

# Driving Ambition

NEET Driving Support Programme 2017-2019

A SICAP Case Study

Goal 2 – Action 2.2 Supports for Young People

Theme – Goal Two Projects



## Driving Ambition

### NEET Driving Support Programme 2017-2019

Anyone who lives in a rural county like Monaghan knows that access to private transport isn't just a luxury, it's a necessity. In rural Ireland, driving is an essential skill that individuals require to enhance their employment and social contacts.

In the first two years of the SICAP Programme (2015-2016) our Goal 2 SICAP Development Officers noted that the majority of their clients in the NEET category (Not in Employment, Education or Training) had no access to either a car or public transport. This had a direct impact on their ability to take up employment or training opportunities. While the Rural Transport Initiative is doing a good job, present public transport provision does not meet the needs of young people accessing employment or training in many areas of County Monaghan.

It was further noted that even when young people lived in an urban setting like Monaghan town, some of those from disadvantaged estates on the town outskirts did not even recognise their need to have a driving licence. They could only countenance a job within walking distance of their estate. This narrowed their worldview on possible employment or training opportunities.

The initial projects designed by the SICAP team to engage NEET clients were moderately successful but client engagement was very challenging and time consuming. The idea of supporting clients to acquire a driving licence was floated but funding was limited. It was also assumed on past experience that DSP were reluctant to support such training unless it had a direct link to employment. Another support agency suggested it would raise unfair expectations, stating there was no point in clients acquiring a licence as they would be unable to afford a car or the cost of insurance. But as the author Jim Butcher said, *"You can't plan for everything or you never get started in the first place."* Besides, the acquisition of a licence was a happy side effect and not the overall aim of the project. The overall aim was to get the clients active and engaged on a goal that was relatively achievable.

So the team persisted. They felt that the initial steps required to access the programme would cause clients to open their eyes to other opportunities. They approached DEASP and Monaghan LES to gauge their opinion on the issue. Both agreed that the inability of NEET clients to access transport was a significant barrier to progression in terms of training & employment. Together, we set about devising an initiative to support clients obtain driving skills and so the NEET Driving Support Programme was instigated.

#### **What is the NEET Driving Support Programme?**

The NEET Driving Support Programme offers financial support with the cost of 12 driving lessons and the cost of a driving test application to any person under 25 in County Monaghan who is currently not in education, employment or training (NEET). The programme commenced in March 2017 and has been running ever since.

#### **What agencies were involved in the Programme?**

Agencies involved in the initiative were Monaghan Integrated Development (through SICAP programme and Local Employment Service) & the Department of Employment and Social Protection.

## Initial response

The first information session was held in 2017 to publicise the programme and identify suitable individuals. Client engagement was immediate. Over 30 people attended the first information session. These were then narrowed down to shortlist of eligible clients, some of whom progressed to the programme and some who were placed on a reserve list.

## How does it work?

A NEET category individual who is currently engaged with any MID programmes or with DSP is referred to the SICAP Goal 2 team. They then register the client for SICAP (if necessary) and outline the steps they need to take to complete the programme:

<b>Step 1</b>	Apply for and complete the Theory Test - <a href="http://www.theorytest.ie">www.theorytest.ie</a> Practice DVD & book available from MID.
<b>Step 2</b>	Apply for Learners Permit
<b>Step 3</b>	Contact SICAP, LES or DEASP to indicate that you have passed the Theory Test and Submit a photocopy of your Learners Permit. SICAP, LES or DEASP will give you details of the driving instructor to complete your 12 lessons and pass your name onto the driving instructor/school.
<b>Step 4</b>	Complete 12 driving lessons
<b>Step 5</b>	Apply for the Driving Test.
<b>Step 6</b>	Book car for the driving test with the driving school.
<b>Step 7</b>	Sit the driving test.

