Generation Irish
Intergenerational working in the Irish community of Luton
“There are so many of us who are first, second and third generation Irish in Luton. So, it's really important to keep our culture going, and make sure the young ones know that we have a strong force here in Luton.”

Marie Sexton, festival goer at Luton St Patrick’s Festival, 2017
Introduction

Luton Irish Forum aims through research and discovery, to define the emerging needs of the Irish community in Luton. Outcomes and discoveries will enable us to provide guidance to other Irish organisations in Britain that largely serve older members of the Irish community and which aim to engage with their younger members.

This guidance will enable these organisations to address the diverse and evolving needs of younger Irish emigrants and in particular second and third generations. It will provide guidance to enable young people to celebrate, maintain and strengthen their links with Ireland and Irish culture, fostering a more vibrant sense of community and of Irish identity.

We carried out this project as we see it is important for the sustainability of Irish and other BME organisations in the UK.

Background

Luton Irish Forum has been identifying for several years that, there is a generational gap in its client base. Currently, we successfully provide welfare support, social and cultural services and activities to an ageing community of first generation Irish who were predominantly part of the wave of Irish migrants to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s. These community members are the predominant users of our building as part of various social groups and have the majority representation on our board of trustees. The other generational group we serve, is our Baby and Toddler Group, predominantly made up of mothers in their mid 20s to late 30s and toddlers up to school entry age.

There is a defined gap of people of working age 20-60yrs, young people 12-19yrs and children 6-11yrs. There is, however, evidence of support from the ‘missing’ generations of our organisation, most prevalent at our annual Luton St Patrick’s Festival, annual women’s afternoon tea event and throughout the year via social media.

In 2016, as part of Luton Irish Forum’s Ireland 1916 : Luton 2016 Project, the targeting of youth engagement of 12-19yrs was piloted. A short term dedicated youth group was established and subsequently Luton Irish Forum’s Youth Board was formed. It was identified through consultation with the young people and observations by the commissioned Luton Irish Forum’s Youth & Heritage Officer, that the group, made up of both second and third generations 12-18yrs, all had strong ties with their Irish heritage through family, but also had strong sense of Britishness through national identity and education. What was identified early into the project, was that the young people formed bonds and friendships through comparing and
contrast their Irish experiences, often through food and humour. What was unexpected, was the discovery that the group gave them a safe space to voice their feelings of their Britishness and Irishness in differing family and social circles. Also, it gave them the space to voice their differing religious and political views to those of their parents and grandparents.

In early 2017, Cross Care Migrant Support completed a global survey of Irish welfare services and identified that the Luton Irish Forum’s youth group was the only Irish youth dedicated group outside of Irish dancing schools, traditional music groups and GAA youth teams in Europe, to their knowledge. With the only other known group of this type being in Philadelphia, USA. Both the Luton Irish Forum and the project in Philadelphia identified that their groups attracted second and third generations who did not necessarily engage with Irish dancing or GAA teams, which are traditional routes to engaging with Irish culture for Irish and those of Irish decent living outside of Ireland.

**Who are the second and third generations?**

There has been a wealth of academic study of the Irish communities in Britain, notably the Irish 2 Project, 2001, in which a large-scale study of Irish communities in major UK cities was conducted. This has brought about the definitions we commonly use and the approaches we use in supporting the Irish communities through a network of Irish welfare services, clubs and associations. Generations of Irish decent have commonly been defined as ‘first generation’ being born in Ireland, ‘second generation’ born of parents or one parent born in Ireland and ‘third generation’ born of grandparents or one grandparent born in Ireland. (Walter, 2005)

The position of second and third generations in a multi-cultural Britain is different to those of ‘visible’ minority ethnic groups. Being from a majority white community, having local accents and cultural similarities, it is assumed that they are ‘white’ English (Modood, 1996: Goullbourne 1998) this leaves them feeling detached from migrant communities they come from. (Walter, 2016)

In 1997 a racial equality report ‘Discrimination and the Irish Community in Britain’ was published, which was the catalyst for White Irish being included as a separate ethnic group in the 2001 census, with the hope of capturing the English-born children and grandchildren and further descendants who choose to identify as Irish. Irish organisations in Britain promoted this new ethnicity option leading up to the 2001 and 2011 census but still only a small proportion used the White Irish category. It is suggested that most people of Irish descent do not tick this box, either because the wording is confusing or because of the lack of credibility for the ‘second-generation Irish’. It is also suggested that possibly some preferred to identify as English having lost links with their Irishness. (Walter, 2015)

The 2001 Census, the first to include a separate category for “Irish”, showed Luton to have a far larger Irish population than the country as a whole (White Irish - Luton 4.7%, England 1.3%) it is thought that many Irish descent were unaware of the opportunity to do this, and so it is believed that this figure is an under-representation.

It is thought that a realistic estimate of the Irish population, to include subsequent generations born in this country would take the Irish-born population and multiply it by 2.5, giving a rounded percentage of 12.5% of the total population, making the Irish the largest single ethnic group. This will of course also be an underestimate as many of the first generation who lived here will no longer be registered on the census although their offspring may still form a part of the population. Even using the 4.7% recorded by the census as ethnic Irish, the Irish come out as the second largest single minority ethnic group in Luton, second only to Pakistani at 9.2%. (Duignan, 2004)

Accents play a big part in the perception of identity of second and third generations. Having a British accent means they are generally treated as British regardless of their Irish links, and ‘with an acceptance by these people that their English accent preclude[s] them from claiming an Irish identity’. (Walter 2008, 179) Creating a stigma around claiming they are Irish without an Irish accent.

