the quality of life for all citizens of the County through a more responsive and inclusive service that recognises and supports communities to play an active part in society.

SOCIAL INCLUSION AWARENESS RAISING

County Galway Local Authorities will work to achieve a positive and proactive approach amongst staff to address social inclusion issues by creating a greater level of awareness of individual and organisational responsibility.

ACCESSIBILITY OF COUNCIL SERVICES

County Galway Local Authorities will strive to increase the accessibility of its full range of services through an enhanced understanding and awareness of the needs of its customers.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

County Galway Local Authorities will seek to ensure that its policies and procedures send a clear equality message by strengthening the principle of diversity into recruitment and selection and by promoting a culture and ethos that acknowledges and celebrates diversity in the workplace.

CORPORATE PLANNING AND FUNDING

County Galway Local Authorities will seek to incorporate social inclusion planning in the design and delivery of its services and include social inclusion objectives in its statements of policy and strategy. The Council will also seek to ensure that adequate resources and funding is allocated on an annual basis for social inclusion programmes, services and initiatives.

ENHANCING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION, SOCIAL CAPITAL AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

County Galway Local Authorities will seek to develop the social capital of communities in a spirit of partnership which enhances local democracy and participation.

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

County Galway Local Authorities will seek to strengthen local communities through the provision of community assets and resources through engagement and proactive support.

UNIVERSAL ACCESS AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

County Galway Local Authorities will promote the concept of universal access through the adoption of the Barcelona Declaration and incorporation of lifetime design principles in all future development.

SUPPORT LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS AND ENHANCE QUALITY OF LIFE

County Galway Local Authorities will seek to meet the needs of low income groups in the delivery of its services and to target resources at those in most need.

COLLABORATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

County Galway Local Authorities will seek to meet the needs of low income groups in the delivery of its services and to target resources at those in most need.

SECTION 5 - THEMATIC AREAS

1. SOCIAL INCLUSION AWARENESS RAISING



Social inclusion can best be addressed by a strong knowledge base on the part of the organisation on the nature of the problem and the ways it can be tackled.

The social inclusion role of the local authority is not always evident and obvious to the citizens of the county. There is also a need to **raise greater awareness** within the organisation of the local authority's social inclusion responsibilities and then to transfer this awareness to citizens. The staff of County Galway Local Authorities deliver an important range of local services. There is a need to create a wider sense of corporate and individual responsibility to address exclusion in a co-ordinated and focussed manner.

This approach will be employed to ensure that the Social Inclusion Strategy adopted by the local authority will be disseminated and embedded into the day to day work of the organisation. Informing and raising awareness of the needs of target groups is crucial to generating a positive approach to addressing social inclusion and making it relevant to the day to day work of council employees.

Delivering a more socially inclusive service will have maximum impact once staff have a greater awareness of the relevance of their work on quality of life and social inclusion. A number of methods will be employed to ensure that the organisation actively promotes a positive understanding and awareness of social inclusion amongst staff. Addressing exclusion can be measured by the degree to which social inclusion awareness has been increased among staff of the local authority and by the level of increased understanding of the process of inclusion and the degree to which it has become embedded into day – day operational matters of the local authority.

Supporting Strategy: County Galway Local Authorities will work to achieve a positive and proactive approach amongst staff to address social inclusion issues by creating a greater level of awareness of individual and organisational responsibility.

OBJECTIVES:

RAISE AWARENESS AMONGST STAFF

PROVIDE INFORMATION TO STAFF

PROMOTE THE ROLE OF THE COUNCIL IN THE COMMUNITY

Actions	Unit
Develop a Social Inclusion Directory of Services and Handbook for all staff outlining services and supports available for particular target groups.	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development
Produce a leaflet on the role of County Galway Local Authorities in addressing social inclusion and the role all staff can play in creating a more inclusive society.	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development
Include the social inclusion core objectives of the organisation in County Galway Local Authorities Corporate Yearbook and Diary	Corporate & Cultural Affairs
Develop a social inclusion module for staff induction training and incorporate references to social inclusion in all staff induction material	Corporate & Cultural Affairs
Make the Galway County Poverty Profile available on an interactive basis to all staff via the internal intranet	Information Services
Expand the role of the internal Anti-Poverty Learning Network to monitor the ongoing development and introduction of national social inclusion initiatives as they relate to local authorities.	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development
Develop a County Galway Local Authorities Social Inclusion Newsletter to outline services and new initiatives in addressing exclusion in partnership with the community.	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development
Participate in national and E.U programmes and initiatives aimed at increasing awareness of social inclusion.	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development / All Units
Produce a number of booklets on local authority services available for particular target groups including the elderly, disabled and members of the travelling community to explain the nature of services and supports available.	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development
Develop a social inclusion 'users manual' and proofing mechanism for staff involved in the design and delivery of services to ensure the needs of particular groups are considered at planning stage.	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development / APLN
Promote staff training, particularly for those dealing directly with the public and those concerned with the maintenance or control of the external environment, to improve understanding of issues regarding people with disabilities.	Corporate & Cultural Affairs
Ensure that the learning from participation in anti-poverty and social inclusion initiatives are shared within the organisation and the lessons of best practice are available to all.	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development / APLN
Develop a Social Inclusion Measures link on galway.ie in association with the SIM Group to outline the services and supports available by a range of organisations in addressing social inclusion.	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development

2. ACCESSIBILITY OF COUNCIL SERVICES



For the local authority to provide an effective service it must ensure that customers can better access the services in a manner that suits their needs. This means accommodating the customers specific requirements, impairments or accessibility needs.

A significant proportion of the Irish population has low levels of literacy. This means that fairly straightforward tasks like filling in forms or reading instructions may pose considerable difficulties. The International Adult Literacy Survey conducted in Ireland and published in 1997 provided a profile of the literacy skills of adults aged 16-64. The survey showed that about 25% of the Irish population were found to score at the lowest level (Level 1), performing at best tasks which required the reader to locate a simple piece of information in a text. The survey showed early school leavers, older adults and the unemployed as being most at risk of literacy difficulties, with participation in adult education and training being least likely for those with the poorest skills. Applying the 25% 'rule' to County Galway would imply that approximately 25,000 people in the county have literacy difficulties.

According to the National Adult Literacy Agency '**Plain English**' is a way of writing and presenting material that makes it attractive to read and easy to understand. Information has never been a more important tool in society, so it is vital that as many people as possible can access and understand it. Using plain English can achieve this, as it involves: considering the needs of the reader; writing clearly, concisely and with as little jargon as possible; and laying out information in an understandable format.

