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University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

An Analysis of the Role of Community Development Projects in promoting social inclusion: Mayfield Integrated Community Development Project

CARL Research Project

In collaboration with

Mayfield Integrated Community Development Project



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Date completed:	May 2017

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CARL seeks to:

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- provide their services on an affordable basis;
- promote and support public access to and influence on science and technology;
- create equitable and supportive partnerships with civil society organisations;
- enhance understanding among policymakers and education and research institutions of the research and education needs of civil society, and
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Dedication

To my boys Alan & Dylan, you two are, by far, my greatest achievement.

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Community

Abstract

When examining the role of community development an associated phenomenon is never too far from consideration. One contributor defines social exclusion as 'what can happen… when a combination of linked problems mutually reinforce each other' (Cabinet Office UK, 2007). In order to address the damaging effects of being socially excluded, some areas have set up community development projects. The services that these projects offer can vary, with some offering community childcare facilities, afterschool clubs and educational courses. The list is vast. However, these projects have one distinct common purpose, to empower local communities and promote social inclusion. The work that these projects do in local communities is admirable, however many have expressed concern about the ability of the sector remain autonomous when ever changing government structures are becoming further embedded in their daily functioning (Forde et al,2015). This study will examine these concerns and explore the issues that are currently being faced by local services.

Many of these projects closed during times of austerity and, at present, many still face constant funding issues. What appears to be missing in all this is the voice of the people who lost these services. The purpose of this study is to explore the role of one particular community development in an area that is classified as disadvantaged, and speak directly with the people who attend this project. Key themes that emerged from this study correlate with findings observed in the literature. Furthermore this study will present findings that highlight the role of such projects from a community member's perspective.

KEYWORDS: Social exclusion, community development, Well-being, Social networks, Social inclusion, Community childcare, child development.

Abbreviations

MICDP- Mayfield Integrated Community Development Project

CDP- Community Development Project

CCS- Community Childcare Subvention

CEYA- Cork Early Years Alliance

ESRI- The Economic and Social Research Institute.

Chapter One

1.1 Title

An Analysis of the Role of Community Development Projects in Promoting Social Inclusion: A study conducted in collaboration with Mayfield Integrated Community Development Project.

1.2 Introduction to the Research

The following chapter will introduce the overall aim and objectives of this research. Mayfield Integrated Community Development Project were interested in conducted a needs analysis of their project. They wanted to explore if their services were meeting the needs of the community. In addition, MICDP were also interested in identifying any future services that may benefit community members going forward. Considering the changes that the sector is now going through and threats to funding being omnipresent, I was interested in exploring the experiences of people who use, and rely on, this project. It was decided in collaboration with the project, UCC, and the CARL team that by gauging this experience the overall objectives of this study would be promoted. It must however be noted from the outset that the objectives of this study are shared. Some objectives are that of the researcher and others are connected to gathering information that may be useful to MICDP.

In order to frame this research, for the reader, it may be useful to introduce Mayfield Integrated Community Development Project. MICDP is a community project based in the northside of Cork city. Their aim, as described in their mission statement is to "*to respond to local needs by the provision of support, training and developmental opportunities to individuals and groups in the community. We work with people in a non-discriminatory way and encourage everyone to reach their full potential in a safe, open, friendly and accessible environment"*. As a social work student, I was interested in exploring the role that such a project has within its community. The study was predominantly participatory as the opinions and experiences of those who utilise the project were important to convey. An in-depth review of the literature will explore concepts of community and inclusion, and identify for the reader the services that are offered. This researcher deduced four key themes that emerged from two data collection methods. These themes highlight strongly the role of this project within the community of Mayfield.

1.3 Rationale

1.3.1 From a personal perspective

As a mature student, and mother, this researcher is very aware of the barriers that can be encountered when attempting to return to education. The cost of childcare, a lack of knowledge on how to navigate a computer, and all that it entails, were strong worries that almost won out when considering a return to education after 14+ years. What was missing and perhaps needed was somewhere like Mayfield Integrated Community Development Project to build the confidence that was needed to take such a big step. This researcher also liaised with other community development projects in the city during her second professional placement and witnessed the significant role that they play in communities. This was another factor that prompted the uptake of this particular topic. There is, however, an awareness that having such an opinion can influence bias. In order to address this the author engaged in a "process of continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation" (Berger, 2015, p220)

1.3.2 From a social work perspective

Social work as a profession is very strong on utilising a person-centred approach, for this to be possible practitioners must look at families systemically and take a holistic view of people's circumstances and environments. This research will go directly into the community and seek to identify the role that this project plays in the lives of the people who access it. It will acknowledge and analyse the direct experience of parents whose children attend the crèche and seek to examine if this Project is positively addressing some of the social issues that leave people vulnerable to social exclusion.

To aid the author in trying to build an understanding of this service, the families, and the community, the research will be informed by an ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Ecological systems theory acknowledges the many interrelated parts that operate within, and impact upon a person's life. This theoretical approach places the person at the centre of many systems, the micro, mesosystem, exosystem, and macro systems. Each layer defines variables and constructs that have a direct or indirect influence over a person's wellbeing. A key component within these systems is the community in which a person lives.

Therefore it will be important to gauge where this project is placed within individuals and families functioning systems.

1.4 Research Aim

A central aim of this research is to gain an insight into the role that projects such as MICDP play in addressing social exclusion.

1.5 The main objectives of this study are:

1. To develop an overview of services that are utilised by community members.
2. To gain insight into community member's experiences of accessing services.
3. To explore how participants have utilised the skills acquired through their participation in the service/activity within their lives.
4. To critically examine potential gaps in service provision & explore participants' views on the development of future services.
5. To explore the role of such projects in terms of offering family and community support.
6. To gain an insight into the demographic of participants who avail of the services at MICDP.

1.6 Research Questions

1. What services are provided by MICDP in order to address social exclusion, e.g. unemployment, social isolation, low-educational attainment?
2. In what way have these services contributed to social inclusion?
3. What additional supports would benefit individuals/ families in the community?
4. How do parents feel about their child attending the community childcare facility within the project, what are their opinions?

1.7 Conclusion

The above chapter has introduced the reader to the overall aims and objectives of this study and outlined the rationale for the research, from both a personal and social work perspective. As noted above, services were closed during times of austerity and the voices of the

community members who lost them was not considered. It is hoped that this research will contribute, in some way, towards promoting that voice. As a social work student this researcher feels that this investigation is warranted considering CDP's positioning within vulnerable communities. As highlighted above concerns have been expressed therefore it appears vital to capture an insight into these projects from the perspective of those who have first-hand experience of them. The concerns referred to will be introduced for the reader in greater detail in the next chapter.

1.8 Overview of Chapters

Chapter One;

Chapter One has introduced the reader to the research.

Chapter Two; Literature Review

Will identify the history and background of community development in Ireland and provide the reader with an insight into the ongoing debates and issues that currently surround the sector. It will also examine pertinent research and highlight the theoretical debates that are relevant to the research topic

Chapter Three; Research Design

Chapter Three identifies the methods that were utilised throughout this study to collect and analyse data. It will also discuss the theoretical approach that framed this research for the author. The chapter will conclude with the suggested limitations and ethical considerations.

Chapter Four; A Presentation & Discussion of findings

This chapter is a presentation of findings that emerged from the data collected through interviews and questionnaires. The chapter will also present four key themes to the reader and offer a visual representation of questionnaire findings.

Chapter Five; Recommendations & A Concluding Thought;

This final chapter will provide some suggested recommendations for consideration. It will also conclude the research and provide the reader with the author's personal reflection on completing this study.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will take the reader through the journey of community development in Ireland. It will highlight the significant contemporary debates that currently surround the processes of funding and identify the issues that are currently being faced by local services. There will also be an exploration of the rationale that underpins the types of services offered, as well as an examination of the reasoning for the location of such projects. The following will also seek to gain insight into theoretical debates which focus on concepts of community, disadvantage and social exclusion. Finally the chapter will conclude with the identification of factors that may negatively impact community well-being.

2.2 Ireland's relationship with the community & voluntary sector

Between the 1960's and 90's significant growth is identified within the community development sector. In 1971 figures emerged that one third of the population were living well below the poverty line, under increased pressure the government appointed projects such as the National Committee on Pilot Schemes to Combat Poverty (NCPSCP). The Committee who worked in conjunction with the European Programme to Combat Poverty initiated projects which sought to target specific groups; the emphasis was placed not on the individual but on the structural inequalities that existed throughout society (Tobin, 1994). There was however conflict when attempting to promote this conclusion, with many politicians promoting the common belief that poverty lay at the fault of the individual.

The possibility that poverty was/ is perpetuated through entrenched structural inequalities was a source of ongoing conflict which resulted in the NCPSCP being disbanded and replaced with the Combat Poverty Agency in 1986. One of the main focuses of this National agency was to promote equality and integration, through addressing discrimination and empowering socially marginalised groups. After the agencies inception there was clear provisions made within Irish social policy to reflect that community development was going

to be a main mechanism for tackling poverty within communities, as evidenced in the Combat Poverty Act (1986) Section 4.2c (Motherway,2006).

Such direct approaches included the Local Development Social Inclusion programme (LDSIP), as well as the Community Services Resource Centres' Programme (ibid). Loughry (2002), highlighted these approaches as progressive moves towards a participatory model which promoted activism, rather than a model which saw people as passive recipients of state services. The acknowledgment by policy that community development was a key resource in addressing such issues appeared a welcome realisation, however with increased funding came the emergence of a closer state relationship.