How second and third generations identify themselves can frequently change to adapt to different situations, leaving them unable to form a strong identity. It has been suggested that the solution is to find a balance of identity that would enable second and third generations to express their Irishness that would meet their expectations, whilst retaining a level of Irishness for the first generation. This hybrid identity...
could reflect a better balance of both a person’s Irish cultural heritage and their British identity. (Walter, 2013)

This hybrid identity has been missing from formal documentation, even though the term ‘British-Irish’ appeared throughout the Good Friday Agreement (Hickman 2005). It is suggested that allowing this term to exist would show the first generation that the second and third generations are not trying to claim equal rights to identity, but simply celebrating their Irishness while retaining their loyalties to their Britishness. Examples of this hybrid identity already exist in Britain with organisations such as, London Irish Rugby Club, the Manchester Irish community, the Liverpool Irish Festival, the Coventry Irish Society, the Nottingham Irish Centre. (McElhatton, 2010)

Second generations are better positioned to recognise the differences in Irish and English or British cultures, as they live across cultural boundaries of the two, within their own families and outside. Often this is harder for their parents and to recognise. (Walter, 2016)

Many participants of the Irish 2 Project in 2001, identified the greater sociability experienced in Irish families, with music, dancing and the involvement of children at family events setting apart events in Irish families and communities, and showing a greater closeness of the generations within families that was not seen in the families of their English peers. (Walter, 2016)

Religion was also defined as an important factor in the cultural differences, with Irish families notably attending church more regularly and the display of religious iconography setting apart the Irish and English homes. Even with the relaxing of religious commitments, strong moral links remain within the Irish culture. (Walter, 2016)

Holidays ‘home’ have played a big part in the experiences of many second and third generations. Spending summer holidays in often rural areas with extended families of aunts, uncles and cousins played a pivotal part in second and third generations’ experiences of being part of large families and the sociability surrounding them. For many it was also a way of learning Irish history that was absent from their British school education, giving them an ‘alternative view of the political relationship between Britain and Ireland, making them resistant to discrimination.’ (Walter, 2013, 02)

It is suggested that in Britain there has never been a way to be Irish-British or British-Irish...which is remotely comparable with the way in which it is perfectly acceptable for people to claim to be Irish-American’ (Hickman, 2007, 04) (Walter, 2013)

A new generation

With significant studies being carried out in the late 1990s and early 2000s there is little up to date insight and data surrounding second and third generation young people in Britain, who have been newly coined Millennials and Post-Millennials, or within political and economically terms, ‘post-Celtic Tiger’ and ‘post-Peace Agreement’ generations.

There has however, been several new studies looking at first generation migrants with ‘The Generation Emigration website, launched by the Irish Times in 2011, conducting a survey of migrants in 2012, The London Irish Centre commissioning a study of new migrants in 2012, and National Youth Council of Ireland also undertaking a survey and interviews with migrants in London and Toronto in 2013. Also that year, University College Cork launched its report “Irish Emigration in an Age of Austerity” (Glynn, 2013) which combined an extensive survey of Irish households with interview data from recent migrants’. (Ryan and Kurdi 2014, 07)

In 2014 Middlesex University, in partnership with the Irish in Britain published a study which focused on the new generation, ‘post-Celtic Tiger’ and ‘post-Peace Agreement’, migrating to Britain, within the teaching profession. The study aimed to explore how might their experiences and expectations differ from earlier waves of Irish migrants to Britain. (Ryan and Kurdi 2014)

Their findings included:

» Few used Irish organisations as sources of information or support. Nonetheless, several were actively involved in Irish associations most notably the GAA – this applied to both male and female participants.

» Although most said they did not need to access practical support through Irish organisations, several noted that Irish social groups could serve an important need, especially for newly arrived people, those located in places outside London where it was harder to make friends, and young students who may feel quite lonely.

» Recently arrived migrants define their mobility in terms of choice, freedom and transience, in contrast to previous waves of migrants whom they associate with forced migration from Ireland and permanent settlement in Britain.

» The vast majority of participants said they felt no discrimination as Irish people in Britain and that Irish teachers were widely regarded as hard working professionals. However, a few, particularly those outside London, commented on the persistence or even resurgence of anti-Irish stereotypes.

» Almost all participants used new communication technologies to maintain regular contact with family and friends, not just in Ireland but scattered...
throughout the world.

» These teachers visited Ireland very often, partly because of their opportunities for frequent holidays, several remarked that proximity to home was a distinct advantage of Britain over other more far flung destinations.

» While most people intended to return to live in Ireland eventually, they were generally uncertain about when that might be. A significant number hoped to return home within 5 years, but many anticipated a prolonged stay in Britain, while others planned to move on elsewhere. The global reach of these migrants is noteworthy with a significant proportion having lived or intending to live in a country other than Ireland or Britain.

» Although most found it impossible to imagine settling down and having children in Britain, a number of those who had been here for several years had begun to consider this possibility. (Ryan and Kurdi, 2014, 50-51)

One of the recommendations made by the study within policy development was to:

» Tackle negative stereotyping in professional settings. While most participants had not experienced outright discrimination, there is an underlying 'casual racism' which continues to feature in day to day interaction for Irish people in Britain, even in professional settings. There is a need for dialogue about the impact and implications of persistent negative stereotyping, for example, anti-Irish 'jokes' and banter, and a recognition by employers and trade unions in Britain that this may negatively impact on experiences in the work place and should be addressed. (Ryan and Kurdi, 2014, 52)

The 2014 study highlighted the long-established needs of ongoing support of the newly arrived to combat loneliness, and the need to address issues of discrimination. But it also highlighted the significant differences in the attitudes and experiences compared to those in earlier waves, and offered insight into the current motivations and lifestyles of this new generation. (Ryan and Kurdi, 2014)

This leaves us with the question: If there has been significant change for the new first generations in our community in Britain, has there been change for the new second and third generations?

Aims of Study

Focusing on Irish and Irish descent young people under 30. This mixed method research project aims to establish if:

1. There is a lack of facilities/ activities/ opportunities for under 30s to gather as a social group in Luton.
2. The established traditional Irish activities in Britain of Irish music, Irish dancing and GAA sports (The Big Three) are the only need for the under 30s in Luton.
3. Cross cultural activity is required to engage the under 30s in Luton.

Methodology

This project used a range of methods including both quantitative and qualitative. We began with a secondary analysis of official data sources and previous academic research to provide a broad picture of the context of the experiences and attitudes of the Irish in Britain.

We then collected new data through an online survey using the Survey Monkey software. This survey was advertised through social media, via the Facebook pages of Luton Irish Forum, local GAA teams, local Irish dancing schools and local county associations, Luton Irish Forum’s Instagram page and paper surveys completed at theatre events at Luton St Patrick’s Festival 2019 and at clubs and activities at the Luton Irish Forum centre.

