

THE NEEDS AND RIGHTS OF COMMUNITIES IN BALGADDY

A statistical and qualitative profile of local authority housing estates in Balgaddy



Your home and where you raise your family is so much more than bricks and mortar. It is the starting place for so many basic rights essential for life – the right to health, the right to education, the right to work. We are being denied these basic rights and being treated like 3rd class citizens simply because we are tenants of the state'

(Debbie Mulhall, human rights activist)

Introduction

This report was undertaken to provide a qualitative and quantitative profile of the Balgaddy area which will inform community and statutory responses to the needs identified in the report. The report is compiled from key data sources including the 2016 Census returns and the Pobal HP Deprivation Index and surveys of needs conducted in 2009 and 2017. The report is an initiative of the North Clondalkin Community Safety Forum and the Rights Platform, with the support of the North Clondalkin Community Development Project (NCCDP).

The report is timely because it was able to draw on the latest Census data from the CSO and the Pobal HP Deprivation index, both of which became available in 2017 when the community survey was also carried out. The 2017 survey enabled comparisons to be made with the findings from the 2009 survey.

The objectives of the research was to gather and assemble data and information from primary and secondary sources, to undertake a house-to-house survey to ascertain the views and experiences of residents in the area in order to:

- Highlight the level of marginalisation in the area
- Provide an indication of infrastructure and service deficits
- Outline the needs of families, communities
- Indicate the responses required to meet these needs

Methodology

The statistical data from primary sources was gathered and assembled by the project team. Desk research of secondary sources - primarily previous reports on the area - was also undertaken by members of the project team.

The community survey conducted in the autumn of 2017 utilised the same questions used in the 2009 survey in order to provide a basis for comparison of issues/conditions and to indicate changes over the 8 year period. The survey was a house-to-house exercise undertaken by the project team in face-to-face interviews, covering all houses in the selected areas. 134 questionnaires were completed, which compares favourably with the sample from the 2009 survey.

The project team included Noreen Byrne, Fiona O'Brien, Paula Haverty, Margaret McLoughlin, Larry Cullen and Aiden Lloyd.

Balgaddy

Balgaddy is located in the Clondalkin-Cappaghmore Enumerative Division (ED) in the South Lucan area of West Dublin, although it is more associated with the public housing conurbations of North Clondalkin by both locals and most professionals. Balgaddy began to be developed in the late 1980s and has

experience significant development since then. Balgaddy is presently composed of 5 housing estates consisting of Foxdene: 200 units (mixed development); Meile An Ri: 139 units (public); Buirg An Ri: 84 units (public); Tor An Ri: 100 units (public); Rosse Court: 280 units (private). Rosse Court consists of private houses and, while affected by some of the issues covered in this report, is not subject to the analysis that informs the report. The total population of the 4 remaining estates is 2,049 (CSO 2016).

3 of the 4 estates covered in the report, Meile An Ri, Buirg An Ri and Tor An Ri, are medium to high density with a large number of apartment and mezzanine units with little or no private garden space and few community recreational spaces. Foxdene consists of traditional houses with gardens and has a somewhat smaller number of local authority rented units (64%) than the other 3 estates where the tenure is almost exclusively local authority rental (95%).

28% of the population define themselves as having other than Irish ethnic background and 11.6% of the population don't speak English well or at all. In the 2009 survey, residents expressed their concern about the lack of community facilities making social integration and participation difficult. Since then a Family Centre has been established and a small youth facility has been made available by South Dublin County Council (SDCC). The Bush Centre, which formerly provided crèche facilities and community space, is now a scout centre.

Housing conditions in Buirg An Ri, Tor An Ri and Meile An Ri are very poor, with constant complaints of dampness, mould, lack of repairs and associated safety concerns. Balgaddy was one of the sites included in a collective complaint under the European Social Charter, whereby the examining committee found (in 2017) that poor conditions and other issues violate key articles of the Charter. An independent architectural survey carried out for the complaint found *'poor quality materials and the presence of pyrite resulting in unsafe buildings ... showing signs of dampness, mould and other symptoms of poor construction.'*

Drug dealing and anti-social behaviour has been consistently flagged by residents over the years. The construct of the design of some of these housing estates has resulted in many 'vulnerable spaces' – i.e. small, difficult-to-light spaces that are somewhat hidden from general view, including the view of the adjacent householders. This design feature becomes problematic when normal social controls (estate management, policing and community censure) fails to be established.

