

# **BUILDING CAPACITY TO SUPPORT TRANSITION IN THE MOUNT AND BALLYMACARRETT IN EAST BELFAST**

## **FIELDWORK REPORT FROM PHASE 1 – BUILDING CAPACITY IN COMMUNITIES IN TRANSITION**

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AUGUST 2018



The  
**Executive Office**

# Foreword

In July 2016 the Northern Ireland Executive published an Action Plan setting out 38 actions it would take to address some of the most difficult issues which continue to disrupt peaceful and democratic society, in particular, the issues of continued paramilitary activity, criminality and organised crime.

This plan seeks to achieve four ambitious outcomes; a society where citizens and communities feel safe and confident; where paramilitarism has no place; where the public support and have even more confidence in the justice system; and where those who wish to move away from paramilitary activity and structures are supported to do it.

The Executive Office has responsibility for delivery of Action B4 of the Executive Action plan through the Communities in Transition project, which aims to support eight areas where there has been a history of paramilitary activity and coercive control to transition into open and accessible communities where paramilitary activity no longer plays a role.

The Tackling Paramilitarism Programme Board, which oversees delivery of the Executive Action Plan, commissioned independent research which identified the eight areas of focus for this project that have been most impacted by paramilitary activity and associated criminality. The report will focus on The Mount and Ballymacarrett in East Belfast.

In September 2017, we appointed a Consortium, led by Co-operation Ireland in partnership with the Mitchell Institute (QUB), INCORE (Ulster University) and the Institute for Conflict Research (ICR) as Strategic Partner to develop a two-phase programme to build capacity to support transition within these communities.

A partnership approach sits at the very heart of this project; we recognise that delivery on the ground needs to include those people who are most affected by these issues.

Phase 1 of the project consisted of extensive consultation with local communities and key stakeholders in each of the areas. This report provides a summary of the findings from Phase 1 and our proposed next steps as we move forward.

We recognise and value the extensive range of important and often challenging work that has already been undertaken by individuals and groups at local level in tackling these issues. This project gives us the opportunity to further drive forward with a new and innovative approach to tackling paramilitary activity and we look forward to continuing to work alongside the communities involved, who are often best placed to propose and deliver solutions to the problems they face.

*The Executive Office, in partnership with the Communities in Transition Consortium*



# Introduction

It has been twenty years since our society said YES to peace. Although much has changed, there are still many challenges as we continue to transition into a peaceful society.

The Executive's Action Plan on Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime recognizes the role communities must play in tackling paramilitarism by developing a culture sympathetic to the rule of law and addressing the systemic issues that these groups seek to exploit. Lawfulness is binding on all, extending across communities, the justice system and statutory agencies. Many of the actions within the plan seek to promote culture of lawfulness across society.

## ACTION B4

seeks to provide programmes to build community capacity so that they can move beyond the coercive control and malign influence of groups involved in criminality. As such, Action B4 will **Support ambitious initiatives aimed at building capacity in communities in transition, including through developing partnership across civil society and across community divisions.'**

## OUR AREAS OF FOCUS:

- Antiville and Kilwaughter in Larne together with Northland and Castlemara in Carrickfergus
- Brandywell and Creggan in Derry/Londonderry
- Kilcooley (Clandeboyne 2&3 SOA) and Rathgill (Conlig 3 SOA) in North Down
- Drumgask and Kilwilkie in Lurgan
- Lower Falls, Twinbrook, Poleglass, Upper Springfield, Turf Lodge and Ballymurphy in West Belfast
- New Lodge and Greater Ardoyne in North Belfast
- Shankill (upper and lower, including Woodvale) in West Belfast
- The Mount and Ballymacarrett in East Belfast

Between November 2017 and March 2018, the CIT consortium conducted an engagement process in each of the selected eight areas as part of the phase 1 of the project.

The process included a desk-based review of the locality in conjunction with interviews and focus groups with a range of stakeholders in each area, including services providers, community groups, faith-based groups, elected representatives, the business sector, residents and others.

**THIS REPORT REFLECTS THE MAIN FINDINGS THAT EMERGED FROM THE FIELDWORK AND THE PROPOSED NEXT STEPS.**

The information presented in this document represents the views and suggestions expressed by the participants in Phase 1 of the project. We are conscious that there will be other views and perspectives on the document and the purpose of the publication is to stimulate discussion and promote debate on issues that are of utmost importance to the continuing development of your community. In addition, as stakeholder conversations took place over a limited period of 3-4 months, it was not possible to speak to everyone within the community.

