



**SECAD Partnership CLG    Lot 18-4 South Cork**  
**SICAP Case Study 2025**



**Title:**        SICAP Learning & Skills – Pathways to Thrive  
**Theme:**    Goal 2 Employability and Labour Market Prospects  
October 2025 HD  
<https://vimeo.com/1128524700?fl=tl&fe=ec>



Riailtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



Ama chomhchistiú ag  
an Aontas Eorpach  
Co-funded by the  
European Union



The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) is co-funded by the Government of Ireland, through the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, and the European Union.

## Case Study Context & Background

As outlined in our SICAP Strategic Plan 2024-28, SECAD has committed to supporting people who are distant from the jobs market namely those who are long-term unemployed (LTU), experiencing multi-dimensional layers of disadvantage ranging from literacy issues, inter-generational familial unemployment, mental health challenges, addiction, and other barriers.

Year on year, with each SICAP programme iteration, SECAD works with 600+ individuals to provide multilevel support pathways to facilitate positive change and create opportunities for them to thrive. This can be in the form of employment focused workshops such as CV & interview preparation, upskilling in specific industries to maximise job prospects, or following the self-employment route to set up a small business or sole trading venture.

SECAD continues to focus on providing targeted supports above to those most in need through the delivery of services in designated hubs including Midleton, Youghal, Cobh, Carrigaline, Macroom & Millstreet. This delivery model is underpinned by the named local priority target groups (LPTGs) as outlined in the current SICAP 2024-28 contract.

SECAD undertook an updating of the Small Areas which show a 'Disadvantaged' score in the 2022 Census within the named LPTG's. This exercise was essential given that the Strategic Plan was submitted ahead of the 2022 census Small Area statistics being published. These are referenced in **Table 1** at the end of this document.

### Ever changing demographic profile

While SECAD has targeted delivery of essential supports across the LPTG areas referenced above, the SICAP programme has come under growing pressure in recent years with the ever-changing demographic profile. Throughout 2023-25 resulting from major geo-political shifts on the global stage, Ireland has seen exponential increase in the numbers of migrants arriving. To this end, SECAD has been working with over 14 different Accommodation Centres across South Cork which between them at peak times hosted in excess of 2,600 residents. This client population was a mix of International Protection Applicants and Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection.

Since mid-2025 there has been significant flux in relation to both groupings with massive outflow of BOTPs from structured settings in line with changes in Government policy, but also with the increased inflow of IPA's as many people seeking protection were being placed in the newly vacated BOTP settings. This fluctuation has caused huge uncertainty at several levels, firstly for the people themselves, for the support bodies in terms of planning, and for the local communities where settings are hosted. Numbers currently sit somewhere around 2,000 with an ever-changing flow.

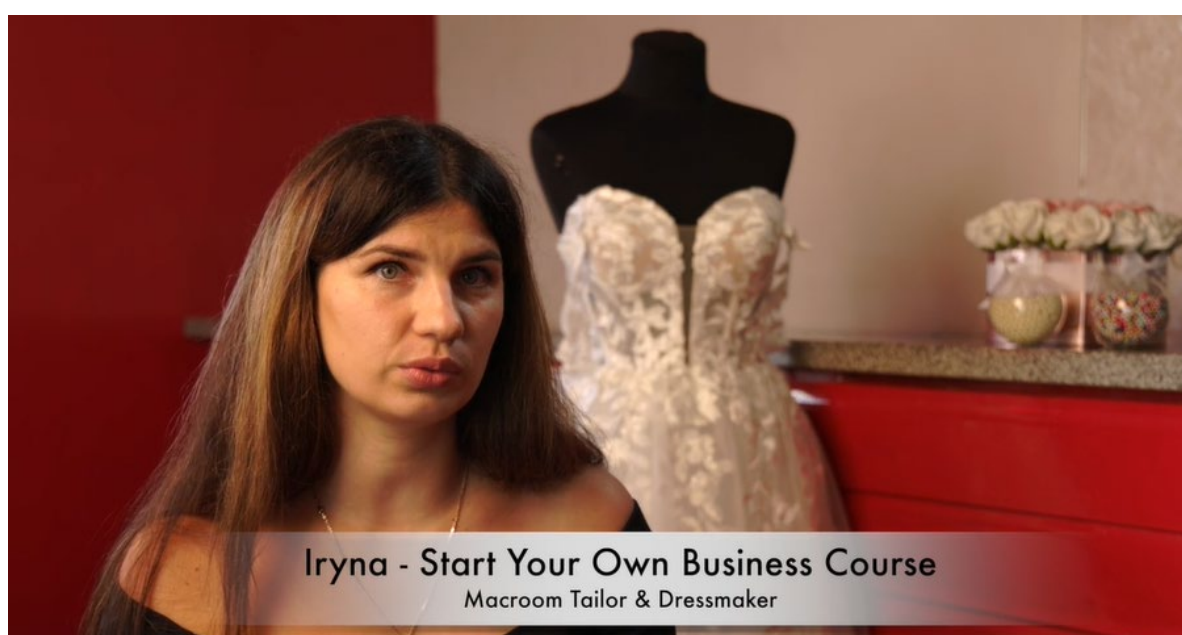
Socio-economic challenges which currently persist in the South Cork area (and nationally) are centred on the cost-of-living crisis, affordable housing, poverty and inequality, pressure on public services like healthcare, youth unemployment, an aging population, the need for skills development and addressing rural decline.

