

# BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE, HOW TO SUSTAIN MOMENTUM

AN EVALUATION OF THE BUILDING COMMUNITY  
RESILIENCE PROJECT IN DUBLIN SOUTH CENTRAL.

BY ANDREW MONTAGUE, DECEMBER 2021



Comhairle Cathrach  
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## FOREWORD

I am delighted to welcome this evaluation on behalf of Dublin City Council.

After one and a half years in operation, the Building Community Resilience Project is now well established in the Dublin South Central Area. It is timely, then, to have this evaluation to help us assess the project and plan for its future.



We are all aware of the impact on the lives of people living and working in some parts of our community of persistent antisocial behaviour. It takes a significant toll on the mental health and quality of life of many people.

We are also cognisant that many of those who cause this trouble are themselves in trouble and need our help as much as they need us to curtail their destructive activities.

Building Community Resilience is very much aligned to recent policy directions regarding policing, anti-social behaviour and community safety. We recognise that it is not the business solely of the police, or indeed any one agency. Rather, responding effectively to antisocial behaviour requires a real partnership of communities and agencies at grassroots and at policy level.

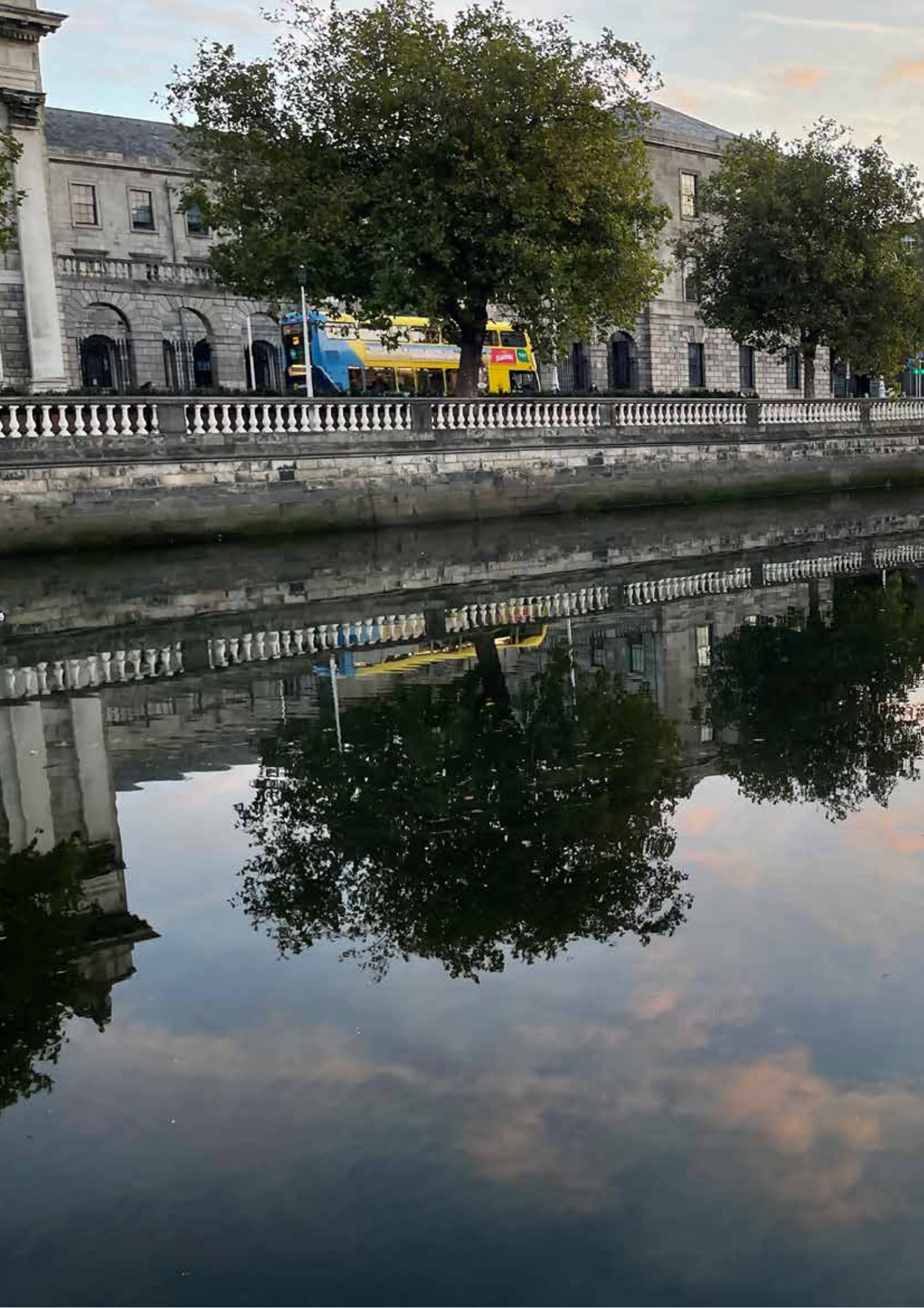
The BCR project is such a partnership involving Dublin City Council, An Garda Síochána, Tusla, City of Dublin Youth Services Board, to name a few, and especially the Local Policing Forums in the South Central Area, who got this project up and running.

Dublin City Council remains committed as the lead agency in the project. We are pleased to be able to support the project through increasing the number of hours available to its coordination.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the many residents, services and statutory bodies involved in any way with this project across Dublin South Central. I would also like to thank Community Action Network for their coordination of the project until now and to welcome Ms Bronadh O'Brien, our new coordinator, who will begin with us in February 2022.

Finally, I would like to thank Andrew Montague for his thorough evaluation of the project and the commitment and expertise he brought to it.

Derek Kelly  
Director of Service – South City  
Dublin City Council





# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

“XXX was shot at last week for asking someone to move on – they went away and came back with a gun half an hour later and shot at them!”  
Resident from the south-west of Dublin City.

Crime, antisocial behaviour and drug dealing is causing severe problems to many communities across the south-west of Dublin City. In response to these issues, four local policing forums came together to form the Four Forums Network. The network commissioned research from the University of Limerick into crime in their communities. The report was called Building Community Resilience<sup>1</sup>.

Dublin City Council agreed to fund the implementation of the report's recommendations and established Building Community Resilience project. The committee have developed a five-strand strategy:

- Supporting Local Policing Forums
- Building Restorative Practice Communities
- Responding to street based antisocial behaviour
- Responding to criminal network organisers
- Connecting with National and Local Policy Development

## **SUPPORTING LOCAL POLICING FORUMS**

Building Community Resilience has worked to improve the local structures so that issues that can't be addressed by a local policing forum can be referred up to the parent Dublin South Central joint policing committee. The joint policing committee can, in turn, refer an issue to the Dublin City joint policing committee, which is attended by more senior Gardaí and Dublin City Council management. Building Community Resilience will act on any issues that aren't resolved by the joint policing committees.

Building Community Resilience is also preparing a series of training workshops, and is compiling an information booklet for new members of local policing forums and the public.

Dublin City Council now pay the salary of a part-time worker to support the local policing forums and the Four Forums.

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<sup>1</sup> Johnny Connolly and Jane Mulcahy (2019) Building Community Resilience. Responding to criminal and anti-social behaviour networks across Dublin South Central: a research study. Dublin: Four Forum Network and Dublin City Council. Available at: <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/31426/1/building-community-resilience.pdf>

In addition to the direct support of the local policing forums, Building Community Resilience is working with each local policing forum to carry out Community Crime Impact Assessments in high-crime neighbourhoods within their areas, to identify and tackle antisocial behaviour and crime.

## **RESTORATIVE PRACTICE**

Restorative practice is a process designed to strengthen relationships between individuals as well as social connections within communities<sup>2</sup>. Building Community Resilience aims to create model restorative communities across the Four Forums area to support a community culture of non-violence and relationship building and to inspire others to take this approach.

Restorative practice has been shown to reduce the rates of school suspensions in the USA<sup>3</sup> and in Ireland<sup>4</sup>, with particular benefits for children from low-income families, and for girls.

## **RESPONDING TO STREET-BASED ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND DRUG DEALING**

Building Community Resilience is working with nine youth projects in the Canal's local policing forum area to deal with a particular problem of young people from different communities congregating and getting involved with antisocial behaviour along the canal and the Luas line. There are also serious concerns across all four forums with young people getting involved in drug dealing.

The TRY project has had significant success in dealing with drug dealing and antisocial behaviour in one community, using a street-based approach to building relationships with young people to link them in with supports and

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<sup>2</sup> IIRP Graduate School (2021) What is Restorative Practices? Available at: <https://www.iirp.edu/restorative-practices/what-is-restorative-practices>

<sup>3</sup> Augustine, Catherine H., John Engberg, Geoffrey E. Grimm, Emma Lee, Elaine Lin Wang, Karen Christianson, and Andrea A. Joseph (2018) Can Restorative Practices Improve School Climate and Curb Suspensions? An Evaluation of the Impact of Restorative Practices in a Mid-Sized Urban School District. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2840.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2840.html)

<sup>4</sup> Hugh Campbell, Derick Wilson, Tim Chapman and John McCord (2013) Developing a Whole System Approach to Embedding Restorative Practices in Youthreach, Youth Work and Schools in County Donegal. Available at: [https://pure.ulster.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/11404529/Co.\\_Donegal\\_Restorative\\_Practice\\_Project%2520Research%2520Report%2520-%2520Final%2520Sept%252013.pf](https://pure.ulster.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/11404529/Co._Donegal_Restorative_Practice_Project%2520Research%2520Report%2520-%2520Final%2520Sept%252013.pf)

services<sup>5</sup>. Building Community Resilience is working to replicate this model elsewhere within the Four Forums area.

Working with the University of Limerick, Building Community Resilience organised a series of workshops to help local communities and those working to help young people to get a deeper understanding of the issues causing antisocial behaviour and crime, and how to work together to address the issues.

Building Community Resilience is promoting a trauma-informed approach for organisations working with young people and with adults who have suffered severe trauma in their childhood. Together with Tusla, and the Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC) Building Community Resilience held an online workshop in trauma-informed care in November, and will arrange training and other supports for practitioners in 2022.

## **RESPONDING TO CRIMINAL NETWORK ORGANISERS**

The Gardaí have identified a number of key criminal network organisers. These are career criminals at the centre of the drugs trade. The Gardaí have prepared a tailored strategy for each network organiser, and they will seek to disrupt their activities, remove their assets and bring charges against them.

Caution should be used with this approach. Fourteen out of 15 studies assessed in a systematic review showed increased levels of violence as a result of drug law enforcement<sup>6</sup>. Violence may be an inevitable consequence of drug prohibition when groups compete for massive profits.

## **CONNECTING WITH NATIONAL POLICY**

The approach of Building Community Resilience is heavily influenced by the report on the Future of Policing in Ireland<sup>7</sup>. A guiding principle of that report is that policing is not the responsibility of the police alone. The report proposes that every community in the country should have a Local Community Safety

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<sup>5</sup> Jane Mulcahy (2021) Relentless Caring, Trying something new. An evaluation of the Targeted Response to Youth (TRY) Project. Available at: <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/34556/1/TRY-Evaluation.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Werb, D., Rowell, G., Guyatt, G., Kerr, T., Montaner, J., & Wood, E. (2011). Effect of drug law enforcement on drug market violence: A systematic review. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 22(2), 87-94. Available at: [https://www.hri.global/files/2011/03/25/ICSDP\\_Violence\\_and\\_Enforcement\\_Report\\_March\\_2011.pdf](https://www.hri.global/files/2011/03/25/ICSDP_Violence_and_Enforcement_Report_March_2011.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland (2018) The Future of Policing in Ireland. Available at: [http://policereform.ie/en/POLREF/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland\(web\).pdf/Files/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland\(web\).pdf](http://policereform.ie/en/POLREF/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland(web).pdf/Files/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland(web).pdf)

Strategy. The Building Community Resilience project met with the Policing Authority on several occasions to discuss the proposed new structures and to update the Authority on the work of Building Community Resilience.

Building Community Resilience made a submission to the Policing Authority on new draft joint policing committee guidelines, and is represented on the Government Consultative Forum on Antisocial Behaviour.

Building Community Resilience is a member of the Greentown Learning Network. This network was set up by the University of Limerick for practitioners in community safety, following the publication of the Lifting the Lid on Greentown report<sup>8</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

Building Community Resilience has made considerable progress over the last 18 months. Many of the strands, however, have yet to come to fruition, so it is too early to judge the success of the overall project.

It is clear, however, that the project is building structures and working in a way that aligns with national policy and should be of great benefit to the communities in Dublin South Central.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Dublin City Council, the Gardaí and Tusla should continue to commit senior staff to engage with the project.
- Work on responding to network organisers should proceed with caution. Levels of violence, however, should be closely monitored to ensure there are no unintended consequences.
- Dublin City Council should commit to funding Building Community Resilience for at least three years to give this promising project a chance to make a real difference to the lives of the people living in the affected communities.

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<sup>8</sup> Sean Redmond, (2016), Lifting the Lid on Greentown. Why we should be concerned about the influence criminal networks have on children's offending behaviour in Ireland. Available at: [https://ulsites.ul.ie/law/sites/default/files/3910\\_DCYA\\_Greentown\\_%20Full%20report%20final%20version.pdf](https://ulsites.ul.ie/law/sites/default/files/3910_DCYA_Greentown_%20Full%20report%20final%20version.pdf)



A photograph of a city street scene, likely in Dublin, featuring a red brick building on the left, a modern grey building in the center, and a stone church with a clock tower on the right. The street is lined with trees and has a blue overlay. The word "INTRODUCTION" is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the image.

# INTRODUCTION

## THE ORIGINS OF THE BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE PROJECT

The four local policing forums in the south-west of Dublin City came together in 2016 to establish the Four Forums Network<sup>9</sup> (Figure 2.1). The Four Forums work in communities which are seriously affected by crime, antisocial behaviour and community safety issues. The network was established to share experience and to advocate for resources and policy change. There was also a concern that antisocial behaviour and criminality was being carried out by groups and criminal networks that operated across the area of the four forums<sup>10</sup>.

The four forums are:

- Ballyfermot/Chapelizod Local Policing Forum
- Canal's Local Policing Forum
- Dublin 12 Local Policing Forum
- South West Inner-City Local Policing Forum

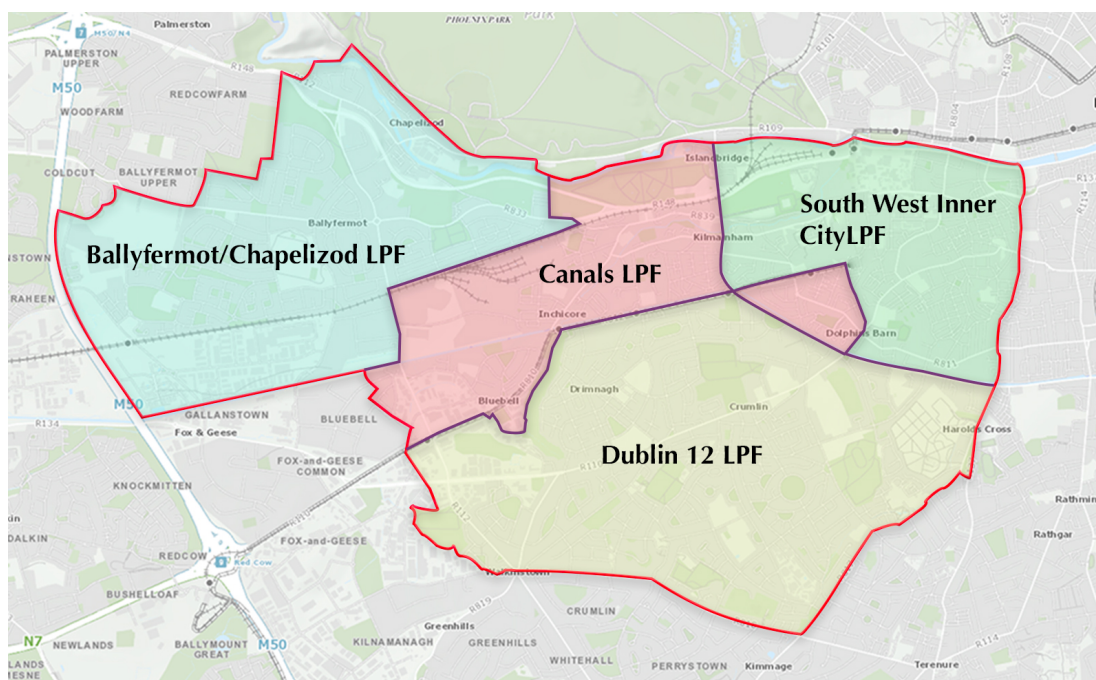


Figure 2.1 Map of the Four Forums in the south-west of Dublin City. Maps were sourced from Central Statistics Office and Ordnance Survey Ireland with additional graphics by Andrew Montague. The boundaries of the forums are not officially documented. The boundaries used in the maps in this report are estimated based on conversations with members of the forums.

<sup>9</sup> Dublin South Central Area Local Policing Forums (2021) Four Forums Network. Available at: <https://dscforums.ie/four-forums-network/>

<sup>10</sup> Same source as above

With funding from Dublin City Council, the Four Forums network commissioned research from the University of Limerick into crime in their communities. Written by Johnny Connolly and Jane Mulcahy, and published in 2019, the report was called Building Community Resilience<sup>11</sup> (Figure 2.2).

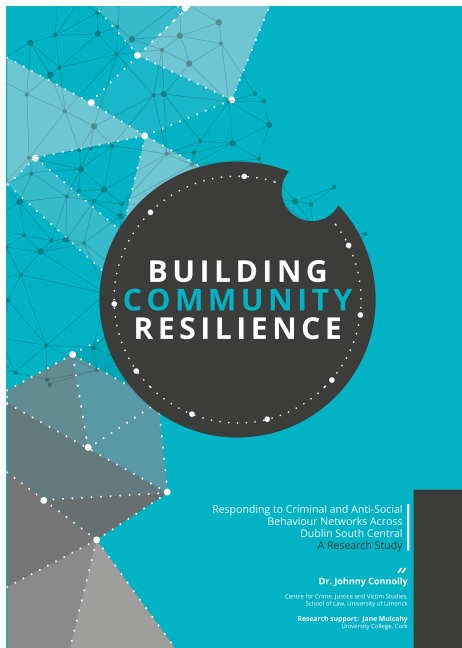


Figure 2.2 The Building Community Resilience Report by Johnny Connolly and Jane Mulcahy

Dublin City Council agreed to fund the implementation of the report's recommendations. It set up the Building Community Resilience Management Committee in 2020. The committee is responsible for the development and implementation of the Building Community Resilience strategy<sup>12</sup>.

The members of the Management Committee are<sup>13</sup>:

- Dublin City Council Director of Services (South City) (originally Mary Taylor, now Derek Kelly).
- Representatives of the four local policing forums in the Dublin South Central area.
- Chair of the Dublin South Central joint policing committee (Cllr Daithi Doolan).

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<sup>11</sup> Johnny Connolly and Jane Mulcahy (2019) Building Community Resilience. Responding to criminal and anti-social behaviour networks across Dublin South Central: a research study. Dublin: Four Forum Network and Dublin City Council. Available at: <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/31426/1/building-community-resilience.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Building Community Resilience (2020) Terms of Reference Building Community Resilience Project Management Committee June 2020. Available from Building Community Resilience

<sup>13</sup> Same source

- District Superintendent(s) An Garda Síochána (originally Chief Superintendent Lorraine Wheatley, now Chief Superintendent Michael McElgunn).
- Tusla Area Manager, Dublin South Central (Mr Des Delaney).
- City of Dublin Youth Services Board (Ms Celine Martin).
- Community Representative of the citywide joint policing committee (Mr Joe Donohue).

Dublin City Council is the lead agency in this project and chairs the Building Community Resilience Management Committee.

Dublin City Council engaged Peter Dorman, from Community Action Network (CAN) to coordinate the project for 2.5 days a week from June 2020 to December 2021<sup>14</sup>. The council also funds a small programme budget to support the work.

## **FIVE STRANDS OF THE BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE PROJECT**

Based on the Building Community Resilience report, the Building Community Resilience project developed their strategy around five strands<sup>15</sup>:

- Strand 1: Supporting Local Policing Forums
- Strand 2: Restorative Practice
- Strand 3: Responding to street based antisocial behaviour
- Strand 4: Responding to network organisers
- Strand 5: Policy

## **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION?**

The Building Community Resilience strategy is a new approach to dealing with antisocial behaviour and crime. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess if this innovative approach could make a significant difference in reducing the harms of crime within the affected communities<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Same source

<sup>15</sup> Building Community Resilience (2021) BCR Evaluation. Available from Building Community Resilience.

<sup>16</sup> Same source

## EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation consisted of:

- A literature review.
- A review of census data and Pobal's Small Area Deprivation analysis for the Dublin South Central Dáil Constituency.
- A review of Building Community Resilience documents, including minutes of meetings.
- Attendance at a number of Building Community Resilience meetings.
- Site visits to the communities most affected by crime.
- Qualitative research: Semi-structured phone interviews with 19 key stakeholders involved with the Building Community Resilience project.

The interviews were transcribed during the phone call, and oral consent was obtained to use anonymised quotations in the evaluation.



A photograph of a street scene with trees and a person on a bicycle, overlaid with a semi-transparent red rectangle containing white text.

# **CONTEXT FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE PROJECT**

## IMPACTS OF CRIME ON AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

Crime and antisocial behaviour is having significant detrimental impacts on the residents in high-crime neighbourhoods across the Four Forums area. Residents and people working within these communities described their concerns through Community Crime Impact Assessments. A Community Crime Impact Assessment is a community-led process to assess and respond to the impacts of drug related crime and antisocial behaviour<sup>17</sup>.

