PAUL - A Learning Partnership:

compendium of

Research & Evaluation

conducted by Paul Partnership:

2001-2006

[With Select Samples]

**PAUL
PARTNERSHIP
LIMERICK**

Turning the tide of unemployment
Ag tiontú taoide na dífhostaíochta

**PÁIRTÍOCHT
PAUL
LUIMNEACH**

Chairman's Foreword

The opportunity to publish our learning from research and evaluation conducted over the course of the last six years is a welcome one as we in PAUL Partnership prepare a new strategic plan which will take us forward from 2007 to 2013. It is essential that our new plan is informed by what we have learned about problems related to poverty and social exclusion and, with a strong reputation for original research using innovative methodologies, PAUL is well placed to capture key lessons and use them to help shape practical responses to those problems. And with an output of 24 formal research and evaluation reports since 2001, it is clear that PAUL's commitment to learning is as keen as ever.

Perhaps the most important reason to publish a document like this is to share our learning. As the title of the document suggests, PAUL's goal is to learn in partnership, collaborating with the broadest range of people and organisations with a stake in promoting social inclusion and an essential part to play within PAUL Partnership. None of the research or evaluation we do is possible without their input and it is most important that the lessons taken from this work are made available to our partners so that any learning that may be relevant to their own work is passed on. Therefore, I am particularly pleased that this publication includes a synopsis of three of the most significant and interesting pieces of research conducted by the partnership since 2001. The findings in these reports, Quality of Life Indicators at Local Community Level, Baseline Analysis of Needs of Communities not Targeted by PAUL Partnership, Equality in Public Services in Limerick City: Meeting the Needs of People with Disabilities, Older People & People from Minority Ethnic Communities, are of vital significance to us as we identify priorities for our new strategic plan. I hope that they are of interest to readers and, especially, to partners looking at their own objectives for the years ahead.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who contributed to our research and evaluation work since 2001. I would like to record my special appreciation for the dedication of our Research & Evaluation Sub-Group, which oversees this work and draws together partners from the community, voluntary, statutory, private and education sectors, ensuring that combined perspectives guide PAUL's approach to research and evaluation.

Sexton Cahill
Chairman
PAUL Partnership

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Editor's Introduction

A Learning Partnership

Since its inception, in late 1989, PAUL Partnership has striven to be a learning organisation. Learning can be achieved in various ways. PAUL is in continuous dialogue with a broad range of communities and groups, agencies and organisations, both local and national. In this most fundamental sense, PAUL itself is a vehicle for mutual learning between all these actors. PAUL provides the means by which those with a stake in social inclusion can share their experiences, pool their resources, combine strategies and, together, maximise their impact on local poverty and social exclusion.

When this works well, the most deprived members of our community have a stronger voice because of the collective commitment to listening to their concerns. PAUL is structured specifically to support all stakeholders to listen to each other and to respond to poverty and social exclusion in a collaborative way. Accordingly, one of the most essential parts of PAUL's mission is to be a "learning partnership."

Research & Evaluation

Although PAUL constantly learns by keeping its "eyes and ears open" within its operational structures, consultation processes and connections with partners and communities, its more formal effort to acquire knowledge and to shape and modify its strategies accordingly is achieved by conducting research and evaluation.

In the vast majority of cases, the focus of research and evaluation studies conducted by PAUL is determined in partnership between stakeholders participating within the Board of Directors, the operational Sub-Groups and in the various networks in which PAUL participates or plays a facilitative role. Information needs are identified collaboratively and terms of reference for conducting the research or evaluation exercises required are designed by research staff and overseen by a dedicated Research & Evaluation Sub-Group composed of partner nominees – including community representatives – technical experts and staff.

The importance of neutrality and objectivity, particularly where evaluation of the effectiveness of PAUL's own work is concerned, means that research and evaluation projects are conducted by external area experts and consultants following competitive tendering competitions to undertake the work.

The scope and range of PAUL Partnership's activities has resulted in a very considerable research and evaluation output. Readers will see that over the last seven years of the 2000-2006 Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP), 14 research exercises have been commissioned and completed (with a further one approaching completion) and 9 evaluations have taken place. Research and evaluation projects have featured within every part of the Partnership's operational remit, from assessments of its community development capacity-building measures to situational analysis in disadvantaged communities and from areas of work core-funded by the LDSIP to the needs of clients served by Limerick Local Employment Service Network (LESN) and a range of other projects in receipt of funding from other national programmes.

In the majority of instances research and evaluation reports remain unpublished because their primary purpose is to inform PAUL's strategic priorities. Nevertheless, there is a very firm emphasis on the sharing of learning and findings. These are most frequently disseminated informally within the Partnership's structures and external networks in order to ensure that all partners have access to conclusions and recommendations produced. Where the findings of a report are seen to be of potential importance for a wider audience or where recommendations may serve as a lever on public policy decision-making, reports are published.

Structure of the Report & Case-Studies

The report is divided into two main sections:

Section 1:   Compendium of research & evaluation conducted by PAUL Partnership: 2000-2006

Section 2:   Select samples of research and evaluation conducted by PAUL Partnership, the findings from which continue to be of vital strategic importance.

While the first section demonstrates the breadth of PAUL's work in research and evaluation, the second section is likely to be of interest to the reader seeking more detailed insights into the techniques used by PAUL Partnership to conduct research, as well as key learning outcomes. The report summaries are structured in the following way:

- Reasons for Undertaking the Research

- Methods Used to Conduct the Research

- Learning from the Research.

The research reports selected have been summarised and edited specifically for this publication to make their findings more accessible and include three of the most important pieces of research conducted by PAUL Partnership over the last seven years (and which continue to be used to inform actions designed and implemented by both PAUL and its partners). They are:

- *Quality of Life Indicators at Local Community Level (2002)*

- *Baseline Analysis of Needs of Communities Not Targeted by PAUL Partnership (2006)*

- *Equality in Public Services in Limerick City: Meeting the Needs of People with Disabilities, Older People & People from Minority Ethnic Communities (2004)*

The first report represents an attempt to establish local perceptions of quality of life in disadvantaged communities in Limerick City traditionally targeted by PAUL Partnership. It is an interesting study, not least because it was conducted at the time the National Spatial Strategy was being designed and for which a similar exercise took place at national level. The contrasting findings of PAUL's research show the importance of the *local* – and, accordingly, of "local solutions to local problems."

