



Written Communication Tool Review

Research conducted by
Bobby McCormack
On behalf of
Ballymun Anti Poverty Network (BAPN)

Review of methods used to communicate in print with the Ballymun community in 2005

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Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the many residents, various staff of organisations and also those who participated in the review and contributed to the completion of this piece of work.

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Preface

The Ballymun Anti Poverty Network (BAPN) was established in December 2002 in the context of the Government review of local and community development structures. While organisations within Ballymun had enjoyed close working relationships for a number of years, the review offered the opportunity to take a structured approach to examining the possibilities for greater co ordination of our work.

With resources secured through the Cohesion fund from The Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the BAPN initiated a number of exciting research projects to enhance and build on existing anti poverty and local development activity in Ballymun.

One theme that consistently emerges as a key challenge for community and local development organisations is effective communication and engagement with residents. It was in this context of improving communication with the local community in Ballymun that the BAPN decided it would be a useful exercise to review the use of existing communication tools in the form of Community Newspapers and local publications.

We were keen to explore how a community newspaper could enhance;

- Increased resident & community participation
- Improved communication with residents in a manner that engages them but also puts across the agencies message
- The profile of the new Ballymun in the minds of residents
- The development of an independent voice trusted by residents, community & agencies alike

More than one hundred and eighty five people contributed valuable insights and presented practical recommendations to be incorporated into this report, their collective wisdom forms the basis of this work.

On behalf of the BAPN I would like to express our thanks to those individuals and organisations that have engaged with us in the process of this research.

We would like to acknowledge the drive and enthusiasm of some key people who have been instrumental in the compilation of this report, namely the focus group participants, the interviewees, the communication review working group (Marie Lawless, Catherine Lane) and Bobby McCormack our researcher who dedicated considerable time and energy to this project. Their contributions give the research meaning and relevance.

The BAPN hope that this document and the recommendations contained within it will be a useful resource to those organisations who have an interest in developing more innovative and effective ways of communicating with other agencies and more importantly their key audience, the people of Ballymun.

Bernie Roe

Chairperson, Ballymun Anti Poverty Network 2003-2006

Introduction

Background to Review

A mid term review of the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme 2000 – 2006 was carried out by the Board of the Ballymun Partnership in December 2003. That review highlighted a number of priorities, including community participation and community leadership, as areas to be focused on for the remainder of the programme. At this time, Ballymun Anti Poverty Network (BAPN)¹ had also decided to focus on addressing levels of current communication strategies operating in Ballymun. In doing so, it was recognised that in order to support any meaningful resident participation, existing communication methods would have to be reviewed. Simultaneously, a piece of work was carried out on resident participation which highlighted that 80.5% residents reported that they didn't receive enough information and that the provision and availability of information was an issue of significant concern.²

The Ballymun Anti-Poverty Network (BAPN) secured funding through the Cohesion Funds from The Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs to develop a number of exciting initiatives, which were based on building current anti poverty and social inclusion activities in Ballymun. This piece of work was therefore one such initiative. In the context of improving communication with the local residents, BAPN decided to review the use of a communication tool (Community Newspaper). The main aim of the review was to explore how a community newspaper could enhance;

- Increased resident & community participation
- Improved communication with residents in a manner that engages individuals but also conveys profiles/positions of agencies;
- The profile of the new Ballymun in the minds of residents;
- The development of an independent voice trusted by residents, community & agencies alike;
- The celebration and documentation of active citizenship.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were as follows;

1. To document and evaluate existing newsheets, newsletters & newspapers;
2. To assess knowledge and attitudes of key stakeholders involved in the production of existing communication material in Ballymun. These are primarily the local residents, agencies/service providers and advertisers.
3. To draw on elements of best practice and learning from other community newspapers in operation both nationally and internationally in particular those presently undergoing or having undergone regeneration activities.
4. To assess, based on the findings of the review, the appropriateness of a community newspaper as an effective communication tool for Ballymun;
5. To recommend (if appropriate), a model and format for a community publication including cost and possible funding sources.

