

Themes

A series of themes were presented as the basis for the Colin Neighbourhood strategy. These themes were based on the findings of the strategy development and were confirmed by the strategy steering group.

Developing and Validating the Themes

The themes outlined were developed through extensive consultation and debate across the Colin community and its various stakeholders. The themes represented the core needs of the community and the framework within which they can be addressed. While they are presented as separate themes, they are interdependent and interlinked and they should be viewed in this way. Training for Employment is evidently closely linked with employment and in the context of Colin required investment by both private and public organisations.

The provision of childcare support for those re-entering the labour market was very important and while it sits within a different theme, it is nevertheless fundamental to breaking the circle of long-term unemployment.

Themes: People and Place

For ease of use the themes are presented in two broad clusters: people and place. The people themes represent the broad social, economic, education, and health issues that impact the lives of the Colin community.

The place themes represent the key physical and environmental issues that need to be tackled if the neighbourhood was to be renewed and revitalised.

The format for presenting the themes was as follows:

- **Introduction:** This sets the context for the theme and the various elements of it;
- **Profile:** Based on research that establishes the baseline socio-economic profile of the Colin community;
- **Consultation:** Based on the extensive community consultation which has taken place over the duration of this study;
- **Issues:** Summary of the underlying factors which are the source of the need;
- **Need:** Identification of the core need of the community which requires action;
- **Objectives:** The key objectives which, if addressed, would assist in tackling the underlying need;
- **Targets:** A measurable (SMART) indicator of what should be done to impact the objective;
- **Actions:** Identification of the key actions to move toward achieving the targets; and
- **Who Actions:** These are presented as proposed at this stage, subject to further discussion and negotiation with the key bodies/organisations.

Theme: Health and Caring

The Investing for Health Strategy sought to shift the emphasis by taking action to tackle the factors which adversely affect health and perpetuate inequalities. The key Values and Principles which underpin this strategy are summarised below.

Values:

- health is a fundamental human right;
- policies should actively pursue equality of opportunity and promote social inclusion;
- individuals and communities should be involved fully in decision-making on matters relating to health;
- and all citizens should have equal rights to health and fair/equitable access to health services and health information according to their needs.

In terms of the Colin area, both the Noble indices and the Health Needs Indices reflected the significant challenge which existed within the area.

In addition to official publications, the community consultation highlighted issues that are linked to health needs including:

- support for parents as a key community issue;
- abuse of drugs and alcohol as a significant community issue; and
- growing concerns regarding mental health issues among young people.

It is important to note that many of these findings, particularly abuse of alcohol and drugs can be a result and symptom of other underlying personal and/or social issues.

This is recognised within the Investing in Health and the Neighbourhood Renewal documents.

Health has been defined by the World Health Organisation as:

“a complete state of physical, mental and social wellbeing and not simply the absence of disease or infirmity”

This definition provides an important reference point both in terms of defining the baseline of health and how it is central to the regeneration process.

It is recognised that as a society we can significantly improve the health status of people by tackling related problems including poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, poor housing, crime, and general environmental conditions i.e., pollution.

“the poorest are more likely to be sick or disabled and to die prematurely than the wealthiest. Poverty is the greatest risk factor for health”

Research provided by a range of health bodies including the Eastern Health and

Social Services Board and Down Lisburn Trust combined with the Noble research showed significant health issues within the Colin community.

Health, Vulnerable Groups, and the Social Change

It is generally accepted that society has a responsibility to protect its most vulnerable groups. Traditionally the core vulnerable groups were children, the elderly, the sick, and those with special needs. In most cases, the primary carers for these members of society were immediate family supported by the resources of the various health and caring and education agencies. Within the history of Belfast and West Belfast, there was a strong family and community ethos which underpinned the commitment to those most in need.

It was widely accepted that significant change had taken place in society generally and our consultation suggested that this was now being reflected in the Colin community as:

- the traditional community ethos of belonging and support is being challenged and eroded;
- this loss of community ethos appears to have become more significant since the reduction in civil and community strife (Post Cease-fires); and
- the traditional family unit is changing significantly.