The Official Languages Act 2003 requires the local authority to ensure a better availability and a higher standard of public services through **the Irish Language**. The Legislation and scheme places an obligation on the local authority to ensure that a number of services are available either exclusively through Irish, exclusively through English and those which will be provided through both languages. The legislation is intended to promote and maintain the Irish Language. However, as a significant proportion of the population of the county conduct their lives through Irish the local authority has a responsibility to ensure that its services are accessible through Irish.

There are huge gaps in access to technology by many socially excluded groups, so much so that "digital exclusion" is now a real barrier for people's lives, restricting their educational and vocational opportunities. To guard against further possible social exclusion related to the spread of Information Technologies in all areas of life a number of practical measures are necessary to ensure **e-inclusion** and greater access to local authority services. According to the Information Society Commission eEurope 2005 carries the ambitious objective of achieving "an Information Society for All".

This means overcoming social and geographical differences, ensuring an inclusive digital society that provides opportunities for all, thus minimising the risk of 'digital divide'. The achievement of a truly inclusive Information Society requires a demand-oriented approach where the needs and specificities of all social groups and areas are taken into account. With regard to ICT access, particular attention is needed for those groups that are most at risk of being excluded, such as disabled and older people. The concept of "e-accessibility" must be incorporated into any future expansion of local authority services on-line and information dissemination using ICT.

The **Return to Learning** Project is a partnership initiative between the Local Authority National Partnership Advisory Group (LANPAG) and the Department of Education and Science (DES), supported by the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA). The project aims to give local authority employees an opportunity to attend a workplace basic education course. The objective of the workplace literacy programme is to create a 'safe' and supportive learning environment for staff.

Decentralisation of local authority services to locations throughout the County is another important measure to increase overall access to services. The Councils Library service operates in over 25 communities and a network of Area Offices are located in each Electoral Area. Decentralisation of services brings the local authority closer to the communities it serves. A number of local authority services are provided in Area Offices including motor tax and planning services have been expanded on a pilot basis. The Council remains committed to delivering the widest range of services possible at local level in accordance with the principles outlined in Better Local Government and the objectives of the Council's Corporate Plan. The level of services being provided at the decentralised offices at Loughrea, Oranmore (Lackagh), Ballinasloe and Carraroe continue to improve.

Libraries have a key role in addressing social inclusion through the delivery of a range of important services to local communities and through engagement with marginalised groups. Location of a library service has a big impact on use in a particular area and Libraries have a developed close links with local communities. A strong community partnership approach throughout the branch library network enables outreach with local communities, access to general and local authority information, access to ICT and a location to display community notices. In addition to its core activities the library service impacts on social inclusion in a number of ways. In co-operation with An Post, the service delivers books-on-tape to the visually impaired and provides primary schools with reading material. The mobile library ensures that communities in outlying rural areas have access to the service on a frequent basis.

The Galway Library service seeks to 'make each of our libraries a special place for children, to make all the programmes and services provided by our libraries, open and accessible to all, irrespective of social or economic status'. The Libraries also seek to encourage 'lifelong learning in the community through the provision of learning materials and programmes that promote self-improvement and foster self-fulfilment'. Libraries are also an important place to promote awareness of other peoples and other cultures.

Supporting Strategy: County Galway Local Authorities will strive to increase the accessibility of its full range of services through an enhanced understanding and awareness of the needs of its customers.

OBJECTIVES:

PROMOTE E-INCLUSION
INTRODUCE LITERACY PROOFING
INCREASE ACCESS TO SERVICES
DEVELOP LIBRARY SERVICES



ACTIONS	UNIT
Develop a literacy proofing template based on NALA guidelines to ensure all local authority documents are accessible, user-friendly and meet the needs of those with specific requirements	Corporate & Cultural Affairs
Ensure that significant local authority plans, policies and strategies are made available in a number of formats including audio and brail	Corporate & Cultural Affairs / All Units
Ensure that public notices and media advertising takes account the literacy needs of the reader and be in a font that is easy to read and understand	Corporate & Cultural Affairs / All Units
Introduce a 'Plain English' campaign and awareness programme to ensure that written materials produced are easily understood	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development / APLN
Pilot work-place literacy programmes using the 'Return to Learning Initiative' a local authority workplace model developed by the Department of Education, LANPAG and NALA	Corporate & Cultural Affairs / Partnership Committee
Develop an e-inclusion policy and ICT accessibility guidelines to ensure that on-line information and services are accessible to all	Corporate & Cultural Affairs / IT
Expand the galway.ie internet site with appropriate software to enable access for those with visual impairments.	Corporate & Cultural Affairs / IS
Develop proposals arising from the EU e-community project on e-consultation systems	IS / Community, Enterprise & Economic Development
Continue to adequately and appropriately resource and staff the branch library network and develop additional outreach programmes and initiatives	Corporate & Cultural Affairs / Libraries
Strengthen the community partnership approach in the branch library network and continue to work with schools, active age groups / adult literacy groups	Corporate & Cultural Affairs / Libraries
Develop additional methods to attract traditional non-users to the libraries and implement the recommendations from the national 'Branching Out' report	Corporate & Cultural Affairs / Libraries
Seek to introduce Optical Scanning services in the branch library network	Corporate & Cultural Affairs / Libraries
Further develop accessible local authority offices in each Electoral Area with a broader range of services provided and progress the recommendations from the 'Connecting Communities' pilot project	Corporate & Cultural Affairs
Implement the provisions of the scheme in support of the Official Languages Act to ensure services are provided in the Irish Language	Corporate & Cultural Affairs

3. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE



The workplace of the future will need to be able to address, prevent and eliminate discrimination and create a context where all employees can achieve, participate and contribute within the workplace. It will need to develop a culture and a practice in the workplace where harassment and sexual harassment find no expression. Organisations can contribute to the emergence of diversity within the workforce by including in their workforces employees from across the nine groups listed in equality legislation. In such a context equality and diversity become an accepted dimension of organisational learning, quality customer service, employee partnership and participation, internal and external communication strategies and decision-making. A mainstreaming approach to equality and diversity is one where organisations move from coping with diversity to consciously being diverse, to investing in diversity and to achieving benefit from diversity.

In order for workplaces to respond effectively to the needs of a **diverse workforce** they first need to be aware of what these needs are. The local authority must ensure good systems of communication and appraisal within the organisation. Training and awareness can effectively support marginalised groups to identify their needs and plan for their future within the workplace. A number of tools and approaches can assist the organisation to understand and accommodate a diverse workforce. The need to promote an equality-friendly organisation that recognises and celebrates diversity can be further strengthened through existing initiatives within County Galway Local Authorities such as the Equality Action Team.

