

LIBRARY OF SANCTUARY GUIDE TO LAOIS



Laois County
Library Service



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



ciste na
gcuntas diomhaoin
the dormant
accounts fund



Library of
SANCTUARY AWARD
Winning People, Winning Community

WELCOME TO COUNTY LAOIS

Information for new members of our community

Laois County Library Service highly values the culture of welcome that we aim to place at the heart of our service and our community in County Laois. This was acknowledged in 2019 by Places of Sanctuary Ireland when Portlaoise Library was recognized as the first Library of Sanctuary in Ireland. Through our work with Laois Integration Network (and its many member groups), Laois Partnership, direct provision centres and the many library members who are new to County Laois we identified a need for information as a key barrier to the new members of our community accessing the services they need, making meaningful connections and feeling welcome in County Laois. Although this guide is not exhaustive we hope that it provides at least access points to the different areas of Laois community and services. The publication of this guide was funded by the Dormant Accounts Fund and Laois County Council.

Bernie Foran
County Librarian
Laois County Council



SHORT HISTORY OF LAOIS

Archaeology tells us that the first people in Laois were hunters and gatherers about 8,500 years ago when the land was covered with forests. By the Neolithic period (4000-2500 BC) the first farmers appeared, clearing forests and planting crops. Bronze Age people lived here around 2500 BC producing weapons, tools and golden objects. They were followed by people of the pre-Christian Celtic Iron age.

By the first century AD, Laois was part of the Kingdom of Ossory. The county was divided roughly into seven parts, which were ruled by the Seven Septs of Laois: O'More (O'Moore), O'Lalor, O'Doran, O'Dowling, O'Devoy (O'Deevy), O'Kelly and McEvoy.

When Christianity came to Ireland, holy men and women founded religious communities in Laois. Between 550 and 600, St. Canice founded Aghaboe Abbey and St. Mochua founded a religious community at Timahoe. Later, religious orders with strong ties to the continental Catholic Church replaced the older religious communities.

Around 1150 the Normans seized control of Ireland. In Laois, the fortress on the Rock of Dunamase was part of the dowry of the Irish princess Aoife, who was given in marriage in 1170 to the Norman warrior Strongbow. The Normans controlled the best land in the county, while the native Irish retreated to the bogs, forests and the Slieve Bloom Mountains. The early 14th century saw a Gaelic resurgence with the Irish chieftains forcing the Normans to withdraw.

In 1548, English warriors confiscated the lands of the O'Mores, and built the Fort of Leix. Portlaoise is the town that grew up around the fort. In 1556, the town was named Maryborough and Laois was named Queen's County in honour of the English queen, Mary Tudor. Queen Mary issued orders for the plantation of Laois with English settlers. Irish chieftains fought the English, but the power of the Gaelic chieftains was broken and by 1610, most of Laois's Irish nobility were transported to the south and west of Ireland. Catholic tenants and landless labourers remained behind and served the Protestant settlers who now owned the land.

The Great Famine of 1845-49 devastated the county and many of the poorest people died or emigrated. Further crop failures in the 1860s and 1870s, along with increasing levels of debt, caused an increase in tensions between the county's landlords and their tenants. Tenants began to assert their rights and oppose the landlord system.

By the end of the century a series of land reforms had transferred much of the land ownership to the tenants. This coincided with an increase in Irish nationalism, with many Irish people feeling that Ireland should control her own destiny. This led to the Irish War of Independence and the establishment of a new Irish State in 1922. The new Ireland gave the county its old name back. Queen's County was once again County Laois.

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GENERAL ADVICE AND INFORMATION



Public Libraries

Libraries offer **FREE MEMBERSHIP** to all the community. To join the library, you will need photographic identification and proof of address.

Once joined, you can borrow books, DVDs, CDs and magazines. Most of the libraries offer **FREE internet access**, printing, photocopying and scanning facilities. Many of the libraries offer free WIFI. There are online service also including language and business courses, E-books and audiobooks. The libraries run a series of events throughout the year so keep an eye on the social media and website for upcoming events.



laois.ie/departments/libraries



**Abbeyleix
Durrow
Mountmellick
Mountrath
Portarlinton
Portlaoise
Rathdowney
Stradbally**



library@laoiscoco.ie



0578594982

EDIC/Europe Direct Information Centre

Portlaoise Library is home to the EDIC centre which provides information and advice about the European Union's policies and gives the public the opportunity to send feedback to the European Union institutions.

Laois County Council

Local authorities or county councils have several roles. These include:

- Provision of social housing
- Overseeing planning permission
- Maintaining and improving roads
- Fire Services
- Libraries and playgrounds
- Dog Licences
- Public Parking



www.laois.ie



The council provides services for people in Co. Laois



Phone line 057 866 4000 is open between 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday

A list of current councillors can be found at laois.ie/about-the-council/councillors/


Citizen's Information Centre

The Citizen's Information Centre in Portlaoise provides free professional advice and confidential information on civil and social rights and entitlements. They provide information about residence rights, employment rights, health services, housing, social welfare entitlements and general information about living in Ireland.



 www.citizensinformation.ie

 (Over Mulhall's Supervalu)
Kellyville, Portlaoise

 0818075590

Office Opening Times: 9.30–5.00 p.m. Monday-Friday

Public Opening Times: 10.00a.m. to 12 noon and 2.00–4.00 p.m. Monday–Friday offering a mix of Drop-In and Appointment services.


The National Citizen's Information phone service is open Monday–Friday 9.00a.m. to 8.00 p.m. on 0818 074000.

Money Advice and Budgeting

This is the State's free money advice service. It guides people through dealing with debt and helps them to manage their money. Their helpline is open Monday to Friday, 9.00a.m. to 8.00p.m.



 **Portlaoise MABS Office**
Railway Mews, Railway Street, Portlaoise

 0761072620

 portlaoise@mabs.ie

 www.mabs.ie/en/



SAFETY AND SECURITY

Emergencies For emergencies only requiring fire, police or medical personnel call **999** or **112** free of charge.

An Garda Síochána

If you live in Ireland and are a victim of a crime, you should contact the Gardaí – the Irish police force.

Portlaoise Garda Station is open 24 hours a day seven days a week and can be contacted on **0578674100**. Other stations in Laois are part-time and contact details can be found below.

Crimestoppers is a partnership between the Gardai and the community. You can give information to the Gardai about any criminal investigation using the confidential freephone number **1800 25 00 25**. The caller can remain anonymous. This confidential freephone number is staffed by members of the Garda National Bureau of Criminal Investigation.



www.garda.ie

If you are a victim of crime, you are entitled to information from **An Garda Síochána**. You will be told the name, telephone number and station of the investigating Garda and Garda record number on its **PULSE** system. You will also be informed about:

- your role in the criminal justice system
- the support services available
- the compensation schemes available
- how to access legal aid and your entitlement to certain expenses if the matter goes to court

The Gardai will explain the investigation process to you and make sure that you are kept informed about the progress of the investigation, including whether a suspect is charged or cautioned. You will also be told about the support services available to victims of crime.

