

## 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](mailto:cit@cooperationireland.org) within one week of each participatory design session.

*Area: Lurgan*

*Theme: Community Safety and Policing*

*Date: 16/01/19*

*Number of attendee's: 11*

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

- There are two major issues in Kilwilkie impacting upon relations between the PSNI and the community. The community/neighbourhood policing team is well received but the actions of non-community trained officers continues to cause problems and it is left to the community officers to 'pick up the pieces'. The community have good relations with some recognisable neighbourhood officers, but that relationship is being hindered by the actions of other officers and additionally by the slow nature (and often failure to secure convictions of offenders) of the criminal justice system. Proposed interventions are on a regional/national basis to educate communities on the role and limitations of policing operations (e.g. that overhead helicopters in the community could be the air ambulance flying to Newry and not for a police operation). In Drumgask in particular (and more so in Drumbeg and Meadowbrook than Ardhowen) it was reported that these areas were more difficult to police (requiring two patrol cars rather than one) and often there were community perceptions that most arrests in the area were 'terror' related, when in reality most arrests are in relation to drugs;
- It was emphasised that there are more differences than similarities between Drumgask and Kilwilkie and this is very evident in relation to policing as there is very little relationship between the PSNI and the community in Drumgask. It was posited by some that any funded positions in the community of Drumgask should be mandated to engage with the PSNI or outline publicly their reasons for not doing so. It is important to note that no community residents of Drumgask were in the room for this public meeting. It should be noted however that at the previous youth PDP meeting in Lurgan, community representatives from Drumgask stated that they had to consider their personal safety when engaging (or not) with the PSNI.

- Success breeds success and the community needs to see action before it engages fully. The previous successful policing actions (eg. Clendenning's site - see phase 1 report) were focal points for enhancing police-community relationships. It was suggested that rather than lofty ambitions for 'tackling paramilitarism' the more achievable target was to build on small-scale community issues and build strong, sustainable police-community relationships.
- There was general support for the solutions put forward from phase 1 but with the caveat that they are much more bespoke/suitable to Kilwilkie than Drumgask. The phase 1 solutions were: Support local community organisations to act as a partner in local policing and community safety e.g. through the development of a police-community Communication Strategy; Training/educational workshops for the community around human rights, lawfulness and the responsibilities of policing and the criminal justice system; Activities to highlight the dangers and risks for young people who become involved in anti-social behaviour. However, at one of the two discussion tables it was noted that these suggestions at present would not be operable in Drumgask. This was suggested to be for several reasons, including a stronger dissident narrative which has been promoted on social media (which it was viewed the PSNI had challenged with some success with their own social media output), fear of residents to be seen to be engaging with the PSNI (though the PSNI still receive calls from the Drumgask area), and a weak physical/community infrastructure in Drumgask. It was felt that a capacity building programme for the community in Drumgask was required before any engagement on more ambitious goals. One suggested intervention was to promote more engagement with the community in Kilwilkie, to learn how the community there had developed relationships with the PSNI – and possibly bring an external partner in after these relationships had developed to showcase work on policing and restorative justice in republican communities elsewhere in NI (e.g. Colin area, West Belfast). It was suggested that there was currently little support/provision for ex-republican prisoners in Drumgask (similar sentiments were expressed with regards to Kilwilkie), and that by introducing services to support ex-prisoners, this would improve confidence in these communities which feel abandoned from the state – and would provide a platform to begin to engage with the community on wider (and more ambitious) *Fresh Start* objectives.
- There was strong support for the introduction of restorative practices to the area as a conduit for a culture change in addition to the benefits experienced in other areas with longstanding community-based restorative practices. The police were also strongly supportive of the introduction of restorative practices.

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

- Community capacity is weak (particularly in Drumgask) but outside agencies do not have traction within the community. Participants emphasised that whoever takes on the work must be mindful of what legacy is left behind as previous funded projects have been of little or no sustainable use to the community. It was argued that any outside agencies that tender for the work should be mandated to have an interest in building

up the community capacity – participants stated that previous initiatives demonstrate that the funded groups have not been interested in doing this. It should also be noted that there were serious concerns that, given local groups had very low capacity, from the outset they would be excluded from the tendering process (and particularly the e-tendering process). Several participants suggested that the process must include local organisations as part perhaps of larger consortia – this would ensure the building of community capacity and the sustainability of the project in the longer-term.

**3. Outcomes that participants suggested these interventions would achieve?**

- Improved community attitude to policing.
- Build capacity in Drumgask to provide a foundation for further work.

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

- Participants suggested visible results could include increased foot patrols by police officers.
- In an abstract form, measurement could be by less hostility and incidents of tension between the police and the community (particularly young people).

**5. Target beneficiaries/participants of the suggested interventions?**

- Police officers
- Community groups
- Young people
- Community residents
- Ex-prisoners

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

It was argued that the capacity of the community in Drumgask had to be built up, and that further engagement/knowledge exchange with Kilwilkie and republican areas further afield would provide the opportunity for residents in Drumgask to view models of good practice and learn of the ‘journey’ of other republican communities in terms of developing relationships with the police.

**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 noted that the language and terminology of 'Paramilitarism' is not appropriate for the area and community. The community would be more receptive to targeting the actions of 'criminal gangs' and drug dealers.

**8. Any dependencies identified by participants?**

- The disparity of policing approach and relationships with the community in Drumgask compared with Kilwilkie is a consistent challenge for this theme. This was raised in the research in phase 1.

**9. Any risks identified by participants?**

- Lack of community space has and will continue to impede any interventions as the community are unwilling to leave their area to engage in programmes.
- The continued actions of police (non-community/ neighbourhood officers) will stymie community relationships with police generally
- Outside agencies failing to build capacity in the community and then leaving when the funding ends with no sustainable legacy left to support the community.
- Local groups being excluded from the tendering process which would mean the project has no legacy/sustainability.
- It was felt that by providing better support services for republican ex-prisoners in Drumgask, this could help challenge the perception that the community has been abandoned by the state (a message which it was felt was easily exploited by dissident republicans) – which in turn would make work around policing in the area 'less risky'.

**10. Any other comments made by participants?**

- On the ground the community don't know the difference between the different police departments.
- The momentum of community engagement with police is lost due to the slowness of the criminal justice system and forensics services.
- Whilst there was support for a community (public) meeting around policing, it was mentioned there was significant foundational work needed given that the last such event in Kilwilkie led to an extremely volatile situation.
- Core need for more community police officers.
- Rather than focus on unattainable (and community representatives stated an inaccurate) aim of 'tackling paramilitarism' the focus should be on the key day-to-day issues experienced in the community (Criminal gangs; drugs).
- Foundational work is critical before money begins to be invested into the area (and into organisations). Participants argued that statutory agencies need to get on board and develop relationships to work collaboratively and effectively.

- One participant commented that there was a lack of people from the community in attendance at the meeting – which naturally is problematic if one is seeking to promote ‘collaborative’ and ‘participatory’ design with the community.

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

- Researchers were approached at the end by a representative from a women’s group (WICT) requesting a direct meeting with women covering all the themes of the workshops. Contact in relation to arranging such a meeting will continue with researchers.