

CU Focus



ART COMPETITION WINNERS ANNOUNCED



Editorial

Spring: a lovely reminder of how beautiful change can truly be. (anonymous)

Having emerged from two years of pandemic lockdown, many of us are indeed planning new projects and ventures as we get used to returning to some sort of normality and a more open society. We do this however, against the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine conflict which has resulted in economic uncertainty with far reaching implications across the globe. We are beginning to see cost of living increases particularly in the area of home energy and motor fuel which will affect all of us.

Credit unions have always played a significant role in helping members and communities during challenging times like these. No doubt, many challenges and uncertainties lie ahead, but the importance of the credit union movement to continue to be a key provider of financial services to communities has never been clearer. Credit unions exist to support their members through thick and thin.

In this edition of CU Focus, we take a look at the winners, runners up and merits of the Credit Union Art Competition. The final was again broadcast via a special virtual ceremony hosted by Marty Whelan and screened across ILCU social media channels on the 10th March. The theme this year of 'Imagine' really brought out the creativity, vision and dreams of the entrants.

This year's Credit Union Schools Quiz will also be a virtual affair and a fun online quiz for contestants has been prepared for the public to test themselves. Like last year, a virtual version of the quiz, hosted by Today FM's Fergal D'Arcy, will be available on ILCU social media channels in April for schools to use as a fun activity for their classes.

We take a look at the importance of social impact reporting. Recognising that social impact measurement and reporting can be advantageous for credit unions, the ILCU has developed a range of supports and materials to enable credit unions to take their first steps and begin their social impact measurement journey. The Credit Union Compliance Centre have also looked at the importance for culture and governance of diversity and inclusion for credit unions with the ultimate benefit of better meeting the needs of our diverse members.

Our CU Stories section continues to highlight the many newsworthy stories and events from credit unions across the country and we always welcome any contributions credit unions may have to our future CU Focus editions.

We are looking forward to welcoming credit unions to the ICC, Waterfront in Belfast at the end of April for our Conference & AGM. A brand new format has been developed for this year's event with a number of topic breakout sessions running parallel to the AGM. Our speakers include Business Futurist Patrick Schwerdtfeger and Economist David McWilliams, along with a host of other interesting presenters. We hope to see a strong turnout for our first physical AGM since 2019.



Main Cover Image:
Credit Union Art Competition Group Winner: Donegal Community Inclusion Hub

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ILCU

CONFERENCE & AGM



In association with



After a two-year absence, the long-awaited ILCU Conference & AGM, in association with ECCU, is taking place on Saturday 23rd and Sunday 24th April at the ICC, Waterfront, Belfast, and is open to all Credit Union personnel to attend. As well as nominating two delegates and two alternates to attend the AGM, we are encouraging credit unions to register extra volunteers and staff who wish to attend as Conference Attendees under our brand-new format.

You can register for the 2022 Conference & AGM at www.ilcubelfast2022.com. Whether you are booking as a Delegate or Alternate for the AGM, or as a Credit Union staff member or volunteer for the Conference, you can find the booking form on the website.

Alongside the AGM, the Conference will host various topic talks and breakout sessions. This brand-new format is open to all Credit Union officers and will welcome guest speakers such as Business Futurist Patrick Schwerdtfeger and Irish Economist David McWilliams for a weekend of dedicated networking and social segments.

You can find out more information about the conference itself, with the agenda on our website detailing the break-out sessions and plenary speakers. The website also hosts information about accommodation in Belfast, lunch options for the weekend and this year's social events that will be taking place across Friday and Saturday all of which you can pre-book online.

Make sure you book early as this is a Conference & AGM not to be missed!

For more information visit www.ilcubelfast2022.com

AGENDA

ILCU CONFERENCE & AGM



Saturday 23rd April

- 09:00 — Plenary (Hall 1) — Welcome Address from ILCU President Helene McManus
- 09:10 — Official Opening by Councillor Rose Nicholl, Lord Mayor of Belfast
- 09:20 — A word from our Title Sponsor - Gerry Jordan, CEO, ECCU DAC
- 09:25 — "Embracing Disruptive Innovation" — Patrick Schwerdtfeger
- 10:05 — "Ireland - Prospects & Challenges" — David McWilliams
- 10:40 — Fireside Chat with both speakers hosted by John Campbell, BBC NI Economics & Business Editor
- 11:10 — Coffee Break in the Expo Area
- 11:30 — Hall 1 — AGM 2022
- 11:40 — Hall 2A — "Recruiting & Retaining Volunteers - How to do it well" — Hannah Coleman, Boardmatch Ireland & George Gillespie from Volunteer Now NI
- 11:40 — Hall 2B — "The ESG Agenda - What it means for Credit Unions" — Louise Cullen, BBC NI Agriculture & Environment Correspondent
- 12:40 — Lunch
- 14:00 — Hall 1 — AGM 2022
- 14:00 — Hall 2A — "Social Impact measurement and reporting: views from credit unions" — Dr. Olive McCarthy, Centre for Co-operative Studies, University College Cork
- 14:00 — Hall 2B — "Approved Housing Bodies - what you need to know and why investment works for Credit Unions" — John Hannigan, CEO, Circle Voluntary Housing Association
- 15:00 — Coffee Break in the Expo Area
- 15:30 — Hall 2A — "Making financial power work for local places - the role of non-profit financial institutions in community wealth building" — Rachel Bentley, Associate Director, CIES, (Centre for Local Economic Strategies, UK)
- 15:30 — Hall 2B — "Credit Union Mortgages - The Way Forward" — David Malone, ILCU CEO, ILCU & Paul O'Donovan, CEO, O'Donovan Associates
- 16:30 — Close of Day One

Sunday 24th April

- 09:15 — Plenary (Hall 1) — "Good to Great - how to unlock your potential!" — David Meade, Business Leader & Broadcaster
- 10:15 — Hall 1 — "Strategic Mergers - ABCUL White Paper" — Robert Kelly, CEO, ABCUL
- 10:15 — Hall 2A — "Imagine, Align, Communicate- How Leaders Provide Strategic Vision" — Mark Prendergast, Prendergast Leadership
- 10:15 — Hall 2B — "Credit Union Collaboration in Action - Agri Lending from Cultivate" — Joe Healy, Chairman, Cultivate & Finbarr O'Shea, CEO, Bantry Credit Union
- 11:15 — Stretch Break
- 11:30 — Plenary (Hall 1) — "Improving Financial Literacy in Sierra Leone" — Brett Hudson Matthews, CEO, My Oral Village Inc
- 11:50 — ECCU Update — Gerry Jordan, CEO ECCU DAC
- 12:10 — Virtual address from Elissa McCarter LaBorde, President & CEO of WOCCU
- 12:30 — Presentation to the founding credit unions of the ILCU
- 12:45 — Closing address by President Helene McManus
- 13:00 — Close of Conference



In association with

Credit Union

Shaping Strategy for a Complex World

Learning and Development have again partnered with Prendergast Leadership to design a new leadership course, Shaping Strategy for a Complex World to meet the developing needs of the movement. We are all aware that credit union leaders have a key role to play in defining the scale of their credit union's strategic ambition and this course will enhance leader's skills to achieve success.

Shifting a leadership group's thinking from being reactive to the events that impact on their members, to stepping back from current events to define a strategic direction that guides future focused decisions, takes time and effort. The course builds on our other leadership courses and is designed to inform current and future leaders, while creating the space for them to reflect and share ideas on the strategic direction that best supports their member's needs.

If realignment of strategy, change of needs around an

evolving operational model are present in your credit union, this course will equip your leaders to create vision and gain the followership of your people to achieve sustainable strategic success.

Are any of the following relevant to you?

- Understanding strategy
- Creating strategy vision.
- Achieving greater influence
- Understanding and employing followership
- Understanding the behaviours and core competencies of strategic leaders

... if yes, this course is for you

Our leadership courses are designed for CEOs/Managers, Deputy Managers, Chairs, Vice-Chairs, Board Members, Committee Members, those within a management function, and all aspiring leaders. Courses and dates to note for the coming months are listed below.

Course Name	Dates	Timing
Leadership: Shaping Strategy for a Complex World	Saturday, 2 April 22	9.30am – 3.30pm
Leadership: Communication & Critical Thinking (3 day course)	Saturday, 7 May 22 Saturday, 14 May 22 Saturday, 21 May 22	9.30am – 3.30pm

Join us at the ILCU Conference & AGM 2022 where we will be discussing the current challenges for leaders in a breakout sessions on Saturday 23rd April with leadership expert Mark Prendergast.

Volunteering: Giving Back and Doing More

Volunteer recruitment is a continuous process and not one that sits in isolation in the run-up to AGM. Your credit union should aim to be active in the volunteer recruitment space throughout the year. CU Learning and Development will soon be rolling out our 'Giving Back and Doing More' programme which aims to support credit unions in reaching new potential volunteers.

It is important to be proactive with volunteer recruitment and retention. The *Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Toolkit* is available to download from the affiliate area of www.creditunion.ie and provides a great resource and knowledge base from which to maintain your volunteer recruitment.