The Garda Victim Service Offices will acknowledge your report of the crime and keep you informed of significant developments during the investigation. Where it is decided to prosecute or not to prosecute you, following an investigation into an incident, the Gardaí or the Director of Public Prosecutions will write to you to let you know of that decision. Sometimes you may be told in person. The Gardaí will show special sensitivity if you are the victim of a sexual offence. The Gardaí will try to make sure that the Garda and the doctor who are helping you are of the same gender. You will be told about special support agencies dealing with sexual offences.

Laois Garda Stations Contact Numbers

Portlaoise Garda Station	057 8674100
Abbeyleix Garda Station	057 8730580
Arles Garda Station	059 9147628
Ballylinan Garda Station	059 8625112
Borris-in-Ossory Garda Station	0505 41122
Clonaslee Garda Station	057 8628022
Durrow Garda Station	057 8736113
Mountmellick Garda Station	057 8624140
Mountrath Garda Station	057 8732236
Portarlinton Garda Station	057 8623112
Rathdowney Garda Station	0505 46122
Stradbally Garda Station	057 8625222

Laois Domestic Abuse Service

This is a service for women experiencing domestic abuse. Support is provided to women to make their own decisions about their relationships/lives by providing impartial information and outlining possible options. These options include a court accompaniment service, a group support programmes, a counselling service and a referral service. Go to <https://www.laoisdomesticabuseservice.ie/> for further information.



Mounrath Road, Knockmay, Portlaoise. R32 KX8E



057 8671100

Monday to Friday 9.30 a.m. -12.30 pm and 2.30- 4.00 p.m.

Offaly Domestic Violence Support Service

This is a service to provide support and services for men and women who experience domestic violence. It aims to support them and their children at a local level. It provides:

- one to one confidential support
- Information Line – telephone support
- Accompaniment to court and other services



Cormac Street, Tullamore, Offaly



057 935 1886



info@odvss.ie

GP Out of hours service/MIDOC

This is a service to provide you and your family with access to urgent family doctor series outside of normal surgery hours i.e. late in the evening or night-time. MIDOC is NOT a walk-in service. Access to the service is by appointment only by contacting MIDOC on 1850 302 702 Monday to Friday 6.00-8.00 p.m. and Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays 8.00 a.m. to 8.00 a.m. i.e. 24 hours. If it is a medical emergency call 999 or 112. Visit <https://www.midoc.ie/> for further information.



SOCIAL ENTITLEMENTS

Intreo Centre

The Department of Social Protection runs Ireland's social welfare system. The staff are known as Community Welfare Officers. They assess and advise on the eligibility for allowances and supplements. They can give you advice about income support and social welfare payments and can help you with finding a job. Examples of social welfare payments include Jobseeker's Allowance, One Parent Family Allowance, Disability Allowance and Child Benefit. All allowances are subject to means testing and vary according to circumstances and the nature of the need.

Intreo is a new service from the Department of Social Protection. Intreo is a single point of contact for all employment and income supports. Designed to provide a more streamlined approach, Intreo offers practical, tailored employment services and supports for jobseekers and employers alike. Their offices are called Intreo Centres. For further information visit www.gov.ie/intreo.

Department of Social Protection



Portlaoise office,

DSP Government Buildings,
Old Abbeyleix Road,
Portlaoise.



057 8634101.

Social Welfare Branch Office /

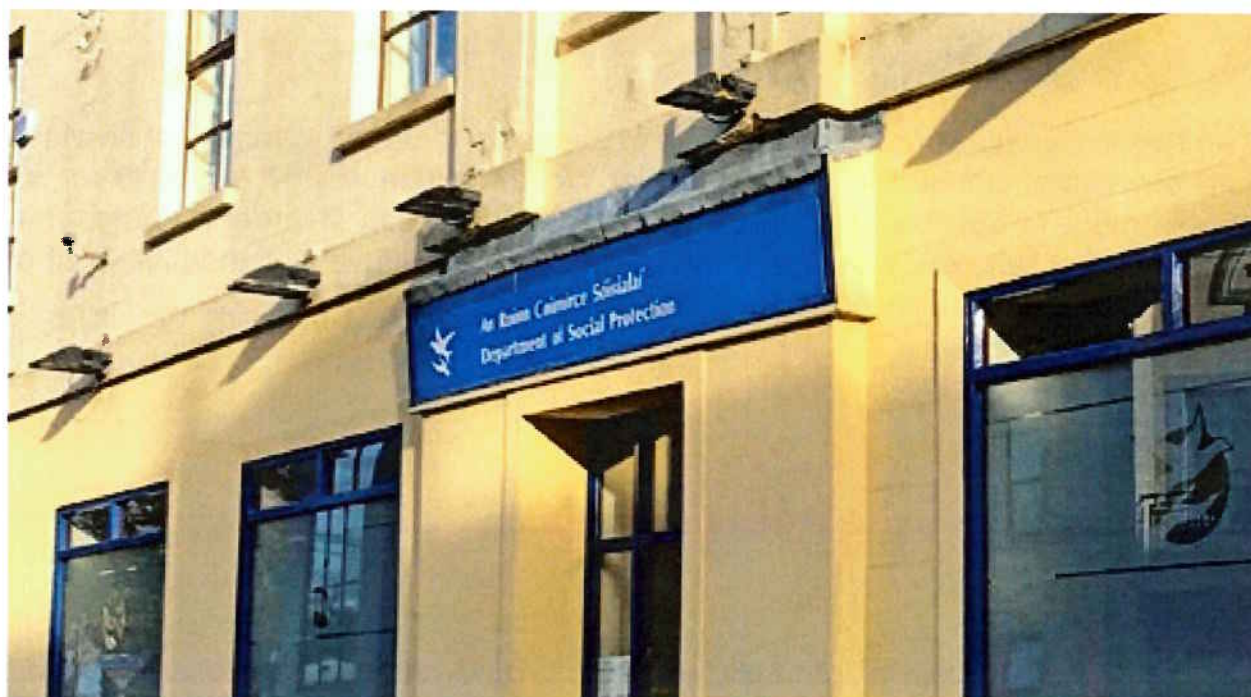


Intreo Office

Church Street,
Portlaoise,
R32 WY06.



057 8678010



Personal Public Service Number (PPSN):

A Personal Public Service (PPS) Number is a unique reference number that helps you access social welfare benefits and public services in Ireland. It is required when applying for any benefits, entitlements, social housing support and health care e.g medical card in Ireland. It is also used for employment and taxation purposes. A PPS Number is always 7 numbers followed by either one or two letters. To get a PPS Number, you will need to provide evidence of why you need a PPS Number and provide a copy of your photo identity document (Passport, Driving Licence, ID card) and proof of your address. If you do not have valid documents, you should provide whatever ID documents that you do have. You can apply online, in writing by filling out a REG1 form or by email. For more information <https://www.gov.ie/en/>.



**PPSN Applications,
CIS Registration,
Department of Social Protection,
Shannon Lodge,
Carrick on Shannon,
Co. Leitrim.
N41 KD81**



Email: PPSN@welfare.ie

Public Services Card:

The Public Services card allows people to access a range of government services and payments. Contact Portlaoise Social Welfare office at 057 8678010 for an appointment to get the card. You must attend in person in order to have your photograph taken. You will need to bring your passport/driving licence as proof of identity and current utility bill as proof of address.

