

Developing Integrated Policing

The Blanchardstown  
Community Policing Forum

Prepared by **Johnny Connolly**  
on behalf of The Blanchardstown Local Drugs Task Force

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***By Johnny Connolly  
November 2004***

## **Contents**

Section One –	Overview and Recommendations
Section Two –	Drugs, Crime and Community Spirit in Blanchardstown
Section Three –	The Community Policing Idea
Section Four –	Current Developments in Community Policing
Section Five –	The Blanchardstown Community Policing Forum
Section Six –	Monitoring and Evaluation
Section Seven -	Conclusion

The process of consultation and development of this document was led by the justice and supply sub-group of the Blanchardstown Local Drug Task Force and ratified by the full membership of task force.

### **Blanchardstown Local Drug Task Force Members List**

Ann Losty	Blakestown Rep
Bernie Clarke	Corduff Rep
Brian Santry	Probation & Welfare Services
Claire Devaney	Huntstown Rep
Fergus Mc Cabe	NDST
Joe Doyle	TF Coordinator
John Cahill	Blanchardstown Youth Services
Mandy Mc Entee	Advocacy Rep
Margaret Richardson	Elected Rep
Michael O Donovan	Elected Rep
Mark Costello	Hartstown Rep
Martin Mc Entee	Co Dublin VEC
Moira Hyland Doyle	Voluntary Rep
Marian Horkan	NAHB
Niall Mulligan	CDT Rep
Olive McGrath	Mountview Rep
Paul Hatton	Coolmine House
Peter Hughes	Gardá Rep
Phillip Keegan	TF Chairperson
Rosaleen Kinane	FAS
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## **Foreword**

**On behalf of the Blanchardstown Drugs Task Force, I very much welcome the publication of this report. Following on from the Developing Integrated Policing Seminar, held in April of this year, the report represents the next stage in the establishment of the Blanchardstown Community Policing Forum.**

**It is broadly acknowledged in the community that the serious issues relating to crime and anti-social behaviour will not be resolved through community policing alone. There is an ongoing need for youth facilities as well as drug prevention, education, treatment and rehabilitation. However, there is a strong view that there is an urgent need for a co-ordinated response, involving the community and the state agencies, to these serious problems, which have such a corrosive effect on community life.**

**With regard to policing in general the Garda Síochána Bill, 2004 is currently making its way through the Oireachtas. This is an important development in policing in Ireland and should be welcomed. Of equal importance to this legislative process however, is the practical experience being gained on the ground as communities and state agencies seek to develop joint solutions to the problems that affect us all. It is to be hoped that whatever community policing system emerges from the Oireachtas debate on the Garda Síochána Bill, it will be one, which will learn from, and build upon, this local experience.**

**I would like to thank all those involved in bringing the Blanchardstown Community Policing Forum process this far.**

**I would also like to thank the author of the report, Johnny Connolly.**

**Phillip Keegan  
Chairperson Blanchardstown Local Drug Task Force**

**Developing Integrated Policing**

**The Blanchardstown Community Policing Forum**

***By Johnny Connolly***

***22 November 2004***

## Contents

*Section One – Overview and Recommendations*

*Section Two – Drugs, Crime and Community Spirit in Blanchardstown*

*Section Three – The Community Policing Idea*

*Section Four – Current Developments in Community Policing*

*Section Five – The Blanchardstown Community Policing Forum*

*Section Six – Monitoring and Evaluation*

*Section Seven - Conclusion*

### Section One

#### Overview

*The Blanchardstown Developing Integrated Policing Seminar was held on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2004 and was organised by the Blanchardstown Local Drug Task Force in association with the Greater Blanchardstown Response to Drugs, The Combat Poverty Agency and Blanchardstown RAPID (Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development).*

*In light of the proposal to establish a Community Policing Forum in Blanchardstown, the purpose of the seminar was to consider the implications of the provisions of the Garda Síochána Bill 2004, which is currently before the Oireachtas, in terms of local policing needs.*

*The seminar heard presentations from Michel McDowell T.D, Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform; Garda Commissioner Noel Conroy; Denis Brudley, Vice*

*Chairman of the Northern Ireland Policing Board; William Soffe, Fingal County Council; Ivana Bacik, Reid Professor of Criminal Law, Criminology and Penology at Trinity College, Dublin; and Ann Losty, local resident and chairperson of the Greater Blanchardstown Response to Drugs and the Mulhuddart/ Corduff Community Drugs Team and community representative on the Blanchardstown Local Drugs Task Force. The seminar also received contributions from the floor, from elected public representatives, a local youth group and other local residents who were in attendance.*

*Following on from the seminar, this report was commissioned by the Blanchardstown Drugs Task Force to identify and make recommendations as to the next stage in the process of establishing a Community Policing Forum in Blanchardstown.*

### **Summary of Recommendations**

*Recommendation One: The Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform should clarify the status of the community policing fora currently in existence or in the process of being established, in relation to the provisions of the Garda Síochána Bill.*

*Recommendation Two: The Garda Síochána Bill 2004, should build upon the practical local experience being gained through the establishment of community policing fora in Blanchardstown and elsewhere.*

*Recommendation Three: In light of the broad support for the development of a coordinated response to policing and estate management issues, the Blanchardstown Local Drug Task Force should now oversee the establishment of a 'Blanchardstown Community Policing Forum - Management Board' to drive the process forward.*

*Recommendation Four: The precise membership of the Management Board should be considered and agreed by the Task Force. However, the membership of the Board should include:*

- *Elected public representatives;*
- *Other community representatives to ensure broad community representation;*
- *A representative of the Local Drug Task Force;*
- *Two members of An Garda Síochána, not below the rank of Inspector. One from the drug unit and one from the Community Policing Unit;*
- *Fingal County Council, area manager;*
- *A representative from the Probation and Welfare Service*



***Recommendation Five: Following a proposal from the proposed Management Board, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform should provide the necessary funding to establish the Blanchardstown CPF. Alternatively, funding should be made available through the National Drug Strategy Process.***

***Recommendation Six: The Management Board should identify a suitable Chairperson.***

***Recommendation Seven: The Management Board should identify a suitable local CPF coordinator with adequate administrative assistance to liaise between the Management Board and the local community. The Board should provide ongoing active support to this individual***

***Recommendation Eight: The Management Board should review and agree the principles underlying the proposed Community Policing Forum and its Aims and Objectives. It is important that the Aims and Objectives are realistic and that they can be subject to evaluation.***

***Recommendation Nine: The Management Board should establish a clear action plan for the establishment of the Blanchardstown Community Policing Forum. The state agencies should consider this action plan when developing their own local plans.***

***Recommendation Ten: Local concerns and priorities in relation to policing and estate management issues should be identified and prioritised in the Community Policing Forum process***

***Recommendation Eleven: The Management Board should establish a system of communication to inform residents of developments in relation to the CPF and other related matters and to agree a process of information exchange between the various stakeholders.***

***Recommendation Twelve: The Management Board should establish transparent financial accountability processes and lobby for adequate financial, administrative and human resources.***

***Recommendation Thirteen: The Management Board should ensure that the Community Policing Forum process is inclusive. A particularly important issue here relates to young people, local minority groups such as travellers and other ethnic groups (asylum seekers, refugees, immigrants, migrant workers and non-Irish nationals)***

