The Community Participation Project is a joint project of the two community networks in Dublin's north inner city, the Inner City Organisations Network and the North West Inner City Network. It is funded by the North Inner City Local Drugs Task Force. The purpose of the Community Participation Project is to help local people to get involved in the actions and decisions which affect their communities.

This guide and the longer document, *"Developing a Good Practice Guide to Community Participation"*, may be down-loaded from the websites of the Inner City Organisations Network and the North West Inner City Network

www.iconnetwork.ie

www.nwicn.ie

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Foreword

The Community Participation Project is a joint project between the two north inner city community networks, ICON and the NWICN. The project has two part-time workers, and is funded by the North Inner City Drugs Task Force.

The aim of the Community Participation Project is to encourage and support local people to get involved in the actions and decision which affect their lives and their communities. This support work had been taking place on an informal basis in the local projects working on the ground with little or no resources. The project initiated research into the level of participation by the local community and the research highlighted the lack of a structured approach when engaging with local volunteers. The *Good Practice Guide to Community Participation* emerged as a means by which to help organisations and local groups to involve local people more effectively.

The project has a clear understanding that there are barriers to community participation. These barriers are both at the level of perception and capacity. People can feel that they are inadequate when it comes to getting involved in groups. They may also not be aware that they can develop skills for such involvement. In order for people to become involved in the participation process, and even once they are there, they need training and support. If networks/ state agencies wish to engage a wider range of people in their processes, it is important to give different kinds of support. For example, many people particularly who end up as activists in their community can start off by being encouraged to get involved in personal development and within the right context become interested in wider community issues.

The guide has been developed as a simple to use resource, offering solutions to some of the barriers facing people's participation and also highlighting the challenges and models of best practice in the promotion and development of community participation. We hope it will be a helpful tool for projects and organisations and further afield.

We, the Community Participation Workers, would like to thank all those who contributed to the development of the guide but most especially the other members of the Community Participation Research Group (Mark Hogan (St Vincent's Trust), Deirdre McCarthy (Community Technical Aid), Siân Muldowney (ICON) and Michael McCarthy (NWICN)) and Ger Doherty (researcher) for their valuable commitment to ensuring this guide reached completion.

Anne Burke (ICON)   Noeleen Jennings (NWICN)

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» the Steering Committees of ICON and NWICN, for support and discussion;

List of text boxes

CHAPTER

Introduction

1

CHAPTER I

Introduction

This guide is primarily for the member organisations of the Inner City Organisations Network and the North West Inner City Network, for the central organisations of the two networks and for people living in the north inner city of Dublin. We hope that it will be of practical help to members of the local communities who are trying to take part in the actions and decision-making which affect their lives and the lives of their communities. We also intend that it will help organisations to promote participation 'on the ground' - in all community-based organisations, in the networks, and in whatever is going on locally.

While the guide has been written to meet the needs of Dublin's north inner city, we hope that it will be useful to anyone interested in community participation, whether in Ireland or further afield. We think that it is relevant not only to communities and community organisations: since we believe that the approaches suggested here can be viewed as good practice, we would like to see them adopted by statutory and voluntary organisations.

The methods suggested here are based on the experiences of individuals and groups, both in this area and elsewhere. Many of them are already being used successfully by local organisations. Some require resources, so that projects and networks which begin to adopt them will need budgets to do so. At least as important as resources will be long-term, serious commitment, because it takes time to build up genuine participation. If that commitment is there, and if at least some individuals and organisations begin to put suggestions from this guide into practice, we expect that more community members will begin to have a role in commenting on, and directing, the work of the networks and the other organisations. We would also expect that some new people will become actively involved in their communities, and that those who are already active will find it easier and more productive to stay involved.

For anyone who may be afraid that this guide is just about getting more people to sit around committee tables at endless meetings, it's important to say now that there are lots of ways that people can influence what goes on in their communities. Our hope is to help make it easy and enjoyable for people to get involved – at a level they're comfortable with, in relation to the issues they're interested in, when they want to, and for as long or as short a time as they like.

1.1 What is community participation?

We define 'community participation' as:

members of a community being involved in the actions and decisions which affect their lives and the life of their community.

A 'community' can be those who live in one area, or who have some extremely important life experience in common (for example, Travellers, immigrants to Ireland, people with disability, gay or lesbian people).

The Inner City Organisations Network and the North West Inner City Network believe that all people have the right to a role in making decisions which affect them, a right which is recognised by the Irish Government and the United Nations. As two community networks whose primary aim is to tackle social exclusion, our task is to promote the participation of those who have traditionally been excluded from decision-making, those people who have the least power and the least resources.

There can be many different kinds of participation. For example, some people may organise activities for the children of their neighbourhood every summer, while others may be really active in lobbying the City Council to improve their area; some may be involved in no activities at all relating to their community, while others may be on every committee in their locality.

Text Box 1

Levels of participation: 'Arnstein's Ladder'

There have been many attempts to define different levels of participation, according to how much power and influence those taking part really have. For example, Arnstein (1969) set out a simple model with seven levels of participation, ranging from 'manipulation' to 'citizen control', with community members having increasing levels of power at each level. As organisations committed to community development, ICON and NWICN wish to promote the highest, most meaningful, levels of participation.

8.	Citizen control	} Degrees of citizen power
7.	Delegation	
6.	Partnership	
5.	Placation	} Tokenism
4.	Consultation	
3.	Informing	
2.	Therapy	} Non-participation
1.	Manipulation	

Highest Level of Participation Most Power

Lowest Level Least Power

Arnstein presented the levels as rungs on a ladder, and similar 'ladders of participation' are often presented. A ladder suggests something that is to be climbed. But there is no inevitable progression between different levels of participation, nor is there a need to participate at any of the lower levels before being able to participate at the highest. Furthermore, those in charge of a process often have no intention of presenting a 'ladder' to those they ask to get involved, but are quite content to keep them at the lowest level. So we don't show the levels in the form of a ladder here.

Arnstein, Sherry R. (1969) "A ladder of citizen participation" *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 35, pp. 216-224 www.lithgow-schmidt.dk/sherry-arnstein/ladder-of-citizen-participation.html

1.2   Who are the 'community'? Who do you want to involve? And can the people who are usually excluded, or exclude themselves, ever take part?

This guide doesn't contain a definition of the word 'community'. But when thinking about promoting community participation, it is important, right at the start, to decide who you want to participate.

Some groups and organisations are focused only on particular categories of people and they may be the only people they want to get involved. For example, residents of a Dublin City Council flat complex who are setting up a tenants committee will only be concerned with the participation of the other tenants of the flats. In that case, the answer to the question 'Who are the community?' seems obvious. But perhaps it's not: for example, are the families seen as being the greatest source of anti-social behaviour included, or the most isolated and vulnerable residents?

For the networks and the Community Participation Project, the 'community' of the north inner city means at least everyone who lives there. **So community participation has to involve everybody, without discrimination on the basis of ethnic origins, gender, age, disability, or anything else**. Since ICON and NWICN are 'social inclusion networks', the people we are primarily trying to include are those who are the most socially excluded. For us, therefore, 'everybody' must include the categories of people and the geographical areas which have traditionally either not taken part or been excluded. The questions for the networks and other concerned organisations must be:

- Who are the most marginalised people in the community?

- Are there categories of people who are never brought together to provide each other with mutual support and to try to improve their quality of life?

- What can be done to promote their participation in community activities, and particularly in the decision-making processes which affect them?

Examples of categories of people who are most likely to be marginalised include: people with mental health problems; people living alone and on low incomes in private rented accommodation; parents whose children are in care; people with problems due to drug misuse; families seen as consistently engaging in anti-social behaviour. The suggestions on spreading information and getting people's views given in Chapter 3 show that there are many ways that these groups can participate. However, they are likely to do so in significant numbers only if they are specifically targeted. For the networks and some member organisations, this would mean:

- making their participation a priority;

- putting extra time, effort and resources into getting them involved;

- co-ordinating and facilitating one-to-one support and encouragement from any residents or service providers with whom the most marginalised individuals have good relationships.

1.3   What's in this guide...

The rest of this document is divided into five chapters. Chapter 2 contains an outline of the methods used to develop this guide. Chapter 3 consists of suggestions for organisations on how to let people know what they are doing and how to involve them in their work at different levels. It includes some ideas on how community members can gain more control of community-based organisations. Chapter 4 is aimed directly at members of the community who are already involved in local activities, or who are thinking of becoming involved. In Chapter 5, we describe barriers to achieving true community participation, and suggest ways to overcome them. Chapter 6 is about ways to judge how much local people are involved in the decisions and actions which affect their lives and the life of their community.

Throughout this document, we have inserted numbered 'text boxes', which contain our own further comments on topics in the main text and findings and ideas from the writings of others. Sometimes, we also use 'endnotes' to explain where an idea came from, if it wasn't from our own research, or to suggest places to go for more information. Each endnote is marked by a small number in the main text [1], and is presented after the last chapter. We hope that these add to the usefulness of the guide. Further ideas and background information can be found in the longer document, *"Developing a Good Practice Guide to Community Participation"*, which is available from the networks and can also be down-loaded from their websites.

CHAPTER

How this guide was developed

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CHAPTER 2

How this guide was developed

The ideas and suggestions in this guide have been developed through the following methods.

1. Study of reports, books and other documents relating to community participation in Ireland and elsewhere.

2. Discussions with eleven groups of local people, all of whom are involved or in contact with local community organisations (see *Appendix 1*). Most were groups which come together regularly; three were brought together by local projects just for the purpose of taking part in the research. A total of 72 people participated. In order to get as wide a range of views as possible, efforts were made to meet with different types of group, including tenants groups, older people, young people, people from other countries who are living in the area, and people who have experienced drug addiction. Since the aim of the guide is to promote local participation, it was to this aspect of the research that most time was devoted. The reports on all the group discussions are available in a separate document.

3. A broad questionnaire sent to all of the member organisations of ICON and NWICN and to relevant statutory organisations (about 130 organisations in total). Twenty-four member organisations and two statutory bodies responded. The collated responses are available on request.

4. An interview with two community workers (one a local resident) who have each been active in the north inner city for over 30 years.

5. Discussion and analysis by the members of the Community Participation Project's 'Research Group'.

6. Discussion with members of the Steering Committee of ICON and the Steering Committee of NWICN.

The overall aim of the group discussions, questionnaire and interview was to find answers to the following questions.

- What are the biggest issues for local people?

- How much power do they think that they have to do anything about these issues?

- What are the best ways to spread information about the projects and networks?

- What are the best ways to get people involved in the projects and the networks?

- What are the best ways to get people's views?

- What are the barriers to people getting involved?

- How can these barriers be overcome?

- How are local people involved in the organisations at the moment, and how is this involvement promoted?

We have tried to adopt a participatory approach to preparing this guide, by trying to ensure that the ideas in it are largely based on the opinions of people who work and (especially) live in the area. In fact, much of the research has been done by someone from outside the north inner city, and the groups who participated have so far only had a chance to comment on our presentation of their own particular views. Therefore, we cannot claim that levels of participation in this research have been the highest possible. However, two members of the 'Research Group' which has directed the work are local people, and they have played a major role in the design, performance and analysis of the research.

CHAPTER

How to promote Community Participation

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CHAPTER 3

How to promote community participation

This chapter is aimed at groups and organisations in the north inner city. It contains practical suggestions for how to achieve genuine participation. These are presented under a number of headings, which are based on the different ways that people may want to get involved.

1. **Letting people know what's going on**
    Everybody should have easy access to information about what's going on in their area, so it's important to use the best possible ways to spread information.

2. **Getting people's views**
    If organisations are going to try to deal with the key issues for local people, then they need to know what those issues are. What's more, organisations should also be able to involve people in making decisions without asking them to make much effort other than to give their opinions. Therefore, they need to have methods to get the views of as many people as possible.

3. **Helping people to be more involved**
    There will always be people who want to have more active roles, and to be more deeply involved, so the next section is about how to help and encourage them do that.

4. **Helping people to act for themselves**
    Finally, we present some ideas on how organisations can help members of the local community to take as much control as possible over local activities.

The important thing is to offer opportunities and a variety of ways in, so that people can get involved at different levels and with the people they feel they have the most in common with.
www.renewal.net Solving the problem: getting people involved
www.renewal.net/Documents/RNET/Solving%20the%20Problem/Gettingpeopleinvolved.doc

3.1 Letting people know what's going on

Before people can participate in activities in their area, they need to know what's going on. The following points show the best ways to spread information. The more approaches that are tried, the bigger the number of people who are likely to end up well-informed.

- Frequent and regular newsletters

- Leaflets/flyers through doors and left in places where people gather – in shops, in post offices, in labour exchanges, in Citizens' Information Centres, inside or outside community centres, in pubs

- Posters/noticeboards – again in the places where people gather

- Word-of-mouth: Information spread by word-of-mouth has to have a starting point: this could be any of the methods shown here, or it could be someone who is viewed as a good source of information, like a local shopkeeper.

- Visits to existing groups

- Open information meetings in every neighbourhood[2]:

    » *once or twice a year*

    » *held on Saturdays, in the morning and repeated in the afternoon*

    » *in local halls or centres*

    » *advertised really well*

    » *telling people in advance what issues they can raise*

    » *making it clear to people beforehand that they don't have to join anything if they come*

    » *that are social events*

    » *with refreshments – tea, coffee, sandwiches etc.*

    » *that are fun for children*

    » *with a crèche for the day, so that people can bring small children*

    » *where people can leave their contact details if they want to get more involved*

    (Sunflower Recycling workers' group)

- Text messages

- Community radio

- Internet/e-mail

- Phone calls

- Through schools:

  » flyers in children's school-bags

  » meeting Transition Year pupils

  » informing children so they can tell their parents, in homes where literacy levels are low

- Calling door-to-door

- Social gatherings

- Directories of services available locally

- Using important local events (like the consultation/information sessions on the redevelopment of a flat complex) to spread information on other activities and issues, by speaking, having a stand, giving out leaflets, and/or chatting to people

- Giving out information leaflets/booklets to households when they move into a new Dublin City Council flat or house

- Announcements at religious services.

