



**Proposal:
Ballymun Centre for Lifelong Learning**

March 2006

Prepared by Ballymun Partnership Education Working Group

Introduction

Ballymun as an area of redevelopment, innovation and rapid change both physically and socially, has grown to value the possibilities that lie in adult education and lifelong learning. For many residents of the area formal educational attainment and third level opportunities were not seen as real possibilities in the past, therefore the opportunity to access education at a later stage in ones life has become an essential and realistic option for many.

The population of Ballymun was estimated to be 15,229 in 2002 (CSO 2002). Approximately 10,620 of this population are over the age of 15 (Ballymun Partnership 2003.) The area has, in the past, been associated with high levels of unemployment and early school leaving. Recent statistics show that the unemployment rate is 14.4% (International Labour Statistics) in comparison with 4.3% nationally (Ronayne, 2001). Furthermore there still continues to be high levels of early school leaving within the area with approximately 50% of young people leaving Ballymun schools without completing the senior cycle (Ryan, 2004).

Background to Ballymun Partnership Lifelong Learning Centre Proposal

Ballymun Partnership is a government funded local development partnership company for Ballymun. It promotes social and economic inclusion in Ballymun through the implementation of area based strategic plans. Its principal areas of work are:

- Childhood Development
- Community Development
- Education
- Enterprise and Employment
- Economic Development

The organisation focuses its work to support children, families and communities in Ballymun.

Through its representative structure the Partnership's work is premised on the principle of community development and promotes the concept of equitable relationships while embracing difference. The Partnership facilitates inter sectoral and inter agency work by supporting opportunities for organisations and groups with a shared sense of purpose and a commitment to the development of Ballymun to work together. This work is informed by the principles of mutual respect, trust and leadership and pursues a shared vision by sharing information, responsibility, resources, expertise, decision-making and accountability.

In April 2005 Ballymun Partnership strengthened its Education Working Group by widening membership to all stakeholders with an interest in developing education provision and achievement for Ballymun. (Appendix 1 provides a list of Education Working Group members.) Ballymun Partnership wrote to the CEO of the CDVEC in August 2005 notifying that a process was to be initiated to discuss possibilities for the development of the old Ballymun Senior Comprehensive School building due to be vacated in the Summer of

2006. In September 2005 the Education Working Group established a sub group called the Lifelong Learning / Adult Education sub group to look into the possibilities for the establishment of a Lifelong Learning Centre in Ballymun; a centre that could be housed in the old Ballymun Senior Comprehensive School building. Members of this sub group are:

Name	Organisation
Breda O'Brien	Principal, CDVEC Whitehall College of Further Education
Jacqui Caulfield	Co-ordinator, CDVEC Ballymun Youthreach
Mary Love	Co-ordinator, CDVEC Ballymun Adult Read and Write Scheme
Nuala Whelan	Assistant Manager, Ballymun Job Centre
Birte Schlesselmann	Assistant Project Manager, Community and Family Training Agency
Catherine Kaye	Education Officer, Ballymun Local Drugs Task Force
John Murphy	Manager, Ballymun Men's Centre
Kevin O'Higgins / Frank Brady	Co-ordinator, Jesuit University Support and Training
Gerry Campbell	Adult Education Director, Trinity Comprehensive School
Chris O'Malley	Chairperson, Ballymun Partnership
Colma Nic Lughadha	Education Programme Manager, Ballymun Partnership

At its first meeting this sub group agreed to consult, through a schedule of questions pertinent to the establishment of a lifelong learning centre, with a variety of education organisations and groups and relevant others working in Ballymun. The sub group reviewed and compiled the responses received through this consultation and agreed to formulate a proposal for a Lifelong Learning Centre for Ballymun that could be presented, in particular to the CDVEC, for consideration and support, but that could also be presented to other bodies with a role in promoting lifelong learning.

