

BELFAST ACTION TEAM

LOWER FALLS/SHANKILL

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ACKGROUND

1. Apart from the Divis Flats complex which is being demolished the area has been redeveloped and the standard of housing provided is good. The general environment within the flats complex is appalling and must constitute a serious health risk. Whatever effort is being made by the statutory agencies at street cleaning has patently failed.
2. The unemployment level in this area is officially quoted at 60% but unofficial surveys by the St Peters Church Authorities and other groups suggest a figure of 80%+. The level of skills in the area and educational qualifications held is low, with a high incidence of literacy and numeracy problems. The attitude of mind that there is no prospect of a job and therefore no point in education and training prevails, and this is compounded by a marked reluctance to travel outside the area.
3. There is a high level of community activity and a proliferation of groups covering most areas of charitable or community activity. The largest is the RC Church under the title of Cathedral Services which operate a variety of social and community schemes and are also active in the field of industrial development. The Divis Joint Development Committee is an umbrella organisation for a variety of groups ranging from the Residents Association to a Drop In Centre. At the Conway Mill, Father Des Wilson operates a number of projects particularly in the field of education. ACE funding has been withdrawn from all activities in the Mill as a result of an NIO policy directive.
4. The area has made the maximum use of the ACE programme and the area is well catered for under the Youth Training Programme. The Lower Falls Youth Training Workshop however compares unfavourably with Shankill Community Projects in terms of job placement ie 25% as against 70%.
5. Apart from Falls Road swimming baths there are no leisure or community facilities, although Grosvenor Road Recreation Centre is just outside the Action Team Area.

There is a health centre in the area and a day centre is operated by a voluntary group at the Dunville Park.

LOWER SHANKILL (COURT WARD)

6. In the early 70's the area was a thriving business community which stretched from Peter's Hill to Tennent Street and beyond. Behind the main shopping precincts there were many small manufacturing businesses serving the local needs. Unemployment was low, morale and community spirit was high as manifested in the Save the Shankill campaign.
7. Retail facilities between Peter's Hill and Agnes Street are scarce and those that do exist have a derelict or run down appearance. A few shops provided by the Housing Executive are vacant allegedly because of the high rents.
8. The area has been redeveloped and the standard of housing is generally good with the exception of a few low rise flats which have caused some dissatisfaction. The redevelopment however resulted in shift of population with particularly the younger families opting for housing outside the area. The area now has a large elderly population, although there is now some indication that the balance is beginning to change.
9. Unemployment is officially recorded at 40% but local groups would claim the real figure is closer to 60%. The redundancies at Harland and Wolff, Mackies and the Engineering Industry in general is having its effect. The impending closure of Gallahers will also be keenly felt in this area. The area is however well catered for by the Woodvale, Crumlin Road and Shankill Community Workshops (YTP) which have excellent records in terms of job placement ie 70%+.
10. The area has good leisure and recreational facilities with the Shankill Leisure Centre, the 10 acre Hammer Complex and a large youth club. The overwhelming impression is that the full potential of these facilities have not been exploited.

11. In the early and mid 70's, there was a high level of community activity and morale was high. In recent years however the level of community involvement has been low even though the provision of facilities is much superior. Local people would tend to attribute the reasons to the population shift associated with development. Growing concern at unemployment levels could however provide a springboard for a return to a higher level of community activity.

BROWN SQUARE

12. This is a small community of 88 dwellings located between Millfield and Westlink. Although convenient to the Lower Shankill they are a separate and identifiable community with a very active residents association. They have objected to the vesting order associated with the proposed Millfield - Royal Avenue development scheme.
13. There are no community, recreational or play facilities in the immediate area and the streets are used for car parking by city centre car park dodgers which increases the danger to the children of the area.
14. This is a mainly Protestant area and their close proximity to the Catholic Divis Street area makes them feel vulnerable, a situation exacerbated by the policing arrangements ie the Divisional/Sub Divisional boundaries mean that responsibility for this small area is split between (four) police stations.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

15. The general objectives of the Action Team for the area as a whole are as follows:
- (a) to improve the employability of the residents
 - (b) to ensure that public services are properly delivered and any deficiencies are made good
 - (c) to promote self confidence and self respect in the local population
 - (d) to improve the image of the area
 - (e) to promote good quality development in the area
 - (f) to explore opportunities for community business, co-operative and self help enterprises

16. The Action Team Area can be sub-divided into 3 separate and distinct communities and the detailed objectives will have a different emphasis and different priorities for each.