Overall, the best way to let people know 'who you are, what you are, and what you are doing', is face-to-face. There is no substitute for personal contact, so that community members can see and hear directly from those who are already involved.

Information for specific categories of people, and related to specific issues

There are methods of spreading information which are especially suited to reaching certain categories of people.

Young people

- Through youth workers and others with whom young people have good relationships

- Internet

- Phone texts

- Phone calls

Older people

- Open information meetings, held in the mornings, about issues that affect older people

- Visits to senior citizens' centres

Ethnic minorities

- Ethnic minorities' press – probably the best way to reach people from overseas who are living in the area

- Publicity at multi-cultural events or events organised by particular nationalities

- Announcements at places of worship that have services for particular ethnic groups or tend to attract them, and through the newsletters of these religious centres

- Through SARI (Sport Against Racism Ireland)

- Radio (for example, the 'Polish Nights' of Anna Livia)

- The newspaper Metro Ireland (for those with English as their first language, or who otherwise have very good English)

- Through migrant-led organisations

The key to success is using people's own language.

Men

- A one-to-one drop-in service providing advice, information and support for men

People who misuse drugs

- Magazines for people who misuse drugs or who used to, like those produced by the organisations Uisce and Soilse

Spreading information in relation to drugs

The following are methods specifically suggested to spread information on drug misuse.

- Leaflets to educate parents and children:

  » specifically aimed at parents

  » specifically aimed at children (especially 14- to 16- year-olds)

  » perhaps using 'before and after'–type photographs of people who have misused drugs to frighten children off starting to use them

- Information leaflets on services and where to go to help

- Information leaflets on cocaine

- Drug awareness programmes

- Helpline on drugs

- Meetings with parents (to include the giving of information on 'hazard warning signs' – what to look for if their children might be starting to use drugs, or thinking of it)

- Talks to children from people who have been through the experience of drug addiction.

Spreading information to people with disabilities and increasing awareness of disabilities

- Information on the entitlements of people with disabilities and those caring for them in local newsletters and flyers

- Certain information to be printed in Braille

- 'Disability awareness sessions' for the community at large; open to everyone, and with representatives of local groups and organisations especially encouraged to attend.

What kind of information needs to be provided?

Information needs to be provided on:

- current activities in the area

- up-coming activities and events

- issues that are affecting the area, or are likely to

- services that are available locally; directories of services with contact details and very brief descriptions are important ways of providing information, but people also need to be told frequently where to go for this kind of information

- what the two networks and the different local organisations do (for example, a regular newsletter could highlight the work of two local projects or groups in each issue, or representatives of the networks could visit local groups to explain their work)

- how to contact and gain access to State services, community and voluntary organisations, and decision-makers and influential individuals such as TDs and City Councillors

- how an individual resident should deal with an issue affecting them; in some cases there may be a whole range of organisations or individuals that they could contact about just one issue – it's vital that people know where is the best place to go, especially if they are dealing with a crisis

- what's happened recently, and especially what are the things that community organisations have achieved, and what are the things that can be celebrated

- what's going on even when nothing obvious is happening, so that nobody feels that things are going on behind their back[3]   .

Some organisations are better at spreading information than others, and some have more time and resources to do it than others. Therefore, it may be best if organisations come together, perhaps through the networks, to organise the flow of information in the community.

Text Box 2

How a network should spread information about itself

To let people know what is going on in the area, what it is doing, what it has achieved and how to get involved, a community network should consider using all the methods given here, especially:

- Visits to groups and projects
- Regular newsletters
- Information leaflets
- Regular open information meetings

Text Box 3

How to make it more likely that people will read what you write

Newsletters, posters, flyers and leaflets have to:

- Hit you in the face
- Be catchy on the front, with headlines on issues that are relevant to people
- Be vibrant and bright
- Be in plain language, with no jargon and only as many words as are absolutely needed
- Have large print that's easy for people to read
- Have photos of people whom others will know, if photos are an option.

Know who your readers are, and write for them.

3.2   Getting people's views

This section is about ways for organisations to get the views of members of the community: for example, their views on what's going on in their lives and in the community, on what needs to change, on how to bring about changes, and on how efforts to improve things are actually working.

When you ask someone's views, it's important to (at least):

- let them know how the opinions or information that they offer will be used;

- if possible, check with them that they are happy with your record of their input;

- make it clear to them what influence, if any, they will have on what happens next – for example, will their views be acted on, and who will decide how they are used;

- be sure that you don't raise false expectations;

- report back to them on what happens as the process you have involved them in progresses.

Ideally, the method used to get people's views will offer them the chance to be involved in the decision-making that follows.

The best ways to get people's views

- Visits to groups to ask them for their opinions.

- Open meetings. People are only likely to come if a meeting is about something that is important or that interests them, or if they see it as an opportunity to raise a particular issue.

- Visiting door-to-door, spending time talking with people. This can be done informally just to allow people to raise issues, or as part of a more formal survey, where community members are asked to respond to particular questions or to fill in a questionnaire. This kind of survey can be done by local people trained up to do research, or by independent researchers. Households can be visited at random, or it may be necessary to try to talk to every household in a particular street or flat complex.

- Talking to people on street corners, at shops and wherever else it's easy to find lots of people. Again, this can be done for several purposes.

- Questionnaires, with questions that are plainly put.

- Committee members and others in positions of influence who are local people can get opinions informally from people who stop them on the street, or from neighbours.

- Community radio or television, allowing anyone to come in and make a CD/DVD.

- A website through which people can discuss issues (a 'forum', 'blog', 'chat-room').

- Texting in views.

- Drop-in centres, with opportunities for people to express opinions, and some way of noting and reporting these.

- Suggestion boxes in local centres, shops and churches.

- A newsletter inviting readers to send in comments.

Getting the views of specific categories of people

During our research, particular groups suggested the best ways to specifically get their views:

For senior citizens

- Visit groups and social centres (e.g. at lunch-time in the Aughrim Court Senior Citizens Centre) and ask people for their opinions

"They think when you're old you can't think any more."
(An Síol Senior Citizens Group).

For young people

- Through discussion and debate. Questionnaires and surveys can also be used, but they're not as good.

> *"They make us think they're listening, and that they're interested – and they could be, at the time – but they don't do anything that we ask".*
> (Bradóg young people's group)

For people from other countries

- Give questionnaires to staff of centres which people from other countries use, so that staff can organise discussion of the questions

- Use a questionnaire that:

  » is in the right language [4]

  » can be filled in quickly

  » the person goes through with a questioner who uses the right language

  » is presented to people in the right place (where they gather)

- Use networks of people and word-of-mouth to get people to a meeting – but the meeting has to be about something important to people, otherwise they will not come.

For people with disabilities

- One-to-one interviews, in person or by phone

- Make contact with individuals with disabilities through relevant agencies

- Ask a disability organisation if they would interview people in their group on your behalf

- Interview people at relevant hospital clinics (if hospitals will give permission)

- Make a video, a 'vox pop' where people give their views strongly straight to the camera. This could be presented to the Health Service Executive, for example.

- Video an incident illustrating an important issue for people with disabilities, for example, someone trying to get a taxi, or getting into a taxi.

For people misusing drugs

- The best way is through outreach, talking to groups and individuals:

  » outside and inside drop-in centres for drug users;

  » outside the clinics;

  » outside the surgeries of those GPs who provide methadone to many people.

To finish, we would like to stress three general points:

1. The best ways of getting people's views involve some kind of social contact with people who are trusted, for example, one-to-one chat on the doorstep or discussion and debate amongst a group of people who are comfortable with one another.

2. Any research needs to use questions which are plain and easily understood.

3. Some of the methods suggested can be used to get the views of people who aren't already involved in some kind of group or organised activity, and of those who are unlikely to ever attend a meeting of any kind.

Text Box 5

Young people and the internet

Very many young people in the north inner city seem to use the 'Bebo' website. Therefore, the internet may be a very good way to communicate with young people and to get their views. It could be worthwhile for youth projects in the area to try to get a group of young people together to operate a website providing information for young people and letting them discuss their community, their lives in it and what they want for it.

Text Box 5

Are questionnaires a good idea?   Yes ☐   No ☐

But a better question would be: Who is in control?

Some of the network member organisations suggested to us that questionnaires don't really work as a means of getting opinions locally. There are other methods of asking people for views and information, which give more scope for respondents to identify and expand on issues for themselves, especially group discussions and more creative methods, such as 'Planning for Real' and 'Participatory Appraisal'*. When compared to these more open techniques, questionnaires have at least two major disadvantages:

- the people who write the questionnaire influence the information and opinions that are obtained, through the questions they include (and leave out) and how they ask them;
- the information and opinions obtained are limited by the content and wording of the questionnaire.

But questionnaires also have a number of important advantages:

- you can get information or opinions from a lot of people
- the information is relatively easy to analyse, because the questions set limits to the amount, and kind, of information you get back
- you can present answers clearly, with numbers and percentages (which tend to make results look impressive).

What all of this means is that there are times when it may be best to use a questionnaire, times when other techniques are more appropriate, and times when you may need to use a mixture of techniques. Although some methods are more useful than others if you want to get people involved in the long term, **the critical point is not which methods are chosen, but whether community members are involved *"only as suppliers of information, or whether they have greater control – the core of participatory approaches"*****.

A 'participatory' research approach is one in which the members of a community are actively involved in designing, carrying out and analysing research into their own situation, and in planning and performing actions based on the findings. When it comes to doing research, there are several reasons for using a participatory approach, over and above any arguments for participation in general. For example, local researchers who are known and trusted are likely to find it much easier than outsiders to get information and views from other local community members. They are also likely to have a much better understanding of local issues and of what questions need to be asked. What's more, helping to design, perform and analyse research can give participants great confidence, plus a whole new range of skills.

*Planning for Real and Participatory Appraisal involve very visual methods of analysis and planning. Planning for Real makes use of 3-D models of a neighbourhood, while Participatory Appraisal involves people jointly creating and analysing visual presentations (like maps, models and ranking lists) of their lives and environment. A particular advantage of such techniques is that they don't have to rely on the spoken or written word, and so can be very useful for getting the views of shier or quieter people, and of people with literacy problems. It's worth noting that Participatory Appraisal (or 'Participatory Learning and Action') isn't just a set of methods or exercises, it's a whole approach based on a deep commitment to participation and an assumption that local people, rather than outsiders, are the 'experts'.

**Bennett, F. and Roberts, M. (2004) *From input to influence: participatory approaches to research and inquiry into poverty (Summary Report)* (York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation). Discussing the role of people living in poverty in research into poverty, the authors stress that their involvement "in making sense of the information produced, by using their 'insider expertise', may be more important than employing them as interviewers". This report also presents arguments for using participatory approaches to research.

3.3 Helping people to be more involved

An organisation committed to community development principles will want to promote the highest levels of citizen participation[5], and to involve community members as much as possible in decision-making. That should mean looking for direction from the community in general, using the approaches outlined in the previous section. But it also means helping those individuals who want to make a bigger commitment to community activities to get involved and to stay involved. That's what this section is about.

Text Box 6

Be honest about who's in control

Many organisations, particularly statutory ones, will often be unable or unwilling to allow any but the lowest levels of participation. Be honest about the level of participation you intend to adopt. For example, don't tell the people you want to involve that they are in control if someone else really has a right to over-rule their decisions.

See: New Economics Foundation (1998) *Participation Works! 21 techniques of community participation for the 21st Century* (London: New Economics Foundation) page 7
www.neweconomics.org/gen/z_sys_publicationdetail.aspx?pid=16

Text Box 7

The power of a group

- *"The key to having some power over an issue is to be involved in a group with others, to work together on it."* (Rutland Street School Women's Knitting Group, Lourdes Youth and Community Services)

- *"People create power. ....The only power is through a group."* (Uisce Group)

- *"When you're on your own, you feel powerless. ....Having a group behind you gives you power. A group can politicise the issue and make people aware."* (NWICN Disability Awareness Working Group)

3.3.1 Helping people to get involved

Some people come forward on their own to join existing groups and initiatives, or to start new ones, without any prompting from community organisations. However, it's more often the case that community organisations have to work to get people involved. The following are some general points to note.

- **The best way to get someone involved is for a local person who is already involved to persuade them to take part.**

- People need to be asked to get involved.

- People are only going to get involved if community organisations are doing something about the issues that are important to them. Therefore, organisations need to work on the community's priorities, and to keep trying to tell the whole community what's going on, and what results are being achieved.

- The process of getting local views offers a great chance to get people involved. If people are brought together to take some kind of active role in identifying issues and proposing how to deal with them, then they can often be helped to stay involved when the time comes to act on the findings. This is the idea behind many of the more creative methods of organising participation (see Box 9).

- Many people get involved because of some personal or group issue. Community organisations need to be able to respond: one-to-one work with someone to help them deal with a personal need can be the 'hook' or 'gateway' by which they get involved in broader community activities. For example, it may be possible to bring individuals together about a need they have in common.

- Community organisations may wish to try to get certain categories of people involved. For example, individuals who have been on Community Employment with a project could be approached to see if they would become members of the management board. Parents of young children may also be particularly interested in becoming active, because they tend to be very conscious of their children's environment and how to give them a better future.