Statistical data

The Enumerative Division of Clondalkin-Cappaghmore has a relative disadvantage rating of -15.8. In 2011 the disadvantage rating was -15.2, and in 2006 -11.3, so the ED has been subject to worsening disadvantage since 2006 in contrast to the general trend of recovery in the county since the dip caused by the economic downturn.

Enumerative division	2006	2011	2016
Clondalkin-Cappaghmore ED	-11.3	-15.2	-15.8

In addition, 24% of households have no car resulting in a heavy reliance on public transport. 36% of households have no personal computer (PC) in the home and 17% have no internet access in the home, leaving them in an adverse situation in a world that is increasingly reliant on internet access.

	Clondalkin-Cappaghmore ED	South Dublin County	National
No car in the home	24%	12%	15%
No PC in the home	36%	23%	28%
No internet access	17%	10.6%	18%

Almost 11% of the ED population left school before 15 years, compared with a South Dublin County average of 6%. 4.5% have no formal education and only 4.1% have an ordinary level degree or national diploma against 7.5% in the county. In addition, in terms of 3rd level qualifications, only 10.7% of the population in the ED hold any third level qualification up to PhD compared with a national figure of 28.4%. What this illustrates is that the percentage of residents in Cappaghmore with lower 3rd level qualifications are half the national average, however, when the totality of higher level qualifications are compared, the national average is almost two thirds higher than the percentage in Cappaghmore. This demonstrates how the 'rising bar' in third level qualifications acts to exclude lower socio-economic groups such as many of those in the Cappaghmore ED.

	Clondalkin-Cappaghmore ED	South Dublin County	National
Left School before 15 years	10.6%	6%	5.9%
No formal education	4.5%	1.6%	1.6%
Hold an ordinary level degree or national diploma	4.1%	7.5%	7.6%
Hold at least level 7 ordinary degree up to PhD.	10.7%	27.6%	28.4%

Small areas

The data from the small areas below set out figures on the factors that are measured in calculating levels of disadvantage/affluence. A minus prefix indicates that the figure is below the affluence baseline. 3 of the small areas are *disadvantaged* (scoring under -20) and 3 are *very disadvantaged* (scoring greater than -20).

The percentage of the population whose education ceased at primary level is higher than the national average of 9.8%, with very high rates in Tor An Ri (41%). Again, the percentage of those with 3rd level education, averaging at 11.39% across the 6 small areas, rates poorly against a national average of 34.91%.

Unemployment rates are very high, slightly less so for females, ranging upwards from 31.82% against a current national rate of 6.3%.

By any measure Balgaddy experiences high levels of disadvantage, which gives a strong indication of the level of social and economic supports required to lift the population out of poverty.

Pobal HP Index (based on the 2016 census)

Small area	Pop	HP Index	Housing type	Lone parent ratio	Age dependency	Pop with Primary level education only	Pop with 3 rd level education	Unemployed male	Unemployed female
267048001 Tor An Ri	404	-21.74 Very Disadvantaged	92.93% LA rented	56%	39.11	41%	10.85%	46.03%	32.91%
267048002 Buirg An Ri	246	-14.6 Disadvantaged	98.68% LA rented	60%	28.46	13%	16.2%	45.5%	43.10%
267048005 Meile An Ri	302	-18.5 Disadvantaged	94.05% LA rented	59%	45.70	11%	16.44%	40.91%	33.33%
267048006 Meile An Ri	357	-20.02 Very Disadvantaged	93.27% LA rented	65%	37.82	24%	11.4%	41.79%	41.54%
267048007	312	-16.66	61.29%	68%	22.44	23%	6.86%	27.59	31.82

Foxdene Green		Disadvantaged	LA rented						
267048008 Foxdene	428	-21.73 Very Disadvantaged	66.1% LA rented	60%	28.04	31%	6.61	43%	39.66%
National						9.8%	34.91%	9.2%	6.6%

In addition to the levels of disadvantage within each of the 6 small areas, 2 of the small areas Meile An Ri 267048005 and Foxdene Park/Drive 267048007 have experienced worsening disadvantage since the 2006 baseline.