The second report proceeds from a directive from the Board of PAUL Partnership. The Board was concerned to establish needs in communities *outside* of the five communities traditionally targeted by PAUL (and the focus of the previous research) as a first step towards identifying ways in which the Partnership might begin to make links with other communities experiencing disadvantage in Limerick City. This report re-emphasised the fact that the most disadvantaged communities in Limerick City and traditionally targeted by PAUL remain particularly deprived and constitute what the author has described as a "first tier" of disadvantage. However, the findings demonstrate that a "second tier" of less acute disadvantage also exists within Limerick City and this presents both familiar challenges (for which tried and tested methodologies in community development may be required) as well as entirely new issues which will entail new thinking.

The third report departs from a focus on *geographical* communities to examine factors behind social exclusion and poverty which can be experienced within groups, rather than places. In this case the research looked at equality - specifically at equality-*proofing* measures in place locally that are designed to ensure equal access to quality public services. Three groups whose vulnerability to inequalities is acknowledged and covered by the Equal Status Act (2000) were targeted by the research: people with disabilities, older people and people from minority ethnic communities. This research demonstrated many of the very positive examples of systematic proofing implemented locally by public service organisations. It also demonstrated some key measures which could be introduced to enhance these equality strategies and offered a number of useful "proofing templates" which can be used by PAUL and its partners to increase awareness of equality issues and equality of outcome. The templates are included in this document at *Appendix A*.

We hope that the reader finds this document to be a valuable insight into the range of research and evaluation work carried out by PAUL Partnership as well as an interesting compilation of some of the key learning outcomes achieved between 2000-2006. Readers with queries arising from their study of the document are encouraged to contact PAUL Partnership directly for further information.

Gary O'Brien
Research & Evaluation Officer
January 2007

Section I

Research Reports
2001-2006

Section I

Name of Report	Author/s	Year	Status
The Implications of Integrating Children with Special Needs into Mainstream Childcare Provision	Des Carswell	2002	Unpublished
Quality of Life Indicators at Local Community Level	Anne Eustace & Ann Clarke *(Eustace-Patterson Ltd.)*	2002	Unpublished
Towards the Establishment of a Home Care Agency	Seamus Lillis & Associates	2003	Unpublished
A Study of Sectoral Employment Trends in the Greater Limerick Area	Candy Murphy et. al. *(Goodbody Economic Consultants)*	2003	Published
Quality Learning in Limerick – We Can Do It!	Sinead Meehan	2003	Published
Report on Community-Based Non-Formal Provision for Children & Youth at Risk of Early School Leaving in Limerick City	Phyllis Murphy	2003	Unpublished
Niche Market Opportunities	Marketing Centre for Small Business & BDO HR Solutions, Limerick	2003	Published
Cost-Benefit Analysis of Selected Childcare Projects	Donal Dineen & Eilish Finnerty (UL)	2003	Unpublished
Equality in Public Services in Limerick City: Meeting the Needs of People with Disabilities, Older People & People from Minority Ethnic Communities	Jane Pillinger & Sara Burke	2004	Unpublished
Analysis of Demographic & Socio-Economic Changes in Limerick City: 1996-2002 (in PAUL Partnership, Short-Term Action Plan: 2004-2006)	Gary O'Brien	2004	Unpublished
Credit Access & Provision	Paul Quinn	2004	Unpublished
Barriers to the Employment of those Most Distanced from the Labour Market	Craig Bullock et. al. *(Optimise Consultants)*	2005	Unpublished
Baseline Analysis of Needs of Communities Not Targeted by PAUL Partnership	Eileen Humphreys *(Infoworks)* with Martin Power & Catherine Brown (UL)	2005	Unpublished
Tipping the Scales: Promoting the Participation of Women in Limerick	Niamh Kenny & Bill Thorne *(Exodea Europe Consulting)* with Ann McKeown *(Profiles in Work)*	2006	Unpublished
Identifying ICT Needs in Disadvantaged Communities in Limerick City	Pat Bogue *(Broadmore Research)*	2006	In progress

Evaluation Reports

2001-2006

Name of Report	Author/s	Year	Status
Evaluation of the Five Action Centres Funded by PAUL Partnership (3 Volumes)	Anne Eustace & Ann Clarke *(Eustace Patterson Ltd.)*	01-03	Unpublished
Evaluation of Limerick Local Social Capital Programme	Neil Walker *(Walker Local Development Consultancy)*	2002	Unpublished
Case-Study Research Under the Local the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP) Services for the Unemployed Measure: Targeting & Outreach	Niall McCann	2002	Unpublished
Meeting the Needs of Limerick Local Employment Service Network Clients	Ashley Beston et. al. *(Unique Perspectives)*	2003	Unpublished
Learning from Limerick Territorial Employment Pact Pilot Projects	Patricia Conboy	2004	Published
Review of Estate Management in Limerick City	Patricia Conboy	2005	Unpublished
Review of the Impact of PAUL Partnership's Diploma Courses in Community Development & Community Development Estate Management	Anne Eustace & Ann Clarke *(Eustace Patterson Ltd.)*	2005	Unpublished
Impact Analysis of PAUL Partnership's Implementation of the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP)	Margaret Mastriani with Eileen Humphreys	2006	Unpublished
An Evaluation of the Adult & Continuing Education Certificate & Diploma in Community Development – Money Advice	Niamh Kenny & Bill Thorne *(Exodea Europe Consulting)*	2006	Unpublished

Section II

Select Samples of Research Studies

Quality of Life Indicators at Local Community Level

Researched & Written by Anne Eustace & Ann Clarke *(Eustace Patterson Ltd.),* 2003

1.1 Reason for Undertaking the Research

The importance of the "local," both to PAUL Partnership and the 37 other Area-Based Partnership companies throughout the country, has remained since the early 1990s. At one level, for PAUL, local means Limerick City where the Partnership plays a vital role as a broker and facilitator of social inclusion strategies that are most effectively developed and implemented at several removes from central government. In this way, the term "local solutions to local problems" can have real meaning with local knowledge and local champions working in partnership to develop tailored strategies aimed at combating poverty and social exclusion and mobilising human, community and capital resources in their pursuit.

