



Fermanagh & Omagh  
District Council  
Comhairle Ceantair  
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

# Audit of Irish Provision in the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council Area

Revised  
and Updated August 2019

Iniúchadh  
Gaeilge sa Ceantair Fhear  
Manach agus na hÓmaí

Athbhreithnithe agus  
nuashonraithe Lúnasa 2019



## Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>		<b>Page 2</b>
<b>Section 1</b>	<b>Introduction and Background</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>Section 2</b>	<b>Language Profile</b>	<b>Page 6</b>
<b>Section 3</b>	<b>Preliminary Community Audit Findings</b>	<b>Page 8</b>
<b>Section 4</b>	<b>Conclusion and Recommendations</b>	<b>Page 13</b>

## **Executive Summary**

Within the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council Area there is a significant Irish Language Community. People with knowledge of Irish in the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council area constitute 14.54% of the overall Council population (as recorded in the 2011 Census).

## **Review and Update**

This document is a revision and update on a previous piece on an audit carried out by Pobal ar a'n lúI of existing Irish language services to help inform awareness of existing Irish Language provision in the Council area.

The review consisted of:

- Consultation with the Irish Language Community within the district
- Key Stakeholders
- Desk research
- Face to face meetings
- Phone interviews

## **Key Findings**

The Key findings of the review of Irish Language activity in the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council area were:

- An increase in Irish Language activity
- An increase in engagement in Irish Language classes and conversation circles

## Section 1: Introduction and Background

### 1.1 Introduction

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council came into being on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015.



The Council area is home to a population of just over 114,992 people living in mainly rural communities who are served by 40 Councillors elected in the 7 District Electoral Areas (DEAs) of:

<b>Enniskillen</b>	<b>Erne North</b>	<b>Omagh</b>	<b>West Tyrone</b>
<b>Erne East</b>	<b>Erne West</b>	<b>Mid Tyrone</b>	

## 1.2 Background

Within the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council Area there is a significant Irish Language Community. People with knowledge of Irish in the Council area constitute 14.54% of the overall Council population (as recorded in the 2011 Census).

This means that in 2011 of the 184,898 people who have some ability of the Irish Language within the jurisdiction, 16,719 of them lived in the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council area.

### Section 2: Language Profile

This section looks at the language profile of the Council based on the statistical data available from the 2011 Census.

In the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council area, amongst the population aged 3 years old and over, the 2011 Census recorded that:

- ❖ **14.54%** had some knowledge of Irish

Census Data in relation to Language	Fermanagh and Omagh District Council	NI Data	Variation
Knowledge of Irish	14.54%	10.65%	<b>3.89%</b> above the NI Average
Knowledge of Ulster Scots	4.40%	8.08%	<b>3.68%</b> below the NI Average
English was not a first Language*	2.94%	3.14%	<b>.20%</b> below the NI Average

### 2.1 Conclusion

The statistics indicate the existence of a significant Irish Language community in the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council area.

## Section 3: Preliminary Community Audit Findings

### 3.1 Introduction

The statistical data provided in Section 2 supports the evidence need for investment in terms of strategic planning of Irish Language development support in the Fermanagh and Omagh Council area. However, statistics alone cannot explain the social importance, economic impact and cultural significance of promoting and providing development support for the Irish Language locally.

It is important to recognise that teaching of the Irish Language is not restricted to educational activities. To contextualise the variety and breadth of language integration in the **Fermanagh and Omagh District Council** area we conducted an audit of existing provision, considering:

- ❖ Early Years Provision
- ❖ Irish Medium Primary Sector Provision
- ❖ Irish Language provision in English Medium Primary schools
- ❖ Irish Language provision in English Medium Post Primary schools
- ❖ Third Sector Irish Language Provision
- ❖ Informal Education
- ❖ Youth Services
- ❖ Summer Scheme
- ❖ Art and Culture
- ❖ Sports
- ❖ Community Development

### 3.2 Early Years Provision

The strategic function of the Early Years provision is incredibly important in any language revival. Not only is it the initial gateway for many families to engage with the Irish Language, but it is also vital in creating a vibrant Irish-medium primary school sector. The viability of these schools and their ability to attract capital funding is directly related to the numbers of children entering them from Irish-medium preschool providers.

