

Kilkenny PPN Social Inclusion Plan

From Listening to Action: Social Inclusion in

Co. Kilkenny

A Three-Year Plan for Visibility, Voice & Influence
(2026–2028)



Prepared – March, 2026

Approved by the Social Inclusion Working Group, Social Inclusion

Pillar of Co. Kilkenny PPN

Community Voices Must Lead to Real
Influence

Executive Summary

Kilkenny PPN's Social Inclusion Plan sets out a practical three-year framework to strengthen how social inclusion issues are identified, progressed and addressed within local decision-making structures. Its central purpose is simple: to ensure that the lived experience of disadvantage, exclusion and inequality is not merely heard, but translated into structured and visible influence within local government.

The Plan responds to a clear challenge. Community organisations across County Kilkenny work every day with people facing barriers linked to poverty, disability, housing, transport, isolation, discrimination, access to services and other forms of disadvantage.

However, consultation showed that the pathway for bringing these concerns into formal decision-making has not always been clear, consistent or effective. Participation has sometimes been uneven, follow-through has not always been visible, and issues have too often remained at the level of informal discussion rather than structured action.

This Plan addresses that gap.

It establishes a clear operating model through which systemic social inclusion concerns can be raised, reviewed, validated, framed for policy consideration and progressed through appropriate governance routes. The emphasis is on structured participation, evidence-based influence and transparent reporting.

The Plan does not create a new service, complaints mechanism or advocacy body. It does not deal with individual casework. Instead, it creates a disciplined participation system that helps community experience inform local governance in a practical and constructive way.

At the heart of the Plan is a straightforward issue pathway:

Issue Identification → Submission → Triage → Decision Brief → Governance Progression → Response Tracking → Feedback

This structure is important because influence requires organisation. Community concerns are more likely to gain traction when they are clearly evidenced, appropriately framed and directed to the part of the system that can respond.

The Plan is built around several practical realities.

In the first place, communities will only continue to engage if they can see that participation leads to visible follow-through. Trust depends on clear communication, updates and accountability.

Secondly, volunteer capacity must be protected. The Social Inclusion system relies heavily on people giving their time. Without boundaries, discipline and realistic expectations, the model would quickly become unsustainable.

Thirdly, participation must be intentional and inclusive. Established organisations can often dominate formal processes unless specific effort is made to broaden participation and hear from less visible or under-represented groups.

Finally, informal engagement is not enough. If the Social Inclusion Pillar is to be a credible route to influence, it must operate with clear governance, practical tools and shared standards.

To support this, the Plan includes:

- clearly defined governance roles and responsibilities
- a practical implementation toolkit
- issue tracking and reporting mechanisms
- structured communication and feedback systems
- launch and implementation supports
- risk and sustainability monitoring
- annual review and continuous improvement processes.

Implementation will take place in three phases.

Year 1: Build and Stabilise

The focus will be on putting the system in place, establishing practical tools, clarifying roles, launching participation pathways and testing the model in operation.

Year 2: Strengthen Influence and Participation

Attention will shift to improving the quality of issue progression, increasing participation balance, strengthening governance engagement and improving visibility of outcomes.

Year 3: Demonstrate Outcomes and Secure Sustainability

The final phase will focus on evidence, learning, documented outcomes, strategic alignment and preparation for longer-term continuity.

Success will not be measured by the number of issues raised.

Success will be measured by whether the system works.

That means:

- issues are handled consistently
- participation is broad and credible
- governance engagement is effective
- responses are visible
- communities receive feedback
- volunteer capacity is protected
- the Social Inclusion Pillar becomes a trusted and practical route to influence.

We believe this is a realistic Plan. It does not over-promise. It recognises the limits of volunteer-led participation and the realities of local governance. But it provides something important: a stronger, clearer and more accountable way for community knowledge to shape local decisions.

Ultimately, this Plan is about strengthening democratic participation.

Its purpose is to ensure that the voices of people experiencing disadvantage are not lost, fragmented or overlooked, but translated into credible, structured and meaningful influence within County Kilkenny's local governance system.

*Prepared by the Social Inclusion Working Group on behalf of the Social Inclusion Committee of Co.
Kilkenny PPN Social Inclusion Pillar*

Spring, 2026

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1. Introduction

Kilkenny Public Participation Network (PPN) provides the formal structure through which community and voluntary organisations engage with local government and contribute to local decision-making.

Within that framework, the Social Inclusion Pillar brings together organisations working with individuals and communities who may experience disadvantage, exclusion or barriers to participation, ensuring that these lived experiences can inform policy discussion, service planning and local governance.

For the purposes of this Plan, social inclusion means enabling all people in the county to participate meaningfully in community life and to access the services, opportunities and supports required to do so. Where barriers exist, the role of the Social Inclusion Pillar is to ensure that these experiences are identified, evidenced and brought into structured local decision-making processes.

The Social Inclusion Pillar is not a service delivery mechanism, nor does it exist to manage individual casework. Its purpose is to provide a credible and organised route through which systemic social inclusion issues can be identified, validated and progressed through appropriate governance structures.

This Plan sets out the operating framework to support that role.

It introduces a practical participation model built around:

- a clear issue submission pathway
- structured triage and validation processes
- policy framing through Decision Briefs
- defined routes into relevant council governance structures
- formal issue tracking and reporting mechanisms
- transparent feedback and communication loops.

The purpose is to ensure that community concerns are handled consistently, assessed fairly, progressed where appropriate, and communicated back in a clear and accountable way.

The Plan also recognises that not every issue raised can or should progress through the Social Inclusion system. Issues outside scope will be documented where appropriate and may contribute to the wider evidence base informing future strategic discussion, planning and policy development.

Importantly, this is a practical and proportionate model. It has been designed to operate within existing PPN governance arrangements and local authority structures, while protecting volunteer capacity, maintaining clear role boundaries and supporting long-term sustainability.

The Social Inclusion Plan is about strengthening the connection between lived community experience and structured local decision-making - ensuring that social inclusion concerns are not simply heard, but progressed through a credible and disciplined participation system.

2. Practical Design Principles

The Social Inclusion Pillar must operate within a practical and sustainable set of constraints. This Plan has therefore been designed around several operating realities that shape how effective social inclusion participation can be organised in practice.

1. Visible Follow-Through Builds Trust

Communities are more likely to engage when participation leads to visible action. If issues are raised but no clear response, update or outcome is communicated, confidence in the process weakens. Structured feedback and transparent reporting are therefore essential to sustaining engagement.

2. Influence Requires Structure

Community concerns are most effective when they are translated into clear, evidence-based and committee-ready inputs. Local authority systems are more likely to respond where issues are validated, appropriately framed and aligned with relevant governance or policy structures.

3. Volunteer Capacity Must Be Protected

The Social Inclusion system relies heavily on voluntary participation and finite coordination capacity. Without clear processes, realistic progression limits and defined responsibilities, the system risks becoming overloaded and unsustainable. Sustainability is therefore a design requirement, not an afterthought.

4. Participation Must Be Intentional and Inclusive

Participation does not automatically become representative. Without deliberate outreach and engagement, established organisations may dominate while smaller, rural or less visible groups remain under-represented. This Plan therefore places emphasis on participation balance, local reach and practical engagement mechanisms.

Taken together, these realities underpin the operating model set out in this Plan. They explain why the Plan emphasises structured issue pathways, clear governance roles, practical tools, risk management and disciplined reporting rather than informal or reactive engagement.

The Plan also reflects the statutory basis for community participation established under *Section 46 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014*, within which Public Participation Networks provide the formal framework for structured engagement between communities and local government.

3. Social Inclusion Context - Co. Kilkenny

Overview

Understanding the social inclusion context of County Kilkenny is essential to designing an effective participation system. Social exclusion does not arise from a single factor; it emerges from the interaction of demographic change, geographic dispersion, service access and economic opportunity. In Kilkenny, these dynamics are shaped by a predominantly rural settlement pattern, an ageing population, concentrated pockets of disadvantage and increasing cultural diversity. While the county performs broadly in line with national averages on many socio-economic indicators, evidence shows that disadvantage is unevenly distributed across communities and locations. For the Social Inclusion Pillar, this means that participation must be structured, evidence-informed and capable of capturing issues that may otherwise remain fragmented or localised. The purpose of this section is therefore to outline the key demographic and socio-economic patterns that inform the design and priorities of the Social Inclusion Plan.

County Kilkenny's social inclusion context is shaped by population distribution, demographic change, service accessibility and uneven patterns of deprivation.

The county had a population of 104,160 at Census 2022. Kilkenny City, with a population of 27,184, functions as the primary administrative, employment and service centre. Outside the city, towns such as Callan, Castlecomer and Graiguenamanagh play important local roles but have more limited, service capacity.

Approximately two-thirds of the county's population live outside larger urban centres, reflecting a strong rural settlement pattern. This dispersed population has important implications for transport access, service availability and community participation.

Age Profile

Kilkenny's population is balanced but steadily ageing. Around one in six residents is aged 65 or over, while the 45+ population represents a growing share of the county. This trend increases demand for accessible transport, healthcare services, disability supports and age-friendly infrastructure, particularly in rural areas. At the same time, younger cohorts require sustained access to education, employment pathways, childcare and affordable housing. Social inclusion planning must therefore respond to the needs of both an ageing population and younger families.

Employment & Economic Context

The county has a mixed economy supported by services, manufacturing, agriculture and tourism. A significant share of employment is concentrated in health and social care, education, retail and public administration, while manufacturing and food production remain important in several areas. Agriculture continues to underpin many rural livelihoods. Commuting patterns are also significant, with many residents travelling to neighbouring counties such as Waterford and Carlow for employment.

From a social inclusion perspective, this highlights the importance of accessible transport, local employment opportunities and targeted upskilling supports, particularly for individuals in lower-paid or precarious employment.

Social Inclusion Indicators

Key indicators relevant to social inclusion include:

- Disability prevalence: approximately 14–15% of residents report a disability, increasing with age.
- Lone parent households: estimated at 18–20%, indicating potential income and childcare pressures.
- Single-person households: approximately 29%, which can increase risks of isolation.
- Non-Irish nationals: around 11–12% of the population, reflecting increasing cultural diversity

These trends highlight the importance of accessible participation structures and culturally inclusive engagement approaches.

Deprivation Patterns

Overall deprivation levels in Kilkenny are broadly close to the national average according to the *Pobal HP Deprivation Index (2022)*. However, disadvantage is unevenly distributed, with identifiable pockets of deprivation in both urban and rural areas.

This means that social exclusion in Kilkenny is not uniform across the county but concentrated in particular locations and communities.



Map of Kilkenny from the Pobal data

Key risk factors which arose directly or more subtly through the limited research process are:

Access to Services
Barriers to accessing health, social care and disability services, including availability, waiting times and outreach provision.
Transport and Connectivity
Limitations in public transport, particularly in rural areas, including service frequency, accessibility and links to employment, education and healthcare.
Housing and Accommodation
Issues relating to housing supply, affordability, suitability and access to supports, including homelessness and overcrowding.
Employment and Economic Participation
Barriers to accessing employment, training and economic opportunities, particularly for those in rural or disadvantaged situations.
Education and Training
Challenges in accessing further education and training, including cost, transport, childcare and digital barriers.
Childcare and Family Supports
Availability, affordability and flexibility of childcare, along with access to family support services.
Social Isolation and Community Participation
Barriers to participation in community life, including isolation, lack of local services and limited opportunities for engagement.
Access to Information
Difficulties accessing clear, consistent and accessible information about services and supports, including language and digital barriers.
Equality, Integration and Discrimination
Issues relating to exclusion, discrimination, integration and access to culturally appropriate services.
Digital Inclusion
Barriers to accessing or using digital services, including lack of devices, connectivity or digital skills.
Disability and Accessibility
Physical, social and service-related barriers affecting participation and independent living.
Youth and Young People
Limited opportunities for young people in relation to education, employment, services and participation.
Older People
Challenges relating to ageing in place, access to supports, mobility and social participation.
Rural Disadvantage
Issues arising from service withdrawal, distance, infrastructure gaps and limited local opportunities.
These categories are indicative and are intended to support:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • issue identification • triage and clustering • alignment with policy areas

Implications for the Social Inclusion Plan

These patterns reinforce the need for a targeted, structured and evidence-informed approach to social inclusion participation.

A general county-wide engagement model, on its own, is unlikely to capture the full range of social inclusion experiences across Kilkenny. Barriers to participation are not evenly distributed, and neither are the challenges experienced by communities.

An effective participation model must therefore recognise:

- rural access and connectivity barriers
- transport limitations and geographic isolation
- uneven patterns of disadvantage across communities and localities
- reduced visibility of smaller or less well-connected organisations
- the needs of communities that are traditionally under-represented in formal participation structures.

These realities have direct implications for how the Social Inclusion Pillar must operate.

The Plan therefore does not rely on general consultation alone. Instead, it establishes structured participation pathways through which systemic issues can be identified, evidenced, validated and progressed through appropriate local authority governance structures.

This approach strengthens the quality of community intelligence entering the system and creates clearer routes through which recurring issues can be recognised as broader systemic concerns rather than isolated incidents.

In practical terms, this means that issues emerging from lived community experience — including housing access, transport connectivity, disability inclusion, service reach, digital exclusion, social isolation and income vulnerability — can be translated into clear, documented and policy-relevant inputs for discussion within council structures.

The result is a more disciplined and credible participation model, capable of strengthening both representation and the quality of social inclusion influence within local decision-making.

4. National Context – Tackling Social Exclusion in Ireland

At national level, addressing social exclusion is a key public policy priority. The focus extends beyond income poverty to include equitable access to services, employment, education, housing and participation in civic life. National policy recognises that exclusion is often linked to factors such as rural isolation, disability, lone parenthood, low income, unemployment and limited access to transport or essential services.

Government strategies emphasise evidence-informed decision-making, targeted support for disadvantaged communities and effective collaboration between statutory bodies and community organisations. Programmes such as the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) and the work of Local Community Development Committees (LCDC) reflect this coordinated approach at local level.

Public Participation Networks (PPNs) form part of this national framework. Established under the *Local Government Reform Act 2014*, PPNs provide the formal mechanism through which community and voluntary organisations engage with local authority decision-making.

Their role is not to operate as external advocacy bodies, but to ensure that community experience informs policy and planning within local government structures.

Within each PPN, the Social Inclusion Pillar represents organisations working with communities experiencing disadvantage. Its role is to identify systemic issues, validate recurring concerns and support the preparation of structured inputs for consideration within council committees and related decision-making forums.

National guidance expects PPNs to operate in a disciplined and transparent manner, focusing on systemic issues rather than individual casework, maintaining clear documentation and ensuring balanced participation across communities.

This Social Inclusion Plan aligns with that national approach. It introduces a structured pathway through which community experience can be documented, assessed and progressed within local authority decision-making structures. By strengthening clarity, documentation and feedback loops, the Plan supports the broader national objective of ensuring that social inclusion issues are addressed in a consistent, accountable and evidence-informed way at local level.

5. Strategic Alignment to Corporate Plan, Kilkenny Co. Council

The Social Inclusion Plan operates within the governance framework of Kilkenny PPN while maintaining its distinct role as a structured participation mechanism for social inclusion issues.



The Plan is not intended to replicate or replace the strategic role of Kilkenny County Council. Rather, it provides a practical route through which lived community experience, particularly the experiences of people facing disadvantage or exclusion, can inform local policy discussion and decision-making in a structured and constructive way.

Where relevant, issues progressed through the Social Inclusion Pillar will be framed to connect community evidence with the Council's wider strategic priorities, including community wellbeing, service accessibility, economic participation, sustainable communities and democratic engagement.