With this in mind, it should be noted that the suggested interventions are therefore not funding commitments but the starting point for continued dialogue on the possible options moving forward.

## Outline

The first section of this report presents an outline profile of the area, the headline findings and the relevant context for successful transition in the area. The second part of the report provides a detailed thematic description of the findings and possible solutions as suggested by various participants. Although each area is unique, seven common themes arose as the major issues regarding building community capacity for transition – Community safety and policing; Young people; Health and well-being; Environment and culture; Community development issues; Restorative justice and restorative practices and; Personal transition. The final section presents what will be the next steps in the project and the timeline for their implementation.





# Area Profile and Headline Findings



# Area Profile of the Mount and Ballymacarrett in East Belfast

## Politics

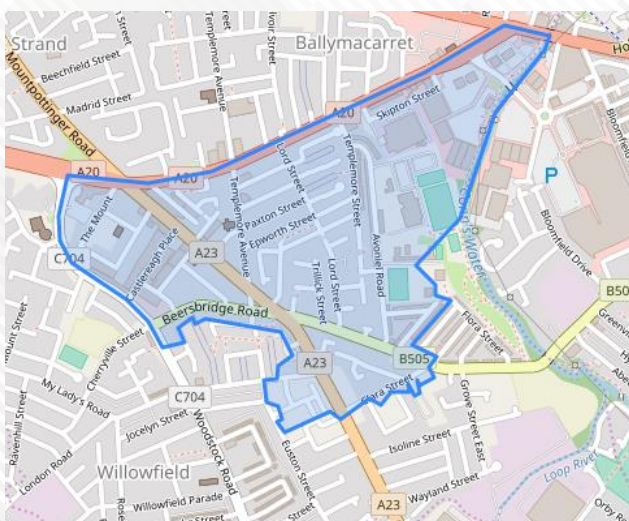
- Both The Mount and Ballymacarrett are within the Belfast East constituency area used for Parliamentary and Northern Ireland Assembly elections. In 2017, the area elected (three) DUP, (two) Alliance and (one) UUP candidates in the most recent Northern Ireland Assembly Elections and Gavin Robinson (DUP) in the General Election. The preference for Unionist parties can be attributed to the fact that 70.4% of the community identify as British, while the electoral success of the Alliance Party is often associated with their well-respected community work.

## Social and Economic Issues

For statistical purposes, NISRA has divided this area of The Mount into two Super-Output Areas (SOAs) – the two-feature similar, but distinct issues:

- Mount 1 is the 8<sup>th</sup> most deprived zone, out of 890 SOAs in NI, in relation to access Education Skills and Training. 15% of residents in the area encounter Income Deprivation.
- Mount 2 is ranked 54<sup>th</sup> for incidents of Crime and Disorder and 61<sup>st</sup> for Living Environment. 31% of the community faces Employment Deprivation and 21% of children are impacted by Income Deprivation.

### The Mount 1



### The Mount 2





## Social and Economic Issues

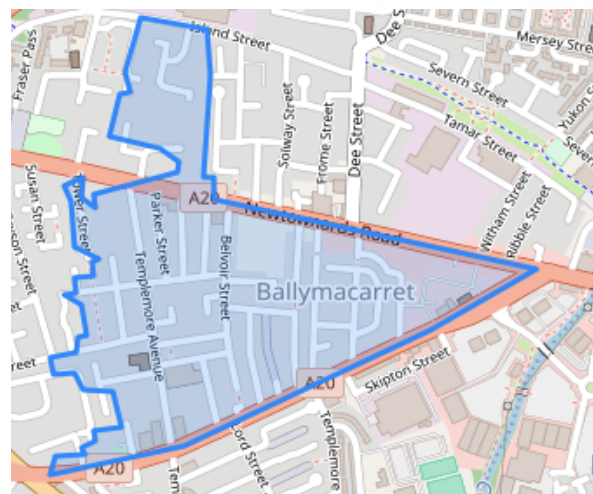
Ballymacarrett is divided into three SOAs, two of which were included in this study:

- Ballymacarrett 2 has the 31<sup>st</sup> highest rate of crime and disorder. 40% of residents face Employment Deprivation. Over half of residents (54.4%) do not own a car and nearly a quarter (24.2%) of households consist of a lone parent and dependent children.
- Ballymacarrett 3 has the 17<sup>th</sup> highest level of Education Skills and Training Deprivation. Almost a third (31.5%) of residents have a long-term health problem or disability that limits their day-to-day activities and almost 60% of those living in the zone have no or low qualifications.

