



Partnership Agenda

network newsletter

Summer 2007



- New Protocol forges closer working relationship between Dublin City Council and Community Groups in Dublin's Inner City
- Promoting Democratic Participation in the North West Inner City
- Zero Tolerance to Homophobic Bullying
- Consultation Seminar with Community Groups in Croke Park
- Community sector workers launch campaign for secure funding and workplace rights



David Connolly, Director, Dublin Inner City Partnership and John Tierney, Dublin City Manager, sign the Protocol on May 2, 2007.

New Protocol forges closer working relationship between Dublin City Council and Community Groups in Dublin's Inner City

Liz Leonard reports on the launch of the new Protocol document agreed between Inner City Community Groups and Dublin City Council.

Dublin Inner City Partnership and Dublin City Council recently jointly launched a document in which they formally agreed to work closely together in the interests of improving the impact and effectiveness of urban regeneration and public services in Dublin's Inner City, particularly in relation to tackling poverty and disadvantage in the inner city residential communities.

The document, entitled "Protocol for Progressive Engagement: Formal Operating Agreement between Dublin City Council and Dublin Inner City Local and Community Development Organisations" was formally signed at a ceremony on May 2 by Dublin's City Manager, John Tierney and Director of Dublin Inner City Partnership, David Connolly.

Speaking at the launch, David Connolly said: "This Protocol marks the beginning of a new phase in the relationship between the community sector and Dublin City Council. It is based on an acknowledgement of mutual respect, and values each other's remit and contribution to local social and economic development. The document establishes creative structures through which we can jointly address the challenges of poverty and inequality in Dublin's Inner City".

According to the document "the Protocol recognises the principle of active participation by residents and their representatives in the decisions that affect their lives and the valuable role played by community and voluntary organisations working in collaboration with DCC to support the social as well as the physical and economic regeneration of areas".

The Preamble of the document also says that "This protocol will provide a framework for

communication between the different stakeholders and a means to build trust, confidence and understanding between residents, Dublin City Council and local and community development organisations".

The Protocol has an Introductory section followed by nine Agreed Principles. There are also five general commitments as well as a series of detailed commitments by each of the parties. The Protocol also establishes a set of Joint Fora through which the Parties can meet to exchange information, share experience and resolve issues.

The section on "Commitments by DCC and L & CD sector" refers to "the need to have consistent protocols across the inner city on five specific areas of co-operation. These included:

1. Valuing each others brief and contribution to local social and economic development.
2. Deployment of Community Gain funds from private regeneration in Integrated Area Developments.
3. Consistency of approach inner citywide in the engagement between Dublin City Council and the Local and Community Development Sector.
4. Promoting active community participation and the involvement of local residents/tenants.
5. Providing the mechanisms for co-operative engagement at local level".

The challenge for the future will be to put the Protocol into action and to use the structures it has established to further the work agenda.

[Hard copies of the Protocol are available from the DICP office \(telephone: 01 872 1321\). The Protocol can also be downloaded from the website \[www.dicp.ie\]\(http://www.dicp.ie\)](#)

Promoting Democratic Participation in the North West Inner City

Jennifer Flynn reflects on the recent voter education drive in the North West Inner City.

Participation in the political processes is a crucial activity in a democracy. Yet disconnection and alienation characterise the reality in many urban areas in Ireland, particularly in areas that have experienced social exclusion, poverty and disadvantage.

Over a 25 year period, voter turn-out in Irish general elections has declined from 76% in 1977 to approximately 63% in 2002. In all wards in disadvantaged areas participation rates were lower than the national average of 58% with many falling below 50% in 2002. The outcome from the May 2007 election was similar. Only 55% of the electorate in Dublin Central voted while only 56% voted in Dublin South Central.

