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The author of this report and Ballymun Partnership, would like to express their gratitude to all the residents of Ballymun who gave freely of their time and their input to the research process.

We would like to acknowledge the support of the Community Development Working Group of the Ballymun Partnership, the Community Participation Sub-group which acted as the steering group to oversee the research process, the Ballymun Anti-Poverty Network and the Solas Development Centre. We would especially like to highlight the significant contribution of Bernie Roe, Dublin City Council, to the success of this piece of work.

And finally, a special thank you and congratulations is sent to the ten members of the research team and to Lorna Langan who supported their work.

*Philip Land PL&A Consultants
and Ballymun Partnership
June 2006*



Research carried out by the SOLAS DEVELOPMENT CENTRE and the working group of the BALLYMUN PARTNERSHIP co-funded by THE BALLYMUN ANTI-POVERTY NETWORK, SOLAS DEVELOPMENT CENTRE and the BALLYMUN PARTNERSHIP

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PREFACE

It is hoped and expected that the wishes of these residents expressed during the research process be listened to and acted upon by those agencies and organisations who serve them and the wider community.

This research should stimulate community and statutory agencies and groups to re-examine their methodologies, redesign their programmes and reinvigorate their research efforts to find working mechanisms and practices that challenge the local community into action. The vision of a community being inspired into community activity through different and innovative programmes of action is a vision worth cherishing and striving for.

It would appear that local involvement or participation by residents in the Ballymun area has levelled out at around the 31% mark, based on the findings of research conducted in 2003 and this more recent research. This level is only slightly below the national average for volunteering in urban areas which stands at 32.7%.¹ The fact that this level of participation exists in the Ballymun area is remarkable when one considers that 80.5% of those surveyed said they did not receive enough information and 82.8% of those surveyed said they did not believe they had a voice when it came to matters concerning the Ballymun area. This raises obvious questions about the quality and effectiveness of community engagement in Ballymun at present.

Despite expressions of discontent with certain crucial aspects of local development, over two thirds of those surveyed indicated a willingness to get more involved in their community in the future. It is not suggested that engaging higher numbers of people in community activities is easy; what is suggested is that every additional percentage point of engagement achieved marks a move in the right direction for the Ballymun community, present and future, providing of course that the engagement achieved is participative and meaningful.



524 residents from Ballymun gave freely of their time to provide the answers to compile this data

¹ "Tipping The Balance" Report of the National Committee on Volunteering, 2002.



Introduction

To ascertain how and in what way residents of Ballymun can meaningfully influence both the work of the local development agencies and state agencies that serve them

This programme of research was commissioned by the Community Development Working Group of Ballymun Partnership. The Partnership seeks broad representation from the community sector in Ballymun, and a sub-group of the Community Development Working Group, the Community Participation Sub-group acted as the steering group to oversee the research process. The research was fully supported by Solas Development Centre and without the support and the commitment of Solas participants it would not have been possible to complete this piece of work in the manner and timeframe achieved. The Ballymun Anti-Poverty Network also played a significant role in guiding the process.²

Solas Development Centre, located in a three-bedroom flat on Balcurris Road, provides an informal and secure environment for women from Ballymun and runs a series of programmes aimed at acquiring basic skills and confidence building.

For many of its participants it is the first step in their quest to access more formal education or work. The ethos of the centre offers a supporting and encouraging environment for individuals until they feel ready to engage in a more structured learning environment.

This research was jointly funded by the Ballymun Partnership, Ballymun Anti-Poverty Network and Solas Development Centre.

CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

This research was designed as the latest in a series of studies aimed at eliciting a comprehensive understanding of the current status of resident participation in Ballymun and builds on the findings of the document *“Community Participation in Local Development Structures in Ballymun”* which was researched and written in 2005. The research also coincided with a review of existing communication tools and strategies which was commissioned by the BAPN.

The key objectives of the research were:

1. *To obtain and report resident perceptions into the nature, extent and context of resident participation in Ballymun;*
2. *To provide participants of the Solas Development Centre with the research skills and training to participate as fieldworkers in the collection of data regarding local participation in the community;*
3. *To identify the training needs of programme participants of the Solas Development Centre;*
4. *To document core training required and opportunities for learning and skill development to build capacity for effective participation by residents;*
5. *In the context of the continuing programme of regeneration in Ballymun it was considered appropriate to conduct the research at this time.*

Philip Land of **PL&A Consultants** was retained, following a public tendering process, to train and support the development of the research team; to develop appropriate research tools; to oversee the conducting of the research; to manage the collation of the results and to provide analysis of the findings.

² BAPN members include: The Ballymun Partnership, Ballymun Local Drugs Taskforce, The Drop-In Well Family Resource Centre, RAPID, St. Margaret Community Development Project (CDP), Community Action Project (CAP) CDP, The Ballymun Men's Centre CDP and Community and Family Training Agency (CAFTA) CDP.

The Ballymun Anti-Poverty Network was established as a result of a review of local development and community structures by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. It was established to help bring the National Anti-Poverty Strategy down to local level and to improve cohesion and alignment between local and community development groups. The Ballymun Anti-Poverty Network includes all Pobal funded agencies, Community Development Programmes, RAPID and Ballymun Partnership as well as the Family Resource Centre and the Drugs Task Force.

Methodology

...a number of different research methods were used: multiple choice questionnaires, video booth, research diaries and disposable camera

23,000 opinions and answers were put forward by Ballymun residents during the lifetime of research process



Lorna Langan - Research Team Leader

THE RESEARCH TEAM

The research team comprised ten local women from Ballymun who were engaged in activities within Solas Development Centre or known to the Centre Manager Lorna Langan who, acted as team leader to the project and was supported by Eve O'Connor from the Solas Management Committee.

The ten researchers selected had no prior research training but between them they shared over 200 years of experience of living, working and raising a family in the Ballymun area.

The age profile of the research team spanned the 20 to 50 age group and members of the team lived throughout the Ballymun area representing all five neighbourhoods of Poppintree, Coultry, Shangan, Silloge and Balcurris.

Team members were selected on the basis of their interest in the project and availability rather than any formal vetting or interview process. As a result, there was a variety of skills and abilities within the research team but also an obvious series of limitations. The brief for the research, which outlined a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, was perhaps over ambitious given the skill-set of the participants, the size of the sample to be interviewed and the time-frame available for training.

PAR is by its nature a qualitative research method. It is about gathering opinion, in preference to fact. It demands asking questions designed to make it easy for people to respond; talking to people in normal language.

The difficulty this approach presented for the researchers involved primarily related to their ability to record the opinions of the respondents. Where one or two questions might comprise the research, the recording of responses could be possible but given the breadth of research required and the number of answers to be recorded it became apparent that recording opinions would have to be done in a different manner to the normal question and written answer process associated with PAR.

In the light of the obvious challenge that conducting research of this magnitude presented a number of different research methods were used:

- **Multiple choice questionnaires**
Multiple choice questionnaires comprising 13 questions were designed with input from the researchers and the commissioning group. 11 of the 13 questions used a multiple choice format with the remaining two questions drafted using a qualitative approach. During the research 472 questionnaires were completed. [Appendix 1]
- **Video booth**
A video booth was established in Ballymun Town Centre and 52 interviews were conducted with local residents. Each interview was asked three questions about resident involvement in Ballymun. The recorded interviews represent unequivocal qualitative data and when added to the completed questionnaires form an excellent basis for analysis and recommendations. [Appendix 2]
- **Research diaries**
As residents in the area the views of each researcher were sought through Research Diaries.
- **Disposable camera**
Each member of the research team was asked to document their individual impression of Ballymun with a disposable camera.

In total, over 23,000 opinions and answers were put forward by Ballymun residents during the lifetime of the research process.

The research was conducted throughout the Ballymun area at points agreed with the commissioning group and by door-to-door survey. All the questionnaires were completed between the 10th and 17th of February. Teams of two interviewers attended a series of public locations to have the questionnaires completed. The locations were identified by the team members as busy locations where a cross section of local residents would visit on a daily basis. These included:

- Ballymun Town Centre
- Main Street Ballymun
- Centra in Poppintree
- Centra in Shangan
- Playschools
- Poppintree Community Centre
- Axis Centre
- Civic Offices

Research Team



Back row (left to right): Sarah Russel, Geanna Dempsey, Ann Flood, Philip Land, Elaine Nolan, Liz Casey, Sinéad Jordan, Mary Carroll
Front row (left to right): Ailish Langan, Adrienne Kelly, Hazel Peters

For the researchers, door-to-door proved the best method of conducting the research with many respondents welcoming the researchers into their homes to complete the survey. The preference for door-to-door research is worth commenting on. It was the opinion of the commissioning group that this method may be least successful and raise issues of safety for the individual researchers. However, as all the researchers were local people, the option of door-to-door research held no fears and they were happier calling to peoples homes throughout the area rather than trying to engage people in public areas. The experience of the researchers would suggest that while participatory action research places a certain onus on local people to learn new skills and engage with their community once these issues have been addressed the process and its results are democratic, equitable, liberating and life enhancing.