We received a total of 205 fully completed responses from across Luton (of which was the majority of respondents) and the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire counties, giving
us quantitative data on:

» Age range.
» Irish generation.
» National identity.
» Importance of Irishness to individual identity.
» Feelings of belonging.
» Attitudes towards cultural education for children and in schools.
» Influence of religion.
» Attitudes towards second and third generations.
» Successful events/ activities in Luton.
» Views of what is still needed.

Three in-depth interviews were carried out face to face, giving rich qualitative data on key issues such as:

» Irish identity.
» Community formation.
» Social networks.
» Involvement in Irish organisations.
» Events.
» Experiences of anti-Irish sentiment.
» Attitudes towards links with religion.
» Views on needs of further community development.

The profile of our participants represents a broad range of our existing networks, but we make no claim as to the representativeness of the wider Irish community in Luton, with us identifying a possible under representation of non-Catholic and mixed ethnicity Irish in Luton within our sampling.

Respondents to the questionnaire were asked to indicate if they were willing to be contacted for a face to face interview, as well as targeting potential participants using personal contacts within the Luton Irish Forum.

Results

Summary data results of the Generation Irish online survey.

The first generation are predominantly over 30 and the third generation are predominantly under 30. Substantial numbers of second generation present over and under 30s.

Surveys were conducted with people from a broad age range.

Higher percentages of both over 30s (59%) and under 30s (30%) identify as Irish. Under 30s (33%) identify with hybrid identities more than over 30s (24%).
88% of over 30s and 84% of under 30s feel Irishness is an important part of their identity.

73% of over 30s and 61% of under 30s feel part of an Irish community.

70% of over 30s and 76% of under 30s feel the Catholic religion is important to Irish culture.

75% of over 30s and 62% of under 30s think second and third generations should be considered Irish. More under 30s (14%) than over 30s (8%) think they shouldn’t.
Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagrees

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Neither agree nor disagree
### Analysis

A summary analysis of both survey data and individual interview responses.

### Other

- Trips to Ireland.
- Specific activities for second and third generations.

### Other

- Cultural learning for under 5s.
- Politics.
- Storytelling.
- Better engagement of Protestant Irish.
- Specific activities for second and third generations.
- Food.
- More social events.
- Inclusion of the surrounding Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire counties.
- Activities for people of working age.

---

Festival goer, Luton St Patrick’s Festival 2017
» First generation, under 30, are still migrating to Luton.
» 18% of under 30s are first generation, but 30% of under 30s identify as Irish. 62% think that second and third generations should be considered Irish, but with 58% thinking there is a stigma around being second and third generation.

When asked if she felt there was a stigma surrounding being second and third generation, Rachel from Luton reflected.

‘I think it can work kind of two ways possibly; people that are sort of fully Irish… from Ireland and from that I think they might see us as some plastic paddy that kind of gets put down to the drunk quite a lot. I was in Chicago with a guy from Dublin and I was chatting and said ‘Oh, my dad’s from Wexford. And he was like, ‘You’re from North London you can tell.’ But then I’m not saying I’m from Wexford, I’m saying where my dad is from. So I think there’s that kind of misconception. I think Americans don’t help with that. I think that on the other side; the flipside; anyone who’s from a completely English background can sometimes maybe have some unfair stereotypes that can be banded around quite easily. But, actually even the context could be quite offensive but it’s something we’ve kind of learnt to live with a lot of over the years. So yes, I think when you are sort of half and half you almost come up solidly in either camp. You are kind of seen as either Irish by English people or English by Irish people.

I think that people who are fully Irish, they’ll think that you are just going out as an excuse as it’s St Patrick’s Day to get blind drunk. They don’t necessarily think that you may go on family holidays there; that you still have connections there; that you haven’t got a rosy idea of Ireland you may actually realise it isn’t all thatched cottages there and there is actually a modern country now. Whereas for people from an English background completely, I think possibly influenced by their parents’ generation, they think of the IRA. I think that can be unfair. It’s a thing to think about maybe and think of how those stereotypes and passing down stereotypes. They do die down but I think it takes time to go?’

Fiona from Luton remarked on the discrimination she experienced at work.

‘Yeah, at work this person was like ‘You’re actually Irish?’ Well my dad’s from Ireland, I lived in Ireland for like six, seven years. I had half my life in Ireland, and he was like ‘but you’re not really Irish’. I was like, ‘Well I’m more Irish than you!’ So it’s kind of like, I know I’m not fully Irish, but I do class myself as Irish, just because half my life was spent in Ireland.’

» Both under and over 30s want Irishness as part of their identity. But Under 30s want to use hybrid identities more than over 30s.

Rachel remarked when discussing how she would describe her identity.

‘I don’t necessarily mean like on a census form that you would put down that you were Irish. Well, I wouldn’t class myself. If someone asked me in one word what nationality are you? I wouldn’t say I was Irish. I would say English or British. I think it’s almost like, on forms it does tend to be in the white section; it tends to be British, Irish or other, whereas if it’s a black or Asian background it does say I’m black British or Caribbean then it’s something like that where it doesn’t identify a choice.

I think it’s like I said before, when you’ve got people from a fully English background who haven’t had any sort of interaction with an Irish person - sounds bit weird but you know. Maybe add a category like they do with some Caribbean backgrounds, so on forms if it was seen as separate thing. British of Irish descent? So that that would I think make it more of a thing that you were of that sort of ethnic background if you like.

I think there is that thing that if you do something, you feel like a plastic paddy if you do say you’ve got sort of an Irish background. I’ve got friends who have got family from Jamaica. Someone Jamaican would never say that. They would say she had a strong foothold with that culture and identity as well. I think for Irish people it’s quite different. So I think if it were something like British-Irish on a form I think then people like myself would start to feel like oh you can have both’.

Fiona reflected on her feeling around second and third generations being considered Irish.

‘I think it depends. Because, if they’ve never been to Ireland and they’ve probably never met their grandparents then I don’t think so. But if they’re always in Ireland, then yeah’.

» 61% of under 30s feel part of an Irish community, with the majority of over and under 30s feeling ‘The Big Three’ meet the needs, but with the majority of both under and over 30s still wanting a variety of activities.

Heather from Luton responded to the question of the importance of Irishness on personal identity and commented on her sense of belonging to an Irish community.

‘My whole life revolves around it [laughing]. I work at the Irish Forum, I play football. I’m in an Irish pipe band… Yes I do [feel part of an Irish community] Part of the club [Claddagh Gaels LGFC] …Only since I was 18 and started coming here [Luton Irish Forum] really, other than that I think I’m English’.