- If people are being brought together to deal with a particular problem, it is worth trying to involve not just those who are most obviously affected by that problem, but also others, such as their families, who are affected indirectly.

- Local opportunities to volunteer, and the benefits of volunteering, should be publicised widely in the area.

The following are some ways of encouraging people to take the first step towards getting involved:

- any kind of face-to-face contact, whether by knocking on doors or going to natural meeting places;

- information and awareness-raising campaigns, for example, on voter registration;

- putting on classes, which may lead to longer term involvement;

- providing meeting spaces, drop-in and/or advice facilities;

- organising cultural, social or sports events;

- involving children (which often brings in parents too);

- doing a survey to find out what talents and under-used resources there are locally;

- inviting people to join sub-groups and 'working groups' which allow community members to become involved in relation to issues of particular interest to them, without having to take on the responsibility for running an organisation;

- approaching people who have been active in community affairs in the past, or who are active now on particular issues, to look for their advice, and to see if they can identify individuals who might get involved if they were asked.

Text Box 8

Getting people involved: experiences from Britain

Some of the approaches which we suggest for getting people involved are based on a summary of British experiences, presented by the British Government's Department of Communities and Government. That body suggests that the following can be *"triggers to community involvement"* :

- a threat from outside;

- unused community resources;

- a common need.

www.renewal.net *Solving the Problem: Getting people involved*
www.renewal.net/Documents/RNET/Solving%20the%20Problem/Gettingpeopleinvolved.doc

"People get involved if they have the time and the energy , if they are made to feel that they add value, and of course if they enjoy it".

Blakey, H. and Richardson, P. *Usual suspects or community leaders – what's the difference? Analysis of pilot online discussion forum 22nd - 26th November 2004;* University of Bradford.

Text Box 9

"Participation Works!"

The book, "*Participation Works!*", summarises 21 creative techniques that have been used successfully in Britain and elsewhere to involve people in decision-making. The actual descriptions are short and clear, and there are case studies and directions on where to get further information. Some of the techniques, like Planning for Real and Participatory Appraisal are now quite well-known in Ireland, but others, like 'Citizens' Juries', 'Choices' and 'Open Space' are not. Some can be used to involve large numbers of people. Many have the advantage that they allow young people to take part on an equal footing with adults.

New Economics Foundation (1998) *Participation Works! 21 techniques of community participation for the 21st Century* (London: New Economics Foundation)
www.neweconomics.org/gen/z_sys_publicationdetail.aspx?pid=16

3.3.2 Making it easier to join

Most people are a bit nervous about the idea of getting involved in a group or a committee for the first time, and it can be just too daunting for some. But organisations can make it easier for people to take the all-important first step.

Observing meetings

If someone shows any interest in joining a committee or group, then a good way to help them make up their mind is to let them sit in and observe a few of the group's meetings. If they do then decide to get involved, they're already used to the meetings, and better prepared all-round. If confidentiality is an issue, then either the observer can be asked to agree to keep all or some of the proceedings confidential, or else the meeting can be divided into two, with the visitor skipping the part dealing with confidential issues.

'Shadowing'

This is where somebody accompanies an existing committee member or community representative going about their business in that role. The 'shadow' not only observes at meetings, but also gets the chance to see close-up what a particular role actually involves, and to get constant explanations of what is going on. Shadowing has a very definite purpose: that at the end of an agreed period the newcomer will replace the existing member or representative and take on full responsibility for their role.

'Mentoring'

A 'mentor' is an experienced and trusted person who guides a less experienced person through a process, acting as someone they can bounce ideas off and talk through issues with. An organisation can set up a 'mentoring' or 'buddy' system, so that experienced members offer support, information and advice to new members on a one-to-one basis.

'Induction': introducing a new member to an organisation

Any organisation or group which wants community members to join it should have an induction process for new community members. In other words, it should have a set of procedures in place to introduce the newcomer to the organisation and help them settle in.

Basic information: there are certain things that we believe any potential member should know before they commit themselves to joining an organisation. In Section 4.1, we present a list of questions for people to get clear answers to before they join anything. We suggest that each organisation presents a list of similar questions to someone who is considering joining them, along with the organisation's answers, in writing.

One-to-one support: the next step for the organisation or committee is to give someone the task of giving one-to-one support to the new member during the 'induction period' which should last as long as the individual needs.

Here is what the individual responsible for a newcomer's induction needs to do.

- As soon as possible, and ideally before a first group meeting, explain what the group or organisation does, and encourage the person to ask questions about this.

- Explain what their 'roles and responsibilities' are – what will they be expected to do as a member of that group, and what they will be able to do. It is essential to give this to someone in writing, and to discuss it with them. Members' responsibilities may be to the project, to their community, or to themselves.

- Get the newcomer to remind herself/himself about why they have joined, what they hope to be able to do, and what they hope to get out of it. It will be most useful if this can be written down, and if it can be shared with the other members of the group.

- Explain any informal aspects of the group's work which may be worth noting (for example, if smoke breaks are common, or if there are people who always like to sit in the same place!).

- Explain the supports available from the organisation.

- Describe any training and other opportunities for personal development that will be available.

- If the person is a representative of another group or a community, discuss and agree how they will report from and to those they represent, and what resources you can provide to help them to do this.

- Review all of the points above at agreed times during the induction period.

- Observe the new member during the process, and try to judge if they need any further help or advice.

- Help the newcomer to prepare for meetings, and to go through what happened at meetings when they're finished.

It's better not to make an induction process seem too formal to the person it's designed to help. Otherwise, it may just seem like yet another challenge for them to overcome. But it is important that the organisation formally agrees a procedure and takes it very seriously, and that the support commitments are very clearly laid down.

Taking this overall approach should help people to stay involved, but it is also respectful of individuals' rights as volunteers[6].

Text Box 10

One-to-one support for someone who's getting involved: a case study

Mary was a local resident dealing on a day-to-day basis with drug addiction within her family. For many years she had felt isolated in trying to deal with the extra problems drug addiction brings.

A mutual contact put the Community Participation Project Worker in the North West Inner City Network (NWICN) in touch with Mary, who had expressed an interest in the network's work on the drugs issue. The worker arranged to meet with Mary over a cup of coffee. She explained what the NWICN Drugs Working Group was all about and how it fed into the North Inner City Local Drugs Task Force. Leaving relevant information leaflets with Mary, the worker asked her to call when she had read them to arrange another meeting, where she would answer any questions Mary had. Over the following months Mary and the worker met for coffee or talked on the phone on a regular basis. The upshot of this was that Mary was asked to attend a Drugs Working Group meeting to observe how meetings went. At this stage, it was made clear she did not have to say anything at the meeting if she did not feel comfortable. Prior to the meeting the Community Participation Worker met with Mary to explain who would be at the meeting and which group or community each person represented. As is usual when a new person is present, the chairperson asked the group to introduce themselves and say who they were representing. After the meeting, the Community Participation Project worker answered any questions Mary had in relation to the issues raised.

Around this time, the network organised a number of events – an Annual General Meeting, a Volunteer Party, and a Drugs Working Group Planning Day – all of which Mary and a friend were invited to attend. In the initial stages, the worker would arrange to meet Mary and accompany her to the venue, whenever possible. The worker did this until Mary felt comfortable, had learned how the network operates, and had got to know the people involved, especially the other members of the Drugs Working Group. The overall outcome for Mary was that she became involved with other local groups and organisations, attended events, made new friends, and got the opportunity, along with other local residents, to do a one-year accredited course in community leadership.

And now?

Mary was with the Drugs Working Group for 18 months, after which time she felt ready to represent the group at the North Inner City Local Drugs Task Force (as an observer for a three-month period). Unfortunately for the Drugs Working Group, Mary got a new house in another area, and so left the group. However, the good news is that Mary is now a volunteer in her new community. She says that her experience of participating in NWICN has been of great help to her in settling into her new neighbourhood.

Text Box 11

Induction for activists taking up paid jobs

Local people who are employed by community-based organisations may have a particular need for guidance and support, especially if they also take part in unpaid community activity. The induction process for people who have been unpaid community activists and are now taking up paid jobs in the community should include discussion of the issues that may affect them (such as experiencing divided loyalties or having to deal with difficulties around confidentiality) and what supports will be available to them. Funding should be sought or set aside (by individual organisations and/or by the networks) specifically to provide the relevant supports.

See: CDX (no date) *Working at home: 10 guidance notes for supporting residents who are working as paid workers and as board members in their community* (Sheffield: CDX)
www.cdx.org.uk/resources/cdxresources.htm

One-to-one support in the longer term

One-to-one work, such as mentoring and shadowing, is very important in supporting people who do become more involved. It's not just the practical help that matters, it's also the emotional support from someone you trust, especially when things get difficult. When someone becomes more experienced, such support usually comes through friendships built up along the way. However, organisations can also try to build in one-to-one support for experienced members. Just as paid staff usually have regular reviews of their work, it is useful for voluntary committee members and community representatives to review their involvement annually with a trusted individual, in some kind of formal or 'semi-formal' way. Such reviews give an opportunity to consider issues which the person might not be comfortable raising in the setting of a group review or evaluation, or which might not seem relevant to a group discussion.

3.3.3 The social side of participation

The social side of community activities is very important. People are not likely to stay involved for long if they're not comfortable with those around them and if they are not enjoying themselves. The friendlier and less formal the process, then the less threatening it should seem and the more likely people are to enjoy it. What's more, the better participants get on with each other, then the more they can support each other when needs be.

By building a social element into all of their activities, organisations and groups can give people the chance to relax together, to get to know and trust each other, to enjoy themselves and to generally feel that they are part of something good. Ways to do this include:

- always having tea, coffee and biscuits at meetings, training sessions and other events, and having breaks for people to chat over them (ideally, breaks that are long enough for the smokers to join everyone else for at least a while);

- having meals together before, after or during longer sessions;

- occasionally combining meetings or opinion-gathering/decision-making sessions with social events – which can be for adults and/or children;

- going on visits together to other communities, groups and projects;

- holding purely social events every so often;

- holding residential meetings and conferences (of which the ICON Conference is an excellent example);

- weekends away which may or may not involve work, but whose main aim is socialising;

- holding celebrations to mark successes.

3.3.4 Reviewing community participation within organisations

Ideally, community organisations should review their policies and practices in relation to participation at regular intervals. A first step would be for the management committee/board, including any local members, to agree just what they mean by 'full participation' in the work of the organisation. Then they should together agree the resources and supports that residents need to participate fully.

Looking at its overall work, there are some basic questions which a community organisation can ask itself in relation to community participation:

(1)   How do we get community members' views – for analysis, planning, evaluation?

(2)   How do people get involved in decision-making?

(3)   How many people who have come through our organisation are now active in community affairs?

Any board or committee that includes a mixture of local people and others should regularly review how the committee itself works. Questions to consider could include the following:

- Do the views of residents often get ignored?

- Does the group give more weight to the views of 'professionals'?

- Does everyone have equal access to information (e.g. through e-mail, by getting all necessary documents in good time for meetings)?

- Does everyone try to avoid using jargon if at all possible? When jargon or technical language is used, does the group ensure that everyone knows what it means?

- Are the times of meetings just as suitable for the residents as for other members?

- What supports and training, if any, do the community members need in order to be able to participate fully? Does the organisation have the time, money and staff to provide these?

Text Box 12

Resources for internet access

Those individuals with e-mail can communicate much more easily with one another than those without it. This means that people without e-mail can end up having much less information about what is going on than people with e-mail. Therefore, each organisation *"should consider providing an e-mail facility for all board members. This should include allowances for a computer and stationery as well as the cost of internet service and IT training"**.

*CDX (no date) Working at home: 10 guidance notes for supporting residents who are working as paid workers and as board members in their community (Sheffield: CDX)
www.cdx.org.uk/resources/cdxresources.htm

3.3.5 The responsibilities of organisations towards community representatives

If an organisation invites people to represent their community on its management committee, or if it sends somebody to represent the community in some formal setting, then **it has a responsibility to provide the resources, supports and training that the representatives may need**[7]. It has to recognise too that other committee members and staff may have to set aside time to ensure that community representatives are supported properly. These responsibilities also apply to any statutory body or collaborative initiative which includes community representatives. The following are a number of issues which require special attention.

Communication

If someone is going to be viewed as a legitimate representative by their community, and to have their support, other members of the community will have to be satisfied that they are accountable – that community members know what they are doing on their behalf, and can direct them. It's especially vital that there is good communication between the representatives and the rest of the community. Among the steps which an organisation can take to help with this are the following[8].

- The organisation should agree the best methods for the community representatives to communicate with those they represent

- Paid workers could help community representatives to prepare for meetings where they are giving feedback to the community, and could accompany them to those meetings

- The organisation could prepare a plain language summary of the main points of committee meetings, which community representatives could then discuss with groups and individuals

- Community members should try to keep a log of local residents they have spoken to during a given period of time, as a way of feeding in concerns, issues and views to the organisation

- If challenged by other members of the community, a community representative should be able to invite that person to observe a meeting of the committee, as a way of keeping everything in the open.

Bringing community representatives together

A key task for organisations like the networks is to try to bring community representatives together to provide support to each other[9]. Among other things, this helps representatives to be more independent of help from outside the community. Community organisations should also try very hard to ensure that one person doesn't end up representing a community on his or her own.

Funding needed

Funding for community representatives is likely to be necessary for:

- training

- expenses

- childcare and other social care (e.g. care of elderly relatives)

- administration work on their behalf

- facilitation of meetings amongst themselves[10].

Are there times when community representatives should not take part in an initiative when invited?

