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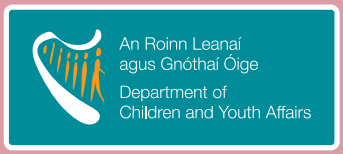

Children's Voices in Housing Estate Regeneration

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH AFFAIRS
2015

Children's Voices in Housing Estate Regeneration

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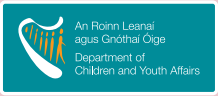

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Contents

Acknowledgements iv

About the authors v

Executive Summary 1

Introduction 5

1. Children's rights and participation 7
   - 1.1 Children's rights 8
   - 1.2 Children and participation in urban neighbourhoods 11

2. Regeneration and social housing 15
   - 2.1 An overview of social housing in Ireland 16
   - 2.2 Regeneration as a policy response 17
   - 2.3 The Case Study Estate: Regeneration in Knocknaheeny Estate, Cork City 24

3. Methods 27
   - 3.1 Informed consent 29
   - 3.2 Focus Group methodology 30
   - 3.3 Creative methodologies 32
   - 3.4 Analytical framework 33

4. Findings 35
   - 4.1 Profile of participants 36
   - 4.2 Focus groups: 6-8 year-olds 36
   - 4.3 Focus groups: 9-13 year-olds 41
   - 4.4 Focus groups: 15-17 year-olds 50
   - 4.5 Focus groups: 17-19 year-olds 60
   - 4.6 Rap workshops: 11-year-olds and 14-17 year-olds 66
   - 4.7 Summary of findings of Focus Groups and Raps 78

5. Conclusions and Recommendations 81
   - 5.1 Conclusions 82
   - 5.2 Recommendations 84
   - 5.3 Final remarks 86

References 87

Appendices
   - Appendix 1: Demographic and socio-economic profile of Knocknaheeny 94
   - Appendix 2: Information leaflets on research project 98
   - Appendix 3: Consent form 102
   - Appendix 4: Certificate of Participation 103
   - Appendix 5: 'The Wheel' Tables 104
   - Appendix 6: Profile of local authority housing in Ireland 117

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Executive Summary

Background

The theme of this research is children's participation in housing estate regeneration. Estate regeneration can affect children's lives in terms of their living conditions and environmental surroundings, and their sense of safety, belonging, place, identity and community. However, children's voices are seldom heard in regeneration programmes. This research represents a first step in hearing the voices of children and young people and presents their views in relation to a major regeneration programme currently underway in the Knocknaheeny Housing Estate on the Northside of Cork City.

Methods

The research methodology used was a rights-based approach entailing a range of qualitative and creative methods, including focus group activities and discussions, rap, photography and art. These methods ascertained children and young people's views and experiences on what they like and do not like about their area, what they think is good and bad, and what they think should be changed. Ten focus groups involving 78 children and young people were held over the spring and summer of 2013.

Key findings

Children and young people would like regeneration to achieve renewal of their area, a safer neighbourhood, a cleaner environment, a better reputation for the estate, and improved life chances and opportunities by:

- Enhancing community and personal safety through more effective community policing and housing management, addressing problems such as:
  - anti-social behaviour and disruptive tenants;
  - public drinking;
  - drug dealing;
  - violence and intimidation.
- Improving existing amenities and the local environment through:
  - new and better quality houses;
  - providing effective refuse collection and litter removal;
  - maintaining green areas and open spaces;
  - improving recreation, sports and leisure amenities;
  - considering the impact on young people when lanes are closed in response to residents' petitions;
  - managing through-traffic and road safety;
  - providing new amenities to reflect their current interests;
  - improving bus services to the area and connectivity with the wider city.
- Providing educational and employment opportunities through:
  - training, apprenticeships and employment in the regeneration programme;
  - promoting commercial and retail investment in the local economy.

They also highlight some of the disruptive impacts of regeneration in terms of:

- losing their homes due to demolition;
- re-location of families and friends to addresses outside of the estate;
- the associated impact on their social networks, friendships and family connections.

All of the participants want to be involved in the decision-making around regeneration. The older groups, however, are more cynical about having an influence and are critical of the omission of children and young people's voices.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The research highlights the importance of actively listening to the voices of children and young people and enabling their capacity as agents to influence change. There are three main sets of recommendations arising from this research relating to:

- regeneration guidelines;
- estate management;
- capacity-building.

Regeneration guidelines

There are current best practice guidelines in relation to estate regeneration issued by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG).

Policy conclusions	Policy recommendations
(1) The guidelines outline a range of approaches and practical steps by which the views of residents on regeneration can be elicited, but stipulate that local authorities consult with children and young people only in a supplementary manner when formulating regeneration applications.	(1) In advance of making applications for regeneration funding to central government, local authorities as part of their community consultation responsibilities should be obliged to establish young person consultative panels to ensure the opinions of children and young people are reflected in regeneration plans.
(2) The regeneration guidelines advocate the ongoing involvement of residents in estate regeneration boards and the dissemination of information between local authority staff and residents at implementation stage. However, children and young people are not necessarily acknowledged as active participants in this process in their own right.	(2) The guidelines on regeneration should be amended to include an explicit requirement for local authorities to demonstrate how children and young people are included in the implementation stage of regeneration programmes so that their views on progress are incorporated on an ongoing basis and plans can be altered accordingly.

Estate management

There are some broader outcomes relating to estate management arising from this research, which also apply to non-regeneration estates.

Policy conclusions	Policy recommendations
Effective estate management is evident in Knocknaheeny through the role of Tenant Liaison and Estate Management Officers. However, their remit does not extend to involving children and young people despite the demographic profile of the area.	To promote good estate management practice, including in estates where regeneration is not being undertaken, consultation mechanisms with children and young people should be devised and these should be adopted by local authorities and voluntary social landlords.

Capacity-building

The research found that there is a knowledge and skills gap within the local authority sector in relation to engaging with children and young people.

Policy conclusions	Policy recommendations
(1) The research found that there was inadequate information flow between the local authority and young people on what the regeneration programme entailed.	(1) Information should be developed in an appropriate form for dissemination to children and young people in consultation with schools, youth groups, youth workers and others who work with young people.
(2) The ongoing work of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) and other bodies is testament to the progress made to date on children's rights in matters of public policy in Ireland. However, at an operational level in the delivery of services by local authorities and public bodies, the recognition of children and young people as rights-holders is incomplete. The absence of a rights discourse does not imply lack of commitment, but rather a lack of 'know-how'.	(2) It is recommended that a practical toolkit be developed by the DCYA and DECLG based on the methods used in this research to guide local authority staff and other relevant parties on how to engage, consult and incorporate the views of children and young people in regeneration programmes. The toolkit could form an element of a wider education and training programme about children and young people's rights and involvement in public administration, and be promoted as part of continuing professional development (CPD) workshops and career development.

Introduction

The theme of this research is children's participation in housing estate regeneration. Estate regeneration can affect children's lives in terms of their living conditions and environmental surroundings, and their sense of safety, belonging, place, identity and community. However, children's voices are seldom heard in regeneration programmes, even though the local built environment is where children spend most of their time and changes to it can have profound and long-lasting effects on their lives.

This research aims to give a voice to children and young people on issues that affect the spaces where they live, play, are educated, socialise and grow up, especially in situations where those spaces are the subject of major change. The objectives of the research are:

- to review the literature on housing estate regeneration from a children's rights perspective;
- to document children and young people's perspectives of an ongoing large-scale regeneration scheme in Cork City;
- to identify the barriers to achieving meaningful participation by children and young people in housing estate regeneration;
- to ensure the effective dissemination of the key research findings to children and young people, parents and guardians, and statutory and non-statutory parties with a view to informing policy.

The research starts from the premise that consultation and participation with children in regeneration programmes is not just desirable but essential in order to achieve good outcomes. It is also informed by the view that participation is the right of all citizens, but especially those who live in areas of socio-economic disadvantage which are frequently the subject of major public policy interventions, such as estate regeneration programmes.

Who participates, who is consulted and the methods by which this is undertaken is also of crucial importance. It is the contention of this research that eliciting the opinions of adults, while a necessary and important element of good practice in its own right, does not overcome the need to hear the views of children and young people. It is frequently assumed that if parents or adults are asked for their opinion, those of children are covered as well. However, as the findings of this study show, children and young people have distinctive and particular views, which may run counter to the conventional wisdom of adults in terms of how they see and interpret their community and locality.

Following from this is the importance of using appropriate methods to engage children and young people in ways that are meaningful and attractive to them. This often challenges public bodies, such as local authorities and professionals like regeneration officials and housing managers, to devise innovative techniques and data-gathering methods. Effective participation needs to be based on meaningful engagement with the process from an early stage to embed the concerns, opinions and suggestions of the people most affected by changes to their community. Techniques drawn from community development practice can facilitate effective participatory planning.

Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) highlights the importance of affording children the right to express their views on matters affecting them. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009) has asserted that '*the right of all children to be heard and taken seriously constitutes one of the fundamental values of the convention*'. Respecting children as active subjects of rights means they should be afforded due recognition in terms of the validity and relevance of their experiences and views in contributing to governmental processes.

This research project takes the values espoused by Article 12 as its starting point and its objective is to establish the views of children and young people in relation to a major regeneration programme currently underway in a large social housing estate on the Northside of Cork City. This regeneration programme (details of which are presented in Chapter 2 of this report) is being undertaken by the primary social housing landlord in the area (i.e. Cork City Council) in the Knocknaheeny Estate and will entail four phases over a 10-year period, between 2012 and 2022. The total cost of the regeneration is over €100 million and entails physical, environmental and socio-economic strands involving house demolition and rebuilding, urban design and public space interventions, and social and economic initiatives.

1. Children's rights and participation

1.1 Children's rights

1.1.1 Evolution of children's rights

The meaning of childhood has changed over time (Aries, 1973; de Mause, 1976) affecting the evolution of children's rights and social policy interventions. Children were viewed as property until the mid-19th century, their labour contributing to the overall needs of the household (Earls, 2011). During the 19th century, childhood began to be conceived as a time of innocence and of becoming, with an increasing emphasis on children's sentimental value. The late 19th and early 20th centuries have been termed the child-saving era, during which State, private and religious institutions aimed to protect and secure the health and welfare of children, resulting in child labour reform, compulsory education and the development of a juvenile Courts system (Hart, 1991; Earls, 2011). These interventions were informed by a child-as-redeemer perspective, i.e. children are the resources of the future and need to be made into competent adults who contribute to society. From the mid- to late 20th century, James and Prout (1997) have identified a shift towards valuing the child's existing rather than potential person status, and to construing children as active in the construction of their own lives, not merely passive subjects of others' care.

However, this positive progressive picture belies the ambiguous construction of childhood. Children have been, and continue to be, simultaneously positioned as both vulnerable and irresponsible (James, 2011). The agency and autonomy of children are often situated in terms of their wrong-doing, not their contribution (*ibid*, p. 176). From this perspective, children and young people are seen as a risk or threat to society, in need of control and regulation. These perspectives garner support from moral panics about youth and teenage culture, which is presented as delinquent, anti-social, subversive and threatening (Powell *et al*, 2012), youth as problems-to-be-solved (Hart, 1991).

In Ireland, the Industrial Schools system positioned children as objects of discipline rather than objects of concern, or more importantly subjects of rights. Indeed, Walsh (2013) has argued that Ireland did not follow the trajectory of other countries in terms of children's rights until much later: although the child protection system that developed through the 1880s to 1930s[1] was influenced by the ISPCC and Victorian ideals of child-saving, a focus on disciplining children was the result. The moral framework in Ireland, heavily dominated by religious doctrine, depicted children as immoral and corrupt, needing moral rehabilitation. It was not until the 1970s that the notion of the child as an object of discipline began to shift. Media coverage from the 1980s onwards has exposed child sexual and physical abuse in State and religious care (including the seminal 1999 documentary 'States of Fear'), precipitating a crisis of trust in these bodies (Powell *et al*, 2012) and contributing to changes in child care practice, legislation and public opinion.[2] Given the exposure of the abuse scandals in residential and care homes and religious institutions, it has been argued that the protection of children may best be achieved by hearing their voice and respecting their concerns and expressions of their own welfare (Powell *et al*, 2012; Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2010).

For the past 30 years in the literature on children's rights, there has been a debate on whether children should be granted full self-determination rights as adults have (the child liberationist view) or whether children should be shielded from harm with limited rights on the basis of capacity and maturity (the child protectionist view). Child liberationists (such as Holt and Archard) have been critiqued for neglecting children's dependency, their vulnerability to adult exploitation and the development of competencies as they grow. However, child protectionists have also been critiqued on the basis that their caretaker thesis relegates children to passive objects of care who are vulnerable to the repressive use of power by adults (Powell *et al*, 2012).

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[1] The earliest legislation in Ireland was in 1889 when the Cruelty to Children Act was passed. This was followed by further legislation in 1894, 1904 and two Acts in 1908.

[2] The 1991 Child Care Act brought child protection practice in line with welfarist ideology. Most recently, the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse Act 2000 led to the Ryan Report being published in 2009.

1.1.2 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is seen as integrating the two perspectives of child liberation and child protection, and as striking a balance between protection and freedom. It was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 20 November 1989 after a decade spent drafting it (Earls, 2011) and entered into force on 2 September 1990.[3] It recognises that children do depend on adults for care and protection, but emphasises that children should also have a role in the governance of their own lives. It is guided by what Hammarberg (1990) calls the 'three Ps', dividing the 41 substantive rights in the Convention into three main categories: Protection, Provision and Participation rights.

The UNCRC states that children are entitled to special care and assistance and that the best interests of the child should be the primary consideration in all public and private actions concerning children. Every country has ratified the Convention except the USA and Somalia; Ireland did so in 1992. Ratification formally binds a government to meet the obligations and responsibilities espoused in the Convention. It also subjects the government to oversight by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. This Committee monitors the interpretation and implementation of the UNCRC and conducts a review process every 5 years with each ratifying country. Ireland has submitted three progress reports to date (NCO, 1996 and 2005; DCYA, 2013a).

1.1.3 Participation in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

It is Article 12 that is most interesting for the purposes of this research project because it grants children the right to express their views in all matters affecting them, as follows:

> '1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
> 2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.'

Participatory rights in the UNCRC are of special importance. While other Articles assert participation rights (in particular Article 13, Article 14, Article 15 and Article 17), the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has identified Article 12 as a special principle, one that also pertains to other UNCRC Articles. The UN Committee's General Comment No. 12 (2009) on *The right of the child to be heard* states the following:

> 'The right of all children to be heard and taken seriously constitutes one of the fundamental values of the Convention. The Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee) has identified article 12 as one of the four general principles of the Convention, the others being the right to non-discrimination, the right to life and development, and the primary consideration of the child's best interests, which highlights the fact that this article establishes not only a right in itself, but should also be considered in the interpretation and implementation of all other rights.'

Participation rights are seen as the most radical part of the UNCRC because they give substance to the agency and capabilities of children, not just focusing on their dependency and vulnerability (Earls, 2011). Some commentators argue that this could lead to significant change for the status of children in society, whereby the best interests of the child is decided through involvement of the child. This goes beyond a narrow legalism (where children can

[3] The UNCRC has also been adopted and included in other Human Rights Conventions, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Article 24) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 7).

participate in care and legal proceedings) towards also hearing children's voices in wider community and political matters, what Keane (2008, p. 16) calls '*the age of the child citizen*'. Lundy (2007) draws attention to the importance of the phrase '*all matters affecting the child*', which necessitates policy-makers considering what affects children and asking children themselves what matters affect them.

Central to citizenship is the capacity to voice one's opinions and express needs, and to have these taken into account (Earls, 2011). Child participation ensures that children's best interests are considered at all points by engaging children themselves in defining what this means. Thus, efforts must be made to engage children as citizens – to let them speak for themselves, be active agents of change, and not always be spoken for by others such as their parents/carers, teachers, etc.

Earls (2011, p. 15) argues that child rights are '*the last station along the human rights succession*' and one of the most important because of that period of life being one of openness, change and enthusiasm. The debate about children's citizenship has moved from the subordination of children (e.g. Marshall, 1950, who argued that children should be viewed as citizens *in potential* only) to their recognition (James, 2011). The deficit model of childhood, whereby children are viewed as having limited competencies and as being incomplete in comparison to the adults they will become, is being challenged. Increasingly, children are seen in terms of what they already contribute in the present as children, not future-oriented constructions of the contribution they will make as adult workers (Lister, 2007).

Considering children as competent people who are encouraged to participate in society does not mean disregarding the different capacities children have because of their age and maturity. For example, Lister (2007) proposes a model of '*differentiated citizenship*' for children, acknowledging their different capacities and their need for special protection while enabling participation. Similarly, James *et al* (2008, p. 87) propose '*a new model of citizenship that can acknowledge and accommodate the difference between a child and an adult, rather than make it the basis for discrimination and exclusion*'. The UNCRC propounds a similar view by taking into account the age and maturity of the child. Such participatory citizenship can enable children to develop confidence and competencies in the public sphere and is essential to young people's integration, personal development, empowerment and material well-being (Powell *et al*, 2012).

Child citizenship does not necessarily mean children need to vote (although there are arguments for reducing the voting age to 16, as the Irish Constitutional Convention has considered), but that their perspectives and preferences are heard meaningfully. Hart's (1992) Ladder of Child Participation provides a typology that moves in 8 steps from tokenistic or manipulative mechanisms to meaningful engagement. The primary aim is shared decision-making, whereby young people are treated as equal and valued partners in their communities and in society at large (Driskell, 2002).

Lundy (2007) elaborates on Article 12 of the UNCRC by devising four elements to realise its principles: space, voice, audience and influence. In terms of space, children must be given the opportunity to express their views in a safe and inclusive space. States must take proactive steps to invite and encourage children's input '*rather than simply acting as a recipient of views if children happen to give them*' (Lundy, 2007, p. 934), as is currently the case in Irish planning law (*see Chapter 2*). Lundy argues that children's right to a voice must be facilitated by child-friendly information, time to understand the issues that affect them and fun activities to elicit their views. In accordance with the UNCRC, children's views must be given due weight, which requires authorities to listen actively, including to non-verbal cues, and demonstrate respect for the opinions of children. There is thus a requirement for appropriate training for those who are the audience for children's perspectives, such as public bodies.

Acknowledging the influence of children's voices is fundamental to ensuring their participation is meaningful and effective. Tokenistic participation that raises expectations of influence is damaging and Lundy (2007) argues that safeguards need to be in place to ensure that children's voices when elicited are not subsequently ignored. The power differentials between adults and children must be acknowledged and the entitlements of children must be at the centre of the deliberative process. Beyond this, according to Percy-Smith and Thomas (2010, p. 357), '*children and young people's participation cannot be understood in isolation from the cultural, social and political contexts in which it occurs*'. This is of particular importance in relation to children from disadvantaged communities, who often experience marginalisation and disempowerment.

1.2 Children and participation in urban neighbourhoods

A general principle informing consultations between local authorities and communities has been that they occur with adults since adults are taken as representing the views of the community at large, including those of children. However, as outlined above, there is a growing body of literature that challenges this view and argues that children's perspectives differ from those of adults and that children have a right to articulate these perspectives and have them taken into account in their own right.

According to Matthews (2003), unlike other marginalised groups children are often not in a position to enter into dialogue with adults about their community needs and concerns and to date there has been little recognition in planning discourse of children's participation in their own right. Horelli (1998) has commented on the paucity of literature on children's participation, while Chawla (1997) has noted the marginalisation of children from the decision-making process. Speak (2000) has argued that while there has been some very limited acceptance of children in areas such as urban design and the environment (*see also* Ward, 1990; Simpson, 1997), there is a need to develop a new concept of children as agents at all levels in urban neighbourhoods. Philips (2004, p. 168) has argued that children are excluded from participation in decision-making on two grounds: '*Their social class (euphemized as "low educational attainment") is deemed to leave them "unskilled" to make decisions; their generational position as "human becomings" (rationalized through the child development paradigm) is deemed to leave them "unready" to make decisions.*' At a global level, UNICEF (2012) has also noted with concern the absence of children from urban planning and the dire consequences this can have for them in terms of their health and in many cases their ability to survive, especially in circumstances where natural disasters, conflict and unrest impact on urban living conditions.

Fitzpatrick *et al* (2000), speaking from a UK perspective, have argued that only very recently have children emerged as a focus of urban regeneration programmes and suggest that there are three main reasons for this: firstly, a recognition of the special disadvantage of young people in deprived areas; secondly, the problems perceived to be caused by young people in these areas; and thirdly, an increasing interest in extending community participation to include young people as what Fitzpatrick *et al* term '*citizens of the future*'. Horton *et al* (2013, p. 250) have critiqued this emphasis on '*children-as-tomorrow's-adults*' as limiting '*children and young people's capacities as politicised actors (for good or for bad), activists or co-constructors of communities, here and now*'. While much of the literature underscores the benefit of community involvement for both youths and elders, typical community activists tend to be older individuals who have been residents in the area for some time (Fitzpatrick *et al*, 2000). The primary barriers to the involvement of young people in community activity are identified as being largely structural (Blakeley and Evans, 2008). A high level of attention has been afforded to the lack of representation of young people in community forums, directly informed by concerns relating to the political position of youths and a need to stimulate '*democratic renewal*' (Fitzpatrick *et al*, 2000). Lundy and Stalford (2013) highlight several justifications for children's right to

participation, including that their participation leads to better decisions for them and provides insights for policy-making, budgeting and service delivery; it helps build capacity for engaging in democratic processes; it helps children stay safe; and it makes adult decision-makers more accountable.

Kraftl *et al* (2013) have pointed to '*a rich seam of social-scientific research*' that addresses the question of children's agency and rights in everyday life. This includes work from researchers such as Christensen and James (2008), Kraftl *et al* (2012) and Pells (2012), and provides recognition of how children deal actively '*with the complexities and vulnerabilities of their social, cultural and material worlds*' (Kraftl *et al*, 2013, p. 192). They also note that the recognition of children's agency has given rise to a critique of '*adultist assumptions*' which are implicit in urban spaces. This critique has produced a body of work concerned with children's sense of agency and their experiences of urban space and neighbourhood (Chawla, 2001), mobilities (Nordström, 2009; Karsten, 2005; Skelton and Gough, 2013) and play (Gleeson and Sipe, 2006).

Kraftl and Horton (2007) also outline the justifications for why children's participation in public policy processes is of such importance and summarise these into four key points based on moral, political, social and practical grounds:

- Firstly, echoing Lansdown's (1995, p. 2) argument, the case is made that, **morally**, young people should have the right '*to be actors in their own lives and not merely passive recipients of adult decision-making*'.
- Secondly, **politically**, participation is seen as foundational to the present and future process of meaningful democracy (Hart, 1997).
- Thirdly, it is argued that, **socially**, participation is perceived as a precondition of cohesive and inclusive community life, supported by the claim that young people's frequent detachment from policy-making effectively marginalises, underestimates and makes adversaries of this significant quarter of the population (Miles, 2000).
- Fourthly, it is asserted that at a **practical** level participation by young people simply makes good sense since, as Franklin and Madge (2000, p. 1) have stated, '*young people often have a better idea of services they would like, that they need and will use, than anybody else*'.

In addition, young people's participation is not only beneficial to the organisation or wider community, but also to young people themselves through '*the experience of being trusted, having responsibility and opportunities for action*' (Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2010, p. 360).

1.2.1 Children and participation in the EU and Ireland

At EU level, the Council of Europe published its *Revised Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life* in 2003, which calls for the active participation of young people in decisions and actions at local and regional level, and specifically references the urban environment and housing policy. The Council of Europe *Youth Agenda 2020*, which was adopted in 2008, contains resolutions promoting young people's active participation in democratic processes and structures, and is committed to policies based on equal opportunities for the participation of young people in all aspects of their everyday lives (Council of Europe Resolution CM/Res(2008)23). The Council of Europe *Strategy for the Rights of the Child, 2012-2015* promotes child participation as one of its four strategic objectives and states that (Council of Europe CM (2011)171 final 15 February 2012):

> 'All children have the legal right to be heard and taken seriously in all matters affecting them, whether in the family or alternative care environments; day-care; schools; local communities; health care, justice and social services; sport, culture, youth work and other recreational activities aimed at young people under the age of 18; and policy-making at domestic, European and international levels.'

Significantly, the Council of Europe *Strategy for the Rights of the Child, 2012-2015* identifies adult attitudes as one of the major barriers to effective child participation in public policy and civil life.

Further policy developments in the EU relating to the rights of children include the 2013 European Commission Recommendation *Investing in Children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage*, which identifies child participation as a key pillar for tackling child poverty and sustaining children's well-being.

In Ireland, since ratification of the UNCRC in 1992, governments have developed new strategies (e.g. National Children's Strategy, 2000), established new bodies (e.g. National Children's Advisory Council, 2001), introduced legislative reforms (e.g. Children Act 2001) and appointed the first Ombudsman for Children (2004). The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) was formed in June 2011 and is led by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, who has full ministerial status at Cabinet level. The establishment of the DCYA consolidated a range of functions which were previously the responsibilities of the Minister for Health; the Minister for Education and Skills; the Minister for Justice and Law Reform; and the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The legislation underpinning the 'Transfer of Departmental Administration and Ministerial Functions to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs' (2011) names one of the functions of the Minister as '*overseeing the development, improvement and monitoring of policies and structures to promote and enable participation by children and young people in decision-making on matters that affect their lives*'.

The participation of children and young people in decision-making is embedded in all aspects of the work of the DCYA. The Department has a dedicated Citizen Participation Unit, the role of which is to take the national lead role in ensuring that children have a voice on matters that affect their lives and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. The work of this Unit is responsible for much of the progress achieved under Goal 1 of the National Children's Strategy through the development of effective structures for children's participation in decision-making, conducting consultations and dialogues with children and young people and development of evidence-based policy in keeping with national and international best practice (Kilkelly *et al*, in press). The DCYA funds and oversees Comhairle na nÓg at local level and Dáil na nÓg at national level, and the Children and Young People's Participation Support Team. The Unit collaborates with other Government departments, statutory bodies and non-governmental organisations in providing opportunities for children and young people to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives, with a strong focus on ensuring participation by seldom-heard children and young people.

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014-2020, published in April 2014, sets out the Government's agenda and priorities in relation to children and young people under the age of 25 and provides the overarching framework for the development and implementation of policy and services. The Policy Framework has adopted an outcomes approach and is based on five interconnected and reinforcing national outcomes for children and young people. The importance of children and young people having a voice in decisions that affect their lives is integral to all five outcome areas. The Policy Framework identifies six transformational goals for achieving the national outcomes, with '*listening to and involving children and young people*' being one of the goals. It commits to the development and implementation of the first National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making (2014-2020), which is currently under development by the DCYA. It further commits to the establishment of a Children and Young People's Participation Hub by the DCYA, to become the national centre for excellence on children and young people's participation in decision-making. This hub will support implementation of the Participation Strategy through the provision of information and training for Government departments and agencies and the non-governmental sector.

In November 2012, Ireland held a Constitutional referendum with regard to children's rights, following the passing of the Thirty-First Amendment of the Constitution (Children) Bill or Children First Bill (2012) by the Oireachtas in October 2012. The referendum was passed (58% in favour, 42% against, 33.49% turnout), although the result is currently the subject of a legal challenge. The amendment is seen as vitally important in bringing key principles of the UNCRC into domestic law, particularly regarding the best interests of the child being a primary consideration in all actions concerning children (Children's Rights Alliance, 2012). The Constitutional amendment also specifies the participation of children in proceedings taken by the State for children's welfare and in adoption, guardianship or custody cases in Article 42A.4.2 as follows:

> 'Provision shall be made by law for securing, as far as practicable, that in all proceedings referred to in subsection 1 of this section in respect of any child who is capable of forming his or her own views, the views of the child shall be ascertained and given due weight having regard to the age and maturity of the child.'

Methods to hear children's voices in wider community and political matters vary. They include Dáil na nÓg and Comhairle na nÓg, student unions and school councils. Some limitations of these types of initiatives have been highlighted by Percy-Smith and Thomas (2010), who point to difficulties with participation initiatives that mimic adult-based governance structures, have a narrow scope and are not determined by children themselves. However, the innovative approach and methods adopted by Comhairle na nÓg and Dáil na nÓg in Ireland have ensured that the pitfalls highlighted by Percy-Smith and Thomas have been largely avoided. An independent evaluation of Comhairle na nÓg concluded that it is effective in engaging young people and that '*Comhairle na nÓg is a vibrant and unique youth participation initiative that has the capacity to engage and involve young people in local decision-making and has enormous benefits for both the young people involved and the communities they live in*' (McEvoy, 2010, p. 2).

It is evident that Ireland is moving from a welfare-based approach to children to a rights-based approach and that innovative policies and practices will enable children and young people to have a voice in the matters that affect them. However, not all aspects of public policy reflect the progress made in terms of recognition of the voices of children and young people and the contribution they can make. Kilkelly (2007) has stressed the need to develop a children's rights infrastructure in Ireland and has noted that a children's rights focus is absent from the area of planning/transport even though this has a serious impact on their lives. *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* has acknowledged '*the role of the built environment and planning in relation to accessing nature and safe green spaces*' (DCYA, 2014, p. 56); however, it is important that these commitments are translated into meaningful opportunities for participation in the planning process.

Meaningful participation by young people in the regeneration of social housing areas is of particular importance given the high densities of children and young people living in the sector due to the priority given to households with children in the allocation of social housing tenancies. There is an important link between discourses on children's rights and social housing, and to establish this more explicitly Chapter 2 provides an overview of local authority housing in Ireland. It also introduces the concept of regeneration as a strategy to address problems associated with estate decline and to improve liveability for all residents, especially children and young people.

2. Regeneration and social housing

2.1 An overview of social housing in Ireland

Social housing can be defined as rental accommodation constructed with a State subsidy, where allocation of dwellings is linked to social need and where the landlord usually has non-profit status or is a State agency such as a local authority (Fahey, 1999; Norris and O'Connell, 2013). According to the Census of 2011, social housing accounted for approximately 9% of the housing system, with private renting and owner occupation accounting for close to 19% and 69% respectively (Finnerty and O'Connell, 2013, p. 255). Social housing is allocated to households whose incomes are so low that they are unable to secure housing in the private market (either rented or purchased) from their own means or who are living in overcrowded, unsuitable or substandard accommodation. As applicants for social housing are means-tested, local authority housing predominantly accommodates low-income households and this has implications for the socio-economic profile of the sector.