Fiona reflected on her feelings of belonging to an Irish community.

‘I guess I do yeah. It’s like the St Patrick’s parade, you can get involved in it and then obviously it’s a massive celebration and everyone comes together,… I didn’t really need to come down here [Luton Irish Forum]. But, obviously being involved here last year [Youth and Community student placement] and speaking to like, older generation Irish people, it kind of brought back being back in Ireland. So, I felt like I was in Ireland’.
As well as 'The Big Three', Under 30s do not engage with Under and over 30s. ‘I think day to day? Not so much, this sense of belonging to an Irish community in Luton. I work in events, so I do know how much work goes on behind the scenes. I’d be interested to know from somebody who was completely alien to it about how they feel. But I have noticed over time and so have my friends…it is nice seeing people that have Eastern European accents. They’re not just walking through town, they are actually being involved with it which I think is healthy for the town as a whole. It’s a respect that there’s this group, you know an ethnic group, that’s really celebrating their roots, its culture and the hold that they have now and generations down. But at the same time it’s not closed shop….sort of inviting people to come in and participate as well. I think that’s really healthy for the town as a whole’.

Rachel reflects on how she feels Luton St Patrick’s Festival is inclusive and its effect on the perception of the town. ‘I work in events, so I do know how much work goes on behind the scenes. I’d be interested to know from somebody who was completely alien to it about how they feel. But I have noticed over time and so have my friends…it is nice seeing people that have Eastern European accents. They’re not just walking through town, they are actually being involved with it which I think is healthy for the town as a whole. It’s a respect that there’s this group, you know an ethnic group, that’s really celebrating their roots, its culture and the hold that they have now and generations down. But at the same time it’s not closed shop….sort of inviting people to come in and participate as well. I think that’s really healthy for the town as a whole’.

Rachel explains her views on the Luton Irish Forum’s positioning in engaging the under 30s, and offers insight into what activities she would like to see on offer.

[Luton St Patrick’s Festival] I think it’s the time where young people like myself, get engaged with being themselves as part of the Luton Irish community and like I have said before, there was maybe a feeling that the Forum was for the first generation

Fiona explained her feelings around the question of whether under 30s should be offered a variety of activities.

‘I feel like there should be more on offer, probably. Like I know here [Luton Irish Forum] they do like Irish language classes. So yeah I feel like there is a lot of things, but probably people [younger people] don’t know about it, because it’s not as popular as the three [The Big Three] because Irish dancing is so popular, and anyone who I speak too, and I’m like ‘oh Ireland’ they’re like ‘oh so Irish dancing?’

Heather remarked on the lack of opportunities outside the ‘Big Three’.

‘Well someone who doesn’t dance play music or play football. Where would they fit in? So I think the social aspect, like connecting people is missing. I’m not saying pub culture but yeah just talking and having a laugh.

Like I say if you don’t play football, dance then there’s not really much on for you. And, because Luton Irish Forum is kind of aimed at older people, I wouldn’t even say there is much on here for younger people either’.

» There is already a high sense of belonging and assumed services and activities. But 39% of under 30s do not feel this sense of belonging.

Rachel explained her views on her sense of belonging to an Irish community in Luton. ‘I think day to day? Not so much, but that’s because I’m not Catholic. I think if I was Catholic it might be a different story. I have friends who are second generation. They’ve gone through the classic Catholic school route like Sacred Heart and Cardinal Newman. So my dad is Catholic but I was christened CoE [Church of England] because my mum is. I think for them it was probably a stronger feeling but then when it comes to St Patrick’s day or something put on by the Forum, I think you do start to get a bit of a sense that you are part of that community as well, because you don’t feel like a sore thumb. You do feel that you are part of the celebrations’.

» Under and over 30s recognise a strong link between Catholicism and Irishness.

Rachel explains her view on the question of the influence for the Catholic religion on Irish culture.

‘I say it is yes tradition. I mean. For us we’ve still got a Sacred Heart [picture] up in the house and things like that. Lots of little knick knacks from Knock and Lourdes and things like that. I think every house is a bit that way with Irish people in it. Yeah. I’d say it still is an important part I think because mostly it’s a lot of people that moved over from Ireland and have their families here; for the most part, they would be Catholic. So, I think that they end up going to school and if you are Irish then you are Catholic you go to the same churches; you go to the same schools. There’s also a lot more ceremony if you like.

You get baptised then it’s communion and confirmations.

It’s about Irishness as opposed to sort of Catholicism although the two are very tightly ingrained. I think it’s a bit how Ireland is as a country. So I think the Catholic faith is diluting a bit more, not quite a stronghold, like when my dad was growing up, then I think there was a bit more. I think obviously with the repeal of the 8th and the gay marriage vote, I think it is slowly starting to come away from the influence the church has. For us there’s maybe knock on effects’.

Heather reflecting on her thoughts about Luton Irish Forum being a religiously neutral organisation.

‘No, it should just remain neutral. Don’t get involved in religion or politics side of things, because then you’re kind of limiting other cultures, which matters in the service I think’.

» As well as ‘The Big Three’, under and over 30s feel significantly that Luton St Patrick’s Festival is successful in offering opportunities to engage with Irish culture.

Fiona explains her experience of engaging with Irish culture through Luton St Patrick’s Festival.

‘...because, like years ago it used to be like such a massive Irish community here, and it’s probably not as much now. But I feel like we all come together, town was packed! And I feel like that it only happens once a year.’

[Ruton St Patrick’s Festival] I think it’s the time where young people like myself, get engaged with being themselves as part of the Luton Irish community and like I have said before, there was maybe a feeling that the Forum was for the first generation
and obviously for them. They’re a little older now so it does tend to be things like they have a tea and chat group. There are things that go on, but they’re on here because it’s a venue like a community centre. It’s not necessary to do with Irishness but I know there have been some things like for little ones where there was an Easter school at Stockwood Park. Yeah there’s a kind of that split; it’s like the ones who are a lot older ones and the ones who are a lot younger. I think that kind of 20s/30s/working age… I think that would be nice to see more things that they can get involved with, but I think that would be more of a cultural nature.