Within Limerick City itself, PAUL Partnership retains a focus on communities based in a number of specific areas. While Limerick City and its immediate environs, taken together, have many of the typical characteristics of affluence, a number of large neighbourhoods within the city are relatively disadvantaged. PAUL Partnership supports the view that such communities deserve special attention because of its contention that several kinds of disadvantage continue to exist there at once and that these tend to be mutually exacerbating and reinforcing, creating particular difficulties for people living in them. Consequently, Limerick City is a place of socio-economic contrasts, where relatively wealthy communities surround neighbourhoods where concentrated disadvantage is quite entrenched.

Because of the challenges experienced by people living in communities where disadvantage is relatively pronounced, in 2001 PAUL Partnership decided to launch a unique, neighbourhood-based research project which sought to identify what "quality of life" means to local residents. Quality of life can be defined as *the gap between experience and expectations, where the narrower the gap, the higher the perception of a good quality of life.*

The research had several key aims, namely:

- To establish localised indicators of quality of life for people living in the most acutely disadvantaged parts of Limerick City including:
  - Moyross
  - Our Lady of Lourdes Parish
  - St. Mary's Parish
  - St. Munchin's Parish
  - Southill
- To determine the existing gap between what people regard as a desirable quality of life and their current experience
- To illustrate the contrast between localised perceptions of quality of life and wider perceptions
- To identify how quality of life indicator perceptions vary between the communities themselves
- To provide PAUL Partnership, the local communities and their partners with a credible set of indicators of quality of life to inform strategic responses.

1.2 Methods Used to Conduct the Research

The consultants contracted by PAUL Partnership to conduct the research developed a three-phase methodology:

- **Phase 1** involved a combination of desk research, an international literature review, interviews and focus groups to begin the process of identifying and ranking the relevant quality of life indicators for each of the five disadvantaged communities.

- **Phase 2** identified existing information on the quality of life indicators arising from the consultation process engaged in Phase 1. A household survey was conducted within the five target communities to address the gaps identified and to validate the findings from Phase 1.

- **Phase 3** involved the collation and analysis of all of the information gathered during the research, culminating in the production of a final report on quality of life indicators.

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During Phase 1, the consultants began the process of identifying local perceptions of quality of life beginning with focus group sessions at each Community Action Centre located within five communities. Staff working at the Action Centres were asked by the consultants to invite a representative sample of community residents and members of local community groups to workshops on quality of life which were facilitated by the consultants.

The outcome of these exercises was the compilation of a list of eight main quality of life themes, ranked in order of importance with a set of positive and negative indicators associated with each. The themes, in order of perceived importance, included health, safety, employment, education and training, community spirit, environment, housing and income.

These themes formed the basis of a household questionnaire which was designed by the consultants and launched in each of the targeted communities. One of the most innovative features of the project related to the administration of this survey. Participants on the Mary Immaculate College / PAUL Partnership Foundation Certificate Course in Community Research Methods and Evaluation Techniques were engaged to deliver the questionnaire as part of their assessment. This enabled the research methods students to become involved in a live research project and permitted a large sample to be targeted across the communities. An added advantage to this lay in the fact that the course participants were working as community development volunteers in the neighbourhoods targeted by the research (and in many cases, living there). This helped to build trust with residents in the communities who can often feel objectivised by the plethora of research projects conducted in their neighbourhoods. At the conclusion of the project, the main findings were highlighted during a feed-back session to which members of the communities consulted were invited. This helped to increase local residents' sense of ownership of the research.

The survey was carried out in June 2002 achieving a sample of 389 households across the five targeted communities and succeeding in capturing a wide breadth of views from the socio-economic and demographic groups typical of those areas.

The findings were presented in a detailed document prepared for internal use by PAUL Partnership. In addition to this, a summary document was produced for more general consumption and launched publicly in May 2003.

1.3   Learning from the Research

The outcome of the survey is extremely interesting for a number of reasons.

First of all, the results of the household survey, including the importance of the themes and the aggregate pattern of ranking according to perceived importance, remained consistent with the outcome of the focus group exercises. The "top five" themes taking the communities as a whole included:

1. Health
2. Employment
3. Safety & Security
4. Education & Training
5. Community Spirit & Sense of Belonging

Secondly, this pattern of consistency continued with particular themes pronounced repeatedly from one community to the next. While health was the highest ranked on average, it was the number one issue for three communities and was only outside the top five in one area. Employment, education & training and safety were also heavily prioritised; all were within the top five in each community surveyed. Indeed, safety was within the top three for all five communities. Interestingly, three communities ranked community spirit and sense of belonging within their top five.

Thirdly, there was a degree of variation between the communities, in terms of perceived importance of particular themes, with some ranked significantly higher in particular communities than in others. For example, housing, stress levels/well-being and spirituality/social values were each to be found inside the top five of only one community and in each instance those communities were different. Variation was also clearly evident between how positively or negatively people in the communities felt about particular issues linked with some of the themes.

Finally, although the themes identified in this research were similar to issues highlighted during a national-level survey conducted during development of the National Spatial Strategy (immediately prior to the PAUL Partnership survey), there was a significant difference between the order of priority accorded to the themes by those surveyed, as the following table demonstrates:

Table 1.1 2002 Quality of Life Indicators Ranked in Order of Preference – PAUL Target Communities and National Level Findings:

Ranking (Aggregate)	Quality of Life Theme – Target Communities	Quality of Life Theme – National Findings
1	Health	Education
2	Employment	Employment (inc Income)
3	Safety & Security	Environment
4	Education & Training	Health
5	Community Spirit/Sense of Belonging	Housing
6	Housing	Leisure & Recreation
7	Environment	Shopping & Retail
8	Levels of Stress/Well Being	Transportation
9	Income/Material Wealth	_

The findings clearly show that the most significant thing to be learned from this exercise is the importance of discovering *localised* perceptions of what people regard as essential quality of life issues for their particular community. For organisations like PAUL Partnership and the groups and agencies with which it shared the findings, relying on general assumptions could lead to a mis-match between local priorities and strategies.