***Recommendation Fourteen: The management Board should establish in-built monitoring procedures and identify other appropriate indicators to facilitate the evaluation of the Community Policing Forum process.***

## Section Two

### Drugs, Crime and Community Spirit in Blanchardstown

*In its annual report for 2003, the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), which monitors the implementation of the United Nations drug conventions, highlighted the importance of understanding the relationship between drug abuse, crime and violence at the micro-level as a means of developing practical and sustainable responses. The harm caused to communities 'by the involvement of both adults and young people in drug-related crime and violence is immense'. The report describes the way in which drug-related crime at a micro-level can lead to the creation of 'no-go areas', the development of a culture of fear and the general erosion of what it terms the 'social capital' of communities. 'Social capital' is defined as 'the norms, or 'laws', that exist in social relations, and through social institutions, that instil foundations for trust, obligation and reciprocity'.*

*A number of recent Irish studies have sought to provide this micro perspective on the drug problem and have shown the way in which the problems associated with drug trafficking and drug use impact disproportionately on certain sections of the population or in specific locations<sup>2</sup>. Studies on drug availability suggest that many drug users have relatively easy access to drugs in their own areas. Also, there is significant evidence to show that the drugs phenomenon has undermined the somewhat romantic historical notion that people do not commit crime in the areas in which they live.*

*A recent study commissioned by the Combat Poverty Agency and the Katharine Howard Foundation used a variety of research techniques to assess the living conditions in Fatima Mansions, South Fingals and Fettercairn, Tallaght – all in Dublin; Deanrock estate in Togher, Grk, Moyross in Limerick, Muirhevnanor in Dundalk and Cranmore in Sligo<sup>3</sup>. The authors concluded: 'Social disorder has the greatest impact on residents' quality of life, through direct experience of anti-social*

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<sup>1</sup> International Narcotics Control Board (2004) *Report 2003* United Nations Publications. Page 6.

<sup>2</sup> For a forthcoming overview see Connolly (2005) *Drugs and crime*. In Connolly J, Keane M, Long J, Pike B and Sinclair H, *Overview of drug issues in Ireland* Drug Misuse Research Division, Health Research Board, Dublin.

<sup>3</sup> Fahey, T. (ed.) (1999). *Social housing in Ireland: A study of success, failure and lessons learned*. The Katherine Howard Foundation and Combat Poverty Agency, Dublin.

*behaviour, a general loss of communal space and a sense of personal safety, and negative labelling of estates in the wider community' (Page xx).*

*Another important factor which arises in this area and which is of particular relevance to the task of establishing sustainable local responses such as Community Policing Fora relates to the way in which fears, which can become associated with local drug markets, drug-related crime and anti-social behaviour, can operate as a major disincentive to community willingness to assist in policy responses.*

*Two surveys conducted in the North Inner City area of Dublin asked for reasons why local residents might not report a crime to the Garda Síochána<sup>4</sup>. From a range of optional answers, by far the most common reason for not reporting a crime to the Gardaí was the fear of reprisal from those locally involved in criminal activity. This finding reveals both the insidious impact of crime, particularly drug-related crime, on community life and the challenges posed to responses such as community policing which must involve community participation to be effective.*

*An impressive body of recent research and information has been compiled in Blanchardstown in relation to the RAPID process<sup>5</sup>. In particular, the Blanchardstown Rapid Needs Analysis surveys conducted in Blakestown, Corduff, Mountview and Mulhuddart in 2002 and 2003, provide a sound basis of local information upon which the Blanchardstown Community Policing Forum can build<sup>6</sup>. A total of 2,022 households (68.8%) participated in the surveys.*

*While these survey findings are not necessarily representative of the Blanchardstown Drug Task Force area as a whole, they do reflect the experiences of a significant proportion of the population. They provide a recent and comprehensive picture of the impact of the problems associated with drug-related crime and anti-social behaviour being experienced by local residents. Furthermore, the high response rates recorded in the surveys indicate the interest local residents have in the future development of their*

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<sup>4</sup> Connolly, J. (2001). *Community Policing Forum Panel Survey: Unpublished*  
Connolly, J. (2003). *Drugs, crime and community in Dublin – Monitoring quality of life in the North Inner City* North Inner City Drugs Task Force, Dublin.

<sup>5</sup> Rourke S (2004) *Blanchardstown Rapid Needs Analysis Report – Blakestown, Corduff, Mountview, Mulhuddart* Blanchardstown RAPID.

<sup>6</sup> Rourke S (2002) *The Mulhuddart Needs Analysis Survey* Mulhuddart Planning and Development Group; Nolan A, Duffy V and Regan C (2003) *The Corduff Needs Analysis Survey*, Corduff Needs Analysis Group; Rourke S (March 2003) *The Mountview Needs Analysis Survey* Mountview Needs Analysis Group; Rourke S (April 2003) *The Blakestown Needs Analysis Survey* Blakestown Needs Analysis Group.

*communities. The surveys findings highlight the urgency of the task at hand and they have also identified areas where improvements can be made thereby providing an important momentum for the establishment of a local CPF.*

*The table below shows the response rates from the four surveys:*

<i>Area</i>	<i>Year of Research</i>	<i>Number of Households</i>	<i>Number of Completed Questionnaires</i>	<i>Percentage of Questionnaires Completed</i>
<i>Mulhuddart</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>540</i>	<i>478</i>	<i>88.5%</i>
<i>Corduff</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>1,263</i>	<i>605</i>	<i>47.9%</i>
<i>Fortlawn/ Whitechapel</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>450</i>	<i>351</i>	<i>78%</i>
<i>Whitechapel/ Sheepmoor</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>686</i>	<i>588</i>	<i>86.7%</i>
<i>Totals</i>		<i>2,939</i>	<i>2,022</i>	<i>68.8%</i>

*Source: Rourke S (2004) p3.*

*All four surveys found that issues relating to safety and security were the most significant concerns/ worries which local people had about living within their own area. Many of these concerns appear to be drug-related. Survey respondents were asked about their perceptions of the area and about their hopes and fears for the future.*

*In particular, the summary report concludes that:*

*“there is a real fear that the drug situation will get worse and that a large number of people will become addicted to drugs unless some urgent remedial actions take place in the next number of years”*

*In Mountview, ‘excessive drinking, drugs, robbed cars/ joyriding, gangs of young people, crime and other anti-social behaviour account for 69.4% of the responses to the question concerning ‘What are the worst things about living in the area?’ In the Corduff survey, community safety and security was ranked number one in terms of the issues concerning local residents. Within this category the four top priorities were: Anti-social behaviour; Crime, vandalism and graffiti; Drug-dealing; and Community Policing respectively.*

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<sup>7</sup> Rourke S (2004) p 29

*The research found that, in the Blanchardstown area there was a perception that the drugs problem was getting out of control and that parents were really worried about their children becoming addicted to drugs. It was concluded:*

*“there has developed a drug culture within which drugs are openly available, where more and more young people are dabbling in drugs, where drug taking is a regular social activity for an increasing number of local residents”<sup>8</sup>*

*A central factor which contributes to the social cohesion of any community relates to the perceptions local residents have about their area and also their willingness to become involved in community activity to assist in overcoming these difficulties. All of the Needs Analysis Surveys referred to the low level of community spirit in these areas – in Mulhuddart 76% of respondents felt that community spirit was poor or very poor; in Fortlawn/ Whitechapel the figure was 60% and in Whitestown/ Sheepmoor 76%.*