In Ireland, the largest social housing landlords are the local authorities, who have been providing social housing since the end of the 19th century in rural and urban areas. The local authority rental stock is currently around 129,000 units. The origins of the sector are agrarian: the earliest social housing was built under the Labourers Acts in the late 19th century as part of the land reform programme. In urban areas, extensive slum clearance schemes dating from the 1930s marked the beginnings of large-scale local authority building programmes. Social housing is also provided on a smaller scale, often on a more targeted basis, by voluntary housing associations and these account for 15,000 units. Overall, local authorities have constructed almost 400,000 social housing units out of the total housing stock of 1.9 million dwellings nationally. For a detailed profile of local authority housing in Ireland, see Appendix 6 of this report.

2.1.1 Performance of local authority housing

Given the strong linkage between social housing and low income, it is clear that the sector has improved the living conditions and quality of life of hundreds of thousands of less well-off Irish households by providing them with secure tenancies in good quality, affordable accommodation. The majority of the stock can be classed as functioning effectively and the sector is characterised by far more success than failure (Fahey, 1999). Furthermore, recent research has shown that high levels of deprivation do not necessarily lead to poor quality of life or liveability (Norris and O'Connell, 2013).

While the merits of the local authority sector are numerous, the system has not been without its weaknesses. Until recently, local authorities could be open to the accusation of being more concerned with the administration of their estates rather than the management of them. Such was the degree of management weakness that some segments of the stock have deteriorated to the point of requiring urgent remedial attention (Norris and O'Connell, 2014). While such cases are exceptions to the norm of successful settled estates and are numerically in the minority in terms of the overall stock, they have had significant negative consequences for both local authorities and tenants in respect of reputational impact and the level of resources invested in them by the State to address their problems. Responding to the needs of deteriorating/declining estates has proved to be challenging for local authorities and various initiatives have been undertaken over the past number of decades. Before looking at these initiatives in more detail (*see Section 2.2*), the indicators of estate decline and contributors to loss of liveability are outlined below.

2.1.2 Indicators of estate decline and loss of liveability

A number of prominent features of declining estates can be identified and are broadly categorised into physical, environmental and socio-economic issues and have an influence on what is termed the 'liveability' of estates. Van Gent (2009, p. 77) defines 'liveability' as a subjective notion among residents that refers to place-based elements that are related to the daily living environment: 'These elements may include the quality of the housing stock, urban

design, physical appearances, cleanliness, quality of public space, safety and perhaps some degree of social interaction between neighbours.' In physical terms, common problems can include poor dwelling design, deteriorating physical quality, problems of dampness, poor sound and heat insulation, inadequate heating systems and insufficient ventilation. Such weaknesses of the housing fabric reflect the age of units and the deterioration of original building methods and materials. In relation to the estate environment, the standard of the public realm, such as green areas, communal spaces and estate layout, can contribute to liveability problems. Such problems can be compounded by graffiti, litter, illegal dumping and damage to street furniture.

The social cohesion of estates can be undermined by persistent crime and anti-social behaviour, damage to homes, public buildings, amenities and cars, which leads to anxiety among residents on personal and communal safety. Other indicators influencing liveability include voids caused by abandonment and high turnover of tenants as households move elsewhere in search of better quality accommodation; low levels of tenant purchase because tenants are reluctant to commit to an area as a long-term destination; and high rent arrears, reflecting both the prevalence of low-income households and also the absence of constructive relationships between local authorities and residents. When these factors are underpinned by socio-economic problems – such as long-term unemployment, lack of economic activity and investment, poor educational and training opportunities and outcomes, low income and high risk of poverty among residents – estates can prove difficult to rejuvenate in the absence of extensive interventions entailing comprehensive physical, environmental, social and economic measures.

The causes of declining and difficult-to-let estates are therefore complex and multiple. No one factor offers a complete explanation and it is important not to fall into the trap of 'design determinism' (Coleman, 1990), which traces many of the problems to flaws in the original design of estates, or to view physical refurbishment as the sole solution to multi-faceted problems.

2.2 Regeneration as a policy response

As stated above, it is now widely acknowledged that the issues and challenges faced by disadvantaged estates are multi-faceted, deep rooted and require interventions that adequately address the different, intertwined aspects of deprivation and poor levels of liveability (Campbell, 2011). According to Burton *et al* (2006, p. 299), the justification for regeneration initiatives, at its very simplest, targets urban areas that:

> 'show clear signs of decline in their economic fortunes, the quality of their physical environment and the social structures that might otherwise improve residents' quality of life. Incomes are low and there is a heavy reliance on [welfare] support; the health of the population is poor compared with other parts of the same town or city; people are often fearful of crime and are victims of much anti-social behaviour. Children leave school with few qualifications and hence are likely to experience the same extremely limited life chances as their parents. The area continues to be one where few would choose to live and from which many choose to leave given the opportunity'.

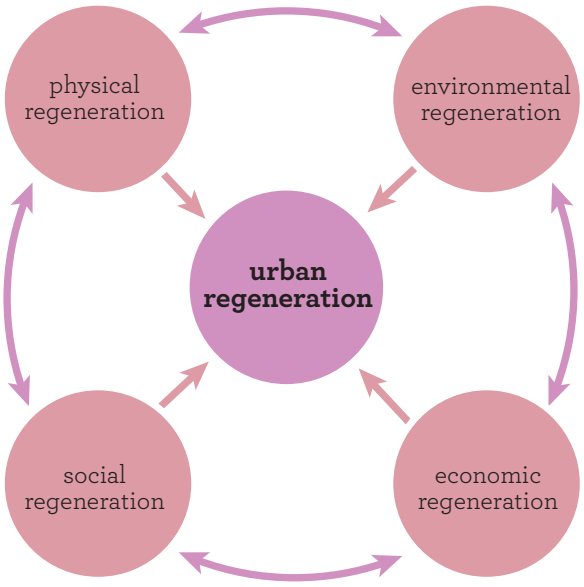
Regeneration initiatives are an important part of the response to problems experienced by disadvantaged areas. Regeneration should also be seen as part of anti-poverty initiatives and as a strategy to tackle structural inequalities and promote positive social change through the redistribution of resources, effective public policies and delivery of high-quality public services. Much regeneration activity is targeted at neighbourhoods that have high concentrations of social housing, which is accompanied by other indicators of socio-economic disadvantage, poverty and marginalisation, including low rates of labour market participation, higher than average reliance on social welfare payments, low levels of educational qualification and early school-leaving, and concentration of lone-parent households. Such areas are also often associated with poor-quality housing and environmental conditions. Regeneration is viewed as a strategy that can address these issues through a variety of interventions with a view to narrowing the gap between the target area and its hinterland so as to improve the environmental, economic and social experiences of residents.

2.2.1 Nature and definition of regeneration

According to the widely accepted definition of the term by Roberts and Sykes (2000, p. 18), 'regeneration' can be understood as:

> 'a comprehensive and integrated vision and action which leads to the resolution of urban problems and which seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area that has been subject to change'.

This definition can be diagrammatically represented as a series of interconnected elements, all of which contribute to the core objective of regeneration:



The definition above, proposed by Roberts and Sykes (2000), has been accepted by most commentators as encompassing the essential features of regeneration. Some have suggested additional dimensions that should be taken into account. For example, Lichfield (1992, p. 19) argues that for regeneration to be effective, there is a need for a better understanding of the process of decline and agreement on what one is trying to achieve. Hausner (1993, p. 526) points to the inherent weaknesses of approaches to regeneration that are short-term, fragmented, ad hoc and project-based, and without an overall strategic framework for city or area-wide development. Similarly, Donnison (1993, p. 18) has called for ways of tackling problems in a coordinated way in disadvantaged areas.

2.2.2 Addressing estate decline in Ireland

In Ireland, the initial response to estate decline was dominated by refurbishment of the physical fabric of dwellings and appeared heavily influenced by Coleman's (1990) concept of 'design determinism'. From 1985 to the mid-1990s, over 12,000 houses were refurbished by local authorities under the Remedial Works Scheme funded by central government. However, this scheme reflected the 'bricks and mortar' pre-occupation of local authority housing departments and its long-run benefits have been questionable. According to Fahey (1999), the scheme failed to have a significant effect on the most disadvantaged estates because it did not address social issues such as unemployment, poverty and drugs epidemics.

The main limitations of the Remedial Works Scheme were that it was not linked to the reform of the management function of housing departments and thus did not address problems related to allocations, social order, anti-social behaviour and intimidation, nor was there

an appreciation of the impact of deeper socio-economic issues facing estates. It was clear, therefore, that the problems faced by such estates could only be remedied by interventions based on a much more holistic understanding of their root causes and basic reform in the management approach of housing departments. Two significant developments are noteworthy in this regard – the modernisation of housing management in local authority housing departments and the emergence of regeneration as a strategy for the renewal of declining estates in place of refurbishment-based initiatives, such as the Remedial Works Scheme.

2.2.3 Emergence of housing management

From the mid-1990s onwards, the Department of the Environment increasingly challenged local authorities to adopt more responsive, estate-based and inclusive housing management approaches. This was originally flagged in a major policy document on social housing called *A Plan for Social Housing*, published in 1991, and was maintained in a follow-up document in 1995 called *Social Housing: The Way Ahead*. The Housing Act 1992 permitted local authorities to assign responsibilities to resident and tenant groups to promote greater levels of tenant participation in the management of their estates. Best practice guidelines on housing management were also set out in the reports of the Housing Management Group (1996 and 1998), specifically in relation to staff training, development of key performance indicators, interagency cooperation and the use of information technology.

These policy developments signalled an overdue realisation that the established desk-based, rule-driven approach of housing departments was untenable in responding to the complex challenges posed by many estates (Fahey, 1999). Central to these reforms was the need to devise effective methods of consulting with tenants. Significant resources were devoted to capacity-building and promoting best practice in this area, especially with the establishment of the Housing Unit within the Institute of Public Administration in the late 1990s and the development of the local authority housing practitioners' network as a resource for staff working in the field (Norris and O'Connell, 2013).

2.2.4 Regeneration masterplanning: Adopting a holistic approach

The second important development that reflects new approaches to the needs of declining estates was the evolution of regeneration masterplanning to address estates' social and economic needs, as well as the requirement for physical improvements. Reflecting this change of approach, the formulation of a National Regeneration Programme by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) targeted large- and small-scale programmes across the country, including multi-million euro initiatives in Ballymun in Dublin, the Limerick regeneration schemes in the Moyross and Southill Estates and the regeneration of Knocknaheeny Estate in Cork, as well as smaller scale programmes in Sligo, Dundalk, Tralee and Waterford.

There was also reform in the mechanisms employed for the delivery of regeneration programmes, which in some respects represented a loss of faith in the capacity of local authorities to deal with the problems. For example, in the case of Ballymun, a special company known as Ballymun Regeneration Limited was established in 1997 by Dublin Corporation and delegated specific responsibility to drive the initiative. In Limerick, responsibility was removed from Limerick City Council entirely and given to the Limerick Regeneration Agency, which assumed responsibility for the Moyross and Southill Estates. Responsibility was subsequently restored to Limerick City Council in 2011 after the Agency itself was wound up. The regeneration of Knocknaheeny remains within the overall structure of Cork City Council, but is the responsibility of a specialist regeneration team based in the Knocknaheeny Regeneration Office.

The adoption of the regeneration approach was an acknowledgement that previous refurbishment interventions were too narrowly focused on remedial works and did not take sufficient account of social and economic factors. The publication of a major policy document by the DECLG in 2007, entitled *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities*, reiterated the commitment to investment in rundown estates by establishing Regeneration Gateways, the aim of which was to (DECLG, 2007, p. 63):

> 'galvanise the agencies at local level and ensure that interventions are focused on a common aim. This will accelerate the development of an appropriate vision for the area and a detailed plan of action. It is designed to secure the commitment of all of the key stakeholders and maintain the momentum for delivery by providing an appropriate implementation vehicle. In all cases, it is essential that an effective dialogue is achieved with those living in the area.'

It is clear that the holistic understanding of regeneration, as outlined by Roberts and Sykes (2000) earlier, which embraces social and economic as well as physical interventions, also underpins Irish policy, although it is arguable whether this is implemented in practice. *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* (DECLG, 2007) stated that past attempts at regeneration of disadvantaged communities suffered from a narrowness of understanding of what regeneration was and stated that such attempts 'can be criticised for an over-reliance on refurbishment of the buildings, rather than the development of a strong community'.

The holistic interpretation has been reiterated by a report on regeneration published by the Houses of the Oireachtas (2011), entitled *Social Regeneration: Beyond Bricks and Mortar*. This also emphasised the importance of pursuing social regeneration initiatives, which are often less tangible in comparison to physical interventions, but must occur in parallel with interventions in the built environment. The report noted that:

> 'Social regeneration is often people-focused as it focuses on the quality of life of residents and addresses problems at the individual and household level. It can work in tandem with physical regeneration as part of an overall programme or … through the work of area-based interventions (ABIs) involving local partnerships.'

Furthermore, the report highlights the importance of ensuring that the essential features of social regeneration include interventions in health, education, community facilities, arts and culture, and family and child well-being (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2011).

Though the impact of social regeneration initiatives may be less visible in physical terms when compared to large-scale capital projects such as demolition and new house building, they nonetheless have the potential to deliver significant returns in terms of 'social capital' in the form of social cohesion, well-being and social inclusion, reductions in crime and anti-social behaviour, greater engagement with education and employment services, and improved levels of trust. The combined impact of each of these determines the 'liveability' of an estate. A report by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (2007) on the Ballymun Regeneration Programme clearly endorsed the role of social programmes and emphasised the importance of these in tackling the root causes of problems such as crime and anti-social behaviour, which have the potential to undermine the efforts of regeneration programmes. The report stated that 'If crime and anti-social behaviour are not to undermine the sustainability of the regeneration programme, the underlying causes of anti-social behaviour need to be addressed and pragmatic countermeasures implemented'.

Supports for vulnerable families and children have also been found to have an influence on the effectiveness of social regeneration. Interventions that focus on providing support for families have been found to have the greatest effect on the life chances of individuals since this facilitates engagement with services such as family support, education and training, and can significantly improve the quality of life for the families concerned – and also for the wider community. According to research carried out in the UK, this is especially true if such interventions are flexible, take place early in children's lives and are based locally (Field, 2010).

Similarly, a recent report by Redmond and Hearne (2013) for Clúid Housing Association identified the importance of preventative social policies in relation to housing management, family support and early intervention in supporting communities in social housing estates. They argue that:

> 'Estates and neighbourhoods deteriorate in part because of a lack of preventative polices. This suggests strongly that, in order to sustain estates and communities, preventative policies and practices are pursued in the long term. Such social policy evidence is increasingly pertinent to regeneration.'

The particular relevance of the role played by investment in early education is also highlighted. For example, Goodbody Economic Consultants in a systematic review for Start Strong of early intervention programmes reported that the HighScope Programme in the USA and the Start Strong Programme in Ireland had cost-benefit returns of 16:1 and 7:1 respectively (Goodbody Economic Consultants, 2011, p. 3). The critical role of combined community development and family support services has also been highlighted by research undertaken by McKeown (2000) for the (then) Department of Health and Children, which concluded that:

> 'The following family support measures are found to be the most effective in supporting vulnerable families: therapeutic interventions, parent education programmes, home-based family support programmes, child development and education interventions, youth work, and community development.'

In acknowledgement of the effectiveness of investment in Early Years supports, the Government recently announced the Area-Based Children's (ABC) Programme and has pledged €30 million of State funding to early interventions in disadvantaged areas, including estates undergoing regeneration (DCYA, 2013b)[4]. Social investment as an integral element of regeneration is now accepted. However, in addition to establishing the principles of what regeneration is, there is also the issue of how the process is implemented in order to ensure that the investment of large-scale resources delivers effective returns. Effective and appropriate mechanisms of consultation with residents and communities are therefore a vital component in this regard.

2.2.5 Effective consultation and participation in regeneration

There is now general acceptance that effective regeneration can lead to empowerment of residents and local communities and ensure that there are lasting benefits derived from the investment of resources. However, a critical ingredient of this is meaningful participation by residents. According to Hearne (2013):

> 'Best practice social regeneration requires the adequate participation of local authority tenants and residents for the negotiating process inherent in any development of the built environment (Punch, 2009; Participation and Practice of Rights, 2009; Taylor, 2011). A well-planned and effective regeneration project should create and support sustainable community development. This could lead to the empowerment of the local community as it participates in regeneration decision-making processes, estate modernisation and social renewal.'

There are two areas where consultation and participation can be deployed to include residents: estate regeneration and local area planning.

Estate regeneration

The *Good Practice in Housing Management Guidelines for Local Authorities: Regenerating Estates, Rebuilding Vibrant Communities* were published by the Centre for Housing Research in 2006 with the intention of providing local authority housing departments with practical assistance in undertaking regeneration programmes. There is a strong emphasis in the guidelines on the importance of consultation with residents to ensure more effective and

[4] The Young Knocknaheeny initiative was set up under this programme.

successful outcomes. Involving tenants 'can help to ensure that the estate regeneration strategy fits with their priorities and promotes a sense of ownership over, and support for, the project among tenants' (Treadwell Shine, 2006, p. 4). There is also acknowledgement that the challenges of building good relationships with residents should not be understated, especially in estates where there are multiple problems. In such settings, time and resources must be invested and 'building strong relationships, based on trust and respect, between tenants and local authority staff can be a lengthy process. Sufficient time needs to be invested to allow these relationships to grow and flourish' (*ibid*).

Recognition of the role to be fulfilled by residents is clear and there is also reference made to the perceptions of children. The guidelines suggest the use of focus groups and 'creative sources' for data collection when seeking the views of children. However, they fall short of offering practical guidance on methodologies other than to say that external expertise from outside local authorities may be required to engage in data collection with children and young people (Treadwell Shine, 2006, p. 88).

A further set of guidelines was devised in 2012, *Good Practice Guidelines on Regeneration*, by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government in recognition of the ongoing importance of regeneration as a core activity of local authority housing departments. These guidelines are intended to assist housing departments in identifying estates that may be suitable for regeneration prior to funding applications being submitted to central government. While these guidelines have not yet been officially approved for implementation at local authority level, they offer a step-by-step checklist on key elements such as data gathering, constructing an evidence base, identifying problem estates, consultation with relevant parties, defining and implementing regeneration strategies and evaluating the outcomes. Of particular relevance are the sections relating to why residents should be consulted and the benefits to be derived from such consultations: 'Residents of target estates have a right to be consulted regarding the content of estate regeneration plans and consultation arrangements should include all residents – both local authority tenants and owners and tenants of privately owned dwellings' (Norris, 2012, p. 43).

Echoing the 2006 guidelines, the 2012 guidelines also highlight the multiple benefits arising from consulting residents, including availing of their in-depth knowledge of the problems in their communities and their role in identifying solutions; creating a sense of community ownership over regeneration projects; and ensuring value for money by tailoring potential interventions to the needs of target estates. Local authorities are required to demonstrate how they have complied with the consultation requirement if they wish to apply for regeneration funding from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. However, the most recent guidelines (2012) mention consultation with children and young people alongside other 'hard to reach' groups, as opposed to being a priority group with opinions of their own. The critical issue of the role of children and young people must be addressed in any review of these guidelines.

Local area planning

Recent developments in planning legislation specifically relating to the Planning and Development Acts 2000 to 2010 and the guidelines issued for the formulation of local area plans are relevant to resident and community consultation. While guidance to local authorities on consultation with children and young people is limited, planning legislation and planning guidelines may offer additional insights given that local authorities have statutory responsibility for planning in Ireland. Existing legislation permits local authorities to seek the views of a wide variety of interests in relation to the preparation of local area plans. For example, Section 20 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 states that:

> '(1) A planning authority shall take whatever steps it considers necessary to consult the public before preparing, amending or revoking a local area plan, including consultations with any local residents, public sector agencies, non-governmental agencies, local community groups and commercial and business interests within the area.'

The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010 represents an advance on the provisions of the 2000 Act in respect of who is consulted in formulating local area plans. The Act refers directly to children or their representatives and states that 'children, or groups or associations representing the interests of children, are entitled to make submissions or observations under subparagraph (iii)'. While explicit reference to children is welcome, the adequacy of the provision is questionable since it places the onus on children or their representatives to make submissions rather than requiring planning authorities to proactively seek out their views. The critical issue of the role of children and young people must be addressed in any review of the legislation.

A more proactive tone is set by the *Local Area Plans: Public Consultation Draft of Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (DECLG, 2012a), which recommend that planning authorities are 'innovative and engage with any community-based organisations that represent younger persons'. The focus would appear to be on seeking guidance on where recreational and amenity provisions for younger children and teenagers should be located, although specific steps on how these inputs can be made is lacking.

An additional resource in the form of a *Manual for Local Area Plans* (DECLG, 2012b), published as a companion document to the *Local Area Plans … Guidelines* (*see above*), offers more detailed assistance to local authorities. Various methods are presented on how consultations can be undertaken and a wide range of national and international examples of best practice on consulting with communities are provided. In relation to garnering the views of children and young people, there is reference to a case study on how children were included in the formulation of one local area plan in Co. Limerick through a workshop using drawings and paintings (*ibid*, p. 13). However, there are no details provided on how such workshops should be organised and structured in terms of child protection requirements, the resources needed, staff training or the competencies required.

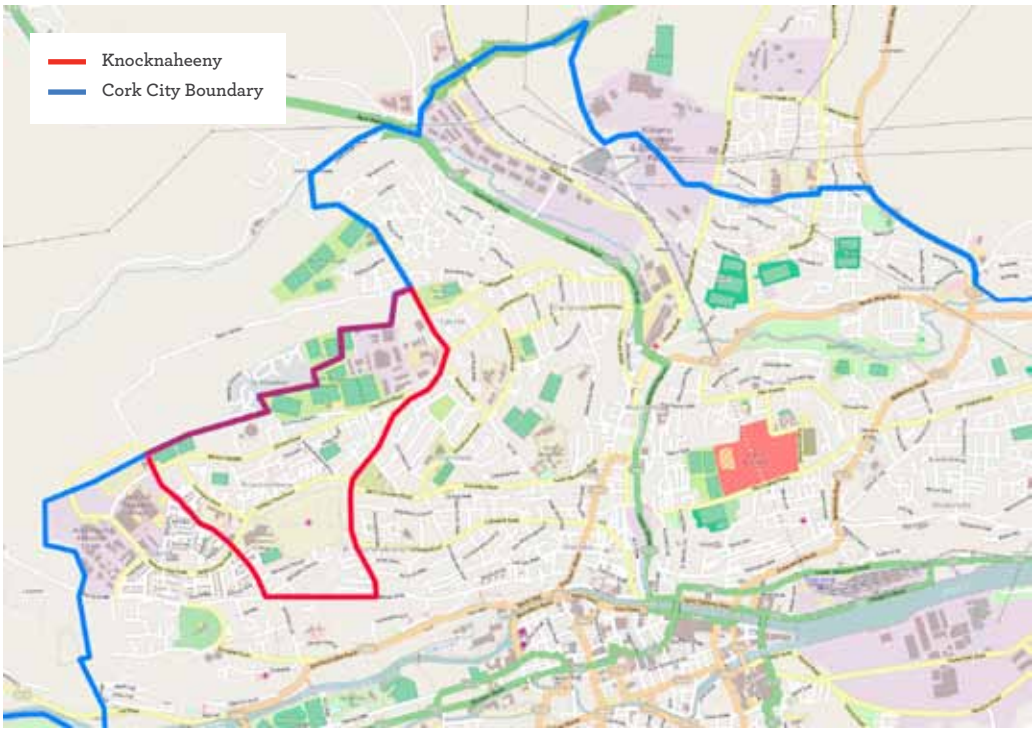
On the basis of developments in regeneration policy and planning legislation and practice, there is evidence of a greater awareness of the necessity to consult with communities. The right of children to contribute to local planning is acknowledged in the legislation, although the detailed methods of how this can be put into practice are not as yet fully developed. In respect of estate regeneration, recently drafted guidelines refer to involving children in a supplemental capacity as a 'hard to reach group' (Norris, 2012, p. 44). The current situation would appear to offer an opportunity for learning between two major areas of policy in relation to the built environment. On the one hand, consulting with children and young people is established as a principle in the planning system, although the practice remains underdeveloped. On the other hand, the principle of consulting with them in regeneration programmes is underdeveloped, yet there are ample opportunities for developing new and innovative practices.

Filling this gap is the objective of the remainder of this research report and the following chapters present the views and opinions of children and young people on how a major regeneration programme in Knocknaheeny Estate in Cork City has been implemented to date and also provide an account of how appropriate methodologies were devised.

2.3 The Case Study Estate: Regeneration in Knocknaheeny Estate, Cork City

Knocknaheeny, which is one of the largest social housing estates in Cork, is located to the north-west of the city and has been earmarked for a major programme of regeneration by Cork City Council (*see Figure 1*). It was constructed in the early 1970s in response to a growing demand for affordable housing to meet expanding industrial employment in the city and demand from newly forming households of people who had grown up in older Cork Corporation estates on the Northside of the city, such as Churchfield, Farranree and Gurranabraher, and who wanted to live adjacent to those neighbourhoods.

Figure 1: Location of Knocknaheeny Estate, Cork City



In its early years, Knocknaheeny, similar to many other local authority estates, exhibited a strong occupational profile and many tenants were employed in Cork's main industrial companies, such as the Ford car factory, the Dunlop tyre company and the Verlome dockyard. However, with the collapse of these industries in the 1980s, the profile of the estate changed to one where many more households became reliant on long-term social welfare payments. The tendency towards welfare dependency was compounded by the effects of the £5,000 Tenancy Surrender Grant, which operated from 1984 to 1987, and caused the departure of many tenants who were employed and their replacement by new tenants reliant on social welfare. Since much of the housing stock in Knocknaheeny was constructed in the early 1970s, its fabric, and that of the estate environment more generally, has deteriorated over time and many residents are living in conditions that are now substandard in terms of dwelling insulation, heating and ventilation.

In addition to poor dwelling quality, the socio-economic profile of the estate is now marked by high levels of unemployment, lone parenthood, poverty and, in comparison with the rest of Cork City, low levels of educational attainment and a low rate of tenant purchase. The risk of poverty is particularly damaging to children in very direct ways: for example, schools in the area provide children with meals each day since their parents cannot afford to feed them properly. (A detailed socio-economic profile of Knocknaheeny and surrounding areas is provided in Appendix 1 of this report.) This combination of physical, environmental and socio-economic factors led to the formulation of a major regeneration initiative for the estate in 2011.

2.3.1 Knocknaheeny Refurbishment Programme 2001

The present regeneration masterplan was preceded over a decade ago by a housing and environmental refurbishment programme known as the Knocknaheeny Block D Refurbishment 2001. According to Wain Morehead Architects, the aim of this was to 'enable the redefinition and improvement of the Knocknaheeny area by the implementation of a feasible overall planning, urban design, architectural and landscape masterplan'.[5] This resulted in the upgrading of 78 dwellings, the construction of a sheltered housing complex, urban design and traffic management interventions, and the construction of a new community centre.

However, because the interventions were focused primarily on the physical fabric of the estate, their impact was limited and they did not address the many 'liveability' problems faced by the residents. The limitations of the 2001 refurbishment were acknowledged when the Minister for Housing and Planning, Jan O'Sullivan, TD, announced a revised strategy for Knocknaheeny to ensure that interventions planned for the area were relevant to meeting its needs. The Minister, in the Dáil Debate of 4th December 2012, stated that the new regeneration masterplan:

> 'presents a much broader view, beyond a simple upgrading of the housing stock, to address underlying issues of social exclusion and socio-economic disadvantage. Issues such as connectivity and permeability, investment and employment have also been explored. Wide-ranging schemes of demolition and rebuilding, public realm upgrades including addressing areas of anti-social behaviour, and significant investment in social regeneration activities are all proposed'.

2.3.2 Cork City Northwest Masterplan – Knocknaheeny, 2011

A comprehensive regeneration masterplan, prepared by the National Building Agency and entitled the *Cork City Northwest Regeneration: Masterplan and Implementation Report,* was published by Cork City Council in 2011. In contrast to the 2001 plan, this contains a more holistic vision for the Knocknaheeny Estate and reflects current thinking on how regeneration should be conceived. The masterplan contains multiple strands relating to the social, economic, physical and environmental interventions needed to address the decline of the estate and its reach extends beyond the specific catchment of the Knocknaheeny Estate to include those areas on the Northside of Cork City that come under the auspices of the RAPID Programme Area Implementation Team.

2.3.3 Consultation process

Physical plan

The *Cork City Northwest Regeneration: Masterplan and Implementation Report* for Knocknaheeny states that 'Cork City Council has worked closely throughout the Summer and Autumn of 2011 with the elected representatives, residents and other key stakeholders to disseminate and debate the vision, development, concept and proposals outlined' (Housing Agency, 2011, p. 1). Ideally, a detailed consultative process would include using design workshops, focus groups, practical exercises and other methodologies (similar to those outlined later in this report). In reality, the consultation process was less comprehensive and the physical, design and environmental elements of the masterplan were devised by technical staff – architects, engineers and planners of the National Housing Agency and Cork City Council.

Once the masterplan was prepared, its aims, objectives and operational aspects were then disseminated to relevant stakeholders, including the local community, through a series of public meetings. Five of these meetings were organised for residents of Knocknaheeny Estate (especially those in the implementation areas earmarked for house demolition and rebuilding), two were for community groups working in the estate, two for the general public and one was

[5] *See* http://www.wma.ie/wmaweb/energy/Case_Studies/9773_Mid_Terrace/9773_Mid_Terrace.pdf

for business operators. Individuals were also invited to make written submissions to Cork City Council and a total of 55 were received. Written submissions were also made by six public representatives, one sporting organisation and one petition, signed by 170 residents of the Lower Hollyhill and Upper Ard Cullen Estates requesting the closure of a specific laneway.

Social plan

Although there was no direct resident and community input to the original formulation of the physical and design strands, residents were involved at the implementation phase. A more inclusive methodology was adopted for the social and economic aspects of the masterplan. Drawing on the highly developed network of community groups, service providers, advocacy organisations and residents in Knocknaheeny and the Northside of Cork City, a comprehensive social plan was devised and a detailed operational programme was drawn up around 10 key themes by a RAPID Area Implementation Team, ranging from family support, youth services and community safety to economic and environmental development.[6] The social plan was subject to an independent peer review to ensure its aims and objectives, implementation targets and resource requirements were realisable and adhered to current best practice in estate regeneration.