Irish-medium nursery units perform an important function in engaging parents and families with their children's education. They provide training and volunteering opportunities which have the potential to improve the life prospects of families wishing to embrace Irish as the language of choice in which to raise their children. They also deliver social cohesion, provide opportunities for community development and engage people in the growth of Irish as a living community language. The three Irish-medium pre-school providers in the Council area are:

- ❖ **Naíscoil an Traonaigh (Voluntary provision meeting the needs of 16 children in Lisnaskea)**
- ❖ **Naíscoil na gCrann (Statutory provision meeting the needs of 26 children in Killyclougher)**
- ❖ **Naiscoil Cholmchille (Voluntary Irish medium provision within an English medium setting meeting the needs of 24 children in Carrickmore)**

Pobal ar a'n Lúí also provide a Grúpa Tuistí agus Leanaí Irish Language Parent and Toddler providing early years support for families in the Omagh area.

### 3.3 Irish-Medium Primary Education Provision

There are currently three primary schools educating children through the medium of Irish in the Council area. All are directly linked to the Naíscoil provision detailed in 3.3:

- ❖ **Bunscoil an Traonaigh (Irish Medium Maintained Primary School established in 2004 currently meeting the needs of 48 children in Lisnaskea)**
- ❖ **Gaelscoil na gCrann (Irish Medium Primary School established 2006 meeting the needs of 143 children in Killyclougher)**
- ❖ **Bunscoil Cholmchille (Irish medium Stream operating in a maintained Primary school(St Colmcile's Primary school ) meeting the needs of 69 in Carrickmore)**

### 3.4 Irish in the English-Medium Primary Education Sector

In addition to local provision in the Irish-medium sector, there are a further 24 English-Medium Primary Schools in the area which have varying levels of Irish Language provision. School spokespersons were keen to point out that peripatetic Irish Language, although always desirable, is dependent upon additional funding being available. English medium primary schools promote and offer some programmes in Irish or linked to the Irish language such as the following:

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Provider</b>	<b>Format</b>
Townlands Programme	Fermanagh and Omagh District Council	One day workshop delivered in school
Céilí Dancing Programme	Fermanagh and Omagh District Council	6 weekly workshops with a final concert for neighbouring participating schools
Learn Irish	Tyrone GAA	Online classes available through website for Key stage 1 and 2

### 3.5 Post Primary Schools

There currently isn't any Irish Medium Post Primary school provision operating in the Council area, however there is Irish-language provision in the English Medium Post Primary schools is detailed below.

Dean Maguire College (Carrickmore)	St Aiden's Highschool (Derrylin)
St Kevin's College (Lisnaskea)	St Joseph's (Enniskillen)
Christian Brothers Grammar School (Omagh)	Mount Lourdes Grammar School (Enniskillen)
Loreto Grammar School (Omagh)	St Michael's College (Enniskillen)
Sacred Heart College (Omagh)	

In most cases the schools also indicated that this formal education is also supplemented through extracurricular involvement in quizzes, competitions, social occasions and Gaeltacht excursions.

### 3.6 Community Irish Language Learning Provision for Adults

The review team found that there is a range of Irish Language provision for adult learners in the area. Fermanagh and Omagh District Council provide a £500 grant to support the development of Irish Language in local communities. This Grant is named Irish in the Community and to date 40 awards have been made to the organisations listed below:

Name of Organisation	DEA
Cairde Bhunscoil an Traonaigh, Lisnaskea	Erne East
Cavanaleck Community Association	Enniskillen
Creggan Education & Research Services, Omagh	Mid Tyrone
Culmore O'Kane Residents Association	Omagh
Derrygannon Community Association	Erne East
Derrylin O'Connells GAA	Erne West
Dromore CCÉ	West Tyrone
Dromore GFC	West Tyrone
Drumquin Wolfe Tones GFC	Mid Tyrone
Enniskillen Gaels GFC	Enniskillen
Fintona CCÉ	West Tyrone
Glór an Tearmainn	Mid Tyrone
Greencastle Youth Club, Omagh	Mid Tyrone