Several common themes emerged across these communities:

### ***Fear***

“One night I could hear people talking, and I looked out and there was two men pointing a gun at me. My legs went to jelly.”

“XXX was shot at last week for asking someone to move on – they went away and came back with a gun half an hour later and shot at them!”

“I don’t even let my kids out to play any more. Three shots in so little time. Someone is going to be killed.”

### ***Anger***

“They look through your windows for fun just to intimidate you. If you go out to get in your car they’ll shout after you and will not move when you are trying to reverse.”

### ***Racism***

“They always try to intimidate you, as they identify me as not being from Ireland.”

### ***Sexual Exploitation***

“There were some accounts of young women and girls being sexually exploited, either in repayment of drug-debt or in exchange for drugs.”

### ***Children Drawn into Criminality***

“What stresses us all are the young fellas and girls dealing.”

“[Gardaí] expressed concerns that a significant number of children aged 12 to 14 have become drawn into the [drugs] trade.”

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<sup>17</sup> Jane Mulcahy (2020) Safety in numbers: an evaluation of Community Crime Impact Assessment (CCIA) pilot projects. Dublin: Citywide. Available at: [https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/33403/13/safety\\_in\\_numbers\\_report\\_web.pdf](https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/33403/13/safety_in_numbers_report_web.pdf)

“It is very difficult for Gardaí to tackle juvenile dealers.”

“My own son is now JLO’d, and we would have tried to be really tight with him on this. But we didn’t win.”

“It’s intergenerational and some grooming goes on within families.”

### ***Drug Debts and Intimidation***

“Young people get started and then get trapped, and it affects the whole family – parents end up having to pay back debt and getting threatened.”

### ***Shame***

“I feel so much shame. Everyone says – ‘How are you getting on up there?’, ‘You poor thing.’, ‘How can you live there?’”

### ***Breakdown of Community Spirit and Solidarity***

“After a child been shot a few years ago and the intimidation experience by onlookers there is very little support within the community. There is no trust in anyone.”

“You go out and say hello to your neighbour, but if they come along you have to go in, or they’ll think you were talking about them. There’s no community spirit.”

## **GARDA RESOURCES**

There are 26 Garda divisions in Ireland, with six in Dublin. The four forums are spread across three divisions (Figure 3.1):

- The Ballyfermot/Chapelizod forum is in the Western Division.
- The D12 forum is in the Southern Division.
- The South West Inner-City Forum, and the Canal's forum are in the South Central Division.

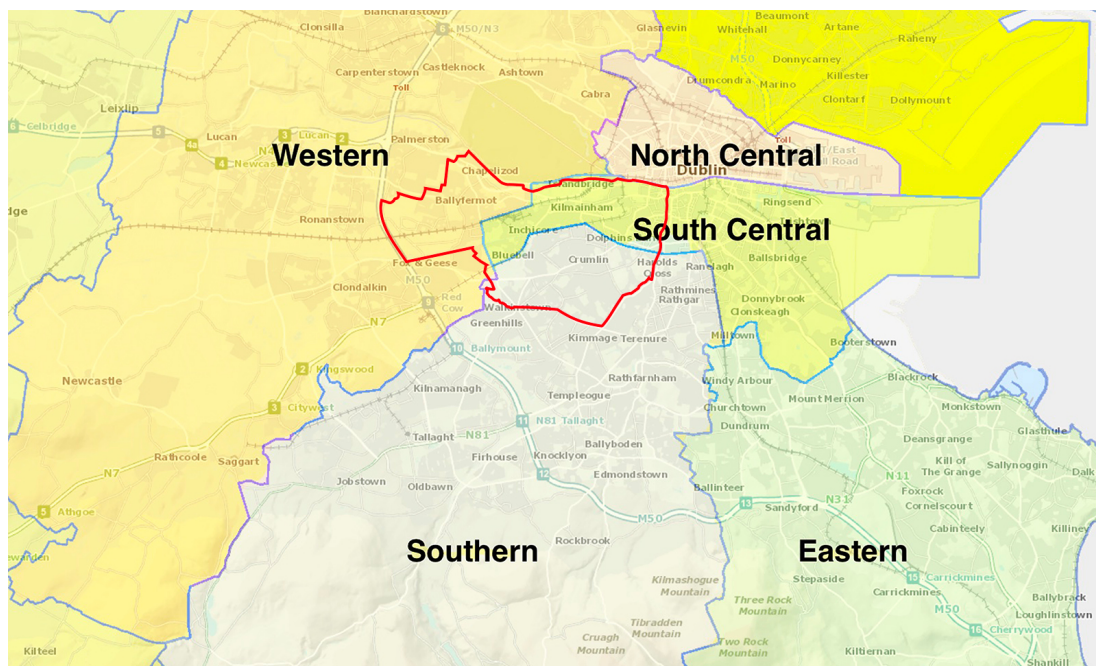


Figure 3.1 The Four Forums are spread across three Garda Divisions. Source CSO with additional graphics by Andrew Montague.

The 2011 census sets out the number of people living in each Garda Division in Ireland, and the Garda.ie website provides the latest Garda staffing numbers in each division. Staffing figures from October 2021 were used in this report. Combining these two data sources, we can compare Garda staffing levels per 1,000 residents in each Garda division (Table 3.1).

The average staffing level across the state is 2.6 Gardaí for every 1,000 people. The Dublin South Central Division has 5.5 Gardaí for every 1,000 people – the second-highest staffing level in the country, after Dublin North Central. Both the Western Division and the Southern Division have 2.3 Gardaí per 1,000 people, below the national average.

Garda Division	Population 2011	Garda Staffing October 2021	Gardaí per 1,000 people
Dublin South Central	131,290	716	5.5
Dublin Western	321,511	746	2.3
Dublin Southern	248,070	576	2.3
<b>National Average</b>			<b>2.6</b>

Table 3.1 Garda Staffing levels in the different Garda Divisions in the Four Forums area. The population in each Garda Division was sourced from the 2011 Census. The Garda Staffing levels are available on the Garda.ie website.

## CRIME RATES

It can be difficult to compare crime rates in different parts of the country. In many communities with high levels of offending, residents are afraid to report crime to the Gardaí. In the Building Community Resilience report, one of the interviewees from Ballyfermot highlights this issue <sup>18</sup>:

“There is a lot of stuff up here that is happening that is not being reported because the communities are too scared to report anything.”

What’s more, in some communities, certain types of crime, such as drug dealing, can become such a part of every day life that residents no longer bother reporting. A similar crime in another community, however, could be much more out of the ordinary and would likely result in more calls to the Gardaí.

One way to assess the level of serious crime in a community is to compare murder rates with the national average. Murder is obviously a serious crime, and comparing levels of murder is unlikely to be significantly affected by rates of crime reporting. The data for murders in Ireland is provided by the Central Statistics Office at the Division level<sup>19</sup>, and each of the four forums represents only a minority of the residents in their division. So, we don’t have a murder rate for each of the four forums. The murder rate at the Division level, however, can still give us a useful indicator of the level of serious crime in the communities in the four forums.

Over the last 18 years, the murder rate across the state has been 0.9 murders per 100,000 people per year (Table 3.2). The Dublin Western Garda Division has the second-highest murder rate in the country at 2.2 murders per 100,000 residents per year. Dublin South Central has the third-highest murder rate at 2.1 murders per 100,000 people. The Dublin Southern Garda Division has a murder rate of 1.3 per 100,000 people per year – although lower than the other two divisions, this is still around 50% above the national average.

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<sup>18</sup> Johnny Connolly and Jane Mulcahy (2019) Building community resilience. Responding to criminal and anti-social behaviour networks across Dublin South Central: a research study. Dublin: Four Forum Network and Dublin City Council. Available at: <http://www.canaction.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Low-Res-Building-Community-Resilience-Report-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Central Statistics Office (2021) Recorded Crime - Statistics Under Reservation. Available at: <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/crimeandjustice/recordedcrime-statisticsunderreservation/>

Garda Division	Population 2011	Murders 2003-2021	Annual Murder Rate per 100,000 people
Dublin Western	321,511	128	2.2
Dublin South Central	131,290	50	2.1
Dublin Southern	248,070	58	1.3
<b>National Average</b>			<b>0.9</b>

Table 3.2 Murder rate in the three Garda Divisions within the Four Forums. Source: Central Statistics Office.

## UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF A CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESPONSE TO DRUG CRIME

There have been many attempts in recent decades to address drug dealing through the criminal justice system. For example, the Criminal Justice Act of 1999 introduced by John O'Donoghue TD, brought in harsh penalties for the possession of £10,000 (€12,700) of a controlled drug. Every person (other than a child or young person) found guilty shall be liable to life imprisonment or a minimum of 10 years imprisonment.

Criminal networks have responded to these harsh penalties by forcing others to hold their drugs. People who run up drug debts can be forced into drug dealing or holding or hiding drugs<sup>20</sup>. Of particular concern is that criminal networks are also grooming children into the sale and supply of drugs<sup>21</sup>.

When drugs are seized by the Gardaí, it can result in those forced to hold the drugs, and their families, having to pay off large debts to pay for the seized drugs<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> Megan O'Leary (2009) Intimidation of Families. Family Support Network. Available at: [http://fsn.ie/uploads/research\\_files/IntimidationofFamilies\\_000.pdf](http://fsn.ie/uploads/research_files/IntimidationofFamilies_000.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> Sean Redmond, (2016), Lifting the Lid on Greentown. Why we should be concerned about the influence criminal networks have on children's offending behaviour in Ireland. Available at: [https://ulsites.ul.ie/law/sites/default/files/3910\\_DCYA\\_Greentown\\_%20Full%20report%20final%20version.pdf](https://ulsites.ul.ie/law/sites/default/files/3910_DCYA_Greentown_%20Full%20report%20final%20version.pdf)

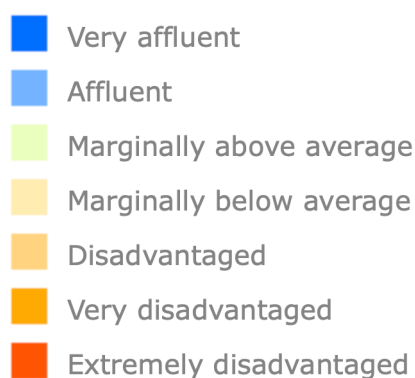
<sup>22</sup> McCreery, S., Bowden, M., and Keane, M. (2020) Debts, threats, distress and hope – towards un- derstanding drug-related intimidation in Dublin's North East Inner City. Dublin: Ana Liffey Drug Project. Available at: [https://www.aldp.ie/content/uploads/2021/01/Debts-Threats-Distress-and-Hope\\_Towards-Understanding-Drug-Related-Intimidation-in-Dublins-North-East-Inner-City\\_Ana-Liffey-Drug-Project.pdf](https://www.aldp.ie/content/uploads/2021/01/Debts-Threats-Distress-and-Hope_Towards-Understanding-Drug-Related-Intimidation-in-Dublins-North-East-Inner-City_Ana-Liffey-Drug-Project.pdf)

## SOCIAL CONTEXT OF AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

Pobal's HP Deprivation Index is a helpful tool for assessing levels of deprivation or affluence in a community. The index provides a measure of deprivation down to the Small Area level<sup>23</sup>.

Each Small Area contains about 100 houses and a score is calculated using census data such as unemployment levels, education levels and the number of single parents. A score above 30 indicates the Small Area is extremely affluent. A score below -30 is evidence of extreme disadvantage.

Pobal's HP Deprivation Index maps give a visual representation of deprivation or affluence. Each Small Area is colour coded based on the results of the index. The colour scheme used can be seen in Figure 3.2.



*Figure 3.2 The colour scheme used for Pobal's Deprivation Index maps.*

The map for the Four Forums area shows a mixture of affluent and disadvantaged areas (Figure 3.3). There were 111,000 people living in the Four Forums area at the time of the last census and the average Deprivation Index score was -1.7, which is very close to the average for the state. The scores range from an extremely affluent +34 for a Small Area in Islandbridge, to a very disadvantaged -29 for a Small Area in Dolphin House.

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<sup>23</sup> Haase, T. & Pratschke, J. (2017) The 2016 Pobal HP Deprivation Index for Small Areas (SA) Available at <http://trutzhaase.eu/wp/wp-content/uploads/The-2016-Pobal-HP-Deprivation-Index-Introduction-07.pdf>

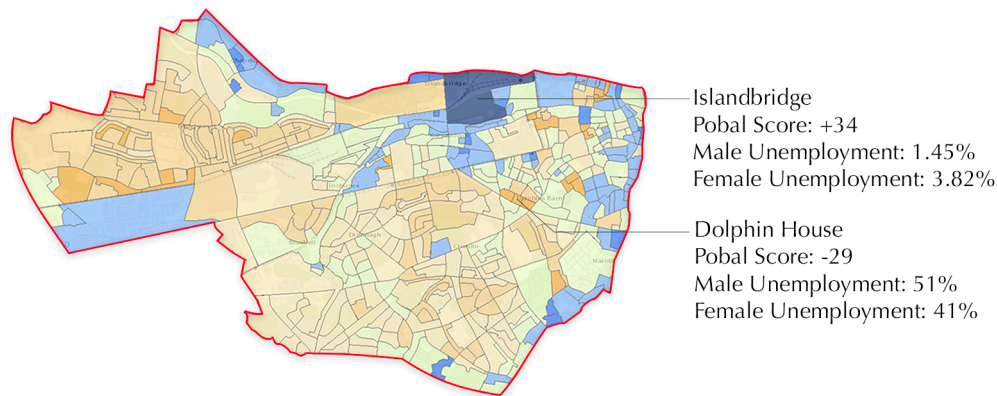


Figure 3.3 Pobal's HP Deprivation Map shows a mixture of affluent and deprived areas across the Four Forums network. Source: Pobal's HP Deprivation Maps with additional graphics by Andrew Montague.

Of the four forums, Ballyfermot/Chapelizod has the lowest average Deprivation Index score, of -10, indicating a disadvantaged area. The D12 forum has an average score of -4, which is marginally below average. The Canal's forum has an average score of +2, and the South West Inner-City Forum has an average score of +7, both classified as marginally above average.

Many of the high-crime areas across the Four Forums are in the most disadvantaged communities, but there are also significant problems in some less disadvantaged areas.

## IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE PROJECT

Peter Dorman from Community Action Network was employed in June 2020 to implement the Building Community Resilience strategy – three months after the first pandemic lockdown was introduced. The various levels of public health restrictions that have been in place since then, have influenced the implementation of the Building Community Resilience project. In particular, face-to-face meetings weren't possible for much of the last year, and online meetings may have affected turnout and participation at events.







# **LITERATURE REVIEW**

## CARE AND CONTROL

A community worker from the South West Inner City of Dublin, Joe Donohue, proposed the phrase ‘Care and Control’ to describe a twin approach to responding to complex issues of community safety<sup>24</sup>. He suggested that An Garda Síochána and the local authorities should use their extensive powers to take back control of communities from criminal gangs. In parallel, he promoted an approach of care and understanding of those engaged in gang culture and antisocial behaviour.

This Care and Control approach echoes through the Building Community Resilience report by Connolly and Mulcahy<sup>25</sup>, the report on the Future of Policing in Ireland<sup>26</sup> and the Youth Justice Strategy 2021-2027<sup>27</sup>.

Connolly and Mulcahy call for a balance of care and control in the response to crime and antisocial behaviour. Clear boundaries must be placed on harmful behaviour, whilst recognising that those causing harm are often victims who require care. The report on the Future of Policing in Ireland sets out a human rights approach to policing, where the purpose of policing is to protect the human rights of all members of society to live free from violence, abuse, crime and fear. At the same time, the police must use their powers to arrest, search and detain individuals appropriately, effectively and with fairness to everyone. The Youth Justice Strategy 2021-2027 states that the guiding principles of the strategy are grounded in a commitment to uphold the rights of children and young people, while acknowledging the impact of offending on society and the victims of crime.

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<sup>24</sup> Joe Donohue (2013) Care and Control - Challenges for Creating Safe and Sustainable Communities. Available at: <https://www.cwi.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/control-and-care-joe-donohue-2013.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> Johnny Connolly and Jane Mulcahy (2019) Building Community Resilience. Responding to criminal and anti-social behaviour networks across Dublin South Central: a research study. Dublin: Four Forum Network and Dublin City Council. pp 13-14 Available at: <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/31426/1/building-community-resilience.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland (2018) The Future of Policing in Ireland. Available at: [http://policereform.ie/en/POLREF/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland\(web\).pdf/Files/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland\(web\).pdf](http://policereform.ie/en/POLREF/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland(web).pdf/Files/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland(web).pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Department of Justice (2021) Youth Justice Strategy. Available at: [https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Youth\\_Justice\\_Strategy\\_2021-2027.pdf/Files/Youth\\_Justice\\_Strategy\\_2021-2027.pdf](https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Youth_Justice_Strategy_2021-2027.pdf/Files/Youth_Justice_Strategy_2021-2027.pdf)

## IMPACTS OF CRIME, ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND DRUG DEALING ON COMMUNITIES IN DUBLIN SOUTH CENTRAL

Connolly and Mulcahy describe a variety of impacts that criminal networks have in Dublin South Central<sup>28</sup>. The networks can affect schools, where conflict can arise over connections to different networks. Drug debts are used as a tool to draw people into networks, or to carry out crimes on behalf of a network. Others are drawn in by the potential material benefits that can be obtained through crime. Criminal networks can orchestrate antisocial behaviour to facilitate criminal activity, and they can organise confrontations with Gardaí to try to make certain locations no-go areas for police. On the other hand, criminal networks can control crimes that might bring unwanted policing attention, which could undermine their drugs operations. People involved with networks usually will not interact with An Garda Síochána, but they also create an atmosphere of fear so that residents are reluctant to engage with An Garda Síochána, even for routine matters. This leads to an under-reporting of crime in affected communities.

In a report for the Canals Community Policing Forum, Justin O'Brien described serious antisocial behaviour issues caused by young people under the age of 18 in the Inchicore area<sup>29</sup>. There were racist attacks on children and adults; attacks and robbery of pedestrians and cyclists along the canals; thefts from local shops; broken windows in local schools; damage to apartment blocks, parked cars and community infrastructure. The report identified 50 children in the area with serious welfare concerns. The report found that 28 young people were engaged in antisocial behaviour in the area, 17 of these were regularly involved, while another 11 were intermittently involved.

The retired Assistant Garda Commissioner, Jack Nolan, consulted widely on the issue of community safety for his report on Inchicore and Kilmainham<sup>30</sup>. There were particular concerns about young people causing antisocial behaviour along the canal and at Luas stops. It appeared that many of the young people were coming from outside the community, although they may have had family

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<sup>28</sup> Johnny Connolly and Jane Mulcahy (2019) Building Community Resilience. Responding to criminal and anti-social behaviour networks across Dublin South Central: a research study. Dublin: Four Forum Network and Dublin City Council. pp 9-10 Available at: <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/31426/1/building-community-resilience.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> Justin O'Brien (2019) Canals Community Policing Forum Report on Children Involved in Antisocial Behaviour in the Inchicore Area. Available from Canals local policing forum.

<sup>30</sup> Dr. Jack Nolan (2019) Report on Scoping Exercise Inchicore - Kilmainham, "Building a Sustainable Community" p. 62. Available at: <http://www.tara.tcd.ie/bitstream/handle/2262/93944/Building%20a%20Sustainable%20Community%202019.pdf?sequence=1>

connections to the area. A variety of problems were described, including the burning of bins; smashed windows; and throwing bottles and stones on to sports pitches. There were also issues around drug dealing, drug usage and the presence of drug paraphernalia in public places.

A 2021 report by the Drimnagh Task Force showed that the majority of residents in the Drimnagh area believed that antisocial behaviour was getting worse<sup>31</sup>. Most people also thought that drug use was getting worse among young people, and most thought there was a strong connection between the drug economy and antisocial behaviour. Halloween night 2018 was highlighted as being particularly harrowing, with large-scale bonfires and rioting. Those consulted described the congregation of young people on the streets, frequently accompanied by dogs and the playing of loud music. Like other reports from the area, the issues of young people causing problems along the Canal corridor was raised. Young people from different areas arrange meetings, often to fight each other. It was also noted, however, that sometimes these meetings were more positive, as young people build links across neighbourhoods.

Drug issues were described in the Drimnagh Task Force report<sup>32</sup>. Children as young as 10-12 years old, mostly boys, are experimenting with drugs, typically starting with weed, alcohol, tablets and Nitric Oxide gas. Many young people were also getting drawn into the drugs trade – carrying drugs from one location to another, storing drugs, or selling drugs. A common theme to emerge from consultation with stakeholders was the issue of grooming of vulnerable young people into the drugs trade. The volume and value of drugs that young people are holding has increased, which puts them at high risk from the more senior dealers if they are apprehended by the Gardaí and have their holdings seized.

Drug debts can be manufactured<sup>33</sup>. Drug dealers are organising the theft or robbery of drugs from vulnerable young people so that they will run up a debt. If the young person is unable to pay, the debt is passed on to their family and the figures owed can be randomly multiplied, in particular if a family is willing to pay.

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<sup>31</sup> Drimnagh Task Force (2021) Gaps in Youth Provision in Drimnagh, Dublin 12, p. 31. Available at: <https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/20586403/drimnagh-task-force-2021-report.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> Same source

<sup>33</sup> Same source

The trappings of drug dealing was an issue of concern in the report, with some young people who are just old enough to get their licence, driving top of the range new cars<sup>34</sup>. These displays of wealth can entice the next generation of young people into the drugs trade.

Violence is a feature of the drugs trade in Drimnagh, and the violence has become more extreme lately due to competition between gangs<sup>35</sup>. Young people are under pressure “to do what it takes to stay relevant and connected.” Random assaults are being used to create an atmosphere of fear within the community.