*The perceived increase in criminal and anti-social behaviour is seen as a major contributory factor in the decline of the area in recent years and there is a fear that estates will become ‘no-go’ areas. The summary report concludes that there is an urgent need to re-create a greater sense of community spirit and community solidarity in the areas concerned and to reverse the patterns of community decline and disillusionment expressed by many survey respondents.*

*An extremely important and positive survey finding in the context of the proposal to establish a local Community Policing Forum relates to the acknowledgement by the community that local people must play a role in the creation of a solution. In response to the question as to what was needed to make the area a better place to live, the Blanchardstown Needs Analysis Report identifies the presence of:*

*“a strong opinion that local people need to become more involved in activities and developments which affect their own area. Equally, however, there is a clear sense that this community solidarity and community action needs to be accompanied by a corresponding improvement in the services and facilities provided by Government departments and statutory agencies”<sup>9</sup>.*

*Based on an assessment of local participation in volunteer community work, it is estimated from the Mountview survey that over the next 3-5 years, it should be*

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid p 30

<sup>9</sup> Ibid p37

*possible to increase the rates of volunteerism from the current level of 16.5% of households to a figure in excess of 25% However, it is concluded from the Mountview survey that:*

*“the likelihood of these people becoming involved in helping to build up the community spirit in Mountview will be connected to the extent to which outstanding issues/problems within the estate can be satisfactorily resolved – namely, issues/problems relating to crime, anti-social behaviour, a better/cleaner environment and the provision of basic services/facilities. It is considered that if these issues can be resolved or progressed, it will create the context and catalyst for the revival and regeneration of community spirit within the mountview area”<sup>10</sup>.*

*The willingness of local people to participate in efforts to regenerate the area represent an important foundation upon which the Community Policing Forum can build. Its ability to address the problems faced represent the challenges it must confront. We will now consider other recent developments in community policing in Ireland.*

### *Section Three*

#### *The Community Policing Idea*

*Community Policing in practice can mean different things to different people. Throughout the world, there is a range of different models and structures in existence<sup>11</sup>. Essentially however, Community Policing is best defined not in terms of a single structure but as a philosophy. The common themes which can be identified across community policing schemes internationally are:*

- *Problem-solving of non-crime issues;*
- *Partnership between police and public;*
- *New forms of accountability;*
- *Power-sharing between community and police over police decision-making.*

*Community Policing schemes seek to build upon the recognition that the most effective way of addressing local crime problems is for agencies to work in an*

<sup>10</sup> Rourke (March 2003) p20

<sup>11</sup> For a review see Brogden M and Nijhar S.K, (1995) *A bibliography of community policing overseas – A review of origins, diverse practices and problems of implementation* Institute of Criminology and Criminal Justice, The Queen's University of Belfast, Northern Ireland Office.

*integrated way and to build upon the informal mechanisms of social control which already exist in communities. The establishment of local drugs task forces was partly prompted by the acknowledgement by the 1996 Ministerial Task Force of the need to establish structures for the effective coordinated delivery of services at local level.*

*However, in local areas where there has traditionally been poor police/community relations, community policing schemes to be successful must seek to overcome those difficulties so that they can tap into the existing social control networks.*

*The establishment of a successful CPF is something which has the potential to bring great benefits not only to the local community, but to the state agencies and to the wider Dublin community. As far as the local community is concerned, it does not have the resources or the capability of resolving the problems it confronts without significant state support. On the other hand with regard to policing, it is widely acknowledged within Policing Studies literature that successful policing is almost impossible without active public support.*

*A number of studies based on crime survey data have led to the estimation that reports from the public make up 80 per cent of all recorded crime. The police are dependant on the public as witnesses and in terms of reporting and investigating crimes. Also, the changing nature of drug dealing in recent times, particularly with the onset of mobile phones, where the trade has become less visible, means that the policing of drug dealing has become increasingly focussed on the need for adequate information and intelligence from the public. Poor police/community relations can operate as a barrier to the free flow of such information and therefore directly impact on the effectiveness of the police.*

*The development of Community Policing Forums can be seen therefore as something which can be of benefit to all concerned. They therefore make sense in theory. However we have considered some reasons why the public might be unwilling to report drug-related crimes to the police. For example, fear of reprisal from those involved in the drug trade operates as a significant disincentive to reporting such offences to the Gardaí. In order to overcome such barriers community policing initiatives must be seen to be operating in the interests of the broader community,*

*reflecting the community's concerns and priorities and making a difference to their quality of life.*

*We will now look at two relevant examples where community policing approaches are progressing in the face of significant challenges.*

### *Policing developments in Northern Ireland*

*The Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 led to the establishment of the current policing structures in the North of Ireland. This followed on from recommendations of the Patten Commission on policing, which was established as a result of the Belfast Agreement<sup>12</sup>. The Patten report identified the development of community policing as central to its proposed reforms. This was defined as: "Policing with the community...the police participating in the community and responding to the needs of that community, and the community participating in its own policing and supporting the police"<sup>13</sup>.*

*Among the structures established under the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 are the Policing Board and District Policing Partnership Boards<sup>14</sup>.*

*The Northern Ireland Policing Board is made up of nineteen members. Ten are members of the Northern Ireland Assembly and nine are independent members. All members are appointed by the UK Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The job of the Policing Board is to oversee policing and ensure that the service is effective and efficient. The Policing Board is not controlled by Government and has strong independent powers to carry out its work. The relevant specific responsibilities of the Policing Board include:*

- to hold the Chief Constable to account for his actions and those of his staff;*
- to set objectives and targets for police performance (following consultation with the Chief Constable) and to monitor progress against these;*
- to monitor crime trends and patterns;*

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<sup>12</sup> The Report of the Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland (1999) *A New Beginning: Policing in Northern Ireland*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid* p40.

<sup>14</sup> More information on the Policing Board and the District Policing Partnerships see [www.nipolicingboard.org.uk](http://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk) This site also publishes the regular DPP newsletters.



- *to assess the level of public satisfaction with the performance of District Policing partnerships;*
- *to issue a Code of Practice on the exercise of the functions of the DPP's*
- *to assess the effectiveness of DPP's.*

*On the 4<sup>th</sup> March 2003, the Policing Board appointed 207 members to the DPP's. District Policing Partnerships are established in each district council area. The role of the DPP is to consult with the community, establish in conjunction with the District Commander policing priorities and monitor police performance against the local policing plan.*

*The main responsibilities of the DPP's are to:*

- *provide views to the District Commander on any matter concerning the policing of the district;*
- *monitor the performance of the police in carrying out the policing plan;*
- *make arrangements for getting the views of the public on matters concerning the policing of the district and gaining their co-operation with the police in preventing crime;*
- *act as a general forum for discussion and consultation on matters affecting the policing of the district.*

*At the Blanchardstown Policing Seminar in April 2004, the Vice Chair of the Policing Board, Denis Bradley, highlighted the monitoring role of the DPPs: "Their job is not to hold the police to account – that is for the policing board.. Instead they have a monitoring role. The police come and report to them". He also pointed to the progress made in terms of the relationship between Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) commanders and the local DPPs:*