In addition there are helpful videos, best practice case studies and downloadable resources such as role descriptors to assist your recruitment. The use of volunteer role descriptions is an easy way to reach a broader volunteer base through organisations that support volunteer recruitment, more details on this are included in tip number 4.



Here are the top 5 tips to get momentum early in the year for your volunteer recruitment strategy:



1. Develop your website volunteer page

Potential volunteers are most likely to search online for opportunities, ensure your website has a volunteer page with helpful information for potential volunteers. Do you have an expression of interest register that potential volunteers can log their details?

2. Begin storytelling of your great volunteer work

Credit unions have great stories to tell on the social impact they deliver in their communities, these stories are a great recruitment tool as they speak to the altruistic nature of volunteers. Why not tell potential volunteers, on your social media channels, your website and in your annual reports about the great impact you have on your community?

3. List specific projects for new Project Volunteers

New research on the back on volunteering trends during the pandemic has shown that potential volunteers are more likely to volunteer in the first instance for projects with defined objectives, start and finish dates. Do you have something that a project volunteer can contribute to?

4. Draft Volunteer Role Descriptions and get ready to advertise them early

Volunteer role description templates are available with the Volunteer: Recruitment and Retention Toolkit. Have you thought about advertising your roles to get greater reach to potential volunteers? Organisations like Volunteer Ireland (ROI), Boardmatch (ROI) and Volunteer Now (NI) provide services free of charge to promote your volunteer opportunities to broader audiences who may not be aware of opportunities in credit unions.

5. Consider in-house Volunteer Recruitment & Succession Planning training to decide your credit union approach and achieve success.

Bring your ideas and best practice together to achieve results with training and support materials. Why not schedule now, when there is time to plan and implement a new approach for volunteer recruitment in 2022 and beyond?

All of the above tips will allow you to exploit opportunities that arise throughout the year for volunteer Recruitment. National Volunteer Week will run from Monday 16th to Sunday 22nd of May and provides the perfect opportunity for your credit union to promote its social impact through storytelling and to recruit new volunteers.

New marketing materials are being developed for volunteer recruitment as part of the Giving Back Doing More programme and will be available in the run up to National Volunteer Week. They can be employed on your website, social channels and in office.

To learn more about social media, its channels and how to reach specific demographics check out the Volunteer: Recruitment and Retention Toolkit and select your campaign hashtags such as **#ImagineMore** and **#TogetherBetter**, as well as the national volunteer hashtags **#NVW2022** and **#SmallActionsBigImpact**.

Learning and Development 2022 Business All-Star



Eoin McGeeney, Head of Learning and Development with AIBF and IITD awards

CU Learning and Development have been recognised as a Business All-Star by the All-Ireland Business Foundation for outstanding contribution for quality and standards in learning and education for the credit union movement. Receiving this in addition of the Best Not-for-Profit award from the Irish Institute of Training and Development has strengthened Learning and Developments position as the leader in credit union training in Ireland.

The Foundation is responsible for identifying and accrediting best-in-class Irish businesses, overseeing the All-Ireland Business Accreditations, and is led by an advisory board made up of a panel of volunteer judges and business experts. The independent adjudication panel is chaired by Dr. Briga Hynes, head of the Kemmy Business School at the University of Limerick and Kieran Ring, CEO of the Global Institute.

Through the robust assessment processes associated with this accreditation it was recognised that CU Learning and Development, "meets the evolving needs of both volunteers and staff in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland" and in particular it emphasised our "Conduct in the areas of Trust, Commitment, Performance and Member Centricity".

A key element of the excellent member centric proposition of CU Learning and Development is the extensive eLearning catalogue available on CU Learn which provides the largest range of credit union specific courses available anywhere on demand.

In accepting the Business All-Star Accreditation, Eoin McGeeney, Head of Learning and Development commented, "This is an important external recognition for the valuable ongoing work of the Learning and Development team, our people are central in the consistent delivery of best in class learning for our credit unions".

Access to our eLearning courses is available on www.culearn.ie. For best value enrol on the CU CPD Scheme or alternatively the eLearning Bundle, both of which cannot be beaten for value.



AND REPORTING FOR CREDIT UNIONS

What is it?

Reporting on Social Impact Measurement for credit unions began in Canada in the mid 1990's on the back of government funding for research into cooperative organisations and has since developed into a sophisticated reporting category in its own right. Recognising the value that social impact reporting can bring to the messaging and attractiveness of credit unions, this approach was adopted in the UK to attract investment and differentiate credit unions from moneylenders in more recent years. But what is social impact measurement?

For credit unions, social impact is the positive effects a credit union's actions has on its people and communities. Reporting social impact allows us to measure and monitor these effects, enabling the full impact to be assessed over a longer period of time. It is recognised domestically and internationally that the impact of credit union social impact measurement is significantly enhanced through reporting, telling and storytelling. It can be the case that credit unions are so accustomed to achieving positive effects for their communities, the idea of reporting on it does not make the marketing agenda.

Why is it important?

Social impact measurement and reporting enables your credit unions to enhance its reputation within your community, markets the benefits of membership and services, while also promoting your credit union as a meaningful place to volunteer. These are recognisable as elements that contribute to the credit union difference. Borrowing from some research and considering the credit union difference in the area we see;

"If we wish to strengthen the foundations of our [credit union] sector, we should equip ourselves with the capacity to demonstrate our impact."

The credit union difference How to measure and report it

To take this a step further and closer to home with some national research, Olive McCarthy from University College Cork has written;

"Demonstrating how credit unions differ from conventional banks, as a competitive advantage, was a fundamental value that could be derived from social impact measurement and reporting."

In the same article when reviewing 2020 credit union annual reports for social impact reporting, she found;

"...what was reported well was hugely powerful and demonstrated the importance of the credit union to the community."

Social impact measurement and reporting for Irish credit unions

In recognising that social impact measurement and reporting is an important differential and competitive advantage for credit unions, where should your credit union begin its journey?

Where to start?

The ILCU have developed two reporting templates and a range of supporting graphics to enable credit unions to begin or enhance their social impact measurement and reporting. The templates cover ten separate areas where credit unions are most effective in having a social impact and these can be seen in the Social Impact pie chart opposite.

You can choose between a first steps or an advanced template, depending on how comfortable you are in this space. Beginning your journey is neither demanding in time or resources as data should be easily available. To make first steps even easier, marketing materials have been designed and can be adapted for your credit union message and logo.

The full range of supports for measurement and reporting are available in the **Social Reporting** section in the affiliate area of www.creditunion.ie

It is important to remind ourselves of the longer-term benefits of social impact measurement and reporting, where tracking of effects over time will truly demonstrate the credit union difference. For this reason is it most important to include social impact reporting and measurement into your credit union strategic plan and objectives. We have provided templates for this on the **Social Reporting** webpage.



Join us at the ILCU Conference & AGM 2022 in the ICC Belfast

As well as having our project team manning our Social Impact stand at this year's ILCU Conference & AGM, we will also be contributing to the new AGM format and breakout sessions. Come and talk to us directly or listen in on case studies and advice on best practice. See you there.

Kilcloon Credit Union at 50!



In 1971 Fr. Finian O'Connor proposed the setting up of a Credit Union in Kilcloon Parish, following which a weekly Study Group met in order to gain an understanding of credit union rules and procedures prevailing at that time. The Study Group received invaluable assistance from Michael McGuinness and Kathleen Matthews of Navan Road Credit Union. On 17th February 1972 Kilcloon Parish & District Credit Union ("Kilcloon Credit Union") was formally registered, and "collection points" were located in Kilcloon, Batterstown and Kilcock. The Common Bond included most of the Parish of Kilcloon, extending into north Kildare to cover the town of Kilcock and up to certain points along the Royal Canal both east and west of Kilcock. In its beginnings the Credit Union was governed and operated solely by volunteers under the leadership of the Board and principal officers namely, Raymond Ward, Chair, Bobby O'Connell, Secretary and Sonny Carr (RIP), Treasurer. The three remaining members of that first Board, Donal McCarthy, Bobby O'Connell and Raymond Ward, can be very proud of their wonderful achievement in bringing this successful social and financial service to their communities in Batterstown, Kilcloon and Kilcock.

Growth was steady over the ensuing 10 years and by 1982 there were over 1,000 members. Recognising the need for a more secure and permanent base, a premises in the centre of Kilcock was purchased and developed as office space, and by 1985 the Credit Union had moved to its first new office. Shortly afterwards our first employee was hired to manage the office and member accounts. Opening hours were soon extended, as was our Common Bond which now covered the entirety of Kilcloon Parish, Kilcock and the townlands of Ferns and Garadice. With the extended opening hours and



Anne Tynan Vice Chair, Mike Cosgrave CEO, Helene McManus, ILCU President and Chair Kilcloon Credit Union

Common Bond came further growth, such that by 1990 there were over 1,500 members.

In 1990 a sub-office was opened in Kilcloon and another in Batterstown in 1992. As membership and transaction growth continued computer systems were installed in 1993. In 1996, the Board made a decision to secure larger property in Kilcock and following significant renovation works this premises became the new home of the Credit Union in 1998 - and its from here that the Kilcloon Credit Union continues to operate today.