Small Area	2006	2011	2016
Meile An Ri 267048005	1.10	-15	-18.05
Foxdene Park/Drive 267048007	-12.9	-15.30	-16.66

The 2017 Survey

The survey questions posed in 2017 were the same as those asked in the 2009 survey. This was deliberate in order to compare issues and viewpoints with those pertaining in 2009.

A more qualitative perspective, which helped to explain or elaborate on the points people made in the responses to questions, was also picked up by the surveyors during the survey. These have helped to better outline the concerns expressed through the questionnaires.

The survey was carried out in October-November 2017 by six surveyors calling to each house in the Balgaddy/Foxdene area. 134 surveys were completed which compares favourably with the 2009 survey, and is sufficient to represent an accurate reflection of the generative issues within the area.

Q1 How long have you lived in Balgaddy?

The 2009 survey identified some division between new residents and those who were settled in the area for a longer period. This division would appear to have dissipated, although there is a noticeable isolation being experienced by some migrant families that cannot be solely attributed to length of residence.

There has been a significant change over the years since the 2009 survey. The population is now quite stable, with 80% of residents living in the area for more than 5 years.

Length of residence	2017	2009
Less than 1 year	Not calculable	16%
1 – 5 years	19%	44%
More than 5 years	80%	40%

Q2 What do you enjoy the most about living here?

Family and neighbours was the most mentioned by respondents to this question. Being close to family was regarded as very important – ‘all my family are here’ and ‘all my grandchildren went to the playschool’ were typical comments.

Having supportive neighbours and a sense of community rated high in people’s answers. People spoke of ‘community spirit’ and ‘good neighbours’ as being important for them. ‘I like the area, I know a lot of people’, ‘great neighbours, it’s the only reason I stay’ were illustrations of this.

A significant proportion of respondents believed that there was nothing joyful about living in the area, while others appeared to have safety concerns. ‘I keep to myself,’ ‘my apartment is safe for my kids and I,’ were statements that indicated this concern. Others considered themselves lucky to have a home – ‘at least I’m not on the street’ ‘I was lucky to get a house’ ‘I have a roof over my head’ ‘I was heading for homelessness’ were some of the comments from people who felt things might have been worse.

Being close to services such as buses, shops and schools, was regarded by some as a positive aspect of living in the area ‘It’s central to everything, shops and bus routes.’

These findings contrast with the levels of satisfaction recorded in 2009 when 68% of respondents indicated that they were dissatisfied or did not enjoy living in the area. This change can be attributed to the development of neighbourly relationships and family links established or strengthened over the period between the surveys.

Family and community	63%
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Nothing	25%
Having a home	16%
Close to services	10%

Q3 What do you enjoy the least about living here?

When people were asked what they enjoyed least about living in Balgaddy, anti-social behaviour scored highest. Complaints ranged from bin stealing, lighting fires, breaking windows to vandalising houses and cars. People felt intimidated that gangs had free rein and there was a general feeling of powerlessness. 'The way that residents of (a particular road in Balgaddy) are left to put up with the anti-social behaviour' was just one description that conveyed a sense of powerlessness.

Litter was another problem mentioned by many. The area was described as 'dirty' and 'the dumping of rubbish' a particular problem. 'There is nowhere to take my dogs or kids. Everywhere is destroyed.' Noise was also identified as a problem.

An associated issue identified was 'The drug dealers, the gangs hanging around the park, the amount of open drug dealing.' It was generally accepted that drug dealing is endemic and totally out of control in the area.

While some people thought that particular services such as shops, schools and transport were good, many others complained about the lack of services, especially leisure, play and other extra-curricular activity. 'Nothing for kids' was a shared view. Others complained about transport services referring to 'buses being pulled without proper notice or warning.' The vandalising of the park was mentioned by many.

