

BALLYMUN —

A BRIGHTER FUTURE

A plan to tackle the underlying causes of addiction and crime and to tackle open drug dealing.

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March 2021



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Citation:

Montague, A (2021) Ballymun – A Brighter Future. A plan to tackle the underlying causes of addiction and crime and to tackle open drug dealing. Dublin: Dublin City Council.

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Acknowledgements

I want to thank C il n O'Reilly and Jackie O'Reilly from Dublin City Council, Hugh Greaves and Marie Lawless from the Ballymun Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, and Pat Montague from Montague Communications for their help and guidance in planning and editing this report.

I would also like to thank the many people that I interviewed for this report who generously shared their time and their expertise.

Andrew Montague

Executive Summary

Ongoing Deprivation in Ballymun

The Ballymun Regeneration project brought much needed investment and improvements to the physical infrastructure of Ballymun. But social change was always going to be harder, and take longer, and much remains to be done. By many measures, Ballymun remains one of the most socially deprived communities in the country.

Based on the 2016 census, the Trinity National Deprivation Index ranked Ballymun as one of the most disadvantaged communities, if not, the most disadvantaged community, in the country (Teljeur and colleagues, 2019). Pobal's HP Deprivation Index, using different indicators from the 2016 census, showed that Ballymun has one of the highest concentrations of disadvantage in the country, with over 30% of the population classed as very disadvantaged.

Male unemployment was at 50% or higher in six Small Areas according to the 2016 census. It is likely that levels of unemployment are even higher today, one year into the Coronavirus pandemic.

Ballymun receives its child protection services through Tusla's Dublin North City Service Area. This service area, which also covers Finglas, Cabra and the North Inner City, has by far, the highest number of children in care per 1,000 children in the country – more than twice the national average (Tusla, 2020). Despite the highest allocation of child protection staff, many of the posts remain vacant. Tusla's own internal audit states that children at risk of significant harm were “not receiving an effective service” (Power, 2020).

Ballymun has a long history of drug and heroin use dating back to the 1980s, and it remains the community with the highest level of people with problematic opiate use in the country – 10 times greater than the national average (Hay and colleagues, 2017).

Many of Ballymun's original problems were caused by bad estate management practices by Dublin Corporation back in the 1970s and 1980s. In the 1980s Ballymun accounted for 10% of the Corporation's housing stock, but it housed 45% of the Corporation's single parents, 29% of homeless applicants and 59% of single male applicants. Some of these new tenants had recently been discharged from institutions and had a long history of instability. They needed high levels of support, but few services were available (Power, 1999). Families with even modest means left the community, with almost half of all flats being re-let in 1985.

Dublin City Council is today housing large numbers of tenants in Ballymun that need high levels of support. Some are in temporary accommodation while others have been rehoused permanently. While these families have high needs, many of the services required are not available.

Ballymun is policed through the Dublin Northern Garda Division. This division has the fourth highest level of murders and attempted murders in the country (Central Statistics Office, 2021). Despite this high level of serious crime, this division has the 8th lowest level of Garda staffing of the 28 Garda divisions in the country. 45 Gardaí in this division are permanently assigned to the airport, which means that the level of

Gardaí available to police the community is actually the fourth lowest in the country.

Surge in Criminality, Youth Crime and Crack Cocaine Use

Ballymun has suffered from serious criminality in recent years associated with open drug dealing and a surge in crack cocaine usage. Many young people are getting drawn into this criminal activity. (Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, 2019).

Open drug dealing is happening on a scale that is seen in very few other communities in the country, according to senior Gardaí. Crime data shows a doubling of Controlled Drug Offences in Ballymun over the last four years, and an 8-fold increase since 2003 (Central Statistics Office, 2021).

Criminal networks in Ballymun have targeted people using opiates, to get them hooked on crack cocaine (O'Reilly and Mac Cionnaith, 2019). This process was not helped by a significant reduction in the staffing of the Garda drugs unit, dropping from 12 staff to three.

Comprehensive Approach Needed to Deal with Criminality

Murphy and colleagues (2017) recommended a comprehensive approach to dealing with criminal networks involving:

1. Prevention
2. Desistance – support for people moving away from crime
3. Suppression of criminal activities.

The first part of a comprehensive approach to crime is to prevent people getting involved in crime. To do this, we need early interventions. Research shows that Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) can cause problems in many generations. People who

experience multiple traumas in childhood are more likely to suffer from mental illness and problematic substance use, and be involved in violent crime in later life. These outcomes can then be a source of trauma for the next generation. These intergenerational effects can lock families into cycles of adversity, deprivation and ill health. A collaborative, trauma-informed community response can help reduce the likelihood that the next generation will be affected by ACEs (Hughes and colleagues, 2017).

Remarkable work is carried out every day in Ballymun to improve children's wellbeing, and to provide a high quality education. There is a wide range of community groups, youth groups, sports groups, crèches, schools and state agencies providing high-quality services and support to young people and their families.

There are, however, significant challenges in providing adequate supports for children growing up in difficult environments. There is a problem in filling posts in Tusla's child protection team for Ballymun. Additional senior posts in this team would help reduce the turnover of staff, speed up the recruitment of vacant positions, and improve the quality of this vital service. An additional 10-15 Youth Workers, Social Care Workers and Family Support Workers would help manage the caseload of the child protection team. These posts would be easier to fill as there is no shortage of trained staff in these disciplines. It would also reduce the workload on Social Work staff and make it a more attractive team to join.

There is also a need to provide an alternative education programme for the estimated 60 young people from the age of 10 to 16, who are outside of the education system. Other communities, such as

Finglas, have successful Youth Encounter programmes, and there is an urgent need for a similar programme in Ballymun.

Multisystemic Therapy is one approach to helping young people at high risk. It's an intensive, home-based approach that supports the main caregiver of an affected child, improving the home environment for the young person. It has been shown to be an effective approach for young people involved in criminality in Ireland (Naughton and colleagues, 2019) and a multi-agency team should be brought together to provide this service to the most vulnerable children in Ballymun.

The second aspect of a comprehensive approach to crime is to support people to move away from crime and criminal networks (Murphy and colleagues, 2017). This will need an increased focus on street work to engage with street dealers. It will also require an expansion of the successful Strive programme, that case-manages prolific offenders, to cover all of Ballymun.

The final part of a comprehensive approach to crime is to suppress harmful criminal activity (Murphy and colleagues, 2017). A detailed plan is needed to deal with the open drug dealing and crime hot spots in the community. Community input is vital to identify the most harmful hot spots, and the Gardaí, the City Council and other community agencies will need to develop a tailored response to the key hot spots. Addressing these areas will require frequent, visible and sustained policing, but will also need further work from the City Council to deal with littering, or any upgrades to the layout of the area that will help reduce crime.

Support for People Engaged in Substance Misuse

There are a wide variety of supports available to people engaged with substance misuse in Ballymun. Many of the organisations involved in supporting people are taking a trauma-informed approach to their work. This is based on the understanding that most people that have substance misuse problems have suffered from multiple significant traumas in their childhood. People who have experienced four or more traumatic Adverse Childhood Experiences are up to 11 times more likely to develop a problematic drug addiction (Dermody and colleagues, 2020). It is vital to break that cycle. All agencies working with people with addiction problems, including the Gardaí, the probation services and drug treatment services, should use a trauma-informed approach.

While many supports are on offer for people suffering with addiction problems, there is a shortage of residential treatment options. In particular, there is a need for better options for people who have a dual diagnosis – suffering from both a mental health problem and a concurrent addiction problem.

A Brighter Future

While we can't eliminate addiction and all criminal activity, we can do more to protect the next generation of children growing up in Ballymun and reduce the number of traumatic experiences in their lives. This will help prevent them from being drawn into serious substance misuse and criminality. We can also tackle some of the most serious side effects of illicit drug use, such as the use of young people in drug dealing networks, and the large number of open drug markets in the community.

If we can make substantial progress with these problems, the lives of many young people, their families, and the community will be changed for the better. There has been substantial investment by the state into the physical infrastructure of Ballymun. A modest investment now, in services for the community, to bring Ballymun up to the level of service available in other communities, could transform the lives of many people.

We can build a brighter future for Ballymun.

Key Recommendations

- Dublin City Council should coordinate local agencies, principal officers in relevant government departments, and work with the local community to draw up and implement a comprehensive approach for dealing with criminality in Ballymun. An effective strategy must include actions to:

1. Prevent crime;
2. Desistance – encourage and support those involved in criminal activity to move away from crime;
3. Suppress the most harmful criminal activities;

Prevention

- Provide 10 Senior Social Work positions to the Child Protection team for Ballymun, to address the concerns from Tusla’s internal audit report of 2019 that found that children at risk of significant harm were “not receiving an effective service”. Increasing the number of senior posts would help reduce the turnover of staff, speed up the recruitment of vacant positions, and improve the quality of this

vital service. An additional 10-15 Youth Workers, Social Care Workers and Family Support Workers would help manage the caseload of the Child Protection team. These posts would be easier to fill as there is no shortage of trained staff in these disciplines. It would also reduce the workload on Social Work staff and make it a more attractive team to join. (Responsibility: Tusla).

- Establish a new programme to work with the estimated 60 young people from 10 years old up, that have dropped out of the education system. (Responsibility: Department of Education and Skills).
- Multisystemic Therapy is an intensive home-based approach that supports the main caregiver of children at high risk, to help improve the home environment for the young person. The Ballymun Network for Assisting Children and Young People should set up and train its own Multisystemic Therapy team, staffed from a variety of agencies working in Ballymun, with the Network acting as the steering committee. This service should be available for young people involved in serious criminality, but also for young people at high risk, who have not yet become involved with crime. (Responsibility: Tusla, HSE and the Ballymun Network for Assisting Children and Young People).
- Dublin City Council should not be housing additional families, who need significant supports, in temporary or permanent housing in Ballymun, while the supports needed by these families are not available. (Responsibility: Dublin City Council).

Desistance

- Provide the Gardaí and the probation services the resources they need to

expand the Strive programme, to allow more offenders to be included, and to cover all of Ballymun. (Responsibility: Garda Commissioner and Department of Justice).

Suppression

- 40-50 additional Gardaí are needed in the Ballymun station to effectively police the open drug dealing, the crime hot spots, and to case manage prolific offenders in the Strive Programme. (Responsibility: Garda Commissioner).
- Open drug dealing must be tackled. In Ballymun, it's happening at a scale seen in few other communities in the country. Open drug dealing stigmatises the community; it's leading people to withdraw from community life; it normalises drug dealing, drug use, and violence, for young people growing up in Ballymun; and it's drawing people from outside the community into Ballymun to buy and use drugs. (Responsibility: Gardaí).
- A planned and coordinated approach to crime hot spots is needed. The Gardaí, Dublin City Council and the community should work together to identify the worst hot spots, and develop a tailored plan for each of those hot spots. Frequent, sustained, visible policing will be required, as well as environmental enhancements or in some cases house building by the council. (Responsibility: Gardaí and Dublin City Council).

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Aim of this Report

This report was commissioned by Dublin City Council following a request by the Lord Mayor at the time, Paul McAuliffe. The Council asked for practical and achievable recommendations regarding a number of significant concerns about drugs and criminality raised by the local community and local agencies in recent years. The main issues identified were:

- The surge in the supply and consumption of crack cocaine in the area;
- The number of young people drawn into criminality and antisocial behaviour;
- Open drugs markets selling to local people, and to people from outside the area;
- The lack of adequate policing resources to deal with the serious problems in the area.

There is a concern that a new report into the impacts of drugs on the community of Ballymun, could damage the reputation of the community. But the issues are serious and need to be understood and addressed.

1.2 Methodology

This report will:

- review the literature on the impacts of criminal networks on communities in Ireland;
- Review the social history of Ballymun;
- Assess the up-to-date social indices on Ballymun;
- Assess Garda staffing in the Dublin North Division compared to other Divisions in Dublin and the rest of Ireland;

- Interview staff working for statutory and local community agencies in Ballymun;
- Interview local public representatives from all parties and independents that represent the area;
- Interview experts on criminality from Ireland and the UK.

This report builds on the community consultation that was carried out for the report, Planning for a Safer Ballymun (Community Action Network, 2018).

1.3 Profile of Interviewees for Report:

- Dublin City Council Staff: 10 interviewees;
- Drugs Counsellors: 2 interviewees;
- HSE and Tusla: 6 interviewees;
- Oberstown staff member: 1 interviewee;
- Criminology researchers: 3 interviewees;
- Gardaí: 7 interviewees;
- Education and Youth workers: 4 interviewees;
- Drugs Task Force Staff: 5 interviewees;
- Community Sector and Probation in Ballymun: 5 interviewees;
- Local public representatives: 5 interviewees.

1.4 My Connection with Ballymun and Influences on my Thinking

As the author of this report, it is helpful to be aware of the experiences that may influence my thinking. I live in Ballymun with my wife and two young children. I've

been very involved with community life since I moved here in 2002:

- I was an elected councillor for the area for 15 years, from 2004 to 2019.
- I was a member of the board of Ballymun Regeneration from 2004 to 2014;
- I was chair of the Ballymun Social Regeneration Committee for 10 years;
- I'm the current chair of the Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force;
- I helped set up the Strive programme that works with the most prolific offenders in the Shangan and Coultry neighbourhoods, to encourage them to move away from criminality. I've chaired the steering committee since the programme was set up in 2014.

As well as having many close friends in Ballymun I've worked with many families in the area, and get a close-up view of the work that the many community and statutory agencies carry out.

I have seen the impacts of drugs on this community over many years. I've known many good people whose lives have been seriously damaged by addiction. Some have died. Others have managed to reduce their drug consumption or even quit altogether. I've also watched as people I know have been drawn into criminality. While some people use drugs occasionally, others have serious dependency problems and their whole lives revolve around their addiction.

There are times when levels of violence are high, and the impact on the whole community is apparent. But often it is individuals or families that are affected – living in fear and isolation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Scope of the Literature Review

A full review of the literature on addiction, illegal drugs, drug dealing, policing and youth crime is beyond the scope of this report. The review will instead focus on the impact of drugs and crime on communities in Ireland, and approaches to dealing with criminality in Ireland.

2.2 Childhood Trauma in Young People Engaged in the Garda Youth Diversion Programme

In order to better understand addiction and criminal behaviour it's important to recognise that trauma suffered in childhood can lead to increased risky behaviour, substance misuse and incarceration in later life (Felitti and colleagues, 1998). These childhood traumas are often referred to as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). The more ACEs a child experiences the higher the risk of behaviours such as substance misuse, suicide attempts, and the higher the risk for adult diseases such as heart disease and cancer.

Young people that have experienced four or more ACEs are **11 times more likely to inject drugs** in adulthood. One study from Wales, showed that people with four or more ACEs were **20 times more likely to have been incarcerated** in their lives, compared to the general population (Dermody and colleagues, 2020).

But why is trauma in childhood so significant? Because the most developed part of the brain – the pre-frontal cortex – shuts down during traumatic events. The “old brain” – the limbic system – takes control. When children are exposed to repeated trauma, they spend more time operating from the “old brain” as opposed

to the higher brain function of the pre-frontal cortex. This can affect the development of the brain, and can reduce cognitive and social abilities.

Trauma survivors can become more sensitive to stimuli when faced with stressful situations. Their stress responses can be triggered not only by threatening situations, but also by their anticipation, and by cues in the environment relating to their traumatic experiences (Dermody and colleagues, 2020). They can be hypervigilant and aggressive. These behaviours that stem from childhood trauma can be seen as dysfunctional and challenging, if the cause is not understood.

Dermody and colleagues (2020) worked with youth workers to assess the number of ACEs experienced by 125 young people who had been involved with the Garda Youth Diversion Programme. They also held focus groups with Youth Workers and with Garda Juvenile Liaison Officers (JLOs).

They found that the young people involved with the Garda Youth Diversion programme had experienced approximately three times more ACEs than the average population. Most of the young people had four or more ACEs.

The study showed that 91% of the young people with 6 or more ACEs came from disadvantaged areas.

The most common ACEs experienced by young people on the Garda Youth Diversion Programme were:

- Loss of a parent (through death or family breakup)
- Emotional abuse
- Household substance abuse.

Girls in this study were reported to have experienced sexual abuse five times more frequently than boys. Boys, however, were more likely to have experienced emotional neglect compared to girls.

For young people who have experienced significant childhood trauma, contact with the criminal justice system can be very challenging. It can intensify fear, anxiety and negative feelings, and it can lead to re-traumatisation (Dermody and colleagues, 2020).

The report stated that Gardaí, by virtue of their position of power, may be a trigger for young people to go into a “fight or flight” reaction. Garda behaviours may inadvertently mimic the behaviours of an abuser, and so can act as a trigger. For example, if the Garda is disrespectful, overly controlling, does not ‘see’ or humanise the young person, does not explain things fully to them, or otherwise makes them feel psychologically unsafe, their behaviour may trigger the young person.

The report found that JLOs often work in a trauma-informed way. But this manner of working is often learned on the job, rather than as a result of specific training. The JLOs reported that it is often easier for JLOs to work in a trauma-informed manner, than regular Gardaí out on the beat working in higher conflict situations. Gardaí have to look after their own safety and the safety of their colleagues first. A trauma informed approach, however, can improve safety, as Gardaí could better understand situations, and potentially use a different technique that might lead to safer outcomes.

The authors made some policy recommendations based on their research. They suggested that more should be done to prevent childhood trauma. They also

proposed including trauma interventions as part of diversion programmes and offender management.

Furthermore, the authors recommended managing trauma in criminal justice staff, as they can be affected by repeated exposure to others’ traumatic events, or from being in frequent contact with trauma survivors. In addition, there is the potential of staff experiencing primary trauma in high-risk work-related situations. Managing trauma can help keep staff empathetic, engaged and motivated.

2.3 Drug Markets in Ireland

Connolly and Donovan (2014) described four illegal drugs markets in Ireland. Their research described open drugs markets, where the drug dealing was carried out on the street, and closed drugs markets, where the drug dealing was done behind closed doors, often in pubs or in flats. The open markets were more harmful to the local communities than closed markets. Residents described how the open drug-using, associated with the open drugs markets, normalised drugs use, and there was concern that this would lead to experimentation by young people. There were also worries that the open drugs markets would draw young people into drug running to earn money. Residents were also concerned that open drugs markets can lead to a stigma for their area.

The involvement of young people varied across the four sites studied. Two of the markets had no significant involvement of young people in the sale or distribution of drugs. In one of the markets, young people under the age of 18 were frequently involved, and in the fourth market youngsters under the age of 16 were heavily involved in running drugs for the market.

Violence was a feature of the four drugs markets. Most of the violence was associated with drug debts, but occasionally the violence was a result of territorial disputes. Fear of violence and reprisals strongly discouraged residents from taking action or from reporting drugs issues to state agencies.

The report recommends regular patrolling of areas with open drugs markets, to disrupt dealing, force the market to continuously move, discourage experimentation with drugs, and improve morale in the community and local businesses. Regular patrolling can also improve relationships between the Gardaí and the local community.

They concluded that the complete removal of illicit drug markets through law enforcement was not a realistic goal. They proposed instead that the most harmful aspects of illicit drugs markets should be targeted.