## How much does it cost?

Theory Test	€45 (Paid by the Client)	
New Learner Permit	€35 (Paid by the Client)	
*Driving Lessons (12)	€290 Driving Instructor funded SICAP (LES/DEASP contributes €250 towards the cost of the lessons for their caseload clients with SICAP paying the balance)	* MID seek quotations each year for a Driving Instructor to provide the lessons and hire of car for test.
*Car Hire for test	Funded by SICAP (included in the €290 fee for lessons)	
Driving Test	€85 Funded by SICAP	
New Driving Licence	€55 (Paid by client)	
	<b>Total Overall Cost</b>	<b>€510</b>

The programme requires the client to contribute at least €135 towards the various stages in obtaining their driving licence. It was decided to seek this contribution from the client to demonstrate their commitment to obtaining a driving licence.

The cost to the client will increase if they require any additional lessons over and above the 12 funded through the programme. Overall, SICAP contributes €375 per client. This drops to €125 in the case where the person is an LES or DEASP client.

## How many clients participated in the programme?

Year	Number of clients who enquired about programme	Number of clients who commenced lessons
2017	30	9
2018	27	9
2019 (21 <sup>st</sup> August)	17	13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>31</b>

48% of clients who enquired about the scheme commenced the 12 lessons. It is interesting to note that of the 31 clients who commenced the lessons, 21 were female while only 10 were male.

However, 34 clients who expressed a strong interest in getting a driving licence did not complete the theory test. Those clients who did not progress their theory test received several calls from SICAP Development officer encouraging them to do so. This may suggest a need for further support to assist these young people with theory test completion due to literacy or other issues and needs to be explored further.

## What were the driving outcomes for the 31 participants who commenced the lessons?

2017	Outcome	Number of Clients (9)
	Completed 12 funded Lessons	8
	Did not complete 12 lessons	1
	Still completing funded lessons	0
	Completing additional lessons	0
	Applied for Driving Test	8
	Passed Driving Test	4
	Failed Driving Test	0
	Awaiting Test date	3

Four clients passed their driving test in Year 1 with three awaiting a test date. One client from the Traveller community completed the 12 lessons but moved to Scotland and did not complete the test. Only one client in Year 1 did not complete the lessons. This client is currently working full-time and is not currently pursuing his driving licence.

2018	Outcome	Number of Clients (9)
	Completed 12 funded Lessons	8
	Did not complete 12 lessons	0
	Still completing funded lessons	1
	Completing additional lessons	3
	Applied for Driving Test	5
	Passed Driving Test	2
	Failed Driving Test	2
	Awaiting Test date	1

Two clients passed their driving test in year 2 with two failing the test and another one awaiting a test date. The remaining four clients are currently completing lessons.

2019	Outcome	Number of Clients (13)
	Completed 12 funded Lessons	0
	Did not complete 12 lessons	0
	Still completing funded lessons	13
	Completing additional lessons	0
	Applied for Driving Test	0
	Passed Driving Test	0
	Failed Driving Test	0
	Awaiting Test date	0

**Year 3:** Thirteen clients commenced driving lessons in year 3 and all are currently completing the 12 funded lessons

*Client: "I would not have thought of doing the lessons without this support as I did not have the money to even think about it"*

### What is the employment/training status of the 31 participants who commenced the lessons?

2017	Outcome	Number of Clients (9)
	In Employment	5
	In Education or Training	0
	On Social Welfare payment	3
	Moved out of Country	1

**Year 1:** Five clients entered employment since commencing the lessons. Roles of employment included childcare worker, care assistants, construction worker and clerical officer all of whom require transport to access employment on a daily basis. Four clients remain on social welfare payment, three of whom are members of the Traveller community. However, it is worth noting that the driving programme was a very successful tool in engaging members of the Traveller community to the SICAP Programme. Indeed, two of the three members of the Traveller community passed their driving test.

*Client: "It was really worthwhile. I would not have got my licence as quick without the support. I'm now driving to work in Ballybay at the minute which is great."*

2018	Outcome	Number of Clients (9)
	In Employment	4
	In Education or Training	4
	On Social Welfare payment	1

**Year 2:** Four clients entered employment since commencing the lessons. Roles of employment include office administrators and care assistants. Four members of the Syrian community who commenced the lessons are currently completing training courses in Dundalk.