Similarly, the strategic value of this exercise is to establish a point of reference by which progress towards narrowing the quality of life deficit - the gap between experience and expectations – can be tracked and measured. It will be interesting to repeat this survey in 2012, as planned, to determine whether that gap has narrowed for people living in parts of Limerick historically affected by disadvantage.

Baseline Analysis of Needs of Communities Not Targeted by PAUL Partnership

2.1   Reason for Undertaking the Research

The previous section highlights research into quality of life perceptions in the five communities of Southill, Moyross and St. Mary's, St. Munchin's and Our Lady of Lourdes' parishes. These communities have shown evidence of acute, persistent and concentrated deprivation and have remained the focus of a great deal of the work of PAUL Partnership since its inception in late 1989.

More recently, the Partnership has been attempting to identify *other geographical areas* within the city where disadvantage may exist but where targeting by PAUL (and by other programmes and agencies) has not been concentrated. Part of the reason for this concern relates to a number of significant changes which have been taking place over the course of recent years which make it essential that the needs of people in such communities be identified.

One of the most striking changes has been the high degree of population movement and dispersal that has taken place within the city. A sizeable proportion of this movement, for different reasons, has originated from the most disadvantaged communities. The Partnership is keen to assess the extent to which individuals moving out of such communities may find themselves isolated from the kind of strong social structures that they may have been familiar with from birth as well as the level of risk of poverty and disadvantage to which such individuals potentially remain vulnerable (e.g. those who have moved out of areas with robust community support structures to new neighbourhoods or apartment complexes while remaining welfare dependant).

PAUL is also interested in getting a closer insight into problems that are affecting communities that are less acutely deprived in the "traditional" sense. Issues here might well include relatively high levels of unemployment or educational disadvantage (though lower levels than those experienced in more acutely deprived areas), as well as increased prevalence of anti-social behaviour and a declining sense of community belonging, interaction and neighbourliness (which can be particularly isolating for older people, lone parents and other more vulnerable people).

A different, but no less significant reason for undertaking the research has to do with the degree to which the strategic environment for local development organisations has changed as a result of public policy decisions. One of the most significant of these is the increased emphasis on the need for area-based partnership companies like PAUL to focus on all of the various kinds of disadvantage which have the potential to lead individuals and communities into social exclusion and poverty *within their entire operational areas*. Under the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP), PAUL's designated operational area is Limerick City and its immediate environs. While PAUL has a wealth of experience built up during 16 years working in partnership with people living in the *most* disadvantaged areas of Limerick City, it recognises that challenges lie ahead in identifying and responding to the needs of other local communities which may also face various barriers to social inclusion and a satisfactory quality of life.

Therefore, this research exercise was designed to begin the process of looking beyond the current focus of PAUL Partnership's work by mapping other areas where characteristics of disadvantage can be identified but which have not yet been targeted for intensive support either by the Partnership or other agencies or mainstream local development programmes. It was agreed that the following objectives be prioritised:

1. Identification of existing communities where disadvantage is apparent and measurable but which have not been targeted before and where links with existing community development supports are weak or absent

2. Comprehensive needs analysis of residents and households in the areas selected for study – related to factors including participation, service needs and gaps in provision.

2.2   Methods Used to Conduct the Research

To reach these objectives, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis were be applied to two kinds of data or information:

i   "secondary" or pre-existing data from the demographic and socio-economic base-line of information (primarily the 2002 Census of Population statistics) which could be used to complete a demographic and socio-economic profile of the study areas

ii   "primary" or new data, uncovered during the research itself using a combination of quantitative and qualitative research instruments (structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews respectively).

Of the two sources of information, the primary data naturally provided the greatest challenge as it had to be generated "from scratch," as it were, using a questionnaire in an extensive survey of households within the target areas. However, it is this primary data that makes the research unique and valuable because it provides information that has not been available for analysis previously.

The researcher's first practical task was to identify the target areas for study. In order to make the selection, the following criteria were applied:

1.   Areas characterised by relative disadvantage based on recognised indicators of deprivation used in public policy (i.e. the Haase-Pratsche Index, Haase & Pratschke, 2004; GAMMA, 2004). In practice, this implied a focus on those communities adjacent to those currently targeted by PAUL Partnership (the five most spatially disadvantaged communities in the city and environs), effectively being part of a second tier of relatively disadvantaged communities

2.   Areas with an identity as, and "boundaries" of, neighbourhood; and

3.   As far as possible, coincidence of boundaries of neighbourhood with statistical units (Electoral District or group of Electoral Districts used in the census)

4.   Areas which had not previously been part of any comprehensive needs analysis, including assessments conducted in preparation for the RAPID programme. Thus, the research was to target only areas which had not to date, received structured mainstream local development support.

These criteria led to selection of the following Electoral Divisions (EDs) which, in part or in combination, represent distinct neighbourhoods:

1.   **Singland A, part:**   668 households in the target area with 35 (5.2%) surveyed

2.   **Abbey D:**   543 households in the target area with 29 (5.3%) surveyed

3.   **Galvone A, part:**   310 households in the target area with 16 (5.2%) surveyed.

The decision was also taken to target a sample cohort of **"dispersed"** individuals resident in areas outside of readily definable communities but disadvantaged, or vulnerable to disadvantage, in the sense that they were recipients of welfare supports for housing (i.e. rent allowance). This was to allow the research to get an understanding of the needs of Limerick's burgeoning "dispersed" population, many of which have migrated out of the traditionally disadvantaged communities within the city. A sample survey of 20 households was conducted at random across areas on the environs of Limerick City and city centre from a cumulative total of 390 households. The sample represented 5.1% of the total.

The survey of dispersed population was supplemented, under guidance, by students of the PAUL Partnership / Mary Immaculate College Foundation Course in Community Research & Evaluation Methods, replicating the practice in the 2002 *Quality of Life* exercise of involving people living and working in communities in Limerick City in research conducted locally. This part of the survey was designed to be open-ended, using semi-structured interview techniques to allow for greater qualitative feed-back. Many of the more detailed personal perspectives that were collected in this way were extremely useful in identifying the motivations of those who have changed their place of residence within the city, their sense of "community belonging" and their most pressing service needs.