¹ Ballymun Anti-Poverty Network (BAPN) has members representing the following local development agencies in Ballymun; Ballymun Partnership, Ballymun Local Drugs Task Force, Drop in Well, Community and Family Training Agency (CAFTA), St. Margaret's Travellers Community Association, RAPID, Community Action Project (CAP) and Ballymun Men's Centre.

² Land, P and Associates (2006) *Is Anybody Listening*. Ballymun Partnership/ Ballymun Anti-Poverty Network and Solas Development Centre: Dublin.

Socio-Demographic Profile of Ballymun ³

Ballymun as a community is an area that has many factors influencing its shape and culture. Factors such as demographics, community activity, education, employment, literacy rates, health and housing were all examined within the first few weeks of this research process as part of the secondary data gathering stage. It is currently undergoing one of the largest regeneration programmes in Europe and it is envisaged that by completion both the overall demographics and profile of those living in Ballymun will have significantly changed. Prior to the redevelopment project, 80% of the population were local authority tenants and 20% were owner-occupiers. Ballymun Regeneration Limited estimate that post re-development this could change to a 40:60 or even 30:70 public: private tenure ratio. Over 100 organisations and agencies are currently active within the area of Ballymun.

³Further information on the socio-demographic profile can be found in; Ballymun Partnership (2003) *Ballymun Fact File 2003*. Ballymun Partnership: Dublin

Methodology

The research methodology employed in this study consisted of four main parts;

1. Secondary Research

An overview of existing written communications tools used in the area was firstly undertaken in order to determine the nature and extent of the remit. Following this overview phase, it was found that many organisations were active in the written communication field and at least four publications existed outside the realm of voluntary and community activity. Key national and international authors in the area were contacted and approached for information regarding relevant research that existed. Results of an overview of literature including an intensive web trawl showed that research in this area was very limited.

2. Design of Data Gathering Tools

As part of this research process, it was decided to carry out three interviews with key services who were currently involved in designing written communication tools in Ballymun. These interviews helped to inform the design of the primary data gathering tools whilst also serving to highlight issues, challenges and processes that could be involved in this research process. The second phase of this project was the design of the data gathering tools. Four data gathering tools were designed for the purpose of this research project.⁴ Before each tool was used, it was piloted with an audience that was appropriate for the target group intended. The data collecting techniques employed in the study were as follows;

- **Interview** - staff and representatives of agencies and organisations in Ballymun. Twelve interviews were undertaken with representatives from the following agencies; Children and Young People Development Group, Axis Community and Resource Centre, Ballymun Partnership, Ballymun Neighbourhood Council, Local Councillor, Ballymun Job Centre, Ballymun Partnership, Ballymun Concrete News, RAPID, BCON, Ballymun Regeneration Limited and Ballymun Drugs Task Force.
- **Facilitated questionnaire** - members of the general public. Members of the Ballymun community were approached at random in different areas of Ballymun at various different times over a four-week period. One hundred facilitated questionnaires were conducted with males/females over the age ranges represented in Ballymun.
- **Self completion questionnaire** - members of the general public. Further opportunities were afforded by leaving the questionnaire in areas of public interest – Post Office, Credit Union, Library, Doctors, Primary Health Care Unit, Jobs Club, Money and Budgeting Advice Centre, AXIS Resource and Community Centre and Coffee Shops. This questionnaire was also given to the members of the Ballymun Anti Poverty Network and the Ballymun Community Organisations Network for them to distribute to those who they felt should be included in the process.

⁴ Copies of the data gathering tools can be made available on request from the Ballymun Anti-Poverty Network c/o Ballymun Partnership.

- **Focus Groups were facilitated with;**
 1. Young people in an out of school setting
 2. Young people in school
 3. Ballymun Neighbourhood council communication group
- **Business interests**

Forty four questionnaires were distributed to individuals/businesses in the area with a self addressed envelope to encourage a high return rate.

3. Data Collation and Analysis

The data collation took place over a period of two weeks. This involved processing the different forms of data and highlighting themes. Particular challenges that were involved in this process were; time and resources constraints of individuals and organisations (for example the business community) and a sense of research fatigue in Ballymun.