Family friendly policies help workers to combine work with their personal commitments and choices. **Work life balance** policies are those policies which help workers in combining employment with their family life, caring responsibilities and personal and social life outside the workplace. This definition includes statutory entitlements such as maternity, adoptive, force majeure, parental and carer's leave and other non-statutory measures such as childcare and employee assistance schemes. Further developing a work life balance culture in the organisation is an important measure in promoting equality of opportunity. Active policies and procedures are an essential first step in combating **racism in the workplace**. These should ideally be part of a wider equality programme, taking into account the full equality agenda on the nine grounds specified by law: gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community. The local authority needs to continue to build on the significant progress which has been made in regard to policies on equality and diversity in order to promote equal opportunity in all aspects of employment. A Diversity and Equality Management policy that takes a more diversity management approach to the grounds covered in the equality legislation is also necessary.

OBJECTIVES:

PROMOTING EQUALITY

ACHIEVING DIVERSITY

ENHANCING WORK LIFE BALANCE

Supporting Strategy: County Galway Local Authorities will seek to ensure that its policies and procedures send a clear equality message by strengthening the principle of diversity into recruitment and selection and by promoting a culture and ethos that acknowledges and celebrates diversity in the workplace.

Actions	Unit
Enhance a culture of equal opportunity by avoiding the use of discriminatory language in all documentation and portray activities in a non-discriminatory way where pictures or other illustrations are used	Corporate & Cultural Affairs / All Units
Equality proof written communications to eliminate discriminatory language and attitudes by persons preparing course materials, advertisements and reports (including training organisations)	Corporate & Cultural Affairs / All Units
Include a statement in the Annual Report or other relevant publications on equality issues	Corporate & Cultural Affairs
Provide training and information on equality issues to staff through courses, seminars and other means to impress the need and benefit for equal treatment	Corporate & Cultural Affairs / APLN
Implement agreed codes of practice for the employment of people with disabilities and promote employment opportunities for people with disabilities in line with the Government's 3% employment target	Corporate & Cultural Affairs / HR
Promote an organisational culture that openly values and accommodates difference and cultural diversity by developing support mechanisms to encourage employees from minority groups	Corporate & Cultural Affairs / HR
Promote and support anti-racist training within the organisation and participate in the national Anti-Racist Workplace Week	Corporate & Cultural Affairs / HR
Assist in the local implementation of the National Action Plan Against Racism: Planning for Diversity, and develop a local Anti-Racism and Diversity (ARD) Plan in association with partner agencies	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development / SIM Group
Build an inclusive workplace through implementation of the agreed actions and recommendations in the Dignity at Work and Equality & Diversity Management policies.	Corporate & Cultural Affairs / HR
Facilitate the absorption of Work Life Balance policies and further promote models of good practice in association with the Partnership Committee	Corporate & Cultural Affairs / Partnership Committee
Promote the role and work of the Equality Action Team within the organisation in order to monitor and review progress in achieving equality objectives	Corporate & Cultural Affairs / HR
Seek to implement the recommendations from the 'workplace review' study in association with the Partnership Committee	Corporate & Cultural Affairs / Partnership Committee
Continue to support workplace basic education pilot projects	Corporate & Cultural Affairs / Partnership Committee

4. CORPORATE PLANNING AND FUNDING



Social inclusion and local social policy will continue to be a key element in local authority corporate planning. In recent years, there have been several national commitments to social inclusion and anti-poverty issues. NAPS states that building an inclusive society is a key priority of Government. Responsibility for implementation of NAPS and the more recent National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Inclusion (NAPS/incl) requires actions across different levels, including the local authority. The key role identified for local government is to set strategic development objectives across its full range of services.

In addition, the Local Government Act 2001 places an obligation on the local authority to consider social inclusion in the design and delivery of local services and to develop local strategies to address social inclusion. As such, it is necessary to develop mechanisms throughout the organisation that will enable **social inclusion planning** be embedded into day to day operations. The allocation of sufficient resources and funding to support social inclusion activity is also necessary.

The Galway Local Authorities Corporate Plan 2005 – 2009 is an important framework that will guide the work of the local authority over a five year period. Annual Operational Plans will also be structured across the themes established in the Corporate Plan. Social Inclusion is an important theme incorporated in the Corporate Plan. The commitments of a number of Units of the local authority are outlined with relevant performance indicators. It will be important to also reference the impact of other strategies against social inclusion in the future. County and Town Development Plans should indicate the impact of development from a social perspective and outline measures that will target particular disadvantaged groups.

Policy Proofing is defined as a formal mechanism by which policies are assessed at design and review stage for their likely impact on a particular area of concern. The development and application of Proofing Templates across the organisation will be important if consideration for social inclusion is meaningful from the outset of the planning of services and programmes. A number of national best practice proofing models and templates have been developed and are being used across a number of government departments and state agencies. These include Disability Equality and Poverty Proofing Templates. Such templates, when applied, challenge the service provider to think about how its policies and programmes impact on poverty and exclusion. The key considerations in applying a proofing template include:

- Does the policy or programme help to prevent people from falling into poverty?
- Does it contribute to the achievement of the NAPS targets?
- If the proposal has no effect on the level of poverty, what options might be identified to produce a positive effect?

The Community, Enterprise & Economic Development Unit together with the internal Anti-Poverty Learning Network will lead the development and introduction of proofing templates within County Galway Local Authorities.

OBJECTIVES**PROOFING POLICY****CORPORATE COMMITMENT****MEASURING PERFORMANCE****GRANTS SCHEMES****COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP FUND**

Supporting Strategy: County Galway Local Authorities will seek to incorporate social inclusion planning in the design and delivery of its services and include social inclusion objectives in its statements of policy and strategy. The Council will also seek to ensure that adequate resources and funding is allocated on an annual basis for social inclusion programmes, services and initiatives.

Actions	Unit
Include a section on Social Inclusion in future Corporate Plans adopted by the Council outlining the commitments of the local authority to addressing inclusion	Corporate & Cultural Affairs
Outline how social inclusion will be addressed by the policies adopted in future County, Town and Village Development plans	Planning & Sustainable Development
Outline how the needs of particular target groups described in NAPS will be addressed in relevant major policy documents (disabled, elderly, children etc..)	All Units
Develop and implement proofing methodologies across areas of local planning to address the impact of programmes against poverty and disability	All Units / APLN
Public notices about meetings / conferences to include a statement inviting attendees to inform the Council of any special access requirements and ensure they are provided	Corporate & Cultural Affairs / All Units
Continue to support internal working groups addressing social inclusion including the Anti-Poverty Learning Network and the Social Inclusion Working Group of the CDB	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development
Produce an annual social inclusion report alongside the Annual Report to outline achievements in addressing inclusion with reference to the performance indicators outlined in the Corporate Plan	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development
Identify and proactively target resources into disadvantaged areas of the county through the RAPID and CLAR programmes	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development
Target particular disadvantaged groups (elderly, disabled, isolated communities) in the County through the operation of the Arts, Heritage and Environmental programmes of the Council	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development / Planning / Environment
Introduce a mechanism to prioritise Council supports and grant aid to RAPID / CLAR areas and to areas identified in the Poverty Profile with high deprivation scores	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development / All Units

