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UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh



COMMUNITY RESEARCH REPORT

April 2017

Before 5 Family Centre
and
Community Academic Research Links, UCC

Community researchers:

Christine Ahern, Mary Barry, Kenneth Burns, Susan Calnan, Sheila Cosgrave, Gertrude Cotter, Maria Dobrea, Sarah Foley, Martin Galvin, Betty Golden, Ruth Hally, June Hamill, Gillian Hayes, Owen Jump, Irene Madden, Christine Moynihan, Louise O'Connor, Catherine O'Mahony, Kathleen Ryan, Ola Olwabunmi Taiwo, Triona Wallace, Clare Watson

before5
Caring for Children & Community

UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

CARL
COMMUNITY - ACADEMIC
RESEARCH LINKS
University College Cork, Ireland

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Community researchers outside the Before 5 Family Centre, Churchfield, March 2017

Introducing the partners

Before 5 Family Centre, Churchfield, Cork

The Before 5 Family Centre was founded in 1975 and is based in Churchfield, an urban area on the north side of Cork city. The service provides family support through crèche, preschool, afterschool and parent and toddler programmes. The centre also has community and adult education classes. To find out more about the Before 5 Family Centre, visit their Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/Before-5-Family-Centre-708968012515294/

Community Academic Research Links, University College Cork

Community-Academic Research Links (CARL) is an initiative in UCC that works with community and voluntary groups on research topics identified by the community. To find out more about CARL, the groups CARL have worked with and to read a selection of completed research reports, visit the CARL website: http://carl.ucc.ie.

For this partnership, the Before 5 Family Centre linked with seven PhD students and staff on an elective module on community-based participatory research (PG6025) in UCC. All the resources used in this module are openly available and can be downloaded from this page: www.ucc.ie/en/scishop/resources/module/ This module and partnership was funded as part of a European Commission study, EnRRICH, grant number 665759.

How to reference this report

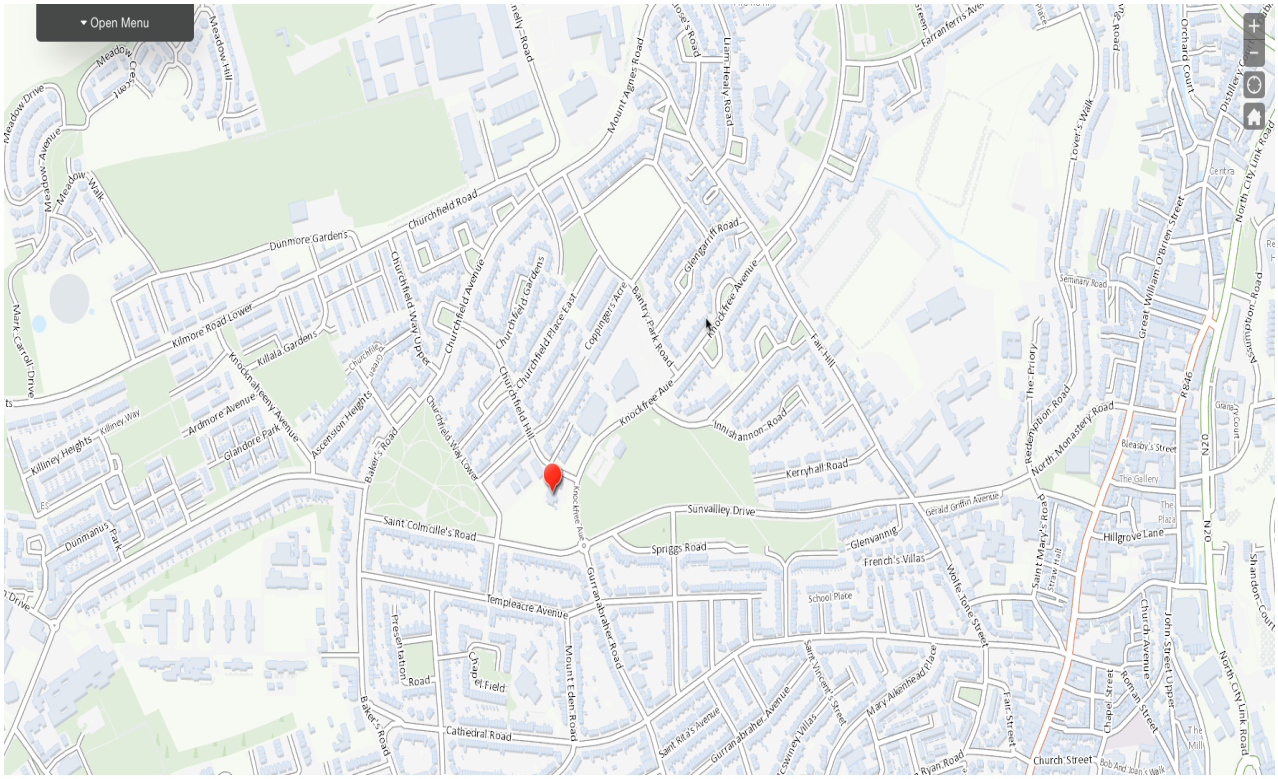
> Before 5 Family Centre and Community Academic Research Links (2017) "Before 5 Family Centre Community Research Report", Before 5 Family Centre / Community Academic Research Links, University College Cork, Ireland.