Hillview & Kilmacormack II Community Association, Enniskillen	Enniskillen
Knocks Community Association	Erne East
Mountfield Community Association	Omagh
Mullymesker PTFA	Erne West
Newtownbutler First Fermanagh's GAA	Erne East
Oidhreacht Mhuintir Luinigh	Mid Tyrone
Pobal ar a'n lúl, Omagh	Omagh
St Joseph's GAC, Ederney	Erne North
Tattyreagh Youth and Community Group, Omagh	Omagh
Trillick Arts & Cultural Society	West Tyrone

It is important to note that most of these classes are beginner level with no clear learning pathways for those wishing to reach fluency.

Consideration may wish to be given to the coordination of classes to ensure coverage throughout the week and at different times of the day and evening to accommodate individual work and caring responsibilities.

There are some organisations who provide Irish language classes within the district who have not applied for the Irish in the Community grant from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, among these are Kinawley Brian Ború's GAC and Roslea Shamrocks GAC.

### **3.7 Third level and further education**

The adult courses provided by Irish Language organisations are often an introduction to formal education. The South West Regional College's Omagh Campus currently provide the following accredited adult learning courses:

- ❖ **OCN NI Level 1 Award in Irish (QCF)**
- ❖ **OCN NI Level 2 Award in Irish**
- ❖ **OCN NI Level 3 Award in Irish**

The above courses are not run annually but only when demand is identified.

To date the outreach Irish language Diploma available in Cookstown or Derry in conjunction with the University of Ulster is not delivered within the Fermanagh and Omagh Council area however, several Irish language learners from the district have started and completed the Diploma course in recent years.

There is a possible link with Universities in the Republic of Ireland for a similar Diploma which should be explored further.

### 3.8 Youth Services

The importance of quality youth provision in minority language promotion is widely recognized. The Review team identified the following opportunities for children with Irish to access such provision.

<b>Club Óige Na Carraigne Móire (Carrickmore)</b>	<b>Óg Órgras na hÓmai (Gaelscoil children in Omagh)</b>
<b>Cairde le Chéile (post primary provision in Omagh)</b>	

Additional provision for children not attending Irish Medium schools but who wish to learn Irish are also catered for through the following provision

<b>Óige Mhuintir Luinigh (Greencastle )</b>	<b>Muid ar Maididn(Omagh)</b>
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### 3.9 Summer Schemes

In addition to term time Youth Services a number of organisations provide Irish Language Summer Schools for children. These experiences provide participants with a mini Gaeltacht experience within the Council area. The summer colleges identified as operating in the Council area include:

<b>Cairde Bhunscoil an Traonaigh - Camp Samhraidh2017</b>	<b>Campa Samhraidh Choláiste Mhuintir Luinigh (Greencastle Youth Club)</b>
<b>Cairde le Chéile</b>	<b>Campa an Tearmainn</b>
<b>Gaelscoil na gCrann</b>	

### 3.10 Arts and Culture

In Fermanagh and Omagh Council area the development of the Language through arts and culture events is evident with the two Council managed facilities appearing to be the most prolific. The main centres of activity are:

<b>❖ Enniskillen Castle (Council venue)</b>	<b>❖ Strule Arts Centre (Council venue)</b>
<b>❖ Dún Uladh</b>	<b>❖ An Creagán Visitor Centre</b>

The main body of the arts and cultural events used to promote and support Irish language development in the Council area were identified as follows:

- |                                 |                               |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ❖ <b>History /Culture Talks</b> | ❖ <b>Concerts</b>             |
| ❖ <b>Language Festivals</b>     | ❖ <b>Gaeltacht Trips</b>      |
| ❖ <b>Primary School Céilí</b>   | ❖ <b>Drama nights</b>         |
| ❖ <b>Singing workshops</b>      | ❖ <b>Culture Nights</b>       |
| ❖ <b>Set Dancing</b>            | ❖ <b>Conversation Circles</b> |
| ❖ <b>Music Sessions</b>         | ❖ <b>Sean – Nós Dancing</b>   |