In addition, referring to changing demographics in Ireland and specifically South Cork, there are consequent increased needs experienced by people seeking protection with a notable increase in populations from India, Brazil, Africa and Ukraine. Individuals from Ukraine often present as highly skilled, however a lack of English language competence and difficulty in recognition of specific qualifications or skills such as in the medical field have created significant barriers to employment. Other barriers include challenges about work experience, driving skills or recognition of driving licence in Ireland.

SECAD has found that the vast majority of refugees and people seeking protection which we have worked with are extremely keen to progress to employment and make a new life for themselves and their families here in Ireland, especially when there is little chance of them able to return to their home countries.

## Stakeholders involved

- LDC SICAP Employment & Enterprise Team
- Local training providers: CETB, NALA, Adult Literacy, skills training providers on manual handling, HACCP food safety training, Start your own Business training and mentoring.
- Community organisations and referral partners – Employability, LAES, DSP, FRCs and other Community Development organisations, e.g. Cumann Na Daoine, Macroom-E centre, Local Training Initiatives, Citizens Information.



SICAP client Iryna – featured in case study video running her own business in Macroom town

## SICAP's Contribution

Through SICAP, SECAD provides multifaceted supports to beneficiaries such as those involved in this Case Study. These range from introductory workshops to employment clinics, specific skills training workshops, as well as one-to-one sessions. Furthermore, our beneficiaries are also often involved in community wellbeing programmes such as art and wellness, or outdoor classroom sessions involving our onsite ecologist, all facilitated and possible through the SICAP programme.

SECAD adopts an inclusive and 'whole community' approach to all our supports, cross company and as such actively promotes a human rights and equality framework, while applying quality and long-standing community development approaches to our work. SICAP does not operate in a silo, rather very effectively dovetails with other SECAD development programmes and initiatives like Tus, RSS, LAES, AMIF, WorkAbility, and Leader to maximise impact for the communities we serve.



**SICAP client Esther – featured in case study video now working with CnD Community Cafe**

The practice of collaborative working with key stakeholders is embedded throughout our delivery of SICAP, from the community grass roots to local, regional and national players. Specific to this cases study and the area of learning & skills, our standout partners are CETB, NALA, Adult Literacy, various skills training providers, community organisations and referral partners including Employability, LAES, DSP, FRCs and other Community Development organisations, e.g. Cumann Na Daoine, Macroom-E centre, Local Training Initiatives, Citizens Information.



**SICAP client Tommy – featured in case study video now working with Waterford Local Link**

## Interventions, participants and progressions

### Interventions

Supports are provided consistently through monthly employment focused workshops in each designated community location. Once registered, each beneficiary may then access a one-to-one consultation to ascertain their needs and develop next steps and personal action plan.

Clients are referred internally for any relevant job skills training; this scoping of client training needs helps to formulate further training to be planned within the SICAP training and skills remit.