Accommodation:

Private rented Accommodation:

Most rooms, flats, apartments and houses to rent are advertised on accommodation websites such as <https://www.daft.ie/> or www.myhome2let.ie. You can search for accommodation and set up alerts for your specific requirements. In Laois keep an eye out in the accommodations section of the local newspapers such as the Laois Nationalist and Leinster Express. Local noticeboards and local newsletters are also sources for information. You may also find available accommodation through word of mouth or 'To Let' signs on properties. Be aware of your rights and your obligations as a tenant and your landlord's rights and obligations. For example, your landlord must provide you with a rent book and ensure that the accommodation meets certain minimum physical standards. They must also register the tenancy with the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB). For more information visit www.citizensinformation.ie.

Housing Assistance Payment

The HAP (Housing Assistance Payment) scheme is a form of social housing support which authorities can provide housing assistance to households with a long-term housing need, including many long-term Rent Supplement recipients. It is provided by the local authority i.e. Laois County Council (not by the Department of Social Protection). You must be an approved housing applicant in order to be eligible for HAP. For more information, contact your local authority (details below) go to www.hap.ie or your local Citizens Information office.



**Laois County Council
Housing Department,
Áras an Chontae,
James Fintan Lalor Avenue,
Portlaoise .**



057 8664000.



<https://laois.ie/>



HEALTH

In Ireland, the public health service is run by the Health Service Executive, the HSE. It oversees hospitals, local health centre and offices. These provide a range of services including:

- Child health services
- Community Welfare
- Public health nursing
- Family Doctor Services
- Speech therapy
- Social Work
- Physiotherapy
- Addiction Counselling and Treatment
- Psychiatric Services
- Occupational therapy
- Audiology Services (Care of hearing)
- Chiropody Services (Care of the feet)
- Ophthalmic Services (Care of the eye)

The main health centre in Laois is:

 **Laois Community Services,
Dublin Road,
Portlaoise.**

 **057 8621135**

The national HSE information telephone line is open 8 a.m. to 8.00 p.m.

Monday to Saturday on

1850 241850 or 041 6850300.



Registering with a family doctor/General Practitioner/GP:

To access health services, you will need to register with a family doctor/GP in your area. A GP is often the first doctor people see about a health problem. GPs provide referrals to more specialised doctors called consultants and other services such as addiction or counselling. You cannot see a consultant for the first time without a referral from a GP. You will find a list of General Practitioners on https://www.icgp.ie/go/find_a_gp. Some GPs only offer services to private patients, while others may deal with both private and medical/GP card patients. Your local health office can provide you with a list of the GPs in your area who accept medical card patients.

On registering you will have to give your name, address, contact number and date of birth. If changing your GP, you should tell your current doctor of your plans to change and ask that your medical history be sent on to your new doctor.

Medical Card Scheme:

The medical card scheme entitles certain people to free public health services. With a medical card you can get public health services free of charge, including doctor visits and public hospital services. To be eligible, your income must be below a certain level. If you do not qualify for a medical card on income grounds you may be eligible for a GP visit cards. You can apply online at www.medicalcard.ie or phone 1890 252919. You will need you will need to provide PPSN (Personal Public Service Number), dates of birth, income and expense details. Your local citizen's information office can provide you with more information on eligibility.

GP Visit Card:

This card entitles you to free visits to your family doctor/GP . To be eligible your income must be below a certain level. However, children under the age of 6 years and people over the age of 70 years are automatically entitled to a GP visit card without an income test. The GP card does not cover you for medication costs and hospital visits. You will need a PPS number to register online or you can fill out an application form manually. For more information go to <https://www.hse.ie/eng/>

Local Pharmacy

Your local pharmacist can advise on some minor ailments and recommend medicines that do not require a prescription.

Dental Treatment Services Scheme:

This scheme provides access to limited dental treatment for adult medical card holders only. This includes a free oral examination every calendar year and free emergency treatment to relieve pain.

Public Health Nurse:

Public Health Nurses are employed by the Health Services Executive to provide a range of health services in the community. You can contact your local Public Health Nurse at your local health centre. Services include post hospital care, dressings and injections and referrals to other services. Your PHN can also advise you on Dietary, Occupational Health and Counselling Services.

HSE Health Centre, Dublin Rd, Portlaoise | (057) 862 1135

Mental Health:

Mental health problems are common and can have a very wide range. If you feel persistently sad, depressed, have trouble sleeping or have other concerns you should contact your GP for advice. In an emergency situation you may contact the Department of Psychiatry in Portlaoise Hospital or if it is late in the evening or night-time MIDOC is available at 1850 302 702.

There are also community organisations such as

The Samaritans:

They provide a 24-hour listening service so you can talk to someone about what's on your mind at 116123.

GROW

Is a voluntary organisation that provides friendship and support for people with mental health problems. The Laois office can be contacted on 057 9351124 or by contacting John Farren at 086 8033126. The website www.yourmentalhealth.ie contains advice on mental health.

AWARE

Provides information to people who are experiencing depression or other mood related disorders, those who are concerned for a family member or friend or people who are seeking to know more about depression. Contact 01 6617211 to get information about the local service in Laois or email info@aware.ie.

EDUCATION

Early Childhood Education:

This is not part of the formal education system. It is run by private, community and voluntary groups. The Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE) gives children less than 4 years of age access to two full academic years of free pre-school before they start primary school. Children are eligible to start the ECCE scheme in the September of the year that they turn 3 years old. For more information on this scheme visit <https://www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/>. A list of early childhood services in Laois is available at <https://www.tusla.ie>.

Primary education:

Children attend primary schools, also known as national school, between the ages of 4 and 12. Primary education consists of an eight-year cycle: junior infants, senior infants, and first to sixth classes. Education in state primary schools is free. The school year is from September to June. A list of primary schools in Laois can be found on the www.education.ie or www.schools.ie websites.

The Citizens Information website-www.citizensinformation.ie- provides a step-by-step guide to how to enrol your child in a primary school.

Secondary education:

The secondary level of education is five years with two State examinations during that time, the Junior Certificate after three years and the Leaving Certificate after five years. Some schools offer a transition year after the Junior Certificate making the school cycle six years in total. Children begin their second-level education around the age of 12 and finish around the age of 17 or 18. The Citizens Information website-www.citizensinformation.ie - provides a step-by-step guide to how to enrol your child in a secondary school.

Third level Education:

This includes colleges, universities of technology, colleges of education and private third level colleges. Access to these is usually based on the Leaving Certificate results. The Central Applications Office (CAO) manages admission applications to higher education institutions. You can apply for a place by sending a completed application form to the CAO. For further information go to www.cao.ie.

Financial support for third level students is means tested (it is based on family income). Grants are available to help meet living expenses, transport costs and or college fees. The grants are managed by Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI). For more information visit their website at <https://susi.ie/>.

Training and Education Supports:

Laois and Offaly ETB:

The Education and Training Board offers a range of adult and further education and training programmes. These programmes include Post-leaving certificate (PLC) courses, Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), Youthreach programmes for early school leavers and evening classes for adults. For more information visit www.laoisoffalyetb.ie or call 0578621352.