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For the main survey, a total of 100 households were surveyed using a random selection chosen from the existing electoral register and a comprehensive and highly structured questionnaire asking those surveyed to evaluate conditions in their communities. The questionnaire was designed to capture the following information:

· Presence and extent of use of the community and social infrastructure of the neighbourhoods

· Residents' assessment of the quality of neighbourhood (whether it is a good place to live and improving over time)

· Residents' perceptions of the quality of local service and the extent of problems in the neighbourhood including safety and security and personal experiences of crime

· Residents' perceptions of the "social capital" of the neighbourhood based on the presence and interaction within informal social networks, trust in people and institutions, participation in voluntary and community organisations and civic action.

2.3   Learning from the Research

The main finding presented in the report was to confirm that deprivation and disadvantage in Limerick City are pervasive and exist outside of the five communities where there are very pronounced concentrations of disadvantage (i.e. the five areas mentioned above and studied during the *Quality of Life* exercise). It should be noted that the researcher's analysis of the existing demographic and socio-economic base-line of secondary source information (primarily the 2002 Census of Population statistics) shows that these five communities remain, on a scale of relative disadvantage, particularly deprived within the overall context of the city and the state. As such, they are described in the report as representing the **"first tier"** of spatial disadvantage in Limerick City.

However, the researcher also used the main indicators of disadvantage within the census data to show that there are *further* concentrations of deprivation – what she refers to as a **"second tier"** of most deprived communities – mainly in city-based Electoral Divisions (EDs) adjacent to the five most disadvantaged communities. In a broader context it is also evident from this analysis of secondary data that there are generally higher incidences of deprivation in EDs *within* the city boundaries than within the suburbs (although EDs outside the city boundary tend to be much bigger in size and it is more difficult to identify deprivation that may be isolated within large areas rather than concentrated in small ones). In the specific areas targeted by the research, the main conclusions based on the pre-existing census statistics were that:

· Singland A and Abbey D areas are relatively *more* disadvantaged that Galvone A

· All areas, in contrast to the first tier communities, have a high level of home ownership

· Relatively high levels of age dependency exist in all 3 Electoral Division areas (i.e. numbers aged less than 15 and over 65)

· There is bias towards higher than average numbers of older people in Singland A and Abbey D

· Relatively low levels of educational qualification are common throughout

· Relatively high unemployment is common throughout, compared with the average for Limerick City and environs, the region and the state (with Abbey D approaching an unemployment rate of 20% which represents a so-called "unemployment black-spot" in statistical terms).

Thus, the analysis of secondary data confirmed that deprivation in the *most* disadvantaged communities remains high (despite relative improvements throughout the so-called "Celtic Tiger" years) but that areas outside of these constitute a second tier of disadvantage and that there are needs here which are not being met.

Furthermore, there are *differences* between neighbourhoods or spatial communities in Limerick City. Taking the second tier disadvantaged spatial communities, while the traditional / older neighbourhoods surveyed (Singland A and Abbey D) are more disadvantaged based on key indicators of deprivation, there is a better base of essential services within or close to the neighbourhood. By contrast, the relatively new community in Galvone A, while less disadvantaged on the basis of economic indicators such as home ownership, and employment status, is highly disadvantaged in terms of the presence of a local community and social infrastructure to service the needs of the local community.

Services in the Galvone A area, in particular, have not been developed in the spatial setting or have been lost for various reasons. Problems of social disorder which are clearly in evidence there (e.g. loss of shops linked to persistent thefts and vandalism) could be either a reason for lack of facilities / services or an outcome of the lack of community and social services / facilities. In any event, it has become a neighbourhood characterised by a strong concentration of problems and a lack of resources (including community organisation) to deal with the issues. This, however, is a community which has concentrations of families who recently moved from more disadvantaged estates (i.e. those with a greater capacity for mobility) at an earlier point in time and, in that context had experience of mobilisation to community action and support for a process of community development.

More generally, the findings indicate a need to improve the provision and accessibility of services to people on low incomes and those who are socially disadvantaged. Specific target groups in need include young single parents, parents of young children on low incomes (in employment), children and teenagers, elderly people and foreign migrants. None of these groups generally are in a position to pay for private services or even to afford the transport to public services / facilities available outside of their immediate neighbourhoods. This, in turn, is severely affecting their quality of life and limiting opportunities for their participation in community.

Facilities that appear to be particularly lacking are those for teenagers / young people and children, and social and leisure facilities for residents. Interestingly, a factor generally highlighted by the study is that people's expectations of quality and provision have changed. For instance, it is not regarded as adequate anymore to provide space for leisure (park / open spaces) with no facilities (e.g. for play) and no security and control (rules and sanctions) concerning use.

While the study findings are generally supportive of policies of dispersal of disadvantaged groups through housing policies in that the survey findings indicated that populations with characteristics of disadvantage dispersed into more affluent neighbourhoods have better quality of life (better services, less social disorder etc.). They also indicate that for those on low incomes, this can result in social isolation and loss of a support base. As such, there are trade-offs for people who choose to / or are forced to leave.

Some of the key challenges arising from the analysis include attitudes to community organisation *and* trust in public institutions. In the latter instance it is clear from the survey results that such trust has been damaged and there is a sense of neglect by public policy to be found in these communities. In all communities there is also a lack of intermediary community organisations and processes to harness community participation and to influence local public decision-making. And, although the sense of 'community belonging' is reasonably strong throughout the communities surveyed, it is also evident that there is a low level of engagement in organised community activity. While various reasons were cited for this (including a degree of distrust of *individuals* involved in community activism as well as a lack of time), the key point for PAUL Partnership is that there is a degree of inertia to be addressed in some areas whilst in others, where the community is more positively disposed to community action, the structures, vehicles and capacities for community organisation are largely absent and need to be negotiated in partnership with local people.

