

The Feud and the Fury

section two

Response of the Community Sector

In 'The Missing Peace: Development Plan (2000-2003)', Springfield Inter-Community Development Project identified six key areas of work, one of which addressed conflict reduction/resolution. The aim of this section was to "co-ordinate responses to inter and intra-community tension as appropriate and provide a vehicle for discussion, which encourages the reduction of confrontations between communities". In the absence of a single group that could provide support to groups from both sides of the Shankill feud, it was apparent that there was a role for SICDP. During this period we tried to open channels of communication within both constituencies on the Shankill but in reality it was not possible to work with each group equally. Prior to the events of August, SICDP had established stronger links with the Upper Shankill area than with the Lower Shankill. This was not through choice and was the result of the weak infrastructure in the Lower Shankill area, which we had identified but were unable to impact.

Often there was apprehension about working with the 'other side', of the Shankill divide. There was also suspicion directed towards SICDP since it was an external organisation. There were concerns over the safety of the staff, which made it difficult to move between both constituencies. An example of this was the reaction when a photograph of the Director of SICDP appeared in the Shankill Mirror with Peter Mandelson (then Secretary of State) during a visit with one 'side' of the conflict. Mistrust grew even though she had been involved with organising the meeting for all parties. This dilemma points to larger problems within the Great Shankill area, namely, 'who represents and speaks for the different

groups?'. We acknowledge that there were many factors that contributed to the lack of the effective use of resources and flow of information among groups. Due to the nature of the division on the Shankill and the current state of relationships among community organisations it is obvious that no one group could adequately advocate on behalf of both sections of the community. This predicament contributed to confusion 'on the ground', as well as during meetings of the Interagency Group and reduced the overall ability of the community and voluntary sector to work efficiently. What emerges is the need for a collaborative and strategic approach with all involved to confront the differences, similarities and fragmentation faced by the Shankill community. We are very aware that there are many issues the community and voluntary sector must address and in the autumn a second report will offer further analysis of the community sector as well as chronicle the stories of families and victims of the feud. At the end of the report we offer recommendations towards this proposal. Meanwhile the main focus of community support for the displaced families was very much provided by those organisations that were politically aligned with either 'side'. Consequently we address the role of those groups in this report.

In the course of the report it will become clear that there are conflicting responses and accounts of events. There are several areas of dispute, which are highlighted at the beginning of each statutory section. We acknowledge that it is impossible to put forward the 'truth', but we hope to document the perceptions of the incidents and the way events played out during the feud. What is significant are the ways perceptions impact on people's actions-people act on what they believe to be 'reality'. In some situations perceptions can be as dangerous as reality. This is an important lesson to keep in mind, especially in a contested



society where people act on what they perceive to be reality. In our experience, interface work is often about myths, rumours and misconceptions, however, this does not take away from the fact that violence still takes place. It is important for both parties involved in the feud, as well as the statutory and community sectors to take on board each other's perceptions as a way of moving forward and reducing intra and inter community conflict. We recognise this is a long-term and difficult task.

Not only does this report document the perceptions of individuals but also we aim to set forward a community perspective surrounding the events in the Autumn of 2000 and the months that followed. In lieu of adequate statutory evaluation this report is an attempt to monitor statutory provision and point out challenges and difficulties. It is our hope that the recommendations made in the report, coupled with an insight into the perceptions of the community sector will lead to an honest and frank discussion within the statutory sector and provide realistic solutions. It is often said that hindsight is a luxury and in this case looking back is a positive means to assess the successes and failures. It is our view that

there is a reluctance on the part of statutory agencies to review their practice in relation to the Emergency Procedures and the efficiency of the services they provide. Hopefully, our response will prompt the statutory sector to address the issues we raise and incorporate the lessons learned in the past five years into future service provision.