The Information Hub (LOETB Adult Guidance Service) is a place to seek advice on Adult Education pathways, options and funding and provides one to one guidance and information.



Lyster Square, Portlaoise



0578672963

Laois County Library Service

The library provides access to informal lifelong learning by providing access to a national collection of over 12 million books and other media. There are also online learning courses and other online resources. These are all for free.

Qualifax:

This provides comprehensive information on further education and training courses. They include different types of courses some of which lead to qualification while others do not. The site has a listing of all courses in Ireland. It is annually updated with information about further and higher education and training options in Ireland and further afield.



<https://www.qualifax.ie/>

Skills to Work:

Skills to Work is an Irish Government jobs campaign, aimed at making it easier for jobseekers and employers to know what Government skills initiatives are available to them and to encourage businesses to employ people currently unemployed. Using online information, you can find out which of the Government skills initiatives - Springboard, JobBridge, JobsPlus and Skillnets – could best suit you.

The **Springboard+** provides free higher education courses for people who are unemployed and those looking to return to the workforce. You can also apply for a Springboard+ course if you are working, but you must pay a 10% contribution towards the course fee. There is a range of part-time courses from certificate to master's degree levels. Visit the back to education section of www.citizensinformation.ie for further information.

The **Back to Education** programme can support people getting a social welfare payment to access second- and third-level education.

The **Part-Time Education Option** allows you to keep your Job Seeker's Allowance or Jobseeker's benefit and attend a part-time day or evening course that will improve your chances of getting a job.

The **Education, Training and Development Option** allows you to keep your jobseeker's payment and attend a course not covered by the standard Back to Education allowance such as a personal development course.

Vocational Training and Opportunities/VTOS:

If you are over 21 years of age, are unemployed and have been getting certain social welfare payments for at least 6 months you can apply for the Vocational Training and Opportunities Scheme (VTOS). This scheme provides a range of courses to meet the education and training needs of unemployed people. It gives participants opportunities to improve their general level of education, gain certification, develop their skills and prepare for employment, self-employment and further education and training. VTOS is operated through Laois Education and Training Boards and is aimed at unemployed people who are early school-leavers.

There is further information on all these schemes available in the back to education section of www.citizensinformation.ie.

LANGUAGE LEARNING

Fáilte Isteach:

This is a community project that trains volunteers to welcome migrants through English conversation classes. If you wish to attend the classes or to become a volunteer or contact



Fáilte Isteach



087 913 1236

olenakryvulya@laoispartnership.ie

[/ failteisteach@volunteerlaois.ie](mailto:failteisteach@volunteerlaois.ie)

Portlaoise Education and Training Board:

Portlaoise ETB have a range of English language classes to suit most levels. They offer:

- An initial assessment of your current English language level, so you can understand where your language skills are on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).
- Structured English language tuition to improve your use of English grammar, vocabulary, and spelling and to increase your confidence and fluency in using English for speaking, listening, reading and writing.
- The chance to get ready to start working towards a qualification to progress your English language skills.

If you are not sure of your level, don't worry, each student is assessed before being placed in a class. They will find a class that suits you. Most of their courses are free of charge or low cost. There is no fee for courses at Beginner to Elementary level. For higher level courses, learners may have to buy books or pay a small fee. For more information on English Language courses contact Deirdre Brennan at 057 8661338 or email dbrennan@loetb.ie.



Tower Hill, Portlaoise, Co. Laois. R32 RR84



057 8661338

Transparent Languages:

Learn English where and when it suits you. Available 24/7 to all Laois Libraries members. Go to <https://laois.ie/departments/libraries/online-resources/> for further information or contact your local library staff.

Literacy Service

If you need help with basic reading, writing, numbers or computers the literacy service can direct you to classes taking place.



ashields@loetb.ie



0578672963

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087 913 1236

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ashields@loetb.ie



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There is further information on all these schemes available in the back to education section of www.citizensinformation.ie.

BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT

Who can work in Ireland?

If you are from a European Union/EU member state, one of the countries of the European Economic Area/EEA, Switzerland or the UK, you are entitled to come to work in Ireland. You do not need an employment permit. You are entitled to have your dependents come to live with you.

If your non-European Economic Area/EEA spouse or civil partner is coming to live in Ireland with you, they must apply for permission to remain under EU Treaty Rights to have similar rights to live and work in Ireland.

If you are an EEA, Swiss or British national, you are entitled to be treated in the same way as Irish citizens when you apply for work in Ireland. You are free to apply for any job vacancy, including jobs in the public sector.

If you are from any another country, then generally you need an employment permit. There are 9 different employment permits. For more information on these go to www.citizensinformation.ie.

People who have been granted refugee status in Ireland and people who have been refused refugee status but have been given permission to remain on humanitarian grounds do not need an employment permit.

Qualifications:

Quality and qualifications Ireland (QQI) is the state agency responsible for the recognition of foreign qualifications in Ireland and the recognition of Irish qualifications abroad.

For more information visit:



www.qqi.ie



call 01 9058100.

Finding Work:

Intreo

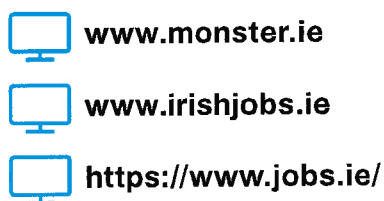
The Intreo service is a single point for all employment and income supports. It offers practical, tailored employment services and supports for jobseekers and employers alike.

It provides guidance on both employment, training and personal development opportunities. They provide information leaflets on CV and application form preparation, interview skills and different pathways to work such as internships and other supports. Access to information on job vacancies is available at <https://jobsireland.ie/>



Websites:

There are many job websites available in Ireland. These websites of the have tips on how to prepare your CV. You can set up these websites to alert you when jobs become available in Laois.



Newspapers and social media:

Your local newspapers e.g. Laois Nationalist and Leinster Express both have a job listing section. Social media sites are also used to advertise job vacancies e.g. Portlaoise Jobs Club Facebook page.

Starting a business:

Local Enterprise Office

The Local Enterprise Office is the first stop shop for anyone seeking information and support on starting or growing a business in Ireland. It provides advice, information and support to you in starting up or growing your business. You can set up a business as a sole trader, as a partnership or as a limited company. The type you choose depends on the kind of business you are running and with whom you are doing business. Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) provide a range of financial supports to help with the set up or growth of small businesses employing up to 10 people. They also provide training and mentoring. Information on the Laois Local Enterprise Office can be found at <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Laois/>.



**Business Support Unit,
County Hall,
Portlaoise,
Co. Laois.
R32 EHP9.**



057 8661800



Email: localenterprise@laoiscoco.ie

Dignity Partnership

This is a social enterprise in Laois that helps refugees and asylum seekers in opening their own business.