Limitations of the consultation process

As stated above, there was no consultation with residents and community organisations in deciding the underlying principles or initial design of the regeneration masterplan. There was a limited degree of dissemination on how the masterplan would be implemented through a number of public consultation meetings. While the social plan element of the regeneration masterplan was more inclusive, it was oriented exclusively towards adults without overt reference to children in their own right. The voices of children and young people remained unheard in either the formulation or implementation phases of the masterplan and the social plan. This omission, though undesirable, is not surprising since there has until recently been little institutional awareness of the need to hear and act upon the views of children and young people directly in housing management and estate regeneration.

Despite the omission of young people, there has been important institutional learning since the present research project was initiated. .On being informed of the importance of hearing the voices of children and young people in their own right, Cork City Council Regeneration Office amended its evaluation instrument, which was devised to assess the overall level of effectiveness of the regeneration programme, to take account of the views of younger age groups living in the Knocknaheeny Estate over the lifetime of the masterplan. One potential avenue to consolidate this is by utilising the Comhairle na nÓg structure in Cork City Council.

[6] Social plan themes include (1) family support and early childhood development; (2) community safety; (3) education, training and lifelong learning; (4) health; (5) youth and sports; (6) environment; (7) balancing communities; (8) social cohesion and capacity-building; (9) economic development; and (10) transport and connectivity.

3. Methods

The research methodology employed in this project is based on a rights-based approach, following the work of Ennew and Plateau (2004) and Beazley *et al* (2009). Such a methodology focuses on research *with*, rather than research *about*, children and young people. Lundy's (2007) work has been a critical influence on the project methodology, in particular her emphasis on hearing voices in a safe and inclusive space. Furthermore, Lundy and McEvoy (2011) propose that children's participation in research should adhere to the following principles:

- be voluntary and safe;
- be creative and child-centred;
- ensure their views are carefully listened to and acted upon;
- that feedback is given and children engaged in research outcomes.

Table 1 interprets the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in relation to research with children.

Table 1: The right to be properly researched

Relevant Article of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child	What it means for rights-based research
Article 12.1: 'States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.'	Children's perspectives and opinions must be integral to the research.
Article 13.1: 'The child shall have the right to freedom of expression: this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.'	Methods need to be found, and used, to help children to express their perspectives and opinions freely in research.
Article 36 protects children against 'all … forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare'.	Children must not be harmed or exploited through taking part in research.
Article 3.3: 'States Parties shall ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, in the number and suitability of their staff, as well as competent supervision.'	Research must conform to the highest possible scientific standards. Researchers must be carefully recruited and supervised.

Source: Ennew and Plateau (2004, p. 29)

In line with the above criteria, the project developed a range of qualitative methodologies to hear children's views and experiences, drawing from a growing trend towards bringing in the voice of the citizen/service user to policy formation and programme design, for example, in youth mental health, primary care and voluntary housing (see, for example, Combat Poverty Agency, 2009). Participatory action research methods were employed in the project (Greene and Hill, 2005; Veale, 2005), using a variety of methods for engagement, including rap, drawing and PhotoVoice, as well as an activity developed by the researchers called 'the Wheel'.

Purposive sampling accessed 78 children and young people, aged 6-19, through seven schools and youth organisations – one primary school; one secondary school; three after-school clubs (two of which were delivered by a voluntary child and family support organisation and one by a youth diversion programme); and two education and training centres for early school-leavers. This was a time-consuming and sensitive process since the researchers were not known to the local community and had to build up their legitimacy over time. Furthermore, the Knocknaheeny area has been the subject of many research projects and there is a degree of 'research fatigue' in the community, especially since the benefits to them are not always clear. Over a period of four months, relationships were established and trust was built up between the researchers and people in the area. From this relationship-building, key actors such as youth workers, training centre managers, school teachers and principals facilitated access to the children and young people. This sensitive networking enabled the researchers to access not only the general population of children and young people through the primary and secondary schools, but also more 'difficult-to-reach' young people in early school-leaving programmes, training workshops and youth projects. These children and young people are acknowledged by youth workers in Knocknaheeny as being among the most marginalised in the area and the wider city. Hence it was vital to garner their views and their participation added to the richness and depth of the data.

Overall, a total of 10 focus groups were held over the spring and summer of 2013, after an initial pilot focus group was undertaken to refine the research questions. The focus groups were complemented by a focus group with youth and community workers in the area under the auspices of the Northside Youth Forum.

3.1 Informed consent

Informed consent was sought before children, young people and adults participated in the focus groups. This required that all participants know that:

- they have the choice to participate in the first place;
- they have the right to withdraw at any time during the research;
- what the research is about and what their role in the research is.

A consent form was issued prior to the focus groups to obtain consent from the children and their parents or carers (*see Appendix 3*). In order to facilitate this informed consent, information leaflets were distributed to the children and their parents (*see Appendix 2*). All children had the option of opting out of the focus groups whether they were in school or other settings. In the school settings, the Principal selected the class that would participate and in practice none of the school-based children opted out. This contrasted with the non-school focus groups coordinated by youth workers and project coordinators where some children opted not to participate.

Permission was also sought at the beginning of each focus group to record the proceedings. Information has been treated confidentially and no names have been used in this research to ensure anonymity of the participants. Ethical permission was granted by the University College Cork (UCC) Social Research Ethics Committee, the relevant committee of the UCC University Research Ethics Board. The researchers also applied for and were granted Garda vetting clearance prior to beginning the research.

3.2 Focus Group methodology

Different approaches to focus group research were considered, acknowledging the capacities of different ages (Lansdown, 2005), such as using playful group activities with younger age groups and conversational methods for older ages (Hennessy and Heary, 2005). The focus groups present opportunities for creativity and innovation by using techniques that may otherwise not be considered in more conventional consultations. There are also specific advantages to focus group research with children in that they create a safe and encouraging peer environment and replicate types of group settings that children are familiar with (Hennessy and Heary, 2005). The composition of focus groups with children is recommended to be 5-8 participants of single-sex groups in order to encourage girls to participate more. Other recommendations include that each group is within a 2-year age range and a duration of 45 minutes to 1 hour is recommended for children under 14 (Hennessy and Heary, 2005). Thus, initially the project aimed to run 10 focus groups to capture the age cohorts, separating boys and girls.

While 10 focus groups were held, due to how children and young people were accessed many focus groups were mixed-sex groups and the size of groups varied according to which organisation facilitated the session. For example, in schools, focus groups had up to 18 participants who were broken up into smaller subgroups, while in smaller youth clubs and after-school groups, focus groups ranged from 5-8 participants. Every focus group was divided into subgroups and wherever possible these subgroups were single sex.

Snacks and drinks were made available after each focus group and Certificates of Participation were distributed in order to thank the children and young people for participating in the research (*see Appendix 4*).

Project workers and teachers, sometimes termed 'gatekeepers' in the academic literature, were asked to be present because of their familiarity with the young people and their encouragement and support of them (this is also recommended by Curtis *et al*, 2004). With all the focus groups, it was essential that the Research Team created a relaxed, convivial and friendly environment so the children and young people would feel comfortable to express their views. The gatekeepers' ability to act as a link between the Research Team and the children and young people was vital to the quality of the data collected. They acted as our 'referees', putting the children at ease by introducing us as 'friendly', 'very nice' and vouching for our bona fides. In addition, their continued support and presence during the focus groups elicited more information and opinions than the researchers may otherwise have done, by adding to our questions and encouraging each child and young person to express themselves. This was particularly important for the youngest age groups in the research, who needed more input from facilitators to elicit their views.

However, there were challenges when seeking access to young people. Despite our best efforts and those of local organisations, there were some groups who were not met, such as Traveller children living in the area. A focus group had been set up, but it fell through because it coincided with sensitive negotiations between the Traveller community and Cork City Council. The researchers acknowledge that the lack of direct engagement with young Travellers inevitably leaves a gap in the data relating to their views on regeneration. In the context of a complex set of interactions between Cork City Council, Travellers and the local community, the researchers formed the view that, although regrettable, at that time it was not going to be feasible to establish meaningful contact with young Travellers.

An additional challenge was to involve children and young people in an advisory group to design the focus groups, the questions asked, and when, where and how the focus groups were run. Despite requests, it proved difficult to obtain details of young people interested in forming a research advisory group from the service providers since they were engaged in organising the focus groups. In the absence of the establishment of the advisory group, the researchers committed to returning to the participants with the draft report and to involve them all in a local dissemination event.

The focus groups comprised the following structure and questions were phrased at the appropriate level for younger children who took part in the project:

1. Introductions and warm-up. Following introductions, the project was outlined by the researchers and the children and young people were reminded of their right to consent and to withdraw from the project at any time. The cross and the circle warm-up activity was used either at the beginning of the focus group or mid-way through the session if children and young people needed a break. (This activity involves a young person drawing a cross in the air with their right hand and then a circle in the air with their left hand; the challenge is to then attempt to do them both at the same time.)

   The City Council regeneration masterplan was shown to each group and initial questions asked: Have you heard about regeneration? If so, who from? Who do you think is responsible for it? Did your parents go to any meetings organised by the Council about regeneration? Is anyone moving house or does anyone know someone who is moving because of the regeneration? This section was completed with a 5-minute brainstorm on 'what is regeneration'. Younger groups were asked what they would do to make Knocknaheeny a better place if they had a magic wand. Responses were recorded by the researchers in writing and in voice recordings.

2. The main activity of each focus group centred on a data collection method the researchers constructed called 'the Wheel' (*see Figure 2*). Some of the children and young people subsequently called this activity 'the Pizza'. The Wheel proved to be particularly effective and attractive to children and young people since it demystified the research and created an open-ended, but systematic process of data gathering.

   For this activity, each group was divided into smaller subgroups of 3-5 children or young people. There were two variants of the Wheel – one for younger groups and one for older groups. Each subgroup was issued with a large sheet of paper with a circle divided into four quadrants and markers and pencils with which to record their views.

   For the younger age groups, the categories included:
   - What I like about my area.
   - What I don't like about my area.
   - What I'd like to change about my area.
   - How I should have a say.

   For the older age groups, the categories included:
   - What I like about my area.
   - What I don't like about my area.
   - What I'd like to change about my area.
   - What regeneration should do.
   - They were also asked to write outside the circle – How I should have a say.

All groups, besides the very youngest participants (aged 6-8), were also asked to prioritise the Top 3 changes they would like to see coming from the regeneration.

Figure 2: The Wheel – data collection method

3.3 Creative methodologies

The focus groups were complemented by creative methodologies, including:

- **Art:** The youngest children (in two focus groups) were asked to draw whatever they liked on the Wheel.
- **PhotoVoice:** One group of young people in a local school were asked to take photographs of the area with disposable cameras distributed by the Research Team, following the themes of the Wheel activity. The photographs were subsequently discussed in a follow-up session where each person was asked to select the photographs most important to them, discuss their experiences and views in relation to this, and write captions for the photos they selected (this draws from the methodology outlined by Fargas-Malet *et al*, 2010).
- **Music:** Two groups (one under 12, one over 12) were involved in a rap project with a local rap artist commissioned by the project. He worked with each group over a 3-day period through collaborative song writing and rap performance. The focus of the song was derived from the Wheel activity to identify what the children and young people like, don't like, would like to change about their area and what they think of regeneration.

These creative methods have been found to facilitate children and young people to express dimensions of their experiences and views that they may find difficult to do through focus group discussions solely (Darbyshire *et al*, 2005; Curtis *et al*, 2004). Hearn and Thomson (2014) have argued that while employing creative methods such as texts, images and artefacts for research purposes may sound deceptively simple, there are a range of issues that must be taken into consideration in such approaches. Included here are such issues as how to manage stereotyping of minority groups, ethical issues relating to images and questions of ownership of the product of the creative process. Each of these issues arose in the course of this research and they were negotiated appropriately, although some more easily than others. For example, regarding ethical issues relating to images, the primary concern was that participants would

take photos of people without their permission. To avoid this, clear guidelines were given to participating young people that they were not to photograph people in their PhotoVoice project, which they all adhered to. Regarding ownership of the products, a project archive has been created. A collage of the photographs selected by the young people was assembled into a professionally printed poster and presented to the school at a dissemination event as a permanent record of the young people's participation. The raps were burned on to CDs, distributed to all the participants, and are posted on the rap producer's website.

The question of attitudes towards marginalised groups was also of concern to the researchers. There are different opinions among researchers on how to approach this. For example, Hearn and Thomson (2014) would appear to favour not including racist images produced by young researchers on the basis that they would cause harm. In this project, negative stereotyping of Travellers living in Knocknaheeny was expressed by some participants. The researchers' position on this was that such views should be included in the analysis, not simply because they represented the voices of some young people but also because the underlying objective of this research is to generate meaningful policy and practice learning, which includes tackling discriminatory attitudes at all levels.

3.4 Analytical framework

The project has conducted a thematic analysis of the focus groups' interviews by age cohort. In the following chapters, we identify the categories and subcategories important to each group, illustrated by verbatim quotations from participants as well as pictures and photographs. The responses to the Wheel activity were compiled in a spreadsheet and categorised into a number of themes, which formed the analytical framework. The categories were further refined in discussion with the secondary school group to confirm their validity.

As per the questions asked in the Wheel activity, the chapters are divided according to:

- What I like about my area.
- What I don't like about my area.
- What I'd like to change about my area.
- What regeneration should do.
- Top 3 changes.
- How I should have a say.

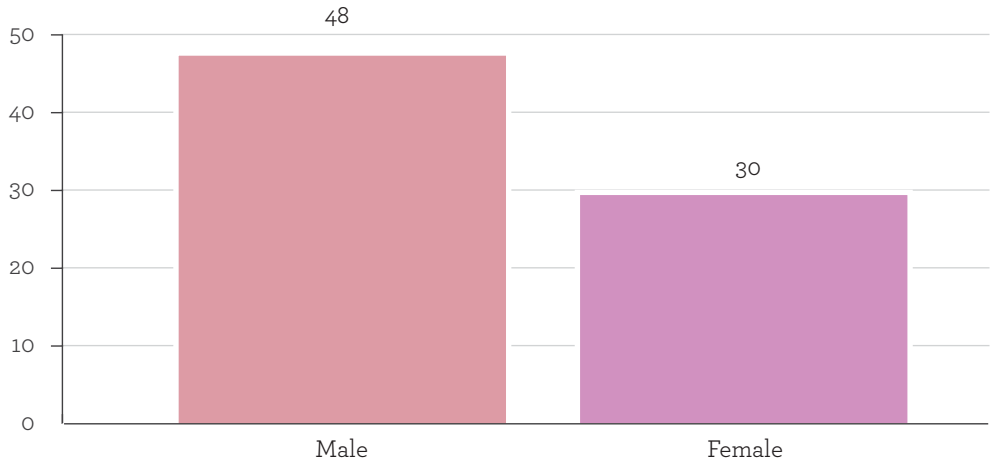
A separate analysis of the rap is included in Section 4.6 of Chapter 4.

4. Findings

4.1 Profile of participants

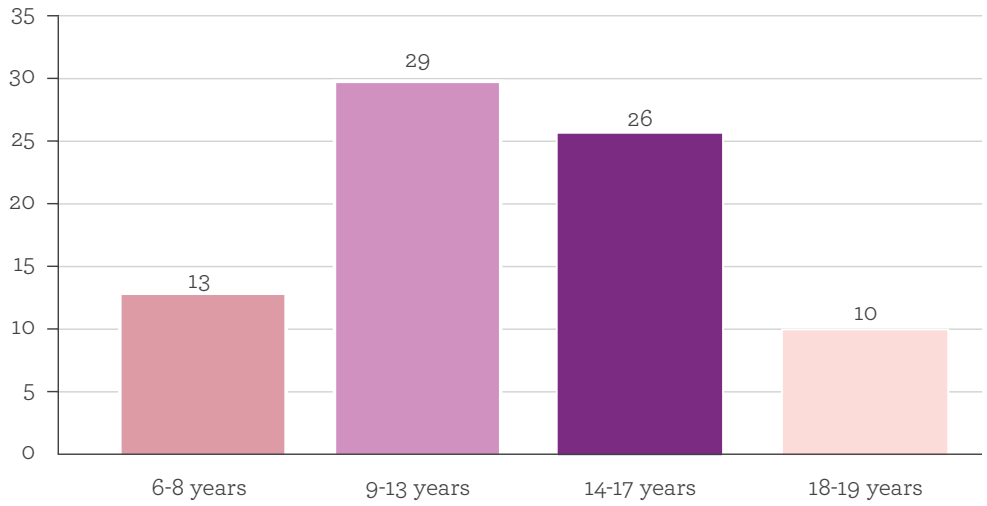
The Research Team met with 78 children and young people through seven organisations and schools in Knocknaheeny. More boys than girls took part in the study (*see Figure 3*). In part, this was because of the involvement of one all-boys primary school (18 participants) and the lack of access to a mixed primary school despite repeated efforts.

Figure 3: Number of participants, by gender



There was a more even mix of ages among participants, as Figure 4 shows.

Figure 4: Number of participants, by age



4.2 Focus groups: 6-8 year-olds

This was the youngest group of participants in the research. Two separate focus groups were conducted with 13 children aged 6-8 (one group of 8, termed Group A; and one group of 5, termed Group B) through after-school clubs delivered by a voluntary child and family support organisation in the area. One of the first parts of the focus group was to show children the City Council regeneration masterplan and spend a few minutes talking about the area and about regeneration. The children spent several minutes identifying places on the map they knew, including their own terraces, where shops and takeaways they liked were located, and other businesses and services in the area. Of the 13 children, 8 had heard of regeneration and had seen the masterplan in the organisation's foyer as well as at the local library. They see the 'Corporation', 'the government' and 'the builders' as being responsible for regeneration.

The children were aware of the regeneration programme mainly through the early phase of **demolition**. Four of the children know someone who had moved because of the regeneration, including grandparents, cousins and friends. One child has moved to another area because of Phase 1 of the regeneration and another two children are due to move in later phases.

(Group B) Facilitator: Have ye seen things that are happening in Knocknaheeny?
Girl 1: Yea.
Facilitator: What's been happening?
Girl 1: Houses are getting knocked down.
Facilitator: That's right.
Girl 2: And they are getting rebuilded.

The discussion about the demolition of houses led to the issue of **rubbish in the area** being raised. This was an issue reiterated by children and young people in every focus group and is a key matter in what children do not like and what they would like to change.

(Group B) Facilitator: Did you see any of the houses being knocked down?
Boy 1: No.
Boy 2: Up the hill there, there are a few houses that are knocked.
Girl 1: There's bags of nappies up there and cans.
Facilitator: How do ye feel when ye see the bags of nappies?
Girl 2: Disgusting.
Girl 1: I feel I'm going to puke.

When asked if they had a magic wand and could do one thing that would make Knocknaheeny a better place to live, children had ideas that especially focused on **enhancing the immediate physical environment** and having a clean area:

(Group A) Girl 1: I'd put flowers and trees on it.
Facilitator: Oh, that's a lovely idea.
Girl 2: Where all the grass is, to put a swimming pool there.
Girl 3: If the grass is all messed up and you could cut it, if they could easily make it better and put nice stuff then on it.

During this discussion, some of the children also expressed concern about the **moving and rehousing of people they know**. This is having an impact on the accessibility of the children to their network of friends and family. Proximity of family and friends is a matter that is particularly important to these young children who are generally not allowed to walk far on their own.

(Group A) Boy 2: To put the houses back to where they were.
Facilitator: Oh, the houses that are gone, you would like them back to where they were. Why?
Boy 2: Because my Granddad and Nana lived around the corner and I was allowed go down to them on my own. And now I'm not because they live far away from me.
Facilitator: Any other ideas?
Girl 5: Keep it clean.
Facilitator: That's very important. Would ye all like that?
Many voices: Yea.
Facilitator: [Boy 1 name] What did you say?
Boy 1: Same as [Boy 2 name], but my cousin, my cousin used to live around the corner.
Girl 4: I wish the dirt on the floor would disappear. That it would just disappear.
[...][7]
Boy 1: My cousin used live up around the corner from me.
Facilitator: And how do you feel about that [Boy 1 name]?
Boy 1: Sad because he lives way up the back further.

[7] This mark indicates that conversations continued among participants.

The main part of the focus group was the Wheel, an activity divided into four quadrants:

- What I like about my area.
- What I don't like about my area.
- What I'd like to change about my area.
- How I should have a say.

Each is discussed below. The children were encouraged to write and draw pictures on the flipchart paper and some of these are included below.

4.2.1 What I like about my area

What the 6-8 year-old children like about their area centred on three main themes: amenities and environment; commercial and retail; and personal relationships and perceptions. Other likes include recreation and sports (dancing class, GAA and soccer) and public services (e.g. school). A more detailed description of what the children wrote is provided in Appendix 5.

Regarding **amenities and environment**, the park was the most important to this group of children and some of them also drew pictures of slides and swings on the flipchart paper.

The community garden and after-school clubs provided by youth services are also well liked. Shops and takeaways in the area were mentioned many times. Each group wrote a list of their favourite shops, in particular the main supermarket in the area but also takeaway pizzerias and chippers.

In terms of **personal relationships**, playing with friends and family is very important for these young children. Knowing people in the neighbourhood also gives them a sense of security and well-being. Because they are young, they are not allowed to walk to shops or friends' homes or schools without accompaniment, so proximity is very important. As one of the children (Group B) said when explaining what she was writing on the Wheel: 'I like having my cousins live near me. My Mam won't let me walk'. A discussion was held by a group of girls when filling in the section of the Wheel on what they like that particularly focused on personal relationships as follows:

> (Group A) Girl 3: Your neighbours.
> Facilitator: Your neighbours, I like that because you need your friends and your community.
> Girl 4: I like club [child and family support organisation].
> Girl 3: I like going to the dancing club.
> Girl 2: I like my BFFs.
> Facilitator: Best Friends Forever – they are important.
> Girl 4: I like knowing the people who are in my terrace … I like staying in my terrace. Knowing the people in my terrace. I like living near the club [child and family support organisation].
> Facilitator: So it is, like, you have freedom in the terrace.
> Girl 4: And you are allowed to play out because Mam knows all the people.

4.2.2 What I don't like about my area

What the 6-8 year-old children do not like about their area centred on three main themes: safety and anti-social behaviour; amenities and environment; and personal relationships and perceptions. A more detailed description of what the children wrote is provided in Appendix 5.

Safety and anti-social behaviour were the dominant concerns for these young children. Many of them feel unsafe due to people fighting and fear of people who are drunk. Another issue is the noise in the area caused by parties and by motorbikes driving around. The children said that this is worse at weekends when there is no school, but for some it affects them more regularly and when and where they play. As one girl commented, 'Every day when I'm playing, they drive down and it's really noisy'.

> (Group A) Girl 1: I don't like mean people.
> Facilitator: I don't like mean people, either. Anything else.
> Girl 2: I don't like the screaming.
> Facilitator: You don't like the screaming?
> Girl 1: In the yard.
> Girl 2: [No] around the house there is lots of screaming.
> Facilitator: Really? At night time or during the day?
> Girl 2: During the day and night time.
> Facilitator: Just people screaming. Will I write that down for you [Girl 2 name]?
> Girl 2: There are people having a party and they are right next to my bedroom.
> Facilitator: You speak the words and [facilitator] will write it down.
> Girl 2: I really don't know what to say.
> Facilitator: You said it perfectly there. So you don't like the parties next door, through the wall. You don't like when they wake you up.
> Girl 2: Imagine, my Mam was sleeping in my bed with me and … the baby was screaming and my Mam and Da sleep next to where the dog is barking. Everyone is screaming when they walk around. They wake my baby brother.

In terms of the **environment**, the 6-8 year-olds were also very critical of the rubbish in the area, whether in the boarded-up houses or on the footpaths. The glass and broken swings in the park are big issues for them. Some of the children think it is due to people being drunk and smashing bottles on the ground. One boy stated that 'the last time I sat down, I cut my leg there on the glass'.

> (Group A) Girl 4: Swings are broken in the park.
> Facilitator: Did they fall down, by accident?
> Girl 4: No, because two ladies pushed them all down.
> On purpose. They are broken.

> (Group B) Girl 2: Broken glass up by my cousin's house.
> Girl 1: Bold people.
> Girl 2: Nappies outside my cousin's house.
> Girl 1: I don't like the noises at night.
> Facilitator: What noises?
> Girl 1: The builders making noises at night.
> Facilitator: Are there other noises at night?
> Girl 1: The teenagers.
> Facilitator: And what are they doing?
> Girl 1: They are going out, making noises.

The children had mixed opinions about the houses being demolished – from being pleased about the prospect of new houses being built in the area to dislike of the noise and dirt from the demolition.

(Group B) Facilitator: Did you see any houses being knocked down? And how does it make you feel?
Boy 2: I feel happy because we'll get new ones.
Boy 1: I feel happy because they stop ignoring me. I'm happy because they stop ignoring me. Because they stop annoying me.
Facilitator: Who's annoying you? And did you like having the diggers making noise in the area?
Girl 1: Because I can't get to sleep.

The disruption to the **children's social networks** was reiterated in their discussion about what they don't like about the area. One young girl (Group A) said: 'I've a good one. I don't like all the houses being knocked down'. She then drew a picture of a house and a wrecking ball damaging it, asking 'Why?' on the roof. She later stated: 'I don't like when people have to move out of their houses because they're our friends'. Another young girl said something similar: 'I don't like my friends going away'.

4.2.3 What I'd like to change about my area

What the 6-8 year-old children would like to change in their area centred on three main themes: amenities and environment; safety and anti-social behaviour; and personal relationships and perceptions. A more detailed description of what the children wrote is provided in Appendix 5.

Most of the changes focus on **improving the immediate environment by stopping littering and cleaning the area**. The children also made proposals for enhancing the area in terms of more flowers and trees, and an improved playground/park. Some of the children drew pictures of flowers and the park.

In terms of **safety**, the children would also like to change some of the behaviour of people in the community, particularly around drinking, violence and noise levels.

(Group A) Girl 2: I'd like to change people to stop shouting.
Girl 3: I'll write keep the neighbourhood clean.
Facilitator: Clean, that is good.
Girl 1: I'd like to change the mad people.
Facilitator: What do you mean by mad people?
Girl 1: People that push you on the ground and stuff.

The proximity of shops also arose for one of the girls and a larger garden in which to play for another. However, the dominant theme of the discussion at this point in the Wheel activity focused on the environment, the rubbish and broken glass in the locality:

(Group A) Girl 2: I wish the shops were nearer.
Girl 1: The dirty water.
Facilitator: Where is the dirty water?
Girl 1: The water that is everywhere, the green water, and then people are always throwing things into it, rubbish.
Girl 4: I'd like a bigger garden to play in. Not just room for a shed.
Girl 1: I'd like to change broken stuff.
Facilitator: [Girl 1 name] You made a great point. Is there loads of broken stuff around the place?
Girl 1: Sometimes people break glasses and just leave it there. I'd like to clean up all the glass as well.

4.2.4 How I should have a say

Both groups of 6-8 year-olds think it is very important that young people have a say in what happens in the community so that the Council will know what young people think and hence 'they get smarter and brainier'. They had many proposals for how the City Council and the Government could engage with children and young people about regeneration. Some of the comments included:

- Come to talk to us – in school, house.
- [Child and family support organisation] – tell you with your friends.
- When people come to a visit to my house.
- I'd like to meet people on the street in the community.
- Shorter children's book.
- Small book.
- Smaller books.
- Stick notes to poles.
- Write a note.
- Put notes on trees.

Analysing the above list, the children would like a representative from the Council to talk to them directly, whether in the child and family support organisation they attend, through school, in their own homes or on the street. They proposed that a shorter masterplan (what they call 'a book') be distributed to children. They think they could be updated about what is happening in the area through notes posted on telephone poles and trees.

4.3 Focus groups: 9-13 year-olds

This was the second youngest group of participants in the research. Two focus groups were conducted with 26 children aged 9-13 (one group of 18 in a primary school, termed Group A;[8] and one group of 8 in a Garda Diversion Programme, termed Group B). The first part of the focus group involved showing the children the masterplan and spending a few minutes talking about the area and regeneration.

Of the 26 children, all of them had heard about regeneration.

- Everyone in Group A had heard of regeneration directly from a former Government Minister, Lucinda Creighton, TD, former Minister of State for European Affairs, who had visited their school and discussed regeneration at a school assembly. From Group A, 7 had seen the masterplan in a number of different places: 3 on the Internet at home; one saw it with their grandparents who had a printed copy; another boy's parents had a copy; and one had seen the online edition through the Knocknaheeny Facebook page. They had also heard of regeneration because they saw homes being physically knocked down: one had seen this on the TV3 news and another had read about it in the *Evening Echo*.
- Everyone in Group B had also heard about regeneration. Four of the total of 8 knew about it because a member of their families, friends or acquaintances had moved or were preparing to move. Half of the group had also seen the masterplan.

  (Group A) Facilitator: So everyone has heard of the regeneration project? How had ye heard of it?
  Boy 1: At home.
  Boy 2: I just seen the houses being knocked down so.
  Boy 3: I got told. I saw it as well, and it was on RTÉ.
  Facilitator: Ah, ok. And who told you?
  Boy 3: I don't know. Just like down at the buildings, they are all gone. Just random people.

[8] Because Group A was much larger than other groups, it was more difficult in the transcriptions to distinguish between interlocutors. Hence it was not possible to give a distinct number to the participants. Where Boy/Girl 1 or Boy/Girl 2 is referred to, these are only relevant for the quotation in question.

Facilitator: Just people around the streets basically?
Boy 3: Yea.
Boy 4: My Aunt told me.
Facilitator: Your Aunt told you, yea?
Boy 5: It was on the Internet.
Facilitator: Ah, ok.
Boy 6: My Nan. Her house is getting knocked down.
Facilitator: Her house is getting knocked down? Has she moved yet?
Boy 6: Not yet.
Facilitator: Later is it? OK. Yourself?
Boy 7: It was on the paper.
Facilitator: Do you remember what paper?
Boy 7: The *Evening Echo*.
Facilitator: The *Evening Echo*. Yea.
Boy 8: It was on the computer.
Facilitator: Which computer?
Boy 8: That computer [pointing to the class computer].
Facilitator: Did you see a presentation here? Ah, OK. Yourself?
Boy 9: My Mam told me.
Boy 10: My Nan told me.