Feedback from almost all researchers concluded that:

- *Residents were happy to answer questions when the researcher was also a Ballymun resident*
- *Many people felt the types of questions being asked were different and refreshing*
- *Many people suggested that it was about time this type of research was conducted*
- *All researchers felt that the questionnaire was too long particularly for stopping people in the street*

The "Video Booth" research was conducted between 10.00am and 12.00pm on February 2nd 2006 in a vacant shop unit in Ballymun Town Centre. In the two-hour period 52 Ballymun residents answered three questions on camera. Sinead Jordan and Hazel Peters volunteered to act as on-camera interviewers; Ailish Langan took responsibility for documenting the names of those being interviewed and Lorna Langan secured permission from those being interviewed to use the information gathered and the video footage for the benefit of local development in the area.

The remaining seven members of the research team Elaine Nolan, Geana Dempsey, Liz Casey, Mary Carroll, Ann Flood, Sarah Russell and Adrienne Kelly engaged with shoppers in the Town Centre and encouraged them to voice their opinions. While some people refused to participate when informed that the interviews would be filmed, the team still managed to elicit the cooperation of 52 local residents during the 2 hour period that the video booth was in operation.

The responses on camera represent significant qualitative input to the research. The text of these interviews offers clear opinions and guidelines for future developments in the Ballymun area. A sample of these interviews is available on DVD and the remaining interviews are available, for validation purposes, from the Ballymun Partnership.

During the Christmas break each researcher was given a disposable camera and asked to take photographs that they felt represented the area in which they live. This aspect of the research enjoyed a mixed response from the researchers. While some of the team had no problem taking photographs throughout the area, other members felt it intrusive and embarrassing. As a result, of the 270 exposures available less than 200 photographs were actually taken. In addition, the effort expended by some team members was negligible.

This should not be interpreted as a criticism; the commitment and dedication of the team was outstanding throughout the research with over 95% attendance at weekly training. What the poor return reflects is perhaps better interpreted as a lack of confidence among certain team members and in fact many team members alluded to this later on in the research process. Notwithstanding the obvious difficulty with this research tool, the photographs available offer an interesting insight into Ballymun at that specific moment in time and will be a useful photographic database for future generations.

Of the 10 researcher journals given to the research team at the beginning of the training process only 6 have been returned. The journals were not popular with the research team with many team members struggling to understand exactly what was required of them. This was perhaps partly due to the lack of training time available and the pressure to develop so many areas of research in a short space of time. Nevertheless, almost all the research team understood how significant the journals could be by the end of the process but there was little point in writing-up commentaries retrospectively. The journals available offer little in terms of insight into the research process but do point to a growing confidence among the group as the training process developed.

There is significant evidence that a good team spirit developed between the researchers. Many of the team met for the first time on the first day of training and this brought with it certain anxieties and uncertainties. However, by the end of the process there was a real sense of achievement among the team who are confident that they have undertaken a process that can inform future developments in the Ballymun area.

THE TRAINING

Training was conducted at the Solas Development Centre on Balcurris Road over a twelve week period. The Centre, located in a three-bed roomed flat on the third floor was inviting and friendly and all the research team seemed at home in the surroundings. The atmosphere and facilities within Solas were conducive to the training process. Many of the research team had themselves lived in a similar flat at some stage of their lives and therefore felt at home. Sessions were held weekly on Thursday and Friday mornings between 10.00am and 1.00pm. Almost all team members had children in playschool or school and therefore the training was designed to facilitate their other commitments. This, along with the good atmosphere within Solas, can help account for the high levels of attendance and commitment of the research team. In short, many team members said they had fun and enjoyed the process.

Notwithstanding the fun people had the beginning of the training process was somewhat derailed by the negativity encountered among the research team toward individuals and agencies of authority in Ballymun. As a result, the first three sessions were almost entirely given over to "Anger Management". This proved an invaluable exercise.

Residents were happy to answer questions when the researcher was also a Ballymun resident



...the commitment and dedication of the team was outstanding throughout

*Listening to residents... Access to information...
Advice... Training... Respect and trust...
Patience... Skill development... Confidence
building...*



As residents themselves, the researchers came to understand how other residents may respond to issues being raised or surveyed during the research. The first three sessions dealt with all aspects of resident disappointment, anger and frustration. Following this process, the team members were focused more on what could be done rather than what had been done. It was interesting to the team members that almost all of them had similar stories to tell and situations to face. These sessions formed the initial team bond and established their rights as residents to conduct the research.

Moving on, the team were introduced to the concept of PAR. Every effort was made to present the methodology in simple user friendly terms. Terms like "Qualitative" and Quantitative" research became measuring the "Quality" and "Quantity" of resident involvement. Everyday examples of research were cited to encourage the notion that all team members have been researchers all their lives. Searching for a child's shoes in the morning before school, checking the kitchen presses for contents before making a shopping list or trying to find out why the television is not working were, among other examples, presented as evidence of our innate research capacity.

By the end of the 6th training session one could sense that the research team believed that they had the right as residents to conduct the research and the ability as adults to complete the task at hand. The only real issue to be addressed remained the format of the research. Qualitative research requires good aural and transcribing skills if it is to be effective. Given the reservations expressed by some of the team members it was unlikely that all team members would be able to fully engage in such a process. A key objective of the training programme was to ensure that no one was excluded by the process being developed and when the commissioning group agreed that quantitative methods could be used to carry out the research the problem of maintaining the integrity of the group was resolved.

Nevertheless, it was suggested by the team members that a variety of collection methods should be used to conduct the research. The following list of collection methods was proposed for discussion:

- Clipboard and questionnaire
- Video camera
- Dictaphone
- Disposable camera
- Opinion booth
- Door-to-door
- Text message
- Internet and e-mail
- Meeting

In the final analysis many of the above were incorporated into the research process in some shape or form.

During the Christmas break all team members were asked to draft two questions that they felt were relevant to Supporting Meaningful Resident Participation. The team had identified the following areas as key focus points for future community engagement:

- Listening to residents
- Access to information
- Advice
- Training
- Respect and trust
- Patience
- Skill development
- Confidence building

After Christmas training focused on three main areas:

- Research skills - listening, interview techniques
- Testing the research tools – questionnaires, video booth
- Ethical considerations in field research

The piloting phase was crucial to the success of the principal research in that it helped overcome many of the fears that team members had about conducting the actual research. By collating responses from the sample questionnaires the research team could see the results of their work and how the data might be analysed and used by local development agencies. This gave a real sense of purpose to the research.

Following the pilot phase all team members talked about their experiences; outlined what had been successful for them and agreed the best way to conduct the final research. Although guided by the wishes of the commissioning group, the research team had developed a collective capacity that would guarantee a good, comprehensive and professional piece of research was conducted. It is in this collective capacity that the potential to undertake and conduct further research lies.

Crucial to the development of the individuals, the development of team spirit and the growth in collective capacity and interdependence was the support provided by Lorna Langan of Solas. The team members obviously respect and trust Lorna and they responded to her urgings making a successful outcome possible.

RESEARCH OUTCOMES

The list of outcomes of the research is impressive and reads as follows:

- 472 questionnaires completed by Ballymun residents comprising 13 questions with almost 23,000 opinions expressed and recorded
- 52 on-camera interviews conducted with Ballymun residents
- 187 photographs of Ballymun taken

The research has produced significant benchmarks that, given the variety of tools used and the sample size surveyed, are both accurate and robust. These benchmarks should be used to measure achievement levels of future proposed local development actions and strategies.

In addition to the research outcomes it is also worth considering the capacity that has been developed amongst participants of the Solas Development Group. Six or seven members of the research team have expressed an interest in conducting further research programmes for agencies or groups in Ballymun. With further training and guidance the team of people who conducted this research could emerge as a research engine for the Ballymun area.

