



# **Migrant Integration and Social Cohesion Strategy 2019 - 2024**

## **Executive Summary**

# Executive Summary

This document is a summary of Fingal County Council's Migrant Integration and Social Cohesion Strategy 2019-2024. The main goals of the strategy are to make sure Fingal County Council's services meet the needs of the diverse population and contribute to making Fingal a place where:

- » all who live, work and visit are valued, and
- » everyone can play a full part in community life, regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, religious or cultural background.

The strategy is supported by an action plan. In this summary, we will tell you about the strategy, what we are doing – and how you can help.

This summary has three parts:

1. Why do we need a Migrant Integration and Social Cohesion Strategy?
2. How did we develop the strategy?
3. How do we plan to improve our services to make it easier for migrants to access services and integrate into community life?

## Who do we mean when we talk about migrants?

When we talk about migrants or people from migrant background, we mean people who were not born in Ireland, but who now live here. The term also refers to their children, born in Ireland or outside.

This plan was developed by Fingal County Council with the help of people who live and work in Fingal as well as other experts.

You can read the full strategy at: [www.fingal.ie](http://www.fingal.ie)

# 1. Why do we need a Migrant Integration and Social Cohesion Strategy?

Here are four points on why this strategy is necessary.

## 1. Nearly 1 in 6 people living in Fingal are non-Irish nationals

Fingal's population is approaching 300,000. Of these, nearly 16% (about 47,400) are non-Irish nationals.

## 2. There are high numbers of migrants in some areas of Fingal

People from a migrant background live in all parts of Fingal, but some areas have a higher migrant population than others. For instance, in six of the 42 areas (Electoral Divisions) less than half the population are 'white Irish'. 'The family-and-friends-effect' can lead to this high concentration as people arrive to an area where a family member or friend has already settled. This leads to a network of support among migrants in that area.

## 3. We need to recognise greater diversity

People from migrant backgrounds bring greater diversity to Fingal and vary in terms of:

- » **age,**
- » **socio-economic background,**
- » **religious beliefs and customs, and**
- » **ability to speak English.**

## 4. We need to appreciate the opportunities and challenges of diversity

A diverse population presents opportunities in terms of:

- » **new business ideas,**
- » **cultural richness, and**
- » **new language skills.**

But diversity can also present challenges such as how we can provide appropriate services to a changing population. This strategy will help us to respond to these challenges and continue to welcome those who have settled in Fingal.

# 2. How did we develop the strategy?

First, we set up three groups to help us develop the strategy and make sure both the strategy and action plan meet the needs of people who live, work and visit Fingal. These three groups are:

## 1. Fingal County Council's internal working group

This is a group of senior staff members who will make sure the strategy is implemented and the actions are achieved.

## 2. Community Integration Advisory Council (CIAC)

This is a group of representatives from community groups who:

- » **gave advice on how to develop the strategy,**
- » **helped get feedback from the community on the strategy, and**
- » **identified the issues that we need to work on first.**

This group has now completed its work and a Migrant Integration Forum will be set up by the Public Participation Network (PPN). The PPN is a network of local groups that helps improve communication between the Council and community, voluntary and environmental groups. The new Migrant Integration Forum (group) will be made up of representatives from Irish and migrant communities and will help us achieve the actions in our action plan.

## 3. An Expert Advisory Group

This is a group of experts and senior officials from organisations and agencies that work with, or provide services to, migrants and organisations that have developed similar strategies. They:

- » **advised us as we developed the strategy, and**
- » **will continue to meet each year to review progress on our action plan.**

# Who took part in the consultation?

A total of 576 people took part in the consultation. Members of CIAC who took part were representing the views of their groups, which provided us with a wide base of information. We gathered the views of:

- » **people who live in Fingal,**
- » **Fingal County Council staff, and**
- » **people in other organisations who provide services to migrants in Fingal and nationally.**

More than half of those who took part in the consultation were women. And, most (324) were aged between 30 and 59 years.