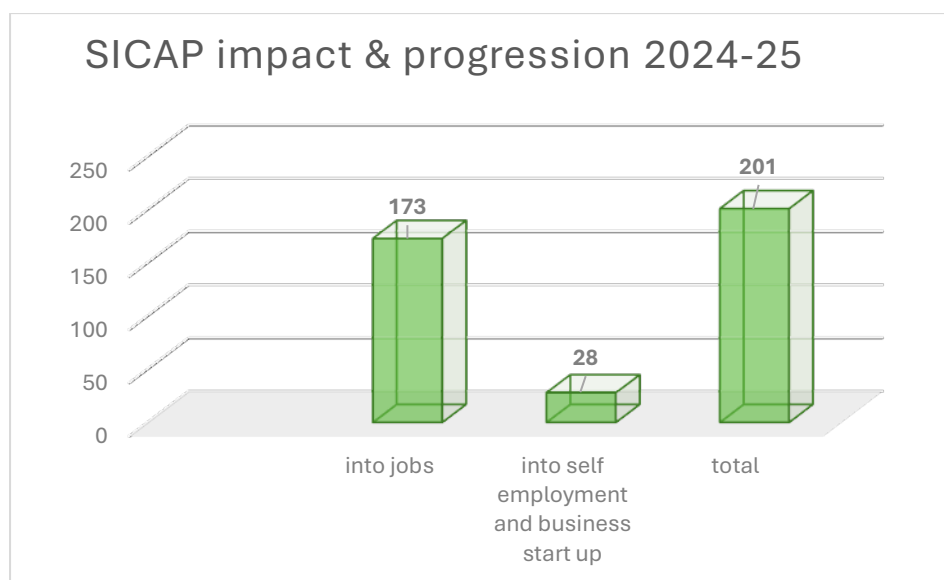
Weekly enterprise workshops are also available for relevant clients, whereby individuals may then progress to an online start your own business course to investigate this avenue further. The Workshop allows for broader delivery of essential and targeted information, while the one to one meeting and ongoing supports is paramount to the individualised support, direction and progression.

### Progression & Impact

Our SICAP employment services returned strong progression rates through the previous SICAP programming period 2018-23 years, with 558 recorded as progressing to a job.

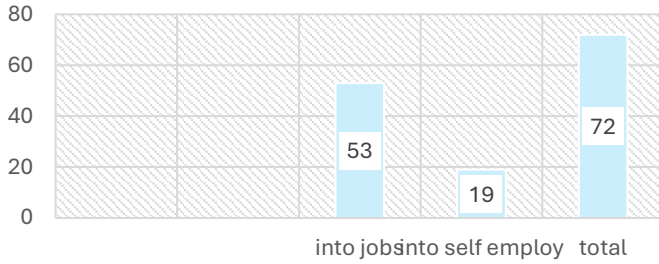
Our employment team also extends to provision of support to those who in receipt of social welfare and looking at self-employment as an option. SECAD supported 147 new Business start-ups during the previous contract, majority of which were eligible for BTWEA and STEA.

The current SICAP programme now operational over 18 months is already tracking very positively, with over 200 individuals already progressing into jobs and self-employment.



Within this cohort, we also see strong progression rates among our clients classified as people seeking protection. This cohort faces significant other challenges, not least language but have shown great determination to contribute to Irish society.

## Progression 2025 <people seeking protection>



Snapshot of 2024 & 2025

### progression by skills training course among 'people seeking protection'

**SICAP** Course Impact And Progression Tracker Data Analysis Skills Training Dashboard 2024  
Analyzing Trend and Details to find out Employment Progression from Sectors By Locations

Food Safety (47.37%), Security (15.79%) And Clerical and Office (15.78%) Jobs demonstrated The Top Industries Gaining Employment  
Youghal Demonstrated The Top Location Gaining Employment Progression

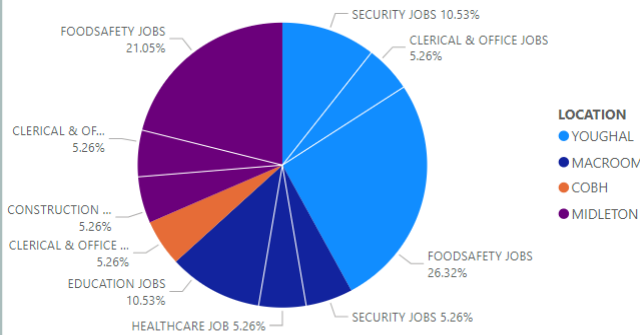
- LOCATION, LOCATION
- ✓ CARRIGALINE
  - ✓ COBH
  - ✓ MACROOM
  - ✓ MIDLETON
  - ✓ YOUGHAL