Due to the restricted timeframe and the specific aims of the report, the roles and responsibility of the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) and Belfast City Council are not detailed. As the months pass there is a clear need to highlight subsequent issues that have surfaced, especially in relation to compensation. The Northern Ireland Office is responsible for the criminal compensation unit. Lamentably, families have experienced a tremendous amount of bureaucracy, despite having been assured that the NIO would 'fast track' the claims. Currently, there are pressing issues relating to property damage and the replacement of personal belongings. Additional issues have emerged concerning the ability of ex-prisoners to claim compensation. Currently, ex-prisoners are not eligible for compensation although this can be overturned at the discretion of the

Secretary of State. Furthermore, we are aware Belfast City Council has a role to play in relation to emergency procedures and operation, however, the nature of their role is not explicit. Finally, there is a lack of clarity concerning the role and responsibility of the Northern Ireland Assembly. We accept that the Assembly is a new institution, but under the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister there are guidelines for emergency planning. In an effort to prevent future confusion the responsibility of emergency provision needs to be addressed immediately at a senior governmental level.

Whilst it is impossible to fully explain the horror, chaos and fear that surrounded the displacements during the Shankill feud it is clear that the lack of co-ordination on behalf of the statutory organisations contributed to the confusion and the feelings of helplessness experienced by the families. Not only were families displaced from their homes but it was perceived that no one cared about their plight. The feeling of being forced out of one's home is not something that is easily forgotten. There is pain on all sides.

Springfield Inter Community Development Project (SICDP)

As events unfolded during August 19th 2000, Roisin McGlone, Director of SICDP, received a number of phone calls indicating the nature of the day's events and early figures relating to displacements. SICDP's role at this stage was to pass on its experience of the systems and procedures used in past years so that information could then be operationalised by the main community representatives based in and around the Greater Shankill area. The first step for SICDP was to ensure that the 'Operational Procedures for Displaced Families - June 2000' was distributed and implemented. On the evening of August 19th SICDP made enquiries to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive ('After Hours' phone line) to ensure that emergency procedures were in place, only to find that no procedures had been activated.

With no procedures in place the Housing Executive advised SICDP to generate a list of names of those displaced and to phone back in the morning, a de facto procedure. Responsibility for generating this list of names was then passed on to EPIC (Woodvale Road) and Community House (Lower Shankill). SICDP continued to fulfil the role of advisor to the main community representatives but did not see for itself, at this stage, a more central role.

Two weeks into the feud, no emergency payments had been made so SICDP contacted the North and West Belfast Health and Social Services Trust only to find that systems had yet to be activated and the Interagency Group had not met. As with the 1996 scenario, SICDP reported that "we have had to fight the statutory agencies all the way - improvement from the 1996 episode was only marginal despite the role of the Interagency Group" (which includes nearly all the key personnel / individuals from statutory bodies involved in the events of 1996). A month into the feud SICDP received notification that the Interagency Group was finally to meet. By this stage SICDP had presumed that all the relevant agencies would have implemented their procedures, however when enquiries were made to the community representatives it transpired that no emergency payments system was in place. Moreover, it became clear that community workers helping the displaced families on the Shankill Road were not even aware of the existence of the Interagency Group. Dismayed by the lack of progress SICDP then moved from a 'back-seat' position to a more active role, particularly in relation to activating the emergency payments systems.

When the Interagency Group eventually met September 22nd 2000, SICDP contacted the key agencies and received assurances that all the outstanding issues had been addressed. Unfortunately, at the next meeting of the Group it was revealed that there was no real progress from the 1996 response. There were constant calls from community representatives for the Shankill to be declared an emergency area so that additional funds

could be released as there was a conviction within the community sector that the statutory bodies were conspiring to play down the scale of events.

Anecdotal evidence generated in discussions with the displaced families indicated that:

- The Housing Executive still would not go into people's houses
- No steel shutters were being put up because of pressure from paramilitaries
- Removal firms and Housing Executive DLOs (Direct Labour Organisations) wouldn't go in to the Shankill area because of intimidation or fear of intimidation
- Removal firms didn't realise that 'after hours' coverage meant 24 hour coverage
- The RUC was not protecting property
- No emergency payments had been made
- There were no childcare arrangements
- Social Services had not spoken to any of the displaced families or their representatives.