Redmond (2016) investigated a criminal network in a Garda Sub-District outside Dublin that was given the pseudonym of Greentown. The research tracked 31 individuals aged between 11 and 36 years old that were involved in burglary or drugs for sale and supply. Garda analysts constructed a network map to examine the relationships between the 31 individuals. The map indicated where two or more individuals were connected with the same offence. The researcher was not given access to the identity of the individuals involved, but could discuss their backgrounds and case histories with local Gardaí to develop an understanding of the criminal network.

This research showed that the criminal network in Greentown was hierarchical and governed by a family based core. The

research also highlighted the key role that criminal networks play in encouraging and compelling children to become involved in crime.

Connolly and Mulcahy (2019) adopted similar research methods to Redmond's research in Greentown to investigate criminal networks in Dublin South Central. Two criminal networks in the research area were identified, one comprising 44 individuals, the other with 52. The criminal networks examined appeared to be loose constructs with varying levels of hierarchy. The authors highlighted the hidden impact of the networks, which extended into schools, where divisions can emerge over associations with families or networks. They described how the networks can use antisocial behaviour as a tool to facilitate criminal activities. Confrontation with Gardaí can be organised to make certain locations no-go areas for the police. Residents fear reprisal for any interaction with the Gardaí, even for routine matters. This in turn leads to the non-reporting of crime in the area by local people, which renders local crime statistics unreliable.

The researchers highlight the complex relationship between the local community and the criminal networks. There is a fear of the networks, but at times the local community can benefit from cheap goods stolen by people who use drugs that are sold-on into the community.

The authors described three strata within the criminal networks:

- Career criminals at the centre of the networks;
- Street dealers, usually teenagers and young men;

- Children – often below the age of criminal responsibility (12 years old), who are groomed into the networks.

2.4 Joint Agency Response to Crime (J-ARC)

In 2014, a protocol was signed by An Garda Síochána, the Irish Prison Service and the Probation Service to establish the J-ARC programme. This is a multi-agency programme of supervision and rehabilitation of offenders. The J-ARC programme targets prolific offenders or offenders causing most harm to their communities. The aim of the programme is to manage offenders to reduce crime and enhance public safety (J-ARC Evaluation Framework Working Group, 2018).

Three pilot J-ARC programmes were started as part of the J-ARC framework:

- ACER3: targets burglary offenders in Dublin 8 and Dublin 24;
- Strive: targets offenders causing most harm in East Ballymun;
- Change Works: targets violent offenders across the Dublin Metropolitan Region.

In addition to the three justice agencies, the Ballymun Strive programme gets support from the Ballymun Job Centre, the Department of Social Protection, Dublin City Council and the Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force. The author of this report is the Chair of the Ballymun Strive Steering Committee.

An independent evaluation of the Strive programme showed (J-ARC Evaluation Framework Working Group, 2018):

- Five of the 18 offenders on the programme did not reoffend in the first year of the programme;

- There was a reduction of 43% in the number of offences committed by the offenders;
- The number of severe crimes was down 58%;
- “Overwhelming” support for multi-agency approach from all those working on the Strive project, especially owing to the participation of the Ballymun Job Centre and community representation.
- Information sharing has improved significantly as a result of the multiagency approach.

Due to the small size of the programme (18 offenders), it is not possible to prove that the positive results were caused by the programme, but the outcomes are encouraging, and similar reductions in offending were seen in the other two J-ARC programmes that were also independently assessed.

Abt and Winship (2016) carried out a research review to identify the most effective strategies to reduce community violence, and they found a similar approach to the Strive programme to be effective. They called the approach “focussed deterrence” and they state that this way of working had the largest direct impact on crime and violence, by far, of any of the interventions in the 1,400 studies assessed in their report. The authors described focussed deterrence as identifying specific offenders and offending groups, with the mobilisation of a diverse group of law enforcement, social services and community stakeholders. This group framed a response to the crimes committed by the offenders using both sanctions and rewards, together with direct, repeated communication with the offenders in order to change their behaviour.

2.5 The Bail Supervision Scheme

The Bail Supervision Scheme was designed by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to provide the courts with an alternative to remanding young people in prison. It's specifically aimed at those who are at a high risk of being refused bail while waiting for their case to be heard in the Children's Court in Dublin (Naughton and colleagues, 2019).

Many of the young people on the scheme had complex needs, were early school-leavers and lived in challenging environments. Often they had experienced multiple adversities in life.

The scheme uses the evidence-based Multisystemic Therapy (MST) model to provide support to the young person's caregiver (usually the mother). In turn the MST model helps the caregiver to support the young person. For example, the Bail Supervision team helped some caregivers to establish a morning routine, making it more likely that the young person would attend their course. Other caregivers needed support to recover from addiction to improve living conditions for the young person. Caregivers were also given skills to manage aggressive behaviour in the home, and to offer appropriate incentives for good behaviour. One caregiver described the Bail Supervision Scheme as "the best thing that has ever happened to us".

The objectives of the MST model are to tackle barriers to positive change within the home and community environment, help the caregiver to challenge the young person's problematic behaviours, and to facilitate sustainable pro-social change in the young person's behaviour.

The evaluation found substantive evidence that the Bail Supervision Scheme contributed to positive changes in the

participating young people's behaviour. There was a 72% reduction in reoffending six months post Bail Supervision compared with the six months before the scheme. The young people on the Bail Supervision Scheme had a reduction in reoffending almost twice that of the control group (Naughton and colleagues, 2019).

2.6 Comprehensive Approaches to Dealing with Criminal Networks

In an evidence review on drug related intimidation, commissioned by the Health Research Board, the authors advised taking a comprehensive approach to dealing with gang criminality (Murphy and colleagues, 2017). Three layers of intervention should be run simultaneously:

- Prevention – try to prevent people from joining criminal networks;
- Desistance – encourage gang members to move away from gang involvement;
- Suppression – a clampdown on the most harmful gang activities.

These three approaches together can suppress gang activity and lead to a reduction in drug related intimidation.

The prevention aspects of a comprehensive approach should include universal programmes aimed at all young people, but there should also be specific programmes aimed at children at higher risk, including programmes for parents of at-risk children aged 0-3.

For young people who are involved in high-risk behaviours, such as antisocial behaviour and drug use, but who have not yet joined a criminal network, the report indicates that there is good evidence for therapeutic approaches such as:

- Multisystemic therapy;

- Multidimensional therapy;
- Functional family therapy;
- Highly individualised programmes of care providing precise supports for the individual and their family.

Approaches to encouraging people to move away from gang involvement include:

- Targeted outreach;
- Social Skills training;
- Education;
- Employment support.

The report describes the important role that gang members themselves play in moving away from criminality by actively changing their personal identity. They pursued prosocial values, such as volunteering, securing a stable job, getting married and having children. They also sought alternative sites of belonging among prosocial groups including their family, faith-based groups, local gym and their place of employment. These former gang members essentially performed “desistance work” on themselves and their social relationships. The key role for law enforcement agencies and the community is to recognise, support and welcome any proactive steps that are taken, otherwise the positive work can be derailed and the person can return to criminal activity.

The report recommends tackling specific harmful gang activities in a community rather than targeting the gangs themselves. The research reviewed shows that targeting gangs can be counterproductive, as it can lead to increased cohesiveness of the network.

One approach to suppressing criminal network activity that the report identified was the “Pulling Levers” programme, where

“every lever will be pulled” to prevent a specific harmful activity from occurring. Working with the community, a specific crime problem is identified, such as open drug dealing. The identified offenders are notified that they are under scrutiny for the specific crime and told how they can avoid sanction. They are also given offers of support. If the offenders are then caught carrying out the specific offence, they are sanctioned as quickly, as publicly and as severely as legally possible.

The authors of the review suggest that focussed policing of micro-locations (hot spots policing) yields positive benefits, and the evidence shows that hot spot policing does not displace crime to adjacent areas. In fact, adjacent areas also experience crime reductions.

Abt and Winship (2016) urge a cautious approach to drug enforcement activity by criminal justice agencies. They state that drug enforcement appears to have a limited impact on crime and violence and may actually increase violence by destabilising the drug market and increasing violence among drug sellers.

Murphy and colleagues (2017) indicate that comprehensive gang control programmes can be complicated and challenging to implement. To manage a comprehensive approach, they recommend that each component of the programme be planned and specified, and the project team should include someone with strong research expertise to help plan and monitor the process. Strong interagency relationships, with effective communication and data sharing procedures are necessary. There should be a designated lead agency with strong leadership ability. It is also essential to involve the community in developing and implementing the programme.

Chapter 3: The Factors That Led to the Surge in Crack Cocaine Use in Ballymun in Recent Years

3.1 Long History of Problematic Drug Addiction in Ballymun

Ballymun has a long history of drug problems dating back to the 1980s. These problems continue to have serious harmful impacts on the community, with up to three generations using drugs in some families (Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, 2019).

Heroin has been a particular challenge for Ballymun. In 2014, there were an estimated 63 people with problematic opiate habits for every 1,000 adults living in Ballymun – by far the highest prevalence in the country,

and more than 10 times the national rate (Figure 3.1) (Hay and colleagues, 2017).

Data from the Central Treatment List showed that there were 330 people with an address in Ballymun in receipt of methadone-based treatment in 2019.

Many of the people in receipt of methadone treatment are getting older. In 2019, 39% were aged 45 or over. An increasing number of these older people are having physical and mental health issues. These problems are sometimes made worse by the use of other drugs, such as crack cocaine, tablets and alcohol.

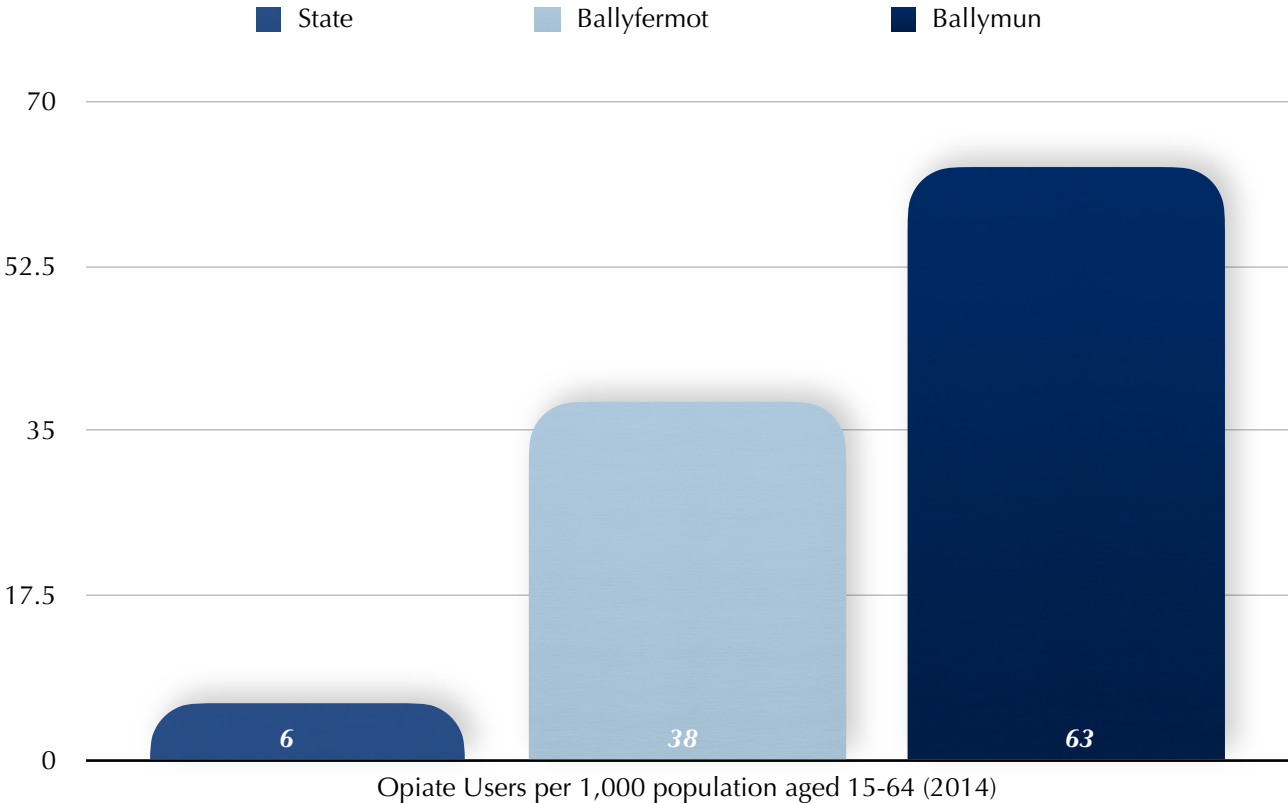


Figure 3.1: Comparison of the number of people with problematic opiate habits between the State, Ballyfermot (the community with the second highest levels of opiate use) and Ballymun. Source Hay and colleagues, 2017.

A 2004 report suggested that benzodiazepine prescribing was noticeably higher in Ballymun than the national average (Ballymun Youth Action Project, 2004). The findings also indicated that a considerable proportion of patients who were prescribed benzodiazepines continued to take the medication for years. The authors highlighted the easy availability of benzodiazepines for illicit use.

In recent years younger people have largely avoided heroin, but cannabis, alcohol and tablet-use are common (Interview: Education and Youth Worker 1). One survey of 96 young people from Ballymun showed that 78% had used cannabis at some time in their lives (O'Brien and Foley, 2017). Of the 53 young people who reported on how much they spent on cannabis, the average was €108 per week.

Many young people, and often their parents, don't consider cannabis a serious drug (Interview: Education and Youth Worker 1). But the herbal cannabis that is commonly used today is more potent than the cannabis resin that was used in the past, with increased risk of psychosis and other harms (Bates, 2017). In addition, many young people run-up debts for cannabis and are then coerced into criminal activity (Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, 2019).

An indication of the variety of drugs used in Ballymun can be assessed from the National Drug Treatment Reporting Data, collected by the Health Research Board. In 2019, 311 new or previously treated cases were assessed or treated by agencies based in Ballymun. Of these, 164 were for drug use, 133 for alcohol and 13 were concerned persons. In terms of drug type for reason of referral, heroin and cocaine were most reported (n=56), followed by cannabis

(n=22), benzodiazepines (n=13). Other drugs included different opiates.

The large population of people using opiates in Ballymun are a vulnerable community. Many people that use opiates report that they were specifically targeted by criminal networks to try to get them using crack cocaine (Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, 2019).

3.2 The Contribution of Poor Estate Management to the Rise of Heroin Use in Ballymun

Ballymun was built in the late 1960s to provide better homes for people living in poor quality, inner-city housing (Power, 1999). 2,814 flats and 400 houses were built. The high-rise concrete design that was used in Ballymun was popular in the UK and in Europe in the 1960s and 1970s and was inspired by the Swiss architect and planner, Le Corbusier (Marmot, 1981; Power, 1999). Le Corbusier believed that building skyscrapers could help relieve congestion in inner cities but still provide parks and open-space. But the reality seldom lived-up to the ideal (Marmot, 1981; Power, 1999). In Ballymun, the flats quickly developed serious faults that were difficult to repair and the open spaces were not set out as parks, and were often unattractive, unusable and prairie-like (Image 3.1) (Power, 1999; Dublin City Council, 2017).



Image 3.1: The open spaces were not developed as attractive parks. Photo by John Montague.

Within two years of the flats being built the first problems emerged. The flats were gleaming white when first built, but they quickly became grey and dowdy (Image 3.2). Repairs and maintenance were neglected. A significant indicator of problems was that the turnover of tenants was higher in Ballymun than in other council estates in Dublin (Power, 1999).



Image 3.2: The flats quickly turned from gleaming white to grey. Photo from RTE.

One important factor that encouraged families to leave was the lack of opportunity to buy their own home. Tenants living in flats were not allowed to purchase their homes from Dublin Corporation, whereas those living in standard terraced or semi-detached corporation homes were offered generous grants to buy-out their homes. As a result, those with even modest incomes sought transfers to enable them to take advantage of the tenant-purchase scheme (Power, 1999).

In 1984, the government introduced a surrender grant of £5,000 for tenants to give up their Council home. This freed up council homes and allowed many marginalised people to be housed, such as homeless single people, and single parents. The surrender grant, however, was another encouragement for those families with good incomes to leave Ballymun. The high turnover of tenants reached a peak in 1985 when there were 1,171 new lettings – almost half of all the flats (Power, 1999).

With the high turnover of tenants it was difficult to maintain social connection and good community spirit. As higher-income families left due to the surrender grant or to avail of tenant-purchase options, income levels in the community fell and services deteriorated. It became harder to let out vacant flats, and by 1989, 450 were boarded-up and many were vandalised (Power, 1999).

In the 1980s Ballymun accounted for 10% of the Corporation's housing stock, but it housed 45% of the Corporation's single parents, 29% of the homeless and 59% of single male applicants. Some of these new tenants had recently been discharged from institutions and had a long history of instability. They needed high levels of support, but few services were available (Power, 1999).

The rapid change in the population and the increase in empty vandalised units created an atmosphere of mayhem in the community (Power, 1999). The conditions were ripe for the ensuing explosion in drug and heroin consumption in Ballymun that took hold in the 1980s (Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, 2019).

The impacts of heroin use in the 1980s are still being felt today, with Ballymun having the highest prevalence of problematic opiate consumption in the country (Hay and colleagues, 2017). Furthermore, in recent years, there has been a surge in crack cocaine use (O'Reilly and Mac Cionnaith, 2019; Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, 2019).

It's important to recognise that there were many committed residents who fought for improvements for Ballymun. In 1984, the Ballymun Community Coalition was founded. The Coalition set up the Ballymun Credit Union. The LINX project was developed to support the disproportionate number of residents with psychiatric problems (Power, 1999). The Ballymun Job Centre opened in 1989 and in 1997 the Ballymun Local Drugs Task Force was established to respond to the drugs crisis in the community (Ballymun Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, 2020).

The regeneration of Ballymun was started in 1997 (Dublin City Council, 2017). Over the following 20 years, all the tower blocks and flats were demolished and new homes were built (Image 3.3). Parks were upgraded and a range of new community facilities were provided. But the regeneration fell short of the original plans. The promised shopping centre was never built and thousands of homes that were planned, have yet to be built (Dublin City Council, 2017). This has left a legacy of disappointment with the regeneration process (Kelly, 2020).



Image 3.3: New homes being built in Ballymun as part of the regeneration. Photo by John Montague.

3.3 Impact of Social Deprivation

While there are a variety of factors that can lead someone into problematic drug use, in the context of a community like Ballymun, it is important to understand the role that deprivation plays.

There is compelling evidence to suggest that high levels of deprivation are associated with addiction, stress, mental health problems and crime (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009).

The report, "Drug Misuse and the Environment" (Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, 1998) describes how deprivation can lead to problematic drug misuse:

- Deprivation can lead to psychological stress and some people can self-medicate with illicit drugs to relieve distress. Drugs can also provide excitement and good feelings;
- For young people who are poorly educated and lack job skills, drug dealing can offer an easy way of making a living;
- In communities with high levels of unemployment, being a drug dealer can confer status;
- British Crime surveys have shown that young people who were unemployed

were more than twice as likely to use drugs than those with full-time jobs;

- Deprived communities may not have the resources to respond to drug problems in the way that more privileged communities can.