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Introducing Churchfield

Churchfield Community

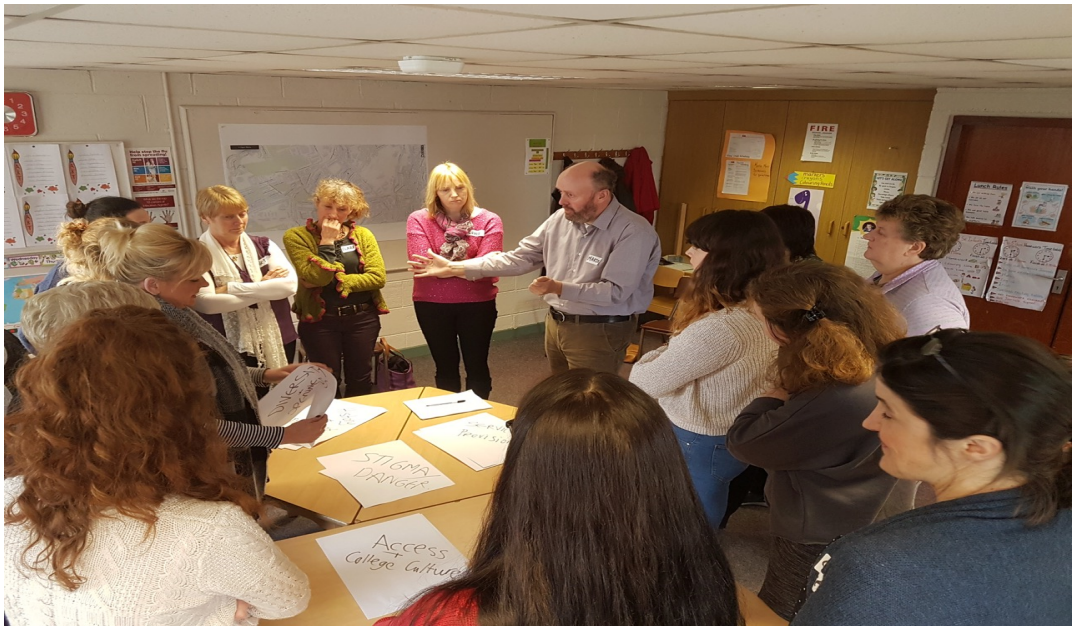
Churchfield and Gurranabraher are situated on the north side of Cork City. The areas are traditional working class areas with a high density of social housing. The Churchfield and Gurranabraher area was one of the first and largest areas developed by the cork city council in the 1940's. The red dot, denotes the location of the Before 5 Family Centre Building. ETC ETC.



