

# INNER CITY ORGANISATIONS NETWORK



*Celebrating 30 Years*  
1992 - 2022







*ICON came into being to highlight the human and economic crisis in Dublin's North East Inner City. At the ICON launch in 1993 it was pointed out that the severity of the crisis was such that a coordinated and integrated approach involving the full support of all the key players in the statutory, voluntary and business sectors was the only hope of success*


Fergus McCabe

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Finally, the continued success and impact of ICON over three decades was made possible by the sustained participation and contribution of the activists and workers involved in the very many organisations that comprised the network.

Signed 

Seanie Lambe ICON Chairperson 2022



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## List of Acronyms



|         |   |
|---------|---|
| ADM     | Area Development Management                                     |
| ARASI   | Association of Asylum Seekers and Refugees Ireland              |
| AWF     | Alliance Work Forum   |
| CDP     | Community Development Programme                                 |
| CPAD    | Concerned Parents Against Drugs                                 |
| CTA     | Community Technical Aid   |
| DALC    | Dublin Adult Learning Centre                                    |
| DCC     | Dublin City Council   |
| DDDA    | Dublin Docklands Development Authority                          |
| DICP    | Dublin Inner City Partnership                                   |
| HSE     | Health Service Executive  |
| IADP    | Interagency Drugs Project                                       |
| ICRG    | Inner City Renewal Group  |
| ISP     | Integrated Services Process                                     |
| LCDC    | Local Community Development Committee                           |
| LCPC    | Local Child Protection Committee                                |
| LDC     | Local Development Company                                       |
| LYCS    | Lourdes Youth & Community Services                              |
| NAHB    | Northern Area Health Board                                      |
| NCCCCAP | North City Centre Community Action Project                      |
| NEIC    | North East Inner City   |
| NIC     | North Inner City  |
| NICCC   | North Inner City Community Coalition                            |
| NICCC   | North Inner City Cooperative Limited                            |
| NICDATF | North Inner City Drug & Alcohol Task Force                      |
| NWICN   | North West Inner City Network                                   |
| NYP 1   | Neighbourhood Youth Project 1                                   |
| NYP2    | Neighbourhood Youth Project 2                                   |
| PESP    | Programme for Economic and Social Progress                      |
| PPRP    | Participation and Practice of Rights Project                    |
| RAPID   | Revitalising Areas through Planning, Investment and Development |

|      |                                 |
|------|---------------------------------|
| TEN  | The Employment Network          |
| YEAG | Youth Employment Action Group   |
| YPAR | Young People at Risk Initiative |





## INTRODUCTION

When ICON was established as a community network in the north east inner city in 1992, it was built on the foundations of a number of community projects, set up to respond to the crisis of youth unemployment during the 1970's and 1980's, namely North Centre Community Action Project, the North Inner City Cooperative, Lourdes Youth and Community Services and TOSACH Training Workshop. These organisations jointly formed the Alliance for Work Forum and the Inner City Renewal Group which merged with the Inner City Tenants Association and the Voluntary and Statutory Network to form ICON. The principal objectives in forming a strong and representative community network were to protect the financial resources and range of community based organisations and services that had been secured for the residents and to identify new opportunities and innovative approaches capable of responding to changing needs due to persistent unemployment, low income and acute poverty in the area. In 1991, Dublin inner city, after Ballyfermot, was identified as the most disadvantaged area in Ireland. The north east inner city had a very high incidence of long term and youth unemployment and a concentration of extreme poverty, particularly in the local authority housing complexes.

In addition, the development of the docklands with other private sector redevelopment, severe problems with public housing provision and estate maintenance and the failure of state services to target local needs, also required an effective representative structure to enable negotiation with these external interests. The fact that the formation of ICON coincided with a new approach to social partnership, also provided a major incentive to engage productively with the public sector. In response to the crisis of long term unemployment the trade unions, in negotiating a national wage agreement had proposed that the community and voluntary sector directly be involved in designing and delivering a targeted response, using EU funds. This major shift in government policy, which was called the '*partnership approach*', resulted in the formal recognition of the community sector as an equal partner at a local development level. This change provided the basis for ICON to promote new and innovative solutions to acute issues that required an integrated response locally.

Over the next two decades ICON presented a community development model, with national significance, which provided leadership and organising capacity to address the most serious issues impacting on the inner city communities. These issues included the national response to drug misuse, local educational innovation, integrated state and community service provision, targeted responses to young people, ethnic minorities and tenants and a coherent and collective voice to articulate matters of community concern. ICON functioned in a highly participative and inclusive manner and successfully encouraged direct involvement from many residents and workers and activists from the community, voluntary and statutory sectors. However, in the past decade, as some of the most serious social problems have escalated, the withdrawal from partnership approaches and changes imposed by government departments and statutory agencies have undermined community development and the local capacity to network and operate in an integrated way across the sectors. Despite this, ICON and other community organisations have managed to refocus their efforts to remain relevant to local needs.

## PART ONE: The Decade of Community Development Prior to the Formation of ICON

In the ten years prior to the establishment of ICON, in response to the serious social and economic problems which beset the north inner city, there was intensive development of local community initiatives, based primarily in the Gardiner Street, Sean MacDermott Street and Summerhill area. These communities experienced severe disadvantages due to the persistence of low income, lack of employment opportunities, poor educational and skills training provision and lack of sporting and leisure amenities. Housing provision was generally inadequate, but the decision by Dublin Corporation in 1978, to demolish the tenements in Summerhill and Gardiner Street and relocate the residents to the outskirts of the city, undermined and weakened community solidarity and resilience. However, many of the local tenant organisations remained in existence and were active in challenging the threats to their neighbourhoods. In addition, during this period, a number of key community projects were also set up, which greatly expanded the community capacity locally. The primary focus of these newly established community initiatives, utilising public funds for youth training and employment, was on provision for local young people, who were most severely impacted by the unemployment crisis. The introduction of the part time Social Employment Scheme assisted the further expansion of community provision.

### Neighbourhood Youth Projects (NYP 1&2)

A new special education initiative was located in the inner city in 1979. This was among the first in the country and was aimed at early school leavers. The NYP (1), for younger children, was established in the 'School on Stilts' behind Rutland Street school. A second NYP (2) for children was established over eleven years. The two stated aims of the project were to work with young people at risk and help support them in making as positive as possible transition from childhood to adulthood and to act as a catalyst to enable young people and their families to respond in a real way to major social issues that impacted on their development. The project was set up by the then Eastern Health Board with two staff, no premises and a minibus. The North Centre Community Action Project provided an office in Summerhill Parade and the project remained based there, eventually taking over the whole building.

### North Centre City Community Action Project (NCCCAP)

This community development project was first established in 1977, when funding was made available through the First EU Programme to Combat Poverty on a short-term basis. Their initial focus was in response to the housing crisis and the Dublin Corporation Plan to depopulate the north inner city. By March 1979, an alternative community plan was produced, and street protests and public meetings were held. In 1982 a major community cultural event, called the 'Looking on Festival' was organised. The same year Tony Gregory was elected as a TD and held the balance of power in the Dail which resulted in the renowned Gregory Deal. Over the following years NCCCAP developed into a highly successful youth and community training organisation, proving a wide range of innovative skills programmes for local young people, and operating as a Community Training Centre.

### North Inner City Cooperative Limited (NICC)

The Community Cooperative was formed in 1979, utilising Anco youth employment schemes, initially with two supervisors employed and ran a production unit in fibreglass and one in bedroom

furniture manufacture. The two units were based in the School on Stilts and the basement of Rutland Street school where five local young people were employed in each. Over the next year the two production units were developed as viable businesses by improving the products, diversification and expanding the number of commercial outlets. Negotiations were successfully undertaken with the IDA and the Inner City Committee to secure support for local industrial development, and manufacturing machinery and equipment was obtained. A 5000 sq. ft. rented premises was secured in November 1981, at 83 Gardiner Street/ Mabbot Lane and four workers cooperatives employing twenty workers were formed, in bedroom furniture, upholstery, steel fabrication and knitwear. Rainbow Knitwear Coop was formed by six local women, with a skilled machinist and designer overseeing production. These Coops proved highly successful for several years. Over fifty local people were employed during the lifetime of the workers' cooperatives, the workers were unionised as members of Irish Transport and General Worker Union (ITGWU) and trade union rates and apprenticeship schemes were implemented. The Cooperative also led the campaign to secure a small industrial estate, which was constructed by the IDA at the Gloucester Diamond.

#### [Lourdes Youth & Community Service \(LYCS\)](#)

The LYCS was formally established in 1984 from three smaller activities that had been underway for a number of years - a craft and skills centre located alongside the North Inner-City Coop in the 'School on Stilts' in 1980 and a community services project set up in 1982. The initial projects were funded by Anco youth employment and training schemes, and the community services project provided a youth service run by local young people, called the Youth Employment Action Group (YEAG). After the projects were integrated, seventeen staff were employed in LYCS and by April 1984 the first full time training was established with thirty-six trainees between the ages of 15-25. Nine of the staff were local people who had been involved in youth and community work. Between 1984 and 1990, over 300 full time trainees were catered for with an average age of sixteen, of whom over 80 per cent left school without formal qualification. From the start the management of LYCS had strong input from people living in the area. In 1986 the management committee was made up of five staff, six people living and working in the area and two people with professional expertise. This local ethos was retained and by 1990 of the twelve people on the management committee, nine were living in the area. A particular focus in LYCS was integrated community education. While delivering the Youthreach training programme, LYCS also retained the informal training/ community resource element with a particular emphasis on the development of women's groups. By 1990 approximately 90 women and 70 young people were regularly using the open facility with access to creche and play schemes.