This alignment strengthens the relevance of community input and improves the likelihood of meaningful engagement within local authority structures, while preserving the Pillar's independence as a representative community participation mechanism. The intention is not to shape community concerns to fit institutional priorities, but to ensure that valid social inclusion issues are presented in a way that supports informed dialogue, policy consideration and practical decision-making.

By taking this approach, the Social Inclusion Plan strengthens the relationship between community participation, elected representation and local governance, helping to ensure that lived experience becomes a more visible and credible part of local decision-making.

6. Approach to Developing the Plan

The Social Inclusion Working Group sought to develop a plan that would:

- make it easier for organisations and communities to raise social inclusion issues
- improve how issues are prioritised and progressed
- strengthen how representatives bring issues into local authority decision-making structures
- ensure communities receive clear feedback on what happens after an issue is raised.

The consultant supported this process through research, analysis and drafting. The Plan itself is owned by the Social Inclusion Working Group.

How Information Was Gathered

The Plan was informed by a combination of primary engagement and secondary research to ensure that it reflects local experience as well as wider policy context.

Working Group discussions

Structured discussions were held with members of the Social Inclusion Working Group, both in person and online. These discussions helped shape the direction of the Plan and ensured that the proposed approach reflects local governance structures, operational capacity and practical experience.

Survey of member organisations (Nov–Dec 2025)

A survey was circulated to member organisations and stakeholders to gather views on:

- awareness of the PPN and Social Inclusion Pillar
- effectiveness of communication
- perceptions of representation and influence
- barriers to participation
- training and support needs.

Community visits (Dec 2025)

Community visits were undertaken to hear directly from people in different locations, including rural areas. Meetings were held in Kilkenny City, Callan, The Rower, Mullinavat and Castlecomer.

Secondary Research

Secondary analysis included review of relevant national and local policy frameworks, Census 2022 data, the *Pobal HP Deprivation Index 2022*, and examples of good practice in social inclusion participation.

As part of this analysis, the membership of the Social Inclusion Pillar was reviewed and categorised to develop a broad typology of organisations engaged in social inclusion activity across the county. Organisations were grouped by primary focus, including areas such as community development, disability support, housing and homelessness, migrant and Traveller inclusion, youth and family services, arts participation and advocacy. **Appendix 1** provides a listing of social inclusion pillar members and their respective focus.

This categorisation helped provide an overview of participation patterns and representation balance within the Pillar. It was not intended to rank organisations but to better understand the composition of the network and identify potential participation gaps.

It is recognised that membership lists do not always reflect current activity levels. Some registered organisations may be inactive, while other groups working on social inclusion locally may not be formally registered with the PPN.

The typology therefore provides a useful structural overview rather than a definitive map of all activity and will require periodic review.

Secondary analysis also considered relevant county strategies, including the *Kilkenny County Council Corporate Plan* and the *Local Economic and Community Plan*.

How the information was used to inform the plan

Information gathered through primary engagement (surveys, community visits and Working Group discussions) and secondary research (policy review, Census 2022 data, deprivation analysis, and review of Social Inclusion Pillar membership) was analysed together to identify:

- recurring social inclusion issues and themes
- structural and practical barriers to participation
- patterns in organisational representation across the Social Inclusion Pillar
- realistic actions aligned with available volunteer capacity and governance constraints.

As part of this analysis, the membership of the Social Inclusion Pillar was reviewed and grouped into a functional typology of organisations, including service providers, advocacy bodies, peer-support groups and community participation organisations. This provided a clearer picture of participation patterns, sector balance and rural–urban representation.

While recognising that some registered organisations may be inactive and some active groups may not be formally registered, this overview helped identify potential participation gaps and inform targeted engagement.

The findings were then reviewed with the Social Inclusion Working Group to confirm priorities, test assumptions against local experience and agree the core components of the Plan.

A note about limits in the consultative activity

Attendance at community sessions varied across locations, and not all organisations were able to participate. The findings therefore provide useful insights but may not represent all perspectives across the county. For this reason, the Plan treats the results as indicative and includes actions in Year 1 to continue engagement and learning as implementation progresses.

How the research shaped the plan

Information from surveys, community visits, Working Group discussions, membership analysis and secondary data was considered together to identify key themes.

Across these sources, several consistent issues emerged:

- lack of clarity about the role and remit of the Social Inclusion Pillar
- uncertainty about how organisations can raise issues effectively
- frustration where issues appeared not to progress or receive formal responses
- uneven participation across rural areas, organisational types and under-represented groups
- concerns about volunteer workload and representative sustainability.

Analysis of the Social Inclusion Pillar membership also indicated that participation is not evenly distributed across service providers, peer-support groups, advocacy bodies and community organisations. This highlighted the need for a system that supports broader participation while preventing dominance by more established actors.

Secondary data reinforced these findings, pointing to rural dispersion, pockets of deprivation, an ageing population and disability prevalence as factors shaping social inclusion needs across the county.

Taken together, the evidence pointed to the need for a clear, structured and sustainable operating model. The Plan therefore introduces a consistent pathway through which issues can be raised, assessed and progressed which is

7. The Role & Purpose of the Social Inclusion Pillar in the PPN

The value of the Social Inclusion Pillar within Kilkenny PPN lies in providing a structured and credible mechanism through which the lived experience of disadvantage, exclusion and inequality can inform local decision-making.

Its purpose is not service delivery, case management or operational problem-solving. Rather, it exists to strengthen democratic participation by ensuring that systemic social inclusion issues emerging from communities are identified, validated, evidenced and progressed through appropriate local governance structures in a disciplined and accountable way.

The Pillar provides the participation infrastructure through which community experience can be translated into structured policy and governance engagement.

Its core functions are to:

- identify and validate systemic social inclusion issues emerging from communities and member organisations
- distinguish recurring or strategic concerns from individual casework or operational matters
- convert community concerns into clear, evidence-based and policy-relevant inputs suitable for governance consideration
- route issues through appropriate statutory and governance structures, including Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs), the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), Municipal District structures and other relevant mechanisms where appropriate
- support PPN representatives in presenting agreed issues consistently and reporting back through formal feedback processes
- maintain transparent documentation, tracking and communication so that progression, responses and outcomes are visible and accountable
- strengthen the quality, legitimacy and representativeness of social inclusion participation within local governance.

The Social Inclusion Pillar does not operate as a service provider, advocacy agency or parallel governance structure. Its role is to ensure that community intelligence is organised, prioritised and channelled effectively into formal local decision-making processes.

In practical terms, it provides the bridge between lived community experience and structured civic influence.

8. Position within the wider Social Inclusion Landscape

The Social Inclusion Pillar operates within a broader county ecosystem of organisations and services working to address disadvantage, exclusion and inequality. This includes SICAP-funded organisations, community development projects, disability services, family resource centres, charities, advocacy bodies and statutory agencies.

The purpose of the Pillar is not to duplicate or replace this work. Its distinct role is to strengthen the wider system by providing a structured participation and governance pathway through which systemic social inclusion issues can inform local decision-making.

The Pillar adds value by:

- elevating recurring systemic barriers identified by frontline organisations into structured governance discussion
- strengthening the quality, consistency and accountability of community representation within local authority structures
- providing practical participation pathways and operational tools for member organisations
- improving visibility and transparency through documented issue progression, reporting and feedback
- helping ensure that community intelligence contributes to policy discussion in a structured and credible way.

In this sense, the Pillar supports governance influence and democratic participation rather than direct service delivery.

Clear Operating Boundaries

To protect credibility, sustainability and constructive working relationships, the Social Inclusion Pillar operates within clear boundaries.

It does not:

- undertake individual casework or personal advocacy
- duplicate statutory complaints, appeals or service response processes
- act as a substitute for frontline services or statutory responsibilities
- commit outcomes or resources beyond its actual influence
- operate as a parallel governance or decision-making structure.

These boundaries are essential to maintaining focus, protecting volunteer capacity and ensuring that the Pillar remains a credible mechanism for structured participation and systemic influence.

Strategic Alignment

The Social Inclusion Pillar operates within the governance framework of Kilkenny PPN while maintaining its distinct role as a community participation mechanism focused on social inclusion.

Its purpose is not to replicate county strategies, but to strengthen them by ensuring that lived community experience informs policy discussion and local decision-making in a structured way.

Where relevant, issues progressed through the Pillar will be framed in ways that connect community evidence with wider county priorities and policy frameworks. This strengthens the quality of dialogue between community organisations, elected members and council structures while preserving the independence of community voice.

A Strategic Alignment Review is included in Year 3 of the Operating Plan to examine recurring issue themes, assess alignment with relevant county strategies, and identify opportunities for stronger long-term policy linkage.

9. Key Structural Issues Addressed in the Plan

Consultation, stakeholder engagement and review of current arrangements identified two significant structural weaknesses that currently limit the effectiveness of social inclusion participation at county level.

These weaknesses are not about a lack of commitment or goodwill. Rather, they reflect gaps in structure, process and connectivity between community experience and formal decision-making.

This Plan has been designed specifically to address those weaknesses in a practical, proportionate and sustainable way. **Appendices 2 and 3** contain information which informs this section.

1. Uneven Participation and Representation

Across County Kilkenny, many organisations work directly with individuals and communities experiencing disadvantage, exclusion or barriers to participation. These organisations hold valuable frontline insight into emerging needs, service gaps and the lived realities of social exclusion.

However, engagement with the Social Inclusion Pillar is not consistent across the county.

In some areas, organisations participate actively and regularly. In others, engagement is limited, information does not flow reliably, and the Pillar is not always understood as a practical route to influence.

This matters because the effectiveness of the Social Inclusion Pillar depends on the quality, breadth and legitimacy of the community intelligence that informs its work.

Where participation is uneven:

- systemic issues remain isolated within individual organisations rather than being recognised as wider patterns
- concerns may be raised informally without sufficient evidence or structure
- participation can become concentrated among a small number of established organisations
- smaller, rural or less visible groups may remain under-represented
- emerging issues may not be identified early
- the credibility and representativeness of the Pillar can be weakened.

This reduces the Pillar's capacity to reflect the full diversity of social inclusion experience across the county.

The Plan responds by moving from an informal engagement model to a more structured participation system.

Key measures include:

- clear issue submission pathways so organisations understand how concerns can be raised
- practical tools to support issue documentation, triage and evidence gathering
- transparent feedback mechanisms so organisations can see what happens after issues are raised

- regular reporting to strengthen trust and visibility
- targeted efforts to improve participation among under-represented communities
- structured monitoring of participation balance across the county.

This approach does not create additional governance layers. Instead, it strengthens the reach, consistency and legitimacy of the existing Social Inclusion system.

The objective is not simply greater participation, but broader, higher-quality and more sustainable engagement that produces credible community evidence.

2. Weak Pathways for Strategic Issue Progression

Consultation also highlighted a second structural challenge.

While councillors, PPN representatives and community organisations are committed to addressing social inclusion concerns, there is not always a clear or disciplined pathway through which systemic issues can be progressed strategically within local governance structures.

Issues may be raised with good intent, but without structured validation, documentation or policy framing, they can be treated as isolated concerns rather than evidence of wider systemic problems.

Without a stronger progression pathway:

- recurring issues may not be recognised as patterns
- councillors may receive fragmented or anecdotal concerns without sufficient supporting evidence
- similar issues may be raised repeatedly in different forums without coordination
- opportunities to influence relevant governance structures may be missed
- responses may be inconsistent or difficult to track
- communities may receive little visibility on what happened after concerns were raised.

This weakens both community participation and governance response.

The issue is not a lack of willingness to act. It is the absence of a consistent mechanism for converting community experience into structured governance engagement.

This Plan addresses that gap directly through a defined operating pathway:

Issue identification → submission → triage → policy framing → progression through relevant council structures → response tracking → feedback

This ensures that issues are not simply forwarded as general concerns. They are reviewed, validated, documented and aligned with the most appropriate governance route.

Supporting mechanisms include:

- standard Decision Briefs for structured issue presentation
- issue clustering to identify recurring themes and systemic patterns
- clearer routing through Strategic Policy Committees, LCDC and other relevant structures

- formal issue tracking and outcome monitoring
- predictable reporting arrangements that strengthen transparency and accountability.

This creates a more effective interface between community participation and formal local decision-making.

3. Strengthening Democratic Participation

The Social Inclusion Pillar is not intended to replace elected representatives, statutory decision-making structures or formal governance processes.

Its purpose is to strengthen them.

The Plan provides a structured participation mechanism that enables councillors, PPN representatives and governance structures to engage with clearer, better-evidenced and more strategically framed social inclusion issues.

This supports stronger policy discussion, improves the quality of representation, and helps distinguish isolated concerns from broader systemic challenges.

In practical terms, the Plan strengthens democratic participation by making community intelligence more structured, credible and actionable.

Strategic Implication

Taken together, these two structural weaknesses explain why informal participation alone is insufficient.

Without stronger participation, the system lacks breadth, legitimacy and representative reach.

Without stronger progression pathways, community evidence struggles to translate into meaningful influence.

This Plan addresses both challenges by creating a practical and sustainable operating model that strengthens participation, improves evidence quality, supports democratic representation, and creates clearer pathways for social inclusion issues to inform local decision-making.

10. The Plan – Vision Statement, Goals & Strategic Objectives

10.1. Vision Statement

The Social Inclusion Pillar of Kilkenny PPN will provide a credible, structured and sustainable route through which the lived experience of disadvantage, exclusion and inequality can inform local decision-making.

Its purpose is to ensure that systemic social inclusion concerns emerging from communities are not confined to informal discussion, but are translated into validated, evidence-based and visible influence within local governance structures.

Through this approach, community experience becomes a recognised and credible part of policy discussion, democratic representation and local decision-making.

10.2. Overarching Goals

1. Strengthen Structured Influence

Ensure that systemic social inclusion issues raised through the Social Inclusion Pillar progress through a clear, documented and accountable pathway into appropriate local governance structures.

2. Improve Transparency and Feedback

Provide consistent reporting, visible follow-through and clear communication so that communities understand what has been progressed, what responses have been received, and where limitations exist.

3. Protect Volunteer Sustainability

Design and operate the system in a way that recognises finite volunteer and coordination capacity, with realistic progression limits, clear boundaries and manageable workloads.

4. Strengthen the Quality of Representation

Support PPN representatives and participating organisations to present validated issues clearly, consistently and within an evidence-based policy context.

5. Embed Governance, Accountability and Continuous Improvement

Ensure that roles, responsibilities and decision-making processes are clear; that issues and outcomes are documented; and that the system is regularly reviewed and refined.

10.3. Strategic Objectives

To achieve these goals, the Plan will:

1. Embed the Implementation Toolkit as the standard operating framework for issue submission, triage, progression, tracking and reporting.
2. Establish a structured Social Inclusion Issue Pathway from issue identification through to governance progression, response tracking and community feedback.

3. Strengthen communication and reporting discipline across the Social Inclusion system to improve transparency, trust and accountability.
4. Improve the quality and consistency of representation by supporting structured issue presentation, representative feedback and clearer governance engagement.
5. Monitor workload, participation balance and operational sustainability through routine oversight and risk review.
6. Undertake annual reflection, learning and refinement to strengthen system performance over the life of the Plan.
7. Strengthen strategic alignment with relevant county governance and policy frameworks while maintaining the independence of community voice.

Strategic Reflection

This Plan represents a deliberate shift from informal participation towards a disciplined and sustainable operating model for social inclusion engagement.

It replaces ad hoc issue escalation with a clear, structured system through which community concerns can be identified, validated, progressed and reported in a transparent and accountable way.

Its success will depend not simply on activity levels, but on the quality of participation, the credibility of evidence, the effectiveness of governance engagement, and the visibility of outcomes for communities.

Appendix 4a sets out how these strategic priorities are translated into the phased three-year Operating Plan.

11. Guiding Framework

This Plan is grounded in practical implementation discipline, clear governance and structured participation.