Background to the partnership

Introduction

Community and voluntary groups are an essential part of the fabric of society. When a local need is identified, residents and community members setup local community services to meet those needs. Universities and their staff and students, have an important role to play in supporting community groups to fulfil their mission, particularly groups that are encountering challenges, such as funding or organisational difficulties. One of the ways universities can support community groups is to partner with them on research projects.



What were we trying to find out?

Before 5 were interested in exploring the current relevance of their service to families and community members in Churchfield, and to plan the future direction of their work. Before 5 wanted to create an exploratory space to collaborate with past and current users of their service to:

a) discuss what the Before 5 service has contributed to Churchfield;
b) to reimagine Before 5's place and mission within the community;
c) to generate new ideas for strengthening the services of Before 5, and
d) to create a strong, active community of local past and current members interested in pursuing new ideas.

This report is a short summary of the participatory research scoping and research design process that occurred throughout this partnership. Ethical approval was provided by the Social Research Ethics Committee at University College Cork.

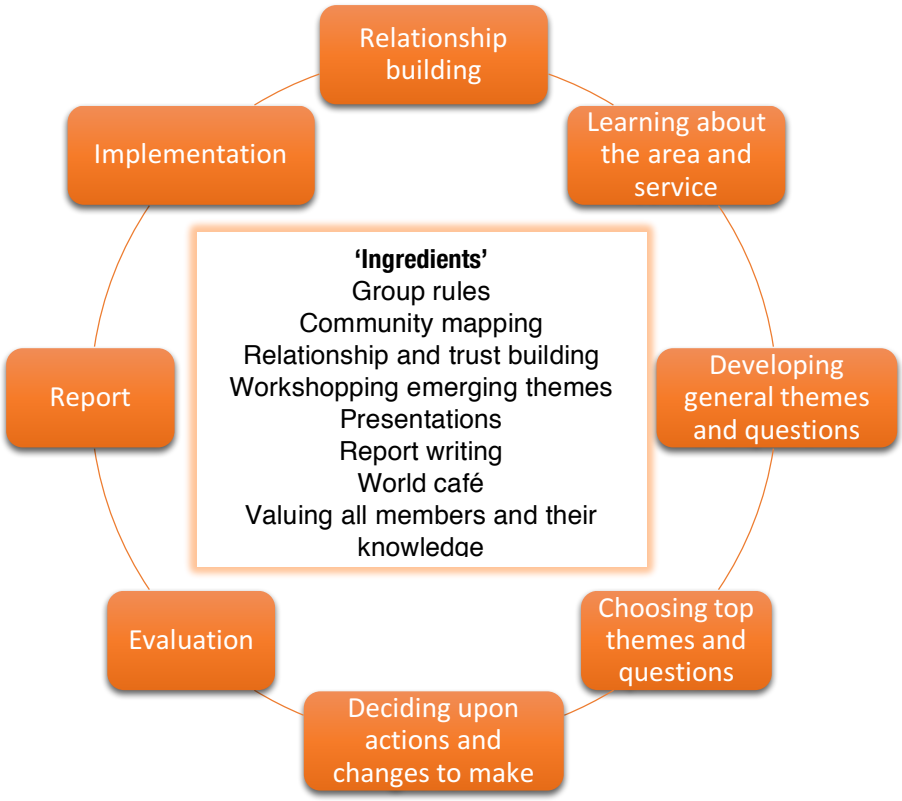
Research process

What were our questions?

The process began with no set research questions. Before 5 set the broad objectives for the partnership, which were to understand Before 5's place in the community and how Before 5 could continue to benefit its community members. There were no pre-set research puzzles to answer. The process was about generating questions and ideas from community participants, through harnessing the collective and individual knowledge and experiences of community members with the support of university staff and students.