Although it has pockets of deprivation, Drimnagh is not a particularly disadvantaged community. The Pobal Deprivation score for the area is -6, which is classed as marginally below average<sup>36</sup>. Despite not being seriously disadvantaged, Drimnagh clearly has severe problems with antisocial behaviour, drug dealing and crime.

## UNDERSTANDING CRIMINAL NETWORKS

Sean Redmond’s groundbreaking report, *Lifting the Lid on Greentown*, explored the structure of a criminal network in an anonymised location in Ireland<sup>37</sup>. Using PULSE data from the case study area, An Garda Síochána Analysis Service constructed a network map with icons representing all offenders who were suspected or charged with burglary and/or the sale and supply of drugs during 2010 and 2011. Lines were drawn on the map connecting individuals who were involved in a crime together. Some individuals at the core of the network had lines connecting them to many other offenders. Others at the core of the network managed to avoid criminal charges and had few lines connecting them to others.

A method called Twinsight was devised to allow the researcher to talk to Gardaí about members of the criminal network, without the researcher knowing the identity of those involved<sup>38</sup>. The researcher had an anonymised map with a

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<sup>34</sup> Same source

<sup>35</sup> Same source

<sup>36</sup> Same source

<sup>37</sup> Sean Redmond (2016), *Lifting the Lid on Greentown*. Why we should be concerned about the influence criminal networks have on children’s offending behaviour in Ireland. Available at: [https://ulsites.ul.ie/law/sites/default/files/3910\\_DCYA\\_Greentown\\_%20Full%20report%20final%20version.pdf](https://ulsites.ul.ie/law/sites/default/files/3910_DCYA_Greentown_%20Full%20report%20final%20version.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> Same source

unique code for every offender on the map. Local Gardaí had a similar map, but in addition to the codes, the names of the offenders were on their map. The researcher could then discuss the individuals on the map and get an understanding of their role in the criminal network from the Gardaí, without breaching confidentiality.

The research described a criminal network in Greentown that was hierarchical in nature, and was governed by a family and kinship-based core<sup>39</sup>. The network was supported by a sympathetic culture in the area, the sharing of the rewards of crime among associates, but also by onerous debt obligations.

The study showed that criminal networks play a significant role in encouraging and forcing children to engage in criminality<sup>40</sup>.

Connolly and Mulcahy's Building Community Resilience report used the same Twinsight methodology to analyse the criminal networks in Dublin South Central<sup>41</sup>. Two criminal networks were identified, one with 44 individuals, the other with 52. More than 90% of offenders in these networks were aged between 12 and 40 years of age. Those involved in crime represent a small part of the population. Fewer than 3% of people aged between 12 and 40 offended in 2015 or 2016, although with the widespread fear of reporting crime in the area, the true figure is likely to be higher.

The networks appear to be loose constructs, with varying levels of hierarchy depending on location, or whether they revolve around specific families<sup>42</sup>.

## EXISTING COMMUNITY STRUCTURES FOR RESPONDING TO CRIME

The Garda Síochána Act 2005 introduced the statutory structures of joint policing committees and local policing forums<sup>43</sup>. Chapter 4 of the act places a statutory duty on the Gardaí and local authorities to cooperate, and it sets out

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<sup>39</sup> Same source

<sup>40</sup> Same source

<sup>41</sup> Johnny Connolly and Jane Mulcahy (2019) Building Community Resilience. Responding to criminal and anti-social behaviour networks across Dublin South Central: a research study. Dublin: Four Forum Network and Dublin City Council. pp 8-9 Available at: <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/31426/1/building-community-resilience.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> Same source

<sup>43</sup> Irish Statute Book (2005) Garda Síochána Act 2005. Available at: <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2005/act/20/enacted/en/pdf>

the duty of the local authorities to take steps to prevent crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour.

Section 36 of the act states that a local authority and the Garda Commissioner shall arrange for the establishment of joint policing committees. The joint policing committee's function is to serve as a forum for consultations, discussions and recommendations on matters affecting the policing of the local authority's administrative area.

Under Section 36(2)(l), the joint policing committee is to establish, in consultation with the local Garda superintendent, local policing fora within specific neighbourhoods.

The local policing fora are to keep under review and make recommendations to their parent joint policing committee on:

- the levels and patterns of crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour in their area, including patterns and levels of misuse of alcohol and drugs;
- the factors underlying and contributing to the levels of crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour in their area.

According to the Local Policing Fora guidelines<sup>44</sup>, there are three main components to a local policing forum: a coordinator; a management committee that should meet monthly; and public meetings, which should happen four times a year.

The management committee should include:

- A representative of An Garda Síochána of Inspector or more senior rank.
- A representative of the local authority at a senior level, e.g., Area Manager or person at equivalent level of responsibility.
- A representative nominated from the relevant local drug task force.
- No less than three residents from the local community.
- One local authority elected member.
- The Committee may also include representatives of other state agencies as required.

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<sup>44</sup> Dermot Ahern (2009) Local Policing Fora Guidelines. Available at: <https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Local%20Policing%20Fora%20Guidelines%20-%20EN.pdf/Files/Local%20Policing%20Fora%20Guidelines%20-%20EN.pdf>

In addition to the statutory joint policing committees and local policing forums, Connolly and Mulcahy describe Community Safety Groups – a collaboration between Gardaí, local authority and residents<sup>45</sup>.

Connolly and Mulcahy report that the four local policing forums in the Dublin South Central Dáil constituency came together to cooperate in their efforts to address criminality and antisocial behaviour<sup>46</sup>. The four forums are:

- South West Inner City
- Dublin 12
- Canal Communities
- Ballyfermot/Chapelizod

Whether from statutory, community and voluntary sector, or both, Connolly and Mulcahy characterise the response to criminal networks in Dublin South Central as poorly organised<sup>47</sup>. The approach from joint policing committees, local policing forums and Community Safety Forums is reported to be unfocused and *ad hoc*. The structures are described as weak, disconnected, lacking in clear orientation and poorly resourced.

## **PROPOSALS FOR NEW STRUCTURES TO ADDRESS CRIME AND COMMUNITY SAFETY**

The report on the Future of Policing in Ireland sets out a number of principles to guide its recommendations<sup>48</sup>. The second principle in the report states that policing and national security are not the responsibility of the police alone<sup>49</sup>. From this principle, the report recommends that policing must be done with communities and in partnerships with other entities including schools, community and voluntary organisations, businesses, human rights organisations, youth groups, faith-based groups and others. They also

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<sup>45</sup> Johnny Connolly and Jane Mulcahy (2019) Building Community Resilience. Responding to criminal and anti-social behaviour networks across Dublin South Central: a research study. Dublin: Four Forum Network and Dublin City Council. pp 82-83 Available at: <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/31426/1/building-community-resilience.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> Same source pp 11-12

<sup>47</sup> Same source, pp. 84-85

<sup>48</sup> Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland (2018) The Future of Policing in Ireland. Available at: [http://policereform.ie/en/POLREF/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland\(web\).pdf/Files/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland\(web\).pdf](http://policereform.ie/en/POLREF/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland(web).pdf/Files/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland(web).pdf)

<sup>49</sup> Same source

recommend that health and social services be resourced to help with community safety and the prevention of harm, including the capacity to deal with out-of-hours emergencies.

The sixth principle states that An Garda Síochána should be structured and managed to support front line policing<sup>50</sup>. They propose a new district policing model, with front-line district police at the core of the organisation. All Gardaí at district level should work as a single team to solve problems affecting community safety, reduce crime and prevent harm. Each district commander should develop a district policing plan together with the local policing structures and other key community groups.

The Building Community Resilience report bases its recommendations on the report on the Future of Policing in Ireland<sup>51</sup>. It also sets out principles for its recommendations. The second principle states that responses should be delivered through a locally oriented policing and community safety approach, based on the District Policing model recommended by the commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland.

The Building Community Resilience report recommends that the Four Forums network situates itself at the centre of policing reform in Ireland<sup>52</sup>. To this end, the Four Forums should communicate with the Implementation Group on Policing Reform, the Policing Authority, the Garda Commissioner, the Chief Superintendent of Kevin Street, the Dublin South Central Joint Policing Committee and with Dublin City Council.

The Four Forums should work towards the establishment of a Local Policing and Community Safety Team in Dublin South Central and to develop a policing and community safety strategy, based on the Building Community Resilience report<sup>53</sup>.

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<sup>50</sup> Same source

<sup>51</sup> Johnny Connolly and Jane Mulcahy (2019) Building Community Resilience. Responding to criminal and anti-social behaviour networks across Dublin South Central: a research study. Dublin: Four Forum Network and Dublin City Council. pp 86-95 Available at: <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/31426/1/building-community-resilience.pdf>

<sup>52</sup> Same source

<sup>53</sup> Same source

## RESPONSES TO CRIME, ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND DRUG DEALING

In 1979, Herman Goldstein described a problem-oriented approach to tackling crime. This approach involved defining the problem, researching it, and exploring alternative approaches to dealing with the issue. A systematic review of the literature carried out by Joshua Hinkle and colleagues in 2020 showed that using a problem-oriented approach significantly reduces crime and disorder<sup>54</sup>.

The report on the Future of Policing in Ireland supported a move away from reactive policing towards a proactive problem-solving approach together with predictive policing, crime prevention and intervention<sup>55</sup>. The Building Community Resilience references this recommendation from the report on the Future of Policing in Ireland and also recommends a problem oriented approach<sup>56</sup>. Persistent concerns identified by local communities should be analysed thoroughly to identify the causes. Strategies to intervene should be developed, working with other agencies and the community.

In an evidence review of drug related intimidation, commissioned by the Health Research Board, Laura Murphy and colleagues advised taking a comprehensive approach to dealing with gang criminality<sup>57</sup>. Three layers of intervention should be run simultaneously:

- Prevention – try to prevent people from joining criminal networks;

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<sup>54</sup> Joshua C. Hinkle, David Weisburd, Cody W. Telep and Kevin Petersen (2020) Problem-oriented policing for reducing crime and disorder: An updated systematic review and meta-analysis. Campbell Systematic Reviews. 2020;16:e1089. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1089>

<sup>55</sup> Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland (2018) The Future of Policing in Ireland. Available at: [http://policereform.ie/en/POLREF/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland\(web\).pdf/Files/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland\(web\).pdf](http://policereform.ie/en/POLREF/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland(web).pdf/Files/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland(web).pdf)

<sup>56</sup> Johnny Connolly and Jane Mulcahy (2019) Building Community Resilience. Responding to criminal and anti-social behaviour networks across Dublin South Central: a research study. Dublin: Four Forum Network and Dublin City Council. pp 86-95 Available at: <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/31426/1/building-community-resilience.pdf>

<sup>57</sup> Murphy L, Farragher L, Keane M, Galvin B and Long J (2017) Drug-related intimidation. The Irish situation and international responses: an evidence review. HRB Drug and Alcohol Evidence Review 4. Dublin: Health Research Board. Available at: [https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/27333/1/HRB%20Drug%20and%20Alcohol%20Review%20-%20Drug%20Related%20Intimidation\\_FINAL\\_for\\_publication.pdf](https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/27333/1/HRB%20Drug%20and%20Alcohol%20Review%20-%20Drug%20Related%20Intimidation_FINAL_for_publication.pdf)

- Desistance – encourage gang members to move away from gang involvement;
- Suppression – a clampdown on the most harmful gang activities. Connolly and Mulcahy supported this approach, but highlighted the importance of involving the local community so that an appropriate approach is taken for the local context<sup>58</sup>.

Connolly and Mulcahy proposed that responses to antisocial behaviour and crime should be trauma informed and restorative. In 1998, Felitti and colleagues found a strong relationship between childhood traumas and serious illness and mental health difficulties in adult life<sup>59</sup>. Traumas included psychological, physical or sexual abuse; violence against the mother; or living with household members who were substance abusers, mentally ill or suicidal or imprisoned. Those who suffered four or more serious childhood traumas had a 4- to 12-fold increased risk for alcoholism, drug abuse, depression and suicide attempts as adults<sup>60</sup>. These outcomes can then become a source of trauma for the next generation<sup>61</sup>. A collaborative, trauma-informed community response can help reduce the likelihood that the next generation will be affected by childhood trauma<sup>62</sup>.

Research has shown the value of restorative practice approaches. For example, a randomised controlled trial of the effects of restorative practices on classroom and school climates and suspension rates in Pittsburgh public schools showed

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<sup>58</sup> Johnny Connolly and Jane Mulcahy (2019) Building Community Resilience. Responding to criminal and anti-social behaviour networks across Dublin South Central: a research study. Dublin: Four Forum Network and Dublin City Council. pp 86-95 Available at: <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/31426/1/building-community-resilience.pdf>

<sup>59</sup> Felitti, V. J., Anda, R. F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D. F., Spitz, A. M., Edwards, V., Koss, M., & Marks, J. S. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 14 (4), 245–258.

<sup>60</sup> Same source

<sup>61</sup> Hughes, K., Bellis, M.A., Hardcastle, K.A., Sethi, D., Butchart, A., Mikton, C., Jones, L. & Dunne, M. (2017) The effect of multiple adverse childhood experiences on health: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Lancet Public Health*. 2017;2(8):e356–e66. Available at: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667\(17\)30118-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667(17)30118-4)

<sup>62</sup> Same source

an improvement in school climates as rated by teachers<sup>63</sup>. Rates of school suspensions decreased in students under the age of 11, and the reduction in suspensions was higher for children from low-income families, and for girls. This benefit for children from low-income families would be particularly helpful in many of the communities affected by crime across Dublin South Central. Jack Nolan also supports a restorative practice response to break the cycle of youth offending in the Inchicore and Kilmainham areas<sup>64</sup>.

The report on the Future of Policing in Ireland highlights that An Garda Síochána's crime figures are unlikely to be a reflection on the true rate of crime in Ireland. In Scotland, for example, the police estimate that for every crime recorded, another four crimes go unrecorded. While some less serious crimes are likely to be missed, serious crimes such as sexual assaults, domestic violence, drug related crimes and hate crimes are also under-reported, often due to fear of reprisals. In Ireland, there is also a serious problem where crimes have been reported, but have been improperly recorded and in numerous instances downgraded to less serious offences.

Connolly and Mulcahy take up this theme and recommend that responses to crime and antisocial behaviour should be informed by the best available evidence. They propose the use of Community Crime Impact Assessments as an approach for gathering information from residents about crime and antisocial behaviour, to enhance the understanding of the true rate of crime in a neighbourhood.

The Lifting the Lid on Greentown report argues that building maps of criminal networks can be a helpful tool to get a practical sense of the size of the networks<sup>65</sup>. This approach may also highlight opportunities to identify points of vulnerability to help with strategies to reduce a network's influence. The children embedded in the network studied in this report were involved in serious crime at a level that is five times higher than national averages for

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<sup>63</sup> Augustine, Catherine H., John Engberg, Geoffrey E. Grimm, Emma Lee, Elaine Lin Wang, Karen Christianson, and Andrea A. Joseph (2018) Can Restorative Practices Improve School Climate and Curb Suspensions? An Evaluation of the Impact of Restorative Practices in a Mid-Sized Urban School District. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2840.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2840.html)

<sup>64</sup> Dr. Jack Nolan (2019) Report on Scoping Exercise Inchicore - Kilmainham, "Building a Sustainable Community" p. 62. Available at: <http://www.tara.tcd.ie/bitstream/handle/2262/93944/Building%20a%20Sustainable%20Community%202019.pdf?sequence=1>

<sup>65</sup> Sean Redmond (2016), Lifting the Lid on Greentown. Why we should be concerned about the influence criminal networks have on children's offending behaviour in Ireland. pp. 55-56 Available at: [https://ulsites.ul.ie/law/sites/default/files/3910\\_DCYA\\_Greentown\\_%20Full%20report%20final%20version.pdf](https://ulsites.ul.ie/law/sites/default/files/3910_DCYA_Greentown_%20Full%20report%20final%20version.pdf)

burglary. This suggests that it would make sense to allocate disproportionate resources to tackling this problem. The research also suggests that children involved in burglary could be under inappropriate adult influence and that the appropriate response should be welfare related and protective rather than justice related and punitive. Short-term law enforcement campaigns against such criminal networks are unlikely to be successful. Sustained long-term planning and interventions are required.

Justin O'Brien recommends that local agencies, local projects and Tusla work together to deal with antisocial behaviour and the welfare needs of children<sup>66</sup>. The report also calls for more intensive family support services for parents that have serious difficulties with addiction and mental health issues. Housing services should also provide supports to vulnerable families. Housing bodies, in particular Dublin City Council, need to do more to address antisocial behaviour among their tenants. If vulnerable families become homeless, they need to be targeted with intensive supported temporary accommodation or transitional housing before they are rehoused. The report called for a reversal of the reduction in community police staffing in the Inchicore area and an increase in funding for community and statutory services in the area. The report recommended the provision of specialised drug services for young people under the age of 18.

The Drimnagh Task Force recommended support for the Building Community Resilience project<sup>67</sup>. It also called on Dublin City Council to encourage new infrastructure investment in the Drimnagh area. The community lacks a defined town centre, sports facilities and a primary care centre. The report supports an emphasis on supporting vulnerable families and promoting an early intervention approach for young people at risk of being drawn into criminality. It highlights the difficulties for some young people of transitioning from primary to secondary school and calls for a programme to help young people to manage this process. It recommends the provision of after-school supports and activities, in particular for those aged 5-10. The report calls for a local Youth Justice Service for the Drimnagh area, as many of the hardest to reach young people are reluctant to engage with the Crumlin service. The report advocates

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<sup>66</sup> Justin O'Brien (2019) Canals Community Policing Forum Report on Children Involved in Antisocial Behaviour in the Inchicore Area. Available from Canals local policing forum.

<sup>67</sup> Drimnagh Task Force (2021) Gaps in Youth Provision in Drimnagh, Dublin 12, p. 31. Available at: <https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/20586403/drimnagh-task-force-2021-report.pdf>

for an employability programme for early school-leavers, and it promotes the linking of young people at risk with appropriate community-based services.

The Youth Justice Strategy 2021-2027 commits to upholding the rights of children and young people, while acknowledging the impact of their offending on society and the victims of crime<sup>68</sup>. The intended outcome of the strategy is to reduce harm in communities by reducing the number of children and young people who engage in, or are vulnerable to engagement in crime; to minimise young people's involvement with the Criminal Justice System and support their personal development.

Young people involved in crime should be diverted from the formal youth justice system to the greatest extent possible, with due regard for the welfare of communities. The strategy recommends a collaborative approach to service delivery for young people involving parents, guardians and families as far as possible. Measures taken to address offending should aim to provide supports at the earliest opportunity – ideally before offending occurs, and should address underlying causes of offending behaviour. Detention should be a measure of last resort.

A collaborative approach with all relevant agencies and community partners and led by the Department of Justice will underpin the Youth Justice Strategy. The strategy aims to align with the Community Safety Strategy set out in the report on the Future of Policing in Ireland.

The strategy commits to the provision of significant new services that could have a profoundly positive effect on supporting vulnerable young people and protecting communities<sup>69</sup>:

- Research and assess the effectiveness of engagement with under 12s and appropriate family supports (aligned with and not duplicating other services).
- Examine the necessary steps to establish a diversion process for those aged 18-24, aligned with the development of the Health Diversion approach and relevant community supports.
- An Garda Síochána will provide specific training to all Gardaí on interaction with young people.

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<sup>68</sup> Department of Justice (2021) Youth Justice Strategy. Available at: [https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Youth\\_Justice\\_Strategy\\_2021-2027.pdf/Files/Youth\\_Justice\\_Strategy\\_2021-2027.pdf](https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Youth_Justice_Strategy_2021-2027.pdf/Files/Youth_Justice_Strategy_2021-2027.pdf)

<sup>69</sup> Same source

- Garda Youth Diversion Projects will provide assistance to schools to help retain children within the education system whose behaviour may bring them in contact with the youth justice system.
- Publish report on Out of School provision and explore alternative options where mainstream school options have been exhausted.
- The Department of Justice will develop and fund sustained community-based interventions for the most serious and prolific young offenders and their families, and for those who are at significant risk of becoming serious and prolific offenders. Interventions will be designed around the needs of the children, with appropriate interagency cooperation.
- We will extend Bail Supervision so that it is accessible to all young people who can benefit from it, particularly vulnerable and hard to reach groups.

Research in recent years has given us a better understanding of the causes of crime, such as the importance of childhood trauma, or the influence of criminal networks on young people. Armed with this deeper understanding, communities and statutory agencies can develop interventions that will hopefully prove more successful in dealing with antisocial behaviour and crime in the future.



slán abhaile

→ mairtín  
→ Ballyfermot Community Civic Centre  
→ Ballyfermot Community Civic Centre

BALLYFERMOT COMMUNITY CIVIC CENTRE  
IONAD FORAIL BHAILÉ FÓRMÁID

IONAD FORAIL BHAILÉ FÓRMÁID  
COMMUNITY CIVIC CENTRE  
BALLYFERMOT

The background image shows a modern, multi-story building with a light-colored, textured facade and large glass windows. A young tree with autumn-colored leaves stands in the foreground on the left, next to a wooden planter box. The sky is blue with some clouds. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent teal rectangle that serves as a background for the text.

# **STRAND 1 SUPPORTING LOCAL POLICING FORUMS**

## THE HISTORY OF LOCAL POLICING FORUMS IN DUBLIN SOUTH CENTRAL

Before the formal structures of local policing forums and joint policing committees were introduced, there were safety committees in communities such as Bluebell and Fatima, while the South West Inner-City Forum was set up in 2000.

The Garda Síochána Act 2005 introduced the statutory structures of joint policing committees and local policing forums<sup>70</sup>.

According to the Local Policing Fora guidelines<sup>71</sup>, there are three main components to a local policing forum: a coordinator; a management committee that should meet monthly; and public meetings, which should happen four times a year.