*"At first, the PSNI commanders were terrified of the DPPs – old men especially. One year on, that terror has disappeared. They think they are the best thing ever, and didn't realise how powerful they could be. Originally, the public couldn't ask questions at the DPPs unless they were tabled in advance.*

*Now they invite the public to comment, and take questions from the floor. Debate and engagement are developing”.*<sup>15</sup>

### *The North Inner City Community Policing Forum*

*In October 2002 the North Inner City Community Policing Forum (CPF) was launched by Taoiseach Bertie Ahern<sup>16</sup>. The primary purpose of the CPF is to co-ordinate a common strategy in response to drug dealing between the local community, the Garda Síochána and Dublin City Council.*

*The evaluation of the CPF, which incorporated a survey of the opinion of local participants' attitudes, identified a number of concerns in the area in relation to drug dealing and drug-related crime. It also identified a number of positive outcomes which arose as a consequence of the development of the CPF, including regular and consistent attendance at local meetings held under the auspices of the CPF<sup>17</sup>. This is particularly significant in an area where there are serious concerns about co-operating with Gardai on drugs-related issues due to fears of reprisal from those involved in drug, a factor which was also identified in the survey. Significant progress was also identified as having been made in relation to a series of local drug-related incidents. The evaluation also reported increased cooperation between State agencies as a result of the CPF.*

*The main findings of the Community Policing Forum Panel survey were:*

- *70% of respondents believe that the service provided by An Garda Síochána has improved as a result of the CPF;*
- *60% believe that the service provided by Dublin City Council has improved as a result of the CPF;*
- *72 per cent stated that they would be more willing to co-operate with the Gardai in relation to drug-related crime as a result of the CPF;*
- *59% stated that they would be more willing to cooperate with the gardai about non-drug-related crime as a result of the CPF;*

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<sup>15</sup> All Seminar quotations are taken from the official transcript of the Seminar supplied by the Blanchardstown Drugs Task Force.

<sup>16</sup> Connolly J (2003a) Taoiseach launches Community Policing Forum. *Drugnet Ireland*, Issue 8, June.

<sup>17</sup> Connolly J (2002) *Drugs, crime and community policing – the north inner city community policing forum* North Inner City Drugs Task Force, Dublin.

- *70% stated that they would be more willing to cooperate with Dublin City Council in relation to estate management issues as a result of the CPF;*
- *45 per cent stated that they were less worried about drug-related crime as a result of the CPF. However, 55 per cent stated that there was no change in this respect;*
- *All respondents wished to see the CPF continue into the future;*

*The CPF is in the process of being mainstreamed. In his address to the Blanchardstown Policing Seminar, Garda Commissioner Noel Conroy, referring to the existing Community Policing Fora, highlighted their positive contribution to police/community relations:*

*“The community Policing Fora which have been established in both Kevin Street District and in the North Inner City area of Dublin have proved to be extremely effective in building on the relationships which exist between An Garda Síochána and local communities”.*

#### *Section Four*

##### *Current developments in Community Policing*

*The National Drugs Strategy 2001 – 2008*

*The National Drugs Strategy highlights the importance of Community Policing Fora to the development of Local Drug Task forces. Action 11 aims:*

*“To extend the Community Policing For a initiative to all LDTF areas, if the evaluation of the pilot proves positive”*

*The North Inner City Community Policing Forum has now been positively evaluated and is in the process of being mainstreamed. The National Drug Strategy 2001 – 2008 – Critical Implementation Path states, in relation to the above action, that An Garda Síochána should implement the following steps: ‘establish a working group and terms of reference; examine evaluation reports from the south and north inner city policing fora, draft community consultation policy proposals and submit to the Garda*

*Commissioner for approval<sup>18</sup>. The current status of these specified steps is unclear at present.*

*However, an ongoing task in relation to the establishment of CPF, which is highlighted in the Critical Implementation Path, is that their establishment should take account of provisions outlined in the Garda Síochána Bill 2004.*

#### *The Garda Síochána Bill 2004*

*The Garda Síochána Bill, 2004 includes new provisions dealing with the organisation, management, performance and accountability of An Garda Síochána.*

*Sections 30 – 34 of the Bill relate to Co-operation between An Garda Síochána and Local Authorities and Arrangements for Obtaining Views of the Public. Relevant sections include:*

*s.31 (1) The Minister may, with the consent of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, issue guidelines concerning the establishment and maintenance by a local authority and the Garda Commissioner of a joint policing committee;*

*s.31 (2) Guidelines issued under this section ... may include provision for –*

*(a) the establishment of the committee within the framework of a city development board or a county development board, as the case may be, or otherwise,*

*(b) the appointment of its members and, in particular, the representation on the committee of the Garda Síochána, the local authority, members of Dáil Éireann and such other public authorities, bodies or persons as may be provided for in the guidelines;*

*It is proposed that, as per:*

*s.32 (2) The joint policing committee's function is to serve as a forum for consultation, discussions and recommendations on matters affecting the*

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<sup>18</sup> Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (2004) *National Drugs Strategy 2001 – 2008: Critical Implementation Path* Dublin, Stationery Office.

*policing of the local authority's administrative area and, in particular, the committee shall keep under review the levels and patterns of crime and disorder in the area, and in particular to*

*(a) keep under review –*

*(i) the levels and patterns of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour in the area (including the patterns and levels of misuse of alcohol and drugs), and*

*(ii) the factors underlying and contributing to the levels of crime, disorder, and anti-social behaviour in the area,*

*(b) advise the local authority concerned and the Garda Síochána on how they might best exercise their functions having regard to the need to do everything feasible to improve the safety and quality of life and to prevent crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour within the area.*

*The joint committee may also, as per s. 32 (2)*

*(c) with the Garda Commissioner's consent, establish, as the committee considers necessary within specific neighbourhoods of the area, local policing fora to discuss and make recommendations to the committee concerning the matters referred to in paragraph (a) as they affect their neighbourhoods, and*

*(d) co-ordinate the activities of local policing fora established under paragraph (c) or otherwise.*

*The Garda Síochána Bill 2004 is currently progressing through the Oireachtas, having passed through its second stage in Seanad Éireann on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2004.<sup>19</sup> Presumably, given the debate it has already evoked in the Seanad, it will be debated extensively in Dáil Éireann. This debate is ongoing and is beyond the scope of this report to address it in any detail. However, in a seminar held in Blanchardstown in April 2004,*

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<sup>19</sup> Parliamentary Debates Seanad Éireann (Official Report) Unrevised, Vol.175 No. 16 Tuesday 2 March, 2004.

