

Inner City Organisations Network
(ICON)

Progress Report 1996

1. Introduction

ICON is an umbrella organisation which aims to link up voluntary and community groups operating in the north east inner city of Dublin as well as individuals working and living in the area. The main functions of ICON can be described as a source of information, a forum for debate and local policy making and a means of lobbying issues as they arise within the community. The wide range of organisations involved in ICON is reflected within its nine working groups which include economic development; education and training; youth, childcare and family support; women; residents and tenants; sports and leisure; elderly; arts and culture; and drugs. As a local network ICON is recognised by the Dublin Inner City Partnership and other statutory organisations including the Eastern Health Board, FAS and the City of Dublin Vocational Educational Committee.

As a local network, ICON aims to bring community groups together but it also promotes 'partnership' between state, non-state, business and community groups in the area. In keeping with such a strategy it has been the main force behind the initiation of the Inter Agency Drugs Project and the Integrated Education and Family Support Initiative. Both are operated as independent limited companies and are concerned with developing integrated locally based responses in relation to drugs and the youth respectively. They include the involvement of a wide range of state agencies, government departments, business people, voluntary and community groups, local public representatives and many more. Their aim is to develop coherent policies and strategies which can be implemented at a local level while taking into account the particular needs of the north east inner city.

2. Report on icon's Activities for 1996

Working groups

Drugs working group

In August 1995 ICON initiated a Drugs Crisis Campaign in the north east inner city and this continued during 1996. Since the campaign began, which has included lobbying government departments, public meetings, weekly meetings of the drugs working group, the following progress has been made, at least some of which can be attributed to the success of the campaign:

- Initiation of the Inter Agency Drugs Project; October 1995. In relation to the drugs issue in the area ICON also links into the Inter Agency Drugs Project and the Dublin City-wide Drugs Crisis Campaign.
- Initiation of the Dublin Drugs Crisis Campaign; October 1995
- ICON was represented on the three working groups within the Eastern Health Board Regional Committee on Drugs - treatment, education/prevention and rehabilitation.
- A Ministerial Task Force was set up under Mr. Pat Rabbittee T.D., Minister of State to the Government to review present arrangements for a co-ordinated approach in relation to demand reduction. ICON has made a submission to this task force.

Treatment

- City Clinic now open 7 days a week.
- City Clinic will open from 5.00 p.m. to 7.00 p.m. specifically for young users smoking heroin to offer detox and counselling.
- Mobile clinic service began in November.
- A young users programme set up within the North Inner City.
- A Relative Support Group has been initiated and the Eastern Health Board have made a commitment to support this.
- Plans are being made to introduce an additional clinic into the area in an attempt to address the waiting list.

Education

- Three workers appointed within the Eastern Health Board to develop culturally appropriate education programmes.
- “On my Own Two Feet” is being adapted for primary schools and is being piloted in four schools in the area.
- A National Media Campaign has been launched.

Rehabilitation

- SAOL Project?

Street Campaign:

- Local committees have been set up in numerous areas in the north east inner city.
- ICON is committed to supporting local committees to address the drug problem in a peaceful way. Over the past 6 months large public meetings and marches have given some indication of the frustration which communities are experiencing due to drug dealing on the streets and the lack of treatment facilities available. icon’s drug crisis campaign has included weekly public meetings and marches in an attempt to bring people together to tackle the drugs problem in their area in a peaceful way.

Law and Order

- Bill on the seizure of assets.
- Drug free unit in Mountjoy.
- Extra medical staff for prisons.
- A co-ordinated committee involving Social Welfare, the Revenue Commission and Gardai has been set up.
- Nora Owen T.D. Minister for Justice on 22nd July 1996 announced that there would be a treatment facility for drug addicted prisoners at Mountjoy Prison’s Health Care Unit (initially for 6 people).
- Proposals have been agreed which will allow for Estate Management procedures to be developed to evict and refuse to house drug pushers.