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The study recommends that the following conclusions inform any strategic responses designed by PAUL and its partners:

- Evidence from recent research suggests that if the *base of the social and community infrastructure* is of good quality such that it is used by residents and the quality of life in residential areas is high, this will create favourable conditions for higher levels of social capital to develop spontaneously in the community (e.g. building commitment to the community, encouraging people to stay, and new people to move in)

- An effective type of response is *centralised provision of services*, for instance, in the city centre into which there has been a strong movement of population with characteristics of disadvantage and where service provision centred on community is weak. Any such provision would need to be linked with support to improve accessibility to the target populations. This includes, in the first instance, the availability of physical centres to act as meeting places (for meetings, activities, to act as multi-service delivery points). Ideally, premises need to be adapted such that they are suitable or can be adapted to suit the needs of different user groups. Accessibility and affordability are key issues

- In terms of participation and service delivery, in relation to specific target groups, it is important to work in tandem on measures to promote social inclusion and mutual support (i.e. working to bring together people with similar characteristics) and social integration (i.e. bringing different types of people into social contact with each other). Integration is particularly important in the case of migrants but also for single parents and young and older people. Any and all efforts to improve the *social mix* within activities / organisations is an important priority

- The creation of new meeting places, in turn, can provide new opportunities for developing social networks and could increase participation in voluntary and community groups which is weak and needs an injection of new ideas to promote a renewal. This is relevant, in particular, linked to the study findings indicating a lack of interest in participation in existing groups or not knowing what exists or feeling that they are run by activists who are 'out for themselves.' The provision of new sources of meeting places (social and service related), in turn, will provide the opportunities for informal sociability / contact which can lead on to the identification of common interest / needs and, perhaps in time, the creation of new groups more relevant to people's needs.

3.1   Reason for Undertaking the Research

While the previous research projects reflect the importance of an area and neighbourhood-based approach to poverty and disadvantage, PAUL's principal remit around social inclusion has wider relevance. Over the course of the last two decades, the causes of social exclusion have become more clearly understood and are now seen to include a variety of situations which have the potential to place affected individuals, notwithstanding where they live, at risk of disadvantage and even poverty and social exclusion.

The current emphasis on ensuring equality is an excellent example of this. Principles of diversity and equality have gained much currency in Ireland with the enactment of legal instruments prohibiting discrimination on a wide variety of specific "grounds," as well as successive national policy statements underlining their importance. For example, under the Equal Status Act (2000) discrimination has been prohibited across 9 separate "grounds" (age; family status; gender; race; disability; religion; marital status; sexual orientation; and membership of the Traveller community). Similarly, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) has stressed the necessity of taking measures to combat inequality because of the firm correlation between poverty and inequality.

The importance of these principles lies in the recognition that in order to genuinely "level the playing pitch," it is necessary to introduce extra measures which take into account specific difficulties experienced by particular groups of people. In other words, it is not enough simply to say that one considers everyone equal; one must sometimes make special allowances in order to ensure everybody has equal potential to avail of opportunities.

The existing legislation has imposed particular obligations on service providers. Those agencies, authorities and bodies charged with the delivery of public services have a key role to play in pronouncing the importance of equality through quality service provision and equality proofing.

Firm recommendations for equality proofing have been outlined in a host of public documents such as the NESF's Strategic Policy Framework for Equality Issues (2002) and Support Pack on the Equality/Diversity Aspect of Quality Customer Service developed by the Quality Customer Service (QCS) Working Group and the Equality Authority (2001). These urge a comprehensive understanding of the effects of inequality, including the combined effects of multiple kinds of inequality (for example, by women with disabilities, older people living in poverty people from minority ethnic groups with a disability). They recommend a proactive and systematic approach to ensuring services are delivered equitably and take into account particular difficulties commonly experienced by a different groups of people. For example, the QCS recommendations for proofing frameworks incorporate distinct measures of best practice including **statements of commitment; consultation with users; communication and outreach strategies; measures for physical accessibility and provision of suitable materials; staff training; coordination; data collection; and performance monitoring/review.** These documents further emphasise that a mainstay of quality service is inclusive consultation with clients to guarantee relevant difficulties can be heard and appropriate responses identified.

With these concerns squarely in mind, PAUL Partnership's Equality & Disability Sub-Group (one of 10 current sub-committees of the PAUL Board, each with representation from all of the partners and charged with a specific remit within a range of operational issues) decided to launch a review of public and statutory service provision in Limerick City with a focus on the measures in place to ensure equality and access. Because of the considerable complexities of equality issues, and the different kinds of inequality that can be experienced, it was decided to select three of the nine "grounds" under the Equal Status Act and concentrate on the corresponding groups in the first instance (with the possibility of targeting other groups during future research). The following three groups were targeted:

·   People with disabilities
·   Older people
·   People from minority ethnic groups

The aim of this research was focused less on establishing a quantitative profile of the groups than on helping to raise awareness of the importance of systematic approaches to principles of equality in service delivery, including the kind of proofing framework

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described above. A crucial part of this was to capture the perspectives and perceptions of people from these groupings and how this might impact on service delivery. A further aim was to establish the current extent of measures so that future progress can be assessed.

3.2   Methods Used to Conduct the Research

The first phase of the research involved an exploration of the considerable national and international literature associated with equality principles and proofing systems, as well as a profile of Limerick City focused on groups of people who are characteristically at risk due to inequalities. This had a particular focus on the groups specifically targeted by the research. Following this, the researchers combined qualitative and quantitative methods to gather primary source material.

The quantitative phase of data collection involved the use of a series of questionnaires in the following sequence:

1. A questionnaire was sent to 26 national organisations which had relevant operational remits (either as policy-level or representative bodies)

2. 30 public and statutory service providers with a relevant remit were identified in Limerick City. Structured questionnaires were sent to each which sought information on equality and diversity principles specifically incorporated by the organisation and proofing strategies currently in operation

3. 39 groups within the Community and Voluntary sector working directly with people from the three equality categories were contacted by researchers and issued questionnaires seeking views on what "equality and diversity" and to gather information on their experiences around the quality of service use from an equality perspective.

Following this, the research proceeded to adopt a more qualitative approach and the following information-gathering exercises took place:

1. Face-to-face interviews with key personnel within 20 public service providers and staff of organisations representing older people, people from minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities in Limerick City.

2. Two focus group sessions with people experiencing the kind of inequalities typical amongst the groups targeted by the research.

The findings from the research were presented in a detailed written document as well as a summary version of the key learning, both intended for use by the Equality & Diversity Sub-Group and other sub-groups of the Partnership.