2.2.1 The role of the State

The first real acknowledgement of the role of community development came in the form of the White Paper (2000), 24 years after being promised by Tanaiste Brendan Corish. The document defined the relationship between the State, the voluntary and community sector, and civil society; it set out four important points for future activity.

- It acknowledged the vital role that community and voluntary sector plays in society.
- It identified the need for voluntary activity units to be set up in all government departments.
- A programme was to be established that would concentrate on stable annual funding distribution.
- Lastly, specific funding supports would be put in place to provide research and training (Harvey, 2014).

Although the road ahead looked positive for community development, the sector was about to be dealt another significant blow. Firstly, the funding promised through the White Paper (2000) was delayed by over 2 years and the activity units that would enable the community sector to bring local issues to government were discarded. Harvey (2014), notes that when the funding was received it had been cut by 53% and the allocation of funds towards research and training was cancelled. Programs that were implemented included the aforementioned *Local Development Social Inclusion Programme* (LDSIP) (2000-2006), as well as *the Local Government Efficiency Review Group.* The latter group felt that local community

development bodies should align themselves with local authorities in order to ensure maximum value for money, therefore local government should be given the responsibility for the provision of local services (Forde et al, 2015).

However it was the events of 4 years later (2008-2014) that would almost decimate the sector and produce what, Harvey (2015), referred to as a 'radical disengagement' of government support for community projects (p,9). Under the Local Community Development Programme (LCDP) 2010-2015, '*local delivery structures for social inclusion and rural development'* were reduced from 94 to 52 (Forde et al,205). Furthermore, long-running community development projects were discontinued or modified into LDC'S (Local development Companies) (Community Work Ireland, 2015). These local development companies are multi-sectoral in structure, comprising of community representatives, statutory representatives, social partner representatives and local authority representatives. As noted by Forde et al, (2015) '*this had serious implications for the quality and depth of community engagement, ownership and initiative at local level*' (p.16). The journey of community development and what it has gone through in recent decades may be summarised in the below quote:

"It is an extraordinary story. Community development went from invention…to reinvention in the 1960s to become the flagship of Europe by 2002, only to be destroyed in just over ten years. There is very little left" (Harvey, 2015, p13).

Contemporary observers of community development and associated projects have commented '*that marketization and competitive tendering is counter to the objectives and fundamental principles of community work*' (Community Work Ireland, 2015). According to the report '*In Who's Interests?*(2015), such principles include a thorough analysis of social and economic demographics, localised identification of what the community actually needs and a development of strategies at local level to address the needs identified. The above report criticises heavily the governments shift from a grant-giving model to a competitive tendering approach. The scheme behind this competitive tendering approach is known as SICAP, as will be discussed below (Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme 2015-2017).

2.2.2 **SICAP**-Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme

The Irish Government describe SICAP (2018) as a Programme that '*will continue to focus on reducing poverty and promoting social inclusion…through engagement and collaboration* (Department of Rural & Community Development, 2018). Nevertheless there is evidence to suggest that this type of competitive tendering will in fact produce the opposite effects. Significant research from the United Kingdom indicates that competitive tendering has had a deleterious effect on the sector, both in terms of the way it influences the daily functioning of projects, as well as infringing on the ability of the sector to answer the needs of the community independently (MacMillan,2010; Benson,2014; Independence Panel,2015: NCIA,2015).

Recent research in Ireland entitled '*Community Development in Ireland under Austerity and Local Government Change: Policy and Practice',* produces a chilling portrayal of a sector 'hemmed in' and 'struggling' to adapt to the regimes of alignment and competitive tendering (Forde et al,201, p 3). According to Lee (as cited in Forde et al, 2015), competitive tendering of SICAP has been '*a complex and costly exercise that has created the duplication of management responsibilities for the Programme'* (p37). The above literature would appear to reiterate this and indicate that there is a significant disintegration of trust between the voluntary and community sector and the Irish State.

Internationally, research has further identified the broad role of community based organisations. Salmon, Hems & Chinnock (2000) found that services provided a variety of functions from community building to advocacy. Moreover research has identified they also play a critical role in building social capital (ibid). .

2.3 **On the Ground; what's happening locally**

Considering the above, the question must therefore be posed as to whether the current focus on value for money and targets is "*undermining the capacity of the community and voluntary sector' to produce optimal citizen participation in society*'' (Lee, 2015, p89). According to Keane et al (2015, p58), the ESRI highlighted that '*the poor suffered'*, they lost some of *'their best protectors*'. Although this has somewhat improved since then community services advise that they still face a daily struggle to stay afloat. This was evidenced in recent years when, in 2015, up to seven Cork community crèches faced closure over new government regulations that changed teacher-child ratios. The public outcry when these services were threatened was immediate. Niamh Sheridan of the Cork Early Years Alliance and Togher Family Centre, advised that:

'*73% of these children are living in relative poverty. To meet the needs of these children, we do a huge amount of extra work with their parents and 17% of these children need one-on-one support from our staff," she said. "Our crèches are a huge support to these struggling families and without them, these children will be further disadvantaged'* (O'Sullivan, 2017).

Previous research highlights the value that community based family support services, including childcare, can have in empowering families to reach better outcomes (Melhuish & Hall, 2013). The aforementioned authors evaluated the UK's Sure Start family support programme and noted two distinct benefits of community based family support. Firstly, services that are based in the community are far more accessible and secondly they build a sense of community support which promotes a sense of belonging and inclusion (ibid). The Mayfield Integrated Development Project aims to empower families in the community and address some of the issues that they may face when trying to return to employment or education; some of these efforts are done so through the Rainbow Childcare facility.

2.3.1 What is Community Childcare?

From a social perspective the aim of community childcare is to promote social inclusion and the empowerment of families in communities who are predominantly reliant on social welfare (OMCYA 2008). The main source of funding is delivered through the Community Childcare Subvention Programme (CSS) which is administered by Pobal; who provide a range of services on behalf of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA, 2017). A prime motivator which underpins this programme is that children from low income households will have access to quality early education and childcare at an affordable price. For families to be

eligible for this type of childcare they must fall within a certain income bracket. The CCS programme is predominantly rolled out in areas that are determined to be of disadvantage. The 2016 Pobal Deprivation Index identifies disadvantage and deprivation by measuring data that has been compiled from previous censuses (Haase and Pratschke, 2016). The index targets and assesses affluence and disadvantage in society through three dimensions; demographic profile, social class composition and labour market situation. The areas are then ranked with an overall deprivation score, with 40+ being the most affluent and -40 being the most deprived.

Some areas in Cork City North-West were deemed to be 'most disadvantaged' with a HP score of -12. One of these areas was Mayfield. According to the Dublin Inner City Community Childcare Providers Network (2008), community childcare plays a crucial role in supporting families living in disadvantaged areas. Furthermore research has identified that investment in early childhood can yield positive results that address complex societal challenges (Wagmiller & Adelman, 2009). The proposed advantages include enhancing children's overall development, reducing social exclusion and contributing positively to future social investment (Hayes, 2008). However since its inception in 2010, some have described the CCS scheme as an "*incentive tool that is structured around a negative social construction"*' (O'Donoghue & Hayes, 2011, p45). Others have criticised its unyielding focus on areas of economic disadvantage, as it fails to consider the needs of the children individually (Barnardos, 2015). Moreover contributors note that there are dangers lurking when governments categorise children as '*at risk*', and those who are not, as subsequent policies fail to acknowledge that risk is a dynamic construct that can be omnipresent for many children for many different communities (Whelan and Maitre 2008, p5).

The new Single Affordable Childcare Scheme, in Budget 2017, looks to address some these discrepancies. However the majority of crèches that operate CCS, soon to be Single Affordable Childcare Scheme will, for now, remain concentrated in areas of low socio-economic classification. The subsidy may be welcomed by middle income earners, however the CEYA (2017), strongly advise that the new scheme may in fact exacerbate crèche funding issues and push facilities further towards closure (Evening Echo, 2017). An occurrence that will almost certainly push some families into further economic strain.

2.3.2 Growing Up in Ireland

The *Growing up in Ireland Study* demonstrated clearly how economic strain can damage parental mental health (James et al, 2013). The problem currently is that although Ireland is in supposed recovery many families are still living well- below the poverty-line[1] (Barnardos, 2017). A worrying occurrence when research suggests child poverty has far reaching consequences for not only our children but for families, communities and wider society (James et al, 2013). Barnardos head of advocacy June Tinsley adds that '*Poverty affects every aspect of a child's life, their health, their wellbeing, their education and their future... If we don't break this vicious cycle, its effects will last for generations'* (Barnardos, 2017).

In addition, Eamon Murphy, economic and social analyst with Social Justice Ireland has highlighted that *"it is extremely worrying that despite falling unemployment and Ireland allegedly having the fastest growing economy in Europe, there is little relief for the working poor"*(Social Justice Ireland,2018). Another study entitled, 'Minimum Income Standard and the Cost of Childcare' (2015) quantified the minimum gross income needed to afford childcare for urban-based one child households. The study found that **multiple**, minimum income standards were needed to afford basic childcare and maintain a '*minimum essential standard of living*' (Social Justice Ireland, 2018).