3.4 Assessing Levels of Deprivation in Ballymun

Using the most recent census, from 2016, we can see that Ballymun remains one of the most disadvantaged communities in Ireland. The census provides a wide range of statistical data that can help assess the social wellbeing of a community.

Census data is organised at different geographic levels such as state level, electoral division level and small area level. Small Areas are the most fine-grained level. Each small area contains about 100 houses, and there are 61 Small Areas within the catchment of the Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force. Examining data at the small area level allows us to locate pockets of disadvantage or affluence that would otherwise be missed in a larger sample size.

It's also beneficial to examine data at a higher level to see the bigger picture in Ballymun. Electoral divisions are helpful in this regard. There are four electoral divisions in Ballymun – Ballymun A, Ballymun B, Ballymun C and Ballymun D (Figure 3.4).



Figure 3.4: Electoral Districts in Ballymun.

The Trinity National Deprivation Index 2016 combines four indicators from the census to give a deprivation score to each electoral district in the country (Teljeur and colleagues, 2019). This allows us to compare levels of deprivation from one community to another. The four indicators that are used in this index are:

- Unemployment;
- Low social class;
- Local Authority rented housing;
- No car.

The index ranks the 3,409 electoral districts in the country, in order of the most deprived. The higher the score, the more deprived the electoral district is. The results for the four electoral districts in Ballymun are:

- Ballymun D – Most deprived electoral district in the 322 electoral districts in the county of Dublin, the third most deprived of the 3,409 electoral districts in the state. Score 9.1
- Ballymun B – Second most deprived electoral district in Dublin, fifth most deprived in the state. Score 8.8
- Ballymun C – 10th most deprived electoral district in Dublin, 25th most deprived in the state. Score 6.8
- Ballymun A – 43rd most deprived electoral district in Dublin, 115th most deprived in the state. Score 4.1

These results indicate that Ballymun is one of the most deprived communities in the State.

Pobal's HP Deprivation Index is another tool for assessing deprivation based on census data. It gives a measure of deprivation down to the small area level (Haase & Pratschke,

2017). It calculates its index using a different set of indicators from the Trinity National Deprivation Index. The indicators used in Pobal's HP Deprivation Index are:

- unemployment levels;
- education levels;
- the number of single parents;
- the percentage of households headed by semi-skilled or unskilled manual workers.

Figure 3.4 shows an extract from the 2016 HP Deprivation Index map showing the 61 Small Areas within the catchment of the Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, which is outlined in red. Figure 3.5 shows the scoring of the HP Deprivation Index and the labelling and colour scheme used in the map.

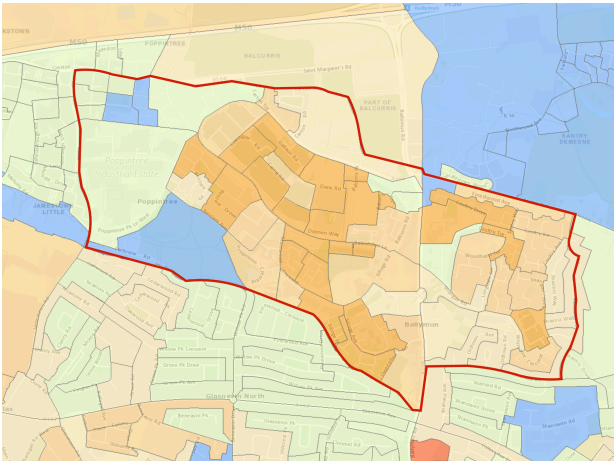


Figure 3.4: Pobal's HP Deprivation Index map with the catchment area of the Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force outlined in red.

Relative Index Score	Standard Deviation	Label	Colour Scheme in Maps
over 30	> 3	extremely affluent	dark blue
20 to 30	2 to 3	very affluent	medium blue
10 to 20	1 to 2	affluent	medium green
0 to 10	0 to 1	marginally above average	light green
0 to -10	0 to -1	marginally below average	light yellow
-10 to -20	-1 to -2	disadvantaged	medium yellow
-20 to -30	-2 to -3	very disadvantaged	orange
below -30	< -3	extremely disadvantaged	red
Total			

Figure 3.5: Scoring and Labelling of Pobal's HP Deprivation Index map.

The population of the Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force catchment area is 17,714. The HP Deprivation Index score for the area is -11.04, which ranks Ballymun as disadvantaged. While the average score is of interest, it is important to note the wide variety of scores within Ballymun ranging from very disadvantaged to very affluent.

At first glance, Ballymun's score has improved in recent years, with the score rising from -19.15 in 2006 to -11.04 in 2016. Most of this improvement, however, can be attributed to the development of vacant lands within the catchment area with a largely affluent population moving into these new homes. The score of the original Ballymun population has not changed significantly.

For example, within the Ballymun A Electoral District, there are 14 Small Areas (Figure 3.6). The overall score of Ballymun A improved significantly from -15.88 in 2006 to -2.49 in 2016. However, nine of the fourteen Small Areas were empty or had very few homes in 2006, while five were fully developed. The aggregate score in the five fully developed Small Areas was -17.18 in 2006, and this deteriorated to -19.73 in 2016. So, the improved score in Ballymun A was down to the new population moving into recently developed lands, while the score of the original population has actually declined.

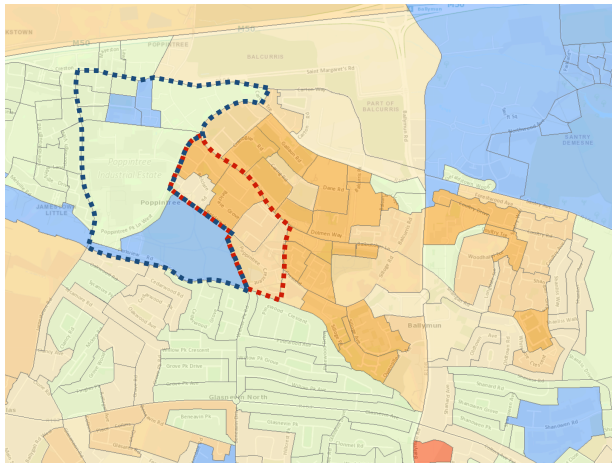


Figure 3.6: The Ballymun A Electoral District has nine newly developed Small Areas, outlined in blue dash, that are all scored above average or affluent. The original population live in the five Small Areas that are outlined in red dash, and are categorised as below average or disadvantaged.

While the HP Deprivation Index shows there are pockets of affluence within Ballymun, 32.4% of the population are classified as very disadvantaged, with a score of -20 or lower. This is a very high level of people living in very disadvantaged circumstances. In comparison, just 8.9% of the population living within the Finglas/ Cabra Drug and Alcohol Task Force catchment area has a score of -20 or lower.

The unemployment rate in Ballymun measured by the census in 2016 was 27%, more than twice the national unemployment rate of 13%. But when you drill down into the Small Area level, there are six Small Areas where the male unemployment rate was 50% or above, going as high as 59% in one Small Area (Figure 3.7).

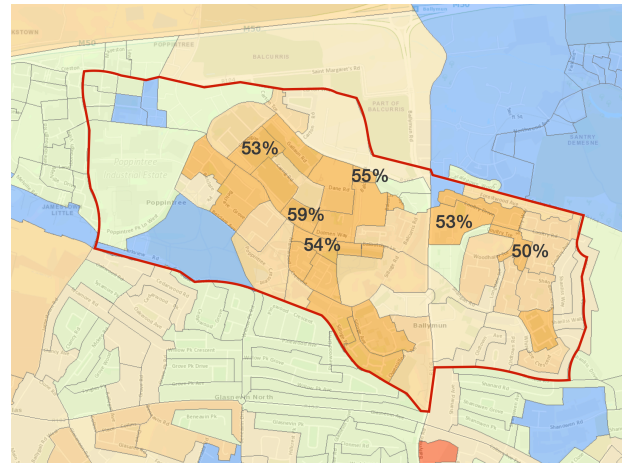


Figure 3.7: Male Unemployment of 50% or above in six Small Areas in Ballymun

Taken together, the Trinity Deprivation Index and Pobal's HP Deprivation index paint a picture of Ballymun as one of the most deprived communities in Ireland – possibly the most deprived in the state.

3.5 Housing More Families with High Needs in an Already Deprived Area

Having high levels of deprivation in the one community has caused serious problems in Ballymun for decades. There are worries that current housing practices are exacerbating the already severe problems in the area. Reports to the Ballymun Network for Assisting Children and Young People have indicated that a disproportionate number of families needing high levels of support have been housed in Ballymun in recent years. Some are in temporary accommodation in the Travelodge hotel, others have been rehoused permanently into the area.

While these families have high needs, there has been no increase in the necessary services for these tenants. In 2019, the Ballymun Network for Assisting Children and Young People indicated that the increase in families with high needs lead to an increase in the number of referrals to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. There were also reports of rising levels of domestic violence in 2019, before the Coronavirus lockdowns.

There has also been an increase in families with high needs renting accommodation through the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) living in Hampton Wood and Geraldstown. Many of these families are looking for support from already overburdened services in Ballymun (Interview with Education and Youth Worker, 5).

3.6 High Levels of Serious Crime but Low Garda Staffing for the Dublin Northern Division

Ballymun is situated within the Dublin Northern Division of the Gardaí (Figure 3.8). There are 800 Gardaí in this division,

with 45 assigned to work in Dublin Airport. Per head of population, the Northern Division has the 8th lowest share of Gardaí of the 28 Garda Divisions in Ireland. If the 45 that work in the airport are not counted (as they are not available for work in the community), the Dublin Northern Division has the 4th lowest share of Gardaí in the country (Table 3.1, from Reply to Parliamentary Question by Paul McAuliffe, T.D.).

There are six Garda Divisions within Dublin (Figure 3.8):

- North Central
- South Central
- Southern
- Western
- Northern
- Eastern

Of the six Garda Divisions in Dublin, the Northern Division, which contains Ballymun, Coolock and Balbriggan has the second lowest number of Gardaí per head of population. The North Central Division has more than three times the number of Gardaí per resident (Figure 3.9).

Despite having lower staffing levels than many other divisions, over the last five years the Dublin Northern Division has had the fourth highest levels of murder and attempted murder in the State (Table 3.2, Source: Central Statistics Office, 2021). Murders require substantial investigations, pulling Gardaí from other policing duties in the division (Interview, Gardaí 5).

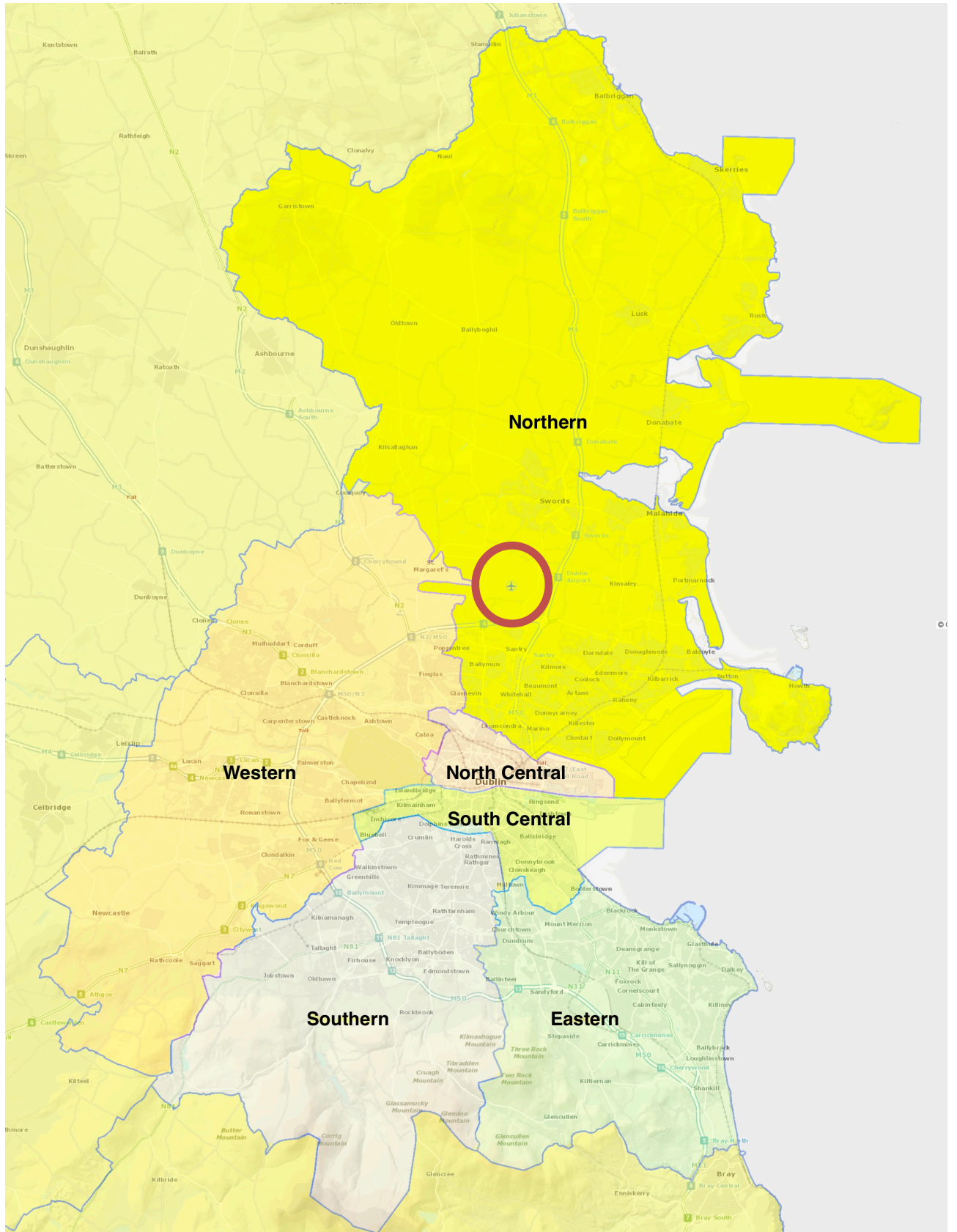


Figure 3.8: Map of Garda Divisions in Dublin with the airport circled within the Dublin Northern Division. Source: Central Statistics Office Sapmap with highlighting by the author.

Rank	Garda Division	Population	Garda Staffing	Gardaí per 1,000 population
1	Dublin North Central	94,535	681	7.2
2	Dublin South Central	131,290	734	5.6
3	Waterford	116,176	379	3.3
4	Sligo/Leitrim	97,579	311	3.2
5	Westmeath	88,770	274	3.1
6	Limerick	194,899	601	3.1
7	Louth	128,884	391	3.0
8	Roscommon/Longford	105,417	314	3.0
9	Donegal	159,192	464	2.9
10	Cavan/Monaghan	137,562	393	2.9
11	Cork City	258,500	725	2.8
12	Clare	118,817	316	2.7
13	Mayo	130,507	343	2.6
14	Tipperary	159,553	413	2.6
15	Kerry	147,707	359	2.4
16	Galway	258,058	623	2.4
17	Dublin Western	321,511	770	2.4
18	Dublin Southern	248,070	591	2.4
19	Laois/Offaly	162,658	382	2.3
20	Cork West	133,479	310	2.3
21	Dublin Northern	350,583	800	2.3
22	Cork North	155,874	355	2.3
23	Wexford	149,722	338	2.3
24	Wicklow	142,425	312	2.2
25	Kilkenny/Carlow	156,164	342	2.2
26	Dublin Eastern	200,918	383	1.9
27	Kildare	222,504	422	1.9
28	Meath	195,044	333	1.7

Table 3.1: There are 20 Garda Divisions with higher staffing levels than the Dublin Northern Garda Division. If the 45 Gardaí that work at the Airport are not included in the Dublin Northern figures, the rate of Gardaí per 1,000 population falls to 2.1 – the fourth lowest staffing level in the country. The average level is 2.8 Gardaí per 1,000 population. Source Reply to Parliamentary Question by Paul McAuliffe, T.D.

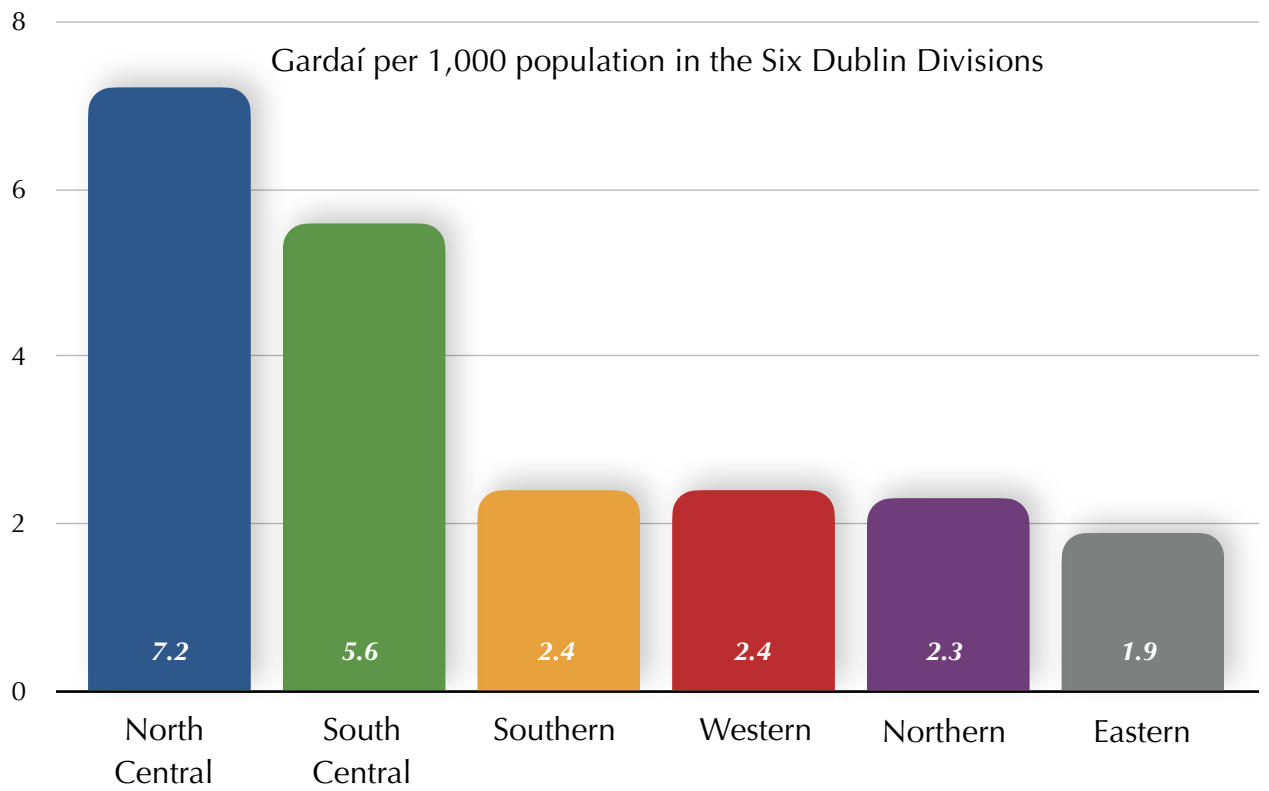


Figure 3.9: Garda Staffing levels per 1,000 people in the six Dublin Garda Divisions. Source: Reply to Parliamentary Question by Paul McAuliffe, T.D.