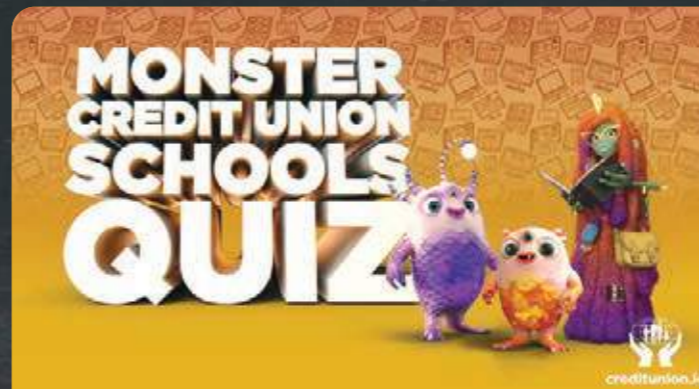
However, due to the rising costs of operating our two sub-offices coupled with the dwindling footfall in those offices, partly caused by increasing online technology and the emigration that resulted from the financial crash in 2008, a decision was taken to close both the Kilcloon and Batterstown sub-offices and concentrate the physical



Kilcloon Credit Union staff Eileen Whelan, Thelma Armstrong, Alyson Britton, Marie Nolan, Aoife Forkin, Lisa Kavanagh

delivery of services to members out of the Kilcock office.

From its beginnings in 1972 Kilcloon Credit Union has gone from strength to strength and as we enter our 50th year we can boast that using the latest technologies and supported by 12 staff we offer a range of counter and online-based services to a growing membership in excess of 10,000. We have always prided ourselves on supporting the financial wellbeing of the members of our community and putting those members and the wider community first, by providing a safe home for savings, competitive loan products, payments and banking services, community and club sponsorships and donations, and student bursaries. As we look to the future and based on this solid foundation, we will continue to seek to improve our services, enhance our product offerings and respond to the needs of our members.



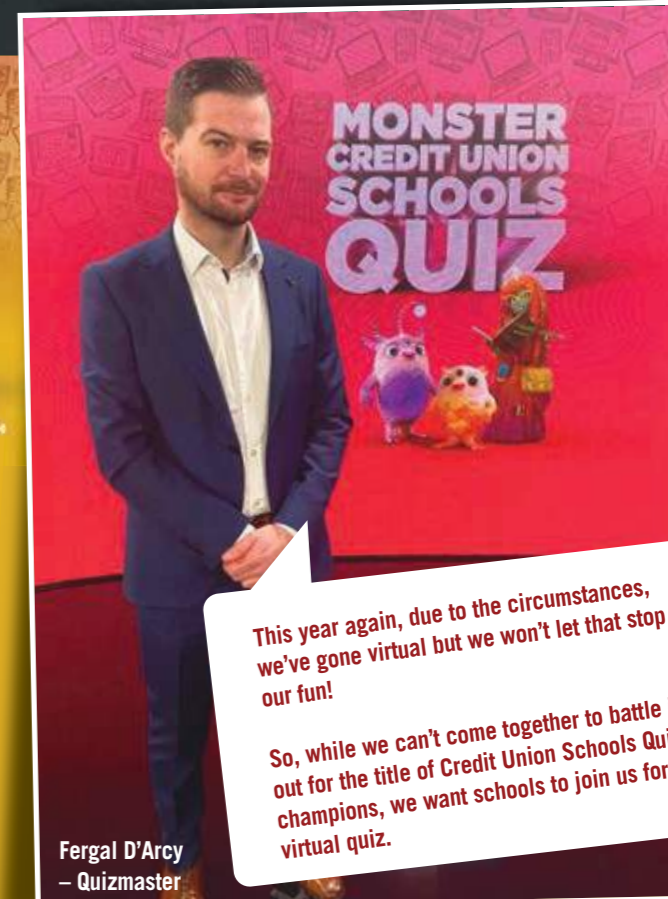
The Credit Union Schools Quiz is taking the virtual route again this year for 2022.

We hope that you will have seen our online Quiz Wizards tool which is a virtual quiz on the credit union website. We will be running a number of quiz rounds throughout the month of April.

The virtual quiz is fully available to all credit unions to share on their social channels, to send to their schools directly, or to even have a go themselves!

In place of the National Final, we are hosting six rounds of a virtual quiz, with host Fergal D'Arcy. We hope the quiz will be an asset for teachers to use in their classroom, for parents to use at home and for the general public to test their knowledge.

This will be going live on ILCU social channels to mark the usual National Final date.



Fergal D'Arcy - Quizmaster

This year again, due to the circumstances, we've gone virtual but we won't let that stop our fun!

So, while we can't come together to battle it out for the title of Credit Union Schools Quiz champions, we want schools to join us for the virtual quiz.

If you have any queries about the virtual quiz, feel free to contact the events team at ilcuevents@creditunion.ie and they will be happy to assist.

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Manager, Youghal Credit Union

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e: billy@odwyerpw.com
t: 051 364034
m: 087 9873332
in [billy-o-dwyer](https://www.linkedin.com/in/billy-o-dwyer)

General Category

CREDIT UNION ART COMPETITION WINNERS ANNOUNCED



The winners of the Credit Union Art Competition for 2021 were recently announced in a virtual prize-giving broadcast on the 10th March hosted by MC Marty Whelan. The prize-giving ceremony was viewed across the island of Ireland. The competition now in its 38th year, it is still one of the most prominent and longest-running competitions of its type.

This year's theme "Imagine", encouraged people to explore their thoughts, hopes and dreams, and portray them on paper or canvas.

To quote Albert Einstein, "Imagination is more important

than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world." Imagination is a powerful tool which helps people escape from reality. Imagination can also be the start of a brilliant idea which could change the world.

Art has always been a huge part of Irish life. Promoting and encouraging involvement in the arts across communities is an important message we want to spread. Art plays a critical role in enriching the lives of everyone and is central to sustaining, and increasing connections. Entrants were encouraged to reflect on the

crucial role that the arts play in Irish society and how they help bind communities.

Eleven successful entries were crowned winner in their respective categories and in addition to the ten individual winners and one group winner, there were 22 runner-up and merit awards. Age categories encompassed 7-years-and-under to 18-years-and-over. There was also a category for artists with learning difficulties. The competition is facilitated by credit unions in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

7 years & under



Evan O'Farrell



Dylan Cregan



Caoimhe Brett



Senan Coyne

8 - 10 yrs



Teresa Coen



Ella Kelly



Elsie Browne

11 - 13 yrs



Isabelle Scott



Abilmbola Fashade



Elia Cormican

14 - 17 yrs



Marta Wisniewska



Aaron Brady



Olesja Glushak



Alice Quinn

18 years & over



Mary Bradfield



Shona Beedal



Aisling White

CREDIT UNION ART COMPETITION WINNERS 2021 GENERAL PLACEMENT

Chpt	Name	Credit Union	Category	Position
22	Evan O'Farrell	Core	7 years & under (G)	Winner
13	Dylan Cregan	Cois Sienna Desmond	7 years & under (G)	Runner-up
14	Caoimhe Brett	Thurles	7 years & under (G)	Joint Merit
15	Senan Coyne	Roscommon	7 years & under (G)	Joint Merit
18	Teresa Coen	Ballina	8 - 10 yrs (G)	Winner
9	Ella Kelly	Arklow	8 - 10 yrs (G)	Runner-up
1	Elsie Browne	Donegal Town	8 - 10 yrs (G)	Merit
1	Isabelle Scott	Derry	11 - 13 yrs (G)	Winner
11	Abilmbola Fashade	Glanmire & Dist	11 - 13 yrs (G)	Runner-up
15	Elia Cormican	Roscommon	11 - 13 yrs (G)	Merit
16	Marta Wisniewska	St. Jarlath's Tuam	14 - 17 yrs (G)	Winner
6	Aaron Brady	Virginia	14 - 17 yrs (G)	Runner-up
	Olesja Glushak	Clonmel	14 - 17 yrs (G)	Joint Merit
4	Alice Quinn	Kilkeel	14 - 17 yrs (G)	Joint Merit
10	Mary Bradfield	Dungarvan	18 years & over (G)	Winner
25	Shona Beedal	Dunboyne & Dist	18 years & over (G)	Runner-up
7	Aisling White	Kildare	18 years & over (G)	Merit

Additional Needs Category

CREDIT UNION ART COMPETITION WINNERS 2021 ADDITIONAL NEEDS CATEGORY

Chpt	Name	Credit Union	Category	Position
18	Darren Stepanovisius	First Choice	7 years & under (AN)	Winner
9	James Mulligan Redmond	New Ross	7 years & under (AN)	Runner-up
4	Harry Holdsworth	Armagh	7 years & under (AN)	Merit
23	Christina Ryan	Rathmore & Dist	8 - 10 yrs (AN)	Winner
9	Blake Balfe	Altura	8 - 10 yrs (AN)	Runner-up
22	Ethan Anidi	Blackrock	8 - 10 yrs (AN)	Merit
9	Kyle Pitcher	Wexford	11 - 13 yrs (AN)	Winner
2	Sean Og Bonnes	Antrim	11 - 13 yrs (AN)	Runner-up
13	Clodagh O'Halloran	Rathkeale & Dist	11 - 13 yrs (AN)	Merit
6	James Moonan	Drogheda	14 - 17 yrs (AN)	Winner
23	Dylan Murphy	Listowel	14 - 17 yrs (AN)	Runner-up
2	Caoimhe Gilbert	Antrim	14 - 17 yrs (AN)	Merit
9	Alicia Fortune	Wexford	18 years & over (AN)	Winner
14	James Wellwood	Thurles	18 years & over (AN)	Runner-up
1	Cathy McCrossan	Derry	18 years & over (AN)	Merit
1	Group 2 - Donegal Community Inclusion Hub		Donegal Town	Group Winner