### Ballymacarrett 2

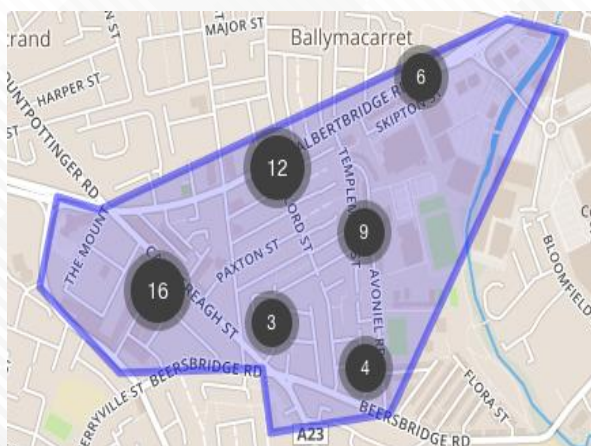


### Ballymacarrett 3



## Crime Statistics: REPORTED crime in September 2017

### The Mount 1

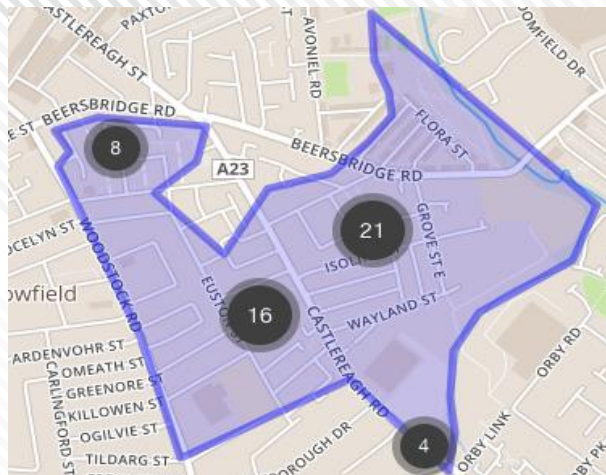


TOTAL	50
Anti-social behaviour	18
Burglary	2
Criminal damage and arson	5
Other crime	2
Other theft	5
Shoplifting	3
Theft from the person	1
Violence and sexual	14



## Crime Statistics: REPORTED crime in September 2017

### The Mount 2



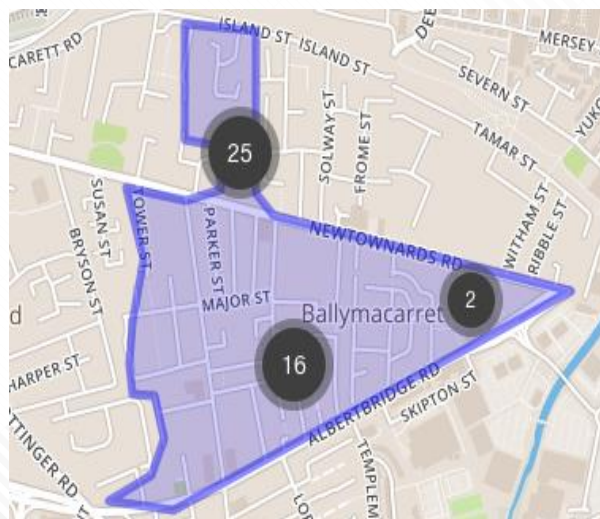
TOTAL	49
Anti-social behaviour	16
Burglary	2
Criminal damage and arson	12
Other theft	2
Possession of weapons	3
Shoplifting	2
Violence and sexual offences	12

### Ballymacarrett 2



TOTAL	16
Anti-social behaviour	8
Criminal damage and arson	1
Other theft	1
Violence and sexual offences	6

### Ballymacarrett 3



TOTAL	43
Anti-social behaviour	13
Burglary	3
Criminal damage and arson	1
Drugs	1
Other theft	6
Possession of weapons	2
Public order	1
Shoplifting	4
Violence and sexual offences	12



## Context for transition:

### **Transition in The Mount and Ballymacarrett continues to be shaped by:**

- Poverty and unemployment
- Poor educational attainment
- High levels of drug and alcohol addiction
- Lack of support structures
- Uneven investment
- Poor record of previous initiatives led by relevant statutory bodies
- Low quality of community facilities
- Concerns about how funding is distributed – i.e. ‘over-funding’ of certain groups with alleged paramilitary affiliations for ‘good behaviour’
- Lack of leadership
- Poor standard of training opportunities
- The degree of paramilitary control and its associated impact