In addition to the changes to community and family ethos, it was recognised that alongside the traditionally vulnerable groups (children, elderly, sick, and those with special needs), there are several emerging vulnerable groups, particularly in the Colin area:

- young males (16-25) particularly in relation to those suffering from mental health; and
- single parents (16-25) who face significant challenges in bringing up children in difficult circumstances.

Recognising that some within the vulnerable groups identified above required a range of support services (e.g., antenatal care, respite care, family support services), local health professionals and community representatives highlighted several specific health issues which were causing concern in the Colin area. These included:

- mental health issues generally;
- suicides, particularly among young people;
- parenting support needs; and men's health issues.

The findings reflected the broader findings of the 2001 Health and Social Well-being Survey which indicated that 21 percent of the adult (aged 16 and over) population in Northern Ireland considered themselves to be depressed and that a similar percentage had a potential psychiatric disorder.

In relation to young adults, research carried out by the Health Promotion Agency with 16-25-year-olds indicated that mental health problems such as sleep disorder, stress, anxiety, and behavioural problems affected one in five adolescents here.

In relation to suicide, it was estimated that over 95 percent of people who lost their lives to suicide had been suffering from a mental illness. Even though the suicide rate in Northern Ireland is amongst the lowest in the EU, the trend was increasing. In 2000, there were 163 registered deaths from suicide, 130 among men and 33 among women. Of these 42 were under the age of 25.

At this stage, there was limited published data available to allow a comparative assessment to be made of the level or impact of such needs in Colin. However, throughout the consultation process, the community had consistently identified the above issues as emerging health issues. It is important also to note that these issues are viewed as symptoms of the problem as compared to the source.

The Colin strategy sought to ensure that the symptoms and impacts of such issues are managed but more importantly that resources are dedicated and coordinated to address the causes of such personal and social disease.

Resources

At a trust level, Down Lisburn Trust has highlighted that:

“The Regional Capitation Review Group as applied to the Trust by the Eastern Health and Social Services Board would indicate the Down Lisburn population as having a negative equity position of £9.2 million”

The Trust highlighted that the concept of equitable distribution of resources and equitable access serves to underpin the main strategies at the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland, and Board levels, and these were complemented by new Targeting Social Needs (TSN) commitments.

The Trust wished to see a clear and unambiguous commitment and the action plan agreed to begin to address the equity position.

It is not within the capacity or responsibility of the CNP to seek to deliver health services to the Colin community. It was however proposed that given the significant need which was identified within the strategy document that CNP will work to ensure that the health needs and issues are addressed.

In identifying ‘Health and Caring’ as a priority theme, CNP proposed to address, monitor, and assess the change in the general well-being of the local community. To this end, the following framework would underpin the Health and Caring theme.

accessibility: it would be important that the strategy monitors the accessibility to services that are provided within the community and those which are provided beyond the immediate area. This theme is linked to two other factors:

– availability of services i.e. waiting lists, health visits, caseloads;
and

– transport to points of service i.e. clinic, hospital;
ensuring resources: through a review of documentation and discussion with the Eastern Health and Social Services Board and Down Lisburn Trust, the basis for allocation of resources had been identified and reviewed. Using the Regional Capitation formula, the Health and Social Services Boards sought to ensure equitable distribution of resources to the various Trusts. It is the responsibility of the Trust to ensure that services are delivered to the respective areas and their needs;

monitoring performance: a key element of the strategy would be to ensure that the delivery of services meets the needs. In relation to health care, this is difficult to assess, however, every effort would be made to monitor key indicators. These might include expenditure, staff numbers across delivery teams in the Dunmurry patch and specific performance related to targets provided in the strategy; and **the long term:** the strategy sought to ensure that the services are delivered and monitored over a seven to ten-year period.

Conclusion

The levels of health deprivation within the Colin area were well documented and while across the Colin community there is recognition that the vast majority of Health Professionals on the ground deliver key services, there was a belief that resources are inadequate. In addition, given the scale of health needs, there was a belief that the health provision in the area was constantly in crisis mode, therefore addressing the symptoms rather than the underlying causes, CNP recognised that the causes of ill health are complex, but also believed that the delivery of this strategy could provide a vehicle for a coordinated approach to dealing with such issues.

