



## **Belfast Area Partnerships**

*“From Challenge to Change”*

*Education in Belfast*

**Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings**

**20<sup>th</sup> October 2005**

## **Belfast Area Partnerships**

### **“From Challenge to Change” Education in Belfast Conference Report**

As part of the Belfast Area Partnerships (BAPs) Development Project, eight mini, citywide and intercity conferences have been organised over the past two and a half years. The final 3 events formed part of a series known as 'From Challenge to Change'. The second in this series considered the theme of education in Belfast.

The purpose of the event was to provoke challenging debate around issues key to the development of our communities, to engage decision makers, policy formers and resource holders, to acquaint them with BAPs analysis of key challenges and introduce them to the innovative practice which has been developed in response to these challenges, often by BAPs themselves or in partnership with agencies and community providers.

As part of the event BAPs commissioned a short film which considered the positive experiences of the CATER project which the Area Partnerships had coordinated. The Community Approaches to Education for Regeneration (CATER) project was established by the Belfast Area Partnership Boards to address some of the problems of urban education systems in areas of social disadvantage. CATER was funded through the Belfast European Partnership with money going to the five Belfast Area Partnerships (BAPs) in North, West, East, Greater Shankill and South. The project ran between January, 2000 and the end of June, 2001.

The heart of the CATER project was to address some of the educational consequences of social disadvantage that are manifested in the City, but also it aimed to strengthen links and networks across the City itself. The main aim of the project was to strengthen the links between schools, their local communities and, in particular, the parents in these communities. The intention was that this would enhance the educational development of children in those areas by raising the importance attached to education within local communities. In this way the CATER project aimed at enhancing the culture of education in socially disadvantaged parts of Belfast.

The short film BAPs commissioned illustrated some of the successes resulting from the CATER project and at the same time highlighted the pitfalls of short term funding around such projects.

The event emphasised the need to build upon the positive experiences of the CATER project. A copy of the film is enclosed with this report.

The event was held in the Long Gallery at Stormont and ran from registration and finger buffet at 5.00pm until close at 7.30pm. 42 people attended the event from a total of 29 community and statutory organisations across Belfast. Facilitated by Professor Tony Gallagher from Queens University with guest speaker Helen Johnston, Director of Combat Poverty in Dublin, the evening began with the first showing of the BAPs film which was commissioned for the occasion. This was followed by presentations from Tony Gallagher and Helen Johnston followed by a useful discussion session which brought the evening to a close.

The following section includes information provided by the speakers at the event and outlines some of the key issues considered and highlighted.

***Looking back to CATER: Tony Gallagher, School of Education Queens University Belfast, October 20, 2005***

***'Distressed' urban areas***

- *It is not low income alone that characterises these neighbourhoods, but an interlocking mix of environmental, social and economic circumstances, sometimes exacerbated by public policies, that discourages investment and job creation and encourages alienation and exclusion. (OECD, 1998: 10).*

***Aims of CATER***

- BAPS initiative
  - strengthen school – community links
  - promote culture of learning

- promote networking across the City

***CATER activities***

- parent & adult education programmes
- out-of-school programmes for pupils
- links between education & parents
- consultation on educational issues
- networking among the CATER teams

***Parent & adult education***

- links with larger providers
  - BIFHE & BELB
- links with other organisations
- added value of CATER
  - targeting of parents
  - financial support
  - school & community links

***Out-of-school programmes***

- Summer & Easter schools
  - 11+ preparation
  - GCSE revision
  - team building
- homework clubs
- other curriculum areas
  - maths, ICT, literacy, modern languages
- CATER: responding to identified need

***Linking education & parents***

- local history programme, into ICT
- establishing parents' facility in schools
  - coffee mornings & discussion group
  - environmental work: gardening, playgrounds

- fathers and sons
  - link with football club
  - literacy initiative

***Consultation on 11+***

- official consultation through public meetings
- CATER consultation:
  - discussion sessions in local areas
  - compilation of views across groups
  - community submissions to Review Group

***OECD, 1998***

*The formation of distressed urban areas often gives rise to the feeling that cities are the victims of forces they cannot control. There is however nothing inevitable about distressed urban areas. ...*

***OECD, 1998***

*... They reflect, rather, problems in the way in which economic, social and environmental change affects many cities. This process of change is amenable to the influence of public policy and civic action.*

***Belfast primary schools:***

***last seven years***

<b>Constituency</b>	<b>FSME</b>	<b>Enrolment</b>
<b>East Belfast</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>-26%</b>
<b>North Belfast</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>-12%</b>
<b>South Belfast</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>-2%</b>
<b>West Belfast</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>-6%</b>