The management committee should include:

- A representative of An Garda Síochána of Inspector or more senior rank.
- A representative of the local authority at a senior level, e.g., Area Manager or person at equivalent level of responsibility.
- A representative nominated from the relevant local drug task force.
- No less than three residents from the local community.
- One local authority elected member.
- The Committee may also include representatives of other state agencies as required.

The four local policing forums in Dublin South Central are (Figure 5.1):

- Ballyfermot/Chapelizod
- Canals
- Dublin 12
- South West Inner-City

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<sup>70</sup> Irish Statute Book (2005) Garda Síochána Act 2005. Available at: <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2005/act/20/enacted/en/pdf>

<sup>71</sup> Dermot Ahern (2009) Local Policing Fora Guidelines. Available at: <https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Local%20Policing%20Fora%20Guidelines%20-%20EN.pdf/Files/Local%20Policing%20Fora%20Guidelines%20-%20EN.pdf>

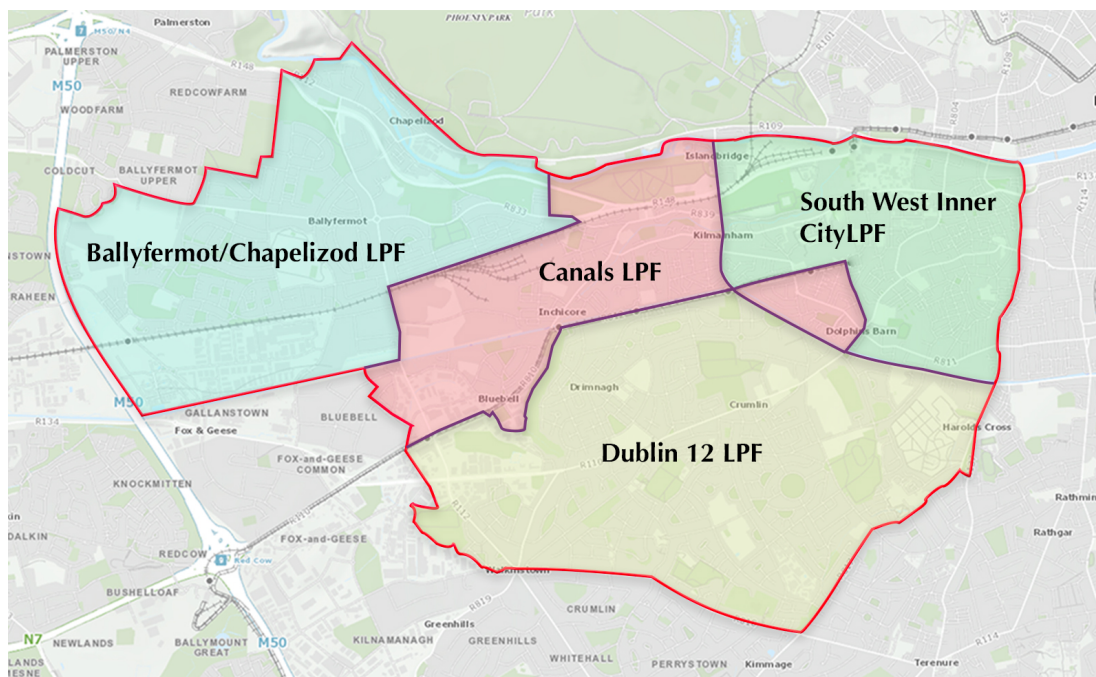


Figure 5.1 Map of the Four Forums in the south-west of Dublin City. Maps were sourced from Central Statistics Office and Ordnance Survey Ireland with additional graphics by Andrew Montague. The boundaries of the forums are not officially documented. The boundaries used in the maps in this report are estimated based on conversations with members of the forums.

The boundaries of the four local policing forums are similar, but not identical, to the boundaries of the drugs task forces in their area. The exact boundaries of the local policing forums are not documented, and were estimated for this report from conversations with members of the local policing forums.

In 2016, the local policing forums in Dublin South Central came together to form the Four Forums network<sup>72</sup>. The Four Forums work in communities which are seriously affected by crime, antisocial behaviour and community safety issues. The network was established to share experience and to advocate together for resources and policy changes. There was also a concern that antisocial behaviour and criminality was being carried out by groups and criminal networks that operated across the area of the four forums<sup>73</sup>.

## CHALLENGES FOR THE LOCAL POLICING FORUMS

The Building Community Resilience report by Johnny Connolly and Jane Mulcahy (2019) describes the challenging environment for the four local policing forums<sup>74</sup>:

<sup>72</sup> Dublin South Central Area Local Policing Forums (2021) Four Forums Network. Available at: <https://dscforums.ie/four-forums-network/>

<sup>73</sup> Same source

<sup>74</sup> Same source as above

“At present, a largely unfocused, *ad hoc* approach to the issues [of crime and antisocial behaviour] seems to dominate across all the existing structures: Joint Policing Committees (JPC), Local Policing Fora (LPF) and Community Safety Fora (CSF). The same issues repeatedly crop up for discussion and the perception of community-based workers and residents who attend the public fora meetings is that current interventions and responses are not effective. As things stand, the structures (JPC, LPF, CSG) are weak, disconnected, lacking in clear orientation and poorly resourced.”

This poor connection between the local policing forums and the joint policing committee is reflected in the interviews conducted for this research:

“The community reps, the local policing forums and the broader community had no connection with the local JPC, which in turn had no connection to the central JPC.” Interview 2, public representative.

“People felt the local policing forum structure was just floating around and not well attended to. They were a talking shop, with no relationship between the local policing forum and the joint policing committee. No matter what is said at the local policing forum, the Gardaí will or won’t do something, and the city council will or won’t do something. A forum can only have value if it’s part of a more cooperative structure.” Interview 10, member of a local policing forum.

One of the interviewees highlighted that the city council doesn’t seem to respond to the views of the residents:

“We have no say with Dublin City Council. There is pressure to bring new builds, which is grand, people need homes. But they are bringing people with a lot of problems into these areas. But we have no increase in project resources, no increase in schools resources. We have no input in these decisions.” Interview 11, community development worker.

A recurring theme in the interviews was the problem of frequent staff turnover:

“The police come and go. The local authority staff come and go. There’s low morale and members are feeling abandoned. This is far from how they were envisaged when they started.” Interview 3, community representative.

“One of the structural weakness is the high movement rate among the Guards. We’ve had maybe five or six inspectors through our arms. Some have lasted less than a year. There’s no continuity. We did retain some very committed sergeants. Martin Comerford was a sergeant in community

policing. He's just retired. He was excellent – quiet, but effective." Interview 14, member of local policing forum.

COVID-19 also has had a big impact on the work of the local policing forums:

"It's very difficult to keep community people included. The changing personnel in City Council and Gardaí is a problem. A lot of this work is interpersonal engagement. It's difficult to build relations over Zoom. Confidence, focus, trust and reliance aren't there because of COVID and changing personnel." Interview 2, public representative.

Not all the interviewees were negative about their local policing forums:

"We've been moderately successful to date, with good strong membership from a lot of places. The Guards have been strong supporters. We had Gerry O'Donoghue from Dublin City Council for a number of years. He's a first-class, decent operator. His replacement, Tony Smithers, is very good, I've got to say. He made it his business to stay with us." Interview 14, member of local policing forum.

## **WHAT HAS BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE DONE TO SUPPORT LOCAL POLICING FORUMS?**

Together, Building Community Resilience and the Four Forums analysed the official guidelines for the local policing forums. These were originally published in 2009 by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Dermot Ahern TD<sup>75</sup>.

Following the analysis of the guidelines, significant changes were made to improve the connection between the local policing forums and the Dublin South West joint policing committee. There is now one rep from each local policing forum on the joint policing committee.

Each local policing forum meeting has an agenda item dealing with their two or three hot issues. Issues that can't be dealt with locally, or issues that point to deficits in policy or resource allocation, are brought to the Four Forums meeting.

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<sup>75</sup> Dermot Ahern (2009) Local Policing Fora Guidelines. Available at: <https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Local%20Policing%20Fora%20Guidelines%20-%20EN.pdf/Files/Local%20Policing%20Fora%20Guidelines%20-%20EN.pdf>

At the Four Forums meeting, the Building Community Resilience coordinator presents a compilation of the reports from each local policing forum, with some analysis of linkages, policy issues or resource issues.

The Four Forums then prepare a presentation for the joint policing committee on their common problems that can't be addressed locally. This presentation sets out their analysis and their ask. The Chair of the joint policing committee, Daithí Doolan, attends this Four Forums discussion, and will suggest ideas on how to progress and track the issue. For example, a working group could be set up; a request could be made to Building Community Resilience to examine the issue; a parliamentary question could be submitted, a Dáil debate could be requested; or a meeting with senior official or minister could be sought.

Progress on issues raised are tracked through the joint policing committee, with reps feeding back to their local policing forums.

Recent issues that have been passed from the local policing forums to the joint policing committee include the issue of racist abuse in some communities, antisocial behaviour on the Luas, and problems caused by sulkies.

In addition to the improved communication between the local policing forums and the joint policing committee, Dublin City Council pay the salary of a part-time worker to support the local policing forums and the Four Forums. The support worker is based in Dublin South City Partnership and works closely with Building Community Resilience. Ali Warner was also engaged to help the Four Forums conduct online public meetings.

Local policing forum members have asked for training to support them in their roles. Building Community Resilience is preparing a series of training workshops to cover topics such as:

- the role of local policing forums;
- methods of responding to antisocial behaviour in communities;
- the roles of Gardaí, Dublin City Council, Tusla and other agencies;
- other community safety matters.

Building Community Resilience is also compiling an information booklet for new members of local policing forums and the public.

## INTERVIEW RESPONSES TO SUPPORT FOR LOCAL POLICING FORUMS

The responses to the supports for local policing forums were generally positive.

"Originally there was no relationship between local policing forums and the joint policing committee'. Now there is someone from each of the local policing forums at the joint policing committee." Interview 1, City Council official.

"Without the resource of Peter, the forum would collapse." Interview 3, community representative.

"It's brought them [the four forums] together as a unit, and they get a lot of support. They appreciate the support they are getting. Dublin City Council have appointed someone to run the meetings and take notes. That's a step forward. They appreciate the support for online public meetings." Interview 4, member of Building Community Resilience steering committee.

"...with Building Community Resilience and Peter's involvement, there is a qualitative difference. It's helping the committee. There is some sense that we are involved in something that is part of something bigger. We have representation from someone at housing manager level. Now we have someone who feels committed." Interview 10, member of local policing forum.

"The BCR have designed a toolkit so that the members know what can be done. That's very important stuff." Interview 13, senior Garda representative.

"The most important thing is that they [the local policing forums] are a statutory avenue for the community to get their concerns to the police." Interview 13, senior Garda representative.

COVID-19, however, has made the work more difficult.

"COVID had a big impact, especially in Ballyfermot, where there's been no public meetings in 18 months. That takes its toll." Interview 2, public representative.

"The biggest problem is that we are running a pilot through a pandemic, so centres weren't open, youth clubs weren't open, nighttime activities for kids didn't happen, such as Halloween last year. There was no council activity.

That has probably made it difficult to assess its effectiveness.” Interview 13, senior Garda representative.

“The disadvantage of the joint policing committee is that it has all been online over the last year. There are no cups of coffee, and no building of relationships.” Interview 13, senior Garda representative.

It’s harder to get the community involved with online public meetings.

“...this was the first time I ever did a public meeting on Zoom. It was good, but we didn’t have the heart of the community at it.” Interview 12, senior Garda representative.

And there is some concern about the sustainability of the supports.

“There is someone from the partnership helping with the minutes of the meeting. That’s fine when it’s a pilot – but it needs permanent resourcing.” Interview 8, member of local policing forum.

One respondent wanted the forums to focus on the issues of estate management and policing, and not get involved with issues around child protection.

“Sometimes it [the forum] drifts into stuff related to child protection – but I don’t agree with that. That work should go through other structures. You can spend more time talking about Tusla and the lack of family support...”. Interview 3, community representative.

Another concern was about the number of meetings.

“There’s a lot of meetings. They need to be strategic about who needs to be in the room. Do we need the joint policing committee to be engaged in so many issues? As part of the evaluation, they need to look at how they manage the meetings.” Interview 3, community representative.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRAND 1, SUPPORTING LOCAL POLICING FORUMS**

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, a significant amount of work has been done to support the local policing forums.

- Creating new and clear connections between the local policing forums and the joint policing committee has been helpful for both organisations.

- Training for forum members has given the confidence to carry out their roles.
- Analysis of the Ministerial Guidelines for local policing forums has highlighted the requirement of the Gardaí to provide an inspector or higher rank for local policing forum meetings, and for the City Council to provide a senior staff member for the meetings.
- A part-time coordinator has been appointed to support the four local policing forums
- With support from the Building Community Resilience coordinator, the Four Forums prepare a joint presentation on their shared issue for the joint policing committee meeting.
- The forums have been given support for hosting online public meetings

Appointing a part-time coordinator for the four local policing forums is a significant step forward. This still falls short, however, from the role envisaged for the coordinator in the Ministerial local policing fora guidelines<sup>76</sup>:

“The coordinator will perform a key role in building open and trusting relationships with the local community and all stakeholders as the LPPF develops. In order to carry out this role effectively, the coordinator should have considerable local knowledge and experience of working in the community. S/he should also be readily accessible to the local community.”

Based on the guidelines, each forum would really need their own coordinator. Meanwhile, the role of coordinator for the four forums should be made a permanent role, and not a short-term support.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Dublin City Council and the Gardaí must continue to provide senior staff with decision-making powers for the local policing forum and joint policing committee meetings.
- The council should make the role of coordinator a permanent role, and should consider providing a coordinator to each of the four local policing forums.
- Stakeholders such as the HSE, Tusla and schools should play a central role in improving community safety.

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<sup>76</sup> Dermot Ahern (2009) Local Policing Fora Guidelines. Available at: <https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Local%20Policing%20Fora%20Guidelines%20-%20EN.pdf/Files/Local%20Policing%20Fora%20Guidelines%20-%20EN.pdf>

- The exact boundaries of each of the local policing forums should be documented.





The background image shows a residential street scene. On the left, a red brick building with white window frames and satellite dishes is visible. A large tree with green leaves is in the foreground on the left. In the center, a semi-transparent orange rectangle contains the text. To the right, another brick building and a grassy area with a black fence are visible. The foreground is filled with tall green grass.

# **STRAND 1 COMMUNITY CRIME IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

## COMMUNITY CRIME IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Another significant support provided by the Building Community Resilience to the local policing forums was the help provided to carry out a number of Community Crime Impact Assessments/problem-solving cycles, to help deal with crime and antisocial behaviour hotspots.

A Community Crime Impact Assessment is a process that helps a community tackle antisocial behaviour and crime<sup>77</sup>. The process can be broken into three steps:

1. **Initial Impact Assessment:** A mechanism to identify the key issues relating to antisocial behaviour and criminal activity that are impacting on the quality of life of residents in a particular area.
2. **Problem-Oriented Analysis and Response** A collaborative problem-solving approach is taken to tackle the issues identified in the initial impact assessment.
3. **Repeat Assessments:** The effectiveness of the response is monitored through repeat assessments over time.

The assessment phase starts with structured interviews with a selection of residents to identify the issues of most concern to them relating to antisocial behaviour and crime in their community. The data is triangulated against other sources of information, such as:

- Structured interviews with relevant non-residents, including local Gardaí, local authority staff, youth workers, drugs services staff, local elected representatives and local business owners.
- Garda PULSE data.
- Council data, such as the number of complaints to the local authority about antisocial behaviour, or the number of transfer requests as a result of antisocial behaviour.
- Observation of the locality for signs of antisocial behaviour, such as graffiti, dumping, burnt-out cars, vandalised property.
- Local Media reports, including social media.

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<sup>77</sup> Jane Mulcahy (2020) Safety in numbers: an evaluation of Community Crime Impact Assessment (CCIA) pilot projects. Dublin: Citywide. Available at: [https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/33403/13/safety\\_in\\_numbers\\_report\\_web.pdf](https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/33403/13/safety_in_numbers_report_web.pdf)

The analysis and response step takes a problem-oriented approach, building on the problem-oriented policing model, which was first put forward by Herman Goldstein in 1979<sup>78</sup>. Goldstein recommended defining the problem, researching it, and exploring alternative approaches to dealing with the issue.

A systematic review of the literature carried out by Joshua Hinkle and colleagues in 2020<sup>79</sup> showed that using a problem-oriented approach significantly reduces crime and disorder.

The Building Community Resilience report by Johnny Connolly and Jane Mulcahy recommended that the Four Forums “should support the development of a local Community Crime Impact Assessment as a means of informing local policing and community safety strategies and as a way of monitoring interventions<sup>80</sup>.”

The Community Crime Impact Assessment approach also aligns with the report on the Future of Policing in Ireland which called for a creative, information-led problem-solving approach, with community based safety structures<sup>81</sup>.

One of the core principles of the Future of Policing in Ireland report is that policing is not the responsibility of police alone. The report recommends that local authorities, health services, child services and other social services should be required by law to work with the police to protect people from harm. Policing should be done with communities. The Gardaí should work in partnership with schools, community and volunteer organisations, businesses, human rights NGOs, youth groups, faith-based groups and others. Senior

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<sup>78</sup> Herman Goldstein (1979) Improving Policing: A Problem-Oriented Approach. Crime Delinquency 1979; 25; 236 DOI: 10.1177/001112877902500207. Available at: [https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/default/files/improving\\_policing\\_a\\_problem-oriented\\_approach\\_goldstein\\_crime\\_delinquency.pdf](https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/default/files/improving_policing_a_problem-oriented_approach_goldstein_crime_delinquency.pdf)

<sup>79</sup> Joshua C. Hinkle, David Weisburd, Cody W. Telep and Kevin Petersen (2020) Problem-oriented policing for reducing crime and disorder: An updated systematic review and meta-analysis. Campbell Systematic Reviews. 2020;16:e1089. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1089>

<sup>80</sup> Johnny Connolly and Jane Mulcahy (2019) Building Community Resilience. Responding to criminal and anti-social behaviour networks across Dublin South Central: a research study. Dublin: Four Forum Network and Dublin City Council. Available at: <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/31426/1/building-community-resilience.pdf>

<sup>81</sup> Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland (2018) The Future of Policing in Ireland. Available at: [http://policereform.ie/en/POLREF/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland\(web\).pdf/Files/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland\(web\).pdf](http://policereform.ie/en/POLREF/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland(web).pdf/Files/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland(web).pdf)

Gardaí should be assessed on the basis of their success in building such partnerships<sup>82</sup>.

## **INITIAL ASSESSMENTS ACROSS THE FOUR FORUMS**

Four initial assessments were completed by November 2021 – one in each of the forum areas. Contributors to the assessment included residents, schools, local community services, Gardaí and those bodies with responsibility for estate management.

It's important to note that the assessments focused solely on the impacts of crime and antisocial behaviour on people living and working in the affected communities, and as a result, they paint a negative picture. This should not take away from the many positives of community life in the neighbourhoods being assessed.

## **REPORTED CRIME AND ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

Crime and antisocial behaviour issues that were highlighted by the assessments included:

- The sale of drugs in the community. Dealing is carried out in a variety of locations, often by teenagers and children.
- Joyriding
- Reckless riding of Scramblers and Motorbikes
- Dumping
- Fires
- Racism
- Domestic Violence
- Sexual Exploitation
- Shootings
- Knife Crime
- Paramilitary presence in some communities

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<sup>82</sup> Same source

## ***Drug Dealing***

Tablets were the biggest selling drugs in one of the assessment areas, but cocaine and crack cocaine have become more prominent in recent times.

“Crack is a big seller in this area for the weekday madness and then coke is more for the weekend good times.”

The drugs’ trade is deeply embedded in many of the communities, with a significant number of young people involved:

“In one particular area... it’s 1 in every 4th house that either the children are involved in it or the fathers and mothers are doing it.”

“Young people from known difficult/dysfunctional families (generational addiction families) are particularly targeted for grooming, but it can happen to anyone around here.”

In one community, the drug dealers were well organised and not chaotic.

“They are very savvy, very together. They are making a lot of money – and cash is king.”

As people moved into their new homes during a regeneration, the drug dealing became more visible.

“It’s more open now because in the flats it was hidden in stairwells and that. Now it’s out on the public street.”

There were three shootings in one community during the period of its assessment – all within weeks of each other. One young man was seriously injured in the first of these.

“My children drive me for my shopping now in case there is a shooting.”

“I hardly sleep, and I am drained. I need out of here.”

Drug dealing in parks was a particular problem for one community.

“...since Christmas, it’s gone into the parks in a big way. It was always there, but nothing like it is now... The parks are attractive locations for the trade because they are so open, so they can see us coming – it’s difficult to do surveillance and there’s lots of hiding spaces for the stashes.”

One assessment highlighted a concern that cannabis was being sold as jellies, which are indistinguishable from jelly sweets and packaged in a similar way.

“You’d have to read the packaging carefully to tell the difference between a drug and a normal packet of sweets.”

### ***Racism***

Racism was an issue highlighted in several communities.

“They always try to intimidate you, as they identify me as not being from Ireland.”

### ***Sexual Exploitation***

“There were some accounts of young women and girls being sexually exploited, either in repayment of drug-debt or in exchange for drugs.”

### ***Paramilitary Presence***

There was considerable disquiet expressed by some respondents about demonstrations by the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP) in one community. This included graffiti, flag displays and leaflet drops.

“There certainly has been a degree of intimidation felt by me and my family to have borderline paramilitary organisations operating in the area. At a recent funeral of a local resident, there was a full display of flag bearers, pipers and ‘recruits’ in full camouflage and berets right out on the street. This caused quite a bit of stress and was very disappointing to see considering the solemnity of the occasion.”