Theme: Education

CNP sought to improve the lives of its residents in the short, medium, and long terms. It was recognised that access to a sound education can bring real-life opportunities for children and adults alike.

Within the Colin area, there were clear educational needs across the pre-school, primary, and post-primary education stages. Noble and Census findings indicated significant educational needs in the area, particularly in the Colin Glen and Twinbrook wards. In terms of child poverty, the Noble indicators showed that more than 75 percent of children in the Colin Glen and Kilwee wards received Free School Meals, thus indicating a high level of social need.

Recognising the current limitations of the educational resources and support in the Colin area, the local community considered their schools and support programmes to be among the main assets of the area. It was recognised within the Colin Steering Group that access to education presented one of the best sources of improving the well-being and lifestyle of the community.

The Context

The link between educational attainment and socio-economic disadvantage has been recognised for many years. The research suggests that socio-economic

disadvantage limits educational opportunities by increasing the likelihood of family stress and the tendency to leave school early. Disadvantage also makes it more difficult for children to benefit from the education they do receive. For example, inequalities in health, both in terms of the incidence of illness and in the take up of services, can be powerful factors leading to retardation of physical and intellectual growth.

While there is widespread recognition of the existence of a link between education and socio-economic disadvantage, there is less agreement on the nature of this link and its cause. The debate tends to focus on the relative importance of four main factors:

the individual child;
family background and parental influences;
the socio-economic characteristics of the community in which the child lives; and
the school that the child attends.

Evidence on the links between social background and educational performance in Northern Ireland in general and Belfast had been widely available for several years. This evidence confirmed much that is known from findings elsewhere, including the concentration of under-achievement in certain areas, the association between educational under-achievement and socio-economic disadvantage, and the importance of schools in educational performance.

The link between socio-economic circumstances and educational performance was recognised by the Department of Education in Northern Ireland. The Department's strategy for the School Support Programme began by making the point that: "throughout the world, there are schools which face problems associated with the socio-economic backgrounds of the communities that they serve. In Northern Ireland, many such schools face the additional challenges of communities scarred by civil unrest spanning more than a generation".

The strategy also recognised the importance of school effectiveness as a factor in educational attainment. It pointed out that "some schools do better than others in similar circumstances" and cites the example of two inner-city schools with similar intakes where the pupils were doing 30 percent better in one school than in another.

Data from the Department of Education illustrated the continuing strong relationship between social background and school performance.

Performance Levels of Students receiving Free School Meals

The concept of community partnership is increasingly important in education policy. Similarly, an Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) report on improving city schools highlighted the importance of communication with parents and community links, adding that schools "warrant, and sometimes receive, strong support from community agencies."

Initiatives such as Support for the Family, funded by Belfast Regeneration Office across schools in the Colin area and outer East Belfast, had sought to assist the

establishment of Family Centres. Such centres aimed to encourage greater cooperation between children, parents, and schools to facilitate the development of a learning culture within the school and home environments.

Going Forward

Based on the research highlighted above, the provision of a sound basic education was fundamental to overall personal and social development in modern society. In essence, education provides basic skills and the opportunity to avail of life choices that may not be otherwise available. The reverse is also the case, i.e., failure to achieve a basic education, specifically basic numeracy and literacy skills significantly reduces life opportunities and choices.

Ofsted Improving City Schools: strategies to improve educational inclusion. London: Ofsted. Taken in isolation such failings can have huge personal and social impacts, however, when these are combined with other factors such as health deprivation factors, the consequences are more pronounced and can significantly compound the problem.

Therefore, in terms of the implementation of the Colin Neighbourhood Strategy, there were several key mechanisms that had to be put in place:

Monitoring the need: while there was consensus that the schools within the Colin offer good educational provision and support, there was also recognition that the needs of the children were much more complex than would be the case in many other areas of Northern Ireland. These needs were multi-faceted and therefore the solutions could be complex and involve considerable resource implications for the schools involved. These resources were not always available and while interventions do occur through pilot initiatives such as Support for the Family, the duration is limited. CNP was committed to ensuring that the needs of local schools and their pupils and staff are reflected to the appropriate bodies on an ongoing basis;

Supporting the providers: the strategy must work in cooperation with the main providers and delivery organisations of education in the area i.e., pre-school, primary school, and secondary schools. CNP would seek to support and where appropriate lobby on behalf of the key delivery bodies across the area. In addition, recognition would be given to those providers of education which are not located within the area but deliver services to children from the area i.e., Special Schools, etc; and

Ensuring resource allocation: in its role of coordinating and lobbying on behalf of the community, CNP would work with the key delivery bodies to ensure that the allocation of resources reflected the level of need in the community. The monitoring of the allocation and assessing the impact of the efforts would form part of the implementation of the strategy.

