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**Limerick LECP Submission on behalf of Sanctuary Runners**

**April 2023**

**Who we are:**

Sanctuary Runners is a solidarity through sport initiative, set up as a volunteer organisation in 2018 in Cork and has grown to over 10,000 people participating as runners/ walkers and joggers across 35 groups nationwide since then. Our purpose is to create a space for all communities to get together and show solidarity, friendship and respect to those who make Ireland their home, either through choice or circumstance.

Sanctuary Runners was a 2019 Winner of Health & Wellbeing and Local Authority Innovation at the Chambers Ireland Excellence in Local Government Awards and has been shortlisted for the prestigious EU Sports Inclusion Award by the European Commission.

**Vision:** Our vision is for a more inclusive, integrated and equal society where the benefits of multiculturalism are clearly understood and valued and that community integration as a policy is properly understood, valued and championed.

**Mission:** Our mission is to become bridge builders, in Ireland and internationally, by using running, jogging, walking groups and events to bring people together, including, and especially, asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. By building and creating these opportunities in an equal and respectful way it will enable people to develop friendships, networks and learn from each other.

**Our key priorities:**

Community Integration is vital for all sectors of Limerick, now more than ever. With 35 groups across the country, including in Limerick and across the midwest, the Sanctuary Runners experience offers vital insight and a pathway for supporting ground level community integration supports that are scalable, replicable and sustainable.

We welcome the acknowledgement of the impact COVID 19 had on vulnerable communities, with particular reference in the Draft to the impacts on those living in Direct Provision and seeking international protection. As we move into a new phase of post COVID life, the important learnings on physical wellbeing, the positive impact outdoor space has on our mental well being and the dangers of isolation and how we can tackle such challenges through community ground up initiatives must be valued and form part of our shared community planning.

Sanctuary Runners firmly hold that all policy statements should be inclusive, in terms of their accessibility as well as their intent and suggest the following actions and understandings be included in the Local Economic and Community Plan Limerick 2023-2028.

1. Recognise the diverse population within the catchment area impacted by the LECP.
2. Recognise the opportunities available in Limerick through utilisation and management of its green open spaces as venues for sporting and social activities that are inclusive of all Limerick residents.
3. That the LECP incorporates earnings from the Limerick Migrant Integration Strategy-Belonging to Limerick.
4. Particularly that the LECP supports, through acknowledgement and funding avenues Integration Theme 5 of the Belonging to Limerick Integration Plan : Active Community Participation.
5. Sanctuary Runners welcome the strategic aims of this report and see huge value for all communities in Limerick in such aims as the promotion of volunteering, promotion of wellbeing through physical activity and encouraging all organisations to be inclusive and would wish to see these featured in the LECP.
6. Support for volunteers: volunteering provides opportunities for our local communities to build and share skills and provides a vital space for those in Direct Provision to share their skills and talents and get to know people in their new community.
7. Recognise the huge economic contribution of migrant workers to LImerick, through their labour in our health and service industries etc and their contribution to creating a vibrant multicultural life in our county.
8. Acknowledge the supports required over the coming years to support migrants in Limerick, including all International Protection Applicants, other migrants and those displaced from Ukraine. The community and voluntary sector has undertaken sterling work in supporting groups and ongoing support to ensure the positive early steps are maintained and communities are supported in their welcome are vital.

Submitted on behalf of Sanctuary Runner Ireland and Sanctuary Runners Limerick APril 29th 2023.