Yes, so like Liverpool do a Feis, things like that, where it is on the front of it, is just a concert but obviously has got that Irish element. I think that it would be nice to get young people involved with that… so they’ve got that in Liverpool. It would be really exciting to see Luton to have some kind of strong acts. I feel like a lot of them go to London, so be quite nice, it’s not too far from London, to have something along these lines, in a park or a festival, that would be exciting… get sort of modern acts from Ireland over. They don’t have to be sort of traditional ceili bands, it could be more that they are just Irish singers…..I think that will bridge that gap between.

I think there is that feeling that any kind of Irish music is very traditional. I think people can sometimes feel like it’s a little bit old. Whereas if you had something showing what it actually is like and then you’ve got that thing in common as well, when you speak to your cousins and they can see actually… that might be where they get annoyed, the first generation in Ireland. They think we’re just sitting there with rose tinted glasses thinking and singing mauldin songs you know. That’ll be exciting to see something that I think would be real way of engaging people my age. I think sometimes culture can feel a little bit heavy. So I think something where it is showing that it’s something new and exciting, but again you are still keeping your foot in the cultural identity’.

» Under 30s want to engage more with history and language.

Rachel offers further insight into how she feels history and language learning opportunities should be offered, through reflecting on existing and past offers.

‘I think things like the 1916 commemorations here [Ireland 1916 : Luton 2016 project, Luton Irish Forum] … had an art display. I think things like that are quite interesting because I didn’t know too much about it. So, it was really interesting to go there and start looking at the artwork and the artefacts; something simple, things like that where it’s not sitting down with an information book. It actually becomes a bit more tangible when you think ‘you know my family, what did they do? that’s how they felt and were affected by it’. I think that’s probably a nice way of learning about the culture.

I think things like I liked what you [Easter Play Day 2019, Luton Irish Forum] did at Stockwood, with the little ones, through craft and it was a nice touch that they had St Patrick up. I think there were a few of them. It was a nice touch with Niamh with the golden hair. So that things, that are quite not as well-known unless you’ve grown up with the stories or know the stories. Yeah I think that side of it is really nice to see, like the really little ones starting to kind of engage. Maybe when they are twenty years on, they’ll maybe have a sort of a stronger understanding of it.

Now there’s a lot more about the Irish language and that’s a very ancient form but it’s almost modernised. You get a lot groups that will do a cover of modern songs into Irish. So things like that, I think are quite nice. Nice example of the old and new kind of working nicely together because it’s younger people in the country respecting the heritage that over time had died out. But they’re sort of giving it a bit of a modern twist, if you like’.

» Both under and over 30s think more second and third generation specific services and activities are required.

Rachel reflecting on what types of activities she feels are needed.

‘I think St Patrick’s Day, that is the time younger people feel like they can really get involved with the Forum and with what they do. It would be nice to see a bit more throughout the year. I know these things take a lot of planning, funding and logistics. It would be nice to see a few more things that really get people out of doors. I’d like to see a Gaelic match not just in the park. It’d be nice if it was a bit more central and a bit more open. I think it would increase more community cohesion with other communities getting involved perhaps and then having an understanding. I think that’s the best way and I think at a group level that affects other misconceptions and create some better understanding about the second generation in Luton, but also the country as well.

I think Luton as a whole is regenerating, so I think it’s exciting not just as a Lutonian to see something like that, but I think also for Lutonians of Irish descent, I think it can be forgotten that the town has a lot of people of Irish descent.

I think they do forget sometimes that Luton has also been really built up on Irish migrants. I think it would be just be a way of sort of solidifying that identity and saying you know there is a reason why this is going on here and it’s nice to support things in your own town. It’s just a good promotion for the town and we’ve had so much bad press over the years. I think anything that’s sort of showing diversity, I think is positive really’.
Discussion

A conservative estimate of the Irish community, including Irish descent in Luton, based on the 2011 census, is 15,000.

The 2011 Census showed the Irish population to have decreased since the 2001 census, but, Luton to still have a far larger Irish population than the country as a whole (White Irish - Luton 3%, England 0.9%). Using the methods proposed in (Duignan, 2004) that takes this figure and multiplies it by 2.5. We estimate that the Irish population, including second and third generations is 7.5% of the total population, making the Irish the second largest ethnic group. This will of course also be an under-estimate as many of the first generation who lived here will no longer be registered on the census although their offspring may still form a part of the population. (LBC, 2011)

There are still first generation, under 30s, migrating to Luton, who may not be in need of practical support as those of previous waves were. They still need social opportunities to combat loneliness for the benefit of their health and wellbeing and integration into the community.

There are still fears or assumed fears around the stigma of being second and third generation, with 30% of under 30s identifying as Irish when only 18% of under 30s are first generation. This, compacted with 63% thinking that second and third generations should be considered Irish, but with 58% thinking there is a stigma around being second and third generation.

Both under and over 30s want Irishness as part of their identity. But under 30s want to use hybrid identities more than over 30s, showing a new confidence in claiming an identity that better fits the new British born generations. Both under and over 30s think more second and third generation specific services and activities are required, suggesting a need of cross cultural activities and specialised engagement.

Some 61% of under 30s feel part of an Irish community. With the majority of under and over 30s feeling ‘The Big Three’ meet the needs, showing the success and effectiveness of the GAA, music and dancing. Also, under and over 30s feel significantly, that Luton St Patrick’s Festival is also successful in offering opportunities to engage with Irish culture. This suggests that there are sufficient activities on offer. However, the majority of both under and over 30s are still wanting a variety of activities, showing an appetite for more.

With 40% of under 30s not feeling a sense of belonging to an Irish community, this shows that there is still a need for community engagement. Also, social activities are required to combat possible issues of loneliness which impact on health and wellbeing. There is also evidence of barriers to engagement for the Protestant Irish due to ‘The Big Three’ being predominantly through local Catholic parish clubs and schools.

Under 30s want to engage more with history and language, which Luton Irish Forum currently offer. But under 30s do not currently engage with Luton Irish Forum, identifying a need for these services to be developed to become more youth friendly. Both under and over 30s feel there is a need for more youth friendly services and activities, showing a need for overall youth development in the community.