#### [Alliance for Work Forum \(AWF\)](#)

The Alliance was established in 1985 by the local community organisations listed above who had been cooperating with each other on a range of issues. These groups representatives comprised, Mick Rafferty (NCCCAP), David Connolly (North Inner City Coop), Dave O'Brien (LYCS), Theo Ryan (Tosach Community Training Workshop) and Martin Brennan (YEAG). In October 1986, following a series of local meetings to expand membership, a Work Forum Conference was convened, to prepare an action plan and establish a broader network. A welfare rights service was established



in 1987 in response to a need identified by local social workers. Direct engagement with the Custom House Docks Development was established after its formation, in 1987. The Alliance for Work Forum maintained a local representative structure to negotiate with the Custom House Docks Development Authority and proved highly effective. The Alliance remained as the main local representative body until the Minister for Environment, instructed the Authority to cease engagement with the Alliance. In November 1989 a weekend workshop was convened to discuss progress and prepare a strategic plan. The workshop report included a short profile of the twelve constituent groups of the Alliance at that stage. The affiliated organisations comprising the Alliance in 1990 were, North Inner City Coop; LYCS; Training Workshop in Agriculture; Larkin Unemployed Centre; NCCCAP; Charleville Mall Library; Community Resource Centre, Buckingham Street; NIC Welfare Rights Centre; EHB Clarence Street; Inner City Magazine and Folklore Project and the Dublin City Building Coop.


### Inner City Renewal Group (ICRG)

The Inner City Renewal Group was formed in September 1990 by members of the Alliance for Work Forum to provide a specific entity to secure funding for the area from the third EU Programme to Combat Poverty. Eventually the state decided to fund only three very large organisations through the Programme but the Department of Social Welfare made a recommendation to government that 12 of the unsuccessful applicants should be funded at some level. This led to what was later to become the Community Development Programme with over 100 projects nationally. By the first half of 1991 four full time workers were employed as Director, Welfare Rights Worker, Community Organiser and Secretary. A welfare rights campaign was commenced. Much of the initial work focused on the potential for urban renewal in the Killarney Street area with advice from the Department of Geography in Trinity College Dublin. This new organisation also provided the capacity to encourage wider coordination among many of the key projects.


### North Inner City Tenants Association

One of the key voluntary groups operating in the area was an association of local tenant organisations. This had evolved in the mid-1970s from an initiative taken by residents in St Mary's Mansions and Liberty House flat complexes on Sean McDermott Street. They had taken over the basements in the flats to develop youth centres and this idea expanded to the adjoining areas including Avondale House, Matt Talbot Court, Mountainview Court and Lourdes House. The initial involvement was organising local initiatives, providing summer projects, annual community weeks and sports events, however other community priorities emerged that required organised protests in response to community concerns on Gardiner Street, traffic on the proposed inner city ring road and the Corporation proposal to demolish the tenement buildings in Summerhill and Sean McDermott Street. Between 1974 and 1978 The North Central Community Council (NCCC), involving twelve neighbourhood groups, was formed as an umbrella network for these diverse tenant groups and during the 1980s they played an important role in representing tenant interests.

### Voluntary and Statutory Network

The Voluntary and Statutory Network was set up in the early eighties which comprised of those workers involved in the immediate area of Dublin's North Inner City. Initial meetings were a response to issues arising for local workers, primarily family care challenges and juvenile justice problems. It became a forum for discussing common aspects of work that different projects were doing across professional divides, including childcare, youth work and educational and vocational training settings. Most of the projects represented at the regular meetings shared common concerns, were community based and often working with the same children and families in the same community. The network also had the important function of the sharing of information among the projects. The groups affiliated ranged from local childcare projects, community training workshops, youth projects, youth services and preventative drug projects. Individuals included social workers and community workers, School Attendance (Truant) Officers and local voluntary workers. The core group members over the life of the V & S were the Lourdes Youth & Community Service, the Youth Encounter Project, the St. Vincent de Paul Child Care Centre, Tabor House, NYP 1 and 2 and local parish projects. Several new projects arose, either out of initial discussion or were directly initiated by the V & S, including, the St. Vincent de Paul Child Care Centre - a short term community based residential project for preteen boys and girls; the Talbot Centre - a local drug counselling service for local children and youth; Tabor House - a community residential project for teenagers. A special report, entitled '*Crime, Custody and Community*'  was commissioned and published by the group, and this helped to highlight nationally the issues impacting on local young people.

### Forming a New Community Network

By 1991, while significant progress had been achieved in building an effective and expanding community response over the previous decade in the northeast inner city, there were also serious challenges presented to the sustainability of these initiatives. In addition, given the difficult experience of dealing with the Docklands Authority, there was a need to convene a local representative structure that could not be ignored. In addition, the national tripartite agreement concluded between the trade unions, employers, and the government in 1991,  called *The Programme for Economic and Social Progress (PESP)*, ushered in a new era of national Partnership, with potential opportunities for the community sector at a local level.

In these circumstances the need to organise a larger and more powerful and representative community network was debated locally. An initial meeting was convened during 1991, in the Dublin Adult Literacy Centre (DALC), Mountjoy Square, involving the three existing networks which proposed the formation of what became ICON. The attendance included representatives of these networks, Fergus McCabe (Voluntary & Statutory Group), Paddy Malone (Local Tenants Organisations), David Connolly and Dave O'Brien (Alliance for Work) and Mick Rafferty (ICRG). A proposal setting out principles, objectives, potential participation and needs analysis was discussed with the outcome agreed that a new overarching community network was required, to protect the gains the community had achieved and to promote new ideas, innovations, and local responses. The national PESP agreement, also provided an important context and incentive for

the development of a large and representative community network in the north inner city, as the agreement for the first time specifically recognised the valuable role and contribution of the community and voluntary sector in resolving acute poverty and disadvantage at a local level.



## PART TWO Developing and Expanding the Network

### Inner City Organisations Network (ICON)

In February 1992, a meeting was convened in the North Star Hotel, Amiens Street, where agreement was reached to formally establish the network. The proposed name and potential membership were approved and ICRG was appointed to act as organising entity for the new network. The first collective event, held in the Dublin Adult Literacy Centre on Mountjoy Square in early 1992, was focused on building the new network and comprised primarily of local community activists. The subsequent events were much larger affairs, convened as major conferences. The network adopted an innovative approach in encouraging voluntary participation from community organisations, activists, and residents of the area. Members were expected to become actively involved in the various working groups and decisions were made by debate and consensus. This resulted in a very dynamic organisation with large numbers of people involved.

In early 1992, former members of the V&S became actively involved in the work of ICON through special interest working groups most notably the Child Care, Youth and Family Support and Education and Training Groups. Members also focused on the issue of Drug Prevention and Economic Development Groups. The issue of '*Youth and Childcare*' was addressed at ICON's first seminar in 1993. The ICON 'Youth, Family and Childcare Working Group' recognised the need for an integrated approach to childcare and child development by considering children in terms of their school, family, and community by forging links between them. The working group also advocated an inter-agency strategy in responding to the complex needs of children at risk and support programmes for their families in the NEIC. In September 1992, a general meeting was held to consider progress. Information was provided on several matters by representatives including, on the new HIV clinic, the Lourdes Social Employment Scheme and on the changes negotiated in the Community Employment Programme. Reports from seven working groups were also presented. The working groups were:

- Women (Liz Riches)
- Youth childcare and family support (Maureen Downey)
- Employment and Enterprise (Seanie Lambe)
- Culture (Mel MacGiobuin)
- Training and Education (Robbie MacDonald)
- Sport and Leisure (Fergus McCabe)
- Community Development (Paddy Malone)





Over twenty local community organisations affiliated to ICON in the first year. The public launch of ICON took place in February 1993, with President Mary Robinson in attendance. The network membership expanded rapidly and by September 1993 there were sixty-five representatives present at the general meeting, with Fergus McCabe as chairperson. Reports were presented from the working groups which mainly focussed on the intention to produce an integrated area plan. Members for the incoming Steering Committee were nominated by each working group and Fergus McCabe and Liz Riches were re-elected as Chairperson and Secretary, respectively.

In the first quarter of 1994, ICON, published an Area Action Plan for the NEIC, which was launched at a residential seminar with an attendance of almost three hundred people, drawn from residents, full time workers and relevant statutory agencies and government departments. The integrated area plan, funded by DICP, involved more than three hundred participants in the consultation and production of proposals and specific actions. Several major initiatives emerged from the implementations of the proposals in the plan. These included an integrated services process, an interagency drugs project and an education initiative aimed at combining the different statutory services in response to the needs of primary school children who were at risk.

The Annual Report for 1994 from the ICON Steering Committee highlights the new Inter-Agency Drugs Monitoring Group; the proposed inner-city wide community alliance; the continued implementation of the Area Action Plan and support for street traders. The report also highlights the nomination of Pauline Kane and Seanie Lambe as community representatives to the Dublin Inner City Partnership Board (DICP) and the submission to the Dept of An Taoiseach for an inner city wide, EU URBAN initiative in conjunction with the DICP. Reports from eight working groups were also presented and a financial report for the year was attached. The detailed report included priority topics of concern, including the impact of drug misuse, the scale of local unemployment, the role of ICON, the use of community employment and the housing conditions in the local areas. Specific recommendations and proposals were put forward to address these key issues. As an outcome of the plan, the ICON Women's Group, in conjunction with Barnardos, produced a

feasibility study to make the case for investment to provide local childcare facilities. A campaign was subsequently mounted to advocate for provision.

### Major Community Conferences

A significant aspect of the different community approach adopted by ICON was to convene a series of major conferences, which included participation of local representatives from the community sector, statutory agencies, elected representatives and local residents who were active in the network. Five of these large events were organised between 1996 and 2006, with the first in Newcastle, County Down, two in Kilkenny and two in Waterford. These events were subsidised by the state and private sector and enabled large numbers of local residents and community activists to attend and debate and agree policy priorities, resolve differences in approach and socialise in an organised setting. Each of the events proved highly successful and resulted in the production of agreed Strategic Area Action Plans. From 10-12 June 1996, the conference, held in Newcastle, included as guests, community activists from both sides of the political divide from Derry and Belfast in Northern Ireland. The agenda is particularly notable because of the emphasise placed on the issue of gender. The conference, called Living in the City, commenced at 6pm on the Monday evening and closed on Wednesday at 1pm. The full day on Tuesday was focussed on four workshops, with large participation. The titles of the workshops provided an indication of the main concerns of the network at that stage and include Changing Roles of Men and Women; Problem Drug Use- an Integrated Response; Linking the Social Economy to Urban Renewal Initiatives and Juvenile Justice- a community response.