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# *Headline Findings Arising the Mount and Ballymacarrett*

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1. Almost all the participants in the fieldwork were concerned by the high levels of deprivation in the area, the low standard of educational attainment and the poor levels of health (particularly drug and alcohol addiction), that exist throughout the community.
2. Participants in the fieldwork noted that the area's facilities are generally of a poor standard (even previously well used sites, such as the Connswater shopping centre, have been allowed to slip into decline). Residents welcomed investment in the area (by the likes of Urban Villages) but were concerned that it was often being delivered in an uneven fashion. For instance, some buildings have been upgraded to a very high standard but sit close to derelict sites and abandoned buildings. Also, there was a sense that the majority of capital funding is focusing on property along the main arterial routes, while the connected streets are being left to decline. Many were frustrated by this cosmetic approach, feeling that the area was being improved to a scale fit for visitors/tourists, rather than local residents.
3. Many participants discussed a concern that the area was becoming increasingly physically isolated from development that was happening elsewhere in Belfast – it was felt that changes to the local road network had reduced the area's connectivity to the city centre and had failed to deliver a convenient passage to the increasingly thriving Titanic quarter. Moreover, large vacant spaces, such as the Sirocco Works and general lack of connection with more affluent areas of East Belfast led to some participants describe the area as an 'island'.
4. Participants were regularly concerned by the level of unemployment in the area – feeling it could be a gateway to depression, or act as a means of recruitment for paramilitary organisations. People felt that the jobs that did exist in the area were of a low quality (low paid and with little opportunity for future development).
5. Many participants believed that the overall capacity of the community was beneath the desired level, especially for residents seeking job opportunities, or further training elsewhere (while training opportunities within the community are perceived to be of a poor standard and inconsistent in their delivery). There were also concerns that when groups had previously identified young people with potential and invested time in their development, these young people quickly moved on. In these instances, the groups either lacked the resources to offer the young people long-term appointments, or the individuals chose to move on to what they perceived as better opportunities (which were generally always outside of the community). Furthermore, it was noted elsewhere that as soon as people from the community were trained/educated/employed to a reasonable level they generally chose to leave the area and live elsewhere (due to a perceived lack of confidence in the area's future).
6. Many participants in the fieldwork requested an inventory of past, present and planned investments in the site, as it was suggested that previous funding (considered to be significant) is hard to identify, in terms of the area's infrastructure and overall capacity. An inventory of this kind would also facilitate a clearer vision for the future, by identifying gaps in funding and opportunities for collaborative investment.
7. Several participants referenced a lack of confidence in the area's key stakeholders and community leaders. People often felt that there was a class difference between themselves and their elected political representatives, with the feeling being that people living in 'nicer' areas nearby may not be fully able to relate to the sense of 'hopelessness' that most participants in the fieldwork identified.
8. Participants were also concerned by the view that statutory bodies were 'rewarding' community groups with alleged paramilitary associations, by 'over-funding' the groups for 'good behaviour', it was felt that this approach of indirectly 'appeasing' paramilitary organisations had inadvertently given the groups significant involvement in future plans for the area and substantial control of most local events/facilities (as they were attributed with receiving the majority of funding available for their design and delivery).



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# *Headline Findings Arising from the Mount and Ballymacarrett*