An organisation may sometimes have all the supports in place to nominate someone to an initiative as a community representative, but may decline to do so. Questions to be considered when the benefits of participation aren't clear include:

- Are the terms of reference, that is the powers and responsibilities, of the community representatives clear?

- Is the initiative likely to bring any benefits?

- Are the community representatives likely to have any real influence? If not, is it still worth participating, just to 'call the bluff' of those responsible, and to show that you are willing to take part in something you don't have faith in?

- Would it be more appropriate if community representatives came from another source? For example, is there a smaller group, like a tenants group, which should be taking part, rather than your organisation? In such cases, would you actually be speaking on behalf of local people, rather than letting them speak for themselves? Or should the representatives be selected collectively, for example, through the community networks?

- Are regular reviews of the initiative – including reviews of how community participation is progressing - built into its terms of reference?

3.3.6 Training

One role of community development organisations is to train and educate people so that they can do something about the things they're interested in, and so that they in turn can educate others. Good training can help people to gain the knowledge, skills and confidence to participate in community activities. The same barriers which hinder participation generally may stop people people taking part in training, but focusing on individuals who show some interest, and organising training for them can be be a very good way to help community members to get more involved.

The following are among the training topics that can help to promote and support participation.

- Committee skills and how to work as a group

- Public speaking, including speaking in any formal setting

- Negotiation skills

- Personal development

- Dealing with conflict and distrust

- Learning the 'system' and how to use it: how decisions are made in Ireland, especially how local government (Dublin City Council in the case of the north inner city) works; how to influence decision-making and policy[11]

- Representing the community (at least some of this training could be delivered by existing community representatives)

- Active citizenship – on voting and how to get the most out of the political system

- 'Rights Awareness' training – for groups to learn about their social and economic rights, as recognised by the Government in international treaties

- Leadership skills

- Organisational skills – the best way to improve skills is through experience, especially by working alongside someone who is a good organiser.

To be really successful, training needs to respect, to build on, and to be designed around, the experiences of the participants. Therefore, the first step when planning a course is to find out what the participants need and want, and what their relevant experiences are[12].

Points to remember when organising training include the following.

- Training should be made available before people join a group or committee, or as soon as possible afterwards.

- The days, times, duration and location of training need to suit the circumstances of those who are likely to take part.

- Participants' expenses (including any 'social care' costs) should be covered.

- Childcare should be provided, or childcare expenses should be covered.

- There may be a need for extra supports: for example, 'mentors' in the community - more experienced people for individual participants to discuss ideas and learning with.

- As always, there needs to be a social and informal side.

A large organisation may be able to organise training relatively easily at the time particular individuals need it. But it's much more likely that organisations will need to co-ordinate training locally. For example, there could be twice-yearly training in 'committee/group skills' for anyone joining groups and committees in the area for the first time. This kind of joint training could perhaps be co-ordinated through working groups of the networks.

3.3.7 'Rotation' on committees: changing members, changing community representatives

There are many advantages to having a system of 'rotation' for positions as community representatives or as members of management boards/committees. This means that an individual can only be a member or a representative for a certain length of time, and must then be replaced by somebody else. If it's membership of a committee, for example, it might be that someone can only be a member for four years in any seven-year period, and that one third of the members must resign at every Annual General Meeting. For community representatives, it just means that they are replaced after a certain length of time.

The best way to ensure that rotation happens is to lay it down in the rules of the organisation. That means that an organisation simply has to make community participation a priority, or it won't survive.

Rotation means that a committee is renewed regularly by new members, while still having the stability given by more experienced ones. There are many benefits.

Rotation:

- brings fresh ideas to a committee or position;

- helps to prevent 'burn-out' amongst more experienced members;

- means that more people are gaining valuable experience and learning skills – not just as members of a group, but in the positions of chairperson, secretary and treasurer (because the people who hold those jobs have to resign from the committee);

- creates less reliance on a small number of people;

- encourages individuals who have been active in one position, but who now have to resign, to take up new roles in the organisation (for example, on a sub-group) or in other community activities;

- brings a greater chance of representing diversity within the community, by allowing more people to take part;

- shows openness and a desire to have new people involved; therefore, community members are more likely to know that there's no clique and that it's worth getting involved – they will be valued and will be able to have an effect;

- prevents individuals, through no fault of their own, becoming 'permanent' members of a management committee or 'permanent representatives' of their communities;

- means that there is always an 'end in sight' for a member or representative – a set time for which they can try to do their best, and then relax!

For organisations which put rotation into practice, it's important to:

- publicise when rotation is due. That way, everyone knows about it, there'll be no misunderstanding as to why someone is stepping down, and it will put further pressure on you to actually ensure that the rotation goes ahead successfully;

- if possible, set up 'mentoring' or 'shadowing' between those who are due to step down and those who will replace them;

- set down rules for rotation in the Memorandum and Articles of Association, if you're a limited company, or in your constitution or ground rules if you're not;

- regularly assess progress in recruiting new members/representatives;

- build in annual reviews to see how rotation is working.

It may not make sense for a new, small group, to build a rotation system into their rules. But it would still be worth trying it informally. For larger or better-funded organisations, rotation should certainly be possible.

Text Box 13

Check-list for a meeting organiser

The questions...

- Is the time the most suitable one for the community members most concerned?
  - » weekends or evenings, usually
  - » mornings for older people or carers of school-age children
- Do you need to run it twice, at different times to suit different people?
- Does the venue need to have some 'status', sending out a message that those attending are valued?
- Is the venue convenient and comfortable, and will people be at their ease in it?
- Is the venue accessible for people with disability?
- Will social care expenses, and childcare and/or childcare expenses, be provided?
- Will any other expenses be covered for those taking part?
- Can transport be provided for people who would find it difficult to attend otherwise?
- Does everybody get good notice of the meeting?
- Does everybody who may attend get any documents they need in good time for the meeting?
- Who sets the agenda for the meeting? Does everyone have some control over what's on it?
- How do items get on the agenda?
- Can community members get items put on the agenda easily, and do they know this?
- Are the agenda and the purpose of the meeting clear, and easily-understood?
- Is the agenda agreed at the start by those attending?
- Is there a need for an occasional meeting without an agenda, for people to spend time exploring issues that are important to them, rather than being driven all the time by the things that must be dealt with immediately?
- Do you need to allot a time at the meeting for people's complaints, so that the whole meeting doesn't get taken up with them?
- Is an end-time for the meeting agreed at the start, and kept to?
- Will there be a social side to the meeting?
  - » Refreshments or a meal, before, during or after it?
  - » Breaks for refreshments and chat for everybody, with enough time for the smokers to socialise with the non-smokers before disappearing?
- Will a translation service be needed for anyone attending?

If at all possible...

- Arrange seats in circles or semi-circles, and don't have a 'top table'.
- Use plain language, and ask everyone else to do the same. Avoid jargon, buzz words and initials (like 'DCC' for 'Dublin City Council').
- Don't just expect people to sit and listen, but allow and encourage them to take an active part in the meeting.
- Get to open discussion quickly, and give everyone a chance to speak as soon as possible. (You may need to use small groups to do this.)
- Don't let **anyone** speak too often or for too long.
- If there are invited speakers, make sure that they're good, that what they have to say is relevant to the people at the meeting, and that they can say it clearly.
- The better the speaker, the harder they can be to follow, so make it as easy as possible for everybody to speak. Try not to let people get intimidated by the abilities and knowledge of others.
- Encourage people to ask for explanations of anything they don't understand, and give time for them to do this.
- Do some kind of quick evaluation at the end, to let everyone find out how others found the meeting and especially how easy it was to participate in it. You could also try to find out why people came to the meeting in the first place.

Some of the points here are taken from: Burns, D., Heywood, F., Taylor, M., Wilde, P. and Wilson, M. (2004) *Making community participation meaningful: a handbook for development and assessment* (Bristol: Joseph Rowntree Foundation/Policy Press) p. 61.

"Use networks of people and word-of-mouth to get people to a meeting, but the meeting has to be about something important to people." (Hill Street Family Resource Centre group discussion)

3.4 Helping people to act for themselves

"Can't we do it ourselves, instead of having outsiders do it for us?"
(Lourdes Youth and Community Services Men's Group)

This was a question put by one group during the research for this guide. It highlights the fact that, even within community organisations, much of the decision- making and the work in the north inner city is done by people from outside the area.

Probably the biggest change that's needed to bring about local control within the community organisations is for it to be made an absolute priority. Here are some suggestions to help build up local people's control over community organisations.

- **Bring local staff and local committee members together.** It is possible to build on the particular knowledge and experience of local residents who are currently on management committees or boards, or who work for local organisations. Networks could organise periodic meetings for these local volunteers and staff, at which they could offer each other mutual support and identify issues of common concern and explore ways to tackle them. By supporting such meetings, organisations would be showing how they value their local workers (paid and unpaid), as well as giving them the opportunity to develop a stronger voice for their community.

- **Involve long-term activists.** There are long-term, unpaid activists in many parts of the area who play crucial roles in their immediate communities. These are people with whom many others feel very comfortable, and to whom they go if they have a problem. Some of these activists are members of residents' groups or on the management committees of community organisations, but some are not. Community development organisations should seek to acknowledge the contribution of these individuals, and encourage and help them to pass on their skills and experience to other community members. If a process such as that suggested in the previous paragraph is started, then it would be very important to try to get these people involved.

- **Employ local people.** Wherever possible, if paid workers are needed, local men and women should be employed to do the work. Not only does this give more influence to local people within the organisations, but there are also other advantages:

   » local workers have many shared experiences with the people they are trying to help;

   » they are often known and trusted;

   » they provide role models for others in the community; and

   » their employment brings more money into the community.

- **Set target dates for having community members in key roles.** Community organisations and groups often have to 'buy in' expertise from outside, for example, to provide certain types of training or conduct research. Many organisations may aspire

to having local people do this work, but it will happen only if it is really prioritised. When funds are available for training or research, some could be allocated to allow a local person to work alongside a trainer or researcher, and with a target date for when he or she should be ready for the role. A similar challenge exists in relation to community representation and to key positions on committees and at meetings, like chairperson, facilitator and small group reporter. If no local person is in a position to take on these roles, it may be necessary to have a paid worker (who isn't local) do it, but there needs to be a target date for replacing that person with a community member.

- **Encourage local staff members to take part in community activities.** Where at all possible, member organisations should allow and encourage staff who are local residents to participate in community activities as part of their work. This means allowing for such time when preparing job descriptions and planning staffing requirements and rotas. They should try to make sure that employees have the necessary supports to participate, whether their participation happens in their working time or spare time.

- **Use money to support volunteers rather than employ staff.** When funding is available for some purpose, organisations need to question whether it is more appropriate to spend it on a paid staff member, or whether it would be better in the long run for it to be used to support unpaid community members in the work that they are already doing[13]. For example:

  » Could the money be given directly to a tenants' group, so that the group could get training that it needs, or could cover its members' expenses better, or could spend it on getting their community's views?

  » Or could it be used to allow unpaid activists to take time off work and so devote more time to their community activities?

- **Focus on young people.** There needs to be more focus on getting young people involved in community activities. Efforts to involve young people more *are* under way locally, and need to be supported vigorously if a new generation of local activists is to emerge.

- **Try to make the most of local resources.** Community organisations should continue to look for opportunities to start initiatives which rely more on the resources that are available within the community, and less on outside funding. There are limits to what can be done, but there are already successful local examples, most notably the credit unions, but also projects like Sunflower Recycling. Organisations also need to consider how there can be the greatest possible access to their existing resources, like buildings and minibuses.

- **Promote independence.** A community development organisation may need to decide to withdraw support from a smaller group, if both sides think that the time has come when the group will benefit from being able to rely more on itself.

3.5   Resources for promoting participation

Many of the measures suggested in this guide can be put in place by individual projects, in which case they need to set aside, or specifically seek, the necessary funds. Some of this funding should be for a budget to support volunteers. Other measures (for example, many types of training, or steps to bring together local residents who are employees of community organisations) will only be practical if a number of projects come together to put them into practice. The networks and the Community Development Projects are probably the most appropriate organisations to co-ordinate such measures. Whatever way they are co-ordinated, they will need funding. This will mean either pooling of organisations' funds or obtaining specific funds for the co-ordinating body. Here are some of the items for which costs need to be allowed[14]:

- Training

- Childcare and social care

- Time off work for members of the local community, who are employed by local organisations, to attend community-related meetings

- Extra staff time on induction, mentoring, de-briefing

- Greater direct funding for tenants groups and other smaller community groups

- Extra time for working with the most marginalised

- Newsletters

- Celebrations

- Weekends away

- Visits to other projects

- Expenses to attend meetings

- Bringing in outside people for talks and facilitation

- Funding for 'sabbaticals' for volunteer activists to take time off work to concentrate on community activities for a set period.

CHAPTER

Getting the most out of Community Participation

4

CHAPTER 4

Getting the most out of community participation

The aim of this chapter is to help members of the community who are already involved in community activities, or who are thinking about getting involved, to get the most out of their participation, both for themselves and for their community. Each of the following sections deals with a particular situation that an individual or a group may find themselves in.

4.1   If you're joining an organisation or committee

Try to get clear answers to the following questions:

- What will your role and responsibilities be as a member of the committee/ organisation?

  » What will you be expected to do?

  » What will you be able to do?

- What training opportunities will there be?

- Who will you get support from?

- If you think you have a great idea, where do you bring it?

- Where do you go if you have a problem?

- Will any expenses which arise for you be covered?

- Are there any legal responsibilities or liabilities involved for you?

In Section 3.3.2, we suggest that it's up to the committee or organisation to make sure these questions are asked and answered clearly. But it's good to come prepared!