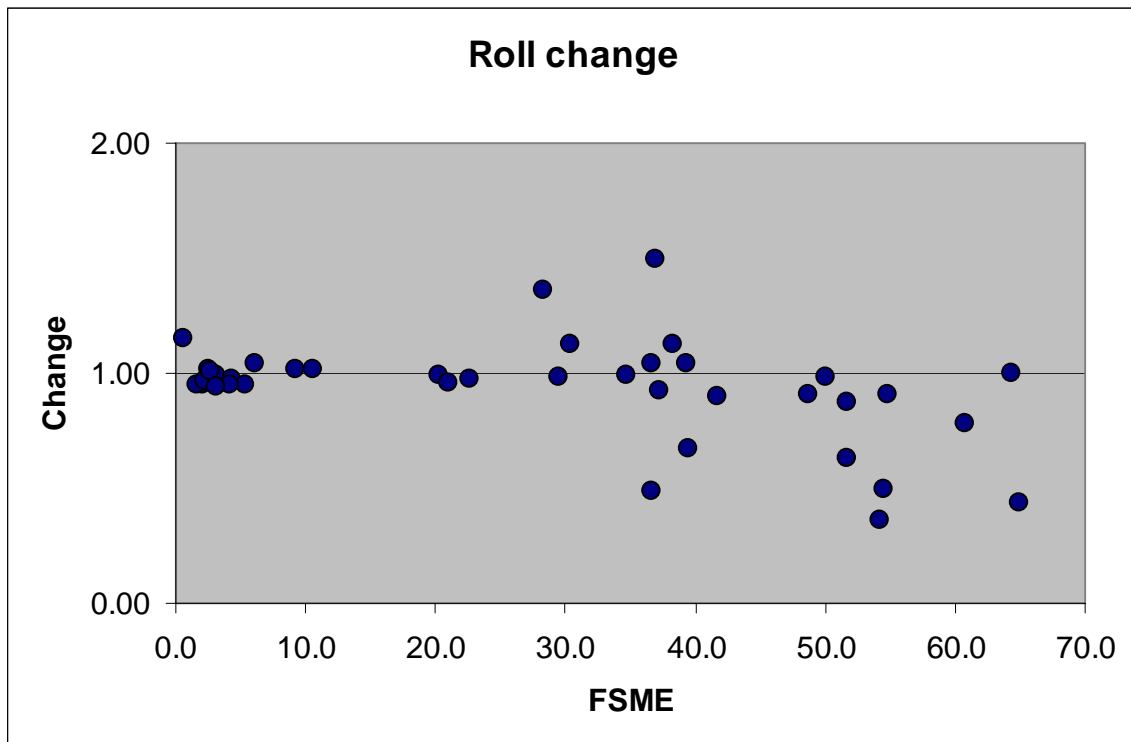
***Belfast postprimary schools:***

*last five years*

Constituency	FSME	Enrolment
Cath Grammar	12%	+1%
Oth Grammar	3%	-1%
Cath Secondary	48%	-10%
Oth Secondary	42%	-16%
Disadvantaged	58%	-31%

***Belfast postprimary schools:***

*last five years*



## **TACKLING EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE IN IRELAND**

*Helen Johnston Director Combat Poverty Ireland*

### **OVERVIEW**

1. What is Educational Disadvantage?
2. Extent of Educational Disadvantage in Ireland
3. Responses to Educational Disadvantage
4. A “Network” Approach
5. Challenges for the Future

### **SOME DEFINITIONS**

- *“... the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools” Education Act (1998)*
- *“the complex interaction of factors at home, in school and in the community (including economic, social, cultural and educational factors), which result in a young person deriving less benefit from formal education than their peers. As a result they leave the formal education system with few or no qualifications, putting them at a disadvantage in the labour market, curtailing personal and social development, and leading to poverty and social exclusion” Combat Poverty Agency (1996)*

### **EXTENT OF DISADVANTAGE**

- 16% of the school population
- 1,000 pupils do not transfer annually from primary to second level
- 2,400 leave with no formal qualification (95% retention rate to Junior Cert)
- 10,600 leave before Leaving Cert (81% retention rate) .... but
  - 8% schools have drop out rates of 50%+ before Leaving Cert
- 1 in 10 leave with literacy problems

### **CAUSES**

- No one cause – multi-dimensional
- Lack of income
  - Basic welfare needs
  - Participation costs
  - Short-term needs
- Lack of education tradition
- Lack of Relevance
  - Curriculum
  - Pedagogy
  - Particular needs
- Inequality