In the first six months of 1999,


- ICON progressed the Network Action Plan
- Local residents' groups and Dublin Corporation were consulted about the impact of their Integrated Area Plan
- ICON representatives were maintained on six external Boards, including DICP, Drugs Task Force, City Clinic, Docklands Development, Larkin VEC, National College of Ireland.
- A Community Support Worker was provided for drug users and their families

- Funding was secured to locate a permanent memorial for those who had died of drug-related problems
- Proposals were developed for a Community Policing Forum and for an Education Task Force for the area
- Preliminary work was undertaken on an anti-racism training programme.

In October 1999 the Network Strategic Action Plan, was launched by local poet Paula Meehan, in the offices of the Dublin Docklands Authority, with a response from Peter Coyne CEO of the DDDA. In November 1999 ICON organised an intercultural festival in Liberty Hall, which was organised jointly with the Association of Refugees and Asylum Seekers (ARASI).

### The second decade

In early 2000 ICON employed a new development worker who was responsible to work with local tenant organisations in relation to the delivery of the Action Plan launched in October 1999. The aim was to provide an outreach strategy to encourage local people to participate in the community network and the Integrated Services Project (ISP), and to identify issues of central concern to tenants for resolution by Dublin City Council. A four -month innovative training programme on negotiating skills and assertiveness, delivered by the ISP, was attended by twenty four local tenants.

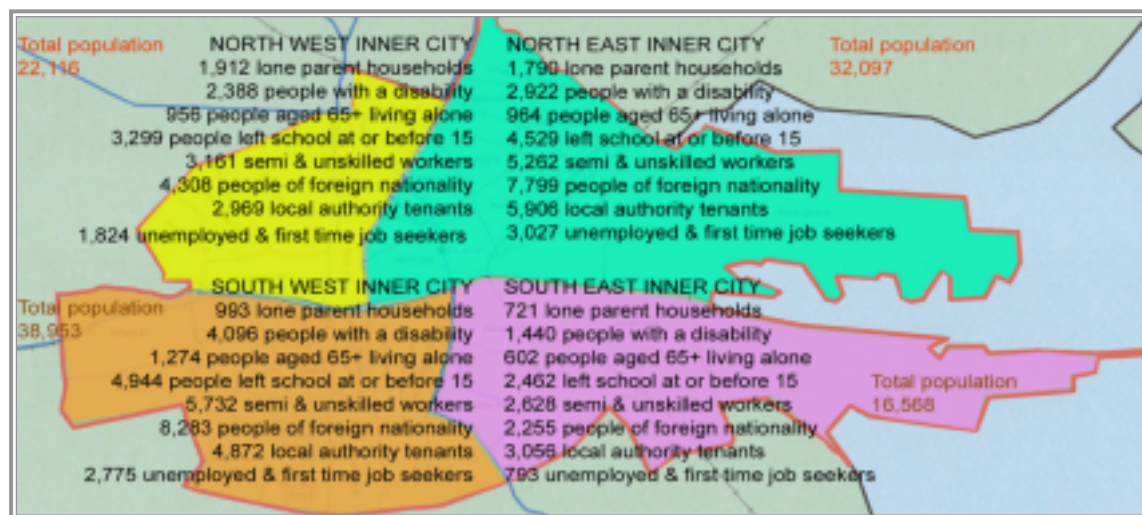
In December 2000 the President, Mary McAleese, unveiled a memorial sculpture at the junction of Sean McDermott Street and Buckingham Street. The figure, called Home, was by renowned sculptor, Leo Higgins and was provided to commemorate the local people who had died due to drug misuse. 





In February 2001 a new three-year government programme, entitled *Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development* (RAPID) was introduced. The Government proposal, to implement a focussed urban revitalisation programme, directly influenced by the ISP, was prepared by DICP and submitted by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions as part of the National Partnership Agreement negotiations. ICON facilitated the introduction of the programme in NEIC and established local RAPID cluster areas with residents' participation in the identification of local social and economic needs and priorities. Within two years 124 projects with a total cost of €119 million were submitted to the National Committee, of which 25 projects costing €53.3 million were in the NEIC.

In June 2001 ICON organised a protest outside the Department of Education on Marlboro Street, with local students dressed in cap and gown, to highlight the low level of access to third level by students in the NEIC. The demand for an Educational Task Force for the NEIC was supported by Trinity College, NCI, NICDTF and DICP. The scale of the challenges presented in 2001 is illustrated below:



By 2002 ICON was ten years in existence and had sixty member organisations and three full time staff, funded by DICI and NICDTF. The Steering Committee was elected annually by the AGM and consisted of members representing Working Groups of which there were nine functioning. The Network was represented on more than twenty-five committees and bodies including ISP; NICDTF; DICI and DDDA. The ICON conference to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the network was again held in Waterford, over three days from Friday 1 November to Sunday 3 November 2002, with over 200 people in attendance. Under the overall title *Rights; Responsibilities; Resources*, five Workshops were convened, including *Drugs-from old to new challenges*; *RAPID: Community Participation-who gains?* *RIPON: Children at Risk*; *Violence against Women: an issue for community development and the Challenge of a multi-cultural society*. These specific themes reflected the new realities and recent initiatives in the north inner city. The new RAPID local development programme, the issue of violence against women and the multi-cultural changes that had occurred were all priorities to be addressed.

The DICI three-year progress report published in early 2004, entitled *Realising Rights*, contained a comprehensive listing of the key achievements by ICON over the period. These included, developing the Youth at Risk Initiative; submission to the National Action Plan against Racism; a series of events organised by the multi-cultural working group; organising educational activities for 10-21 year olds in the North Wall area; needs analysis for the St Agatha's Youth Development Group catchment area; support for community participation in RAPID; lobbying against cutbacks in the Community Employment programme; participating in the Voter Education Initiative; providing a Women's Aid outreach centre; organising the Monto Festival; fundraising and activities for the ICON elderly committee; undertaking needs analysis of Dominick Street area residents and providing training courses, in leadership and committee skills for the local tenants groups, provided in conjunction with Community Technical Aid, who worked with tenants in 23 local flat complexes.



In March 2006 another major ICON conference was convened in Kilkenny and enabled the delegates to formulate the basis for a three-year strategic plan, which was launched later in the year and entitled, *Challenging Times Strategic Plan, 2007- 2010*. In 2007, in the context of delivering this plan, a formal operating agreement, between Dublin City Council and the Dublin inner city local and community development organisations was negotiated. Called *Protocol for Progressive Engagement* and involving from NEIC, ICON, ICRG, CTA, LYCS, North Wall Women's Centre and NASCADH, it was formally endorsed on 2 May 2007 by John Tierney, City Manager and David Connolly, Director DICP. The strategic plan also identified the needs of older people and in early 2008, in response to their increasing isolation in the inner city communities, ICON decided to undertake detailed research to establish the actual living conditions and specific needs of older people in the area. In response ICON produced a report on the conditions for older people in NEIC called '*Changing Times, Changing Needs*'. The outcome provided detailed priorities and recommendations to the many agencies responsible for service provision to address the changing requirements in terms of accommodation, safety and care and social provision.

In April 2008 the two networks, ICON and North West Inner City Network (NWICN), produced a Good Practice Guide to Community Participation. The project was aimed at removing barriers to participation by local people in community groups and in engaging with the relevant statutory

agencies. The progress report from ICON for 2008, provided details on the advancements on the implementation of their strategic plan, 2007-2010. This report outlined actions on some priority issues pursued. These included a range of specific activities undertaken, by the Working Groups including, Educational, Drugs and Alcohol, Senior Citizens, Domestic Violence and Intercultural, with policy proposals developed for the general election, distributed in leaflets to households and candidates.

During this three year period an ICON Health Forum was convened to produce a needs assessment and engage in consultation with the Primary Health Care Unit in Summerhill. A specific sub-group was established to address the needs of local grandparents acting as carers of their grandchildren, because of drug related issues and the new task undertaken by the Community Participation Project involved publishing an effective local guide to rehabilitation and treatment services for drug users and their families. For the Dominick Street/ Dorset Street area of the north inner city, a new community project, *Taca Clann*, was developed as an interagency group working in partnership to combat issues of social exclusion and poverty in the neighbourhood. An application to the Dormant Accounts fund was submitted that allowed for interagency training to be delivered to residents and state agencies referred to as *Central Training* and delivered by Community Action Network (CAN). The training highlighted the collaborative nature of the project between ICON, RAPID and MACRO, allowing participants from the North Inner City to work together. A new Dublin Multicultural Resource Centre (DMRC) was resourced and became a focus for intercultural work in the NEIC, with capital funding secured to redevelop the basement in the Dublin Council of Trade Unions building on Lower Gardiner Street, as a resource centre.





### ICON Campaign Against Drug Misuse

The most acute issue that had to be addressed by ICON, in the early stages of the development of the network was the hardship and devastation visited on the north inner-city communities by the scale and persistence of drug supply and misuse. The first heroin epidemic in Ireland had occurred in the north inner city in the 1980s and spread across the city. Activists in the area had been involved in the Concerned Parents against Drugs (CPAD), which had been organised to confront the problem. Their campaign proved successful initially, but over time the approach adopted proved less effective in stopping the major drug dealers and the Gardai increasingly reacted to CPAD as the problem rather than the solution. In response to the increasing incidence of drug dealing in the north inner city and the impact on the families of drug users, ICON launched a new street protest campaign with a more holistic response. The difference in approach is captured in the campaign slogans adopted. In contrast to the CPAD slogan of PUSHERS OUT, the new ICON slogan was ADDICTS WE CARE: PUSHERS BEWARE. This broad campaign also included community providers, involved in services for addicts and their families, and had the parents and grandparents of addicted people among the leadership. The ICON public campaign proved highly successful in influencing government policy when, after the assassination of Veronica Guerin in June 1996, it was finally decided to address the crisis, with the establishment of fourteen local drug task forces, including one in the North Inner City. Alongside the street campaign, ICON established integrated local responses including the Inter Agency Drugs Project, the CityWide Drugs Crisis Campaign, and the Community Policing Forum, all of which helped to determine and shape national responses.