*a number of issues were raised which have a direct bearing on the current proposal to establish a local community policing forum.*

### **Section Five**

#### **Developing Integrated Policing – The Blanchardstown Community Policing Forum**

##### **Developing Integrated Policing Seminar**

*The mission statement of the Justice and Supply/ Control sub group of the Blanchardstown Drug Task Force states its aim:*

*“The development of a clear, effective and just system between relevant agencies and the community which will assist in the reduction of the supply of, and demand for, drugs so that all residents can develop themselves and their community free from intimidation and the adverse effects of a drug culture”.*

*The sub group further believes that the drug issue should not be seen solely as a Gardaí problem “Its resolution will require effective cooperation between the Gardaí, local communities as well as a range of other agencies”. The sub group identifies the issue of community policing as of vital importance.*

*The large attendance at the recent Blanchardstown Policing Seminar revealed strong local interest in the development of community policing.*

##### **Local policing and estate management concerns**

*The Blanchardstown Policing Seminar and the RAPID Needs Analysis Surveys identified a number of concerns in relation to local attitudes towards service provision, including An Garda Síochána in relation to policing and Fingal County Council in relation to estate management.*

*With regard to policing, the Needs Analysis Surveys recorded many positive attitudes locally towards the ongoing activities of the Gardaí. Forty-three per cent of local residents in Mulhuddart, Fortlawn/ Whiteapel and Whitestown/ Sheepmoor areas felt that the Gardaí are providing a ‘very good, good or alright service’, while 54 per cent of Corduff residents who have used the Gardaí responded that the Gardaí are*

*providing a satisfactory service. Particular reference was made to the positive image created for the gardaí through their involvement in and support for the development of local youth projects. There were also positive comments about the way the gardaí patrol public spaces during daytime hours. It was felt that, through visible patrolling, the gardaí can act as a 'significant deterrent to people getting involved in anti-social and criminal activities'.*

*However, there was a considerable level of dissatisfaction recorded with regard to the response of the gardaí to ongoing anti-social and criminal activities taking place in Blanchardstown:*

*"local residents are equally concerned about the perceived ineffective and minimal responses by An Garda Síochána – there is a strong sense that the gardaí do not have a sufficient presence within local estates to tackle problems concerning anti-social and criminal behaviour"<sup>20</sup>*

*For the respondents from Fortlawn and Whitechapel, in response to the question 'What are the services that most need to be improved in the area?', Fingal County Council and An Garda Síochána are the two organisations whose services respondents feel most need to be improved. In the Corduff survey, with regard to the open commentary on safety and security issues it was found that policing drew the most commentary. Policing, according to the report, 'was viewed by many as the key to resolving the issues'. The surveys identified a strong belief among respondents that having more police on the streets will resolve or at least improve the situation with regards to safety and security issues. The Corduff survey concludes: "the police are viewed as a front-line cure for the social ills that are prevalent".*

*The specific concerns raised at the Blanchardstown Policing Seminar and in the RAPID Area Needs Analysis Surveys are issues which the Community Policing Forum will need to address. They include:*

- *A reported lack of confidence in and respect for An Garda Síochána due to the perception that it is ineffective and inefficient in tackling crime and anti-social behaviour;*

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<sup>20</sup> Rourke S (2004) OpCit p13.

- *A perception that the gardaí often seem more interested in pursuing what are perceived by some as petty/minor offences rather than major offences such as drug dealing;*
- *A perception that the garda are very slow to respond to requests for help and assistance;*
- *The absence of a regular visible presence;*
- *There is a concern that people have no chance to get to know the local community police before they are moved on to another area;*
- *There are concerns raised about the apparent attitudes of some gardaí to local residents, particularly young people and the use of 'stop and search' powers;*
- *a general concern relates to concerns about residents' lack of awareness about local services. Although the Needs Analysis Surveys found a high level of awareness about the activities of organisations like Fingal County Council and An Garda Síochána, it was concluded that even for such agencies, local residents need to be informed more about the various activities of these agencies;*
- *there is a perception that agencies tend to 'do their own thing' rather than collaborate with other agencies and organisations. It was suggested that there was need for various agencies and organisations to 'work more closely together in the best interests of local residents'*

#### *Future Status of the Blanchardstown Community Policing Forum*

*A number of concerns were raised, both in the Seanad and in the Blanchardstown Policing Seminar, in relation to the proposal to situate the proposed Local Policing Committees within the city and/or county development boards. It is unclear as yet what the implications the Bill will have for the ongoing efforts being made to establish community policing fora at local level. Ivana Bacik, in relation to the provisions of the Bill relating to local policing stated:*

*“When those sections are examined individually, it is clear that they are largely vague, aspirational and lacking in detail”.*

*There was also a great deal of discussion as to the role, function and membership of the proposed Local Policing Committees and Local Policing Fora.*

*While many of these issues will be debated as the Bill passes through the Oireachtas, there is a real and understandable concern at a community level, as to the precise status and future role of the existing community policing fora which are already in*



*existence throughout the city or which are in the process of being developed, as in Blanchardstown. The local concern in relation to this issue was addressed by Anna Quigley, chairperson of Citywide Drugs Crisis Campaign in a contribution from the floor and by community representative Ann Losty, in her address to the Blanchardstown Policing Seminar:*

*“When we agreed this (CPF process) we thought we only had to concentrate on getting the money to set up the Policing Forum. Then the Minister announced that he was introducing the Garda Síochána Bill. We weren’t sure whether we should laugh or cry. Other speakers have gone into detail about the Bill but as a resident and a community development worker the only question I have is whether the Garda Síochána Bill will undo the good work already agreed in Blanchardstown – given that positive relationships already exist between local and community development structures which include representatives from An Garda Síochána and Fingal County Council, and we have a proven track record of working effectively together – or whether it is an opportunity that will build on this work.”*

*With regard to this matter, the Minister stated:*

*“I envisage that town councils, resident associations and other groups could become involved in the process through the local policing fora which may be established by a Joint Policing Committee under section 32 (2) (c) of the Bill. These would operate under the umbrella of the Joint Policing Committees and deal with issues at neighbourhood level”.*

*The status of community policing fora established prior to the enactment of this legislation is therefore unclear. Will they be retrospectively legitimated by a Joint Policing Committee for example? This uncertainty is an important issue and one which needs to be addressed quickly. The provision of legislation creating innovative structures of local police accountability is an extremely positive development and should be welcomed. However, a lingering doubt as to the future status of the Blanchardstown Community Policing Fora in relation to this legislative process could operate as a significant impediment to progress at a local level.*

*Recommendation One: The Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform should clarify the status of the community policing fora currently in existence or in the process of being established, in relation to the provisions of the Garda Síochána Bill.*

*Furthermore, the practical experience to be gained from developing local policing fora will provide an essential evidence base upon which to develop the structures which will emerge through legislation.*

***Recommendation Two: The Garda Síochána Bill 2004, should build upon the practical local experience being gained through the establishment of community policing fora in Blanchardstown and elsewhere.***

#### **Towards the Blanchardstown CPF – Management Board**

***Despite these concerns, it is clear from the Blanchardstown Policing Seminar and from consideration of the Blanchardstown Needs Analysis Surveys that there is an urgent need to maintain the current momentum towards the establishment of a local Community Policing Forum.***

***Until there is clarity as to the precise structures to be established under the proposed Garda Síochána Bill, or the legal status of Local Policing Committees and Community Policing Fora, it is important that a Board of Management is established to drive the process of establishing the Blanchardstown Community Policing Forum. The importance of there being an engine driving the process cannot be underestimated. This was found to be very important with regards to the North Inner City CPF.***

***Recommendation Three: In light of the broad support for the development of a coordinated response to policing and estate management issues, the Blanchardstown Local Drug Task Force should now oversee the establishment of a ‘Blanchardstown Community Policing Forum - Management Board’ to drive the process forward.***