Under and over 30s recognise a strong influence of Catholicism on Irish culture, but feel it’s perceived ‘rigid’ nature shouldn’t inhibit their experience and exploration of Irish culture. They feel the links they make culturally, socially, politically with Ireland should be current and reflect the vibrant and modern country Ireland is now, and not restricted to their family experience.
Recommendations

- An overall young people’s engagement strategy should be developed for Irish and young people of Irish descent to facilitate access to voluntary and statutory services.
- A network or working group should be established, to support Irish organisations, associations and groups in adopting youth engagement best practices, building better partnership working, and youth representation within the community.
- New approaches should be developed for the welfare and cultural support offered to young first generations migrating to Luton, with a focus on social opportunities to support positive health and wellbeing.
- Continued support, funding and sustainability of ‘The Big Three’ and Luton St Patrick’s Festival is essential, with these services and activities further developing and nurturing youth engagement and accessibility. The impact of these for the community and young people should be better championed, strengthening communities and partnerships, also providing evidence of need for funders and sponsors.
- Other public events outside of St Patrick’s should be offered. This would build a stronger cultural calendar and create a variety of opportunities throughout the year for social gatherings, cultural engagement and showcases.
- More promotion and education to the wider community of Luton about modern Irish culture should be carried out to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions of the Irish and to retain positive links with Ireland in a post-Brexit Britain.
- Issues of stigma surrounding second and third generations should be tackled by the development of inclusive attitudes by first generation to encourage second and third generations. The community as a whole fostering and championing more understanding and acceptance of hybrid identities. This includes the highlighting of achievements of second and third generations and better representation within Irish organisations and groups.
- A new approach to cross-cultural work should be adopted. Multi-ethnicity and multi-faith work should be continued, to strengthen integration with the wider Luton community, and to better engage mixed ethnicity Irish who have been under-represented in this study. Also, the importance and impact of British and Irish cross-cultural work should be recognised and explored further, with the aim of engaging more ‘half and half’ [half Irish, half British] families at events and activities, and gaining a better understanding of hybrid identities.
- The preservation of Irish traditions and aspects of culture influenced by Catholicism is important. However, the approach of organisations and groups who are religiously neutral, should be carefully considered.
- Services, events and activities which have networks and links to Catholic schools and parish centres should consider how accessible they are to those who do not attend church and Catholic schools, non-religious and Protestant Irish.
- The issues and barriers faced by under and over 30s who do not feel part of an Irish community should be explored further to offer insight into how better engage and support them.
- Luton Irish Forum should develop their heritage and language activities to become more youth friendly and consider how these services are promoted to young people.
- More youth friendly and focused activities and events need to be provided within the community, offering young people more social and cultural opportunities that are engaging and relevant to them.
Examples of best practice of intergenerational work by the Luton Irish Forum and participating Luton ‘Big Three’ groups.

Luton Irish Forum
Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, Leagrave (Branch)
The Finbarr Conway Academy (of Irish Dancing)
St Dympna’s GFC (Gaelic Football Club)
St. Vincent’s Junior GFC (Gaelic Football Club)
Luton Irish Forum marked Lá Fhéile Bríde 2019 (St Brigid’s Day) by hosting its third annual Afternoon Tea event on February 2nd, celebrating the achievements of women. This was the first St Brigid’s Day celebration and follows on from two previous women’s history projects – Mná na hÉireann (Women of Ireland) in 2017 and The Vote, in 2018, attended by Dr Helen Pankhurst, women’s rights activist and writer.

The 2019 Afternoon Tea programme showcased the stories of two women from the local Irish community; Catherine Martin, Luton Irish Person of the Year 2018 and Sister Eileen O’Mahony, founder of the NOAH Enterprise. The afternoon included presentations and traditional music played by talented local duo, Tea and Spuds.

To coincide with the event, Luton Irish Forum asked for nominations from the public to draw up a list of significant Irish women in Ireland and the diaspora over the past 100 years. The ‘Top 20 Irish Women’ was chosen by public vote via social media, Afternoon Tea attendees, Forum members and published to mark International Women’s Day on the 8th March 2019.

Some 85 guests enjoyed chatting with friends old and new at the beautiful Putteridge Bury House, Luton. ‘It was wonderful to see several generations of women, discussing well-known achievers and learning about new ones from the event brochure.’

Many guests saw the event as an established part of the local Irish calendar, ‘I have attended all three yearly events. Always informative, providing loads of facts and history’.

Statistics

- 3rd annual women’s event.
- 85 guests with 66 completing surveys.
- Ages 20-90.
- 27% first generation Irish, 40% second generation Irish and 8% third generation Irish.
- 40% having attended this event previously and 58% attending for the first time.

Costs

- Luton Irish Forum Project Officer 2 days per week over 4 months.
- Luton Irish Forum administration and management.
- Afternoon tea for a minimum of 80 guests.
- Sound.
- Musicians.
- Photographer.
- Marketing and promotion.
- It was observed that generations of women (grandmothers, daughters and granddaughters) attended together.
- It was reported that many tickets were bought as presents for mothers and grandmothers.

Engagement Tips

- The quality of the venue is key.
- The premium ticket price is kept affordable but reflects the quality of the event.
- The annual date, and the 3 to 4 month ticket sale period enables participants to forward plan.
- Presentations are informal but educational. The programme is set within ample social time.
- The majority of guests are happy to complete feedback forms which are presented as part of the table setting. This lets us gather valuable data and feedback.

Capacity

- The good service we receive from the venue, local florist, local sound and entertainment company and photographer, enable us to put on a large and good quality event that is manageable within a small staff team.
- It has taken three events/years to refine the event plan, ticket sales structure and build a picture of the demographic of the participants.
- Moving into the fourth year with a good working model we are now able to invite volunteers to help plan and deliver the changing theme of the event, ensuring the event remains engaging and relevant.
Luton Irish Forum
Luton St Patrick’s Festival 2019

Luton St Patrick’s Festival 2019, the 20th organised by Luton Irish Forum, culminated in ‘unmissable’ celebrations and great live music and Irish dancing enjoyed by thousands in the town centre on Sunday 17th.


Inside The Mall (shopping centre), audiences crammed around the stage to enjoy more live music and watch award winning Irish dancers from both the local area and Ireland.

Many families took advantage of the free children’s craft activities and games in the Market & Family Area, making shamrock-themed headbands and other decorations and having their faces painted.

The Lennon family, who come from Longford said “This year’s festival had a real family feel about it and the lads loved it. It’s so important to keep passing Irish tradition down.”