Text Box 14

Getting funding

Getting money for a group can be just as hard as getting money for anything else. If you want ideas on where you can get it, one of the first things you need to do is talk to people who are used to looking for it – the community networks and their member organisations. Another thing to do is to try to get a copy of *The Irish Fundraising Handbook**, which covers just about every source of funding for community and voluntary groups.

Some of the application forms for money from Government sources are very daunting. But try not to let that put you off – if you need advice and help on making applications, there are local organisations which can give them.

*Create (2007) *The Irish Fundraising Handbook, Sixth Edition* (Dublin: Create).

4.2 Are you trying to set up a residents' or tenants' group where you live?

Try to:

- be clear why you're setting up the group – on what you are trying to achieve – and who it's for

- knock on as many doors as possible to see who's interested

- as soon as possible after a group begins to meet, agree 'ground rules' for meetings – on things like confidentiality, respecting each other's opinions and so on; stick these rules up on the wall at every meeting, use them, and review them every so often

- share out tasks from the start, so everyone can make a contribution and no one gets over-run with work

- be as representative as possible of the views of all residents

- be as open and transparent as possible

- bring other residents along with you, so you know that you have the support of as many residents as possible – that means letting people know what's happening, even when it seems that nothing's happening[15]

- be accountable to other residents – report back to them, and seek their direction

- build up your skills in working as a group (taking on the different roles – chairperson, secretary; taking minutes; facilitation skills; being a good group member); the networks and other organisations are there to help you do this

- build up links with other groups and organisations, and get as much help as possible

- review your work from time to time, to see if you're doing what you set out to do at the start, and if you need to change your aims at all

- enjoy it – tea-breaks at meetings and the odd social event can really help.

Think: are there things that you could do quite quickly and easily that could make a difference to where you live? If people can see some improvement, they'll be more likely to think that it might be worth their while getting involved.

Get help from:

- Other groups and individuals who've been in the same position

- Community organisations, especially the networks, ICON and NWICN, and their members. Some organisations have workers with specific responsibilities to help tenants and residents groups (for example, ICON, NWICN, Community Technical Aid and some of the Community Development Projects[16])

- Voluntary organisations

- Government organisations, like Dublin City Council

- Politicians

No matter who you get help from, try to make sure that you – the residents – are in control. Bear in mind that those who help you may have their own agendas. For example, if you're negotiating with another organisation, they're not the right people to get all your advice and support from! But do be open to help from outside: you never know where you may find allies you didn't expect.

4.3   Keeping your residents' or tenants' group open

It's really important that everybody is welcome to join your group. At the same time, if you're going to work together and be successful, everyone has to be able to trust one another, to be sure that everyone will respect confidentiality and not try to take over a group or an activity. Therefore, it may seem like a good idea to recruit only people you know can be trusted. But there is a very big danger in this: if the initial members of a group set about recruiting mostly people that they know and trust, a clique is very likely to develop. So it's much better to have truly open membership and recruiting practices. You can still make special efforts to get particular individuals to join if you think they would be very valuable members of a group.

The best way to try to prevent breaches of trust and confidentiality is to have clear **group rules** and to stick to them. If such breaches do happen, then they should be dealt with firmly, but carefully and sensitively. If you think they're going to be a problem, then the rules will have to include measures to get people to leave if they break confidentiality or trust. To put them into practice requires a lot of skill so, even as you start up, you may need to look around and see how some of your group can get those skills, or if anyone from outside the group could provide them.

If there's so much interest in being on a group that elections need to be called to choose a committee, then:

(a)   you're very lucky;

(b)   make sure that everyone knows they can stand for election, and that the voting system is the fairest possible;

(c)   have the option of 'co-opting' replacements for people who leave;

(d)   let other community members attend meetings as observers as much as possible;

(e)   have regular open meetings which any community member can attend, for spreading information and getting the opinions of as many people as possible;

(f)   after the elections, keep people up-to-date on what you're doing and what's going on (see Section 3.1).

Text Box 15

If your group is small ... Don't despair!

Sometimes groups get really disheartened when they find how few active members they can attract. For new groups in particular, who aren't in contact much with other organisations, there's a tendency to think that other groups are much stronger than them, are bigger and have much more support. In fact, that's rarely the case. No matter what piece of work is happening in any community – whatever it is, from a residents' group, to a project set up to meet some local need, to a workers' co-operative – it usually seems that the whole thing relies on just a few people to keep it going. This is perfectly natural: even when there are no other major barriers to them taking part, it's only at certain stages in most people's lives that they'll have the chance to be very active in the affairs of their community.

4.4 Setting up a group to deal with a particular issue

If you're trying to get together with other people to deal with some particular issue, then lots of the suggestions in relation to setting up a tenants' or residents' group should also be useful to you. But you are in a different situation to people setting up a tenants or residents group. There won't usually be a ready-made community for you to try to represent, so you may have to work hard to find others who want to join you. The following are a few things you could do to begin with.

- Check to see if such a group already exists locally

- If there's some kind of relevant group for Dublin or the country, find out if they have any useful advice and support to offer

- Contact the local Community Development Project and/or community network for advice and help

- Advertise for members

- When you do have a group, spend some time agreeing on your aims and on how you hope to achieve them. For example, is the purpose of the group for members to offer each other mutual support, or is to organise activities, or is it to lobby for some change in Government policy – or is it do all all of these things?

Text Box 16

Helping new members

A small group may not be able to do everything that's suggested in Section 3.3.2 above, *("'Induction': introducing a new member to an organisation")*, but it can still choose one member to look after each newcomer and go through the basics of what we suggest. And it's really important to be very welcoming.

4.5   Representing your community

Being a representative of your community is usually hard, but it should also be rewarding. If you try to make sure that you always know that you're doing what your community wants you to do, if you try to keep them informed about what's going on, and if you have people to support you, then the task can be made much easier.

If you're thinking of taking up a role representing your community, getting answers to the following questions before you commit yourself should help.

- How much influence will a community representative have? How will it benefit the community to have a representative there?

- How will you keep the people you're representing up-to-date on what is going on? How will they know what you are doing on their behalf? How will they know what decisions are due to be made? Will there be regular meetings, or flyers, or some kind of simple newsletter?

- How will you find out what your community wants, so you can be satisfied that you're speaking on their behalf? Will there be regular open meetings, regular meetings of a committee or a working group? Is there a way to get the views of people who don't come to meetings?

- To whom will you be accountable? In other words, when you have to speak, or make decisions, on behalf of the community, who will direct you on what to say or do, and to whom will you have to report back afterwards?

- What kinds of decisions will you be able to make on your own, and on what kinds of decision will you need direction from the people you are accountable to?

- How will you and the community you represent pick which issues you will push?

- What resources are available to let you do all this, and how much time can you spare to do it? How can you be sure that you won't be out of pocket over it? Who will help and advise you?

- Will you and other community representatives be able to meet regularly to review and plan together, and to support each other?

- What technical advice - that you can trust - will be available to you?

- How long will you be there for? Does everyone in the community know this?

- How will your replacement be chosen? Have you and others identified potential replacements for you? If you have, what can you do to help those people prepare? If you haven't, are you going to start trying to identify them soon?

When setting out to represent your community in some initiative, you never know whether it's going to be really useful, or a total waste of time. Apart from the risk of becoming very

frustrated, probably the biggest dangers for a community representative are that you will end up isolated, without support from the people you represent, or that you will be totally run off your feet. If you have satisfactory answers to the questions above right from the start, we hope that you can avoid both of those hazards, so that the main challenge will be getting the results that your community wants[17].

4.6   Preparing to attend meetings that are more formal

If you're a new member coming to a meeting of a management committee, or if you're representing your community at a meeting, it's best if you can prepare with somebody else. For a community representative, the best way to do this is with others who are representing your community or their own. A lone community representative really does need one or two supporting individuals to do this preparation (and the later 'de-briefing') with. These are the kinds of issues you may want to discuss.

- **In general:**

    » Who'll be there

    » The agenda – what is due to be discussed

    » What documents do you need for the meeting, and what documents have you received

    » How to raise issues you want dealt with

    » Looking for clear decisions

- **For community representatives in particular:**

    » Which issues to prioritise

    » Preparing a case for what you want

    » Who will raise which issue

    » Likely responses to your issues and how to deal with them

    » Who is likely to support you on the issues of most importance to you

    » When to push really hard to get the outcome you want, when to compromise and when to seek 'deferral' (so that discussion/decision on a topic is put off till another meeting)

    » How to respond to points raised by other community representatives

Different communities within the same area may have different priorities, or may see themselves as being in competition for scarce resources. Separate meetings of community representatives to prepare for meetings of joint community-statutory initiatives, such as

Partnership boards, Local Drugs Task Forces and 'RAPID' Area Implementation Teams, offer the chance for the representatives of different communities to reach agreed stances on issues, and then to present a united front – or at least to agree on how to respond to each others' positions at full meetings[18].

4.7   After a meeting

People aren't really likely to have much time to analyse everything that happened at a meeting. However, for somebody who is new to a particular organisation and for individuals who are representing their community, there does need to be some kind of formal 'de-briefing', a discussion that leads to a shared understanding of what happened at a meeting, and what needs to be done as a result. Even a short meeting or a phone call can be better than nothing.

For a new member, these debriefing sessions should be with the person responsible for induction. Their main purpose should be to ensure that the new member has enough information to understand the meeting, and has a chance to ask any questions they want to about it.

For those representing their community, the best way to 'de-brief' is with other community representatives, with or without individuals who are trying to provide them with support.   Key points to consider could include the following:

- Were we happy with the agenda and was it followed?

- Did all the issues important for us get proper attention?

- What were the main decisions taken and are we happy with them?

- What are the issues on which decisions weren't taken, and which need to come up again?

- What were the issues that came up that we need to go back to our communities for direction on?

- Did we support each other when necessary, and did the support help?

- What did we disagree about, and what came up that we may disagree about in the future?

- What do we have to do as a result of the meeting?

- What do we need to do better at the next meeting?

CHAPTER

Overcoming barriers to Community Participation

5

CHAPTER 5

Overcoming barriers to community participation

Chapters 3 and 4 suggest ways to increase community participation, but it has to be recognised that there are many obstacles to achieving high levels of involvement. In this chapter, we outline these obstacles, as identified through our local research. and through the work of others[19]. In each case, and where possible, we suggest how the networks and other organisations can try to overcome these barriers.

Recognising the obstacles to participation is an important step towards overcoming them. Any effort to tackle these obstacles will generally involve doing one of two things:

(1) Improving people's ability to take part by helping them to increase their confidence, skills and knowledge

Improving confidence, self-esteem, knowledge and skills is very important, especially since the local networks and projects do not have control over many of the processes in which community members need to take part (for example, regeneration projects, 'RAPID'), and cannot change how they are organised. It is also a good thing in itself.

(2) Changing the way that things are done

Since much community participation is based on meetings and groups, this means running committees and meetings, and all the associated activities, in particular ways, to make it easier for community members to participate. It also means trying to use other methods of letting people take part, which demand less time and effort.

Lack of results or lack of relevance

Suggestions for organisations

- Try to be sure that you are working on people's priorities. That means knowing what groups' and individuals' needs and issues are, and being able to respond to them.

- Help people to come together about needs and issues they have in common. Use sub-groups and 'working groups' which allow people to become involved in relation to issues of particular interest to them.

- Give people realistic hope, and be honest about what's possible. Stress from the start that it may take a long time to get the results that people want. Only organise something if there is a realistic chance of success or some kind of positive action, even

if people can't get everything they want.

- When successes – however small – are achieved, tell people about them.

- If a group gets what it wants, help the members to decide if they are happy to stop their activities now, or is there anything that they – either as individuals or as a group – would like to move on to.

Poor feedback to people who take part in meetings

Suggestions for organisations

- Provide accurate reports on each meeting in good time for the next one.

- At each meeting, describe the progress in relation to decisions made at the previous one, and respond to comments made.

Difficult language and 'jargon'

Suggestions for organisations[20]

- Don't use jargon (technical words, words that are used only by people very familiar with a particular topic, or words which have meanings other than their everyday ones) and initials at meetings or in written material. People can go and learn these later if they want to.

- If needlessly complex language is used at a meeting, get the people who have used it to explain it.

- Don't allow speakers to talk too quickly. Give other people time and space to look for explanations.

- Involve local people in chairing and reporting back at meetings. The more they do this, and the more they are involved in producing documents, then the more likely it is that the language used will be understood easily by community members.

- Through the networks, identify a number of projects and/or individuals who are willing to read any project's draft documents and suggest changes which will make them more readable. The networks should inform member organisations that this service is available, and should promote its use, with regular reminders to members.

Unsuitable timing of meeting and activities

Suggestions for organisations

- Organise meetings and activities:

  » at weekends;

  » in the evenings;

  » in the mornings, when carers of school-going children usually find it easier to attend.

- Provide childcare and/or childcare expenses, to allow parents to attend at times when their children are in their care.

- Hold 'duplicate' meetings (i.e. meetings with the same agenda) to suit the needs of different groups – for example, one in the morning and one in the evening.

- Send notice of meetings in good time.

Distrust and conflict

Suggestions for organisations

- Continually consider how much power the organisation holds, and whether it needs to give up some of this power. This applies to individuals too.

- Keep stressing that the group/organisation/activity is open.

- Try to recruit people from all the parts of an area or community.

- 'Rotate' the membership as much as possible, so that no one person stays there for too long and new members join regularly.

- Have group rules, so that nothing confidential which has been agreed is ever heard back outside the meeting.

- Bring in outsiders for activities with children sometimes, to lessen potential friction between parents.

- Keep letting the community know what you are doing and what is going on (even if nothing much is happening) and keep looking for others' opinions.