The discussion about knowledge of regeneration led to the issue of family and acquaintances moving from the area. This was an issue reiterated by children and young people in every focus group as a key matter they did not like about the regeneration programme. Children felt regeneration was **disrupting close familial and friendship ties** by placing a physical distance between them and their social spheres.

(Group A) Facilitator: And how are they getting on so far? The people who have moved, do they like it?
Boy 1: Not really.
Boy 2: My Nana says she hates it, says she shouldn't have left. You know the person on the news for not leaving. She says she should have done that.
Boy 3: Did your Nan own her house?
Boy 2: Yea, she rented it, she owned it. But she still wants to go back. But they knocked it down now.
Facilitator: But she might get to go back in a few years' time.
Boy 2: Yea.
Facilitator: And yourselves?
Boy 3: My Granda and my Uncle.
Facilitator: OK and have they already moved?
Boy 3: Yea.
Facilitator: And do you know how they are?
Boy 3: They like the house, but they don't like where they are living.
Facilitator: How come?
Boy 3: Because Supervalu and stuff like that is too far away.

There was some confusion about who was responsible for regeneration, with some children mentioning University College Cork, local voluntary bodies and a local city councillor. Others recognised it was either the Government or the Corporation/Council that had primary responsibility. When asked what they thought regeneration was about, the children's answers appear to reflect some sense of unease about regeneration in the community. Some strongly support it, especially on the basis of poor quality housing, while others are wary.

(Group A) Facilitator: What do you think regeneration is about?
Boy 1: Making it better.
Boy 2: No, like destroying the place.
Boy 3: Rebuilding it like.

Boy 4: Why do they have to knock the houses. There is no need for it, like.
Boy 5: In about 10 years, it will all be done.
Facilitator: That's the plan. They are knocking down the old houses because they are not very good quality.
Boy 6: My house has a load of blocks and there's mould on them.
Facilitator: Ah really. So do you think it is a good idea to get a new house?
Boy 6: Yea. In the corner, there is all black mould growing and one night we were all just sitting in the front room and we heard a great big splash. And water fell through the ceiling, water fell through the ceiling.

Before moving on to the Wheel activity, the children were asked if they had a magic wand and could do one thing that would make Knocknaheeny a better place to live, what would they do. The children were particularly keen for the development of commercial and retail outlets in their neighbourhood, mentioning cinema, DVD rental shop, swimming pools, a snooker hall, all-weather pitches and a go kart/motorcycle track. They also mentioned the problem of anti-social behaviour.

(Group A) Boy 1: Put in free all-weathers.
Boy 2: Put more stuff in the park.
Boy 3: I'd make a biking place, a huge biking place.
Boy 4: A snooker hall.
Boy 5: Cinemas.
Boy 6: Throw away all the bad people.

The main part of the focus group was the Wheel, an activity divided into four quadrants: What I like about my area; What I don't like about my area; What I'd like to change about my area; and How I should have a say. For this part, the large Group A of 18 children was divided into 4 subgroups of 4-5 participants, while the 8 children in Group B were divided into 2 subgroups of 4 each.

4.3.1 What I like about my area

What the children like about their area centred on five main themes: recreation and sports; commercial and retail; amenities and environment; public services; and personal relationships. A more detailed description of what the children wrote is provided in Appendix 5.

The children were particularly concerned with **activities for young people**. They mentioned sports clubs (e.g. swimming, GAA, boxing and soccer), youth services and commercial and retail businesses they enjoyed with their families and friends. They also prioritised local public services, such as school, church and medical services.

(Group B) Facilitator: What I like about my area. That's grand so. Start calling out what you like about the area, anything at all.
Boy 1: Having friends and family around you.
Facilitator: That's very important. Write that down now. Friends and family – that's very good. How about you other lads? What do you think? What do you like about Knocknaheeny?
Boy 2: Family.
Boy 3: That Supervalu is close.
Boy 1: GAA clubs.
Boy 2: I like the park.
Facilitator: The park, so put that down. Come on, lads, you can tell us more. You don't have to say just one thing.
Boy 1: Loads of terraces.
Boy 2: Lots of friends.
[Indistinct]

Facilitator: What? The youth centre. Apache Pizza.
Boy 1: School.
Boy 2: School is close.
Facilitator: School is close, that's important.
Boy 2: We don't have to go far, unlike a lot of kids.
Facilitator: Yea, unlike a lot of kids.
[Indistinct]
Boy 3: The doctors.
[Indistinct]
Boy 2: Swimming.
Boy 4: Churchfield swimming.

Some of the children also expressed great pride in their area. This was a theme that emerged with almost every age cohort. Many of the children were aware that Knocknaheeny had a bad reputation and felt this was untrue.

(Group A) Facilitator: What do ye like?
Boy 3: Everything.
Facilitator: Put it down.
Boy 3: Knocknaheeny is the best place.

4.3.2 What I don't like about my area

What the children do not like about their area centred on four main themes: safety and anti-social behaviour; amenities and environment; personal relationships and perceptions; and a lack of good sporting facilities in the area. A more detailed description of what the children wrote is provided in Appendix 5.

Safety and anti-social behaviour were the main concerns for these 9-13 year-olds. Many of them feel unsafe due to people fighting, vandalism and anti-social behaviour. In the subgroups, a few of the children described some incidents of bullying.

(Group A) Boy 1: You'd be walking on the road. [Boy's name] and my friend [another boy's name] were walking on the road and a fella came up to me, grabbed me by the shirt, started mocking me, tried to fight me an' everything.
Facilitator: So he threatened you?
Boy 1: Yea. And was just at me for like no reason.

(Group B) Facilitator: Vandalism. What do you mean by vandalism [boy's name]?
Boy 1: Breaking windows, buildings and cars.

The children were also very concerned about **drinking, drugs and drink-driving** in particular. Again, this was part of a list of overlapping issues that combined to make the children feel unsafe in their neighbourhood.

(Group B) Facilitator: Why is it not safe?
Boy 1: Because people are drinking and driving.
[...]
Boy 2: Teenagers [indistinct], a junkie nearly hit me one day.

The issue of **motorbikes** came up in every single focus group, often more than once during a session. Sometimes it is mentioned as something a few of the children like, while other times it is raised by different children as something they dislike. When asked how they would like to change the area, some children wanted to get rid of motorbikes, while others imagined a special 'bike park'. This age cohort was similarly divided.

(Group B) Girl 1: They shouldn't have motorbikes in the park because of kids. Not safe.

(Group A) Boy 6: They are going in there with their [motor] bikes.
Facilitator: I don't think that's allowed.

Boy 7: It's not allowed, but they go in there anyway. And they'll get caught.
Boy 8: They already did [get caught by the police]. But they go in there anyway.
Facilitator: And what do you think of that?
Boy 8: Bad.
Boy 9: I think it's cool.

With this age cohort (9-13 years) on this theme of 'What I don't like about my area', **Travellers and Traveller discrimination** arose several times. Three of the four subgroups from Group A mentioned Travellers – that there were 'too many Travellers' or that halting sites were problematic zones.

(Group A) Boy 2: There's too many Travellers and the halting site.
Facilitator: Too many what?
Boy 2: There's too many Travellers around the place, jocking horses.
Facilitator: Do you like the horses?
Boy 1: The horses are grand, it's just the people who are on them.
Facilitator: Why don't you like the Travellers? What do they do?
Boy 2: They hurt you.
Boy 1: They try and start fights and everything … they are always throwing bottles, fighting outside the doors and everything, and they come up, they come up to the door asking for the phone, asking for extension leads, everything.
[…]
Boy 1: Get rid of some of the 'knackers'.
Boy 2: I'd get rid of the halting site.
Boy 3: Ban the halting site.
Boy 1: But you can't get rid of them, like.
Boy 2: You can. You can offer them houses.
Facilitator: So when you say 'knackers', you don't just mean Travellers. You also mean bad people. And what do the bad people be doing?
[…]
Boy 1: Starting fights, constantly.
Boy 2: I'd say bomb the halting site.
Facilitator: What's that like, do you stay away from them, do you?
Boy 1: Yea, we try to avoid them if possible like. I walk to the other side of the road if I see them coming.
Boy 2: Don't make eye contact.
Boy 1: Yea, don't make eye contact.

Discriminatory attitudes towards Travellers, as expressed above, are not unique to residents of social housing areas, but reflect broad societal attitudes and policy failures at national and local level in Irish society. However, the concentration of Traveller halting sites in deprived areas and the absence of trust between residents, local authorities and the Traveller community can exacerbate negative opinions to the point that there is no meaningful engagement or relationship between the parties. In such an environment, space is created for fear, negative opinions and actions, such as the recent rounding up of horses and ploughing of fields, which compound an already tense situation.[9]

4.3.3 What I'd like to change about my area

What the 9-13 year-old children would like to change about their area centred on five main themes: amenities and environment; commercial and retail; recreation and sports; safety and anti-social behaviour; and personal relationships and perceptions. A more detailed description of what the children wrote is provided in Appendix 5.

[9] *See* http://www.irishexaminer.com/archives/2013/1120/ireland/several-seized-horses-will-have-to-be-put-down-250096.html

Reflecting the age profile of this cohort, they have a relatively greater amount of freedom to pursue activities separately from their families and parents, and spend time with their friends outside the home. Hence, the children were quite focused on age-appropriate social activities in the area. These crossed categories of local amenities, commercial and retail sectors, and recreation and sports.

(Group A) Facilitator: So that is why they are knocking and rebuilding. If you had a magic wand, or if you won the lotto, what is the one thing that you would do to make Knocknaheeny better?
Boy 1: Put in free all-weathers.
Boy 2: Put more stuff in the park.
Boy 3: I'd make a biking place, a huge biking place.
Boy 4: Snooker hall.
Boy 5: Cinemas.
Boy 6: Throw away all the bad people.
Boy 7: Put in an arcade.
Boy 8: Out in a GameStop.
Boy 9: Xtra-vision.
Boy 10: Boot out all the Travellers. And the site.
Facilitator: Anything else?
Boy 11: Get more land. You know where the shopping centre is? Spread that out a bit more.
Boy 12: A sports shop.
Boy 13: But where would all this go? There is barely any space in there.
Facilitator: Well, they can redevelop the Supervalu area all right. There are some plans to do that, I think.
Boy 14: A swimming pool. An outdoor swimming.

(Group B) Boy 2: I know, a house with a big huge swimming pool.
[Indistinct]
Boy 3: I think I'd like a quad track.
Facilitator: A quad track. A mansion with a quad track.
Boy 4: That's what I was going to say.
Boy 2: Could we get a Go-Kart track?

Reflecting how some of the children said they sometimes felt unsafe in their communities, many of the groups were positively disposed toward the Gardaí and the diversion projects in the area. While all of those who mentioned the Gardaí said they would like to see more Gardaí, some thought their presence was sufficient, while others thought it lacking in terms of numbers and response. In general, the children felt more comfortable with the presence of the Gardaí visible in the community.

(Group A) Boy 1: We'd like them [Gardaí] to make Knocknaheeny a better community. Not just robbing … people fighting …
Boy 2: Safer.
Boy 1: … we need a safer community.
Boy 3: And no drinking over there, people taking drugs.
Boy 2: Yea, the houses getting abandoned.
Facilitator: Why is it not safe?
Boy 1: Because people are drinking and driving.
Facilitator: Drink-driving.
Boy 1: Bullying.
[…]
Facilitator: Are the Guards up there helping, like?
Boy 1: No, we need more Guards.
Facilitator: Make the laws clearer so. And more Guards.
Boy 1: And more security around.
[…]

Facilitator: A good thing. So what I like about Knocknaheeny is that ...
Boy 1: ... the Guards are always around the place. Like, when my windows got knocked in they were like up in 30 seconds.
Facilitator: So they are helping?
Boy 1: Oh yea! Always helping.

(Group B) Facilitator: More Guards. Why should there be more Guards, lads?
Boy 1: Another thing, they would go to other places quicker.
Facilitator: You think they would go to other places quicker? [Boy 2 name] Do you think the Guards would go to other places quicker than Knocknaheeny?
Boy 2: Yea.

4.3.4 What regeneration should do

What the children think regeneration should do centred on six main themes: amenities and environment; recreation and sports; personal relationships and perceptions; consultation; commercial and retail; and providing new opportunities for the community. A more detailed description of what the children wrote is provided in Appendix 5.

In the main, this age cohort (9-13 years) is positive and hopeful about the regeneration project. They were concerned about improving the quality of the housing stock, local amenities and the environment. They hoped regeneration would improve their feelings of safety in the area, but their biggest hope was for regeneration to enable the development of an infrastructure for more social activities for their age group, either via sports and club facilities or through the enablement of commercial enterprises, particularly chain stores such as GameStop and restaurants such as Hillbillys.

(Group A) Facilitator: So what should regeneration do?
Boy 2: Put in astro turf pitches.
Boy 3: Rugby pitches.
Boy 4: More Hillbillys.
Boy 5: Build a swimming pool.
Boy 1: Snooker.
Boy 3: Build another shooters [Snooker hall].
Facilitator: So do ye think regeneration is doing a good job?
Boy 1: Yea, if they pull off what they say they are going to do, it will be way better. It would be way better in Knocknaheeny.

The children were keen to change the poor reputation they felt Knocknaheeny had. They suggested two approaches. One was to build tourist attractions to bring people into the area and the other was to build more houses, including facilities for the sick and the elderly.

(Group A) Facilitator: What regeneration should do? You know that plan we looked at a while ago? Well, that is the regeneration plan. What do you think it should do for your area?
Boy 1: Put tourist attractions and stuff.
Boy 2: We are children, we have our rights.
[...]
Boy 2: More people into the area.
[...]
Boy 1: Make more buildings.
Facilitator: What sort of buildings?
Boy 1: You know, like, more hospitals, homes for the old people.

The children also expressed hope that the quality of the environment in Knocknaheeny would be improved through the regeneration programme.

(Group B) Boy 2: I'd like to see more trees. Go greener.
Facilitator: Go greener. That is good.
Boy 3: Clean up your own pet poo.
[...]
Boy 1: Cleaner roads.

4.3.5 Top 3 changes

The final task for the focus group was for each subgroup to look at all the information they had collected on their sheets and to prioritise them into the Top 3 changes they felt would be most important for the future of Knocknaheeny. These priority changes are summarised below.

Number 1	Number 2	Number 3
We would like a gaming place (so our mams won't know that we're playing)	A big stadium for soccer	An Internet café
A happy community	A safer environment	More indoor activities for children
Astro pitches	Cinema	More fields

There were also many other suggested changes that the groups wrote down as part of their 'wish list', including: new roads would be good; employment in building and managing; I want the houses back; people can have a proper life with proper houses; more facilities; Argos; a new Apple store; a GameStop; more jobs; send on the Travellers; shops; soccer club; swimming; and to get a MMA club (Mixed Martial Arts).

Priorities for the area centre on enriching the social fabric in the community by improving the local facilities and safety. This was expressed in two ways: in terms of a safe environment and, also, safety from criminality and anti-social behaviour. But as can be seen from the lists, the children are also strongly aware of economic development in terms of employment and creating a local retail centre. Despite their young age, they see the links between environmental, community and economic regeneration, viewing these matters as of equal importance to the physical regeneration of their community.

4.3.6 How I should have a say

The final part of the Wheel activity focused on 'how and why the children should have a say' on developments within the community such as regeneration. When asked why children should have a say, they wrote:

- We should have our own say.
- We should know what they are doing 'cos we live here.
- Regen is trying to help the community, which is a good thing.
- What's wrong with the houses? Would you like your house knocked?
- We should be heard.
- We want our say.
- We are children and we have our own rights.
- We have a bigger imagination.
- Children are more active.
- Children should be allowed to say what happens in the area.
- We should be asked what to do.
- Children should get a say in what happens.
- Adults should listen to children.

In contrast to other groups (both younger and older), these 9-13 year-old participants are conscious of their rights as children in the now, not as future adults. When the researchers probed the origins of this awareness, it emerged that their teachers and youth workers had introduced them to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its relevance to their lives and experiences.

The children had numerous ideas for how they could have a say, as follows:

- We could make a poster about what we want.
- City Council meet with children on a regular basis.
- Send a survey to children giving options for park, cinema.
- Let us help build.
- A public vote.
- We would like more information.
- Get a big billboard and say there is a meeting going on, date and time.
- You should have a choice to move out or not.
- Make Knocknaheeny a better place.
- Involving planning.
- I think we should have a say in this project.
- Brighter future in Knocknaheeny.
- Involved in the designs.
- Meet the Council, tell them my point of view.

The children felt very strongly that regeneration was progressing apace and that they, and their parents, had not been consulted sufficiently, if at all. They felt they should be entitled to have a say, that they should be heard, that they had bigger imaginations than the adults and regeneration was missing an opportunity by not speaking with them, that regeneration should even employ them. In a very practical sense, they thought regeneration should at least survey the views of young people. They even mentioned the possibility of protest.

> (Group A) Facilitator: The people doing regeneration, how should they ask you? How could you give your input?
> Boy 1: Employ somebody.
> Boy 2: Employ us.
> Facilitator: Employ you doing what?
> Boy 2: Management.
> Facilitator: Very good. Anything else?
> Boy 2: In the building, I don't know.
> Boy 1: Send out a survey to all the young children.
> Facilitator: Very good. Here, you write that down, will you?
> Boy 1: No, I don't like writing.
> Facilitator: OK, I'll do it. Asking what [in the survey]?
> Boy 1: Asking what they would like – a park, swimming pool, and whatever has the most votes.
> Facilitator: Listen, lads, ye are doing brilliant. These are great ideas. But what else can they do?
> Boy 3: Protest.
>
> (Group B) Facilitator: How do ye think ye should have a say in what is happening … in the regeneration? … Should ye tell the Council? Should ye get to meet the Council?
> Boy 1: Yea, we have our rights.
> Girl 1: We are here too.
> Facilitator: Yea, well that is very good, ye have your rights. You wrote that already. So do you think you should meet the Council? [Indistinct]
> Boy 2: Yes.
> Facilitator: Well, write it down. We should meet the Council. And why would you want to meet the Council [Boy 2 name]? What would you want to say to them?
> Boy 2: Tell them that.
> Facilitator: Tell them what?
> Boy 2: My point of view.

4.4 Focus groups: 15-17 year-olds

This focus group was conducted with 18 teenagers, aged 15-17 years, in a local secondary school.[10] It involved two activities: the Wheel and PhotoVoice. Similar to other groups, the Wheel activity formed the central part of the discussions. This group was also asked to participate in an additional activity – a PhotoVoice project – which involved taking photographs in their neighbourhood in line with the themes of the Wheel. These pictures are integrated in the analysis below and provide a visual representation of the issues affecting young people in the area.

Ten of the 18 young people had heard about regeneration, mainly from the 'youth centre', 'me Mam', 'Nan and Grandad', their school Principal, 'word on the street' and 'word-of-mouth'. They see the Corporation, Government and Taoiseach as primarily responsible for regeneration. Six out of the 18 young people had a parent or family member who went to a regeneration meeting. Just one of the group has moved so far and found the experience very positive.

> Boy: Yea, my parents went to a meeting.
> Facilitator: And how has the move been for you?
> Boy: Grand.
> Facilitator: Do you like it down there?
> Boy: Yea, it is way quieter and less people and shit like that.
> Facilitator: And do you think you will stay?
> Boy: Yea.

The focus group began with a brainstorming of what regeneration involves. When asked what comes to mind when thinking about regeneration, the group focused on **cleanliness of the area** and **more facilities**.

> Girl 1: Making Knocknaheeny better.
> Boy 1: Starting all over again.
> Girl 1: Cleaning up.
> Girl 2: New.
> [...]
> Boy 1: More sports and things like that.
> Facilitator: More sports facilities. Anything else that comes to mind?
> Boy 2: Cleaner environment.
> Girl 2: I'd like to know what's going to happen when it changes. Is it going to be cleaner and stuff like.

[10] Because this group was much larger than other groups, it was more difficult in the transcriptions to distinguish between interlocutors. Hence it was not possible to give a distinct number to the participants. Where Boy/Girl 1 or Boy/Girl 2 is referred to, these are only relevant for the quotation in question.

A matter that arose for this 15-17 year-old group during discussion, which had not arisen for other younger groups, was the **closing of the alleys in the area**. It was the focus of conversation several times during the focus group and has affected the young people by making their journey between school and home longer.

Facilitator: Anything else, guys? Regeneration, is it just ...
Girl 1: Open alleys again.
Facilitator: Open alleys and short-cuts.
Several voices: Yea, yea, yea.
Girl 2: Yea, they closed the lane.
Facilitator: Are lanes and alleys important?
Girl 2: Yea, because it would be faster to get home for lunch.
[...]
Girl 3: They closed the main lane and now there are other alleys and lanes that are not being used, like, just for like.
Girl 4: Yea, I know what you mean.
Facilitator: Yea, so they closed the main lane and it takes longer to get home. OK, that's good [to record as topic]. Because people have different views on lanes, young people's views tend to be different to adults' views on lanes.
Girl 1: My Mam thinks it should be opened. I just want to walk home.

"The whole alley is always closed... a real nuisance for the residents of Hollyhill and Ardcullen."

The group was also somewhat critical of the early phase of regeneration in terms of the **demolition**.

Girl 1: It looks manky. It looks dirty and ... [indistinct]
Facilitator: What looks manky and dirty?
Girl 1: Where they knocked all the houses.
Girl 2: It looks like a ghetto.
[...]
Facilitator: But do you think it is going to be nice when they build it back up again?
Girl 1: But sure, that will take years. I would prefer to not knock stuff.

Another group was more positive about the demolition of the houses. In a discussion about the photographs taken by the young people, one of the boys highlighted how it provided space for young people to ride their motorbikes.

Boy: Look, houses knocked.
Facilitator: Were those houses knocked for the regeneration?
Boy: Yea.
Facilitator: What's it like up there now?
Boy: There is nothing up there now. It's all flat, soil and that. There are motorbikes going up and down there every day, so it's not going to set. It's good for them [motorbikers] because there is loads of open space, flying up and down the road.

Regeneration in progress

The 18 young people were divided into smaller groups for the Wheel activity – 5 subgroups of between 3-4 students, mostly divided according to gender.

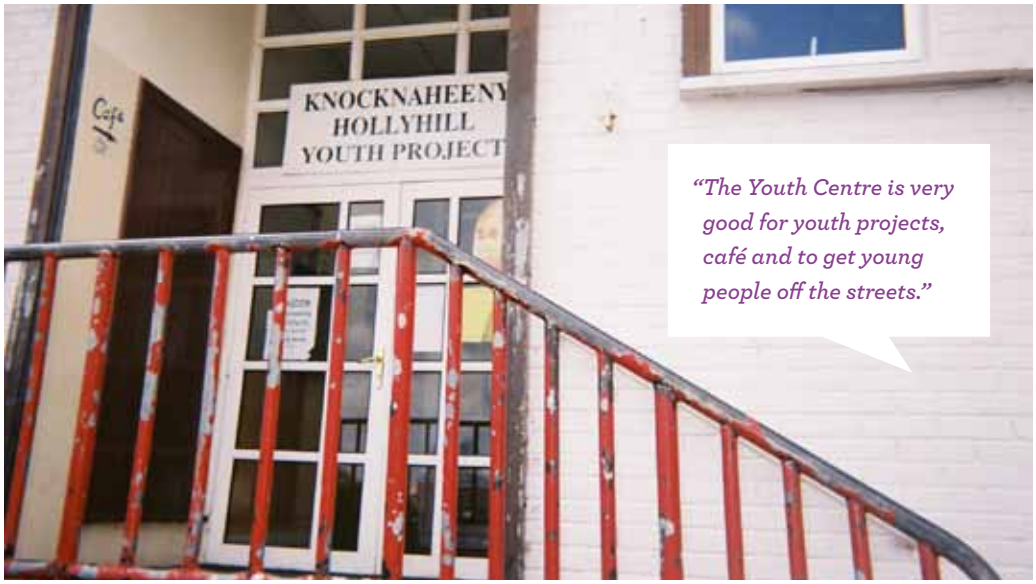
4.4.1 What I like about my area

Three themes emerged for this group in terms of what they like about their area: commercial and retail; personal relationships and perceptions; and amenities and the environment. One subgroup also mentioned that they like the schools in the area. A more detailed description of what the children wrote is provided in Appendix 5.

As with the younger groups, the 15-17 year-olds wrote a list of all the shops and take-aways they like in the area.

"The shop is so close to my house, I love it!"

Similarly, proximity to family and friends is important to this age group and they also highlight the nice people in the area and how it is friendly and welcoming. The youth centre is very important to this age cohort and they also like the new buildings and houses that are being constructed as part of regeneration.



"The Youth Centre is very good for youth projects, café and to get young people off the streets."

However, there was debate in the subgroups about the area. One pair of boys discussed whether the area was respectable and made distinctions between particular areas in Knocknaheeny, some seen as more problematic than others.

Boy 1: It is a nice area.
Facilitator: Well, put that down then.
Boy 1: A nice respectable area.
Boy 2: It is not a respectable area at all!
Facilitator: Yea?
Boy 2: It is not though.
Facilitator: Well, it is all in the eyes of the beholder.
Boy 2: Can I put down some parts?
Boy 1: Shanakiel is a lovely place.
Facilitator: Look, put down anything that comes to mind about what is good. Are ye proud of the area? Have you family here?
Boy 1: They are all on about they want their alleys open. That is part of [estate name]. That's not Knocknaheeny. It is not Knocknaheeny though.

Another group had a dispute about whether the people living in the area are nice. While one boy now lives in a quieter area outside Knocknaheeny, he and another boy and girl discussed whether people are nicer in Knocknaheeny than in other areas.

Boy 1: I said now that there's nice people around the place. But she doesn't agree with me at all.
Girl 1: Well, you don't live here [Knocknaheeny].
Boy 1: I lived here for 12 years and then I moved down there.
Facilitator: Are there more nice people up here than down there?
Boy 1: No.
Boy 2: There's nicer people up here.
Boy 1: I live down in a quiet part.

4.4.2 What I don't like about my area

Safety and anti-social behaviour were the dominant themes in this part of the Wheel activity, although amenities and the environment are almost equally emphasised (*see details in Appendix 5*).

The same issues arose for this group of 15-17 year-olds as for the younger groups in terms of **alcohol and drug abuse, violence and vandalism**. For several of the young people, they have direct experience of the issues arising. One of the groups of girls discussed the issue with the facilitator:

Girl 1: Alcoholics drinking like.
Facilitator: Drinking on the street, is it?
Girl 1: It's people lying on the ground.
Facilitator: Oh dear.
Girl 1: Fights.
Girl 2: And fires.
Girl 3: Junkies, seriously junkies.
Facilitator: And is that getting worse, do you think?
Several voices: Yea.
Facilitator: Why?
Girl 1: Way worse.
Facilitator: Why?
Girl 1: Because there are always fights and everything.
Girl 2: My brother came home and he was saying that a fella was trying to sell him tablets.
Facilitator: Really? And why do you think the drugs problem is getting worse?
Girl 1: There are too many young fellas coming out of rehab at the same time and coming back together.
[...]
Girl 1: And the last time two fellas in a car tried to drag my brother into the car.
Facilitator: Really?
Girl 1: Yea and he ran home.

The drugs issue dominated much of the discussion in many of the other subgroups. Drugs make the young people feel unsafe in their area, with the community vulnerable to crime and violence.

Boy 1: It is destroying it.
Facilitator: Why is it destroying it?
Boy 1: Because people can't go out on the streets because there's drugs, fighting and there is trouble.

Facilitator: And so, where are the drugs coming from?
Boy 2: Everywhere.
Facilitator: Where are people getting the drugs?
Boy 2: Dealers, I suppose.
Facilitator: The dealers. And are the dealers local or are they people coming in?
Boy 2: Yea. Everywhere, local and coming in.
Facilitator: If you were to rank the level of problems, is drugs the most important issue in the area or is it not the most important?
Boy 2: Drugs are making the place a bad name, wrecking the place. That is why people are trying to move.
Facilitator: OK, OK.
Boy 3: People have no money to pay for drugs and so they are robbing houses and that.

Drinking and drugs impact on the access of the young people to local amenities and sports and recreational facilities, in particular the basketball court (which was raised by several other groups in the study). Cleanliness of the area is also connected to this issue, for example, due to broken glass.

Facilitator: You don't like the basketball court?
Boy 1: It's pointless, like. There are all gangs up there. And all they are doing is smoking up there and taking drugs.
Facilitator: You are not too keen on that?
Boy 1: And drinking as well.
Facilitator: That is interesting because a lot of people are kind of put out by that carry-on.
Boy 1: And it is all covered in glass.
Boy 2: Yea. It is the same with the alleys.

Use of the soccer pitch is also affected by people drinking. In a discussion about the photographs the young people had taken, the issue of drinking arose.

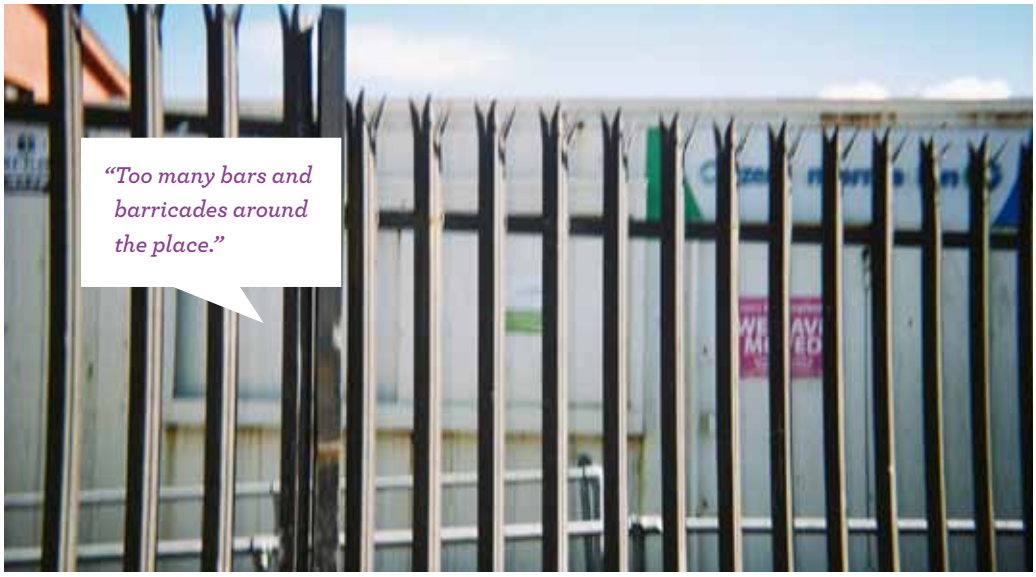
Facilitator: So that field now. What do ye do in that field? Can ye do anything? Can ye play soccer or ...
Boy 1: That's the soccer pitch there.
Facilitator: Is that the schools pitch? Can ye use it after school?
Boy 2: There are no goals up like, but we kick the ball about.
Facilitator: But people drink in there and stuff?
Boy 2: In by the wall at the side and at night and stuff. Like, we'd know who they are and stuff, but they'd be half-langers [drunk] and that and they want to play soccer.
Facilitator: Does it stop you from playing soccer?
Boy 2: They come over and they'd be wrecking the game, or something like.