#### **Management Board - Membership**

***A number of contributors to the Blanchardstown Policing Seminar highlighted the importance of ensuring gender balance in the formation of local policing structures. The experience of the North Inner City Community Policing Forums of significant gender unbalance at different stages of the process. For example, an under-representation of men at local community and larger CPF meetings and an under-representation of women at Management Board level. Every effort should be made by all stakeholders to ensure even gender representation at all levels of the process.***

***It was also stated that, with regard to community representation, given the low voter turnout at election time, other non-elected community representatives should also be***

*identified. It was also suggested that the Drugs Task Force should be represented on the policing structure adopted.*

***Recommendation Four: The precise membership of the Management Board should be considered and agreed by the Task Force. However, the membership of the Board should include:***

- *Elected public representatives;*
- *Other community representatives to ensure broad community representation;*
- *A representative of the Local Drug Task Force;*
- *Two members of An Garda Síochána, not below the rank of Inspector. One from the drug unit and one from the Community Policing Unit;*
- *Fingal County Council, area manager;*
- *A representative from the Probation and Welfare Service*

#### **Community Policing Forum – Funding**

*The Management Board should identify the appropriate source of funding for the Community Policing Forum and prepare a proposal to ensure adequate funding for the process.*

***Recommendation Five: Following a proposal from the proposed Management Board, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform should provide the necessary funding to establish the Blanchardstown CPF. Alternatively, funding should be made available through the National Drug Strategy Process.***

#### **Management Board – Chairperson**

*It is also extremely important that the Management Board is chaired by an individual who can command significant local credibility. The role of the Chair would include: chairing management board meetings, ensuring that meeting minutes are maintained, ensure that the Management Board fulfils its agreed action plan.*

***Recommendation Six: The Management Board should identify a suitable Chairperson.***

#### **Management Board – Co-ordinator**

*The Management Board should identify a suitable local CPF coordinator with administrative assistance to liaise between the Management Board and the local community and to provide active support to this individual.*

*The role of the coordinator is crucial. S/he should be a person who can command sufficient credibility in the community. It is also important that s/he be given adequate administrative support. Given that the coordinator may be seen as the 'local face' of the Community Policing Forum, it is very important that the precise role of the coordinator is identified and communicated locally and that s/he is given ongoing support by the Management Board.*

*Recommendation Seven: The Management Board should identify a suitable local CPF coordinator with adequate administrative assistance to liaise between the Management Board and the local community. The Board should provide ongoing active support to this individual*

### **Principles, Aims and Objectives of the Blanchardstown Community Policing Forum**

*In April 2003, the Justice and Supply subgroup of the Blanchardstown Drugs Task Force, in light of its proposal to establish a Community Policing Forum identified a number of Principles which would underpin the proposed CPF:*

- *that residents will be treated with respect, equality, justice and compassion;*
- *that people living and working in Blanchardstown have a right to be safe and a corresponding responsibility to create a safe environment;*
- *the importance and benefit of dialogue is highlighted, particularly with the local community, in order to build mutual understanding and respect;*
- *that individuals, community and agencies are accountable for their actions and in response to honest feedback, should be open to change;*
- *the Blanchardstown Policing forum will:*
  - *be representative of all interests;*
  - *have local involvement;*
  - *be open in what it does;*
  - *have the commitment of all stakeholders.*

*The Justice and Supply Sub group of the Blanchardstown Drugs Task Force has identified the following aims and objectives for the Blanchardstown Community Policing Forum:*

***Aim:***

*To provide a structure for the Gardaí, Community and other agencies to address the crime, drugs and alcohol problems in the area together, in a co-ordinated way.*

***Objectives:***

- (a) Increase level of communication and trust and foster the growth of existing relationships, particularly between the gardaí and young people;*
- (b) Increase the level of information exchange between the gardaí, community/residents and other relevant agencies;*
- (c) Ensure the law is effectively enforced with regard to the supply and trafficking of illegal drugs;*
- (d) Provide an opportunity to raise concerns and issues regarding the allocation of resources and other crime and safety issues;*
- (e) Allow agencies to raise difficulties encountered in providing services to the community and to assist in the resolution of difficulties;*
- (f) Ensure the law is effectively enforced with regard to the sale and supply of alcohol to people who are underage;*
- (g) Promote community development, particularly in relation to crime, drug and alcohol problems;*
- (h) Lobby for the allocation of appropriate resources for high levels, high visibility and high standards of policing in the Blanchardstown area;*
- (i) Support the other actions of the Local Drugs Strategy.*

*It is important that aims and objectives outlined above are realistic and can be subject to evaluation.*

***Recommendation Eight: The Management Board should review and agree the principles underlying the proposed Community Policing Forum and its Aims and Objectives. It is important that the Aims and Objectives are realistic and that they can be subject to evaluation.***

## Management Board – Action plan

*What is primarily important at this early stage, to quote from Minister McDowell in relation to proposed Joint Policing Committees, is that:*

*“Committees should not be mere talking shops or public relations exercises but would engage the community in real problem solving and problem identification”.*

*The Management Board should be a working committee, with a clear action plan. Through the Blanchardstown Policing Seminar, the RAPID Needs Analysis Surveys and the Blanchardstown Local Drugs Task Force a number of specific actions have been identified which can be considered by the Management Board and addressed through the proposed CPF.*

- *Increased and sustained commitment to community policing, building trust through increased garda availability, communications and the establishment of local sub-stations;*
- *action in relation to drug supply in the local areas, investigation of local drug supply lines and more undercover work and greater targeting of known drug dealers by the Garda Drug Unit;*
- *more visible and regular policing, especially at nighttime, more gardaí ‘on the beat’ and on horses rather than in cars, greater flexibility in Garda deployment;*
- *a more active and robust approach by An Garda Síochána in apprehending and prosecuting people who are involved in drugs related activities (e.g. dealing in drugs, possession of drugs).*
- *commitment to better garda response time targets;*
- *more formalised policy discussions on allocation of tenancies, stricter vetting of tenants who are moving into the area (so as to ensure that drug dealers are not allocated houses);*
- *the perceived need to evict troublesome tenants for anti-social behaviour;*
- *the need to place new tenants in boarded up houses;*
- *formalisation of resident participation in estate management programmes, the tidying up and cleaning of the open spaces in the housing estates by the relevant statutory agencies and the local residents;*
- *environmental crime prevention measures to make certain laneways and cul-de-sacs more inaccessible to gangs/groups of young people to engage in anti-social behaviour, the closing off of places where young people engage in anti-*

*social behaviour should involve a joint approach from residents and from relevant statutory agencies, introduction of closed circuit T.V. in key locations;*

- *the creation of speed ramps to prevent excessive speeding;*
- *the development of innovative programmes for 'youth at risk'*

*The Management Board should set out an action plan for the forthcoming year in light of the aims and objectives identified above and also in relation to the specific concerns and required actions identified above.*

*Recommendation Nine: The Management Board should establish a clear action plan for the establishment of the Blanchardstown Community Policing Forum. The state agencies should consider this action plan when developing their own local plans.*

#### *Defining and identifying local crime priorities*

*It is important at this point of the process to identify and prioritise the crime concerns and security fears of the local community. The Garda Commissioner raised this point during his seminar presentation:*

*"It is therefore important to ensure that such a framework is put in place which enables and ensures that all the stakeholders within communities have a voice in determining priorities".*