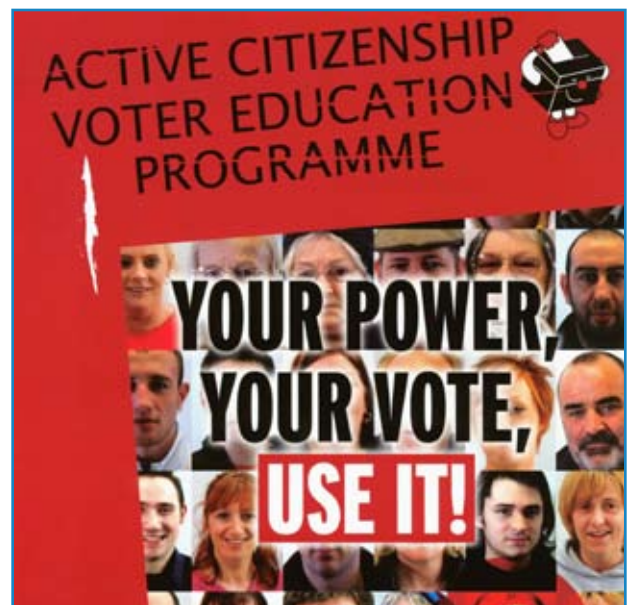
The reasons for this collapse in participation are numerous with a major cause being the unrepresentative nature of Irish politicians. Women made up only 13% of the Dáil elected in 2002 and 47% of this Dáil came from the professional classes (only 15% of the population as a whole are from this category). This huge

overrepresentation of the white male middle class population reinforces public perceptions of politics as being the preserve of the wealthy, excludes sections of Irish society from the decision making process and confirms for many that politics is redundant and not for them.

Further, the lack of any form of political/civic education in school curricula in the senior cycle leaves many people unclear about political structures and how to participate in them.

Despite this depressing reality, it was clear that in the local and European elections in 2004, areas that had had voter education programmes, such as West Tallaght experienced significant increases in electoral participation.

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South West Inner City Local Employment Centre

The services of a quality-based Inner City Employment Service (ICES) will soon be operational in support of unemployed people living in the DICP's SWIC quadrant. This is due to the collaboration of representatives of the community and business sectors working in harmony with the DICP, FAS and the CDVEC. All of this effort will soon ensure that employment, job placement, training and vocational education opportunities are locally accessible to unemployed people living in the SWIC area.

The Board of Management of the SWIC Local Employment Centre has now formed a Limited Company. An Independent Chairperson is now also in place. His task will be to assist the new Board to achieve its 2007 objectives and to ensure

that all the governance-related responsibilities and duties of the Board are addressed.

A highly experienced and motivated manager has been recruited to lead the ICES staff team. Work is progressing, with the practical support of the Digital Hub and FAS, to identify and fit-out a suitable premises for the ICES employment centre.

The DICP expects the local ICES service to be up-and-running by the end of June 2007.

The SWIC local employment centre, with those based in St Andrew's Resource Centre (South East Quadrant), Inner City Renewal Group (North East Quadrant), ICES Manor Street (North West Quadrant) will then complete the DICP's network of four community-owned service providers, which in turn forms the inner city's Local Employment Service (LES).

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An Síol CDP, MACRO CDP, the North West Inner City Area Network and the North West Inner City Women's Network came together early in 2007 to collectively organise voter education work. Staff from the organisations had participated in the Vincentian Voter Education Training of Trainers programme in 2006 and a representative from the area is participating in the national network that the Vincentians formed around the training.

The core activities which took place from March to May were delivering voter education training to participants in the Bradog Regional Youth Service, the Gateway Project and the North West Inner City Training & Development Project and organising a voter registration drive with local residents and project participants.

The group facilitated completion of applications to the supplementary register of electors by organising for a Community Garda to be present at a specific time and venue to authorise the forms. Awareness raising also took place through postering and the production of a special four- page supplement in the MACRO newsletter about voting and political structures.