This is the first group to mention the term 'scumbag' – it is a term that appears to be used by the teenagers more than younger children. In a discussion over the photographs taken, a group of boys make the distinction between scumbags and others.

Facilitator: What are scumbags?
Boy 1: Scum like – drink, smoke, take drugs and all that stuff. There's loads of them up around here like.
Boy 2: You drink in a pub [addressing Boy 1]. Are you a scumbag?
Facilitator: Just because you drink, sure there is people everywhere drinking. What's the difference, say, between a drinker and a scumbag?
Boy 1: A drinker is in a pub. A scumbag is in the street taking drugs and that.

4.4.3 What I'd like to change about my area

Similar to responses on what they did not like about their area, this group would like to see changes to amenities and the environment and to safety and anti-social behaviour (*see details in Appendix 5*). Opening up the area more and cleaning it up (including the basketball court) is very important to these young people. The barriers in the area are documented in many of the photographs taken by them.



In terms of safety and anti-social behaviour, one proposal is to have more Gardaí in the area. This is particularly related to the issue of drugs, which is very visible on the streets, as highlighted in this conversation between two boys and one of the facilitators.

Boy 1: More Guards.
Facilitator: More Guards, interesting point. A lot of people are mentioning the drugs issue. Is that an issue around here, lads?
Boy 2: Yea.
Facilitator: In what way is the drugs thing an issue around here, lads?
Boy 1: Being over-used like.
Facilitator: But how do you know?
Boy 1: Because you see them.
Facilitator: Where do you see them?
Boy 2: Just out on the streets and around the place.

Some of the subgroups were also concerned about horses and caravans associated with Travellers, but not to the same extent as the 9-13 year-old younger groups (*see Section 4.3.2 above*). The matter of motorbikes in the area was of particular concern to the girls.

Facilitator: So motorbikes are an issue? And what do you think would be a solution to the motorbikes in the area? What would be the solution for that, do you think?
Girl 1: Get rid of them.
Facilitator: What about a facility for people to use?
Girl 2: But not up here.
Boy 1: Sure they are getting, buying, any kind of bike and going out in the field on it. The Guards come up one way and they get out the other, on the bike, like.
Facilitator: So it would be better if there were some kind of park or something?
Girl 2: Yea, but not anywhere near the houses.
Facilitator: Not near the houses?
Girl 3: How about the field by the reservoir?
Girl 4: Yea, there are about five fields up there.
Girl 3: There are filthy horses in there.

4.4.4 What regeneration should do

Proposals for what regeneration should do are related to the things the young people would like to change about their area, namely: opening the alleys, cleaning the area, having more facilities and improving the basketball court. Many of the young people think that regeneration will improve the area and people's lives (*see details in Appendix 5*).

The alleys came up in conversation several times. While the young people recognise that there were reasons for closing them, they argued that the alleys could be re-opened for specific times, especially for school. Closing the alleys has also resulted in their becoming dumping grounds, which also concerns the young people.

Facilitator: Did you feel they were closed for good reasons?
Boy 1: For good and bad reasons. But if you look inside the gates now, there is all rubbish.
Girl 1: Like, it was dirty, but they could have cleaned it. And they could have locked it at a certain time instead of just closing it off.
Girl 2: Open it for school and close it when it is over. That is all I am worried about.
Boy 1: You have to walk around.
Girl 2: It's not that long for me. I just prefer to walk that way.

The duration of the regeneration led to a discussion about whether people think they may stay in Knocknaheeny or move to another place. The discussion led to a proposal for better schools and some debate about the schools already in the area. For one young person, the school having a regeneration project is a good thing, demonstrating that it is a good school, while for another young person the very fact that regeneration is required is a problem.

Facilitator: But when this regeneration is finished, you are all going to be in your 20s. It is a 10-year programme, so you will be in your mid to late 20s.
Boy 1: 26.
Girl 1: Jesus, I won't be living here anyway.
Boy 1: I'll be married and all with 9 kids. [All laugh]
Facilitator: So it is an area that you really don't want to stay in?
Boy 1: It depends.
Girl 1: If it gets better, I would like to stay. If my children will have a good life.
Facilitator: And what would give a good life to your children, do you think?
Girl 1: Better school.
Boy 1: Better school? What's wrong with the schools?
Girl 1: My child won't be coming here.
Boy 1: This is a great school.
Girl 1: No, it is not.
Boy 1: You don't see other schools having a regeneration project over there.
Girl 1: You don't see other schools having to have a regeneration project.
Facilitator: You could put it in there if you want – 'better schools'?
Girl 2: They don't have to knock it. Just make it a bit better.

Other young people would prefer to move to 'a quieter place'. Two boys spoke of how they would rather live in the countryside.

Boy 1: Out by the countryside, towards the countryside, not too far into the country, so and have a family there.
Facilitator: So you don't think you would raise a family here?
Boy 1: I wouldn't like that.
[...]
Boy 2: I'd like to stay close enough to my family. I like living in the city, but a quiet place out towards the countryside, I'd love to live out there, but not too far. It would be better, quieter, less hassle. Your kids would grow up better, you know like?

Employment is also a factor in whether young people could see themselves having a future in the area. However, whether due to the recession or the disadvantage in the area, some of the young people anticipate difficulties in securing work.

Facilitator: And you were saying you would like to stay in the area, that you'd like to be able to work and that.
Boy 1: If I got work like, it is hard to say. I wouldn't mind staying here.
Facilitator: And what do you think about prospects for employment up here?
Boy 1: Work is hard to get.
Boy 2: Sorry?
Facilitator: Do you think work is hard to get?
Boy 2: Up here? Yea, because there is not much to do like. There is not much going on.
Boy 1: There is not much work out there now, placement-wise.

4.4.5 Top 3 changes

Each of the five subgroups identified the Top 3 changes they would make, as follows:

Number 1	Number 2	Number 3
Make the place more liveable	Clean up the area	Make people want to stay in the area
School	Park	Better houses
Employment, jobs, trade	More shops for teenagers and things to do	A better school, with cafeteria and better food
Better estates for our community	Making Knocknaheeny having a good reputation for the future	Trade
Re-opening of the lane		Cleaning up the area

It is clear from the priorities the young people identified above and from their earlier discussion that they have a holistic view of regeneration – they think regeneration should enhance the liveability of Knocknaheeny, improve its reputation and the possibility of people remaining in the area. They identify not only physical improvements they would like to see in terms of better housing and estates, but also social, economic and environmental matters they would like addressed, including improving the schools and facilities for young people, more jobs and trade, cleaning up the area and improving the local park.

4.4.6 How I should have a say

The young people in this age group of 15-17 are very keen to have a say for a number of reasons, which they wrote around the outside of the Wheel as follows:

- We should have a say.
- Young people should have a say.
- We should have a say in what things to change in our community.
- They should be in the middle of it all.
- Youths have a big part to play in the future.
- We are the future so we should have an opinion.
- Yes, young people should have a say in this because we are the future and it should be our decision on what will help the community.
- I think young people should have a say because it is their lives and their families' lives. They have to look at it every day.
- We are the ones that are growing up and have to live in Knocknaheeny when everything is being changed.
- They live in the area too.
- The older people should respect the youths and their opinions.

The group had two main proposals for how they should be involved – meetings that involve young people and youths getting jobs.

> Facilitator: So just have a think about ways that you could be involved in deciding about it [regeneration]. So your parents got to go to that meeting. Would you have liked to go to it yourself?
> Boy 1: Well, ah, yea. Just to see what they were saying about the area.
> Facilitator: Were you invited?
> Boy 1: No.
> Facilitator: No. But do you think they should have specific meetings for young people, not with the parents.
> Boy 1: No, with everyone.
> Boy 2: Everyone, equal.

However, some of the young people are cynical about their influence and that the Council 'don't care what we think about it' (Girl). They wrote:

- It might be a waste of time to talk to the Council because if they wanted us involved in it, we would already be involved.
- Even if they don't know we feel like this, they should have still considered the young people and their opinions.

The conversations in the focus group demonstrate this further.

> Facilitator: Would you go if there was a meeting called? Or could you have a council in your school or something?
> Several voices: Yea.
> Facilitator: ... that would give information.
> Girl 1: But wouldn't that just be a waste of time because if they wanted us involved, they would have already involved us?
> [...]
> Girl 2: Yea, but they won't take us serious anyway.
> Facilitator: Do you think they won't take you seriously?
> Girl 2: Because they would just look at us and think 'They are just kids'.
> [...]
> Facilitator: Ye were saying that you don't think you would be taken seriously. That ye won't be listened to. Is there any way that ye might?
> Girl 3: No, they will just say 'Ye're children, what do ye know'.
> Girl 4: [Laughing] Can you give me directions to the government!
> Facilitator: But do you think it is important that you do have a say, because people are saying that?
> Girl 3: Because we are the ones that are going to be living here when everyone else is gone.

The group is worried that consultation with young people should happen ***now*** because they are going to grow up in the area and when they are older, it may be too late to have a say.

> Boy: When we do get older, they still will be not caring about us anyway. Sure, then it will be too late anyway, it will half be finished. What we had, what should be there, what we think would help the place, wouldn't be there.

4.5 Focus groups: 17-19 year-olds

Two focus groups were conducted with 12 people aged 17-19 years in two education and training centres for early school-leavers (consisting of Group A with 5 individuals and Group B with 7 individuals). All had heard about regeneration, although few had seen the City Council's masterplan. The main ways in which they heard about the programme were through local media (e.g. the *Evening Echo*), a community group (We The People), from family and through word of mouth ('The people around were talking about it, like there is a lot of talk about it'). Three of the 7 participants in Group B knew a family member who attended a meeting organised by the City Council. Another way they became aware of the regeneration was when the demolition began: 'Saw building work'; 'We just knew what was happening with all the houses gone'. As one boy in Group A said: 'No, just at the terrace when they started building, they were just after building stuff and they were knocking down houses, that is when I noticed there was something really happening.'

The demolition and moving of people was the first topic that arose with Group A.

> Facilitator: And is there much talk going on about the regeneration?
> Girl 1: There is. There's a girl who won't move out of her house. She is still the only one still there.
> Facilitator: And what do you think of that?
> Girl 1: I wouldn't blame her for not moving.
> Facilitator: Why?
> Girl 1: Because she paid for her house. She owns it like and she wants the right amount of money.
> Boy 1: She wants to be closer to the shopping centre and all, over being old.

For those who had moved due to the regeneration (two young people across Groups A and B), so far they are pleased with the move.

(Group B) Boy 1: It is quiet down there. It's better, boy.
Facilitator: Why is it better?
Boy 1: Because it is quiet.

Change and renewal was the main understanding when Group B initially brainstormed about regeneration, especially regarding the quality of the houses.

Girl 1: Renewing stuff.
Boy 2: A change of scenery.
Boy 3: You just need to change things too, like.
Facilitator: A change of scenery. You said something [Girl 1 name]?
Girl 1: Renewal.
Facilitator: Renewal. What do you mean by renewal?
Girl 1: Like the houses, they are falling apart.
Facilitator: OK. Anything else?
Boy 1: When something is worn down, you have to fix it.

For Group A, regeneration means improving the area, its reputation and the rubbish.

(Group A) Facilitator: What is regeneration?
Boy 1: It is about developing the area.
Facilitator: What about you [Boy 2 name]? What do you think it is?
Boy 2: Fixing the place. Try to make a better name for the place.
Facilitator: How about you [Girl 1 name]?
Girl 1: Clean up all the rubbish, keep it tidy.

So far, both groups think that regeneration is of benefit to the community. Unlike other groups, the closing of the alleys was not as important and is mainly seen as a good thing for safety reasons and to stop dumping, even if it means people have to walk further. However, some of the girls in Group B would like the lanes to stay open.

(Group A) Facilitator: And so far from what you have seen, what do you think are the good things and the bad things about it?
Boy 1: It looks tidier. It does, to be honest, yea.
Girl 1: Even there, like when you are walking up the back road, it looks huge. All the houses are gone. It looks huge, doesn't it?
Facilitator: And why do you think that is good?
Boy 1: I don't know.
Boy 2: But them houses were kips anyway. Burnt out and all. Alleys everywhere.
Girl 1: Shoes hanging off the wires everywhere. [Laughs]
[...]
Boy 2: It is a good thing that they closed the alleys. People feel safer.
Facilitator: OK, that is interesting.
Boy 2: The only bad thing is there is no more short-cut to the shop/off-licence [indistinct]. It is a bad thing that we have to walk the whole way around to get to the shops.
Facilitator: So [Boy 2 name], you think it is not a great thing?
Boy 2: It is a good thing to block up alleys, but you have to walk all the way round.

(Group B): Facilitator: Do you think litter is a problem?
Girl 2: Illegal dumping. By my house there was loads of it, up the lane, but they blocked it off.
Facilitator: Do you think that is not a good idea?
Girl 1: It is good because they can't run away.
Girl 2: No short-cuts anymore.
Girl 1: I'd leave some of them open.
Girl 2: Keep my alley open as well.

4.5.1 What I like about my area

Similar to the other groups, 'likes' for this 17-19 age group centred on commercial and retail outlets; personal relationships; and amenities and the environment. Public services featured more substantially for this group, including schools, crèche, library and the bus service (*see details in Appendix 5*).

As the other groups did, the young people made a list of all the commercial and retail outlets that they like. The proximity to shops and to the city centre is important to them: 'It has everything you need. If you go up to Supervalu, there is everything you might need' [Boy 2, Group A].

Closeness to family and friends is very important, as is the community spirit: 'You are close to everyone' [Boy 1, Group A]. Some of the young people think that Knocknaheeny has become a safer place in the past few years and that it does not deserve its reputation: 'Yea, but just over the past few years, it has quietened down an awful lot' [Boy 3, Group A].

While they are proud of their area and most would like to stay, one of the girls did not think the area is a good place in which to raise children.

> (Group A) Girl 1: Unless you get older and you want to move, if you have your own kids and stuff, you know? You probably just want to get out of there then.
> Facilitator: And why would you do that if you had kids?
> Girl 1: Because ...
> Boy 1: I would stay.
> Facilitator: Why?
> Boy 1: Because I grew up here.
> Facilitator: Yea, because it is your home.
> Boy 1: It has everything, like. It is near to the city as well. What is there to complain about?

4.5.2 What I don't like about my area

The dominant themes that arose for the two groups in terms of what they do not like about their area were safety and anti-social behaviour. Other themes important to the groups were amenities and the environment, opportunities in the area and reputation (*see details in Appendix 5*).

Of particular concern to the two groups is the prevalence of drugs in the area, as well as violence and drinking.

> (Group B) Boy 1: They'd want to get rid of the pubs and the off-licence first.
> Facilitator: Why is that [Boy 1 name]? Do you think they are a problem?
> Boy 1: Yea, for young people obviously.
> Facilitator: Why?
> Boy 2: Because you see 11 and 10 year-olds wobbling around the roads. Gear heads. Heroin heads. Smoking heroin and selling heroin to all the young people.
> Boy 1: Junkies, smoking and hanging around.

What they perceive to be harassment from the Gardaí is also an issue, especially regarding the popular pastime of biking.

> (Group A) Boy 1: Motorbikes, quads and stuff. What do you want kids to do?
> Boy 2: They are blocking off all the fields and stuff, like.
> Boy 2: They will tell them to get out of the fields or they will take the bike.
> Facilitator: Who will take the bike?
> Boy 1: The Guards.

Issues around amenities and the environment mainly centred on rubbish in the area and the young people were critical of their community for their lack of care of the environment.

(Group A) Girl 1: They don't even clean it, it is a manky place.
Boy 1: People be throwing rubbish and naggins in the ground and that.
Facilitator: One thing I did notice, cycling along, is that there are no litterbins. And a lot of the groups were complaining about that.
Girl 1: And if there was bins up there, they wouldn't be used. They would be empty the rest of the year, I'd say.
Boy 1: There was a bin in the park and people burned it, like.

The lack of facilities for young people also arose, which some argued is linked to the problem of drugs.

(Group B) Boy 2: That's why everyone is getting locked up – because they are getting boreded [sic] out of their head and they start committing crimes. Robbery.
Facilitator: But you said that the youth clubs are good, no?
Girl 2: It is, but you cannot go to the youth club on a Sunday.
Girl 1: [indistinct] Put down boredom.
Girl 2: The playground is destroyed.
Girl 1: It was there around a week and the tyre was burned down.
Girl 2: Yes. Scumbags. Say that there is not enough soccer clubs or boxing clubs around the place or that.
Girl 1: There is. There is two boxing clubs.
Girl 2: But no, they are way down the back road.

Opportunity is also important for these older groups in terms of jobs and higher education and they are worried about the unemployment in the area.

(Group B) Facilitator: So not just about young people. What about your parents now? Like, is there enough facilities for them?
Girl 1: No.
Girl 2: My Mam just stays at home, sitting.
Girl 3: Stuck at home. What else are they supposed to do? They have kids to mind and dinners to cook and to keep the house clean.
Facilitator: They are busy. Do they work?
Girl 1: My Mam doesn't work at all. Your Mam doesn't work either.
Girl 2: Sure you couldn't even get a f****** job up here.
Girl 1: None of them have jobs.
Girl 2: Yea, no jobs.
Girl 1: Not enough jobs.

In terms of the reputation of the area, Group A felt that everyone is tarnished by anti-social behaviour, such as joyriding, which is caused by only a few. They perceive this to be highly unfair, but it affects them in their daily lives.

(Group A) Boy 1: When you used play soccer, like if we play against some team, you'd have all lads calling you 'knacker' and that.
Boy 2: Yea. That's because we are from Knocknaheeny. 'Scumbag' and that.

They argued that the area has changed in recent years, but not its reputation and the ascription of the term 'scumbag' to all from Knocknaheeny.

(Group A) Boy 1: Knocknaheeny does have a bad name. But a lot of that was over joyriding and a lot of that was over eight years ago. It has changed big time since then.
Facilitator: So you think the area has changed. Do you think the area has changed as well?
Boy 2: Yea, big time. Since they closed up the alleys, there is nowhere for scumbags to go and stuff.
[...]
Facilitator: And do you feel proud about being from Knocknaheeny?
Boy 1: Yea.

Girl 1: Yea.
[...]
Girl 1: Because you know the way people say scumbags and all that, Knocknaheeny like?
Boy 2: So, f**k them.
Girl 1: There are scumbags out there, but we are not scumbags. Like do you know what I mean? So we are getting a bad name for what those people are doing.

4.5.3 What I'd like to change about my area

These 17-19 year-olds would mainly like to see improvements in the amenities and environment, in the commercial and retail outlets, and in the recreation and sports facilities (*see details in Appendix 5*). They would especially like a restaurant or café in the area, since the only local café is part of the Youth Centre and usually closed at weekends.

(Group B) Girl 2: A restaurant would be cool.
Facilitator: There actually is no restaurant?
Boy 1: You can't get a cup of coffee in Knocknaheeny.

While they wrote about a wide range of aspects they would like to change in the area, conversation at this point in the Wheel activity mainly centred on drugs and drug dealing.

(Group A) Boy 1: Try to get out the drugs.
Facilitator: So lads, is there a drugs issue here?
Boy 2: It is everywhere.
Facilitator: How? What is it?
Boy 1: People selling it, there's [indistinct]. There are a lot of people on heroin.
Facilitator: Where are people getting the drugs? Is it from drug dealers or are there any other sources?
Boy 1: That's the way it goes, dealers and dealers and dealers.
Facilitator: And are they locals?
Boy 1: Yea, they are everywhere.

They see the drugs issue as also bound up with the unemployment in the area.

Boy 2: There are fellas that are drug dealers. That's what they have to live, like. Because there are no jobs out there, everyone has to go dealing, like.
Facilitator: Do you think the jobs issue is a big issue up here?
Boy 2: That's the reason people take drugs as well, like.
Facilitator: OK.
Boy 1: There is one fella, sitting at home with nothing to do, we'll say – 'I'm on my own so I'd be smoking gear', like that's what happens.
[...]
Facilitator: Do you think jobs would eliminate a lot of the problems in the area?
Boy 1: If you are working 9 to 5, you don't have time to be thinking and then taking drugs and that.

4.5.4 What regeneration should do

The main theme that arose in this section of the Wheel was 'amenities and the environment', as shown in the comments for this group in Appendix 5. Almost of equal importance was 'opportunity' – that regeneration enhances opportunities for those living in the area, especially young people. The young people would also like more recreation and sports facilities, and for the area to become safer: 'That it would be quiet. For old people, like just walking around Knocka, like' [Boy 2, Group B].

People in both Groups A and B would like regeneration to provide bigger houses and a cleaner, quieter area with more amenities for young people, whether an improved park or a designated moto cross or scramble track.

(Group A) Boy 2: If they cleaned up the park, it wouldn't be too bad. If the soccer pitch had no glass.
Facilitator: So they should really maintain the amenities?
Boy 1: That park is after been forgotten about. All you need is a gate, to open and close.
[...]
Boy 1: It wouldn't cost that much to brush up the place. A motor cross track. Nearly every child in Knocknaheeny has a motorbike and they have nowhere to go. And they have nowhere to go.
Facilitator: And where do they go at the moment?
Boy 2: Into a field and the Guards come and tell them to get out.
Facilitator: So there should be a proper scrambling track?
Boy 2: They should have done that years ago, like.

The scramble track was proposed to Minister Kathleen Lynch, TD, but there has been no result from their proposal.

(Group B) Boy 2: You should put more stuff up here anyway.
Facilitator: OK, like?
Girl 1: Parks.
Boy 2: The Park above there, it has one swing.
Boy 1: A scramble track. We said that the last time over in Knocknaheeny School to, you know, your one, what's her name? Kathleen Lynch. She sent us back a letter saying 'Thanks' and all that, but nothing ever happened. And we even showed her a location and all, like.
Boy 2: We drew it out and everything, the whole lot.

The prospect of jobs associated with the regeneration also dominated conversation at this point, particularly for the males in the group: 'They [jobs] should be given to the community because it is being done in the community. You know what I mean?' [Boy 1, Group B].

(Group A) Facilitator: So, ye are flying through this. So what should regeneration involve?
Boy 1: More jobs.
Facilitator: Just discuss that 'more jobs' thing there, like. What do you think [Boy 3]?
Boy 3: More jobs.
Facilitator: What do mean by more jobs?
Boy 3: There is empty fields. We could build shops and that.
Facilitator: Shops and facilities. When you talk about more jobs, what do you mean?
Boy 1: Get us some jobs so we can make money.
Facilitator: In the regeneration?
Boy 2: Supermarkets.
Boy 3: Helping with the building.

(Group B) Boy 2: We should be building the whole of it, the whole of Knocknaheeny.
Boy 1: See like when that Barnardos was being built. There was a least 30 people from Knocknaheeny working on it.
Facilitator: There was. That should be repeated.
Boy 1: They are developing Knocknaheeny, so Knocknaheeny people should build it.
Boy 2: And then get a trade out of it. A carpenter.
Boy 1: Plasterer, electrician ...
Boy 2: Or a handyman, like.

4.5.5 Top 3 changes

The top changes these 17-19 year-olds would like to see are as follows:

Number 1:	Number 2:	Number 3:
Park	Restaurant	Cinema
Moto cross park	More bins, public toilets	More jobs

Similar to other groups, not all of the 17-19 year-olds' preferences were ordered by number. Unnumbered changes include: more jobs for young people; do up the courts; prevent people taking drink and drugs; services for young people; parking spaces; bigger houses; construction jobs; more shops; Penneys/shopping centre; and centre for activities.

The priorities of this older group of teenagers, as with the other children and young people, span a wider understanding of regeneration, beyond a 'bricks and mortar' approach. They would like to see more amenities and services for young people, improvements to the physical and environmental conditions of Knocknaheeny, and stress the importance of economic development such as jobs, more shops and a restaurant for the area.

4.5.6 How I should have a say

The two groups argued that young people should have a say 'because they live in the area'; 'because they want more things to do'; 'for things to do when they grow up'. They were critical of the authorities because 'they didn't think about young people when starting regeneration', but 'when it's done, we are the people going to live in houses'.

They argued that young people 'should have been asked for opinions before final changes happened' and proposed several ways of having a say, including meetings with the Council, participating in planning meetings and working on the building construction, as follows:

- We should have a meeting with the Council about jobs and activities.
- Young people should have a meeting with Council planners/designers.
- Kids should be involved in planning side of it.
- Go to planning meetings.
- Send out letters to have meetings.
- Updates on what's happening.
- Should ask for young people's opinions.
- Working on building side of things.

4.6 Rap workshops: 11-year-olds and 14-17 year-olds

In July 2013, two groups of young people assembled in Knocknaheeny to write and record two rap songs (henceforth called The Rap). This was a 3-day process that involved work-shopping of ideas and themes and the recording and mixing of the final raps. The results highlight how productive and empowering rap can be as a means of expression and as an insightful mode of data collection for researchers working with children living in disadvantaged urban contexts. Having completed focus group research with over 70 children and young people on regeneration, the two raps can be seen as summarising the results of the focus group work in an original and expressive way.

4.6.1 Rap methodology

Participant selection

Working in tandem with a professional youth worker employed by a youth project in Knocknaheeny and with Garry McCarthy (more commonly known as GMC), the participants for The Rap were selected on the basis of prior relationships with both. GMC and the youth

worker had already developed a strong working relationship as the professional youth worker and her colleagues in the Northside Youth Forum (an umbrella group of youth organisations working in the Knocknaheeny area) had referred many children and young people to GMC's initiative.

Participants were selected on the basis of two characteristics: (1) that they were resident in Knocknaheeny and (2) that they had some proficiency in terms of rap music, whether that was writing rap lyrics or having developed an accomplished rapping style. The groups were divided on the basis of age: a younger group of three 11-year-olds (henceforth Group/Rap A), and an older group of six 14-17 year-olds (henceforth Group/Rap B). There was due to be four members of the younger group, but one participant fell ill on the first day of the project and it was decided to proceed with the three participants. Both groups worked independently in the creation of two standalone rap songs, with participants taking full responsibility for the writing of the lyrics. The themes of 'Knocknaheeny' and 'Regeneration' were the only prerequisites.

Temporal overview

The Raps were work-shopped, written and recorded over three days in July 2013 in Knocknaheeny by the participants (henceforth Rappers) in a temporary recording studio run by GMC.[11] Although the studio was a pre-fabricated building, it was very comfortable. The participants felt very safe and secure there and GMC had many musical instruments and recording equipment of high quality for the Rappers to use, including drum machines, a keyboard, a PA system, an Ipad with music production apps, and plenty of rooms in which to work. The Rappers could work either collectively, alone or in consultation with the youth worker, GMC or the researchers. Two members of the Research Team actively participated in the workshops, one from beginning to end and one during the early phase. The younger group met from 10-11.30am over the three days (the 1½ hour length of the session was set on the basis of the literature and advice from GMC and the youth worker). The older group's sessions were a little longer, meeting from 12-2pm.

The initial format followed the template established with the 10 focus groups. The project was outlined and the children and young people were reminded of their right to consent and to withdraw from the project at any time. The City Council Regeneration Masterplan was then distributed and the groups asked had they heard about regeneration; if so, who from; who do they think is responsible for it; did their parents go to any meetings organised by the Council about regeneration; is anyone moving or knows someone who is moving? This section was completed with a 5-minute brainstorm as a group on what is regeneration. The next section involved the Wheel activity (as outlined earlier in this report), whereby each group was issued with a large sheet of paper with a circle divided into four quadrants labelled:

- What I like about my area.
- What I don't like about my area.
- What I'd like to change about my area/what regeneration should do.
- How I should have a say.

The Wheel became the focal point for the three days as the Rappers returned time and time again to their reflections to search for newer and sharper ideas for their lyrics.

Embracing the gatekeepers

The youth worker had an existing relationship with the Rappers; they all held her in high regard and her continued presence and encouragement was a continuous point of support for the Rappers, especially as sometimes they were struggling with the size of the task of writing the Rap. GMC is a well-known Rapper on the Irish and Cork Hip Hop scenes. He has a growing reputation as a Rap producer and Rap artist, and has to date released two albums

[11] The space is provided by the Cork Education and Training Board (ETB) and Music Generation Cork City. It is run by GMC, who also funds the equipment.

of his own work. He is also a highly skilled youth worker. In the eyes of the Rappers, GMC is 'cool'; he is someone they look up to, both on the basis of his reputation as a Rap artist and also on the basis of his ability to work with the children in a professional, respectful and productive manner. Although there were some issues with behaviour due to spending such a large amount of time in a relatively small space, both the youth worker and GMC resolved those issues with the greatest of skill and care. As researchers from the University, we stood in a different position from the youth worker and GMC, unknown to the young people. However, over the course of the three days, going through the process of helping and supporting the Rappers to write their raps, they became much more at ease in the company of the researchers.

Political participation

Once the 'focus group' element of the project was completed, the groups turned to the task of writing the lyrics. At the outset, the researchers made clear to the Rappers the intention to use the raps as a central pillar of the final report. Also, and for many of them more importantly, the Rappers would be invited to perform their finished raps at an event to mark the report's launch. Therefore, as the Rappers wrote their lyrics, they were all aware they were involved in an act of political participation. The Rappers knew their lyrics would be seen and heard, and could potentially influence regeneration, as their opinions and analysis would be listened to by important decision-makers.