Actions	Unit
Utilise the DED deprivation score index in deciding allocation of resources around the county. i.e level of disadvantage be used as a criteria in selecting projects / grants to be funded. Deprivation score to carry 'weight' in grant allocations / housing schemes etc..	All Units
Restructure a number of local authority grants schemes to include an overall focus of the impact of the grant on social inclusion and include the likely impact on social inclusion in the assessment criteria	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development / Planning / Environment, Water & Emergency Services
Seek to ensure that allocation of resources from the Development Levies Scheme has an impact on social inclusion.	Planning & Sustainable Development
Where possible, identify and label expenditure outlined in annual Estimates process as 'Social Inclusion' spending	Finance / All Units
Introduce a specific Social Inclusion programme budget to support initiatives in partnership with local community groups and accessible to Council staff working in support of community development (Community Wardens / Traveller Liaison / Housing Liaison / CEDO's)	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development
Restructure the Amenity Grants scheme to incorporate closer links between local community initiatives being planned in association with staff from the local authority. (Community Wardens / Traveller Liaison / Housing Liaison / CEDO's)	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development
Explore the possibility of introducing a 'community initiative scheme' as outlined in the Local Government Act 2001	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development



5. ENHANCING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION, SOCIAL CAPITAL AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE



Local authorities provide a crucial forum for the democratic representation of local communities, giving expression to local identity, identifying local concerns and setting local priorities. Local authorities are more than service providers. As democratically elected and accountable bodies they have the authority and legitimacy to speak and act on behalf of their communities. The elected Council thus acts as a democratic forum for the representation and articulation of civic interests and can provide **civic leadership**. Direct and meaningful consultation with

people, partnership between all sectors of society, consensus, transparency, institutional openness, and political accountability, are essential elements in 'social wellbeing'. Empowering people for participation in society is a core principle of Social Capital. Social capital provision and enhancement is essential in all communities.

The National Economic and Social Forum defines **Social Capital** 'as networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups. Properly applied and developed it can play a role of leverage in linking to public agencies, bridging across to other disadvantaged groups and bonding in terms of developing crucial community level supports and mutual care at local level. Social Capital is one resource, among others, which can be used in support of community development and social inclusion'. The NESF survey of social capital indicates a number of groups where social capital engagement is lower; including; young adults and the elderly, people living in rural and large urban centres, lower socio-economic groups and those with disabilities. About 20% of the population is considered to be actively engaged in volunteering activity.

Democratic accountability and **local governance** includes a new proactive relationship with the community at large, collaborative consensus, planning and implementation, the involvement of people below 'multi-agency' level, acknowledging the community as a source of learning, fostering local debate and drawing people into a political process which enhances participatory and representative democracy. The establishment of County Development Board's and Strategic Policy Committees and the changes that are taking place in local government provide a unique opportunity to enhance the democratic process by integrating and strengthening representative and participative democracy.

The involvement of local communities and their representatives has been facilitated through the establishment and operation of County Development Board structures and through local authority Strategic Policy Committees comprising of elected Councillors and voluntary / sector representatives. These structures facilitate participation by local communities in the formulation of policy

The advent of Fóram Pobail (County Community Forum) has introduced a valuable means of community participation and feedback in respect of local government and local development processes. The Local Agenda 21 process for sustainable development requires action by local authorities in partnership with the community and a range of other local authority services are primarily delivered based on community and agency collaboration. Community participation is a valuable asset in local government.

OBJECTIVES:**ENHANCE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION****DEVELOP SOCIAL CAPITAL****MEANINGFUL LOCAL GOVERNANCE**

Supporting Strategy: County Galway Local Authorities will seek to develop the social capital of communities in a spirit of partnership which enhances local democracy and participation.

Actions	Unit
Develop active citizenship and voter awareness programmes to encourage greater engagement in the political process	Corporate & Cultural Affairs / Community, Enterprise & Economic Development
Develop and support activities which reinforce local representative and participative democracy, including voter registration, voter participation and engagement, and public education on the democratic process	Corporate & Cultural Affairs / Community, Enterprise & Economic Development
Encourage the involvement of young people and disadvantaged groups in active democracy through Comhairle na Nog and ensure greater consultation with young people in local authority issues	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development
Develop and support the capacity of Fóram Pobail to link with representational structures of the local authority including Strategic Policy Committees and the County Development Board	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development
Improve coherence and delivery across the range of local community development structures and programmes through the CDB integration process	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development
Further develop the participatory planning model and active engagement with communities in the integrated area planning process	Planning & Sustainable Development / Community, Enterprise & Economic Development
Support the concept of volunteering in the community and work closely with the Galway Volunteering Advice Centre and NUIG Community	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development Knowledge Initiative
Publish a Directory of Community Services detailing services of the local authority which outlines how local communities can participate in local governance	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development
Support the Community Warden Scheme in engaging with local communities and in forging stronger links between the local authority and community	Corporate & Cultural Affairs

6. BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES



The Galway County Development Board Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development defines 'Communities' as centres where people live, work, learn, socialise, and engage in community, sport and recreational activities. Strengthening local communities involves **building community assets** and infrastructure, providing a range and choice of housing options, and creating safe, secure and healthy environments where people have a sense of belonging and a good quality of life. Social investment in communities involves resourcing people to play an active part in the development of their areas. The local authority has a key role to play in providing services to local communities. The needs of rural isolated areas must also be addressed through the provision of appropriate supports and services

As a housing authority, County Galway Local Authorities have a responsibility for estate management, planned maintenance and social integration. In general, the condition of the council owned housing stock is in relatively good condition. Some schemes do require substantial refurbishment and modernisation. Upgrading the heating systems in the stock is the most important maintenance issue facing the local authority. It is necessary to upgrade the heating systems of approx. 1,000 units from the total housing stock of 1,900 units (including Ballinasloe)

Changing demographics are also having consequences for **accommodation planning**. It is evident from the Assessment of Housing Needs that the number of single person households has increased over the years and make up approximately 30% of need. The predominant group within this sector (approx 33%) are living in accommodation that is unfit or materially unsuitable. Household size according to Census data is reducing. Several factors are at play here including the increasing age profile of the population.