Safety was a concern for many people. Many of the respondents appeared to be fearful of being too visible and easily targeted if they made complaints. Parents were concerned and protective of their children 'I don't feel safe in my house and letting kids out to play is not safe.'

Some people mentioned housing quality as being poor, with particular mention made of damp and its effect on health. 'I have health problems with my child, who is constantly sick.' 'Houses are not up to standard' was a particular complaint linked to damp and mould amongst other maintenance issues.

The lack of maintenance of both green spaces and the area in general was a problem. One comment described the area as being 'run down with a high turnover of people moving.' Frustration and an absence of hope was also expressed in the criticism of the local authority, the Garda and the lack of investment in the area by service providers.

Anti-social behaviour was also the highest scoring issue in 2009 and litter and lack of services continue to be high scoring issues in 2017.

	2017	2009
Anti-social behaviour (ASB)	53%	35%
Litter	26%	19%
Drugs	17%	
Lack of services	16%	23%
Safety	12%	
Housing quality	4%	
Garda	3%	
No choices	3%	

Q4 Do you have any particular concerns about the area?

When it came to naming specific concerns about the area the somewhat related issues of anti-social behaviour, drugs and the lack of services for young people rated highest, with safety also a major concern. Burning bins, robbed cars, children being harassed and noise at night were only some of the anti-social behaviours listed. In terms of anti-social behaviour there was a strong sense of matters 'going downhill'.

Respondents believe that drug dealing is rampant 'every night of the week'. 'Kids as young as 10 are calling to buy drugs' and 'drugs being sold as kids are leaving school' were particularly striking comments of the depth of the problem.

The lack of activities for children and young people also rated highly in the survey. 'Nothing for kids' and 'youth groups needed' were common comments. Leaving kids out to play unsupervised was regarded as unsafe and the need for more structured play and leisure activities was articulated by many.

The level of rubbish and unkempt appearance of the area also listed highly, with blame attributed to both residents and the local authority. 'People throwing their rubbish' and the South Dublin County Council 'not doing enough' reflected the views of many respondents.

Safety was a real concern for many.' I keep myself to myself' was an indicative comment of this fear and while there was a recognition that Gardai are present, there was also a concern about the quality of policing. 'Gardai now and again drive in, turn, and go back out' was seen as tokenistic rather than meaningful.

The lack of community work or schemes for adults, 'no money coming in for the community' and 'not much help' was mentioned as contributing factors to the specific concerns identified. A disregard for minorities was also mentioned in this respect.

Both anti-social behaviour and drugs topped the list of particular concerns in 2009 and continue in 2017 indicating that neither of these problems have been impacted upon.

Anti-social behaviour	39%
Drugs problem	24%
Services for young people	21%
Litter	19%
Safety	13%
Transport	4%
Lack of Gardai	4%
Housing issues	2%
Services	1%
Racism	1%

Q5 Environment

When asked to comment on the environment, litter was by far the most common issue. Rubbish dumped everywhere, broken glass, bonfires, burned out wheelie bins and drugs paraphernalia left lying about were matters that respondents listed. 'The green areas are always dirty' was a common complaint, with proper maintenance of these areas called for. 'Putting something on them' was presumably a reference to the need for play areas and particular reference was made to the playground which is constantly vandalised and 'full of glass.' The lack of policing (not just Gardai) by authorities in terms of following up on anti-social behaviour and vandalism was also called for.

Lack of parking and traffic were other issues. 'Trying to get into the estate' and 'cars parked on green verges' were specific problems mentioned. Cars speeding and the need for speed limits in areas where children play on the road, because parents don't regard the green spaces as safe, was a particular concern.

Anti-social behaviour was again mentioned because of its impact on the environment, especially on the green areas, which were a constant focus in the survey returns. The need for, and condition of, the playground and the need for recreational and developmental provision for children was highlighted again, as was community activity and the community infrastructure required to support such activity.

Finally, the condition of the housing in Balgaddy in terms of quality, suitability and the health and safety hazards arising from damp, mould growth and poor maintenance was mentioned by some respondents. Transport inadequacy was also mentioned as a factor contributing to a poor social environment.