### Inter Agency Drugs Project (IADP)

The IADP was formally established in November 1995 from an ICON initiative that commenced in November 1993, when the Gardai and HSE were approached to participate in a joint response to opiate misuse. Funding for a two-year pilot project was provided by three Government Departments, Health, Justice, and Education. Three sub committees were formed: Treatment and Education; Prevention and Education and Supply and Control, with community, voluntary, statutory, business, and elected representatives. A total of thirty-eight individuals attended the sub-committees addressing a wide range of issues and general meetings were convened every three months. The IADP undertook an extensive range of actions, including research with Trinity College to establish the extent of drug use, profile of users, and implications for a national drugs strategy. Seminars on community drugs teams and community policing were held and the potential for drop-in centres in local authority housing was explored. The IADP, which was a two-year pilot project, provided the model for the establishment of thirteen local drug task forces, twelve in Dublin and one in Cork, which was included in the Report of the Ministerial Task Force in October 1996, when the £14 million plan to improve the Government's response to the drugs crisis was announced.

### CityWide Drugs Crisis Campaign (CityWide)

In a direct response to the heroin epidemic devastating many of the communities in Dublin city, in 1995 at a major conference in Liberty Hall, Citywide Drugs Crisis Campaign was set up, as a collective campaign to secure the public policies and resources needed to tackle the drugs crisis. The Citywide Steering Committee was formed with the support of ICON, the Trade Union



movement, and local activists, with Fergus McCabe ICON and Paul Clarke SIPTU appointed as joint Chairs. Initially a campaign involving the trade unions was mounted to raise the profile of the drug misuse issue. In early 1996 Citywide organised two conferences to put together policies around the three strands of health/treatment, justice/supply and prevention/education and it produced its first comprehensive policy document – *‘Responding Together’* – in May 1996. This was followed by the organisation of a successful campaign to ensure that proposed cuts to the budget for the Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund were not implemented and the full budget was restored.

As the Local Drug Task Forces were established, in early 1997 CityWide provided support for the community representatives appointed to the local Boards. They also nominated community representatives to the National Drug Strategy Team, which was overseeing a coordinated government response to the drug misuse crisis. Over time, as new task forces were established on a regional basis, CityWide expanded their support work nationally. Their primary focus was on advocating and providing a community development approach to tackling the complex issues presented by the drugs problem, involving drug users, their families, and their communities. Citywide was recognised and funded by government as a Specialist Support Agency to develop the capacity of local communities to tackle the drugs problem, with ICON as a core member of the Board. During that year Citywide facilitated the first meeting of the local Drugs Task Forces Community Representatives, countrywide network, and Fergus McCabe was appointed by Government as the first Community Sector Representative on the National Drugs Strategy Team (NDST).

In 1998 two seminars were convened, in Liberty Hall, on community policing and on treatment provision. In 1999 the second Citywide policy document, *‘Responding Together: The Crisis Continues’* was produced, acknowledging progress but stating unequivocally that the drugs crisis continued to have a major negative impact in our communities. In 2000 CityWide organised the first Service of Commemoration and Hope with family support groups, which took place in Sean McDermott St. church, with the Taoiseach in attendance. In 2001 Citywide organised a conference to consider the role of local communities in the implementation of actions within the 2001 – 2008 National Drugs Strategy and this was followed by the third policy document in 2002, *‘Responding Together: The Campaign Goes On’*. Following the general election in 2002, CityWide was back on the streets, marching to highlight the need for the drugs issue to be given a higher political priority.

One of the key issues emerging in 2003 was the growth of the cocaine problem and CityWide gathered and presented the evidence from the ground, through a survey of community drugs projects, which showed the extent of the problem. This was highlighted further by a seminar on cocaine misuse, which called on government to respond to the problem and in 2004 CityWide was asked to participate in the National Sub-committee on Cocaine which was set up by government. In 2005 CityWide marked its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a major exhibition on community involvement in the National Drugs Strategy, with presentations by ICON and by former and current Ministers. In November 2005 Fergus McCabe resigned his position as NDST Community Representative in

protest at the lack of commitment by the Department of Health and a number of protest meetings were organised by CityWide during 2006. The Department of Health made further commitments about its involvement and later in the year Fergus McCabe took up the position as the first community representative on the high-level Inter-departmental Group, with the Citywide Co-ordinator taking up the role of NDST Community Representative, on an interim basis.

During the 2007 General Election a canvassing leaflet was widely circulated on the drugs issue in local communities and in 2008 emergency meetings were convened in September and December by the National Community Reps to launch the campaign *Time to Take a Stand*, to highlight the deterioration of partnership in the National Drugs Strategy (NDS). Following the launch by government of the new NDS in 2009, CityWide launched a further campaign of action to highlight the damage being done by the dismantling of the partnership process in the NDS. During 2010 local community meetings were organised as part of a campaign to oppose severe budget cuts to community drug services and a conference in October in Ballybough Community Centre was attended by over 100 participants from across communities.



### PART THREE: Cooperating and Integrating - Profile of Local Organisations

The strength and capacity of ICON to work as a broad and representative community network was greatly enhanced by the fact that the original founding members remained as leaders and active in the organisation, and many of the community projects, who became members, contributed

substantial time and resources to developing the work of the network. This enabled new integrated initiatives to be developed and ensured wide participation from among the local community and the workers employed in the area. In addition, the establishment of the Dublin Inner City Partnership provided a wider structure to engage with the state sector and the other social partners to develop new integrated strategies for long term local development. ICON, in turn, provided an effective and proven model for the DICP to include the communities in the other quadrants of the inner city. The success of ICON over the first two decades was built on the significant contribution of the membership organisations and the development of new integrated initiatives that were set up involving the community projects and statutory and voluntary services. This also enabled ICON to convene a unique series of large conferences comprised of residents, community activists, state agencies and political representative which provided the means to consult widely, develop integrated strategies and commit to implementation in a way that was innovative and ground-breaking. This dynamic local partnership approach ensured that the targeted solutions adopted were sustainable and adequately resourced. The participation and contribution of this wider infrastructure ensured the continued effectiveness and relevance of ICON over three decades.

#### Dublin Inner City Partnership (DICP)

The formation of the ICON network coincided with the establishment of DICP and was directly linked to the development of what was called the *partnership* approach. This local development initiative which was proposed by the Trade Unions to tackle the crisis of long-term unemployment, was initially negotiated as part of the national agreement (PESP) and was a major shift in the state recognition of the vital role of the community sector. A Board was convened for Dublin Inner City with community, statutory and social partner representatives and a prominent business leader, was elected as Independent Chairperson. Six community representatives were initially selected from the inner-city area including Mick Rafferty (ICRG) and Bernie Walsh (LYCS) from the northeast inner city. A strategic plan was drawn up and funding was secured from the EU Global Fund, for the range of actions set out in the plan. The relevant state agencies were instructed to cooperate in the delivery of the strategies and a high level of participation and contribution, from each sector, was achieved.

The DICP adopted the operating principle as community led and community driven' which resulted in the policy of identifying new and innovative approaches to tackling long term unemployment and acute poverty by investing in local community development organisations to deliver the actions in the strategic plan. The significant financial resources secured were exclusively deployed through the local community infrastructure, linked to the Partnership. The Board also decided to operate in four distinct quadrants in the inner city, to help develop and operate a local community infrastructure and to establish local community networks as the nominating body for community sector representation. ICON in the north inner city was the first such network and provided the model for networks established in the three other areas. To enhance the capacity of the local community organisations to deliver the strategic plan, the Partnership Community Directors, advised by Community Technical Aid, Northern Ireland, proposed that an independent technical aid service should be created in the inner city. The DICP Board, based on the model provided by

ICON, also introduced the changes necessary to enable the establishment and support of four community networks for the inner city, one in each quadrant, who nominated the eight community directors, and in 1994 Seanie Lambe and Pauline Kane were appointed by ICON.

In the initial years Partnership funding was provided primarily from EU sources. During 1993 the DICP managed and operated the EU Global Fund which invested in seven projects in the NEIC, and significant amounts were committed to community organisations in the NEIC for specific actions linked to the Partnership strategic plan over the following two years. This proved highly effective, and the Partnership model was extended nationally after the end of the initial pilot phase. As the partnership approach was developed the statutory agencies steadily increased their involvement and commitment. In 1996 the Inner City Employment Service was established as a major local response to long term unemployment and the need for inner city residents to access the labour market and ICRG and the Larkin Centre were the local projects involved in the development and delivery of the new service. In 1997, the DICP in partnership with FAS, introduced a new community employment programme that provided enhanced criteria for participation of unemployed people and additional funding to encourage and enable innovation. This proved highly successful and provided a model for expansion nationally. Of the twenty three CE innovative projects in the inner city, eight were members of ICON, including Alliance for Work Forum, The Cavan Centre, Community After Schools Project, Community Technical Aid, Fire Station Artists Studio, Larkin Pre Enterprise, SAOL Project and Sunflower Project. An evaluation of this initiative, entitled *Partners in Social Innovation* was published jointly with FAS, in May 1999 and included in the Partnership Agenda newsletter, which was distributed to 1,200 people. DICP was also involved directly with FAS in introducing the Whole Time Jobs Initiative in 1997 which provided 228 full time jobs in the inner city for local people who were over five years unemployed. In March 1999 an evaluation on the success of the initiative was published and used to challenge the decision of the Minister to terminate the initiative by the end 1999. This campaign proved successful and ultimately, with the help of SIPTU, the jobs were made permanent in 2004.

The DICP operated until 2010 and was involved in a wide range of initiatives in support of community development in the north inner city. These include the initial establishment, by the Partnership of Community Technical Aid, the Inner City Employment Service, financial support for ICON and funding the area strategic plan, the setup of the whole-time Jobs Initiative (TEN) and core funding for Inner City Enterprise and the Larkin Centre. The Partnership, with DCU, established the Inner City Computer Network, which involved CTA, LYCS and the Larkin Centre. The DICP was also involved in establishing networks for inner city school principals, at primary and secondary level, a schools and community computerisation project, support for a Childcare Network and responses to the intercultural changes occurring in the inner city. The partnership approach relied on the active participation of the four community networks and the local organisations involved in delivering on the specific programmes. In this context ICON played a significant and influential role in developing and maintaining this inclusive response.