For the purposes of this framework, “we” refers to the Social Inclusion Pillar operating within the PPN governance structure, including the Steering Group, Social Inclusion Working Group, PPN Coordinator and PPN representatives, working alongside member organisations and relevant governance structures.

The framework sets out the principles, operating assumptions and shared values that guide how the Social Inclusion system functions, how decisions are made, and how participation is managed in practice.

Guiding Principles

1. Clarity of Roles and Process

Responsibilities, decision-making pathways and operational processes are clearly defined so that participation is structured, fair and accountable.

2. Proportionate Action

The system focuses on what is realistic, manageable and capable of meaningful follow-through. Progression is disciplined to protect quality, credibility and sustainability.

3. Evidence-Informed Participation

Issues progressed through the system are supported by evidence, community experience and identifiable patterns, rather than isolated incidents or anecdotal concerns.

4. Transparency

Decisions, issue progression and outcomes are communicated clearly so that participants understand how the system is operating and what actions have been taken.

5. Respectful and Constructive Engagement

All participants engage professionally, follow agreed processes and contribute in a way that supports effective working relationships across community and governance structures.

6. Sustainability

Volunteer, representative and coordination capacity are recognised as finite resources and must be protected through disciplined operating practices.

Operating Approach

The Social Inclusion system will operate on the basis of the following practical commitments:

- System over ad hoc – Issues progress only through the agreed intake, validation and progression pathway
- Managed progression – Active issue volume is controlled to protect quality, follow-through and representative capacity
- Balanced participation – Geographic reach, organisational diversity and participation from under-represented groups are monitored
- Complementarity – The Pillar strengthens the wider social inclusion ecosystem rather than duplicating the work of other organisations or services
- Continuous improvement – The model is reviewed regularly and refined based on operational experience and learning.

Core Values

The Social Inclusion Pillar will operate in a way that reflects the following shared values:

- Integrity in Representation – Representatives act on agreed positions and within defined governance arrangements
- Fairness and Inclusion – Participation actively seeks to include less visible and under-represented voices
- Accountability – Decisions, actions and outcomes are documented and open to review
- Collaboration – Constructive working relationships are maintained across community, elected and statutory structures
- Practical Impact – The focus is on meaningful progress and structured influence rather than activity for its own sake.

12. Operating Plan

12.1. From Strategy to Delivery

The Plan is designed to move social inclusion from informal discussion to structured influence within local government decision-making.

The Vision, Goals and Strategic Objectives define what the Plan aims to achieve. The Guiding Framework sets out the principles, values and standards that shape how the work is carried out. The Operating Plan translates this strategic framework into practical action over three years.

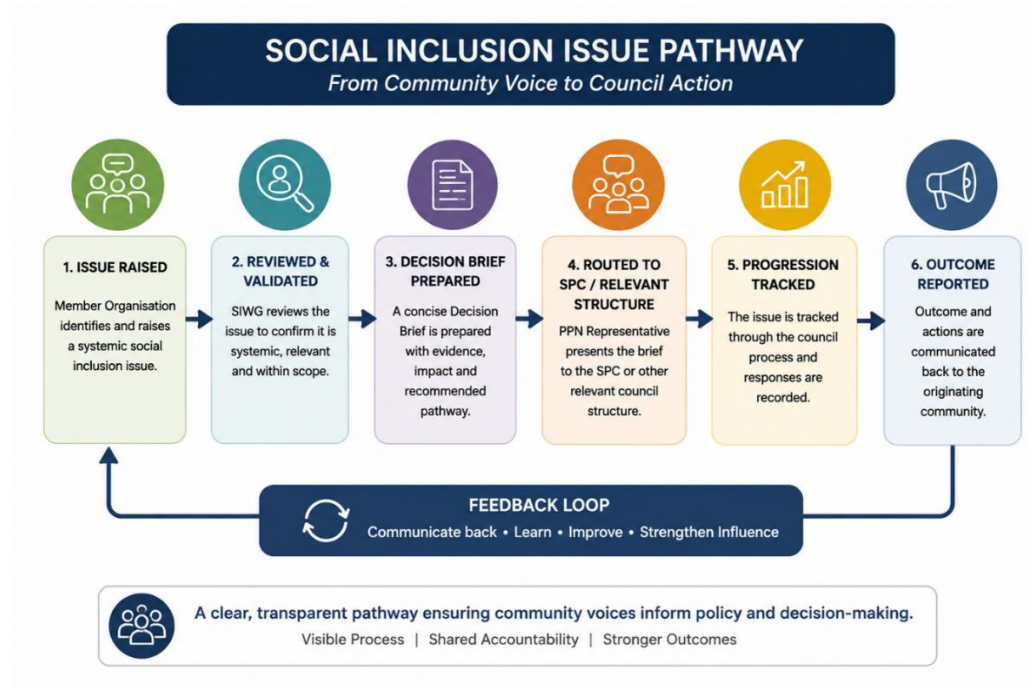
In summary:



This is not a standalone implementation schedule. It is the operational expression of the strategic framework.

12.2. Operating Model

The Plan is supported by a structured participation model that connects community experience with local authority decision-making. Issues affecting communities move through a defined pathway:



This approach strengthens clarity and follow-through while ensuring that participation remains manageable and that community experience translates into structured and accountable influence.

The model is supported by practical tools which are presented in **Appendix 8**, and which are:

- Launch & alignment Session Framework
- Implementation Readiness Checklist
- Issue Pathway Walkthrough
- Governance Role Summaries
- “How the System Works” Briefing Note
- Representative Reporting Guidance
- Issue Submission Guidance
- FAQ/Clarification Note
- Early Intervention Review Template
- Induction Materials

A detailed description of the operating model and associated toolkit is provided in the Implementation Toolkit accompanying this Plan.

12.3. Local Participation & Community Engagement

Member organisations across the Social Inclusion Pillar play a critical role in ensuring that local social inclusion issues are identified and communities are heard.

This may include:

- hosting occasional listening or engagement sessions
- encouraging community organisations to use the Issue Pathway
- sharing information through local networks
- identifying emerging issues
- supporting participation by smaller or less visible groups
- helping rural and geographically dispersed communities engage.

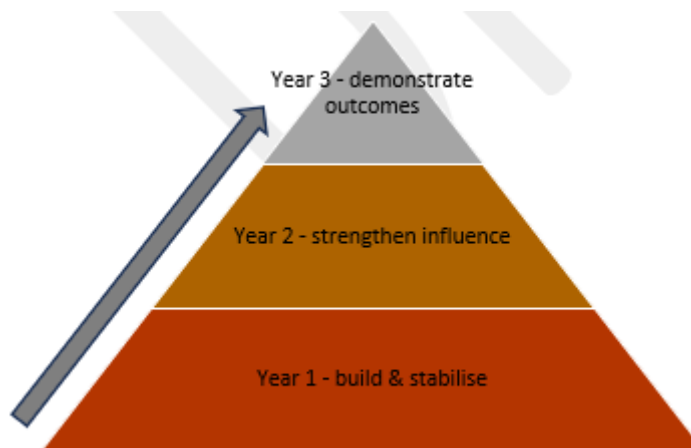
All issues identified locally must enter the formal Issue Pathway. This ensures that the Social Inclusion Committee retains responsibility for validation, prioritisation and progression, avoiding parallel or informal decision-making.

This approach strengthens participation, improves local intelligence and increases the legitimacy of the overall system.

Appendix 9 refers.

12.4. Three-Year Delivery Approach

This section sets out how the Social Inclusion Plan will be implemented over a structured three-year period. The phased approach is deliberate: it allows the Social Inclusion Pillar to establish strong operational foundations, test and refine its systems in practice, strengthen the quality of influence, and build a sustainable model for longer-term participation. Each phase builds logically on the previous one, with progression based on learning, operational discipline and realistic capacity.



The three-year operating model is therefore not separate from the strategic framework; it is the practical expression of it. The guiding principles protect the system from drift, while the phased delivery model ensures structured implementation, measurable progress and sustainable development.

The phased approach is designed to:

- establish reliable systems before expanding activity
- protect volunteer and coordination capacity
- strengthen the quality and credibility of representation
- reduce the risk of informal or inconsistent practices
- improve transparency, accountability and visible follow-through
- ensure that learning informs continuous improvement.

Year 1 – Build and Stabilise

Purpose: Establish the operating system, embed discipline and test the model in practice.

The first year focuses on creating a functioning and credible operating framework for the Social Inclusion Pillar. The priority is to establish practical systems, clarify expectations, build confidence among participants, and test the issue pathway under live conditions before further development.

Key priorities include:

- formal adoption of the Plan
- finalisation of the operational toolkit and issue management systems
- agreement of progression limits to protect sustainability
- testing and refining the Social Inclusion Issue Pathway
- briefing PPN representatives, elected members and participating organisations
- launching member awareness and engagement activity
- opening the issue submission process
- establishing issue tracking, reporting and feedback arrangements
- conducting regular triage and review meetings
- publishing early public progress updates
- completing a Year 1 review to identify learning and improvement priorities.

Role of the PPN Coordinator – Year 1

In Year 1, the PPN Coordinator provides the central operational support required to establish and stabilise the system.

This includes:

- managing issue intake and triage administration
- maintaining the Issue Tracker as the formal operational record
- supporting Decision Brief preparation and issue progression
- monitoring timelines, progression limits and workflow pressures
- coordinating communications, updates and reporting
- supporting engagement across the Social Inclusion Pillar membership.

Year 1 Outcome: A functioning and tested social inclusion participation system with clear operational discipline, active participation and documented learning.

Year 2 – Strengthen Influence and Participation

Purpose: Improve quality, consistency, participation balance and governance effectiveness.

With the operating model established, Year 2 focuses on improving performance rather than expanding activity indiscriminately.

The emphasis shifts from system establishment to strengthening influence, improving governance engagement, increasing visibility of outcomes, and ensuring participation remains representative and credible.

Key priorities include:

- reviewing and applying Year 1 learning
- refining tools, workflows and governance routing processes
- improving issue progression quality and routing accuracy
- increasing formal response and outcome capture
- strengthening representative reporting and feedback discipline
- reviewing participation patterns across organisational types and geographic areas
- engaging under-represented communities where gaps are identified
- holding themed or issue-focused engagement discussions
- maintaining regular risk, workload and operational reviews.

Role of the PPN Coordinator – Year 2

In Year 2, the Coordinator supports system strengthening by:

- analysing operational performance and emerging patterns
- monitoring issue progression and recorded outcomes
- supporting effective governance routing
- maintaining reporting and public communications
- monitoring participation reach and representation balance
- supporting operational risk and sustainability oversight.

Year 2 Outcome: A stronger, more responsive and more credible participation system with improved engagement, clearer issue progression and stronger evidence of influence.

Year 3 – Demonstrate Outcomes and Secure Sustainability

Purpose: Consolidate learning, demonstrate impact and prepare for the next planning cycle.

The third year focuses on evaluation, strategic learning and long-term sustainability.

By this stage, the emphasis shifts from operating the system to demonstrating what it has achieved, identifying recurring themes, assessing strategic relevance, and ensuring the model remains practical and sustainable for future use.

Key priorities include:

- publishing a Social Inclusion Outcomes Report
- analysing recurring issue themes and systemic patterns
- reviewing alignment with relevant county strategies and policy frameworks
- assessing participation reach, diversity and inclusion effectiveness
- reviewing governance capacity and long-term sustainability
- refining tools and processes based on operational experience
- addressing representative continuity and succession planning
- identifying priorities for the next development cycle.

Role of the PPN Coordinator – Year 3

In Year 3, the Coordinator supports consolidation by:

- compiling operational evidence and trend analysis
- supporting outcomes reporting and review activity
- identifying recurring issue themes and participation patterns
- reviewing workload sustainability and operational effectiveness
- refining tools and supporting transition planning.

Year 3 Outcome: A sustainable, evidence-based and credible social inclusion participation model with demonstrated learning, clearer influence and a strong foundation for future development.

12.5. Issue Types and Governance Routing

The Social Inclusion system focuses on systemic issues affecting communities, not individual casework.

Indicative issue areas may include:

- access to services
- transport and connectivity
- housing and accommodation

- employment and economic participation
- education and training
- childcare and family supports
- social isolation and community participation
- access to information
- equality, integration and discrimination
- digital inclusion
- disability and accessibility
- youth issues
- older people
- rural disadvantage.

Following triage and policy framing, issues will be aligned with the most appropriate governance route.

Potential progression pathways include:

- Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs)
- Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)
- Municipal District structures
- relevant council officials
- other appropriate statutory or public bodies where relevant.

Some issues may be cross-cutting and involve multiple structures. In such cases, a lead progression route will be identified to maintain clarity, accountability and coordinated follow-through.

The operating principle is straightforward:

Issues are not forwarded as general concerns; they are structured, validated and progressed through the part of the system capable of responding.

12.6. Governance Roles & Accountability

Effective implementation depends on clearly defined governance and operational roles.

- Strategic oversight is provided by the Steering Group, which monitors sustainability, workload, risk and overall system performance.
- The Social Inclusion Committee provides operational oversight by reviewing and validating issues, prioritising progression, monitoring participation balance and supporting structured issue development.
- The PPN Coordinator provides day-to-day operational management, including issue intake, tracking, reporting and process discipline.
- Member organisations, representatives, councillors, council officials and relevant agencies each play defined roles in issue identification, progression, governance engagement and response.

Detailed role descriptions are provided elsewhere in the Plan and supporting appendices.

12.7. Capacity, Risk & Sustainability

This operating model is designed to be practical and sustainable.

For the system to function effectively, minimum commitments are required across key roles, including:

- regular Social Inclusion Committee review meetings
- representative preparation and reporting time
- Steering Group oversight of performance and risk
- protected operational coordination time.

Quarterly governance review will monitor risks including:

- excessive issue volume
- weak reporting or feedback compliance
- uneven participation
- delays in governance responses
- operational bottlenecks or workload pressures.

Where risks arise, proportionate adjustments may be made to protect system credibility and sustainability.

12.8. Implementation Support

The Plan is supported by a practical Implementation Toolkit containing the operational tools, templates and reporting mechanisms required for consistent delivery.

This ensures:

- standardised issue handling
- documented decision-making
- transparent reporting and feedback
- fair and consistent operational practice
- manageable workloads and clearer accountability.

A half-day launch and alignment session will support implementation by clarifying:

- the purpose of the Plan
- governance roles and boundaries
- operational processes
- issue progression expectations
- reporting responsibilities
- sustainability principles.

Ongoing support will remain proportionate, including light-touch guidance, induction support for new representatives, and periodic review as part of continuous improvement.

13. Social Inclusion Issues & Routing through Local Authority Structures

13.1. Purpose

This section outlines:

- the types of social inclusion issues that may arise through the Social Inclusion Pillar
- how these issues are directed to the appropriate local authority structures
- The aim is to ensure that issues are not only raised, but are clearly aligned, appropriately routed and capable of informing policy and decision-making.

13.2. Types of Social Inclusion Issues

Issues raised through the Social Inclusion process should reflect systemic challenges affecting groups or communities, rather than individual cases. **Appendix 2** and **3** also refer.

While each issue will be considered on its own merits, the following categories provide a practical guide to the types of issues likely to arise:

Access to Services
Barriers to accessing health, social care and disability services, including availability, waiting times and outreach provision.
Transport and Connectivity
Limitations in public transport, particularly in rural areas, including service frequency, accessibility and links to employment, education and healthcare.
Housing and Accommodation
Issues relating to housing supply, affordability, suitability and access to supports, including homelessness and overcrowding.
Employment and Economic Participation
Barriers to accessing employment, training and economic opportunities, particularly for those in rural or disadvantaged situations.
Education and Training
Challenges in accessing further education and training, including cost, transport, childcare and digital barriers.
Childcare and Family Supports
Availability, affordability and flexibility of childcare, along with access to family support services.
Social Isolation and Community Participation
Barriers to participation in community life, including isolation, lack of local services and limited opportunities for engagement.
Access to Information
Difficulties accessing clear, consistent and accessible information about services and supports, including language and digital barriers.
Equality, Integration and Discrimination
Issues relating to exclusion, discrimination, integration and access to culturally appropriate services.
Digital Inclusion
Barriers to accessing or using digital services, including lack of devices, connectivity or digital skills.
Disability and Accessibility
Physical, social and service-related barriers affecting participation and independent living.
Youth and Young People
Limited opportunities for young people in relation to education, employment, services and participation.

