

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: Shankill

Theme: Community Development

Date: 04/02/19

Number of attendee's: 4

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

- Participants felt that there is a lack of knowledge and understanding about the concept of community development and what it entails in practical terms. Many therefore felt that volunteers and others involved in such work (particularly women) do not acknowledge or define their efforts as community development. Participants stated that given how broad community development has become as a concept, information workshops/discussions about the theory, practice and impact may be worthwhile.
- Participants felt that community development work was well established in the area, with a plethora of programmes and initiatives carried out over the years (with varying degrees of success). Yet there was a perception that funding bodies tend to favour the larger, more established organisations who receive the majority of funding, leading some to query the effectiveness, or the 'alleged outcomes' of some programmes.
- In relation to establishing new community groups and organisations, participants believed that individual members of the community are more likely to come together around a critical issue/area of mutual concern (potential issues may include mental health, addiction and suicide). It was suggested that promoting engagement around a particular theme such as addiction or mental health may be a useful means around which to encourage more local people to get involved in community development – and quite often individuals volunteered within their local community on

such issues, without themselves realising that what they were engaging in was community development. This was consistent with the view that community development should not just be viewed as falling within the reach and remit of certain organisations, but should be seen as a way of improving social conditions for the community, and by the community more broadly.

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

Despite the well developed community and voluntary sector within the Shankill area, participants explained that significant challenges remain in terms of addressing social need/social ills. As such, it was acknowledged that the sector, and indeed community development approaches more generally, could not tackle the entrenched issues such as; the legacy of the conflict, socio-economic issues, physical and mental health, addiction/drugs/suicide issues, continuing presence of paramilitaries etc.

Whilst participants felt that the community and voluntary sector offered solid foundations and the potential for successful community development work, there was a consensus that collaboration, partnership working and holistic approaches could be improved across the sector/sectors. In other words, it was explained that the Shankill is still split in half, metaphorically speaking, as a consequence of the feud. Consequently, collaboration tends to be area based (i.e. lower, mid or upper Shankill), with organisations within each 'section' working together or securing funding time and again to address very localised issues/need. As a result, there is a reluctance, according to the participants, for some organisations to extend beyond their specific 'constituency.'

Finally, there was a prevailing concern that smaller organisations and those which rely extensively on volunteers, were struggling with issues around capacity, encouraging locals to get involved, how to access funding, governance issues etc.

3. Outcomes that participants suggested these interventions would achieve?

- Engaging individuals within the community who have no connection with paramilitary groups and who have previously not been involved in community work (around a theme that they are passionate about/interested in – addiction/mental health etc).
- Building capacity in, and supporting volunteers and people involved in community development work who may have been unaware that the work they are doing is within the realms of community development.

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

- Wider and more representative engagement from the community in the Shankill
- Less reliance on 'gate-keepers'

5. Target beneficiaries/participants of the suggested interventions?

- Community members
- Community volunteers
- Community organisations who require assistance and support to build skills, capacity and sustainability.

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

By drawing in residents who typically do not engage in community activity, or those who do not see their voluntary efforts as community development. A project would provide the opportunity to increase participation across a range of demographics; and provide support, guidance, increase confidence and develop the skills base of those wanting to affect change in the Shankill. Fledging community groups would subsequently require support in terms of governance, management skills, funding support etc.

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.**

This question was not directly addressed by participants. However, one participant noted that it was crucial that the programme supported the local community, including those who had left paramilitarism behind – but it was important that the programme did not support those 'wearing two hats' who may be exercising 'coercive control' in a more 'subtle' manner. However, another individual highlighted the difficulties in avoiding the 'rumour mill' in trying to distinguish who was genuine about transition and who was merely 'playing the game'. This individual suggested that participants had to be taken at face value and attempts made to include them in the transition process, until the genuineness of such efforts were proven otherwise.

8. Any dependencies identified by participants?

This question was not directly addressed by participants.

9. Any risks identified by participants?

- Participants expressed non-specific concerns and views about an underlying element of paramilitary involvement and control within the area, particularly in some established communities, which tends to undermine community confidence in engaging in community development work.
- It was believed that there was a tendency within the Shankill to 'look inwards,' which is reflected in the impact of myths, rumours and perceptions that participants felt stymied community development in the area. This could be related to the rumour mill about 'who ran what' and their role (historic or current) in paramilitary structures.

10. Any other comments made by participants?

- The factional nature of loyalism across the Shankill precludes interaction and effective community development work on an intra-community basis within the area as a whole.
- A participant felt strongly that the underlying conditions for community development are still not present in the Shankill and that this project should focus on that initially (specifically addressing paramilitary influence and the domination of community development by some organisations); otherwise there is a risk of merely reinforcing the pattern of unsustainable community investment.
- Participants noted that community development on the Shankill can be slow as it is dependent on personal relationships; and it takes time, investment and commitment to forge working partnerships.
- Participants felt that community volunteers and workers felt demoralised and unsupported when organisations that they perceive as being closely connected with paramilitary members and groups, are given funding. Participants felt the legacy of previous funding schemes will inhibit community uptake and engagement with this programme.
- In terms of governance of this project, once groups/consortia are funded a participant emphasised the need for appropriate and strict governance. This was predicated on the basis that there is a perception in the area that groups have not and do not meet the outcomes they claim to, in terms of community development work.
- A participant added that the funding system for community development in Northern Ireland has engendered a fierce competition between community groups for resources and this competitiveness has negated the capacity for the development of inter-organisational collaboration.

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

- No further follow-up workshop required.