Process

In UCC, students on the PG6025 module were learning about the theory and principles of community-based participatory research. Four, full-morning sessions took place in the Before 5 centre. Participants included community members with a current or past involvement with Before 5 and the module participants (comprised of 7 students and 3 staff members). One ending and review session was held at the university on the last day of the module. Through purposeful exercises such as pair-and-share, and a chicken-and-egg story illustration, the group got to know each other and worked towards establishing an environment of trust and respect. As we had no set questions and the process was participatory, some of this time was spent making sense of, and discussing, what the process was about. Community mapping, where participants recorded their stories and experiences of the locality on paper, was a key starting point in establishing topics and questions of importance to Before 5 community members. This final report is a short summary of the partnership's process and the emerging future actions. The key ingredients of the research scoping process were:

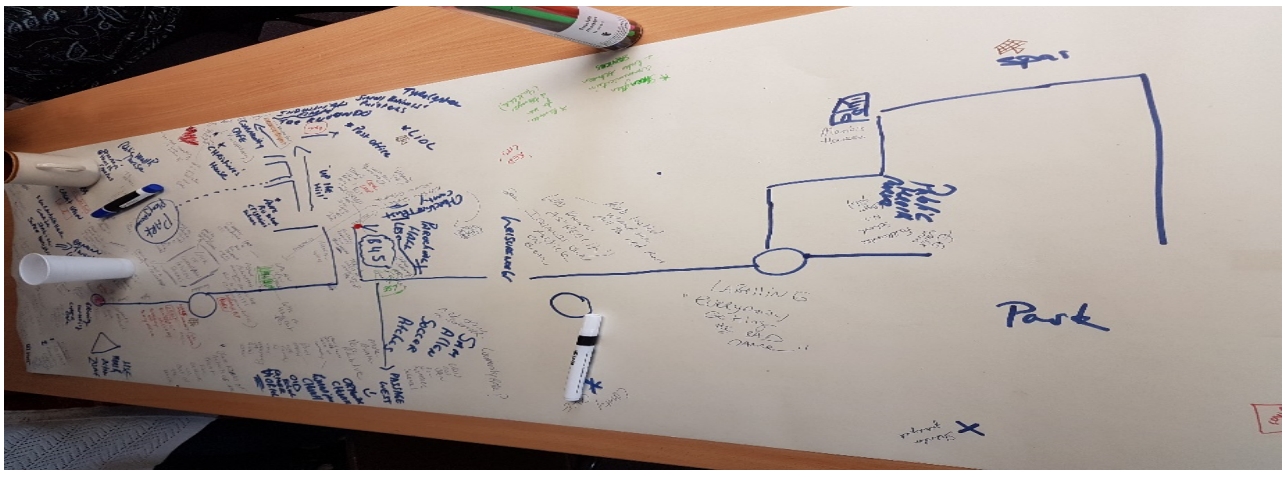


Emerging themes



Getting to know the area and Before 5's place in the community

Community mapping is a method to explore how different people view and understand their local environment. Community mapping can highlight the relationships between different elements in a locality and associated challenges and opportunities. The community mapping process helped the university module participants to get to know community members, their community, including unique stories about the history of the area and about key services. It also helped participants to own the wealth of knowledge they possessed about their area, its history, services and values.



One of the four community maps created

From community maps to themes and questions of importance

The community mapping process led to the generation of three overarching themes which were further developed into three distinct groups in the third and fourth sessions. These overarching topics were:

1. Before 5: Relevance and Importance in the Community
2. Before 5 Communication and Community
3. Building Links with UCC and Educational Institutions

As the topics were teased out, the conversations began to move towards identifying actions necessary to initiated and implement the feasible, but also the 'ambitious' ideas. A series of key actions for the future were identified. The appendix below presents a collection of notes taken by UCC students during visits 3 and 4, which capture the developing discussions and the corresponding actions from each group. The notes are intentionally left in their original format and language, without additional editing and analysis to fully represent the issues arising from the research scoping exercise.