Consultation Findings

Service Providers

Approximately 185 people were engaged in this research process across all the data gathering methods. The following list captures the views of the staff and representatives from agencies and organisations operating in Ballymun who were consulted as part of this process.

- Four of the twelve interviews that took place with staff or representatives of agencies were with people who worked and resided in Ballymun. Eight (67%) resided elsewhere.
- All (100%) who were interviewed were very familiar with the written communication landscape and were able to identify many newspapers/newsletters that were relevant to the residents of the Ballymun area.
- All (100%) read some or all of the papers/newsletters in the Ballymun area.
- All interviewees were asked for opinions of local publications mentioned. Responses showed that the standards varied quite substantially from paper to paper or newsletter to newsletter. In the main, respondents felt that they were all points of reference for people working in the area but that the editorial or viewpoints of all papers/newsletters were quite biased.
- When asked to detail the “best story or article”, the respondents talked about both positive (Coultry Park Opening, Brian Kerr Interviews, Young Ballymun Open Day) and negative (young people being used to carry drugs, stories about demolition).
- Eighty three percent of respondents use written communication tools as part of their organisations work. This varies from a daily to once yearly exercise. The 17% who don't use written communication tools as a communication tool use them for advertising purposes.
- All interviewees feel that written communication tools are an effective method of information dissemination or of creating awareness on a subject matter. However, this was qualified by some respondents mentioning that for it to be effective it needs to be done in the proper manner and efforts also must be made to match the audience with an appropriate communication tool.
- All agencies/organisations were asked how they would improve local publications. Responses included improving the quality in terms of proof reading, careful editing and printing and layout. Responses also included the need for local publications to be relevant to the readership providing space for reader's contributions. It was also reported to be important to have an independent and autonomous paper, free from

organisational or advertising influence, which can provide balanced viewpoints, broader debates and critical analysis.

- In terms of qualities necessary for a written communication tool to be effective, the responses provided by the agencies interviewed were largely similar to those mentioned above in terms of possible improvements. In other words, issues relating to consistency, reliability, providing balanced opinions, good design and layout, relevant and interesting. In terms of elements which would contribute towards the success of a local newspaper, positive elements included providing factual information, topical stories, be mindful of levels of literacy and be regularly produced.
- Services/agencies were also asked what an ideal “Ballymun Wide Written Communication Tool” would look like in design and content. Responses included; a publication that is bright and colourful, upbeat, lively and positive, layout which is professional, tabloid size and good print, less advertisements and more stories, have different styles of writing in the content and capture the opinion of people.
- The majority of agencies/services interviewed were able to provide examples of various supports or measures that could be built on to increase the success of a Ballymun written communication tool. Examples included; exploring a training project for local journalists, the possibility of the additional support from the Ballymun Neighbourhood Council, pooling of resources regarding printing, paper and resources and collective training in communication, PR, or Adobe Acrobat.
- Fifty percent said they could and would provide financial assistance if the paper met certain criteria, while 25% said they could support it in many other ways with the remaining 15% said that could not support such a venture.
- Agencies/services interviewed were asked about what funding avenues would they suggest in order to create or expand upon written communication tool(s) in the area. The routes suggested included; Combat Poverty Agency, Anti Poverty Network, Dormant Accounts, RAPID, Drugs Task Force, Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, European Funding, Community Trusts Foundation, Smurfit Business School, Private Sponsors, Commercial Funding, Housing and Urban Renewal.
- Ninety two percent of respondents felt that door-to-door delivery was the most effective method of distribution with only 8% who were not sure. Information points, shopping centre and coffee shops were also mentioned as points of collection.
- In terms of the ideal model of ownership proposed by the services/agencies interviewed, the majority were of the opinion that there should be an emphasis on community either in terms of co-operative ownership, or some kind of NGO, community trust with a board of trustees or a representative group of made up of residents, statutory agencies, community organisations, business and enterprise expertise.

Any Other Comments?