Theme: Training for Employment

The key to addressing both short-term and long-term unemployment was through a vibrant and competitive local environment. This dynamic environment creates and

supports businesses that requires employees to fulfill key operational tasks. In the context of Colin itself, the business base is small, there was a history of long-term and generational unemployment, and the provision of appropriate training had been patchy. There were also significant issues of low levels of literacy and numeracy among a significant number of the adult population. This presented major challenges to preparing young and older adults for the workplace.

Context

The Programme for Government provided the framework within which the local administration would address the social and economic development of the region. The aim of the overall Programme for Government was to provide:

“a balanced, competitive, innovative, knowledge-based and fast growing economy where there are plentiful opportunities for all.”

CNP sought to create an environment in which the skills and talents of its residents would be employed in meaningful and wealth-creating employment. The levels of unemployment across the area and the limited employment opportunities within the area presented a significant challenge. The key to creating a vibrant local economy would be to ensure the skills development of the local labour force matched the needs of the business community. CNP proposed to place addressing the issues of employability as a key priority in the delivery of its strategy over the next seven to ten years.

Employability

The Taskforce on Employability and Long-term Unemployment was established under the Programme for Government, to consider how best to tackle the problems of long-term unemployment and economic inactivity which persisted in Northern Ireland despite a general improvement in economic conditions.

The Taskforce developed a model of employability that set out the main factors associated with an individual’s capacity to obtain and sustain employment. It also recognised issues external to the individual, such as the labour market and economic factors.

The model identified four categories that affect employability

personal attributes;
structural aspects;
managing the labour market; and
personal circumstances.

As a result, Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) was developing the “Targeted Initiatives” which would be implemented in so-called ‘unemployment black spots’ and would provide DEL and its partners with an opportunity to test various approaches to supporting those out of work. In addition, DEL was committed to piloting and developing labour market intermediaries.

Labour Market Intermediaries (LMIs)

This concept was developed in the USA and at its most basic it involved job broking, where an agent acts on behalf of job seekers and employers to match an individual to a job opportunity. However, LMIs also attempted to improve the supply of labour by addressing the specific skills needs of jobseekers in line with employers' requirements and influencing the behaviour of employers towards a group of people that they may be disinclined to recruit.

LMIs also encouraged employers to try to meet the needs of the client group by, perhaps, being more flexible around working patterns or offering placements and introductory trial periods. Some LMIs adopted a 'demand-led' approach, which focused on improving the supply of labour to meet the requirements of a particular sector or employer.

These LMIs began by developing a good understanding of the employers' vacancies, skills requirements, and so on and then set about matching jobseekers to these needs by training them specifically for the vacancies. Employers would therefore have a pool of 'job-ready' applicants from which to select and were not required to provide on-the-job training in vocational or soft skills.

LMIs provided intensive support to the client and the employer throughout the client's assessment and development, the job matching process, and in the early period of employment. The aim was to get the client into the labour market and ensure they could retain jobs and achieve promotion.

Conclusion

Within the recommendations of the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Task Forces, there was a clear focus on developing appropriate interventions. Given its young population and the levels of generational unemployment within the area, CNP believed that the area required such support.

Theme: Employment

Research evidence had highlighted the significant link between employability and the needs of the business community. This section sought to set in context the demand side of the employment equation, namely the employment opportunities which could be developed as part of CNP.

Context

The establishment of Invest Northern Ireland as the key agency of economic development in Northern Ireland brought a fresh approach to indigenous and inward investment activities.

Invest NI's mission:

“to accelerate economic development in Northern Ireland, applying expertise and resources to encourage innovation and achieve business success”.