Sustainable communities require the necessary recreation, amenity and play facilities alongside infrastructure provision. The local authority plays an important role in working with communities to secure recreational facilities. County Galway Local Authorities Play Policy 2005 - 2009 seeks to ensure that a range of play opportunities are available to children and young people across the County to allow them to enjoy their right to play in an environment that is both safe but challenging, that is healthy, and appropriate for their age, needs, abilities and location.

OBJECTIVES:

DEVELOP HOUSING SUPPORTS

PROVIDE RECREATIONAL AND AMENITY FACILITIES

PLAN FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Supporting Strategy: County Galway Local Authorities will seek to strengthen local communities through the provision of community assets and resources through engagement and proactive support.

Actions	Unit
Implement the recommendations of the County Play Strategy and develop a range of play facilities throughout the county	Corporate & Cultural Affairs / Community, Enterprise & Economic Development
Develop sport, recreation and amenity facilities in the county in partnership with local community and sports groups and maximise revenue from the Sports Capital Programme for investment in local facilities	Corporate & Cultural Affairs / Community, Enterprise & Economic Development
Promote the concept of socially inclusive planning and link with the Garda Crime Prevention through Environmental Design Officer to ensure safer communities	Planning & Sustainable Development
Implement policies on urban space that ensures the needs of the disabled are taken into account in design considerations	Planning & Sustainable Development
Continue to develop participatory planning models in local areas and expand the community participation element in the preparation of local area plans	Planning & Sustainable Development
Reinforce and prioritise commitments to tenant participation and estate management initiatives through review of tenant handbooks	Housing
Seek to introduce pre-tenancy training programmes for those about to be allocated local authority homes in association with other groups	Housing
Develop and implement a Homeless Persons Action Plan	Housing
Continue to support community involvement in housing policy through the Housing Strategic Policy Committee and local capacity building programmes to encourage participation	Housing
Implement the actions from the Action Plan for Social and Affordable Housing 2004 - 2008	Housing
Seek to enhance provision of additional dwellings for single person households	Housing
Establish the Travellers Housing Voluntary Group as recommended in the Plan for Social and Affordable Housing	Housing
Continue to work with and support the facilitation of Voluntary Groups in the delivery of social housing units	Housing
Implement the Four Year Traveller Accommodation Programme 2005 -2008 and continue to support the Local Traveller Consultative Committee	Housing
Continue to incorporate provision for housing for disabled people in Local Development Plans and housing programmes.	Housing
Ensure transport planning recognises the access needs of rural communities through expansion of the Rural Transport Initiative	Roads & Transportation
Support the implementation of RAPID area plans in Tuam and Ballinalsoe through effective participation in local structures and targeting resources to disadvantaged communities	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development / All Units
Develop and implement the Arts in Education Programme and target particular isolated rural communities	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development / Arts Office

7. UNIVERSAL ACCESS AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT



NAPS has identified people with disabilities among groups of people who account for a substantial proportion of those living in poverty and who may be subject to a high risk of poverty. The overall state figure for people with a disability is 323,707 or 8.3% of the population. The total figure for Galway County stands at 8.5% or 12,176 people. A number of areas in the County have higher proportions, including Ardrahan which has the highest percentage of people with a disability at 16.3%, Woodford (15.9%), Roundstone (15.1%), Loughrea Urban (14.2%) Kilconnell (13.7%) and Shankill (13.3%). (Galway County Poverty Profile 2005)

The National Disability Authority states that everyone experiences a disability. Disability is part of everyday experience. The common assumption that a person with a disability equals "wheelchair user"

is inaccurate. Everyone is disabled by the environment at some stage in his or her life. Local authorities have a responsibility to ensure the function of our built environment is to enable. A more inclusive approach is to think in terms of the **universal right of access** and to seek to improve accessibility and usability for everyone. The principle of universal access ensures that people who have a disability can participate fully in society.

The local authority has an immensely important role, both as a building control authority and in its development and maintenance of the external environment. In recent years there have been improvements in ensuring access for people with impairments. For example kerb dishing at road crossing is now mandatory and audible pedestrian crossing signals are common place.

The E.U **Barcelona Declaration** (1995) facilitates local authorities to deal with disability in a structured and integrated manner. In fulfilling the Declaration's agreements each local authority undertakes to raise disability awareness and to engage in a consultative process with disabled people in implementing plans and actions. In essence, the Declaration promotes the fact that "Every person has a value and the right to be treated with dignity." On a practical level, this translates into the facilitation of structures at local government level that remove disabling barriers preventing people with disabilities from functioning and participating in society. The whole range of local authority services are important for disabled people. From October 2004, Part 3 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 came fully into force and all local authorities will have to consider making "reasonable adjustments" to ensure disabled people have equal access to services. In 2005, the National Disability Act came into force and the Governments National Disability Strategy places further obligations on the local authority to ensure universal access.

The National Disability Authority notes that there have been significant developments in making Ireland a more inclusive society, which has been underpinned by legislation, government policies and national development plans and that such development impacts not only on how local authorities do their business but also on the lives of people with disabilities themselves. Within an equality framework a disability-proofing template seeks to provide a support for local authority decision makers in their proofing of plans, policies, actions or projects. The NDA recommends that in the proofing process consideration be given to the identity, values, experience and relationship a person has with the local authority as a service provider, as well as the socio-economic situation and educational background of people with disabilities.

The Galway County Development Plan 2003 – 2009 contains the policies to:

- Provide ramped kerbs at all junctions and central island refuges to facilitate ease of access for wheelchair users in addition to adequate widths for the accommodation of a wheelchair. and to
- Provide adequate access for people with disabilities such as through the provision of parking facilities, and disability access facilities, which are incorporated into existing / new development.

The **disability proofing** process consists of four basic components: awareness raising, auditing information, consulting with people with disabilities and impact assessment. The proofing process will ensure that County Galway Local Authorities is committed to the notion of the promotion of equality and not merely a compliance with law and regulations.

Lifetime Design is a set of specifications that, when applied to a home plan, will create a home that can be lived in and visited by persons with mobility limitations. Lifetime Homes are not specialist homes, but ordinary ones which have been carefully designed. As well as being more pleasant for people at all stages of their lives, Lifetime Homes can more easily be adapted to the needs of disabled or frail people than can more traditional housing. The NDA recommends that "local authorities should ensure that the public and private sector housing needs of disabled people are met, by incorporating relevant provisions in development plans and housing programmes" (NDA, 2002, "Building for Everyone). In the future the 'lifestyle housing' concept will have to be Lifetime Proofed. This means that design will have to be flexible and adaptable from design inception through to its entire lifespan with little intervention to the initial design.