+353 89 254 6155



info@dignitypartners.company



<https://dignitypartners.company/>













TRANSPORT

Buses:

Local Link provides bus services in local and rural areas of Laois and the free travel pass is accepted. For bus timetables visit 0578691268 or visit www.locallink.ie







For information about routes and fares for public buses and to plan your journey visit www.transportforireland.ie

For private companies' schedules and timetables call or visit the websites of the following:

 JJ Kavanagh and Sons	 0818313222	 www.jjkavanagh.ie
 Bus Eireann	 1850836611	 https://www.buseireann.ie/
 Dublin Coach	 014659972	 www.dublincoach.ie
 M & A coaches	 0568833454	 www.mandacoaches.com

Rail/Trains:

Irish Rail operates all rail services in Ireland. Visit www.irishrail.ie for schedules and timetables.

 Portlaoise Station	 0578621303
 Portarlinton Station	 0578623128
 Ballybrophy Station	 050546331

Free Travel Scheme:

The Free Travel Scheme allows you to travel free of charge on all public transport owned by the State. This includes bus, rail and Dublin's LUAS with some exceptions.

Everyone aged 66 and over, legally living permanently in the State, is entitled to the Free Travel Scheme. Some people under 66 also qualify. In some cases, a Free Travel Companion Card is available. This card allows a companion to travel with you for free. No one else can use your Free Travel Card; it is for you only.

Free travel is also available on a limited number of services operated by private bus transport companies. Private bus transport operators that have opted in to the Free Travel Scheme accept free travel cards.

For further information on qualification go to www.gov.ie

Driving in Ireland:

To drive in Ireland, you must have a valid driver's licence. If you have never driven before you will first need to:

- Pass the driver theory test
- Apply for a learner permit
- Complete a driving test course/Essential Driving Training/EDT
- Pass a driving test.

Driver Theory Test:

You will need to have passed a driver theory test before applying for a learner permit. There are different tests depending on which category of drivers licence you are applying for. Go to <https://theorytest.ie/> to book your theory test. When going to the driver theory test centre you will need the following: valid proof of identity, evidence of your Irish PPS number and two identical colour passport sized photographs.

Driving Licence/Learner Permit

When applying for a driving licence or learner permit, you must visit a National Driver Licence Service (NDLS) Centre. The only NDLS Centre in Laois is in the basement of the Laois Shopping Centre in Portlaoise. As part of the face-to-face application process, your photograph and signature are captured digitally. You must also provide proof of your PPS number (see Section on how to apply for this), proof of address, and photographic identification to confirm your identity. Other documentation is also required please visit www.ndls.ie for more information. You can make an appointment at www.ndls.ie. You are required to carry your driving licence with you at all time when driving.

It is possible to exchange a driving licence issued by certain recognised states, a list of which is available on www.citizensinformation.ie under the travel and recreation section. If you have a European Union/European Economic Area driver's licence you may continue to drive in Ireland on your current licence. You can exchange it for an Irish drivers' licence when it expires.

If you are the holder of a driving licence issued by a country not recognised for driving licence exchange, you cannot exchange your driving licence for an Irish driving licence and will have to go through the full driver licensing procedure starting with the driver theory test. If you have a licence from a country outside of the EU/EEA, then you may drive on your driver's licence in Ireland for 12 months. However, after the 12-month period you need to apply to have your driver's licence changed to an Irish one. For more information on this go to <https://www.ndls.ie/>

Driving Test:

Once you have completed your Essential Driver Training sessions and held your learner driving permit for at least six months, you may book your driving test on the <https://rsa.ie/>. The Essential Driver Training course is made up of 12 one-hour Sessions with a Road Safety Authority approved instructor, which you must complete before taking your Driving test. Alternatively, you can download a driving test application form or obtain a copy from any motor tax office. It is recommended that the driving test be applied for well in advance as waiting times can be long.



Motor tax:

Under Irish Law, if you have a car you must pay motor tax before you can drive it. Motor tax is collected in Laois by Laois County Council. You can pay online at <https://laois.ie/online-payments/>. You can get more information about the cost and how to pay motor tax at www.motortax.ie. Online payment will require:

- Vehicle registration number
- PIN number- Your PIN number may be received from Shannon via email, text or reminder motor tax form. If not, try last 6 digits of Vehicle Registration Certificate VRC/logbook i.e. C17____123456. If new/imported vehicle, it is the last 6 digits of your chassis number (also known as Vehicle Identification Number/VIN number on VRC/logbook)
- Insurance details (name of company, expiry date & insurance policy number)
- Credit/Debit card details



Motor Insurance:

Under Irish law, you must also have motor insurance before you can drive your car in Ireland. Driving without insurance in Ireland is a serious offence. If caught you will have to pay a fine, may be disqualified from driving and get penalty points on your driving licence. Most insurance companies sell motor insurance. The price can vary a lot from company to company and depends on the age of the car, the type of car and the age and experience of the driver.

National Car Test:

Under Irish law, your car must have regular tests to make sure it is road worthy and safe to drive. This test is called the National Car Test or NCT and is carried out in local testing centres. If your car has not got a up to date NCT certificate you could face a fine and penalty points on your driving licence. For more information about the NCT test and when it is due, visit <https://www.ncts.ie/>



BANKING

There are three main types of financial institutes in Ireland: banks, building societies and credit unions. You can open an account in any bank or building society for your everyday banking needs. This type of account is called a current account you can lodge/put money in such as your salary or social welfare payment or take money out in branch or via an ATM. This account will also allow you to pay bills or transfer money.

A Savings account is one where you gain interest on your money. It is also called a deposit account. If you do earn interest on your savings, you will have to pay a tax on the interest called Deposit Interest Retention Tax (DIRT).

A credit union is a financial co-operative where members can save money and can lend money to each other at reasonable rates of interest. Unlike banks, credit unions are non-for-profit organisations with a community focus. To find out more and to become a member, visit www.creditunion.ie

To help you decide which financial product is the best for you, visit www.consumerhelp.ie, which has lots of easy to understand information about banking, savings, loans and other financial matters.

Once you have decided what type of account you want to open and which provider you want to use, contact them and ask for an application form. You will need proof of identity and address. For more information about opening a bank account, see www.consumerhelp.ie or www.citizensinformation.ie



VOTING

In order to vote in an election or referendum in Ireland, you must be eligible to vote and registered to vote.

Eligibility:

Each local authority must put together and publish a list of voters in its area. This is called the Register of Electors. You can check the Register at local authority offices, Garda stations and public libraries, or online at <https://www.checktheregister.ie>

To be eligible for inclusion in the Register of Electors, you must:

- Be at least 18 years old and
- You must be resident in Ireland.

Also, your eligibility to vote in different types of elections depends on your citizenship.

- Irish citizens can vote in every election and referendum
- British citizens can vote in Dáil, European and local elections
- EU citizens can vote in European and local elections
- Non-EU citizens can vote in local elections.

Registration:

Persons entitled to vote at elections who are not on the register of electors, or whose details are out of date can register or update their details directly by submitting a form online at www.checktheregister.ie. Alternatively, a person can submit a paper form, which can be downloaded from www.checktheregister.ie or by contacting their local authority.

For more information go to www.checktheregister.ie or www.citizensinformation.ie.

CITIZENSHIP

How can I become an Irish citizen?

