![Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership logo — opportunity : renewal : progress]

Community Organisations in the

Ballymun Whitehall Area

Research Report

Research conducted July – October 2014

![DCU in the Community logo]

Introduction

The following research report was conducted in the autumn 2014 by Innovate Ballymun, a project housed within Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership and Dublin City University. Three years on, when this report is published, the picture on the ground has changed significantly. A number of Ballymun based community and voluntary organisations have closed their doors, including Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership.

Nevertheless, this research report provides a comprehensive "on the ground" picture of services available to local people in the area of Ballymun in 2014 and the systems the organisations used to support local people into leading better lives.

(May 2017)

Background

Ballymun, in North Dublin, is coming to the end of an intensive physical and housing regeneration which started in the nineties and has been led by Ballymun Regeneration Limited (BRL), a subsidiary of the Local Authority, Dublin City Council. In 2013, the Ballymun landscape changed, the regeneration programme came to an end and short-term supports were retained to develop physical, economic and social aspects of the area via Dublin City Council.

The tasks of social regeneration are still pressing for an area with acute indices of social deprivation. Ballymun needs to protect what has been developed in terms of social, economic and environment outcomes for local individuals and families. In addition, Ballymun needs to continue to improve service provisions for individuals and families, offering real progression in terms of social and economic development.   In the spirit of social innovation - new ideas to meet unmet social needs in the public good - a coalition of the Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership, Dublin City University and Dublin City Council has come together to drive a new phase of sustainable social regeneration, under the name Innovate Ballymun.

Innovate Ballymun is here to empower service users to better access the services available to them. In addition, we will work with service providers to help develop a more collaborative approach to dealing with clients' issues and concerns. With this in mind, the Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership determined the need for research into the service provisions in Ballymun in order to understand in detail what is being offered by local community organisations. This research also seeks to ascertain whether these services meet (or not) the needs of the service users, as part of the broader Social Regeneration Plan.

Author

Laura Martins de Carvalho, Research Officer with Innovate Ballymun

Co-author

Annabelle Conway, Social Innovation Manager (formerly Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership, Innovate Ballymun project)

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, the Innovate Ballymun Team would like to thank all the community organisations that kindly took the time to answer this questionnaire and participate in this research. Their involvement has contributed tremendously to the project and we hope to foster future collaborations with them. In addition, we would like to thank the Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership, Dublin City University and Dublin City Council for their support and DCU in the Community for facilitating this research.

The 24 community organisations that participated in this project are:

Adult Read and Write Scheme

Aisling Project Poppintree

B.E.S.T. Ballymun Educational Support Team

Ballymun Community Law Centre

Ballymun Estate Pensioners

Ballymun String Orchestra

Ballymun United Football Team

B.I.T.E. Ballymun Initiative for Third Level Education

C.A.F.T.A. Community and Family Training Agency

Community Mothers Programme

Coultry Way Tidiest Road Committee

Ellenfield Residents Association Ballymun

Father Maloney Community Centre

Home Farm FC

J.U.S.T. The Jesuit University Support and Training

Men's Networking Resource Centre

Pairc Ni Cuilleann Residents Association

Poppintree Environmental Project Ltd.

Rainbow 13+ Arch

Rediscovery Center

Santry Parish Centre

Sports Across Ireland

The Holding Court Theatre Group

St. Margaret's Travellers Pre-school

1. Objective and aims

The purpose of this research is to verify the quantity and scope of services available to local people in the area. We also wish to understand what kind of systems the organisations use to support local people. This information will allow Innovate Ballymun and participating organisations to better understand how our service provisions are supporting local people into leading better lives.

2. Research methods

To decide on the most appropriate method for this research, a consultation was carried out with the acting managers and staff members of the Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership due to their knowledge and ongoing work with the community. Their contribution provided invaluable insights into the dynamics between community organisations in the Ballymun area and helped us decide on which approach would yield the best results.