*The priority issues at this stage appear to relate to problems associated with drugs and alcohol. It would be useful however for the Management Board to give consideration to the way in which crime and anti-social behaviour is defined and distinguished. Also, a local crime and anti-social behaviour audit should be conducted to consider the priority problematic locations<sup>21</sup>.*

*Another issue which arises in this context is the tendency for the process to become diverted from the priority concerns. The experience of the North Inner City Community Policing Forum was that at many initial meetings other local concerns emerged frequently, many of which were not related to drug-related matters or even crime and anti-social behaviour issues. It is important to acknowledge that, although these concerns are valid, they are not the primary focus at this stage. This point will*

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<sup>21</sup> For a useful guide see Harradine S, Kodz J, Lemeti F and Jones B (2004) *Defining and measuring anti-social behaviour* UK Home Office Development and Practice Report No. 26

*need to be communicated clearly and consistently to avoid the process being side-tracked at an early stage.*

***Recommendation Ten: Local concerns and priorities in relation to policing and estate management issues should be identified and prioritised in the Community Policing Forum process***

### **Communication and information exchange**

*An issue which emerges from the Blanchardstown Policing Seminar and the Needs Analysis Surveys relates to the lack of awareness about local services. There is a clear need for the development of public awareness strategies which would serve to inform local residents about available resources. Communication is a two-way process, both the community and the state agencies can benefit from enhanced communications as a way of alleviating fears and removing misconceptions.*

*Information strategies should include both written information (e.g. leaflets, brochures, local newspapers) and information and advice days/sessions/ events within local community settings (e.g. community centres, resource centres). Also, the use of local radio should be considered.*

#### ***Leaflet and newsletter***

*To inform people of the establishment of the North Inner City Community Policing Forum an introductory leaflet was produced. This included: a joint signed statement from the Management Board in which they state their commitment to the success of the CPF; the CPF aims and objectives; individual statements from Board members and the CPF coordinator and relevant contact details. Over three thousand leaflets were distributed by the coordinator prior to the first meeting of the Community Policing Forum. This has now evolved into a newsletter.*

*In the North of Ireland, the District Policing Partnerships produce a quarterly magazine<sup>22</sup>.*

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<sup>22</sup> See [www://www.ni-policingboard.org.uk](http://www.ni-policingboard.org.uk)



## *Meetings*

*In his address to the Blanchardstown Policing Seminar, the Minister stated that he was conscious:*

*“from the Garda perspective that there is a need to ensure that attendance at meetings should not become so frequent as to be an unreasonable burden on the senior Gardaí involved”.*

*Community policing is labour intensive. However, it is important that resources are managed appropriately. It is anticipated that local meetings will become a crucial aspect of the overall process. To ensure public confidence, it is important that meetings are attended by representatives of the relevant state agencies. However, meetings at a local level should be attended by relevant personnel, for example, community gardaí. Management Board meetings should be attended by middle-management level and larger meetings should be attended by more senior personnel.*

*A central factor in the success of the North Inner City CPF was the consistent attendance at all meetings by representatives of the relevant state agencies. On some occasions it was felt that, given the particular topic under discussion, only certain agencies were required. However, the willingness of state agency personnel to be in attendance at local meetings was an important indicator to the local community that the process was being taken seriously. Furthermore, from the perspective of the state agencies, their attendance at local meetings provides an extremely useful means of familiarising themselves with local residents.*

*It also needs to be recognised that for local community residents, attendance at meetings can also be challenging from their perspective; both in terms of organising child-minding for example, but also given the local intimidation which can sometimes result from participation in community activity of this nature.*

## *Information exchange*

*Another important issue which arises in the context of communications relates to the types of information being sought and being exchanged at meetings.*

*From the community perspective, it can be anticipated that there will be demands for information about ongoing anti-drug activity by the relevant agencies for example. On*

*the other hand, the state agencies may need to exercise some degree of caution with regards to the type of information presented. For example, the Garda Síochána Bill 2004, as per section 32 (3) states:*

*‘The joint policing committee may not consider matters relating to a specific criminal investigation or prosecution or matters relating to the security of the state’*

*Such understandable concerns aside, it is important that information is presented in such a way that it is locally relevant and can enable residents to determine whether progress is being made in relation to their concerns.*

*Local area statistics on garda activity (premises searched, street searches, station searches, checkpoints, number of drug seizures) and on local drug seizures (by drug type) as well as the numbers prosecuted (by age and gender) are provided in the Blanchardstown Drug Task Force Action Plan 2001 – 2005<sup>23</sup>. It is very important that information of this nature is provided regularly within the CPF process.*

*William Soffe, County Manager with Fingal County Council touched on this matter in his presentation to the Policing Seminar:*

*“I believe a short-term benefit of a joint policing committee for Fingal, and for the other 33 local authority areas in the country, is that we should be able to get data on crime for our own areas. I appreciate this will be a major challenge for the Gardai but I believe it is one which would be all the easier if the logic of the boundaries of the committees were to lead to the reorganisation of Garda Divisions to coincide with local authority lines”.*

*Recommendation Eleven: The Management Board should establish a system of communication to inform residents of developments in relation to the CPF and other related matters and to agree a process of information exchange between the various stakeholders.*

### **Resources and training**

*The Management Board should establish appropriate financial accountability processes and lobby for adequate financial, administrative and human resources.*

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<sup>23</sup> Byrne F (2001) *Blanchardstown Drug Task Force Action Plan 2001 – 2005* Blanchardstown Drugs Task Force.

## *Personnel*

*It has been estimated that the population growth rate for the Blanchardstown areas is in excess of three times the rate for the Dublin region<sup>24</sup>. It is anticipated that the local drug problem will increase as the population grows. This has major implications for local resources. It is important that service ratios such as police numbers per portion of local population matches this increase. The issue of local garda resources is raised in the Blanchardstown Drug Task Force Action Plan (2001 – 2005):*

*“At present two Sergeants and ten Gardai are assigned to this unit (Garda drugs unit). This is estimated to be some 40% less than the level of staffing two or three years ago. Moreover Gardai are frequently diverted from this important role in response to the juggling of priorities on an ongoing basis. Physical presence within communities is viewed as vital if relationships based upon trust and mutual understanding are to be fostered and maintained with the community and young people. This role would also furnish accurate, relevant and timely information to the gardai and enable greater responsiveness to issues be they supply related, criminal activity or anti-social behaviour and intimidation. A reduction of nearly 90% in number of neighbourhood watch schemes is a negative indicator of the current situation” (Page 50)*

*The Patten report suggested that community police should remain in the same position for at least three years to allow relationships of trust between police and local residents to develop sufficiently.*

*Similarly, the number of Fingd County Council staff involved in Estate Management is stated in the Task Force plan as “wholly inadequate”. Similar concerns are expressed in relation to the perceived scarcity of front-line staff such as probation and welfare officers and social workers.*

## *Training*

*Another matter which has arisen in this context relates to the issue of training. The importance of adequate training for state agency personnel, particularly in terms of relations with young people, was emphasised during the Seminar. In her presentation, youth representative Roseanne Byrne stated the view of young people that:*

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

*“Police should have some training for dealing with young people so that both points of view can be heard”*

*An important issue raised by young people in this context relates to the proposal in the Garda Síochána Bill, 2004 to establish an Ombudsman to deal with complaints against the gardaí. One contributor, reporting from the young people’s discussion stated:*