National and EU Policy and Strategy:

In March 2002 a meeting of the EU heads of States and Governments recognised education, training and employability as central to the achievement of Europe becoming the world's most dynamic knowledge based economy by 2010. Lifelong learning is a core element of this strategy. It is seen by the EU Commission as paramount not only to competitiveness and employability but to social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development. The Commission defines lifelong learning as "all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence, within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective." (Europa, 2003)

Nationally both the White Paper on Adult Education (DES, 2000) and the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (Irish Government, 2000) refer to the importance of National Lifelong Learning strategies and echo the EU Commission's emphasis on developing objectives and actions.

Currently within the Ballymun area there are many organisations involved in the delivery of adult education and training. Ballymun Partnership's Lifelong Learning and Training Strategy (Ryan, 2006) asserts that a Lifelong Learning

Centre would encourage the connectivity of lifelong learning within the area and would act as a focal point for adult learning in the community. A Lifelong Learning Centre would encourage organisations to plan adult education together in a structured and strategic way. For the learner a physical space dedicated to lifelong learning and adult education and training may ensure greater access to a structured life long learning pathway with clear progression routes building on existing skills, competencies, knowledge and abilities.

Target groups

It is envisaged that those who would benefit from a Ballymun Lifelong Learning Centre would be aged 16+ who may be disadvantaged educationally, socially or within the labour market and wanting to access training or education or guidance. Essentially target groups arising from the initiatives proposed in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy and Sustaining Progress. A list of these target groups is included as Appendix 2.

It is proposed that a Lifelong Learning centre will enable this target group to access lifelong learning opportunities, which for some may provide a springboard into a sustainable career and for others may encourage active participation in society. This target group consists of individuals who have low levels of education, lack of appropriate work experience and who may be socially disadvantaged. This centre will promote lifelong learning as an accessible opportunity for all no matter what their previous experiences or attainments have been while also empowering the individual to reach his or her own potential. The centre will aim to attract learners on the learning continuum from preparatory education and introductory programmes to nationally accredited academic courses.

Adult Training & Education Providers

The Lifelong Learning Centre is intended to benefit all learners in Ballymun, therefore potential centre programme providers may include:

- Community based education providers
- Providers funded by statutory bodies and government departments such as VEC, FÁS, HSE, EU Funding, DETE, DSFA
- Universities

The Centre would ensure that services are not duplicated and that there is a co-ordinated and more strategic approach to the delivery of lifelong learning by the various providers in the Ballymun area. The cooperation of services will aim to encourage an interagency approach to working, promoting the development of a seamless service to students. Models of interagency working encourage positive interaction and co-operation between organisations delivering related services. This in turn tends to impact positively on learners who are facilitated within the system in a more co-ordinated manner to achieve their objectives. The Lifelong Learning Centre, by its very nature, will contribute to the development of an interagency approach to the delivery of a Lifelong Learning Strategy for Ballymun.

Education Programmes

The Centre will facilitate a wide variety of Lifelong Learning opportunities, including formal and non-formal programmes and informal learning experiences. It will attract those who are out of the formal education system, those who are in low skill employment, those who are accessing labour market initiatives and those who are accessing basic skills training. The Centre will aim to attract non-profit making education and training providers and the various support services required for learners including welfare advice, occupational and educational guidance, mentoring and advocacy, learning support and childcare information.

We believe that this Centre will be an innovation in Ballymun and will cater for the needs of Ballymun learners in a structured but flexible manner.

The centre will allow for interagency working ensuring that the maximum amount of Lifelong Learning opportunities are available within the centre.