## **EFFECTS OF EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE**

- Reduces life chances of the individual
  - Higher risk of poverty & social exclusion
  - Curtailed personal & social development
- Negative Impact on Economy
  - Reduces pool of skilled workers
  - Reduces state's capacity to compete
- Cost to Society
  - Unemployment supports
  - Dealing with personal and social problems

## **RESPONSES TO EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE (1)**

### Social Inclusion

- National Anti-Poverty Strategy
- Social Partnership Agreement
- National Children's Strategy
- County Development Boards
- Area-based partnerships
- Many other related initiatives eg. Drugs Strategy

## **RESPONSES TO EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE (2)**

## **RESPONSES TO EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE (3)**

### Recent Educational Initiatives

- Education Act 1998
  - Educational Disadvantage Committee
- Education Welfare Act 2000
  - National Educational Welfare Board (School Attendance)
- Youth Work Act 2001
- DEIS 2005 (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools)
  - Standardised system for identifying disadvantage
  - Integrated school support programme (SSP)
  - Annual investment of 40m euro

## **A "NETWORK" APPROACH**

### Combat Poverty's Demonstration Programme on Educational Disadvantage

- 1996 – 2000
- Purpose
  - Establish & support locally-based networks
  - Develop structures to influence policy, based on local experience
- Strands
  - Local structure of 4 networks
  - Policy strand

- Evaluation strand

## **DEMONSTRATION PROGRAMME**

- 4 Networks
  - Tralee Education Network (TEN)
  - Network for Education Support Tuam Area (NESTA)
  - Drogheda Youth Educational Network (DYEN)
  - Killinarden Education Network (KEN)
- Based in area with a local partnership company
- Membership
  - Schools, parents, training centres, youth and community services, area-based partnerships, statutory services (health, police, probation), special projects, special interest groups

## **WHY NETWORKS?**

- Facilitate coming together of relevant parties to work collectively to address educational disadvantage
- Networks are:
  - Structures/groups which facilitate inclusion and participation
  - Structures which enhance working relationships
  - A catalyst for information sharing and collaborative action

## **EFFECTIVE NETWORKS**

- Commitment to common goals
- Shared ownership
- Sustaining relationships
- Shared responsibility
- Respecting other disciplines
- Openness
- Practice

## **RESOURCING NETWORKS**

- Developing new ways of working within existing resources
- An independent co-ordinator
- A commitment of time (for meetings & dialogue)
- Support of senior management
- Good internal reporting structures
- Network steering committee
- Companies limited by guarantee?

## **CHALLENGES FOR NETWORKS**

- Time
- Setting aims and objectives
- Balance between process & action

- Organisational backing
- Networking as a means to an end
- Support/Funding

### **CORE ISSUES ADDRESSED**

- Information sharing & awareness raising
- School attendance
- Parental involvement
- Transition from primary to post-primary
- Literacy development
- Traveler participation
- Teacher training
- Sharing additional resources

### **OUTCOMES**

- Value of working collaboratively
- Strengthening of inter-agency relationships
- Broader issues identified
- Contribution to policy
  - Teacher education
  - Literacy
  - School attendance
- Increased awareness of national policy
- Greater involvement of parents
- Improved responsiveness to needs
  - Positive outcomes for young people

### **YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICES – pathways to early school leaving**

- Breakdown in school relationships
- Family problems
- Absence of personnel identifying problems
- Patterns of behaviour emerge

### **BUT**

- Some positive experiences for most
- Important role of parents

### **CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE**

- Integration at central & local level
- Inclusion of non-school partners
- Teacher involvement
- Parental involvement
- Involvement of young people
- Early intervention
- Support for networking / partnership
- Multi-level responses

- Home, school, community and adult education services.

## **DISCUSSION SESSION**

Over the course of a little under 18 months the CATER teams across Belfast organized a wide-ranging series of activities and events that directly involved hundreds of young people, parents and other adults, and indirectly engaged with hundreds more.

Tony Gallagher chaired a discussion session during which the speakers responded to questions relating to their presentations. A number of other key points were made as follows:-

- The need to use examples of successful projects such as CATER to shape future initiatives – there is no need to re-invent the wheel
- Short term funding is less than helpful - projects that have proved to achieve success require a long term commitment. Education initiatives have a particular requirement for this long term approach.
- The CATER programme has demonstrated the importance of involving parents, the audience were particularly impressed by the example on the DVD of parents becoming involved which resulted in them becoming classroom assistants.
- The potential of the planned roll out of Neighbourhood Renewal in disadvantaged neighbourhoods was highlighted –real joined – up thinking will be required to maximize the opportunity for the education sector in Belfast.
- The engagement of both the Department of Education and the Education and Library Boards is imperative.
- Good practice needs to be shared more often and opportunities such as this event encouraged to ensure discussion between the sectors.