FALLS/DIVIS

17. To improve the level of skills and qualifications of the people of the area by:
- reviewing with DED colleagues the YTP provision in the area and the scope for improving the placement rate
 - to discuss with the Management of Boucher Road Training Centre the possibility of attracting more applicants from the ATA particularly for craft apprenticeships
 - to review with DED colleagues and ACE organisers the potential for training and the attainment of qualifications by ACE workers
 - to advise and encourage all groups and individuals to exploit the full potential of the opportunities available under Open Learning.
18. To encourage a change of attitude towards seeking work and/or training opportunities outside the area. This can only be achieved by a general improvement in the level of self confidence and will be to a large extent dependant on 1. above
19. To encourage employers in the area and larger employers in a wider area to increase their employment of labour from the ATA. This will involve:-
- identifying employers who are expanding their workforce;
 - identifying areas of skill shortages or potential shortages;
 - encouraging YTP providers to seek work experience placement opportunities and establish communication links in those areas;
 - the ATL arranging meetings with potential employers to put the case for the area
20. To effect an improvement in the cleansing services in the Divis Flats complex. It is intended to arrange regular meetings with the Housing Executive and Cleansing Department to monitor the situation and effect an improvement. There

may well be a case for a 1 off clean up to establish a base line against which future standards can be monitored.

21. To identify and encourage activities ie cultural, recreational or otherwise which would enhance the image of the area.
22. To encourage the formation of womens groups and through these groups stimulate an awareness and understanding of health matters which affect the family and individuals.

LOWER SHANKILL

23. To encourage the re-emergence of community groups and community leaders and stimulate community development. This could be achieved by:-
 - fund new activities for the existing groups to raise their level of activity;
 - encourage and fund training courses for community workers to improve their effectiveness and raise morale;
 - promote the formation of women's groupings and through these groups stimulate initiatives to improve family health awareness.
24. To identify the skills of unemployed residents with a view to re-training and upgrading of those skills and improve employment potential.
25. To encourage employers to increase their employment of people from the area by using the same approach as outlined in para /9 above in relation to Falls/Divis area.
26. To investigate factors affecting young people and their attitude towards the community and employment and where possible to develop a programme to enhance their self esteem and standing in the community.
27. In collaboration with DED colleagues to encourage ACE organisers to ensure that ACE workers are given every chance to improve their employability by adequate training and the opportunity to acquire a vocational qualification or a credit towards one.

28. To examine the community and social provision for the elderly population and in particular to identify any initiatives which may be required to improve their domestic security arrangements.

BROWN SQUARE

29. To establish a working relationship with the Residents Association with a view to channelling their energies towards community improvements which are realistic and attainable:-

- the provision of play facilities for children in the area
- the establishment of a modest community centre in the area which reflects the size and needs of the community
- supporting the residents in discussions with the RUC on the control of car parking and divisional responsibilities for the policing of the area.

STAFFING REQUIREMENTS

30. If the proposed strategy is agreed and approved, staffing resources necessary to implement the proposals would be:-

- an Employment and Training Advisor to progress activities in that area and act as deputy to the ATL
- a Community Worker to take forward projects in the more general field of community activity including women's groups
- a Clerk/Typist/Receptionist
- the joint funding with the other Action Team of a Co-operative Development worker with the NI Co-op Development Agency, whose role would be to promote community business, co-operative and self help initiatives within the designated areas.

In view of the lead time involved, it is important that the recruitment process

is set in motion quickly if the staff are to be in post by September and the maximum impact can be made on this financial year.

ACCOMMODATION

31. Suitable office accommodation has been identified at Murray Street (beside ABC Cinema). It is on the fringe of the Action Team area and accessible to both communities and the 800 sq ft available would comfortably accommodate 6/7 people. Works Division have been asked to carry out a condition survey after which, subject to approval, the matter will be referred to Personnel Services to progress.