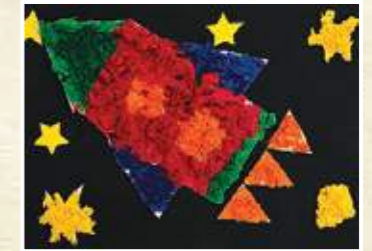
7 years & under



Darren Stepanovisius



James Mulligan Redmond



Harry Holdsworth

8 - 10 yrs



Christina Ryan



Blake Balfe



Ethan Anidi

11 - 13 yrs



Kyle Pitcher



Sean Og Bonnes



Clodagh O'Halloran

14 - 17 yrs



James Moonan



Dylan Murphy



Caoimhe Gilbert

18 years & over



Alicia Fortune



James Wellwood



Cathy McCrossan

Group Winner

*Group 2 - Donegal
Community
Inclusion Hub*



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Diversity and inclusion is a regulatory priority for both the Central Bank of Ireland and the Financial Conduct Authority (“FCA”). Diversity and inclusion is an important factor in creating a positive culture within an organisation. Reflecting on recent regulatory developments, in this article we explore the importance of diversity and inclusion for credit unions – with the ultimate benefit of better meeting the needs of our diverse members.

WHAT IS DIVERSITY & INCLUSION?

The OECD has defined board diversity as “...Diversity of thought, experience, knowledge, understanding, perspective and age means that a board is more capable of seeing and understanding risks and coming up with robust solutions to address them...” Diversity and inclusion has been further defined in the workplace as “...the inclusion of individuals representing more than one national origin, colour, religion, socio-economic stratum, sexual orientation, etc.” and as “...the art of thinking independently together...” Diversity of thought can be achieved through representation of the following differences:

- Gender
- Socio-economic background (class)
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Education
- Race
- Visible and non-visible disabilities
- Education
- Sexual orientation
- Religion/belief
- Different personality types
- Cultural background
- Experience
- Thinking style/diversity of thought

Where an organisation has a mix of different types of people, this leads to diversity of thought and contributes to better decision making. Diversity is not effective without a culture of inclusion in organisations. It involves individuals feeling confident to contribute to decision making and making suggestions as well as raising questions and

concerns without fear of experiencing negative consequences. Inclusion can be measured by how a person’s career develops in an organisation such as by way of promotion and other opportunities to learn and develop and by how an organisation listens and responds to people from different backgrounds. Diversity and inclusion should exist at all levels of an organisation. It is important that financial services providers reflect society and that there is evidence of social mobility for vulnerable or different groups.



BENEFITS OF DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Diversity has been shown to reduce instances of misconduct and consumer detriment as well as improving organisational culture. It assists financial services providers in better serving their communities as they are more representative of them and can understand their needs better. The broader the mix of people a provider has, the greater the benefits and resources are for complex problem solving and innovation. Diversity and inclusion has also been shown to improve risk management and governance.

There are numerous benefits to having a diverse and inclusive environment including:

- Helps in improving culture
- Creates a staff profile which is more representative of the community being served
- Makes it easier to identify the needs of all members
- Better risk management and improved attitudes to risk
- Reduction in groupthink
- Facilitates free expression of different opinions
- Leads to better independence at board level
- Contributes to retaining staff at an organisation
- Contributes to a positive speak up and challenge culture
 - Leads to better decision making and problem solving
 - Contributes positively to innovation
 - Leads to positive conduct and a reduction in incidences of misconduct
 - Has been found to contribute to improved performance results
 - Has been found to improve governance and oversight
 - Better challenge of reports at board level
 - Contribute to more competition in the market through innovation in products and services
- Results in better outcomes for financial services providers
- Better financial returns
- Contributes to the overall stability, safety and soundness of the financial sector

CULTURE

Culture is very important in a credit union. Where there is a healthy culture, different opinions can be expressed without fear of repercussion. It is important for credit unions to foster a safe environment in which all people can express their views on subjects and are listened to. A lack of a diverse and inclusive environment can cause a negative culture, adverse outcomes for members and poor decision making which all contribute to higher conduct risk.



REGULATORY APPROACH

The Central Bank and the FCA are examining different ways to promote diversity and inclusion across financial services providers including:

- Research and information
- Continuing to analyse PCF applications
- Sectoral diversity and inclusion reports
- Reviewing firm’s policies and procedures
- Assessing the levels of diversity in firms

HOW CREDIT UNIONS CAN ACHIEVE DIVERSITY & INCLUSION?

Credit unions can make diversity and inclusion a strategic priority and should examine how they can foster a culture of diversity and inclusion for all officers. The board of directors and senior management have a key role to play here. Tone from the top is an important factor in developing a diverse and inclusive environment. The main driver of change will be the introduction of a diversity and inclusion policy which will have an influence on the recruitment of officers.

When receiving applications for roles, credit unions can mask the names of applicants so that candidates are judged on their qualifications and experience rather than ethnicity. Also, credit unions should have development plans in place to assist staff from different backgrounds/experience. Existing officers from different backgrounds should be considered for promotion and development for roles as part of succession planning.

Boards can decide to set diversity and inclusion targets with time frames and measure progress against this. Diversity and inclusion should be considered as a regular item on the agenda of board meetings. Other measures which could be taken include:

- Evaluate culture in the credit union
- Provide a supportive environment for LGBTQ officers and members
- Provide an inclusive environment for parents and carers
- Include officers with disabilities
- Consider the introduction of employee education programmes

Training also plays a key role in developing an inclusive culture. All officers should be trained in what diversity and inclusion is and be aware of the importance and benefits of same. Unconscious bias should also be addressed. All officers should also be trained in the contents of the diversity and inclusion policy.

CONCLUSION

Credit unions should consider the needs and benefits of a diverse and inclusive organisation. Different life experiences and ways of thinking can lead to better approaches to problem solving, better decision making and a healthier organisational culture. It can also help to address succession challenges. It is important that credit unions avoid using a tick-box approach to this area and to properly consider and embed a culture of diversity and inclusion.

For further information on diversity and inclusion, please contact the Credit Union Compliance Centre (CUCC) at compliance@creditunion.ie or by telephone on 01-614 6711.

NATIONAL SURVEYS INTO THE SPENDING HABITS OF CREDIT CARD USERS



National research commissioned by the Irish League of Credit Unions (ILCU) into the spending habits of credit card users has revealed that there has been no improvement in consumer awareness of interest rates or spending habits in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) when compared to previous ILCU surveys conducted in 2020 and 2019. The main headline from the Northern Ireland survey was that the majority of credit card users were unaware of the interest rate they pay.

ROI Interest rates

When asked about their awareness of the interest rate they paid on their credit card balance, 65% of respondents said that they did not know what interest rate they paid, an increase of 7% on the 2020 survey results.

Of those who responded that they are familiar with the credit card interest rate they pay, 26% think they pay between 11% and 17%, while 38% think they pay 18% to 24%. One fifth of these respondents believe they pay less than 5% in interest with over half believing they are paying less than 10%. Overall, the survey highlighted a significant lack of understanding on how interest is applied. Interest rates on credit cards typically range from 13% to 26%. **

36% of respondents incorrectly stated that they “don’t pay any interest” if they cover the minimum balance due at the end of each month, with 31% correctly stating they knew that they paid interest on the full balance as well as interest on the outstanding balance from the date of the transaction.

NI Interest Rates

The survey results revealed a wide mix of knowledge on interest rates. Of those who responded that they are familiar with the credit card interest rate they pay, 21% think they pay between 6% and 10% while 25% think they pay between 18% and 24%. Just over a third (34%) of respondents believe they pay less than 5% in interest.

Overall, the survey highlighted a significant lack of understanding on how interest is applied. 26% of respondents incorrectly stated that they “don’t pay any interest” if they cover the minimum balance due at the end of each month, with 29% correctly stating they know they pay interest on the full balance as well as interest on the outstanding balance from the date of the transaction.

ROI Spending habits

Just over half of the Irish population own a credit card with 56% of these reporting they use it to buy ad hoc purchases each month. 14% said they have made a New Year’s resolution to throw the card away while 10% said they would use it to fund a planned holiday.

68% of credit card holders plan to use their monthly income to clear their balance fully every month, while 15% said they would use their monthly income to make the monthly minimum repayment.

NI Spending habits

18% of those surveyed said they have made a New Year’s resolution to throw away the credit card while 14% said they would use it to fund a planned holiday. 45% of credit card holders plan to use their monthly income to clear their balance fully every month, while 33% said they would use their income to make the monthly minimum repayment. 11% said they would clear the balance every so often but would miss some months as they wouldn’t have the money available.