The newly-established Before 5 steering group, developed as a result of the partnership, will further analyse, develop and implement the rich ideas listed above. Some of the ideas may also become student community-based research (CARL) projects in the coming academic year and some may be local actions for implementation by the community steering group.



Brainstorming ideas at Before 5

Conclusion

Community-based participatory research projects can take many directions and can have several different outcomes. As illustrated above, the community-based participatory research partnership between UCC and Before 5 resulted in three core topics or ideas which were of importance to Before 5 community members. Importantly, the partnership provided a valuable platform for identifying and debating the most immediate threats and opportunities facing Before 5 centre. The community researchers brought their heads together to debate and brain-storm key ideas and planned routes towards implementing these key ideas. Many of the additional ideas and possible projects are documented in Appendix B.

As the partnership drew to a close, there were areas where it was evident how UCC could continue to support Before 5, for example, through making introductions to staff in UCC+. Overall, participants from the Before 5 Family Centre were independently organising and directing many of the ideas developed throughout the partnership. Strong connections were made between UCC, CARL and the Before 5 centre. While the module and this particular partnership has come to an end, the module coordinators and CARL staff will continue to liaise with Before 5. This report serves as a record of the partnership, in particular, the wide range of ideas generated and the energy created by coming together to exchange knowledge and experiences.



Final session at UCC with community members and students

Appendix: Emerging themes, workshop notes and possible action plans

Topic Before 5 - Relevance and importance within the community

Discussion A, 1st March

Sub-themes

Ownership

Before people used to come in and have a cup of tea. You can still have tea. Simple solution is to advertise "come and have a cup of tea". We could do a coffee morning once a month. Just simple, no pressure. A drop in once a month. Have a chat. We can't have everyone coming in and out every day but once a month might work. It would be good to build a regular group. Maybe they could be champions of BEFORE 5. I'd like if we had a group of champions. It could be a core group.

We could put old photos up to start the ball rolling. It might help to get the elderly involved too. They might have photos. They would know people in the photos. The group could chat about the photos and history of the place.

History is such a big part of it.

Blast from the past. We can publicise it. If we advertise in the newsletter in the church some of the elderly might see it there too. We want it to be community owned.

What can UCC do?

I think they can call to schools, especially sixth class.
history: we have an oral history department in UCC. We could write up some of the history. A UCC CARL student could do it as a project.
Maria: I'd love to know of the past of the place
Yes and you are building your own history too.
I remember the house behind me with farmer's land. A lot of the stories are not written down and it would be good to share them with the younger generation. This would build ownership as well.
Betty: there would be a sense of pride. I love this idea. June: I'd love to have a student working on that. Oral history.

Funding

We are in danger of disappearing: We can't have that.
Funding is a huge problem. I am talking about thousands. Not small amounts.
It's important to keep going with the smaller local fundraising drives as well ...it all helps but as well as that it brings people along and gets them engaged and it gives the idea of ownership.
But on the bigger picture…how do we engage…We can type letters and ask people in the area to sign them. Let's get a petition team together.
As part of the Early Years Alliance we met with politicians, they promised to work across party. We want to ask, "what have you done since then"?
We could ask the parents coming in to help and could go door to door with a "save the centre" petition.
In the past Sr. Renee would call a politician and that was it. Now things have changed. You need to prove everything. Where is the evidence? Of the value of your work?

UCC could help us to build an evidence based case. EG an Early Childhood Studies student.

There isn't as much of a sense of a community pride though. People are more standoffish. Elderly are more isolated.
The Church is breaking down. People need a drop in. We want people who never dropped in before. 80 or 90 could become 300 and that would rattle local politicians.
Younger mothers might do the Facebook work.
Word of mouth is important. And a leaflet to older people.