"Ballymun Concrete News needs to survive - its good for the area"

"The Clondalkin Gazette helps to build and knit a community together so why can't a local newspaper"

"I would like to see a community newspaper that is linked to a training project for young people that is leading kids somewhere"

"Need to be aware that there are people who are not comfortable with the written word, so we should include cartoons"

"Community Media could be worth looking at - DCU, NTL and maybe others could be interested"

Members of Ballymun Community

A. One hundred facilitated questionnaires were completed over a three-week period. People were randomly stopped at different points in Ballymun and asked to take part in this piece of research.

Approximately 200 people were approached to get the 100 completed questionnaires. The gender breakdown of those who responded to the facilitated questionnaire comprised of 53 female and 47 male participants. The majority of male respondents were under the age of 35 years (60%). Similarly 64% of female respondents were under the age of 35 years. Overall, 62% of the 100 individuals interviewed were under 35 years with only 13% reported age in excess of 56 years plus. Over two thirds of respondents live in Ballymun (72%).

- The total percentage figure for levels of readership of local publications is 57% with 39% not reading any local publication and 4% unsure. A greater number of female respondents reported reading a local newspaper than male respondents (60% versus 53%).
- The most commonly read newspapers reported by respondents were The Northside People (26%) and the Ballymun Concrete News (24%). In total, the respondents mentioned seven local publications with 6% reporting readership of all seven publications. Respondents reported varying levels of readership from "whenever I get a chance", "every time they are distributed" to "every week", "fortnight", "month".
- Those who reported reading local publications were asked why do they read the aforementioned publications. Almost all responses included the need "to keep up to date", "hear what is going on in Ballymun", to take an interest in the community and for information purposes.

- Those who reported not reading local newspapers were also asked why they do not read any local newspapers/newsletters/publications. Some responses included the irrelevancy of the publications, “because I am not from here”, “I am not Irish and my English is really bad”, “because they are not relevant for my age group”. Others reported that the content significantly influenced their non- readership “because they are all advertising agencies” or “they are biased and only offer one side of things”.
- Interviewees were asked to provide two examples each of articles or stories that they had read about Ballymun, the following are examples mentioned;

Examples of two articles or stories that respondents reported reading about Ballymun

The New Playgrounds.....Crime in the area
The Drugs problem (Heroin in particular)
The Swimming pool...Sports in the area and the lack of facilities
Poems about demolition of towers.....Regeneration in general
A new crèche in the area...New houses.....Joyriding
Trees being planted.....A local movie being made
The new health centre.....The IKEA centre and preventative healthcare.....
The women in Balcurris having their protest

B. As mentioned earlier, a self completion questionnaire was placed in all public areas in Ballymun in order to increase response rates from members of Ballymun community. Thirteen questionnaires were returned so this serves as the total number processed in this element of the research, 54% of respondents did not live in Ballymun while 46% lived in Ballymun.

- All questionnaires returned from this means highlighted respondents reading the following publications

Northside People	85%
Ballymun Concrete News	85%
The Local News	38%
Ballymun Regeneration Limited Newsletter	15%
Ballymun Echo	15%
Drop in Well Newsletter	15%
Drugs Task Force Newsletter	8%

- The reasons for reading a local publication included; “keep you up to date on what’s happening”, “to get local news and local information”, “to read articles of interest” and “to keep informed about a rapidly changing environment”.

- When asked about readership of current publications both positive and negative opinions about each were expressed. Overall respondents cited limitations and room for improvement.
- The majority of respondents reported possible improvements to present publications. The most commonly reported improvements focused on expanding the nature and diversity of the content and increasing the local perspective on what's happening in Ballymun. Specific improvements noted by respondents are presented in the box below.

