

Communities In Transition

Participatory Design Process – Reporting Template

Please complete this report following each participatory design session (i.e. one per session) to record the key of the discussion. Please use the sections below to structure the report. If any area was not covered during the discussion, please note that in the relevant section.

Please return the completed report to cit@cooperationireland.org within one week of each participatory design session.

Area: Carrick/Larne

Theme: Community Development

Date: 23/01/19

Number of attendee's: 15

1. Proposed interventions discussed to address the issues identified in Phase 1 fieldwork?

- Community residents' group believed that quick visible wins were critical to creating the conditions necessary for meaningful community engagement. Due to the prevailing apathy within communities, they need to see the impact of initiatives/activities in order to be stimulated to engage.
- Interventions should focus on single-identity work given the demographics of both Carrick and Larne as being predominantly single-identity communities.
- The priority need in terms of building capacity in communities was foundation building and relationship work. Participants pointed to a community legacy of outside agencies coming in with no interest or ability to build capacity in the members of the community. Consequently, when the funded worker leaves, there is no institutional memory within groups or individuals to sustain the work.
- Suggestion that interventions should provide training/educational work and capacity building work for local residents to help achieve two key outcomes – establish community based organisations (as there are few at present in the B4 areas in Carrick and Larne) and upskill these and existing organisations to enable them to become more sustainable and apply for their own funding in the longer-term.
- Interventions should focus on a key community issue and utilise that need as a means to building community dialogue and capacity. For example, the common issues of debt and drugs were suggested as possibly unifying issues across the communities under the auspices of this initiative. Given the previous experience of mistrust between community groups in each area over the competition for resources for similar approaches, it was suggested

that getting groups to come together and work collectively around an issue could reduce rivalry/parochialism and demonstrate the potential of a consortium approach.

- Working with the community around a cultural issue (participant suggestion was bonfires/cultural 'fun day' which has been a recent means by which a women's group in Woodburn in Carrick has been established) was seen as a positive way to draw community residents into community development conversations. It was posited by a participant that a barrier to engagement was using community development language and the best way was to work with people from the community - but try to focus on building confidence and relationships first rather than throwing out academic phrases and language that may be intimidating to some people. The approach being used on the WICT programme was mentioned by a participant as a positive way to build capacity in the community.
- Civic empowerment courses were presented by participants as a good way to build community capacity and confidence (Ulster University has previously run these courses, and a small number of residents in Carrickfergus have taken part). Education programmes that target building knowledge and awareness of the community of their responsibilities, as well as the role and responsibilities of statutory agencies, were identified as important foundation processes to build the space necessary for improving the statutory-community relationship.
- Participants, in referencing the media portrayal and reputation of the area, suggested a communication strategy that tended towards instilling a civic pride in the community.

2. Comments on current community capacity to address issues identified?

- Participants highlighted the lack of experienced volunteers within community groups (those that exist) at present means there is no mentoring capabilities within the groups to build capacity. This results in new volunteers soon falling away.
- Some participants argued that the governance and administrative requirements (including funding applications) amounted to Governmental/Council roadblocks that were discouraging to new groups, staffed by volunteers inexperienced in community development.
- One participant asked what the best way was to 'get in' to a community which has no visible community organisations or groups (and thus no 'gatekeepers' to gain access in to the community). Antiville was discussed as an example of this – there are few if any organisations based in the area. It was suggested that perhaps there could be learning from other areas in Northern Ireland which historically has faced the similar challenge of weak community infrastructure. Another participant suggested that the best 'way in' was to try and work with whatever, if anything, is there – for example, the local senior citizen's group. This is a real challenge for potential Communities in Transition work moving forwards – the B4 areas in Carrick and Larne are starting from a very

low base in terms of lack of community organisations, very low levels of community engagement, and low levels of capacity of those organisations that do exist.

3. Outcomes that participants suggested these interventions would achieve?

- Improved statutory-community relationship.
- Increasing community confidence on both an individual and community basis
- Training and capacity building would increase the skills of individuals and groups – and provide small community led organisations with the ability to apply for small amounts of money to work on their own projects

4. How did participants suggest will we know if these projects/interventions have succeeded? (indicators/measures)

- Establishment of more community groups
- Increased volume of eligible funding applications
- More community representation at public events
- More local people volunteering/engaging in community work around various issues.

