

Fingal County Council Community Development Office

Strategic Plan 2025 - 2029

Introduction

The **Community Development Office (CDO)** plays a crucial role in enhancing community well-being across Fingal. Through collaboration, funding support, capacity building, and strategic leadership, the CDO empowers residents and community groups to actively participate in civic life. This **2025 Strategic Plan** outlines key priorities, goals, and actions to ensure the continued development of **inclusive, resilient, and thriving communities**.

Vision

To foster **connected, inclusive, and empowered communities** across Fingal by supporting grassroots initiatives, strengthening interagency collaboration, and enhancing community infrastructure.

Mission

To provide **leadership, support, and resources** that enable community groups, residents, and stakeholders to actively participate in the **social, economic, and environmental** development of their communities.

Fingal's Key Demographic Trends (Census 2022) & Strategic Alignment

Fingal County is one of Ireland's most diverse and rapidly growing regions, with a **population of 330,000** (Census 2022). It has a **young, multicultural, and urban-rural mixed population**, requiring **targeted and inclusive community development strategies**. This **2025 Strategic Plan** aligns with **Fingal's demographic trends**, ensuring that community development initiatives are **responsive to the needs of all residents**.

1. Rapid Population Growth & Urban Expansion

- **Fingal is Ireland's fastest-growing county, with a 9% population increase from 2016 to 2022.**
- **Urban centres like Swords, Blanchardstown, and Balbriggan are expanding rapidly.**
- **Demand for community infrastructure, housing, and services is increasing.**

 **Strategic Response:**

- **Expand support for community facilities** to meet growing demand, ensuring **affordable, well-managed spaces for community, sports, and cultural activities**.
 - **Strengthen interdepartmental collaboration** to support sustainable urban planning.
 - **Increase funding and resources for emerging community groups** in growing areas.
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2. Youthful Population & Need for Engagement

- Fingal has **the youngest population in Ireland**, with **33% under 25**.
- Secondary **school-age population** and need for **youth services, recreational spaces, and leadership programs**.

✔ Strategic Response:

- Expand **Fingal Comhairle na nÓG**, increasing engagement with schools.
 - Support youth-centered events and sports initiatives under **Active, Together Sport & Physical Activity Plan 2024-2029**.
 - Support **mentorship, training, and leadership programmes** for young community leaders.
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3. Multicultural & Diverse Population

- **Fingal has the highest percentage of non-Irish nationals (21%)** in Ireland.
- Large **migrant communities in Balbriggan, Blanchardstown, and Swords**.
- **Language barriers and social integration challenges** persist.

✔ Strategic Response:

- Implement actions from the **Fingal Migrant Integration & Social Cohesion Strategy 2019-2024**.
 - Provide **translation services and culturally inclusive programmes** at community facilities.
 - Organise **intercultural events and workshops** to promote social cohesion.
 - Ensure **fair and equitable funding distribution** for migrant-led community groups.
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4. Aging Population & Need for Age-Friendly Initiatives

- While Fingal is young, its **over-65 population grew by 35% (2016-2022)**.
- There is an **increased demand for age-friendly community services, accessible facilities, and social inclusion programmes**.

✔ Strategic Response:

- Deliver the **Fingal Age-Friendly Strategy 2024-2028**, focusing on:

- Expanding **Older People’s Council meetings**.
 - Supporting **age-friendly public spaces** and transport accessibility.
 - Organising **social, recreational, and intergenerational programmes**.
 - Host **Age-Friendly events** to celebrate active aging.
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5. Areas of Socioeconomic Disadvantage

- Certain areas, including **parts of Balbriggan, Mulhuddart, and Blanchardstown**, experience **higher unemployment, lower educational attainment, and social exclusion**.
- Need for **targeted community engagement and funding supports**.