Possible improvements to present publications that are available in Ballymun

Need more money and get people opinions
Stories on how things have changed
Have real people and real issues in them
More pages, more interviews, more in depth stories
Involve the community
More sport – have a regular sports column
More colours, more photos, more pages, Make them interesting
Provide prizes in competitions, free CD's and DVD's
Movie reviews
Improve the standard of journalism, design and layout
A newspaper for kids
I'd get the school of journalism from DCU involved
Provide a variety of articles
Provide people from around the area to write in
Print what is really going on in Ballymun

- The general consensus was that the paper should come out on average every 2 weeks and be delivered door to door. It should be free and be around 16 pages in size. It should be colourful, well designed and laid out with lots of photos. The content should be relevant and interesting and should illustrate both sides to the stories presented. Residents and readers should have many opportunities to take an active part in the publication. The paper should be as independent as possible and not have to curtail its viewpoints because of pressure from funders or advertisers. This independence is important to many respondents. Finally the general view was that the paper should be at least partly community owned or in its entirety.
- A lot of those interviewed could provide examples of what people living in Ballymun would be interested in reading in their local newspaper. Overall the examples provided were those commonly found within other area newspapers for example fashion, celebrity, music, and jobs in the area, sports, crosswords and a problem page. Other interesting articles/stories that a local publication could address are listed below;

Interesting articles/stories that a publication should publish about Ballymun

- How the elderly are treated*
- Health of People in Ballymun*
- How we are being ripped off in stores and restaurants and bars*
- Teenage pregnancies – The real reasons*
- Literacy rates in the area*
- Undertake a reader's survey*
- Review of books and movies*
- Why the place developed in the way it did*
- Profile the stories of the volunteers who keep the community going*
- Drugs and gangs, Cocaine – the real story*
- Sport in Ballymun*
- Nothing to do – no facilities*
- How to get into Martial arts*
- What's on section –gigs and clubs*
- Results of the local teams*
- The swimming pool and the amount of money coming to Ballymun*
- How people have dealt with no money and lots of crime in Ballymun*
- Poor transport*
- Sexually transmitted diseases*
- Speed of the cars*
- Kids these days*

- On the self completion questionnaire, respondents were also asked to report on any positive or negative points in relation to current written communication tools.

Positive points of the publications that are presently available in Ballymun	Negative points of the publications that are presently available in Ballymun
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They run a lot of positive stories, but they don't ignore the unpleasant stuff • Local news, sport, events • They are informative and topical • The publications show the more positive aspects of Ballymun • Local organisations and businesses supporting the community • Usually written by local people • It's nice to get local news and photos • They are readily available • Illustrates the positive work of organisations • Provides information about where to go if you have a problem • Good for local news • Solid positive news concentrating on the redevelopment of the area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One in particular likes to tow the official line • Its not always balanced coverage • Layout and quality • Incorrect grammar • Doing articles on things that have already happened • Each publication is written by a group with its own agenda • Lack of in-depth interviews or well researched articles • Not information on events • Lack of advance publicity • Include Santry and Glasnevin

- Suggestions on possible improvement to present publications that are available in Ballymun were; better editing, bigger, less advertising, more input from a range of different groups, put copies up on the notice boards in local churches or community organisations, showcase writer and talent groups, feature projects, stories that are not related to public relation events such as launches/openings, opportunities could be given to senior pupils in Trinity Comprehensive, adults involved in community work or project workers, photographic exhibitions would also be interesting and it would also be good to highlight the range of services in Ballymun.
- Respondents were asked to provide insight into the type of story/article they would like to read about and should be published in a community newspaper, the following two boxes are the most commonly reported responses;

What kind of information/story/article do you like to read about?	Interesting stories or articles that a newsletter/newsletter/publication should publish about Ballymun
Combating drugs Swimming events Improved housing Locals being interviewed and promote achievements In-depth, well-researched articles Anything to do with the area and its residents Planning issues New buildings and playgrounds Sports	Profile of community groups Achievements of local people Updates on the regeneration programme Interview a local band, artist or comedian Sporting or academic success Constructive dialogue about challenges facing the area A resident's diary Living conditions in Balcurris Review of drama productions Tree planting – the importance Implication of extra runway at Dublin airport and IKEA store Historical places of interest

- All of the respondents said there was a point in having a newsletter/newspaper/publication in Ballymun for the following reasons; Keeps people in contact with what is going on locally, encourages reading, informs sense of identity and pride, promotion and awareness of what is available locally.
- Respondents were asked what an ideal “Ballymun Wide Written Communication Tool” would entail. Responses included; easy to read and comes out once every fortnight; Ballymun Concrete News; delivered door to door and owned by the people of Ballymun; transition year students could get involved in it; weekly or fortnightly paper run as partnership between groups, residents, statutory bodies and schools; colourful; plenty of information from residents; possibly owned by a sub group of BCON and belong to the youth of Ballymun.

