Evaluation of SICAP
Pre-Employment Supports

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WEBINAR LAUNCH

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INTRODUCTION

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Introduction I

- **Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)**

  ➢ Provides funding to tackle poverty, social exclusion and long-term unemployment through local engagement and partnerships between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies

- **Pre-Employment Supports**

  ➢ Study focuses on the employment assistance given to individuals deemed to be furthest from the labour market who are both long-term unemployed (unemployed for two years or more) and have low levels of educational attainment (Leaving Certificate or less).

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Introduction II

- Given the sharp rise in total unemployment in Q1 2020, due to the Covid-19 crisis, it is likely that the **total number experiencing long-term unemployment** will rise into the future

  ➢ Those remaining outside paid employment for longer durations are often those who face an **array of disadvantages** and require appropriate preparation before they can be considered **'employment-ready'**

- Very difficult to source **data on pre-employment interventions** and a **comparable control group** to allow for the estimation of a counterfactual

  ➢ Even if available, it is expected that the participants in such a programme will have a **complex and diverse range of needs** meaning that they are currently quite distant from the labour market

- **Quantitative approach alone will not be sufficient** to capture the effects of such programmes

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METHODOLOGY

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ESRI Approach

Three Strands of Research:

1. Detailed Profile of Participants

2. Standard Counterfactual Analysis

3. Qualitative Analysis

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1. Detailed Profile of Participants

- Enabled us to identify formally, using econometric modelling techniques, the **key attributes** of individuals in receipt of SICAP pre-employment supports (the treatment group) with those of individuals with not in receipt of pre-employment supports (the control group), in terms of:

  - **Individual characteristics** such as age, education and gender;
  - **Barriers to inclusion** faced by participants such as disability, housing difficulties, belonging to an ethnic minority, being a lone parent etc.;
  - **Spatial factors** such as small area level of deprivation, population density, urbanization, geographic location

- Help inform the qualitative aspect of the study

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2. Counterfactual Analysis I

In order **to measure the impact of pre-employment supports**, we must have access to data that allows us to do the following:

- Identify a **"treatment group"** of individuals who have benefited from pre-employment supports under SICAP;

- Identify a **"control group"** of individuals who are similar to the treatment group in terms of their key observable characteristics who did not engage in any pre-employment supports;

- **Compare the employment outcomes** of the treatment and control groups some time after the pre-employment supports were administered to the treatment group;

- **Ensure that the estimated treatment impact is robust** by eradicating any potential differences in observables between the control and treatment group that could also be correlated with the outcome variables.

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2. Counterfactual Analysis II

❑ Begin by identifying a **pre-employment treatment group** within the 2018 IRIS data using the following criteria:

➢ Those <u>unemployed for 2 years or more</u>, and

➢ <u>Educated to Leaving Certificate or below</u>, and

➢ Received <u>at least one employment type intervention in 2018</u>

• **Employment type interventions include:**

➢ G2:4 - *Preparing people for employment and to remain in work*

➢ G2:5 - *Promoting better quality and sustainable employment*

➢ G2:6 - *Providing a pathway to self-emp./social entrepreneurship*

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2. Counterfactual Analysis III

❑ In contrast, the **pre-employment control group** consists of individuals within the 2018 IRIS data who were:

➢ <u>Unemployed for 2 years or more</u>, and

➢ <u>Educated to Leaving Certificate or below</u>, and

➢ Have **<u>no record of receiving an employment type intervention in 2017 or 2018</u>**

❑ **Rationale for this approach:** The difference in the employment outcomes between the 'treatment' and 'control' groups will give us a measure of the treatment groups likely progression rates in the absence of employment supports i.e. the counterfactual

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3. Qualitative Analysis

❑ A short postal/email **survey of LDCs -** 91% response rate

❑ Selection of **five case-study areas** for further analysis

➢ In-depth **interviews** conducted with LDCs CEOs and staff, participants, local employers, and key policy stakeholders

  ▪ Used to unpack the impact of participation on the development of:

  ▪ **soft skills** - **key work skills** (team work, communication, literacy, timekeeping), **attitudinal skills** (motivation, confidence, responsibility, self-esteem), **personal skills** (appearance, attendance, timekeeping) and **practical skills** (ability to complete forms, manage money, complete a CV etc.) (such as self-confidence, self-presentation)

  ▪ **participant plans for the future**

➢ **Interviews** with current & former programme participants, examining:

  ▪ **individual experiences** on the programme

  ▪ **perceived impacts** on their employability & personal/social development

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FINDINGS FROM COUNTERFACTUAL ANALYSIS

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Distribution of Interventions (at least 1) by Programme Goals