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

There were 472 questionnaires completed during the research. In an effort to avoid making the questionnaire too intrusive respondents were asked their first name only; how long they had lived in Ballymun; which age group they belonged to; and which area of Ballymun they lived in. Researchers noted the gender of each individual respondent. The questionnaire comprised 13 questions in addition to this respondent profiling. The gender, age and length of residency of the respondents are broken down as in Table 1 (see over-leaf).

The sample surveyed with questionnaires offers a broad spectrum of Ballymun residents. Remarkably the largest sub-set of respondents has lived in Ballymun for over 31 years. The profile of respondents would support the notion that the transient nature of Ballymun in prior eras has changed. Over 62% of respondents have lived in the area for more than 23 years. In many cases this amounts to the complete lifetime of respondents spent living in Ballymun. This point is worth a particular consideration since Ballymun remains, despite the regeneration and the number of new dwellings built and available for purchase, the area with the largest concentration of social housing in the country. At the end of the regeneration process it is expected that up to 2,500 of the dwellings in the area will still be occupied on a tenancy basis.

Gender Profile		
Male	140	29.66%
Female	332	70.34%

Age Profile			
18 to 30 years	Male	34	7.2%
	Female	95	20.1%
31 to 45 years	Male	54	11.4%
	Female	133	28.2%
46 to 60 years	Male	29	6.1%
	Female	71	15.1%
61+ years	Male	33	7.0%
	Female	??	??%

Residency Profile		
Less than 7 years	42	9.0%
8 to 14 years	43	9.1%
15 to 22 years	92	19.4%
23 to 30 years	142	30.1%
More than 31 years	153	32.4%

Table 1: Profile of respondents: questionnaire

Gender Profile		
Male	11	21.2%
Female	41	78.8%

Age Profile			
18 to 30 years	Male	2	3.8%
	Female	7	13.5%
31 to 45 years	Male	2	3.8%
	Female	16	30.9%
46 to 60 years	Male	4	7.6%
	Female	15	28.8%
61+ years	Male	3	5.8%
	Female	3	5.8%

Residency Profile		
Less than 7 years	2	3.8%
8 to 14 years	4	7.6%
15 to 22 years	9	17.3%
23 to 30 years	17	32.7%
More than 31 years	20	38.6%

Table 2: Profile of respondents: video booth

As social housing tenants, in largely suitable accommodation in terms of size and facilities, the possibility for residents to move from Ballymun is limited through the local authority transfer scheme and with the continuing rise in house prices throughout the country it is unlikely that many of Ballymun's current residents will be in a position to move out of the area in the foreseeable future. In total the 472 respondents to the questionnaires had lived in Ballymun for a cumulative total of 11,842 years; giving an average residency of the sample surveyed of 25.1 years.

There were 52 on-camera interviews conducted via the Video Booth during the research. Respondents were profiled in the same way as with the questionnaire. Three questions were asked during each interview. The gender, age and length of residency of the respondents are broken down as in Table 2.

Once again the largest sub-set of respondents was in the "over 31 years of residency" category. In total the 52 on-camera interviewees had lived in Ballymun for a cumulative total of 1,432 years; giving an average residency in Ballymun of the sample interviewed of 27.5 years.

Given the gender, age and residency profile of those surveyed in the course of this research it is beyond question that the responses annotated are worthy of consideration and deserve to be taken seriously by agencies and organisations who serve the current residents of Ballymun.

Research Findings

“
I am involved and have been involved since 1968 when I moved in to the area
”

“
I have to be honest; I've never gone to a meeting... if it affected me it would bring me out... I couldn't see myself going to anything about someone else's issue
”

The research findings are presented under three broad headings as follows:

- *Participation Levels*
- *Barriers to Participation*
- *Resident Preferences*

This allows for the cumulative assessment of data compiled and provides a clear progression pathway for action to address current participation deficits. The individual and combined responses to the questions asked are available on request from the Ballymun Partnership.

PARTICIPATION LEVEL

Of the 472 respondents 146 or 31% said they were involved in their community. As a “member of a club” and “more than once a week” were the most frequent responses. The 31% participation rate is exactly the same as the participation rate identified during the research to develop the Ballymun Fact File in 2003. However, if one is to compare this community participation rate with voter participation in the area there is a clear inertia where local development is concerned. At the Local Elections held on 11th June 2004 voter turnout for Ballymun was 50.34%.³ This represented an increase of 17.98% on the voter turnout figure for 1999.

This increased voter participation resulted from a concerted campaign by the National Active Citizen Network and its local counterpart Ballymun Welfare Rights Centre. The increase in voter participation may augur well for increased community participation if a concerted effort is made to engage the local population. However at present, community participation rates are significantly lower than voter participation rates in Ballymun which in turn are 13 percentage points below the national average.

Of the 472 respondents 294 or 62.3% said they were not involved in their community. Respondents cited being too busy (139) and not receiving enough information (55) as the main reasons although unsuitable times (25) and childcare (28) was also cited as significant factors affecting community involvement. Only 35 or 7.4% of respondents said they “couldn't be bothered”. While the rate of non participation is extremely high the level of apathy is quite low indicating once more that a greater level of engagement is possible [Table 3].

Of the 472 respondents 33 or 7.0% said they were not involved at present. Work (37)⁴, family (19) and health (17) were the main reasons given. Only 5 people out of the 472 surveyed felt it was “too difficult to get involved in today's society”. 34% of females surveyed said they were involved in their community compared to 23% of male respondents.

In contrast to current participation levels 266 or 56.4% of respondents said they would like to be more involved in their community. This is a considerable increase on the 31% who are currently involved and offers the basis for hope for the future. Over half of those who expressed an interest in being more involved cited once a week as their preferred level of involvement. A further 35 respondents said they would be willing to be involved “as often as necessary”. This amounts to a significant untapped resource for local development in the area.

There was a significant disparity between male and female respondents with only 43% of males surveyed willing to get more involved compared to 62% of females surveyed.

Of the 206 respondents representing 43.6% who said they would not be willing to get more involved 123 or 59.7% said they were too busy.

A further 17 respondents said they “didn't care” with 38 more saying they “didn't see the value”. The majority of the “don't care” and “don't see the value” responses were proffered by male respondents.

Once again the apathy levels expressed by the community are remarkably low demonstrating that the general community in Ballymun are ready and willing to participate more.

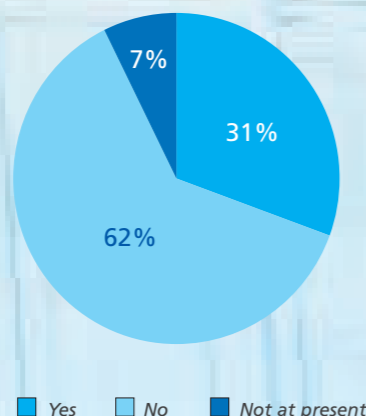
Of the 472 respondents only 62 or 13.1% said they were not interested when asked what time of day, week and year would suit them best. This is considerably less than the 62.3% who said they were not involved in their community and the 43.6% who said they would not like to get involved in their community.

This is a clear indication that higher resident participation rates are possible and achievable and by analysing these positive responses one can clearly identify actions required to engage a larger proportion of the community.



...we can all get more involved in the area... if they had more activities... a tenant's association... if they came up with ideas to get the area working together it would be a lot stronger... a lot safer

Table 3: Current levels of community involvement.

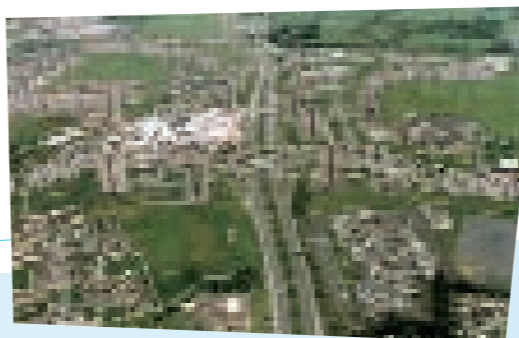


³Source National Active Citizenship Network, Ballymun Welfare Rights Centre, July 2004.

⁴Some respondents who said they were not involved cited “work reasons” which was not listed as an option in this section and this explains the higher number of responses to this option than respondents answering “Not at present”.