ROI Relationships with credit cards

Over two thirds of the population (67%) believe credit card companies in Ireland don’t do enough to explain how interest rates work, while 62% say that the general public lacks an understanding of how credit card interest works.

61% of adults agree that people in Ireland rely too much on credit cards for making purchases. 57% of respondents believe people in Ireland are now more dependent on credit cards due to the COVID pandemic with 22% feeling that users spend less on their credit cards than before the pandemic.

NI Relationships with credit cards

Nearly half of the Northern Irish population (48%) believe credit card companies don’t do enough to explain how interest rates work, while 38% say that the general public lacks an understanding of how credit card interest works.

57% of adults agree that people in Northern Ireland rely too much on credit cards for making purchases. 64% of respondents believe people are now more dependent on credit cards due to the COVID pandemic with 20% feeling that users spend less on their credit cards than before the pandemic.

Commenting on the findings, ILCU Head of Communications, Paul Bailey said:

“This survey highlights that consumer awareness around credit card interest and how that interest is applied is still worryingly poor.

“Over two thirds of respondents in ROI believe that credit card companies aren’t doing enough to clearly explain credit card terms and conditions to consumers. Two thirds of consumers in Northern Ireland own credit cards, but 61% of these are unaware of the interest rate they pay.”

“These are worrying statistics given the high usage and over reliance on credit cards among the entire population on the island of Ireland.”

“I would encourage the public to arm themselves with as much information as possible when it comes to financial products and services to make sure they are making the right financial decisions to suit their individual circumstances. At the credit union, we aim to provide members with the necessary financial education to support them in managing their financial wellbeing”.

The study was commissioned by the Irish League of Credit Unions (ILCU), and carried out by independent research company, iReach Insights, in December 2021. 1,000 adults responded to the ROI online survey and 503 adults responded to the NI online survey.

**Competition and Consumer Protection Commission

New Grant Measures for Home Energy Upgrades Announced

In February, the Government approved a new package of supports, to the value of €8bn, to make it easier and more affordable for homeowners to undertake home energy upgrades. The new measures offer enhanced grant supports to householders and aim to address the perceived barriers to undertaking energy upgrades (particularly retrofits).



The new announcements provide a better alignment between One Stop Shops, the Better Energy Homes Scheme (which funds one-off shallow measures) and the Community Energy Grant Scheme. This should ensure that there is a clearer and more efficient connectivity between the schemes, which should facilitate and support the expected increased consumer demand.

A new National Home Energy Upgrade Scheme was announced which provides increased grant levels of up to 50% of the cost of a typical deep retrofit (up from 30%-35% grants currently). Grant amounts will be specific to house type, rather than being based on the value of the work carried out. The maximum grant will be in the region of €25,000 per home.

Homes built pre 2011 will now be eligible for retrofit grants. This had been previously limited to homes build pre 2006

There has been a removal of the requirement that houses must be rated C3 or lower in order to qualify for a retrofit grant. The target of B2 remains in place, and there is a requirement that the home must achieve an annual primary energy uplift of 100 kW per hour

A new grant, to the value of €350, has been introduced to help householders fund the initial technical assessment of the home.

There are also enhanced grant supports (under the Better Energy Homes Scheme) for single measures which don’t form part of an overall retrofit. For example, grants for cavity wall and attic insulation will more than triple. These new grants are available immediately.

Important role of One Stop Shops

The announcement reiterated the critical importance of One Stop Shops in delivering on the work needed to meet the targets which Government has. An ambitious ‘green’ target of upgrading 500,000 homes to a B2 energy rating or better by 2030 has been set.

For many people, getting this work done may be a daunting prospect. It is recognised that the provision of one-stop solutions will be essential to making it easy for people to get this work done and in ensuring these targets are met.

Last year, the Irish League of Credit Unions, in conjunction with Energia and House2Home, launched the CU Greener Homes scheme, a one-stop shop for home energy upgrades. CU Greener Homes provides access to all of the information and supports needed to carry out home energy upgrades, including the initial assessment, the grant application process, the amount of low-cost credit union finance required, and full project management.

A key feature of the CU Greener Homes proposition is a bespoke Energy Upgrade calculator which is available on cugreenerhomes.ie. By inputting a few basic details about their home, in just 3 minutes, the calculator enables people to find out:

- » the cost of proposed home energy upgrades for their home,
- » the grant support which may be available,
- » the cost of credit union finance, and
- » the impact of the work on the energy efficiency of their home

Announcement Welcomed

Paul Bailey, ILCU Head of Communications welcomed the announcement

“We welcome the announcement by the Government of changes to the household retrofit scheme. In particular, the move to multi annual funding will help bring certainty to the scheme and facilitate longer term planning for retrofit providers. The introduction of fixed grant supports and the grant support for the initial technical assessment will be very well received by home owners”

He added, “We believe that the CU Greener Homes one stop shop is ideally placed to assist homeowners to make home energy upgrades and that credit unions are ideally positioned to assist homeowners to fund the difference between the grant funding and the overall cost of the proposed works”.

DID YOU KNOW?

30% of your home's heat can be lost through poorly insulated walls

Get a quote for insulation today at www.cugreenerhomes.ie

DID YOU KNOW?

Heat pumps can eliminate oil/gas bills from the home, while reducing energy usage and carbon emissions

Get a quote for a heat pump today at www.cugreenerhomes.ie

Participating Credit unions

There are currently more than 60 credit unions participating in the CU Greener Homes with an additional 50 set to join the scheme in the coming months.

Programme Updates

It has been a busy start to the year, and we continue to provide remote support to our local partners. Some key highlights of the first quarter include the following:

Ethiopia

In February, the Amhara Savings and Credit Co-operative Organisations (SACCO) Federation held its first AGM. The Amhara SACCO Federation is one of two recently established regional apex bodies in Ethiopia. The AGM was well attended with 117 participants. During the sessions, they discussed key developments including approving their credit policy, operational plan, internal bylaws and a progress report which was appointed by their new CEO. There was also an opportunity to recognise and award the three best performing SACCO Unions. The AGM also forwarded gratitude to the Foundation and the Amhara Cooperative Commission, who have contributed to the Federation's success for both their technical and financial contributions.



The Amhara SACCO Federation, the first regional apex body for Ethiopia, held its first AGM with 117 participants.



The Gambia

The National Association of Cooperative Credit Unions of The Gambia (NACCUG) held its first-ever stakeholder conference to raise awareness about the credit union movement and NACCUG's work. The Foundation co-funded this inaugural event that brought together regulators and policymakers from across the country, including National Assembly Members, to discuss challenges and opportunities for the credit union sector.

The National Association of Cooperative Credit Unions of The Gambia held its first-ever stakeholder's conference with Dr Seekou Jabbie, first Deputy Governor of Central Bank The Gambia presenting.

Sierra Leone

The first meeting of the newly formed Credit Union Steering Committee was held at the end of January. This is an important forum to bring together stakeholders to establish consensus on issues related to the sustainable development of the movement in Sierra Leone. The Steering Committee include representatives from the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Department of Cooperatives, Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, Bank of Sierra Leone, NaCCUA and Foundation staff in Freetown.



The Credit Union Steering Committee includes delegates from The Foundation, NaCCUA, Bank of Sierra Leone and representatives from different ministries.

Cooperation among Cooperatives



Sierra Leone team including IT Officer, Monitoring Officer, Bookkeeper and CUA supervisory Officer



The Sierra Leone delegation with the manager of TAC Kaneshie Credit Union, a church-based Credit Union, who demonstrated the practical aspects of EasyBooks.

Four representatives from the credit union movement in Sierra Leone participated in peer-to-peer MIS training on a recent visit to the Co-operative Credit Union Association (CUA) in Ghana. The credit union movement in Ghana is long established and currently has over half a million members. The purpose of the visit was to support the team from Sierra Leone to understand the EasyBooks software and how credit unions use this software. During the visit, the team attended a number of workshops and had the opportunity to visit credit unions in Ghana to see how credit unions use the software and the benefits of it. EasyBooks will be rolled out in a small number of credit unions in Sierra Leone as part of the move away from

using manual systems to IT systems. This visit was an excellent opportunity to learn from the credit union movement in Ghana, in order to strengthen the credit union movement in Sierra Leone.

MIS training for bookkeepers is ongoing in Sierra Leone, with all bookkeepers now set up with 'Remote View', a software that will enhance offsite monitoring and enable the provision of IT support from Freetown. The training also focused enhancing excel skills to aid the delivery of critical monthly data collection for the Monthly Financial and Loan Aging reports.

Credit Union Donations

Thank you to the **141** credit unions who donated just over **€420,000** to our work last year. 2021 was another challenging year for us all we are very grateful for your continued support.

Your donations allow the Foundation to support our dedicated local partners to develop and strengthen their **193** credit unions with over **181,000** members (**43%** female members) in our three partner countries – Ethiopia, Sierra Leone and The Gambia. This in turn provides much-needed

access to formal financial services for people in these countries.

Unfortunately, annual donations from credit unions in 2021 were down almost 19% on the previous year. Therefore, we ask all credit unions to consider donating to our work in 2022. The Foundation's work is focused on increasing financial inclusion and reducing poverty. Together, we play a role in building financial inclusion for all. If your credit union requires any information, please contact us.