Ranking	Garda Division	Murders 2016-2020	Attempted Murders 2016-2020	Murders and attempted murder per 100,000 population
1	Dublin North Central	13	3	16.9
2	Louth	7	12	14.7
3	Dublin Western	27	19	14.3
4	Dublin Northern	17	28	12.8
5	Wicklow	4	9	9.1
6	Waterford	8	1	7.7
7	Dublin Southern	15	3	7.3
8	Dublin South Central	6	3	6.9
9	Cavan/Monaghan	7	1	5.8
10	Limerick	7	4	5.6
11	Kildare	10	1	4.9
12	Clare	2	3	4.2
13	Meath	4	4	4.1
14	Dublin Eastern	6	2	4.0
15	Cork City	9	1	3.9
16	Mayo	5	0	3.8
17	Roscommon/Longford	4	0	3.8
18	Cork North	3	2	3.2
19	Kilkenny/Carlow	4	1	3.2
20	Cork West	4	0	3.0
21	Wexford	4	0	2.7
22	Sligo/Leitrim	2	0	2.0
23	Donegal	2	0	1.3
24	Laois/Offaly	2	0	1.2
25	Kerry	1	0	0.7
26	Tipperary	1	0	0.6
27	Galway	1	0	0.4
28	Westmeath	0	0	0.0

Table 3.2: Rate of murders and attempted murders per 100,000 population. The Dublin Northern Division has the fourth highest rate at 12.8. The average rate is 5.3. Source: Central Statistics Office, 2021.

3.6 Cuts to Community Policing in the Dublin Northern Garda Division

In 2012, there were 86 Community Gardaí in the Dublin Northern Division. The numbers have been whittled away since then, with just 26 Community Gardaí in January 2021. These 26 Gardaí have to serve a population of 350,000 (Figure 3.10) (Source: Reply to Parliamentary Question by Róisín Shortall T.D.).

3.6 Severe cuts in Drugs Unit Staffing and in Community Gardaí staffing in Ballymun

Despite the hard work that the Gardaí in Ballymun carry out and the risks to their own personal safety they take to protect the community, inadequate staffing levels undermine their work. **This is unfair to the many hard-working Gardaí in Ballymun who don't have the resources to deal properly with the problems they face.**

The number of Gardaí in the Ballymun station fell from 130 in 2009, to 113 in 2011 – a 13% reduction (Reply to Parliamentary Question from Paul McAuliffe, T.D.). The staffing levels have gradually increased since then with 142 Gardaí in the Ballymun station at the end of February 2021 (An Garda Síochána, 2021).

The number of Gardaí in the Drugs Unit, however, were cut much more substantially during those years, from 12 Gardaí to just three – a 75% cut in staffing (Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, 2019). As small as the drugs unit in Ballymun became, those three Gardaí were also responsible for dealing with any drugs issues in Dublin Airport. In the last year, there has been some restoration to the local drugs unit. There were eight staff in the drugs unit in the first half of 2020 (Interview: Gardaí 2).

The number of Community Gardaí in the Dublin Northern Division fell by 70% between 2012 and 2021 (Source: Reply to Parliamentary Question by Róisín Shortall T.D.). At the time of writing in March 2021, there are eight Community Gardaí working from the Ballymun station (Interview: Gardaí 7).

3.7 Surge in Drug Offences in Ballymun in Recent Years

In 2003 there were 52 Controlled Drugs offences in Ballymun. There has been an 8-fold increase in drugs offences over the 16 years between 2003 and 2019. Since 2015 the number of Controlled Drugs offences have more than doubled, from 183 offences in 2015 to 419 in 2019 (Figure 3.11) (Central Statistics Office, 2021).

There are open drugs markets in many parks and public spaces in Ballymun (Community Action Network, 2018; Interview: Dublin City Council staff 1). The Ballymun drugs market serves more than just the local community – it has become a market for many people outside of the area. People often come into Ballymun on their way to work to buy their drugs (Community Action Network, 2018).

Gardaí working in the area report the level of open drug dealing is on a scale that is seen in very few other communities, and not seen elsewhere within the Dublin Northern Division (Interviews: Gardaí 2, 5 and 7).

The surge in drugs offences, the increased use of crack cocaine and the open drug dealing in Ballymun, coincided with reduced Garda numbers in community policing and in the drugs unit (Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, 2019). This reduction in policing may have been a key factor in the significant rise in drug problems in the area.

Community Gardaí in the Dublin Northern Division

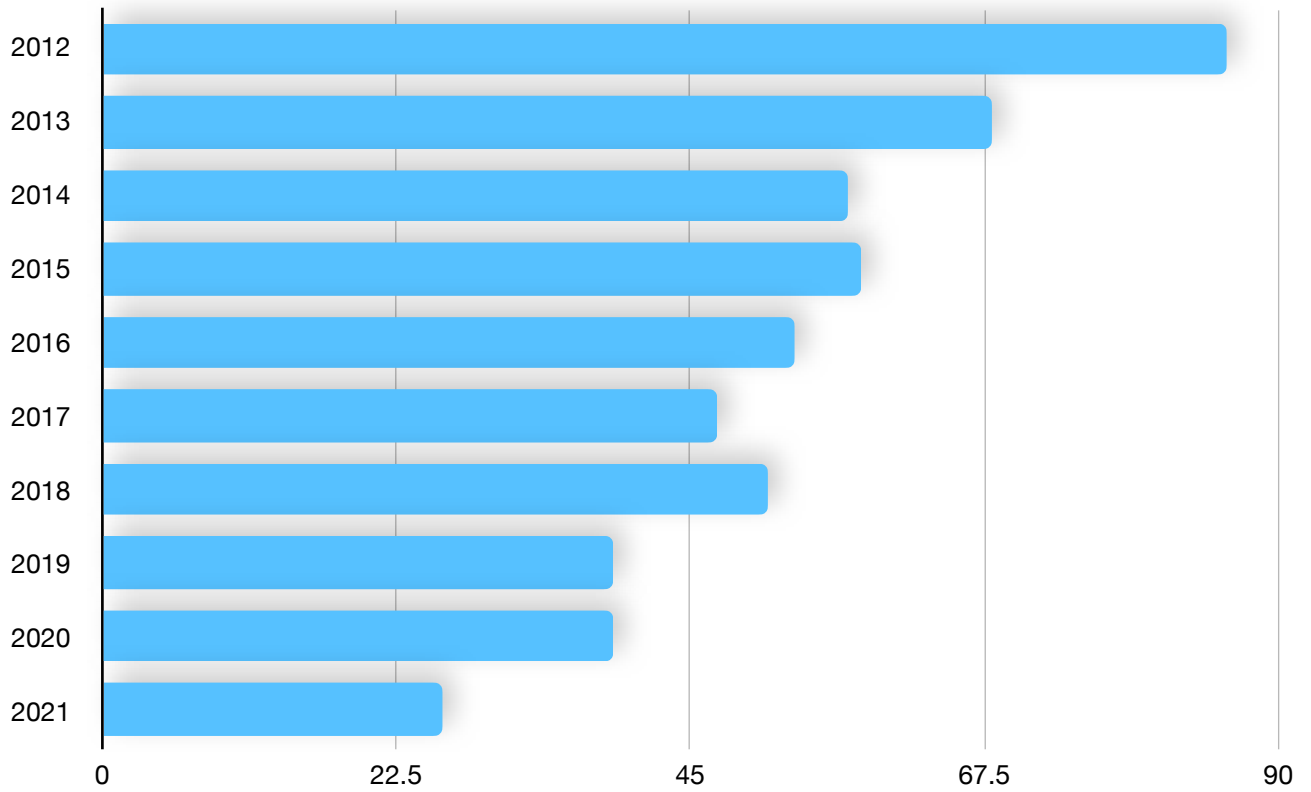


Figure 3.10: The number of Community Gardaí in the Dublin Northern Division has fallen from 86 in 2012 to 26 in 2021, a drop of 70% (Source: Reply to Parliamentary Question by Róisín Shortall T.D.)

Controlled Drugs Offences in Ballymun

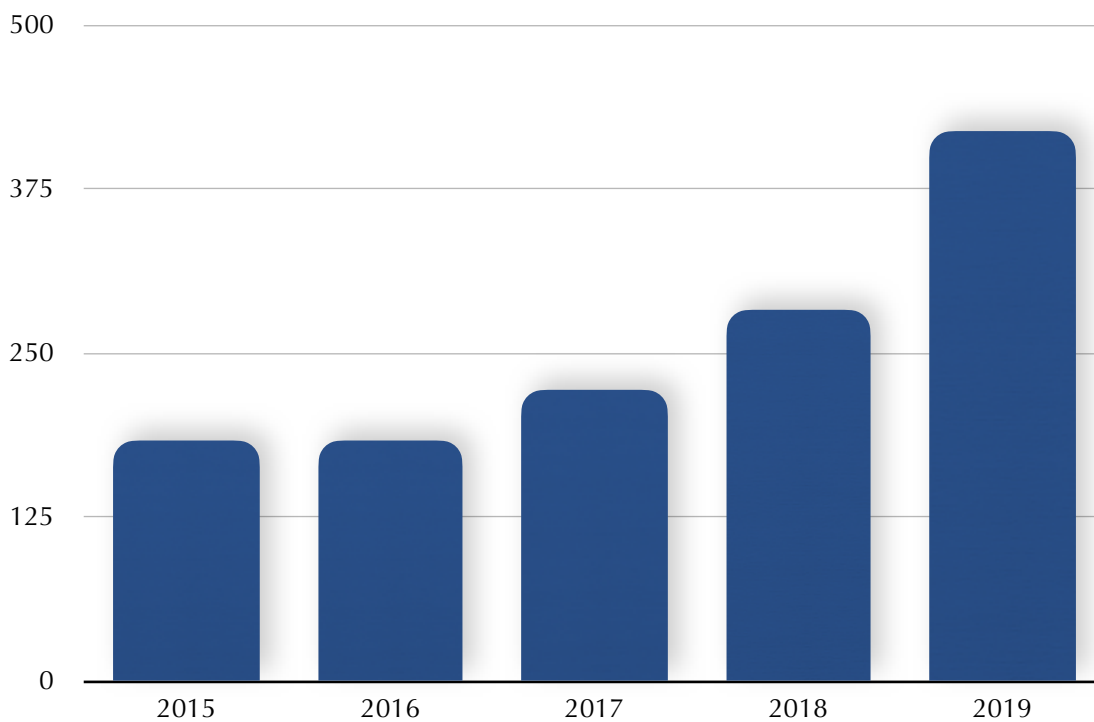


Figure 3.11: Controlled Drugs Offences in Ballymun have more than doubled since 2015. Source: Central Statistics Office, 2021.

Chapter 4: Crack Cocaine, Drug Dealing and the Impacts on the Ballymun Community

4.1 Crack Cocaine Surge

Crime statistics show a significant increase in Controlled Drug Offences in Ballymun in recent years, rising from 183 offences in 2015 to 419 offences in 2019 (Figure 3.10) (Central Statistics Office, 2021). There are no figures for 2020 available at the time of the publication of this report.

O'Reilly and Mac Cionnaith (2019) reported a surge in crack cocaine use in Ballymun. Local services identified 60 people living in the area that had developed problematic crack cocaine habits. Others were using crack cocaine on a less frequent basis, such as on pay day or at the weekends. In addition to local people buying crack cocaine, many people from outside Ballymun come to the area on a daily or weekly basis to buy and use crack cocaine. Those coming to Ballymun to buy their drugs report that the crack cocaine in Ballymun is high quality, easily available and cheap (Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, 2019).

4.2 Impacts of Crack Cocaine on Users

Crack cocaine is a highly addictive drug that has profound impacts on many of those using the drug, their families and on the wider community.

The physical impacts of crack cocaine can be overwhelming. For some, using the drug becomes more important than eating. People using crack cocaine can become unrecognisable within a matter of weeks. Some people can transform from being obese at the start of a binge, to becoming

emaciated (Drugs Counsellor 1; Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, 2019).

Drugs are often consumed in out-of-the-way locations that are often dirty, increasing the risk of infection (Figure 4.1).

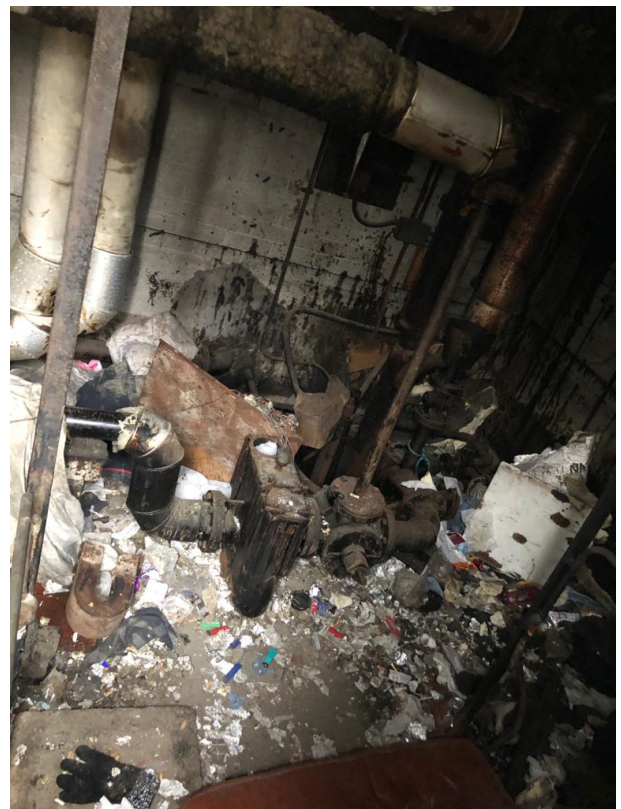


Figure 4.1: Site used for drug consumption in Ballymun, 2021. Source: Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force.

The drug also has serious mental health effects, exacerbating underlying problems. Many people using crack cocaine have required hospitalisation for both physical and mental health problems.

Often, people using crack cocaine have had a longterm history of opiate use, and may have been on a methadone treatment programme for years (Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, 2019). Frequently,

people who take opiates report that they are deliberately targeted by drug dealers to try to get them hooked on crack cocaine (Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, 2019). People who use crack cocaine describe to counsellors that they feel alive when they use the drug, in a way that they often haven't felt for years, while taking opiates (Interview: Drugs Counsellor 1).

4.3 Impacts of Crack Cocaine on the Families of Drug Users

A crack cocaine habit puts severe financial stress on those that use the drug. Most of their income goes on the drug, leaving little for food or heating. Children can be badly affected by crack cocaine use within the family – in particular if parents are using. There has been an increase in child protection and child neglect referrals associated with crack cocaine in recent years. Local services have responded to these needs by supplying food parcels to families struggling to provide the basics for their children (Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, 2019).

4.4 Impacts of Crack Cocaine on the Wider Community

In addition to the harm that those who use crack cocaine can do to themselves and their families, there are also significant impacts on the local community. There has been a marked increase in violence and aggressive, intimidating behaviour in the area associated with the increase in crack cocaine use (Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, 2019). In order to acquire money for their habit people who use crack cocaine can get involved with aggressive begging, prostitution and robberies (O'Reilly and Mac Cionnaith, 2019; Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, 2019). Sex work to raise money for drugs has become more visible in the

community (Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, 2019).

The impacts of crack cocaine use on the wider community has led to anger and a sense that these behaviours are not being addressed and that the drug dealers have a free rein (Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, 2019).

4.5 House Take-Overs/Cuckooing

As crack cocaine use surged in Ballymun, there was also a spate of house take-overs in the community. Criminal networks are taking control over the homes of vulnerable people and using these homes for the sale and consumption of drugs and other illegal activities (Community Action Network, 2018; Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, 2019; Interviews: Gardaí 2, Dublin City Council staff 1). The activity in these properties can be highly disruptive to the neighbourhood. The first house take-over came to the attention of the City Council in 2017, when a Garda was shot and injured from one of these houses. Since that time there have been at least 15-20 more take-overs in Ballymun (Interview: Dublin City Council Staff 1).

This type of house take-over is not unique to Ballymun and has been described in the UK and in Canada as "Cuckooing", after the cuckoo bird that takes over another bird's nest. The vulnerable tenants who are frequently targeted include people with crack cocaine addictions, tenants with mental health or physical disability problems, elderly people or young people (Butera, 2013).

The City Council works closely with the Gardaí, the HSE and other community groups to support the vulnerable tenants and to close-up these houses. While house take-overs are still happening, the number

of take-overs in Ballymun is reducing (Interview: Dublin City Council staff 1).

4.6 Open Drug Dealing

There is a very active drugs trade in Ballymun, with open drug markets in many parks and public spaces. There is also active drug dealing from many homes in the community (Community Action Network, 2018; Interview: Dublin City Council staff 1).

The Ballymun drugs market serves more than just the local community – it has become a market for many people outside of Ballymun. People often come into Ballymun on their way to work to buy their drugs (Community Action Network, 2018).

The drugs trade has a serious negative impact on the quality of life of those living in Ballymun (Community Action Network, 2018). People feel anxious when they are out-and-about in Ballymun, especially at night. Many people report that they won't go out, and they also restrict other family members from leaving the home (Community Action Network, 2018). This withdrawal from the community can lead to further increases in crime in the community (Connolly and Donovan, 2014). Locals report particular problems at shops due to aggressive begging and sometimes assaults. The criminality in Ballymun leads many people to feel anxious, isolated, powerless and even shame (Community Action Network, 2018).

The emergence of crack cocaine in late 2017 and early 2018 increased the rivalry between different drug supply networks. Competition for trade lead to violent outcomes including shootings, pipe-bombs and street brawls (Community Action Network, 2018; O'Reilly and MacCionnaith, 2019; Interviews: Gardaí 2, and Dublin City Council staff 1).

While there are significant numbers involved in the drugs trade and criminal activity in Ballymun, the vast majority of people want nothing to do with crime. An analysis by Gardaí of the Shangan and Coultry neighbourhoods in 2018 showed that fewer than 3% of residents had committed offences in the previous year. More than 97% had not (unpublished report to Ballymun Strive steering committee).

4.7 Intimidation Associated with Drug Debts

Drug dealers often sell their drugs without the need for up-front payments, and they are happy for their customers to run up debts. These debts can quickly get out-of-hand. One Irish study showed that around half of all reported drug debts were for €1,000 or more (Connolly and Buckley, 2016).

In order to ensure that debts are repaid, threats of violence and actual physical violence are common. Not only are the people who use drugs threatened, but family members are also frequently targeted, in particular the mothers of those that have run up the debts (Connolly and Buckley, 2016). One drugs counsellor in Ballymun reported that the sisters of men or boys that use drugs can be coerced into providing sexual services to pay off their brothers' debts (Interview: Drugs Counsellor 1).

Others that run-up debts can be ordered to carry out various criminal activities from storing drugs or weapons, to carrying out shootings, to settle their debts. The effects of intimidation can spill over into schools, with young people carrying weapons to school to protect themselves (Connolly and Buckley, 2016).