**SICAP COURSES:**  
Security,  
HACCP Food Safety,  
Safepass, Forklift and SYOB

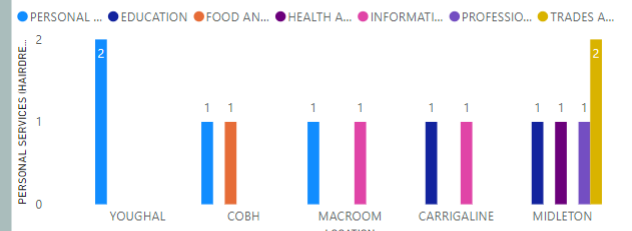
**19**  
Number Of Employed Participants

**13**  
Number Of Self Employed Participants

#### Employment Progression By Percentage from Job Sectors By Location



#### Self Employment Progression From Job Sectors By Locations



#### Top Industries Gaining Employment



**SICAP** Course Impact And Progression Tracker Data Analysis Skills Training Dashboard 2025  
Analyzing Trend and Details to find out Employment Progression from Sectors By Locations

Security (26.47%), Construction (26.46%) And Food Safety (26.47%) Jobs demonstrated The Top Industries Gaining Employment  
Midleton And Youghal Demonstrated The Top Locations Gaining Employment Progression

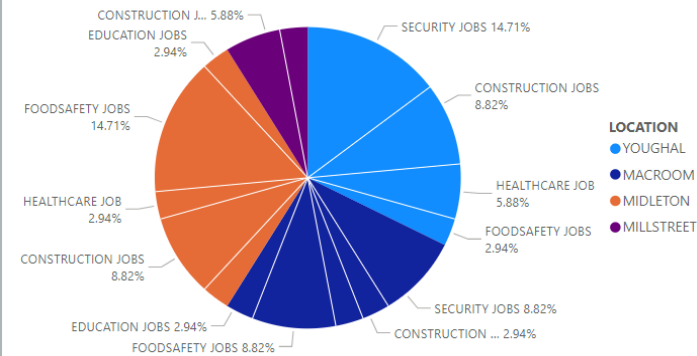
- LOCATION, LOCATION
- ✓ MACROOM
  - ✓ MIDLETON
  - ✓ MILLSTREET
  - ✓ YOUGHAL

**SICAP COURSES:**  
Security,  
HACCP Food Safety,  
Safepass, Forklift, SYOB and Healthcare

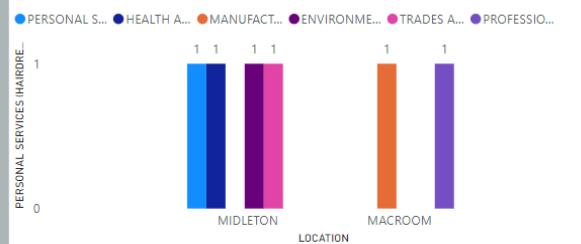
**34**  
Number Of Employed Participants

**6**  
Number Of Self Employed Participants

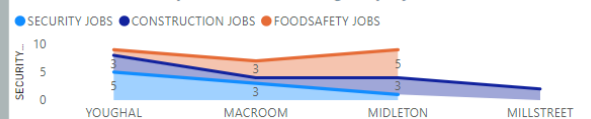
#### Employment Progression By Percentage from Job Sectors By Location



#### Self Employment Progression From Job Sectors By Locations



#### Top Industries Gaining Employment



## Lessons learned and next steps

What worked well and not so well

The integration of services across several SECAD programmes with SICAP as a pivotal support serves to maximise impact for those beneficiaries most in need. However, it must be said the lack of joined up strategic planning of programme resources like SICAP, New Arrivals funding, and funding sourced from other Departments like Justice (e.g. AMIF) is in danger of undermining the impact of investment in areas of support for migrant integration and employability. Longer term whole of Government strategic investment in communities most in need is vital for more sustainable outcomes in the long run.

SECAD provides expertise in certain key areas through SICAP, including lifelong learning and skills training, employability and self-employment for those most marginalised in our society. Also, essential community supports for specific communities of interest and well as area based and rural communities. We are however not in a position to solve and address mainstream health, transport, childcare or housing deficits, nor is this our brief, but we will continue to work and collaborate with those who can, through actively influencing and advocating where appropriate or by equipping those to better advocate for themselves.