As well the ad-hoc cultural events held throughout the year by both individuals and groups the following festivals are also popular annual events:

- ❖ **Féile Pheadar Joe (Creggan, Omagh)**- joint committee led by An Creagán and Haughey family, including Pobal ar a'n lúl and local Irish speakers
- ❖ **Gaelic, Gàidhlig and Ulster Scots Festival (Omagh)**- organised by FODC Irish Language Officer and supported by Pobal ar a'n lúl
- ❖ **Seachtain na Gaeilge**- annual festival of local events as part of wider International Seachtain na Gaeilge (Irish Language Week)

### **3.10 Irish Language Officer in Cultural Organisations**

Both the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) and Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (CCÉ) have provisions in their constitutions around the promotion and protection of the Irish language. All clubs and branches of these two organisations are required to have an Irish Language Officer who should work towards the development and promotion of Irish within their branch and community.

The opening lines of the GAA's Official Guide state that active support of the Irish Language and culture is central to the GAA's business. Clubs are tasked with promoting culture and heritage in their local communities. To achieve that aim each of the 38 Clubs in the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council area should have a dedicated Irish Language and Cultural Officer whose key role is to develop, promote and sustain cultural and language activities in the Club.

Every GAA Club is encouraged take part in the annual Scór, a cultural framework allowing people to participate in activities right across the cultural spectrum, within a clear, community-based amateur context through the medium of Irish. Participants

have the added benefit of moving on to represent their Club at county, provincial and national levels.

The GAA clubs actively promoting the Irish Language through participation in the Joe McDonagh Foundation in the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council area are:

Name	County	DEA
Éimead CLG, Lios na Sceithe	Fermanagh	Erne East
Naomh Seosamh Eadarnaidh CLG	Fermanagh	Erne North
An Caisleán Glas agus Sperrin Óg	Tyrone	Mid Tyrone
An Táite Riabhach Naomh Pádraig, CLG	Tyrone	West Tyrone
O'Connells CLG Doire Uí Loin	Fermanagh	Erne West
Cill Náile Brian Ó Bórainmhe CLG	Fermanagh	Erne West
An Droim Mór CLG	Tyrone	West Tyrone

Additional cultural organisations who also deliver services through the medium of Irish within the Council area include:

- ❖ Trillick Arts and Cultural Society
- ❖ Gortin Historical Society
- ❖ Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann

### 3.11 Irish Language Groups engaged in Community Development

Irish Language communities traditionally organically grow up across the area primarily because of increased intake in Irish-medium schools and higher numbers participating in night classes.

This increased interest in the Irish Language provides new opportunities to bring about a range of real social, educational and community benefits.

The two-main funded community led organisations currently delivering Community Development programmes through the medium of Irish in the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council area are:

❖ **Pobal ar a'n Lúl**

❖ **Dún Úladh**

The Community Development services provided by these groups are designed to support existing and emerging Irish Language communities develop their skills, knowledge and confidence. This is a bespoke process, which are in most cases an organic response to an emerging need.

In addition to the groups receiving core funding for this work a number of voluntary organisations are also contributing to the development of a community development infrastructure in the Council Area includes:

<b>Glór an Tearmainn</b>	<b>Conradh na Gaelige ( Carrickmore)</b>
<b>Pobal and Ghleanna</b>	<b>Tús Nua</b>
<b>Sruth na hÉirne</b>	

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council started 2 Irish Language Roundtables (The Fermanagh Roundtable, and the Districtwide Roundtable) to create a forum where community groups could more easily interact with statutory agencies providing Irish Language services.

The quarterly meetings of these Roundtables has resulted in greater networking opportunities for the community groups with not only each other but also with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, Foras an Gaeilge, Conradh na Gaelige, Glór na nGael and others.

Several groups have developed capacity and gained opportunities through sharing knowledge and resources with each other. An Irish Language mailing list had also been established which sends monthly emails to subscribers about Irish Language activity within and near to the district, funding opportunities and information about community based classes within the District.