Older People
Challenges relating to ageing in place, access to supports, mobility and social participation.
Rural Disadvantage
Issues arising from service withdrawal, distance, infrastructure gaps and limited local opportunities.

These categories are indicative and are intended to support:
issue identification
triage and clustering
alignment with policy areas

13.3. Routing of Issues to Local Authority Structures

Approach

Following triage and policy framing, each issue is reviewed to determine:

- the most relevant Strategic Policy Committee (SPC)
- whether the issue also relates to other committees or structures
- how the issue aligns with local authority responsibilities and policy priorities
- Each issue is assigned: a lead SPC (primary route) and where appropriate, a secondary link to other structures

This ensures clarity, avoids duplication and strengthens the likelihood of meaningful consideration.

Indicative Mapping

While issues are assessed on a case-by-case basis, the following provides a general guide:

- Housing SPC: housing access, supply, suitability, homelessness
- Transport / Infrastructure SPC: public transport, rural connectivity, accessibility
- Community SPC: social isolation, participation, community services, integration
- Economic SPC: employment, training, economic participation
- Planning SPC: location of services, accessibility, spatial development
- Environment SPC: fuel poverty, environmental services, climate impacts
- LCDC: community development programmes, social inclusion initiatives and funding

Many issues are cross-cutting. In such cases, one SPC is identified as the lead, with links made to other relevant structures where appropriate.

13.4. Roles & Responsibilities

Social Inclusion Committee
The Committee:
determines the appropriate routing for each issue
ensures alignment with policy areas
avoids duplication across committees
supports a coordinated approach to engagement
PPN Representatives
They:
bring Policy Issue Briefs to the relevant SPC
present issues within a policy context
contribute to discussion and seek responses
report back on outcomes

Key Principle

Issues are not forwarded as general concerns. They are structured, aligned and directed to the part of the system that can respond.

Outcome

This approach ensures that:

- issues are considered in the correct forum
- engagement with SPCs is focused and effective
- the Social Inclusion Pillar operates as a coordinated and credible contributor within local authority structures

14. Governance, Roles & Delivery Framework

The effective implementation of this Plan depends on clear governance, defined responsibilities and disciplined operational management.

The Social Inclusion system is designed as a structured participation model through which community concerns can be identified, validated, progressed through appropriate governance structures, and reported back transparently.

This requires clearly defined roles, agreed boundaries and shared accountability across community organisations, representatives, governance bodies and operational supports.

The model is intentionally structured to ensure that participation remains credible, evidence-based and sustainable.

To protect fairness and operational integrity:

- only systemic issues progress through the formal pathway
- individual casework is outside scope
- issues progress through agreed governance processes only
- the Issue Tracker remains the single formal operational record
- progression limits are used to protect capacity
- urgent individual matters are signposted to appropriate services.

These boundaries ensure that the Social Inclusion Pillar remains focused on structured participation and systemic influence rather than informal issue escalation.

Without this discipline, participation can become inconsistent, anecdotal and difficult to sustain.

Governance & Operational Oversight

The delivery of the Plan requires clear internal leadership, governance oversight and operational discipline.

Role	Core Function	Key Responsibilities
Steering Group	Strategic oversight	Provides governance oversight, monitors risk, workload and sustainability, agrees progression parameters, and reviews overall system performance
Social Inclusion Working Group	Issue validation and operational oversight	Reviews and validates issues, prioritises progression, supports development of Decision Briefs, monitors participation balance, and identifies emerging themes
PPN Coordinator	Operational system management	Manages issue intake, maintains the Issue Tracker, supports triage administration and Decision Brief preparation, monitors timelines, coordinates reporting and communications, and flags operational risks

Engagement & Representation

Effective implementation also depends on clearly defined roles across the wider participation and governance system.

Role	Main Role	Accountability
PPN Representatives	Present agreed issues through relevant governance structures and report outcomes	Accurate representation, feedback and reporting
Strategic Policy Committees	Provide a formal policy forum for consideration of validated systemic issues	Policy scrutiny, consideration and recommendation
County Councillors	Support progression of validated systemic issues through council decision-making and political oversight	Democratic oversight and political advocacy
Council Officials	Consider issues within statutory remit and provide responses or operational follow-up where appropriate	Statutory and operational engagement
Member Organisations	Raise and evidence systemic social inclusion issues	Clear submissions and constructive participation
External Agencies	Provide specialist evidence or expertise where relevant	Operate within statutory or organisational remit
PPN Secretariat	Provide constitutional and governance oversight	Governance compliance and organisational integrity

Role of the PPN Coordinator

The PPN Coordinator provides the day-to-day operational continuity required to ensure that the participation pathway functions effectively.

The Coordinator supports the system but does not determine which issues progress. Decisions regarding validation, prioritisation and progression remain within the agreed governance structures.

The role focuses on operational discipline, including intake management, issue tracking, reporting, communications, workflow monitoring and escalation of operational risks.

Appendix 8 provides detailed role descriptors.

Shared Delivery & Minimum Operating Conditions

Delivery of the Plan is a shared responsibility.

Community concerns are identified through member organisations, reviewed by the Social Inclusion Working Group, progressed through governance structures by representatives and elected members, and tracked through formal reporting and feedback mechanisms.

For this model to function credibly, minimum commitments are required:

- regular Social Inclusion Working Group meetings
- representative preparation and reporting time
- Steering Group oversight of performance and sustainability
- protected operational coordination time for the PPN Coordinator.

These are core operating requirements, not optional enhancements.

Risk Management & Sustainability

Risk management forms part of routine governance oversight.

The Steering Group will undertake quarterly reviews to monitor:

- excessive issue volume
- weak reporting compliance
- uneven participation
- delays in responses
- governance bottlenecks
- representative workload pressures
- declining confidence in system effectiveness.

Where risks emerge, proportionate adjustments may be made to protect sustainability, credibility and effective delivery.

A Risk Register is included in the Appendices as part of ongoing monitoring and continuous improvement.

15. Implementation Toolkit

A strategic plan does not deliver change on its own. Without practical systems, clearly defined tools and consistent operating discipline, even well-designed plans can drift into informal practice, inconsistent decision-making and unsustainable pressure on volunteers and coordinators.

The Implementation Toolkit is the practical mechanism that translates this Plan from strategic intent into day-to-day operation.

It provides the operational infrastructure required to ensure that the Social Inclusion system functions consistently, fairly and within agreed governance boundaries. This includes standard issue submission forms, triage tools, Decision Brief templates, issue tracking mechanisms, reporting formats and supporting guidance, ensuring that all issues progress through a common and disciplined pathway.

The Toolkit is designed not simply as an administrative support, but as a governance safeguard.

By standardising how issues are received, assessed, validated, progressed and reported, it:

- reduces ambiguity and inconsistency
- supports fair and evidence-based decision-making
- prevents informal side processes or ad hoc escalation
- protects volunteer and staff capacity through clearer workflow management
- strengthens transparency, accountability and operational discipline.

The Toolkit strengthens the credibility and effectiveness of the Plan by ensuring that:

- every issue is recorded through a consistent and documented process
- triage and progression decisions are transparent and traceable
- Decision Briefs are prepared to a common standard
- representatives have clear expectations regarding issue progression and reporting
- responses and outcomes are formally tracked and communicated
- progression volumes and workload pressures can be monitored
- governance oversight is supported by reliable operational information.

In practical terms, the Toolkit is what turns participation into a functioning governance system rather than an informal process.

The full suite of templates, tools and supporting guidance is provided at **Appendix 7**.

15. Communication & Reporting Framework

Effective communication is central to the credibility and success of the Social Inclusion Plan.

Because the Plan depends on structured participation, representative engagement and visible follow-through, communication must be disciplined, consistent and purposeful. Without clear communication, participation can become fragmented, informal processes can emerge, and confidence in the system can weaken.

The communication framework for this Plan is therefore designed to support transparency, accountability and operational clarity across all stages of the issue pathway.

In practice, this means:

- clear, plain-English communication so that member organisations and communities understand how the system works
- consistent use of agreed communication channels to avoid duplication or confusion
- formal reporting arrangements for representatives, committees and governance structures
- structured feedback loops so communities can see what issues were progressed, what responses were received, and where limitations exist
- visible public updates to strengthen trust, transparency and engagement
- disciplined communication practices that reduce informal side processes or undocumented issue escalation.

This communication approach supports the wider governance model by ensuring that information flows clearly between community organisations, representatives, governance structures and operational supports.

Effective communication is therefore not a supporting activity; it is a core part of how the Social Inclusion system maintains trust, accountability and operational discipline.

Further operational detail is provided in [Appendix 9](#).

16. Capacity-Building, Implementation Support & Review

Effective delivery of the Social Inclusion Plan depends not only on the quality of the operating model, but on shared understanding, clear expectations and realistic implementation support.

Because many of the roles within the system are voluntary or part-time, capacity-building must be practical, proportionate and focused on what is necessary for effective delivery.

The aim is not to create a training burden, but to ensure that those responsible for implementation understand the purpose of the Plan, their role within it, and the practical systems that support consistent participation and governance engagement.

16.1. Launch & Alignment

Before formal implementation begins, a dedicated *Launch and Alignment Session* will be held for key stakeholders, including the Steering Group, Social Inclusion Working Group, PPN Representatives and the PPN Coordinator.

This half-day session will mark the practical commencement of the Plan and establish a shared understanding of how the operating model will function in practice.

The session will focus on:

- Clarity of Purpose – understanding the rationale for the Plan and the shift from informal engagement to structured participation
- Roles and Boundaries – clarifying governance responsibilities, expectations and operating limits
- The Social Inclusion Issue Pathway – walking through issue submission, triage, policy framing, progression and feedback processes
- Implementation Toolkit – introducing the practical tools, templates and reporting arrangements that support delivery
- Quality of Representation – strengthening expectations around issue presentation, representative reporting and governance engagement
- Sustainability and Capacity – agreeing realistic operating expectations and protecting volunteer capacity.

This session will establish shared standards from the outset and reduce the risk of inconsistent interpretation or informal side processes emerging during implementation.

A draft session plan and supporting materials are included in **Appendix 6**.

16.2. Ongoing Implementation Support

Following launch, support will remain proportionate and practical.

This may include:

- concise guidance notes and role summaries
- a simple “How to Raise an Issue” guide for member organisations
- induction support for new representatives or participants
- targeted clarification where operational issues emerge
- periodic reinforcement of reporting and governance expectations.

The objective is to maintain implementation quality without creating unnecessary administrative burden.

16.3. Review, Learning & Continuous Improvement

Implementation will include planned review points to ensure that the Plan remains effective, practical and responsive to operational learning.

An annual review will assess:

- system performance
- participation patterns and reach
- issue progression effectiveness
- representative reporting and feedback
- workload sustainability
- emerging risks or operational bottlenecks
- opportunities for refinement or improvement.

Feedback may be gathered through short surveys, structured discussions, written input or review within existing PPN governance meetings.

A more detailed strategic review will take place toward the end of Year 2, when sufficient operational experience has been gathered to assess whether the model is functioning as intended and whether adjustments are required.

These review points support accountability, reinforce shared ownership and ensure that the Social Inclusion system continues to evolve in a disciplined, sustainable and evidence-informed way.

Further detail on monitoring and evaluation is provided in **Section 17** following.

17. Monitoring, Review & Measures of Success

Measuring success is essential to ensure that the Social Inclusion Plan delivers meaningful influence rather than activity alone.

Success will not be measured simply by the volume of issues raised, but by the effectiveness, credibility and sustainability of the participation system established through this Plan.

The monitoring framework is aligned with the Strategic Objectives and is designed to assess whether the Social Inclusion system is operating as intended, delivering structured influence, and remaining practical and sustainable over time.

Measurement will combine quantitative indicators (such as issue progression, response rates and participation reach) with qualitative evidence (including stakeholder feedback, case examples and evidence of improved governance engagement).

17.1. Strategic Objective-Aligned Measures

Strategic Objective	What Success Looks Like	Example Indicators
1. Embed the Implementation Toolkit	Operational tools are consistently used across the system	Toolkit implemented; standard templates in use; Issue Tracker maintained
2. Establish the Issue Pathway	Issues progress through a clear and documented pathway	% of issues recorded and triaged through agreed process
3. Strengthen Communication and Reporting	Reporting and feedback are consistent and visible	Public updates issued; representative reporting compliance; documented feedback loops
4. Improve Representation Quality	Issues are clearly presented and evidence-based	Decision Briefs prepared to agreed standard; representative reporting quality
5. Monitor Workload and Sustainability	System remains manageable and proportionate	Workload review; progression limits monitored; backlog avoided
6. Undertake Annual Reflection and Improvement	Learning informs refinement of the model	Annual review completed; operational improvements implemented
7. Strengthen Strategic Alignment	Community evidence informs wider policy discussion	Strategic alignment review completed; documented examples of policy engagement

17.2. Year-by-Year Performance Review

Year 1 – Build and Stabilise

Success focus: Establishing a functioning and disciplined operating system.

Indicators may include:

- operational toolkit implemented
- issue submission pathway active
- Issue Tracker operational
- regular triage meetings held
- representative reporting arrangements established
- public progress update issued
- 90-day stabilisation review completed.

Year 1 Success: The system operates predictably, consistently and within agreed governance boundaries.

Year 2 – Strengthen Influence and Participation

Success focus: Improving quality, credibility and participation balance.

Indicators may include:

- improved issue routing effectiveness
- increased formal response and outcome capture
- participation balance reviews completed
- targeted engagement with under-represented groups
- thematic issue analysis completed
- representative reporting standards maintained
- operational risks actively managed.

Year 2 Success: The quality of social inclusion influence improves without compromising sustainability.

Year 3 – Demonstrate Outcomes and Secure Sustainability
Success focus: Consolidating evidence, demonstrating impact and preparing for continuity.
Indicators may include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Inclusion Outcomes Report published
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • documented case examples of issue progression and governance engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Alignment Review completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sustainability and workload review completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • operational tools refined based on experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuity and succession planning addressed.
Year 3 Success: Documented evidence of influence, balanced participation and a sustainable operating model.

17.3. Qualitative Measures

In addition to formal indicators, success will also be assessed through qualitative evidence, including:

- feedback from the Steering Group and Social Inclusion Working Group
- representative feedback
- stakeholder feedback from member organisations
- evidence of improved clarity and reduced operational ambiguity
- perceptions of credibility among councillors, officials and participating organisations
- case examples demonstrating structured issue progression.

17.4. What Success Ultimately Means

Success does not mean resolving every issue raised. Success means that:

- issues are handled consistently
- systemic patterns are identified and documented
- formal governance engagement takes place
- responses and outcomes are visible
- participation is broad and balanced
- workloads remain sustainable

- community voice becomes a credible part of local decision-making.

This approach ensures that the Social Inclusion Plan delivers measurable, practical and sustainable influence over its three-year life.

18. Conclusion

This Plan marks an important step forward for the Social Inclusion Pillar of Kilkenny PPN.

It establishes a clear, practical and sustainable framework for structured social inclusion participation, moving the Pillar from informal engagement and ad hoc issue follow-up towards a disciplined operating model grounded in transparency, accountability and credible governance engagement.