*Driving Instructor: "I see a great value in the programme as it helps with employment in a very tangible way. It was great for the Syrian's as it helped them to integrate into Irish society"*

2019	Outcome	Number of Clients (13)
	In Employment	1
	In Education or Training	0
	On Social Welfare payment	12

**Year 3:** One client has gained employment since commencing the lessons and will require a driving licence in the longer term to sustain the position. No other clients on the 2019 programme are currently working.

**Client:** *"It was great as it got me 'up and doing' the lessons. I might not have done the lessons otherwise"*

## **Benefits and Challenges of the programme**

### ***Benefits***

- The programme appealed to individuals from hard to reach groups, specifically Travellers and Programme Refugees.
- In Year 1 & 2, a significant number of clients (72%) progressed into training or employment after commencement of driving lessons.
- In Year 1 & 2, 88% of clients completed the lessons while only one client disengaged from the programme, which indicates a high retention rate.
- There was a social benefit for clients obtaining a driving licence as it increases their independence and mobility.

### ***Challenges***

- Over 50% of clients who expressed an interest in the programme over the three years did not progress to the driving lessons. Conveying the importance of mobility to this cohort in a rural county remains a considerable challenge and the underlying causes for this lack of progression require further investigation.
- Clients in Carrickmacross have to travel to Monaghan for many of the lessons, as this is where they complete the test. The Driving Instructor was unable to collect the clients in Carrickmacross, which meant an extra cost for their travel to Monaghan and additional logistical challenges.
- For clients who require more than the 12 funded lessons, the cost of additional lessons may be a contributing factor to their delay in booking the driving test.

## **Recommendations**

- *Establishment of support programme for driving theory tests*
  - 52% of clients who were interested in the scheme did not complete their theory test. This would indicate the need for a 'theory-test support programme', possibly within the education system.
- *Contract a Driving Instructor in South Monaghan to take clients to Dundalk for tests*
  - As the driving test was located in Monaghan Town, it meant that most of the lessons had to be completed in Monaghan town as well. Logistically, it was difficult for South Monaghan clients to get to Monaghan Town for lessons and the distance involved meant the instructor was unable to collect the client in Carrickmacross and drop home afterwards. The possibility of directing South Monaghan clients to lessons in Dundalk requires exploration as public transport connections from Carrickmacross make Dundalk easier to access.
- *Link the driving support to career planning course/life coaching*

- Many of the clients presenting to the scheme have complex needs regarding different aspects of their lives. It would be beneficial for each client participating in the driving programme to complete the SICAP Life Coaching course.
- *More publicity of scheme especially in disadvantaged communities*
  - There may be a need for improved publicity of the driving programme with specific emphasis on disadvantaged areas of the County. Linking in with other programmes and services operating in these areas would be a good means to attract new clients into the programme.
- *Clients must complete funded lessons within 6 months of receiving offer of support*
  - Some clients who participated on the programme had a significant gap between lessons, which may have contributed to a delay in learning to drive and applying for, or passing, the test. We recommend that all clients who participate on the programme avail of the lessons within 6 months of commencing the scheme.

## Concluding Reflections on the Programme

The SICAP team feel the programme has been very successful to date and the evidence backs this up. An understanding driving instructor plays a key role. We were fortunate that the instructor who secured the tender was a previous MID client who was sympathetic to the needs and background of the clients.

However, as stated previously, the key outcome sought was not to get the participants a driving licence. It was activation - getting the participants to be pro-active in doing one thing, which in turn might lead them to participate in other opportunities that may better their lives.

To date, this has been very successful in terms of engagement with the NEET client group. Of the 31 clients who participated in the programme, 6 have achieved a driving licence with only one person not completing the twelve funded lessons. It is also of note that many of the remaining 34 clients who expressed an interest in the programme but did not progress to driving lessons had their minds opened to new possibilities. They have since participated in other SICAP supports including life coaching, manual handling, occupational first aid & Safepass as a result.



Siobhan Fox delighted with passing the test



Laverty School of Motoring