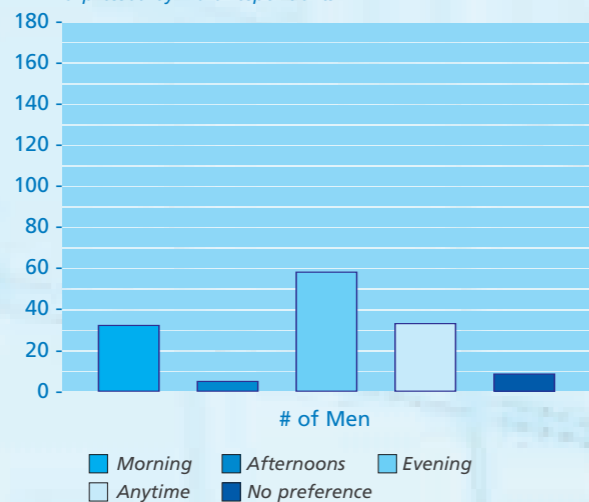
“

...the kids have nowhere to play...
they are being kicked off every green space



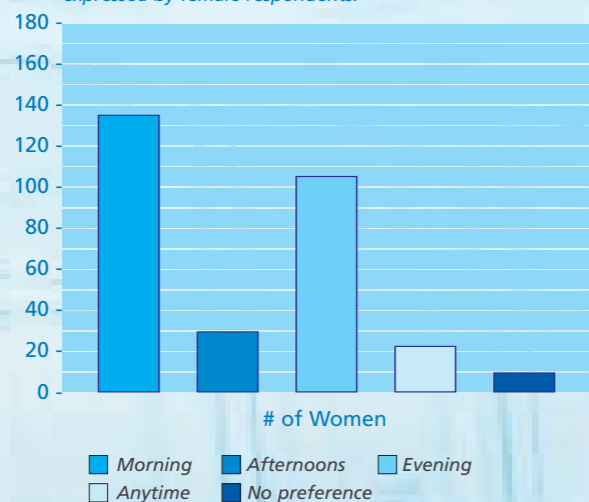
”

Table 4: Best time of day for community involvement as expressed by male respondents.



- The best time to engage the male population is by running activities in the evenings on week days. [Table 4]
- The best times to engage the female population is by running activities in the mornings and evenings on week days. [Table 5]
- Both male and female respondents clearly indicate that they would prefer if activities were offered on a year round basis.

Table 5: Best time of day for community involvement as expressed by female respondents.



The potential for even greater levels of involvement was clearly identified through responses to two other questions contained in the survey. When asked if they would get involved in specific issue based community activity the levels of interest and potential engagement raised significantly. Nine issues were listed and respondents were asked to rate them in order of importance.⁵ Given the closeness of the results for all issues mentioned it would be irresponsible to draw any significant conclusion from the results to hand except to point out that all of the nine issues mentioned to respondents generate significant interest throughout the community.

When asked would they be willing to engage with groups or organisations discussing the issues mentioned 310 or 65.7% of respondents expressed their interest in getting involved, with attending a meeting attracting 202 of a possible 310 expressions of interest. Overall respondents were willing to get involved across all involvement opportunities suggested as in Table 6.

Table 6: Preferences expressed for nature of involvement.

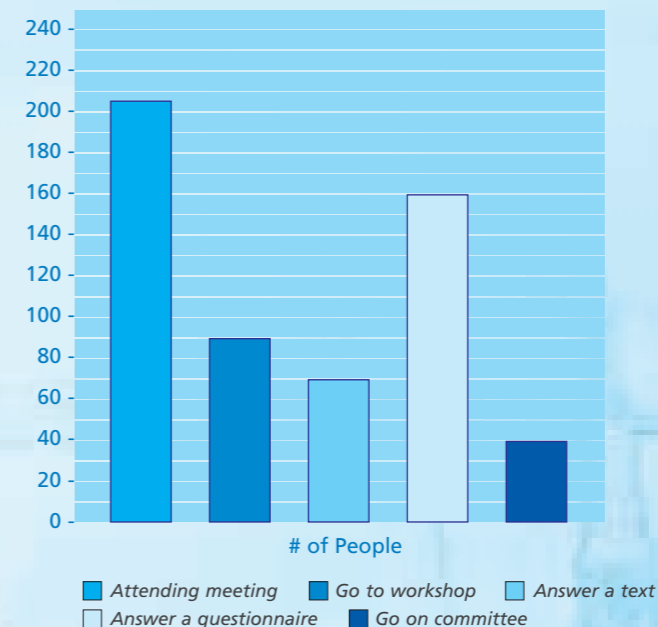


Table 7: Type of participation preferred.



The levels of participation interest registered in answering this question at 65.7% are significantly higher than the 31% who said they were involved in their community and the 56.4% who said they would like to be more involved in their community.

The data available provides clear evidence that meaningful resident participation can be achieved when the participation of residents is issue based.

Of the 162 respondents or 34.3% who said they would not be willing to get involved with groups or organisations discussing the issues mentioned, 84 of these or 51.8% cited being too busy as the reason. In the modern society and economy this should not be interpreted as a negative response. In fact only 15 respondents or 3.1% said they don't care and only 30 respondents or 6.2% said they don't see the value. The total of 9.3% between these two groups of respondents is significantly less than the 13.3% who responded similarly earlier in the survey; further evidence that issue based community participation has the potential to engage the biggest proportion of the population.

Even more encouraging was the response to the preferred roles of the individual's surveyed in future local development actions. When optional roles were outlined the lowest "not interested" ratio in the entire survey emerged with only 20 respondents, or 4% declining to commit to taking part. When asked in what way they would like to participate respondents as indicated in Table 7.

“

...go out and look for people and ask them do they want to get involved... send out leaflets... call door-to-door... put posters in the shopping centre

”

⁵ Childcare, Communities Facilities, Education, Environment, Healthcare, Housing, Safety, Transport, Youth.

“

...it's hard to get a lot of people together with different schedules they have like work and school but holding meetings is a good idea to get everyone talking... everyone wants Ballymun to be a nice place



”

“

...we need more reps... more in your face reps... more tenants associations... years ago there was two or three people on each road... it wasn't just down to one person as it is now... people need to be knocking on the doors

”

Table 8: Preferences expressed for type of participation by gender.

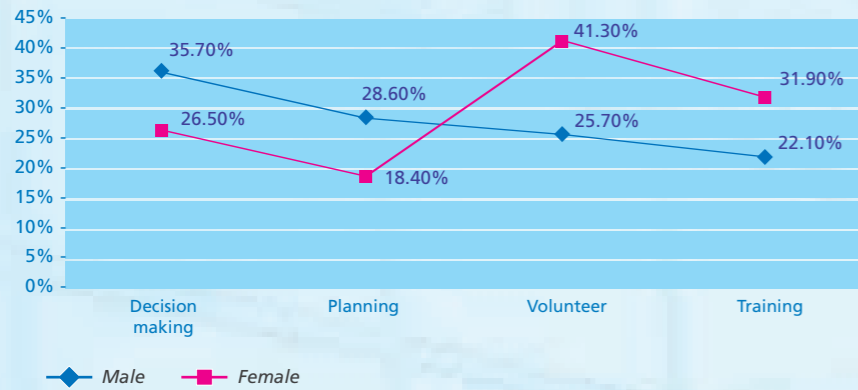
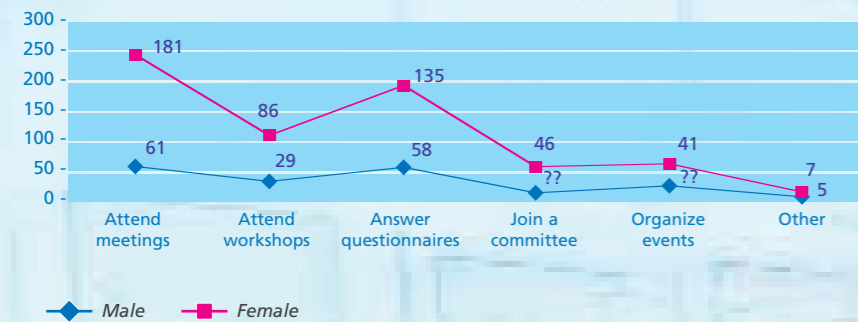


Table 9: Preferences expressed for nature of involvement by gender.



There was a significant difference between male and female respondents in terms of preference expressed as in Table 8.

As is clearly apparent from the above graph the priority for male participation lies in decision making whereas for the female respondents volunteering is the main interest expressed. Female respondents were least interested in planning while training was the least attractive option for male respondents.

The high level of willing volunteers is encouraging for local development agencies who must examine ways to tap into this significant resource. When asked specifically what it was that they would be interested in doing, respondents were offered a number of options as follows:

1. Attend local meetings
2. Attend workshops
3. Answer questionnaires
4. Join a committee
5. Organise events
6. Other

Respondents expressed their preferences as in Table 9.

