



Community Work Ireland is the new name for the
Community Workers' Co-operative
Continuing to work collectively to support and
promote community work as a means of
addressing poverty, social exclusion and
inequality and advancing human rights

Community Work Ireland,
Westside Community Resource Centre
Seamus Quirke Road Galway
Phone: +353 (0) 87 9326467/+353 (0) 87 2998619
Email: info@communityworkireland.ie
Website: www.communityworkireland.ie

Independent community work as an approach to address challenges

CWI Submission to the Dublin Inner City Taskforce

October 2016

Introduction

Community Work Ireland is a national organisation that promotes and supports community work/community development as a means of addressing poverty, social exclusion and inequalities. Community work/community development is based on the principles of participation, collectivity community empowerment, social justice & Sustainable development, human rights, equality & anti-discrimination¹. It is an approach to addressing significant social and economic issues that emphasises early intervention and the involvement, engagement and participation of those affected by these issues in the process of needs identification and strategy/project development to address these needs.

CWI acknowledges the ongoing challenges faced by the communities in the North-East Inner City and has expressed our support and solidarity to colleagues working in and with the disadvantaged communities in this area of Dublin.

CWI welcomes the establishment of the North-East Inner City Taskforce, the terms of reference provided to the Chairperson and the fact that the report is to be produced within a relatively short period of time. We further welcome the fact the report is to be produced with the engagement and involvement of local community representatives and public representatives and include a collaborative review process involving children, young people, parents, professionals and other stakeholders.

CWI welcomes the opportunity to make a submission and we hope that it will make a positive contribution to the work of the Taskforce.

¹ All Ireland Standards for Community Work - <http://communityworkireland.ie/all-ireland-standards-for-community-work/>

Community work as means of intervention

Community work or community development is an internationally recognised means of intervention to address disadvantage and marginalisation. Community work is primarily a developmental activity that focuses on addressing the underlying causes of poverty, social exclusion and inequality and in organising collective action to address these issues. It requires a focus on identifying issues of the most marginalised and disadvantaged communities with the voice and participation of people directly experiencing these issues being central. Most crucially, in the current context outlined below, community development requires the identification by communities themselves of their own needs and of the most appropriate strategies needed to address the issues that affect them.

In Ireland, a significant grassroots community development infrastructure developed within communities, supported in many instances by the State and by the European Union. However, in recent years this infrastructure has experienced significant cuts to resources and supports. In addition, the reconfiguration of the community sector has meant that many of the organisations that worked in and with the most disadvantaged communities were merged with the larger and more distant Local Development Companies.

The Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme was introduced in 2014. For various reasons² the implementation of the SICAP programme was awarded after a competitive tendering process. The nature of SICAP definitively shifts funding from grant-giving, the model that has been used for decades to support community development and social inclusion initiatives, and continues to be used in many other areas, to a model based on payment for contracted services determined centrally. This is one of the most significant changes to local development and community development interventions in recent history. SICAP has resulted in significant loss to the autonomy and ability of community workers and community organisations to respond to the needs of their communities as they are 'contracted' to deliver a set of centrally designed services to a centrally prescribed number and range of targets. In the North-East Inner City, Community Work Ireland is aware that the SICAP programme is inhibiting the ability of local community workers and community organisations to be respond to the very real needs of their communities. In the context of the significant challenges being faced in the North-East Inner City, Community Work Ireland strongly suggests that the SICAP Programme is not fit for purpose.

An alternative

Community Work Ireland suggests that the Taskforce supports the establishment of a distinct community development programme to support community work in the North-East Inner City. This should be underpinned by the following:

- A community analysis of need in the area and strategies to address those needs;
- A strategic planning exercise that is based on this analysis that will establish goals for the work;
- A level of resources and support for the work that will facilitate and enable the goals to be achieved – based on a grant arrangement;
- Implementation should be by community-based organisations that have a history of working in the area;
- The programme should be designed in a manner that ensures that work at local level is based on locally directed needs analyses and underpinned by community work principles as outlined in the *All Ireland Standards for Community Work*:
 - Collectivity – collectivity includes collective analysis, collective action and collective outcomes in pursuit of a just and equal society;
 - Empowerment - community work is about empowering communities increasing knowledge, skills, consciousness and confidence to become critical, creative and active participants;
 - Participation - participation is rooted in the belief that communities have the right to identify their own needs and interests and responses required
 - Social Justice and Sustainable Development

² Please see the Community Work Ireland publication, *Exploring the Impact of Competitive Tendering and Procurement on Social Inclusion and Community Development in Ireland* for an outline of these - <http://communityworkireland.ie/in-whose-interests/>

- Promoting a just society involves **promoting policies and practices that challenge injustice and value diversity;**
 - Promoting a **sustainable society involves promoting environmentally, economically and socially** sustainable policies and practices.
- Human Rights, Equality and Anti-discrimination - Community work is concerned with the promotion of human rights and equality in society and with addressing the multiple forms of discrimination experienced by many groups.