3.3   Learning From the Research

It was noted by the researchers that this was a unique example of work carried out at a local remove to progress equality using the frameworks developed at national policy level. They viewed this in itself as a significant commitment to the advancement of

equality. In addition, the inclusion of a specific strategic theme - "City of Equality" - in Limerick City Development Board's development plan signalled a real intention to progress equality locally

From a more systematic perspective, the researchers concluded the following:

- There is a general *willingness* to engage in equality actions, including equality-proofing, equal status policies and reviews

- There are good examples, locally, of equality policies and activities as well as equality awareness training – particularly anti-racism training and disability awareness

- Despite the strategic objectives within the CDB plan, further work remains to be done to enhance the systematic implementation and co-ordination of equality measures at city-wide level

- Public and statutory service providers were found to have a good level of awareness of equality issues generally as well as the ways in which the particular groups targeted by the research can experience inequality. Despite this, there is room for better understanding of some key equality concepts, language and equality challenges

- There were some examples of effective involvement of clients in the enhancement of services and identification of equality issues

- Despite solid *strategic* commitments to equality, at a *systematic* level the researchers found only limited awareness of equality proofing methods particularly, with little evidence of integration of equality proofing into monitoring and evaluation

- There can be a steady focus on equality issues pertinent to *individual* target groups but there is also a need to enhance integrated measures so that more than one group, or individuals exposed to multiple kinds of inequality, can be accommodated simultaneously within a cohesive framework

- Knowledge about the status and numbers of people within the three groups is constrained by very considerable data gaps and in most cases information about service utilisation is not disaggregated. This makes it very difficult to reveal group-specific trends and, in turn, makes it difficult to monitor the impact of service delivery in terms of equality

- There is good evidence of the needs of people from minority ethnic groups being met by some specific service providers although these needs are not responded to as well within *mainstream* service delivery

- The needs of older people are not particularly well recognised and services for this group are underdeveloped and under-resourced

- Disability access in particular is regarded as problematic and the statutory obligation to provide "reasonable accommodation" has had limited impact only.

The researchers offered a list of recommendations to help build upon the commitment to equality already in evidence amongst public and statutory service providers in Limerick City. Crucially, the researchers have placed an emphasis on practical, systems-level actions that will result in the achievement of tangible and measurable progress. There is additional emphasis on the importance of an integrated approach so that organisations and agencies operating as a whole can respond more effectively to the multi-dimensional nature of exclusion due to inequality.

The summary list of recommendations includes the following:

- Equality and diversity principles should be core concerns within organisations and agencies and central to service planning with the specific needs of specific groups clearly recognised and appropriate responses set in place

- The next step beyond a statement of commitment should be development and operationalisation of equality-proofing mechanisms at systems level within organisations. This should be accompanied by the prominence and visibility of an equality ethos in order to increase internal and external awareness

- Equality within the organisation should be enhanced by developing equality policies and statements, codes of practice that support a whole organisation approach to managing and accommodating equality and diversity

Section II

- Senior level commitment should be ensured by the leading, championing and resourcing of equality

- Data collection, monitoring and review is vital and should be built into central performance monitoring systems within organisations

- A city-wide forum, hosted by Limerick City Council, should be created and should include representation by, and interaction between, groups and organisations with an equality remit and senior management personnel from public and statutory service providers

- The partnership model should continue to be seen and promoted as an effective way of progressing equality

- Inter-agency co-ordination and integration should be enhanced with a specific focus on equality and diversity

- The design of information and communications strategies should be informed by equality principles as well as the specific needs of different target groups

- The involvement of service users in planning and development of equality strategies should be enhanced and emphasised as a key proofing mechanism

- Training – including a more systematic and co-ordinated approach to training and awareness raising – should be intrinsic to all organisations. Skills should be pooled and, as far as possible these should be directly informed by the experiences of people from key groups affected by inequalities

- Quality customer service, extending to front-line staff dealing with diverse client groups, should be enhanced and informed by existing national guidelines including the Support Pack on the Equality/Diversity Aspect of Quality Customer Service developed by the Quality Customer Service (QCS) Working Group and the Equality Authority

- Good practice guidelines on how to accept and respond to complaints should be incorporated and should be clear to service providers and users alike

- A wide-ranging audit of disability access should be conducted and in conjunction with this an awareness-raising and information seminar should be hosted for public service providers relating to the meaning and implications of the obligation to provide reasonable accommodation

- Equal status reviews should be conducted and sustainability and momentum should be ensured by emphasising that equality should not be a 'one-off' issue but, properly, the focus of strategic and systematic frameworks within and between public and statutory organisations.

In addition to these recommendations, the researchers developed a series of practical tools which can be used to enhance systems for equality and diversity within organisations including:

- A summary of key actions to promote equality work

- A checklist of issues to consider in achieving equality in service provision

- An equality-proofing template

- Guidelines for ensuring consultation with service users.

These resources are included in the Appendices.

Finally, equality & diversity are notoriously difficult terms to define, let alone agree. One of the most interesting outcomes from the PAUL Partnership research was a list of terms which members of groups often affected by inequalities were asked (during facilitated focus groups) to associate with equality. It is worth noting what equality means to those for whom it is most important:

- Everyone should be treated equally
- Respect
- Opportunities
- Freedom
- Equal access
- Treatment
- Dignity
- Choices
- Consideration
- Facilitation.

Appendix A

Summary of key actions for consideration in promoting equality work

Action to promote equality	Issues to consider in implementing the action
Equality in the organisation	• Equality in the corporate and strategic development of the organisation • Corporate and organisational development • Equality policy making structures and procedures
Management of equality and diversity	• Senior commitments and leadership and equality champions in the organisation • Diversity in the workforce • Equality and diversity training • Awareness of equality issues, legislation and obligations
Equality policies	• Equality policies and their coverage of the nine grounds • Awareness of policies by employees
Budget and resources allocated for equal opportunities	• Equality officers and staff • Budget and reporting mechanisms • Representation at senior management level
Awareness of equality in service delivery	• Dissemination of equality policies amongst workforce • Dissemination of equality policies and information about equality in local communities, information centers etc
Equality initiatives	• Integration of equality into mainstream provision • Initiatives to promote equality • Equality proofing measures across individual grounds • Positive action measures and mainstreaming of equality
Service provision	• Specific services / positive action • Resource commitments • Special or pilot projects • Equality content in actions
Monitoring and evaluation of equality	• Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms • Dissemination of findings and outcomes
Data	• Data available on health status • Data collection on service provision • Data gaps
Access to services	• Physical, Communications and Information
Participation of service users	• Participation of older people, disabled people and minority ethnic groups • Feedback mechanisms • Perceptions of service users regarding equality outcomes
Participation of managers, employees and service providers	• Participation of managers, employees and service providers • Feedback mechanisms • Perceptions of service providers regarding equality outcomes