Litter is the top area of environmental concern in both 2009 and 2017 and traffic rates as a common concern across the 2009 and 2017 surveys.

	2017	2009
Litter	85%	Not comparable
Traffic	47%	
Anti-social behaviour	40%	
Environment and green areas	33%	
Playground	16%	
Drugs	16%	
Provision for children and young people	10%	
Poor housing	4%	
Garda responsibility	4%	
Community activity/community infrastructure	4%	
Transport	1%	

Q6 Services

Community services, together with the necessary community infrastructure, outstripped all other itemised responses to this question, while youth activities and services also scored highly. These two were rated well above other services, such as shops and statutory provision, and appear to indicate that a safe, flourishing community or neighbourhood is the priority for residents. 'We need a resource centre/community centre,' 'a family and child centre,' 'a proper community centre for kids is number one' and 'homework clubs to help kids on weekends' reflected some of the needs expressed. The need for a crèche was also expressed.

Transport was also named as an important service connecting people to extended families and the wider world 'services are very bad' and the lack of direct services to Tallaght' were specific complaints. Parking was again raised as an issue because of the dearth of spaces accompanying the housing, a substantial proportion of which is medium-rise apartment blocks.

Again, mention was made of litter in terms of the importance of regular clean-ups, the degraded appearance this brings and the broader message that this conveys to the population in terms of worth and respect. Policing and the need to fund community activity to address the significant social needs in the area were also concerns for many.

In 2009 the main services concern centred on the lack of a playground and the lack of facilities and community resources. This continues to be the main concern in 2017. Poor Garda services appears to have slipped down the list of concerns in 2017, although remaining a constant concern that appears under other headings.

	2017	2009
Community activity/community facilities	75%	Not comparable
Youth activities/facilities	41%	
Services and shops	23%	
Better transport	16%	
Policing	7%	
Litter	3%	
Funding/investment	1%	
Parking	1%	
House maintenance	1%	

Community facilities

There was a real divide between people who thought that community facilities were needed in the area and those who thought there was no need. Presumably this reflects an awareness of the existing family centre and the recently allocated scout centre as well as a belief that greater use of existing facilities, is necessary. Some people believed that it was necessary to go outside the area to avail of community facilities. Another respondent complained of 'a year long waiting list for scouts.' 'No breakfast club to facilitate those who want to work' was another comment, reflecting a reality that women are more likely to find work than many men.

When asked about the type of facilities needed in the area sport ranked highest, closely followed by youth and children and community development. 'Something for older kids to go to get off the streets' was how one respondent put it. Another felt that 'street workers to work with kids' would be necessary.'

Facilities for a women's group and a men's shed were also listed. Mother and toddler facilities was also listed and housing issues was specifically named as an activity that needs to be facilitated. 'A planting project to make the area more appealing' was an interesting suggestion aimed at addressing a duality of needs.

The 2009 survey indicated a strong need for community facilities. While matters have improved, half of respondents to the 2017 survey expressed a view that additional community facilities are still required.

Q7 (a) Are community facilities needed in Balgaddy?

	2017	2009
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Yes	44%	Not comparable
No	51%	

(b) What type of facilities?

	2017	2009
Sport	7	Not comparable
Youth and children	6	
Community development	6	
Women's group	3	
Men's shed	3	
Mother and toddler	2	
Housing issues	2	

Q8 (a) Would you be interested in becoming involved in a group to develop plans for the area?

A good proportion of respondents expressed a desire to be involved in developing plans for the area, indicating a strong interest in improving the general situation of residents. Some were unable to spare the time. 'I've got my hands full with a sick Dad and my son with asthma, otherwise I would love to help' brings home the interlinked nature of health, care and disadvantage. The highest proportion were willing to get involved in any form of activity.

Fewer were able to identify a particular group or activity that they would like to be involved in. On the basis that leaders are more likely to be clearer about their preferred activity or issue - e.g. housing, sport etc.,- this is a strong indicator of an absence of community leaders. The number of those interested in supporting positive improvements, without being totally precise about what the required vehicles for these improvements are, is quite impressive.