Business Interests

Due to time constraints from the business interests it was very difficult to ensure a high response rate. The questionnaires that were returned were analysed and the following points were noted

- The respondents were from Ballymun and read local publications (Ballymun Concrete News and the Northside People). The main reasons for readership were to update on developments in Ballymun and to obtain local news. Business interests were also asked would they be willing to support financially or otherwise a Ballymun wide written communication tool. Different opinions were obtained from each feedback questionnaire. Improvements suggested included a continuous flow of support until the commercial regeneration kicks in and also involvement of schools and teenagers in the area. Funding avenues that were suggested were organisation of fundraising events, grants, advertising, tax relief and FAS workers. Both feedback forms highlighted the need of maintaining a local publication in Ballymun. One suggestion focused on the developed of a collective co-operative style operation for Ballymun.

Members of Focus Groups

Focus groups were facilitated with;

1. Young people in an out of school setting
2. Young people in school
3. Ballymun Neighbourhood council communication group

Focus Group 1	
Positive points/aspects of existing publications	Negative points/aspects of existing publications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing good reputation of Ballymun and not putting it down • See local people • Shows you what is happening in Ballymun • Pictures • Shows you stuff to buy • Lets you know what is going on in the area • FREE • Keeps up to date on local news • Try's to talk about good stuff/news in the local area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only 8 pages long • Pages just fall out, should be stuck in • Too boring for young people to read • Too much stuff about politics • Too much advertising, not enough story • Don't find anything interesting to read in it • No sports • Don't like my picture in the paper

What would you like to see in a local newspaper/newsletter/publication?

- Teen talk (fashion, make-up etc)
- Talk about girls and boys sports, local and outside
- Take photographs
- Write about music
- Local gossip
- Problem page, somewhere you can write in about anything
- Star sign
- Different and new fashion column every week
- Clubs, what's on, so young people can get off the streets
- Cars column, cars for sale, talk about cars.
- School information, what's going on in the local schools
- Cinema listings
- Keep us informed, local warnings about rapists etc (nobody talks about it)
- Keep it colourful, eye catching
- Bus schedules
- Information about events outside the area, (gigs, Disney on ice etc,)
- Pink colour
- More pictures
- Sex section, young pregnancy issues, what to do and where to go.
- Local joke and story section
- Interviews with local people, especially young people.
- Tips on getting to know and learning to talk to the opposite sex

Focus Group 2	
Positive points/aspects of existing publications	Negative points/aspects of existing publications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FREE • Its all about Ballymun • Showing good reputation of Ballymun and not putting it down • Shows people that Ballymun isn't a kip • Shows you what is happening in Ballymun • Maps of Ballymun • Lots of colour • Pictures • Shows you stuff to buy • Lets you know what is going on in the area especially planning for the future • Keeps up to date on local news • See local people • People are happy in the photographs that are in the papers • Useful contact Numbers (If you are concerned about anything) • Safety tips • Information on support groups • Information on Drugs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only 8 pages long (Too Short) • Lies told about housing dates • Pages just fall out, should be stuck in • Too boring for young people to read • Too much writing • Too much stuff about politics • Lots of irrelevant information • Too much advertising, not enough story • Boring design – looks the same every week (It does not catch your attention) • Don't find anything interesting to read in it • No sports • No TV guide • No star signs • No movie reviews • No fashion tips • No coupons • Too much talk about drugs