The emphasis of the political participation element of the Rap Project also worked very well as a motivational tool. Writing lyrics is a difficult and taxing exercise and, as with all people involved in the creative process, motivation sometimes wanes. The youth worker, GMC and the researchers regularly emphasised to the Rappers that the research had been commissioned by Government departments and that senior officials at Cork City Council would read the report and see them perform their lyrics live at the launch event. They were also aware the Raps would be performed in front of members of their own community: parents, neighbours, friends and members of their own age cohort, which was important to them. Throughout the project, the term 'keeping it real' came up quite a bit. It seems to mean being honest, authentic, that the lyrics would have integrity. The Rappers were strongly focused on representing their community in a true light by 'keeping it real' and to present their analysis and critiques of regeneration, many of which were formed over the three days through the process of reflection and lyric writing.

Tools for Thinking: The Rhyming Dictionary and the Wheel

The writing process was quite arduous at times for some of the Rappers. Some wrote them quite quickly; other Rappers sat and discussed the themes with each other, the youth worker, GMC and the researchers, and then carefully crafted their lyrics in either two or three days. GMC had a backing track continuously playing, encouraging the Rappers to say the lyrics out loud as they wrote them. This meant everyone knew where everyone else was with their lyrics, and though they developed different themes, this continuous communication meant there was a general synthesis in the overarching themes of each individual finished piece.

The Rappers worked together around a conference table, and the Wheel activity from the first day's focus group work hung on the wall. The Rappers often returned to the Wheel when searching for new inspiration. As those ideas had been formed in dialogue, this further aligned each group's finished piece into broad thematic lines. Here is an example of how that worked:

> Researcher: How's it going [Boy's name]?
> Boy 1: It's not.
> Researcher: What are you trying to say now?
> Boy 1: I don't know what to say.
> Researcher: What about the Wheel [pointing to the Wheel on the wall]. You were the one that said Knocknaheeny has a bad name and it's largely untrue.
> Boy 1: Yea, but she is after writing about that.

Youth worker: But you can say it in your own way.
GMC: What do people think about Knocka?
Boy 1: That it's full of feens.[12] [Everybody, including the other Rappers, laughs]
GMC: So say something about that.

Over time, Boy 1 came up with the lyric that pokes fun at the representation of Knocknaheeny men as *Feens*, exaggerating the Northside Cork accent.

But what do ya see when you look at me,
A young teen or a feen from Knocknaheeny?

One of the most useful pieces of equipment during the project was the Rhyming Dictionary. The Rhyming Dictionary was an application GMC downloaded onto an Apple Ipad. It enabled the Rappers to enter a word into the programme and it would respond with a comprehensive list of words that rhymed with it. This opened up new linguistic opportunities for the Rappers. Because they had not previously encountered many of those words, they actively sought the help of the youth worker, GMC and the researchers to define the words. Even if the Rappers did not use any of these new words in their raps, discussing the meaning of previously unknown words developed deep levels of concentration and reflection.

As they were strongly focused on 'keeping it real', the groups revelled in the opportunity to be creative using their own local idiom. While there may be breaches of the rules of grammar and syntax in the Raps, it was not that the Rappers were unaware of those rules. Through conversation, it was clear they had well-developed linguistic abilities, but using the local idiom was itself a political message and about 'keeping it real'. Here are two examples of how the Rhyming Dictionary enabled the Rappers to fine-tune their critiques and observations:

Girl 1: We know Knocka has a bad reputation
But there is no need for a mass evacuation.

Boy 3 had been searching for the right words to express the obvious fear they felt as young people living and playing in their neighbourhoods with the ever-present danger of used syringes discarded in the playing fields. Through the Rhyming Dictionary, he found the perfect word:

Boy 3: When we're playing soccer in the park and it's dark
And it's full of needles. Like getting bitten by a shark.

Studio work

In ordinary circumstances, GMC works with young people once a week. What was distinctive about this Rap Project was that these raps were written and recorded within three days. This condensing of the experience of Rap production made the process more like a single event with a beginning, middle and end. Above, we have described the beginning and middle parts of the process, and in this section we discuss the studio work. Working in the studio to record the final versions of the lyrics operated like a succession of crescendo moments, where each Rapper would finally perform their work.

The recording of the Raps involved the process of mixing and arranging them into a coherent order and, most importantly, writing the lyrics for the bridge and chorus elements that would bind all the verses together. Sitting together around the mixing desk, the Rappers worked collectively to find themes to bind their overarching messages for the finished pieces. The end point involved sitting back together, celebrating, eating together and listening to the final product with a deep sense of achievement. Snacks and drinks were made available afterwards in order to thank the children and young people for participating in the research. To create a sense of ceremony, each of the Rappers was presented with a 'Certificate of Participation' and each Rapper was given a CD copy of the final product.

[12] 'Feens' is a term used in Cork idiom for boys or men. It has a somewhat mysterious etymology: it may come from the Traveller Language Cant where 'man' translates as *feen* (*see* http://www.travellersrest.org/sheltaenglishnocant990418.htm).

The studio time worked effectively and efficiently because of GMC's coaching/production skills and technical skill as a sound engineer. Several takes were recorded of the Rappers' verses, with GMC's continuous encouragement to 'do it better', to 'rap it like you mean it', to 'speak it from the heart'. The Rappers were encouraged to transform their lyrics from words on the page into the artistic form of Rap music thanks to GMC's prowess as a producer, finding adept and different approaches to encourage each individual Rapper to achieve his or her potential.

Below, each rap is analysed individually. In contrast to the analysis of the focus groups, rather than concentrating on the commonalities across the themes, though those have been identified, a short analysis of each individual component of each rap is presented: verses, bridges and choruses.

4.6.2 Analysis of Rap A (under 12s) – *No More*

Rap A, *No More*, gives a succinct description of life in Knocknaheeny by three 11-year-olds (2 male and 1 female), chronicling the many challenges the children encounter in their day-to-day experiences. Examining the Wheel and the finished lyrics, it is clear that the movement from the basic description of the particular issues, through the work-shopping and then transformation into the lyrical form enhances their descriptions with a new power, clarity and incisiveness. Not every issue raised during the focus group stage was turned into a lyric, and that is important: the Rappers chose to write about the issues *they* felt most strongly about and hence the final raps are a condensing of those issues. The contents of the Wheel activity from Group/Rap A can be found in Appendix 5.

The views of Group A map onto other focus groups from similar age cohorts. When asked '*What they liked about their area*', they spoke about recreation and sports, amenities and the environment, commercial and retail services and personal relationships. When asked '*What they didn't like about their area*', they mentioned personal safety, criminal activity, anti-social behaviour, the poor level of amenities and environmental degradation, and there was some displeasure with the schools in the area. When asked '*What they would like to change about their area*', they were concerned about authorities tackling the issues of poor amenities, the quality of houses, improving safety and controlling bullying and anti-social behaviour. When asked '*How they should have a say*', they felt their voices were not respected and because of this they were afraid to speak out. This was a problem for them because they really wanted to be heard.

The Rappers prioritised other ideas expressed in the Wheel activity by writing several lines on that theme, and on the basis of reflection and discussion they also developed wholly new ideas. Rap A, 'No More', is centred on seven key themes: the environment; political responsibility; having political influence; fear, anti-social behaviour and crime; drinking and drugs; personal relationships; and recreation.

No More[13]

Verse 1 by Boy 1

Look over the wall, needles on the floor,
Outside the boarded up house next door.
Glossy plans from the corporation man
Cans on the grounds no I'm not a big fan.
Of all the trash outside on the grass.
The council just needs a kick up their ass.
All I wanna do is stop the fighting.
At night people shouting it's frightening.

Verse 2 by Girl 1

I wish I had some kind of magic wand
So I could open up and tell it what I want.
No more drinking, fighting and drugs
No more kids growing up into thugs.
Some young people don't care about the law!
Lighting fires in the green ya that's what I saw.
Glass on the b-ball [basketball] court kid's fall.
It's for us to play in because we're small.

Verse 3 by Boy 2

He lives in a skip with a needle in his hip
A junkie living with the rats in his gaff.
Always on drugs, always off his head
Spending everyday just lying in his bed.
I don't wanna live next door to that!
You'd never see junkies living by fat cats.
Stop all the gangs fighting every day.
Stop ignoring me, listen to what I gotta say.

Chorus

We don't want no more
We don't want no more
We don't want no more
It needs to change and that I'm sure.

We want to open up and not be afraid.
To say exactly what we want to say.
We want to open up and not be afraid.
To say exactly what we want to say.

Bridge

If only we'd more places to be creative.
A place to write rhymes
Or a place to sing
Hip-hop is our education.

[13] The recorded version of the Rap is available on http://soundcloud.com/gmcworkshops/sets/knocknaheeny-regeneration-ucc/

Boy 1's rap focuses on five themes: the physical environment, drugs, political responsibility, a lack of consultation, and fear. Working directly from the Wheel activity, he incorporates those themes into a powerful account of how these issues personally affect his life. From his own most personal milieu, his home, he looks over the wall, sees discarded needles outside the boarded-up and neglected neighbourhood, the trash on the grass, cans on the ground. By highlighting these ever-present and real dangers of a poor environment brought about by a lack of care for the neighbourhood, he directs his irritation at the power-holders: 'The council just needs a kick up their ass'; the 'glossy plans from the corporation man' look meaningless to him, how do they tackle his concerns? And then, in a change of tone, he raps about fear: 'All I wanna do is stop the fighting. At night people shouting it's frightening'. These are powerful lines, coming from the experiences of an 11-year-old, young citizen of the Irish State.

Girl 1's rap develops five themes: political participation and consultation, drinking and drugs, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour, the environment, and personal relationships. The verse begins with a wish for political participation. In the Wheel activity, some of the questions were adapted for the younger groups to make them age-appropriate. Instead of asking 'What I'd like to change about my area/what regeneration should do', we asked, *'If you had a magic wand what would you change about the area?'* Girl 1 picks up this usage and twins it with a desire to be recognised and listened to, in a real and productive sense: 'I wish I had some kind of magic wand, so I could open up and tell it what I want'. She wishes to transform the neighbourhood, to end drinking, fighting and drugs, three issues she sees as being intertwined, and an end to criminality and anti-social behaviour. Insightfully, she links the effect of such events with 'kids growing up into thugs … don't care about the law'. In the final couplet, she links the issue of environmental degradation to its impacts on her social world: 'Glass on the b-ball [basketball] court kid's fall. It's for us to play in because we're small'. They are kids, and she knows they deserve better.

Boy 2's rap develops six themes: the environment, drugs, political participation, political responsibility, the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour, and, uniquely for his age cohort, inequality. Boy 1 and Boy 2 are good friends; the issue of drugs particularly troubled both of them: drugs, drug users and discarded used syringes. The Rap begins with a biographical portrait of a drug user, living in 'a skip' with little regard for the environment. In a call for political participation, he says 'I don't want to live next door to that', and in an insightful comment on inequality says, 'You'd never see junkies living by fat cats', surprising the youth worker, GMC and the researcher with his level of political awareness. The final couplet marries three interlinking themes: political responsibility, fear and a plea for political participation: 'Stop all the gangs fighting every day. Stop ignoring me, listen to what I gotta say'. In the recorded version, this lyric is delivered with ample gusto.

Their bridge was a collective effort and became an ode to rap music and the overall initiative. These lyrics are all the more powerful in the context of their critique of school during the Wheel activity:

> If only we'd more places to be creative.
> A place to write rhymes
> Or a place to sing
> Hip-hop is our education.

Their chorus is a collective call for change and an appeal for their voices to be heard, drawing a contrast between their expressed fears about living in their area and their fear of talking about it:

> We don't want no more
> It needs to change and that I'm sure.
> We want to open up and not be afraid.
> To say exactly what we want to say.

4.6.3 Analysis of Rap B (over 12s) – *Deal With It*

While Rap A is an extremely succinct and engaging description of life in Knocknaheeny, chronicling the many challenges the children encounter in their day-to-day experiences, Rap B, *Deal With It*, offers a further level of critical reflection and analysis. Group/Rap B had 6 members, aged 14-17 (3 male and 3 female). Reflecting the higher analytical capacity of this older age cohort, *Deal With It* is longer and more complex, with a strong imaginative and aesthetic appeal. Like the other group, the project began with the Wheel activity (*see contents of the Wheel activity from Group/Rap B in Appendix 5*).

The views of Group B again map onto other focus groups from similar age cohorts. When asked *'What they liked about their area'*, they spoke about amenities, particularly the voluntary youth services in the area, they saw great potential with the environment in Knocknaheeny due to the fresh air and proximity to the countryside, they thought commercial and retail services very important and highly valued personal relationships with family and the broader community. When asked *'What they didn't like about their area'*, they mentioned personal safety, criminal activity, anti-social behaviour, drug users, the poor level of amenities and environmental degradation, and they raised the issue of the perception of Knocknaheeny, in particular its poor reputation in the city.

When asked *'What they would like to change about their area/what regeneration should do'*, they were concerned with the issue of horses, but not all agreed on that issue. Some thought Travellers were a problem in the area, but others disagreed. The issue of neighbourhood stigmatisation was important and they were concerned with transport and communication, arguing that Knocknaheeny was quite far away from the city centre and improved public transport ought to be introduced. They also thought the Council should supply Wifi for young people in the area. Reflecting the concerns of their age cohort, they thought regeneration should employ local young people and improve educational services in the area. When asked *'How they should have a say'*, they felt their voices were not respected, that the Council should listen to them rather than adults, because the 'adults would have moved on in a few years and we will be still be living here'.

Moving from the Wheel activity to the Raps, again these Rappers prioritised particular ideas by writing several lines on that theme, and on the basis of reflection and discussion, developed wholly new ideas. Rap B, *Deal With It*, is centred on 12 key themes: environmental; political responsibility; having political influence; fear; anti-social behaviour, crime, drinking and drugs; personal relationships; stigma; public services; sports and recreation; inequality; regeneration; and a misdiagnosis of problematic issues by authorities.

Deal With It[14]

Verse 1 by Boy 3

The creation of this regeneration is making
A new Knocka nation. We're patiently waiting
For the restoration of our community
We can change what others have to say and have to see.
But what do ya see when you look at me
A young teen or a feen from Knocknaheeny?
Our place it's known as a disgrace
People haven't took the time to see our real face.
As youths we need to be seen and heard
Our questions we need to be answered and not ignored.
So what you gonna to improve Knocknaheeny?
Have you a magic wand or are you just a genie?

Verse 2 by Boy 4

We're the future of Cork, the new generation
Our voices lost in the talk of regeneration.
We wanna be heard and we wanna be known
As the children who made a difference on our home.
Knocknaheeny, the place I was born and raised
Is gonna be improved in a new and better way.
Well that's what they say, at least, they are trying to change our streets
So I express what I feel, I put these lyrics on this beat.
When you look at Cork City's youths what do you see?
The truth or what you can't understand and see.
The real faces that make up our community
But livin' up here you have to make opportunities.

Chorus by Girl 2

Listen to what we have to say
We're the future, we're here to stay.
So deal with it,
Just deal with it.
Listen to what we have to say
We're the future, we're here to stay.
So deal with it,
Just deal with it.

Verse 3 by Boy 5

The truth's harsh, like biting a lemon its bitter
But the truth is the place is destroyed in litter.
Trying to avoid broken bottles in front of you
Jumping around the place like it's Just Dance 2.
And all the builders up knocking all the houses
And all the small maddies are out jocking the horses.
My mother's out the back and she's trying to get a tan
And my brother's running down the road after the whippy van!
And all the boys with their shorts and their t-shirts
And all the girls wearing their belly tops and skirts.
When we're playing soccer in the park and it's dark
And it's full of needles. Like getting bitten by a shark.
And all the people going out robbing cars,
They're drink and driving, they're crashing, they can see the stars.
This is where I'm from I keep real with it.
I'm Knocknaheeny born just deal with it.

[14] The recorded version of the Rap is available on http://soundcloud.com/gmcworkshops/sets/knocknaheeny-regeneration-ucc/

Chorus by Girl 2
Listen to what we have to say
We're the future, we're here to stay.
So deal with it,
Just deal with it.
Listen to what we have to say
We're the future, we're here to stay.
So deal with it,
Just deal with it.

Bridge 1 by Boy 5
C in Cork is for culture.
O in Cork is for the opportunities.
R in Cork is for Rebels that are red.
K is for Knocka where I rest my head.
C in Cork is for culture.
O in Cork is for the opportunities.
R in Cork is for Rebels that are red.
K is for Knocka where I rest my head.

Verse 4 by Girl 3 and Girl 4
GIRL 3: Think of all the families being separated
Is that what you mean when we're regenerated?
GIRL 4: How would you feel if you were kicked out of home?
Moving somewhere else where you feel all alone.
GIRL 3: We know Knocka has a bad reputation
But there is no need for a mass evacuation.
GIRL 4: Shades [police] moves us on when we're only hanging around.
People stealing, stabbing, dealing, that's what's really going down.
GIRL 3: Stop stopping Bonna [Bonfire] night it's only our tradition.
Why bother saying it, ye're not going to listen.
GIRL 4: Horses in estates they're a state, they're neglected.
But others are OK, leave 'em alone just accept it.
GIRL 3: We know that there's issues that need to be dealt with.
But your masterplan never asked us SHHHH!
GIRL 4: It doesn't matter though about what we think.
Why's it always the youth are the missing link?

Bridge 2 by Boy 3
Make Knocka a better place.
For you and for me and the entire Knocka-race.

Bridge 3 by Boy 4
The things you say should be gone,
We think they're grand, but you got it all wrong.
So deal with it,
Deal with it
Just deal with it,
Deal with it.
The things you say should be gone,
We think they're grand, but you got it all wrong.
So deal with it,
Deal with it,
Just deal with it,
Deal with it.

Boy 3's lyrics are clever and satirical. It is humour, but humour with a serious intent. Directly addressing the promise of regeneration, Boy 3 sets up the premise of his critique by highlighting the political responsibility of authority-holders and decision-makers. He cites the 'restoration' of the community, but acknowledges the ongoing project is disrupting community life, and that needs to be fixed. Next he addresses the issue of estate reputation and the ongoing issue of stigma. During the Wheel activity, Boy 3 raised this very point and subsequently turned it into the lyrical form. Playing with perception, he asks the listener/audience of senior civil servants, planners and council officials 'What do you see when you look at me, a young teen or a feen from Knocknaheeny'. In the final recorded version, he exaggerates the Northside Cork accent to represent the stigma of being low status, the low status he recognises is attributed to him and his community by the rest of the city/society. Addressing this stigma, Boy 3 dispels the myth: 'People haven't took the time to see our real face'. The final couplet returns to the topic of political responsibility and the lack of consultation. When writing the lyrics, he made clear he wanted to ask decision-makers *'How are you going to improve Knocknaheeny when you haven't even asked us what we think?'*, which became 'Have you a magic wand or are you just a genie?'

Boy 4's verse develops six themes: political participation, personal relationships, political responsibility, the hope for regeneration, neighbourhood stigma and public services/education. He begins with a call for participation: 'We're the future of Cork', but 'Our Voices lost in the talk of regeneration'. Knocknaheeny is his place, where he is from; he is embedded in the community, tied and made by these personal relationships. Boy 4 has an extremely accomplished rapping style; the rhythm of his lyrics, at times, runs at an alternative beat to the 4/4 time signature on the track. This is a sophisticated rapping style because to an audience it sounds at first as if he has lost his way, but then they realise he planned it all. This parallels with the meaning of those lyrics because he says: 'Well that's what they say, at least, they are trying to change our streets. So I express what I feel, I put these lyrics on this beat'. This is a clever approach because he was attempting to communicate the sense of hesitancy and confusion about the entire regeneration project in the area: there is real confusion and in the rap he actually sounds confused. In the next theme, like some of the other Rappers in this group, he addresses neighbourhood stigma and the misrecognition the community, especially the young, face: 'When you look at Cork City's youths what do you see?' He argues that Knocknaheeny youth are no different from young people in other parts of the city: 'The truth or what you can't understand and see. The real faces that make up our community'. In Knocknaheeny, with a lack of education programmes and employment opportunities, you have to make your own: 'But livin' up here you have to make opportunities'.

Boy 5 is a prolific writer of rap lyrics. The youngest member of the group, he wrote the longest verse and one entire bridge on his own. Largely working independently from the group, his verse focuses on six themes: political participation, the environment, fear, regeneration, stigma, and personal relationships. The verse begins by drawing attention to the lack of consultation in the area, arguing that they, as residents, are best placed to identify the flaws in the area: 'the truth's harsh', 'deal with it'. Drawing from literal description to metaphor, he describes how environmental degradation is affecting their everyday lives. His next section is an ode to community and one feels the positive experience of living in such a tightly knit neighbourhood that is often joyful. These descriptions run from the fun of community life to the real dangers associated with criminality, drugs and environmental degradation: 'When we're playing soccer in the park and it's dark, And it's full of needles. Like getting bitten by a shark'. Despite all the good, he also describes their fears about criminality, robbing cars, dangerous driving, etc. This is Boy 5's truthful and honest description of Knocknaheeny, but he refuses to be stigmatised by it: 'This is where I'm from I keep real with it. I'm Knocknaheeny born just deal with it'.

The final verse written by Girl 3 and Girl 4 is the most critical of both regeneration and other authorities working in their neighbourhood. They are good friends and they wrote and rapped their section together. Their rap develops five themes: a critique of regeneration, political responsibility, neighbourhood stigma, critique of authorities, and political consultation. They also have an accomplished rapping style and once in the verse their lines

overlap, transforming 'SHHHH' and 'it' into 'shit'[15]. Both have had a personal involvement with the regeneration process, with family and friends having been moved out of the area to new neighbourhoods. This caused them both some distress and they address this theme in the first line of the lyric. For them, one of the key issues is families being separated. Addressing policy-makers directly, they ask 'How would you feel if you were kicked out of home? Moving somewhere else where you feel all alone'. Then, linking the themes of neighbourhood stigma and the policy of regeneration, they state 'We know Knocka has a bad reputation, But there is no need for a mass evacuation'.

In the next section, they develop the theme of misrecognition, stating that the Gardaí and Council are mistaken in determining that bonfire night and horses are problematic practices. They argue that while some people do it poorly or disruptively, it is wrong to tar everyone with the same brush. They say 'Shades [police] moves us on when we're only hanging around. People stealing, stabbing, dealing, that's what's really going down'. They were particularly annoyed the police 'wasted time' on them when there were crimes being committed elsewhere. Finally, they strongly critique the lack of consultation with regeneration: 'We know that there's issues that need to be dealt with. But your masterplan never asked us SHHHH! It doesn't matter though about what we think. Why's it always the youth are the missing link?' This is a powerful sentiment: they feel they are being ignored, that what they think doesn't actually matter.

The chorus by Girl 2 makes a direct appeal to be admitted to participate in the consultation processes given the rapid transformation of their neighbourhood. It contains three meanings: (1) that authority-holders must listen to young people to transform the area; (2) though they may be young people, their voices need to be heard; and (3) to challenge the persistent stigmas they must contend with:

> Listen to what we have to say,
> We're the future, we're here to stay.
> So deal with it,
> Just deal with it.

Rap B includes three distinct bridges. These transitional sections re-emphasise themes developed elsewhere in the verses.

Bridge 1, written and performed by Boy 5, links the chorus to the third verse: 'C in Cork is for culture. O in Cork is for the opportunities. R in Cork is for Rebels that are red. K is for Knocka where I rest my head'. Boy 5 reiterates their dual localised identities, as citizens of Cork City (the rebels) who are also the young people of Knocknaheeny. O is for the opportunities, but, as acknowledged elsewhere, from their perspective these opportunities do not seem to be distributed evenly across the city.

Bridge 2, written and performed by Boy 3, offers a striking change of direction, a single voice foregrounded by a silent backdrop: 'Make Knocka a better place. For you and for me and the entire Knocka-race'. Incorporating the melody and part of the lyrics of the Michael Jackson song *Heal the World*, Boy 3 satirises that song's sentimentality. But there is a second level of satire, where he reinforces the message about regeneration being top-down and lacking consultation. In his performance of this section, Boy 3 beseeches the authorities to 'help us'. But, as explored in Bridge 3, how can the authorities do so when they have fundamentally misrecognised the problems.

Bridge 3, written collectively by the group and performed by Boy 4, is integrated with the chorus refrain. It reiterates one of the key themes of the entire rap – the misrecognition of positive aspects of community life (e.g. horses, bonfire night, hanging around on the street, etc.) as problematic behaviours: 'The things you say should be gone, we think they're grand, but you got it all wrong'. This critique drives home their point about the importance of consultation and inclusion.

[15] They did not want to use 'rude' words in the rap, knowing its audience, but wanted to express this point in the strongest possible terms.

4.6.4 Conclusion

The rap sessions proved to be a fruitful and creative element of the research process, both as a data-gathering opportunity and as a way of getting young people to engage critically with the regeneration process. The use of rap echoes Hearn and Thomson's (2014) observation that children and young people use various forms of media to make sense and keep connections with their friends, families and beyond, and for making sense of their lives and experiences. Rap also helps address the concern that research about children and young people is generally conducted from adult perspectives and seeks to redress this imbalance (Bragg, 2007; Thomson (2011), cited in Hearn and Thomson, 2014). Therefore, the use of rap and other creative approaches allows young people to express themselves in spaces where they are comfortable, reveal opinions that may not necessarily be articulated through other methods and allows them to reflect on their everyday life experiences and identity. There is also an evident political awareness revealed in the lyrics – around issues such as social class, inequality, stigma, power and relationships with Cork City and the City Council. In fulfilling Lundy's (2007) four principles of space, voice, audience and influence, the raps will also be performed at various dissemination events arising from this research.

4.7 Summary of findings of Focus Groups and Raps

Common opinions are expressed by all age groups in relation to amenities and facilities, family and friends, and personal safety. All the children and young people involved express positive opinions about youth clubs and centres, sports facilities, shops, the park, and the proximity of family and friends in their area.

One of the biggest concerns of the participants is anti-social behaviour and personal safety. For the youngest age groups, aged 6-8, noise is a particular stress factor, which reflects the poorly built quality of their homes and night-time street activity. For the older age groups, the prevalence of public drinking and drug-taking and dealing is a major concern since they feel unsafe in their area and perceive this as adding to the negative reputation of the estate. All groups would like more Gardaí in the area, although the oldest age group (17-19 years) were more negative in their opinions of the Gardaí than younger groups.

Attitudes of children and young people to the local Traveller population were very negative and revealed a deep level of animosity and mistrust, and a desire for social distance. These attitudes vary little from broader social attitudes towards Travellers in Irish society. However, such attitudes are articulated in a context where there are much higher levels of proximity to Travellers in Knocknaheeny than in, for example, middle-class enclaves of Cork City. They are also expressed in a context where relationships between local Traveller families and Cork City Council are tense, mainly because of periodic rounding-up and confiscation of Traveller horses and living conditions on the local halting site. The researchers feel that this situation is of such seriousness that interventions based on mediation and community development are essential to begin building constructive relationships and dialogue between the Traveller population, local residents and the City Council.

The older groups, particularly 12-year-olds and over, are especially concerned with the reputation of the estate. They were at pains to point out that not everyone is 'a scumbag' and that the attitudes from elsewhere in the city towards Knocknaheeny are misinformed. Many take pride in being from the Northside and from 'Knocka', and are hurt by the constant negative depiction of their area. They want to build their futures there, but are worried about employment opportunities and raising children in a stigmatised and unsafe area. The research also reveals that pride in the area is balanced by connectivity with the wider city and that young people identify with Cork City as well as their immediate neighbourhood. The challenge for regeneration is to promote a vision that integrates specific estates with the wider city and ensures that children and young people in particular can avail of employment and educational opportunities across the city, while retaining links with their home area (Lupton, 2003).

All the children and young people express a demand for a cleaner and more attractive physical environment. They are highly critical of the litter in the area and the failure of the local authority and the community to maintain the cleanliness of the estate. The older groups were concerned with the enclosed nature of the estate, especially the prevalence of steel barriers and fencing, and would like a more open environment.

Children and young people are positive about regeneration and think that it will bring improved housing and better facilities. The few children we met who have moved are happy because they now live in a quieter area. However, some other children express concern about the loss of friends and family who have moved out of their immediate neighbourhood under the first phase of relocation. This is felt most keenly by the youngest group (aged 6-8) for whom proximity is very important. Older age groups, particularly the 15-17 year-olds, are critical of the closure of lanes without their input because this cuts them off from their established access to school, amenities and friends, and causes them some inconvenience. However, they do recognise the wider community safety issues caused by anti-social behaviour on the lanes.

The perceptions of what regeneration will deliver differ according to each group. Those in the youngest age group (6-8 year-olds) have practical concerns relating to play and would like a better playground. Age groups from 9-16 years see regeneration in terms of improved housing and providing specific amenities for young people, such as a scrambling track and a better basketball court. The older groups, in particular 17-19 year-olds, would like to see greater commercial activity in the area, such as cafés and restaurants where they could meet and socialise freely, just like other young people in other neighbourhoods across the city. They are also aware of the potential job opportunities, with one group in a training centre intent on writing to the City Manager to seek local employment and apprenticeships in the regeneration programme. This 'shopping list' response to consultation with communities, including children and young people, is inevitable because of what they perceive to be official neglect in comparison to more affluent parts of the city. It also reflects the fact that this research project was one of the only opportunities for children and young people to have a say since this was not extended to them in the formal regeneration consultations.

All of the children and young people would like to be involved in the decision-making around regeneration. The raps are critical of the omission of children and young people's voices, social structures, institutions such as the City Council, and inequality. The 9-13 year-olds in particular articulated a highly developed understanding of their rights as children to be involved in matters that affect them. These children had worked with their teachers and youth workers on social justice, environment and human rights issues (including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) throughout the year. The human rights discourse gave them a frame of reference to articulate their views on how they could have a say on regeneration.

In contrast, other groups expressed their rights as future residents and adults, rather than their rights as children in the here and now, showing the value of human rights education with children and young people from a young age. Young people from the age of 16 upwards came across as more resigned to the reality that their voices are not being heard and also on what regeneration could deliver in terms of opportunities for training and employment and a better future. However, children and young people are not short of ideas on how they can get involved and have a say on matters that affect them and their communities. The challenge to policy-makers and service providers is to hear their voices and respond to them in a meaningful manner. One of the lessons from this project is that when consultative and participatory processes are initiated, they must be sustained and followed-through in terms of delivering tangible outcomes based on the views of all age groups in regeneration areas.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

This research has examined children and young people's participation in a major regeneration programme in Knocknaheeny, which is the most disadvantaged social housing estate in Cork City and is characterised by high levels of poverty and deprivation and poor living conditions. This research project represents an attempt to give a voice to children and young people by asking for their opinions on the regeneration of their area. The research began from the principle that children and young people have a right to voice their opinions and to participate in decision-making that affects them and the research methodology was guided by this principle. The researchers' position was that children have voices that must be heard as rights-holders in the 'here and now' and not as 'adults in the making'.