Community and Tenants

Since it was set up in 1992 ICON has constantly attempted to encourage the development and participation of community and tenants groups in the area. This has proved to be extremely difficult but in the last few months the response of communities to the drugs issue has provided a unique opportunity to encourage the formation of local committees within specific flat complexes and areas. The issues concerning these groups at present range from dealing with the drugs issue in their area, developing ideas around setting up youth activities, educational issues, insurance, funding etc. Some of them have links with the Community Section in Dublin Corporation and some have been identified as part of the pilot Estate Management and Tenant Participation Programme to be developed through Dublin Corporation. One of the priorities identified within ICON is to provide information, links and support for these newly formed groups so that they can identify their own needs for their own area at a very local level and have a meaningful role in terms of participation and decision making.

Representatives from the local committees meet with ICON on a weekly basis. Existing projects in the area and working groups within ICON have expressed an interest in attending these meetings to provide information about what they do in an attempt to ensure that as many people as possible are aware of the resources available to them within the community. ICON are also organising a residential week-end in February for representatives from the local committees so that experiences and information can be shared. This will also give some of the less organised local committees a chance to begin to explore the benefits of planning in a more strategic and long-term way which could potentially provide opportunities to access more substantial funding in the future as well as create local job opportunities.

Social Economy Working Group and Jobs Initiative

Unemployment is one of the main issues which was identified within the ICON Area Action Plan. ICON is involved in attempting to ensure that social and economic issues within the north east inner city area are addressed in a number of ways.

1. As part of the Jobs Initiative ICON was invited by Dublin Inner City Partnership to become one of the managing agents. With the assistance of Oideach Obair ICON placed a bid and were successful in securing 75 jobs. Recruitment for these jobs is presently taking place.
 - Jobs were identified in consultation with projects at a local level.
 - A limited company, The Employment Network (TEN), is in the process of being set up to manage the initiative and will include 6 representatives from ICON, a representative from each of the projects taking on a worker and 6 statutory representatives. At present ICON is facilitating the setting up TEN and liaising with those involved in TEN regarding development of structures which will allow TEN to operate.
 - Jobs are being advertised and recruited through the Local Employment Service (LES).
2. ICON continues to be involved in the work of DICP which allows input into attempts to influence existing budgets and policy, in particular Community Employment, Local Employment Services, Enterprise, Education and Training and Social Development. Over the past couple of months the priority has been the establishment of the Local Employment Service. This is designed to ensure that local people get access to jobs in the local economy.
3. ICON is represented on the Customs House Docks Development Authority -Community Liaison Committee. The committee has been working on a number of issues, in particular local labour for Jury's Hotel, the restructuring of the North Wall Community Training Workshop and a mentoring system between the companies in the Financial Services Centre and the local schools. A major issue is the new Docklands Development Authority and what amount of real participation local communities will have in drawing up the plan.

Community College

Due to the interest of local people over the last 10 to 15 years the proposed community college for the north inner city is due to be opened in Sean McDermot Street in 2 years. The two existing schools in the area (Parnell and North Strand) will amalgamate into one. ICON made a submission to the VEC emphasising that the community college should be an educational resource to the community and it should

have a role to play in addressing educational deprivation within the area. This submission highlighted the need for:

- Community involvement/participation.
- Special education support team.
- Support for teachers.
- Creche facilities.
- Adult and community education.
- Enhancing community resources.
- Links with youth services, first and third level education, gardai, training - workshops, local business community etc.
- Curriculum development.

ICON is attempting to raise awareness of the community college within the area, establish a cross-sectoral working group to address the issue (including representatives from TUI, business sector, statutory sector, VEC, local projects etc.) and develop ideas regarding ensuring community participation takes place and educational disadvantage is addressed. A seminar on the community college is being planned for March 1997. ICON has also been asked to put forward a nomination for the Advisory Council which has been set up by the VEC for the two amalgamating schools.

Women's Group

The women's group secured funding from Combat Poverty Agency to undertake a piece of research. This research focused on women's groups in the north east inner city and a report was drawn up. One of the main findings which came out of the report was that there was interest in considering the possibility of setting up a women's network in the area. The findings of the research were presented at a seminar in December 1996. Combat Poverty took part in this seminar and it was agreed that ICON should facilitate the setting up of a women's network in the area. This will involve further discussions and meetings to identify what type of a network the women's groups in the area are interested in i.e. network based on information sharing, sharing of resources, issue based or a combination of all three.