OBJECTIVES:

PROMOTE UNIVERSAL ACCESS

IMPLEMENT LIFETIME DESIGN PRINCIPLES

INTRODUCE DISABILITY PROOFING

Supporting Strategy: County Galway Local Authorities will promote the concept of universal access through the adoption of the Barcelona Declaration and incorporation of lifetime design principles in all future development.



Actions	Unit
Formally adopt the Barcelona Declaration and develop an implementation plan to ensure the application of universal design principles across all functions of the local authority	Corporate & Cultural Affairs
Prepare and Implement a sectoral plan in accordance with the provisions of the National Disability Act 2005	Corporate & Cultural Affairs
Ensure that relevant development proposals continue to incorporate access and facilities for disabled people including dished kerbs and level access to buildings	Planning & Sustainable Development
Continue to ensure that car parking, whether provided by the public or private sector, incorporates spaces suitable for people with disabilities	Planning & Sustainable Development
Continue to closely monitor use of reserved parking for disabled people in towns and villages and apply appropriate sanctions for those who park illegally	Corporate & Cultural Affairs
Seek to appoint / designate an Access Officer to ensure Council services meet the needs of people with disabilities and to create a greater awareness of access issues in the county	Corporate & Cultural Affairs
Introduce a disability-proofing template in line with the National Disability Authority model to ensure that universal access is considered at design and policy making stage	Planning & Sustainable Development / APLN
Undertake detailed access audits of significant streets in the larger county towns and ensure that barriers to access are removed	Roads and Transportation
Reduce footpath clutter by the rational arrangement of street furniture and ensure that street furniture is compatible for those with visual and physical impairments	Roads and Transportation
Ensure the adequate protection of any building or repair works so that they do not constitute a hazard for passers-by	All Units
When granting licenses for contractors to occupy footpaths and roads temporarily during construction works, ensure that works are properly protected	Roads and Transportation
Ensure that building designers and owners understand and comply with part M of the first schedule to the Building regulations	Planning & Sustainable Development
Seek to ensure that all public facilities and venues used by the local authority are accessible to all	All Units
Incorporate universal access and design principles into the design and layout of recreation, play and amenity areas.	Corporate & Cultural Affairs / Community, Enterprise & Economic Development
Develop and introduce a proofing criteria for lifetime design for new homes	Planning & Sustainable Development

8. SUPPORT LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS AND ENHANCE QUALITY OF LIFE



A key aim of NAPS is to ensure that the net effect of all policies which impact on income levels provide sufficient income for a person to move out of poverty. Local authorities play a role in reaching this objective by, for example, ensuring that rent increases do not absorb an excessive amount of increases in income of tenants on low-income. In addition, the introduction of waiver schemes to support low income families is a proactive measure that has been adopted by a number of local authorities around the country. A number of small practical steps can be introduced that recognises 'ability to pay' in charging for local authority services.

Income Adequacy is one of the key principles of the National Anti Poverty Strategy. Income related support services are a key dimension in income adequacy. Collection charges to dispose of household waste are based on the accepted 'polluter pays principle'. This principle requires the polluter to pay for the collection, treatment and disposal of

domestic waste. In Galway, this service and charges are carried out by a number of private waste collection firms. In general the 'polluter pays principle' does not take into account the ability to pay the charge. Government policy on waste collection charges is likely to increasingly focus on the development of waiver systems for those on low income.

According to a report from the Combat Poverty Agency 'Waste Collection Charges and Low Income Families' 2003, 'utility charges impose a major burden on low-income households as they consume a higher share of their total income than for other groups. In addition, increases in the charges represent a higher proportion of their disposable income'. At present, the grounds under which a waiver is granted is decided by the individual local authority. A partial waiver scheme is in operation in the Ballinasloe UDC area.

Communities need to feel safe and secure in their own areas and environments. A system that is both proactive and responsive to need is required. County Galway Local Authorities have responsibility for a number of **community safety** services and initiatives. Each of these services has an impact on quality of life and social inclusion. The further development of community safety initiatives in partnership with other organisations and local communities is an important measure in addressing inclusion.

OBJECTIVES

ADDRESS POVERTY

COMMUNITY SAFETY INITIATIVES

Supporting Strategy: County Galway Local Authorities will seek to meet the needs of low income groups in the delivery of its services and to target resources at those in most need.

Actions	Unit
Progress the introduction of a waste management waiver system for low income households following any future national recommendations for local authorities.	Environment, Water & Emergency Services
Continually review local authority rent schemes to ensure that it does not lead to poverty traps and is based on ability to pay	Housing
Implement the Local Authority Central Heating Programme to provide for central heating in local authority homes on a phased and planned basis	Housing
Develop measures to address fuel poverty in the County including energy efficiency for households, advise and awareness initiatives.	Environment, Water & Emergency Services
Seek to introduce a fund to carry out some maintenance works for tenants (where it would normally be their responsibility) in cases of low income / hardship	Housing
Ensure the Scheme of Letting priorities reflects the needs of particular low income groups	Housing
Continue to develop road safety initiatives in conjunction with the Road Safety Committee and target particular groups including elderly and children	Roads & Transportation
Continue to fund educational awareness programmes on road safety and the Junior School Warden Scheme	Roads & Transportation
Co-operate with The National Safety Council to secure the installation of smoke alarms in local authority homes	Housing
Ensure that repairs to roads, paving and underground services are adequately screened for pedestrian safety	Roads & Transportation



9. COLLABORATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

County Galway Local Authorities can only address social exclusion within the remit of its own functional areas of operation. However, acting in a collaborative manner with other agencies and with the community it can achieve a greater degree of effectiveness and added value. It is important for the local authority to actively seek out partnerships with other organisations, particularly those with a social inclusion remit in the design and delivery of its social inclusion programmes and services. It must adopt a pro-active and integrated approach to working with other agencies.

In this regard, the Social Inclusion Measures Group (SIM) of the County Development Board have a key role to play in ensuring co-operation and integration in service delivery. County Galway Local Authorities must adopt an approach that seeks to maximise its own resources and expertise with those of other organisations in addressing social exclusion. This collaborative approach has been promoted through the CDB structure and ensures greater efficiency and co-operation in service delivery. The recent local development cohesion and integration focus of the CDB seeks to ensure that local government and local development structures operate in a more collaborative manner.

Supporting Strategy: County Galway Local Authorities will work closer with those organisations involved in the delivery of social inclusion measures throughout the county and develop strong working relationships to deliver innovative social inclusion projects and activities.