Attending meetings with 242 expressions of interest and answering questionnaires with 193 were the two most popular choices of all respondents and were also the most popular choices for both male and female respondents.

In an effort to carefully build a profile of potential community activity that would engage the largest cross section of the resident population those surveyed were asked to indicate their interest across four broad themes of activity as follows:

- Arts based activities
- Sports based activities
- Education based activities
- Health based activities

Respondents could select as few or as many of the options as they liked and the Table 10 demonstrates their preferences:

The most popular type of activity was "Health Based" which achieved a combined score of 274, representing 58% of respondents, however there was little to choose between "Sports Based", "Education Based" and "Health Based" with 15 citations or 3% of respondents covering all three options.

There is an obvious gender difference emerging in this particular case with 104 male respondents, or 73.2%, choosing "Sports Based Activities" as against 46.7% of women whereas 64.5% of women chose "Health Based Activities" compared to 42.9% of men.

The statistics emerging from this question offer clear pointers for local development agencies in the efforts to engage local residents and these efforts can be further informed by combining information from previous answers. If one combines these activity based preferences with the timing and frequency based responses noted earlier.

It is clear that the best way to engage the male population in Ballymun is to offer sports based activities, in the evenings, on weekdays, all year round. Similarly, it can be deduced that the best way to engage the female population is to offer health based and education based activities in the mornings and evenings, on weekdays, all year round.

Only 4 respondents, less than 1% of the total sample surveyed said they were interested in none of the options offered. When compared to the 62.3% who said they were not involved in their community and the 43.6% who said they would not like to get involved in their community, this identification of focused, targeted local development programmes provides a clear signal to local agencies of actions necessary to support meaningful community participation in Ballymun.

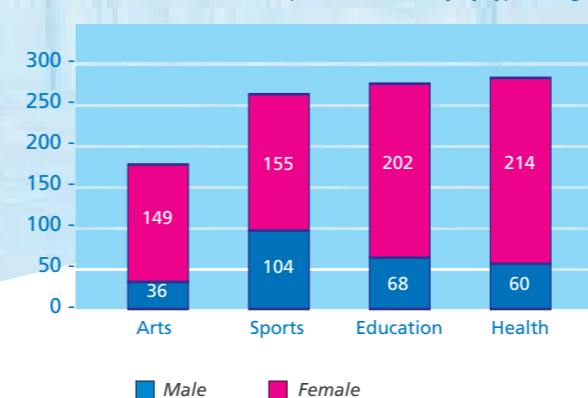
“



...more community things... meetings... get the people all together and let the people in Ballymun say what they want

”

Table 10: Preferences expressed for activity by type and gender.

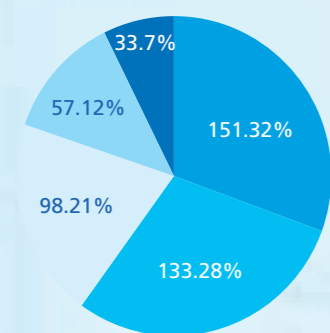


“...I went to many meetings about the housing in Ballymun and they always bring a ‘hob-nob’ in... somebody bigger than us and we are always put down... our voice is never heard... our opinion is never taken”

“...we’ve gone to meetings but we might as well not have bothered our voices weren’t heard and that was it... nobody wanted to know”

“...information for all the residents... across the board... let everyone know exactly what is going on in their area... they say they have newsletters but they only come out sporadically when they feel they want to put one out”

Table 11: Residents opinion as to the value and impact of resident participation



■ Strongly agree ■ Agree
■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree
■ No opinion

When asked whether they felt their participation was valuable because it had an impact on matters concerning the Ballymun area respondents were given five options to select from.

The most common response was “strongly agree” with 151, or 32%, of responses. This was closely followed by “agree” with 133, or 28.2%. The full list of responses is illustrated in Table 11.

Over 60% of respondents either agreed or disagreed and if those who offered no opinions are excluded

64.7% of those who expressed an opinion believe that resident participation in Ballymun is valuable and has an impact.

This high level of positive affirmation should be considered alongside previous answers where 82.8% said they felt people in Ballymun didn’t have a voice when it came to matters concerning the area and 80.2% who said they felt people in Ballymun didn’t get enough information. Despite these obvious impediments to meaningful resident participation there are still a high percentage of Ballymun residents who believe their participation is valuable. This is surely an adequate invitation, even at this stage, to agencies and authorities to engage with local residents.

The male population offered a more negative response than their female counterparts with only 50% of the total number of respondents citing “strongly agree” and “agree” as their answers. This still compares favourably to the 40.7% who responded “disagree” and “strongly disagree”. The remaining 9.3% of males offered no opinion compared to only 6% of females.

There were also interesting differences between the age groups of the respondents surveyed. It would appear that the youngest age group surveyed, the 18 to 30 year olds, were most negative of all age groups although there was still an overall positive perception even within this age group.

The older the profile of the residents surveyed, the more they felt that resident participation in Ballymun is valuable.



BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Throughout the research a number of key issues emerged that should be regarded as significant barriers to meaningful participation. In fact some of the most startling findings of this research could be categorised under this heading. If nothing else, these findings identify, clearly and unequivocally, priority issues to be addressed.

The provision and availability of information has been highlighted throughout this research as an issue of significant concern to the residents surveyed.

An overwhelming 380 respondents or 80.5% said they didn’t receive enough information.

While organisations and agencies will argue that they commit significant resources to publicise their activities, services and events it is undoubtedly “back to the drawing board” time.

When asked how they find out at present about what is happening in the area the most common answers are by word of mouth, 66.3% and by newsletter, 52.5%.

It is not clear how much money is spent annually in Ballymun supporting word-of-mouth, the most effective information medium. Information via local political representatives accounts for just 1%, and through local community representatives the return is equally low at 3.6%.

When asked how they would like to receive information there are four main information channels identified as follows:

- *Newsletter* 325 68.9%
- *By post* 150 31.8%
- *Word of mouth* 131 27.8%
- *Public meetings* 103 21.8%

Other information channels like Community TV, Text Message and Newspaper Articles are all requested by residents albeit in smaller numbers. It is clear from the results of the survey that the existing information channels of word-of-mouth and newsletters need to be continued and expanded, and further augmented with a concerted postal campaign; a series of public meetings; text messaging – particularly for the 18 to 60 age group, and any other conceivable information channel that can reasonably be developed and sustained.

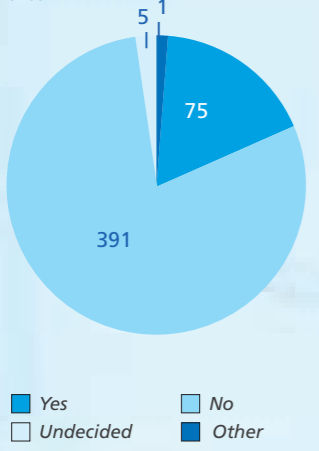
Only 12 respondents out of 472, 2.5%, said they don’t want to be kept informed. Once again the rate of apathy is extremely low.

“...door-to-door... put a face to a name... one-on-one... that’s my name... that’s my number, any queries you contact me... build the trust with the residents... you need people with a known face in Ballymun... a local person”

Meaningful resident participation depends on higher levels of involvement based on a shared vision, trust and understanding



Table 12: Do residents have a voice when it comes to matters concerning the Ballymun area?



When asked whether residents in Ballymun had a voice when it comes to matters concerning the Ballymun area the responses elicited represent the most damning commentary of those surveyed of the perceived current effectiveness of resident involvement in Ballymun. 391 of the 472 respondents, or 82.8%, answered “No”. Only 75 people, or 15.9% answered “Yes” with the remaining 6 respondents categorised as “Undecided” [Table 12].

Given some of the previous findings of this research this extremely high percentage of resident exclusion is hardly surprising. With over 80% of respondents stating they don’t receive enough information and only 31% of residents surveyed currently active in their community it is obvious that the relationship between local people and the agencies that serve them is in urgent need of review.

In the light of these responses the challenges and opportunities facing local development agencies, statutory and non-statutory, become apparent.

This can only be achieved if there is transparency between all the actors involved; mutual respect of the rights and opinions of all; a working communication and feedback framework, and a willingness to consult, debate and compromise.