Intimidation and threats can lead to serious problems in communities with people

reporting fear, stress, anxiety, despair, relationship breakdown, job losses, homelessness and prolonged social isolation (Connolly and Buckley, 2016). Many of these drug-debt related problems are common in Ballymun (Community Action Network, 2018).

4.8 Young People are being Drawn into Criminality

Local services have expressed their concerns about the large numbers of young people that are being drawn into criminal activity and drug-dealing – some in their early teens and some even younger (Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, 2019; Interviews: Dublin City Council staff 1, Education and Youth workers 1 and 2). Some are attracted by the lifestyle and easy money, while others are coerced into action as a result of running up drug debts – often for cannabis (Naughton and Redmond, 2017; Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, 2019; Interviews: Education and Youth workers 1 and 2).

There are estimated to be 10 or more hotspot areas in Ballymun and most have young people involved. For some young people involved in drug dealing, their parents have serious drug habits, and there are concerns about the conditions in many of these homes. Some young people can make a lot of money from drug dealing (Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, 2019). Once drawn in, it can be extremely difficult for the young people concerned to disengage from their offending behaviour (Naughton and Redmond, 2017).

The local schools have identified about 60 young children from the age of 10 upwards that are poorly engaged in school. Some are completely out of school, some are on reduced timetables, and some are attending, but instead of being in the classroom, they

are often sent on errands to reduce classroom disruption.

When in school, these young people usually struggle with their academic work, they are disruptive in class, and they engage in antisocial behaviour. Once they are on reduced timetables, or have completely disengaged from education, they are vulnerable to being drawn into antisocial behaviour, drug dealing and criminality (Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, 2019; Interviews: Education and Youth workers 2 and 3).

Most young people in Ballymun want nothing to do with the drugs trade, but they are still impacted by criminality. The local Youthreach service reports an increase in the numbers attending their service who have dropped out of mainstream schooling, not due to poor academic ability, but because they are suffering from anxiety caused by their environment. They may be living on a dangerous street with feuding. Some are afraid to go out. Sometimes they believe they are a target – and they might be right. While the youth services can offer supports to help deal with their anxieties, it can be difficult to help when there is ongoing criminality in the community (Interview: Education and Youth Worker 4).

Chapter 5: Preventing Young People from being Drawn into Criminality

“Children do not arrive in extreme need overnight and many could be prevented from getting to that point if we helped them sooner in a more effective way. We are, in effect, attempting to manage and contain crises in children’s lives after allowing it to escalate”. UK Children’s Commissioner.

5.1 Comprehensive Approach to Crime

Murphy and colleagues (2017) recommended a comprehensive approach to dealing with crime and criminal networks. There are three aspects to this comprehensive approach:

1. Preventing crime
2. Desistance – supporting people who are moving away from crime
3. Suppression of criminal activities

These three steps will be examined over the next three chapters starting with an examination of preventing young people from being drawn into crime, in this chapter.

5.2 Working with the Most Challenging Children

Remarkable work is carried out every day in Ballymun to improve children’s wellbeing, their education and to protect them from being drawn into crime. There is a wide range of community groups, youth groups, sports groups, schools and state agencies providing high-quality services and support to young people and their families.

One important feature of the work on behalf of children in Ballymun is the collaboration between the various groups that work on

behalf of children. In 2005, the Ballymun Drugs and Alcohol Task Force set up the Ballymun Network for Assisting Children & Young People to deal with concerns about young people engaged in risky behaviours.

The wide range of agencies in the network have developed a case-management system for sharing information to identify and help children with severe problems. Changes due to GDPR, however, have made the process more complicated and as a result, some children may not be getting the interventions that they need. It may be timely to review the children’s services in Ballymun and to develop new protocols to ensure that GDPR considerations do not prevent children from getting the care that they need.

The Network established the Strengthening Families Programme in 2008. This is an evidenced-based programme to support families of young adolescents that are at high-risk.

A significant challenge is getting the families that most need help to use the available services. Some families are too chaotic to avail of the help on offer, while others are afraid of being judged.

5.3 Prevention and Support Services for all Children

In addition to specialised services for the young people with the highest needs, we must improve supports for all children and their families in the community. The best way to tackle crime is to prevent crime. If we are to reduce the demand for drug use in the future, we need to improve the wellbeing of children today.

A 2006 report for the Ballymun Development Group for Children and Young People showed that Ballymun children had significantly more problems with behaviour, emotional problems and relationships compared with children in other communities (McKeown and Haase, 2006). In response to the McKeown and Haase report Youngballymun was set up. It introduced a range of programmes to address the needs highlighted by the 2006 report. Research published by Youngballymun in 2015 showed marked improvements in the behaviour, emotions and relationships of children in Ballymun. Furthermore, there were notable improvements in literacy (Youngballymun, 2015). Up-to-date research is needed to see if this progress has been maintained, improved or receded. Unfortunately, funding for Youngballymun was considerably scaled back in 2016.

It would be timely to carry out a review of children and family services in the Ballymun area, to identify gaps in the services and to highlight areas that could be improved. There should be a particular focus on making sure that the families that most need help are getting the services they need. As part of such a review, it would be helpful to reassess the behaviour, emotional strengths and relationships of children in Ballymun using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire that was used for the 2006 report for the Ballymun Development Group, and repeated by Youngballymun in 2015.

5.4 Supporting Mothers and Infants

Supporting mothers through pregnancy and during the first 2-3 years of a child's life can lead to significant benefits to the mother, the child and the wider community. The benefits of early intervention programmes

can last up to teenage years and beyond. For example, the Nurse-Family Partnership home visiting programme in the USA reported (Brocklesby, 2019):

- 48% reduction in child abuse and neglect;
- 56% reduction in emergency room visits for accidents and poisonings;
- 59% reduction in child arrests at age 15;
- 67% reduction in child behavioural and intellectual problems at age 6;
- 35% fewer hypertensive disorders of pregnancy

Following the cuts to the Youngballymun project in 2016, the infant mental health programme "Ready, Steady, Grow" was closed. Youngballymun is working to develop a new programme to support attachment between mothers and newborn children. They will need funding for a midwife and public health nurse position to get this programme running. The HSE should support this proposal.

The Infant Parent Support Project works with parents that have drug or alcohol addiction problems. This preventive project, which is run by YAP in partnership with Youngballymun, supports parents through pregnancy until their child is two-years-old. The project staff visit parents in their homes, provide one-to-one support to the parents, and they also help link the parents into other services in the community.

Other disadvantaged communities in Ireland have universal home visiting programmes through the Community Mothers Programme (Brocklesby, 2019). A National Review of the nine Community Mothers Programmes in Ireland showed a significant and sustainable difference to the lives of children and their families

(Brocklesby, 2019). Tusla should fund a new home visiting service for all families in Ballymun throughout pregnancy and for the early years of their babies' lives.

5.5 Improvements Needed for Social Work Supports in Ballymun

Tusla is responsible for providing child protection services in Ballymun. The Ballymun child protection service is part of the Dublin North City Service Area. This Service Area also includes Finglas, the North Inner City and Cabra (Figure 5.1).

There are 17 Service Areas across the country.

For every 1,000 children, Dublin North City has by far, the highest number of Children in Care in the country (Table 5.1) (Tusla, 2020), and the highest number of referrals (Table 5.2) (Tusla, 2020). Dealing with such a demanding caseload is a serious challenge for the Dublin North City service. On average, across the country, 22% of initial assessments are dealt with within 40 days. In Dublin North City, just 4% of initial assessments are dealt with within this timeframe. Only Dublin North has fewer initial assessments completed within 40 days (Figure 5.2) (Tusla, 2020).

Dublin North City has more staff assigned to their service than any other area (Table 5.3) (Tusla, 2020), but many of these posts are not filled in reality. There is a high turnover of staff, and there is a shortage of qualified social work staff in the country, and it is difficult to fill posts in such a challenging environment.

An unpublished internal Tusla report from 2019, released to the Irish Times under the Freedom of Information Act, showed that children at risk of significant harm were "not receiving an effective service" from Tusla in the Dublin North City service area (Power, 2020). Child protection plans drawn

up for some children in the area "lacked detail and were not robust". Shortcomings in the area were linked to a high level of staff vacancies, with more than 28 posts to be filled in mid-2019.

Concerns from the Social Work team, and from a variety of other organisations persist. There is still a high turnover of Social Work staff, with vacancies in many posts. Often the most junior staff work with the most vulnerable families while also dealing with high case loads (Interview: Youth Worker 2).

Providing an additional 10 Senior Social Work posts to the team working in the Ballymun area would help reduce the turnover of staff, speed up the recruitment of vacant positions, and improve the quality of this vital service.

Increasing the skill mix on the Child Protection teams would also help. An additional 10-15 Youth Workers, Social Care Workers and Family Support Workers would help manage the caseload. These posts would be easier to fill as there is no shortage of trained staff in these disciplines. It would also reduce the workload on Social Work staff and make it a more attractive team to join.

There is a need for a facilitated discussion forum between the Social Work team and the other agencies that are part of the Ballymun Network for Assisting Children and Young People, to jointly explore the process and experiences and challenges of child protection interventions.

Many of the members of the Ballymun Network for Assisting Children and Young People, who were interviewed for this report, highlighted the need to strengthen the Tusla Family Support Team.

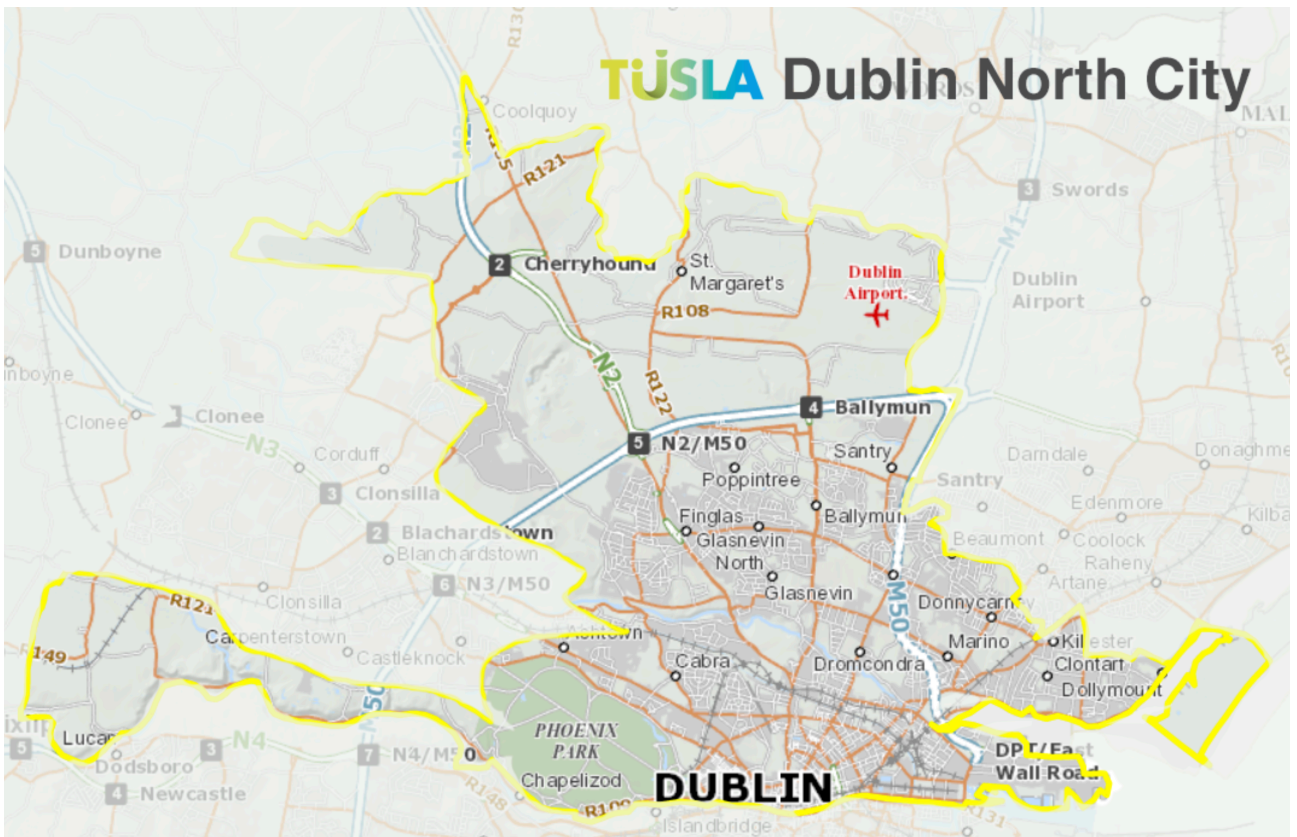


Figure 5.1: Dublin North City Service Area includes Ballymun, Finglas, North Inner City and Cabra.

Rank	Tusla Service Area	Population of 0-17 year olds	Number of Children in Care in Q3, 2020	Number of Children in Care in Q3, 2020 per 1,000 children
1	Dublin North City	44,927	478	10.6
2	Waterford/Wexford	68,513	426	6.2
3	Mid West	96,266	591	6.1
4	Cork	134,015	777	5.8
5	Dublin South Central	65,564	360	5.5
6	Carlow/Kilkenny/South Tipperary	63,009	332	5.3
7	Donegal	42,865	221	5.2
8	Sligo/Leitrim/West Cavan	23,554	117	5.0
9	Galway/Roscommon	79,912	380	4.8
10	Kerry	34,527	155	4.5
11	Cavan/Monaghan	36,446	159	4.4
12	Midlands	80,193	346	4.3
13	Louth/Meath	93,093	397	4.3
14	Mayo	31,968	131	4.1
15	Dublin South West/Kildare/West Wicklow	108,186	407	3.8
16	Dublin North	100,654	337	3.3
17	Dublin South East/Wicklow	86,810	234	2.7
	National Average			4.9

Table 5.1: The Dublin North City Service Area has the highest level of Children in Care in the country, with 10.6 children in care per 1,000 children – more than twice the national average of 4.9, and far in excess of Waterford/Wexford, the Service Area with the second highest number of children in care per 1,000 children. Source: Tusla, 2020.

Rank	Tusla Service Area	Referrals in Q2, 2020	Referrals per 1,000 children in Q2, 2020
1	Dublin North City	943	21.0
2	Midlands	1,472	18.4
3	Dublin South Central	902	13.8
4	Carlow/Kilkenny/South Tipperary	825	13.1
5	Galway/Roscommon	969	12.1
6	Waterford/Wexford	802	11.7
7	Louth/Meath	1,080	11.6
8	Dublin North	1,145	11.4
9	Cavan/Monaghan	403	11.1
10	Mid West	1,022	10.6
11	Sligo/Leitrim/West Cavan	250	10.6
12	Mayo	310	9.7
13	Cork	1,262	9.4
14	Dublin South East/Wicklow	710	8.2
15	Dublin South West/Kildare/West Wicklow	831	7.7
16	Kerry	246	7.1
17	Donegal	286	6.7
	National Average		11

Table 5.2: The Dublin North City Service Area has the highest level of referrals per 1,000 children in Q2, 2020, almost twice the national average. Source: Tusla, 2020.

Percentage of Initial Assessments Completed Within 40 Days

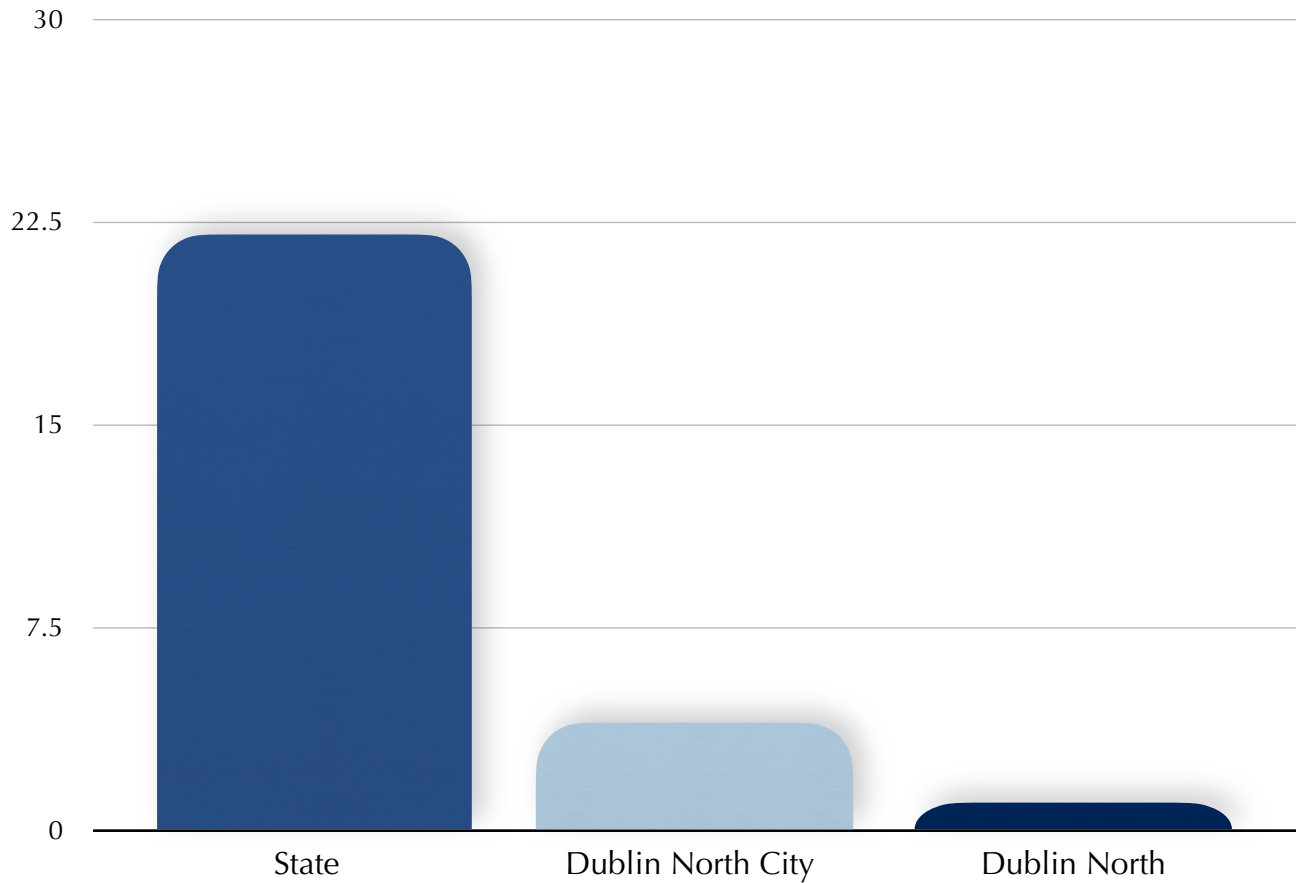


Figure 5.2: The Dublin North City Service Area completed 4% of Initial Assessments within 40 days in Q2, 2020. The national average was 22%. Dublin North completed only 1% of Initial Assessments within 40 days. Source: Tusla, 2020.