### Community Technical Aid (CTA)

The implementation of the Partnership strategies required a high level of commitment from local development organisations and their capacity to undertake innovative and effective responses to

endemic unemployment and acute poverty needed to be further developed and supported. In order to provide this support, it proved necessary to make available a range of technical and professional skills to enhance the capacity of key local organisations and tenants' groups. As a result, a new service was established and directed at the community organisations represented on the Partnership Board. Initial funds were provided by the Department of An Taoiseach to commence operations and the DICP Community Directors provided a management Board. 1995 was the first full operational year for CTA and by then a Service Manager, an Architect/planner and a Project Development Coordinator were employed. By the end of the year there were 65 requests for assistance which turned into 27 on-going development projects across the inner-city area. These initial projects included area-based developments, with the communities in the Markets area, Ballybough Redevelopment Action Group and Croke Villas Residents' Group; eight Special Projects assisting, and training resident groups involved in community building projects; a successful application for EU Youthstart Project, called Step Ahead, made on behalf of seven community training workshops, and managed by CTA and a pilot estate management project. CTA also established a panel of professional experts willing to provide free or low fee services for the community sector.

Following a street campaign in July 1999 against high rise developments in the docklands, organised by the two local networks, ICON and SEN and starting in October 1999, CTA organised four seminars in conjunction with the Southeast Network (SEN) on housing needs in the docklands area. The WIDE project was initiated by CTA and supported by the DICP and EU EQUAL funding. It was established as an innovative approach to facilitate access to work for those most distant from the labour market, specifically ex-prisoners, former drug users, minority ethnic communities, including Travellers, and women parenting alone. CTA was the facilitating partner, and the members of the development partnership were FAS, DICP and DCC. As part of the WIDE Project CTA also undertook research into the experience of prisoners when released. The report entitled, *Getting Out Staying Out*, examined and highlighted the issues and difficulties that prisoners and ex-prisoners face upon their release including preparation for release, timing of release and access to services required and discussed their reintegration needs. In February 2005 a graduation ceremony was held for sixty participants from the WIDE project

By 2003, in response to significantly increased redevelopment of the inner-city, CTA had employed a full time planner to work with local residents' groups to mitigate the impact of development on their communities. The inner city based, Tenants First campaign was first convened in October 2003, and was launched in January 2004, in response to the Dublin City Council announcement of a fundamental change in approach by adopting Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) for housing provision in the north and south inner-city area. CTA provided support for the tenant organisations involved and helped to develop the policies and strategies necessary to oppose the approach. The subsequent collapse of the PPP approach in early 2008 resulted in a major housing crisis in the inner city and a series of protest marches were organised by local activists in the areas most impacted.



In early 2008, in response to the Government introduction of the new Community Childcare Subvention Scheme, DICP convened a large group of childcare providers to examine the crisis surrounding childcare funding and the increased administrative burden imposed on community providers. As part of this process, CTA interviewed and engaged with local community childcare providers to document their experience and to provide an advocacy strategy to oppose the negative impact of the changes. This resulted in the mobilisation of an active and national street protest and political lobbying campaign, commenced in October 2008, which was supported by the trade unions.

### Inner City Renewal Group (ICRG)

The Alliance for Work Forum continued to operate alongside the ICRG with the Inner City Folklore project and the publication of the Inner City News, every six weeks. In 1992 The Alliance secured EU funding to provide eighteen months of skills training for sixteen local people in information technology, involved in production of the folklore and newspaper. In Winter 1992, the ICRG, advised by FLAC, introduced a benefit take-up campaign, together with the Ringsend Action Project, aimed at increasing income for those on social welfare. It proved to be a highly successful initiative and provided a model for a new community approach. The final campaign report was published in February 1994 and endorsed by seven key local community information centres, who expanded the initiative across the inner city and was maintained in the NEIC over the following years. ICRG secured a premises from Dublin Corporation at 21 Summerhill Parade on a long lease for use as a local resource and integration with the local youth service. Funding was secured over the next four years and the refurbishment was completed in 1999.

By 1994, as part of a new community-based job placement service in the four quadrants, ICRG had established a contact point with two full time staff. By the end of 1993 these four centres had registered 900 unemployed people on a data base, and with active involvement of city centre businesses, 420 job interviews were arranged, resulting in 258 full time and 124 part time jobs for local people. This highly successful approach provided the basis for the Inner-City Employment Service, which was introduced in 1996.

In 1995, the SAOL Project, was established by the ICRG with the support of the Eastern Health Board as a two-year pilot programme for former and stable women drug users who were attending the City Clinic. Sixteen women attended the first two year. The project, which the first of its kind in Ireland, was continued when EU NOW funding was secured, and a range of innovative training and education approaches were adopted. The SAOL project was established specifically to promote and address the needs of female drug users and their children. Established as a community development project focused on improving the lives of women affected by addiction and poverty. Over the years the project has developed a range of responses in an integrated programme of education, rehabilitation, advocacy and childcare and remains a unique advocate of the specific needs of women.

In 1995, through the local employment centres, an Urban Linkage programme was devised aimed at securing local jobs and opportunities. In response the Custom House Docks Development Authority established a Community Liaison Committee to maximise the involvement of the

communities in the redevelopment of the docks area. In the first six months of 1999 ICRG employed three new staff for the Local employment service, a manager, mediator, and part time administrator. In the same period 85 clients were placed on employment or referred to education and training opportunities. In early 2001, a video was produced was ICRG with support from DICP to highlight racism. The video called *Echoes from the Streets* was directed by Yuvi Basanth. For the three-year period 2001 to 2003, the Inner City Employment Service, operating in the four quadrants, had job placements of an average of 370 per annum, with significant numbers of local people also placed on CE, WTJI and in FAS training. Staff development was focussed on increasingly working with local residents with a disability and ethnic minorities and also placing ex-offenders and people with addiction problems. By 2006 ICRG celebrated ten years as the provider of the Inner City Employment service in the NEIC.

#### North City Centre Community Action Project (NCCCAP)

The NCCCAP was a Community Training Workshop funded by FAS and located in the NEIC. The workshop ran training courses for local people, catering, woodwork, soccer coaching and office skills training. They also ran the Integrated Assessment System of certification developed by FAS which meant literacy, numeracy and social skills could be assessed as well as hard skills. The NCCCAP worked very closely with ICON. The manager was a very active member of the Board of ICON and was the ICON representative on the DICP. The Workshop got very involved in the working groups of ICON which were a great way of being involved in debates on issues that either concerned the residents of NEIC or the organisations working to try to make life better for the residents. Many trainees of the NCCCAP, young people taking part on the programmes attended the ICON Conferences were also involved in the working groups such as the Enterprise and Employment working group where the young people were interested in getting jobs when their course was over or further education. Another group that ICON facilitated the Integrated Services Project, focused on the topic of relationships between young people and the local guards. A lot of the young men from NCCCAP attended these meetings as they would have had experience of coming in contact with the Gardai and issues would arise for them. Another working group that the Catering course got involved with was the ICON Education Working Group and some attended a protest at Dail Eireann to highlight issues. Involvement in these workshops enabled the trainees to develop young leadership skills and become aware of the policies that were affecting their lives, one such policy was related to the CE initiative.



### Neighbourhood Youth Project (NYP 2)

In the early 1990s NYP secured a new premises on Summerhill Parade which replaced the original offices, initially leased from the NCCCAP. NYP2, continued to work with young people, aged 12 to 18+ and with their parents, usually referred by social workers, schools and other agencies. Five staff were employed to develop the specialised youth service, with a priority target group among local young who were referred, by other agencies or their families, as in need of specific individual supports for various reasons. This work entailed direct engagement with young people and their families and a wide range of community groups and organisations. The NYP staff regularly had to respond to a range of serious needs presented by young people, often dealing with complex and urgent social and family conflict issues. They also worked with a wider group of young people from the north inner city who were attending local schools and training projects, via a daily drop-in centre. A range of activities were provided, including a drop-in youth programme six days a week for those at high risk; sport and football/ basketball programme five days a week; music and guitar lessons and cooking and life skills two days a week; one to one family and individual support work; holiday residential periods in the Cavan and Wexford centres; a health education programme; a youth leadership programme and group work with selected young people every evening.

Some young people who required more specific supports were facilitated in smaller group sessions. These sessions consisted of recreational activities and personal development. Each young person in the small groups was assigned a key worker and had a care plan drawn up for them, under the headings Community, Health, Family Situation and School. The staff also attended care meetings in the local schools. The international young people housed in the north inner city or in the schools also attended the drop-in centre and participated in the activities organised. Over the years a Youth Leadership Volunteer Programme was developed which included young people who were current or past participants in the programme with the aim to develop their leadership and mentoring skills. Formal training in restorative practice and group facilitation was provided by NYP staff and volunteers, alongside practical experience as youth mentors. This approach resulted in increased regular volunteering by local people, and, over time, several former participants secured jobs in the NYP. Since the early stages of the project, they

worked to address the wider socio/economic problems that were impacting on the young people and their families and their neighbourhoods, it was a policy of the NYP staff to actively respond by local networking and direct community action, to address serious issues such as poverty, drug misuse and racism. The workers employed were prominent in the leadership of ICON and in many of the initiatives developed through the network.

#### North Inner City Drugs and Alcohol Task Force (NICDATF)

The initial meetings of the proposed North Inner City Task Force were convened by the DICP. Agreement was reached on the composition of the Task Force and the community representation which was via the local networks ICON and NWICN. The first formal meeting was in the City Clinic on 28 January 1997. Fifteen representatives attended, including four community representatives from ICON, and two from northwest inner city and two reps for local drugs services (Anna Liffey Project and SAOL). Four of the six statutory agency representatives also attended from CDYSB, Gardai, FAS, Dublin Corporation, EHB and Probation and Welfare. Fergus McCabe was nominated as Chairperson and Fidelma Bonass (EHB) was the interim Coordinator. To continue the pioneering work of the Integrated Area Drugs Project, which was due to end in October 1997, it was proposed that the new Task Force would integrate with the IADP, maintaining the working groups and wide representation achieved.