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9. The perceived relationships between groups of this kind and local political representatives were also recognised as an issue. In general, it was noted that people regularly felt unsure where they would go with a concern relating to a local community matter – given the perceived lack of connection with politicians, the alleged relationships some community groups may have with paramilitary groups and the general distrust of statutory bodies (given the perceived policy of appeasement).
10. While many participants expressed their sympathy for the past actions of local paramilitary groups and certain notable members (active during the Troubles), they tended to feel that the organisations have now descended into activity that has very little to do with protecting the community and more to do with criminality. Extortion, money lending and drug dealing were all cited as local problems. Extortion of businesses was considered almost to be endemic, money lending was acknowledged as a problem, but not outlined in any detail, and drug dealing was seen as the main source of concern and which in turn fed back into issues of debt as well as criminality.
11. It was noted in a number of instances that many people live their lives hoping not to encounter anyone associated with this groups and would be reluctant to comment on them publicly (in case they were talking to someone with affiliations/sympathies to one of the organisations). Those who did not support paramilitary organisations also had little interest in opposing the groups, primarily as they had no expectation that the groups are going away. This attitude was also largely associated with a general view of lack of confidence in the PSNI ability to address the issue.
12. People also suggested that public meetings (that could be organised in protest against paramilitary activity), that have happened in other communities, would not be possible in the area, due to the authority of the groups (people would likely not attend and anyone who did would likely be identified as a target by the groups).
13. It was felt that the issues on which paramilitary groups chose to exert their authority were not actually matters that ordinary community members were significantly concerned by (for example extreme flagging around interface zones, or intimidation directed at minority groups). However, the level of aggression and strength of numbers demonstrated by the groups when dealing with these matters meant few people opposed the activities. Participants in the fieldwork specifically emphasized how distressed they had been when people from minority backgrounds, living in the area, had reported that they been subjected to racist abuse as they moved around the area. Residents were routinely frustrated by the notion that there was a community wide racism problem – instead they observed that paramilitary groups had regularly orchestrated such abuse, as it was claimed that the groups did not want any cultural change in the area.
14. Participants in the fieldwork also felt that paramilitary beatings (which were often carried out at the behest of the community in the past – in relation to punishments for people involved in anti-social behaviour and crime) are increasingly inflicted on individuals who have challenged, or attempted to subvert the authority of the groups, rather than having any wider specific community purpose. There was thus less emphasis on the paramilitaries responding to community pressure and more of a belief that any PSAs were associated with criminal behaviour.
15. Many residents felt angry and frustrated with the PSNI, often noting that if it was known locally who was most significantly involved in paramilitary activity, then the PSNI should know as well. Given this, many people were unsure why the PSNI were not doing more to intervene in the area, especially given the perceived amount of drugs being sold throughout the community.
16. Many participants felt that the framing and focus of the B4 programme was judgemental. Also, the promotion of terms such as 'lawfulness' and 'transition' within the context of the programme were also met with discomfort, as they also indicated a condemnatory approach. On a more practical level, there was no agreed definition, or joint understanding of what 'transition' was considered to mean, or what it should ideally entail.



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# *What does this mean for the Executive Action plan*

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## **SUCCESS IN THE MOUNT AND BALLYMACARRETT IN EAST BELFAST AREA IS LARGELY DEPENDENT ON:**

- The successful integration of the strategy into on-going and proposed investment in the area is crucial – to reduce the duplication of resources and to promote dynamic partnerships with other relevant statutory bodies/agencies (i.e. Urban Villages).
- A holistic approach toward the needs of young people is required. Many participants in the fieldwork observed that young people were growing up within a profound sense of ‘hopelessness’ (given the degree of family breakdown, substance abuse and poor educational attainment that exists in the area). Relevant statutory bodies need to work more coherently with local schools and community organisations, in an attempt to create more optimism and improved outcomes in the area.
- There are a large number of community organisations active in the area, but they often work in isolation and in doing so, offer similar programmes and initiatives. Greater collaboration between the respective groups could allow for programmes to be delivered in a more substantial manner.
- Improving confidence in the PSNI and other relevant statutory bodies is essential – currently there are concerns about how complaints/enquires are processed. Future progress in the area will largely be dependent on the community having enough confidence in themselves and relevant agencies to reject criminality and promote the use of the PSNI.
- Identifying a support mechanism for individuals currently involved in a paramilitary group but seeking to leave it requires further consideration – i.e. what type of assistance can they receive.
- More investment in diversionary activity is necessary (i.e. to discourage young people from becoming involved in ASB, or gateway drug use).
- Support for substance needs to be more effectively funded and signposted.
- Residents of the area need to feel ownership of actions that are planned for the area. Participants in the fieldwork often felt that consultation on previous government strategies had either been limited, or simply a token gesture (i.e. the outcome had been pre-determined).





# Themes for transition

Although each area is unique with its own set of circumstances, needs and challenges regarding paramilitarism and associated criminality, seven common themes have arisen out of the fieldwork.

These themes have been used to frame the findings in this next section which are based on the participants' opinions and suggestions.

It is important to note that solving the issues raised by the participants will take a multi-faceted and collective response and it is beyond the scope of this project to solve on its own.

Transition will take time and cannot be achieved by communities alone. This project seeks to help build capacity within communities to forge their own pathways towards a peaceful, democratic society where paramilitarism has no place as part of a wider programme. The next section should be read within this context.