Youth, Family, Childcare

The Youth, Family, Childcare working group meet on a monthly basis and includes teachers, home school liaison teachers, Comhairle Ie Leas Oige, those working in projects in the area etc. Some of the main issues with which this group have been concerned with are Juvenile Justice Bill, Community College, Mandatory Reporting, early school leaving and have also been very involved in the research being undertaken by the Integrated Services Initiative.

Environment and Planning/Sports and Leisure

The Environment and Planning/Sports and Leisure Working Group was reactivated on a regular basis at the end of 1996. They are continuing to meet regularly and attempting to address issues associated with plans for Fairview Park, community college and the New Docklands Authority which is being set up. Issues of concern include adequate facilities in the area, green spaces, community consultation in relation to the proposed North Wall tunnel and plans being developed by new Docklands Authority.

Elderly

The ICON elderly working group continue to link in with elderly in the area and organise a number of activities including weekends away, Christmas Party etc. 2 workers have recently been appointed to this group under the Jobs Initiative and a work plan is in the process of being drawn up.

Arts and Culture

The Arts and Culture working group was involved in organising the Monto Festival during the summer and also involved in organising a street pageant at Hallowe'en.

Dublin Drugs Crisis Campaign

ICON was instrumental in the setting up of the Dublin City-wide Drugs Crisis Campaign in October 1995 and has remained closely involved. The main aims of the Dublin City-wide Drugs Crisis Campaign are to link up organisations fighting back against the drugs epidemic; provide a forum for discussion and policy formulation; share information and experiences; campaign for resources. Throughout the past year ICON has:

- responded to demands to support other communities at public meetings across the city in relation to the drugs issue.
- been involved in the organisation of events under taken by the City-wide which have included:
 - * Seminar and policy document: *Responding Together: A realistic Community & Trade Union Response to the Drugs Crisis*
 - * Lobbying event in September 1996 where TDs were asked to meet with Dublin City-wide Drugs Crisis Campaign in Buswells Hotel on the day the Dail was reconvened in response to Veronica Guerin's death.
 - * Seminar on *Treatment: Tackling the Demand. Heroin and Other Opiates* December 1996
- been involved in the initial set up stages of setting up Dublin City-wide Drugs Crisis Campaign Ltd. which will employ a project co-ordinator, 4 outreach workers and an administrator. This project is being funded by Department of Social Welfare under the Community Development Programme as a specialist support agency.

ICON Seminar

ICON holds a yearly conference. In 1996 this conference *Living in the City: Key Issues for Urban Community Development* took place in Newcastle, Co. Down. Workshops focused on:

- * Changing Roles of Men and Women
- * Problem Drug Use - An Integrated Response
- * Linking the Social Economy to Urban Renewal Initiatives
- * Juvenile Justice - A Community Response

A report is presently being drawn up as a follow up to this conference.

Evaluation

ICON secured funding from Combat Poverty to initiate an evaluation with the help of CAN to establish what has been achieved, review structures and look at future direction of ICON. This evaluation is presently in its final stages.

3. Management, Organisation and Operational Structures

The structure of ICON consists of a steering committee and the nine working groups outlined above. The steering committee is made up of two members from each of the working groups, 2 co-chairpersons, 2 co-secretaries, a representative from the Inter Agency Drugs Project, the Integrated Services Initiative, the Dublin City-wide Drugs Crisis Campaign and the ICON co-ordinator. The structure of ICON allows for flexibility within working groups to organise meetings as necessary. The steering committee meets monthly and a general takes place once every three months. This, together with an AGM and an annual conference (to which statutory representatives and experts in various fields are invited to take part in a number of workshops around a specific theme with people living and working in the north east inner city of Dublin), help ensure that communication within the organisation is enhanced and that issues relevant to the community are kept on the agenda. The organisational structure on ICON is a flexible one which attempts to “avoid a community organisation becoming over-bureaucratic and less empowering for its constituent members” (ICON Area Action Plan 1994 p. 88).

The present co-chairs and co-secretaries were elected at the ICON AGM in September 1996. The ICON co-ordinator was employed in June 1996.