Vision for a Lifelong Learning Centre

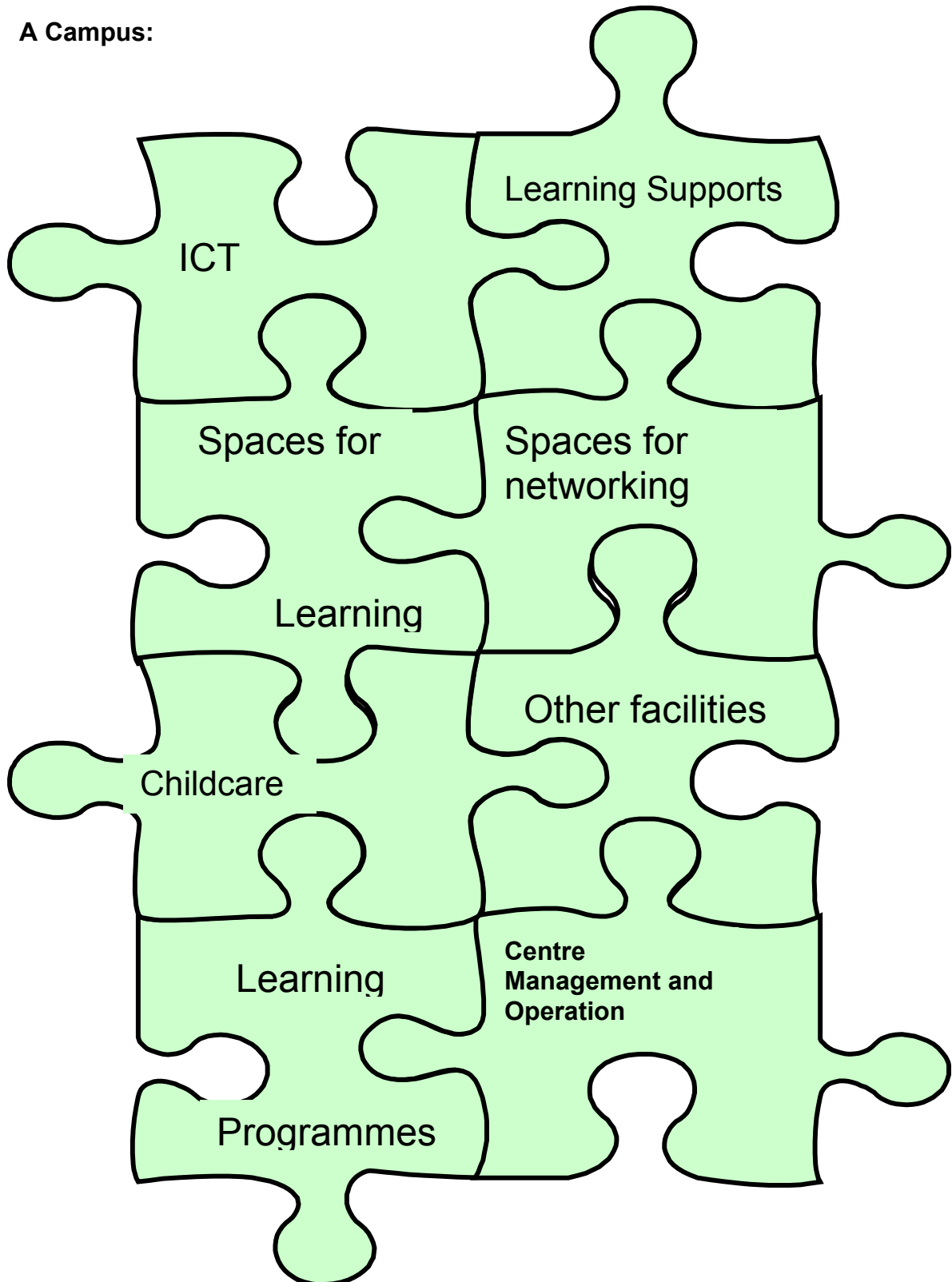
It is envisioned that a Ballymun Lifelong Learning Centre would aspire to be

- a learner centred centre
- a centre that invests in, supports and builds on existing programmes and services
- a campus where a diversity of learning organisations and their programmes co-exist
- a centre that promotes cohesion and co-ordination of education services
- a centre that offers a continuum of progression from pre formal education programmes to formal education programmes
- a centre that facilitates the provision of non-formal learning programmes
- a centre that encourages creativity and flexibility in the provision of education
- a centre that is accessible to all learners over 16 years of age providing programmes in an open, inclusive and supportive ambience
- an attractive, well resourced centre where programmes are delivered to the highest quality by qualified trainers and tutors
- a centre where learners / students are welcome to meet and to network as well as attend learning programmes

What would this vision look like in practice?