<p>What would you put in your ideal publication?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include sports news – football matches and results • TV guide and star signs • Put more pictures in it and have more colour • Make the paper longer, more information • More information on young people • More interviews with local people • Include more articles about clothes, teenage things etc • Make the design more interesting • More pictures/better design (Catchy Headlines) – Have a different design each issue • Less politics • Have a problem page • Fashion tips • Movie reviews • More information on underage sex (Facts, figures and tips)

Focus Group 3	
Positive points/aspects of existing publications	Negative points/aspects of existing publications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ballymun Concrete News is a local newspaper and provides positive news concerning regeneration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The papers are all very biased - they don't show both sides to arguments or stories • The Ballymun Concrete News is not accessible for local input • Too boring for young people to read (not enough youth relevant information) • Too much advertising, not enough content • The style and standard of writing is very poor • None of the papers are reflecting the reality of regeneration

<p>What would you put in your ideal publication?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include sports news and community news that focus on the 120 groups that are active in the area • Have a what to do section for the general community • Have a story detailing how people are dealing with regeneration • Regular format and structure • More information for young people (Maybe have a supplement for young people that could include a teen page, comic page, kids corner, puzzles and competitions) • Make the paper independent of prominent stakeholders • More interviews with local people (Profiles) • Include information that focuses on the roles and work of the forums • Have a good catchy design • Bring back the letters page • The DTF newsletter should be broadened to highlight more issues such as healthy lifestyles and sport

Conclusions

- Existing publications were read by 1 in 2 of those interviewed.
- Findings highlighted that more people are aware of these publications but do not read them. However, staff and representatives of organisations interviewed in Ballymun all read these papers.
- Almost a half (48%) who read local publications read the “Ballymun Concrete News” or the “Northside People”. Only 6% of those people who were stopped randomly in Ballymun to fill in a facilitated questionnaire read the “Drugs Task Force” newsletter or the “Ballymun Regeneration Limited” newsletter.
- There is a keen desire to have a community wide newspaper in Ballymun with over four fifths reporting such interests.
- Community and voluntary organisations that are active in Ballymun use written communication tools to a large extent and believe it to be an effective method of stimulating discourse and creating awareness of issues and challenges.
- People who took part in all four data gathering tools have all mentioned that they want to know what’s going on in Ballymun but they also want a balanced opinion of that activity. A general consensus detailed that the present offerings were biased and offered only one side of the story when dealing with topics, challenges or issues. Members of the general public are very sceptical and wary of organisational input particularly from funders or advertisers.
- Respondents would like to see an increase in the quality and level of relevance of newspapers/newsletters. Young people in particular (see focus group findings) would like to see a “Youth” friendly publication while the “BNC” focus group mentioned that they thought a “Youth” supplement was a good idea.
- The facilitated questionnaire uncovered “Relevance” as a key issue for people in general. Respondents have identified that they want a newspaper that covers a wide range of personal and social interests that the people of Ballymun want to read about.
- The range of data gathering tools utilised have identified that the fact that publications are FREE is a positive factor.
- People who took part in this piece of research stated that delivering publications “door to door” was the most effective method of distribution for a local publication in Ballymun.
- One of the key questions throughout the data gathering was “Please describe the ideal Ballymun Newsletter or newspaper?” Below is a synopsis of the responses;

- o The paper should come out on average every 2 weeks.
- o It should be delivered door to door.
- o It should be free.
- o It should be around 16 pages in size.
- o It should be colourful, well designed and laid out with lots of photos.
The content should be relevant and interesting and should illustrate both sides to the stories presented.
- o Residents and readers should have many opportunities to take an active part in the publication.
- o The paper should be as independent as possible and not have to curtail its viewpoints because of pressure from funders or advertisers.
This independence is important to many respondents.
- o Finally the general view was that the paper should be at least partly community owned or in its entirety. A selected group of people representing various groups was also suggested as a model of ownership.
This sub group would answer to residents and groups who own the paper.