Intervention Goal	Overall (%)	Control (%)	Treated (%)
G2:1 - Promoting personal development and wellbeing	18.4	41.2	8.6
G2:2 - Providing lifelong learning opportunities	34.7	66.7	0.0
G2:3 - Preventative supports for young people	1.2	0.8	0.0
G2:4 - Preparing people for employment & to remain in work	31.8	0.0	56.7
G2:5 - Promoting better quality and sustainable employment	1.6	0.0	0.7
G2:6 - Providing a pathway to self-employment/social entrepreneurship	26.7	0.0	44.3
Total	*31,665*	*1,554*	*2,758*

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Profile of participants

❑ Of all SICAP participants, those with lower levels of education (LC or below) and those who are unemployed for 2 or more years are considerably **less likely to move into employment/self-employment** (11 and 5 percentage points, respectively)

❑ Furthermore, progression into employment/self-employment for pre-employment participants is found to be **<u>lower</u>** for:
- ➢ Females;
- ➢ Lone parents;
- ➢ Older participants (55+);
- ➢ Those living in more disadvantaged areas;
- ➢ Reporting a disability;
- ➢ Ethnic minority;
- ➢ and/or a transport barrier.

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Probit and PSM Models of Progression I

❑ When compared to a similar control group individuals:

➢ 18 percentage points more likely to progress to any employment
➢ 8 percentage points more likely to progress to employment only

Variables	Probit	PSM (ATT)	Pseudo R2 (Pre)	Pseudo R2 (Post)	MH Bounds	N
Employment/ Self-Employment	0.134*** (0.017)	0.177*** (0.011)	0.100***	0.002	5.7	2,744
Employment	0.060*** (0.014)	0.080*** (0.009)	0.070***	0.002	2.7	2,025

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Probit and PSM Models of Progression II

- It is possible for us to make a further restriction to examine the outcomes for those with educational attainment of **Junior Cert or below** only

  - When compared to a similar control group individuals:
    - 17 percentage points more likely to progress to any employment
    - 7 percentage points more likely to progress to employment only

Variables	Probit	PSM (ATT)	Pseudo R2 (Pre)	Pseudo R2 (Post)	MH Bounds	N
Employment/ Self-Employment	0.127*** (0.021)	0.167*** (0.022)	0.141***	0.004	5.7	1,433
Employment	0.051*** (0.015)	0.067*** (0.011)	0.104***	0.002	2.25	1,103

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What determines progression?

❑ Results are driven by **one-to-one interventions** rather than group supports.

  ➢ One-to-one supports **cover a range of tailored activities**, including encouragement and mentoring, job search assistance, CV preparation, facilitating help in areas of literacy and mental health, in addition to providing assistance in making phone calls or filling out job applications and aiding participants to overcome practical barriers to employment or self-employment.

❑ The **number of employment interventions** have a positive impact on employment and self-employment

  ➢ The first employment intervention increases the likelihood of progressing into employment by approximately **6%,** two such interventions by **17%** and three or more such interventions by **22%**
  ➢ **Impacts are larger when progression to self-employment** is included

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Additional Robustness Checks

- Positive treatment effects are **not driven by any particular LDC** as they remain when we control for LDC within the models

- **Government employment schemes** appear to play a role
    - Positive employment treatment effects remain (impact falls from 6% to 4% in terms of employment) when we exclude those reporting employment on such schemes i.e. CE and Tús

- Using the information gathered as part of the European Social Fund (ESF) requirements, treatment **effects are found to remain six months after exiting SICAP**
    - The estimated impacts are of a similar magnitude to our short-run estimates highlighting that the impacts are somewhat persistent, at least, in the short-to-medium term

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QUALITATIVE RESULTS FROM CASE STUDIES

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Perceptions of LDC CEOs, Staff and Other Stakeholders

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Perceptions of LDC CEOs, Staff and Other Stakeholders I

❑ **Growing complexity** of need; **Multiple barriers** experienced by beneficiaries

➢ Significant **variation in needs:**
  - Age (younger and older beneficiaries), those with **little or no work experience**, those who wished to enter **self-employment**, experiencing **addiction** and/or other **mental health issues**, those with **low levels of educational attainment**, **language and literacy skills**, and those experiencing **homelessness**

- Implications for the **kind and intensity of supports** required

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Perceptions of LDC CEOs, Staff and Other Stakeholders II

❑ Provided **valuable insights into the processes** underlying the positive counterfactual estimate:

➢ The nature of provision is **heavily client-led** and **strongly informed** by the kinds of employment available locally

➢ For some groups, progression into **employment is a long-term process**, with the need for considerable work on **softer skills** initially

➢ LDCs who offer other employment services further emphasised the **flexibility** that this provides them with to respond to the particular needs and assist the progression of SICAP beneficiaries

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Perceptions of LDC CEOs, Staff and Other Stakeholders III

❑ LDCs reported some **difficulties in involving some groups**

  ❑ Especially members of the Traveller and Roma community and migrants

  ❑ Despite engaging with SICAP, these groups are reported to face significant barriers in accessing employment

❑ **Transport also emerged as a significant barrier** to accessing education, training and employment in rural areas, and can also pose challenges in offering SICAP supports to those in more remote areas