We can and will continue to address embedded intergenerational long-term unemployment and educational disadvantage through interventions such as those profiled in this case study; to address shortfalls in English language provision where we can through our English Conversation Clubs and will continue to put in place **accessible** wellbeing actions with a view to engage with and bring people in from the periphery.

A primary barrier often encountered by our SICAP team is often that of lack of confidence or motivation on the part of clients. Crucial work undertaken by the team is often the unseen and unquantified work of encouragement to participate, and support to stay the course. This and the provision of our confidential and free employment supports and skills training provides a lifeline for many to start a renewed pathway, which for many affords them a new opportunity to thrive.

## Annex 1 - FURTHER BACKGROUND TO CLIENT STORIES FEATURED IN CASE STUDY:

**Tommy, SICAP client – now employed with Local Link transport services, Waterford:** Long term unemployed and with literacy issues, Tommy was supported initially by SECAD during Covid via online meetings. His literacy issues were addressed and referred to NALA online as a first step due to lack of in person services. Contact was retained via email and information issued on the D (bus) licence course facilitated through SECAD and ETB collaboration.

SECAD facilitated registration and communication with the ETB and contractors to ensure the client's current literacy abilities would be supported. He was included in a WhatsApp group by the SICAP officer, and ongoing support and reminders were provided on course days, as well as supports with the theory test. Tommy went on to complete the driving test successfully, gaining a job with Local Link transport services on the week he passed. "Coming to SECAD changed my Life",

**Esther, SICAP client – now working with CnD Community Café, Youghal:** In 2024, Esther and her two children were forced to flee their home country due to ongoing violence and repeated attacks on their community. During this period, her husband was kidnapped, leaving her as the sole carer and protector of her family. Despite the trauma and uncertainty, Esther demonstrated remarkable resilience and determination to rebuild her life in safety. After arriving in Ireland, she settled in secure accommodation and quickly sought ways to integrate and regain independence. Esther actively engaged with SECAD, where she received tailored employment and training support. With the SECAD's guidance, she participated in several employability courses, job-seeking skills and began volunteering within the local community.

Her commitment to personal and professional growth was exceptional. Within a short time, Esther completed several training programmes, obtained her driving licence, and purchased her own car, significantly improving her family's independence and mobility.

She went on to secure full-time employment and is now thriving both professionally and personally. Her children are well-settled in school, and she continues to make positive contributions to her local community. Esther's story is a powerful example of courage, adaptability, and the impact of accessible employment and integration supports. Her journey from displacement to independence highlights the importance of comprehensive, person-centred assistance for those rebuilding their lives in Ireland.

**Iryna, SICAP client - Dressmaking Start-up in Macroom:** When war forced Iryna and her family to leave Ukraine, they found safety in Macroom. Starting over was not easy, Iryna spoke very little English and it was a very difficult transition. Skilled at sewing, she hoped to use her talent to earn a living. The SICAP team gave her the guidance she needed to think about starting a business. After completing a translated Start Your Own Business course through SECAD, Iryna decided to look for a premises in Macroom and make her dream come true. SECAD appointed a mentor to further support the process of developing her business plan and cashflow forecast.

Numerous meetings followed where translation support was required, with a lengthy process ensuing which culminated in SECAD recommending Iryna's business to the DSP. With limited although improving English, Iryna says she couldn't have managed the paperwork for the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance without the support from SECAD. Translation support funded via the SICAP programme was also vital to Iryna's success. By now Iryna is almost fluent in English and has hired a staff member to help in her business. It is certainly a story of how the SICAP programme really supports those who arrive in Ireland and are displaced and in need of support. That support was crucial in helping her open a dressmaking and alteration shop in Macroom — a service now very much in demand in the local area.

# ‘We had no hope... this has been a lifesaver’



**More than 1,200 people seeking protection have been supported by a programme in Cork run by SECAD. Jennifer Horgan finds out more and meets two women who took part.**

“Only those who have been through the journey and have sought asylum can understand the toll of it; not everyone can get up and go again.”

So says Omolara Osunkoya, just one of 1,200 people seeking protection who have benefitted from the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) since 2022.

Arrival in Ireland for asylum-seekers often comes at the end of a devastating journey. For Omolara, it involved escaping kidnapping in Nigeria, her native country.

In a time of despair and fear, SICAP offered her a route to recovery.

The programme falls under the remit of SECAD, the rural developments and social inclusion partnership, which is passionate about meeting people where they are – often at a crossroads – to walk alongside them as they take the first steps toward rebuilding their lives in a new country.