5. Target beneficiaries/participants of the suggested interventions?

- Community residents' groups/associations
- Community members of B4 areas in Carrick and Larne
- Statutory Agencies

6. How did participants suggest these projects/interventions will build the capacity/capability in the community?

- Participants regarded capacity building within the area as the bi-product of establishing relationships stemming from dialogue between key stakeholders from both the community and statutory areas. It was emphasised by participants that capacity needed to focus on building the confidence and capabilities of local people as opposed to creating a reliance on outside agencies (who do not have traction within the communities). This was a major criticism of previous initiatives in Carrick and Larne – that over reliance on outside agencies had not adequately equipped local people and local organisations with the necessary skills to sustain themselves.

7. How did participants suggest these projects/interventions will support the overall objectives of the Tackling Paramilitarism Executive Action Plan...?

- a. Paramilitarism has no place.
- b. Citizens and communities feel safe and confident.

- c. The public support and have increased confidence in the justice system.**
- d. Support is available for those who wish to move away from paramilitary activity and structures.**

- Participants felt that in relation to the overall objectives of the Tackling Paramilitarism Action Plan that it was recognised that responsibility must not fall to the community alone to meet the objectives - the statutory agencies, in particular the police, must also focus on engaging with the community on the core issues impacting and stymying community development at present.
- One participant also noted that in the context of Carrick, the language of 'tackling paramilitarism' was problematic – with some individuals in B4 communities 'scared' to attend events (such as the PDP sessions). It was suggested that this had reduced attendance at the PDP events in the areas.

8. Any dependencies identified by participants?

- Community participants from both Carrick and Larne noted that the experiential narrative of communities was of one of being 'let down' by statutory organisations and agencies. The legacy of a conflictual relationship was very much still prevalent and the lack of trust between the statutory sector and the community needs to be considered if any proposed actions within this initiative were to have traction in the target areas.
- Local people not being trained in how to work effectively and properly within the community development field.
- A participant noted that they believed there was a legacy for a lot of people from Carrick of being dependent on the old Carrick Council and how it operated and since the amalgamation of Carrick with Mid and East Antrim, this need was no longer being met.

9. Any risks identified by participants?

- Some participants stated that the communities would be reluctant to engage in any initiative that they perceived as being connected with the State in any way.
- As noted, the language of 'tackling paramilitarism' was viewed as being off-putting to some people within the B4 communities. One participant suggested that this had led some on social media to accuse those who had attended the November 2018 CIT launch event in Carrick Town Hall as 'touts'.

10. Any other comments made by participants?

- Community participants stated that the statutory bodies need to be more active in actually going in to the communities to work with the community.

- Participants felt strongly that the language of this programme – in particular the heading of ‘Tackling Paramilitarism’ – was intimidating to members of the community who instinctively equate anything referring to ‘Tackling Paramilitarism’ as associated with the taskforce.
- The plan for Carrick and Larne needs to be a long-term (10-15 year) strategy as continually working on short term funding cycles will not have sufficient impact. Previous programmes at building capacity (CIT 1, CIT 2 and ‘Areas at Risk’) in the B4 areas have not had a sustainable impact - once funding has ended progress tends to be lost, groups which have been set up disappear etc. There is also a wider context of trying to promote more of a community development ethos within working-class Protestant communities (which historically were more reliant on the state) and in improving educational attainment and outcomes for working-class Protestant males in particular.
- A participant emphasised that in Carrick the process is starting very much from ‘ground zero’ and community development principles must be used to build the community from the ‘ground up’.
- Participants believed a significant barrier to community development within the area of Carrick as a whole is the perceived class difference between the communities who live in the ‘estates’ and the surrounding middle-class areas.
- Participants maintained that throwing statutory agencies and money at the issues affecting these communities will not work as they do not have credibility within the areas. From a statutory perspective, participants stated a long-standing willingness to engage and work with and in the communities but did not evidence the awareness of a way to do so.
- Community members and community workers stated that the Churches in all the communities within the areas of Carrick and Larne, do ‘good work’ with the young people who attend their organisations – but they generally do not have much traction in the working-class communities in Carrick and Larne and in tackling paramilitarism generally. It was argued that the young people the Churches engage with are not the young people who come to the attention of the paramilitaries, the community or the police. It should be noted however that no representatives from the Churches were in attendance at this event to challenge such a position.
- Politicians were viewed negatively by community participants and this apathy was attached to politicians on both a local and Stormont level.

11. Is a further follow-up workshop required? Please provide details.

- No