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Perceptions of SICAP Beneficiaries

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Perceptions of SICAP Beneficiaries I

❑ Interviews with those who were **engaged or had engaged in the past with employment and self-employment supports** through SICAP

❑ Overall, **very positive** about the assistance they received
  ➤ Valued the one-to-one support as well as the courses provided

❑ All described a **trajectory from low self-confidence to a renewed ability to engage** with courses and/or apply for jobs
  ➤ A pattern they attributed to the on-going nature of support and the role of follow-up coaching provided by LDC staff
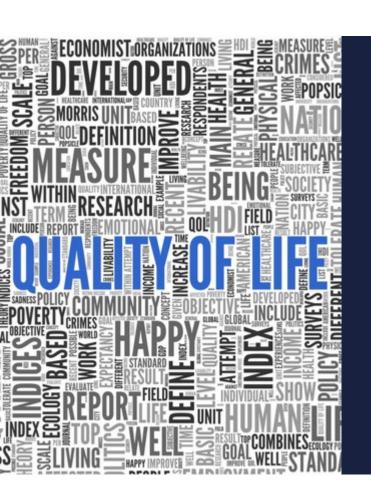
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Perceptions of SICAP Beneficiaries II

❑ Interviewees mentioned the **personal qualities of staff**, especially their warmth and empathy

  ➢ Most had remained in contact with the LDC for on-going 'top-up' advice and support

❑ While many participants had made the **transition to employment or other education/training**, all emphasised the impact of the support received on their **personal development**, especially their **self-confidence**

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CONCLUSIONS

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Overarching Conclusions I

❑ **Positive counterfactual impact on employment** for both employment and self-employment interventions

  ❑ When compared to a similar control group individuals:
  - ➢ **18 percentage points more likely to progress to any employment**
  - ➢ 8 percentage points more likely to progress to employment only
  - ➢ 30 percentage points more likely to progress to self-employment only

❑ **Effects are found to persist six months**

❑ Results **driven by employment interventions** rather than group supports
  - ➢ **Motivation and confidence** had developed as a result of the supports
  - ➢ **Supportive relationship with staff** was seen as central

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Overarching Conclusions II

❑ **One-to-one supports** were viewed as crucial

➢ **Contact maintained over a significant period** to support beneficiaries in engaging with and remaining on courses or finding and staying in employment

❑ **Courses** were often used in supplementing one-to-one support

➢ Workshops on issues such as **tax returns or social media** for those moving into self-employment

➢ Courses designed to enhance **personal development/attitudinal skills** among the target group, often embedded in 'high interest' courses (such as driver theory) to attract participants
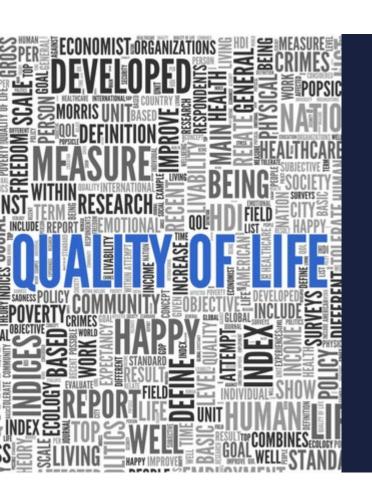
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Overarching Conclusions IIII

❑ LDCs played a key role in providing a **connection to local services and stakeholders**

   ❑ Provision of **other employment services** at LDC level also appeared to shape the kinds of employment supports offered

   ❑ Highlighted **the lack of mental health/psychological services** locally

   ❑ Variation in the level of **contact with employers** across LDCs
- ➤ Those with a **caseload facing multiple barriers reporting greater challenges** in engaging with employers
- ➤ Greater scope for some LDCs to **strengthen links with employers** either directly, or through increased interaction with the regional skills fora, DEASP job fairs, etc.

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IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

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Implications for Policy I

❑ In the context of the high unemployment rates, the long-term unemployed and economically inactive are increasingly made up of **those facing multiple barriers**

    ❑ LDCs highlighted the lack of self-confidence, alongside a large range of more challenging issues i.e. poor mental health, substance abuse and homelessness among the target group

❑ In rural areas access to, and the costs of, **transport seen as persistent barriers** to the target group engaging with education, training and employment

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Implications for Policy II

❑ SICAP employment supports are part of a **broader suite of employment supports**
  ▪ Emerges as occupying a **distinctive place** in this context
    ➢ Flexible & personalised supports (both individual & group)
    ➢ Holistic approach
    ➢ Voluntary nature of engagement
    ➢ Niche self-employment supports

❑ Approach was seen by LDCs, stakeholders and beneficiaries as especially important in working with **individuals most distant from the labour market**
  ▪ **Outreach work** has been successfully used by many LDCs to engage harder to reach groups and there is potential for this work to be further extended
  ▪ Need for more **extended tracking** of individuals accessing SICAP employment supports, ideally optimised by linking into official administrative datasets (long-run impacts)

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