The jigsaw portrayal of our vision for a Lifelong Learning Centre for Ballymun symbolises a centre that is a sum of many parts. These parts when fitted together create a picture, a picture which can be added to over time or that can have pieces removed from it, as the centre is reviewed and evaluated. Page 6 presents a little more detail on the parts that would create the whole:

A Campus:



A Campus:

- ICT: E-learning facilities, Language software. Computer room, Internet, Multi media
- Childcare: Crèche
- Spaces for learning: Training rooms, Study rooms, Meeting rooms, Library, Arts and Crafts room, Function room, Specialist rooms
- Spaces for networking: Café, Garden area, Recreation area
- Learning Supports: including welfare advice, occupational and educational guidance, mentoring and advocacy, learning support and childcare information.
- Other facilities: Reception area, Shop, Car Park, Education Guidance, Education Psychologist
- Learning Programmes: a continuum of programmes from preparatory education and introductory level to nationally accredited academic courses.
- Centre Management and Operation: Building owned by one entity, e.g. the CDVEC, with a local management structure consisting of representation of the owners and local stakeholders. A designated staff team with responsibility for facilities and lifelong learning development.

Conclusion

Ballymun is in a fortunate position to have so many committed stakeholders who provide education and training programmes at all levels in Ballymun annually. In the context of the ongoing regeneration of the community an initiative to develop a Lifelong Learning Centre for Ballymun is a timely one.

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Appendix 1

Ballymun Partnership Education Working Group

Member	Organisation
Paula Heenan Chair	BEST School Completion Programme
Ciara Doyle	Drop In Well Family Resource Centre
Breeda McNamara	Ballymun Men's Centre
Paula Heenan	BEST School Completion Programme
Vicky Mc Dermott	BITE - Ballymun Initiative for Third Level Education
Nuala Whelan	Ballymun Job Centre
Jacqui Caulfield	CDVEC Youthreach
Mary Love	CDVEC Ballymun Adult Read & Write Scheme
Hanora Hanafin	DES Home School Community Liaison
Paddy Fitzgerald	Ballymun School Principal's Network
Tara Stacey	Ballymun Regional Youth Resource
Anne Keating	Ballymun Women's Resource Centre
Chris O'Malley	Chair Ballymun Partnership
Gerry Campbell	Trinity Comprehensive School
Paul Downes	Drumcondra Educational Disadvantage Centre
Kevin O'Higgins	Jesuit University Support and Training
Catherine Kaye	Ballymun Local Drugs Task Force
Breda O'Brien	CDVEC Whitehall College of Further Education
Anne Thornton	Traveller Teaching Service
Dave Bracken	Ballark Community Training Centre
Siobhan Herbert	Lifestart
Orla Conlan	DCU Access Office
Birte Schlesselmann	CAFTA - Community and Family Training Agency
Noirin Coghlan	Ballymun Partnership
Colma Nic Lughadha	Education Programme Manager
Irene O'Reilly	PACE
Trish Scanlon	Ballymun Regeneration Limited
Declan Dunne	Ballymun Partnership

Appendix 2

Target Groups

- The long term unemployed and those at risk of reverting to long term unemployment
- Those at risk of becoming long-term unemployed
- The under employed
- Low income families
- Women who are socially and economically disadvantaged
- Travellers
- Disabled people
- Low income family units
- Young people, who have left school early, especially those who have had direct experience of disadvantage or unemployment
- Others who are socially and economically disadvantaged due to
 - o homelessness,
 - o drug misuse,
 - o refugees / asylum seekers
 - o ex- prisoners

Source : ADM (2000)