Earlier in the day, hundreds of local people from Irish Associations and other community groups plus decorated floats took part in a massive parade from the Luton Irish Forum Centre to the town centre and were cheered along the route while enjoying live entertainment.

This year, the best group entry went to St Dymna’s Gaelic Football Club and ‘Mrs Brown’ was the first ever winner of best individual entry.

Parade goer Marian, who comes from Kildare said “It was just lovely to walk behind the Kildare banner. I have people staying but I had to come to this.”

Statistics

» 20th Luton St Patrick’s Parade.
» 7,516 people in total attended Luton St Patrick’s Festival events.
» 500 participants took part in the parade.
» 200 performers 12th - 26th March.
» 15 members of Luton Irish Forum Choir.

Engagement Tips

» Luton St Patrick’s Festival is an established festival running for 20 years, and is part of a worldwide cultural celebration.
» The Festival offers a variety of traditional and modern acts from the UK and Ireland, and showcases the talents of local Irish dancing schools.
» The parade encourages participation from the community through the carrying of the county flags.

Costs

» Staffing - 21 hours per week per year, with skills in event management, staff/volunteer management, promotion, logistics, income generation and programming.
» Luton Irish Forum administration and management.
» Logistics.
» Stage, lighting and sound.
» Licences and road closures.
» Entertainment.

Capacity

» Festival planning a preparation takes place all year round.
» It’s large St Patrick’s Festival committee is useful for consultation and oversight but can impact on decision making and slows progress. Committee members need to act as cultural ambassadors, encouraging ideas and inclusion.

» Subcommittees can be effective for planning the detail.
» Volunteer support is essential.
» Luton Irish Forum receives grant funding and sponsorship from local business but is still currently underfunded, putting a strain on resources and capacity.
An Irish cultural play day for Primary school aged children, at Stockwood Discovery Centre, Luton. Activities included art, games, Irish storytelling, Irish food tasting with visits from Niamh of the golden hair and St Patrick. Luton Irish Forum’s new Irish Culture Discover Arts Award and cultural passport was piloted as part of the day, enabling children to discover Irish culture and make new friends through sharing experiences.

**Engagement Tips**

- A day of activities offered from 9:30am – 3pm proved to be popular with tickets selling out within 48 hours. Tickets were sold online and at Luton Irish Forum’s reception.
- A sibling discount was offered, making it affordable for families.
- Stockwood Discovery Centre is an accessible and child friendly site, popular with families.
- The day included a variety of activities both indoor and outdoor, with no activity running for more than one hour.

**Statistics**

- 23 children.
- Ages 6-11.
- 21 Arts Awards achieved for discovering Irish culture.
- Tayto crisps voted better than walkers crisps in the blind taste test.

**Capacity**

- The day was planned and led by a member of the Luton Irish Forum team who is experienced in planning and delivering play days, is DBS checked and safeguarding trained. This is key to delivering an engaging day that is appropriate and safe.
- Volunteer support was key in delivering within a small staff team.
- Volunteers were fully briefed about the day, allocated tasks with a schedule and given advice on practical safeguarding issues.
- There is substantial planning, preparation and delivery required for the day, but it is feasible if offered as a premium annual event.

---

Five members of the Generation Irish Project Steering Group, along with four other participants visited the EPIC exhibition in Dublin.

As part of a new development of the Dublin Docklands, EPIC is a permanent interactive digital exhibition which explores the history and achievements of Irish migrants around the world. It also boasts a growing digital archive in which the Irish can submit personal stories to be preserved for future generations.

**Statistics**

- 9 participants.
- Ages 18-75.
- 70% first generation Irish, 30% second generation Irish.
- 100% strongly agreed the exhibition gave a greater sense of importance of their local Irish community.

**Engagement Tips**

- A premium day trip to Dublin is appealing to participants.
- Early booking of flights kept the trip affordable for participants.
- The location is accessible with good transport links from Luton.
- The exhibition is educational and engaging.
- The schedule was simple and offered ample time, ensuring the day was relaxed and enjoyable.

---

**Costs**

- Luton Irish Forum Project Officer 2 days per week for 1 month.
- Luton Irish Forum administration and management.
- Marketing and promotion.
- Venue hire.
- Resources.
- Refreshments.

---

**Costs**

- Luton Irish Forum Project Officer 3 days.
- Luton Irish Forum administration and management.
- Marketing and promotion.
- Entry fee.
- Flights and other travel.
- Lunch.

---

**Statistics**

- 3 days.
- Luton Irish Forum administration and management.
- Marketing and promotion.
- Entry fee.
- Flights and other travel.
- Lunch.

---

**Capacity**

- With a group of independent adults the trip was easy to organise with Luton Irish Forum co-ordinating activities and communicating schedule and location details to participants.
- Luton Irish Forum did not take responsibly for the booking of flights or travel insurance cover.
- Luton Irish Forum easily coordinated travel, meetups and sharing of contact details, giving participants the opportunity to form new friendships.
- A fuller day of activities with a larger group would be feasible.
Luton Irish Forum - Generation Irish Project Steering Group

Costs

- Project Officer, variable hours.
- Luton Irish Forum administration and management.
- Volunteer expenses such as mileage, parking, refreshments.

Capacity

- Out of hours working is required by project officers and co-ordinators.
- When working with groups, meeting scheduling can be difficult, so duplicate meetings and remote contact is often required.
- Although project officers and co-ordinators have to adapt their time, volunteers are often used to remote working and specifically email communication, making planning and preparation time efficient.

Engagement Tips

- Volunteering opportunities need to be tailor made to accommodate work, education and family commitments.
- With this, effective volunteering time may be ad hoc or seasonal. This often means out of hours working.
- Remote working is often necessary but beneficial, with traditional meetings and centre attendance being replaced with group and individual emails, conference and individual calls, Skype, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger.

Luton Irish Forum - Social Media Engagement

Costs

- Project Officer 14 hours per week over 7 days.
- Luton Irish Forum administration and management.
- Paid post promotion and adverts.

Capacity

- Consistent social media management requires 2-4 post per day over 7 days being created and promoted, with monitoring of post reactions and messages.
- Approximately 14 staff hours per week is required with this significantly increasing leading up to Luton St Patricks Festival.