Participants – representing more than 15 nationalities – have completed courses tailored to employment in key industries, including healthcare, construction, security, and hospitality.

Their services also include wellbeing initiatives, employment-focused training, career guidance, and support for starting a business in Ireland.

SECAD’s work begins with listening. Too often, they say, asylum seekers are spoken about rather than spoken with – so their services are tailored to individual needs.

Through dialogue, service providers come to understand their previous employment, skills and areas of interest.

Whilst Omolara was referred onto healthcare courses, another participant, Iryna Lishchuk, was referred for business start-up support.

Iryna’s story is a common one in Ireland in recent years.

“I came here during the war in Ukraine, two and a half years ago now, with my husband and two small children, aged four and eight. We were very scared, but we soon felt very happy and appreciative. Through this programme, people met us and gave us a home. They came to our hotel and helped us with our English. Their support meant everything.”

Iryna is skilled at sewing and wanted to set up a business, but the language barrier was a significant one.

“The language courses were essential as were the business courses. Brian O’Neill ran the business courses. He was so helpful and every question was answered. Honestly, at every stage, I was helped; it was so amazing. Beyond this programme, the Macroom community supported us too. There are very kind people here and when I started my business they turned up and supported me. The older people were particularly lovely.”

Iryna is grateful that her entire family is doing well and that she can give back to a community that supported her in a time of need.

“My husband is in landscaping and he helps with my business too. My children are doing well in school and speak English now. It is wonderful that my business is genuinely needed here; there is a constant stream of costumers. I’ve recently employed a young girl to help in reception. I met her when I made her sister’s confirmation dress.”

Iryna is delighted to offer a young person, from the local area, employment. It has been a hard road and it feels good to reap the rewards.

“I had no English whatsoever arriving here. I learned it in school but never had any cause to use it before the war. My customers now say I have great English.”

The language courses are offered by volunteers in the community, another strand in the programme’s aim to create cohesion and bring about integration.

Omolara Osunkoya arrived in Ireland last year.

“The programme has been a lifesaver,” she enthuses. “When I arrived here with my two daughters, we had no hope and nothing to do. I thought it was all over.”

“Through the accommodation we were offered, we were also introduced to these supports. The first workshop was life-changing. We met a few workers there and the way they spoke to us, that day – they told us not to give up and afforded us so many opportunities.

“We have gone from nothing to something. They do such wonderful work, bringing every-

one together. They create a sense of belonging – make us feel like we are all family. You get to know people in person and then people want to go out of their way to help you. It really is wonderful.”

Omolara had experience in healthcare, having looked after her own parents before she came here.

“When I arrived I got training to upgrade my skills and now I work with autistic people and the elderly. I go into people’s homes and get them up and ready for the day. I am so happy to help people – it is what I am most passionate about.”

The carer is deeply grateful to the programme and also to Cork Migrant Centre.

“I believe that every human person deserves a chance to live,” Omolara says. “Ireland has given us a chance. We only arrived last year, but quickly we were taught about cultural differences which really helped in interviews. There are different ways of doing things in every country. Today I am happy with what I am doing, helping people and contributing to society.”

Her children are also thriving.

“My first born is working in a hospital and my second daughter finished her recent exams with distinction and is working with ABTRAN in Cork.”

This is all part of SICAP’s plan.

Toni McCaul, Social Inclusion Programmes Manager, SECAD, says: “Everything we do at SECAD is rooted in one central idea: community is our superpower. Whether it’s a conversation club, a CV workshop, or a shared meal, we are building something much greater than any single programme or service – we are building trust, solidarity, and a shared future.”

These services are not particular to asylum seekers. The supports provided to people seeking protection, such as business courses and skills training, are the same as those offered to anyone in the rural communities in and beyond Cork who need help taking their next step, whether that’s in employment, education, wellbeing, or otherwise.

The SICAP area includes 6 main hubs: Youghal, Midleton, Cobh, Millstreet, Macroom, and Carrigaline. In these locations, employment workshops and one-to-one consultations occur every month, offering a lifeline to many. Anyone who meets the SICAP programme criteria of a ‘disadvantaged individual’ can get free employment support.

The fundamental idea is to promote social cohesion and community involvement.

Earlier this summer, Minister of State with Responsibility for Community Development and Charities at the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, Jerry Buttimer TD, delivered the keynote

speech to celebrate 100 Cork-based participants for World Refugee Day.