OBJECTIVES:

CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS COHESION AND CO-OPERATION

Strengthen and enhance the role of the SIM Group in co-ordinating the delivery of social inclusion measures and activity across the county	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development
Continue to work with external state agencies, local development groups and community organisations in the delivery of social inclusion programmes	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development / All Units
Support increased cohesion between local development agencies and devise areas of co-operation and integration	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development
Seek out partnerships with relevant external organisations in the design and delivery of services for particular target groups such as the elderly, travellers and people with disabilities	All Units
Report on the levels of collaboration with external agencies in the Council's Annual Report indicating the nature of co-operation	Corporate & Cultural Affairs
Ensure that local external interest groups continue to be consulted with in devising policy and in the preparation of statutory plans and programmes.	All Units
Seek to participate in relevant national and European social inclusion projects	Community, Enterprise & Economic Development / APLN

SECTION 6 - IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING THE SOCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY

POVERTY PROOFING

Poverty Proofing is defined as 'the process by which government departments, local authorities and state agencies assess policies and programmes at design and review stage in relation to the likely impact that they will have or have had on poverty and on inequalities which are likely to lead to poverty'. As a requirement of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy all government departments must proof the impact of policy and programmes against poverty. A model has been developed by the NAPS Unit of the Department of Social and Family Affairs. The primary aim of the poverty proofing process is to identify the impact of the policy proposal on those in poverty so that this can be given proper consideration in designing policy. Poverty Proofing is recommended at a number of stages:

- Development of Corporate Plans and Annual Operational Plans
- Preparation of the Annual Budget
- In the design of significant policy measures
- When conducting expenditure reviews and programme evaluations

The proofing model requires policy makers to assess the impact of the programme against a series of measurable indicators. The model being used by Government examines the policy against the following criteria:

What is the primary objective of this policy/programme/expenditure proposal? Does it . . .

- help to prevent people falling into poverty ?
- reduce the level (in terms of numbers and depth) of poverty ?
- ameliorate the effects of poverty ?
- have no effect on poverty ?
- contribute to the achievement of the NAPS targets ?
- increase poverty ?
- address inequalities that might lead to poverty ?
- as proposed, reach the target groups ?

And what is the rationale and basis of the assessment (data/information) behind each of these proposals?

If the proposal has the effect of increasing the level of poverty, what options might be identified to ameliorate this effect?

If the proposal has no effect on the level of poverty, what options might be identified to produce a positive effect?

A recommendation from NAPS is that local authorities adopt a poverty proofing model / mechanism to assess the impact of policy and programmes on poverty and social exclusion in the county. A number of important policy documents / schemes are prepared by County Galway Local Authorities each year that directs resources and investment into certain communities and impacts on different target groups, for example:

- Water Services Investment Programme
- Allocation of Arts, Heritage, Conservation, Amenity and Economic Grant aid
- Housing Grants / Disabled Persons grant scheme / central heating programme

The annual Budget of the local authority also sets the parameters for expenditure within an overall policy framework, guided by the Corporate Plan, annual Operational Plans, County Development Plan etc.. The proofing model would require all Units to consider the impact of allocating resources, implementing programmes and policy on poverty and NAPS target groups. This approach will ensure that additional consideration is given to the needs of certain communities and target groups.

MEASURING PERFORMANCE

There are a number of methods of measuring the performance of the Council in delivering on the objectives outlined in this Strategy.

Corporate Plan 2005 – 2009

The County Galway Local Authorities Corporate Plan 2005 – 2009 contains a specific Theme in relation to Maximising Social Inclusion and Social Capital. It is a requirement to monitor the progress of the strategies under this Theme and to report this progress in the Annual Report.

Annual Operational / Business Plans

These annual plans outline the variety and nature of activities to be undertaken by each Unit over the period of a year. The detail of initiatives to be undertaken by each Unit will reflect the objectives outlined in the Corporate Plan. It will be possible to extract the nature of social inclusion delivery as reflected in these plans on an annual basis.

INDICATORS

Under Better Local Government – A Programme for Change (1996), local authorities were asked to set service standards against indicators and publish details of their progress against these standards. As part of this process in 2000 the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, published 21 national service indicators for local authorities. These were subsequently revised and amended in 2004 and there are now a total of 42 service indicators by which local authorities are expected to measure and report on their performance within the context of their annual reports.

Of the total of 42 service indicators only 4-5 provide a measure of the performance of local authorities in relation to the promotion of enhanced levels of social inclusion. Local authorities are, however, encouraged to develop their own individual local indicators, some of which could be used to monitor progress on social inclusion objectives.

The Combat Poverty Agency has developed a series of social inclusion performance indicators for local authorities. It is proposed that the County Galway Local Authorities Social Inclusion Strategy would be measured against this proposed list in order to facilitate comparison with other local authorities. The Performance Indicators include:

HOUSING:

- Number of new local authority housing unit starts
- Percentage of the Housing Strategy implemented
- Percentage of the Traveller Accommodation Units delivered by type a) Standard Housing b) Halting bays c) Transient sites
- Number of local authority tenants involved in estate management training

ROADS:

- Percentage of the total County Councils Non National Roads budget spent on works pertaining specifically to the needs of Vulnerable Road users (e.g. tactile paving, dished kerbs, etc.)
- % of newly approved public parking spaces specifically provided for disabled drivers / passengers

PLANNING & BUILDING CONTROL:

- Total No of Social Housing Units provided through Part 5's
- Total No of Affordable Housing Units provided through Part 5's
- % of Social Housing Units provided on site through Part 5's
- % of Affordable Housing Units provided on site through Part 5's

CORPORATE ISSUES:

- Percentage of total local authority staff attending poverty/equality/diversity training
- Percentage of key forms and associated guidance notes that are in accessible formats and plain language

SOCIAL INCLUSION FOCUS:

- Number of policies/actions approved, revised and/or amended by the SPC's that make specific reference to the NAPS/NAPS target groups
- % of total number of policies/actions approved, revised and/or amended by the SPC's that make specific reference to the NAPS/NAPS target groups that have been implemented by the local authority
- Percentage of actions (identified in the CDB Strategy) implemented by the County Development Board that relate to either the NAPS targets and /or the NAPS target groups

QUALITY OF SERVICES:

- No of Customer Surveys conducted that explore the needs and experiences of the named NAPS target groups
- Satisfaction levels of the NAPS target groups with the overall service provided by the local authority.
- The overall conformance level of the local authority website with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)
- The % of total documentation available on the web that complies with WCAG guidelines

COMMUNITY SERVICE AND FACILITIES:

- No of existing / new community facilities funded with support from the Development Levy
- Number of Arts and Culture Projects that involve members of the NAPS target groups
- Numbers of children's play spaces per 1,000 population.
- Percentage of children's playgrounds in local authority estates
- Percentage of play spaces in local authority estates

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND CO-OPERATION:

- Percentage of the NAPS target groups represented by organisations on the community fora.

INCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE:

- Number of procedures/practices/processes that have been changed/introduced as a result of the Workplace Partnership.
- Percentage of changes that relate to either the NAPS targets and /or the NAPS target groups.
- Percentage of local authority staff with a disability.



SECTION 7 FUNCTIONS OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

Galway County Council is responsible for the administrative area of County Galway excluding Galway city and Ballinasloe Town Council. Its responsibilities include the planning, design and construction of important infrastructural facilities. It is the custodian of the environment and through its policies seeks to enhance the county while protecting its unique business, economic, social, arts, heritage and cultural identity.

In accordance with the Irish system of local government, which encompasses both democratic representation and public administration, Galway County Council as a local authority performs both a representational and operational role. A Management Team consisting of Directors of Services and County Manager operate in an executive capacity. A Corporate Policy Group and five Strategic Policy Committees formulate and agree policy.

The Strategic Policy Committees comprise elected councillors and voluntary / sectoral representatives who review and formulate policy across the range of Council functions. Thirty elected representatives drawn from 5 electoral areas perform the representational role of the authority under a system of reserved functions which lay down the framework for policy under which the Management Team operate. 6 Directorates and a Finance Unit have responsibility for the provision of the range of services delivered by the local authority.

HOUSING SERVICES

The objective of the Housing Unit is to provide appropriate housing accommodation and a responsive and supportive housing service for those in need of assistance. The Unit seeks to enable every household to have available an affordable dwelling of good quality, suited to its needs, in a good environment and as far as possible at the tenure of its choice.

ROADS & TRANSPORTATION

The Roads & Transportation Unit is responsible for the design, maintenance and improvement of the National and Non-National Roads Network throughout the County. It also deals with matters relating to the Marine Infrastructure, Road Safety, Health and Safety and Arterial Drainage.

PLANNING & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Planning Section administers the Council's functions under the Planning & Development Act 2000, and Planning and Development Regulations 2001. Its aim is to provide and support measures that will contribute to a structured and well managed physical and economic environment within the County, so that living standards are raised and work opportunities fostered and created, having regard to the principles of sustainability.

ENVIRONMENT, WATER & EMERGENCY SERVICES

The protection and enhancement of the environment is one of the Council's main objectives. The provision of a clean, healthy environment which promotes and facilitates sustainable development is a core remit of the Environment and Water Unit. In addition to monitoring and protecting the natural and built environment, fire safety measures are implemented. The Council is the Fire Authority for the whole of the County including the City and has responsibility for the implementation of the Major Emergency Plan

CORPORATE & CULTURAL AFFAIRS

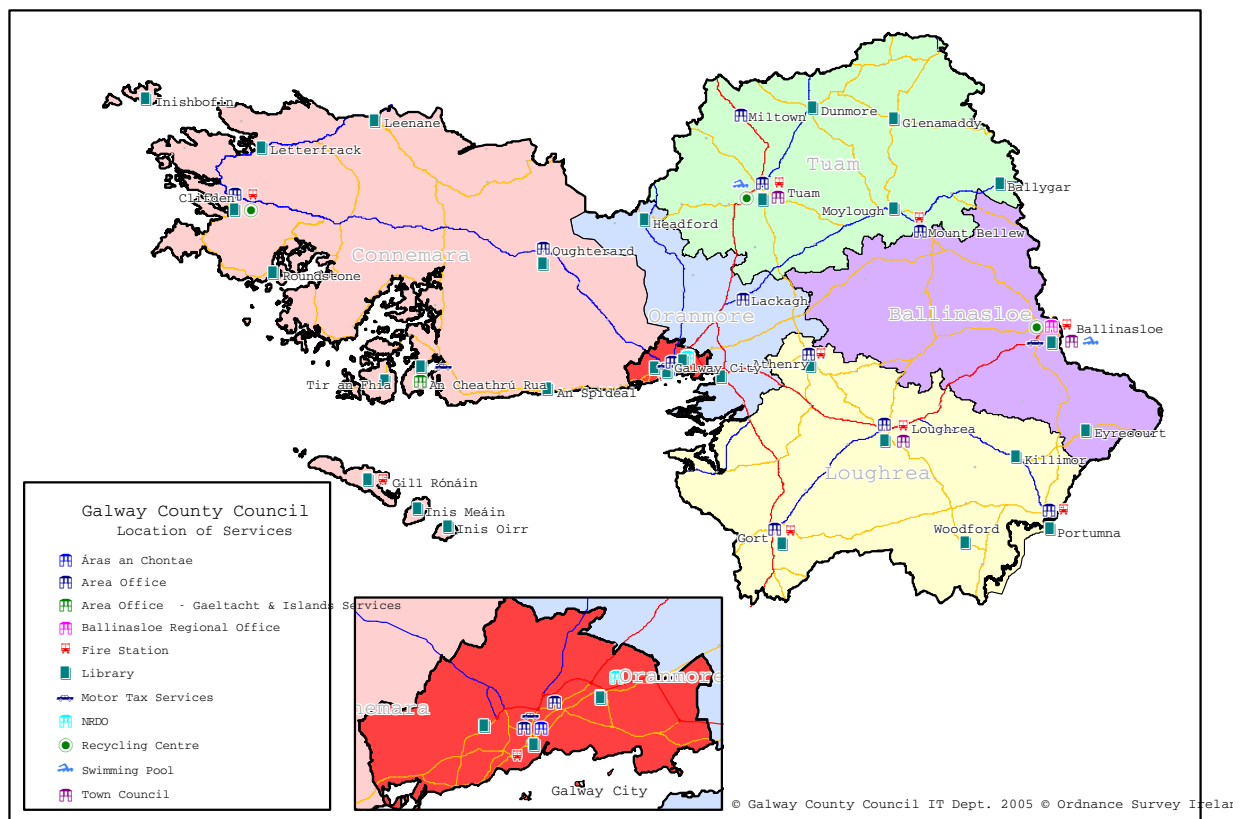
The Corporate Affairs and Cultural Unit encompasses a wide variety of council services ranging from Corporate Affairs to Information Technology and also Motor Taxation, Legal Services and Human Resource Management. The Unit provides direct services to the public in areas such as recreation and amenity and various grant schemes and support services to the Council in the form of corporate secretariat.

COMMUNITY, ENTERPRISE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Community, Enterprise & Economic Development Unit leads the development of the County Development Board and implementation of objectives contained in the 10 year Economic, Social and Cultural Strategy. The Unit plays a key role in supporting community development and interaction with local authority services.

FINANCE

The function of the Finance Unit is to ensure that all financial transactions conducted are accountable and transferable and to implement systems for the efficient operation of council financial resources. All of the activities of the Council have financial implications and the Management of the County Council's Finances is a core function of the Finance Unit.





NOTES