Despite a number of assurances from the statutory sector that the emergency payments would be implemented imminently, at the next meeting of the Interagency Group (October 3rd) no mention of emergency payments was made by the statutory representatives until this issue was again raised by SICDP. Following a series of additional meetings, during which it appeared that the statutory bodies were being uncooperative, agreement was finally obtained and a system of emergency payments was operationalised. The agreed venues for payments to be made were the Everton Centre and the Shankill Road Housing Executive offices. SICDP now reflects that "at all stages the Interagency Group became something of a block on all the bodies involved in it - they all became enmeshed in the day to day aspects of the feud rather than taking a more strategic view". SICDP believes that its role as an 'outsider' enabled it to take a more strategic view of the situation as it unfolded. One notable difference which could well have influenced procedural events in 2000 was the ability, through local political representatives, in particular the PUP, to access the highest political echelons and members of the Assembly. However, community representatives were still astonished by

the lack of a coordinated response from the Northern Ireland Assembly.

In response to identified needs on the ground SICDP, in conjunction with local community workers, helped to organise a series of respite activities for the displaced families. Working with the 'Families of the Displaced, Dispersed and Distressed' in the Mid and Upper Shankill two respite weekends were organised in Castlewellan and Draperstown. SICDP also arranged a weekend break with Community House in Lower Shankill to ensure that families had an opportunity to leave the local area and begin the healing process.

The SICDP management committee met regularly during this period and was kept fully informed of the role played by its Director. This management function, and the support it provided, was vital because of the potential difficulties of having one of its staff members in and around the Shankill Road at this time. On reflection SICDP considers that it had no option but to adopt a more combative role and makes no excuses for "aggressively taking on some of the statutory bodies, a role these bodies were uncomfortable with as they are not comfortable with our 'challenge' function - they are not comfortable when community representatives enquire about the allocation of public funds".

By December SICDP was able to reduce its role again to providing support and information on request, as by this time many of the community representatives knew 'the system' and were more than able to deal with the statutory sector. However, SICDP remains available to work alongside any community group attempting to resolve the issues outlined in this report. SICDP maintains that the relevant legislation needs to be challenged and that the statutory sector needs to be made aware of the dire needs of people affected by social dislocation.

The sections which follow are based on interviews and informal discussions with key community organisations that were involved in helping the displaced families. There is no denying that the events of August 2000 have been devastating to the Shankill community.

Furthermore, social and political developments have affected the Protestant community on many levels. There is evidence of fragmentation within the Protestant community and an obvious need to develop a solid community infrastructure. The lessons that were manifest on the Shankill, however, were not only solely due to the feud. The complexity of communities living in interface areas cannot be overestimated. To purposefully address community needs, more than ever communities are being encouraged to branch out and embrace those of different political persuasions. This is difficult and can be perceived as threatening. Nonetheless, we see this as an area of potential growth since SICDP is willing to support groups as they address the issues the Protestant community is facing.

The Role of the Ex-Prisoners Interpretative Centre / Progressive Unionist Party / Greater Shankill Alternatives Project

Introduction

There is a strong community infrastructure in the mid and upper Shankill area. The Woodvale Resource Center was founded in 1990 and has worked in all aspects of community development, particularly with young people. In 1994 EPIC was set up as part of the Peace 1 programme in an effort to re-integrate political prisoners back into society. The Welfare Rights worker in EPIC dealt with needs of ex-prisoners released under the Good Friday Agreement and they also had a counsellor, who helped both prisoners and their families. Furthermore, the Greater Shankill Alternatives was set up in response to punishment beatings of young people and put in place a community restorative justice programme to augment the existing justice system. Alternatives also had a trained counsellor, who had experience working with young people and families under threat from paramilitary organisations. Since these organisations were in place and had working relationships with groups in the Greater Shankill they were the first point of contact for many