## **SUGGESTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS ON HOW TO TACKLE ISSUES RAISED IN THE INITIAL ASSESSMENTS**

### ***Community Development***

- Build community cohesion.
- Build on community assets to displace antisocial behaviour with pro-social activity.
- Organise community clean-ups.
- Empowering residents to support each other in talking about and acting on community safety issues.

### ***Youth Work***

- Development of Youth work interventions and family supports for those young people involved in the drugs trade.
- Support parents to support children in staying out of the drugs trade.
- Strengthening inter-agency work on child and family concerns through use of Meitheals and Child and Family Support Networks.
- Develop a Trauma Informed Process in the community.
- Some respondents also felt that specific families in crisis need a special response.

*“If all the agencies could come together and focus on that one family, it would make a big difference to the area.”*

### ***Improve Community relations with Gardai***

- Organise joint events such as football leagues.

### ***Policing Response***

- Profiling local organisers of the drug trade with a view to seizing or freezing assets.
- Increased Garda presence, on foot patrol or on bikes.
- The use of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders.

### ***City Council Response***

- Some respondents felt that Dublin City Council needed to act decisively to stamp out tenancy breaches.

## **PROBLEM-ORIENTED ANALYSIS AND RESPONSE**

Problem-solving groups have started work responding to the issues raised in the initial assessments. Based on the model developed through the Grappling with Complex Problem programme with the University of Limerick, the problem-solving groups are focusing on:

1. How to suppress the antisocial behaviour in the area.
2. How to strengthen community capacity to resist and offset antisocial behaviour.
3. How to support those most vulnerable to being drawn into antisocial behaviour.

4. How to strengthen advocacy on behalf of the community.

## **INTERVIEW RESPONSES TO COMMUNITY CRIME IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

The response to the Community Crime Impact Assessments have been positive.

“Three to four years ago the Gardaí would say they got no help from DCC and vice versa. That’s a very important change, that I put down to Building Community Resilience.” Interview 10, member of local policing forum.

“Xxx is very pleased with the Community Crime Impact Assessment in his area. The forums must have ownership of the Community Crime Impact Assessment.” Interview 4, member of Building Community Resilience steering committee.

“In xxx, there was a group that came together to try and respond to their problems. They are finding the Community Crime Impact Assessment very valuable.” Interview 4, member of Building Community Resilience steering committee.

“[The Community Crime Impact Assessment] was brilliant. It was a snapshot of the community. We are bringing the Guards, DCC, Tusla and those working with youth groups together. We have presented the CCIA, re-presented it, and now we’re looking for solutions. That means really asking for Dublin City Council, Tusla and the Guards to really play with us on solving these problems. We need a cohesive response. We are lucky that the personalities in those organisations are brilliant.” Interview 11, community development worker.

“You could see how the Community Impact assessments will work well with the local policing forums. I have done some preparatory work with Peter on the Community Crime Impact Assessments.” Interview 12, senior Garda representative.

“The CCIAs are looking at the quality of life of the community. They are trying to disrupt the networks, without necessarily involving the Gardaí. For example, changing a street layout with planters at the right spot might stop it being used as an escape route.” Interview 8, member of local policing forum.

There was concern from one respondent that there was not enough connection between the Community Crime Impact Assessment process and the local policing forum.

“There was no connection between the local policing forum steering committee and the Community Crime Impact Assessment group. If a Community Crime Impact Assessment is to be done in a local policing forum area, there needs to be a linkage with the local policing forum, and not just with the Gardaí and Dublin City Council. That linkage is fundamental so the local policing forum can learn the lessons from the Community Crime Impact Assessment.” Interview 15, local policing forum member.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRAND 1, COMMUNITY CRIME IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

Four Community Crime Impact Assessments have been started – one in each local forum area, and more assessments are planned.

One important reason for carrying out Community Crime Impact Assessments is due to the under-reporting of crime in many high crime areas. The Building Community Resilience report by Connolly and Mulcahy highlighted the widespread reluctance to report crime across many areas within Dublin South Central, due to either a fear of reprisal, a belief that little would be done, or for some other reason<sup>83</sup>. This under-reporting of crime also came out in the interviews for this report:

“The PULSE system doesn’t in any way reflect what is happening on the ground in xxx... There was only one gun incident in PULSE in the last two years, but in reality there’s one a week.” Interview 11, community development worker.

The Community Crime Impact Assessment can help get around this under-reporting by getting a sense of what is really going on, from the local community, and from non-residents working in the area. This qualitative feedback can indicate whether things are particularly bad in the community or not.

This analysis of the severity of crime in the community could be further enhanced by getting a more precise grasp on what is happening with some

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<sup>83</sup> Johnny Connolly and Jane Mulcahy (2019) Building Community Resilience. Responding to criminal and anti-social behaviour networks across Dublin South Central: a research study. Dublin: Four Forum Network and Dublin City Council. Available at: <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/31426/1/building-community-resilience.pdf>

quantitative research. For example, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) have carried out a crime and victimisation survey every few years since 1998<sup>84</sup>. These surveys could be repeated in the affected communities to give a more precise estimate of whether crime is up or down. Surveys would also allow an assessment of the level of crime in these communities compared to national figures or Dublin-wide figures.

The CSO survey asks respondents whether they report incidents of crime to the Guards, and if not, what are the main reasons for not reporting. It would be very helpful to understand if people are afraid of reprisals or lacking in confidence in the Gardaí, or other possible reasons for under-reporting of crime.

One way to carry out these surveys would be to piggyback on the CSO surveys. The Dublin City joint policing committee could work with the CSO to ensure sufficient sample sizes are used to allow for meaningful analysis in all high crime areas in Dublin.

Particular attention should be paid to getting sufficient responses from vulnerable groups such as Travellers, ethnic minorities and young women.

Crime and victimisation surveys, when combined with PULSE data, and antisocial behaviour reports to Dublin City Council, could help to get a better understanding of the levels of antisocial behaviour and crime in affected communities. These figures can be tracked over time and compared to other communities, and to City averages.

At the time of writing this report, in December 2021, none of the Community Crime Impact Assessments have gone through the full cycle of initial assessment, problem-oriented analysis and response, and repeat assessment. So, it is too early to judge the success of this initiative. But this approach offers real prospects of making a difference to the affected communities.

The success of the Community Crime Impact Assessment will depend on the quality of the analysis, the engagement of all stakeholders and a sustained response. As stated in the report on the Future of Policing in Ireland, policing is not the responsibility of police alone<sup>85</sup>. The Gardaí, local authorities, health

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<sup>84</sup> Central Statistics Office (2019)

<sup>85</sup> Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland (2018) The Future of Policing in Ireland. Available at: [http://policereform.ie/en/POLREF/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland\(web\).pdf/Files/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland\(web\).pdf](http://policereform.ie/en/POLREF/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland(web).pdf/Files/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland(web).pdf)

services, child services and other social services should work with the police to protect people from harm. The engagement of Tusla and the Child and Family Support Network for this process has been significant.

A temporary response, such as a short-term increase in Garda patrols, followed by a return to normal levels of service could damage community confidence in the process.

The report on the Future of Policing in Ireland recommends a new district policing model<sup>86</sup>. It envisages the community working with the Gardaí to solve problems affecting community safety. The Community Crime Impact Assessment could be a model for this engagement.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The Dublin City Joint Policing Committee should work with the Central Statistics Office to carry out a sufficient quantity of crime and victimisation surveys in high crime areas in Dublin to allow meaningful analysis of the results from these communities.
- Community Crime Impact Assessments have the potential to significantly improve the quality of life for residents living in high crime communities. For them to succeed, all stakeholders need to be involved in the problem-solving analysis phase, and a sustained response will be required.
- The Community Crime Impact Assessments could be part of the new model for district policing planned in the report on the Future of Policing in Ireland.

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<sup>86</sup> Same source



The background image shows a street scene. On the left, there is a stone building with a blue sign that says 'IMMA'. In the center, a white car is parked on the street. To the right, there are more buildings and a street sign. The sky is blue with some clouds. The text 'STRAND 2 RESTORATIVE PRACTICE' is overlaid in the center of the image.

# **STRAND 2 RESTORATIVE PRACTICE**

## WHAT IS RESTORATIVE PRACTICE?

According to the International Institute for Restorative Practices Graduate School, it is an emerging social science that studies how to strengthen relationships between individuals as well as social connections within communities<sup>87</sup>.

Restorative practice needs to be distinguished from restorative justice, which is a post-harm response, holding those who have committed harm accountable by direct dialogue with those harmed<sup>88</sup>. The restorative justice process focuses on the repairing of relationships.

The Building Community Resilience report by Johnny Connolly and Jane Mulcahy recommended promoting and developing Dublin South Central as a Restorative Practice location<sup>89</sup>.

The Jack Nolan report on Inchicore and Kilmainham called for the development of a restorative practice initiative to break the cycle of youth offending in the area <sup>90</sup>.

Likewise, the Drimnagh Task Force report into the Gaps in Youth Provision in Drimnagh supported the use of restorative practice in the Drimnagh area<sup>91</sup>.

Strand 2 of the Building Community Resilience project has committed to working with existing restorative practice projects in Dublin South Central to develop restorative practice as a core community safety activity<sup>92</sup>. This strand of

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<sup>87</sup> IIRP Graduate School (2021) What is Restorative Practices? Available at: <https://www.iirp.edu/restorative-practices/what-is-restorative-practices>

<sup>88</sup> Reedswier (2018) My Restorative Journey to Hull, England. Available at: <https://reedswier.com/2018/03/28/my-restorative-journey-to-hull-england/>

<sup>89</sup> Johnny Connolly and Jane Mulcahy (2019) Building Community Resilience. Responding to criminal and anti-social behaviour networks across Dublin South Central: a research study. Dublin: Four Forum Network and Dublin City Council. p. 95 Available at: <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/31426/1/building-community-resilience.pdf>

<sup>90</sup> Dr. Jack Nolan (2019) Report on Scoping Exercise Inchicore - Kilmainham, "Building a Sustainable Community" p. 62. Available at: <http://www.tara.tcd.ie/bitstream/handle/2262/93944/Building%20a%20Sustainable%20Community%202019.pdf?sequence=1>

<sup>91</sup> Drimnagh Task Force (2021) Gaps in Youth Provision in Drimnagh, Dublin 12, p. 31. Available at: <https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/20586403/drimnagh-task-force-2021-report.pdf>

<sup>92</sup> Building Community Resilience (2020) Building Community Resilience Terms of Reference. Available from Building Community Resilience

the project aims to support a community culture of non-violence and relationship building by developing model restorative communities<sup>93</sup>.

## **WHAT HAS BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE DONE TO IMPLEMENT A RESTORATIVE PRACTICE APPROACH?**

There were two restorative practice projects in the Dublin South Central Area before the Building Community Resilience project started:

- The Dublin 8/12 Restorative Practice project.
- The Ballyfermot Partnership Restorative Practice project, based in Cherry Orchard.

The coordinator of the Building Community Resilience project, Peter Dorman, was the chair of the Dublin 8/12 Restorative Practice project steering committee before taking up his role with Building Community Resilience, and he continues his work in that role. Unfortunately, the Ballyfermot Partnership Restorative Practice project closed in December 2021.

The Dublin 8/12 Restorative Practice project is part of an informal network of community-based restorative practice projects that includes Community Development Initiative Tallaght, the North East Inner-City project, the Restorative Practice Project in Limerick, the Cherry Orchard project (which has now closed), and others.

The initial approach of the Dublin 8/12 Restorative Practice project was to offer training to any professional working in the Dublin 8 or Dublin 12 area. Almost 60 participants took part in training programmes run by Community Development Initiative, including school staff, youth workers, Gardaí, Dublin City Council staff and others.

A member of the Dublin 8/12 steering committee, Rea Lavelle, carried out a review that showed that the widespread provision of training was not leading to changes in practice, as the trainees often worked in organisations where restorative practice was not supported. The Dublin 8/12 steering committee decided to take a new approach of developing a model restorative practice community in South Inchicore, focusing on an intense whole-organisation approach with key organisations. The idea is that children in the model community would experience a restorative practice approach at each stage of

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<sup>93</sup> Building Community Resilience (2021) BCR Evaluation. Available from Building Community Resilience

their lives, starting in their home, then their crèche, their primary and secondary schools and their youth clubs.

Attempts are underway to replicate the Inchicore cluster in Drimnagh. The Bosco youth project is exploring this possibility with schools in the Drimnagh area.

The work in South Inchicore involved bringing a range of stakeholders on to the Dublin 8/12 Restorative Practice steering committee, including local schools, youth projects, An Garda Síochána, Dublin City Council, community projects, probation and a representative from academia.

Our Lady of Lourdes primary school has started a three-year whole-school restorative practice approach with support and training from Michelle Stowe of Connect RP. Mercy College secondary school and St. Michael's Family resource centre are also planning to join the Connect RP programme.

Staff from KRIB Garda Youth Diversion programme, Solas youth project, TRY youth project in Donore Avenue and the CORE youth project in South Inchicore have all received training in restorative practice. These projects were offered training, as they all work directly and intentionally with young people engaging in antisocial behaviour. CORE are starting to work with the Connect RP programme, although some modifications will be needed for the programme as it is currently designed for schools.

Responding to the Jack Nolan report<sup>94</sup> and the Drimnagh Task Force report<sup>95</sup>, Dublin City Council provided funding to Dublin South City Partnership to support restorative practice work in the Dublin South City Partnership area.

## INTERVIEW RESPONSES TO RESTORATIVE PRACTICE INITIATIVES

The restorative practice approach is an attractive approach to promoting better relationships in the community.

“Because the idea is so difficult to define and soft centred, it's kind of difficult to sell the advantages. But any group that takes it on, swears by it.”  
Interview 14, member of local policing forum.

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<sup>94</sup> Dr. Jack Nolan (2019) Report on Scoping Exercise Inchicore - Kilmainham, “Building a Sustainable Community” p. 62. Available at: <http://www.tara.tcd.ie/bitstream/handle/2262/93944/Building%20a%20Sustainable%20Community%202019.pdf?sequence=1>

<sup>95</sup> Drimnagh Task Force (2021) Gaps in Youth Provision in Drimnagh, Dublin 12, p. 31. Available at: <https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/20586403/drimnagh-task-force-2021-report.pdf>

“If you work with young people, this is what you’ve been doing for years. We were doing a version of this in Limerick in 1981/82. But now it’s codified, and reinforced. Now everyone can talk about the same subject in the same way, and know what they are talking about. People aren’t talking at cross purposes to each other.” Interview 14, member of local policing forum.

The training from Michelle Stowe and the restorative practice approach is working well in Our Lady of Lourdes primary school.

“Michelle Stowe has been fantastic. She has a whole range of resources and supports to help teachers to put this into place.” Interview 9, resource teacher from Our Lady of Lourdes primary school.

“The children are learning the vocabulary of restorative practice – friendship, respect, inclusiveness.” Interview 9, resource teacher from Our Lady of Lourdes primary school.

“There has been a huge buy-in from the staff.” Interview 9, resource teacher from Our Lady of Lourdes primary school.

You can see the win-wins for the pupils and the staff. The classrooms are more restorative.” Interview 9, resource teacher from Our Lady of Lourdes primary school.

“We do a check-in every morning, and we also do check-out at the end of the day – although it doesn’t always happen in the rush to get out the door. The check-in gives you an idea of where the children are at. The teacher can bear in mind if their day hasn’t started off well. So, you might go easy with them.” Interview 9, resource teacher from Our Lady of Lourdes primary school.

The school, however, has found it difficult to engage parents in a similar restorative approach. The COVID-19 situation has made this more challenging, as it’s been hard to engage parents in online webinars.

The progress in other schools and projects has been slower. Mercy College secondary school has had several staffing changes in the last year that have slowed down the implementation of the restorative practice approach.

Some organisations have found it difficult to put the training received into practice in their organisations.

“It seems to be a good idea, but difficult to implement.” Interview 16, project leader in a local youth service.

“I feel that I’m pushing restorative practice on the staff. ‘Why don’t you do a bit of RP with that issue?’ It should come more naturally. It should be the first thought, not the sixth.” Interview 16, project leader in a local youth service.

Some staff feel that the restorative practice approach will lead to extra work.

“We [the staff] have talked about facilitated circles for troubled groups. The staff are resistant due to the additional work that is needed. Even to prepare for one young person, never mind a group”. Interview 16, project leader in a local youth service.

There’s also a fear of failure among some staff.

“[There’s] a fear that it might cause more harm than good.” Interview 16, project leader in a local youth service.

One potential benefit of a restorative approach is to improve relationships among the different agencies and organisations working in the area.

“...the big potential of restorative practice in community development is the potential for it to be applied to overcome the barriers to siloed working and to facilitate multi-agency working. Different people who need to work together will understand each other better, and their plans for multi-agency working will be improved, with better relationships and more trust built using restorative practices.” Interview 17, member of Dublin 8/12 Restorative Practice steering committee.

Two respondents wanted to see more buy-in from the Gardaí for a restorative approach.

“...they say they haven’t capacity and won’t send people to training.” Interview 16, project leader in a local youth service.

“There always seems to be an openness to engaging [from the Gardaí], but few examples of follow-through. I would like to see more resources dedicated to implementing restorative practices in the guards.” Interview 17, member of Dublin 8/12 Restorative Practice steering committee.

Dedicated staffing resources are needed to implement the actions agreed at the Dublin 8/12 restorative practice steering committee.

“Unless there is a dedicated resource of somebody who can action all of that, then it’s difficult to make progress on implementing the restorative practice strategy. Everyone in the partnership has a full-time job, so nobody can commit to doing the implementation.” Interview 17, member of Dublin 8/12 Restorative Practice steering committee.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRAND 2, RESTORATIVE PRACTICE

A lot of work has gone into the development of South Inchicore as a model restorative practice community. The progress, however, has been slow. Some of this has been down to the challenges of trying to implement a restorative approach during the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, it’s been difficult for the schools to engage parents in a restorative approach to dealing with relationships in the home. There has also been the challenge of putting into practice the restorative approaches learned in training.

Research has shown the value of restorative practice approaches in Ireland and internationally. For example, a randomised controlled trial of the effects of restorative practices on classroom and school climates and suspension rates in Pittsburgh public schools showed an improvement in school climates as rated by teachers<sup>96</sup>. Rates of school suspensions decreased in students under the age of 11, and the reduction in suspensions was higher for children from low-income families, and for girls. This benefit for children from low-income families would be particularly helpful in many of the communities affected by crime across Dublin South Central.

A 2013 study of secondary schools, Youthreach centres and youth centres in Donegal showed significant improvements in behaviour following training in restorative practices<sup>97</sup>. In the 10 secondary schools examined, the number of incidents of problematic behaviours reduced from 519 before the training to 84 after the training. The relationships between the staff and pupils improved, with the number of pupils challenging the teacher’s authority dropping from 99

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<sup>96</sup> Augustine, Catherine H., John Engberg, Geoffrey E. Grimm, Emma Lee, Elaine Lin Wang, Karen Christianson, and Andrea A. Joseph (2018) Can Restorative Practices Improve School Climate and Curb Suspensions? An Evaluation of the Impact of Restorative Practices in a Mid-Sized Urban School District. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2840.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2840.html)

<sup>97</sup> Hugh Campbell, Derick Wilson, Tim Chapman and John McCord (2013) Developing a Whole System Approach to Embedding Restorative Practices in Youthreach, Youth Work and Schools in County Donegal. Available at: [https://pure.ulster.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/11404529/Co.\\_Donegal\\_Restorative\\_Practice\\_Project%2520Research%2520Report%2520-%2520Final%2520Sept%252013.pdf](https://pure.ulster.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/11404529/Co._Donegal_Restorative_Practice_Project%2520Research%2520Report%2520-%2520Final%2520Sept%252013.pdf)

down to 12. In the two Youthreach centres assessed, there was a drop in the number of suspensions from 36 before the restorative practice training down to three after training. The youth centre examined in the study, reduced the number of suspensions from eleven to seven after the training. Unfortunately, the study didn't provide details on the training provided. The Donegal Education and Training Board have committed to carrying out a further evaluation of their restorative practice programme<sup>98</sup>. When published, this could give valuable insights for the Building Community Resilience restorative practice project.

The Childhood Development Initiative introduced a restorative practice training programme in West Tallaght<sup>99</sup>. An evaluation of the project showed that people felt that they needed help to deal with conflict in their homes, in the workplace, at school, in the community and in interagency settings. The programme was effective in helping people in these situations. The number of people who felt confident managing conflict in school or in work increased from 49% to 61%, and from 38% to 48% in the home and from 16% to 35% in the community. After training, the percentage of people who experienced conflict every day decreased in the workplace from 60% to 37%, in the home from 10% to 5% and in the community from 3% to 2%. Interagency collaboration also improved, with the number of services that regularly referred their service users to another service increasing from 8% to 36%. This programme showed an increased use of restorative practice in work, schools and the home. Getting parents to use restorative practice in the home has been a particular challenge in Inchicore. The evaluation of the project in West Tallaght acknowledged that more work needs to be done to adapt the programme to be more inclusive for non-professionals.

These studies show the potential benefits of a restorative approach across different settings and the value of Building Community Resilience continuing to promote this approach in the community, despite the challenges.

In their 2006 paper, Peta Blood and Margaret Thorsborne give some practical advice on how to overcome the barriers to the introduction of restorative

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<sup>98</sup> Donegal Education and Training Programme (2021) Restorative Practices. Available at: <https://www.donegaletb.ie/donegal-etb/restorative-practice/>

<sup>99</sup> Allyn Fives, Celia Keenaghan, John Canavan, Lisa Moran and Liam Coen (2013) Evaluation of the Restorative Practice Programme of the Childhood Development Initiative. Available at: [https://www.cdi.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/CDI-RP\\_Report\\_25.09.13.pdf](https://www.cdi.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/CDI-RP_Report_25.09.13.pdf)

practices<sup>100</sup>. They emphasise the importance of understanding the enormous challenge of introducing such a major shift in thinking about discipline, its purpose and practice.