Minister Buttimer paid tribute to the participants and commended their commitment to learning and contribution to Irish society, whilst commending SECAD’s work within the local community, adding: “Today’s celebration event marking the completion of this suite of skills training programmes is testament to the determination and resolve of our new arrivals in rebuilding their lives with a view to contributing to Irish society”.

Inspiring insights and personal testimonials were also provided by invited speakers to share their thoughts on building new lives in Ireland and integrating within their local communities.

Ryan Howard, CEO of SECAD, paid tribute to the determination of the participants: “We are deeply proud of each participant who has shown resilience and an unwavering commitment to building a new future here in Ireland. Completion of these courses will support their future employment and enable them to further integrate into Irish society.

“This event was not only a celebration of individual achievements, but of the power of inclusive support and community collaboration – key cornerstones of SECAD’s work within local communities across Cork. “It is a clear demonstration of what is possible when inclusive support and opportunity meet human potential,” he concluded.

**“I believe that every human person deserves a chance to live... Ireland has given us a chance.**



**Iryna came to Ireland from Ukraine more than two years ago.** Picture: Matt Brooker

## Annex 2 -

### TABLE 1

#### MIDDLETON URBAN

- Middleton Urban 047254002 [INDEX -11.38] Oakwood Lodge
- Middleton Urban 047254004 [INDEX -15.26] Riverside Pk/Rosary Place
- Middleton Urban 047254007 [INDEX -11.99] further right off Mill Rd
- Middleton Urban 047254012 [INDEX -11.51] The Avenue/Train station
- Middleton Urban 047254013 [INDEX -13.28] Park St

#### YOUGHAL

- Youghal 047323016 [INDEX -10.74] Ashe St/South Main St
- Youghal 047323019 [INDEX -24.34] => **VERY DISADVANTAGED/Blackwater Heights**
- Youghal 047323020 [INDEX -23.14] => **VERY DISADVANTAGED/Dermot Hurley Est.**
- Youghal 047323023 [INDEX -16.52] Sarsfield Terrace
- Youghal 047323026 [INDEX -15.19] Cork Hill
- Youghal 047323027 [INDEX -16.84] Kenny's Lane (Off Lower Cork hill)
- Youghal 047323028 [INDEX -15.95] Tallow St.

#### COBH

- Cobh 047106007 (INDEX -12.54) Aherne Place/Orilla T.
- Cobh 047107003 (INDEX -17.35) Russell Heights
- Cobh 047107016 (INDEX -14.28) Springfield Park
- Cobh 047107017 (INDEX -10.06) Inishmore Park

#### MACROOM

- **Macroom** 047243001 [INDEX -11.02] Behind Castle St.
- **Macroom** 04723002 /047243004 [INDEX -12.46] Fitzgerald's Square/Bowl Rd/St Colman's Pk [vicinity of SECAD office]

## Annex 3 -

### **Documentary Video Structure**

#### **1. Opening – Setting the Context**

##### **Footage Suggestions:**

- Visuals of local accommodation settings (e.g., temporary housing, hostels, community centres)
- Overlay of key statistics: unemployment rates, barriers to employment, demographics of target group
- Voiceover introducing the challenge: limited access to employment pathways for vulnerable individuals

##### **Narrative Focus:**

- Describe the initial need: barriers to employment for individuals in transitional accommodation or facing social exclusion
- Highlight the target group (e.g., migrants, long-term unemployed, young adults)
- Introduce stakeholders: LDC team, SICAP staff, local training providers, community partners

#### **2. Middle – Actions, Supports, and SICAP Role**

##### **Footage Suggestions:**

- Team introductions: SICAP staff explaining their roles and services
- Clips from workshops, training sessions, and 1:1 mentoring
- Screenshots or visuals from your PPT showing programme structure and supports

##### **Narrative Focus:**

- Detail the interventions: security training course, CV workshops, interview prep, soft skills development
- Emphasise SICAP's contribution: funding, coordination, outreach, and follow-up
- Include 1:1 interviews with at least 3 clients:
  - Their background and challenges
  - Experience with SICAP supports
  - Personal impact and progression

#### **3. Closing – Outcomes, Lessons Learned, What's Next**

##### **Footage Suggestions:**

- Data visualisation: charts showing participant progression, course completions, employment outcomes
- Reflections & closing remarks