Clearly, people are interested in meeting fundamental needs – a concern for their children, their own well-being and the environment that they share with others.

	2017	2009
No	51%	Not comparable
Yes	44%	

(b) What group or activity would you be interested in becoming involved in?

	2017	2009
Anything	88%	Not comparable
Sport	5%	
Community development	4%	
Youth and children	4%	
Women's group	2%	
Men's shed	2%	
Mother & toddler	1%	
Housing issues	1%	

Information

The importance of information and how the flow of information is best enabled was considered by those surveyed. A newsletter was by far the most regarded means of getting information out to the community. Phone text, meetings and email/web were also highly regarded, as was local media. Having an information point was an interesting suggestion that could be developed as part of enhanced community facilities provision.

Q9 Information to the community: how do you think you should be kept informed about services and facilities?

	2017	2009
Newsletter	81%	Not comparable
Phone text	29%	
Information point	29%	
Meetings	28%	
Email/Web	27%	
Local media	22%	
Brochures	7%	
Word of mouth	1%	
Post	1%	

Quality of life

Respondents listed services, amenities, including transport and estate management, as items that would make a positive contribution to the quality of life of residents. ‘Clean up the place’ was a common response or ‘getting the council to do more’ as one person suggested. Mention was also made of the need for a medical centre. A better bus service was also identified as something that would make a positive contribution to the community.

A particular focus was on community and youth activities and the facilities necessary to house this activity was also emphasised – ‘a social outlet for adults, women’s group etc.’ as one respondent put it succinctly. Policing and safety also ranked strongly reflecting similar concerns raised in responses to other questions ‘less drug dealers, more Gardai’ as one respondent put it bluntly. A suggestion that there should be ‘zero tolerance of vandalism and bin burning’ was also endorsed by others.

A proportion of respondents were of the view that some of the housing should be demolished ‘knock the place down and rebuild it’ was a sincere suggestion echoed by others. On a more positive note, community leadership was mentioned as something that would benefit the area.

Improving the environment was the primary concern in 2009, with youth activities and support services also scoring high. The 2017 survey placed services, amenities and estate management highest, with community and youth facilities and policing/safety also scoring high.

Q10 List 3 things that you think would make Balgaddy a better place to live?

	2017	2009
Services, amenities, including estate management and transport	63%	Not comparable
Community and youth activities and facilities	60%	
Policing and safety	29%	
Knock it down	4%	
Community leadership	2%	

Conclusions

People in Balgaddy experience poverty, especially material poverty arising from low income, which results in families being deprived of essential items such as adequate food, appropriate clothing, heating and a modicum of social intercourse.

Housing quality and management is also problematic. Much of the housing in Balgaddy is of poor quality and subject to damp and mould growth. The overall design and layout of some of the housing schemes contributes to vandalism, anti-social behaviour and a general sense of insecurity. Maintenance is inadequate, repairs are constantly required and insufficiently responded to in an appropriate and timely manner.

There is widespread availability of drugs. Open dealing is carried out within the environs of the estates. Intimidation is common, adding to community fears and a developing sense of hopelessness.

Services to the area are weak. Housing maintenance and estate management is poor. Garda presence is inadequate. There is a family centre which provides a space for daytime activities, including early childhood education, and there is a scout centre, but the youth centre has been closed for some time and has only recently reopened. The most important needs relate to safety and security, the need for youth services and the establishment of opportunities for social activities, family support and community interaction.

Impact

The impact of these levels of poverty and deprivation, together with a lack of essential services, means that people have a relatively poor quality of life. Many people feel unsafe in their immediate environment, are forced to keep their children under close supervision and cannot avail of the main play area (the playground and central green area).

The conditions for crime, vandalism and anti-social activity are optimised because of design flaws within the estates. There are too many laneways, dark re-entrants, veiled stairways and insufficiently secured common areas. In addition, services access points and letter boxes are unprotected and many individual doorways are overly exposed and unprotected (no gate, too close to the street).