Recommendations

It is clear that Ballymun desires a community newspaper. The community want one that is relevant, interesting and independent. They want a quality product that is informative and offers the opportunity for them to take part in issues that are affecting them. Bearing the wishes and opinions of the people who took part in this research process in mind, it's important to make recommendations that are grounded in the conclusions of this process while also remaining cognisant of secondary data that will effect any future work or activity in this area.

- There is a need for an identifiable group to move this process from one of research into an action domain. After the launch or release of this report, it is important for interested parties to identify themselves and their possible role in this project gathering momentum. Organisations, agencies or groups that want to get involved need to assign what they believe to be appropriate resources in order to move this process forward. In the interest of becoming a genuine community newspaper, it is important to invite all interested parties to take part in this process.
- Examine the financial implications of a community newspaper and its cost/benefit analysis. Sales revenue does not seem to be an option at this stage in the regeneration programme. A newspaper reliant on just advertising revenue will struggle as seen by the experience of the Ballymun Concrete News. Bearing this in mind, if a community newspaper is to be formed and successful it needs to be innovative in its search for funding and financial security.
- Use and build on existing knowledge from current publications either to inform further development or to enhance current activity.
- There is a strong desire expressed to put in place a new community newspaper that is independent and community owned. In doing so, building on the success of existing publications but also be aware of the scepticism that some people had of different written communication forms in this area.
- Examine the desire of local organisations to provide financial support for a community newspaper that could have an element of a training/education project.
 - o Examine the feasibility of approaching Dublin City University (DCU) and its School of Journalism to gauge interest levels in building a professional relationship between their programmes and a community newspaper in Ballymun. This could be a work placement for students or indeed an applied module within their programmes. They are also in the position to offer advice on future activity within their journalistic interest.
 - o Approach FAS, the Local Employment Service and the Jobs Club in an attempt to gauge interest levels in a training programme that would be part of a community newspaper in Ballymun.
 - o Approach Trinity Comprehensive Secondary school in the hope of involving transition year in a Ballymun Community Newspaper.

- Clarify the timeline of the building of the new shopping centre, as this will provide extra advertising revenue.
- Approaches should be made to local resources in an attempt to leverage funding for a genuine community newspaper. Six distinct funding avenues are recommended;
 - o Local organisations such as Ballymun Partnership, BRL, Local Drugs Task Force, RAPID and BRYR
 - o National opportunities such as Combat Poverty, Dormant Accounts or the Irish Youth Foundation
 - o Private funding such as Community Trust funds or Philanthropists
 - o Advertising revenue
 - o Education and Training Revenue – FAS, DCU, HSE and the CDVEC
 - o Fundraising – Residents through raffles, quizzes (This heightens awareness of the paper whilst also creating and building community ownership of the project)
 - o Develop an overall communication strategy for Ballymun which takes into account the findings from this review of written communication.

Appendix

Sample questionnaire

Ballymun Written Communication Tool Review Facilitated Questionnaire

Male	Female			
Age range	12 – 20	21 – 35	36 – 55	56 plus

1. Do you live in Ballymun?
2. Do you read any local newspapers/newsletters/publications? **YES** **NO**

(If the answer is YES go to question 3 but if the answer is NO, go to question 6)

3. What newspapers/newsletters/publications do you read?
4. How often do you read them?
5. Why do you read them?
6. Why do you not read any local newspapers/newsletters/publications?
7. Can you describe two articles or stories that you read recently about Ballymun?
8. What do you think of the following publications?

The Ballymun Concrete News
BRL newsletter

Northside People
Drugs Task Force Newsletter

Any other publication

9. What would you do to improve the present publications that are available in Ballymun?
10. What kind of information/ story/ article are you interested in?
11. Name two or three interesting stories or articles that a newsletter/newspaper/ publication should publish about Ballymun?
12. Is there any point in having a newsletter/newspaper/publication in Ballymun?

YES

NO

Please explain your answer!

13. Please describe the ideal "Ballymun Newspaper" or "Ballymun Newsletter"?
What would it look like? What kind of stories or articles would it cover?
How often would it come out? Where would you get it? Ownership?
14. If you had one wish for Ballymun, what would it be?
15. What do you hope to achieve in 2006?

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