With over 85% of respondents stating that they do not think they have a voice the demand and necessity for change is overwhelming. Further insight into current resident perceptions was provided when residents were asked how they would ensure their voice was heard if an issue that concerned them emerged. Respondents were offered 7 options as follows:

- Complain to the relevant authority
- Attend a public meeting
- Take part in a demonstration or protest
- Write a letter
- Contact your political representative
- Contact your community representative
- Organise a media campaign

They were asked to grade each option in terms of effectiveness on a scale of 1 to 5; 1 being least effective; 5 being most effective. Each answer was then afforded an appropriate value:

1. meaning least effective minus two points
2. meaning less effective minus one point
3. meaning neutral zero points
4. meaning effective one point
5. meaning most effective two points

By multiplying the number of appropriate responses by the relevant number of points awarded to each answer the result in Table 13 emerged.

While six of the seven options returned a positive rating there is a clear opinion expressed by the 472 respondents that “taking part in a demonstration or protest” is regarded as the most effective means of ensuring that their voice would be heard regarding an issue that concerned them.

170 respondents or 36% said that writing a letter was the least effective way of being heard. The more formal channels of expressing their opinions like contacting their political or community representatives only barely returned a positive rating.

Of opinions expressed citing the most effective means of ensuring their voice was heard complaining to the relevant authority scored 190 maximum values compared to 193 maximum values for taking part in a demonstration or protest. Attending a public meeting attracted the lowest number of minimum values with 87.

It is evident from the responses that formal channels of complaint or voicing an opinion are not perceived as effective for the sample surveyed. Researchers noted a “siege mentality” evident among respondents when answering this question.

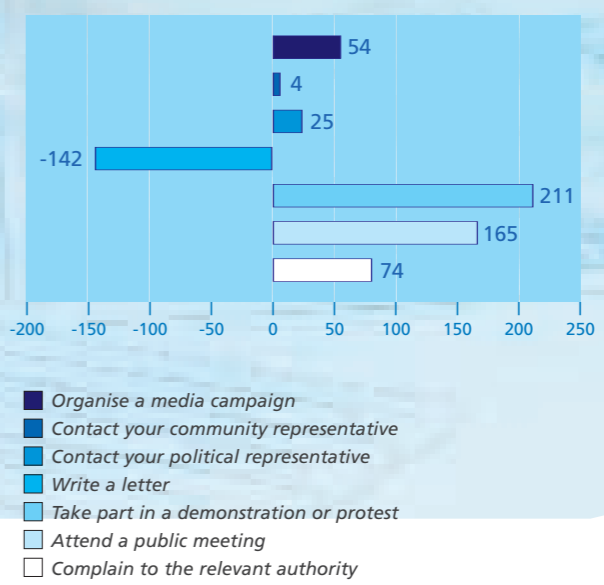
This can perhaps be partly explained by the current low levels of community engagement, the lack of an effective information dissemination strategy and the fact that an overwhelming majority of those surveyed do not feel they have a voice when it comes to matters concerning the Ballymun area.

It is interesting to note the preferences expressed here in relation to the communities perceived capacity and willingness to act. A clearly expressed willingness to take part in a demonstration or protest, attend public meetings, organise media campaigns and complain to the relevant authorities can hardly be interpreted as apathetic or passive. Indeed one could suggest that the people from Ballymun surveyed during this research felt excluded and disenfranchised but they are anything but passive acceptors of their current circumstances.

There is a significant resource and interest within the community that could be mobilised toward a positive outcome and future for the area.

This assertion is underpinned by the 56.4% of respondents who said they would like to be more involved in their community and the 65.7% who responded positively when the question was focussed on specific issues.

Table 13: Preferred methods to address an issue among respondents.



“

...I'd love it if they had a few more clubs and things in the area for children and particularly teenagers... and suit the pockets of Ballymun people who don't have a lot of money



”

“

...there's been a lot of promises... they are coming through on them now but they are leaving the place in a terrible state

”

RESIDENTS PREFERENCES

Throughout the survey residents were offered a series of possible options to choose from in selecting their response. In addition to this multiple choice format residents were also asked two qualitative questions to identify what could be done to help residents get more involved in their community and what support local development agencies could offer to assist the growth of meaningful resident participation.

There were no multiple choice options presented in these questions and residents were encouraged to set the agenda themselves and register their opinion. Preferences expressed by residents in response to these questions confirm the findings of the previous multiple choice questions and add some clear pointers for future local development actions. The responses elicited also confirm the views expressed during the Video Booth interviews. There was a significant cross over in responses with residents identifying similar actions in response to both questions.

Similar key themes emerged from both questions which are categorised below:

How to get residents more involved

- **Information**
Newsletters, updates, door-to-door, better communication
- **Events**
Meetings, awareness days, workshops, training, social events, team building, coffee mornings
- **Employment**
Jobs for residents in Ballymun particularly on the regeneration
- **Youth**
Facilities, activities, clubs
- **Listen**
Let residents have their say
- **Safety**
Neighbourhood watch, residents associations, community policing
- **Children**
Childcare, playgrounds

How local development agencies can support resident involvement

- **Financial Resources**
to directly target resident participation
- **Information**
Newsletters, door-to-door
- **Events**
Meetings, social events, coffee mornings
- **Children**
Childcare
- **Youth**
Youth supports, facilities, clubs
- **Employment**
Jobs for residents, local employment, pay local volunteers
- **Safety**
Neighbourhood councils, policing
- **Listen**
Take notice of resident opinion

Once again the message from residents is loud and clear, 31% identify more funding into the local areas as the key support local development agencies could offer local residents to help them get involved in their area. 24% again highlight the issue of information as being key to greater local involvement.

Residents could have suggested anything they liked, and indeed some of the responses although recorded are not printable in this document, however a significant percentage have again identified information, more events and meetings for residents and increased funding as key issues if meaningful resident participation is to be achieved.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVE

In an effort to ascertain whether the future for Ballymun, in the opinion of the residents who live there, will be better as a result of the changes currently taking place respondents were given five options to select in response to a statement that current changes would benefit the whole community:

The most common response was "disagree" with 141, or 30%, of responses. This was closely followed by "agree" with 132, or 28%. The full list of responses is illustrated in Table 16.

Despite the fact that "disagree" was the most common single answer the combined positive answers of "agree" and "strongly agree" still account for 50% of the total opinion expressed which offers positive hope. In the light of previous answers it is interesting and encouraging that such a high percentage of people are positively disposed to the developments taking place in the area.

Significantly, analysis of this question by gender shows that the female population are more positive in their assessment of the future prospects. 53% of females either agree or strongly agree compared to only 43% of male respondents. Only 24 respondents, or 5% of those surveyed offered no opinion, an indicator perhaps of the high level of interest by residents and the low level of apathy.

Table 16: The changes in Ballymun will benefit the whole community.

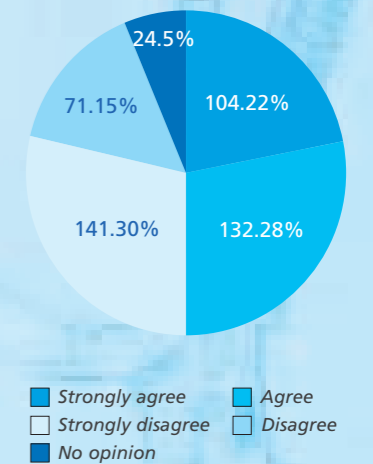


Table 14: What could be done to get residents more involved in their community?

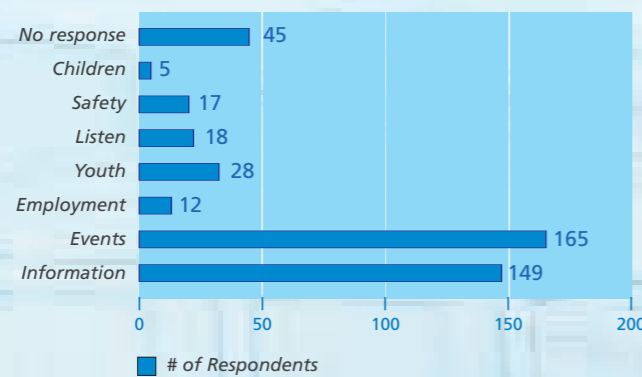
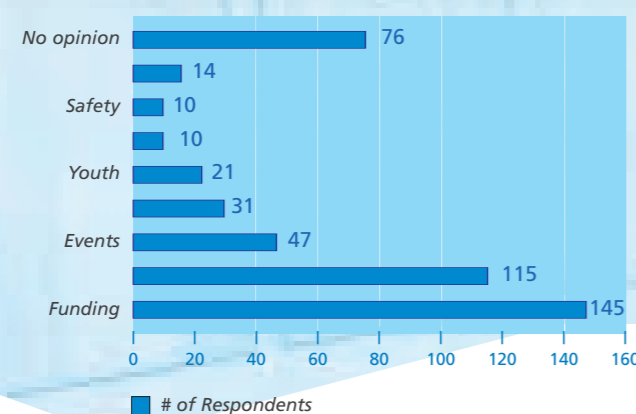


Table 15: What support could agencies give to support resident participation?