In order to successfully introduce a restorative practice programme, those involved need to agree that there are problems that need to be addressed, such as a high number of suspensions from a school or a youth centre, or disrespectful relationships between staff and children<sup>101</sup>. Once there is agreement on the issues that need to be tackled, staff and management need to agree that restorative practice is a good way to deal with those issues. When there is agreement that restorative practice is the right approach to deal with the challenges identified in the organisation, training and implementation can go ahead.

Blood and Thorsborne estimate that it takes about three to five years to properly implement restorative practice in a school<sup>102</sup>. When restorative practice is being introduced, some staff will embrace the change, while others will be more resistant. A tipping point can often be achieved when just 10-20% of staff adopt the new practices, as the early adopters influence the majority. In order to reach that tipping point, those trying to introduce the change should focus their energy on motivating key influencers within the staff – those that are persuasive personalities with multiple connections.

One important way to reach the tipping point is giving staff the opportunity to network both within the school or project and also with staff in other organisations going through a similar process. People need the chance to be able to talk about what is working well, and the problems they are experiencing. Hearing from peers in similar situations can carry more weight than hearing from consultants<sup>103</sup>.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Despite the slow progress, Building Community Resilience should continue to promote restorative practices across Dublin South Central. Significant

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<sup>100</sup> Peta Blood and Margaret Thorsborne (2006) Overcoming Resistance to Whole-School Uptake of Restorative Practices. Available at: [https://www.iirp.edu/pdf/beth06\\_blood.pdf](https://www.iirp.edu/pdf/beth06_blood.pdf)

<sup>101</sup> Same source

<sup>102</sup> Same source

<sup>103</sup> Same source

benefits of embedding a restorative approach have been shown in a wide variety of settings in Ireland and abroad.

- Dublin City Council has recently provided funding to Dublin South City Partnership to support restorative practices in the Dublin South City Partnership catchment area. This funding is welcome and should help allow many of the plans in the area to come to fruition.
- Restorative practice has great potential to improve interagency work in Dublin South Central. Childhood Development Initiative in West Tallaght has had some success in this regard and may be able to offer support.
- Childhood Development Initiative may also be able to offer assistance on introducing restorative practices to parents.
- Engagement by the Gardaí with the Dublin 8/12 Restorative Practice partnership steering committee is valuable. To turn this engagement into a change of their practices, there needs to be buy-in from the Gardaí that a restorative approach will help them to deal with the challenges they face. It may be beneficial for some management and staff from the Kevin Street district to have a facilitated session on looking at the challenges they face and how restorative practices could help.





CHURCH OF THE MOST HOLY SPIRIT



**STRAND 3  
RESPONDING TO  
STREET-BASED  
ANTISOCIAL  
BEHAVIOUR AND  
DRUG DEALING**

The Building Community Resilience report by Connolly and Mulcahy suggests that there are three loose strata operating within criminal networks<sup>104</sup>:

1. Career criminals at the centre of the drugs trade.
2. Street dealers – usually teens and young men operating around hotspots.
3. Children, often below the age of criminal responsibility, who are groomed into participation in the networks.

Strand 3 of the Building Community Resilience project is focused on the response to the street dealers identified in the report.

## INTENSIVE OUTREACH

Connolly and Mulcahy recommend an intensive outreach model to target the young people involved in street dealing networks, their families and those who orbit around them<sup>105</sup>. They describe this model as teams of street outreach workers connected with youth services, whose sole focus is on young people involved in criminality. The outreach workers will typically be young adults who can relate directly to these young people and build a relationship with them on the street, with the purpose of bridging them into employment, education, rehabilitation or other constructive life paths. The TRY project in Donore Avenue has shown the effectiveness of this approach.

The TRY project is aimed at vulnerable young people from 14-26 years old who are active drug and/or alcohol users who congregate in the St. Teresa's Gardens flat complex<sup>106</sup>. A team of peer mentors engage with the young people out on the streets to build strong, trusting relationships and help move them away from antisocial behaviour, poly-drug use and crime towards healthier and more prosocial lives. Thirty-nine young people involved with the project have made significant progress towards positive changes in their lives. The level of visible drug dealing in the area has dropped significantly, and the main "gang" congregating in the area has effectively disintegrated.

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<sup>104</sup> Johnny Connolly and Jane Mulcahy (2019) Building Community Resilience. Responding to criminal and anti-social behaviour networks across Dublin South Central: a research study. Dublin: Four Forum Network and Dublin City Council. p. 16 Available at: <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/31426/1/building-community-resilience.pdf>

<sup>105</sup> Same source

<sup>106</sup> Jane Mulcahy (2021) Relentless Caring, Trying something new. An evaluation of the Targeted Response to Youth (TRY) Project. Available at: <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/34556/1/TRY-Evaluation.pdf>

## WHAT HAS BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE DONE TO RESPOND TO STREET-BASED ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND DRUG DEALING?

Before the Building Community Resilience project was set up, the Canal's local policing forum had flagged a problem of young people from different communities congregating and moving along the canal corridor and the Luas line and getting involved with antisocial behaviour.

A report by Justin O'Brien for the Canal's local policing forum described the issues in more detail<sup>107</sup>. A total of 50 children with welfare concerns were identified from 26 different families. Twenty-eight children were involved in antisocial behaviour, which included a core group of 17 young people who were regularly getting into trouble and another 11 who were intermittently involved. The report highlighted a specific gap in services for young people under the age of 12 who aren't old enough to avail of the Garda Youth Diversion service. There was also no Child and Family Support Network in operation in the area at the time.

The Canal's local policing forum asked the youth projects in the area to come together to look at how to address some of these challenges with a youth work approach. Several meetings between the youth projects were facilitated by Peter Dorman before the Building Community Resilience project started. The meetings then continued as part of the Building Community Resilience project.

The youth projects agreed that a youth work approach with a focus on addressing developmental needs of the young people would help. A street-based outreach approach was discussed, but there were significant challenges around who would manage the project, how would such a project interact with other youth projects in the area, and who would fund it.

A positive development from the discussions between the youth projects was the emergence of a forum for the project leaders. This has helped to build a network of cooperation and support between project leaders.

In December 2021, progress is starting to emerge. Projects are developing shared outreach initiatives across their areas, using existing resources. This had previously begun in the South West Inner City, in a separate process to the Building Community Resilience work.

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<sup>107</sup> Justin O'Brien (2019) Canals Community Policing Forum Report on Children Involved in Antisocial Behaviour in the Inchicore Area. Available from Canals local policing forum.

One advantage of the new shared outreach work is that Garda Youth Diversion projects are on the street alongside regular youth workers, which makes referrals easier and helps associate Garda Youth Diversion staff with Gardaí in the minds of young people.

It is apparent that as these projects build relationships with each other at project leader and youth-worker levels, collaborations can happen quickly. There remains a need for additional outreach services, but existing services can do more by pooling resources.

Tusla have been on the Building Community Resilience steering group since the start of the project. They have responded to many of the issues raised in Justin O'Brien's report and have introduced a range of new services across the wider four forums area. They have launched a new pilot Foróige service aimed at 8-11 year olds and their families in the Inchicore and Oliver Bond areas, with a similar service in the Cherry Orchard area. A Child and Family Support Network has been set up that covers the Canal's area and the South West Inner City. The network coordinates the Meitheal process, which is an interagency approach to support vulnerable children and their families. Funded by Tusla, the Docklands Area-Based Childhood prevention and early intervention programme has expanded its catchment area to include the Oliver Bond area.

With support from Tusla, Building Community Resilience and the Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC) provided an introductory workshop to a trauma informed approach to working with young people. Over 200 people from a wide variety of organisations, including Gardaí, attended the online workshop with Jonny Mathew, a renowned expert in the field. The Child and Family Support Network coordinator has successfully secured funding from Dublin City Council to provide further training in trauma informed work in 2022. Tusla are also funding the Candle Community Trust youth service in Ballyfermot, a service that takes a trauma informed approach.

In 2021, the Solas project was successful in a competition to provide a new youth service for the South West Inner City, focusing on Oliver Bond and Basin Lane. The Department of Justice is working with TRY on mainstreaming their service.

There was an unfortunate funding setback when one of the youth clubs in Inchicore was refused funding for a proposed street-based outreach service in the Inchicore area.

## GRAPPLING WITH COMPLEX PROBLEMS

Building Community Resilience has worked with Sean Redmond and Dr. Johnny Connolly from the Research Evidence into Policy Programmes and Practice project (REPPP) in the University of Limerick, to develop a series of workshops for those working with young people in Dublin South Central. The workshops aimed to create a more in-depth understanding of the problem of street-based drug dealing and to help design some effective responses. These workshops were given the title, “Grappling with Complex Problems”.

Sean Redmond is the University of Limerick Adjunct Professor in Youth Justice and author of *Lifting the Lid on Greentown*, a study of criminal networks in Ireland and their use of children in criminal enterprise. Johnny Connolly is the lead author of the original Building Community Resilience report, and his current research project is developing a comprehensive human rights-based response to drug and gang-related crime and community violence.

A series of six online workshops were held in 2021 with a variety of organisations across Dublin South Central, including youth workers, community workers, school staff, drugs workers, Gardaí, Tusla staff, ex-offenders, residents from high-crime communities and Dublin City Council staff.

The aim of the Grappling with Complex Problems workshops was to develop a common understanding of the problem of antisocial behaviour and drug dealing across Dublin South Central, based on shared experiences from within the group and also the expertise from elsewhere in Ireland and overseas. The workshops looked at what has been tried, and what is needed to tackle the issues.

The Grappling with Complex Problems workshops helped the group to develop an approach to antisocial behaviour based on building community efficacy, supporting vulnerable families, advocacy for the affected communities and disruption of antisocial networks. The learnings from the workshops should help organisations to work together to deal with street-based antisocial behaviour, and also assist in the problem-solving part of Community Crime Impact Assessments.

## INTERVIEW RESPONSES FOR STRAND 3 – RESPONDING TO STREET-BASED ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND DRUG DEALING

There was enthusiasm from several respondents about the outreach model.

“I think it’s a good model. They [the youth projects] need to ask about who is engaging with the street dealers. This work is difficult work. It’s intense. It’s nighttime. The most important approach is to engage. It’s not easy work. Not everyone can do it. I think it’s got great potential. It does require a shift from the organisations that are responsible for the work.” Interview 3, community representative.

“Nothing was working in regards to youth antisocial behaviour [in St. Teresa’s Gardens]. The TRY project really seemed to put a dent into our problems... Of the original 16, only three were still involved in drug dealing, as far as I can remember.” Interview 4, member of Building Community Resilience steering committee.

“We need more people out and about, with less sitting in the youth club. If the workers are out, they will meet and interact with young people. Building relationships is important. That will only improve everything.” Interview 8, member of local policing forum.

“We used a lot of street-based youth groups to try to deal with the racist attacks. We helped to break that cycle.” Interview 11, community development worker.

“I was very impressed with the TRY project. It’s somebody from the area, giving back to the area, and hoping young people refocus away from crime. I thought it was a brilliant project.” Interview 12, member of An Garda Síochána.

“A youth-worker working on public transport on the Luas would be really beneficial.” Interview 16, project leader in a local youth service.

There was frustration that more progress had not been made in implementing a street-based outreach programme for young people.

“There is a lot of frustration among some people that the original idea hasn’t moved on.” Interview 4, member of Building Community Resilience steering committee.

“The D8 and D12 community has been looking at what it means to get a street response to [antisocial] behaviour. There’s a lot of talking, but nobody is willing to take the bull by the horns. When the opportunity arose, where was everybody?” Interview 16, project leader in a local youth service.

“They’ve done bits of outreach together when the youth centres were closed. There is much more cooperation in the North inner city, where they were sharing information about the kids and coordinating opening times. A lot more needs to be done by the youth services.” Interview 19, member of local policing forum.

Some possible reasons for the lack of progress were mentioned.

“Part of the problem is that it is a really difficult issue. The reality of trying to encourage projects on the ground to change their work is difficult because of their capacity constraints and issues related to service-level agreements.” Interview 4, member of Building Community Resilience steering committee.

“It’s probably an element that is not going as quickly as we would have liked because of the pandemic.” Interview 13, member of An Garda Síochána.

Not all respondents were as enthusiastic about the TRY programme:

“I don’t feel it’s going as well as the evaluation states.” Interview 1, Dublin City Council official.

Tusla have set up two new Child and Family Support Networks in the South West Inner City and in Islandbridge. These networks host the interagency Meitheal approach for supporting vulnerable young people and their families. One respondent highlighted that many organisations aren’t using this service enough, and that some don’t even know about it.

“The CFSN and Meitheal’s are something that aren’t widely used, including by Gardaí.” Interview 4, member of Building Community Resilience steering committee.

When the process is used, it works well.

“The CFSN in the South West Inner City is working very well.” Interview 4, member of Building Community Resilience steering committee.

There were criticisms of the referral process to Tusla in one interview.

“...because they get so many referrals, they are very defensive. They have a bunker mentality. They are weak at engaging with other agencies.” Interview 19, member of local policing forum.

“If people don’t get a response, they won’t make a referral. People don’t need to know the detail, but they need to know at least that something is happening.” Interview 19, member of local policing forum.

But it was acknowledged that there have been some improvements in Tusla’s services.

“The number of unallocated cases [with Tusla] has reduced.” Interview 19, member of local policing forum.

“They [Tusla] are responding better to referrals. They at least acknowledge them now. There is a learning curve from some of the local agencies on how to make a good referral to get an intervention.” Interview 19, member of local policing forum.

“Tusla did training with local agencies on how to make a referral.” Interview 19, member of local policing forum.

GDPR was raised as a barrier to supporting young people by several respondents.

“GDPR and interagency work is a real problem. It’s very difficult to get consent from parents who are so disengaged”. Interview 2, public representative.

A new focus on a trauma informed approach has emerged over the last year.

“What’s growing out of the project is the trauma informed idea.” Interview 4, member of Building Community Resilience steering committee.

“Many of the young people have had huge early trauma. So, the trauma informed work is very important.” Interview 7, Tusla staff member.

“I’ve been working in a trauma informed way since I came to xxx. The needs are psychological, embedded and really deep. The work was trauma informed. The minute I started using this method, I felt I was making progress.” Interview 11, community development worker.

“Trauma informed care is very important. There are generations of trauma... With the pandemic, there is even more trauma. We need to be looking at this, before it gets out of hand.” Interview 18, Tusla staff member.

Dublin City Council’s role in estate management was raised by two respondents.

“If you live in a community with a large number of dysfunctional families, including families engaged in criminality – that’s very tough and needs to be dealt with. This includes allocation processes.” Interview 4, member of Building Community Resilience steering committee.

“But in terms of the housing management... a lot of time they don’t intervene. When there is active drug dealing and a family is allowed to stay there, what will the other tenants do?” Interview 19, member of local policing forum.

“...there are times when you have to intervene, but Dublin City Council have failed on that, and it leads to deterioration of the local area and community. The criminal element becomes more powerful in the community. Most people want a nice place to live in and have it reasonably safe. If the landlord doesn’t intervene, the level of trust diminishes.” Interview 19, member of local policing forum.

Dublin City Council’s new antisocial behaviour policy should help improve estate management.

“The new antisocial behaviour policy in Dublin City Council is giving an increased role to social work services within Dublin City Council. They could be the lead agency to organise an interagency meeting. ‘We have a problem with this family with their children, and what are we going to do about it together?’ That is in the policy document, but whether they implement it or not, remains to be seen.” Interview 19, member of local policing forum.

One issue that was raised was the need for community space to house youth projects.

“A lot of youth services say they can’t rent premises. The cost of rent in south city is enormous. Can DCC come behind us here? Where is the strategic plan to support services in the community? DCC have housing projects. Are they putting in meeting rooms, and space for services?” Interview 7, Tusla staff member.

Most respondents were enthusiastic about the Grappling with Complex Problems workshops with Sean Redmond and Johnny Connolly.

“I found it useful. The UL team kept slowing the group down, advising them to explore the problems in greater depth, rather than looking for solutions. They wanted more focus on understanding the problems, and less time looking at solutions. It’s good to hear different perspectives.” Interview 4, member of Building Community Resilience steering committee.

“We had six three-hour sessions once a month. Every one was well worth being at. I always looked forward to being at the sessions. It was really good food for the head.” Interview 11, community development worker.

“[The workshops were] well-structured, well run and full of experience. Peter was brilliant, pulling into focus what we are trying to achieve. Are we going to try and break that cycle? The university people were brilliant. It was really enjoyable.” Interview 11, community development worker.

“Initially, I was asking what’s the purpose of this [the workshops], but by the time I got to the end of it, I could see the value of it.” Interview 12, member of An Garda Síochána.

“It was great to have help from the guys.” Interview 18, Tusla staff member.

The Grappling with Complex Problems workshops have been hampered to some degree by the pandemic. Online meetings can be tough.

“Getting into workshop space over Zoom is difficult. You are drilling down into the details – that can be tiring and draining.” Interview 3, community representative.

Several key themes emerged from the Grappling with Complex Problems workshops.

“Community voices need to be heard at a national level.” Interview 4, member of Building Community Resilience steering committee.

“Building the efficacy of the communities’ ability to respond. Addressing fear and apathy.” Interview 4, member of Building Community Resilience steering committee.

“Endemic drug dealing is a wicked problem. You can’t get one expert from one discipline to sort the problem.” Interview 6, academic.

“The difference with complex problems is that lots of people have skin in the game, but everyone has different opinions on the nature of the problem and the solutions.” Interview 6, academic.

“Some people view it as health, others estate management, law enforcement, child protection. Others don’t think there is a problem.” Interview 6, academic.

“After they all feed back their opinions to the whole group, we ask the group to come up with a unified agreed description of the problem.” Interview 6, academic.

“We try and get the group to a tipping point, where they have described the problem in such detail, that they can spot the point of weakness in the problem.” Interview 6, academic.

“Any solutions tried, comes with risks.” Interview 6, academic.

One participant in the workshops felt it was difficult to raise issues around conflict between young people and Gardaí.

“It doesn’t give you a safe space to air grievances with the police. It was set up to allow you to have a conversation, but I was more or less told to shut up. That needs to be worked out. There needs to be a way to air these issues.” Interview 5, youth worker.

“One of the things in this area, there is a surge of policing for a while, then it goes away. But then you get a whole lot of people with criminal records. The Gardaí swamp an area for a short period of time and animosities build up.” Interview 5, youth worker.

“I know a lot of young people that have no criminal activity, but they are harassed by the Gardaí.” Interview 5, youth worker.

“One of the biggest things that didn’t come up, was decriminalisation. The ‘War on Drugs’ has been an abject failure. It’s easier to buy drugs than cigarettes and alcohol. So, the prohibition of drugs is a big problem.” Interview 5, youth worker.

Some Gardaí, however, were eager to break down barriers and engage with young people.

“We realised there was not enough contribution from young people. If Solas did a sit down with the young people, the youth workers could bring their issues to the forum. Even if one or two of the community guards can sit down with the young people and youth workers and bring back the issues to the community forum.” Interview 12, member of An Garda Síochána.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRAND 3 – RESPONDING TO STREET-BASED ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND DRUG DEALING**

It's clear from the interviews that there is still substantial support for an outreach youth service, along the canal and Luas line, but also in other communities. The results of the TRY evaluation showed strong evidence of the benefits of a street-based outreach approach for dealing with antisocial behaviour. Building Community Resilience should continue to work with youth projects in the area to develop such a service.

Tusla has responded to many of the issues raised in the Justin O'Brien report. They've developed new services for vulnerable children under the age of 12; an extension of the Docklands ABC programme to the Oliver Bond area; provided funding for trauma-informed training; and established new Child and Family Support Networks.

The Child and Family Support Networks coordinate the Meitheal process, which is an interagency approach for supporting vulnerable children and their families. Many agencies are not yet using the Meitheal process. Building Community Resilience could work with Tusla to raise awareness of the Meitheal process and provide training on how best to run a Meitheal. Tusla also need to improve communications with agencies that are making child protection referrals, to at least let them know that something is happening.

The new focus from Building Community Resilience and Tusla on introducing a trauma-informed approach for working with young people is welcome. In 1998, Felitti and colleagues found a strong relationship between childhood traumas and serious illness and mental health problems in adult life<sup>108</sup>. Traumas included psychological, physical or sexual abuse; violence against the mother;

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<sup>108</sup> Felitti, V. J., Anda, R. F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D. F., Spitz, A. M., Edwards, V., Koss, M., & Marks, J. S. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 14 (4), 245–258.

or living with household members who were substance abusers, mentally ill or suicidal or imprisoned. Those who suffered four or more serious childhood traumas had a 4- to 12-fold increased risk for alcoholism, drug abuse, depression and suicide attempts as adults<sup>109</sup>. These outcomes can then become a source of trauma for the next generation<sup>110</sup>. A collaborative, trauma-informed community response can help reduce the likelihood that the next generation will be affected by childhood trauma<sup>111</sup>.

Trauma survivors can become more sensitive to stimuli when faced with stressful situations<sup>112</sup>. They can be hyper-vigilant and aggressive, and their stress responses are easily triggered. These behaviours that result from childhood trauma can be seen as dysfunctional and challenging, if the cause is not understood<sup>113</sup>.

Young people involved with the Garda Youth Diversion programme experience approximately three times more childhood traumas than the average population<sup>114</sup>. 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 a guard 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. A trauma informed approach by Gardaí can improve safety, as Gardaí could better understand situations, and potentially use a different technique that might lead to safer outcomes.