Checklist of issues to consider in achieving equality in service provision

Equality in the organisation
- Do you have a policy on equality and diversity across the equality grounds of age, race and disability regarding service provision (or in other words an Equal Status Policy)?
- Do you have an employment equal opportunities policy across the equality grounds of age, race and disability?
- Do staff know about these policies?
- Have staff been trained in equality and diversity issues?
- Are staff concerns about equality and diversity heard and openly addressed?
- Are equality and diversity issues considered during budget planning processes?
- Have we conducted an equality audit or review of your internal employment structure and of your services?

Services to specific groups
- Do you provide services to specific groups?
- Do these services help to achieve equality of outcome?

Service provision and customer service
- Are services provided to meet needs and to ensure equal participation in society.
- Are front line service providers aware of situations where discrimination can occur?
- Are customer services provided to accommodate equality and diversity?

Involving and consulting users
- Do you consult with service users?
- Are older, minority ethnic and disabled service users represented?
- How are the issues raised by users listened to and acted upon?
- Are local people and services users involved in the development of equality and diversity strategies?

Mainstreaming equality and diversity
- How does the organisation evaluate how to best serve disabled people, older people and minority ethnic communities?
- Has equality and diversity been incorporated into front-line services provision and into customer services?
- Are staff aware of and skilled up to mainstream equality and diversity?
- Is equality built into the vision, planning and processes of the organisation?
- Does the organisation communicate information on equality and diversity to staff?

Data
- Is data available to help assess equality policies and outcomes?
- Are services monitored by gender, age, ethnicity and disability?
- Is this data on performance fed back to staff and users?

Access to services
- Are services accessible to people with disabilities?
- Does all new design of buildings and services integrated disability access from the start?
- Is information provided in accessible formats?

Sustaining equality
- Are there both short- and longer-term targets in place to promote a rolling programme of improvement?
- Are there sufficient financial and human resources to ensure the sustainability of equality programmes

Appendix C

Equality-Proofing Template

Service or aspect of the service selected for equality proofing	Objective	Are there differences between the target group(s) and the general population?	How does the action, service or aspect of service impact on equality?	Have service users been consulted?	Proposed action to resolve inequalities	What resources are needed?	Outcomes in terms of an equality objective	How are these actions monitored?

Consultation guidelines for service users from the three grounds & local communities

Meaningful and appropriate consultation with service users and local communities is a key element of equality in service provision. Placing the user at the centre of service provision is a crucial element of service quality, of appropriate and accessible services and the effective monitoring of services. However, if user involvement and participation is to be effective it has to focus on community and user empowerment and engaging local communities. This includes the emphasis on community development, advocacy, social movements, pressure groups and lobbying; of families and social networks and of local democracy and local partnerships. There exist two approaches to user involvement and participation. First, service-led or management-led user involvement which incorporate user perspectives and user feedback into service quality initiatives, for example, through surveys, consumer panels, citizens panels. Second, user-participation or dialogue-orientated forms of user involvement, directly involve users to influence policy, for instance, through empowerment evaluation, emancipatory research practice and co-decision making.

Examples include:

- **User delegation and control** in the provision of services resulting in direct user influence. This can include the involvement of users in the assessment of need whereby users their advocates and families are being recognised as co-producers of services and fully involved in the planning and provision of services. This can help service providers to integrate the experiences of service users and along with feedback from individual care planning with clients into care strategies, through a systematic evaluation process that could be built into planning tools.

- **Feedback mechanisms** includes user surveys, client satisfaction surveys, consumer and citizens panels and other feedback mechanisms to evaluate services. The greater use of user surveys and feedback mechanisms in all EU countries has been an important development. This includes the growth of user/consumer panels/forums at service level and at local and national levels. In Ireland, user consultation has developed in recent years and a variety of mechanisms now exist. Health Boards have established regional consultative committees, planning committees, Health Units and Consumer Panels. For example, in the North Western Health Board, the experience of Consumer Panels is now being explored by the Mid Western Health Board.

- **Quality groups and quality circles** can build on users' experience of quality improvements, gauged through surveys and feedback, in order to encourage a client-oriented attitude and to foster self-evaluation amongst staff. In the Netherlands, quality experiments that have brought users and workers together in quality circles to develop service standards mediate different perceptions of service provision and jointly evaluate service provision for people with learning disabilities. This has helped professionals to problem solve and integrate client interests with professional standards.

- Reconciling users and professionals perspectives in quality improvements and monitoring: This includes structures to help professionals to problem solve, assess their work and improve quality in order to integrate client interests with professional standards for service delivery, alongside user and worker perspectives on quality improvement. This has been developed to enable staff to be better able to adopt client-centred approaches in their everyday work. In the Netherlands a number of quality experiments have been in running since the mid 1990s which have attempted to address the potential differences between user interests and professional interests with the aim of helping professionals to problem solve and improve quality, to integrate client interests with professional standards for service delivery, alongside the centrality of user and worker perspectives to quality improvement.

- Consultations in policy making and participation is part of the policy agenda. An increasing emphasis is now placed on the development of meaningful dialogue at the national level with people with disabilities, their families, carers and service providers (e.g. health strategy, anti-poverty strategy, disability legislation consultation group etc). In the disability field the new disabilities bill may contain specific rights to some services. In the report of the DLCG a key element of the process was that there will be effective consultations with disabled people and their families where this is appropriate in establishing rights to independent needs assessment, independent advocacy, accessibility and redress.

- Advocacy, information and advice: Advocacy initiatives have become an important element of giving service users a voice, sometimes this is provided within organisations. The development of advocacy projects and advocacy support workers in organisations is being supported by Comhairle.

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