*“We also discussed the proposed Garda Ombudsman. We think that it should be user-friendly for young people, or even have a section for young people. We don’t think it should be an ex-guard or even someone related to a guard. It should be advertised for young people – in schools, community centres, youth centres – and through posters, leaflets and television”.*

*The issue of resolving complaints and addressing conflict is an extremely important one. Consideration should be given by the Management Board with regard to ensuring that the provisions in the Garda Síochána Bill relating to complaints against gardaí can become locally relevant and accessible, to young people in particular.*

*Recommendation Twelve: The Management Board should establish transparent financial accountability processes and lobby for adequate financial, administrative and human resources.*

#### *The Blanchardstown CPF - An inclusive process*

*In line with the principles enunciated above, the Management Board needs to ensure that the CPF process is inclusive. A particularly important issue here relates to young people.*

*Blanchardstown has a younger population age profile compared to the rest of the state. Fifty one per cent (51%) of the population is under the age of 15 with only 3 per cent over the age of 65. A significant number of these young people can be defined as high risk age groups. A number of concerns have been raised in the Needs Analysis Surveys as to the relations between some police officers and young people in the area.*

*In her presentation to the Blanchardstown Policing Seminar, youth representative Roseanne Byrne stated*

*“Young people should be heard. It should be worked out in a way that will include young people”*

*The issue of gender balance was addressed above. Also, the interests and concerns of minority groups such as travellers and other ethnic groups (asylumseekers, refugees, immigrants, migrant workers and non-Irish nationals) will need to be considered.*

*Recommendation Thirteen: The Management Board should ensure that the Community Policing Forum process is inclusive. A particularly important issue here relates to young people, local minority groups such as travellers and other ethnic groups (asylum seekers, refugees, immigrants, migrant workers and non-Irish nationals)*

## Section Six

### Monitoring and Evaluation

#### *The need for realistic expectations*

*It is important for the success of the CPF that the various stakeholders can identify that the process is bringing about real change. As Ivana Bacik stated during the Blanchardstown Policing Seminar with regard to local community concerns:*

*“while the provision of a forum for the Garda and local authorities to exchange views and co-ordinate activities is very welcome, does it have the potential to bring real benefits to local communities, to provide an opportunity for real interaction and give a sense of ownership, of stakeholding in the policing function, back to an alienated public? It may not, if the committee become simply fora for local policy to be discussed; because if the committees can only make recommendations, then the Gardai will not be really accountable to them”*

*It is also important that expectations as to the potential benefits to be derived from an initiative such as the CPF are realistic. Many exaggerated claims have been made about the merits of Community Policing generally. Such claims have seldom been supported by research findings however. The CPF represents a logical step towards the co-ordination of a more effective response to the drugs problem involving the community and the relevant state agencies. By being realistic as to what can possibly be achieved through such a process there is less likelihood of disillusionment setting in. This realistic approach should inform all future evaluations of the CPF.*

*It is important to emphasise that although a reduction in drug related crime and related anti-social behaviour and drug supply are among the general aims of the CPF, such outcomes will be difficult to prove conclusively.*

*The main source of information on crime in Ireland are the annual reports of An Garda Síochána. Numerous problems have been identified in relation to the compilation of these statistics. The Expert Group on Crime Statistics has made a number of recommendations to Government with a view to improving data sources across the criminal justice system. It is particularly important that an effort is made to improve data recording and presentation at local level so that locally based responses such as community policing for can be monitored and evaluated more effectively.*

*Furthermore, garda statistics reflect only those crimes reported to the gardaí by the public and the proportion of reported crimes which are actually recorded by the gardaí. Most crimes are not reported to the police. This so-called 'dark figure' on crime i.e, the number of crimes which go unreported and/or unrecorded, is likely to be higher in relation to drug-related crime than other crimes in areas with significant drug-related problems. This is partially because of the fears of reprisal which can be associated with cooperation of this nature.*

*It is hoped that a successful CPF in Blanchardstown will lead to an increase in the willingness of local people to report drug dealing and drug-related crime to the gardaí and consequently an improvement in the local detection rate and an increase in prosecutions.*

*With regards to monitoring the impact of the CPF on drug supply, this will also be something which will be difficult to assess. Firstly, it will be almost impossible to determine what drug supply is at any specific time. Secondly, with regard to a reduction in supply it will be difficult to prove that such a development, where it occurs, did so as a specific result of the work of the CPF. This is because numerous other variables can intervene to have an impact on supply. A reduction in local drug supply could come about as a result of a problem at the source of the drug supply, something that is unaffected by developments in Ireland. Thirdly, the nature of drug dealing has changed in recent years, with a significant reduction in open drug-dealing on the streets and the widespread use of mobile phones by drug dealers. Drug dealing is now often less visible than it used to be.*

*Having added those notes of realism along with developing outcome indicators, it is also important to record inputs and local perceptions of change<sup>25</sup>. Indicators of progress can incorporate qualitative perception indicators obtained through local surveys and interviews with stakeholders but also they should include more tangible input and output indicators.*

### *Monitoring progress*

- *Local surveys data: Survey data can seek information relating to perceptions of problems and responses. The research experience gained through the Rapid Needs Analysis Surveys, particularly through the use of local researchers, should be built upon.*
- *Human resource inputs: An increase in community gardaí, drug unit staff; A locally based probation service with increased resources; An increase in estate officers responsible for anti-social behaviour; these are measurable indicators.*
- *Communication and information inputs: Meeting minutes should be maintained; attendance at meetings organised under the auspices of the CPF should be monitored; as should the distribution of relevant leaflets and other forms of information communication;*
- *Incident reports: Progress in relation to specific incidents or problem locations can be monitored through the use of incident reports whereby developments in relation to such incidents/ locations are recorded on an ongoing basis; these sources of information can be supported by data collection strategies within agencies. Incident reports gathered over time should be able to reveal the practical impact of the CPF process in relation to local problems.*

*Recommendation Fourteen: The management Board should establish in-built monitoring procedures and identify other appropriate indicators to facilitate the evaluation of the Community Policing Forum process.*

### *Section Seven*

#### *Conclusion*

*The ongoing process of debate taking place in the Oireachtas in relation to the Garda Síochána Bill, 2004, is one which should benefit greatly from the practical experience which will be gained from the establishment of the Blanchardstown CPF.*

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<sup>25</sup> For further discussion of the issues arising here see Connolly (2003) *Monitoring quality of life in an urban area* North Inner City Drugs Task Force; For ideas as to how to establish monitoring systems see Harradine S, et al (2004) *OpCit*.

*The attendance at and contributions to the recent Blanchardstown Policing Seminar highlights the importance and urgency of this task. The Blanchardstown RAPID Area Analysis Report concludes that:*

*“there is a fairly strong view that if the criminal/ anti-social problems can be overcome and if the appropriate facilities/ services were to be set up in Mulhuddart, it could become a very good place to live. In this context it is evident that the next few years are going to be critical for the future well-being of Mulhuddart”<sup>26</sup>.*

*A positive indication however, is that there appears to be significant local interest in participating in the formation of a station. The Community Policing Forum should provide the process through which that solution can be delivered.*

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<sup>26</sup> Rourke S (2004) p14.