The initial workshop on trauma-informed care was very well attended and well received. Training and further supports for a wide variety of practitioners is

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<sup>109</sup> Same source

<sup>110</sup> Hughes, K., Bellis, M.A., Hardcastle, K.A., Sethi, D., Butchart, A., Mikton, C., Jones, L. & Dunne, M. (2017) The effect of multiple adverse childhood experiences on health: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Lancet Public Health*. 2017;2(8):e356–e66. Available at: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667\(17\)30118-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667(17)30118-4)

<sup>111</sup> Same source

<sup>112</sup> Dermody A., Lambert S., Rackow, A., Garcia J., & Gardner C. (2020) An Exploration of Early Life Trauma and its Implications for Garda Youth Diversion Projects Youthrise / Quality Matters, Dublin, 2020. Available at: <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/33447/1/Early-Life-Trauma-and-its-Implications-for-Garda-Youth-Diversion-Services-Full-Report.pdf>

<sup>113</sup> Same source

<sup>114</sup> Same source

planned for 2022. This is a significant initiative, and it's particularly important that the Gardaí are committed to attending the training.

The Grappling with Complex Problems workshops were appreciated by most of those interviewed who were able to attend. Key insights were:

- The importance of building up efficacy of local communities to respond.
- Interagency response is critical, but it's not just about doing more of what organisations always do. It's about understanding all the different perspectives to try to spot new points of weakness with the problem. The different agencies then need to agree to provide the resources for a new approach.
- The lessons from the workshops need to be brought into the problem-solving process of the Community Crime Impact Assessments.

Another issue that was raised in the interviews for this research was the importance of starting a dialogue between young people and the Gardaí. There is an awareness among the Gardaí of this issue and an openness to address the difficulty. The process could start with a facilitated meeting between Gardaí and youth workers, followed by facilitated meetings between young people and Gardaí.

The Youth Justice Strategy 2021-2027 commits to the provision of significant new services that could have a profoundly positive effect on supporting vulnerable young people and protecting communities<sup>115</sup>:

- Research and assess the effectiveness of engagement with under 12s and appropriate family supports (aligned with and not duplicating other services).
- Examine the necessary steps to establish a diversion process for those aged 18-24, aligned with the development of the Health Diversion approach and relevant community supports.
- An Garda Síochána will provide specific training to all Gardaí on interaction with young people.
- Garda Youth Diversion Projects will provide assistance to schools to help retain children within the education system whose behaviour may bring them in contact with the youth justice system.

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<sup>115</sup> Department of Justice (2021) Youth Justice Strategy. Available at: [https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Youth\\_Justice\\_Strategy\\_2021-2027.pdf/Files/Youth\\_Justice\\_Strategy\\_2021-2027.pdf](https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Youth_Justice_Strategy_2021-2027.pdf/Files/Youth_Justice_Strategy_2021-2027.pdf)

- Publish report on Out of School provision and explore alternative options where mainstream school options have been exhausted.
- The Department of Justice will develop and fund sustained community-based interventions for the most serious and prolific young offenders and their families, and for those who are at significant risk of becoming serious and prolific offenders. The interventions will be designed around the needs of the children, with appropriate interagency cooperation.
- The Department will extend Bail Supervision so that it is accessible to all young people who can benefit from it, particularly vulnerable and hard to reach groups.

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<sup>116</sup>. The scheme uses Multisystemic Therapy – a form of intensive support for the young person’s caregiver (usually the mother). In turn, these supports help the caregiver to look after the young person. An evaluation of the scheme showed positive changes in the participating young people’s behaviour, with a 72% reduction in reoffending six months post Bail Supervision compared with the six months before the scheme. This may be a useful approach for some of the most challenging young people within the community.

Building Community Resilience should engage with the Department of Justice to avail of these new services or run pilots where appropriate.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Building Community Resilience should continue to work with youth projects across Dublin South Central to develop street-based outreach projects to address antisocial behaviour and drug dealing.
- The Department of Justice should mainstream the TRY project and expand its service to cover a wider catchment area.
- Building Community Resilience and Tusla should work together to raise awareness of the Meitheal process and organise training on how to run a Meitheal.

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<sup>116</sup> Naughton, C., Redmond, S. & Coonan, B. (2019) Evaluation of Bail Supervision Scheme for Children Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Dublin, Ireland. Available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/0a6bc8-evaluation-of-the-bail-supervision-scheme-for-children-pilot-scheme/>

- Tusla have improved their child protection referral process recently. There are significantly fewer unallocated child protection referrals. They have provided training to other agencies on how to make a referral. They need to continue to work with other organisations and they should provide feedback to referring agencies, without breaking confidentiality guidelines.
- The lessons from the Grappling with Complex Problems workshops need to be used in the problem-solving process of the Community Crime Impact Assessments. In particular, efforts are needed to build up community efficacy and leadership to respond to crime and antisocial behaviour. Attempts should also be made to disrupt the grooming of children into criminal networks.
- A process of dialogue should be facilitated between young people and Gardaí. A helpful model could be the meetings between young people and the Gardaí in the North East Inner City that were facilitated by Community Action Network.
- Breaking intergenerational cycles of trauma is essential to help prevent addiction, antisocial behaviour and criminality in the future. It's critical that as many organisations as possible working in Dublin South Central take up the training on trauma-informed practices and then implement the approach in their work.
- Building Community Resilience should develop a new strand focused on making Dublin South Central a trauma-informed community.
- Dublin City Council's response to antisocial behaviour from their tenants has historically been poor. They are working on a new antisocial behaviour policy and the drafts show a more proactive response is planned with an increased role for social work services within the council. A council-led interagency response to vulnerable families, making use of the Meitheal process, could lead to a significant improvement in the quality of life for vulnerable families and their neighbours.
- Dublin City Council need to plan for additional community spaces to provide for youth services in Dublin South Central.
- Building Community Resilience should engage with the Department of Justice to avail of the new services being developed as part of the Youth Justice Strategy, 2021-2027.







**STRAND 4  
ADDRESSING  
NETWORK  
ORGANISERS**

As discussed in the previous chapter, the original Building Community Resilience report describes three loose strata operating within criminal networks<sup>117</sup>:

1. Career criminals at the centre of the drugs trade.
2. Street dealers – usually teens and young men operating around hotspots.
3. Children, often below the age of criminal responsibility, who are groomed into participation in the networks.

Connolly and Mulcahy recommended an interagency response to these career criminals, curbing criminality with a carrot and stick approach. They suggested an interagency, case management approach, based on the Joint Agency Response to Crime (J-ARC) model. Often, these career criminals do not have many convictions. The agencies that may be suitable to tackle these individuals could include Gardaí, Social Welfare, probation services and the Revenue.

Strand 4 of the Building Community Resilience project is aimed at dealing with these career criminals, or network organisers, at the centre of the drugs trade.

The work is Garda led, with several detectives assigned to each targeted network organiser. The Gardaí are prioritising those whom they believe are causing most concern within their communities, either due to fear, or ostentatious shows of wealth which can act as a draw for young people into criminality.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRAND 4 – ADDRESSING NETWORK ORGANISERS**

While the response to the network organisers is an interagency response, it is significantly different to the Strive Joint Agency Response to Crime project in Ballymun. Strive works directly with offenders, offering to support them with training, addiction treatment and mental health supports<sup>118</sup>. At the same time, their activities are closely monitored, and where appropriate the justice agencies can seek to impose sanctions on the offenders. Strive has been particularly effective with street dealers, but has had little success with network

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<sup>117</sup> Johnny Connolly and Jane Mulcahy (2019) Building Community Resilience. Responding to criminal and anti-social behaviour networks across Dublin South Central: a research study. Dublin: Four Forum Network and Dublin City Council. p. 16 Available at: <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/31426/1/building-community-resilience.pdf>

<sup>118</sup> Andrew Montague (2021) Ballymun – A Brighter Future. Dublin: Dublin City Council. pp. 60-62. Available at: <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/33970/1/ballymun-a-brighter-future-by-andrew-montague.pdf>

organisers. Network organisers tend to have few criminal convictions, and don't need much support, so the programme has little leverage over them, and due to lack of engagement there has been limited success with network organisers. The author of this report is the chair of the Strive steering committee.

Among those involved with the work, there is enthusiasm for the Strand 4 approach to network organisers. It certainly feels right that those who are benefiting most from the drugs trade, should be targeted. They cause so much harm and violence within communities.

There are, however, significant risks associated with the project.

ONE significant risk is that removing network organisers could create a vacuum within criminal networks that could lead to an upsurge in violence, as others seek to take control over lucrative drugs markets.

Dan Werb and colleagues carried out a systematic review of the research into the effects of drug law enforcement on violence<sup>119</sup>. Fifteen studies were evaluated in the review, and 14 showed an increase in violence as a result of drug law enforcement. In Florida, for example, drug arrests were associated with an almost fivefold increase in violent and property crime. The review shows that the removal of key players from the lucrative illegal drugs market creates opportunities for others to fill the vacuum. Violence may be an inevitable consequence of drug prohibition when groups compete for massive profits.

Neil Woods is a former police officer in the UK, who worked undercover for 14 years helping to break up criminal gangs<sup>120</sup>. In his experience, informants were less frightened by those criminal gangs that use less violence, and so passed on more information to the police about these less violent gangs. As a result, these were the easiest gangs to infiltrate and remove. The unintended consequence of policing attempts to break up gangs can be an increase in the power and territory of the more violent gangs.

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<sup>119</sup> Werb, D., Rowell, G., Guyatt, G., Kerr, T., Montaner, J., & Wood, E. (2011). Effect of drug law enforcement on drug market violence: A systematic review. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 22(2), 87-94. Available at: [https://www.hri.global/files/2011/03/25/ICSDP\\_Violence\\_and\\_Enforcement\\_Report\\_March\\_2011.pdf](https://www.hri.global/files/2011/03/25/ICSDP_Violence_and_Enforcement_Report_March_2011.pdf)

<sup>120</sup> Neil Woods (2016) *Good Cop, Bad War*. London Ebury Publishing.

An alternative to arresting and seeking to imprison network organisers may be to target them with a Criminal Assets Bureau approach to remove their assets. This would reduce the rewards for criminal activity and would likely be well received by the community, but may be less likely to lead to an upsurge in violence. The Gardaí, however, have a duty to act on any intelligence they receive, and may have no choice but to prosecute these individuals.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- There is clearly an appetite within communities for the justice authorities to act against criminal network organisers. But there are risks of unintended consequences. I would encourage a cautious approach, with an emphasis on removing assets, and disrupting activity rather than imprisoning network organisers. The Gardaí should closely monitor the situation for any increase in violence associated with the removal of network organisers.
- It may be prudent to give more time to assess the impacts of the original pilot before expanding it to other Garda divisions. Clearly that will be a decision for the steering committee.





A photograph of a street scene at dusk or dawn. The sky is a mix of blue and orange. In the foreground, there's a road with yellow grid markings. A white van is parked on the left. In the background, there are buildings, including one with a 'PHARMACY' sign. A semi-transparent pink rectangular overlay covers the center of the image, containing white text.

# **STRAND 5 CONNECTING TO NATIONAL POLICY**

The Building Community Resilience report<sup>121</sup> by Connolly and Mulcahy was heavily influenced by the report on the Future of Policing in Ireland<sup>122</sup>:

“[Building Community Resilience] situates its analysis in the context of hugely significant developments in the world of community safety recently, particularly those arising from the Report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland.”

## WHAT HAS BEEN DONE TO CONNECT WITH NATIONAL POLICY?

The Building Community Resilience project maintains strong links with the implementation process of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland.

In November 2020, the Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee TD, announced the establishment of three pilot Community Safety Partnerships based on the recommendations on the report on the Future of Policing in Ireland. The partnerships are located in Longford, Waterford City and the Dublin’s North Inner City, and will bring together residents, community organisations with state agencies such as the Gardaí, the local authority, Tusla and the HSE to develop Local Community Safety Plans<sup>123</sup>.

The report on the Future of Policing in Ireland proposes that every community in the country should have a Local Community Safety Strategy<sup>124</sup>. Connecting with this process will be helpful for Building Community Resilience. The Building Community Resilience project met with the Policing Authority on several occasions to discuss the new structures and to update the Authority on the work of Building Community Resilience. The Building Community

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<sup>121</sup> Johnny Connolly and Jane Mulcahy (2019) Building Community Resilience. Responding to criminal and anti-social behaviour networks across Dublin South Central: a research study. Dublin: Four Forum Network and Dublin City Council. Available at: <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/31426/1/building-community-resilience.pdf>

<sup>122</sup> Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland (2018) The Future of Policing in Ireland. Available at: [http://policereform.ie/en/POLREF/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland\(web\).pdf/Files/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland\(web\).pdf](http://policereform.ie/en/POLREF/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland(web).pdf/Files/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland(web).pdf)

<sup>123</sup> Department of Justice (2020) Minister McEntee announces new local partnership projects to strengthen community safety. Available at: <https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PR20000261>

<sup>124</sup> Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland (2018) The Future of Policing in Ireland. Available at: [http://policereform.ie/en/POLREF/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland\(web\).pdf/Files/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland\(web\).pdf](http://policereform.ie/en/POLREF/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland(web).pdf/Files/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland(web).pdf)

Resilience coordinator also met with the coordinator of the North Inner-City pilot.

Building Community Resilience were invited to respond to new draft guidelines for joint policing committees by the Policing Authority. The Four Forums met to discuss the draft and made a submission.

Building Community Resilience has also built connections to other national policy developments. For example, the coordinator represents the Building Community Resilience project on the Government Consultative Forum on Antisocial Behaviour, and made a presentation to the forum.

Following on from the publication of the Lifting the Lid on Greentown report, the University of Limerick set up the Greentown Learning Network for practitioners in community safety around the country. The first meeting was held in December 2021, and Building Community Resilience was represented by the coordinator. The Greentown process is being replicated in three other communities across the country. The Building Community Resilience coordinator was invited to give a talk to the steering committees of the “Redtown” and “Bluetown” projects about the work of Building Community Resilience.

Building Community Resilience made a submission to the Dublin City Council antisocial behaviour policy development team. The coordinator also encouraged local groups from Dublin South Central to make their own submissions.

## **INTERVIEW RESPONSES FOR STRAND 5, CONNECTING TO NATIONAL POLICY**

Most interviewees were supportive of the connection with national policy.

“I think we are well positioned. I met with Helen Hall from the Policing Authority. They talked about their response to drugs and local community. The model they talked about was Care and Control.” Interview 3, community representative.

“From the outset there was a good relationship with the policing authority. We inputted into the policing authority when they were drawing up their report. So, there was always a relationship there. We want to keep those relationships.” Interview 4, member of Building Community Resilience steering committee.

“This is always useful.” Interview 8, member of local policing forum.

“I think that [national policy] is a huge part of the answer.” Interview 12, community development worker.

“Whatever we learn here has to be considered at a national level. Resources are finite, so the learning has to be shared...” Interview 13, member of An Garda Síochána.

“His voice [the coordinator of Building Community Resilience] is listened to.” Interview 13, member of An Garda Síochána.

“We have to hear the voices of those who are most affected, particularly in areas of disadvantage. They don’t always have the confidence to express their views. They might just accept the situation.” Interview 13, member of An Garda Síochána.

“In many respects, this strand has the greatest potential. It asks the central government to intervene.” Interview 13, member of An Garda Síochána.

“Before lockdown I was asked along to a number of meetings such as the Commission on the Future of Policing. It’s the first time that I’ve been involved in these national issues. Something is beginning to shift. There is a realisation that they have to talk to us.” Interview 14, member of local policing forum.

“[National policymakers] are very competent people. After generations of no change, we are beginning to see the signs of creative thinking.” Interview 14, member of local policing forum.

“One of the things from our own local policing forum went up to the JPC, then to the citywide JPC, and then it went to policy strand 5. From there, government has been asked to look at this. So, I think that’s very positive.” Interview 15, member of local policing forum.

One interviewee was enthusiastic about the proposed new policing structures.

“The promise of the research [the report on the Future of Policing in Ireland] would be the new policing authority – Policing and Community Safety Oversight Commission. This committee would have teeth and be able to respond if an agency doesn’t do its part. The committee will have funding.

So, connecting with these policies will be helpful for BCR.” Interview 4, member of Building Community Resilience steering committee.

Not all interviewees were enthusiastic about the policy strand.

“I think it’s nonsense. I don’t feel they are influencing national policy in a meaningful way.” Interview 1, City Council official.

One mentioned disappointment at missing out on national funding.

“Why was there no funding for our area from the Greentown project. Did we not do enough together to get funding? It seems to be an elephant in the room. Collectively, we should be lobbying the Department of Justice to find out why we missed out on the funding. That was a joint failure of all the groups. We should review this and find out how we could get more funding. That should be a role of BCR.” Interview 7, Tusla staff member.

Some interviewees were concerned about the lack of funding to respond to emerging needs.

“We should be able to respond to emerging needs.” Interview 8, member of local policing forum.

“You need to have a flexible approach to be able to respond swiftly to emerging needs and crises.” Interview 2, public representative.

One interviewee was not impressed with what is happening at a national level.

“We are re-inventing the wheel about tackling crime, before the great and the good in Leinster House are doing it. I think what we are doing should be rolled out around the city. A whole set of new structures will be disappointing. The state can’t do this, but local government should be doing it.” Interview 2, public representative.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRAND 5 – CONNECTING TO NATIONAL POLICY**

Despite disappointment that Dublin South Central was not chosen to be a pilot for a Community Safety Partnership, or to be a Greentown pilot, the majority of those interviewed found the connection with national policy to be beneficial to the Building Community Resilience project. People feel they are being listened to, and that their experiences are helping shape future policy. That’s particularly

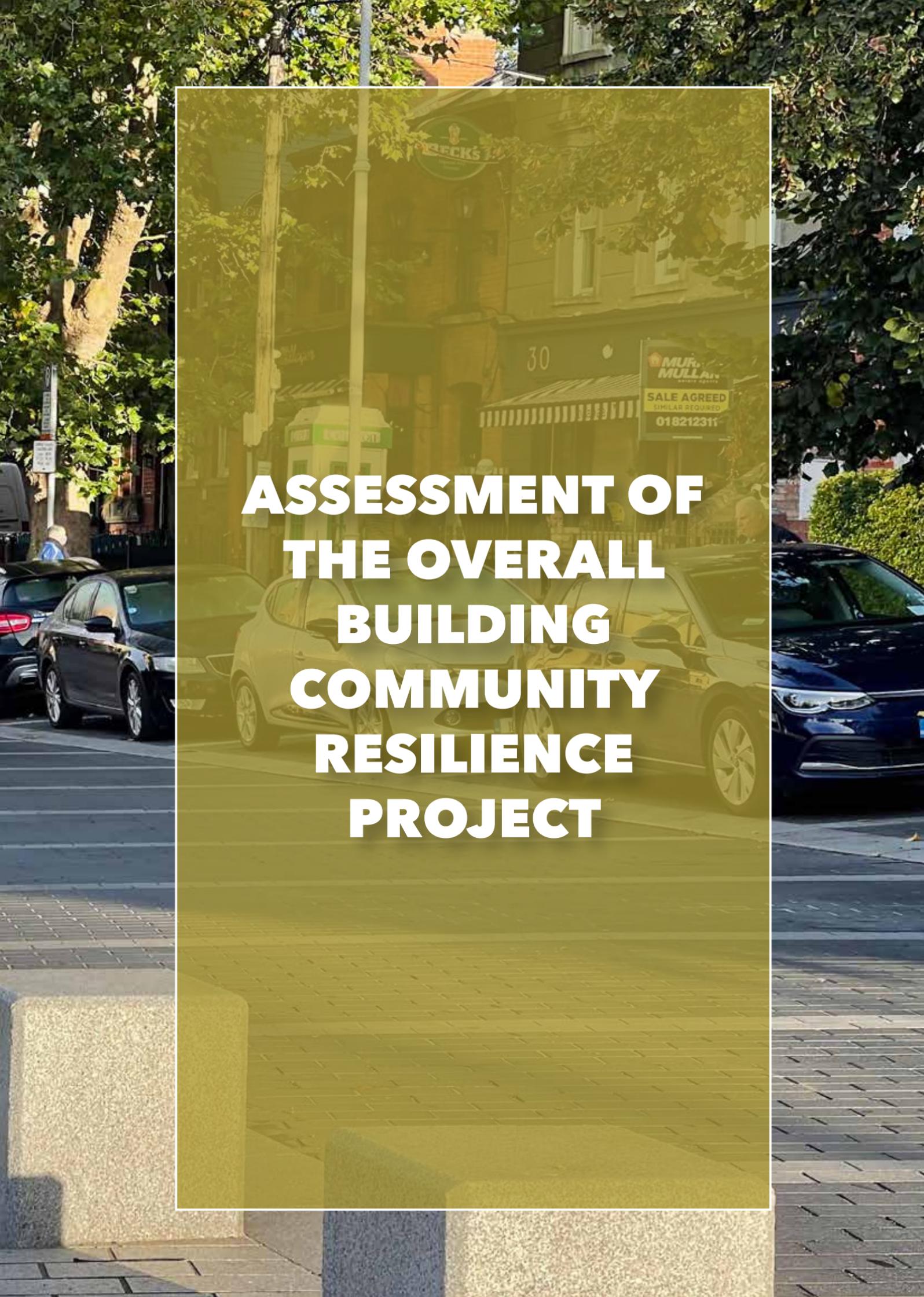
important for disadvantaged communities, who don't always feel heard, and who are suffering the worst effects of criminality.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Building Community Resilience should engage with the Department of Justice to avail of the new services being developed as part of the Youth Justice Strategy, 2021-2027.
- Continue existing connections with national policy development.







**ASSESSMENT OF  
THE OVERALL  
BUILDING  
COMMUNITY  
RESILIENCE  
PROJECT**

In addition to reviewing the five strands of the Building Community Resilience project, the terms of reference of this evaluation asked for an assessment of the structure and organisation of the project. It will also examine whether the project complements or is duplicating other initiatives and projects in Dublin South Central.

## **INTERVIEW RESPONSES ON THE STRUCTURE AND MANAGEMENT OF THE BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE PROJECT**

Most of the interviewees were positive about the Building Community Resilience project.