At its heart, the Plan is about strengthening the connection between lived community experience and local decision-making. It creates a structured mechanism through which systemic social inclusion issues can be identified, validated, framed for policy consideration, progressed through appropriate governance routes, and reported back in a visible and accountable way.

In doing so, the Plan strengthens the relationship between community participation structures and the wider strategic priorities of Kilkenny County Council, helping to ensure that community intelligence informs policy discussion, service planning and local governance in a more consistent and evidence-based way.

This is a practical Plan. It recognises the realities of volunteer capacity, respects constitutional and governance boundaries, and works within existing PPN and local authority structures. It does not promise to resolve every social inclusion challenge. Its purpose is to create a stronger participation system through which community concerns can be raised, evidenced and progressed in a disciplined and constructive way.

Over the next three years, the focus will be to:

- establish a system that is operationally sound and sustainable
- strengthen the quality, consistency and credibility of social inclusion influence
- demonstrate visible outcomes, learning and long-term value.

Success will not be measured by activity alone, nor by the volume of issues raised. It will be measured by the effectiveness of the system itself: the quality of participation, the strength of evidence, the appropriateness of issue progression, the visibility of responses, the balance of engagement, and the credibility of the Social Inclusion Pillar as a trusted route to influence.

The Social Inclusion Pillar cannot eliminate disadvantage. Its contribution is different, but significant: to ensure that the lived experience of exclusion is heard, organised, evidenced and translated into meaningful participation within local governance.

This Plan is therefore more than a statement of intent. It is the beginning of a disciplined operating approach — one that strengthens democratic participation, supports informed decision-making, and makes progress more visible.

Its ultimate purpose is straightforward: to ensure that community knowledge and lived experience - particularly the voices of those experiencing disadvantage, exclusion or reduced access to opportunity - are more clearly reflected in the local decisions that shape people's lives.

That is the commitment.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Current Members of the Social Inclusion Pillar
Appendix 2: Survey & Short Analysis
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Appendix 1 Current Members of the Social Inclusion Pillar

Category	Organisation	Primary Focus	Rural / Urban
Addiction & Recovery	Aiséirí Aislínn	Residential rehabilitation	Rural
	Kilkenny Drug & Alcohol Forum	Prevention & coordination	Mixed
	TADA	Recovery support	Mixed
	Alcohol Group	Peer support	Mixed
Arts & Culture	Aghain Rí Festival Callan	Community arts	Rural
	Piltown Arts & Crafts Club	Creative participation	Rural
	Piltown Knitting & Crafts Club	Social crafts	Rural
	Piltown Back to Education Music	Adult learning arts	Rural
Community Development	Droichead Family Resource Centre	Family support	Urban
	Twilight Community Group	Local support	Mixed
	Men's Breakfast Group	Social participation	Mixed
	Kilnaspic People's Shed	Men's shed	Rural
	Castlecomer Men's Shed	Men's shed	Rural
	Kingsriver Community	Community participation	Mixed
	Rapid Community Garden Project	Community gardening	Urban
	Newpark Close Community Development Ltd	Neighbourhood development	Urban
	Newpark Close Residents	Residents association	Urban
	St. Canice's Community Action Ltd	Local development	Urban
	St. Canice's Neighbourhood Centre	Community services	Urban
	Loughboy Area Resource Centre (LARC)	Area support	Urban
	Ferrybank Lifestyle Links	Social inclusion	Urban
	The Thomas Hayes Trust	Grant support	County-wide

	Brenda's Group	Informal support	Mixed
Disability & Independent Living	Spina Bifida Ireland	Physical disability	National / Urban access
	Acquired Brain Injury Ireland	Neurological disability	National / Urban access
	Muscular Dystrophy Ireland	Neuromuscular condition	National / Urban access
	MS Ireland	Multiple sclerosis	National / Urban access
	Irish Society for Autism	Autism support	National / Urban access
	Irish Wheelchair Association	Mobility & independence	Mixed
	Down Syndrome Ireland (Kilkenny Branch)	Intellectual disability	Mixed
	Camphill Jerpoint	Residential disability support	Rural
	Camphill Community	Inclusive living	Rural
	Camphill Initiatives for Social Ecology	Social ecology & inclusion	Rural
	SOS Kilkenny Ltd	Intellectual disability services	Mixed
	ID Rights Southeast	Disability advocacy	Regional
	Independent Living Movement Ireland	Advocacy	National
	Kilkenny Access Group	Accessibility advocacy	Urban
	Kilkenny Dyspraxia Group	Developmental support	Mixed
	Arthritis Ireland (Kilkenny Branch)	Chronic illness	Mixed
	COPD Support Kilkenny	Chronic illness	Mixed
	Migraine Association of Ireland	Neurological condition	National
	Social Ability	Inclusive employment	Mixed
	KCAT	Disability arts & employment	Urban
Employment & Training	Kilkenny Job Club	Activation	Urban
	Kilkenny Multi-Media Centre	Skills development	Urban
	Kilkenny Leader Partnership	SICAP & rural development	County-wide
Housing & Homelessness	Good Shepherd Centre	Housing support	Urban

	Kilkenny Helping the Homeless	Emergency support	Urban
	Clúid Housing Association	Social housing	Mixed
LGBTQ+ Inclusion	Gay Kilkenny	LGBTQ+ support	Urban
Mental Health & Wellbeing	GROW	Peer mental health	Mixed
	Kilkenny Mental Health Association	Community mental health	Urban
	Lifeline	Crisis support	National
	Involvement Centre	Recovery support	Urban
	Kilkenny Relatives (Mental Health)	Family support	Mixed
Older People & Active Ageing	Kilkenny Age Friendly Alliance	Age-friendly strategy	County-wide
	Older People's Forum	Representation	County-wide
	Paulstown/Goresbridge Active Retirement	Social participation	Rural
Specialist Domestic Violence Service	Amber Domestic Abuse CLG	Domestic violence	Urban
Sport & Healthy Participation	Kilkenny United Women's FC	Women's sport	Urban
	Tullahought Badminton Club	Community sport	Rural
	Song Moo Kwan Ireland	Martial arts	Mixed
	Ballyhale Shamrocks Healthy Club	GAA wellbeing	Rural
	Piltown Snooker Club	Social recreation	Rural
Strategic / Coordination	Kilkenny Forum for Social Inclusion & Participation	Policy advocacy	County-wide
Traveller & Migrant Inclusion	Kilkenny Traveller Community Movement	Traveller advocacy	Mixed
	Kilkenny Integration Forum	Migrant integration	Urban
	Immigrant Services	Migrant support	Mixed
	Fáilte Isteach Kilkenny	Language support	Urban
	Irish Lebanese Cultural Foundation	Cultural inclusion	Urban
	South Sudanese Group	Migrant community	Urban
Women's & Gender Support	Ferrybank Women's Shed	Community support	Urban

	Newpark Close Women's Group	Community support	Urban
	Project Women	Women's empowerment	Mixed
Youth & Children	Millennium Court After School	Childcare	Urban
	Children & Youth CE Scheme (Fr McGrath FRC)	Childcare & employment	Urban
	Silverue Youth Club	Youth participation	Mixed
	Kilkenny Eurobug Youth	Youth development	Mixed
	Young Irish Film Makers	Youth media	Mixed
	Kilkenny Comhairle na nÓg	Youth voice	County-wide

Note: this list contains some member organisations which may have registered but may not be proactively involved in the Social Inclusion Pillar

Appendix 2: Survey & Short Analysis

Methodology

The consultant developed a survey using Google Forms in mid-October with the approval of the Social Inclusion Working Group. The PPN Coordinator circulated the survey link to all Social Inclusion Pillar members for whom email contacts were available. The Pillar has approximately 90 members (see Appendix 1).

A total of 27 responses were received, representing a 30% response rate, which provides a sufficient basis for analysis.

A blank copy of the survey is presented below, followed by a brief analysis which informed the development of the Social Inclusion Plan.

Kilkenny PPN – Social Inclusion Pillar Survey

Purpose: This survey seeks your views on how Kilkenny PPN can better support and represent the Social Inclusion Pillar and its member groups. Your input will help shape the *Social Inclusion Strategic Action Plan (2026–2029)*. We really appreciate your contribution. Kilkenny PPN Coordination Team.

1. Awareness of PPN

How familiar are you with the purpose and role of the Kilkenny PPN?

- Very familiar
- Somewhat familiar
- Heard of it but not sure what it does
- Not familiar at all

2. Current Engagement

How often do you or your organisation participate in PPN meetings, consultations, or events?

- Regularly (most events)
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

3. Barriers to Participation

Which of the following make it difficult to engage with the PPN? (Select up to three)

- Lack of time
- Lack of information/communication
- Accessibility or transport issues
- Meeting times unsuitable
- Not sure how to contribute
- Don't see relevance to our work
- Other (please specify): _____

4. Preferred Engagement Methods

How would you prefer to engage with the PPN?

- In-person meetings/workshops
- Online sessions or webinars

- Email updates and surveys
- Peer networking or small group sessions
- Other (please specify): _____

5. Motivation & Awareness

Why did your group register with the Kilkenny PPN, and how aware are you of the Social Inclusion Linkage Group?

- To stay informed about local developments
- To access funding or training opportunities
- To represent our community's interests
- Encouraged or invited to join
- Other (please specify): _____

Awareness of the Social Inclusion Linkage Group:

- Very aware
- Somewhat aware
- Not aware

6. Representation Confidence

How confident are you that Social Inclusion issues are well represented at local decision-making forums (e.g. LCDC)?

- Very confident
- Somewhat confident
- Not confident
- Unsure

7. Communication & Information Sharing

How effective are current PPN communications (emails, newsletters, website, social media) in keeping you informed, and would your group be open to using WhatsApp for updates from Social Inclusion Representatives?

- Very effective / Yes
- Somewhat effective / Maybe
- Not effective / No
- I don't receive them

8. Training & Capacity Needs

Which areas of support would most help your group to engage effectively? (Select up to three)

- Understanding local policy structures (e.g. LCDC, Council committees)
- Communication and advocacy skills
- Governance and compliance
- Grant writing and funding access
- Digital or online participation skills
- Other (please specify): _____

9. Local Collaboration

Would you be interested in connecting with other Social Inclusion groups in your area for shared learning or joint projects?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

10. Open Question – Voice & Representation

In your own words, what would strong representation for Social Inclusion groups at local level look like?

11. Open Question – Priorities for Action

What are the top two things Kilkenny PPN could do to better support your group or community over the next three years?

Prepared by: Kilkenny PPN Coordination Team

Date: October 2025

(Revised from first revision)

Analysis

The Social Inclusion Pillar survey was conducted to understand how Kilkenny PPN can better support and represent its member organisations. The responses provide insight into awareness, participation, communication and representation.

Awareness of the PPN varies. While some groups are familiar with its purpose, others are less clear about the role of the Social Inclusion Linkage Group. Engagement tends to be occasional rather than regular, indicating interest but inconsistent participation.

The main barriers to engagement are practical. Lack of time is the most common challenge, along with unclear communication and uncertainty about how to contribute. These findings highlight the need for simple processes that respect volunteer capacity.

Respondents were open to a mix of engagement methods, including online sessions, email updates and smaller peer discussions, along with clearer and more timely communication.

Confidence in representation at local decision-making level is mixed. Some groups feel issues are reasonably represented, while others are unsure. This points to the need for clearer feedback loops and visible follow-through.

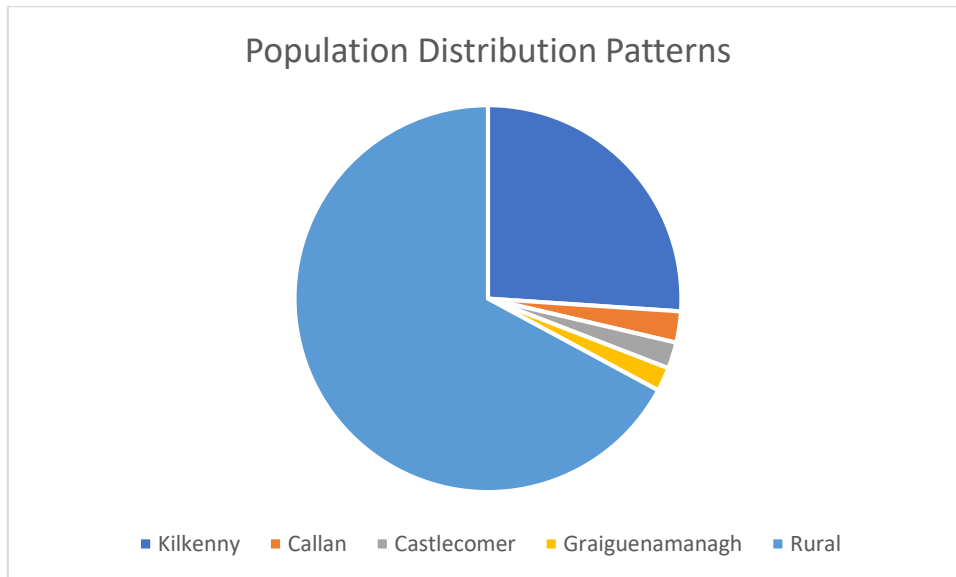
In terms of support, respondents highlighted a need for greater understanding of local policy structures, stronger advocacy and communication skills, and opportunities to connect with other Social Inclusion organisations.

Overall, the survey indicates a desire for clearer participation pathways, stronger communication and more visible impact. These findings inform the Social Inclusion Plan and its focus on structured processes, transparent reporting and sustainable participation.

Appendix 3: Brief Socio-Demographic Profile of Co. Kilkenny

Co. Kilkenny’s social inclusion agenda is shaped by population distribution, ageing, service access challenges, and uneven patterns of deprivation.

Population Distribution Patterns:



Notes

- Co. Kilkenny’s population was 104,160 at Census 2022
- Main urban centre: Kilkenny City recorded a population of 27,184 (April 2022).

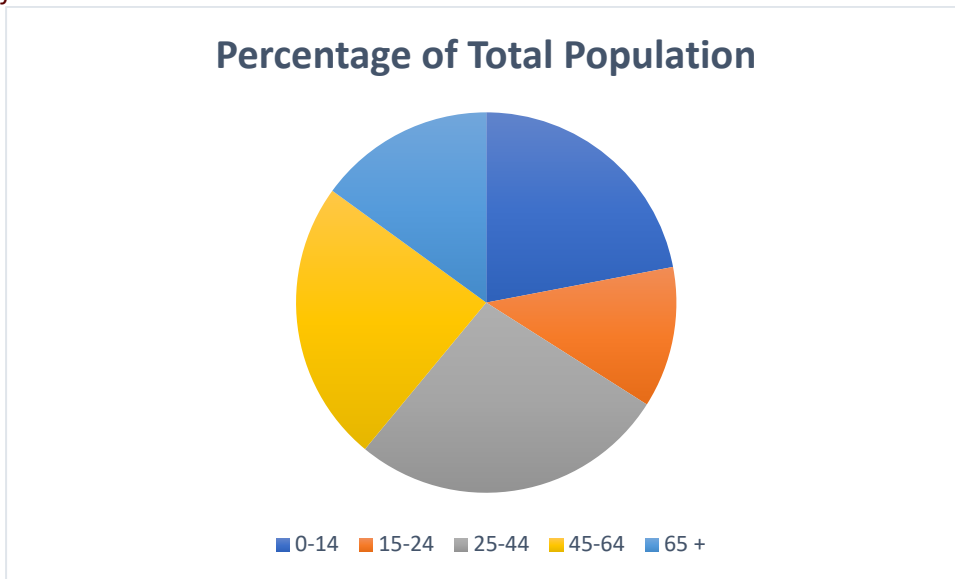
Approximately one-third of Co. Kilkenny’s population resides in settlements of over 2,000 people, while two-thirds live outside these larger urban centres. This distribution highlights the county’s strong rural settlement pattern and the dispersed nature of its communities.