Formation of Board/Steering Group

Is there a board? Do they get tasks to do?
June noted that the board dissolved because Before5 became a company limited by guarantee
Boards can become a closed shop, so we need to be careful that the 'board' or steering group is comprised of community members/ stakeholders in the Before 5 Centre.

We need a steering group. We need to bring new people in. Steering group made up of interested parties could help take some of the pressure/responsibility from management and distribute to service users and families who are interested in the future direction of Before 5.

Topic Before 5 - Relevance and importance within the community

Discussion B, 8th March 2017

Action 1: Establish a New Parents' Committee

Who?	What?	Where?	When?	How?	Why?
June and steering group from community members who participated in UCC collaboration group	Establish a new parents' committee at BEFORE 5 One immediate action is a fundraiser for community member and helping to action the decisions outlined below	Before 5	March 2017 Meet initially every two weeks. Then decide if once a month or every two weeks	Members of planning group volunteering to participate and encourage other new members to join	To encourage ownership of BEFORE 5 by the community. To provide ongoing support to BEFORE 5 with steering of conversations.



Before 5 PARENTS COMMITTEE

Action 2: Organise a Petition for Local Politicians to Increase Funding

Who?	What?	Where?	When?	How?	Why?
June and members of the new parents' committee Asking for help from: 1. Members of local community 2. Current BEFORE 5 parents 3. New BEFORE 5 parents from September 4. Adult classes	Write a letter of petition to local politicians with view to asking members of the community and BEFORE 5 parents to sign it and send to local politicians.	Door to door within the local community. With parents in BEFORE 5.	March – June and ongoing thereafter	Door to door. Begin by asking 10 to 15 to sign the petition and ask them to ask 4 or 5 more and continue to increase numbers. Advertise social media and newsletter.	To ask for funding for the BEFORE 5 Centre. Highlight funding crisis. Remind politicians of promises they made. Ensure elected representatives are accountable to their voters.







PETITON

Action 3: Organise a Monthly Coffee Morning

Who?	What?	Where?	When?	How?	Why?
June and members of new parents' committee Inviting everyone: 1. BEFORE 5 parents especially new parents from September 3. Members of general community 4. Members of adult classes	Set up a "drop-in" coffee morning – monthly. Same day every month. Very informal chat, no pressure. One early session will use photos which people can talk about, from the "old days". Ask older people to bring photos. Might lead to sharing of skills e.g. passing on of craft skills.	The Big Room	From September when new parents come on-board.	Personally invite new parents Let community know while doing petition Ask the "call to older persons" group to help to ask the older population Advertise social media and newsletter	To ask for funding for the BEFORE 5 Centre. Highlight funding crisis. Remind politicians of promises they made. Ensure elected representatives are accountable to their voters.



Before 5 COFFEE MORNING

Action 4: Develop an Oral History Project

Who?	What?	Where?	When?	How?	Why?
June and members of new parents' committee In collaboration with Community-Academic Research Links (CARL) at UCC – possibly a student next year. Before 5 and CARL coordinator Martin / Will / Anna	Develop a project which includes	In Churchfield	Planning to happen over the Summer 2017 with a view to starting the project during the academic year 2017-2018	Collaborate with UCC Format to be decided but plan is to collect stories from community about the local area and create a project, book, archive or similar.	To instil a sense of pride in Churchfield. To highlight the rich history and strong sense of place in Churchfield

"Don't forget the RED CITY"!

Why? "Because we don't want to lose all the great stories and the history of Churchfield"



Topic B: Before 5 Communication and Community

Discussion A, 1st March 2017

Sub-themes

- Network links to services in area
- Communication
- Churchfield overlooked for services (more 'up the hill')
- Spread the resources
- Role of church
- Services for men
- Bereavement support/suicide among young men
- Youth needs
- Few hang-out places for teens
- Elderly people
- More local resident-led initiatives in past
- Despite bonds, isolation felt by some
- Stigma/negative views of area
- Danger and safety in the area