2.4 Factors Impacting on Community & Individual Wellbeing

It is acknowledged that there are many interrelated aspects of a person's life that may contribute to well-being and social inclusion, such may include familial and support networks, income security, health, environmental factors and many others. However, studies have indicated that one of the most detrimental elements to an individual's sense of belonging and purpose is unemployment and loss of structure (Browning & Crossley, 1998; Bentoilla & Ichino, 2003). Other research has reiterated this, noting that unemployment and retirement are considered significant life-stressors that can impact strongly on mental health and well-being (HSE, 2014).

It is noted that the effects of unemployment and retirement will largely depend on a person's social and environmental circumstances and there are fewer studies that explore the wellbeing of those who have rich familial networks in place whilst unemployed or retired. Nevertheless

[1] Poverty Line- is the minimum level of income deemed adequate in a particular country.

research does indicate that both are significant contributing factors in people becoming socially isolated (Gallie, Paugam and Jacobs, 2003). In contrast, an extensive Danish longitudinal study maintains that they found no significant evidence to suggest that unemployment is directly related to ill-health (Browning et al, 2003). This study was extremely detailed in that it sampled a large cohort of participants form different socio-demographic and economic backgrounds.

Nevertheless, one may argue that the Danish findings cannot be applicable to other countries, such as Ireland. Studies, such as those conducting by Richardson et al (2013), maintain that the spike in male suicides in both the North and Republic of Ireland during the economic downturn cannot be ignored. The study drew particular attention to the loss, or lack of, structure and routine, noting the negative consequences that this can have on a person's sense of purpose and their overall mental health.

This researcher does acknowledge that the above issues can exist without the presence of unemployment, however being unemployed or on a low-income has been identified as a risk factor associated with social exclusion, the effects of which are explored further below.

2.5 What is 'Disadvantage'

According to Saunders (2008), traditionally, disadvantaged communities were described as areas which had high concentrations of low-income households, as well as low employment and educational attainment levels. In addition, a large percentage of the community would fall below the national poverty line. Although this is the general classification of disadvantage many believe that this method is very limited in its conclusions.

Saunders (2005; Wolff & De-Shalit 2007), note that it does not take into account other societal complexities such as portions of society who are have low-incomes, and live in areas of this classification but, by all accounts, are doing quite well in terms of life satisfaction. Wolfe & De-Shalit (2007), suggest the need for a '*richer conceptualisation of disadvantage'*, and note that a reliance on economic figures is not adequate as it fails to consider the environmental situations of individual community members (p56). Thus access to opportunities, or lack of, related to social networks is eluded from when classifications of disadvantage are made solely from economic considerations. As referred to in a previous section, the concept of social inclusion may be equated to an individual's participation in

society. Also considered, on personal level, would be an individual's ability to connect with family, friends and be active in their local community.

Putman (1995), views participation in communities as a fundamental component of social capital, noting that social inclusion depends very much on a community's social capital. The author encourages readers to place the concept of social capital within two types of socially disadvantaged communities. The first, a community where an air of mistrust presides and members do not gather collectively to discuss issues that maybe affecting them and their area. The second, a community that enjoys supportive relationships where neighbours reciprocate each other's generosity and a general sense of community spirit exists. According to Putman, this is a community that is somewhat rich in social capital (ibid, 1995). This, it may be suggested, is where the inconsistencies in ranking areas as disadvantaged purely based on economic considerations can occur. Both are classed as disadvantaged but the level of social exclusion maybe significantly higher when social capital is weak. The value of social networks and the need to feel 'connected' in some way was further illustrated in Magee's (2012) study '*More Than a Meal: A Qualitative Study of the Needs of Diners in Cork Penny Dinners*' which identified that, "*the level of social interaction between individuals is a key determinant to their overall well-being*" (Magee, 2012, p.22).

2.6 Social Inclusion: the individual , community & society

Although there are varied definitions of what exactly constitutes social exclusion many agree that when it does occur it places significant restrictions on both a communities' ability to develop. Hayes, Gray, & Edwards (2008), describe situations where individuals are unable to capitalise on opportunities that present themselves if economic and social dimensions are preventing realistic access. Again Putman's hypothesis that social and familial networks have a direct influence over an individual's ability to access opportunity is reinforced. Nonetheless, there must also be an acknowledged that the concept of social capital is closely linked with civic engagement and this according to research, is massively connected to educational levels (European Commission, 2011).

The fact that educational attainment levels are still undeniably poor in are areas classified as 'disadvantaged' is a worrying occurrence in Irish society. Figures released in 2017, show that students in areas classed as 'affluent' were four times more likely to attend third level

education than those from areas of 'disadvantage' (CSO, 2017). Although Putman (2005), views social capital through many layers with strong regard for social networks and reciprocal neighbourly relationships, the author also concedes that there is an undeniable link between educational disadvantage and social inclusion. An occurrence that many suggest will not be addressed by a top down approach that seeks to input external resources which plan, monitor, implement and evaluate projects (McDonald, 1995)

In summary the foundations of community development were envisaged to promote community participation, improve learning opportunities and equip locals with a sense of empowerment and knowledge that would act as platform for social innovation. There are suggestions however that the model which predated the aforementioned approach is alive and well, a quote from recent research describes the following:

"*I believe that we are moving toward privatization and that we are witnessing the demise... This government have shown that they don't want anyone questioning their policies and an autonomous community sector is a threat… If we compromise and go along with their plan we are no better than them and are undermining everything we believe and destroying community development in the process. Either way they've got us."*(Forde et al, 2015, p15)

The above quote is a sobering caption. The road ahead does appear very uncertain but there must also be a significant acknowledgment of an overarching theme that appears to be emerging throughout these investigations; that of community spirit and cohesion. Gillard (2008), proposes that a vital aspect of social inclusion is to simply 'be heard', to be a part of something and be accepted. Field (2003), reiterates this noting that a true sense of community arises through people's fundamental need to create and maintain social bonds, something which contributes vastly to developing a person's sense of self-identity.

2.7 Conclusion

The above analysis has highlighted the precarious position that projects such as MICDP are now finding themselves in. Increased governmental involvement and the structured criteria around funding does appear to be taking its toll on the very structures that were said to promote civic participation and active citizenship. The barriers that such services face have also been identified. Moreover the literature has identified some of the differing opinions and theoretical models that investigate concepts of social exclusion and disadvantage. One may suggest that the environment in which a person lives daily and social networks that surround

them all play vital role and must be considered when attempts are being made to conceptualise both concepts.

The following chapter will identify, for the reader, the research design methods that were undertaken throughout this study.

Chapter Three

Research Design

3.1 Introduction

The following chapter will identify the research methods that were utilised when gathering the data for this project. As this project is being conducted in association with the Community Academic Research Link initiative (CARL), a participatory research framework was adopted. In order to promote the realisation of the overall research objectives a mixed methods approach was utilised throughout. Primary research was conducted in the form of semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. Secondary research was represented in the form of an in-depth literature review. Methods of data collection and analysis will also be described and elaborated on throughout. Furthermore, there will be a discussion around the theoretical approach that informed and guided the author in compiling and structuring this piece. To conclude ethical considerations will be considered and summarised.

3.2 Community Based Participatory Approach

A significant aspect of the research was to identify the experiences of people who had used, or were still using, the services of MICDP. Therefore the theoretical model of CBPR and its focus on "*shared ownership of research projects; community-based analysis of social problems and an orientation toward community action*", did aid this researcher in terms of understanding the value and worth of such research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2008, p.273).

According to Thomas (2011), participatory research, to describe simply, is the difference between an outsider's view and an insider's view. Evidence also suggests that community based groups recognise the value in conducting such research, either through their own organisation or in collaboration with others, in order to satisfy funding, improve service provision and influence policy and practice (Hart, Maddison, & Wolff, 2007).

3.3 Mixed Methods Approach: Qualitative & Quantitative

For the purposes of this research a mixed methods approach was applied when gathering information. For this researcher a qualitative approach was needed to capture language, description, and paint a picture of how people really feel about this service. Creswell & Clarke (2007), note that qualitative research is embedded in many community research projects as it collects data through words and experiences.

However there were concerns, when adopting this method, that information would be quite specific to one individual's experiences and therefore be less easy to generalise and make comparisons (Harry & Lipsky, 2014; Thomson, 2011). However, the aim of this research strongly warranted, and required, and experiential representation of what people had to say about their local community project, anything less would have perhaps lacked the critical human element and depth that this researcher was interested in exploring. Due to time constraints and the desire of the agency to capture as much insight as possible, it was decided to introduce a quantitative method in the form of a questionnaire. This questionnaire included a mix of open and closed questions. This researcher felt it was important to identify several influencing factors that may possibly contribute to a person's vulnerability in terms of becoming socially isolated. Such factors were suggested to include age, marital status and income. Bryman (2006) informs us that *'complementarity*' and '*expansion*' is frequently referred to when researchers adopt a mixed methods approach (p67). Furthermore as this research was collaborative it was felt that the project may benefit from gauging an insight into the demographic of people who utilise the services.

As this study is exploratory in nature and an overall objective is to gauge experience, data gathered and represented was done so through predominantly qualitative methods. This qualitative aspect enabled the researcher to conduct a thematic analysis of experiences and opinions. This author is aware of the ongoing debate regarding the use of open-ended questions being described as qualitative within a quantitative method such as a questionnaires, however to debate this further would go beyond the scope of this piece. In

relation to this study qualitative data refers to interview methods and quantitative refers to the questionnaire.