Damp and fungal growth within many of the houses contributes to poor health, especially for children and those with pulmonary related conditions such as asthma and other conditions.

Because unemployment levels are extremely high (over 5 times the national average) and education levels very low among adults this impinges on the employment opportunities available to residents. The high numbers of adults whose education ceased at Primary level, and the small numbers with Third level qualification, is also likely to impact on the educational achievements of those presently in school, limiting future life chances and career opportunities for these children.

Human rights

The right to be free from poverty is a human right. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares that ... *everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself (sic) and his (sic) family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services* (Article 25).

Ireland has signed and ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which places a responsibility on the state as the rights bearer to realise the rights of all rights holders including the right to *an adequate standard of livingcontinuous improvement of living conditions(and the) enjoyment of the highest standard of physical and mental health.*

None of these human rights are being progressively realised in Balgaddy. Deprivation levels in the Clondalkin-Cappaghmore ED have been progressively worsening over the 2006, 2011 and 2016 Census periods. Austerity measures introduced by the Irish government in the period 2008 -2012 following the economic recession were disproportionately targeted on programmes focused on the most disadvantaged, resulting in a contraction of 35% (Harvey¹). The ESRI also reported that the overall impact of the recession was most adversely felt by those on low incomes².

A collective complaint under the European Social Charter, related to the housing conditions in the area, has been lodged, deemed admissible and upheld by the Charter Committee. The collective complaint contends that the poor conditions and other issues in Balgaddy violate key articles of the European Social Charter including the right to health, the right of families and children to have social, legal and economic protection and the right to have protection against poverty and social exclusion.

Remedies

The accumulation of negative factors affecting Balgaddy makes for a difficult services scenario - the needs of the area are great and the conditions for delivery of services are adverse; but they are not insurmountable, if services are coordinated and targeted, based on an integrated assessment of priorities.

Many services are available to the area but other providers may be overwhelmed by the scale of the need. Clearly, an integrated strategic approach is required if resources are to be applied to best effect. An inter-agency group should be formed for the administration of this task, and should be fully supported and resourced by every involved agency.

Certain matters need to be addressed immediately. Meeting the need for social supports is a priority. Tusla has invested in measures to develop such support in the area but there has been insufficient progress in terms of a tangible presence in the area. Similarly, there is a need for youth services in Balgaddy. A youth centre did operate in small building, was then closed and only recently reopened, however, the space is very restrictive and a larger space needs to be secured.

The Family Centre is a good resource but could be brought to greater use if it was linked to an improved level of community activity in the area - this is at the crux of the required set of remedies for the area. Community activity is at a very low level.

Community development activity describes the outreach work that engages with families, initiates collective responses and generates action for positive social change. Community development also moves people closer to services, ensuring access to and by service providers. It is clear that the area requires an investment in skilled community development workers to generate activity to create an enhanced level of community cohesion, open up access to services and create a demand for social justice and socially justified improvements.

¹ *Downsizing the Community Sector*. Brian Harvey (2012)

² *The Great Recession, Austerity and Inequality: Evidence from Ireland*. ESRI (2015)

Many of the issues in Balgaddy require structural solutions. Much of the housing is of poor quality and in regeneration terms, irredeemable. The worst of this should be demolished, for practical and economic reasons, and replaced with good quality housing. The design layout of the estate could be improved with some well-considered regeneration work – the elimination of ‘hidden’ areas, new lighting and front door/common area protection. Housing with dampness and mould growth will need particular, sustainable solutions.

Finally, this report was compiled as a basis for immediate and medium term strategies to address the dire needs of families as illustrated and outlined in the report. The first duty of the project team is to feed the findings back to the communities living in Balgaddy for feedback and comment. The next stage is to present the findings to politicians, statutory agencies, local authorities, local development bodies and NGOs and community organisations operating in the area.

Many organisations are acutely conscious of the marginalisation that has been present in Balgaddy for many years. This report accumulates and updates the quantitative and qualitative information required to progressively realise the rights of these families through the immediate development and implementation of coordinated strategies and actions to reverse the long-standing social exclusion that has blighted the area.

Sources

Census releases Central Statistics Office (2016)

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