✔ Strategic Response:

- Implement **Fingal Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) 2023-2028**:
 - **Goal 4.3**: Strengthen social inclusion and community connections.
 - **Goal 4.4**: Improve resources in disadvantaged areas.
 - Prioritise **funding support for community groups in at-risk areas**.
 - Expand **training, employment support, and upskilling programmes** in collaboration with **local NGOs and statutory agencies**.
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6. Climate Action & Environmental Awareness

- Fingal’s coastline and rural-urban mix highlight the **need for sustainable community-led climate initiatives**.
- Growing **interest in environmental programmes, community gardens, and circular economy initiatives**.

✔ Strategic Response:

- Expand **Keen to be Green Communities Initiative** in 31 community centres.
 - Support **climate action projects**, including:
 - Bike repair workshops.
 - Clothes swaps & sustainable living education.
 - Community gardens and biodiversity initiatives.
 - Collaborate with **Global Action Plan** to expand **Climate Action Heroes Program**.
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Community Development Department's Strategic Priorities & Actions (Aligned with Fingal's Demographics)

1. Community Development Supports

Goal: Strengthen community capacity, focusing on Fingal's **youth, migrant, and aging populations**.

- ✓ Implement the **Community Development Matrix Approach** to guide community groups.
 - ✓ Prioritise supports for **newly formed groups in high-growth urban areas**.
 - ✓ Encourage **migrant and youth participation in Fingal's Public Participation Network (PPN)**.
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2. Community Facilities Supports

Goal: Ensure facilities meet the needs of Fingal's growing and diverse population.

- ✓ Expand accessibility for **older residents and people with disabilities**.
 - ✓ Provide **multilingual resources** for non-English speakers.
 - ✓ Improve **facility governance and financial sustainability** through training.
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3. Interagency & Cross-Departmental Collaboration

Goal: Address **crime prevention, community safety, and social inclusion challenges**.

- ✓ Work with Gardaí, NGOs, and local groups on **youth crime prevention**.
 - ✓ Improve **public spaces in disadvantaged areas**.
 - ✓ Engage **diverse community voices in policy development**.
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4. Funding Support

Goal: Improve **access to grants** for communities most in need.

- ✓ Ensure **equitable funding distribution** based on **demographic need**.
 - ✓ Expand the **Community Information Management System (CIMS)** for transparency.
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5. Events & Community Engagement

Goal: Celebrate Fingal's **cultural diversity, youth engagement, and age-friendly initiatives**.

- ✓ Support **intercultural festivals** showcasing Fingal's diverse communities.

- ✓ Expand **youth-focused events** under Comhairle na nÓG.
 - ✓ Increase **community participation in high-profile events**, such as:
 - **Fingal Mayor's Awards** (recognising volunteer contributions).
 - **Fingal Vintage Picnic** (celebrating Fingal's older residents).
 - **National Age-Friendly Awards** (honouring older residents).
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Performance Measurement & Success Indicators

To track progress, the Community Development Office will measure:

1. Community Participation & Capacity Building

- ✓ Increase in **PPN-registered groups**, with a focus on **migrant and youth participation**.
- ✓ Growth in **training attendance and volunteer engagement**.

2. Community Facility Usage & Accessibility

- ✓ Facility usage rates across **different demographics** (youth, older residents, migrant communities).
- ✓ Increased **accessibility improvements** in community centres.

3. Social Inclusion & Community Safety

- ✓ Number of **crime prevention initiatives** in collaboration with Gardaí.
- ✓ Community feedback on **improvements in disadvantaged areas**.

4. Funding & Financial Support

- ✓ Increase in **funding applications from underserved communities**.
- ✓ Post-funding reports measuring **social impact**.

5. Event Engagement & Impact

- ✓ Increased participation from **marginalised communities**.
 - ✓ Feedback surveys measuring **event inclusivity and impact**.
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Conclusion

By aligning with **Fingal's demographics**, this **2025 Strategic Plan** ensures that the **Community Development Office** continues to **empower residents, strengthen community networks, and foster inclusivity**. Through **collaboration, capacity building, and targeted support**, Fingal will remain a **thriving, diverse, and sustainable** county.