3.4 Sampling & Recruitment Strategies

The target research population of this study was users of the MICDP. The method used for this particular study is non-probability purposive sampling, as opposed to probability sampling. As time limitations were an ever present consideration it was decided by both this researcher and the Project, that participants would be purposefully selected. As noted by Patton (2002), purposeful sampling is widely used within qualitative research as it is extremely effective in identifying cases that may yield rich data when resources and timeframes are limited. This process '*involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest'' (*Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p172).

The distribution of 63 questionnaires enabled this researcher to *'to maximize variations in stakeholder opinions & experience'* (Patton, 2002, p 125). The identification of interviewee's, from one of the four main service's offered further insight. Interviewee participant's consisted of two parents whose children attended the Rainbow Childcare facility, one participant who availed of several educational/learning courses and one who accessed the resource office.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

3.5.1 Semi Structured Interviews

This researcher wanted the structure of the interviews to be flexible enough to let the conversation be guided by the participants different responses whilst being structured enough to achieve information that would promote the realisation of the studies overall objectives. Whittaker (2012), describes interviews as quite a demanding method of data gathering, as the results are not in a '*readily analysable form*' (p34). However, Bryman (2012), identifies the strengths of the method, adding that semi-structured interviews are an extremely effective way of gathering information when the researcher only has a short frame in which to interact with participants. Within the four interviews conducted participants were asked a mix of pre-determined open-ended and closed questions (see appendix V). Prompts were also utilised if the participant commented on something that spoke to the overall aims of the study

3.5.2 Questionnaires

As mentioned, the time- frame for interviewing participants was limited and the concern that four interviewees would not build a big enough picture of what the service provided was omnipresent. With this in mind it was decided, between both this researcher and the agency, that questionnaires would be an appropriate way of accessing a larger amount of participants. Furthermore, there was a concern, on the part of this researcher, of biasness and idiosyncrasies seeping into the interview process which could result in the data becoming diluted. There was also the awareness that some of the '*influencing factors*' as described above may not be comfortable to disclose face to face. It was also acknowledged that participants may be reluctant to suggest further services that they felt would benefit the community if they were being asked directly in an interview. This researcher also felt that because the study is collaborative the questionnaire findings should be included in the main body of the text rather than in the appendices.

3.6 Data Analysis

This researcher utilised a thematic approach when analysing data gathered. The process of identifying themes or patterns was identified using an inductive (or bottom-up) approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data was coded by themes that emerged naturally rather than the author trying to code data into a 'pre-existing coding frame' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p12). Following Braun & Clarkes (2006), six phases of analysis all data was read through before the process of coding began, it was then read 'actively' to search for meanings and emerging patterns. In addition interviews were transcribed verbatim. Although this was time consuming researchers argue that this is a as "*a key phase of data analysis within interpretative qualitative methodology"* (Bird, 2005, p27)

Analysis of the quantitative data took place through Microsoft excel, data was inputted and then processed. The quantitative figures were then cross referenced against emerging themes to see if patterns were identifiable to the researcher. Quantitative data is represented visually in the form of a graphical presentation to frame the research for the reader and provided an insight into the age and profile of service users.

3.7 Ethical factors

This researcher was very aware that the term 'disadvantaged' was written and referred too throughout this piece. This term was included in order to contextualise the rationale behind

the allocation of funding and the geographical locality of many of these projects. In reference to this concern, Butler (2002), proposes that there are fifteen ethical considerations that must be at the forefront of any social work research. The author suggests that the researcher has a moral obligation to protect and promote the participants welfare as well as contributing positively to the 'over all greater good' (p246). The values of the study were based on the needs of communities and giving them a platform to voice their opinions, there was no intention on the part of this researcher to stereotype people or communities as 'disadvantaged'.

In addition, a fundamental aspect of this research was informed consent. The importance of informed consent was further highlighted by reading and adhering to both the University's code of research conduct as well as CORU's framework code of professional conduct and ethics, the researcher was very aware of the ethical and moral responsibilities that were attached to conducting social research (UCC.ie, 2018; CORU.ie, 2018). As it was not possible to meet every survey participant individually each of them were given an information sheet which clarified the overall aims and purposes of the study, they were free to take this home with them if they wished (*see appendix 1*). Participants were also informed that the final dissertation may be used by the MICDP in future publications but that no identifying information would be utilised. Written consent was also sought from every participant. Participants were also advised before answering both the interview and survey questions that they did not have to answer any question that they did not wish too and could withdraw their responses within an identified time-frame. Additionally, all interviewees were informed that they could terminate the interview at any time (*see appendix IV*).

Another element that required significant consideration was confidentiality. Bryman (2008) notes that confidentiality is an essential part of any research and should be maintained during and after the research is complete. To ensure this interview and survey responses were anonymised and all identifiable information was removed. In addition, throughout the findings section participants were allocated identification numbers to ensure their anonymity. The principles as outlined in Butler (2002), and social works code of ethics in research, were applied throughout in order to protect participants.

3.8 Limitations

The cohort of participants who participated in the survey were those who attended the service during the distribution period therefore other services that are possibly run on a monthly basis may be underrepresented. Furthermore, there is also the awareness that the crèche facility may be under represented in the graphical findings as the amount of people using the crèche will be lower due to the availability of spaces. Due to the volume of services that the MICDP offers it was not possible to clearly identify which service was utilised most often, as some participants ticked more than one option. This is acknowledged as a limitation as it may have diluted the data somewhat. The following chapter will introduce the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Presentation & Discussion of Findings

4.1 Introduction

Firstly, this chapter will present a visual representation of findings which emerged from the questionnaires. This data will be presented to the reader in the form of column graphs and pie charts. The chapter will then provide a thematic analysis of findings from a collaboration of both questionnaires and the semi-structured interviews. Findings from the questionnaire that are not represented graphically are incorporated into the thematic analysis.

4.2 Demographic Profile including Gender, Relationship status, and Age

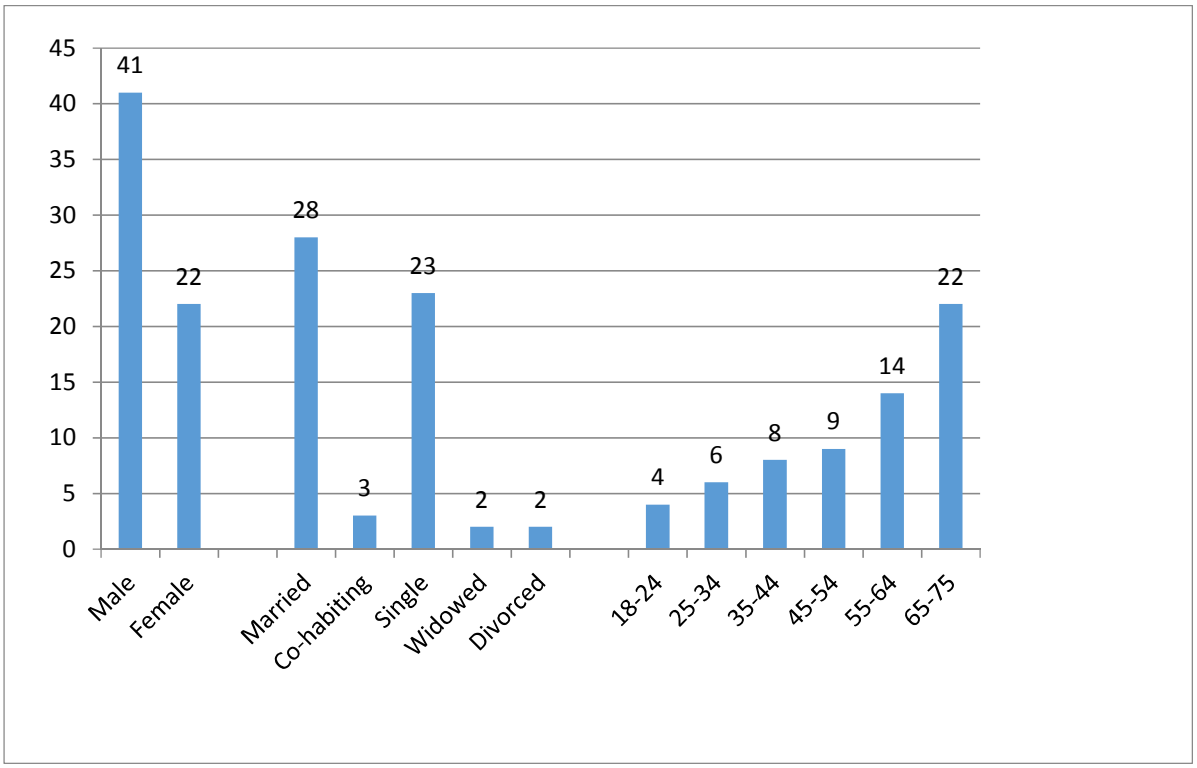
Of 63 participants surveyed, below is a visual representation of numerical findings. It must be noted that some participants chose not to answer some of questions therefore a slight deficit in numbers may be present throughout some of the representation.