“I really like it. I think it’s great. Originally, I was sceptical. It has actually put a structure on to the initiatives. It’s brought people together in a good way.”  
Interview 1, Dublin City Council official.

“[Building Community Resilience] is really good. And it has a lot more potential, if it becomes embedded deeper within Dublin City Council, the Gardaí, community development and the broader community. It’s exciting. It’s come a long way.” Interview 2, public representative.

“It’s an action research idea, so we are researching ideas by doing them.”  
Interview 4, member of Building Community Resilience steering committee.

“I think it’s going at the speed and ability that it can.” Interview 8, member of local policing forum.

“With BCR and Peter’s involvement, there is a qualitative difference. It’s helping the committee. There is some sense that we are involved in something that is part of something bigger.” Interview 10, member of local policing forum.

“We don’t know how much it made a difference to our area. But we were delighted that we were included. The change already is that we are part of something across Dublin South Central. We can make connections and hear what others are doing. That’s brilliant.” Interview 11, community development worker.

“If we can’t police our way out of this, I need to back other approaches. Getting information from the community about their concerns is very helpful. Maybe all these strands won’t work, but we have to try. We need to

open a channel for communication from the community” Interview 13, member of An Garda Síochána.

“It’s early days, and these things are slow burners, but Building Community Resilience has the structure and basis of something different. It has the potential to add value. I’m impressed by it.” Interview 13, member of An Garda Síochána.

“This [project] shows more promise. It considers the coordination and all of the stakeholders, including Tusla. There is scope to widen it further – prison service and probation service – although probation service have some role already.” Interview 13, member of An Garda Síochána.

The project is gaining a positive reputation beyond Dublin South Central.

“There are other elements of my own organisation looking to see if this is a model that we should use in other areas across the city and country.” Interview 13, member of An Garda Síochána.

There was a concern from one interviewee that too many issues are being addressed at the same time.

“So far, the whole structure might be over elaborate. It might not be focused enough on what the community issues are. It tends to be centralised. It has to be, because it’s working with structures of the Guards and Dublin City Council.” Interview 14, member of local policing forum.

Another concern was the top-down approach in some strands, such as the restorative practice strand.

“There’s some kind of link missing to the community. It’s all professionals, and maybe we are missing the community voice. We need to build the resilience of the community, not for the community.” Interview 16, project leader in a local youth service.

COVID-19 has had an impact on the project.

“I think it was going very well. Initially, there was great enthusiasm. People wanted to get it up off the ground. But it was very hard to keep it going during COVID.” Interview 9, resource teacher from Our Lady of Lourdes primary school.

“The biggest problem is that we are running a pilot through a pandemic, so centres weren’t open, youth clubs weren’t open, nighttime activities for kids didn’t happen, such as Halloween last year. There was no council activity.” Interview 13, member of An Garda Síochána.

“All the meetings are on video. The only shortcoming is that you don’t get to meet people informally. In the past, when the meeting was over, there was a cup of tea, and you could have a chat with Gardaí or local Reps. People who didn’t want to voice something at the meeting, they could have a word after. The fact that the BCR hasn’t met in person, doesn’t allow you to make linkages with other people on the committee. The personal contacts enrich the conversation.” Interview 15, member of local policing forum.

People were very positive about how the project is being run and about the coordinator.

“Yeah. I think that BCR is definitely well run. I think Peter is doing a very good job.” Interview 9, resource teacher from Our Lady of Lourdes primary school.

“Peter has been great. Peter has broken the plan down into bite sized pieces.” Interview 1, Dublin City Council official.

“Peter is an exceptionally hard worker. He understands the lived experience of where antisocial behaviour dominates.” Interview 3, community representative.

“Peter manages Building Community Resilience very well.” Interview 4, member of local policing forum.

“Peter does a fantastic job. If there is a meeting held, he takes whatever was decided at the meeting and goes and does something about it. That makes a gigantic difference. In the past, an issue would be raised, but once you walk out of the room, you wouldn’t get the sense that anything is done about it.” Interview 10, member of local policing forum.

“Building Community Resilience is brilliantly well run.” Interview 11, community development worker.

“I met with Peter Dorman shortly after I arrived. I was very impressed.” Interview 13, member of An Garda Síochána.

“Building Community Resilience is very well run. That’s largely down to the professionalism and experience of the coordinator. Nobody involved is not disappointed that he is leaving. But a replacement might have more hours. That would suggest commitment from city council.” Interview 13, member of An Garda Síochána.

“I have nothing but absolute admiration for Peter Dorman. He is so professional and so good. I’ve seen him handle difficult situations. He has a body language that encourages people to calm down. He’s absolutely first class. I’ve never met anyone as good as him.” Interview 15, member of local policing forum.

“Everything I’ve been invited to, has been very well run and facilitated and followed-up on.” Interview 16, project leader in a local youth service.

Some thought it was too early to make a judgement on the project.

“It’s too early to say. It’s only just settling down. A whole load of stuff has to be done yet.” Interview 14, member of local policing forum.

Most interviewees thought the project was complimentary to existing work. None thought that it was duplicating other projects or services.

“The project tries to be pragmatic. They look for willing partners – for example, the restorative practice work.” Interview 1, Dublin City Council official.

“They are not doing something that was already being done.” Interview 10, member of local policing forum.

“Restorative practice was ongoing before BCR. Community Crime Impact Assessment was happening before BCR. But Peter has pulled these together into the BCR framework.” Interview 10, member of local policing forum.

“There is always a risk of duplication. But I think the structures are designed well. They work with the [local policing] forums, the youth workers, existing community workers and projects.” Interview 13, member of An Garda Síochána.

“It’s more of a compliment. We’ll very quickly tell them if they are duplicating it.” Interview 14, member of local policing forum.

"It compliments it [the existing projects]. Definitely. I've found it to be a great support to us here. At no point do I think they have duplicated our work." Interview 16, project leader in a local youth service.

The Grappling with Complex Problems workshops were mentioned as being complimentary.

"It compliments hugely the work that was going on. It's not a firefighting space. It gets you thinking out of the box. It's actually very complimentary." Interview 11, community development worker.

Most people interviewed said that the five strands worked well together.

"The five strands make sense. The first three are the priority. They weave neatly into a nice tapestry" Interview 2, public representative.

"My instinct is that the five strands work well together. They cover most things, but you could always take something out of one strand, and make it into its own strand. For example, trauma informed care is part of a response to antisocial behaviour, but it could be a strand of its own." Interview 4, member of Building Community Resilience steering committee.

"[Building Community Resilience] is a good unit. It's a nice piece of architecture." Interview 14, member of local policing forum.

"The idea of five strands is excellent because it gives different groups a chance." Interview 15, member of local policing forum.

One suggestion was made on how to improve the work of each strand.

"It would help if each strand had a chair to report in, rather than Peter reporting in. This would increase responsibility." Interview 7, Tusla staff member.

Another idea was to give feedback about the work of other strands to people who aren't involved in all strands.

"I think maybe there should be a subgroup that runs throughout them all. So that they are hearing, in each of the forums, what is happening in other strands so that everyone is aware of what is going on. That bit of joined-up thinking is missing." Interview 16, project leader in a local youth service.

The importance of senior decision makers from different organisations was stressed.

“It’s so important to have senior managers supportive.” Interview 2, public representative.

“The good thing, is that it has the backing of the city council.” Interview 3, community representative.

“That means asking for Dublin City Council, Tusla and Guards to really play with us on solving these problems. We need a cohesive response. Often they [the statutory organisations] just disappear. We are lucky that the personalities in those organisations are brilliant. They work very closely with us all the time.” Interview 11, community development worker.

“But senior people in city council are also going [retiring]. It is regrettable, but you just have to manage that. In time, for this to be effective, it needs to be more than just about individuals. But you always need personalities to drive it, and others to enable it. I have confidence that this is significantly on people’s radar, and it won’t be allowed fall away.” Interview 13, member of An Garda Síochána.

There were concerns about the lack of resources for the project.

“The coordinator is only working two and a half days a week. If the project is going to scale up, there needs to be a team working on this across Dublin South Central.” Interview 4, member of Building Community Resilience steering committee.

“The shortcomings are funding and bodies. Do we have the capacity to do the work? You need funding to build capacity. But where is the funding going to come from? Where does the money go? Is it the area that shouts the loudest?” Interview 18, Tusla staff member.

“...while Peter is doing [the Community Crime Impact Assessments], it still needs to be resourced on a permanent basis.” Interview 8, member of local policing forum.

Early intervention was an area that the project could work on in the future.

“There’s not enough focus on early intervention... [That] could be remedied in the future if the project continues to go well.” Interview 1, Dublin City Council official.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE PROJECT

### *Ongoing commitment from key agencies and steering committee members*

The Building Community Resilience project is undergoing some significant changes in staff at the moment. Mary Taylor and Brendan Kenny from Dublin City Council both retired in the autumn of 2021. Mary Taylor was the chair of the steering committee, and Brendan Kenny was the deputy chief executive of the city council, and a strong supporter of the project. The director of Dublin City Council services on the Southside of the city, Derek Kelly, has taken on the role of chair of the steering committee. The project coordinator, Peter Dorman, will be standing down in the new year, with a new coordinator taking up the role in February.

One of the key strengths of the project has been the management of the project by the coordinator and the support from senior officials from the Gardaí, Dublin City Council and Tusla. Local councillors have also shown commitment to the process, and it's helpful that the Chair of the South Central joint policing committee, Daithí Doolan, is a member of the Building Community Resilience steering committee.

It's inevitable that there will be changes in staffing from the organisations involved in Building Community Resilience from time to time. It's essential, however, for the continued success of the project that as staff move on, they are replaced with someone at the same level of seniority, and that new members of the committee continue to show the same dedication and commitment to the project.

It's encouraging that Derek Kelly has stepped in to take over from Mary Taylor, and that the council have agreed to take on a new coordinator on a four days a week, basis – an increase from the two and a half days per week of the current coordinator. The new coordinator will need help and support from all the steering committee members.

The Health Service Executive (HSE) should be invited to join the Building Community Resilience steering committee. The HSE has a key role to play in providing mental health services; dual diagnosis services; and drug and alcohol treatment services for adults. They also provide vital services for childhood development such as psychological services, speech and language services, and occupational therapy services. The HSE are named in the report on the

Future of Policing in Ireland as a key organisation with a role to play in community safety.

The Department of Education, or the City of Dublin Education and Training Board, should also be invited to join the steering committee. They have a responsibility to support vulnerable young people at risk of being drawn into criminality. They could help identify young people who have been excluded or dropped out of school at an early age, and provide appropriate supports or services for these young people.

***Strong Evidence that the Building Community Resilience Project Complements Existing Services and Approaches, or Fills in Gaps Where No Service is Being Provided***

From the start, Building Community Resilience has worked with or supported existing services rather than setting up a range of new services. For example, Strand 1 is about supporting the existing local policing forums.

In Strand 2, Building Community Resilience has partnered with the existing Dublin 8/12 Restorative Practice project to promote the uptake of restorative practice. Together, they have promoted the idea of developing a cluster of restorative practice in South Inchicore. A similar approach is starting in Drimnagh.

In dealing with street based antisocial behaviour and drug dealing in Strand 3, Building Community Resilience is working with nine youth services in the Canal's area to try to develop a new outreach service to deal with the problem of antisocial behaviour moving along the canal and the Luas line. New outreach services are beginning to emerge through collaboration among the existing youth projects. While further services are still required, any new service will not be replicating existing services, but will be filling an identified gap in the needs of the young people in the area.

Strand 3 has also developed the Grappling with Complex Problems network to help service providers come together to look at the issue of youth crime and identify new ways to work together to tackle the issues.

Strand 4 is a Garda-led approach for targeting criminal network organisers. It's not a new approach, but it has a new focus on those network organisers that are causing most harm within their communities.

Strand 5 is about working with national policymakers to ensure that the voice of the local community is heard by decision makers and that the experience

gained by the Building Community Resilience project helps to shape new policies. This is not a duplication of existing service, but rather feeding into the policymaking process.

### ***Five Strand Approach***

There is broad support for the five strand approach from those interviewed for this evaluation. The strands work well together and cover most of the important areas that affect the quality of life of the local community. With strong support from Tusla, a new strand is emerging on trauma-informed approaches to working with people who have suffered from severe childhood trauma.

One area that is not well covered by the current approach is a prevention strategy. Can Building Community Resilience do more to prevent childhood trauma, and improve infant mental health? The illegal drugs trade is so lucrative that we can't stop people from selling drugs<sup>125</sup>. But we can help to reduce the number of people using drugs to self-medicate to cope with the traumas they have suffered in childhood. Tusla has recently expanded its Dockland ABC early childhood programme into the South West Inner City. This is a very positive development. But Building Community Resilience could support new initiatives in this area.

An example of a project that might work well with the Building Community Resilience approach is the Infant Parent Support Work project in Ballymun. This project works with parents who have problems with drug or alcohol use, and it supports them through pregnancy and for the first two years of their babies' lives<sup>126</sup>. An evaluation of this project is being conducted at the end of 2021 and should be available early in the new year. In this author's experience, this project reaches those parents who most need support and helps them link in with available supports and services. Many of these parents are often afraid to seek help, so the support they receive can make a profound difference for the parents and their children.

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<sup>125</sup> Werb, D., Rowell, G., Guyatt, G., Kerr, T., Montaner, J., & Wood, E. (2011). Effect of drug law enforcement on drug market violence: A systematic review. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 22(2), 87-94. Available at: [https://www.hri.global/files/2011/03/25/ICSDP\\_Violence\\_and\\_Enforcement\\_Report\\_March\\_2011.pdf](https://www.hri.global/files/2011/03/25/ICSDP_Violence_and_Enforcement_Report_March_2011.pdf)

<sup>126</sup> Ballymun Youth Action Project (2021) Infant Parent Support Project. Available at: <https://byap.ie/infant-parent-support-project>

### ***Geographical spread of the project***

Building Community Resilience was set up in response to the four local policing forums in Dublin South Central coming together to support each other, and to advocate for extra resources.

While strand 1 gives support to all four of the local policing forums, strands 2, 3 and 4 concentrate on the Canals area and Dublin 8. The restorative practice project is focused on developing a restorative practice cluster in South Inchicore, with a second cluster starting in Drimnagh. Strand 3, is focusing on antisocial behaviour along the Canal and the Luas line, and Strand 4 is focusing on criminal network organisers in the Dublin 8 region.

The Ballyfermot/Chapelizod local policing forum has significant problems with antisocial behaviour and criminality in parts of its catchment area. Building Community Resilience has carried out a Community Crime Impact Assessment in a high crime area of Ballyfermot/Chapelizod. But there has been less attention from the other strands.

Before Building Community Resilience was set up, the current coordinator worked in the Dublin 8 area, and had built up strong relationships with local Gardaí, Dublin City Council, community organisations and the local community. In the short time that the Building Community Resilience project has been running, it made sense to build on these relationships to get demonstration projects up and running. In the future, however, more attention will be needed for Dublin 12, and in particular for Ballyfermot/Chapelizod. The Chief Superintendent from the Dublin South Central Division has been on the steering committee since the start of the project. In December 2021, the Chief Superintendents from the Dublin Western Division and the Dublin Southern Division agreed to join the Building Community Resilience steering committee. This commitment from Gardaí at such a senior rank is very significant, and should help to improve the geographical spread of the project.

### ***Measuring Progress***

Measuring levels of crime in a community is challenging. Police statistics are widely regarded as a poor measure of real crime levels for several reasons<sup>127</sup>:

- The public do not always report crimes when they are a victim or a witness.

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<sup>127</sup> Carl B. Klockars (1999) Some Really Cheap Ways of Measuring What Really Matters. In R. H. Langworthy (Eds.), *Measuring What Matters: Proceedings from the Policing Research Institute Meetings*. Washington DC: National Institute of Justice. Available at: <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/179856-179864NCJRS.pdf>

- The police have discretion on what they record as crime.
- Police statistics on the level of certain types of crime, such as drug offences, corruption, receiving stolen property and other such crimes, do not reflect the actual level of the crime in the community, but are more reflective of the level of police resources dedicated to detecting these crimes.
- Some unknown proportion of crimes are never discovered.

In many high-crime, disadvantaged communities, crime reporting can be particularly low if residents are afraid to report crime, or if they believe little will be done<sup>128</sup>.

The Community Crime Impact Assessment can help get around the under-reporting of crime, by getting a sense of what is really going on from residents and workers in the community. Repeating Community Crime Impact Assessments will give a sense of progress, stagnation or setbacks.

Victimisation surveys carried out in high-crime areas can help quantify the amount of crime in an area. Repeating these surveys can help assess trends over time. The CSO have been carrying out crime and victimisation surveys every few years since 1998. Their surveys would be a good template to use, so that local data could be compared to national figures. It would be even better to have the CSO carry out the surveys in the affected communities in a parallel process to their national surveys. In addition to getting a sense of the true level of crime in the affected communities, these surveys can help identify the reasons that crime is not reported.

Quality of life surveys should also be carried out regularly. Antisocial behaviour and crime can have a major impact on people's quality of life.

Other sources of data can help paint a more accurate picture of the levels of crime, such as the number of reports of antisocial behaviour to Dublin City Council, and the number of transfer requests to Dublin City Council that are lodged based on antisocial behaviour.

Another source of data that could be used is the number of injuries resulting from violence that are recorded in hospitals, such as St. James' Hospital. Do trends in violent injuries in the hospital follow trends in reporting of violent

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<sup>128</sup> Johnny Connolly and Jane Mulcahy (2019) Building Community Resilience. Responding to criminal and anti-social behaviour networks across Dublin South Central: a research study. Dublin: Four Forum Network and Dublin City Council. Available at: <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/31426/1/building-community-resilience.pdf>

incidents to the Gardaí? If there is a spike in violent incidents in hospitals, but no corresponding increase in reporting to the Gardaí, it may indicate that victims are afraid to report. The Dublin City joint policing committee could work with the HSE to obtain these data from all the hospitals in the city.

One helpful way to assess the behaviour, emotional strengths and relationships of children is to carry out a Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire<sup>129</sup>. This standardised questionnaire has been widely used in communities in the UK and has also been used in Ballymun<sup>130</sup>. Repeating this questionnaire over time could flag problems, and show where interventions are necessary.

The success of the restorative practice strand can be assessed by tracking the number of organisations that have embedded restorative practice in their work. If these organisations are working with young people, it would be helpful if they would track indicators such as the number of behavioural incidents in the organisation; the number of conflicts between young people and adults; and the number of temporary or permanent exclusions.

Strand 3 is seeking to respond to street-base antisocial behaviour and drug dealing. The success of this strand should be measured on how safe the local community feel, using the surveys discussed above.

Only a few criminal organisers are targeted in Strand 4. The key thing to track for this project is the level of violent crime in the community. A sustained increase in violence may be an indication that the strand is causing unintended consequences.

### ***Funding***

While the Building Community Resilience project has made considerable progress over the last 18 months since the steering committee first met in June 2020, the project is still finding its feet with many of the initiatives bedding in.

It is too early to judge the success of Building Community Resilience. It is clear, however, that the project is building structures and working in a way that aligns with national policy and should be of great benefit to the communities in Dublin South Central. As projects come to maturity, further evaluations will be needed. But at this stage, the project shows great potential.

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<sup>129</sup> McKeown, K. and Haase, T., (2006), The Mental Health of Children and the Factors Which Influence It: A Study of Families in Ballymun. Main Report Available from Ballymun Drugs and Alcohol Task Force.

<sup>130</sup> Same source

Funding has been secured for a new coordinator for 2022. Dublin City Council should commit to funding for at least three years to give this promising project a chance to make a real difference to the lives of the people living in the affected communities.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Dublin City Council, the Gardaí and Tusla should continue to commit senior staff to engage with the project.
- The HSE should be invited to get involved with Building Community Resilience, and a senior staff member should join the steering committee.
- Likewise, a senior member of the Department of Education, or the City of Dublin Education and Training Board should join the steering committee.
- Building Community Resilience should look at the feasibility of starting a new prevention strand. The Infant Parent Support Work project from Ballymun could be a useful model.
- The work of Building Community Resilience needs to be spread more evenly around the four local forums. Particular attention is needed for some high crime locations in the Ballyfermot/Chapelizod local policing forum area.
- A range of surveys should be carried out, and data collected from a variety of sources to assess levels of crime and quality of life in affected communities across Dublin South Central. These surveys should be repeated and data collected regularly to assess trends, and to compare results with other communities.
- Work on responding to network organisers should proceed with caution. Levels of violence, however, should be closely monitored to ensure there are no unintended consequences.
- Dublin City Council should commit to funding Building Community Resilience for at least three years to give this promising project a chance to make a real difference to the lives of the people living in the affected communities.



## **APPENDIX 1: PHONE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### ***Introductory Questions***

- Do I have permission to use anonymous quotes from you in my report?
- Tell me about your background
- Can you describe the situation in the community?

### ***Overall Building Community Resilience Questions***

- What's your connection to BCR?
- How do you feel the BCR project is going broadly?
- Is BCR well run?
- Do the five strands make sense/Do they work well together?
- Do they compliment existing projects/work in the community?
- Do they duplicate existing projects/work in the community?
- What are the shortcomings/struggles?

### ***Local Policing Forums***

- How is the support for the local policing forums going?
- What's going well about that programme?
- What are the shortcomings?

### ***Restorative Practice***

- How is the restorative practice going?
- What's going well about that programme?
- What are the shortcomings?

### ***Response to street-based ASB***

- How is the support for the response to street-based ASB going?
- What's going well about that programme?
- What are the shortcomings?

### ***Response to Network Organisers***

- How is the support for the response to the Network Organisers going?
- What's going well about that programme?
- What are the shortcomings?

***Policy***

- How is the support for the policy aspect going?
- What's going well about that programme?
- What are the shortcomings?





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