In November 2013, a pilot project of this research was conducted with 17 out of 31 organisations in the Ballymun area. The questions employed in the pilot project served as the reference for the design of this research's questionnaire. The revised questionnaire consists of qualitative open-ended questions and quantitative closed-ended questions and it aims to identify and understand the main structural themes of the organisations, as follows:

- The services being provided
- The funding sources of each organisation
- The target groups that the organisations serve
- The governance structure of each organisation
- The need for the services being provided
- The level of networking amongst organisations
- The level of interaction and involvement amongst the stakeholders
- The gaps in the services being provided

The first stage of this research included contacting all community organisations in the Ballymun Whitehall area (Ballymun electoral districts A to F and Whitehall A to C). At the beginning of July 2014, 99 community organisations were contacted by phone and were invited to participate in this research project. An update on their information status was asked, such as their operating name and status, their telephone and mobile number, the name of the person in charge and their e-mail address. The organisations were also asked if they avail of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter and whether or not they have a website.

In addition, 31 other organisations that had previously participated in the pilot stage of this research were contacted and asked if they avail of Facebook or Twitter and whether or not they

have a website. This brought the total number of organisations that were asked about their use of social media to 130.

While it was impossible to accurately identify all the organisations offering services in the Ballymun area, due to the lack of a central registry containing this information; every effort was made to draw up as comprehensive a list as possible by linking with the Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership and Dublin City Council in regards to their knowledge of community organisations in the area and by also conducting several internet searches.

Once the information status was updated, an explanation of the objective and aims of this research was provided, and the organisations' managers were invited to fill out the questionnaire. The initial uptake was low, and only 13 community organisations returned the completed questionnaire. A new reminder was sent out to the remaining organisations, highlighting the purpose and importance of their participation in the project. In response, 6 more organisations filled in the questionnaire, bringing the total number of responses to 19.

At the beginning of August, the organisations that had not yet responded were contacted again by phone. They were asked to provide feedback about the questionnaire, in order to help us better understand their lack of engagement and also to potentially increase the number of participants. The responses to these calls were mixed: 4 organisations agreed to fill in the questionnaire after further clarification was provided on the purpose of the project; 3 organisations stated they would have a look at the questionnaire, but did not promise to fill it in due to their intense workload; 3 organisations stated that the most appropriate person to fill in the questionnaire was on annual leave until the end of August; 3 organisations stated that their managers were unavailable; 5 organisations expressed dissatisfaction with the questionnaire, but did not provide any further explanation as to why.

The closing date for completion of the questionnaire was 16th August 2014. In total, 24 out of 99 organisations responded and the results and analysis of the questionnaires are displayed in sections 3 to 12 of this report.

3. Funding overview

As demonstrated in table 1, Dublin City Council is the main or the secondary source of funding for 14 out of the 24 organisations. In total, 11 organisations had experienced a reduction in funding, and a further 2 organisations that had their funding ceased completely in the last 3 years (see table 2), which points towards the need to access more diversified and sustainable sources of funding.

The results reveal that there is a strong dependence on government funding, which might hinder the organisations' ability to actively seek alternative funding sources.

Table 1 - *What are your organisation's main and secondary funding sources?*

Funding body	Main funding source	Secondary funding source
	Number of organisations being funded	Number of organisations being funded
Dublin City Council	10	4
Department of Social Protection	3	1
Department of Children & Youth Affairs	3	-
Department of Environment, Community and Local Government	2	1
Department of Education and Skills	2	-
State agencies	1	-
International agencies (including the EU)	1	1
Department of Sports	1	-

Table 2 - *Has there been a reduction in funding?*

	In the last year Number of organisations	In the last 3 years Number of organisations
Yes, but I don't know the amount	3	1
Between 0 – 10%	3	2
Between 10 – 30%	3	5
Between 30 – 50%	-	3
The funding ceased completely	-	2
No, there has not been a reduction in funding in my organisation	5	1

4. Client / service user overview

When asked which target groups the organisations work with, the primary groups mentioned most frequently were the short and long term unemployed; the disadvantaged men and women; the disadvantaged youth; elderly; and Travellers as demonstrated in table 3.

Table 3 - *Who are your primary, secondary and tertiary target groups?*

Organisations' target groups	Primary Number of organisations	Secondary Number of organisations	Tertiary Number of organisations
The long term unemployed and short term unemployed	6	-	1
Disadvantaged men and women	5	1	-
Disadvantaged youth	5	-	2
Elderly	5	1	-
Travellers	5	1	1
Lone parents	4	1	1
People with disabilities	4	1	-
Non-Irish nationals	3	2	-
Early school leavers	3	2	2
People in employment	-	3	1
Self employed	-	1	1

5. Service overview

As demonstrated in table 4, the main areas of focus for the community organisations when they were set up are Education, Sports, and Children & Youth. In total, 8 organisations claimed that due to an increase in the demand for their services, they had to widen the thematic areas in which they offer assistance. In total, 2 organisations stated that they had to reduce the services they provided due to cuts in funding. However, it was found that 11 organisations did not undergo any form of change in their thematic area of work over time.