We gathered these views to:

- » **explore how Fingal County Council supports integration in the services it provides, and**
- » **identify areas for improvement.**

We gathered views through:

- » **online surveys with the public, staff and managers of our community facilities,**
- » **small group discussions with the public, staff and members of the CIAC, and**
- » **interviews with members of the Expert Advisory Group, staff, members of CIAC and other service providers.**

Of the 200 or so people who completed the public survey, about half (93) of them were non-Irish nationals or born outside Ireland.

In the public small group discussions (focus groups), the majority (78%) were non-Irish or born outside Ireland.

## 3. How do we plan to improve our services to make it easier for migrants to access services and integrate into community life?

From the information gathered during the consultation, we identified eight main areas for action:

1. **Engagement (making sure people know about our services)**
2. **Language as a barrier (to accessing and delivering services)**
3. **Communication and information**
4. **Integration**
5. **Cultural differences**
6. **Racism**
7. **Housing**
8. **Organisational matters**

The Community Integration Advisory Council (CIAC) looked at each of these eight areas and identified the issues that we needed to prioritise in the strategy. Some of these issues – and actions – overlap and require us to work with other agencies.

The rest of this summary looks at what you told us and what we plan to do.

## 1. Engagement (making sure people know about our services)

Most people (88%) who took part in the consultation use Fingal County Council Services. The most popular services are libraries, community centres, sports and arts facilities, and the website (www.fingalcoco.ie).

**You said ...**

**... you don't know much about our services.**

**We will ...**

**... promote Fingal County Council's Services.**

We will promote our services using public information sessions, produce and distribute a short list of services and explore other ways to communicate with you about services such as social media.

## 2. Language as a barrier (to accessing and delivering services)

We work with groups and organisations to provide English language conversation opportunities and classes in libraries and community centres.

**You said ...**

**... language is a barrier to accessing and delivering services. We need to give you information, and look for your views, in appropriate languages.**

Staff told us they didn't know the right words to use when speaking about 'migrants', 'new communities' and 'integration'. They were also worried when non-English speakers arrived with someone to act as a translator. Staff didn't know if the translation was accurate or if the translator was independent (that is, if they had the non-English speaker's best interests at heart).

**We will ...**

**... give clear information**

We will make sure our information is easy to understand and uses plain language – no matter which language we provide information in.

**... develop translation and interpretation services**

We will explore the possibility of using staff with relevant language skills, qualified interpreters, and volunteers to help with translation and interpretation.

**... encourage staff to learn and use new languages**

We will find out which languages our staff already know and help them use these languages. We will also help them to learn new languages.

**... train staff about cultural differences**

We will provide training to give staff a better understanding of cultural diversity and how to interact with people of different cultures and backgrounds.

**... support English language classes**

We will work with local providers of English language classes to make sure English classes, where possible, are provided locally, widely advertised, available at low cost and include options for further study.

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### 3. Communication and information

We recognise the vital role of clear communication in delivering services, and finding the right staff to answer your questions is key.

**You said ...**

**... that our staff were helpful, gave information and advice, answered questions and supported community groups (75%). Most of you (77%) also said the information we produced was easy to understand, but those who didn't were mainly migrants.**

Communication can still be a major barrier to accessing and delivering services and exchanging accurate information. The website needs to be easy to navigate and communicate more clearly. Application forms, particularly housing and community funding forms, can be difficult to understand and fill in.

Staff told us they often need more time when working with people who have limited English. They find it difficult to explain to people the reasons for a decision. Staff also said they did not always know about services from other agencies that they could suggest to help people.

**We will ...****... train our staff**

We will make sure we train staff to give accurate information about our services. We will look at the possibility of a 'Cultural Mediator'. This person would help fill gaps due to cultural differences, lack of knowledge of our services, and how we work.

**... improve our internal communication**

We will look at ways to better share information within the council, particularly where services overlap. This will help staff direct you to the most appropriate department.

**... provide clear information to the public**

We will improve how we communicate with you by providing clear information on our services and how they work. We will produce short, easy-to-understand lists of our services along with a list of important contacts. We will make sure the website is easy to use, and we will explore other ways to communicate with you.

**... work with other agencies to keep our information relevant**

We will work closely with other agencies that provide information about our services to make sure the information they provide is up to date and clear.

**... make sure we provide important documents in plain language**

We will make sure that all information, especially information about housing and community funding applications, is clear, concise, easy to understand and written in plain language.