Irish citizenship is obtained in different ways. Most Irish citizens get their citizenship through birth or descent. Foreign nationals can apply to become Irish citizens through naturalisation. Naturalisation is the process through which a foreign national living in Ireland may apply to become an Irish citizen. To apply for naturalisation in Ireland, you must have been physically resident in Ireland for a certain length of time. If you are a foreign national who is either married to an Irish citizen or a civil partner of an Irish citizen, you can apply for Irish citizenship through naturalisation. The residence requirements are more favourable for the spouse or civil partner of an Irish citizen but there is no longer an absolute entitlement to Irish citizenship through marriage. For more information go to www.citizensinformation.ie

Dual citizenship

If you are an Irish citizen, you may also hold dual citizenship, that is, citizenship of another country. You should be aware that certain countries do not recognise dual citizenship. If you wish to apply for dual citizenship, you should check with the authorities of the other country to ensure that your rights are protected. For example, the law in some countries provides for the automatic termination of its citizenship or nationality if you acquire another citizenship or nationality. You should also be aware that acquiring Irish citizenship does not automatically void the obligations of another citizenship or nationality (for example, the requirement to complete military service). For more information go to www.citizensinformation.ie

COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

Below are only some of the community groups and cultural amenities available in Laois. You will find contact details for many more community and support and upcoming events in the community notes section of the local newspapers i.e. Laois Nationalist and Leinster Express or on notice boards in local shops and parish church newsletters/offices.

Public Participation Network

The PPN office supports and connects a broad range of member organizations in Laois. If you have a particular interest or area you would like to take part in locally, the PPN are likely to know if there is a group around that interest or activity in Laois.



 Laois PPN, JFL Avenue,
Lyster Square, Portlaoise, Co. Laois
 ppn@laoiscoco.ie
 0578665661
0860352107

Laois Volunteer Centre:

This is a service for individuals who wish to volunteer some of their free time and for organisations or groups that need voluntary support. The service links the volunteers with organisations/groups that needs them. To browse local volunteering opportunities, go to <https://volunteerlaois.ie/>, call 0872499659 / 087 2523171 or email info@volunteerlaois.ie.

Laois Africa Support Group:

This group aims to involve Africans and other minority groups to become active participants in their local community through various programmes and events. It is an Irish non-governmental and voluntary organisation in Laois, set up by Bolaji Adeyanju. Call 087 388 0688, email info@laoisafrika.com or visit <https://laoisafrika.com/> for further details.

Laois Lithuanian Community

Lithuanian – Mes Is Laois,

FB <https://www.facebook.com/portlaoise.lietuviu.bendruomene/>

Rotary Club:

This club unites people from all cultures and occupations to exchange ideas and take action in communities around the world. The Portlaoise club meets at 6.00 p.m. every first and third Thursday of every month in O'Loughlin's Hotel, Portlaoise.

Men's Sheds:

A Men's Shed is a friendly and welcoming meeting place where men can come together and undertake a variety of activities. Men's Sheds are open to all men regardless of age, background or ability and are a place to share skills and knowledge. There are currently sheds in Portlaoise, Rathdowney, Portarlinton, Abbeylax, Mountmellick and Ballylinan. You can also contact by phone – 087 2916469 – or email portlaoiseshed@gmail.com or go to https://menssheds.ie/shed_county/leinster/co-laois to find the men's shed nearest to you in County Laois.



Midlands Polish Community:

Midlands Polish Community is an association which was established to support integration and cooperation among local Polish individuals, entrepreneurs and organizations as well as Polish-Irish integration and cooperation. Call 085 146 3545 or email contact@polishcommunity.ie or message them through their Facebook page.

POLaois Support Group

This is a Polish Community Group specifically for Laois.



polaoisgroup@gmail.com

FB <https://www.facebook.com/POLaois-Support-Group-148894010622855>

Labras – Laois Brazilian Support Association

We are a small piece of Brazil in the Irish countryside, which seeks to integrate cultures, share information and bring people living in the county of Laois closer together. Join us! labras.ie@gmail.com



Rahman House Mosque



0578665253



Email: portlaoise@islamireland.ie

We offer: Multi-faith Meetings /gatherings;

Youth Development for the local communities from all nationalities;
Integration initiatives for all; Support services for those in difficult situations;
Healthy living seminars; Education classes for children age 5-18 years.
Language support classes.

Active Retirement Ireland

This association was established to enable retired people and anybody over 55 to enjoy a full and active life and to advocate for them. They arrange social events, educational options and activities which encourage retired people to remain healthy and active. There are active retirement groups in nearly every area in Laois. If you would like more information, go to www.activeirl.ie or call 01 8733836.

Laois Heritage Society:

Included in the Society's activities are regular talks, walks, outings, site visits and co-operating and supporting local heritage group. The Society aims is to create awareness of the rich and unique heritage in the county. Another important part of its work is concerned with conservation and keeping a watching brief on threatened sites and artefacts. To learn about the work of the society and keep up to date about upcoming events:



laoisheritagesociety@gmail.com



<https://laoisheritagesociety.ie/>

Lions Club:

This club is dedicated to serving those in need, whether in their own community or around the world. The club provides people with the opportunity to meet and work with others. The Portlaoise Lions Club hold their meetings on the first Tuesday of every month at 8.00 p.m. in the Heritage Hotel, Portlaoise. There are also Lions Clubs in Abbeyleix and Portarlington.

Dunamaise Arts Centre:

Based in Portlaoise this art centre features film, theatre, live music and dance as just some of their events. Visit www.dunamaise.ie/ to keep up to date with their upcoming events.

Family Resource Centre:

Portlaoise Family Resource Centre (FRC) is one of 108 Family Resource Centres in the country. Family Resource Centres are not-for-profit organisations managed by voluntary management committees. Every FRC was established to provide a range of supports that help families meet the day-to-day challenges of everyday life. They organise social, recreational and educational activities. Go to <http://www.portlaoisefrc.ie/> for further information.



Portlaoise Family Resource Centre,
Harpur's Lane, Portlaoise, Laois.



057 8686151



Email: info@portlaoisefrc.ie

Sports:

Below are only some of the sports groups available in Laois. You will find contact details for many more sports groups in the Community Notes section of the local newspapers i.e. Laois Nationalist and Leinster Express or on notice boards in local shops and parish church newsletters/offices.



GAA

The Gaelic Athletic Association is Ireland's largest sporting organisation. It is celebrated as one of the great amateur sporting associations in the world. The Association today promotes Gaelic games such as Hurling, Football, Handball and Rounders and works with sister organisations to promote Ladies Football and Camogie. There are GAA clubs and grounds all over Co. Laois. Visit <https://laoisgaa.ie/> to find out more or contact the local GAA club in your area.

There are also clubs for the following sports: soccer, rugby, cricket, tennis and athletics to mention but a few. Ask in your local area for further details.