The numbers of responses for each category are as in Table 14.

There are clear messages contained within these responses if meaningful resident participation is to be achieved. Of the residents surveyed 35% suggested that they would like more events to engage the community and 32% requested more information.

These responses can be interpreted as requests for improved interaction with the residents to help them work together in the community.

Recommendations

There are a number of steps and measures that can be implemented to support the growth of meaningful resident participation in Ballymun



Based on the results of the research there are a number of steps and measures that can be implemented to support the growth of meaningful resident participation in Ballymun. None of the recommendations below should be addressed in isolation. What is required is a coherent and incremental re-working of local development structures and approaches. Funding for existing programmes and models of action that have thus far proved ineffective should be reconsidered.

1. RESIDENTS ASSOCIATIONS

A significant number of residents surveyed lamented the demise of residents associations throughout the area. Residents associations could ensure that the existing structures are more meaningful to local residents by acting as a link between, and a support to, the Area Forums and the Ballymun Neighbourhood Council.

The present structure with the Area Forums and the Ballymun Neighbourhood Council lacks support and engagement at local level as evidenced in the research where only 3.6% of respondents said they receive information from their community representative. This analysis is further supported by previous research conducted with community representatives themselves.⁶ It is unclear from the research whether this is a resource or an operational issue but what is clear is that it is a crucial issue that needs to be addressed.

Any move to reinstate residents associations should be taken with due care to ensure that these new structures offer a positive contribution to the development of the area and are in fact the first level of local governance in Ballymun. The relationship between authority and responsibility for Ballymun residents should be built from this level, with residents associations authorised to make certain decisions and responsible for overseeing their implementation. The establishing of properly managed and resourced residents associations could be the first step towards devolved or decentralised neighbourhood governance.

This aspiration should be established as a clear medium-term goal over the next eighteen to twenty-four months to allow sufficient time for training and development. Ultimate responsibility for addressing this recommendation rests with Dublin City Council as the relevant local authority.

2. MAKE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT MORE LOCAL

There appears to be a significant difference between the perspective of local development and statutory agencies and that of local residents.

Agencies, almost all of which have a mandate for Ballymun as a whole or a community of interest throughout Ballymun, tend to focus on issues pertaining to Ballymun in its entirety.

For the majority of local residents surveyed the most prominent issues tend to have a more local focus relating to Poppintree; Balcurris; Coultrey, Shangan and Silloge and indeed even to a more local level concerning their immediate area like Sandyhill; Whiteacre; Forrestwood; Belclare; Woodhazel and Druid Court to name just a sample of areas mentioned.

While the strategic Ballymun focus of local development and statutory agencies is necessary and should be maintained, engaging local residents needs to be achieved at a more local and meaningful level. This will require significant additional resources in terms of a cohort of "out of office" local development workers. These workers may conduct their work on a door-to-door basis; be instantly recognisable to their community; could respond to issues being raised at a micro level; could act as the conduit between the residents of Ballymun and the agencies serving them; could facilitate better engagement of local residents in existing structures like Area Forums, Ballymun Neighbourhood Council, etc. In employment terms, positive discrimination in favour of Ballymun residents should be considered in advertising and filling positions of this nature. At a minimum existing local development workers should examine current work practices to respond to requests from the community for closer interaction and familiarity.

Any new programme aimed at engaging the local community should be designed with a timeframe consistent with the remaining period of planned regeneration.

⁶ "Community Participation in Local Development Structures in Ballymun" 2005.



...it is unrealistic to expect or presume that a single or simple solution exist within local development circles of the community in Ballymun

...current dissemination model is not reaching the intended targets and needs to be reassessed

Developing this local development approach should be agreed as a short-term goal over the next six to twelve months and this recommendation should be addressed by Dublin City Council in partnership with the main local development agencies.

3. INFORMATION FLOWS

Word of mouth and newsletters are the most common existing and desired forms of information flow as indicated by the research. It is unclear from the research how much money is being spent annually on providing information into the community; however, what is clear is that the current dissemination model is not reaching the intended targets and needs to be reassessed.

Consideration should be given to using "word-of-mouth" as having an information channel to establish regular contact with residents, pass on relevant information and gather appropriate feedback. These workers could easily establish what type of information tool works best with the residents in their area be it text message, by post, through meetings or by newsletter. If nothing else, this would address the "misinformation" that predominates throughout the area.

With regard to newsletters a clear separation between issues concerning the regeneration and other areas of interest should be made. Once again the focus should be more local for areas within Ballymun rather than focusing entirely on Ballymun as a whole.

An example of a model for a newsletter that may address the current deficit would be as follows:

- *An eight page tabloid publication*
- *Issued every two weeks*
- *Delivered to every home, office and workplace in Ballymun*
- *Four pages of general information pertaining to Ballymun as a whole or communities of interest*
- *Four pages of locally specific information pertaining to each of the five area forums.*
- *The priority should be on advertising events and activities that are planned in the future and not just reporting on past events.*
- *The fortnightly newsletter should encourage feedback from residents to at least one issue pertaining to Ballymun as a whole and one pertaining to each specific area. Feedback mechanisms should offer as wide a variety as possible to include SMS, by post, by phone, etc.*
- *Any new newsletter published should be for all those working and living in the community. It should be neither owned nor controlled by any existing organisation.*
- *It may be possible to establish a body specifically to produce this fortnightly newsletter and accurate costings should be drafted and considered in line with new local developed structures that may emerge.*

A reworking or existing information channels should be prioritised as a short-term goal and achieved within the next six to twelve months. This recommendation should be addressed by all those groups and agencies working to serve the community in Ballymun

4. FUNDING

Access to funding at a local level is highlighted throughout the research as a significant obstacle to increased local involvement. A specific annual budget for each local area should be made available to be spent within broad criteria at the discretion of the local community and their residents associations.

The authority to allocate and spend this budget should be accompanied with a responsibility to implement actions and maintain the outcomes. Although there is a number of existing small grant schemes within Ballymun the application procedures, can appear too bureaucratic and too prescriptive in terms of spending options and many informal residents' groups may feel excluded. This should be considered by grant making bodies.

In the context of the regeneration as a whole, and indeed the total local development budget available in Ballymun, funding at this local level, primarily through residents associations, is insignificant in financial terms but potentially groundbreaking in terms of outcomes and engagement levels. This process may require an annual budget of €2m, excluding administration, which could be increased or reduced depending on the evaluation of outcomes achieved.

The development of the necessary structures and procedures to implement this type of financial programme as an incentive to greater community participation should be set as a medium term goal and achieved within a twelve to eighteen month period.

5. TARGETED INTERVENTIONS

The demand for the development of a wide range of targeted interventions is clear from the research conducted. These new interventions or programmes should be targeted in terms of time and activity. From the research it is clear that certain types of activities attract certain cohorts of the community for example;

- *Sports based activities in the evenings on weekdays are of interest to 73.2% of male respondents*
- *Health based activities in the mornings or evenings on weekdays are of interest to 64.5% of female respondents*

Regardless of any specific trend for any particular type of activity the overall conclusion is that meaningful resident participation can not be achieved on a 9 to 5 basis. Activities and events that occur outside normal office hours are more likely to attract a broad spectrum of users and participants than the normal working day approach.

There is a clear demand for a wide variety of social and cultural community events at a local level to help establish a community spirit within the new neighbourhoods of Ballymun and reinvigorate community involvement within the existing neighbourhoods.

While these demands would place a significant human resource burden on existing staff and would require a change in existing work practices they could be included as a core element of the terms and conditions of any new local development staff engaged as part of a more intensive local development programme.

6. NEW LOCAL DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS

At no point in the answers collated is there any clear recommendation of what exactly should be done, or more importantly what exactly should be done differently.

While the research highlights repeated requests for better and more thorough dissemination of information, more regular and appropriate meetings, increased funding into the areas, more activities for children and youth, more community facilities, etc it is unrealistic to expect or presume that a single or simple solution exists within local development circles of the community in Ballymun.