### **3.12 Irish Language Support Services**

Additional support services available to Individuals or communities developing their language capacity include:

- ❖ Ulster American Folk Park: availability of Irish language material
- ❖ Omagh Library: wide range of Irish language books available

- ❖ Dún Uladh: Lending library and Irish language books/ games available
- ❖ An Creagán gift shop: Irish language goods
- ❖ Enniskillen library: wide range of Irish language books available
- ❖ Lisnaskea library: wide range of Irish language books available

## **Section 4: Conclusions and Recommendations**

In conclusion, the review team identified that the geographical size and the strong sense of place and locality within the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council area are the main challenges faced by individuals or organisations promoting a strategic approach to Irish Language development in the new Council area.

However, with the relevant level of investment the identified challenges are not insurmountable given the commitment of the relevant statutory stakeholders and the historic voluntary commitment of individuals and Community groups to provide a supportive language infrastructure to meet the evidenced needs of the higher than regional average numbers of adults recorded as declaring an affinity with the development and support of language development in the new Council area.

The difference in context and development of the Irish language in each of the legacy areas result in a different set of needs, as different areas are at different stages of development. Care will therefore have to be taken to ensure that resources are targeted to reflect the language developmental needs in Fermanagh and in Omagh.

The audit identifying the following potential developmental opportunities designed to support and develop the Irish Language in the Council area:

- ❖ Greater understanding of the role of six strategic Irish Language bodies and how they can support growth and development of grass roots language revival
- ❖ Delivery of tailored services throughout the Council area, to address legacy differences
- ❖ More opportunities for Council supported discussion forums where information, best practice and shared learning can be disseminated
- ❖ An interagency youth working group to be set up to support opportunities for the continued language development of children who had previously attended Irish Medium Primary Education following their transition to English Medium Post Primary Education
- ❖ A co-ordinated approach to supporting and promoting existing and emerging groups wishing to provide services designed to promote language development

- ❖ Improved communication and promotion of individual language events. It was accepted that the Council officers were particularly good at this but only when provided with the information in a timely manner, which can sometimes be a problem for volunteer-dependant community organisations
- ❖ The development of a network of conversation circles and reading groups allowing people to develop connectivity between different areas
- ❖ Increased use of social media to promote and raise awareness of the positive nature of language development
- ❖ Examples of activities identified which could easily be promoted as menu of possibilities for development in the Fermanagh and Omagh Council area include:

#### **Health and wellbeing**

- ❖ Hiking /walking groups
- ❖ Cycle events
- ❖ Mindfulness programmes
- ❖ Running groups

#### **Capacity Development**

- ❖ Skills development
- ❖ Knowledge development
- ❖ Confidence development

#### **Social Inclusion**

- ❖ Advocacy
- ❖ Lobbying
- ❖ Promotion of language rights
- ❖ Community activism

#### **Early Years**

- ❖ Preschools readiness preparation
- ❖ Parent and toddler groups
- ❖ Puppet shows
- ❖ Stay and play sessions

#### **Environmental**

- ❖ Bird watching tours
- ❖ Biodiversity Programmes
- ❖ Lake walks
- ❖ Night walks

#### **Community Cohesion**

- ❖ Supper/Lunch clubs
- ❖ Befriending service
- ❖ Conversation circles
- ❖ Reading Groups

#### **Culture and History**

- ❖ Awareness of the connection between Irish and Townland names
- ❖ Cultural diversity programmes
- ❖ Cross border engagement
- ❖ Intergenerational programmes
- ❖ Historical discussions

#### **Educational**

- ❖ More language classes
- ❖ Local Mini Gaeltacht experiences at Easter
- ❖ Parents support classes
- ❖ Less formal education mechanisms e.g. singing, drama, rhyme

- ❖ Cultural exchange visits to promote the historical significance of the area
- ❖ Irish language signage (where demand exists)
- ❖ Tourist literature
- ❖ Formal accredited provision for adult learner( AS/A2)
- ❖ Planning for Gaelcholáiste ( Irish Medium Secondary Provision)