Kilkenny City functions as the dominant urban hub, with a population more than ten times that of any other town, concentrating administrative, commercial and service capacity.

By contrast, towns such as Callan, Castlecomer and Graiguenamanagh play important roles as local service centres within their hinterlands, but their scale limits the range and depth of services available locally.

This pattern has direct implications for social inclusion planning, particularly in relation to transport access, service reach, and the need for intentional rural engagement strategies.

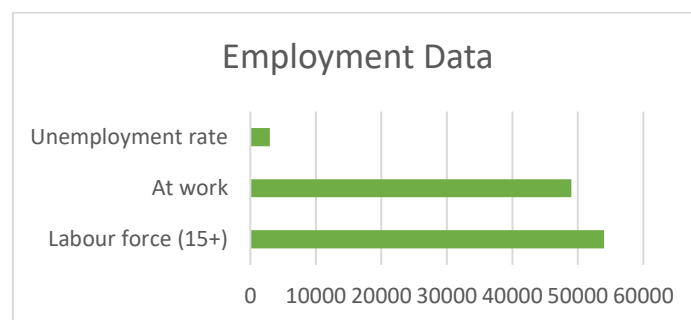
Age profile



Co. Kilkenny’s age profile reflects a balanced but steadily ageing population. While there is a strong child and working-age cohort, approximately one in six residents is aged 65 or over, and the 45+ population represents a substantial and growing share of the county.

This has clear social inclusion implications. An ageing demographic increases demand for accessible transport, healthcare, disability supports, carer assistance and age-friendly infrastructure, particularly in rural areas where service access can be limited. At the same time, younger cohorts require sustained attention to education, training, employment pathways and affordable housing. Effective social inclusion planning must therefore respond to both ends of the age spectrum while anticipating continued demographic ageing over the coming decade.

Employment Data



Co. Kilkenny’s employment profile reflects a mixed economy with a strong services base, supported by manufacturing, agriculture and tourism. A significant proportion of the workforce is employed in wholesale and retail, health and social care, education, and public administration, with Kilkenny City functioning as the principal employment hub.

Manufacturing and food production remain important in parts of the county, while agriculture continues to underpin rural livelihoods, particularly outside the main urban centre.

Commuting patterns also shape employment realities, with many residents travelling to neighbouring counties for work, particularly to Waterford and Carlow.

From a social inclusion perspective, this structure highlights the importance of accessible transport, local job creation in smaller towns, upskilling opportunities, and targeted supports for those in lower-paid service roles or precarious employment.

Social Inclusion Context & Evidence Base

Co. Kilkenny presents a mixed social inclusion landscape. While the county performs broadly in line with national averages on employment and education, structural risks remain. These include rural service access challenges, ageing demographics, lone parent household concentrations, and localised deprivation within certain urban and rural areas.

Diversity is increasing, requiring culturally responsive engagement. Disability prevalence and transport dependency are also material considerations for participation planning.

Theme	Key Statistics	Social Inclusion Implications
Population & Household Context	Total population: 104,160 Aged 65+: 15% Single-person households: 29% Lone parent households: 18–20%	Ageing population and household isolation risks. Lone parent households indicate potential income and childcare pressures.
Disability	Persons with a disability: 14–15% Higher prevalence in older cohorts	Accessibility, transport, health and participation supports are critical, particularly in rural areas.
Nationality & Diversity	Non-Irish nationals: 11–12% Largest groups: UK, Polish, other EU	Growing cultural diversity requires inclusive engagement and accessible communication.
Education (15+)	Third-level: 42–44% Lower secondary or below: 20–22%	Educational attainment varies geographically; rural educational disadvantage remains relevant.
Employment & Socio-Economic Status	Unemployment: 5–6% Higher unemployment in specific EDs Agriculture above national average	Employment generally stable but uneven; rural economic dependence on agriculture may limit diversification.
Deprivation (Pobal HP Index 2022)	County overall: marginally below average to average Urban and rural pockets of disadvantage	Deprivation is concentrated, not universal; targeted, location-sensitive engagement required.

For the Social Inclusion Pillar, the implication is clear: social exclusion in Kilkenny is not uniform but concentrated, and requires targeted, location-sensitive engagement rather than a generalised county-wide approach.

Implications for this plan

The data indicates that social exclusion in Co. Kilkenny is uneven rather than universal, shaped by rural dispersion, an ageing population, concentrated pockets of deprivation, disability prevalence, lone parent households and growing cultural diversity. This Plan therefore requires a deliberately targeted approach.

It must prioritise rural accessibility, support participation of under-represented and marginalised groups, and ensure that engagement mechanisms are accessible to people experiencing isolation, transport barriers or economic constraint.

At the same time, the Plan must enable structured progression of systemic issues emerging from this context - including housing access, disability inclusion, transport connectivity, service reach, income vulnerability, employment precarity and integration - through disciplined committee-ready processes. A one-size-fits-all participation model will not be sufficient. The approach must be

location-sensitive, evidence-informed and operationally robust, while remaining sustainable within volunteer capacity and constitutional boundaries.

Appendix 4: Operating Plan & Performance Framework

Purpose of this Appendix

This appendix sets out the phased implementation approach for the Social Inclusion Plan over the three-year period 2026–2028.

The purpose of the framework is to ensure that implementation remains structured, realistic and measurable. It translates the strategic vision of the Plan into a practical operating programme with defined priorities, expected outcomes and performance indicators.

The framework is designed to:

- establish a functioning and sustainable participation system
- strengthen the quality and credibility of social inclusion influence
- support continuous improvement through structured review and learning
- ensure that workload, governance and participation remain manageable over time.

The phased approach recognises that effective participation systems must be built progressively. Each year therefore builds on the learning, systems and operational discipline established in the previous phase.

A1. Three-Year Delivery Overview

Year	Strategic Focus	Core Purpose	Expected Outcome
Year 1	Build & Stabilise	Establish the operating system and test it in practice	A functioning and reliable participation pathway is established
Year 2	Strengthen Influence & Participation	Improve quality, routing, participation balance and governance engagement	Influence becomes clearer, more credible and better evidenced
Year 3	Demonstrate Outcomes & Secure Sustainability	Consolidate learning, demonstrate impact and prepare for continuity	A sustainable and evidence-based participation model is in place

A2. Alignment Between Vision, Goals & Delivery Phases

Vision

The Social Inclusion Pillar of Kilkenny PPN will provide a structured, credible and sustainable route through which the lived experience of disadvantage, exclusion and inequality can inform local decision-making.

Year	Primary Focus	Key Goals Supported	Strategic Objectives Advanced
Year 1 – Build & Stabilise	Establish core systems and operating discipline	Strengthen structured influence; Improve transparency; Protect sustainability	Embed the Implementation Toolkit; Establish the Issue Pathway; Improve communication and reporting
Year 2 – Strengthen Influence & Participation	Improve governance engagement and participation balance	Strengthen representation quality; Improve transparency; Strengthen structured influence	Improve representation quality; Monitor participation balance; Strengthen governance engagement
Year 3 – Demonstrate Outcomes & Sustainability	Consolidate learning and demonstrate impact	Embed governance and accountability; Protect sustainability; Strengthen structured influence	Annual reflection and refinement; Strategic alignment review; Sustainability monitoring

A3. Year 1 – Build and Stabilise

Purpose

Year 1 focuses on establishing the Social Inclusion operating system and embedding practical implementation discipline.

The emphasis is on creating reliable systems, clarifying expectations, building confidence among participants and testing the issue pathway under live operating conditions.

Expansion is not the priority during this phase. The focus is on consistency, clarity and sustainability.

Key Priorities

- Formal adoption and launch of the Plan
- Finalisation of the Implementation Toolkit
- Establishment of the Social Inclusion Issue Pathway
- Introduction of issue tracking and reporting systems
- Agreement of realistic progression limits
- Establishment of regular triage meetings
- Representative briefing and induction
- Member organisation awareness activity
- Initial public reporting and feedback updates
- Completion of an operational stabilisation review.

Year 1 Performance Indicators

Area	Indicators of Progress
Toolkit Implementation	Operational tools introduced and used consistently
Issue Pathway	All submitted issues recorded through agreed system
Governance Discipline	Regular triage and review meetings established
Reporting	Representative reporting and public updates initiated
Sustainability	Workload remains within agreed progression limits
Operational Learning	Stabilisation review completed and documented

Year 1 Success Statement

A functioning and credible participation system is established, with consistent issue handling, clear governance processes and early evidence of structured engagement.

A4. Year 2 – Strengthen Influence and Participation

Purpose

Year 2 focuses on improving the quality, credibility and effectiveness of the operating model established during Year 1.

The emphasis shifts from system establishment towards strengthening governance engagement, improving participation balance, refining issue routing and increasing visibility of outcomes.

Key Priorities

- Review and refinement of Year 1 operational learning
- Improved routing of issues to appropriate governance structures
- Strengthening representative reporting and follow-through
- Increased formal response and outcome capture
- Monitoring participation balance across sectors and Municipal Districts
- Engagement with under-represented groups and communities
- Development of thematic issue analysis
- Ongoing risk, workload and governance review.

Year 2 Performance Indicators

Area	Indicators of Progress
Governance Engagement	Improved issue routing and response capture
Representation Quality	Consistent representative reporting and issue presentation
Participation Balance	Evidence of broader geographic and sector participation
Transparency	Increased visibility of issue progression and outcomes
Thematic Learning	Emerging issue patterns identified and documented
Sustainability	Workload and governance pressures remain manageable

Year 2 Success Statement

The quality, consistency and credibility of social inclusion influence strengthens without compromising sustainability or operational discipline.

A5. Year 3 – Demonstrate Outcomes and Secure Sustainability

Purpose

Year 3 focuses on consolidating operational learning, demonstrating evidence of influence and preparing the Social Inclusion system for longer-term sustainability.

The emphasis is on reflection, evaluation, strategic alignment and continuity planning.

Key Priorities

- Publication of a Social Inclusion Outcomes Report
- Analysis of recurring issue themes and patterns
- Strategic Alignment Review against relevant county frameworks
- Review of participation reach and representation balance
- Sustainability and workload assessment
- Refinement and simplification of operational tools where appropriate
- Representative continuity and succession planning
- Identification of priorities for the next planning cycle.

Year 3 Performance Indicators

Area	Indicators of Progress
Outcomes Reporting	Outcomes Report published
Evidence of Influence	Documented examples of issue progression and governance engagement
Strategic Alignment	Alignment review completed
Sustainability	Workload and governance capacity reviewed
Continuous Improvement	Toolkit refined based on operational learning
Continuity Planning	Representative succession and continuity arrangements addressed

Year 3 Success Statement

A sustainable, evidence-based and credible participation system is in place, supported by documented learning, visible outcomes and a strong foundation for future development.

A6. Monitoring, Review & Continuous Improvement

Monitoring and review are integral to the operation of the Social Inclusion Plan.

Performance will be assessed through a combination of:

- operational monitoring
- governance review
- participation analysis
- stakeholder feedback
- issue tracking and reporting

- qualitative evidence of influence and engagement.

Annual review points will assess:

- whether the system is operating as intended
- the effectiveness of issue progression and governance engagement
- participation reach and balance
- workload sustainability
- operational risks and bottlenecks
- opportunities for refinement and improvement.

A more detailed strategic review will take place toward the end of Year 2 to assess whether the operating model remains effective, proportionate and sustainable.

A7. What Success Ultimately Means

Success will not be measured simply by the number of issues raised or meetings held.

Success means that:

- community concerns are handled consistently and fairly
- systemic issues are identified and evidenced clearly
- governance engagement is structured and visible
- responses and outcomes are documented and communicated
- participation remains broad, balanced and credible
- volunteer and coordination capacity are protected
- community voice becomes a more effective part of local decision-making.

The ultimate aim of the Plan is to strengthen the connection between lived community experience and local governance through a participation system that is practical, transparent and sustainable.

Appendix 5: Alignment with County Priorities & Governance Structures

Purpose of this Appendix

The Social Inclusion Plan operates within the governance framework of Kilkenny Public Participation Network while engaging constructively with the wider strategic and policy environment of County Kilkenny.

Its purpose is not to duplicate existing strategies or replace statutory planning processes. Rather, it provides a structured participation mechanism through which community experience, particularly the lived experience of disadvantage, exclusion and inequality, can inform local governance and policy discussion in a practical and credible way.

This appendix demonstrates how the Social Inclusion Plan aligns with relevant county priorities and identifies indicative governance pathways through which systemic issues may be progressed.

The alignment is intended to strengthen the relevance, credibility and practical usefulness of community input while maintaining the independence of community voice.

5.1. Strategic Alignment Principles

The Social Inclusion Plan is guided by the following alignment principles:

Community Voice Remains Independent

Community concerns are not reshaped to fit institutional priorities. The role of the Social Inclusion system is to ensure that valid social inclusion concerns are heard, evidenced and progressed appropriately.

Strategic Relevance Strengthens Influence

Where issues align with wider county strategies, policy priorities or statutory responsibilities, this can strengthen the quality of dialogue and improve opportunities for constructive engagement.

Governance Routing Must Be Appropriate

Issues should be progressed through the governance structure most capable of responding, rather than being raised informally or indiscriminately.

Systemic Focus is Essential

The Social Inclusion Plan addresses broader community patterns and structural barriers, not individual casework.

5.2. Indicative Social Inclusion Themes and Strategic Relevance

The table below illustrates how common social inclusion themes may align with wider county strategic priorities.

Social Inclusion Theme	Examples of Issues	Indicative Strategic Relevance
Access to Services	Barriers to health, social care, local supports, outreach services	Community wellbeing, service accessibility, social inclusion priorities
Transport and Connectivity	Limited public transport, rural isolation, inaccessible transport	Sustainable communities, rural accessibility, mobility priorities
Housing and Accommodation	Social housing access, affordability, suitable accommodation	Housing strategy, sustainable communities, inclusion priorities
Employment and Economic Participation	Access to work, local opportunity barriers, financial exclusion	Economic participation, local development, inclusion priorities
Education and Training	Access barriers, lifelong learning, digital skills, progression routes	Skills development, inclusion, community development priorities
Childcare and Family Supports	Childcare access, affordability, local support gaps	Family wellbeing, workforce participation, inclusion priorities
Disability and Accessibility	Physical access barriers, information accessibility, service inclusion	Equality obligations, accessibility, inclusive service design
Older People	Isolation, mobility, access to supports, ageing-related barriers	Age Friendly priorities, community wellbeing
Youth Issues	Participation barriers, local supports, inclusion challenges	Youth participation, wellbeing, community development

Equality, Diversity and Integration	Traveller inclusion, migrant access, discrimination barriers	Equality, integration, inclusive communities
Digital Inclusion	Connectivity barriers, digital access, information exclusion	Service access, digital participation, community inclusion
Rural Disadvantage	Service reach, transport, connectivity, participation barriers	Rural development, community participation, access priorities

5.3. Indicative Governance Pathways

The Social Inclusion Plan does not operate through informal escalation. Issues are reviewed, validated and then aligned with the most appropriate governance route.

Indicative progression pathways include:

Governance Structure	Indicative Relevance
Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs)	Policy-related systemic issues requiring committee discussion, policy consideration or recommendation
Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)	Community development, inclusion, local development and broader partnership issues
Municipal District Structures	Place-based or locality-specific concerns affecting particular areas
County Council Operational Structures / Officials	Operational matters within statutory service responsibilities
Relevant External Public Bodies	Issues requiring engagement beyond local authority remit

Some issues may span multiple areas. Where this occurs, a lead governance route will be identified to maintain clarity, accountability and coordinated progression.

5.4. Alignment with Kilkenny County Council Strategic Priorities

The Social Inclusion Plan complements the broader strategic direction of Kilkenny County Council by strengthening the quality of structured community participation.