Laois Sports Partnership:

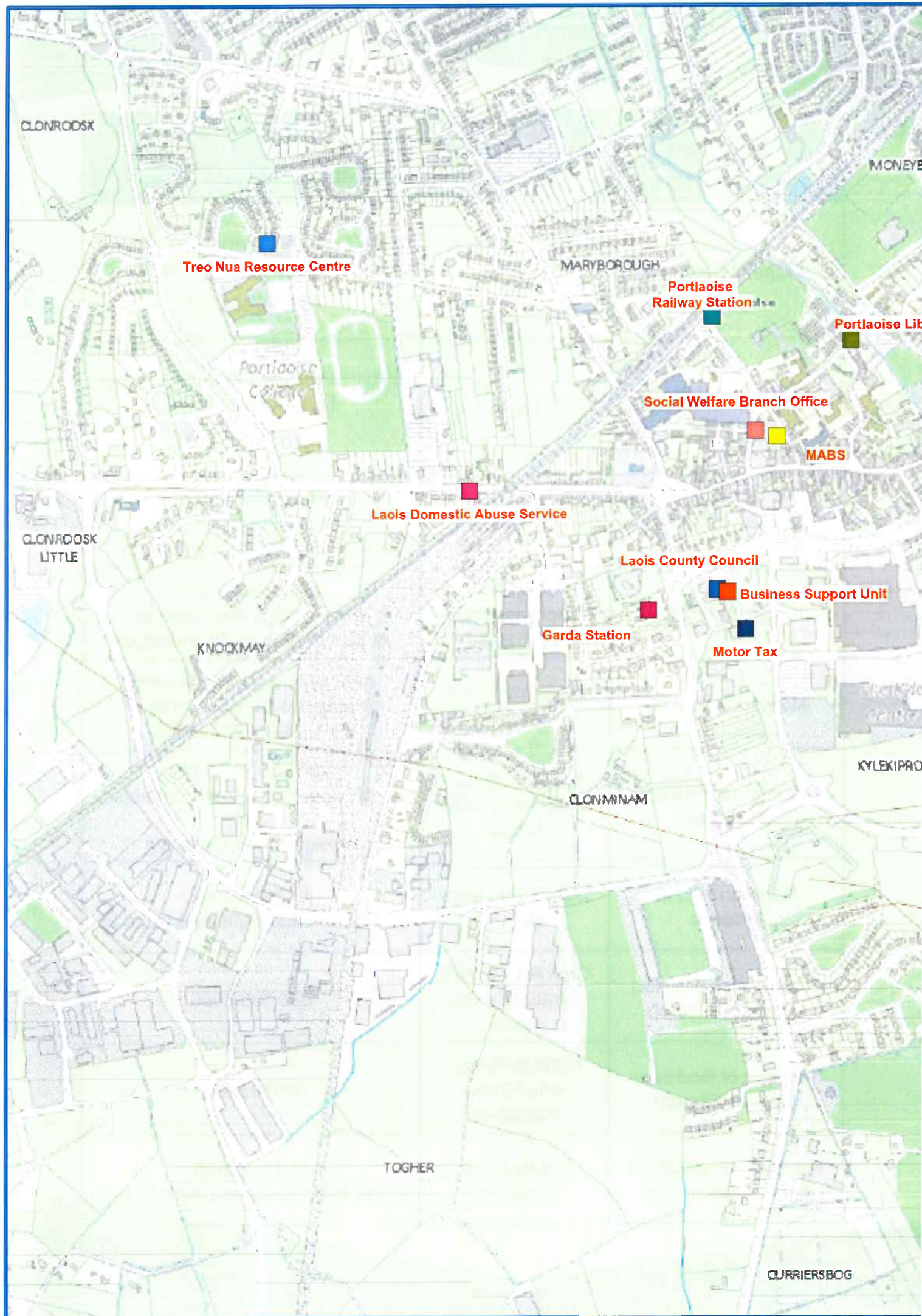
This organisation promotes the development of sport in County Laois through partnerships, events, courses and training programmes. For more information visit <https://www.laoissports.ie/> or contact below:

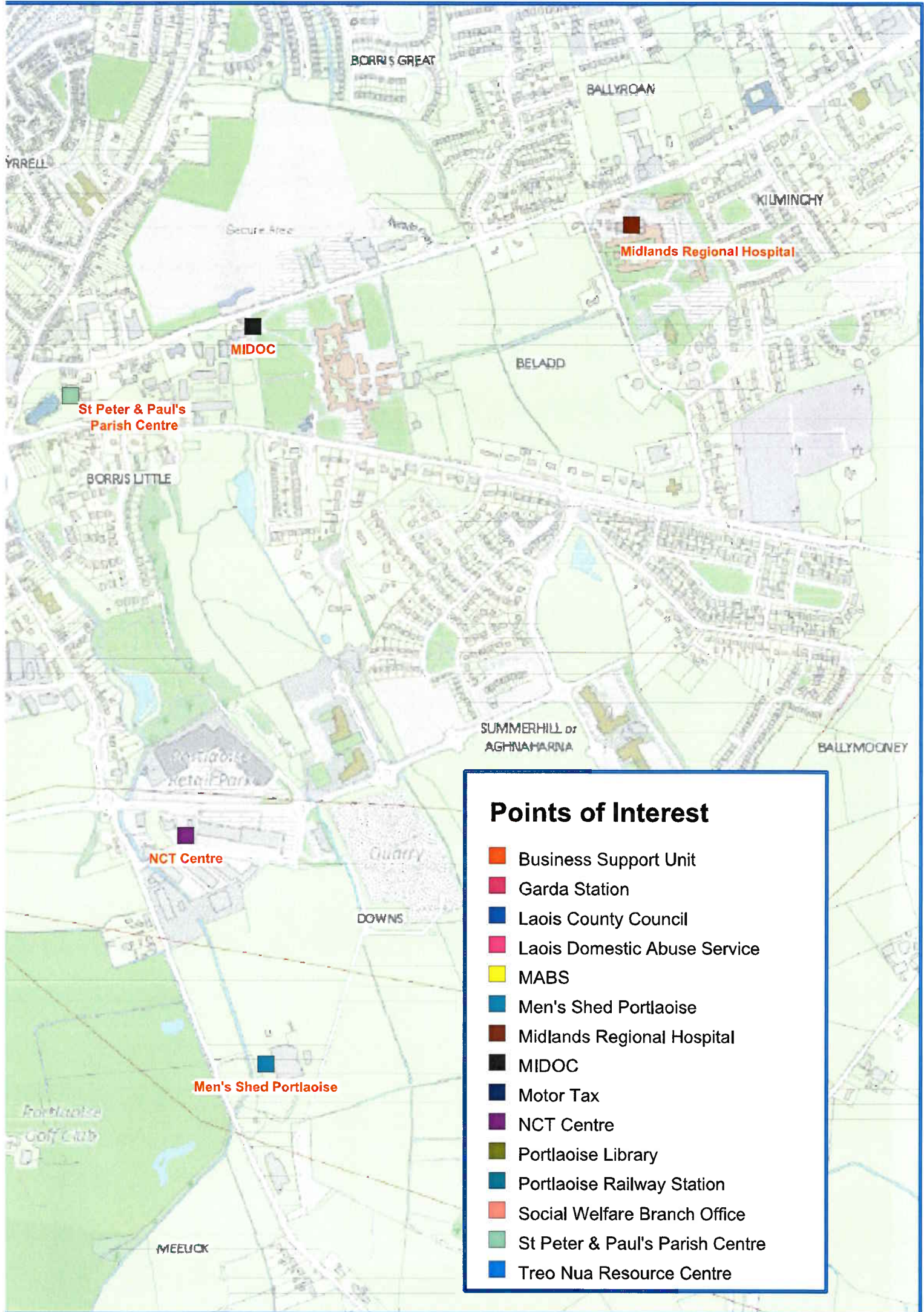
 **Laois Sports Partnership Ltd.**
Portlaoise Leisure Centre,
Moneyballytyrrell,
Portlaoise, Co. Laois. R32YP11
 **057 867 1248**

Outdoor recreation:

There are parks and playgrounds funded by Laois County Council in most towns in Laois. Go to <https://laois.ie/departments/sport-and-leisure/playgrounds/> for more details. Emo Court and Parklands is a wonderful amenity for walking and exercising. Go to <http://emocourt.ie/> for seasonal opening hours. Slieve Bloom is another wonderful amenity, where you will find a great choice of walking trails ranging in distance from 4km to 75km. Go to <https://slievebloom.ie/> for further information, maps and a calendar of organised guided walks.