The Agency had identified the following key strategic issues:

To grasp the opportunities of the global economy and technological age; and work with partners in business, education, research organisations, local economic development bodies, and others in the private and public sectors to tackle the economy's systemic weaknesses.

In addition, there was a range of specific measures which Invest NI initiated to promote business development in Northern Ireland. These included: 'Accelerating Entrepreneurship', the 'New Business Start Programme', and the 'Principles for Business Support framework'.

In the context of generating economic development in the Greater West Belfast area the Task Forces report stated that while the downturn in global economies had caused significant impacts on local firms involved in the high technology sector:

“The Task Forces are insistent that their areas need to have greater participation in the new information and communications industries and that inward investment for the areas should be pursued vigorously.”

There was a clear need within Colin to continue to encourage new business start-ups and assist existing businesses within the area to continue to grow. The local business development needed to have four key strands:

- New Start business development;
- Growing existing businesses;
- New Inward investment projects; and
- Development of the social economy.

The low base of businesses within the area presented immediate barriers to employment because it meant that a large proportion of the community they must travel outside the area for employment. Low levels of car ownership presented accessibility and cost issues for many in the community. In addition, the 'chill factors' associated with traveling into different communities for employment remained a significant personal safety issue for many within the Colin community.

In addition, the low levels of self-employment and new start-ups in the area were a challenge to the policymakers in DEL and the Department of Enterprise, Trade, and Investment (DETI), and the business support agency Invest NI. On the ground, the role of the local enterprise agency within the area, Glenwood Enterprise Centre, was important in the awareness, pre-start, start-up, and growth stages of the micro business.

Ultimately new business creation would come from entrepreneurs from within the

Colin area who see an opportunity to create personal wealth. These opportunities would occur where there is a need for products and services and entrepreneurs could meet that need profitably.

Local investments in industrial and commercial property by local businesses could contribute to boosting local confidence and job opportunities.

Consideration should be given to:

establishing a commercial/industrial property development scheme; and establishing a Business Investment Fund for investors in local businesses.

Such initiatives would assist in pump-priming the micro economy of Colin and generate a sense of economic vibrancy. The need for retail and commercial premises in Twinbrook, Lagmore and Poleglass would provide a focus for some initial activities.

Conclusion

Unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment is a blight on many disadvantaged communities. It is closely associated with other broader social issues which impact disadvantaged communities i.e., anti-social behaviour, and crime. For the most part, finding a job is a route out of poverty.

The key to addressing both short-term and long-term unemployment is through a vibrant and competitive local environment. This dynamic environment creates and supports businesses that require employees to fulfill key operational tasks. In the context of Colin, the business base was small, there was a history of long-term and generational unemployment, and the provision of appropriate training had been patchy. There were also significant issues of low levels of literacy and numeracy among a significant number of the adult population. This presented major challenges to preparing young and older adults for the workplace.

It was proposed that the opportunities presented through the employability interventions and business development initiatives, both traditional and social economy projects, provided a reasonable basis for the Colin community.

Theme: Social Economy

The social economy in Northern Ireland is a large and diverse sector. In many areas, the social economy in Northern Ireland is more fully developed than in other parts of the UK and Ireland. Organisations and bodies which present social economy features include credit unions, housing associations, enterprise agencies, community businesses, and urban and rural regeneration groups.

In the social economy review by Colin Stutt, he defined the social economy organisations as those which:

- have a social, community, or ethical purpose;
- adopt an explicit, market-based business model; and
- have a legal form appropriate to a not-for-personal-profit status.

Social economy organisations tend to be flexible, close to their communities, focus on disadvantaged areas and groups, and encourage participative management and consultative processes: Stutt continued that ‘social economy solutions’ are distinctive and, in many cases, highly effective.

In addition, they could:

- create incomes, wealth, and employment in disadvantaged areas and disadvantaged communities;
- provide employment and routes, or pathways, to employment in the mainstream labour market;
- draw on volunteering and attract donations, which bring into play resources that would not otherwise be available;
- advocate the needs of disadvantaged communities and areas;
- provide a channel for public funds for disadvantaged areas and communities; and
- make a major contribution to the development of social capital.