4.2.1 Graphical Representation One:

Participant Profile- 63 participants

Graph 1

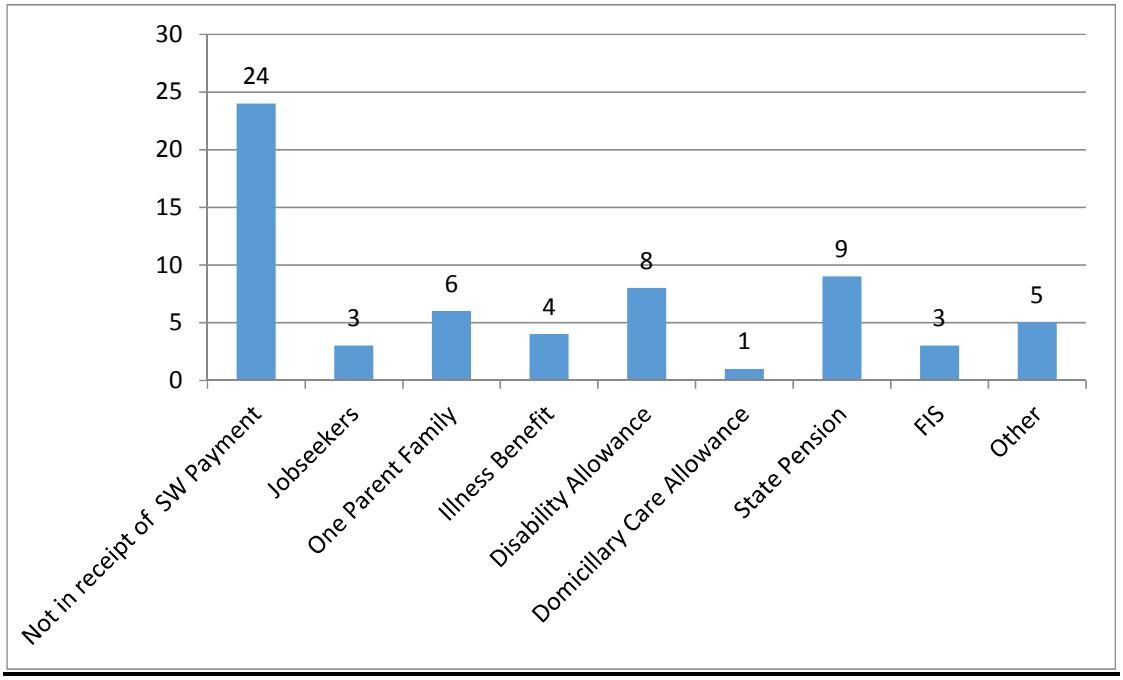
In order of gender, marital status & age



4.2.2 Graphical Representation Two:

Income Type of Participants

Graph 2



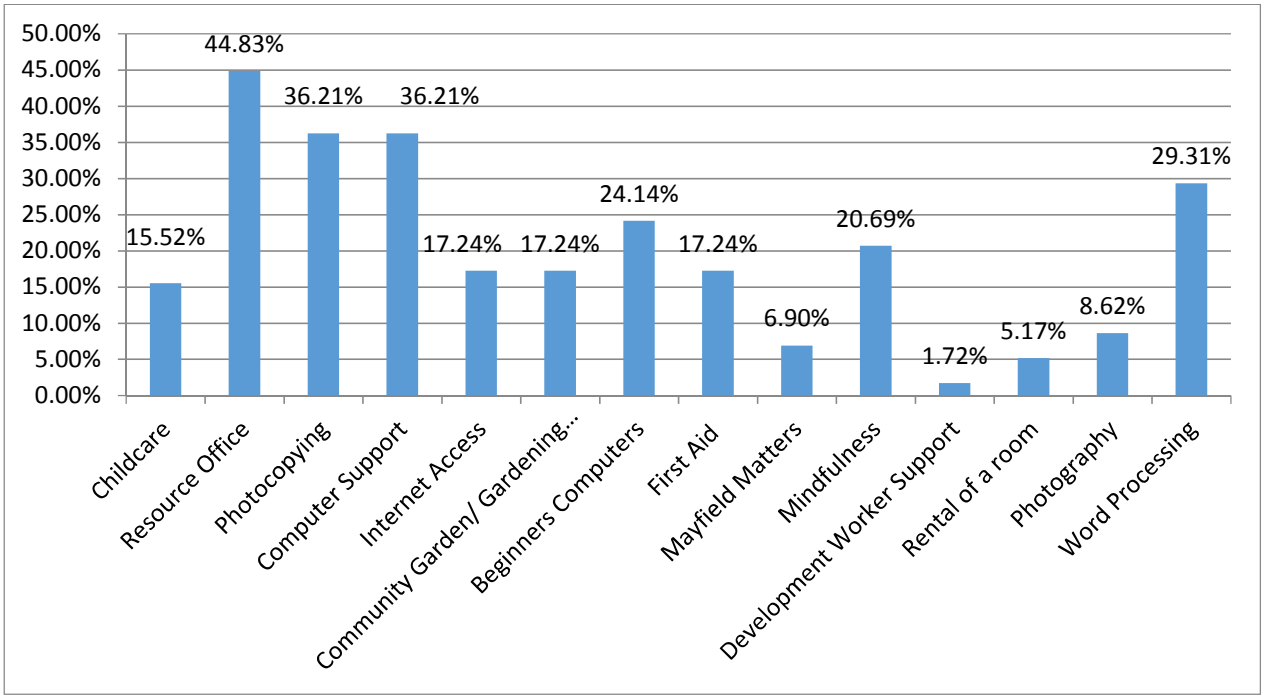
4.2.3 Statistical representation One: How participants heard about the Project'

The most common method for locals hearing, or knowing, about the project was **locally through word of mouth**, of those survey **40.98% (25)** chose this method. The second highest method chosen was the Projects newsletter, **Mayfield Matters 29.51% (18)** of participants heard about the project through receiving this newsletter. The remainder of participants noted that they had heard about the project on face book or through someone who had previously utilised the service.

4.2.4 Graphical representation Three:

Representation Services

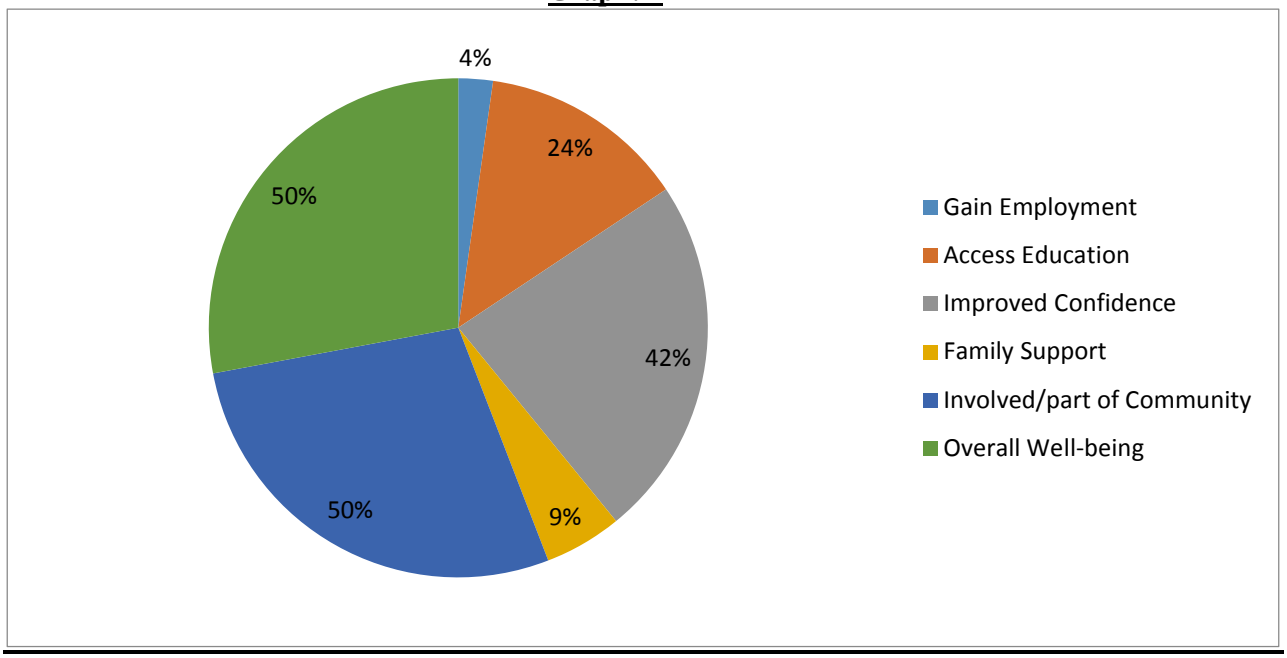
Graph 3



4.2.5 Graphical Representation Four:

How the project has contributed overall to participant's lives

Graph: 4



NB: **Graphs 3 & 4 provide and overall summary of services most availed of at the Project and participant's feelings about the service's they availed of, both representations are reflective of participants selecting more than one option**

4.2.6 Final Statistical Representation: Frequency of use, and Benefits gained

In terms of frequency of use, over 63% of those survey used the project weekly, 15% used the service daily and the remained of participants use the service either on a monthly or yearly basis. Finally, when participants were asked if they felt any of the services had contributed positively to their own lives or the lives of their children, 93.75% responded **Yes,** and 6.5% responded **No.** These figures are further referred to below.

4.3 Theme One: <u>The Importance of Children Getting a Good Start</u>

As highlighted within the literature community childcare is a valued commodity within many communities (Melhuish & Hall, 2013). The debates which surround the funding and accessibility of such childcare were also identified**.** One of the main objectives of this research was to explore the experiences of community members who utilise the services that are offered by Mayfield Integrated Community development Project. One of these services is the Rainbow Childcare facility. An important rationale for the existence of these childcare facilities is that they provide support to parents on low incomes, improve children's overall development and address some of the economic barriers that exist when parents are attempting to access educational or employment opportunities. There has also been a growing awareness of the importance of those 'first years' in terms social development. Early years contributors contend that *'a large body of research in social science, psychology and neuroscience shows that skill begets skill; that learning begets learning'* (European Commission, 2011).