of the displaced families. Due to the lack of information for the displaced families, people flooded to EPIC for support. Community activists in EPIC graphically described the situation with a sense of urgency. They report that families felt unsafe and scared, which was only compounded by the poor treatment they received from the statutory agencies. When displaced families approached statutory agencies for assistance representatives from EPIC believe that people were made to feel 'like beggars'. During the initial stages of the feud people did not know where to turn and many families were 'housed' in a local social club. The descriptions of this time are chaotic as families, pensioners, children and young people tried to access information and support. EPIC stepped in to work with families in the social club and used mobile phones and drew upon existing contacts they had made over the years. Unfortunately, they were dismayed at the poor and slow response by the statutory agencies as well as Belfast City Council, the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Role of EPIC during the feud

The Woodvale Road office of EPIC played a key role in dealing with a number of the displaced families, as well as a number of those classified more accurately as dispersed and distressed. This office undertook the full range of functions in relation to victims of the feud in that it assisted individuals and families getting rehoused and in seeking payments from a range of agencies including the Social Security Agency (SSA), the North and West Belfast Health and Social Services Trust and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). EPIC estimateed it worked with at least 250 cases and each of the key areas of EPIC's work are detailed in the following section.

Social Security Agency (Social Fund Payments)

On August 23rd EPIC approached the Social Security Agency in Corporation Street with a view to minimising any potential problems which might arise in relation to



the system of payments to be introduced. A report written by EPIC nine weeks later catalogued the frustrations experienced with the policies and procedures it had dealt in that period. EPIC summarised the interaction between it and the SSA as characterised by "endless meetings talking about the same topics". Following the public meeting held in the Ainsworth Centre (October 18th) at which the SSA had identified its expenditure as £65,000, EPIC posed a set of questions:-

- Where have the payments gone?
- What were they paid for?
- How were the decisions reached?
- What legislation and guidelines were used?
- Why, when offered, did the Department not send staff out to check the situation, but could provide two members of staff to assist in an advice centre on the Shankill Road but could not make a visit to other groups (this happened on 2nd day of 'feud')?

- Why, when decisions were made, was there no communication between statutory bodies, and when there was, why then, was the information not checked?

It became painfully clear to all concerned that the Social Fund was not designed for the effects of for mass disturbances. Its bureaucratic implementation ensured that the payments process was cumbersome and anything but 'user friendly', and it was the inflexibility of the system that proved to be the greatest annoyance to EPIC. In response EPIC engaged with a number of representatives from the community and voluntary sector to widen its knowledge and experience base, e.g. the Association of Independent Advice Centres, in the hope that a greater degree of flexibility could be engineered, but to no avail. If anything, EPIC believed the system became less

flexible. This was particularly disappointing in view of the fact that when EPIC had undertaken the caseload for the recent prisoner releases under the Good Friday Agreement the systems and procedures implemented had been acknowledged by all parties as highly successful.

A major concern, both for EPIC and the displaced interviewed, was the fact that the SSA very often challenged the information presented in the application forms. In particular there was issue concerning whether or not individuals had items in storage and if these items were damaged (with a resulting debate concerning who damaged the items), and whether items had been lost in transit or if the list of items presented was accurate. EPIC went to great lengths to ensure that its criticisms were of systems and not individuals.

A key issue which seemed incapable of being clarified to the satisfaction of all parties was the much contested issue of how long the SSA took to deal with cases. Whilst the SSA indicated that cases were turned around in between three and five days on average, with the longest cases being ten days - there was a great deal of anecdotal evidence to challenge these figures. Many individuals claimed that their individual case had taken weeks to be concluded by the SSA. EPIC maintains claims often took between one and four weeks to process and has highlighted the lack of communication between the SSA and the NIHE as being the prime cause of the delays.

Perhaps the greatest concern was the level of payments made available by the Social Fund, an issue on which all parties involved were united. Regardless of the Social Security Agency's often repeated mantra that it could not 'replace like with like', the figures are nothing short of scandalous, with, on average, a displaced case being awarded £280 (see Table 2) to cover the costs of setting up a new home. In relation to the awarding of grants there is also anecdotal evidence that many individuals were advised by the SSA to apply for

loans (rather than grants) which in effect would only have added to the hardship suffered by the displaced by going into debt.