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### 4. Integration

Integration is about interacting with others, understanding and respect between cultures in a community. It takes place where people meet naturally such as in schools, parks, libraries and sporting activities. Children and young people, in particular, can be great at helping communities integrate.

**You said ...****... people of migrant background are not visible at events in the county.**

Funding is needed to support integration initiatives. Places where groups can meet can be difficult to access – and expensive. Volunteers running groups need support. Some residents do not mix with neighbours due to 'cultural differences'. There needs to be more opportunities for people to meet and take part in clubs and community facilities. We need to review our policies to make sure they support integration.

**We will ...****... look at appointing an Integration Officer**

We will look at the possibility of appointing a staff member with responsibility for integration matters.

**... involve people in county-wide events**

We will make sure the voice of migrants or people from migrant backgrounds are included in large events such as Flavours of Fingal.

**... include integration in our policy documents**

We will make sure all future policies and reports support integration and include actions from this strategy. We will also look at how best we can measure integration in our services.

**... promote ways to interact with others**

We will set up a Migrant Integration Forum. This will be made up of representatives from Irish and migrant communities. We will ask the Public Participation Network (PPN) to look at ways to encourage different nationalities, including Irish, to attend events which promote interaction. We will work with other organisations on initiatives that promote integration. We will continue to support youth groups to promote integration and will develop a directory of local clubs and interest groups.

**... include ways in community funding to help integration**

We will publish clear guidelines for community funding and include ways to promote integration. We will support new groups to ensure they can meet the criteria for funding.

**... use community and sports facilities better**

We will look at how we can make better use of community and sports centres and staff to develop relationships with all community groups. We will make sure community centres have clear rules for booking rooms.

**... encourage involvement in sporting activities**

We will look at ways to make sure that the sporting groups we support welcome people of all cultural backgrounds. We will continue to encourage people from migrant backgrounds to get involved in playing and volunteering in sports.

**... encourage integration in housing**

We will encourage neighbours to welcome and get to know each other through initiatives such as 'Hello Neighbour'. This initiative is where trained volunteers act as neighbourhood visitors. We will encourage people to set up residents and tenants associations where none exist. And, we will continue to support residents and tenants association and help them to achieve greater integration in their associations.

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## 5. Cultural differences

Understanding cultural differences can be challenging for both staff and migrants. Staff appreciated being able to openly discuss issues of cultural differences during the consultations.

**You said ...****... there is a lack of diversity among staff in Fingal County Council.**

Staff told us they did not know enough about cultural differences, and this can be challenging when dealing with people from various cultural backgrounds.

A particular problem was around gender with male customers not always acknowledging female staff. CIAC suggested that training be provided to migrants on Irish culture to migrants.

**We will ...****... improve the ethnic mix among staff**

We will promote employment opportunities in Fingal County Council within migrant groups, in schools and at community events. We will work with Technological University Dublin Blanchardstown Campus to promote employment opportunities among graduates.

**... provide cultural support and training**

We will provide training for staff and opportunities for them to discuss issues of cultural diversity which they may experience in work. We will also look at how we can promote training on Irish culture through other organisations for people from migrant backgrounds.

**... celebrate diversity**

We will celebrate cultural diversity in Fingal at local and county-wide events. We will look at the possibility of setting up a Fingal Cultural Diversity Day and holding a Fingal Diversity Conference to share experiences and examples of good practice.

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## 6. Racism

While racism is a challenge, some services in the county are responding positively. For example, local schools were noted for good practices in tackling racism.

**You said ...****... there is racially-motivated anti-social behaviour in some housing estates and a view among some people that migrants are 'getting preferential treatment' in the way housing is being allocated.**

Our staff told us they are afraid of 'being labelled racist'.

**We will ...****... challenge racism**

We will work with schools and local businesses to develop an anti-racism campaign. We will also explore the possibility of developing a campaign to challenge widely held false beliefs. We will work with An Garda Síochána to try out initiatives that encourage integration in areas where large numbers of people from migrant backgrounds live.

**... complaints procedure**

We will have procedures and supports in place to deal with complaints of racism from staff and customers.