The Task Force very quickly became the key coordinated response to the drugs crisis in the north inner city. A strategic plan which highlighted priorities such as enhanced treatment services, community safety, challenging supply and developing long term preventative strategies was endorsed by the different representatives. Additional resources were provided for existing services and new responses were developed, setting up community projects specifically to address the drug misuse problems at a local level.

In 1997 the IADP and ICON had proposed the establishment of a community policing and estate management forum, to involve local residents, the LDTF, public representatives and An Garda Síochána and Dublin City Council. The Community Policing Forum was established in April 1999 as an initiative linked to the Drugs Task Force, with Tony Gregory TD as chairperson, Fergus McCabe and Tony Dunleavy from the NICDTF and two Garda Inspectors and a representative of Dublin City Council. This proved to be a very innovative and energetic initiative and provided a model to be extended to other areas.

The North Inner City Drugs Task Force was also involved in establishing a chairs and coordinators network with the other local task forces, which developed a very effective network for political engagement. By 2004, five years on, over €65 million had been allocated to the fourteen Drug Task force areas and over €72 million was committed to a Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund, which had been proposed by the north inner city to attract at risk young people into sports and recreational facilities and activities. The NICDTF had produced a second strategic plan which provided for programmes and services in the areas of supply reduction, treatment, rehabilitation, awareness, prevention and education.

The NICDTF was also a key part of the national drugs strategy and, according to the Minister in line with the targets in the strategy, Garda drug seizure in 2003 were estimated at €100 million,

double the previous year; substance misuse prevention programmes were implemented in all primary and post primary schools in the inner city; by March 2004 6,902 methadone treatment places were available nationally and the Prisons Service had recruited additional staff for drug treatment services in Mountjoy, Dochas Centres and St Patricks and over 1120 recovering drug misusers were on 54 special CE projects, with several based in the NEIC.

## ICON Initiatives

During the first decade ICON was involved in establishing a range of local initiatives that helped influence and shape national policy. While ICON worked primarily with the organisations that were member organisations of the network and the wider partnership structures, several very important initiatives were developed within the network in response to identified local needs, which became the model for national policy. One such initiative was the Community After Schools Project (CASPR) which was set up as a pilot in January 1996, arising from the ICON Strategic Action Plan. This was set up in the Community Resource Centre in Buckingham Street, with Irene Boucher as project supervisor and EHB community worker, Gloria Kirwan, as chairperson. Partly funded by FAS, with over forty, five to eight year old children, from St Patricks in Rutland Street involved in after schools activities, including, supervised homework, followed by indoor and outdoor sports and entertainment as well as weekend and summer holiday trips. Twelve parents of children on the project were also directly involved as community employment workers. This innovative approach provided an initial community education model for further expansion

Several of the most important initiatives emerged primarily from ICON's leadership of the community response to the drug misuse crisis which had a devastating impact on the local residents in the NEIC. The campaign on drug misuse also led to the formation of the CityWide Drugs crisis organisation in 1997 and directly influenced and informed the Government approach which resulted in the establishment of the Local Drug Task Forces. However, ICON was also initially involved in seeking investment of EU funds in the community and establishing inter-agency approaches to a range of social and economic issues, such as the Integrated Services Initiative in 1996 which led to the formation of the Young People at Risk Programme (YPAR). ICON was also directly involved with the DICP in campaigning for and establishing a new approach to long term unemployment by providing full time jobs in community services for local people. This resulted in a government initiative which was managed by the community networks in the inner city. ICON established The Employment Network (TEN) for this purpose.

## The Employment Network (TEN)

The Government's Whole Time Jobs Initiative (WTJI) was introduced in 1997. This initiative was developed in the inner city through the DICP. It was introduced by the Government as a special programme targeted at older men and women over five years unemployed. Following negotiations between the DICP and FAS, the programme was delivered in the inner city by seven managing agents, including TEN for the NEIC. A total of 226 full time jobs were created, and coordinated through the DICP, employing workers placed in 94 local community and voluntary organisation. ICON set up a new entity, The Employment Network (TEN) to manage the local allocation. In the NEIC, 75 full time jobs, comprised of 49 men and 23 women, were allocated to



30 community organisations. The jobs in the area, mainstreamed through the Whole-Time Jobs Initiative, included maintenance and caretakers; transport drivers; security; catering; childcare; youthwork; community development workers; and administration. By early 2003, despite the efforts to end the programme there were still 250 full time jobs in the inner city with 78 jobs provided in the NEIC and a seventy per cent progression rate to other employment over the previous three years. This programme proved to be a major initiative for many local older unemployed men who obtained productive work at trade union rates. Almost 200 of the original workers progressed from the programme to other employment or further education. When the Government subsequently tried to close the initiative, a local campaign, mounted with the Trade Unions, resulted in the posts becoming permanent. In 1999, when the Minister decided to close the WTJI programme and lay off the remaining workers, a protest campaign was organised within the inner city with the support of SIPTU, who referred the dispute to the Labour Court and won an outcome which resulted in the workers retaining their jobs on a permanent basis and culminated by announcement in November 2004 that 250 jobs in the inner city would be maintained.

### Integrated Services Project (ISP)

This project, initially called the Integrated Services Initiative (ISI) was established by ICON and involved the local workers who had comprised the Voluntary and Statutory Network. In 1997 the Government allocated a budget of £750,000 to fund four local projects located in Partnership areas, including Dublin NEIC (Mountjoy A & B). Area Development Management (ADM) was given management of the programme to work in consultation with the DICP. The purpose of the project was *'to develop new procedures to ensure a more focused and better co-ordinated response by the statutory authorities to the needs of communities with the greatest levels of disadvantage, as a basis for a model of best practice'*. The ISI responded to the Government decision, referring to their publication *'Common Goals-Unmet Needs'* (1997) and the ICON Area Action Plan *'Grasping the Future'* (1994) as the template for a community led approach in the NEIC. A series of recommendations and specific tasks were set out and the local participating organisations were identified. A facilitator was appointed in 1999. In early 2000 the ISP published a directory of statutory services for the NEIC. In September 2000, consultants PWC produced their second interim report on the progress achieved in the four areas. The first report had covered ISP initiatives aimed at tackling early school leaving and the second report outlined some of the other ISP initiatives underway in each area, selecting the Community After Schools Project and Young Parents and their Children Project as models. A final report was to examine the potential for replication nationally. The local approach resulted in the foundation of the Young People at Risk (YPAR) project in January 2004.

### Young People at Risk (YPAR)

In early 2000 ICON further responded to the issue of children at risk by establishing an initiative, named RIPON by the young people involved. This had been initiated within the network, involving the two NYPs, LYCS, CASPR and the Eastern Health Board and other statutory agencies. This was effectively the start of the Young People at Risk (YPAR) process. RIPON included members of voluntary, statutory and community organisations working directly or indirectly with children and

young people. The aim with the purpose of integrating services for children at risk in the NEIC. An essential element of RIPON was that its vision and plan for integration should be constructed by a membership working on the ground with children and families. The aim of the group was to promote high quality, effective and coordinated services to children at risk, through the integration of services. Another important facet was the inclusion of the voices and opinions of young people as central in the development of the group. In August 2000, RIPON facilitated a workshop of key statutory, community and voluntary service providers in response to a growing concern that services were not meeting the needs of children and young people experiencing ongoing problems regarding crime, addiction, homelessness, lack of education and training.

In 2002 RIPON produced a draft proposal for the integration of services for children at risk in the NEIC with specific aims. From previous experience it was recognised that the process could not operate effectively without the active representation and involvement of key relevant statutory agencies. This was not perceived to be readily forthcoming and eventually ICON decided to approach the National Children's Office and the Minister for Children in 2002. This resulted in YPAR receiving political attention. As a direct consequence of this meeting, formal meetings were set up between the Northern Area Health Board (NAHB), the Department of Justice, and the Department of Education and other key Statutory agencies

In January 2003 an ICON led interagency initiative for young people was formally established. In June 2003, it was agreed to operate the YPAR project under the aegis of the Local Child Protection Committee (LCPC) chaired by the HSE. The project was taken on board as an inter-agency project, with ICON as the lead, subject to the governance of the LCPC, on which a number of statutory representatives including NAHB, Department of Education and Probation & Welfare were represented. The new Young People at Risk initiative (YPAR) was formally launched in January 2004. Local young people Kellie Harrington and Noel Reilly shared the platform with the Taoiseach. A Steering Group with ICON as the lead agency, was established to manage YPAR and its aim is to oversee the process aimed at reducing the number of young people at risk in the designated area through the development of a comprehensive and integrated programme of care. Funding from the Irish Youth Foundation and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation further supported the activities of YPAR. A Mapping report was published outlining the needs and existing resources for young people at risk in the Dublin NEIC.



In January 2005, ICON Youth at Risk Programme held a seminar to look at issues for young foreign nationals in the north inner city. By that stage, in some wards in the area, almost 40 per cent of the population were foreign nationals and the local school populations had become increasingly multi-cultural. There were also several accommodation centres for asylum seekers. The special seminar was aimed to bring together organisations providing services to these groups, to share information and to improve coordination and integration of services. YPAR also introduced intercultural and equality training later in 2005, to assist the local organisations in developing a more informed and targeted response. In May 2005 YPAR published a strategic plan. Local young people Noel Reilly, Kellie Harrington and Gerard O'Neill spoke at the launch which was attended by over 100 Government agency and NGO representatives alongside local service providers. YPAR Co-chair, Joe Lucey, presented the plan and, in response, the YPAR approach was fully endorsed by Peter Evans of the OECD, Youth Empowerment Partnership Programme, of which YPAR was a member. Arising from the plan, in October 2005, YPAR provided intercultural and equality training. ICON continues its involvement with YPAR today, employing the three staff and managing all funding and governance.