North and West Belfast Health and Social Services Trust (Emergency payments)

The emergency payments were introduced to relieve some of the hardship experienced by the displaced but, as EPIC pointed out in its report, "there has been nothing but problems, by way of change in amounts, refusing people payments and payments being short". Following the protracted and difficult phase that preceded the eventual introduction of the payments at the end of September, EPIC reported that within four weeks of the payments being introduced the Trust was "introducing change by way of removing payments for single people and stopping payments for people who have signed for a new house, although they cannot move in due to unforeseen circumstances". Whilst these payments, which were made over and above any existing benefits or payments individuals were in receipt of, were undoubtedly much welcomed EPIC noted that "they are still an inadequate amount".

In relation to the system of attending the Everton Centre in order to access the payments a PUP representative expounded the view that "it is set out as deliberately trying to put people off claiming, its effect is to make people feel like refugees, many of the staff are arrogant and have a very poor attitude for dealing with 'damaged people'. Overall the surroundings are intimidating". A practical example of the lack of understanding cited was the non-smoking policy enforced in the Everton Centre. Because of these difficulties a commonly held view in the community sector is that the system was designed to put people off. "It is not a good starting point for families attempting to re-construct their lives, there is a great deal of evidence that the financial support offered to people is hugely inadequate and that as a result people are going in to more debt through loans".

Northern Ireland Housing Executive (Shankill Office)

EPIC had a number of successful meetings with the Housing Executive and this was key to overcoming a number of communication problems which dogged relationships in the early phase of the unrest. The PUP played the key role in relation to housing and was in daily contact with the Housing Executive for much of the duration of the feud. They worked in relation to all aspects of housing including ensuring the removal of furniture from houses and storage and then matching families and individuals to available housing in the longer term. The relationship between the Housing Executive, of all the statutory bodies, and the PUP / EPIC was perhaps the most successful and both these parties had a very successful working relationship with Filor Housing Association. The re-housing process was of course slowed down due to the lack of available housing although EPIC ensured that all the individuals it worked with reported on a regular basis as soon as any available housing was identified. The slow down was eased by the fact that the Housing Executive began buying a limited amount of local housing. EPIC and the PUP were also in regular contact with a number of local housing associations, estate agents and private landlords, although they were critical of the lack of support received from certain housing providers and private landlords. Some families were offered temporary accommodation in hotels, but this presented serious financial and logistical problems.

The Housing Executive was also responsible for payments to families and individuals displaced as a result of social unrest, however "when we (EPIC) first contacted them they tried to tell us that these payments were no longer available, after a number of calls to outside NIHE offices, we were assured that the payments were available elsewhere" (EPIC report). Following further discussions with the local NIHE office "we were informed that the payments would be made".

Public Meetings

As part of the engagement strategy (with the statutory sector, politicians and the media) devised by the community sector a number of public meetings were organised locally at which the community was afforded an opportunity to meet directly with a range of key players. The meetings in the Ainsworth Centre were organised by the Women's Group and the PUP community, which invited a number of politicians to the first meeting and a number of statutory representatives to the second (see Appendix 4).

Legal Advice

A further service offered through EPIC to the displaced families, in relation to seeking additional payments, was that it offered a centralised system for the displaced to work with Francis Hanna and Company Solicitors. Having made contact with the solicitors EPIC contacted all the displaced families with a view to collecting statements for claims in relation to criminal injury and criminal damage which were then passed on to the solicitors and filed with the Northern Ireland Office (NIO). Daily contact was maintained throughout the period between the parties and as an indication of how efficient the relationship proved to be the solicitors ensured that the assessors from the NIO were out 'on the ground' within two days of contact by the solicitors. To date, no compensation claims have been approved with the Northern Ireland Office and families are embroiled in a bureaucratic process. For example, even though some people already know they will be denied compensation they still have to wait until their application is turned down before they can appeal their claim. It is also emerging that there are problems for ex-prisoners claiming compensation, to date at least seven have been denied.