CONCLUSION

32. The initial contacts with local groups have been encouraging and there is a fund of goodwill for the initiative. However, it will be necessary to capitalise on this fairly quickly and be seen to be effective if credibility is to be maintained. The difficulty to be overcome is that in "selling" the initiative and encouraging groups to come forward that expectations are raised which may not be fulfilled. The primary concern articulated by all groups is the level of unemployment which is reflected in the strategy. A balance must be found between depressing the expectations of greater industrial development in the area and encouraging a greater awareness of the need to improve employability and increase competitiveness for existing jobs in the wider community.

BUDGET PROPOSALS

	£ 1987/88	£ 1988/89
1. Improving Employability (Education and Training)	75,000	75,000
2. Community Development	50,000	50,000
3. Community Services Youth, Children, Elderly, Women's Groups	100,000	55,000
4. Community Business (Co-operatives and Self Help)	50,000	60,000
5. Industrial Development	110,000	100,000
6. Environmental	60,000	75,000
7. Image Building Cultural Activities, Competitions, Recreational Activities etc	25,000	25,000
8. Staffing	25,000	50,000
9. Accommodation and Services	5,000	10,000
TOTAL	500,000	500,000

PROGRESS REPORT

The following projects have been approved:

1. SPRINGFIELD CHARITABLE ASSOCIATION - BROADWAY CHURCH PROJECT

The former Broadway Presbyterian Church to be purchased and converted to YTP Workshop, Day Centre and Community Care Centre. The total cost will be approximately £330,000. The BAT will provide £12,000 and co-ordinate the public sector involvement from DED, Urban Development Grants and EHSSB.

2. LOWER OLDPARK YOUNG PEOPLES DRAMA GROUP

The project is a weekend drama course for 23 young people, aged between 13 and 17. The group is drawn from Lower Shankill and Oldpark area and when the course is completed they will produce and present a play for local people in a Church Hall. The total cost of the course will be £330 and the BAT will contribute £195.

3. DIVIS WOMEN'S GROUP - CATERING PROJECT

The group wish to be trained as waitresses and provide a commercial catering service for wedding receptions and other functions in the local community centre. The course will begin on 19/5/87 at Alfred Street Training Centre and facilities provided by DED. The BAT contribution to the project for some equipment and operating capital is unlikely to exceed £200. The participants will be expected to contribute about 20% of total.

4. NTH HOWARD ST COMPLEX

A feasibility study has been commissioned to establish the potential for developing the site. The project will be carried out by the Belfast Development Agency.

5. A number of other projects are under consideration:-

LOWER FALLS DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

The proposal is to develop Agnews building into start up units, retail outlets, business suites and a craft workshop.

6. DIVIS PLAY PROJECT

The proposal is to convert an open green space in Divis Complex to a play area and garden. Total cost of project is approximately £8,000 and BAT contribution requested £3,500.

7. BROWN SQ RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

The project is to provide a play area for children and a community centre. The financial implications are not yet available.

8. TUDOR PLACE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

The project is to convert a piece of waste land into a garden for the benefit of the residents. The BAT will be assisting the group with an application under the Environmental Improvement Scheme.

9. DENMARK ST COMMUNITY CENTRE

Discussions are at an early stage with the local group and the Community Services Department about the refurbishment of the premises and the funding of a number of projects.

10. ST ENOCH'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Church located at Carlisle Circus draws a large number of its congregation

from lower Shankill. the projects include:

- (a) a residential unit for alcoholics and drug addicts
- (b) an unemployment centre to provide information, advice, leisure facilities and a workshop.

11. LOWER OLDPARK COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

The Association are planning to develop part of their premises into an activity centre and are preparing a submission for assistance from the BAT.

12. CATHEDRAL COMMUNITY ENTERPRISES

A proposal is currently being prepared for assistance with architectural fees for a survey of the Lower Falls area.

13. Other groups with which the Action Team are currently having discussions are:

- Shankill Community Council
- Lower Shankill Community Association
- Shankill Rd Mission
- Cornerstone Community
- Divis Joint Development Committee
- Lower Falls Handicapped Association
- St Mary's (Church of Ireland) Crumlin Road
- Lower Shankill Residents Association
- Lower Falls YTP
- Scala YTP
- Clowney YTP
- Woodvale Community Projects
- Crumlin Rd Opportunities
- Shankill Community Projects
- Westlink Enterprises Ltd