This research echoes the view of Percy-Smith and Thomas (2010, p. 357) that opportunities for participation by children and young people living in poverty and disadvantaged areas are essential and can be *'a means by which to access other rights in the daily struggle to meet individual needs. In this way, children's participation is inextricably linked to equality and social justice'*. Young people (along with residents more generally) should be included from the earliest stage of regeneration masterplanning so that their ideas can be incorporated into draft plans before masterplans are finalised and adopted.

The research highlights the importance of actively listening to the voices of children and young people and enabling their capacity as agents to influence change. This move – from voice to agency – thereby realises the right of children to contribute directly to social change. This desire for agency and social change was borne out in the opinions of all the children and young people in the present research project, particularly striking in the vivid Rap lyrics and among the older participants of the focus groups.

A number of general conclusions can be drawn from this research:

- Children and young people have their own opinions on the regeneration of their estates and communities.
- They are not apathetic, disengaged or disinterested in matters that affect themselves, their families and their community.
- Different age groups have different views, perspectives and priorities on the regeneration of their area.
- Their opinions are different to those of adults and they are willing to participate, as insightful, knowledgeable, critical and reflective members of the community.
- Children and young people's voices reveal that they have views and perspectives on what they like and do not like about their areas, what they think is good and bad, and about what should be changed.
- Their views on the regeneration of their area range from the positive to the negative, and from the practical to the aspirational.

5.1.1 Hearing the voices of young people

The research found that despite the fact that children and young people have distinctive views of their own, these have not been sought out. The case study in this research has highlighted that while there was some input into the regeneration process from organisations working with young people, mainly in relation to the social plan, there was an absence of direct input from young people. While children and young people were aware the regeneration was taking place in Knocknaheeny, the information they had was mainly sourced from family members and friends rather than from the local authority, Cork City Council.

Until this research project began, there was an absence of intent or capacity on the part of the regeneration project to include children and young people. This omission to consult was in part due to a lack of knowledge of the discourse relating to children's rights and in part due to

local authorities not having an established track record of engaging directly with the young people who live in their housing estates. It was compounded by the absence of techniques or expertise for meaningful engagement between young people and the local authority in relation to regeneration. However, the case study also revealed that the local authority was supportive of the research; it facilitated the research process where it could and was keen to learn from it by implementing consultation processes with young people in the Knocknaheeny area on an ongoing basis throughout the remaining lifetime of the regeneration programme.

This research shows that children and young people have highly developed and original opinions and will speak openly when:

- suitable spaces are created for them to articulate their views;
- appropriate methodologies for consultation and participation are adopted;
- the correct questions are asked in a supportive manner, with people who they are comfortable with and who understand where they are coming from;
- they are given an assurance that the research findings will be forwarded to the relevant central Government departments and the local authority, and taken account of in the implementation of the regeneration programme.

5.1.2 What children and young people think about regeneration

The research shows that children and young people think that regeneration is important and can have long-lasting positive outcomes, but they are also aware of negative consequences. Children and young people would like regeneration to achieve renewal of their area, a safer neighbourhood, a cleaner environment, a better reputation and improved life chances and opportunities through:

- **Enhancing community and personal safety** through more effective community policing and housing management, by addressing problems such as:
  - anti-social behaviour and disruptive tenants;
  - public drinking;
  - drug dealing;
  - violence and intimidation.

- **Improving existing amenities and the local environment** through:
  - new and better quality houses;
  - providing effective refuse collection and litter removal;
  - maintaining green areas and open spaces;
  - improving recreation, sports and leisure amenities;
  - considering the impact on young people when lanes are closed in response to residents' petitions;
  - managing through-traffic and road safety;
  - providing new amenities to reflect their current interests;
  - improving bus services to the area and connectivity with the wider city.

- **Providing educational and employment opportunities** through:
  - training, apprenticeships and employment in the regeneration programme;
  - promoting commercial and retail investment in the local economy.

They also highlight some of the disruptive impacts of regeneration in terms of:

- losing their homes due to demolition;
- relocation of families and friends to addresses outside of the estate;
- the associated impact on their social networks, friendships and family connections.

5.2 Recommendations

This research has shown that local authorities must be proactive in seeking out the voices of young people about their experiences in social housing generally and their experience of regeneration specifically. With impending changes to social housing management, whereby voluntary social landlords will assume increasing levels of responsibility for day-to-day estate management from local authorities, such bodies should also be required to engage with young people in relation to estate management. This means that the onus is on local authorities and social landlords to ensure the voices of children and young people are heard and responded to. All initiatives by these organisations involving direct engagement with children and young people should adhere to the *Children First* national guidance and should comply with statutory guidelines on child protection and welfare.

There are three main sets of recommendations arising from this research relating to:

- regeneration guidelines;
- estate management;
- capacity-building.

5.2.1 Regeneration guidelines

- The best practice guidelines in relation to estate regeneration, commissioned by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Norris, 2012), provide a comprehensive step-by-step manual for local authorities to guide them in devising regeneration programmes. They reference the need for consultation with residents and outline a range of approaches and practical steps by which the views of residents on regeneration can be elicited. However, the guidelines refer to children as a 'hard to reach' group, who could be consulted at the discretion of the local authority as a supplement to the consultation with residents more generally.

  Arising from this research, it is recommended that the **existing guidelines are amended to require that local authorities demonstrate consultation with children and young people in advance of making applications for regeneration funding to central government.** An effective means of achieving this would be to establish locally based consultative panels of young people to ensure the opinions of children and young people who are residents in the regeneration area are reflected in regeneration plans. This can be facilitated through building linkages between local authority regeneration projects and local youth projects, sports and recreational organisations, and schools.

- At the regeneration implementation stage, the guidelines advocate the ongoing involvement of residents in estate regeneration boards and the dissemination of information between local authority staff and residents. However, children and young people are not necessarily acknowledged as active participants in this process in their own right. This research found that there was inadequate information flow between the local authority and young people on what the regeneration programme entailed.

  It is therefore recommended that **children and young people be included in the implementation stage of regeneration programmes so that their views on progress are incorporated on an ongoing basis and plans can be altered accordingly**. Beyond young people who directly participate in the design and implementation process, there is the wider community of children and young people whose views are also valid. Thus, it is also recommended that **implementation updates are devised in an appropriate form and are disseminated to children and young people.** This can be carried out in consultation with schools, youth groups, youth workers and others who work with young people.

5.2.2 Estate management

- Successful regeneration is ultimately dependent on managing the regenerated estates effectively. Therefore, it is important that estate management practices by local authorities and voluntary social landlords include the concerns of children and young people. Such estate management practices also apply to estates where regeneration is not underway. This research found that effective estate management was evident in Knocknaheeny through the role of tenant liaison and estate management officers who were locally based and visible within the community. However, their remit did not extend to involving children and young people despite the demographic profile of the area and this is understandable given how estate management practice has evolved in Ireland.

  The findings of this research present an **opportunity to improve estate management practice by broadening its remit to hear the voices of children and young people** through using the techniques developed in this report.

5.2.3 Capacity-building

- The research was based on the principle that children are rights-holders as articulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It has highlighted that there is a knowledge and skills gap within the local authority sector in relation to engaging with children and young people. This is not surprising given the recent migration of children's rights discourses into public administration and public policy. The ongoing work of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) and other bodies is testament to the progress made to date. However, at an operational level in the delivery of services by local authorities and public bodies, the recognition of children and young people as rights-holders is incomplete. The absence of a rights discourse does not imply lack of commitment, but rather a lack of 'know how'.

  This research has shown how consulting with children and young people can improve regeneration programmes by offering fresh perspectives, previously unheard. The lessons learned locally in this research need to be built on at a national level. It is therefore recommended that a **practical toolkit be developed jointly by the DCYA and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government based on the methods used in this research to guide local authority staff and other relevant parties on how to engage, consult and incorporate the views of children and young people in regeneration programmes**. The toolkit could form an element of a wider education and training programme regarding children and young people's rights and involvement in public administration, and be promoted as part of continuing professional development (CPD) workshops and career development.

5.2.4 Additional applications of the research findings

- Finally, while planning legislation specifically was not the focus of this research, the findings present an opportunity to reflect on the wider planning framework in relation to consultation with children and young people. According to the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010, children, or groups or associations representing children, are entitled to make submissions or observations on local area plans. The guidelines arising from the legislation require planning authorities to be *'innovative and engage with any community-based organisations that represent younger persons'*. However, despite this stipulation, it is clear that the onus remains on the young people or their representatives to be proactive in making submissions. Furthermore, the guidelines do not distinguish between consulting with young people directly and those (adults, community groups, etc) who are perceived to represent them.

It is therefore recommended that **Local Area Plan Guidelines are amended to stipulate that local authority planning departments are proactive in ensuring consultation with children and young people**. Local Area Plan Guidelines should stipulate direct consultation not only with organisations that represent children and young people, but also with children and young people themselves. The recommendation made on capacity-building, referred to above, offers the means to achieve this.

5.3 Final remarks

This research has shown that in a major area of social policy in relation to social housing in Ireland today – estate regeneration – the voices of children and young people largely go unheard. That is not because they have no voice or do not have opinions. Rather, it is because effective consultation and participation mechanisms have as yet not been devised in this key area of Irish social policy.

The research shows that children and young people want to engage in a constructive and meaningful way in how their living conditions and communities are designed, developed and changed. Children and young people offer insights and perspectives of the world around them that differ from those of adults. Not hearing and acting on their views renders policy initiatives such as regeneration incomplete and potentially ineffective.

These practical justifications for hearing the voices of children and young people are founded on their irrefutable right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them, as stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This right must infuse all aspects of State activity, public administration and social policy in Ireland from central to local levels.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Demographic and socio-economic profile of Knocknaheeny

All figures are from the 2011 Census, available from the Central Statistics Office (*see* http://www.cso.ie/en/census/index.html).

Area	Electoral Division(s)	Population
Knocknaheeny	Knocknaheeny	4,301, comprised of 1,429 households
Churchfield	Churchfield	1,522, comprised of 575 households
Gurranabraher	Gurranabraher A, B, C, D, E	4,302, comprised of 1,907 households
Farranferris	Farranferris A, B, C	3,307, comprised of 1,415 households
Fair Hill	Fair Hill A, B, C	5,173, comprised of 1,912 households
Cork City		119,230, comprised of 47,163 households

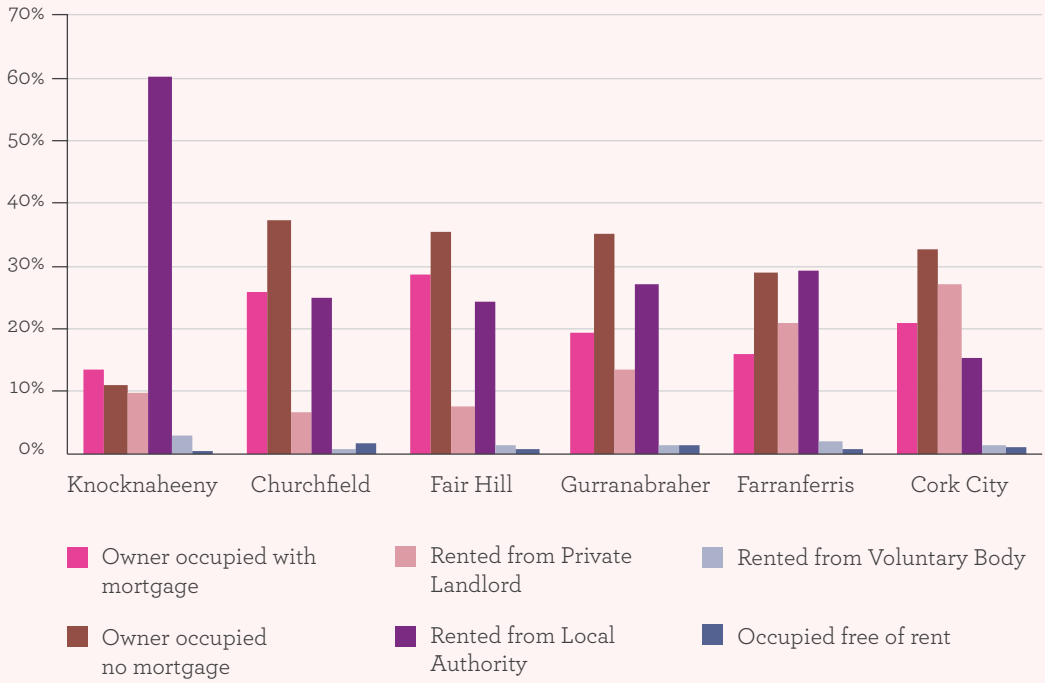
Most households across the Northwest of Cork City vary in size between 2.5 to 3 persons per household across the Northwest quarter, averaging 3.2 in Knocknaheeny.

The 2011 Pobal HP Deprivation Index shows that Knocknaheeny is the most disadvantaged area in Cork City, with a relative deprivation score of -19.1 (*see below*).

Knocknaheeny	Churchfield	Fair Hill	Gurranabraher	Farranferris	Cork City
-19.1	-13.3	-13.8	-15.7	-14.0	-1.9

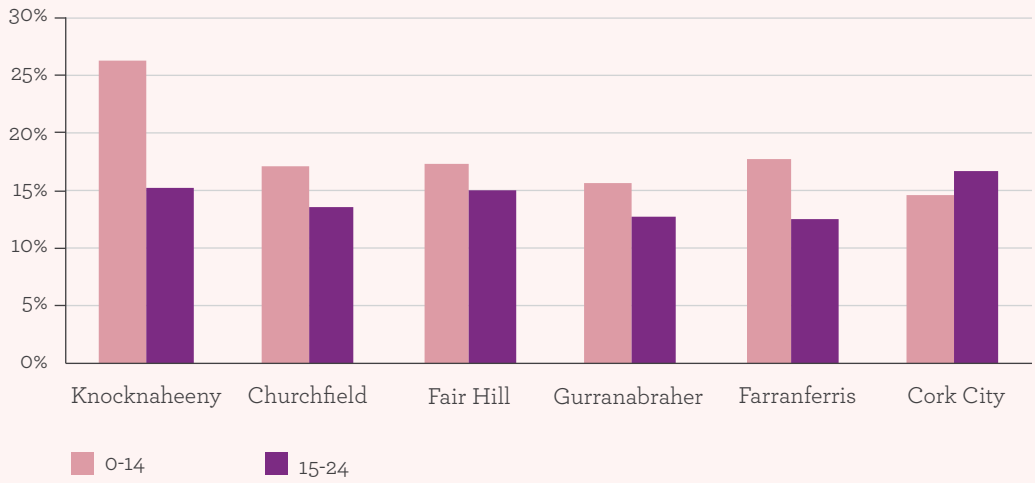
Social housing, which is strongly associated with deprivation since it is targeted at low-income households, is the dominant tenure in Knocknaheeny, with 60% of households renting their homes from the local authority (*see Figure A1-1*). This is more than double the next highest area of social housing in the vicinity, Farranferris, and more than four times the rate for Cork City.

Figure A1-1: Percentage of private households, by type of occupancy



The risk of poverty is particularly important in neighbourhoods where there is a high density of children and young people. Knocknaheeny has the highest percentage of children aged 0-14 of all Northside neighbourhoods and Cork City as a whole (*see Figure A1-2*). When this profile is combined with the relative deprivation index which is 20 times that of Cork City as a whole, it can be seen how children in the area are especially vulnerable to the effects of poverty.

Figure A1-2: Percentage of population under 25 years of age

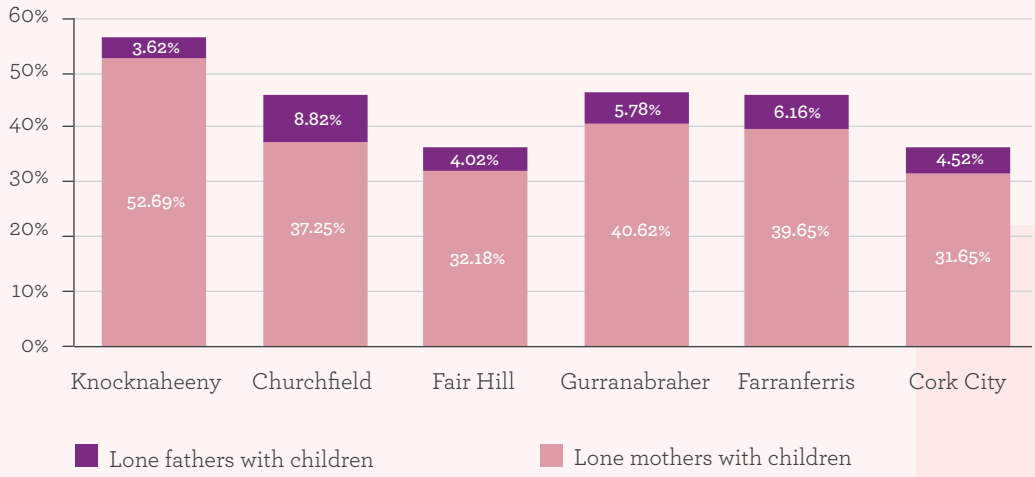


The percentage of the population under 25 is outlined below:

	Knocknaheeny	Churchfield	Fair Hill	Gurranabraher	Farranferris	Cork City
Under 25	41.57%	30.55%	32.34%	28.31%	30.33%	31.46%

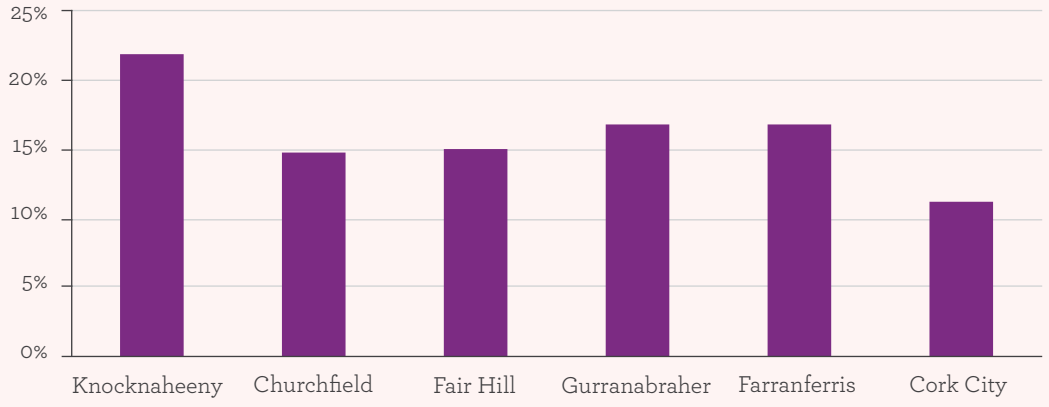
Deprivation is compounded by lone parenthood and unemployment. On both counts, Knocknaheeny is the most disadvantaged area of Cork City. (However, it should be noted that several of the other areas profiled here are also characterised by deprivation when compared to Cork City in general.) As Figure A1-3 shows, the highest percentage of families with children that are headed by lone parents are found in Knocknaheeny (56.31%), with 30% of households being headed by lone mothers.

Figure A1-3: Percentage of lone-parent families



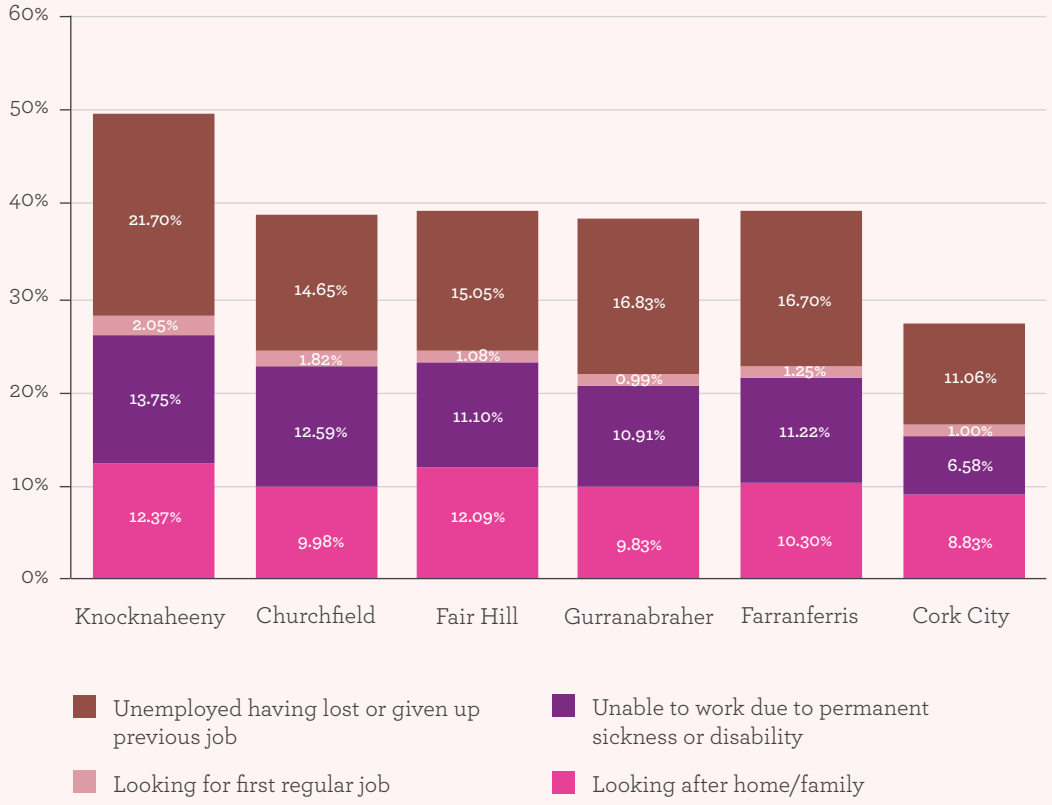
Unemployment is particularly high in Knocknaheeny (21.7%) and is almost double that of Cork City (11.06%) (*see Figure A1-4*). The percentage of those aged 15 and over at work is 31.17% in Knocknaheeny, compared to 42.33% in Cork City.

Figure A1-4: Percentage of unemployed, having lost or given up previous job



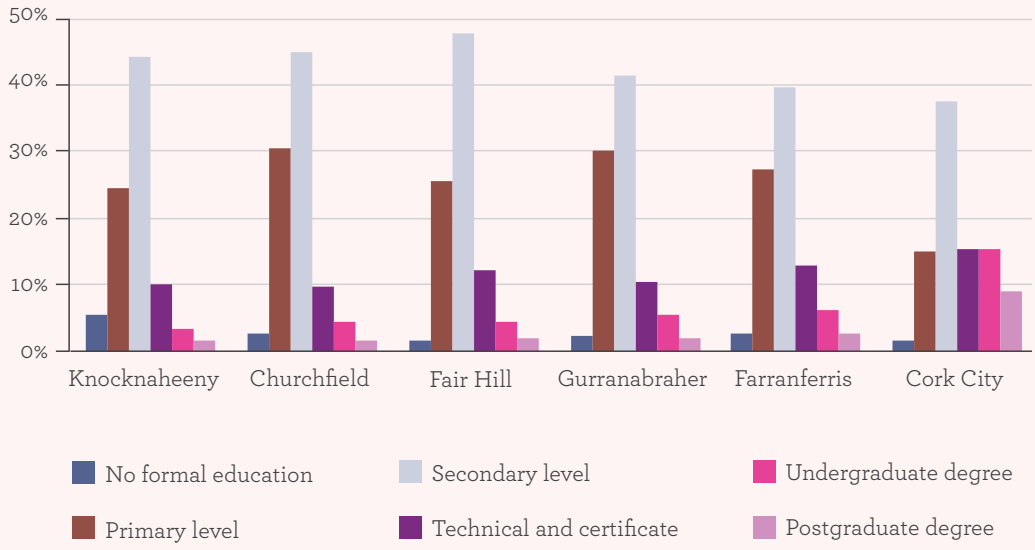
The percentage of the population in Knocknaheeny over 15 who are currently not employed for reasons of unemployment, full-time caring, disability or sickness is 49.87%, which is the highest on the Northside and significantly higher than Cork City as a whole (27.47%) (*see Figure A1-5*).

Figure A1-5: Percentage of population aged over 15 not in employment



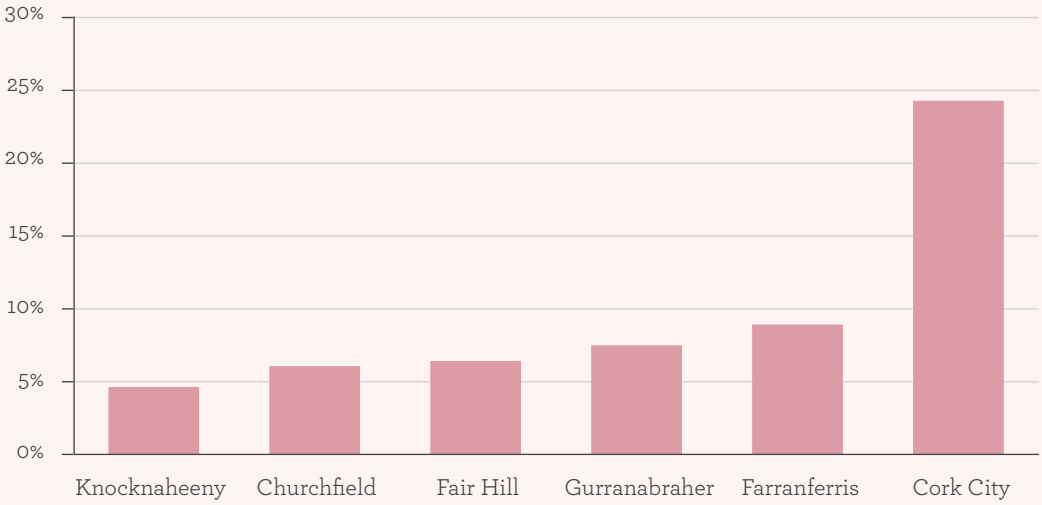
Education levels in Knocknaheeny are generally on a par with the rest of the Northside of the city, although education to third level is substantially lower than Cork City as a whole. As Figure A1-6 shows, most of the population aged over 15 are educated to secondary level. However, there is still a significant percentage of the population in these neighbourhoods with education only to primary level.

Figure A1-6: Percentage of highest level of education completed



The percentage of the population educated to Degree level (undergraduate or postgraduate) is particularly low in Knocknaheeny (4.65%), Churchfield (6.13%) and Fair Hill (6.36%) (*see Figure A1-7*). All areas profiled are far below the Cork City average (24.31%).

Figure A1-7: Percentage of population aged over 15 educated to Degree level



43.88% of households in Knocknaheeny have no personal computer (compared to 31.57% in Cork City) and 43.04% have no broadband (compared to 30.41% in Cork City).

Appendix 2: Information leaflets on research project

Letter to community groups, schools and service providers

UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Coláiste na nEalaíon, an Léinn Cheiltigh agus na nEolaíochtaí Sóisialta
College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences

Scoil na Staidéar Sóisialta Feidhmeach
School of Applied Social Studies

T +353 (0)21 4902228
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E appsocialstudies@ucc.ie
http//www.ucc.ie

28th February 2013

Dear Sir / Madam,

We are contacting you regarding a research project 'Children and Estate Regeneration: Unheard Voices', which the School of Applied Social Studies, University College Cork, is conducting in 2013.

The project is funded by the Irish Research Council, the Department of Youth and Children's Affairs and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.

The research will involve documenting children and young people's perspectives on housing estate regeneration in Knocknaheeny, where the Cork City Northwest Regeneration programme is currently being implemented by Cork City Council.

The reason we are undertaking this research is to fill a gap in the knowledge of planning policy and housing regeneration. Children's voices are seldom heard in local planning and regeneration processes, even though they can be greatly affected by changes in their neighbourhoods. Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasises the importance of the participation of children in society and affording children the right to express their views on matters that affect them. Therefore, the project aims to ascertain the opinions and experiences of children and young people, aged between seven and seventeen years, on the regeneration of their area.

We hope that the research findings will feed directly into future policy on planning and regeneration and ensure that young people's voices are heard as key actors in the processes which shape their communities. The research findings will be fed back directly to the young people who participate and we guarantee to include them and all others who participate in the research in any events such as presentations, conferences, etc. which arise from the research.

Should you require any further information on any aspect of the research please do not hesitate to contact us at the details given below.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Siobhan O'Sullivan
siobhan.osull@ucc.ie
087 6338100

Dr Cathal O'Connell
c.oconnell@ucc.ie
021 4902832 / 087 9021320

Professor F.W. Powell PhD
Head of School and Dean of Social Science

Ollscoil na hÉireann, Corcaigh
National University of Ireland, Cork

Children's information leaflet

Children and Regeneration: Have Your Say!

Research Project by the School of Applied Social Studies, University College Cork

Children's Leaflet

What is this project about?

We would like to hear what you think about the regeneration that is happening in your area. As you might have seen, there are big changes taking place. These are part of the regeneration of Knocknaheeny. Regeneration is about making changes to the houses and facilities in your area. Some will be knocked down and rebuilt to provide better quality houses for families.

What is involved?

Why have you been asked to take part? You have been asked to take part because you live in Knocknaheeny.

What will happen?
You will take part in a discussion with other children about the changes in your area.

Do you have to take part?
No – you only take part if you would like to do so. To take part, please sign and bring back the consent form to your project worker. If you decide that you don't want to take part at any time, before or during the research, you can leave the study.

How long will it take?
The discussion will last about 1 hour. Snacks will be provided.

Will your taking part be confidential?
Yes. Your real name won't be used. We would like to record the group discussion using a tape recorder. We will make sure that you can't be identified.

What will happen to the results?
The results will be presented in a report and at a conference. You will be invited to the conference. We also hope to write in research journals.

Any other questions?

You can contact one of the research team at any time:
Dr Cathal O'Connell, c.oconnell@ucc.ie, Tel: 087-9021320 &
Dr Siobhan O'Sullivan, siobhan.osull@ucc.ie, Tel: 087-6338100

UCC

Thank You

If you would like to take part in the study, please sign and return the consent form .