Rank	Tusla Service Area	Social Work Staff (Whole Time Equivalent) in Q3, 2020	Social Work Staff (Whole Time Equivalent) in Q3, 2020 per 1,000 children
1	Dublin North City	101	2.2
2	Sligo/Leitrim/West Cavan	38.49	1.6
3	Donegal	69.3	1.6
4	Kerry	46.95	1.4
5	Dublin South Central	88.31	1.3
6	Cork	179.16	1.3
7	Mayo	41.84	1.3
8	Galway/Roscommon	104	1.3
9	Mid West	122.41	1.3
10	Waterford/Wexford	85.38	1.2
11	Midlands	92.78	1.2
12	Cavan/Monaghan	41.66	1.1
13	Carlow/Kilkenny/South Tipperary	71.84	1.1
14	Dublin South East/Wicklow	97.71	1.1
15	Dublin South West/Kildare/West Wicklow	103.94	1.0
16	Louth/Meath	86.66	0.9
17	Dublin North	80.57	0.8
	National Average		1

Table 5.3: The Dublin North City Service Area has the highest level of assigned Social Work staff. The assigned staffing level, however, does not match the reality of the staff working in the service, due to the high turnover of staff and the difficulty of recruiting staff to take up these assigned posts. Source: Tusla, 2020.

5.6 Accessing Ballymun Specific Data from the Social Work Database

A particular challenge for those working in children’s services in Ballymun is the difficulty in obtaining Ballymun specific data from the Social Work database. A practical remedy to this problem could be to include a new field for each case in the database for Electoral District. This would then allow cases from Ballymun to be identified more easily, and would also be beneficial for other communities across the country.

5.7 Supervision for Trained Family Therapists

There are a number of people trained in family therapy in Ballymun, who can’t practice due to the lack of a clinical supervisor. This situation should be remedied by providing supervision as part of a new Multisystemic therapy team, or by employing a clinical psychologist to carry out this supervision.

5.8 Assessments and Primary Care Services for Children

The HSE organises its community healthcare services into nine Community Healthcare Organisations (CHOs) across the country. Ballymun is part of CHO 9. CHO 9 covers the north side of Dublin City and county.

There are significant waiting lists for psychology, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy and physiotherapy in the CHO 9 area (Table 5.4) (HSE, 2020, pp. 16-17). Unfortunately, this is a problem across the country. Parents in more affluent parts of the country, however, can pay for these services to be carried out privately. Some children can wait over 2 years for an assessment and then wait several more years for treatment. Local services have

reported delays of up to five years from request for assessment to treatment (Interview, HSE and Tusla 2). Resources need to be increased significantly, to eliminate waiting lists for these vital services.

Service	Percentage waiting more than 1 year
Psychology	67.2
Occupational Therapy	39.4
Speech and Language Therapy	28.5
Physiotherapy	14.6

Table 5.4: Many children have to wait for more than one year for these assessments. Source HSE, 2020.

There are also long delays for children waiting for an Assessment of Need for Children with Disabilities. Fewer than 14% of referrals in the CHO 9 area were assessed within the target timelines (HSE, 2020, p. 17). These waiting lists should be eliminated.

Access to a National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) assessment is also subject to long waiting lists, during which time students can fall completely out of the education system, or suffer developmental delays due to the lack of adequate supports. A NEPS assessment is required before specific educational support can be provided to a student. The waiting lists for the NEPS assessments should be eliminated.

5.9 Alternatives to School for Children who are Excluded or on Reduced Timetables

The schools and youth clubs have identified a group of about 60 young people from the age of 10 upwards that are not engaged in

school. Some are completely out of school, some are on reduced timetables, and some are attending, but instead of being in the classroom, they are often sent on errands to reduce classroom disruption.

Behaviour problems become obvious in primary school when these children are frequently suspended, or taken out of regular class work. They have very little success in normal schooling and no interest in the curriculum. Frequently, they are disruptive to their peers. Often their parents also have serious problems, such as mental health or addiction issues, and they too need support. These young people are at high risk of being drawn into drug dealing and criminal activity (Interviews: Education and Youth workers 2 and 3).

“They need one-to-one mentoring. They need to get experience of success. They usually have no success at school other than disrupting” (Interview: Education and Youth Worker 3).

In 2015, the Ballymun Regional Youth Resource (BRYR) ran a daily programme, called Jumpstart, with seven of these young boys. Funded by Dublin City Council and overseen by the Ballymun Network for Assisting Children and Young People, the pilot programme focused on engaging the boys and providing individualised educational plans and teaching life skills. The team also engaged with the families of the young people. They provided daily support for the parents and guardians. The programme had a positive impact on the young people’s social, interpersonal and communication skills, reduced conflict within their families and decreased antisocial behaviour, criminal behaviour and substance misuse among the young people (Sandra Roe Research, 2016).

Since the pilot finished in 2015, there has been no service or programme available to the majority of young people who are outside formal education or on significantly reduced timetables. These are some of the most vulnerable young people in the community and many are being drawn into criminality. There is an urgent need for a similar programme to be offered to all the young people who are currently poorly engaged, or completely out of school.

Other communities, such as Finglas, have a Youth Encounter service, which is the type of service badly needed in Ballymun.

The Drugs Task Force and the Ballymun Network for Assisting Children and Young People have prepared a proposal for the Minister for Education to develop a “Special School Status” for a project in the area to cater for these 60 children.

5.10 Multisystemic Therapy

Multisystemic therapy is an intensive programme of support for the primary caregiver (usually the mother) of young people at high risk. The young people that benefit from this programme often have complex needs, may have experienced multiple adversities, be early school leavers and live in challenging environments (Naughton and colleagues, 2019).

The programme addresses barriers to positive change within the young person’s home and their community. It helps the parents to challenge the young person’s problematic behaviours. It was used in the pilot Bail Supervision Scheme that was designed by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (Naughton and colleagues, 2019). An evaluation of the programme showed positive changes in the young people’s behaviour.

Ballymun should set up and train its own Multisystemic Therapy team, staffed from a variety of agencies working in Ballymun, with the Ballymun Network for Assisting Children and Young People acting as the steering committee. This service should be available for young people involved in serious criminality, but also for young people at high risk, who have not yet become involved with criminal behaviour.

5.11 Dealing with Violence in the Home

Young people who experience violence in the home, either directed at themselves, or at other family members, can be adversely affected throughout their lives by that violence (Dermoddy and colleagues, 2020).

There have been increases in services in recent years for parents and their children who have left the family home due to violence or abuse. But most people do not leave. There is a need for a significant increase in supports for those that remain in the family home (Interview: Tusla and HSE 5). There needs to be more interventions with the perpetrators, to reduce the violence and coercive control. A family approach for dealing with domestic violence is needed. The resources to develop such a service should be provided in Ballymun.

5.12 Youth Services in Ballymun

The high quality of the work carried out by the youth services in Ballymun came up in many of the interviews for this report. Many praised the strong relationships built between the youth work staff, the young people and their families. These youth services had significant funding cuts during the last economic downturn and are continuing to curtail services. In addition to providing funding to increase opening hours after the Coronavirus lockdowns, the youth services would benefit from funding to

employ staff to engage with the families of young people at risk, building on the strong relationships that are often already in place.

The youth services also regularly need emergency funding to help pay for food and clothing for young people in dire straits. These needs are coming up more frequently in recent years, often as a result of the increased use of crack cocaine by parents and caregivers. The necessary funding should be provided to the youth services to cover emergency needs.

5.13 Breaking the Cycle of Trauma

In order to better deal with addiction, violence and crime, it's important to understand the role that traumas suffered in childhood can have on the health and behaviour of adults (Felitti and colleagues, 1998). These childhood traumas are often referred to as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Felitti and colleagues (1998) researched the impact of the following ACEs:

- Psychological abuse;
- Physical abuse;
- Sexual abuse;
- Violence against the mother;
- Living with household members who were substance abusers;
- Living with household members who were mentally ill or suicidal;
- Living with household members who were imprisoned.

The authors reported that those who had experienced four or more categories of ACE, had a four to twelve-fold increase in risk for alcoholism, drug abuse, depression and suicide attempts, compared to those who had not experienced any. One of the drugs counsellors from Ballymun reported that the

average number of ACEs experienced by their service users was seven (Interview: Drugs Counsellor 1).

There is also a connection between childhood trauma and crime. Many offenders have experienced significant trauma when growing up, including violence, sexual abuse and neglect. Boys who have experienced or witnessed violence are substantially more likely to commit violence than those who have not (Hodas, 2006).

This understanding of the impacts of childhood trauma on behaviour and health outcomes has led to the development of Trauma-Informed Care (Leitch, 2017). It also highlights the importance of developing programmes to reduce violence and neglect.

ACEs can cause problems in multiple generations, as the outcomes for those who have experienced multiple traumas in childhood, include violence, mental illness and problematic substance use. These outcomes can then be a source of trauma for the next generation. These intergenerational effects can lock families into cycles of adversity, deprivation and ill health. A collaborative, trauma-informed community response can help reduce the likelihood that the next generation will be affected by ACEs (Hughes and colleagues, 2017).

Prevention of ACEs can be supported through maternity services and home visiting services that strengthen parenting skills. Screening of families for risk factors for ACEs should be part of routine child healthcare, with ongoing support and referral (Hughes and colleagues, 2017).

This trauma-informed approach is commonly used in Ballymun and many interviewees for this research would like to

see Ballymun become a Trauma-Informed Community (Interviews: Drugs Counsellor 1; HSE and Tusla 2; Education and Youth worker 3; Community Sector and Probation 4).

5.14 Housing Allocations by Dublin City Council

In the 1980s Ballymun accounted for 10% of the Corporation's housing stock, but it housed 45% of the Corporation's single parents, 29% of the homeless applicants and 59% of single men. Some of these new tenants had recently been discharged from institutions and had a long history of instability. They needed high levels of support, but few services were available (Power, 1999).

This concentration of people with high needs, but without supports contributed to the high levels of heroin use within Ballymun that started in the 1980s. It's important that the same mistakes are not made again. Dublin City Council should not be housing additional families that need significant levels of support in Ballymun, when the supports needed by these families are not available.

5.15 Key Recommendations

- Provide 10 Senior Social Work positions to the Child Protection team for Ballymun, to address the concerns from Tusla's internal audit report of 2019 that found that children at risk of significant harm were "not receiving an effective service". Increasing the number of senior posts would help reduce the turnover of staff, speed up the recruitment of vacant positions, and improve the quality of this vital service. An additional 10-15 Youth Workers, Social Care Workers and Family Support Workers would help manage the caseload of the Child Protection team. These posts would be easier to fill as

there is no shortage of trained staff in these disciplines. It would also reduce the workload on Social Work staff and make it a more attractive team to join. (Responsibility: Tusla).

- Establish a new programme to work with the estimated 60 young people from 10 years old up, that have dropped out of the education system. (Responsibility: Department of Education and Skills).
- Multisystemic Therapy is an intensive home-based approach that supports the main caregiver of children at high risk, to help improve the home environment for the young person. The Ballymun Network for Assisting Children and Young People should set up and train its own Multisystemic Therapy team, staffed from a variety of agencies working in Ballymun, with the Network acting as the steering committee. This service should be available for young people involved in serious criminality, but also for young people at high risk, who have not yet become involved with crime. (Responsibility: Tusla, HSE and the Ballymun Network for Assisting Children and Young People).
- Dublin City Council should not be housing additional families, who need significant supports, in temporary or permanent housing in Ballymun, while the supports needed by these families are not available. (Responsibility: Dublin City Council).

Chapter 6: Desistance – Supporting People to Move Away from Crime

6.1 The Structure of Criminal Networks

A recent study of criminal networks in Dublin South Central divided the participants into three groups (Connolly and Mulcahy, 2019):

1. Career criminals at the centre of the drugs trade;
2. Street dealers – teens and young men operating around crime hot spots;
3. Children who are groomed into the criminal networks.

While these categories are not rigid, and some participants could be considered to be members of more than one group, it may prove helpful to plan a tailored response to each of these three categories. We will look at strategies for each of these categories in this chapter starting with children.

6.2 Strategies to Help Young People Move Away from Crime

The vast majority of young people in Ballymun stay out of trouble and want to get on with their lives. But they are badly affected by the surrounding criminality. For those children who get drawn into crime or antisocial behaviour it is helpful to categorise them into two groups (Redmond and Naughton, 2017):

1. The majority of young people (over 80%) who get in trouble will be for less serious offences, such as drinking in the park, or antisocial behaviour. Most of these will commit few crimes and will grow out of their offending. A light touch approach to this type of offending

is appropriate. The Garda Youth Diversion Programme or support from skilled youth workers, schools, sports clubs and community groups works well for these young people (Redmond, 2016a).

2. There is a small cohort of young people engaged in ongoing serious criminal activity. While these children cause great harm to the community, they themselves are also victims. The standard Garda Youth Diversion Programme is usually not effective for these children and more intensive strategies are required to protect them and to protect the community from their criminal activities (Redmond, 2016b).

It is this second category of young people – those involved in serious crime who pose that biggest challenges to our communities. It is estimated that one in eight young people that commit crime fall into this category (Redmond and Naughton, 2017). Just three *per cent* of the young people who commit crime carry out 50% of youth crime (Gallagher, 2019). With so many problems caused by such a small group of offenders, “it is legitimate to allocate disproportionate resources in this area” (Redmond, 2016b).

6.2.1 Drivers of Criminality in Young People

Many of the young people involved in serious criminality come from chaotic homes where their parents or caregivers may have mental health or addiction problems. They often suffer neglect and violence within their homes. Garda Juvenile Liaison Officers describe these children as presenting with multiple vulnerabilities and

complexities (Naughton and Redmond, 2017). Involvement with crime provides access to drugs, alcohol and money, but also fulfils some basic psycho-social needs such as a sense of belonging, friendships and safety (Naughton and Redmond, 2017).

Recent research in Ireland emphasises the significant role that criminal networks play in encouraging and also compelling young people to engage in criminal behaviour (Redmond, 2016b). Relationships forged between key criminal network members with young people make it extremely difficult for the young people to disengage from their offending behaviour (Naughton and Redmond, 2017).

6.2.2 Trauma Informed Approach to Encouraging Desistance

Dermody and colleagues (2020) reported that the young people involved with the Garda Youth Diversion programme had experienced approximately three times more ACEs than the average population. Most of the young people had four or more ACEs.

For young people who have experienced significant childhood trauma, contact with the criminal justice system can be very challenging. It can intensify fear, anxiety and negative feelings, and it can lead to re-traumatisation (Dermody and colleagues, 2020).

The report stated that Gardaí, by virtue of their position of power, may be a trigger for young people to go into a “fight or flight” reaction. Garda behaviours may inadvertently mimic the behaviours of an abuser, and so can act as a trigger. For example, if the Garda is disrespectful, overly controlling, does not ‘see’ or humanise the young person, does not explain things fully to them, or otherwise makes them feel psychologically unsafe,

their behaviour may trigger the young person.

The report found that JLOs often work in trauma-informed ways. But this way of working is often learned on the job, rather than as a result of specific training.

All Gardaí would benefit from trauma-informed training. A trauma informed approach can improve safety, as Gardaí would better understand situations, and potentially take a different approach or communicate in a way that might lead to safer outcomes. JLOs and case managers in particular would benefit from trauma-informed training.

Others working in the criminal justice system, such as probation officers and prison officers should also be provided with trauma-informed training.

Criminal justice staff can be affected by repeated exposure to others’ traumatic events, or from being in frequent contact with trauma survivors. In addition, there is the potential of staff experiencing primary trauma in high-risk work-related situations. Managing trauma in staff can help keep staff empathetic, engaged and motivated.

6.2.3 New Responses Needed for Young People Engaged in Persistent and Serious Crime

When young people get involved in serious criminal activity, such as drug dealing, or burglary, it is likely that they have come under the influence of adult criminals (Redmond, 2016b). These young people need protection. The community also needs protection from their criminal activity. Interventions above and beyond the normal Garda Youth Diversion Programmes are required.

The Tenth Report of the Special Rapporteur on Child Protection (Shannon, 2017) called

for a new statutory offence to be enacted to target adults that groom children to carry out criminal offences on their behalf. Such an offence could prove to be helpful in protecting children from being drawn into criminality. The government should proceed with their plans to introduce such legislation.

There should be continuous assessment of the coercive pressure that young people are put under in Ballymun. Coercing young people into crime shouldn't be acceptable. The justice agencies need to address this serious problem.

6.2.4 What is the Role for Detention for Young Offenders?

Oberstown is the only juvenile detention centre in Ireland. The facility has capacity for 48 boys and 8 girls. The services provided to the young people detained in Oberstown have improved significantly in the last 6-7 years. The children have access to a wide range of supports such as psychological supports, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, drug counselling, bereavement supports, and medical and dental care. In the community it can be hard to access these support services, but even when they are available, the young people often don't make use of these supports for a variety of reasons. In Oberstown, however, most do take advantage of the supports on offer (Interview: Oberstown Staff 1).

While there are benefits to detention for some young people, there are also drawbacks. Detention requires removing young people from their families and brings them together with other young people with serious problems. There is also a hard limit on the number of places available. There are an estimated 1,000 young people engaged in serious crime in Ireland (Gallagher, 2019), but only 56 places in Oberstown

(Interview: Oberstown Staff 1). It is clear that alternatives to detention are needed.

6.2.5 Alternatives to Detention for Young Offenders involved in Serious Crime

With only 56 places available in Oberstown, the current reality for most young offenders with multiple charges is that there are no significant consequences for committing further offences. A young person can run up 50 charges before detention is even considered (Interview: Gardaí 2).

One promising alternative to detention is the pilot Bail Supervision Scheme that was designed by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (Naughton and colleagues, 2019). It offers judges an alternative to detention before a trial, for young people who might otherwise have been refused bail. The focus of this scheme is to provide intensive support to the young person's parent or caregiver in his or her home using a Multisystemic Therapy model. The programme addresses barriers to positive change within the young person's home and their community and helps the parent to challenge the young person's problematic behaviours. An evaluation of the programme showed positive changes in the participant's behaviour, with 72% fewer offences in the six months after the programme, compared with the six months before the programme.

In the Foreword to the report on the evaluation of the Bail Supervision Scheme, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, at the time, Dr. Katherine Zappone stated, "My Department are now looking at progressing plans to expand the scheme and make it available to a larger cohort of children who come before the courts".

The Gardaí in Ballymun report that they would like to be able to use this

intervention for 18 young people who are involved in serious criminal behaviour (Interview: Gardaí 5). The intervention would also be useful for young people at high risk, who have not yet become involved in serious criminal behaviour.

As mentioned in Chapter 5, Ballymun should set up and train its own Multisystemic Therapy team, staffed from a variety of agencies working in Ballymun, with The Ballymun Network for Assisting Children and Young People acting as the steering committee.

6.3 Strategies to Help Adult Street Dealers Move Away from Crime

For some categories of crime, such as burglary and violent crime, prison sentences will often lead to a fall-off in offending (Gash, 2016). Drug dealing, however, does not usually follow this pattern. If one dealer is imprisoned, another will usually pop-up to take their place. What's more, when people go to prison, they often build new relationships with others who help them to become more entrenched in dealing (Connolly and Buckley, 2016). Other strategies are needed to make a significant impact on street dealing.