In relation to this, participants were asked if they felt the crèche had contributed positively to their own lives or that of their child's, and whether they felt the crèche had supported their

child/or children's development. With regards to the first question there was an overall consensus that the service had contributed positively to their lives, with 93.75% of respondents from the questionnaire answering 'yes'. The majority of interview participants also felt that their children had benefited from attending the childcare facility.

Participant one stated that she found taking part in the 'happy talk' project beneficial, commenting that: *"It shows you how to play with your kids, how to interact, how to really talk to your kids… It really helped him with speech and language, and they gave me tips and stuff like that, it was great"*.



(Corkcitypartnerhip.ie/2018)

The premise of "Happy Talk" is that it links '*best practice in community development and speech and language to meet the very serious speech and language delays in The Glen and Mayfield in Cork City* (Corkcitypartnership.ie, 2018). The aim of the project is to improve the speech and language outcomes for children in the local community aged 0-6. According to Cork City partnership (2018), the project has been devised form international literature which investigated what types of interventions work best in communities. The vital importance of oral language and its connection to learning, literacy and numeracy has also

been well documented (Bercow, 2008; Hartshorne, 2006; Law, Reilly, & Snow, 2013). As has evidence which proposes that children from areas of disadvantage can be vulnerable to experiencing difficulties in the area of speech and language (Law et al, 2013; Waldfogel & Washbrook, 2010). This author is aware of research regarding the models of disadvantage that are used when connecting disadvantage with the aforementioned difficulties, however to explore this research in significant detail would go beyond the capabilities of this piece (J. E. Dockrell & Marshall, 2014; Law, et al., 2013; Lindsay, Dockrell, Desforges, Law, & Peacey, 2010).

Nonetheless, projects which focus on early intervention whilst encompassing parental involvement have emphasised the value that these types of interventions can yield in terms of child outcomes. As mentioned in the literature, the UK has invested heavily in programs such as 'Fulfilling Lives: A Better Start', a follow-on to the national 'Sure Start' programme that was referred to in chapter three (Rafferty, 2014). This type of research has highlighted the positive effects of parental involvement in terms of improving language, which in turn contributes positively to the child's future. It is also noted to improve attachments as children are interacting positively with their caregiver. Furthermore, it is suggested that the parent is learning practices that contribute to their ability to represent and interpret what the child is feeling (ibid). Moreover, as noted in the literature an essential aspect underpinning the success of such projects in terms of the value they represent to children, is early intervention and the recognition of difficulties at an early age (ibid). As noted by Rafferty, (2014) "*Intervention by skilled trained others can be at least as effective as speech and language therapy intervention"*

A need that participant one, again, identifies as being met by her first child's attendance at Rainbow Childcare:

> "*It was (staff members name) who spotted it first day.....Like I said only for her……I could be still waiting for appointments"*

The rationale underpinning both the 'Happy Talk' project and community development projects has been discussed and it appears that, in terms of this research cohort, the benefits of early childcare environments are being realised. In terms of child development and contemplating her child's time in the crèche environment participant two further stated that:

> *"It just benefits in every way ……. even intellectually at jigsaws from doing it in school. You know the puzzles that are 50 pieces. Its attentiveness, they*

are focusing on a routine and attentiveness.., it soars her…I just find all round its great"

Participant one echoed this statement adding that her child, who started in Rainbow Childcare at 1.5 years, has benefited from attending, "*Her social skills are out there, she's totally outgoing, and she knows all her songs her a b c's…. It's just fabulous"*. This correlates with findings from the questionnaire where a number of participants advised that the crèche had supported their child's development. Larger research also proposes the benefits of good quality early childcare, suggesting that "*the highest rate of return to human capital investment is found in early childhood years, and yet public expenditure is typically lowest for this age group*" (OECD,2012). A concern also highlighted in the literature when considering the position that some childcare facilities are now finding themselves. One might suggest this is a worry considering that value that the majority participants place on such a service (CEYA, 2017).

A second finding within this theme and a main objective of this study is the role that projects, such as MICDP, play in terms of addressing some of the barriers that leave people vulnerable to social exclusion**.** As explored in the literature, such may include a lack of social supports or the unavailability of affordable childcare **(**ICCCPN, 2008**).** When discussing social exclusion research also identifies that the cost of childcare can be 'all determining' when parents are considering a return to the labour market, for some it is just not viable or sustainable in term of childcare costs (OECD, 2012, p 28). The very logistics of working and parenting are complex and there is a need for flexibly, and an awareness of this from service providers.

A statement that was echoed by participant two:

"They worked around my hours, I started at 3 days which eventually went to 4 days and they accommodated me again, but I just found it very easy they were always very kind and considerate in terms of what I needed and what times I needed"

In terms of family support, a number of questionnaires and half of the interview participants stated that they would not be able to work without the support of the crèche. Another objective of this research was to identify possible, additional, services that locals felt the community may benefit from; these finding will be explored in a later section

4.4 Theme Two; Promoting Participation & Wellbeing through Inclusivity - Relationships Matter

As noted in the literature the need to belong to someone, something or somewhere, to feel connected, is a vital feature of overall well-being (Magee, 2012). The findings of this research would contribute to the same conclusion. Another objective of this research of this research was to identify the role that projects such as MICDP play in providing community support**.** Participants of the survey were asked to indicate if the project had contributed to certain aspects of their lives, over 56% of participants indicated that the service, or activity which they attend, was important to them as it made them feel a part of their community. This sense of belonging was also linked with participant's initial experiences of the MICDP. It emerged throughout the findings that a key component of feeling this sense of belonging and value appeared to be largely attributed to the overall accessibility of the project. Although participants heard about the project through different mechanisms the majority of interviewees noted that the willingness and approachability of staff was instrumental in them accessing and/or continuing to participate in services or activities. Participant three stated that: *"The first thing you see when you came in was a smiling face".* The following collection of extracts from both surveys and interviews further captures the importance of those initial meetings and the overall inclusive nature of the service.

- *"They are there to help and accommodate"*
- *"Wonderful for bringing people together"*
- *The staff are so friendly it makes all the difference"*
- *"People here are so inviting, I mean I would not have come back, I wouldn't have continued"*
- *"They are amazing up here and that's a lot got to do with the fact of me getting involved with everything else that I'm after getting involved with, and the fact that I thought all along they were just dealing with me, it's not that"*

Data from the surveys also identified a high percentage of people who attend MICDP are over 65 years old, a time in life that has been linked with increased risk of social isolation. As noted by Whittaker (2014), '*social isolation is positively correlated with increased age, a single, widowed or married status, few nearby informal supports…..retirement and decreased physical activity* (p230). Findings suggest that there are several courses and/or activities

within MICDP that further promote and encourage a sense of community participation. Firstly, several survey respondents referred to the community garden as something they like to participate in. One respondent stated; "*I enjoy writing for the Mayfield Matters. I also helped start the community garden"*. In relation to the garden another participant added;

> "*Through working in the garden I became a tutor with Age Action who I met at an open day and I also identified the need to set up a knitting group, which is known as the Mayfield Crafters.*

The physical nature of maintaining a garden and the social outlet that such an activity offers is again of great benefit to community member and it addresses many of the aforementioned issues such as physical activity and access to informal supports. Howe (2009), further acknowledge this adding that working creatively together can produce both comfort and incentive (p.106). Another service that has high participation rates is the resource office (44.83%) and the computers for beginners course (24.14%). One survey participant stated that, "*I learned how to use a tablet it, it was excellent".* Another added; "*The services were a wonderful support to me. I learnt everything about computers and I knew nothing coming in"*. A study by Rosenthal (2008) highlighted, that accessing and being able to navigate a computer and/or the internet is especially beneficial to older adults as it can facilitate the start, maintenance, or even an improvement in social networks. As evidenced in the literature, the need for social networks is important as they play a vital role in maintaining good mental health. Moreover, a finding which correlates strongly with the above, in terms of respondent's participation in course/activities, is the affect that attending them has on their wellbeing. This was reiterated by survey findings which identified a significant amount of respondents who stated that attending MICDP has contributed to their well-being overall. As noted in the literature the value of being needed and having purpose cannot be underestimated in terms of contributing to one's mental health (Richardson et al, 2013). Participant three reinforced this, stating;

> *"Feeling you're contributing to anything will make you feel a hundred times better than feeling like somebody who's just taking up space basically"*

This participant further added that doing such courses contributed significantly to their overall wellness, stating that "*my overall well-being definitely, I'm on disability, so obviously I can't work but overall my confidence has soared, my mental health has soared, I'm able to*

stand up for myself a bit more". The value of the project to well-being was further evidenced by this participant who stated;

> "*You come up and you're talking too, I mean I come up and I would have never had an opportunity to talk to older people and you can be sitting there folding papers…… having a great conversation and have a cup of tea".*

Another stated,

> "*I mean I know it's probably not the norm but you can come up if you want and sit down, I feel like I'm part of the family"*

The above extracts relay the importance of purpose and feeling a part of the community in which you live. The literature reiterates this statement confirming that people who have strong networks and are part of a group are both happier and healthier (Ballinger et al, 2009). This finding was also acknowledged in the literature through Magee's (2012) study which highlighted the correlation between social interactions and feeling well in one's self.