Table 4 - *When your organisation was set up, what were the thematic areas you focused on?*

Thematic areas of work	Number of organisations
Education	5
Sports	4
Children / Youth	4
Environment	3
Others	4
No answer	4

6. Measuring clients' progress

Measuring clients' progress over time

When asked whether or not they keep a method to measure their clients' progress over time, 13 out of the 24 organisations stated they do. However, 5 of them do not have a method in place to measure their clients' progress.

Table 5 - *Do you measure your clients' progress over time?*

Measuring clients' progress	Number of organisations
Yes	13
No	5
No answer	4
N/A	1
Other	1

Method of measurement

The results displayed in table 6 reveal that the two most popular methods of measuring clients' progress are internal and external evaluation, and evaluation by service users themselves. Please note that each organisation mentioned that they use more than one method to measure their clients' progress over time.

Table 6 - *How do you measure your clients' progress over time? What methods do you use?*

Method of measurement	Number of organisations that mentioned the method
Internal and external evaluation	10
Evaluation by service users	10
Programme quality assessment	9
Key performance indicators	9
Quarterly / yearly reports	8
Project / case review	6
A database that records outputs and outcomes	6
Goal focused results	5
Tests, exams and surveys	3
Not sure	1

Record and/or database of clients' progress

Of the 12 organisations that keep records and/or database of their clients' progress, 9 stated that they keep thorough and detailed records. However, 10 organisations did not provide any details on the type of records and/or database they keep on their clients' progress.

Table 7 - *Do you keep records and/or a database with this information?*

Record and/or database with clients' progress	Number of organisations that mentioned the database
We keep thorough and detailed records and/or a database	9
We keep good records and/or a database	3
No, we do not keep records and/or a database	2
No answer	10

Follow up method

As demonstrated in the table below, the most popular methods used to follow up with clients are the telephone and e-mail. However, one of the main challenges faced by many organisations (especially those that work with young people), is contacting the youth by phone as they change their mobile numbers constantly.

Please note that each organisation mentioned more than one method of following up with their clients.

Table 8 - *In regards to your clients' progress, do you follow up with them? If, yes, which method do you use?*

Methods used to follow up with clients	Number of organisations
Phone call	6
E-mail	4
Posted letter	1
Face to face interview	3
Other	2
None	1
No answer	7

7. Economic output

Record and/or database of financial expenditure

Of the 24 organisations surveyed, 17 stated that they keep a thorough and detailed record and/or database of their financial expenditure (see table 9). In total, 16 out of the 24 organisations have to adhere to financial targets. These results indicate a high level of good financial governance when it comes to managing their budgets.

Table 9 - *Do you keep records and/or a database of your financial expenditure?*

Record and/or a database of financial expenditure	Number of organisations that mentioned the database
We keep a thorough and detailed records and/or a database	17
We keep good records and/or a database	3
No answer	4

Methods of bookkeeping

As demonstrated in table 10, the methods of bookkeeping vary greatly amongst organisations. The most popular methods used are accounting software and manual bookkeeping, with 14 organisations citing these methods.

Table 10 - *Please explain the methods you use to keep records and/or a database of your financial expenditure.*

Bookkeeping methods	Number of organisations
Accounting software (Tas/ SAGE / Thesaurus)	7
Manual bookkeeping (Excel Spreadsheet / Money Manager / Book of Accounts)	7
Audited accounts	1
Annual audit	3
External audit	2
Treasurer	3
No answer	1

8. Interaction and collaboration between organisations and stakeholders

Organisations' stakeholders

As demonstrated in the table below, the majority of the organisations consider their clients and the local community as their main stakeholders. These results indicate a high level of social capital and community governance.

Please note that each organisation mentioned more than one type of stakeholder.