6.3.1 Ballymun Strive – A Joint Agency Response to Crime (J-ARC)

Strive is a pilot programme that came into operation in 2015. It attempts to reduce crime in the Shangan and Coultry neighbourhoods by targeting the most harmful offenders in that area. It's a multi-agency project and is part of the Department of Justice's J-ARC programme. The author of this report is the chair of the Strive steering committee.

The 20 most harmful offenders in the Shangan and Coultry area were selected for Strive by the three justice agencies – the Gardaí, the Probation Service and the Irish

Prison service. The justice agencies then work with other community organisations such as the Ballymun Jobs Centre, the Department of Social Protection, Dublin City Council and the local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force to offer training, addiction treatment, and mental health supports to the selected offenders. While support is on offer, at the same time their activities are closely monitored, and where appropriate the justice agencies can seek imprisonment for offenders that are not cooperating and continuing to commit crime.

Street dealers are particularly suited to this programme because they often have high numbers of convictions, which gives the justice agencies leverage to encourage better behaviour. Street dealers also frequently have a lot of needs and are often eager to avail of the help on offer. These factors improve their engagement with the programme and make it more likely that they will benefit from the interventions (Interview: Community Sector and Probation 5).

Analysis of the programme has shown that the number of crimes committed by the offenders on the programme has reduced substantially, with a 58% reduction in severe crimes committed by the offenders on the programme in its first year of operation (J-ARC Evaluation Framework Working Group, 2018). In 2019, the Confederation of European Probation recognised the work of Strive and awarded it the best European "Public Protection" probation programme.

Strive has reduced crime in the Shangan and Coultry neighbourhoods. The capacity of the programme should be increased to cover the entire Ballymun area.

6.3.2 Assertive Outreach

The HSE have piloted an assertive outreach programme targeting street dealers in the North East Inner City. Relationships are built up with dealers on the streets, and through these relationships the downsides of dealing are highlighted and positive options are promoted (Interview: HSE and Tusla 1).

The Easy Street programme, run by BRYR Ballymun, is an outreach programme aimed at hard-to-reach young people. The youth workers build relationships with these young people and through those relationships they encourage engagement with positive programmes. The Poppintree Youth club runs a promising programme called Routes to Positive Adulthood.

These programmes depend on street work to build relationships with hard-to-reach young people. These outreach service should specifically target street dealers in Ballymun.

Those funding youth and outreach services should make it an explicit aim to draw people away from street dealing networks.

6.3.3 Tackling Unemployment

Many young people are attracted into crime through access to money and by the sense of belonging and friendships they forge as part of a gang (Naughton and Redmond, 2017). Good jobs can also fulfil these needs, and offer an alternative to a criminal lifestyle.

This report is being written during the Coronavirus crisis, and we are living through an unprecedented rise in unemployment. It's not possible to predict the course of the pandemic or the longterm impacts on the economy and employment. But we must make every effort to get people back to work.

During the last economic downturn a Ballymun Youth Guarantee scheme was trialled (O'Reilly, 2015). The aim of the scheme was to engage young people aged between 18 and 24 who were on the live register and living in Ballymun and to guarantee them an offer of a job, apprenticeship, traineeship, work-experience or continued education. During the scheme there was a reduction in youth unemployment of 29% in Ballymun, compared to an average reduction of 18% in other north Dublin Intreo offices. This might be a good time to implement a similar scheme in Ballymun. The City of Dublin Education and Training Board could play a central role in supporting a new Youth Guarantee Programme.

Even during these uncertain economic times, there are likely to be areas of growth in the economy. For example, the government is planning to retrofit 500,000 homes in the next 10 years to make them more energy efficient (Programme for Government, 2020). Promoting apprenticeships and training in retrofitting could be one route to providing good jobs for young people from Ballymun.

6.4 Targeting Career Criminals

Breaking up criminal gangs is difficult and not without risks. It can lead to violence as rivals compete to take over lucrative drugs markets. Less violent gangs are often easier to disrupt, as people are less intimidated by these gangs and more likely to pass on information to the police. The more violent gangs are the ones most likely to survive, making the situation worse (Werb and colleagues, 2011; Woods, 2016).

But the community still needs to be protected from the activities of criminal gangs. Rather than directly aiming to break up these criminal networks, an alternative approach, advocated by Murphy and

colleagues (2017), is to suppress the harmful activities carried out by these gangs. Chapter 7 will go into more detail on strategies to reduce the harmful actions of criminal networks.

It can be difficult to obtain convictions against career criminals as they use others to carry out the day-to-day activities of the criminal network. As a result the Gardaí and probation services have little legal leverage over them to compel them to cooperate. In addition, they are often not as chaotic as some of those lower down the pecking-order, and they often have lucrative incomes from crime, so it is difficult to attract them away from their criminal activity with offers of support and training. A number of them have been selected for the Ballymun Strive programme, which offers supports to repeat offenders to help them move on from criminality, but due to their lack of engagement, there has been limited success with this approach with career criminals (Interview: Community Sector and Probation 5).

Another practical approach to career criminals is to go after their assets – cash, cars and other possessions, through the Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB). This approach requires police resources for surveillance and forensic financial investigations. It's very dependent on an adequate budget. But it can be a critical tool in tackling criminal activity – if crime becomes less lucrative, it will support fewer criminals, and it becomes less worthwhile getting involved. Removing criminal assets also sends out a message to the community that the state is taking their problems seriously, and it gives a sense that justice is being served on the criminals (Interview: Gardaí 2). We must provide sufficient surveillance and forensic accounting resources to confiscate the illegal assets of these career criminals.

6.5 Key Recommendation

- Provide the Gardaí and the probation services the resources they need to expand the Strive programme, to allow more offenders to be included, and to cover all of Ballymun. (Responsibility: Garda Commissioner and Department of Justice).

Chapter 7: Suppressing Criminal Activity

7.1 Prioritising Garda Resources to Areas with The Highest Need

Crime is geographic. That means it affects some communities at very high levels, with low impact on most other communities (Braga and colleagues, 2012). Unfortunately Ballymun is one of those communities that is badly affected by crime (Community Action Network, 2018). It is important to restate that the vast majority of people in Ballymun have nothing to do with crime, but they are being forced to put up with the fall-out of high levels of criminal behaviour. An analysis by Gardaí of the Shangan and Coultrey neighbourhoods in 2018 showed that fewer than 3% of residents had committed offences in the previous year. More than 97% had not (unpublished report to Ballymun Strive steering committee).

In recent years police forces around the world are having greater success by concentrating their resources on hotspot policing (Gash, 2016). For example, in Western Australia, frequent patrolling was assessed for its impact on crime hot spots (House, 2020). The frequent patrolling resulted in a 22% reduction in the number of crimes, and a 62% reduction in harmful crime, based on their Crime Harm Index.

Ballymun is part of the Dublin Northern Garda Division. This Garda Division has 2.3 Gardaí per 1,000 population – below the national average of 2.8 (See Chapter 3, Table 3.1). It also has responsibility for policing the airport, with 45 Gardaí assigned to these duties, reducing further the number of Gardaí available for regular policing down to 2.1 Gardaí per 1,000 population.

Murders require very high levels of Garda resources. Gardaí must come off regular policing duties to carry out the investigations. In contrast to the low Garda staffing for the Dublin Northern Division, there is a high level of murders and attempted murders in this Garda Division – the fourth highest in the State over the last five years (See Chapter 3, Table 3.2).

In Ballymun, the number of Controlled Drug Offences has more than doubled in recent years from 183 offences in 2015 to 419 in 2019 (See Chapter 3, Figure 3.11). There are many open-drug markets in Ballymun. As well as supplying the local market, people travel from miles away to purchase drugs here – often in the early morning while on their way to work (O'Reilly and Mac Cionnaith, 2019). Open-drugs markets have many detrimental effects on communities. They lead to fear in the community, and many people will avoid the places where drugs are sold, and withdraw from community life leading to a spiral of neglect and increased criminality (Connolly and Donovan, 2014).

Regular patrols can disrupt open drugs markets and cause them to move continuously so that they don't gain a permanent foothold in one location (Connolly and Donovan, 2014). But policing these markets requires large numbers of Gardaí. Drugs are often sold in parks, usually with many routes in and out. In Coultrey Park, for example, in order to catch a dealer in-the-act, at least eight police officers are needed to approach the park from different routes. If a dealer is caught, it can take four Gardaí to process a single juvenile offender (Interview: Gardaí 2).

The Gardaí in Ballymun simply don't have the numbers to disrupt these markets in any meaningful way. So while there are intermittent raids, the markets continue to operate, despite the ongoing complaints of residents. As a result of the inability of the Gardaí to mount a sustained response to crime hot spots, many in the local community have given up reporting crime because they don't see any reaction to their calls (Community Action Network, 2018).

An additional 40-50 Gardaí are required in the Ballymun station to effectively police the open drug dealing and crime hot spots, and to case manage prolific offenders.

7.2 Identifying Hot Spots

Hot spots can be hard to identify from official data when crime reporting is low. Connolly and Mulcahy (2019) recommend using a Community Crime Impact Assessment, to build a profile of hot spots using a combination of PULSE data together with insights from the community. In Ballymun, these community insights could come from the Safer Ballymun Forum (Community Action Network, 2018).

7.3 Prioritising Hot Spots

Once the hot spots have been identified, they need to be ranked in order of seriousness, with the most problematic areas given priority treatment. It's important that the community is involved in ranking the hot spots (Connolly and Mulcahy, 2019).

One City Council official interviewed for this report suggested that drug dealing and antisocial behaviour adjacent to people's homes has the most impact, while activity in parks doesn't have the same negative effects (Interview: Dublin City Council staff 1).

7.4 Policing Hot spots

Many hot spots require frequent, visible policing on a sustained basis to deal with ongoing problems. While there may be concerns that focusing police attention on hot spots will just move the crime to another area, research shows that instead of increasing crime in adjacent areas, policing hot spots often reduces it (Braga and colleagues, 2012).

7.5 City Council's Role in Tackling Hot Spots

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design is an important approach to dealing with hot spots. The City Council should work with the Gardaí to develop a unique plan for each location. It would be helpful if there was a designated staff member in the City Council to coordinate these plans – the public domain officer might take on this responsibility.

For example, housing is planned for one notorious hotspot known locally as "Crack Hill" (Interview: Dublin City Council staff 1). The city council could bring forward the housing development for this location and this would likely put an end to the antisocial problems in this space.

The council has done a lot of useful work in reducing antisocial behaviour in some of the courts in Poppintree, often installing gates to stop the free-flow of people. More courts could benefit from restrictions on movement, but each court requires its own separate intervention with extensive consultation and collaboration with the residents to devise the best solution (Interview: Dublin City Council staff 1).

Staffing levels in the public parks can also help reduce antisocial behaviour and help deter open drug dealing. Recent reductions in staffing levels in Coultrey Park and other

parks in Ballymun coincided with increased vandalism in the parks, with the closure of the playground in Coultry Park for a number of weeks (Interview Dublin City Council Staff 9).

Many residents don't believe that the Council does enough to deal with tenants that are dealing drugs or involved with antisocial behaviour (Interview: Public Representative 3).

The City Council can seek to terminate a tenancy and require a family to leave a Council home if the Council tenant, or someone living in the home, is selling drugs or engaged in antisocial behaviour under the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014. In practice, however, the Council rarely seeks eviction for antisocial behaviour. It is often difficult for the Council to gather enough evidence of offending behaviour to persuade a court to evict. The Council does call in tenants when they receive reports of antisocial behaviour. And in some cases issuing warnings can be enough to improve behaviour. But clearly warnings don't always work (Community Action Network, 2018).

Instead of seeking an eviction of a family, the Council is more likely to use the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1997, to look for an excluding order against the specific family member engaged in the sale of drugs or antisocial behaviour (Interview: Dublin City Council staff 1). If the Council obtains an excluding order, that person can be barred from a specific house, or in some cases they can be excluded from an entire estate.

In some situations vulnerable tenants can be bullied into allowing others into their homes (Community Action Network, 2018; Interview: Dublin City Council staff 1). These "Cuckoo homes" can become a focus

for antisocial behaviour, drug dealing and criminal activity. The Council has dealt with 15-20 of these house take-overs in recent years. In many cases, the Council have negotiated a voluntary surrender of the tenancy to allow the tenant be rehoused into a safer home (Interview: Dublin City Council staff 1).

It would be helpful to develop a protocol for dealing with hostile home takeovers. While it is important to put a stop to serious antisocial behaviour in these homes, it is also important to support the tenants with care and in a trauma-informed manner as much as possible. Support agencies such as Ballymun YAP should be involved early in the process to support the tenants.

Before allocating a home to a new tenant, the Council can ask for a report from the Gardaí in relation to the proposed tenant under section 15 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1997. If the report shows that the person is likely to be an unsuitable tenant, the allocation can be refused. This process, however, doesn't help to identify family members of the tenant who may go on to cause problems in the community (Community Action Network, 2018).

There is also a need for a protocol to deal with antisocial behaviour coming from tenants of private landlords. Often the landlords are unaware of the problems being caused by their tenants, and this may include damage to their properties. It would be helpful if there was a procedure that Gardaí could follow to contact private landlords when their properties are being misused.

The council needs to do more to reduce dumping and littering in the community. A legal approach to enforcement is not working, so a new strategy needs to be

devised. Council supported community clean-ups have worked well in recent years (Figure 7.1). The council should continue to support these events and work with the Tidy Towns committee on environmental upgrades.



Figure 7.1. Belclare Park in Ballymun, looking great, thanks to community effort and the support of Dublin City Council. Photo by Andrew Montague.

7.6 Assessing the Severity of Crime using a Crime Harm Index

In order to reduce crime and make communities safer, we need to be able to track progress, and have helpful ways of assessing the impact of different strategies. In Ireland crime is tracked using Pulse data that gives us the total number of crimes committed under different headings, and an overall crime count.

But simple crime counts can distort what's actually happening in the community for several reasons (Sherman and colleagues, 2016):

- High volume, but not serious crimes disproportionately drive crime counts. Shoplifting has a much greater impact on crime counts than murder, rape or violent crime;
- Crime counts can result in a focus on prolific offenders that are committing low seriousness crimes. For example, there

could be a greater focus on an offender involved in repeated shoplifting rather than an offender involved in a smaller number of violent crimes;

- Crime counts don't tell us whether a community is safer in one year compared to another, which makes it difficult to assess the impact of any action taken in the area;
- Proactive policing can distort crime counts and make it look like crime is rising, when that may not reflect the reality. For example, if the Gardaí conduct stop and search operations to deter knife crime, they will likely improve community safety, but every time they find a knife, the knife crime count will go up. This can be a disincentive to a proactive approach to crime;
- Crime counts make it difficult to tell whether one community is safer than another, which can make it difficult to allocate resources to communities that are dealing with more serious crime.

A Crime Harm Index (CHI) is an alternative way to track crime. An example is the Cambridge CHI. Each crime committed in an area is given a score, calculated from the number of days in prison that an offender would receive for committing that crime, based on the English and Welsh sentencing guidelines. The score for each crime committed in the area is added up to give us a total CHI score. Using the Cambridge CHI, if there were a lot of violent crimes in an area, this would be reflected in a high CHI score.

The Cambridge CHI excludes crimes that aren't reported by the public, but are detected through proactive police work. For example, Garda check points that detect speeding or drink-driving would make the community safer, but would not lead to a

higher CHI score. These figures are important, and are reported together with the CHI. When separated out, this highlights the benefit of proactive work, rather than giving a false impression of higher crime.

There are many benefits to using a CHI:

- It puts an emphasis on reducing the most harmful crimes;
- It allows us to measure harmful crime over time, and to assess the impact of different strategies to address harmful crime;
- We can compare the harms in one community to another which can help with fair resource allocation;
- We can compare the harms done by individual offenders, and so decide which offenders should be targeted. For example, probation can focus their efforts on working with offenders who do the most harm.

One concern with the use of a CHI in a community like Ballymun is that if the public don't report crime because they are afraid to make a report, or because they have grown frustrated with a lack of response to crime, then the high levels of harmful crime happening in the community may not be reflected properly in the data.

There are some challenges with developing a CHI in Ireland. The Cambridge CHI is based on English and Welsh sentencing guidelines. There are, however, no sentencing guidelines in Ireland. The Cambridge CHI could be used as a starting point, and if there are any significant differences in the sentencing practice in Ireland, the Cambridge CHI could be modified to reflect these differences. The Department of Justice has started work on a CHI (Interview with Criminology Researcher 2) and some work has been done on

preparing a "Seriousness Index" for crime in Ballymun. With preliminary work already started, it would be good to pilot the use of a CHI in Ballymun.

7.7 Getting Better Results from CCTV

Ballymun has an extensive CCTV system following significant investment by Ballymun Regeneration Ltd. and Dublin City Council. There are reports of practical challenges to using the system from Gardaí (Interview: Gardaí 2). The cameras are not under the control of the Gardaí, but are monitored 24 hours-a-day on behalf of Dublin City Council by trained operatives. The Gardaí can ring and ask the operatives to point the cameras at a particular location, but the Gardaí themselves can't control the cameras. In other Garda stations, such as Coolock, the Gardaí have total control over the operation of the cameras, and as a result the cameras are more effective. A new protocol should be agreed with Dublin City Council to provide the Gardaí with real time direct access to the CCTV system.

7.8 Key Recommendations

- 40-50 additional Gardaí are needed for the Ballymun station to effectively police the open drug dealing, the crime hot spots, and to case manage prolific offenders on the Strive Programme. (Responsibility: Garda Commissioner).
- Open drug dealing must be tackled. In Ballymun, it's happening on a scale seen in few other communities in the country. Open drug dealing stigmatises the community; it's leading people to withdraw from community life; it normalises drug dealing, drug use, and violence, for young people growing up in Ballymun; and it's drawing people from outside the community into Ballymun to

buy and use drugs. (Responsibility: Gardaí).

- A planned and coordinated approach to crime hot spots is needed. The Gardaí, Dublin City Council and the community should work together to identify the worst hot spots, and develop a tailored plan for each. Frequent, sustained, visible policing will be required, as well as environmental enhancements or in some cases house building by the council. (Responsibility: Gardaí and Dublin City Council).

Chapter 8: Support for People Engaged in Substance Misuse

“We must make it easier to recover, and harder to take drugs. At the moment the situation is the opposite.”, (Interview: local public representative 2).

8.1 Supporting People who are Addicted to Drugs

Preventing drug addiction, and helping those with addictions is a very challenging problem and the subject of much research (Bates and colleagues, 2017). In recent years support workers have shifted from a focus on the substance abuse to spend more time looking at the in-depth needs of the person. There is still a need to try to enforce boundaries on behaviour, but with more understanding and sympathy for people with addiction problems (Interview: Drugs Counsellor 1).

There is an appreciation that societal inequalities play an important role – drug use is usually more common in more unequal countries (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009).

This chapter is not a thorough review of all drug prevention or drug treatment programmes in Ballymun. It focuses on the opportunities to improve services and address the issues that were raised in the interviews for this report.

8.2 Pioneering Approach to Substance Misuse in Ballymun

Many of Ballymun’s drugs services are client-centred with a warm and welcoming approach, that accept the clients as they are, and try to build longterm supportive relationships (Interviews with Drugs

Counsellors, 1 and 2; Interviews with Education and Youth Workers, 1-5).