<i>Place of worship</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Contact</i>
Catholic Services	Laois	https://www.kandle.ie/our-diocese/priest-directory/ (057) 862 1142
Church of Ireland Services	Laois	https://www.ireland.anglican.org/find-a-church/map (056) 7761910
Laois Bible Church	Abbeyleix	https://www.facebook.com/Laois-Bible-Church-119884311377507/
Life Church	National Enterprise Park, Portlaoise	(0)57 868 8460 Email: info@lifechurch.ie https://portlaoise.lifechurch.ie/
Methodist Church	Mountmellick & Portlaoise	https://www.facebook.com/Methodist-Church-Portlaoise-418584125244895/
Mountain of Fire and Miracles	National Enterprise Park, Portlaoise	+353 86 245 0322 Email: contactus@mfmportlaoise.org www.mfmportlaoise.org
Rehman House Mosque	Dublin Rd., Portlaoise	0578665253 Email: portlaoise@islamireland.ie
St Colman's Russian Orthodox Church	Cork Rd, Oldmill, Stradbally, Co. Laois	086 190 6005
The Light of God International Church	National Enterprise Park, Portlaoise	0892438613
The Redeemed Christian Church of God	Dublin Road, Portlaoise	0871526546 Email: logicministries1@gmail.com

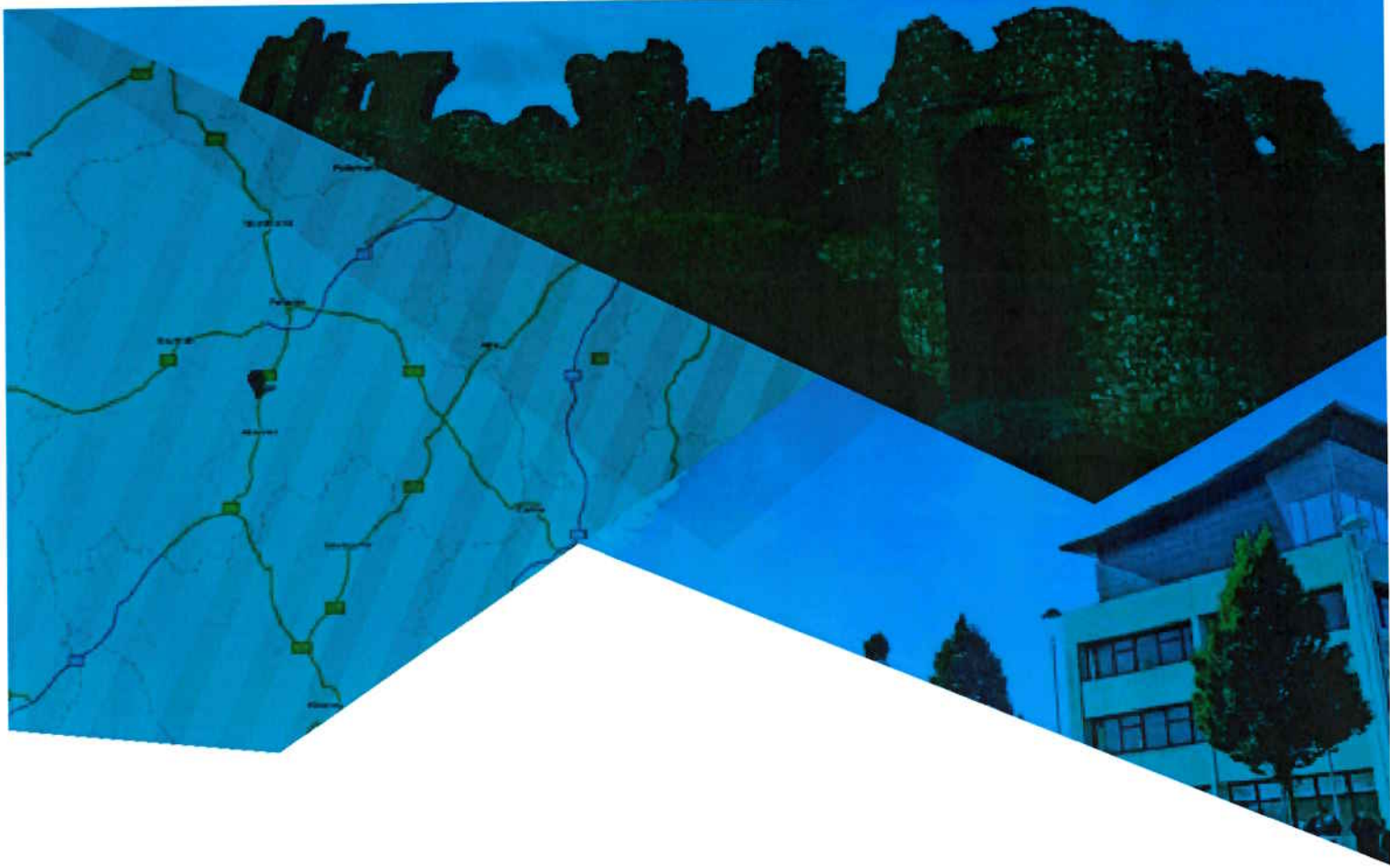




Points of Interest

- Business Support Unit
- Garda Station
- Laois County Council
- Laois Domestic Abuse Service
- MABS
- Men's Shed Portlaoise
- Midlands Regional Hospital
- MIDOC
- Motor Tax
- NCT Centre
- Portlaoise Library
- Portlaoise Railway Station
- Social Welfare Branch Office
- St Peter & Paul's Parish Centre
- Treo Nua Resource Centre

NOTES:



Laois County Library Service



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



ciste na
gcuntas díomhaoin
the dormant
accounts fund



Library of
SANCTUARY AWARD
Welcoming People Seeking Sanctuary

CONTACT US:

Abbeyleix Library
Durrow Library
Mountmellick Library
Mountrath Library
Portarlinton Library
Portlaoise Library
Rathdowney Library
Stradbally Library

abbeyleixlibrary@laoiscoco.ie
durrowlibrary@laoiscoco.ie
mountmellicklibrary@laoiscoco.ie
mountrathlibrary@laoiscoco.ie
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