Table 11 - *Who do you consider your primary, secondary and tertiary stakeholders?*

Stakeholders	Primary Number of organisations	Secondary Number of organisations	Tertiary Number of organisations
Clients (service users)	14	1	-
Local community	13	5	-
Local authority (DSP, DCC, Civil Office, etc.)	5	5	2
State agencies	4	1	1
Non-profit sector	5	1	3
No answer	1	1	1

Networking, partnership and collaboration with other community organisations

Although the representatives of 11 organisations serve on the board of other organisations, 18 organisations do not offer administrative support to other organisations, which indicates a moderate level of networking, but a low level of administrative collaboration.

As outlined in table 12, the majority of the organisations show a low number of partners (between 1 and 5). When asked if they would like to increase intra-organisational collaboration with their current partner organisations, the results showed an equal division with 9 organisations saying yes and 9 saying no (see table 13). In addition, 9 organisations demonstrated an interest in developing new partnerships with more organisations (see table 14).

Table 12 - *Does your organisation partner with other organisations? If yes, with how many?*

Number of partners	Number of organisations
Between 1 and 5	12
Between 5 and 10	3
Between 10 and 15	1
Not sure how many	4
No answer	4

Table 13 - *Would you like to have more collaboration (i.e. share assets, resources, staff, office, etc.) with the organisations you already partner with?*

Increased intra-organisational collaboration	Number of organisations
Yes	9
No	9
No answer	6

Table 14 - *Would you like to increase the number of organisations you collaborate with?*

New partnerships	Number of organisations
Yes	9
No	7
No answer	8

Reasons for mutual collaboration

In total, 9 organisations expressed a strong interest in mutual collaboration, as can be seen in the following quotes:

'We are always open to new collaborations which can mutually benefit our organisations and service users'.

'(We) would be open to further collaboration'.

Some of the main reasons the organisations would like to collaborate with each other are the possibility of sharing resources, staff and facilities, as outlined below:

'(We'd like to see more) sharing of resources, staff, office facilities.'

'Share resources, office space and expertise.'

'Share resources, staff and volunteers.'

'It would be good to have a local meeting room and access to a printer and photocopier.'

Similarly, some organisations perceive the potential for networking and sharing their resources in the process of mutual collaboration:

'(Collaboration devised) on an ad hoc basis, determined by actual needs, as they arise.'

'More communication and deeper partnership (needed).'

8. Collaborations with the business sector

In total, 13 organisations have established relationships with the business sector that have resulted in positive outcomes. In particular, 7 organisations mentioned a successful collaboration with the Ballymun branch of the *SuperValu* supermarket.

Some of the reasons the relationships with the business sector have been considered successful by the organisations are outlined in the following quotes:

'We have received project support and grants from local business'.

'We have succeeded in getting some prizes for clubs sponsored by local businesses and try to negotiate competitive rates for club resources.'

'We have linked, through sponsorship and assistance, with several local business sectors. We have many local sponsors, in return for which we promote their products.'

'(We have won) competition prizes and local campaigns.'

'Fundraising with local supermarkets to pay overheads.'

Future collaboration with the business sector

As demonstrated in table 15, the organisations show a high level of interest in collaborating with the business sector in projects that benefit the whole community.

Table 15 - *Would you like to collaborate with the local business sector in projects that benefit the community?*

Collaboration with the business sector	Number of organisations
Yes	11
No	5
No answer	8

Some of the reasons the organisations would like to collaborate more with the business sector are to acquire sponsorship and foster involvement, as outlined in the following quotes:

'We have looked to local supermarkets and retailers for sponsorship.'

'Collaborations through involvement.'

9. The use of social media

Social media is widely used by many organisations to expand their network and advertise their services. Social media can also be used as an informal database of their clients and stakeholders. Therefore, in order to determine the extent to which social media is used as a working tool, the 99 organisations that participated in this research project were asked if they have a website, and whether they avail of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. An additional 31 organisations that participated in the preliminary stage of this research were also contacted and were asked the same questions. In total, 130 organisations responded to these questions (see table 16).

The results show that 31 out of 130 organisations have a Facebook page, which indicates that the organisations are starting to become aware of the role of social media and to use it as a working tool. They also acknowledge the importance of having a website as a means of promoting their services online. However, they lack information on how social media can further benefit their clients and organisation.

Table 16 – *Do you have a website and do you use social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter?*

Website / Social Media	Number of organisations (out of 130)
Website	48
Facebook	31
Twitter	2

Update February 2015 – the organisations were contacted again for a further update. It was found that 79 organisations have a webpage, 46 have a Facebook page and 8 have a Twitter account.