- Provide training in dealing with conflict.

- The networks should consider setting up structures to help people deal with conflict within communities.

- Each community-based organisation should have a policy on confidentiality that clearly

explains what is meant by 'confidentiality' and to what kinds of issues it will apply. The policy should acknowledge the possible implications of this policy for community members who are on the board of management or who work for the organisation (who, for example, may not be able to talk about work issues at home, or may come under pressure from other local people to inform them of decisions taken by the organisation). The organisation should publicise this policy within the local community[21].

Control and key roles passing to paid workers, who tend to be outsiders

Suggestions for organisations

There are two overall approaches to this problem: organisations should increase local participation in their decision-making generally (which is what this guide is about), and they should try to get more local people as workers.

Specific points :

- Once a local person is able to do a job well, he/she should be given it in preference to somebody from outside the area. This can only be done by including local knowledge as one of the 'essential' qualities for job candidates in advertisements and job descriptions.

- Train local people and help them to get qualifications, so that they can get paid jobs at all levels in community-based organisations.

- If it's necessary that a paid worker from outside the community acts as a representative on an important body, set a strict timetable for replacing that individual with a local person – and keep to that timetable. This means putting in place all the measures needed to prepare a local person to take on the role.

- Aim to have local people in the key roles at meetings: chairpersons, speakers, group facilitators and reporters. Provide any training and support which people may need to take on these roles comfortably.

- Organise staffing arrangements so that meetings and activities can be run at times that suit local people, especially at weekends and in the evenings.

- Set and implement strict policies on confidentiality. Acknowledge the particular difficulties which these may pose for local volunteers or workers, but recognise that community members are well capable of abiding by these policies.

- Set aside funding to cover the expenses of volunteers fully.

- Value and support volunteers.

- Publicise the benefits of volunteering.

Lack of resources for local groups; the expense of taking part

Suggestions for organisations

- Lobby for more resources to be made available directly to residents groups and other groups 'on the ground'.

- When making funding applications, seek money to cover participants' 'social care' (including childcare) costs and other costs associated with participation. Networks should consider setting up a fund to cover these costs across their areas.

- Tell people that their expenses will be paid, and pay them immediately. Organisers should approach community members to remind them that the payment is due, so that they do not have to ask for the money.

'Tokenism' by Government organisations: participation without power

"When you see this kind of thing, you ask yourself: 'Why would I subject people to that?', by asking them to get involved."
(NWICN Steering Committee group discussion)

Suggestions for organisations

- Challenge such 'tokenism' by State bodies.

- Consider very carefully all invitations to participate in collaborative initiatives with statutory bodies. Say 'no' if needs be.

Expectations of not being valued, or of being asked to do too much

Suggestions for organisations

- Take steps to help people learn what is involved before they make a commitment to taking part: for example, let people observe meetings, or accompany a worker or community representative to a meeting.

- Reassure people. Tell them that they won't have to take on a specific job (like that of Treasurer).

- Let people know what supports will be available to them.

- Set up 'induction' procedures, to help newcomers get used to an organisation or activity, and let people who are considering getting involved know about these procedures.

- Acknowledge, thank and praise people for their contributions as much as possible.

- Hold celebrations regularly, to mark successes and to thank people.

- Make sure that existing members welcome and support newcomers.

- Try to build up an atmosphere in which every individual is treated with dignity and respect, whatever their background or personal circumstances.

Too many demands, not enough supports

Suggestions for organisations

- Check what resources and supports individuals need in order to participate, and try to provide them.

- Provide appropriate training and one-to-one and group support outside meetings.

- Try to shorten the time people need to make commitments for, by continually looking for new recruits, training others to take on existing participants' roles, and ensuring rotation of membership.

- Review the amount of work undertaken by the volunteer with her/him at least once a year.

- Thank volunteers regularly and ensure that they know that their contribution is valued.

Lack of knowledge of what is going on

Suggestions for organisations

- Use as many different ways as possible to keep people informed.

Elected Councillors' lack of power discouraging people from taking part in local elections

Suggestions for local organisations

- Lobby for changes in the local government system.

Lack of motivation

Suggestions for organisations

- Achieve successes and show that you have done so.

- Keep publicising the benefits of getting involved.

Work and family commitments

Suggestions for organisations

- Try to involve people through social events, in which children can take part too.

- Provide childcare or cover childcare costs.

- Cover the costs of other 'social care' (for example, care of an elderly relative).

- Hold meetings and activities at appropriate times.

Lack of self-esteem and confidence; fear of appearing 'stupid'

Suggestions for organisations

Once again, two overall responses are needed – firstly, trying to increase people's confidence, and secondly trying to run things in such a way that less self-confidence is needed for people to get involved and stay involved.

- Provide appropriate training and supports (see Section 3.3).

- Try to organise time and space for people to discuss what's going on in their community, to reach a common understanding of issues and events, and to support one another's participation.

- Encourage those people who tend to be quieter to take on tasks at meetings.

- Organise social events, where people can get involved in a way that they don't find threatening.

- Show all participants equal respect.

- **Ask** people to take part.

Lack of skills and knowledge; literacy problems

Suggestions for organisations

- Provide appropriate training.

- Help people to gain knowledge and skills through one-to-one meetings and accompanying existing participants in their activities.

- Try to use the written word as little as possible at meetings and when getting people's views.

Loss of 'community'

Suggestions for organisations

- Organise events and activities that bring people together, from street parties to sports.

Fear of violence[22]

- Nobody can ask expect a community member to join a group where there is a potential threat of violence. Strong community support can make people a bit safer, but it offers no guarantees. Sometimes, groups must decide not to work on any issue that could endanger them, and must make it widely known that they are not dealing with problems like anti-social behaviour. In such cases, organisations with staff from outside the area may be in a better position to do something about these issues.

Discomfort at being the odd one out in a group[23]

Suggestions for organisations

- Try to ensure that there is always more than one community representative, or representative of any category within the community – for example, women or men or young people or an ethnic minority – on any committee or at any formal meeting.

- Create opportunities for community representatives to support one another.

- Try to prevent, counter and challenge racism and all forms of discrimination.

The attitudes of those in positions of power, and their resistance to giving up power[24]

Suggestions for organisations

- Ensure that the organisations' own power structures, and the attitudes of their volunteers and paid workers, encourage and promote genuine participation.

- Try to influence changes in State decision-making structures through long-term lobbying and by showing how small-scale alternatives can work.

- Use the networks and community-statutory initiatives (like 'RAPID' and the Drugs Task Force) to promote joint training and events for volunteers and staff from community and statutory organisations.

"It's very hard for different people not to listen and hear one another if they're in the same room at the conference, especially after socialising together."

"It's putting a face on the statutory people – seeing that they're the same as us."

Comments on the ICON conferences from two local activists, March 2007.

Barriers particularly affecting certain groups

The following are a number of obstacles to participation which were identified locally as especially affecting particular groups.

People with disabilities

- A lack of knowledge and awareness on behalf of the people running community organisations

- Lack of transport

- Problems with access to buildings.

Suggestions for organisations

- Raise awareness and change the attitude of organisations

- Use accessible venues

- Provide transport

- Have suitable meeting times (not while people are at work)

- Pay carers' expenses

- Try to get parents and families involved

- Try to involve people with disabilities in the networks and local activities as a whole, rather than in activities or groups only for people with disabilities or only focusing on their issues

- Try to get more people with disabilities to vote and to take part in voter education programmes.

Older people

- Older people are often afraid to go out after dark

- Many older people are quite isolated, especially those who have been affected by moves (their own or those of the people around them) due to redevelopment.

Suggestions for organisations

- Provide transport to meetings and events

- Organise day-time activities and meetings.

People who misuse drugs

- A stigma is attached to people who use illegal drugs, or who used to, so that other people tend not to trust them.

Suggestions for organisations

- Try to counter discrimination against drug users

- Set an example of building up trust with drug users and people who used to misuse drugs

- Provide one-to-one supports.

People from other countries

- Language difficulties

- Lack of childcare

- Lack of time – either working (often very long hours) or looking after the family in the evening

- Many don't live in the immediate area and don't wish to become involved

- Lack of understanding of the community and voluntary sectors.

Suggestions for organisations

- Use the appropriate language

- Provide childcare or cover childcare costs

- Spread information (see Section 3.1).

Young people

- Those with more power than them not doing what young people ask, either because they don't listen to them or they listen but then do nothing

- The young don't have a voice, and are not taken seriously (e.g. by politicians).

Suggestions for organisations

- Prioritise young people's involvement

- Help young people to set up a website and/or a newsletter where they can raise and discuss issues that affect them, and suggest solutions to problems, and then help them to try to put the solutions into practice. A website is likely to be the more useful for involving greater numbers of young people

- Try to get young people involved in community activities through the schools, for example, through Transition Year or through student councils.

Women

- Generally, women are involved in local community activities in much greater numbers than men. But the greater the decision-making powers of any committee or initiative, the lower the proportion of women participants tends to be[25]

- Some of the barriers identified above affect women more than men, and some

of them are more significant at the higher levels of decision-making. For example, many participants in the more influential bodies are senior paid staff of statutory organisations, who do not have to care for children during the day and who tend to be men. So their meetings are often held during the working day, without measures to allow for child care. Since it is women who usually look after children, they are less likely to be able to go such meetings than men. If they do go, they are even more likely to be the 'odd ones out' than male community representatives, as most other participants will be men.

Suggestions for organisations

• Examine the organisation's policies and practices in relation to participation, and its overall philosophy and ways of working. See if these are more likely to promote participation by men than by women, or vice versa, and adjust them if necessary.

• Bring together women who are already taking part in community activities to identify particular obstacles to other women's participation and ways to overcome those obstacles.

Men

• There's a local tradition of men just not getting involved in community activities

• Men let women take the responsibility

• Women may 'network' more, passing on information from mouth-to-mouth better than men

• Men are afraid of being targeted by gangs (at night or when they're alone) if they're on some kind of committee in their flats

• A lot of men in the Dublin City Council flats are hidden – they're not meant to be there (their partners get the book and the men aren't registered as tenants). This means some of them feel they should stay hidden, and they're also afraid of being noticed by Dublin City Council (for example, if they attend a meeting).

Suggestions for organisations

• Try to get one or two men involved. This will make it more likely that other men will join in

• Use a 'hook' to get men involved. Organise some activity that will attract them at first, ideally something that they'll see as productive and that they can have pride in, for example, learning some skill that could possibly lead on to a job. These skills could be taught by local people[26]

• Encourage men to get involved in activities that they are often happy to organise, like

children's football. It may be enough for them to be involved with such activities, or they could be seen as first step towards getting some men to be more active in other actions

- Try specifically to get information to men, for example, on what's going on in the area and what they could get involved in. This information could be provided in flyers, in a local (general) newsletter, or through a one-to-one drop-in for men

- Try to set up men's groups: for discussion, for social gatherings and to organise activities.

Text Box 17
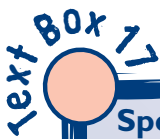
Specific barriers to joining/staying on management committees/ boards of community organisations

- The responsibilities can seem very demanding and/or complex

- Knowledge of a wide range of topics is needed, for example, finance, employment law, health and safety, child protection

- These topics often appear dull

- Low literacy levels can hinder people in dealing with these topics

- People can be intimidated by legal structures; setting these up can seem to involve bewildering complexity

- People may not be interested in the details of how an organisation works

- Organisations may not have the time to really involve people; the organisations are often 'crisis-led', especially in relation to funding.

CHAPTER

How to measure success in improving Community Participation

6

CHAPTER 6

How to measure success in improving community participation

This chapter is about ways to answer the following question:

"How much are local people involved in the decisions and actions which affect their lives and the life of their community?"

Anyone committed to community participation has to keep asking this question, and trying to answer it. Unfortunately, there doesn't seem to be any easy way to get an answer. **It is very important to measure the numbers of people coming to meetings and taking part in activities, but it is not enough to do only that. It's also crucial to look at the effects of participation – and to judge how much power and influence those taking part really have.** Taken together, these are what show us the the 'quality' or 'level' of participation (see Text Box 1).

We need to consider participation in three settings:

(1)   the member organisations of the networks

(2)   the networks themselves

(3)   the area as a whole.

The following are some suggestions for how to judge levels of community participation. If at all possible, it would be best to use several of these approaches at once. To see how participation is increasing or decreasing with time, and whether or not efforts to increase participation are working, these methods would have to be used at regular intervals. We recognise that lots of groups – especially the ones made up only of volunteers – probably won't have much time, resources or energy for this. Nevertheless, we hope that every group will be able to make some effort to assess the level of community participation in its activities.

6.1   How many people are coming to meetings and joining in activities?

Record the numbers of community members (noting the number of volunteers in each case):

- coming to meetings

- taking part in activities

- attending events

- taking part in surveys and participatory research

- on management committees and boards of management (and noting what proportion of the members of these boards and committees are local people)

- who hold 'officer' positions on management committees and boards (chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, treasurer etc.)

- registering to vote and voting in elections.

It should be fairly easy for an individual organisation or group to keep the relevant records, and to analyse them every so often. It would take a little time, but the task would be made easier if a common recording sheet were available for organisations to use. This would also be useful if any groups or organisations wanted to share information on participation, in order to identify trends in the area as a whole.

6.2   Are the issues that are most important to the community being dealt with?

Judging to what extent community-based organisations are dealing with the issues that affect local people the most is a key step in monitoring community participation, but it requires effort. What's needed is some system to regularly get the answers to the following questions:

- What are the issues that are most important for community members?

- Are the networks and their member organisations working on those issues?

- What are the organisations achieving on those issues? (Since it's results that keep people interested.)