Michael Kelly, Business Development/Operations Officer, St. Brigid's Credit Union presents cheque to Sinéad Lynam from the Foundation.

Derek Hennessy, Head of Operations and Natalie Preston, Credit Union Officer from Athlone Credit Union Ltd present a cheque to Sinéad Lynam from the Foundation.

Keep up to date with our work on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. For more information on the Foundation contact Ashley on 01 614 6739 or email aharte@creditunion.ie

Legislative Update



Office of the Data Protection Commission publishes 2021 Annual Report

The Commissioner for Data Protection, Helen Dixon, recently launched the Irish Data Protection Commission's (DPC) Annual Report for 2021.

Of particular interest to credit unions is the DPC's continued compliance review concerning obligations data controllers have regarding the designation and notification of a Data Protection Officer (DPO) under Article 37(1) and Article 37(7) respectively of the GDPR.

Having completed a public sector review in 2020, the DPC expanded the compliance review in 2021 to encompass non-public sector organisations likely to meet the threshold to appoint a DPO, including credit unions, while acknowledging that there is no automatic requirement for private organisations to appoint a DPO. The appointment of DPOs in private sector organisations is determined by the scale and nature of the processing activities involved.

According to the Annual Report, 242 credit unions were identified during the compliance review. On initial inspection, 29% of credit unions were in compliance with Article 37(7) and 3% were in partial compliance. Following first stage engagement, the rate of compliance has risen to 64%, with 10% in partial compliance. 13% of credit unions identified have chosen not to designate a DPO. The credit unions engagement remains ongoing and the DPC will be reviewing the reasons given for not appointing a DPO to ensure the correct application of Article 37(1) (b) and (c).

The Annual Report notes that to date more than 170 additional organisations now comply with Article 37(7) as a result of the DPC's intervention, making DPOs more accessible to individuals seeking to exercise their data protection rights. In cases of where the DPC identifies persistent non-compliance, further enforcement measures will be taken as proportionate and necessary to ensure compliance with the requirements of the GDPR.

The full Annual Report can be found on the DPC website (www.dataprotection.ie).

Consultation on Credit Union Exempt Services (Consultation Paper 148)

On 21st January 2022 the Central Bank of Ireland (CBI) published Consultation Paper 148 to consult on proposed changes to the exempt services requirements set out in the Credit Union Act 1997 (Regulatory Requirements) Regulations 2016.

The proposed changes are mainly technical in nature, apart from policy changes in respect of two areas: changes and

additions to the conditions for the provision of certain exempt services and prescribing a broader set of intermediation services as "exempt services".

CP148 is open for comments until 21st April 2022.

Consultation on Application of the Minimum Competency Code 2017 and the Minimum Competency Regulations 2017 to credit union core services (CP147)

On 19 January 2022, the CBI commenced a public consultation on the application of the Minimum Competency Code 2017 and the Minimum Competency Regulations 2017 to credit union core services. Currently the minimum competence requirements apply to credit unions when acting as retail intermediaries, providing mortgage credit agreements and devising or creating mortgage credit products.

The CBI proposes extending the minimum competency requirements to credit union activities such as lending and deposits

CP147 is open until 19th April 2022.

Protected Disclosures (Amendment) Bill 2022

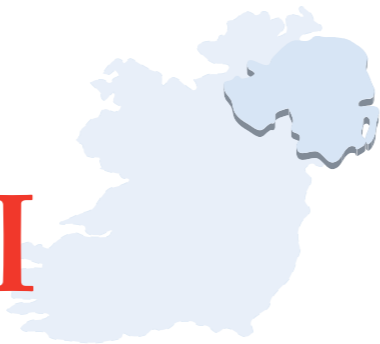
On 9th February 2022 the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform published the long awaited Protected Disclosures Amendment Bill 2022. The Bill will transpose the EU Whistleblowing Directive and it is intended to significantly enhance the protections for whistleblowers in Ireland.

Key features of the Bill include:

- The Bill will extend the scope of the legislation in providing protections for volunteers, shareholders, board members and job applicants for the first time.
- Private sector organisations with 50 or more employees will be required to establish formal channels and procedures for their employees to make protected disclosures, as is currently the case in the public sector. A derogation until 17 December 2023 will be put in place as regards this requirement for organisations with between 50 and 249 employees. This will be monitored and enforced by the Workplace Relations Commission.
- A new Office of the Protected Disclosures Commissioner will be established within the Office of the Ombudsman
- New offences will be created for employers who fail in their obligation to establish internal reporting channels and for persons who:
 - Penalise reporting persons;
 - Hinder or attempt to hinder a person from making a report; or
 - Take vexatious proceedings against reporting persons.

Legislative Update

NI



FCA consults on new introduction of new consumer duty

On 7 December 2021, the FCA published a second consultation paper (CP21/36) on a new consumer duty (the Consumer Duty) for firms (including credit unions).

The new Consumer Duty will have three components:

- A new Consumer Principle (Principle 12 of the FCA Principles for Business), which would be a new addition to the FCA's Principles for Businesses (Principles) and go further than Principle 6 (A firm must pay due regard to the interests of its customers and treat them fairly);
- Cross-cutting rules designed to support the new Consumer Principle; and
- Four outcomes setting out more detailed expectations for how firms can meet the new Consumer Principle.

New consumer principle

- This will provide an overarching standard of conduct
- The FCA wants the consumer principle to prompt firms to ask themselves questions such as "Am I treating my customers as I would expect to be treated?", or "Are my customers getting the outcomes from my products and services that I would expect?". In particular, it wants the consumer principle to set a higher standard than the existing requirement of Principle 6, which states: "A firm must pay due regard to the interests of its customers and treat them fairly".
- The consumer principle should indicate to firms that they need to play a greater and more positive role in delivering good outcomes for consumers, including those who are not direct

Cross-cutting rules

- These will support the consumer principle by setting clear expectations for firms cultures and behaviours
- Three cross-cutting rules which require firms to:
 - act in good faith towards retail customers;
 - avoid causing foreseeable harm to retail customers; and
 - enable and support retail customers to pursue their financial objectives.

The "four outcomes"

- This is a suite of other rules and guidance linked to four particular outcomes that represent the key elements across the whole firm-consumer relationship.
- The outcomes relate to the quality of firms' products and services, the price and value of products and services, consumer understanding and support for consumers.

The rules are designed to be proportionate and while firms will need to apply the rules for all products or services, the requirements are less onerous for simpler products with less risk of consumer harm.

The consumer duty would apply to prospective customers. The practical impact of this will depend on the context. For example, financial promotions are often targeted at potential customers, and firms should consider the needs, characteristics and objectives of a target market of customers when designing products or services.

No private right of action

The FCA is not proposing to provide a private right of action for breaches of any part of the Consumer Duty at this time. However, the FCA will keep the possibility of a private right of action under review, including in light of the evidence it sees of firms' embedding of and compliance with the Consumer Duty.

The FCA intends to work closely with the Financial Ombudsman Service with the aim of having a consistent view on the interpretation of the Consumer Duty while respecting the different roles of the FCA and the Financial Ombudsman.

Will it apply retrospectively?

The Consumer Duty will have no retrospective effect. However, it would apply on a forward-looking basis to existing products or services that are either still being sold to customers, or closed products or services that are not being sold or renewed.

Board obligations

The FCA expects that, at least annually, a firm's board will review the firm's assessment of how it is delivering in line with the Consumer Duty.

The Board is further expected to agree both:

- (1) the actions required to address any issues which impact on the firm's ability to deliver good outcomes, and
- (2) any changes to the firm's future business strategy, before 'signing off on the assessment'.

Changes to the conduct rules

The FCA proposes to amend the senior manager and individual conduct rules in the Code of Conduct sourcebook (COCON) by adding a new individual conduct rule 6 requiring all conduct rules staff within firms to 'act to deliver good outcomes for retail customers' where their firms' activities fall within scope of the Consumer Duty

Timescales for implementation

FCA considers at this stage that firms should have until 30 April 2023 to fully implement the Consumer Duty but it is asking for views on this timescale.

Firms are expected to be able to demonstrate progress when asked during this implementation period and the FCA intends to monitor firms and provide assistance where needed.

The ILCU has recently submitted a response to the FCA's consultation paper asking for regulatory proportionately and flexibility for credit unions and will continue to engage with the FCA on the new duty and its impact on credit unions.

Our Lady Crowned Credit Union offering CU Home mortgages to their members



We talked to Loretto Dennehy-McCarthy, Manager and her team at Our Lady Crowned Credit Union to share their insights



What prompted OLCCU to start offering mortgages?

OLCCU began offering mortgages in late 2021, it was derived from a need from members who were accessing their home improvement product and were requesting a longer term product and lower rate. In addition, an extensive common bond analysis showed that the area had a mixture of newer properties and also older stock which would suit this type of mortgage product. The common bond has a lower socio economic profile, so families who may not be able to easily access the standard bank mortgage product.

Why did the credit union join up to the home loans CUSO?