**... continue with our induction programme for new tenants**

We will look at including modules on anti-social behaviour and racism on our Tenant Induction Programme (the programme for tenants new to an estate). We will review our anti-social behaviour policy.

## 7. Housing

Fingal County Council build communities, not just houses, and provide community and sports facilities. We also support residents and tenants associations.

### You said ...

... the housing application form is unclear and the allocation of housing is complex. A large number of people from migrant backgrounds live in a small number of areas. We need to put in place initiatives in communities and housing estates to encourage neighbours to positively engage and get to know one another. We also need to support residents and tenants associations in new estates. Services for new housing estates need to be considered at the planning stage.

### We will ...

#### ... improve access to housing services

We will set up a translation and interpretation service and train identified staff to deal with people from migrant backgrounds who find it hard to access housing services.

#### ... work to make housing information more accessible

We will explore the possibility of re-designing the Housing Application Form and make sure the allocation process is clear.

#### ... encourage integration

We will encourage neighbours to get to know and welcome each other. We will also continue to support residents and tenants associations. Staff in our community and sports centres will encourage people from migrant backgrounds to get involved in activities. When we plan new housing developments, we will make sure there are services and supports in place to help people integrate.

## 8. Organisational matters

Fingal County Council needs to lead and work with others to help migrants integrate. The consultation process helped us see different ways we, as an organisation, can promote integration. For example, our community centres are a good link and support for developing better relationships with community groups.

### You said ...

... we need to consult with, and listen to, people from migrant backgrounds and they need to be more visible among staff, in documents and at local elections. We need to support the provision of English language classes and support Fingal Ethnic Network. We also need to take the lead on integration within Fingal.

### We will ...

#### ... improve two-way communication

We will set up ways, such as the Migrant Integration Forum, to ensure ongoing communication and conversations with migrants. We will do more to develop relationships and links with migrant groups through our libraries, arts facilities and communities and sports facilities.

#### ... ensure migrant representation

We will use the Migrant Integration Forum, when it is set up, to help us achieve the actions in our action plan and encourage people from migrant backgrounds to get involved in community groups.

We will look at how county councillors can help candidates from migrant backgrounds in local elections. We will look at bringing the voter registration day to more locations and make sure that material on voter registration is available in appropriate languages.

#### ... make migrants visible

We will promote employment opportunities in Fingal County Council among migrant groups and make sure the images in our documents reflect the diverse population of Fingal.

#### ... support Fingal Ethnic Network

We will support Fingal Ethnic Network to define its role in the context of the implementation of this strategy.

#### ... work with other agencies

We will work with other agencies to find out where English language classes are available and where there are gaps. We will look at how best to work with other agencies and organisations to promote integration and social cohesion.



### ... provide leadership to the wider Fingal community

We will develop a Fingal Diversity Charter. This charter is a written commitment by organisations to promote integration and embrace cultural diversity within their organisations. It will also encourage businesses and organisations to take an active approach to integration.

We will also look at the possibility of introducing a Cultural Diversity Day and invite local businesses to share good examples of integration.

## All great ideas but how will we make sure they happen?

We have set up five groups, each led by a department within Fingal County Council which are responsible for making sure we do what we said we would do.

1. **The Corporate Affairs Department is responsible for actions relating to organisation-wide initiatives such as policy and staffing.**
2. **The Department of Economic, Enterprise & Tourism Development is responsible for actions relating to businesses and employment in Fingal.**
3. **The Chief Executive's Office and the Communications Office is responsible for actions relating to information and communications.**
4. **The Department of Community, Culture & Sports is responsible for actions relating to community integration initiatives, cultural differences and racism.**
5. **The Housing Department is responsible for actions relating to housing supports in Fingal.**

These five groups will provide a report each year to the Expert Advisory Group and the Migrant Integration Forum.



Thank you for reading this executive summary of the Migrant Integration and Social Cohesion Strategy. You can read the full report online at: [www.fingal.ie](http://www.fingal.ie)



25  
BLIANA  
YEARS

Comhairle Contae  
Fhine Gall  
Fingal County  
Council



An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt  
agus Comhionannais  
Department of Justice  
and Equality

Plain  
English  
Approved by NALA