Thinking outside the box is a phrase often used in local development circles. The current situation in Ballymun is certainly one which requires such action. It emerged during the research that there is a significant deficit in terms of strategies or approaches that may help enhance the current levels and quality of resident participation. People living and working in Ballymun are perhaps as much victims of their own circumstances as anything else and are unable or unwilling for a variety of reasons to think beyond the current structures and activities. While the emergence of the same answers over and over adds coherence to the research conducted it also highlights a limited perspective on what could and should be done to address the current deficits.

It is recommended that local development experts in Ballymun broaden their awareness of local development models in use in other areas throughout Ireland and Europe.

While circumstances in each Member State have their own locally specific issues, cultural aspects and structural constraints or enablers, the issue of meaningful resident participation is not a phenomenon unique to Ballymun and indeed the daily problems encountered by Ballymun residents and those working to assist them have a distinctly global relevance. It is therefore conceivable that some of the local development approaches in use throughout Europe may be relevant and applicable in the context of Ballymun.

Specific models for consideration should include The Deventer Neighbourhood Approach, a unique neighbourhood governance programme that has enjoyed considerable success in Deventer, Holland and Abierto Hasta el Amanecer, a targeted youth intervention programme from Spain. It must be stressed, that these examples are just the tip of the iceberg in terms of different approaches and innovative interventions that have been tried and tested elsewhere to good effect. In short there is no shortage of information and experience throughout Europe and beyond; it remains to be seen whether there is enough energy and courage within Ballymun to bring the best possible local development supports to the area.

The emergence of the best possible local development supports in Ballymun should be the ultimate long-term goal of community and statutory agencies and should be developed and implemented within the next 3 years.

Conclusion

“

...I'd like to see Ballymun a better place where children can play and people can feel safe



”

The research highlights a number of critical issues that need to be addressed if the objective of supporting meaningful resident participation is to be achieved. These issues have already been outlined throughout this text and in the recommendations contained herein. In conclusion, however, there are some additional comments that are worthy of note based on the analysis of the responses and on viewing the footage from the video booth.

The context of the research should be taken into consideration. It is an accepted fact by residents, agencies and those working to develop the new Ballymun that the area is like a large building site. The largest “knock and re-build” regeneration programme in the history of the state was always going to create minor and major problems for all of those involved whether residents or workers. Despite the obvious challenges that face all concerned the residents surveyed during this research continue to strive and hope for a better place to live, raise a family and work.

There is an obvious need to address current deficits with regard to the following issues:

- *information flows*
- *scheduling of activities*
- *structures for engagement*
- *the integrity of relationships that exist in Ballymun*

A number of significant positive indicators emerged during the research that are less easily identifiable in quantitative terms.

Firstly, no resident approached by the research team refused to answer the questionnaire. Respondents gave freely of their time and invested significant thought into completing the questionnaire whether positively or negatively disposed to either the current situation in Ballymun or the service providers in the area. Residents in Ballymun were willing to express their opinion in the hope that their voice would be heard and their opinions acted upon.

Secondly, while many of those interviewed were dismayed and disappointed with the current state of affairs, very few were angry. There is a realism that permeates the entire process that demonstrates the capacity of Ballymun residents to appraise and evaluate current circumstances and point the way forward for the future.

Arguments presented are both coherent and rational and should be addressed by all agencies serving the residents of Ballymun in the same coherent and rational manner.

It is incumbent on all those in positions of authority in the community and in the agencies that serve the community to continue to strive for the best possible outcome for Ballymun and its residents. Commitment to supporting meaningful resident participation is an essential first step.

SUPPORTING MEANINGFUL RESIDENT PARTICIPATION

Research conducted by the SOLAS DEVELOPMENT CENTRE
on behalf of The Community Development Working Group of Ballymun Partnership
Co-funded by the Ballymun Anti-Poverty Network, the Solas Development Centre and Ballymun Partnership

Questionnaire

Name: _____

Where In Ballymun do you live? _____

How long have you lived in Ballymun? _____

Which age group do you belong to? 18 to 30 31 to 45 46 to 60 61+
 Male Female

Question 1

Are you involved in your community in any way?

Yes No Not at present

If Yes, in what way?

Tick as appropriate: Member of a club
 Member of an organisation
 Member of a committee
 Other _____

How often are you involved?

Tick as appropriate: Once a week
 More than once a week
 Once a month
 More than once a month
 Once a year
 More than once a year

If No, why?

Tick as appropriate: Too busy
 Not enough information
 Not made welcome
 Not invited
 Unsuitable times
 Childcare
 Other _____
 Couldn't be bothered

If Not at present, why?

Tick as appropriate: Work reasons
 Family reasons
 Health reasons
 Previous negative experience
 Too much paperwork
 Higher risk (Health & Safety etc)
 Too difficult in today's society
 Local politics

Question 2

Would you like to be more involved in your community?

- Yes No

If Yes, what time commitment would you be willing to give?

- Once a week
- Once a fortnight
- Once a month
- Once every 3 months
- As often as necessary

If No, why?

Tick as appropriate:

- Too shy
- Too busy
- Don't care
- Don't see the value
- Other _____

Question 3

If you are involved or were thinking about getting involved in your community what time of day, week and year suits you best for meetings or events?

Tick as appropriate:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mornings | <input type="checkbox"/> Week days | <input type="checkbox"/> Spring |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Afternoons | <input type="checkbox"/> Weekend | <input type="checkbox"/> Summer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Evenings | <input type="checkbox"/> Any Day | <input type="checkbox"/> Autumn |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anytime | | <input type="checkbox"/> Winter |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> All Year |

Question 4

Do you think residents in Ballymun receive enough information about events and activities that happen in the area?

- Yes No

How do you find out about what is happening in your area?

Tick as appropriate:

- Public meetings
- Newsletters
- Newspaper articles
- Political representative
- Community representative
- Word of mouth
- Other _____
- I don't find out

How would you like to be kept informed of things happening in the area in the future?

Tick as appropriate:

- Public meetings
- Newsletter
- By post
- Newspaper articles
- Community TV
- Text Message
- Word of mouth
- Other _____
- Don't want to be informed

Question 5

How interested are you in developments affecting the following issues on a scale of 1 to 5? 1 = not interested: 5 = very interested

Tick as appropriate:

- | | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Childcare | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| Community Facilities | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| Education | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| Environment | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| Healthcare | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| Housing | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| Safety | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| Transport | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| Youth | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |

Would you be willing to get involved with groups or organisations discussing the above issues?

- Yes No

If Yes, what would you be willing to do?

Tick as appropriate:

- Attend meeting
- Go to workshops
- Answer a text
- Answer a questionnaire
- Go on a committee
- Other _____

If No, why not?

Tick as appropriate:

- Too shy
- Too busy
- Don't care
- Don't see the value
- Other _____

Question 6

Do you think residents in Ballymun have a voice when it comes to matters concerning the Ballymun area?

- Yes No

Question 7

**If you were concerned about an issue in your area how would you ensure that your voice was heard?
Please grade from 1 to 5; 1 being least effective and 5 being most effective.**

Tick as appropriate:

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Complain to the relevant authority | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| Attend Public meeting | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| Take part in a Demonstration/Protest | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| Write a letter | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| Contact your Political Representative | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| Contact your Community Representative | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| Organise a Media campaign | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| Other _____ | | | | | |

Question 8

How do you feel about the following statement? "Resident participation in Ballymun is valuable because it has an impact on decisions made in the area."

- Tick as appropriate:
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - No opinion

Question 9

What do you think could be done to help residents work together in the community?

Question 10

What support could local development agencies give to help you get involved in activities in your area?

Question 11

How do you feel about the following statement? "The changes happening in Ballymun will benefit the whole community"

- Tick as appropriate:
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - No opinion

Question 12

If you were to get involved in your community in what way would you like to participate?

- Tick as appropriate:
- Decision making
 - Planning
 - Volunteer
 - Training

What would you be more interested in doing?

- Tick as appropriate:
- Attend local meetings
 - Weekly
 - Monthly
 - Attend workshops
 - Answer questionnaires
 - Join a committee
 - Organise events
 - Other _____

Question 13

If new community involvement programmes were being developed which of the following types of activities would interest you?

- Arts based activities
- Sports based activities
- Education based activities
- Health based activities

VIDEO BOOTH QUESTIONNAIRE

Question 1

Do you think the residents of Ballymun have a voice when it comes to matters Concerning the Ballymun area?

Question 2

How do you feel you could get involved in your area?

Question 3

What do you think could be done to help residents work together in the community?