Again the occurrence of such simple connections should not be underestimated in terms of the value they hold with regard to social interaction. Furthermore, this finding links directly with the literature which notes the importance of people creating and maintaining social bonds in order to support overall wellness (Field, 2003). This was echoed by participant three who stated; "*It's my overall well-being … I mean if you met me 4 years ago you would be like that's not the same person"*

Overall the above provides a small insight into the value of social supports in the community. As mentioned in the literature, it may also be suggested that's these findings correlate with Putman's (2002), hypothesis which proposes that informal connections are vital to sustain social networks, which in turn offer potential support to community members.

This analysis also highlights the importance of people being a part of something and feeling as if they belong. The personal value that participants take from attending the MICDP is evidenced throughout these findings. One may suggest that they are all contributing, in some way, to addressing social exclusion. The below quote's, from a survey participants, may capture a sense of the overall value of such services in terms of inclusion, well-being and community participation.

"I am able to access the computer and the internet online, access word processing etc. The courses really helped me release my emotions and mix well with others, and even improved my English"

"I have found that all the short courses have helped me emotionally and increased myself confidence

"Great to meet other people socially, and the course (Mindfulness), was of great benefit to my personal well-being and my ability to relax and cope with daily life"

"You might not be able to measure what they've done, but I feel it"

A gap identified through data collected in the questionnaire that correlates with such findings will be explored in further detail in a later section.

4.5 Theme Three: <u>Employment & Education</u>

As discussed in chapter two the concept of social exclusion is a complex phenomenon, with some viewing it through an economic lens, built on income and material wealth, and others through a sociological perspective **(**Saunders 2005; Wolff & De-Shalit, 2007). Putman (2000), notes that both community participation and education are both vital components that contribute to civic engagement. As shown in the statistical findings the representation of people that felt they were assisted in gaining employment was low. However, it must be acknowledged that half of the interview participants advised that they would not be able to sustain their current employment without the childcare facility**.** It must also be acknowledged that although participants' did not tick this particular option *(See Appendix, III)***,** several did refer to employment when asked if the any of the services contributed positively to their lives. Two particular respondents indicated;

"*The Training to help in the job market in the future and developing my skills in a nice supportive environment*"

"Courses have enabled me to meet new people and helped me socially. I also developed new skills and interests. The skills I have gained have helped me with work"

Furthermore a significant amount of survey participants (42%) stated that their attendance at the project had contributed to an improvement in their overall confidence, a finding that one may suggest will be useful in terms of preparing people for roles such as employment or a return to education. As acknowledged in the literature there are significant challenges that can arise from unemployment, both on a personal and societal level (Gallie, Paugam and Jacobs, 2003). Such challenges include social isolation and increased stress on both the individual and the family unit. Another barrier to inclusion as identified in the literature is education. According to Freire (1997), a fundamental characteristic of community development is that it is an 'educational process' predominantly based on learning by doing, with formal education also playing a role (p11). The learning 'by doing' will be referred to in more detail in a later section, however a significant finding within this research is that over 25% of participants noted that the MCDP project did help them in accessing further education. One particular respondent identified the value of the introductory courses that the Project runs and stated;

"*It was great to learn the basics, it was great to start something knowing how to use the computers and word, it gave me a great starting point, and the teachers were great support and very encouraging"*

Furthermore, Teater & Baldwin (2012), also note that both community development workers and social workers play a significant role in community education with regard to promoting critical autonomy, which in turn empowers communities to 'speak out' against those in power. The above finding is also significant considering the findings, discussed in the literature, regarding the representations of educational attainment from areas that are classified as disadvantaged (CSO, 2017). What surprised this researcher was the lack of research that exists with regard to the importance of confidence building. One may suggest that in order to prepare people for such roles these fundamental building blocks must first be in place.

4.6 Theme Four: **Participants perspectives on the possible development of future services**

In reference to the first theme which discussed the imporatnce of quality early childcare in respect of child development. Several participants made suggestions regarding possible attentional services that may benefit the communiity. In terms of the childcare aspect, a number of participants stated that parents may benefit from an afterschool club and/ or extended crèche hours. Participant one emphasised this stating; "*Afterschool would be fantastic……but it was cut back, they used to do it, Yeah that really hits home... Should be there yeah…"*

The participant highlighted that the afterschool option would give more time to spend with her other child, who has additional needs, completing homework and so on. The participant is also in employment so it may be suggested that this extra time may be a welcome addition for many other parents who are trying to work and/ or look after children. This need was acknowledged in the UK when, in 2017, the government invited parents to apply for 30hrs free childcare if eligible (Department of Education UK, 2016). Again the question of eligibility is a concern with regard to negative social constructs, however the UK, it appears, has recognised the value of children spending longer periods in rich learning environments and announced an increased annual investment of £1bn for early year's entitlements" (ibid).

In reference to theme two, when exploring concepts of well- being and particpation, and there importance in terms of overall wellbeing, several suggestions were made by community members. One survey participant stated that it may be benefical to;

> *"Open up the garden to young people, give them sense of contributing and being part of something like the adults have"*

This is a valid suggestion considering that research suggests that young people are experiencing more extensive issues such as bullying and isolation (Tobin 2009, Hall 2011). For young people to be involved with the project and the community further, may offer them some of the supports that have been idenified by this cohort of participnats.

Another possible service that may benefit the community, as identified through the questionnaire, is the desire of community members to have more courses that address mental health awareness. One respondent stated; *"One to one support for people, bring a therapist to the centre from Pieta House''*.

Openly addressing mental health distress and its existence within communities is also strongly advocated for throughout research. As Sapouna (2008) suggests **"***it is possible to*

address the broader contextual factors contributing to mental distress, normalize mental distress by providing support within mainstream community services, and develop and educational component which will help the reduction of stigma associated with mental health difficulties"(p26)

With regards to theme three, a number of questionnaire respondents suggested that they would like to see more courses run by the MICDP, although some did not specify with regard to the type of course, others suggested courses that focus more on creativity rather than academia. Participant one spoke about the societal value that is placed on mainstream education, stating;

> *"I grew up thinking, I'm actually not intelligent, but then since I came up here, I've found courses that I love it's all creative, it's about creativity, I'm not academic and that's ok too"*

Findings were reflective of the value that participants place on the acknowledgement of talents outside the academic arena, in terms of writing poetry and contributing to the local Newsletter. Furthermore, the projects focus on the strengths of the community and its members is very much appreciated by those who attend its services. There was however a significant amount of participants that would appreciate the opportunity to take part in more 'hands on' courses, such as beauty and/or hairdressing. There was the awareness by participants that space would be an issue. Nevertheless these courses were mentioned several times and therefore warrant identification within these findings.

4.7 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to identify the overarching themes that emerged throughout the questionnaires and interviews processes. The concluded findings suggest that MICDP is a very important place for many members of the community. The first theme that emerged highlighted the role of the Project in terms of family support, identification of need and child development. The second, identified the role of the Project in terms of promoting community participation and well-being, as explained by the participants a central aspect undermining this level of participation is accessibility and the overall inclusive nature of the project. As outlined in the objectives, these findings were reflective of the role that the Project plays in addressing some of the identified barriers of social exclusion. To conclude, this researcher's

recommendations, reflections and final conclusion will be discussed throughout the following chapter.

Chapter Five; Recommendations & Reflection

5.1 Introduction to the chapter

This concluding chapter will present for the reader some key recommendations for consideration. As a researcher, I was curious about the role that these projects had in communities, simply put, I wanted gain an insight into what they meant to communities. I know have this insight but I will also offer, briefly, an explanation regarding the value of such projects to social work practice. Lastly, this chapter will conclude with the researcher's final reflections and thoughts.

5.2 Recommendations

The recommendations from this study include;

- Due to the time constraints of this study it would be useful for the research to be extended. Harvey (2015, p7) asserts that there needs to be an acknowledgement of the

contributions that community development makes to building '*social capital and promoting grassroots participation and social inclusion*'. For this to be truly realised further research is warranted across other CDP's and communities.

- This agency should safeguard and maintain its welcoming and inclusive nature, not only because it is instrumental in getting people to return to the Project but as it also plays a significant role in facilitating access to further services/opportunities.

- Create links between younger and older people in the community, for example invite children from local primary schools to participate/contribute to the community garden.

- Hone in on one particular group that attends the project and carry put specific research that would identify gaps specific to their needs – older people/ younger people/ parents

- Maintain research links with University College Cork should the need to conduct such research arise.

- Considering the current mental health difficulties that are arising for young people in communities all over Ireland, the suggestion by community members to include young people in the community garden or introduce training around mental health awareness, such as SAFETALK or ASSIST, may be a viable option that the Mayfield Integrated Community Development Project may like to consider.

5.3 A Final Concluding Thought;

Throughout this study the author has highlighted the significant changes that are now being faced by the community development sector and one may suggest that there is a role for social work in critically examining such change. This brings our profession back to its very roots and again raises the question of where contemporary social work is placed in terms of promoting social justice. The question must be posed as to how we as practitioners can engage with, and challenge the very causes of oppression and structural inequalities if we do not voice our opinions and/or promote the voices of those who are being directly affected by such changes.