10. Gaps in service

In total, 13 organisations consider lack of funding or resources as the main barriers to improving their services and achieving their goals (see table 17). However, after face-to-face conversations with 4 organisations, it was found that in many cases, the organisations lack basic digital skills or do not know where to acquire computer or internet skills.

In this case, digital/internet and computer skills training can potentially assist the organisations in addressing some of their gaps in service provision.

Table 17 - *Do you feel there are gaps in your work that you would like to address, however, just do not have the resources to do so?*

Reasons for gaps	Number of organisations
Lack of funding	6
Lack of resources	7
Lack of staff	2
Others	3
No answer	6

11. Conclusions

The aim of this research is to verify the quantity and scope of services available to local people in the area and to understand what kind of systems the organisations use to support local people and the costs of such services. The results indicate that there are a large number of services in the area and that the scope of services is wide and varied.

The following headings display the conclusion on each topic covered in the questionnaire.

Funding cutbacks

The areas causing most concern and challenges are funding cutbacks. It was found that 41% of the respondents depend exclusively on funding from Dublin City Council to provide their services. In this context, the organisations show vulnerability, particularly in times of financial instability. This result mirrors the challenges faced by community organisations across the country and emphasises the importance of reviewing the way they are funded in the future, in order to ensure their survival.

New target groups

The results of this questionnaire regarding demand for service revealed that 8 out of 24 organisations had to widen the thematic areas in which they offer assistance. Although 11 organisations did not undergo any form of change in their thematic area of work over time, it is noticeable that the clientele is changing and increasing according to new pressing social demands. For example, 4 organisations stated that they started serving non-Irish nationals and had to re-adapt their services and expertise in order to meet the needs of this new target group.

Measuring clients' progress and record keeping

Overall, the organisations show a moderate level of concern regarding methods of record keeping and measuring their clients' progress. The results show that 13 out of 24 organisations measure their clients' progress over time. However, nearly half of them did not provide any details on how they keep this information and only 4 organisations demonstrated an interest in having a method to measure their clients' progress.

Financial targets as an indicator of good financial governance

A strong correlation has emerged between the need to adhere to a financial target and good financial governance. The results show that 16 out of the 24 organisations have to adhere to financial targets and 17 of them keep a thorough and detailed record and/or database of their financial expenditure.

In total, 23 out of the 24 organisations mentioned they use some form of financial bookkeeping, which indicates good governance when it comes to keeping record of financial expenditure. However, the organisations rely on a variety of administrative structures and on a diversity of bookkeeping methods, therefore we cannot say that there is a common pattern of financial good governance evident in the organisations in the Ballymun area.

Networking and collaboration

Although the organisations show a low number of partners, they are highly connected and there is good level of cooperation amongst them. For example, 11 of them serve on the board of other organisations and 9 have a strong interest in establishing partnerships with more organisations.

Although the majority of organisations are still unclear about how they would like to establish collaboration, 4 of them stated that sharing resources, staff and facilities would benefit the parts involved.

Collaboration with the business sector

The results of this research show that 13 organisations have established relationships with the business sector that resulted in positive outcomes. This can be relevant information when attracting more business to the Ballymun area. A variety of methods is involved in local cross-sector alliance, including sponsorships, prizes, joint issue promotions, and joint ventures.

Although there is a high level of interest in fostering collaboration with the business sector, this research found that in many cases, the organisations do not know *how* they would like to collaborate.

Another trend found in this research is that some of the collaborations happen only once. When these relationships end, managers should determine whether their goals were achieved and what other outcomes resulted from the partnerships. This practice can potentially help managers learn what aspects of the program worked well. This knowledge can then be applied to future collaborations.

The use of social media

The results show that 31 out of 130 organisations have a Facebook page, which shows the increasing recognition of the role of social media and how to avail of these platforms in order to improve service. They also acknowledge the importance of having a website as means of promoting their services online. However, they lack information on how social media can further benefit their clients and organisation.

As per a February 2015 update to the organisations' status, it was found that 46 have a Facebook page and 8 have a Twitter account, which shows that in relatively short time, 15 organisations set up a Facebook page and 6 set up a Twitter account.

Given the role that digital and social media plays in society, it is essential that organisations start availing of these means of communication, particularly organisations that work with young people.