- Does everyone in the area know what is being achieved in relation to those issues?

One approach would involve the following steps, which could be carried out once a year and co-ordinated initially by the networks and Community Development Projects.

(a)   Bring together all interested organisations and groups for one day to get community members' views on what the most important issues are for them, using a 'Participatory Appraisal' approach. This would involve first asking as many people as possible for their views in a variety of ways, and then holding an open meeting for presentation and discussion of the findings.

(b)   Ask each network member organisation to submit a list outlining the issues it is working on, and what it has achieved on each issue over the last year.

(c)   Prepare newsletters and flyers, containing the list of issues from (a) and the lists of issues and achievements from (b), for delivery to every household and project in the area, and to be left in every place where people gather.

(d)   Invite every community member to a general meeting of the network, which would discuss the findings and consider if any issue needs more attention. The findings would also be an important item on the agenda of any meetings for local residents who are activists or staff (see Section 3.4).

6.3   What level of influence do community members have within local organisations, and what difference does community participation make[27]?

Promoting discussion

One way to judge how much influence and power community members have within local organisations is to bring people together to discuss this issue. **A first step would be to organise a meeting of local residents who are involved in tenants' groups and other community organisations as either volunteers or staff** to discuss the following questions:

*   What difference does community participation make?

*   What has happened – for better or worse – that wouldn't have happened if there had been less community participation?

*   If there are benefits, have they been spread throughout the community, or have some benefited more than others?

*   What effects – good or bad – has taking part had on you?

*   Is there anything that needs to be done to broaden and deepen community participation?

The next step would be for participants from that meeting to attend a network general meeting, to report on their conclusions and to involve others in the discussion[28].

Tracking decisions

Another way to evaluate how much influence community members really have in an organisation is to examine one or two decisions very closely:

1.   Bring together community participants in the organisation.

2.   List recent decisions made within the organisation. Let community members pick one or two which they feel are the most important.

3.   Review exactly how each of the selected decisions was made, and get community members and management committee/board members to rate the level of influence by community members[29].

6.4   Monitoring specific aspects of community participation

There are particular aspects of community participation which are relatively easy to monitor. Once again, the networks and the Community Development Projects are probably the most appropriate organisations to promote this kind of monitoring. For example, they could hold workshops to help groups put monitoring procedures in place, and to allow those organisations which wish to share information to do so more easily.

Do efforts to make it easier for people to join groups actually work?

Devise a very simple 'questionnaire' to go through with each new community member who joins a board, working group, sub-committee, or equivalent, say two months and six months after they join. Topics covered could include the following: how much do they know about the organisation, do they feel valued, do they understand what's going on at meetings, are they comfortable at meetings, do they think that they'll stay, what supports are there for them and how do they find them, what are they finding difficult, and what would help them?

Watch the trends in this. If groups come together to discuss these trends, they could see if the organisations that have practical supports in place, like mentoring, shadowing and induction, get better results over time.

Evaluating participation at meetings using the 'Evaluation Wheel'[30]
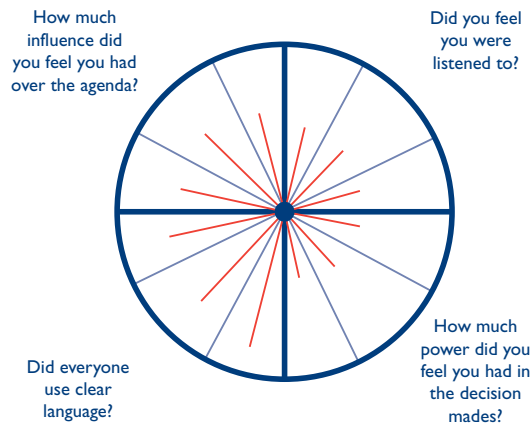
The evaluation wheel is a simple and useful way of letting people give their views on how a meeting has gone. It can be filled in anonymously, but the end result is visually clear and easily-understood.

To use the wheel to evaluate community participation at a meeting, set up a flip-chart sheet on a stand or a wall. Draw a circle on it, and divide the circle into four sectors. Write questions you want people to answer on the sheet, each beside a particular sector, for example:

- How much influence did you feel you had in deciding the agenda, i.e. what was discussed?

- Did you feel you were listened to?

- How much power did you feel you had in decisions made at the meeting?

- Did everyone use clear language?

Then ask each local residents who has attended the meeting to answer each question, by drawing a line in the particular sector, starting from the centre of the circle and drawing outwards as far at they want towards the edge of the circle: the longer the line they draw, then the more positive their answer (e.g. the more influence they felt they had, the more they felt listened to). For example, if someone draws a dot in the sector on "clear language", it means that they felt that the language was not clear at all, but if they draw a line in that sector from the centre right out to the edge, then they felt that the language was very, very clear. If the wheel is left turned away from the group, people can fill it in without others knowing who has given what answer. When everyone is finished, the wheel can be turned for everyone to see it. The completed wheel can also be put on display at the start of the next meeting, so that everyone can see what improvements may be needed in how that meeting is run.

You can have more sectors, or fewer sectors, and you can use any questions you like, for any purpose. The wheel could also be used to quickly evaluate a whole process, rather than just a single meeting.

Monitoring rotation of members

An indicator which would be very easy to monitor would be the degree of rotation on various bodies. For example, for

- Network Steering Committees

- Committees/Boards/Groups on which the community is represented

- Network Working Groups

- Project Management Committees/Boards of Management,

the community membership could be recorded and analysed every year, to see what the rate of replacement of community representatives is. A very slow rate of replacement could certainly be seen as a bad sign, meaning either that not enough members of the community were available to replace existing members, or else that there was some block to new people joining. A very fast turnover could be a bad sign too, if it means that people find it impossible to stay in groups, or that there has been some major conflict.

Text Box 18

Some more signs of successful community participation

- *"When people turn up at meetings"*

- *"When people give you feedback"*

- *"When people are interested in what you have produced."*
 (O'Devaney Gardens Blocks Committee)

- *"More people are showing up"*

- *"People are asking questions, especially people who've never asked questions before"*
 (Dominick Street Redevelopment Group)

ENDNOTES

Endnotes

1   Like this.

2   Instead of worrying too much about defining how big a 'neighbourhood' should be for the purposes of these meetings, it might be best just to identify every hall and reasonably-sized community centre, and then to organise one or two meetings per year in each one. For the sake of efficiency, the organisation of such meetings could be co-ordinated through the two networks.

3   See Blakey, H. and Richardson, P. (no date) *Usual suspects or community leaders – what's the difference? Analysis of pilot online discussion forum 22nd - 26th November 2004*; University of Bradford

      www.regionalforum.org.uk/publications_resources/knowledgebase/400/150.pdf .

4   Great care must be taken to ensure that interpreting and translation are performed accurately and respectfully.

5   Here we use 'citizen' in a broad, positive and inclusive way, meaning a person who has the right to take an active part in shaping their own life. While up to 20% of the people living in the north inner city may not be legally defined as 'citizens' of this State, they are certainly considered to be citizens for the purposes of our work.

6   Some of the suggestions presented here are based on points in the following documents: Place, M. (2007) *Meaningful community participation for local development structures* (Dublin: Ballymun Partnership); Volunteering Ireland (2006) *Fact Sheet 03: Charter for Effective Volunteering* and *Fact Sheet 05 Barriers to volunteering... why people don't volunteer* (www.volunteeringireland.ie).

7   In Section 4.5, we present a set of questions for community members to ask before they agree to take on a representative role. Organisations need to have answers to all these questions before they ask someone to represent them.

8   The bullet points are based on suggestions from page 15 of CDX (no date) *Working at home: 10 guidance notes for supporting residents who are working as paid workers and as board members in their community* (Sheffield: CDX).

9   See Blakey, H. and Richardson, P. (Endnote 3 above).

10   Most of the points on this list are from Craig, S. (1995) *Community participation: a handbook for individuals and groups in local development partnerships* (Dublin: Combat Poverty Agency).

11   For a clear guide to decision-making structures in Ireland, see: Community Workers Co-operative (2001) *Strengthening our voice* (Galway: Community Workers Co-operative). For more on local government in particular, see Curley, H. (2006) *Finding your way around local government* (Dublin: Combat Poverty Agency).

12   See: Burke, A. (2006) *Sustaining and supporting participation: a documentary review and a personal reflection* Document produced for Community Participation Project; Integrated Services Process (2001) *Final report of the Integrated Services Process, North East Inner City Dublin* (Dublin: Integrated Services Process/Area Development Management) page 31.

13   See: Lubelska, A. (no date) *Getting a good deal from community workers* (Newcastle: Association of Community Workers) p. 17.

14   Some of the points presented here arise from discussion in two documents prepared for the Community Participation Project by its two staff members: Burke, A. (2006) *Sustaining and supporting participation: a documentary review and a personal reflection*; Jennings, N. (2007) *Barriers to Community Participation*.

15   For the last part of this point, See Blakey, H. and Richardson, P. (Endnote 3 above) Usual suspects or community leaders – what's the difference? Analysis of pilot online discussion forum 22nd - 26th November 2004; University of Bradford. One or two of the other points in this list are taken from a really useful booklet published by the Tenants Participatory Advisory Service (TPAS) in England: TPAS (no date) *TPAS Keynote No. 2: Running a tenants' association* (Manchester: TPAS). An up-dated version can be down-loaded from www.tpas.org.uk/index.asp.

16   The 'Community Development Projects' (CDPs) are organisations which are committed to tackling poverty and 'exclusion' through the active involvement of those most affected by these problems and which are funded by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. Of the eight CDPs In the north inner city, two have workers whose roles include supporting tenants and residents groups: An Síol CDP and MACRO CDP.

17   For some good points on the skills needed for taking part in partnership initiatives (e.g. Partnerships, 'RAPID'), and how to get the best out of them for your community, see: Community Workers Co-operative (2001) (Endnote 11 above).

18   For further suggestions on "*how to approach meetings as a community representative*", see: Community Workers Co-operative (2001) (Endnote 11 above) page 33. The point about competition is from Craig, S. (1995) (Endnote 10 above).

19   Almost all of the barriers presented in this chapter were identified by local residents and local projects in the course of the research for this guide. Where a barrier was identified through the work of others, this is shown in these endnotes.

20   Some of the suggestions here are influenced by points in an earlier local document, a report on a *"Meeting of community representatives in the Integrated Services Process, held in the Fire Station, Buckingham Street, 12th October 1999"*.

21   This suggestion is based largely on points made in: CDX (no date) (Endnote 8 above).

22   See the points on 'Men' in this chapter, and: Connolly, Johnny (2002) *Drugs, crime and community in Dublin: monitoring quality of life in the North Inner City* (Dublin: Community Policing Forum) pp. 76-77.

23   A barrier identified by: Lubelska, Anna (no date) (Endtnote 13 above).

24   The barrier was identified in: Arnstein, Sherry R. (1969) "A ladder of citizen participation" *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 35, pp. 216-224

      www.lithgow-schmidt.dk/sherry-arnstein/ladder-of-citizen-participation.html

25   See: Crawley, M. and O'Meara, L. (2002) *Gender proofing handbook* (Galway: County Development Boards); Bassett, M. and Quinlan, M. (2006) *Pathways to power: women influencing decision-making in Blanchardstown* (Dublin: Involve); Area Development Management (2000) *Manual: gender mainstreaming the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme 2000-2006* (Dublin: Area Development Management).

26   An example of how this was done locally in the past was mentioned by the men's group which participated in the research: this was the 'Drivers' Co-op'.

27   Some of these points are based on pages 46-47 of Burns, D., Heywood, F., Taylor, M., Wilde, P. and Wilson, M. (2004) *Making community participation meaningful: a handbook for development and assessment* (Bristol: Joseph Rowntree Foundation/Policy Press). It should be noted that this is a good example of a topic that can't easily be addressed through a questionnaire or some form of ranking survey.

28   It's very important that a process of strengthening local involvement does not create a split between active community members and individuals active in the area who don't live there, many of whom have made very significant contributions to the community.

29   Something similar has been tried out recently in Britain, where it is called the "Decision Trail". See Burns et al. (2004), cited in Endnote 27 above.

30   The 'evaluation wheel' is a tool sometimes used in Participatory Appraisal. We learned of it through Patrick Gates, of the Dublin Inner City Partnership.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

Local groups who participated in the discussion sessions

1. *Bradóg* (George's Pocket) Youth Group

2. Dominick Street Redevelopment Group

3. Hill Street Family Resource Centre group (almost all from other countries)

4. Lourdes Youth and Community Services Men's Group

5. North West Inner City Network's Disability Awareness Working Group

6. North West Inner City Network Steering Group

7. O'Devaney Gardens Blocks Committee

8. Rutland Street School Women's Knitting Group, Lourdes Youth and Community Services (almost all members were senior citizens)

9. *An Síol* Senior Citizens Group

10. Sunflower Recycling Workers

11. *Uisce* group*

A total of 72 individuals participated in the discussions with members of the groups listed above.

*A brief follow-up session to discuss further points was held with Community Employment workers at the Dublin AIDS Alliance (some of whom had taken part in the original discussion organised by *Uisce*). This brought the total number of individuals participating in group discussion to 74.

Please note that the questionnaires completed by local organisations were returned anonymously, so that no list of those organisations which responded can be presented.

APPENDIX 2

A guide to jargon and initials

In the following paragraphs, we give our understanding of some words and terms which you may come across if you get involved in community activities. Some of them are used in this guide. We also provide a list of commonly-used sets of initials*.

Jargon

Activist: a community activist is someone who takes an active part in community affairs.