#### Participation and Practice of Rights Project (PPRP)

The PPRP developed from a national initiative convened in June 2001 by the then President of ICTU, Inez McCormack. It was aimed at establishing a new rights-based approach to securing development and investment in local disadvantaged communities. Links were forged with the NGOs involved in human rights advocacy and this was integrated with local community development responses. In Dublin the DICP was approached and, in 2003, local projects were commenced by the two community networks in Dublin north inner city and by cross community groups in North Belfast. There were a series of exchanges between Dublin and Belfast, including a joint meeting hosted by the Lord Mayor in Dublin's Mansion House. Two major conferences were organised, in Dundalk and Down, to promote the innovative approach to 'Realising Rights'. Initial funding of £50,000 was obtained from Atlantic Philanthropies by the end of 2003 to support a six-month planning and feasibility stage in the north inner city and this was also funded by the DICP in March 2004. Four people were employed in local areas, including Dublin north inner city, and Belfast New Lodge and loyalist communities in North Belfast. A local Steering Committee was

formed in each area and a progress report was produced in August 2004, which outlined in particular, new approaches to public housing provision and estate maintenance. In October 2004 a local conference, entitled '*A Dialogue on Rights*' was convened in Stoneybatter, to disseminate learning. The participating organisations in Dublin included ICON, ICRG, Sunflower Project, O' Devaney Gardens, An Siol, MACRO, NWICN, DICP, Combat Poverty and Irish Council for Civil Liberties.



#### [Communities Against Cuts Campaign \(2009\)](#)

The impact of the recession in 2008, with the bank guarantee and the arrival of the international bailout in 2010 had a very detrimental impact on the poorest communities in Ireland and, in addition, as the State looked for cuts in public expenditure, the community and voluntary sector was specifically targeted. In response a major national community and trade union campaign was mounted in 2009, which involved many community activists from the north inner city in the leadership. The initial campaign to organise workers in the community sector had been launched at a meeting in Liberty Hall on 21 November 2006, facilitated by the Dublin Employment Pact. This early initiative was formally endorsed by David Begg for ICTU and Jack O'Connor, President of SIPTU. Over the next two years, this campaign resulted in increased membership in the unions and a greater recognition within the union leadership of the priority needs and demands of the sector and a specific Community Sector Committee was established in SIPTU.



# *This Affects You!*

## *Government Plans to Destroy Community Sector*

**Where will kids go after school without youth projects?**

**Where will families receive support for housing needs?**

**Where will you be able to go to access further training?**

**Where will senior citizens get their meals?**

**How can services remain open without CE or JI workers?**

In July An Bord Snip published a report outlining budget cuts to the community sector. The report recommends massive cuts to already underfunded projects including:

- Community Development Programmes and Partnerships – **Cut of €44 million**
- Community Services Programme – **Cut of €10 million**
- National Drugs Strategy – **Cut of €2.6 million**
- Community and Voluntary Sector Supports – **Cut of €10 million**
- Welfare entitlement for Community Employment (CE) – **Axed**
- Job Initiative – **Axed**

Following decades of neglect this community fought to develop these services and improve the living conditions of everyone who lives here. With rising unemployment and economic recession these services are all the more important.

***Why is this community being targeted by the government for cuts when they are happy to bail out the banks and developers?***

### **What is the community sector?**

The community sector in the north east inner city provides a wide range of services for this community

• CE (community employment) schemes • Childcare • Drug Projects • After Schools • Youth Projects • Care for the Elderly • Homeless Services • Adult Education • Women's Groups • Residents' Associations • Arts and Culture • Family Resource Centres • Environmental • Welfare Supports • Local Employment Services • Ethnic Led Organisations • Community Networks


The community sector also provides employment for this area with many people working in projects and in CE and JI schemes. If projects are forced to close as a result of the cutbacks important services will be lost and many more will be forced on to the dole queues.

In response to the Government budget reductions targeted at the community and voluntary sector, a mass campaign was initiated in 2009 by community activists who were members of the Unions SIPTU, IMPACT and UNITE in response to severe funding cuts imposed by central government on local community-based organisations, as well as proposals for further significant reductions contained in the McCarthy Report (Bord Snip). The joint community sector & trade union initiative, called Communities Against Cuts Campaign, convened a large representative forum with over eighty representatives, chaired by SIPTU community sector President, David Connolly which met in Liberty Hall and planned a series of protest marches, community



mobilisations and direct negotiations with Government Ministers and Departments to reverse the cuts. The initial marches to the Department of Finance and the Dail were concerned with cuts to the childcare sector, reductions in the youth services and the proposed closure of Community Development Projects (CDPs). This campaign culminated in the largest ever community sector protest march when over 10,000 people marched to the Dail in September 2009, prior to the December budget. ICON, and the organisations associated with the network worked collectively, with the trade union movement to confront the attempts by Government Departments to reduce funding and organised street protests locally as part of the national Community Against Cuts Campaign.

***Fighting Cutbacks***  
***Protecting Jobs & Communities***




***What Can You Do?***

*Come along and show your support against the cut backs at a protest*  
**Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> September at 12 o'clock**  
**at the Church on Sean MacDermott Street**

*We will meet the main protest march on O'Connell Street at 1pm  
 and continue to the Dail.*

**Bring placards and whistles and let this Government know  
 that when they say cutback, we say fight back.**



*For further information please contact  
 the ICON office at 8366890 or  
[iconet@iol.ie](mailto:iconet@iol.ie)*

#### **Part Four: A decade of change and renewal.**

One of the consequences from the successful campaign launched against the Government imposition of financial cuts for community activists in the north inner city was that funding departments specifically targeted some of the prominent community organisations involved in

leading the campaign. In early 2010, seven of the key Community Development Projects in Dublin, with four in the north inner city, including ICRG and CTA, were closed when funding was withdrawn, primarily because of their campaigning and advocacy role. Three months later the Dublin Inner City Partnership, which funded ICON and other local initiatives, was also closed when the Department directed that the annual contract for local development funding should be terminated. When this funding ceased, the four workers directly employed in the Partnership lost their jobs. However, due to the concerted efforts of the DICP staff, the Partnership Board approved annual funding to protect and maintain the many local jobs provided by the community infrastructure linked to the Partnership and a temporary mechanism was negotiated to facilitate this and the local community projects were directly funded.

With the closure of the Dublin Inner City Partnership in 2010, Dublin's inner city was left in an anomalous position of being the only region in Ireland to have no Local Development Company (LDC). This meant that there was no one body providing strategic direction or making collective arguments or to access resources for the area, especially those that are only accessible through a LDC. The capacity to resist changes imposed by government funding departments and agencies was severely weakened. This also contributed to Dublin's inner-city communities becoming increasingly less visible and without a voice when significant changes in the community sector landscape, such as competitive tendering and outsourcing were being introduced. To combat this structural void and to ensure a voice for the inner city, fifteen community projects came together to establish the Dublin Inner City Community Alliance. ICON played a key role in the development of the Alliance and in the subsequent battle for the survival of community projects in the inner city over the following years. The Alliance would provide the basis for the formation of the Dublin City Community Cooperative in 2015.



### Community Development v Service Provision

The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government developed a successor programme to the Local Community Development Programme, called the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP). This new programme was put out to competitive tender. Social Inclusion funding was now open to 'for profit' companies to apply for. Ireland became the only country in the European Union which had put its national local community development programme or analogous programme out to public tender.



# Newsletter April 2014

## Inner City Organisations Network

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## The Privatisation of Community Development

Over the last number of years there have been significant changes to the community development sector. Funding has been slashed, projects have been closed and others merged under the Local Community Development Programme. The inner city has been particularly badly hit not only with the loss of projects but the closure of Dublin Inner City Partnership; the ones that remain are struggling to keep services running and staff employed.



### Community Sector Cuts

The extent of the cuts to the community sector has been vast. The Local Community Development Programme (LCDP), which is the only national social inclusion programme in the country, has been reduced from €84.7 million in 2008 to €40 million in 2014, a 43.3% reduction. Over the same period youth services have been cut by 20%. The National Regeneration Programme, aimed at providing upgraded housing and community facilities to disadvantaged areas in cities like Limerick, Cork and Dublin, was reduced from €121 million in 2008, to €80 million in 2013. The RAPID programme had expenditure of approximately €10 million in 2009 but this has been reduced to less than €2 million, a reduction of more than 80 per cent. (The Wheel)

These cuts have resulted in a devastating reduction in community services as local projects have been forced to close, reduce workers' hours, and make staff redundant. As a result 11,150 front-line jobs have been lost with total job losses expected to reach 17,000, or one third of the total number of jobs in the community sector, by 2017.

### Local Government Reform

Under the Local Government Reform Act 2014, as a part of the 'alignment' process the Local and Community Development Programme will be brought under the local authorities from July 2014 which means that any independent community development role it had may come to an end. The LCDP funds ICON and a number of other projects in the area (Community Technical Aid, Lourdes Youth & Community Services, NASCADI CDP, North Wall CDP, Taca Clann Community Project and the New Communities Partnership). In only a few months' time the work of ICON will be monitored and evaluated by a Dublin City Council committee called the Local Community Development Committee. Considering that a large part of the work of ICON is holding Dublin City Council to account for their poor standards of accommodation, it is unlikely they will consider funding this type of work.

*Continued on page 2*

In a key action, ICON took the case against competitive tendering with CTA to the Dail Petitions Committee arguing that it was not good public policy to put social inclusion programmes out to public tender as these are services for the public benefit and not for private profit and that it would undermine and potentially eradicate community development and local community projects and result in the deterioration of services, particularly to the disadvantaged. While the fight against the very premise of tendering social inclusion programmes was taking place, the inner city groups were establishing the inner city cooperative structure and developing a joint tender for SICAP. ICON played a critical role in this process and was one of the founding members of the Dublin City Community Cooperative, which in 2015, won the tender for the inner city (despite competition from two other Local Development Companies). The smaller community projects retained their independence while working collectively as part of the Coop to deliver the SICAP programme in the inner city.

This challenging period brought about a shift in emphasis from community development to more of a focus on service delivery imposed by funding agencies, with an emphasis on individual work in employment and education measured by quantitative results. Targets and monitoring were key components of the new programmes. This was a difficult adjustment for ICON who had worked from a community development approach, where the process is as important and valuable as the outcomes, and collective engagement is key. Despite the difficulties presented, ICON continued to work on an inclusive basis with residents' groups and community and voluntary groups, while still required to meet individual programme targets. Over the past ten years this vital work was involved in priority issues, such as housing, regeneration, voter education and active citizenship and promoting local consultation and community participation, in response to the major physical and economic changes in the north inner city.