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# *Community Safety and Policing*

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## **Key issues**

**There is frustration at the perceived inefficiency of the police and the criminal justice response to dealing with individuals involved in paramilitary-linked criminality.**

Many participants in the fieldwork felt angry and frustrated with the PSNI, often noting that if it was known locally who was most significantly involved in paramilitary activity and criminality, then the PSNI should know as well. Given this, many people were unsure why the PSNI were not doing more to intervene in the area, especially given the perceived amount of drugs being sold throughout the community.

In general, it was felt that statutory bodies must reflect on how best to engage paramilitary groups in the future. The current approach is unspecified and results in some degree of confusion: the groups are seen as being in regular informal contact with different departments and agencies (including the PSNI), which concerns many members of the local community, who believe that this approach reinforces the presence of these organisations in the area (as it is felt that the statutory bodies are indirectly legitimising the groups via this type of engagement).

## **Possible solutions**

**Building relationships of trust and communication between police and residents and demystifying the work of the wider criminal justice system.**

Given the perceived lack of PSNI presence in the area and the associated lack of confidence this promotes, it seems important to consider ways of improving trust and communication between the community and relevant statutory bodies.

Moving forward the evidence suggested that a transition plan should consider:

- Increase the presence of the PSNI throughout the community – especially at particular times of the day and in locations where the community feel most concern.
- Public meetings between the community and PSNI – so that the police can explain their local strategy and the community can gain a better understanding of their practices and efforts to increase lawfulness.



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# Young People

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## Key findings

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**Almost all the participants involved in the fieldwork were concerned by the current local environment young people were experiencing – with a recurring sense that the on-going scale of local deprivation, wide-spread drug and alcohol addictions and prolific paramilitary activity had created a profound sense of hopelessness for those growing up in the area.**

Participants were regularly worried by the area's poor educational attainment and the lack of available resources for those who dropped out of the school system at an early age – it was felt the future for these individuals was particularly bleak, as they would likely be vulnerable to addiction and involvement with paramilitary groups.

Several local community organisations also stated that they found it difficult to invest in young people – those with limited capacity tended to be unreliable, while those with potential generally hoped to leave the area.

## Possible solutions

**Increase and improve service delivery for this particular cohort of the community – in order to reduce potential long-term damage (i.e. addiction and paramilitary involvement).**

Given the delicate political and social situation that many young people are experiencing, it seems crucial to increase and improve service delivery for this group.

Moving forward the evidence suggests that a transition plan should consider:

- A series of programmes specifically focusing on young people (at multiple points of their development) should be developed – focusing on culture, lawfulness, employment, training and substance abuse.
- Urgent treatment for young people suffering from early signs of addiction appears necessary, as it was felt that this would lead to long-term deleterious trajectories.



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# *Health and Well-being*

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## **Key findings**

**Almost all the participants involved in the fieldwork were worried about the high levels of poor mental health and drug and alcohol addiction prominent throughout the area and the insufficient addiction and mental health support services.**

Participants felt that long-term residents were specifically struggling with the impact of the region's conflict, which they felt was largely responsible for the high levels of addiction. They also felt that young people and those who had moved into the community more recently were increasingly frustrated and despondent about the lack of opportunities available throughout the area. Furthermore, it was also felt that, despite these apparent challenges, addiction and mental health support was either under-funded and/or poorly sign-posted.

## **Possible solutions**

**It is clear that there needs to be improvement in mental health and substance abuse support.**

Moving forward the evidence suggests that a transition plan should include:

- More investment and better sign-posting for services dealing with mental health and addiction – specifically focusing on men (especially young men), who are often hard to reach.
- Programmes that demonstrate the risks of substance abuse (particularly with local youth groups).



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# Environment and culture

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## Key findings

**Most participants felt the area's traditional cultural expression was under considerable pressure and many were concerned that key events appear to be less about celebrating the area's history and more about antagonising the 'other' community.**

Many participants who traditionally attend parades and bonfires in the area indicated that they were worried by the culture of drinking that now accompanied these celebrations. In addition, many participants felt under pressure to 'hide their identity', as they felt terms such as 'loyalism' and 'loyalists' were increasingly being used in a derogatory manner outside of the community.

Many residents felt that there had been no improvement in the condition, or capacity of the community since the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 (with a sense that people living in nationalist/republican areas had prospered more directly).

It was noted by the community that they were frustrated by the way in which consultation for proposed developments was being delivered in the area – it was often suggested that consultation by statutory bodies was regularly focused on a small number of stakeholders (who frequently had alleged paramilitary connections – with a local sense that these groups were being appeased, ahead of the general community).