Actions

Research

- Carry out research to identify services already in the area, creating a directory of services
- Identify what additional services community members would like to see introduced, e.g. by conducting a door-to-door survey in community
- Carry out research on service gaps regarding particular groups – men, youth, elderly
- Maintain links with UCC if particular research needs arise

Communications plan

- Set up a communications team within Before 5, or appoint a dedicated communications officer (investigate possibility of funding for), to develop a communications plan for the area
- Create a central online information resource on services in the area and on ongoing events, e.g. dedicated Facebook page for Churchfield area (see e.g. 'I love Terenure' Facebook page) or website
- Also create an offline central information point, e.g. information board in Before 5 or local post office (or other strategic places in community)
- Organise a leaflet drop to houses
- Link up with Knocknaheeny to get advice on communications plan and to see what they have done
- Invite community to Before 5 and take their contact details, with a view to contacting them on an ongoing basis (esp. via texting) on services and activities at the centre

Create positive image

- Make a YouTube documentary on the area, highlighting its positive and unique aspects, local history, etc.
- Invite *Nationwide* (RTÉ television) to do a piece highlighting the positive aspects of the area and to counteract negative portrayals in media
- Create links between old and young people in the area, e.g. a show and tell project to give younger people a sense of the history of their area

Discussion B, 8th March 2017

Actions

Set up

- Set up a dedicated research & communications group at BEFORE 5 comprising Tríona and Christine (who will recruit additional members)
- Fundraise for laptop to be used solely by this group
- Allocate a specific time each week for this group to meet (Wednesday mornings suggested as room at BEFORE 5 is free then for meetings)
- Look into possibility of funding or CE scheme for a communications officer (although office space is an issue so this may not be possible)

Research

- Put together or locate an already existing directory of services
- Link up with Community Development Officers in the area – they are a key source of knowledge and can help in identifying services needed
- Rather than door-to-door survey, set up focus groups to get a sense of what services are needed (e.g. focus groups for youth, elderly, men) – again CDOs could help here in identifying people or groups

Communications

- Develop and maximise BEFORE 5 Facebook page; also set up Twitter account – the research and communications group will have responsibility for this, updating at least once a week (rather than every few weeks)
- Lobby politicians using social media, e.g. Twitter feeds
- For YouTube video, contact North Cork Film-making and Employment Skills Project with a view to shooting a video for the area (or member of the BEFORE 5 group could attend one of their film production courses to develop production skills)

Topic C: Building links with UCC and Educational Institutions

Discussion A, 1st March 2017

Sub-themes

Making Links - parents of those in BEFORE 5 with adult education

- Setting expectations
- Normalising college
- Positive role models from area/ former BEFORE 5 students- could feature them on Facebook or have them come in to talk at an open night
- Growing ambition from grassroots

Parent's Nights- Adult education night

- Before 5 as a place to host continuing education for adults in the local area
- Might lead to financial help from Fás, CIT, UCC, Cork College of Commerce, FETAC

Linking to UCC+

- Regular activity - different UCC students and groups

Summer camps

- Targeting groups, e.g. boy's clubs

Communication of this information

- Online
- Posters
- Profiles
- Before 5 having information to give out, e.g. leaflets or a directory

Discussion B, 8th March 2017

Actions

Connections

The steering committee will reach out and invite the UCC+ team to an initial meeting as Before 5.
Steering group to link in with Siobhan O'Sullivan of Learning Neighbourhoods.

Information Sessions

- Hosting information sessions for families at before 5.
- Invite UCC+ to talk to parents of Before 5 on practical advice to pursue adult education.
  Possibility of holding an open night 3-4 times a year to engage with higher education institutes and adult learners.
- Possibility of Before 5 providing care to children of parents returning to education?
- Find out more info on the Broad Entry Cert. in women's studies (community learning programme) from Knocknaheeny to see if it could be possible here.

Positive Role models

Graduate of Before 5 profiles. Members of the community who have gone on to further education.