While the specific priorities of county strategies may evolve over time, the Social Inclusion system is particularly relevant where issues relate to:

- community wellbeing and social inclusion
- access to public services
- democratic participation and civic engagement
- sustainable communities and local resilience
- equality, inclusion and accessibility
- economic participation and opportunity
- rural inclusion and connectivity.

The contribution of the Plan is not to implement these strategies directly, but to ensure that community evidence helps inform discussion, implementation and local governance awareness.

5.5. Strategic Alignment Review

A Strategic Alignment Review will be undertaken during Year 3 of the Plan.

The purpose of this review will be to:

- identify recurring issue themes emerging through the Social Inclusion system
- assess how these themes relate to relevant county strategies and policy frameworks
- identify areas where community evidence is contributing to governance discussion
- examine whether progression routes remain appropriate and effective
- inform future refinement of the Social Inclusion participation model.

This review is intended to strengthen learning and strategic coherence without compromising the independence of the Social Inclusion Pillar.

5.6. Strategic Positioning Statement

The Social Inclusion Plan exists to strengthen the connection between lived community experience and formal local decision-making.

Its role is not to mirror institutional planning processes, but to ensure that community intelligence becomes a structured, credible and constructive input within them.

By aligning community evidence with relevant governance structures and strategic priorities where appropriate, the Plan strengthens both the quality of participation and the potential for meaningful influence.

Appendix 6: Risk, Capacity & Sustainability Framework

Purpose of this Appendix

The Social Inclusion Plan is designed to be practical, credible and sustainable. Because the system depends significantly on voluntary participation, representative engagement and limited operational coordination capacity, sustainability must be actively managed rather than assumed.

This appendix sets out the framework for identifying, monitoring and responding to risks that could undermine the effective delivery of the Plan.

The purpose is not to eliminate risk entirely, but to ensure that foreseeable pressures are recognised early and addressed proportionately, protecting both the integrity of the Social Inclusion system and the people responsible for operating it.

6.1. Risk Management Principles

Risk management under this Plan is guided by the following principles:

Sustainability Before Volume

The credibility of the Social Inclusion system depends on the quality of issue progression and follow-through, not the number of issues processed. Managing volume is therefore a sustainability safeguard.

Early Identification Prevents Escalation

Small operational pressures can quickly become system-wide problems if left unmanaged. Routine monitoring allows practical intervention before problems become embedded.

Shared Responsibility

Risk management is not solely the responsibility of the PPN Coordinator. The Steering Group, Social Inclusion Working Group, representatives and wider governance structures all contribute to maintaining effective and sustainable delivery.

Proportionate Response

Responses to risk should be practical and proportionate. The aim is to protect continuity and credibility, not create unnecessary bureaucracy.

Continuous Learning

Operational experience will inform refinement of the system over time. Risk management is therefore part of continuous improvement, not a separate compliance exercise.

6.2. Key Sustainability Dependencies

The effective operation of the Social Inclusion Plan depends on several critical conditions.

These include:

- regular Social Inclusion Working Group review and triage activity
- active representative participation and reporting discipline
- realistic progression volumes
- protected operational coordination time
- clear communication and feedback arrangements
- engagement from member organisations across the county
- functioning governance routes capable of receiving issues
- confidence in the fairness and credibility of the system.

Weakness in any of these areas may affect performance and sustainability.

6.3. Risk Register

Risk Area	Potential Risk	Early Warning Indicators	Possible Response
Workload Pressure	Issue volume exceeds capacity	Growing backlog, delayed triage, coordinator overload	Reduce active progression volume, pause intake temporarily if required, reprioritise issues
Volunteer Fatigue	Representatives or SIWG members become overstretched	Reduced attendance, slower reporting, disengagement	Review workload expectations, strengthen support, rebalance responsibilities
Weak Participation Balance	Over-representation by a small number of organisations	Repeated submissions from same sources, limited geographic spread	Targeted outreach, Community Connector engagement, participation review
Poor Reporting Discipline	Representatives do not consistently report outcomes	Missing updates, unclear issue status, weak visibility	Reinforce reporting expectations, role clarification, targeted support
Informal Side Processes	Issues bypass agreed pathways	Parallel communications, undocumented issue progression	Reinforce process discipline, clarify boundaries, strengthen coordinator oversight
Governance Bottlenecks	Slow responses from governance structures	Long delays, unresolved issue status	Escalate through agreed governance routes, adjust expectations, improve routing
Weak Evidence Quality	Issues raised without sufficient validation or documentation	Incomplete submissions, anecdotal concerns, unclear patterns	Strengthen triage, request further evidence, improve issue guidance
Role Confusion	Unclear boundaries between stakeholders	Duplication, informal decision-making, frustration	Role clarification, briefing, governance reinforcement
Loss of Confidence	Community trust in the system weakens	Reduced participation, negative feedback, disengagement	Improve communication, visible reporting, clearer feedback loops
Representative Turnover	Loss of key representatives disrupts continuity	Gaps in representation, inconsistent engagement	Succession planning, induction support, continuity briefing

Coordination Capacity Risk	Insufficient coordinator time or support	Delays in administration, reporting backlog, weak oversight	Steering Group review, workload adjustment, operational reprioritisation
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6.4. Governance Oversight of Risk

Risk management forms part of normal governance oversight rather than a separate administrative process.

Steering Group Responsibilities

The Steering Group will:

- review risk and sustainability as part of quarterly governance oversight
- monitor workload, capacity and progression pressures
- agree proportionate adjustments where sustainability risks emerge
- review participation balance and operational performance trends
- ensure that governance responses remain realistic and constructive.

Social Inclusion Working Group Responsibilities

The Social Inclusion Working Group will:

- identify emerging operational issues during routine triage activity
- monitor issue quality, workflow pressures and participation patterns
- flag concerns to the Steering Group where escalation is required.

PPN Coordinator Responsibilities

The PPN Coordinator will:

- monitor day-to-day operational pressures
- identify early warning signs
- maintain visibility of workflow and reporting performance
- flag operational risks requiring governance attention.

Risk management is therefore a shared governance responsibility.

6.5. Sustainability Controls

To protect long-term viability, the following sustainability controls will apply:

Managed Issue Progression

The number of actively progressed issues will be managed to remain within realistic operating capacity.

Defined Role Boundaries

The system will not absorb individual casework, service complaints or informal advocacy outside agreed structures.

Protected Operational Discipline

All issues will progress through the agreed issue pathway, ensuring clarity, consistency and documented decision-making.

Participation Monitoring

Participation reach and representation balance will be reviewed to prevent over-reliance on a narrow group of contributors.

Representative Support

Light-touch support, induction and practical guidance will help sustain representative participation.

Planned Review and Refinement

Annual and strategic review points will allow practical adjustment based on operational experience.

6.6. Sustainability Triggers

The following indicators may trigger review or intervention:

- sustained issue backlog
- repeated delays in triage or progression
- declining representative participation
- weak reporting compliance
- repeated governance response delays
- evidence of informal side processes
- narrow or unbalanced participation patterns
- increasing operational frustration or stakeholder dissatisfaction
- loss of key operational personnel.

Where these triggers emerge, proportionate corrective action may be taken.

6.7. Sustainability Statement

The Social Inclusion Plan is intentionally designed to be realistic rather than over-ambitious.

Its effectiveness depends not on processing the maximum number of issues, but on maintaining a credible, fair and sustainable participation system that communities trust and governance structures can engage with constructively.

Protecting sustainability is therefore not a secondary consideration—it is fundamental to the success of the Plan.

Appendix 7: Governance Roles

Purpose of this Appendix

The effective delivery of the Social Inclusion Plan depends on clear governance, defined responsibilities and shared accountability.

This appendix sets out the core governance and operational roles that support the Social Inclusion system, together with their principal responsibilities, operating expectations and role boundaries.

The purpose is to ensure clarity, consistency and effective collaboration across all participants, while protecting the integrity and sustainability of the operating model.

The Social Inclusion system functions as a structured participation mechanism. No single role operates in isolation. Effective delivery depends on coordinated contribution across governance, operational management, community participation and formal representation.

7.1. Governance Principles

The role framework is guided by the following principles:

- Clear accountability – responsibilities are understood and appropriately allocated
- Role separation – governance, operational coordination and representation functions remain distinct
- Shared responsibility – implementation depends on collaborative contribution across the system
- Structured participation – issues progress through agreed governance pathways
- Transparency – decisions, progression and reporting are visible and documented
- Sustainability – workload and volunteer capacity are actively protected.

7.2. Governance & Operational Oversight Roles

Social Inclusion Plan – Governance Roles



The following provides additional information on each of the identified roles.

Steering Group

Core Role

Strategic governance oversight.

Purpose

The Steering Group provides overall governance oversight for the Social Inclusion Plan, ensuring that the operating model remains effective, proportionate and sustainable.

Key Responsibilities

- approve and oversee implementation of the Plan
- monitor governance performance, sustainability and operational effectiveness
- review strategic risks and capacity pressures
- agree progression parameters where required
- review annual performance and strategic learning
- support refinement of the operating model where appropriate
- ensure alignment with wider PPN governance responsibilities.

Operating Expectations

The Steering Group should:

- review performance and sustainability at regular intervals
- receive operational reports and risk updates
- intervene proportionately where risks emerge
- maintain focus on governance rather than operational case management.

Role Boundaries

The Steering Group does not:

- conduct issue triage
- decide individual issue progression
- manage day-to-day operational workflows.

Social Inclusion Working Group / Social Inclusion Committee

Core Role

Operational oversight, issue validation and prioritisation.

Purpose

The Social Inclusion Working Group provides the operational governance function for the Social Inclusion system, ensuring that issues are reviewed, validated and progressed appropriately.

Key Responsibilities

- review submitted issues through the agreed triage process
- determine whether issues fall within scope
- identify systemic patterns and recurring concerns
- prioritise issues for progression
- support development of Decision Briefs
- monitor participation balance and emerging trends
- flag operational risks or governance concerns.

Operating Expectations

The Working Group should:

- meet regularly in accordance with operational need
- apply agreed triage criteria consistently
- maintain fairness and evidence-based decision-making
- focus on systemic concerns rather than isolated incidents
- work constructively within agreed governance boundaries.

Role Boundaries

The Working Group does not:

- undertake individual advocacy or casework
- bypass agreed governance routes
- act as a substitute decision-making authority.

PPN Coordinator

Core Role

Operational system management and implementation support.

Purpose

The PPN Coordinator provides the day-to-day operational continuity required to ensure that the Social Inclusion system functions effectively.

The Coordinator supports implementation but does not determine which issues progress.

Key Responsibilities

- manage issue intake and administration
- maintain the Issue Tracker as the formal operational record
- coordinate triage administration and workflow management
- support Decision Brief preparation
- monitor timelines, progression volume and workflow pressures
- coordinate communications, updates and reporting
- identify operational risks and flag emerging concerns
- support implementation discipline across the system.

Operating Expectations

The Coordinator should:

- maintain accurate operational records
- ensure consistency in administration and reporting
- reinforce agreed processes and boundaries
- provide practical support to participants where required
- escalate operational concerns promptly.

Role Boundaries

The Coordinator does not:

- determine issue validation outcomes independently
- act as an advocate on behalf of individual issues
- replace governance oversight or representative functions.

7.3. Representation and Governance Engagement Roles

PPN Representatives

Core Role

Formal representation and governance engagement.

Purpose

PPN Representatives provide the structured link between validated community issues and relevant governance structures.

Key Responsibilities

- present agreed issues through appropriate governance channels
- represent agreed positions accurately and consistently
- provide structured feedback on issue progression and responses
- maintain communication with the wider Social Inclusion system
- contribute to transparency and accountability.

Operating Expectations

Representatives should:

- prepare adequately for governance meetings
- work from agreed Decision Briefs where relevant
- distinguish agreed positions from personal opinion
- report outcomes consistently and promptly.

Role Boundaries

Representatives do not:

- independently redefine agreed positions
- progress issues outside agreed governance arrangements
- act as personal advocates in individual case matters.

County Councillors

Core Role

Democratic oversight and political progression.

Purpose

County Councillors play an important role in supporting the progression of validated systemic social inclusion issues within local governance structures.

Key Responsibilities

- raise relevant issues within formal governance processes where appropriate
- support policy discussion and democratic oversight
- engage constructively with community evidence
- help strengthen visibility of systemic social inclusion concerns.

Operating Expectations

Councillors should:

- engage with issues at systemic rather than individual case level
- support governance progression where appropriate
- maintain constructive engagement with community participation structures.

Role Boundaries

Councillors do not:

- replace the structured triage process
- bypass agreed governance arrangements where formal progression is intended.

Council Officials

Core Role

Statutory and operational engagement.

Purpose

Council officials provide formal engagement within statutory and operational remit where issues relate to local authority responsibilities.

Key Responsibilities

- consider issues progressed through appropriate governance channels
- provide information, clarification or operational responses where relevant
- support constructive governance engagement.

Operating Expectations

Officials should:

- engage within statutory remit and organisational responsibilities
- support transparent and constructive communication where possible.

Role Boundaries

Officials do not:

- assume ownership of issues outside statutory remit

- replace governance decision-making processes.

7.4. Community Participation Roles

Member Organisations

Core Role

Issue identification and community evidence.

Purpose

Member organisations are the primary source of community intelligence within the Social Inclusion system.

Key Responsibilities

- identify systemic social inclusion concerns emerging from communities
- provide evidence, context and practical information
- engage constructively with agreed participation processes
- support broader participation where possible.

Operating Expectations

Member organisations should:

- focus on recurring or systemic concerns
- distinguish individual casework from wider issues
- provide clear and evidence-informed submissions
- participate constructively and respectfully.

Role Boundaries

Member organisations do not:

- bypass agreed submission processes where formal progression is intended
- treat the Social Inclusion system as an individual advocacy route.

Community Connectors (Where Used)

Core Role

Participation reach and engagement support.

Purpose

Community Connectors strengthen local reach, participation diversity and awareness of the Social Inclusion system.

Key Responsibilities

- support communication with local organisations and communities
- encourage participation from less visible or under-represented groups
- help strengthen awareness of issue pathways and participation opportunities.

Operating Expectations

Community Connectors should:

- operate as participation enablers rather than decision-makers
- support structured engagement through agreed channels
- maintain clear communication boundaries.

Role Boundaries

Community Connectors do not:

- validate or prioritise issues
- represent formal governance positions
- undertake advocacy or operational case management.

7.5. Wider Governance and External Roles

External Agencies / Public Bodies

Core Role

Specialist engagement where relevant.

Purpose

External agencies may provide expertise, information or engagement where issues intersect with their remit.

Role Boundaries

Engagement remains within organisational remit and does not alter the governance boundaries of the Social Inclusion system.

PPN Secretariat

Core Role

Governance integrity and constitutional oversight.

Purpose

The Secretariat supports overall PPN governance integrity and constitutional alignment.

Role Boundaries

The Secretariat does not manage day-to-day Social Inclusion operations unless explicitly required under wider governance responsibilities.

7.6. Shared Responsibility Statement

The Social Inclusion Plan depends on shared responsibility across governance, operational management, representation and community participation.

Its effectiveness will depend not simply on role clarity, but on constructive collaboration, consistent communication and disciplined adherence to agreed processes.

No single role delivers the system. Its strength lies in coordinated and accountable participation across the wider Social Inclusion framework.

Appendix 8: Implementation Toolkit

Purpose of this Appendix

The Social Inclusion Plan is supported by a practical Implementation Toolkit designed to translate the strategic framework into consistent day-to-day operation.

The purpose of the Toolkit is to provide the practical infrastructure required to ensure that the Social Inclusion system operates in a structured, transparent and sustainable way.

Without practical tools, even well-designed governance systems can drift into informal practice, inconsistent decision-making and unsustainable workload pressures.