Many participants were concerned by the level of racism that was being reported in the area. Some were particularly worried that local paramilitary groups were orchestrating threats to minority groups living in the area, partly to reduce the possibility of any change to their support networks and traditional authority.

## Possible solutions

**It appears important to create a positive environment, which promotes inclusion and regeneration.**

Moving forward the evidence suggests that a transition plan should include:

- Better consultation of future planning decisions is required, as residents often felt that decisions had been 'made for them' in the past – with the perception that statutory bodies had often consulted a small number of unelected community organisations, rather than the community itself.
- Programmes that work with local organisations (specifically youth groups) to discuss the history of the area's local culture, in order to promote a more positive and universally accepted version of the area's local heritage.
- Initiatives that deal with the community's changing culture and demographics are also required, to help tackle racism and prejudice, while also encouraging citizenship and local pride.



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# Community Development Issues

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## Key finding

**Extensive workload for the most active community organisations coupled with insufficient financial resources and training have limited their ability to address issues that the community faces.**

Most active community organisations felt overwhelmed by the level of needs they faced from those living in the area – nearly all the groups believed they were under-resourced financially and some felt they lacked sufficient training to deal with the magnitude of the problems they were facing (specifically relating to the scale of drug addiction and deprivation that exists throughout the area).

The majority of community organisations who participated in the fieldwork, also felt their capacity to deliver initiatives to support the area were undermined by the complex bureaucratic infrastructure they often encountered when it came to adhering to the paperwork requirements associated with different funding streams.

A number of community development groups were highly critical of perceived attempts by statutory bodies to ‘appease’ other organisations with alleged links to local paramilitary members. There was a significant belief that groups that had alleged links to paramilitary organisations were treated ‘more seriously’ – via this, it was claimed that these were the groups who were more likely to be ‘most listened’ to in consultation processes and more likely to be allocated resources from funding streams.

## Possible solutions

**Developing robust and transparent community practices appears crucial to the future development of the area.**

Moving forward the evidence suggests that a transition plan should include:

- Further training and capacity building for all active community groups is required, as many had a habit of catering to specific sections of the community that they were already familiar with.
- Local community organisations may also benefit from governance training, in order to raise internal standards – i.e. many groups had boards that were dominated by males.
- Although there are variety of forums and partnerships active in the area, a fresh approach to community dialogue is needed to better ensure the area is connected to relevant statutory bodies and other external agencies.



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# *Restorative justice and restorative practices*

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## **Key findings**

**The traditional role and delivery of restorative practices appears to be at a point of critical change.**

There were concerns that previously successful restorative justice schemes are currently lacking impact in the area – it was claimed that this is mainly because they are not receiving the same degree of referrals from paramilitary groups as they may have done in the past.

Despite the apparent reduction in people participating in restorative justice schemes, participants still noted the value of the concept and commented on its strong history of success in the area.

It was questioned how restorative justice can be reinvigorated in the community – with some participants suggesting that local schools, churches and businesses should be given a significant role in supporting the aftercare processes.

## **Possible solutions**

**A clearer and more appropriately defined version of restorative justice seems necessary.**

Moving forward the evidence suggests that a transition plan should include:

- Raise and maintain standards of current restorative justice-based schemes.
- Consider ways in which restorative justice can be linked into local schools, youth groups, businesses, community forums and training programmes.
- Increase support for current programmes by ensuring professional development, consistent standards and better integration with other justice services.



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# Personal Transition

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## Key findings

**The on-going role of ex-prisoners/former combatants in the community needs careful attention and continuous monitoring.**

It was recognised within the fieldwork that there are social and economic barriers that have prevented ex-prisoners/former combatants from easily assimilating into the local area. Yet, participants in the fieldwork were also dubious of the intentions of some ex-prisoners/former combatants – with regular accusations that these individuals have often chosen to shun conventional community work opportunities available to them, in order to (re-)involve themselves in the type of behaviour that was common during the region's conflict – i.e. extortion, money lending and drug dealing (as it was felt these types of behaviour were more financially rewarding and facilitated paramilitary control and coercion in the area).

While participants were supportive of the idea of transition in theory, they doubted the intentions of some individuals most synonymous with the criminality and paramilitary activity in their area – indicating that these individuals likely wanted it both ways: they might make bold gestures to outside agents in order to obtain funding and support for their future plans related to genuine community work, but would likely continue to participate in the types of criminality that they are allegedly currently involved in. This led to participants feeling a general lack of confidence in the concept of transition, especially as there were doubts over the PSNI and other statutory bodies capacity to take paramilitary groups to task.