A "meet the candidates" event took place on May 2 in the Law Society when local people questioned candidates from all political parties and independents about how they will address the major disadvantages and inequalities which still exist in the north west inner city despite a decade of significant national economic growth. Questions on a range of topics from education to services for older people were gathered by the organising group from local representative structures such as the Council for Services to Older People. Feedback from the evening was very positive, however people remain sceptical about politicians' commitment, their needs and the needs of the north west inner city.

Overall the experience of the organising group was that the sense of alienation from our political structures is very deep, there is scepticism and confusion regarding how people can influence policy and decision making in Ireland. Many people expressed the opinion that the only time they see or hear from their representatives is at election time.

The organising group hope to continue this work for local and European elections. One focus will be how to increase the accountability of our representatives to their electorate.

Note: statistics quoted are from "The case for Democratic Renewal in Ireland" TASC

Dublin 7 Schools Cultural Mediation Project

The Dublin 7 Schools Cultural Mediation Project, funded by the DICP, aims to provide translation, interpretation and cultural mediation services to schools and after-schools in the North West Inner City. A survey of schools has indicated that of 2,322 students in the ten schools in the Dublin 7 School Completion Project, 733 of them are minority language students, and many of the parents of these students do not have a good command of English. In the absence of a translation and interpretation service, misunderstandings abound, and when translation and interpretation happen they are often undertaken by children, which is inadequate and unacceptable and sometimes raises child protection issues.

The project aims to ensure that minority language parents can interact with schools on the same basis as indigenous parents through provision of school notices, school policies, etc. in a language that they understand. The project will attempt to provide interpretation services for important meetings between school and minority language parents, for example, the enrolment meeting, routine parent-teacher meetings and non-routine meetings when communication between school and home is essential. Once the basic translation and interpretation needs are met, the project aims to provide cultural mediation services, in order to facilitate conversations between school and home in relation to different cultural practices and beliefs, with a view to avoiding cultural misunderstandings and ensuring cooperation between school and home.

The project has now employed a Coordinator and part-time Administrator; the Coordinator is Amel Yacef and the Administrator is Diana Nacu. They will be working from an office in Bolton Street.

For more information contact Molly O' Duffy, Education Co-ordinator, Dublin Inner City Partnership (telephone 01 8721321) or Michael Mc Carthy, North West Inner City Area Network (telephone 01 617 4847).

Zero Tolerance to Homophobic Bullying

Sandra Gowran looks at the reality of homophobic bullying in schools

The term “gay” has gained near widespread and common usage as a term of derision to attach a negative value to any person, place or thing. This is a major problem for the young person in school coming to terms with their sexuality in a culture in which everything screams that being “straight” is the only valid way to be; where there are no pictures, books, stories, no role models of people who are openly and proudly gay, lesbian or bisexual (LGB). The message that young LGB people receive is that they are “not normal” and that their sexual identity is not something to be valued or to be talked about openly.

LGB people are coming out earlier. In a recent exploratory study carried out in Trinity, the average age that those who participated in the study came out as LGBT was 15 years, some as young as 12 years. The reaction of others to their sexual orientation is often very negative. The, as yet, unpublished study makes for dismal reading into what life in schools is like for these people:

- 76% had experienced verbal abuse;
- 39% had been physically abused;
- 15% had attempted suicide and 21% had self-harmed;
- 42% reported an eating disorder, alcohol abuse or drug misuse;
- 29% reported having practised unsafe sex;

One in ten left education earlier than they would have wished, with 3.3% dropping out of school.

These statistics reveal very alarming findings and an imperative to act on the part of every educator. LGB people are part of every school population in Ireland and are entitled to enjoy the same rights to education and to be safe as all students. As educators it is our responsibility to allow each young person to reach their full human potential. Identity and sexual identity are fundamental aspects of what it means to be

human and all students have a need to have all aspects of their identity recognised and valued.