The concept of social capital is important to understanding the full impact and potential value of the social economy. Social capital can be thought of as the ‘glue’ which holds societies and communities together and helps them to cope with change, realise opportunities and handle adversity.

Over the period of its development, it had been the social capital of the former communities from which many Colin residents originally came i.e. Clonard, Whiterock that had sustained the fledging Colin community over the period of the conflict. Some fear existed that this social capital asset was being lost in the context of the new situation and presented a big challenge to leaders within Colin.

It was important to recognise that there was still a wide range of organisations that existed across Colin that fulfilled a social economy ethos and function i.e., Credit Union, Cloona House, Footprints Women’s Centre. These successes reflected the resourcefulness and commitment of many within the Colin community and were a good basis for further developments. The support for social projects within Colin was strongly supported by the local community and this strategy was implemented. support from statutory bodies would be very important.

The review of the needs and issues within the Colin community identified some key challenges and opportunities which existed within the local community i.e., litter / general maintenance, and community care. These needs provided the basis for the development of social economy projects which may also translate into viable community businesses employing local people in sustainable jobs.

Theme: Recreation / Sport / Leisure Facilities

Recreation

The lack of appropriate facilities was one of the constant issues which were raised at all stages of the development of the Colin Neighbourhood Strategy. Many residents highlighted that communities with populations smaller than Colin i.e., Moyle District Council were served with appropriate leisure and recreational

facilities. The Brook Activity Centre built in the 1970s and located within the Twinbrook estate was the main indoor sports facility within the Colin area. The recent development of the Astro Facility at the Activity Centre had proven to be successful in terms of utilisation by groups and clubs, many of whom were from within Colin.

While the strategy was being developed there was no dedicated play facility in the Lagmore area, a community of several thousand. Within the broad Twinbrook estate which contains four Primary Schools (Scoil na Fuisioige, St Luke's, St. Mark's, and Queen of Peace) there was one playground. Within the Poleglass area, there was no dedicated playgrounds.

This level of provision across a community of almost twenty thousand raised significant questions for the key statutory bodies.

What is an acceptable level of play provision for a community of this size?
Who is responsible for providing such facilities?
Why have they not been provided?

These were the everyday issues for the families who live within Colin.

Sport

The role of sport in regeneration was being considered by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. The reality of life in Colin was that sport was an important element for many young people who play with local Gaelic and Soccer clubs. There were several GAA clubs that drew club members from the Colin community i.e., St Johns, Mitchells, and equally many soccer clubs who drew membership from the area i.e., Donegal Celtic, and Swifts. Such clubs provided a positive and healthy lifestyle option for young people who might otherwise have become involved in anti-social activities. Colin Neighbourhood Partnership applauded the efforts of the many volunteers who gave of their talents and time in encouraging and supporting local sports people. However, there was a lack of provision and coordinated support for such activities.

Arts, Culture, and Language

The Colin community recognised that there were challenges about sense of belonging, a sense of place, and sense of identity. Given the rich community and cultural backgrounds of the residents of Colin, particularly older people from inner West Belfast, there was potentially a dormant cultural and community arts skill that remained untapped. While recognising the presence of local GAA clubs i.e., Davitts, Mitchells, etc, the absence of the traditional parish-based GAA club and the lack of a vibrant community centre for such activities resulted in a lack of cultural focus within the community.

There was an ideal opportunity for a coordinated programme of culture and arts activities to be developed and delivered within the Colin community. Such initiatives could include greater involvement in Feile an Phobail (The West Belfast Festival) and Lisburn City Council Arts initiatives.

Theme: Justice, Crime, and Community Safety

While the Colin community showed clear signs of social stress, much of which was directed at car thieves, local; 'hoods', and increasingly drug dealers. While many statutory, voluntary, and community organisations worked tirelessly in addressing these issues, there was growing frustration at the breadth and depth of the problems. There was a recognition that these efforts were primarily addressing the symptoms and not the causes.

There was a willingness within the Colin community to find real workable solutions to community crime through community initiatives, interventions, and support networks.

CNP also recognised that as a community one of the greatest threats to its cohesion over the next number of years would be the increase in the use of hard drugs within the community.