There is a cooperative, collaborative and innovative set of services in Ballymun, that work well together to support their clients as they deal with problems associated with addiction. As a result, Ballymun has proven to be a good place to pilot new and innovative programmes and services.

8.3 Trauma Informed Approach to Addiction

As mentioned in previous chapters, childhood trauma can lead to higher risk taking in adult life (Felitti and colleagues, 1998). Young people that have experienced four or more Adverse Childhood Experiences are **11 times more likely to inject drugs** in adulthood (Dermody and colleagues, 2020).

To help prevent addiction, more should be done to prevent childhood trauma (Dermody and colleagues, 2020). Staff working in drug treatment services should be trained to work in a trauma informed manner.

8.4 Current Approaches to Crack Cocaine in Ballymun

There is a very active response from multiple agencies to try to deal with the current surge in crack cocaine consumption:

- The Gardaí are actively seeking to reduce supply of the drug through seizures and targeted operations;
- There have been a number of shared learning events and site visits;

- Over 90 people were trained at a two-day course for community agencies. This was funded by CHO 9 HSE Social Inclusion and was delivered by Janus Solutions (UK);
- A more in-depth, seven-day training course for local services was funded by CHO 9 HSE Social Inclusion, and delivered by Janus Solutions (UK);
- Co-ordinated plan to implement the lessons from the training by the local drug services;
- Research has been undertaken on patterns of local crack cocaine use and on the consequences of its use. The findings were released at a workshop held in November 2019;
- The local drug services have identified and engaged with people using crack cocaine in the area. They provide information, advice and support, including the provision or exchange of crack pipes;
- The Ballymun Family Support service has provided help to family members affected by crack cocaine use;
- Local support services have been providing food and hygiene support to people using crack cocaine and their families.

8.5 Substitution Treatment for Addiction

Methadone maintenance therapy can be effective at reducing the use of illegal opiates and for supporting patients undergoing detoxification (Bates and colleagues, 2017). There were 330 people with addresses in Ballymun in receipt of methadone in 2019 according to figures supplied to the Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force from the Central Treatment List.

Unfortunately, there are no useful substitution treatments available for cocaine and crack cocaine addiction (Bates and colleagues, 2017).

8.6 Residential Treatment for Drug Addiction

People who use crack cocaine describe their need to get out of Ballymun to get away from the street dealing and easy availability of drugs, in order to stabilise their lives (O'Reilly and Mac Cionnaith, 2019).

Since 2017 the HSE has funded a number of residential treatment beds which are allocated and available on a Community Healthcare Organisation (CHO) basis. Drug and alcohol services in Ballymun can refer suitable clients for residential treatment. There is a need for more residential treatment beds as there is still a shortage (O'Reilly and Mac Cionnaith, 2019).

8.7 Community Detox

Community detoxification is a valuable alternative to residential detox programmes. Community detox helps people to stop or reduce their use of addictive drugs such as prescribed opioids, benzodiazepines or z-hypnotics with support from a key worker and a GP. In Ballymun, Brian Foley supported clients through the process and acted as a broker to the GPs. Community detox has evolved in recent years, and support agencies such as Star and Ballymun YAP have embedded the model into their work.

It would be helpful to review the community detox model in Ballymun to see if there are any barriers to the process or opportunities to improve the operation of the programme.

8.8 Meeting the Challenge of Dual Diagnosis

Many people with drug or alcohol addictions also suffer from mental health conditions. This combination of substance misuse and mental health problems is referred to as Dual Diagnosis (Proudfoot and colleagues, 2019). For people suffering with Dual Diagnosis, it can be difficult to get appropriate supports, with many services offering treatment for either mental health problems, or substance misuse problems, but not addressing both problems together. In 2017, the HSE set up a steering group to develop and implement a clinical programme to address Dual Diagnosis. These services are still not widely available (Proudfoot and colleagues, 2019).

In their research into the challenges of Dual Diagnosis in Finglas and Cabra, Proudfoot and colleagues recommended increased interagency working at the local level to improve the options for people with Dual Diagnosis. They also proposed training for staff in the relevant services. At a national level, they suggested joined-up policy and funding arrangements, and the preparation of national guidelines for care pathways. They also recommended legislating for cross disciplinary education on Dual Diagnosis.

In Ballymun many of the agencies are working to provide better services for people with Dual Diagnosis. The biggest challenge, however, is that when people are in crisis, it can be difficult to get residential treatment for their mental health problems if they are engaging in substance misuse. We need to be able to offer residential treatment for people with substance misuse problems with coexisting mental health problem (Interview with Drugs Task Force Staff, 5).

8.9 Promoting Recovery

The success of the community partnership approach to the Ballymun Recovery Month in 2019 and 2020 has highlighted that the focus on making recovery visible is necessary and essential. In particular, there is a need to actively promote and celebrate recovery and recovery options, such as community detox, psychosocial supports, peer supports and other recovery options (Hamilton, 2020).

8.10 Community Approach to Reducing Alcohol Harms

In 2010 Ballymun became the first Irish town to develop a plan to reduce alcohol related harm at the community level. The strategy was developed by the Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, Safer Ballymun and Dr. Ann Hope. It followed a year of consultation with the local community, statutory organisations and political representatives. The original strategy (2010-2016) aimed to reduce alcohol consumption levels and change harmful patterns of drinking in order to reduce alcohol-related harm (Ballymun Local Drug and Alcohol Task Force and Safer Ballymun, 2010). A second strategy was developed for 2017-2020. One focus of the strategy has been to provide training to local alcohol retailers to ensure that the licensing laws are enforced. Work is underway for the preparation of a third strategy.

Ipsos Mori carried out community surveys in 2011, 2015 and 2019 to assess the impact of alcohol on the community, with secondary analysis provided by Dr. Ann Hope from Trinity College Dublin. These surveys have shown a reduction in self-harm, and a reduction in harm to others caused by alcohol (Figure 8.1).

National policies such as the introduction of minimum unit pricing as part of the Public Health Alcohol Act, and the development of new regulations on alcohol deliveries would further help to reduce harms caused by alcohol.

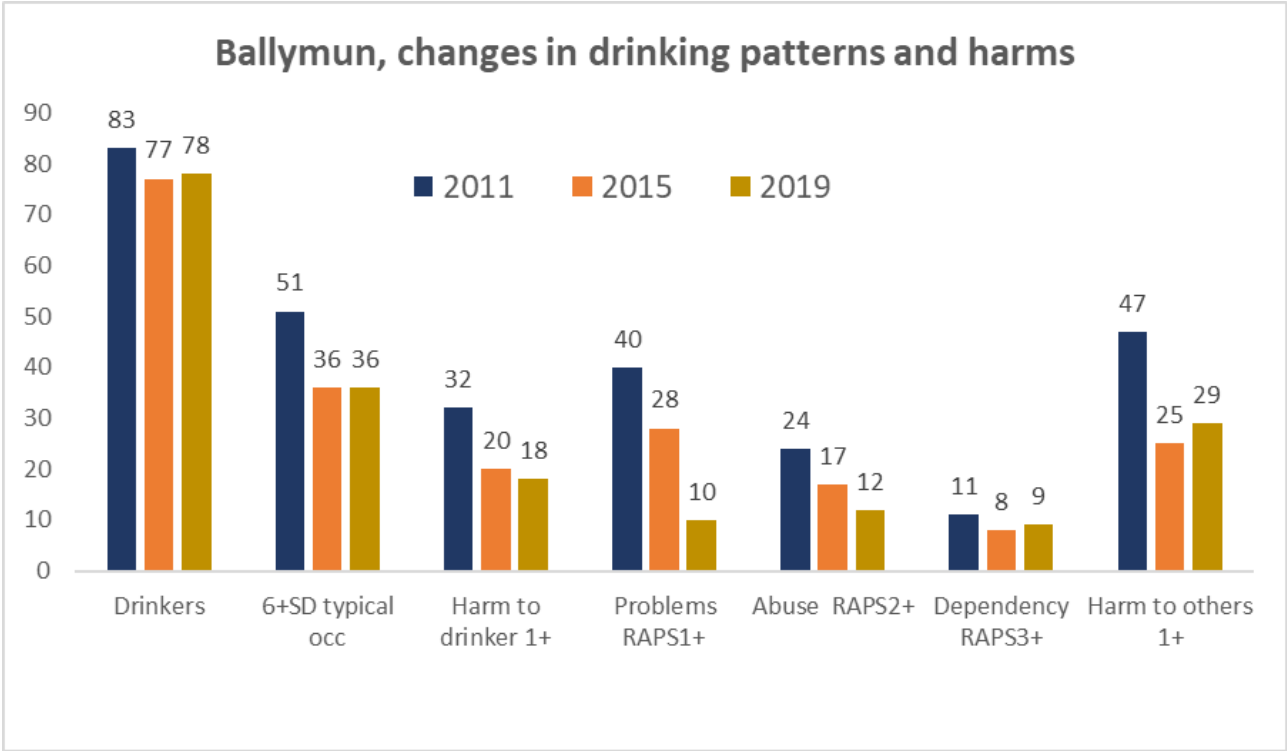


Figure 8.1: Primary Data from Ipsos Mori with secondary analysis by Dr. Ann Hope. Survey into alcohol consumption and resultant harms in Ballymun from 2011, 2015 and 2019. Source: Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force.

8.11 Supporting Older People with Substance Misuse Problems

Many people living in Ballymun have longterm addiction issues, in some cases going back 20 or 30 years. Quite often they have to deal with a variety of physical and mental health problems. This population will need extensive supports to deal with their multiple problems. Local agencies, including the Ballymun Drugs and Alcohol Task Force will need to engage with this population and plan to ensure there are sufficient resources to provide the services they need.

During the first Covid-19 lockdown, local community services assisted the HSE in providing delivery of methadone to particularly vulnerable clients. Such collaborative working between statutory (HSE) drug services and local community-based services could be further developed towards an agreed care-planning model. This would be especially useful for vulnerable, older clients whose physical health, mental health, housing and family support needs require cooperation from a range of agencies. Clients over 40 years of age make up the majority of those receiving opioid substitution treatment (mainly methadone maintenance) and many over 45 and even 50 years of age have been in receipt of such treatment for more than 20 years.

More must be done to encourage collaborative working and care planning regarding the ongoing needs of older and more vulnerable clients. Support should be more explicitly offered to all clients (statutory and community based) wishing to establish new treatment objectives and life goals.

8.12 The Challenge of Supporting People Who Are Not Currently Engaging with Services

While local community and statutory drug and alcohol services provide vital supports to numerous people, especially those with long-established opiate problems, more must be done to identify and engage with those who don't currently avail of local services. Joint targets should be established between community and statutory services to identify and establish helpful relationships with hidden populations of drug and alcohol users. Examples of people who are not currently engaging include women, young men and women not involved in street-based drug activity e.g., tradespeople with jobs, etc. Local agencies should adapt their service provision to focus more on outreach-based support which includes home visits and garden gate visits, online supports, etc. This is especially needed during the Covid-19 pandemic.

8.13 The Challenges of the Two-Week Social Welfare Payments

Many people with addictions struggle with money management, particularly those that are relying on social welfare payments. There is a strong temptation to increase drug consumption on receipt of a social welfare payment. In addition, they often have debts to repay when they get their payment. This makes it difficult to spread out their money over a week, and some will struggle towards the end of the week to pay for basics, including food (Interviews: Local Public Representative 2, Drugs Counsellor 1). The double payments at Christmas can make these problems worse.

Some people who use drugs and are stabilised report that they struggle to control their drug consumption on receipt of the Christmas bonus social welfare payment at

the end of November/start of December. Later in December, they then receive a double payment over the Christmas holidays to cover two weeks. This extra cash in their hands can again tempt them to increase their drug consumption. After Christmas, there are often serious problems paying for basics over the following two weeks as they wait for their next payment. The Christmas bonus payment followed by the double-payment can seriously disrupt people who use drugs, year after year.

8.14 Health Led approach to Drugs

In 2019, the government announced plans to move to a new health-led approach to

possession of drugs. While the government ruled out decriminalisation of drugs, it has proposed that on the first occasion someone is found in possession of drugs for personal use, they will be referred to a health intervention. On the second possession case, the Gardaí could use an adult caution. On the third and subsequent cases, the normal criminal justice processes would apply. While this is a move towards a health-led approach, it still entails a criminal justice approach for the third and subsequent cases of possession (Dillon, 2019). This new approach has yet to be implemented.

Chapter 9: Implementation and Tracking Progress

9.1 Implementation Strategy

This report presents a series of recommendations to deal with the problems caused by drugs and drug dealing in Ballymun. But recommendations are not enough to change the lives of the community, an effective implementation process is also needed (Burke and colleagues, 2012).

The community of Ballymun and its many local community and statutory services have a long and successful history of innovation and interagency collaboration. In order to implement the changes recommended in this report it is important that stakeholders buy-in to the proposals and that supports are provided to help deal with any identified barriers (Bauer and colleagues, 2015). The Safer Ballymun steering committee could facilitate meetings with the stakeholders and draw up an agreed action plan.

Some of the recommendations could be implemented locally, but others will need support from government agencies or departments. Significant resources will be needed to address the serious problems that the residents of Ballymun are living with. A coordinated approach from local agencies, public representatives and the residents will be needed to make the case for the necessary resources. Other communities facing similar challenges could be useful allies to argue for the required investments.

9.2 Comprehensive Approach is Needed

Murphy and colleagues (2017) recommended a comprehensive approach

to dealing with gang-based criminality, involving prevention, desistance, and suppression of criminal activity.

Comprehensive gang control programmes, require the building of strong interagency partnerships with effective communication and data-sharing strategies (Murphy and colleagues, 2017). Ballymun has a long history of high quality interagency work, and has worked on protocols for data sharing in much of this work. This puts Ballymun in a good position to take a comprehensive approach to dealing with criminal networks.

Other factors that are necessary for the implementation of a change process include (Burke and colleagues, 2012):

- The ownership and buy-in of the plan by the stakeholders (the public, staff and managers);
- Sufficient Resources;
- A detailed implementation plan;
- Participation in the implementation process by each stakeholder;
- Coordination and cooperation between stakeholders;
- Strong accountability mechanisms;
- Strong communication – explain what is happening and why;
- Building staff capacity if new skills are needed;
- Supportive organisational cultures.

9.3 Lead Agency is Required for a Comprehensive Approach

The complexity of a comprehensive approach, with multiple programme components and stakeholders with differing priorities, requires a strong lead agency. The lead agency will need to coordinate activities across participating organisations and work with community representatives. (Murphy and colleagues, 2017). Dublin City Council may be best placed to take on this role.

9.4 Community Mobilisation is Critical to Success

Community mobilisation is argued to be one of the most effective components of a comprehensive approach (Murphy and colleagues, 2017). Law enforcement, community agencies and residents must work together to identify the key problems, the young people at risk and the key offenders. They must present a united front when communicating the clear deterrence message, alongside offers of help. Support from the community is needed to encourage people to move away from criminal networks.

Involving the community can also empower them, thus preventing feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. There are concerns, however, that the threat of violence and community intimidation can limit community engagement in Ireland (Murphy and colleagues, 2017).

9.5 Support from Academia

Consideration should be given to involving a representative from academia or someone with considerable research expertise to help develop and manage a comprehensive approach (Murphy and colleagues, 2017).

9.6 Assessing Progress

A variety of indicators can help to assess the well-being of the community, assess crime levels and to gauge the impact of the interventions that are taken. They can also help compare progress with other communities facing similar problems. Good indicators can serve as an early warning system to flag emerging problems and allow for timely interventions.

Helpful indicators should be easy to measure, should be assessed frequently to assess trends over time, and where possible, should be standardised to allow comparison with other communities.

Many useful indicators are already being tracked – for example, unemployment figures are released on a monthly basis. Other indicators would require extra research, such as a community safety survey. Community indicators that would be helpful to collect would include:

- Tracking the number of child protection cases – is this number increasing or decreasing?
- The number of open child protection cases;
- The number of new clients presenting for drug treatment;
- How many children are involved in serious crime;
- Do people report feeling safe. This could be part of an annual questionnaire;
- A measurement of the amount of open street dealing;
- The number of shots fired could be a useful indicator of violence levels;
- The number of children on a reduced timetable;

- The number of children outside of education;
- Needle exchange figures;
- Drug paraphernalia figures;
- Data on distribution of crack pipes;
- The number of antisocial behaviour complaint files lodged with Dublin City Council;
- Data from hospitals on admissions due to violence for residents from Ballymun.

The data that are collected should be publicly available where possible, and could be used by a variety of organisations in the community, such as Dublin City Council's Social Regeneration committee, the Ballymun Safety Forum, the Ballymun Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, and others.

9.7 Indicators for the Wellbeing of Children

McKeown and Haase (2006), published the results of their study on the mental health of children in Ballymun. This report was based on surveys of mothers and children aged between 11-16. It covered a wide range of issues including the wellbeing of mothers, mothers' perception of their children's strengths and difficulties, and children's perception of their own wellbeing. The study showed that the scale and the depth of need of children in Ballymun at the time was considerable. This study would be a very useful starting point for new research. Performing a similar survey now would allow us to track progress since 2006.

Work carried out by the National Centre for Social Research and by the Department of Health has shown that the mental wellbeing of mothers is one of the most important factors in the wellbeing of their children, especially young children (McKeown and Haase, 2006). With this in mind, it would

be very helpful to track the mental wellbeing of parents on a regular basis.

9.8 Crime and Safety Indicators

As discussed in Chapter 7, a Crime Harm Index (CHI) in Ballymun would be a useful tool for assessing progress in dealing with crime. Crimes can then be assessed based on their impact, not just the quantity. Work has started between the Department of Justice and Cambridge University on developing such an index, but Ballymun could develop its own CHI, with input from the community (Interview with Criminology Researcher 2). The residents should have a say in which crimes are having the greatest negative impact on the community. For example, open-drug dealing might be considered more impactful than more discrete forms of dealing. Without input from the community, these crimes might be treated and measured in the same way.

The CHI could be supplemented with community surveys to assess how safe people feel in the community.

9.10 Key Recommendations

- Dublin City Council should coordinate local agencies, principal officers in relevant government departments, and work with the local community to draw up and implement a comprehensive approach for dealing with criminality in Ballymun. An effective strategy must include actions to:
 1. Prevent crime;
 2. Desistance – encourage and support those involved in criminal activity to move away from crime;
 3. Suppress the most harmful criminal activities;

10. Conclusion

While we can't eliminate addiction and all criminal activity, we can do more to protect the next generation of children growing up in Ballymun and reduce the number of traumatic experiences in their lives. This will help prevent them from being drawn into serious substance misuse and criminality. We can also tackle some of the most serious side effects of illicit drug use, such as the use of young people in drug dealing networks, and the large number of open drug markets in the community.

If we can make substantial progress with these problems, the lives of many young people, their families, and the community will be changed for the better. There has been substantial investment by the state into the physical infrastructure of Ballymun. A modest investment now, in services for the community, to bring Ballymun up to the level of service available in other communities, could transform the lives of many people.

We can build a brighter future for Ballymun.

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