As a small/medium size credit union with membership of less than 12,000 the credit union did not have the in house experience or resources to undertake mortgage underwriting. Using the CUSO platform enabled the credit union to offer these services confident that each process is over seen by CUSO department and allowing the credit union staff to focus on day to day lending.

Was there a lot to organise to get the whole thing up and running?

No, the team undertook training and dedicated staff were assigned to process the loans in accordance with the guidelines laid out by CUSO. Each step was explained in detail and the CUSO team were on hand to help with every query. Mortgage lending is very complex and each applicant is different so the relationship that is built up between the member and the credit union is key. The member/applicant needs to be confident in the mortgage process so having the support of the ILCU was critical.

How have you promoted to members that the credit union is offering a home loan product

As it was a new product for us, it was important that we provide confidence to our members in the application process. We then introduced our mortgage lending team to our members. We sent newsletters electronically and door to door to let those in the area know we were now offering this product. We are using print advertising and publicity to keep the public engaged with us. We also use online marketing through Facebook to generate initial enquiries.



What has been the reaction so far and how can members apply?

We have had a number of applications to date and we are progressing those through to draw down shortly. The mortgage underwriting process can be lengthy so we keep the member's information of each of the stages. We are hopeful to have early applicants concluded shortly. The feedback has been very positive to date and we hope that further interest will ensue in the coming weeks and months. Members apply via the OLCCU website www.olccu.ie or by calling the credit union directly on 021-4504923.

The Home Loans CUSO service was developed to provide support to credit unions engaging in mortgage lending, or intending to do so. The service, branded as CU Home has been designed and built so that participating credit unions can have the support and assurance they need to be successful in mortgage lending.

MORTGAGE HUB CONTACT DETAILS

Phone 01 614 6973

Mail mortgagehub@creditunion.ie

SUCCESSION PLANNING GUIDELINES

Succession planning is a process for identifying and developing internal people, both employees and volunteers, with the potential to fill key positions in the credit union, succession planning is focused on identifying specific back-up candidates for key positions in a structured manner.

A credit union needs to develop a succession plan to ensure that it has qualified candidates to replace people in key positions who leave for any reason, such as retirement, illness, or taking another job. In short, a succession plan is a plan developed to help protect a credit union's future.

WHAT SUCCESSION PLANNING WILL DO FOR YOUR CREDIT UNION

The success of the credit union depends on the continuing productivity of people in key positions. The loss of a key person can be devastating for a credit union. Having a qualified successor ready to carry on is absolutely critical, and a succession plan can help the credit union identify a successor, it helps you prepare for losses and deal with them when they occur.

When the credit union has a visible succession plan:

- It signals to your employees that you're focused on their long-term future by protecting the credit union from the havoc that unwelcome departures can create.
- It assures members and helps preserve their confidence in the credit union because they know that it will continue to provide products and/or services without interruption.
- It helps focus people's attention on the competencies they need to do an excellent job.
- It puts more focus on developing talent from within the credit union. People will know that with targeted education, training, and coaching, they could move into key positions. This boosts overall motivation, morale, and satisfaction across the credit union.

Actively pursuing succession planning ensures that employees and volunteers are constantly developed to fill each role as needed. As the credit union changes; loses key employees; provides promotional opportunities; and increases services to members, the succession planning guarantees that you have employees on hand ready and waiting to fill new roles.

HOW TO DEVELOP A SUCCESSION PLAN

When developing a succession plan for the credit union the process involves just six steps:

1. Determine the type of plan.

What concerns are stimulating you to develop your succession plan? Are you worried about unexpected departures due to illness or more competitive offers elsewhere? Are you aware of the planned departures of several key people who are scheduled to retire during the next two years? Or are you planning new strategic directions for the credit union that will require new kinds of competencies for people in key positions?

Clarifying your reason for developing a succession plan will help you construct a plan that meets the credit union's needs.

2. Put a succession-planning team together.

Find the right balance of people in the credit union to participate in the succession-planning process. Select people who are:

- effective communicators;
- knowledgeable about job competencies and competency development; and
- connected throughout the credit union in ways that will help garner support for the plan.

The team can be made up of directors; management and / or employees at a senior level.

3. Identify the main factors that will influence your plan.

There is a need to anticipate factors that may influence the success of your succession plan. For example:

- Fitness & Probity Standards;
- the introduction of new legislation;
- transfers or amalgamations of credit unions; or
- changing trends occurring in the credit union movement that will require new competencies in key positions.

4. Link your succession plan to the credit union's overall strategic plan.

The strategic plan tells members; volunteers and employees what the credit union is all about, where it's going, and how it will get there. If your succession plan is not aligned with your overall strategic plan it is doomed to failure. Your strategic plan, along with the influential factors you identified in Step 3, will enable you to identify the key positions that your plan must cover.

Research indicates that clear objectives, linked to a strategic plan, are critical to establishing effective succession planning.

5. Identify sources for successor candidates.

Having identified the key positions to be included in the succession plan, develop potential candidate pools. In order to do that, you need to spell out the competencies (talents, skills, and knowledge) required for each key position.

Then, after the competencies required



have been identified, it needs to be established where the credit union can find these individuals. They will come from two major sources:

1. The first source is internal, namely from within the credit union. Many people in the credit union are likely to already have the required competencies or, with some development, can acquire them.
 2. The second source is external.
- ### 6. Shape action plans.

A succession plan by itself is useless; in order to ensure its success it needs to be translated into the following:

- concrete action plans;
- backed up by measurable goals; and
- specified timelines; with
- people accountable for taking various actions or applying required processes.

Plus, the implementation of your plan needs to be continuously monitored by your succession-planning team, evaluated on an on-going basis, and adjusted for unexpected events in order to ensure its success.

HOW TO ENSURE SMOOTH JOB TRANSITIONS

It's not enough to simply develop a succession plan and set it into motion. In addition to monitoring, evaluating, and adjusting it as necessary, there is one very important element that must be carefully thought out: ensuring a smooth transition process for the successor. You can have the best, most qualified candidate to succeed a key position, but the transition still may be rocky because you haven't set

up a process for transitioning that person.

Below are three helpful tips for ensuring a smooth transition of a successor hired from a source external to the credit union:

1. **Even before the transition takes place, familiarise the successor with the credit union.** Show the successor his or her new workplace and introduce him or her to people from other areas. Provide the successor with an induction that covers credit union policies and procedures, as well as credit union-specific passwords, acronyms, and the operation of credit union phones, computers, copiers, and printers.
2. **Help the successor feel more at home by introducing him or her to department heads and other key people across the credit union.** Encourage social interactions, such as having lunches that include the successor and people with whom he or she will be working. The more welcome a successor feels, the smoother the transition will be.
3. **Before the transition takes place, prepare the employees who will be interacting with the successor.** Use meetings to provide your employees with full information about the successor and his or her forthcoming roles and responsibilities in the credit union.

Below are three more helpful tips for ensuring a smooth transition of any successor, whether selected from an external source or moved to the position from within the credit union:

1. **Introduce the successor to all the individuals with whom he or she will be working.** Give them the chance to

interact, get to know each other, and develop a level of comfort.

2. **If possible, allow the successor, particularly if he or she is entering a management position, to shadow the person being replaced.** This will familiarise the successor with the daily details of their new jobs, the issues and problems that typically come up, and the knowledge needed to effectively carry out the job.

3. **Provide the successor with as full a debriefing as possible regarding the ins and outs of his or her new position.** Depending upon the position itself, this debriefing should include information on credit union operations, financial data, new product development, and the strategic plan.

IN SUMMARY:

- Identify those with the potential to assume greater responsibility in the credit union
- Identify key roles for succession planning
- Define the competencies required to undertake those roles
- Assess people against these criteria - with a future orientation
- Identify pools of talent that could potentially fill and perform highly in key roles
- Develop employees to be ready for advancement into key roles - primarily through the right set of experiences
- Provide critical development experiences to those that can move into key roles
- Build a data base that can be used to make better staffing decisions for key jobs

CONCLUSION

Although succession planning usually needs to be a long term goal, it is never too late to include it as part of the credit union strategy. In order to keep the succession planning process alive and current, it is essential that communication exists at each level of the credit union. Furthermore, developing the skills of those earmarked for promotion should take place at regular intervals.

Finally, during the succession planning process, it is essential to keep candidates informed regarding their progress and ensure that the lines of communication remain open.

ILCU President visits Virginia Credit Union on her visit to her native county

Virginia Credit Union were delighted to host a visit from Helene McManus on her way to an ILCU Board meeting in Ballyconnell, Co Cavan. Helene is pictured with the staff above and it provided us with an opportunity to share our views on how important VCU is to its local community.



(L-R) Rosaleen Brady, Roseann Traynor, Helene McManus, Marese Callaghan, Geraldine Mulvany & Sandra McGrath.



(L-R) Helene McManus & Micheal McDermott (CEO).

Official opening of the Inishowen Credit Union offices

Inishowen Credit Union Ltd have announced that Buncrana and Foyle Credit Unions have successfully merged and are now operating from four offices in Inishowen: Buncrana, Moville, Carndonagh and Muff.

The combined credit union is now operating under the new name of 'Inishowen Credit Union', to reflect the shared geographic common bond. With almost 25,000 members, this merger is a welcome development for both credit unions and will now focus on providing enhanced member services in the local community.