### *Housing and Regeneration*

ICON works individually and collectively with tenants in local authority flat complexes. This involves organising tenants and facilitating meetings with Dublin City Council and Approved Housing Bodies; developing peer led research into conditions with the flat complexes or providing technical support. This is managed through an Information, Support & Advocacy Service, using a person centred, rights-based approach assisting residents to address their needs or to advocate on their behalf, as appropriate. In this context, ICON has carried out research into maintenance and conditions in local authority flat complexes by providing training to local residents to design and implement a survey which was delivered in Ballybough House, Summerhill, St Mary's Mansions, Liberty House and Matt Talbot Court. This research formed the basis of a Collective Complaint taken to the European Committee of Social Rights (Complaint No.110/2014).



ICON has also been directly involved in a number of regeneration projects in Dominick Street, Croke Villas, St Mary's Mansions and Matt Talbot Court. ICON has always taken the position that tenants need to be informed and organised to have a say in the development of their own homes and communities, by providing support and capacity building to tenants so they can assert their rights and views in the regeneration process. This entails working with residents to ensure their voices are heard and that they have a key role to play in the regeneration of their community.

In response to the proposed plans to build a hotel on the Magdalene Laundry site on Sean McDermott Street, ICON carried out a community consultation and led the community campaign against the sale of the Magdalene Laundry site to a low budget hotel chain. The network successfully advocated for public lands to be utilised for public use – including mixed tenure housing, social & community supports and employment potential while acknowledging the absolute primacy of the survivors to decide on an appropriate memorial

An example of the unique approach to community involvement in urban regeneration, adopted in the north inner city, was the ***Our Streets Initiative***. This involved undertaking local led planning for the Sean McDermott Street, Railway Street, Rutland Street and Summerhill area. There were ongoing issues and few spaces for children and families to socialise and enjoy community life. Residents and community groups needed to be engaged in a process to allow them to reflect on the space and think about how best to create an area where people and families would choose to live, work, and invest. ICON delivered nine workshops using the Planning for Real Methodology which used simple models as a focus for people to put forward and prioritise ideas on how their area can be improved. It is a highly visible, hands-on community development and empowerment tool, which people of all abilities and backgrounds find easy and enjoyable to engage in. The workshops targeted residents from different streets, addiction projects, family-based projects, older people projects and youth services to ensure wide representation.





### *Community Participation and Voter Education.*

A key principle for ICON, since the establishment of the network, has been to encourage increased participation and engagement by local residents in their communities. Community participation is rooted in the belief that local people have the right to identify their own needs and interests and the outcomes required to meet them. Building active participation involves a recognition that policies and programmes targeted at communities and groups will not and cannot be effective without the meaningful participation of those communities in their design, implementation, and monitoring. In the NEIC there are a significant number of residents who engage in local initiatives, decision making structures and events within their own complexes and streets but there is also a large cohort that do not and remain isolated within their communities or are external to decision making structures.

To counter this trend, 'Low Threshold' community engagement events are regularly organised. These are a common community development tool that creates 'easy and stress free' ways for residents to take the first steps to engage in events in their communities. It enables them to become involved in community life and promote positive health and wellbeing. These events frequently are the starting point for wider engagement in their area and in the electoral system. Prior to the Local, European and General Elections, ICON organised a programme of voter education and registration including stalls at schools, post offices, health care centers and community centers. Local residents were encouraged to register and the experience of attending the election centers and voting was replicated in local community halls.



### *Organising community events and activities.*

Over the past decade ICON has provided a range of targeted community events and initiatives to promote community engagement that seek to build the social capacity of the community. These diverse range of events are often the starting point for further engagement in ICON's Working Groups. Specific activities organised locally included, Community Health Days, to engage the community in addressing their health needs; information, education and employment 'Fairs' aimed at local people and annual events such as The Big Scream Halloween Festival and Christmas Tree lighting, in memory of all those who have died from addiction related causes. The network has also retained a focus on the most acute issues, maintaining the Drugs Working Group, establishing the Christmas Hardship Fund, which distributes 10,000 euros to families over Christmas and, during the Lockdown in 2020, ICON purchased and distributed 800 activity packs to children in emergency accommodation, thus creating the opportunity for engagement with residents.

In 2016, the Government launched a major initiative in the North East Inner city, to oversee the long term, social and economic regeneration of the area. In response to this intervention, ICON was involved in the establishment of the North Inner City Community Coalition, to formally engage with the new initiative. In 2020, despite the priority areas set out in the Mulvey Report and the continued impact of serious social and economic problems on residents of the area, the Community Participation Programme in ICON, funded by the HSE, came under attack. Along with other bodies like the Community Policing Forum and the Annie Kelly Education Bursary, the Community Participation Project was deemed to be unrelated to health by the HSE. This was due to the lack of recognition that community participation and interagency working is crucial to an effective response to the pervasive drug problem in the north inner city.



In response to the HSE decision on the community participation project and despite an extensive lobbying campaign and support from many of the political parties and community infrastructure, the HSE withdrew funding from the project in March 2020, making one worker redundant. ICON was reduced to two staff members who continued to deliver the SICAP and ICCSP programmes in the NEIC, but maintained the priority on the community development approach, supported by the work of volunteers. It was a difficult period as the focus on service delivery and limited available funding streams to which ICON could apply impacted on the work. A decision was made by the Board of Management to remain focused on the work of ICON and not to 'chase funding' so that the ethos and purpose of the organisation remained the same.

### [New Community Development Programme](#)

In October 2020, the Programme for Government made a commitment to re-establish the Community Development Programme with the aim to trial community development initiatives that address poverty, social exclusion and inequality, and promote human rights. ICON developed an application for funding for its emerging work in the private rented accommodation sector in the NEIC. Traditionally ICON had worked, for the main part with local authority tenants but the housing landscape had shifted significantly and now many people were presenting who were living in poor standard and overcrowded positions in the private rented sector. The project proposed to work with a cohort of women and focus on the right to adequate housing in the private rented sector in Dublin's north east inner city. ICON was one of 7 projects chosen from 123 applications

nationwide. Over 30 years since the original Community Development Programme there was again a recognition by the state and the Department of Rural and Community Development that community development is a valid and important means of engaging working class communities. ICON's decision to wait for appropriate funding streams to meet the identified needs presenting on the ground had been validated. ICON had weathered the storm and began to develop the network on the ground in a new way.

The CDP Programme began in 2022 and has led to the development of the ICON Women's Housing Forum, work on child trafficking, autism and additional needs as well as developing peer led research into housing needs in the area. The ICON Housing Information and Advocacy Service has had over 300 people through the door in the first 6 months and led to a renewed engagement with the community in the area. Individual engagements have led to collective actions in many housing complexes and streets and the programme is going from strength to strength. Thirty years later, ICON has five staff members and continues to work to address poverty and social exclusion in the north east inner city.

### Conclusion: Celebrating Thirty Years of Community Organisation and Development

Over the past three decades, since the establishment of ICON, fundamental changes have occurred in the north east inner city. Continuous redevelopment and construction have introduced a more affluent population living in newly built apartments, segregated from the traditional residential community, which still endure the highest levels of deprivation in Ireland. In addition, the expansion of the private rented sector has introduced a new multi-cultural population, often living in poor accommodation. In the first fifteen years of ICON's development the statistical profile of the north east inner city changed utterly. The resident population increased significantly but local authority housing declined from three quarters of households to only a quarter, while privately rented accommodation increased from less than 10 per cent to over 50 per cent. In response to these continuous changes, the work in ICON has always been varied, as it adjusts to the issues that arise from the work within the community. The last five years has seen more of a shift towards housing, as this is a major concern as the country is in the midst of a housing crisis and working class communities are bearing the brunt of failed housing policies. Local engagement has increased with the new Community Development Programme and support for the work in ICON is again being valued by some state sectors, who realise that the reality on the ground in the north inner city was and still is very different.

The many community organisations, comprising the network over the years, had to retain the capacity to adapt to new needs presented by the resident communities. This often resulted in the development of innovative responses that subsequently provided models for national programmes. In the first two decades, in what has been described as the partnership era, this process achieved wide participation from the different sectors, closely cooperating to design and implement tailor-made responses. However, over the past decade the responsible Government Departments and state agencies have progressively withdrawn from this local community-based engagement. This retrenchment, seeking to reassert central control and decision-making has resulted in the closure of vital local community infrastructure. In this context, the introduction of



contracting out for service delivery, competitive tendering for community services, including the private sector, and privatisation have changed the local dynamic and reduced the capacity to respond to specific local needs.

As a result, in recent years, at a local and regional level key decisions were being made solely by the statutory agencies, in particular the Local Authority and HSE, and key services were having their funding withdrawn, with the agencies dictating the distribution of funding, programme delivery and programme content. The vital link between national, regional and local has been broken and priorities are again being set by the Government funding departments. It is no longer an interagency approach. The recent attempt to dismantle the North Inner City Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, at the instigation of officials in the Department of Health, continues this destructive process of excluding local leadership and influence in addressing the most acute needs of the communities they serve.

Despite this significant change, ICON and the many local community organisations that have successfully cooperated over the years, continue to engage with and effectively respond to the changing needs of the residents and their communities in the north east inner city. There remains a very high level of participation and interaction, from what is a more diverse and complex community. Considering some of the problems presented, the area remains a vibrant and exciting part of the city, to live and work, with a proud tradition and strong sense of identity. With the recent allocation of community development funding, ICON has been enabled to return to its core function, allowing the organisation to respond to and impact directly on the most pressing challenges. This publication, marking the thirtieth anniversary of the formation of the Network, records the combined efforts of local residents and workers and activists from the community, voluntary and statutory sector over the decades, that resulted in one of the most dynamic, influential and ground-breaking community development approaches pioneered in Ireland. While many of the local innovations helped to shape national policy the most important outcome is that the daily lives and opportunities for local people were measurably improved and enhanced, through the efforts and commitment of all those who worked and participated in the network, and, in terms of successful community development, an enduring legacy to be proud of.





1992



2022



**MONDAY 5TH DECEMBER**

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