Simple initiatives can be taken in educational settings which will have a big impact on the lives of LGB students. It has to start with a zero tolerance approach to name-calling, slugging and homophobic bullying of any kind. Beyond this, policies, procedures, practices and resources need to be reviewed to assess their level of inclusion. It is likely that most staff groups need to undergo some form of awareness education to understand the issues.

What is clear is that educational settings that address this issue and recognise diversity of all types are better, safer, more respectful and inclusive environments for all young people to flourish.

Sandra Gowran is Director of Education Policy Change with GLEN - Gay and Lesbian Equality Network. GLEN is a policy-focused non-Government organisation working for equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual people in Ireland. Tel: 01 473 2609 Email: sandragowran@glen.ie



Consultation Seminar with Community Groups in Croke Park

Liz Leonard reports on a Policy Consultation Seminar which was held recently in Croke Park

Dublin Inner City Partnership invited a range of inner city community groups to attend a one day Policy Seminar in Croke Park on April 16, 2007. The meeting was well attended with about sixty representatives participating in the seminar. The main purpose of the day was to consult with this constituency on the thrust and detail of a Policy Position Paper, "On the Future Role of the DICP" which had been widely circulated in January 2007.



David Connolly (Director, DICP), Professor Joyce O'Connor (Chairperson, DICP) and Trutz Haase (Independent Researcher)

The day was organised around two key presentations: Trutz Haase, an independent researcher presented the results of research he had conducted on behalf of DICP on the changing socio-economic trends in Dublin's inner city. David Connolly, Director of DICP, presented the key themes of the Policy Paper, "On the Future Role of the DICP". The afternoon was structured around roundtable discussions of the themes of the day and then the results of these were fed back to the final plenary session. Joyce O'Connor, Chairperson of DICP, chaired the morning session while Mary Higgins, an independent consultant, led the discussions in the afternoon.

In his presentation, Trutz Haase pointed out that massive changes had taken place in Dublin's Inner City between 1991 and 2002. During this period a major process of gentrification had taken place with the result that indigenous disadvantaged communities are being masked by the new communities of apartment block dwellers which surround them. By 2002, Dublin's Inner City was not showing up as disadvantaged in the national data based

on the Census results. A detailed examination by Trutz of four Electoral Districts, one in each of the four quadrants revealed that at street level there is a huge differentiation of affluent and deprived housing blocks; all the local authority flats are in the deprived category, while all the private gated communities are in the affluent category.



Participants at roundtable listen to the speakers

David Connolly, in his presentation, argued that the State will have to respond differently over the next ten years to poverty and social need. The community sector will have to make the case that resources be committed to the Inner City; it would be best if this case was made collectively. The community sector needs to develop new and innovative ways of addressing social problems and to do so in a manner that is effective and accountable. The key roles which are envisaged for the DICP include: a co-ordinating role; a lead role in the deployment of resources in the Inner City; a role in relation to identifying key anti-poverty measures and monitoring progress against these; and a role in relation to ensuring that the needs of the most

disadvantaged are targeted and met, particularly by advocating for changes in the way in which statutory services operate.

There were lively debates and discussion following the two presentations and later that afternoon in the workshops. A wide range of points were made by the roundtable groups in the general feedback at the plenary session which closed the day. The general conclusion was that while the thrust of the document was adopted, there was a need to work on its full implications and implementation. This task will be a major challenge over the coming months.



Three participants at Policy Seminar in Croke Park

Digital Communities Project DVD and Evaluation are Launched

At a recent event in DIT Aungier Street, the Digital Communities launched a new DVD and an independent evaluation of its work.

The short DVD, made by the DIT's Media Production Unit, tells the story of the Digital Communities project. It gives a voice to some of the many participants who have benefited from the project, and also introduces the various stakeholders and partners that have been involved in the project since the beginning. The DVD was made primarily as a promotional and fundraising tool, in order to raise awareness and to showcase the work that the project is involved with. It will be distributed accordingly to existing and potential partners and stakeholders.