Engagement Tips

- Our popular social media posts promote Irish culture, Irish news features, humorous Irish memes and videos.
- We share events, information, and news of other groups, associations and organisations within the Irish community and other local community partners.
- We receive welfare and passport support requests and share information to those moving from Ireland via Facebook messaging.

To ensure the Generation Irish Project represented the Irish community in Luton fairly, a project steering group was formed to oversee and guide the project. The voluntary group comprised of six invited members who were representative of the ‘missing’ generations identified by Luton Irish Forum. Members gained a better insight into the work of Luton Irish Forum and developed better knowledge of community engagement practices. Through guiding the research and analysing the data results and interview feedback they gained a better understanding of the needs and barriers to engagement of the under 30s.

Several members volunteered for the activities and events as part of the project, offering specialist skills and knowledge, which has provided insight into our development of a working model for volunteers of working age. Several continue to volunteer and champion our work within the community, becoming our first ambassadors, an initiative we aim to develop further.
Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, Leagrave (Branch)

Costs
» Depending on instrument type, costs can be high for a parent.

Statistics
» The highest number of music entries were made to the Regional Fleadh in Princethorpe this year.
» 9 musicians were sent to the competition.
» 3 of those musicians were selected to attend the All-Britain which is due to be held at the end of June.
» If they are successful, then they will progress to the All-Ireland in August.

Capacity
» Leagrave Comhaltas are often asked to perform at events; however, as the group of musicians are young, this is not possible as they are just grasping group playing and this takes time to learn.
» Parents support the lessons however they may not want to support entering competitions.
» Parents volunteering to be committee members is crucial to keep the group going.
» Generations have changed and Irish people have moved out of the area so there is not the influx of new children wanting to learn music.
» The branch struggles to get music teachers to support the one current teacher.

Engagement Tips
» Children enjoy learning the instruments/music and are guided by their parents encouraging them to learn the music.

The Finbarr Conway Academy (of Irish Dancing)

Costs
» Classes are very reasonably priced.
» Competitions costs vary depending on the scale of the competition.
» Lots of dancers don’t compete, they dance because they love to dance. There are no registration fees in our school or for our organisation. Parents only pay the cost of the class.

Statistics
» 40 dancers are currently part of the Finbarr Conway Academy.
» Dancers have competed in lots of local competitions including one organised by Finbarr Conway Academy held every year in Luton. National and international competitions include the Great Britain Championship, North American Championship and All Ireland Championship.
» 2 dancers qualified to compete and represent Luton at the World Championships held in Greensboro, North Carolina.

Engagement Tips
» Successful engagement through word of mouth.
» Dancers visible when performing at charity events, school fetes, other local events.
» Parents like their children to continue in the Irish culture.
» Irish dancing is great for fitness and dancers make lots of new friends and have great fun.
» Pupils practice outside classes to improve their technique. Parents like that this encourages commitment and dedication.
» Competitions are not for everyone, however, those who do compete enjoy participating in them.

Capacity
» It is difficult to find halls that will allow heavy dancing on their floors; those that do, are very expensive to hire.
» The plus side is teaching and passing on Finbarr’s expert knowledge in Irish dancing, seeing dancers learn and flourish and having great fun.
St. Dymphna's is a Gaelic football club, based in Luton for 62 years. It runs teams from Under 7s up to Seniors, also they have a nursery programme for 4 years old and upwards. The underage team (7-12 years old) comprises of Boys and Girls. There is underage training on a Friday night and they usually hold games on a Saturday. The Senior Team train on Tuesday/Thursday and have games on Saturday/Sunday.

**Engagement Tips**

» Players are recruited through promotion within local schools, and at events throughout the year. Also through word of mouth.

» Some come along to training for a few weeks and feel it’s not for them, but the majority enjoy being part of a team.

» They enjoy the challenge of competition against other clubs in the County.

**Costs**

» Payments for pitches for match days.

» Kits.

» Trips e.g. to other clubs which can include around Britain and Ireland.

» Training equipment.

» Goal posts.

**Statistics**

» St Dymphnas have approximately

  - Senior players 35
  - U7 – 16 players 55
  - Nursery players 10

» The number of games played is approximately

  - Seniors - 12 games in a season.
  - Under age - 9 games at each age group.

**Capacity**

» There is an appointed Public Relations Officer within the club who organises fundraising events throughout the year. This is to help with the running cost of the club.

St. Vincent's Junior GAA club was established in January 2019 to provide the local community with a junior club that holds regular weekly training and competes in numerous competitions. There had been a junior club, but it phased out some years ago. Without an active junior club, the long-established senior club would cease to exist. Some long-standing club members got together and invited newer members of the community to get involved.

**Engagement Tips**

» Young people have a sense of belonging by being part of a club and have something positive to do.

» The club family day is as much about having fun with friends as it is about football. The whole club gets involved with helping to organise the day.

» Parents are keen to have a social setting that helps their child to keep fit, active and build their confidence.

**Costs**

» At present there is no registration fee.

» Training costs £2 per session.

» Competitions do not cost the players anything.

» The cost of a kit for players is £25 – paid for by parents.

» The cost of indoor training in the winter months is £50 per session.

**Statistics**

» 85 youths registered.

» 42-48 youths on average attend weekly training sessions.

» 12-15 competitions are held in a season.

» 300+ people attended the club family day, of which two are hosted per year.

» 4 board members.

» 10 committee members.

» 12 coaches.

» 6/7 coaching assistants.

**Capacity**

» Parents volunteering is key to the running of our entire club.

» There is a lack of other teams to play, especially around school holidays when a lot of children visit Ireland.

» There is no fixed club venue.

» Club meetings and administration in keeping with GAA regulations requires a lot of capacity.

» Social media is the best way of sharing news and communicating with members and parents but requires a lot of volunteer capacity.
Generation Irish

‘Intergenerational Working in the Irish Community, a Model of Best Practice’,

Luton Irish Forum
2019

Generation Irish survey results in full, are available at www.lutonirishforum.org

Luton Irish Forum
Kathleen Connolly House
102 Hitchin Road
Luton
LU2 0ES
Tel: 01582 720 447
Email: info@lutonirishforum.org
www.lutonirishforum.org

Facebook: LutonIrish
Twitter: @IrishinLuton
Instagram: LutonIrishForum