The Toolkit ensures that:

- all issues are handled through a common operating pathway
- decisions are documented and traceable
- governance oversight is supported by reliable operational information
- representatives work from consistent documentation
- communication and feedback are clearer
- workload and progression volume can be monitored realistically.

The Toolkit is not intended to create unnecessary administration. Its purpose is to provide sufficient operational discipline to protect fairness, consistency and credibility.

8.1. Toolkit Components Overview

The Implementation Toolkit consists of the following core operational tools:

Tool	Purpose
Issue Submission Form	Standard mechanism for raising systemic issues
Initial Screening Checklist	Early review to confirm basic suitability
Triage Assessment Template	Structured validation and prioritisation tool
Decision Brief Template	Standard format for issue progression
Representative Reporting Template	Formal feedback and reporting mechanism
Issue Tracker	Central operational record
Participation Balance Monitor	Oversight of representation diversity
Workload & Capacity Monitor	Sustainability management tool
Risk Review Template	Governance risk oversight support
Annual Review Template	Reflection and continuous improvement support

8.2. Issue Submission Form

Purpose

The Issue Submission Form provides the standard route through which member organisations can formally raise systemic social inclusion concerns.

It ensures that issues are presented in a consistent way and contain sufficient information for review.

Core Fields

Submissions should include:

- submitting organisation
- contact person (if applicable)
- date submitted
- issue title
- clear description of the issue
- who is affected
- evidence or observed pattern
- why the issue matters
- any relevant local context
- suggested area of concern (if known).

Submission Guidance

The form is intended for:

- ✓ systemic issues
- ✓ recurring barriers
- ✓ community-wide concerns
- ✓ structural access problems

The form is not intended for:

- ✗ individual complaints
- ✗ personal advocacy cases
- ✗ emergency service matters
- ✗ statutory appeals processes.

8.3. Initial Screening Checklist

Purpose

The Initial Screening Checklist provides a quick early review before formal triage.

Its purpose is to determine whether a submission is sufficiently complete and broadly within scope.

Screening Questions

Screening Question	Yes / No
Is the issue clearly described?	
Does it appear to relate to social inclusion?	
Does it appear systemic rather than individual?	
Is sufficient information available for triage?	
Does it appear appropriate for this pathway?	

Possible Outcomes

- proceed to triage
- request further clarification
- signpost elsewhere
- close as outside scope.

8.4. Triage Assessment Template

Purpose

The Triage Assessment Template supports consistent issue validation and prioritisation.

It ensures that progression decisions are evidence-based and aligned with Plan boundaries.

Assessment Criteria

Criterion	Consideration
Social Inclusion Relevance	Does the issue clearly relate to social inclusion?
Systemic Nature	Is this broader than an isolated case?
Evidence Quality	Is there sufficient evidence or pattern?
Governance Relevance	Is there a realistic governance route?
Strategic Relevance	Does the issue align with wider community priorities?
Resource Implications	Is progression realistic within current capacity?

Triage Outcomes

Issues may be:

- progressed for Decision Brief development
- held pending further evidence
- grouped with similar issues
- referred elsewhere
- closed with explanation.

8.5. Decision Brief Template

<i>Purpose</i>
Decision Briefs convert validated issues into governance-ready documentation.
They support structured progression through relevant decision-making routes.
<i>Standard Brief Structure</i>
Decision Briefs should include:
<i>Issue Summary</i>
Short description of the concern.
<i>Community Impact</i>
Who is affected and how.
<i>Evidence Base</i>
Observed pattern, local evidence or recurring concerns.
<i>Strategic Context</i>
Relevant policy, service or governance context.
<i>Recommended Governance Route</i>
SPC / LCDC / Municipal District / operational route / other.
<i>Requested Action</i>
Clear and proportionate ask.
<i>Date / Ownership</i>
Prepared by / progression responsibility.

8.6. Representative Reporting Template

<i>Purpose</i>
This template supports consistent reporting back from representatives following governance engagement.
Transparent reporting is essential to trust and accountability.
<i>Reporting Fields</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• governance structure / meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• issue discussed
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• action taken
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• response received
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• follow-up required
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• next steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• date of report

8.7. Issue Tracker

<i>Purpose</i>
The Issue Tracker is the official operational record of all submitted issues.
No parallel operational records should be maintained.
<i>Suggested Tracker Fields</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• reference number
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• date submitted
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• issue title
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• submitting organisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• status
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• governance route
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• representative assigned
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• latest update
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• response received
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• closure date
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• notes.
<i>Status Categories</i>
Suggested status indicators:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• submitted
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• screening
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• triage review
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• awaiting information
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decision Brief in development
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• progressed
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• awaiting response
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• follow-up required
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• closed.

8.8. Participation Balance Monitor

Purpose

This tool supports oversight of participation diversity and representation balance.

Its purpose is to reduce over-reliance on a narrow group of contributors.

Suggested Monitoring Areas

- organisational type
- geographic spread
- Municipal District participation
- repeat submissions
- under-represented participation trends.

8.9. Workload & Capacity Monitor

Purpose

This tool helps monitor sustainability and operational pressure.

Suggested Monitoring Indicators

- active issue volume
- number awaiting triage
- reporting backlog
- representative workload concerns
- delayed governance responses
- coordinator workload pressures.

8.10. Risk Review Template

Purpose

Supports structured governance review of emerging operational risks.

Review Questions

- Are issue volumes manageable?
- Are reporting expectations being met?
- Are governance routes functioning effectively?
- Is participation sufficiently broad?
- Are any bottlenecks emerging?
- Is volunteer fatigue evident?

- Are process boundaries being respected?

8.11. Annual Review Template

Purpose

Supports structured annual reflection and system improvement.

Review Areas

- system performance
- issue progression effectiveness
- governance engagement quality
- participation balance
- communication effectiveness
- sustainability pressures
- stakeholder feedback
- improvement priorities.

8.12. Toolkit Operating Principles

The Toolkit should be used consistently but proportionately.

Key principles:

- use standard tools unless adjustment is clearly justified
- avoid parallel undocumented processes
- document key decisions clearly
- maintain practical rather than excessive administration
- use the Toolkit to strengthen participation, not create bureaucracy
- refine tools over time based on operational learning.

Toolkit Closing Statement

The Implementation Toolkit is the practical engine of the Social Inclusion Plan.

It is what transforms strategic intent into a functioning participation system—one that is structured, fair, transparent and capable of sustained delivery.

Appendix 9: Community Engagement Model

Purpose of this Appendix

The effectiveness of the Social Inclusion Plan depends on the quality, diversity and reach of community participation.

The Social Inclusion Pillar can only function credibly if it is informed by a broad range of community experience, particularly the experiences of individuals and communities who face disadvantage, exclusion or barriers to participation.

This appendix sets out the community engagement framework that will support implementation of the Social Inclusion Plan. Its purpose is to strengthen awareness, participation and representative reach across County Kilkenny, ensuring that the Social Inclusion system reflects a broad and credible evidence base.

The intention is not to create additional governance structures, but to strengthen participation within the existing Social Inclusion framework.

9.1. Community Engagement Principles

The community engagement framework is guided by the following principles:

Inclusive Participation

The Social Inclusion system should reflect a broad range of community voices, not only those organisations already closely connected to formal participation structures.

Deliberate Reach

Participation does not automatically become representative. Practical outreach is required to ensure that smaller, rural or less visible organisations are aware of the system and able to engage.

Proportionate Engagement

Engagement should strengthen participation without creating unnecessary bureaucracy or unrealistic operational expectations.

Structured Participation

Community engagement should support the formal issue pathway rather than creating informal parallel processes.

Trust Through Visibility

Communities are more likely to participate where they can see that issues are acknowledged, progressed appropriately and reported back clearly.

9.2. Why Community Engagement Matters

Consultation and review identified uneven engagement as one of the key structural challenges addressed by this Plan.

Across County Kilkenny, many organisations work directly with communities experiencing disadvantage, exclusion or barriers to participation. These organisations hold valuable insight into emerging needs, structural barriers and lived experience.

However, engagement with the Social Inclusion Pillar has not always been consistent or evenly distributed.

Without broader participation:

- systemic issues may remain fragmented or isolated
- important local intelligence may not be captured
- participation may become concentrated among a small number of established organisations
- smaller or rural groups may remain under-represented
- emerging social inclusion concerns may not be identified early
- confidence in the legitimacy and representativeness of the Social Inclusion Pillar may weaken.

The Social Inclusion Plan therefore treats community engagement as a strategic requirement rather than an optional activity.

9.3. Community Engagement Objectives

The community engagement framework seeks to:

- improve awareness of the Social Inclusion Plan across County Kilkenny
- strengthen participation from under-represented organisations and communities
- improve geographic reach across the county
- increase understanding of how systemic issues can be raised and progressed
- encourage structured issue submission rather than informal escalation
- strengthen trust through clearer communication and visible follow-through.

9.4. Engagement Approach

Community engagement will be practical, proportionate and integrated into existing structures wherever possible.

The engagement approach may include:

- awareness briefings for member organisations
- plain-English explanatory materials on how the system works
- periodic information sessions within existing PPN structures
- targeted outreach where participation gaps are identified

- engagement through Municipal District structures where appropriate
- themed discussions on recurring social inclusion concerns
- public progress updates to demonstrate issue progression and outcomes.

The intention is to strengthen participation through realistic engagement methods rather than resource-intensive outreach activity.

9.5. Supporting Participation Quality

Broader participation must also be informed and structured participation.

To support effective engagement:

- clear guidance on how to raise an issue will be available
- the distinction between systemic issues and individual casework will be communicated clearly
- issue submission expectations will be transparent
- public-facing communication will use plain and accessible language
- communication channels will be consistent and clearly signposted.

The objective is to make participation practical, understandable and constructive.

9.6. Supporting Geographic and Organisational Balance

A credible Social Inclusion system requires balanced participation.

Particular attention should be given to ensuring visibility and access for:

- rural communities
- geographically isolated areas
- smaller community organisations
- organisations with historically low engagement in formal participation structures
- communities experiencing persistent disadvantage or reduced representation.

Participation patterns should be monitored periodically so that engagement effort can be adjusted where gaps are identified.

9.7. Monitoring Community Engagement

Community engagement effectiveness should be reviewed as part of ongoing Plan monitoring.

Indicative monitoring areas may include:

- geographic participation spread
- organisational diversity
- repeat concentration of issue submissions

- visibility of participation from under-represented groups
- awareness of issue pathways
- stakeholder confidence in the transparency and usefulness of the process.

Monitoring should remain proportionate and focused on practical improvement.

9.8. Community Engagement Statement

Community engagement is fundamental to the credibility and effectiveness of the Social Inclusion Plan.

Without broad and representative participation, the Social Inclusion system risks becoming narrow, unbalanced or disconnected from the communities it exists to serve.

The purpose of this framework is therefore not simply to encourage participation, but to strengthen the legitimacy, reach and quality of community voice within structured local decision-making.

Appendix 10: Launch & Implementation Support Pack

Purpose of this Appendix

The successful implementation of the Social Inclusion Plan depends on shared understanding, clear expectations and practical readiness among those responsible for delivery.

Because the Social Inclusion system relies significantly on voluntary participation, representative engagement and limited coordination capacity, implementation support must be practical, proportionate and focused on operational clarity rather than excessive training or administration.

This appendix sets out the proposed launch and implementation support arrangements that will help establish the Social Inclusion system effectively from the outset.

The objective is to ensure that all key participants understand:

- why the Plan has been developed
- how the operating model works
- what their role is within the system
- how issues progress through the agreed pathway
- what standards of governance, reporting and communication are expected.

10.1. Implementation Readiness Principles

Implementation support will be guided by the following principles:

Practical, Not Bureaucratic

Support arrangements should enable effective implementation without creating unnecessary administrative burden.

Shared Understanding

All key stakeholders should begin implementation with a common understanding of purpose, process and governance expectations.

Clarity of Roles

Confusion about responsibilities is a significant operational risk. Early role clarity is essential.

Proportionate Support

Support should be realistic, recognising volunteer capacity and finite coordination resources.

Continuous Learning

Implementation support should evolve in response to operational experience and emerging needs.

10.2. Launch and Alignment Session

Purpose

Before formal implementation begins, a dedicated **Launch and Alignment Session** will be held for those directly involved in delivering the Social Inclusion Plan.

This session marks the practical commencement of the operating model.

Its purpose is to establish shared understanding, reduce ambiguity, clarify governance expectations and ensure operational readiness.

Suggested Participants

The session should include:

- Steering Group members
- Social Inclusion Working Group / Social Inclusion Committee members
- PPN Representatives
- PPN Coordinator
- other relevant PPN governance participants where appropriate.

Suggested Duration

Half-day session (approximately 3–4 hours)

The session should be practical, interactive and focused on implementation readiness.

10.3. Suggested Session Agenda

Session Element	Focus
Welcome and Context	Why the Plan has been developed and the intended shift from informal engagement to structured participation
Strategic Overview	Vision, goals, principles and delivery framework
Governance Roles and Boundaries	Responsibilities, expectations and role clarity
The Social Inclusion Issue Pathway	Step-by-step walkthrough of issue submission, triage, progression and feedback
Implementation Toolkit	Overview of forms, templates, trackers and reporting tools
Quality of Representation	Standards for issue presentation, reporting and representative accountability
Sustainability and Risk	Workload expectations, progression discipline and operational boundaries
Questions and Scenario Discussion	Practical application and clarification

10.4. Key Messages for Launch

The launch session should reinforce several core messages:

This is a Participation System

The Plan creates a structured route for participation and governance engagement—not a service delivery mechanism.

Systemic Issues Only

The Social Inclusion system focuses on broader recurring concerns rather than individual casework.

Governance Discipline Matters

Informal side processes weaken fairness, transparency and credibility.

Shared Responsibility

Effective implementation depends on coordinated contribution across multiple roles.

Sustainability is Essential

Quality and follow-through matter more than volume.

Communication Builds Trust

Visible reporting and feedback are critical to confidence in the system.

10.5. Implementation Support Materials

Practical support materials may include:

- summary overview of the Plan
- governance role summaries
- issue pathway flow diagram
- “How to Raise an Issue” guidance note
- representative reporting guidance
- toolkit templates and forms
- issue submission guidance
- frequently asked questions (FAQ) summary.

Materials should be practical, concise and easy to use.

10.6. Ongoing Implementation Support

Following launch, support should remain light-touch and proportionate.

This may include:

- clarification support where operational questions arise
- short guidance notes or reminders
- induction support for new representatives or participants
- practical troubleshooting where implementation issues emerge
- periodic reinforcement of governance expectations.

The intention is to maintain implementation quality without creating a standing training burden.

10.7. Early Review Checkpoint

A short implementation review should take place within the first three to six months of operation.

The purpose of this checkpoint is to assess:

- whether roles are understood clearly
- whether the issue pathway is operating as intended
- whether the Toolkit is being used consistently
- whether governance expectations are clear
- whether operational bottlenecks are emerging
- whether additional clarification or refinement is required.

This review should remain practical and focused on operational improvement.

10.8. Launch Readiness Checklist

Before implementation begins, the following should be confirmed:

- ✓ Plan formally approved
- ✓ governance roles confirmed
- ✓ Implementation Toolkit finalised
- ✓ issue submission process operational
- ✓ Issue Tracker ready for use
- ✓ reporting arrangements agreed
- ✓ launch session delivered
- ✓ participant materials circulated
- ✓ communication channels confirmed
- ✓ early review date agreed.

10.9. Implementation Support Statement

Strong implementation depends less on formal training and more on shared clarity, practical tools and disciplined operating habits.

The purpose of this launch and support framework is to ensure that the Social Inclusion Plan begins with clarity, consistency and realistic expectations—creating the strongest possible foundation for effective delivery.