Young people's information leaflet

Young People and Regeneration: Have Your Say

Research Project

SCHOOL OF APPLIED SOCIAL STUDIES, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK

Young People's Information Leaflet

What is this project about?

This research project is being carried out by the School of Applied Social Studies, UCC. We would like to hear your views about the regeneration that is happening in your area. As you've probably seen, there are big changes taking place in your area. These are part of the regeneration of Knocknaheeny. Regeneration involves changes to the houses and services in your area. Some will be knocked down and re-built in order to provide better quality houses for families.

Why have you been asked to take part? You have been asked because you live in the northwest neighbourhood of Cork city, where the regeneration programme has started.

What is involved?

You will take part in discussions with other young people about the regeneration of your area. Sessions will last 1 to 1½ hours. Refreshments and snacks will be provided.

Do you have to take part? No – you only take part if you would like to do so, participation is voluntary. To take part, please sign and return the consent form. If you decide at any point, either before or during the study, that you don't want to take part anymore, you can leave the study.

Will your participation in the study be kept confidential? Yes. We will make sure that no clues to who you are appear in the report or any other publications from the research. Your name won't be identified with anything you say.

What will happen to the information which you give? We would like to record the group interviews. All recordings (and any written material from these recordings) will be kept confidential and in a way that it will not be possible to identify you.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part? We don't expect any negative consequences for you in taking part.

What will happen to the results? The results will be presented in a final report and at a conference to which you will be invited. We also hope to publish in research journals.

Who has approved this study? This project has been granted ethical approval by the Social Research Ethics Committee at University College Cork.

Any other questions?

If you need any further information, you can contact one of the research team at any time: Dr Cathal O'Connell, c.oconnell@ucc.ie, Tel: 087-9021320 & Dr Siobhan O'Sullivan, siobhan.osull@ucc.ie, Tel: 087-6338100

UCC

If you agree to take part in the study, please sign and return the consent form

Thank You

Parent/Guardian information sheet

Young People and Regeneration

Research Project

SCHOOL OF APPLIED SOCIAL STUDIES, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK

Parent/Guardian Information Sheet

What is this project about?

This research project is being carried out by the School of Applied Social Studies, UCC. The project is interested in hearing the views and opinions of young people and children, aged between 7 and 17 years, on the regeneration of Knocknaheeny. Your child has been invited to take part because you live in the northwest neighbourhood of Cork city, where the regeneration programme has started.

What is involved?

The study will involve group discussions on the young people and children's experiences and views of the regeneration of the area. Sessions will last 1 to 1½ hours. Refreshments and snacks will be provided.

Does your child have to take part?
No – participation is voluntary. If you approve that your child takes part, please sign the enclosed consent form. Your child has the option of withdrawing at any time, before or during the study.

Will your child's participation in the study be kept confidential?
Yes. We will ensure that no clues to your child's identity appear in the report or any other publications from the research. Any extracts from what your child says that are quoted will be entirely anonymous.

What will happen to the information which your child gives?
It is proposed to record the group interviews, using voice recorders. All recordings (and any transcripts obtained from these recordings) will be kept confidential and it will not be possible to identify any individual.

What will happen to the results?
The results will be presented in a final report and at a conference to which you and your child will be invited. We also hope to publish in research journals.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?
We don't expect any negative consequences from your child taking part.

Who has approved this study?
Ethical approval for this project has been granted by the Social Research Ethics Committee at University College Cork

Who is funding this study?
The project is funded by the Irish Research Council, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.

UCC

Any further queries?

If you need any further information, you can contact one of the research team at any time:
Dr Cathal O'Connell, Principal Investigator, c.oconnell@ucc.ie, Tel: 087-9021320
Dr Siobhan O'Sullivan, Researcher, siobhan.osull@ucc.ie, Tel: 087-6338100

If you agree for your child to take part in the study, please sign and return the consent form

Thank You

Appendix 3: Consent form

Young People and Regeneration Research Project
School of Applied Social Studies, University College Cork

Consent Form

I ..... agree to participate in the research study: Young People and Regeneration.

I ..... give permission for ..... to participate in this research study.

- The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me.
- I am participating voluntarily.
- I give permission for my interviews to be tape-recorded.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data from the interviews, in which case the material will be deleted.
- 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 any subsequent publications.

Signed ..... **Signed** .....

Date ..... **Date** .....

Appendix 4: Certificate of Participation

Certificate of Participation

AWARDED TO

.....

for the successful completion of

Focus group with the 'Children and Regeneration: Unheard Voices' Research Project

UCC
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh, Éire
University College Cork, Ireland

SIGNATURE

Appendix 5: 'The Wheel' Tables

6-8 year-olds

What I like about my area			
Amenities and Environment	Commercial and Retail	Personal	Recreation and Sports
Going to the park	Apache	Playing with my friends	Dancing class
I am close to the park	Chipper	Playing with my friends	I like GAA
I like the park	Deli	Going to people's houses near my house	Playing soccer with my friends
Park	Gala	Having cousins live near me – see them all the time, play on trampoline	Soccer in sports hall
Park – fun, slide	SuperValu	I like making new friends	**Public services**
Community garden	SuperValu – ice lollies	I like knowing the people in my terrace because my mommy lets me play near there	I like school
I like playing in the grass	I am near the pizza shop	I like having neighbours	I like school
Community garden	Pound shop	My home	
Friday club	Shops	Nice people	
I like club			
[Youth organisation]			
Going to [child and family support organisation]			
When it's clean			

What I don't like about my area		
Safety and anti-social behaviour	Amenities and Environment	Personal
Bold people want to make people hurt	Boarded-up houses	I don't like moving
Drunk people	Rubbish in the boarded-up houses	I don't like my friends moving away
Scary stuff	Litter	I don't like when people move out of their house
Feel unsafe	Broken glass by cousin's house	I don't like the houses being knocked down
Lots of fighting	Rubbish	Builder knocking down the house
People fighting in fields (9-year-old cousin scared)	Stinky nappy	People give out to you
I don't like the screaming, day and night	Rubbish on footpath	When people is greedy

continued

Safety and anti-social behaviour	Amenities and Environment	Personal
I don't like when the party are next door – too loud and wake the baby	Road around terrace – noisy, busy, unsafe	**Commercial and Retail**
Noise at night	Park swings are broken	I don't like the shops being closed down
Teenagers shouting at night		
Lots of motorbikes		
Motorbikes		
Cars too fast		
Men		
Kidnappers		

What I'd like to change about my area

Amenities and Environment	Safety and anti-social behaviour	Personal	Commercial and Retail
More bins for litter bugs	When people are not scary	I'd like a bigger house, garden	I wish the shops were nearer, not so far away
Bins	When people be nice to you	I don't want some houses to go away	Dunnes Stores
More bins	When people stop being drunk	So I could see if my mam was going away to a different terrace	**Recreation and Sports**
Clean the area	Change the mad people, the people who push you on the ground and stuff	Smelly horses to go away	Place for my quad
When people stop litter	I like people stop shouting	People can't find jobs – have to go to America	Football place
Keep neighbourhood clean	Make the motorbikes go away	Stay same	
Dirty water			
Dog poo			
Flowers and trees			
More flowers			
Should be loads of flowers			
More things in the playground			
Park with slide, swings, pond, picnic table			
I'd like a pond			

continued

Amenities and Environment	Safety and anti-social behaviour	Personal	Commercial and Retail
Broken glass			
Change the broken stuff			
When the builders knock the houses, there is lots of dust			
The bumpy road			

9-13 year-olds

What I like about my area			
Recreation and Sports	Commercial and Retail	Amenities and Environment	Public services
Lots of clubs	Shops	Park	Church
Sports clubs	Apache Pizza	Park	School is close
Churchfield swimming pool	Apache	Parks	Doctor
Vincents (GAA)	Apache	Park	Chemist
Vincents (GAA)	Hillbillys	Youth centre	Hospital for people with disabilities (Ortho)
GAA club	Burger Hut	Youth club	Garda always around helping
Hurling	Chinese	Youth centre	Schools
GAA	Lidl	Lots of terraces	**Personal**
Temple United (soccer)	SuperValu	Lots of space	Family and friends
Soccer court	SuperValu		Friends
Father Horgan's (boxing club)	SuperValu is close		Friends and family
Pitch			My friends
All-weathers			Friends
			The nice people

What I don't like about my area

Safety and anti-social behaviour	Amenities and Environment	Personal
Drinking	Rubbish	Halting site
Winos	People throwing rubbish	Horses
Drinking	Litter	I don't like Travellers starting fights between themselves
Drugs	Playground	The Travellers' site
Junkies	Can't use park because burned or used as toilets	Too many Travellers
Junkies	That the houses are being knocked down	Travellers
Safety	Idle houses	There is no kids around my house
I don't feel safe	It's very noisy	Kidnappers
Motorbikes	No shops close to my house	Strangers
Motorbikes in park	Dangerous roads	**Recreation and Sports**
Car racers	Horses not taken care of	That there is no all-weather pitch
Drink driving	School	
Joyriding	Knocka needs a lot of improvement	
Damage to buildings and cars	You can't not like Knocka	
Burning cars		
Burning bins		
Bonfires		
Fires		
Fighting		
Gangs		
Bullying		
Shoplifting		
Theft		
My window got knocked in because of teenagers		
Graffiti		
The Guards will be here everyday		
Trouble		

What I'd like to change about my area

Amenities and Environment	Commercial and Retail	Recreation and Sports	Safety and anti-social behaviour
More youth centres	Gaming place/ GameStop	All-weather pitch	More Guards
Better youth centre	Games stop	All-weather pitch	More Guards (Guards go to other places quicker)
Cleaner	Games shop	Indoor pitch	More Guards in station, not street
No litter	Shooters [snooker hall]	Swimming pool	Drug taking
Keep the place clean	Sports direct	Swimming pool and gym	They should get rid of all the people who take drugs
More grass in my terrace	FIFA 13 Tournaments	Cinema	To get better people around
More open fields	More shopping centres near my house	More cinema	No kidnappers
Better park	New shops	Tennis club	No burnings
No motorbikes in park	Restaurants	Racing track	**Personal**
Horses in better place	Burger King	Fishing club	Cooperation
Better houses	Hot shakes	More equipment	Get rid of halting site
Don't knock the houses	McDonalds	Skate park	Get rid of knackers
Better roads, less potholes	That you don't have to pay for everything	Discos	Knackers are Travellers and bad people
Car park		More activities	Bomb the halting site
Hospital			I would like to see more kids
More doctors			**Opportunity**
No school			People to get a lot more jobs
			More employment

What regeneration should do			
Amenities and Environment	**Recreation and Sports**	**Personal**	**Consultation**
Bigger houses	More activities	The regeneration could make all the changes work out for us	We could have a meeting to talk about what we want
Bigger houses	More play schemes/ youth clubs	Happy faces	We could send letters
Make different/bigger houses	More things for kids to do	Make Knocka better	To get your own rights
Only some houses should be knocked	Games stop	Thank you :)	**Commercial and Retail**
Extend houses, but not having to move	Build a swimming pool and cinema	More people to area	The reservoir should have shops in there
Homes for older people	Huge swimming pool	Waste of money to knock good houses with recession on	Fast food
Fix parks	Quad track	Government stop spending our money	**Opportunity**
Space in Knocknaheeny	Go karting track		New jobs
Upgrade the area	Tennis club		More jobs to offer
Transport to everywhere	Rugby pitches		
Destroy the new apple road	Astroturf		
New roads	Snooker hall		
Clean up pet waste			
Cleaner roads			
No horses			
Dog shelter			

15-17 year-olds

What I like about my area		
Commercial and Retail	**Personal**	**Amenities and Environment**
Apache	Being close to friends and family	Youth centre
Apache	Childhood friends	Youth centre
SuperValu	Family	Youth centre
SuperValu	Friendly	New buildings
Shops	A few nice people	New houses
Close to facilities/shops	Some people only	Not having to walk far for school
The chipper	It's a place we can call home	Some areas are nice
Chipper	It's our area	Park
Chipper	It's welcoming	**Public services**
Hillbillys		Schools
Chinese		
Apple		

What I don't like about my area		
Safety and anti-social behaviour	**Amenities and Environment**	**Personal**
Alcohol is being abused	Alley blocked off	That young people don't have a say in our community
Alcoholics	Lane being closed	Scumbags
Vodka	Alleys where gangs hang out	Has a bad reputation
Smoking/drinking	Walking the long way home over them blocking the alleys	**Recreation and Sports**
Young people drinking	Too many barriers	Basketball court
Drugs	Dirtiness	Basketball court
Drugs	Rubbish	
Junkies	It's dirty	
Crime	The empty vacancies	
Violence	I don't like the library	
Fights	Lack of good facilities	
Robbed cars	Horses let loose	

continued

Safety and anti-social behaviour	Amenities and Environment	Personal
Vandalism	Horses everywhere/ people jocking horses on the streets	
Fires		
Rough areas		
Motorbikes in the fields		
People hanging around		

What I'd like to change about my area

Amenities and Environment	Safety and anti-social behavior	Personal	Recreation and Sports
Less barriers	Stop the drugs making the place worse and glass/ needles everywhere	Do not let people jock horses on the road	Changing the basketball courts to something useful
Make it more open	Less drugs	Get rid of caravans everywhere	Clean the basketball court or convert the basketball court
Open the lane	Try to get people away from trouble	Ban motorbikes for people under 18	Clean up the courts
Clean it up	Get rid of the scumbags hanging around, making trouble	Shelter the homeless	There should be more sports
Cleaner areas	More Guards		**Commercial and Retail**
Make bus stops better and cleaner			Get a shopping centre
Estates rearranged			More Hillbillys
Bigger library			
More activities			
More events			

What regeneration should do		
Amenities and Environment	**Personal**	**Commercial and Retail**
Open up the alleys again	A new start	More shops
Opening the lane	It means a better life for the young people and the future generations	**Recreation and Sports**
More open, friendly	Making people's life better	Get rid of the basketball court – make the basketball court a McDonalds or a park for the children
More activities	Making the community better	
New facilities	Safety	
Better schools	Should be more strict about boys driving	
Get a bigger doctors		
Clean up the area		
It means the area will be a cleaner and better place to live		

17-19 year-olds

What I like about my area			
Commercial and Retail	**Public services**	**Personal**	**Amenities and Environment**
Shops are near	Youthreach	All friends live here	Countryside
Near to the shops	Youthreach	Family	It's near to the city
SuperValu	Good schools	Near to family and friends	Near the city
SuperValu	Schools	Family and friends	Youth club
Pub	Credit Union	The people are friendly	Youth centre
Pub	Doctor	Everyone knows everyone	Community centre
Off-licence	Crèche	Community spirit	**Recreation and Sports**
Off-licence	Library	I feel much safer	All-weathers
Fast food	Church	Less robbed cars	
Chinese	Good bus service		

continued

Commercial and Retail	Public services	Personal	Amenities and Environment
Apache			
Chipper			
Hairdressers			
Salon			
Tyre depot			
Bookies			

What I don't like about my area

Safety and anti-social behaviour	Amenities and Environment	Opportunity
Drugs	Dirty spray-painted walls	Should be more jobs in area
Drugs	It's not clean	Not enough jobs
A lot of drug dealers	Rubbish everywhere	Unemployment
People dealing to make money to feed family	Rubbish everywhere	No third-level education
Drug dealing	Litter and dumping	**Personal**
People bumming for drugs	Nothing for young people to do	Bad name over joyriders, scumbags
Gear heads	Nothing in the park for kids to play with	Scumbags
Gear heads around	Local park	**Commercial and Retail**
Harassment	Lack of services	No restaurant
Guards are pigs fuck d law	The courts	Not enough shopping centres
Harassment, all Guards are pigs	**Recreation and Sports**	**Public services**
Bullies	No sports clubs	Slow response for ambulance and Guards
Violence		
Off-licence		
Children drinking and smoking, boredom		

What I'd like to change about my area

Amenities and Environment	Commercial and Retail	Recreation and Sports	Opportunity
Make it cleaner	Better shopping centre	Boxing club	People to get a lot more jobs
Clean up	Shopping centre	Get boxing club for children	More employment
Litter bins	Put Penneys up here	More stuff for kids to do	More jobs
Put bins in area	Put Tung Sing Chinese up here	New things for kids to do	**Personal**
Big park for kids	Restaurant	All-weathers	Get rid of the bad name
More youth clubs	Cinema	Scrambling track	Respect the area
More crèches	Internet café		Respect each other
Fill up empty places	Bank and ATM		**Safety and anti-social behaviour**
Public toilets			Drugs gone
Horse stables			Off-licence, pub, bookies gone
More doctors			

What regeneration should do

Amenities and Environment	Opportunity	Recreation and Sports	Commercial and Retail
Bigger houses	Get more jobs for young people	Knock the courts and turn into activity centre	Use space in Orthopaedic to build Penneys
Knock more houses	More jobs	Services for young people	**Safety and anti-social behaviour**
Want own house in same area	Building jobs	Motocross track	Prevent drinking and taking drugs
More than houses	More jobs	Hurling club	**Personal**
Cleaner	Jobs for people in area		I would like for things to change in the area
Bins	Provide jobs for people in area		
Multi use complex	Work		
More facilities	Whole of K [Knocknaheeny] should be involved in building the houses		
Park	Training centres		
Parking spaces			
More quiet			

Rap Workshops

Rap A (under 12s) – *No More*

What I like about my area	What I don't like about my area	What I'd like to change about my area	How I should have a say
Recreation and Sports	**Safety and anti-social behaviour**	**Amenities and Environment**	Just open up and don't be afraid to say what you want
GAA	There is a junkie next door, needles on the floor	Better houses	Just give the Corporation a kick up the ass
Hurling	Fighting	Fix up the b-ball court	I say they should make new terraces
Noel's clubs	Causing trouble	Should clean up every day with the truck	
Amenities and Environment	Joints in hands	Pick up your own rubbish	
Singing	Not caring about the law	Clean it up	
Rapping	Lighting fires in open spaces	Stop littering	
Commercial and Retail	Drinking	Free bin collection	
SuperValu	Drugs	Clean up the fags and bottles	
Personal	Smoking	**Safety and anti-social behaviour**	
Family	**Amenities and Environment**	Kill the junkies	
Nothing	Living in a boarded-up house	Stop the fighting	
	Playground dangerous, lack of maintenance	More support for drugs	
	Glass in the basketball courts	**Personal perceptions and relationships**	
	Public services	People	
	School	Scumbags	

Rap B (over 12s) – *Deal With It*

What I like about my area	What I don't like about my area	What I'd like to change about my area	What regeneration should do
Amenities and Environment	**Safety and anti-social behaviour**	**Personal perceptions and relationships**	**Commercial and Retail**
Linkpoint	Garda move you on from hanging around	Horses	Hire young people
Youth centre	Drug dealing	Halting site – Travellers associated with bad people	Cinema
Fresh air	Some people – junkies, killings, alcohol	Some Travellers want trouble/fights, but most ordinary	Penneys
Cannot get flooded	Robbed car	Perception – bad name, 'cause the truth is it's not that bad	More jobs in regen. building, shopping centre, economic development
Personal	Stabbings	**Amenities and Environment**	**Amenities and Environment**
Family	Petrol bombs	Luas or tram	Clean it up
Friends	Bonna night – 18 up adults causing trouble, lots of fights, people getting drunk, bus of Gardaí, 14 arrested	Good bus link	Education – put a college up here
Church – priest Fr. Greg	**Amenities and Environment**	Connect Knocka to City Centre	**Personal perceptions and relationships**
Recreation and Sports	Litter	Wifi	Certain people
Castleview	Boarded-up houses		Make Knocka a better place
Commercial and Retail	No houses		
SuperValu	Empty spaces		
	Personal perceptions and relationships		
	Knocka has a bad name, it's annoying – over everything has happened [over-exaggerated]		

Appendix 6: Profile of local authority housing in Ireland

Tenancy features

Social housing is characterised by a number of key features that distinguish it from other tenures in the housing system. Firstly, tenancies are allocated on the basis of need, which is determined in accordance with a scheme of lettings priorities. This requires prospective tenants to meet certain criteria related to income (assessed by a means-test), the number of dependants in the household, quality and suitability of existing accommodation arrangements, age, illness, disability of family members, etc. If households are deemed to qualify for social housing, they are placed on a waiting list until a suitable social housing offer can be made.

Secondly, households who are allocated a dwelling by a local authority are charged a rent based on household income, as opposed to the full economic cost of providing the unit, under a calculation known as the differential rent system. This ensures that the anti-poverty indicator of affordability is a key determinant of the cost of housing since rents will change in accordance with fluctuations in household income. In 2011, the average weekly rent charged for a local authority dwelling was €59. While the differential rent system is progressive from a tenant's perspective, it has important implications for local authorities because it does not generate sufficient revenues for them to manage and maintain their housing efficiently or effectively.

Thirdly, tenancies are normally allocated on a lifetime basis. This means that continuity of occupancy is guaranteed for households for as long as both tenant and local authority desire this, and it is extremely unusual for local authorities to terminate tenancies other than on grounds of very serious anti-social behaviour or persistent breaches of tenancy rules. Tenancies may be terminated on a unilateral basis by either tenant or landlord under Section 62 of the Housing Act 1966 or by the local authority on the grounds of anti-social behaviour under the provisions of the Housing Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1997.

Fourthly, upon the death of the named tenant, tenancies can be inherited by an immediate family member, such as a spouse, son or daughter, if they have been long-term habitual residents in the dwelling. Once a unit is allocated to a household, it is normally on a permanent basis even if household composition changes and it becomes much smaller than when the tenancy was originally established. This may lead to one or two persons occupying a house originally allocated to a much larger household, but it also means that changing family composition does not contribute to turnover of households.

Finally, tenants benefit from the provision of management and maintenance services provided by local authorities' housing departments in respect of estate management, planned maintenance, upgrades and refurbishments as part of the tenancy.

Tenant Purchase Scheme

In addition to the tenancy features outlined above, local authority tenants also have the opportunity to buy out their dwellings and become home-owners under a discounted tenant purchase scheme. This option is symbolically important in a country where there has historically been a very strong policy bias towards owning a home. It has also had significant practical consequences since many former local authority dwellings have become part of the private housing stock and the scheme has contributed to tenure diversification and social cohesion in many housing estates. Matching these advantages are legitimate concerns regarding the long-term impact of the tenant purchase scheme on the sustainability of the local authority sector since house sales have diminished the size of the sector and in recent years far more homes have been sold off than have been built.

Taken overall, the social housing 'offer' made to tenants provides housing security and supports. These qualitatively outweigh those available to tenants in the private market and arguably owner-occupiers who are buying their homes with a mortgage since many now face uncertainly in terms of housing security due to loss of income.

Share of housing system

According to the Census of Population of 2011, social housing accounts for 9% of the total housing stock in Ireland and is made up of approximately 129,000 local authority dwellings and 15,000 dwellings managed by voluntary landlords. There has been a long-term reduction in the sector's overall share of housing stock since it peaked at just below 30% of all housing in the early 1960s. As Table A6-1 shows, between the 1930s and the late 1950s, social housing output accounted annually for between one-third and one-half of total house building, and it was not until the 1970s that private sector building expanded to make up the larger share of the total. The local authority peak was attained prior to the introduction of the 'right to buy' option for tenants under the Tenant Purchase Scheme and since then the sale of dwellings has played a significant role in eroding the size of the sector, despite spurts in building output in the 1970s and early 2000s.

Table A6-1: Social and private housing output and social housing sold to tenants, 1920s – 2007

	1920s	1930s	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000-2007
Social housing	6,920	38,450	20,768	52,500	29,124	61,953	42,893	20,184	46,926
Private housing	10,910	31,657	37,164	49,188	64,835	176,230	182,203	275,186	468,318
Social housing sold					64,490	59,566	46,204	17,024	10,649

Source: Norris and Fahey (2011)

Estate location and distribution of local authority housing

Local authority housing estates in Ireland range in size from a few dozen to several hundred units and are not comparable to the much larger sized estates that characterise other systems, for example, in the UK or European countries. In comparative terms, most local authority housing in Ireland is provided in relatively small to medium-sized estates and is normally located close to bus routes, schools, shops and community amenities; apart from more recently built stock (dating from the 1980s and 1990s), it could not be classified as geographically peripheral to the towns and cities it is located in. Of the 129,000 units managed by local authorities, approximately 104,000 are located in aggregate urban areas and the rest in rural areas. The largest concentration of local authority housing is in the Dublin region, where 42,200 dwellings are located. The next largest concentration is in Cork City (with 7,200 dwellings), while the other urban centres of Limerick, Waterford and Galway account for between 2,500-2,900 units each.

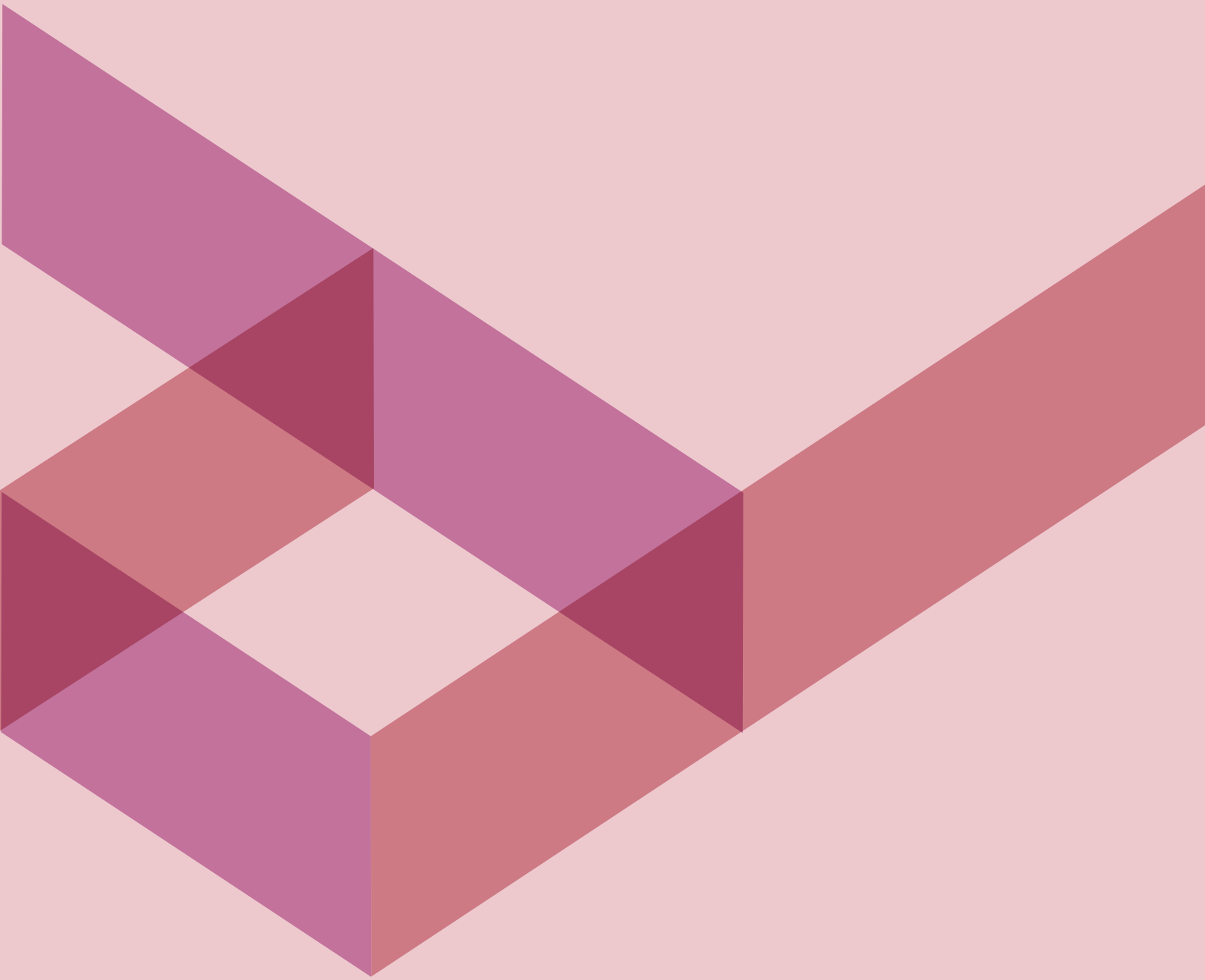
A socio-economic profile of local authority housing

In terms of socio-economic profile, social housing in Ireland could be described as a residual sector. According to Malpass and Murie (1994, p. 22), '*at its core, residualisation refers to a narrowing down of the clientele of social housing to the poor – the way in which council housing has increasingly become the tenure of the least well off*'. This means social housing accommodates predominantly low-income households who, among other conditions, must satisfy a means-test to secure a tenancy. While other social housing systems, especially those in European countries, may exhibit some degree of diversity in the profile of their social housing clientele, this has never been a strong feature in Ireland where the sector has historically been associated with low-income households as a result of means-testing of applicants.

Until the 1970s, low income was not strictly confined to reliance on State transfer payments since low earners in industrial employment were accommodated by local authorities, especially in cities and larger towns. This meant that many local authority estates had strong occupational profiles and linkages to the labour market and in that sense were not residual by being dominated by welfare-dependent households. However, in recent decades as the size of the sector has contracted, the allocation of tenancies has become much more targeted, with new tenancies almost exclusively offered to households dependent on social welfare payments as their primary source of income. The process of residualisation has also been accelerated by the effects of the Tenant Purchase Scheme mentioned above. This has been geographically uneven and has led to large tracts of the stock being privatised in some areas matched by very low take-up in others as tenants appear unable financially or unwilling to commit to buying their homes.

The narrowing of the clientele in local authority housing is clear when the income profiles of households in the different housing tenures are compared. According to the Household Budget Survey of 2009/10, there is a significant income gap between social housing tenants and residents of other tenures. On average, local authority tenants have disposable incomes of €448.66 per week, whereas households who have a mortgage have an average weekly income of €1,132.34 and those who own their homes without a mortgage have an income of €793.69 per week. The composition of household income is also revealing, with social housing tenants far more reliant on State transfer payments than earned incomes when compared to households in the other tenures. This suggests that social housing tenants are less likely to be engaged in formal labour market activities and rely on fixed incomes derived from old age pensions, unemployment payments and other long-term social welfare payments.

NOTES



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