Moreover, we must not forget our own place within these rather large systems and safeguard our own core values, which seek to promote social justice and empowerment. One may

suggest that empowerment is built from the bottom up, relying on autonomous and active communities to promote participation and inclusion from a supportive and encouraging environment. This study offered a small snapshot into these projects. It highlighted that although the value of some services may not be easily measured economically; there is other societal benefits garnered that deserve distinct recognition. Benefits that must not be underestimated in terms of the value they contribute to individuals, communities and society overall. Possibly there is a future role for social work practitioners and students to acknowledge the role of such services through future research.

5.4 Personal Reflection

In order to process my experiences whilst undertaking this study I decided it may be beneficial to keep a journal. This reflection will provide the reader with an insight into this journal and identify some of the key experiences that stood out for the author. As noted in chapter one, I was interested in conducting this research as I had witnessed the value of community projects whilst undertaking my second placement. Having this opinion and insight aided me in sustaining my ongoing interest in the research topic. Yet, I also realised, through conversations with my supervisor that I needed to be objective and be open to the possibility that the findings would speak for themselves; findings that may contrast with my own personal opinions.

Furthermore, this researcher will also take away some valuable lessons that were garnered from undertaking this collaborative research study. At the initial stages of this research there was a concern that analysing the whole Project might be somewhat ambitious. But I was interested in gaining an insight into this Project as a whole and decided that every effort would be made to gauge as much experience and information as possible. However it was possibly this intention that created somewhat of a panic when it came time to analyse the data. The Project returned 63 questions for analysis and there was a sudden anxious realisation that I possibly should have placed a limit on the amount that were distributed. Considering the omnipresent time constraints, I think capping distribution at 20 would have aided this researcher hugely. Primarily because inputting data into excel and conducting a thematic analysis of the above was significantly time-consuming. The issue of time constraints was again influential when it came to the distribution of the questionnaire which was kindly managed by the staff of the project. Perhaps in subsequent research I will be more

aware of such time limitations and have the questionnaires ready earlier so as to be involved in the distribution.

In terms of the questionnaire, one purpose of it was to gain an overview the services that are utilised within the project. Originally the questionnaire listed four options to identify this. However through collaborative discussion it was felt that the questionnaire should include an extensive list of services. This researcher agreed also, however in hindsight the list may have been too large as it resulted in participants ticking more than one option and it is acknowledged that this occurrence may have diluted the data somewhat. It also emerged that a number of participants skipped two of the questions directly after this list. There is therefore an awareness, on my own part, when conducting subsequent research that questions should be short and concise in order to hold the participants overall interest. I also feel in hindsight that I should have possibly held an information session to introduce the research to potential participants. There is a significant realisation now that I was asking quite personal questions within the questionnaire and it may have been appropriate for me to introduce myself properly to the participants. This is again is a valuable lesson that I will hold onto and practice when carrying out future research. To conclude, I must note that, even though I struggled at times, I found carrying out this research extremely worthwhile and hope that subsequent studies will be carried out to explore the significant role of such places within the community. Otherwise, it does appear that they will not get the recognition they truly deserve.

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Appendix I



19/03/18

Dear Participants,

Firstly, thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

I would like to invite you to participate in a study that explores the services offered to you by Mayfield Community Development Project.

I am currently undertaking my final year as a student of the Bachelor of Social Work course in University College Cork. With the permission of Mayfield Community Development Project, I am conducting a survey as part of my research dissertation. You have been asked to take part in this research as I am interested in understanding the role that Projects such as Mayfield Community Development play in addressing the needs of your community and to identify any possible gaps in the services provided.

Completing the survey should not take longer than 15 minutes. The survey is completely anonymous. Your name will only appear on the consent form and no information which identifies you will be published in the research. The research will be utilized for the purposes of this dissertation. In case any extracts of the survey are quoted in the study or any other study, anonymity will be ensured. The results will be available to Mayfield Community Development Project and The Community-Academic Research Links initiative, CARL, which is located at University College Cork.

In relation to the questionnaire, you do not have to answer any question you do not wish too. You can withdraw from the study at any point without any difficulty or repercussion before and during the survey. You may also request to withdraw permission to use the data within a week of the completion of the survey.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me via email: 114724309@umail.ucc.ie.

Yours sincerely,

xxxxxxxxxx

CONSENT FORM

Appendix II

- I …… agree to participate in Sarah Conroy's research study.
- The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing.
- I am participating voluntarily.
- I give permission for the survey to be used for other studies and to be accessible to University College Cork and Mayfield Community Development
- I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data within one week of the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I understand that anonymity will be ensured at all times.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my survey may be quoted in the thesis and any subsequent publications.

Signed:_____ Date: _____

PRINT NAME: _____

Appendix III



Questionnaire

Please Tick or fill in relevant sections

Male ☐ **Female** ☐

1. What is your age?

☐

2. Have you dependents living at home with you?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If you answered yes to the above question, please specify, how many?

_____

3. Please specify if you are

(a) Married ☐

(b) Single ☐

(c) Cohabiting ☐

(d) Other: (please specify) ☐

_____

4. Are you in receipt of a Social Welfare Payment?

Yes ☐ No ☐

5. How did you hear about Mayfield Community Development?

(a) Locally, by word of mouth □

(b) Online , through Facebook □

(c) Someone who had previously used the service □

(d) Other (Please specify) □

_____

5. What service do you avail of at the Project?

(a) Childcare □

(b) Resource Office (CV's etc.) □

(c) Short Course (**Please specify from list below**) □

1. *Beginner's computers with internet & email* □
2. *Word Processing Level 3N0588 QQI* □
3. *Computer Applications Level 4N1112 QQI* □
4. *New ECDL modules (version 6)* □
5. *An introduction to Social Media* □
6. *Applying for a Job Online* □
7. *Foundation Programme (personal development course)* □
8. *Basic First Aid*
   □
9. *Occupational First Aid Level 5N1207 QQI* □
10. *Basic Gardening Course*

6. **Do you feel that any of the services on offer contributed positively to your life/ or your child's?**

(E.g. socially, emotionally or in terms of you accessing further opportunities)

Yes □ **No** □

If you answered, 'Yes' to the above question please give as much detail as possible.

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. **Do you feel that the project could offer additional services in your community?**

(E.g. afterschool clubs, additional educational courses, additional childcare spaces,)

Yes (*Please specify, below)* □ **No** *(the community's needs are being met)* □

_____
_____
_____

8. How likely would you be to recommend the service you availed of at the Project?

(Please circle answer)

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very much

9. **Please indicate if the services you availed of aided you with any of the following?**
(If none apply please move on)

Gain employment □
Access further Education □
Improved your Confidence □
Improved your Well-being □
Got to have a break (**Childcare service**) □
A chance to meet others in the area □

11. Is there anything we have not asked that you feel is important to include?

_____

_____
_____

11. Please indicate if you would be open to taking part in a short interview?

Ye □ **No** □

Thank you very much for your time!

Appendix IV

Informed Consent to Participate



ucc

Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh, Éire
University College Cork, Ireland

An Analysis of the Role of Community Development Projects in Promoting Social Inclusion: A study conducted in collaboration with Mayfield Integrated Community Development Project

RESEARCHER – XXXX

Email: 114724309@umail.ucc.ie

Telephone: xxxxxx

Research Supervisor – xxxxx

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. Prior to conducting this interview please read the following statement which may address any questions you may have. If this form is missing any further information that you may require, please contact me and I will address these immediately.

This research is focused on the services that your local community development provides. The research is seeking to identify if the services offered are meeting the needs of the local community, and to identify any possible gaps in service provision,

Voluntary Participation

Your participation within this interview is totally voluntary. It is your choice whether you decide to participate, or not, and you can withdraw from the research at any time. If at any stage any concerns are raised during the carrying out of this research both the researcher and supervisor can be contacted to address queries or complaints.

Interview Process

The process of this interview will take on average thirty-minutes in a semi-structured fashion. The interview will be recorded using a recording device Furthermore, the audio file will be transcribed verbatim and a thematic analyses approach will be taken to identify key themes which will be discussed in the dissertation.

Confidentiality

All information gathered and compiled from this interview will be anonymised. Every effort will be made as to ensure any identifying information will be removed. Your anonymity will be further assured by using pseudonyms when discussing information gathered. The storage of audio files and documents will be safely kept on a secure password-accessed hard drive. Once the study of this research is complete, the digital recordings and transcripts will be destroyed. On completion of this dissertation a copy of this study will be made available to the UCC library and you will have a right to request a copy of the finished work.

Participant Consent

The following consent is derived from the Social Research Ethics Committee of University College Cork (2015)

- The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing.
- I am participating voluntarily.
- I give permission for my interview to be audio-recorded.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time whether before it starts or while I am participating.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data within one week of the interview in which case the material will be destroyed.
- I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the dissertation and any subsequent publications if I give permission below:

On the basis of the above, I give my consent to participate in this study.

Print Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____

Appendix V



ucc

Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh, Éire
University College Cork, Ireland

The interviewer will know beforehand which service the participant is involved with.

Possible Interview Questions

1. How long have you, (your child) been coming to the service?
2. Did you find the project and its services easily accessible?
3. Can you name a specific service in the Project that you have found beneficial?
4. Has the service enabled you to access employment, or other opportunities?

   Yes / No . If yes please give details:
5. A. What are your feelings about the service? Satisfied / Unsatisfied

   B. Do you feel the Mayfield CDP its meets the community's needs?
6. Are there additional service we should consider providing to the community?
7. What has your experience been of this project?
8. Do you feel that the Project offers support to you and your community
9. (Only relevant to crèche) Do you feel that your child has benefitted from attending the Rainbow crèche?.....Please give details