The team were delighted to officially open the Inishowen Credit Union offices where Helen McIntyre, Director, officially cut the ribbon for the grand opening.

Capital Credit Union "Make A Difference" Loan campaign

On the 1st of February 2022, Capital Credit Union and LauraLynn – Ireland's Children's Hospice launched the "Make A Difference" loan campaign. As part of this campaign, the Credit Union donated €5 to the charity for every loan issued during February 2022.



The campaign raised awareness of the great work that the LauraLynn charity does along with highlighting the financial supports available to Capital Credit Union's members and dedicated staff were delighted to help members with any questions, especially for a cause so close to their hearts.

At the launch of the campaign, Gerry McConville, CEO of Capital Credit Union said,

"I am delighted to see the launch of the 'Make A Difference' Loan campaign which is one example of how Capital Credit Union supports community groups and charities in our local community. With over 50,000 members, we know that many of our members will be aware of the amazing work that LauraLynn does. We hope that the combination of supporting such an amazing charity and our great value loans will be of interest to our members. We are excited to run this campaign and hopefully, it will make a tangible difference to LauraLynn and the services it offers."

LauraLynn Ireland's Children's Hospice was picked as the chosen charity after Capital Credit Union's members decided to donate €1,000 at the Credit Union's recent AGM. Seeing the huge levels of support for LauraLynn, Capital Credit Union wanted to go further and help the charity on a bigger scale. LauraLynn is delighted to work with Capital Credit Union, especially to support its specialised services for children with life-limiting conditions and their families across Ireland.

Kerry McLaverty, CEO of LauraLynn Ireland's Children's Hospice said,

"LauraLynn are absolutely thrilled and honoured to be the Charity Partner for Capital Credit Union. This partnership is a special one as it brings to life our core values of Collaboration and Excellence, as well as aligning with our strong sense of Community. LauraLynn provides care and supports to children and their families in lots of communities and Capital Credit Union and their members are at the heart of so many of those communities. I just want to thank the team in Capital Credit Union and their members for getting behind LauraLynn. The awareness and funds raised throughout this partnership will allow LauraLynn to continue to provide vital care and supports to children with life-limiting conditions and their families across the country."

At the end of the campaign, Capital Credit Union raised an amazing €4,000. They would like to thank all of their members who took out a Make A Difference Loan during February.

Club and Credit Union

You have heard the old saying, 'Club and County'. Well, for this lady, it's 'Club and Credit Union'!

There are two great volunteer organisations in Ireland - the GAA, and the Credit Union - and both have strong roots in their local communities. In a time when it seems to be becoming harder to attract volunteers, we thought we would salute one who has been volunteering with Dromara and Drumgooland Credit Union Ltd since 1975! Add that to her time spent on many committees with her native Kilcoo GAC, you can see the commitment this lady has given over the years to both organisations.

Patricia McEvoy, or Patsy as she is known, can be found manning the Kilcoo branch of Dromara and Drumgooland Credit Union Ltd every Sunday from 11am to 12noon, unless there is a match on, then Sean needs to step in to hold the fort! Therefore, we thought it only fair to highlight this great achievement in the year her beloved Kilcoo became All Ireland Club Champions.

Congratulations Kilcoo on their success, and to Patsy who has always been a champion for our Credit Union!



Patsy was busy in Kilcoo as she had three new members looking to join! Andy Merrigan, who has recently arrived in the area after living in Galway for a few years, Seamus McFerran, who has already been in the area for a few years, and lastly, Frank O'Hare, who is now a permanent resident!



Experience Customer Service Excellence at St. Dominic Credit Union



The St. Dominic Credit Union team are elated to have been awarded Customer Service Excellence at this year's Waterford Business Awards. The awards hosted by Waterford Chamber of Commerce, Dungarvan & West Waterford Chamber of Commerce, Waterford City & County Council and WLR FM is a nod to what SDCU had always known to be exemplary customer service from each and every member of the team. Here's to another year of hard work, dedication to members and going that extra mile!

Mayor's reception for Lisburn Credit Union board to mark the retirement of Walter Sloan

Stephen Martin, Mayor of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council was delighted to invite Lisburn Credit Union Board and staff to celebrate Walter Sloan's retirement from the Board of LCU. This was the first live reception held in the Council Chamber since the onset of COVID-19.

For 22 years Walter Sloan has served the Lisburn community in the Lisburn Credit Union. Walter joined the credit union in the millennium year 2000 and was immediately recognised as an asset the credit union could avail of in a committee and was initially appointed to the Loans committee and elected to the Board of Directors 2001. Walter was then elected as President and therefore Chairman of the Board of Directors in 2014.

Michal Lenaghan, LCU President said "Amongst his many achievements, one that stands out is masterminding the refurbishing of the credit union offices to a modern banking facility to match any in the City. This gave Walter a chance to use his architectural knowledge to lead a small team in this endeavour. His legacy will be there to be seen in 2-6 Bachelors Walk for a long time to come.

As Chair of the Board Walter was always fair and inclusive to all the Directors and sought unanimity in most, if not all important, decisions. His experience and sense of humour was always to the fore and will be missed at the board table."

LCU would like to thank Walter for his service to Lisburn community and wish him a long and healthy retirement.



Front row L to R Councillor Jonathan Craig (director of LCU), Mayor Alderman Stephen Martin, Vi Ellis, Walter Sloan and deputy mayor Councillor Tim Mitchell

Back row L to R Eileen Bayne CEO, Gillian Kerr Director LCU, Brian Hampton Supervisor, Martin McPoland Director, Jonathan Elliott Director, Michael Lenaghan Chair LCU, Martin Busch Vice-Chair LCU and Sean McGurnaghan.

Patrick Keeney retires after 47 years volunteering at Donegal Town Credit Union

One of the most esteemed directors at Donegal Town Credit Union, Patrick Keeney, has decided to offer his resignation at the next AGM. Patrick has dedicated over 47 years to the Credit Union, and this has been purely driven by his own personal mission statement "that everyone needs to give back" to maintain balance in our world.

Patrick has volunteered in other local organisations and when trying to identify what the key requirements are for any volunteer, there are few who could dispute the empathy and discretion are necessary, both of which Patrick has in abundance. His long voluntary association with the Credit Union has culminated in the new building at Miller's Hill, steady employment for many local Donegal residents and a wealth of knowledge that no Google will ever replace! Thankfully, this history has been recorded and such is his willingness to share and help employees, volunteers, and members alike, his dedication to all has not waned in those 47 years! If there is ever a query in our daily work, we reassure ourselves with "what would Patrick Keeney do" and are satisfied that the best interest of both the Credit Union and Member has been reached, as he has passed on his knowledge and truly embodies what volunteering is all about.

What has been the 3 most significant changes that you have witnessed at the Credit Union in the past 47 years?

Without any hesitation, Patrick is quick to point out that, the investment in computers have advanced the Credit Union operations and created the biggest change here. As with any change, he too had to embrace technology and will regularly produce reports required for Board meetings. He tells me that "back in the late '80's when the Credit Union moved from Eske Terrace to Tirchoonnall Street, the total assets at that time were IR£54k – by September 1992, Sam Maguire had come to Donegal

and the Credit Union had successfully deployed a new computer system! This investment fostered a steady growth pattern with assets sitting at IR£865k by year end. "This was revolutionary in that we could provide a Statement to our members showing all transactions and interest", something that could only have been done manually prior to this investment.

Following on from above, the second biggest change has been the level of communication to and from the member base. Originally when the Credit Union started, transactions were simple exchanges of requests and payments, now with the growth of technology, members can opt to pay by Direct Debits, Standing Orders, Online App, and "we produce booklets annually to let our members see the development in their Credit Union, after all each member is a shareholder and that is an important factor".

Lastly the transition from being overseen by a group of Irish League of Credit Union Representatives at the inception of the Credit Union to regulation by Central Bank of Ireland has increased the transparency and work at the Credit Union. However, Patrick is keen to emphasise that the ethos has not changed, "we are here to help our members, we must listen to what it is they want and most importantly the member must know that their troubles can be solved at Donegal Town Credit Union, they must always keep the communication channels open."



Chapter Four Credit Unions supporting their local Hospice

Credit Unions in Chapter Four have once again rallied to support the fund raising efforts of the Southern Area Hospice. In common with many other institutions that rely on financial support from the public, the Hospice's own fund raising has been severely impacted by the pandemic. While in the past coffee mornings hosted by Credit Unions were very popular they have not been an option for the previous two years. Instead Credit Unions came up with their own initiatives, like W.B.R.s 'Donate for a Donut' that featured in the previous edition of CU Focus. The Chapter itself sponsored the advertising on local media. Members comments showed that they appreciated what their Credit Unions had done. The Chapter used the theme 'Local people helping local people' again this year as it reflects the way in which both organisations, in different ways, are based in the community.



Presentation of a cheque for £3,385 at the Southern Area Hospice in Newry. Left to Right – Brian O'Hare, Chapter Four PRO; John Corrigan, Chapter Four; Amy Henshaw, Southern Area Hospice Fund Raising Manager and Kate Murphy, Slieve Gullion Credit Union.

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