## Possible solutions

**Creating genuine opportunities that are legitimate alternatives to criminality and paramilitary is essential. Beyond the practical development of these opportunities, ex-prisoners/former combatants will need to be prepared for genuine change, while the local community needs to feel more confident that the PSNI and other related statutory bodies can successfully monitor this transition.**

Moving forward the evidence suggests that a transition plan should include:

- Statutory bodies and the PSNI must continue to promote a sense of 'lawfulness' throughout the area and attempt to generate a general confidence in the community.
- Those open to transition should be treated with respect and support. Moreover, the possibilities available for change must be genuine, clearly designed and well resourced (i.e. training opportunities and support programmes).





# What is Next for the Project



## Next Steps

The Executive's Action Plan on Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime sets out a range of actions which will work towards an end to all forms of paramilitary activity, the use of peaceful and democratic means and the rule of law in all communities.

This is a challenge for society as a whole and we all have a part to play. Delivery of the Executive Action Plan presents a unique opportunity for new partnerships to develop both across Government and with the community sector. Through the Communities in Transition project, we want to support areas that are significantly impacted by paramilitarism and criminal activity and build capacity amongst the people who live there and the community organisations that are working extremely hard to make a difference to their neighbourhoods.

The scope of the Communities in Transition Project is to build the capacity of these communities through specific, practical interventions to enable them to affect positive change for themselves, break the grip of coercive control and transition away from paramilitary activity.

### Tackling Paramilitary Programme Outcomes:

- Paramilitarism has no place
- Citizens and communities feel safe and confident
- The public support and have increasing confidence in the justice system
- Support is available for those who wish to move away from paramilitary activity and structures

The Project will work with those local communities to put in place interventions to develop capacity and confidence through:

- building capacity to address underlying social issues and achieve improved outcomes for all;
- building capacity to transition in neighbourhoods and places and for groups of people that make up local communities;
- building capacity to proactively move towards a culture of lawfulness; and
- building capacity to become open, accessible and lawful communities.

The area-based approach being taken forward in this project enables activities to be tailored to take consideration of local contexts and for them to be designed and delivered in a way which empowers and supports citizens to continue to deliver change in their communities beyond the lifetime of the project.

### Underpinning Principles:

- **Empowerment:** Empower and support citizens and communities to address the problems they face.
- **Sustainability:** Embedding capacity within communities so that change can be continued beyond the lifetime of this programme.
- **Collaboration:** Working together within communities and between communities and statutory agencies.
- **Lawfulness:** Commitment to the use of peaceful and democratic means and upholding the rule of law across all communities.
- **Inclusivity, Fairness, transparency, impartiality and democratic accountability**



# Next Steps- In Your Community

## PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

We would like to thank everyone who was involved during the first phase of this programme, and we look forward to continuing the collaborative work achieved up until now and extending the range of voices involved in the process.

Over the next few months we will bring together individuals from The Mount and Ballymacarrett in East Belfast who want to see an end to paramilitarism and are willing to act to make change happen. We will work together to define priorities, activities and outcomes that will form the basis of commissioned activity in The Mount and Ballymacarrett. The activities will add value to existing provision and develop the capacity and resilience of individuals and of the local community to address issues connected with paramilitarism and organised crime. This will mean both building capacity to proactively move towards a culture of lawfulness and to address the underlying systemic issues which are exploited by paramilitary and organised criminal gangs.

## ACTIONS IN SUPPORT OF THE PARTICIPATORY DESIGN PROCESS

As part of the participatory design process and to help inform design discussions in this phase, there will be a number of supporting activities happening within your area:

- **Community Learning and Safety Dialogue activities**

Community led events to increase knowledge and understanding of the justice system and the responsibilities of the different agencies within the system.

- **Social Enterprise Actions**

Engage in the development of alternative pathways and income sources and identify opportunities for training; employment; capacity building and collaboration.

- **Environment and culture activities**

A process of engagement around the community ownership of cultural events in public spaces, while fostering dialogue, mediation and youth engagement around those issues.



This document is the result of a community engagement process commissioned by TEO from the Communities in transition consortium: Co-operation Ireland in partnership with the Mitchell Institute (QUB), INCORE (Ulster University) and the Institute for Conflict Research (ICR)