The Evaluation of the Digital Communities project, commissioned by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, was initiated to give an independent research perspective on

New DVD tells story of O'Devaney Gardens

O'Devaney Gardens Community Development Forum launched its DVD entitled "Inside Out, Outside In" on May 3 in the Ashling Hotel.

The DVD was made with the help of many current and former residents who gave their time to be interviewed, and told their stories of what it was like for them coming to live in O'Devaney Gardens in the 1950s when the flats were built. The interviewees discussed how they feel about the changes that have happened over the years, what it is like to live in the flats now and what they would like to see happen in the new O'Devaney.

Many people felt that when the flats are demolished it would be as if they had never been there. The community wanted to record the story of O'Devaney Gardens in some way. The DVD was made to both celebrate and remember life in O'Devaney before it is transformed forever, through the regeneration project.

For further information and copies of the DVD, (cost €5) contact Lena Jordan, 34 O'Devaney Gardens, Dublin 7. Tel: 01 868 4283.

the project. The research evaluates the project achievements, its future aims and how it has developed since its inception in 1997. Since funding the evaluation, the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs have agreed to become a sponsor of the Digital Communities project.



Bridget Gleeson, Information Services, DIT with Peter Byrne, Project Manager, Digital Communities Project at the launch.

Community sector workers launch campaign for secure funding and workplace rights

Liz Leonard reports on the launch of a major campaign to secure workplace rights for community workers.

A major campaign to improve the situation of community workers was launched on November 21, 2006 in Liberty Hall. The meeting, which was addressed by well-known community workers as well as senior trade unionists, was attended by about three hundred workers in the community sector.

A range of speakers at the meeting said that the sector was characterised by low pay, poor career prospects, patchy pension provision, inadequate training and often unsafe work practices. The key reason for this situation is that the Government is unwilling to provide secure medium and long-term funding for staffing and other costs, including pay increases agreed in "Towards 2016" and other national agreements. IMPACT and SIPTU, the two unions representing staff in this sector, point to a growing number of cases where the Labour Court has recommended pay increases in line with national deals but most sponsoring Government Departments have refused to release the necessary resources.

Speaking at the meeting, David Connolly, Chairperson of the Community Sector/ Trade Union Campaign Group said: "Community sector organisations now play a central role in innovative and flexible public service delivery. Yet funding arrangements and working conditions are well behind those in the mainstream public sector in terms of pay, pensions, career progression, training and health and safety. Our campaign aims to bring this sector into the twenty-first century, and to equip it to better serve our communities into the future".

David Begg, General Secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions told the meeting that: "Workers in this sector deliver vital services across the community, often filling gaps left by poor state provision. It is unacceptable that they are expected to do so while enduring very poor and often insecure working conditions. Congress has made this issue a priority and is determined to see that this grossly inequitable situation is ended".

Another speaker, Jack O'Connor, General

President of SIPTU said: "The commitment in "Towards 2016" and in previous national agreements will remain so many pious aspirations, unless we can work together to kick-start the process of campaigning for people's rights. If even a significant minority of Community sector workers become involved in what we are beginning here today then we can break the "Cinderella" cycle of under-funding, lack of resources and over-work for staff. If people feel undervalued it is bad for them, bad for the organisations that employ them, bad for the people they serve and bad for society at large".

This public meeting was part of a campaign by community sector organisations and senior trade unionists to encourage community sector workers to join trade unions and ensure improved working conditions which are in line with public service employees.

Further information can be obtained from:

Equal at Work, Dublin Employment Pact, 7 North Great Georges Street, Dublin 1. Tel: 01 878 8900
Email: info@dublinpact.ie
Website: www.dublinpact.ie

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John Byrne, Seanie Lambe, Gerry McCarthy and Helena McNeill of the Community Sector Campaign Group speak at the event

Partnership Agenda is produced by the Dublin Inner City Partnership.

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