Annual General Meeting (AGM): a formal meeting of all the members of an organisation or group, held once a year, at which a management board or committee is elected and the financial accounts of the organisation are approved.

Appendix: a section added at the end of a document, that provides more information on something mentioned in the main document. It's generally put at the back of the report because you don't actually need to read it for the rest of the document to make sense.

Community Development Projects (CDPs): organisations which are committed to tackling poverty and 'exclusion' through the active involvement of those most affected by these problems. Controlled by voluntary management committees, they are funded by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

Collaboration and collaborative initiatives: Collaboration means working together. A collaborative initiative means any project or piece of work in which two or more organisations come together to do something. RAPID, the Local Drugs Task Forces, the Council for Services to Older People in the North West Inner City and the Young People at Risk Initiative are all examples of collaborative initiatives.

Community development: members of a community coming together to identify, analyse and tackle issues of importance to them.

Community organisation: an independent organisation set up and developed to meet the needs of a particular community, with a major input from members of that community, at least when the organisation was being planned and set up. Some, but not all, community organisations base their work on the ideas of 'community development'. Sometimes, organisations are referred to as 'community-based' – that's generally to cover local projects which are part of a statutory organisation like the Health Service Executive, but which are very active in local community activities.

Community participation: members of a community being involved in the actions and decisions which affect their lives and the life of their community.

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* Our thanks to David Little (of YPAR, the Young People at Risk Initiative, and the Health Service Executive) who prepared the first version of this list of initials.

Co-option: If the existing members of a committee themselves bring someone else on to the committee, the person is said to have been 'co-opted'. The rules of many organisations allow this, so that (for example) new people can join a management committee between Annual General Meetings.

Ethnic minorities: an 'ethnic group' means a group of people who share a common ancestry, culture, history and tradition and who are aware that they share these things. If such a group forms a minority of the population in a particular place, then it can be called an 'ethnic minority'. In Ireland, ethnic minorities include Travellers and the people from many different cultures and countries who have come to live here in recent years.

Facilitation: means making something easier. Facilitating a meeting or a piece of work means helping it to move along. Ideally, the facilitator of a meeting helps those taking part to achieve the purpose of the meeting, without influencing the outcome herself/himself.

Equality proofing: the policies, procedure and practices of an organisation are said to have been 'equality-proofed' if every effort has been made to see that they don't discriminate against people on the basis of characteristics like age, sex or disability. There can also be examples of particular kinds of 'proofing', like 'gender proofing', to try to ensure that men and women gain equal benefits.

Governance: everything about how an organisation or a political area, like a city or a country, is managed and organised, for example, the roles that people have, who is in charge of what, the procedures and rules, how things are actually done.

Induction process: a set of actions to help someone who has just joined an organisation or a group to learn about it and to become comfortable in it.

Jargon: words and language that are used only by people very familiar with a particular topic, words which have meanings other than their everyday ones, or technical words.

Local government: the system by which areas within a country are governed. In Ireland, local government is organised into county councils, city councils, borough councils and town councils. These are also called 'local authorities'. They have responsibility for things like housing, planning, roads and parks. In the north inner city of Dublin, the local authority is Dublin City Council, which is made up of the 52 City Councillors elected every five years in the local elections, plus about 6,200 unelected staff, including the City Manager and the Area Manager. Each of these two groups – the Councillors and the officials - have different powers and responsibilities.

Mainstreaming: when an organisation or a piece of work starts on a temporary basis or through some kind of 'once-off' funding, and it's thought to be successful, it will sometimes be 'mainstreamed'. This means that it moves to getting secure, long-term funding from the State and it officially becomes part of, or linked to, some Government activity.

Management committee/management board: the group of people with overall responsibility for an organisation. If the organisation is set up as a 'limited company', as many community organisations now are, then the committee is called a 'board' and its members are the organisation's 'directors'.

Mentoring: when an experienced member of an organisation gives support, information and advice to a new member on a one-to-one basis.

Minutes of a meeting: the written report on what happened at a meeting, as agreed by the people who were there.

Networks: in this document, when we refer to the 'networks', we mean the Inner City Organisations Network, ICON, and the North West Inner City Network, NWICN.

Participatory Appraisal: (or 'Participatory Learning and Action') is an approach to analysis and planning based on a deep commitment to participation and an assumption that local people, rather than outsiders, are the 'experts'. It involves people jointly creating and analysing visual presentations (like maps, models and ranking lists) of their lives and environment.

Shadowing: where somebody accompanies an existing committee member or community representative going about their business in that role.

Social care: caring for children, elderly relatives or others who need to be looked after.

Social exclusion: this is the process through which some people are pushed to the edge of society and prevented from taking part fully in it because of their poverty, or lack of basic skills and education, and/or as a result of discrimination. The word 'marginalised' is sometimes used instead of 'excluded', but means more or less the same thing.

Social housing: is housing for individuals or families who cannot afford to buy housing or to rent it in the private sector. It generally means flats or houses rented from, or provided by, a local authority (like Dublin City Council) or a non-profit housing organisation

Social inclusion: efforts to tackle 'social exclusion' are often referred to as 'social inclusion' work. This aims to help those who are being excluded, for whatever reason, to participate fully in the life of their society

State: the Government of (the Republic of) Ireland and every organisation it controls.

Statutory organisation: an organisation controlled by the Government. This term can be used to cover Government 'Departments', like the Department of Health and Children (which are run directly by a Minister), and organisations set up by the Government and which, in the final analysis, have to do what the Government says, like the Garda Síochána, the Health Service Executive and Dublin City Council.

Voluntary organisation: an independent organisation, that isn't controlled by the Government and that doesn't try to make a profit, that generally exists to serve the public good in some way. Every voluntary organisation has – or had, at some time in its existence – at least some volunteers involved in its work. Well-known examples would be the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and the GAA. Many voluntary organisations are charities. Most community organisations are voluntary organisations, but people involved in community development often use 'voluntary organisations' just to mean those voluntary organisations which have no specific commitment to community development and/or no links to a particular community.

Organisations: what do the initials stand for?

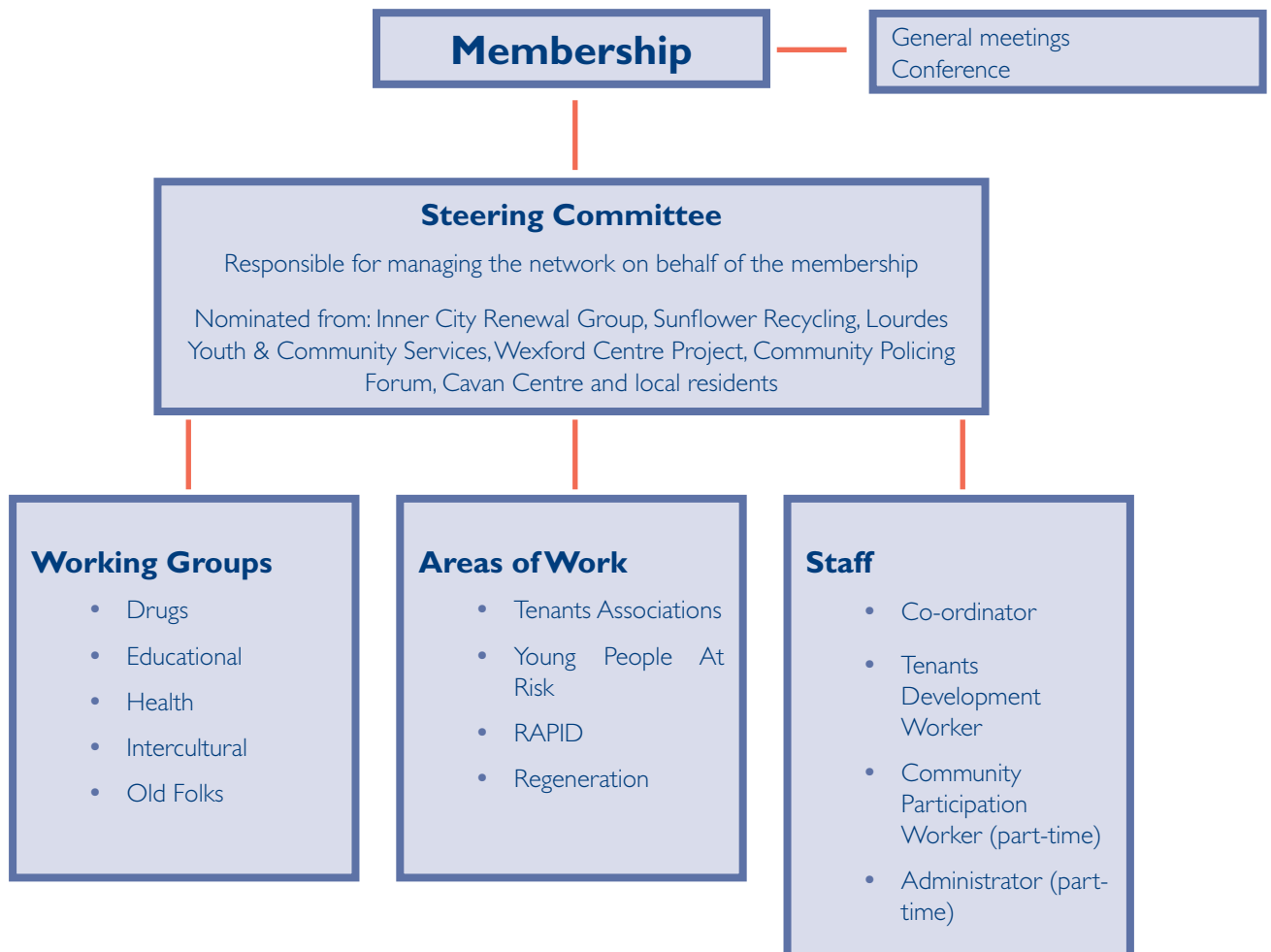| Initials	Full title of organisation	Initials	Full title of organisation
ACRG	After Care Recovery Group	ICON	Inner City Organisations Network
ASP	Adventure Sports Project	ICRG	Inner City Renewal Group
CAN	Community Action Network	IFSC	Irish Financial Services Centre
CASPr	Community After Schools Project	JI	FÁS Whole-time Jobs Initiative
CDB	City Development Board	JLO	Juvenile Liaison Officer
CDP	Community Development Project	LDTF	Local Drugs Task Force
CDYSB	City of Dublin Youth Service Board	LES	Local Employment Service
CE	FÁS Community Employment	LYCS	Lourdes Youth and Community Services
CPF	Community Policing Forum	MACRO	Markets Area Community Resource Organisation
CRAGA	Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs	NCCCAP	North Centre City Community Action Project
CTA	Community Technical Aid	NCI	National College of Ireland
CYC	Catholic Youth Care	NIC	North Inner City
DALC	Dublin Adult Learning Centre	NWICN	North West Inner City Network
DCC	Dublin City Council	NWICWN	North West Inner City Women's Network
DDDA	Dublin Docklands Development Authority	NYP 1	Neighbourhood Youth Project 1
DICP	Dublin Inner City Partnership	NYP2	Neighbourhood Youth Project 2
DoE	Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government	RAPID	Revitalising Areas through Planning, Investment & Development
DTF	Local Drugs Task Force	SWICN	South West Inner City Network
HSE	Health Service Executive	TEN	The Employment Network
IADP	Inter Agency Drugs Project	VEC	Vocational Education Committee
IAP	Integrated Area Plan – Dublin City Council plan for an area	YPAR	Young People at Risk Initiative

APPENDIX 3

The two networks: structures and contact information

ICON: Inner City Organisations Network

The Inner City Organisations Network (ICON) is a forum where issues affecting the people of Dublin's North East Inner City are discussed and joint action to tackle those issues is planned. Any organisation or individual living or working in the North East Inner City can become a member of ICON.

Structure of ICON

Membership	General meetings Conference

Steering Committee

Responsible for managing the network on behalf of the membership

Nominated from: Inner City Renewal Group, Sunflower Recycling, Lourdes Youth & Community Services, Wexford Centre Project, Community Policing Forum, Cavan Centre and local residents

Working Groups	**Areas of Work**	**Staff**
• Drugs • Educational • Health • Intercultural • Old Folks	• Tenants Associations • Young People At Risk • RAPID • Regeneration	• Co-ordinator • Tenants Development Worker • Community Participation Worker (part-time) • Administrator (part-time)

Contact:

Anne Burke
Community Participation Worker
ICON
22 Lower Buckingham Street
Dublin 1

Phone: 01-836 6890
Fax: 01-836 4870
E-mail: iconet@iol.ie
Web: www.iconnetwork.ie

NWICN: North West Inner City Network

The North West Inner City Network (NWICN) is a forum of community and voluntary groups in the North West Inner City area of Dublin, which seeks to enhance the quality of life for all in the community.

Full membership of NWICN is open to local community and voluntary groups based in the North West Inner City. Regional or national community and voluntary groups working in the North West Inner City can become 'Affiliate' members. Individual, businesses and statutory organisations can be 'Friends of the Network'. Only full members can vote at general and annual general meetings.

Structure of NWICN

Membership
Ratify nominations to Steering Committee

General meetings

Steering Committee

Responsible for managing the network on behalf of the membership

Nominated from: Working Groups, An Síol CDP, MACRO CDP, North West Inner City Women's Network, Community Forum, Council for Services to Older People, Bradóg Regional Youth Service

Working Groups
- Disability Awareness
- Drugs
- Education
- Employment
- Grangegorman
- Intercultural
- Premises

Organisational Committee
Oversees staff and financial issues

Staff
- Co-ordinator
- Participation Worker/ Development Worker
- Resource/Administration Worker (part-time)
- Intercultural Worker (part-time)

School Cultural Mediation Project

Contact:

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