Maintaining Contact with Displaced Families

In addition to EPIC's primary role of interacting with statutory agencies it also maintained its role as the primary source of social cohesion for the displaced,

offering help and support as and when required. In addition to this social function the EPIC office also provided an information base for individuals to keep up to date with the work which was being done on their behalf. This allowed individuals to become fully versed in all aspects of the work undertaken by EPIC and the PUP. The social and educative functions undertaken by EPIC in relation to the displaced families were of crucial importance.

Community-Based Counselling

As the community attempted to come to terms with the initial impact of the feud a number of public meetings were held to address the full range of issues arising from the displacements, including the need for community based counselling. People at the meetings began to discuss the emotional impact of the feud and began to realise that both they, as individuals, and their children were being negatively affected and their outlooks had changed. Feedback from the families meant that it was time that community representatives began to consider how the emotional trauma could be addressed. At this point the Greater Shankill Alternatives Project and an EPIC counsellor began to plan a response to these issues. It became apparent that people were very open to the idea of residential for a number of reasons:-

- It gave people some respite
- Families wanted off the Road to a safe environment where they could talk

The idea for respite residential came initially from the displaced families and the residential were organised to address the needs they highlighted. The Greater Shankill Alternatives project approached the Community Relations Council for funding and a proposal for two residential was quickly accepted. This short-term response was viewed by everyone as only a first step in a long process. The view of the community representatives at this time was that the focus had to be community based as this was perceived as the best way to concentrate on family

re-building, safety and relationships. The EPIC counsellor indicated that he has not encountered many professionals who offered a service in this field of work. The counsellor had trained in South Africa and previously worked with Vietnam veterans and noted that in these places there was a move away from the 'professionalisation' of counselling services as this approach was found to be ineffective.

The participants and the counsellors at the residential collectively felt that the notion of 'going to professional counselling for a few weeks to get over your problems' needed to be countered as both the research and the evidence from the residential does not support this approach. There is a deficit of trust between the community and North and West Health and Social Services Trust, particularly there is a clear perception locally that when people most needed the Social Services they were in absentia. As a result there is a great deal of anger aimed at the statutory bodies.

The first residential in Castlewellan was for both adults and children in which Challenge for Youth, working with Alternatives' own youth workers, facilitated the group work and the activity-based work for young people and children, whereas the second residential in Draperstown was organised for adults only. The residential highlighted a number of key issues including stress, hypertension, hyper-arousal, vigilance and fear exacerbated by the fact that many people 'were living on top of each other'.

The approach used was based around 'story telling'. The EPIC counsellor reports that "there was a lot of anger and nervousness initially, everyone talking over each other". Individuals were asked to draw their feelings (either words or drawings) to express themselves. Feelings were explored within smaller groups before they then returned to the larger group (an approach based on a South African model around healing and memories) for a group discussion around feelings, the differences between people and their emotional reactions to the recent events. Physical problems were highlighted e.g. headaches, increased smoking, prescribed drugs, changes in eating habits,

depression, lethargy - all of these issues increased family tensions and relationship breakdowns. During the next day people were given a chance to relax and the 'talking' sessions were interspersed with the aromatherapy, meditation, art and reflexology. This was done in an effort to assist in the process of de-stressing participants and developing the feel good factor. In general terms day one concentrated on what people had been through and day two concentrated on hopes for the future. In addition a number of 'one to one' sessions were organised for those who wanted to avail of them.

It was not an aim of the residential to encourage people to work with EPIC or Alternatives in the longer term. Before the families went to the residentials they were told that a key objective was to put forward a funding proposal for further residentials and that this line of work would form a key part of the workload of the Displaced Families Committee. It was regarded as of vital importance that the Committee was 'in charge' of the whole process and it was based on what the Committee wanted. Indeed, there was a half-day put aside to discuss with Committee members what families had been saying to them in relation to the needs of the community. During the residentials some individuals indicated that they had engaged in other formal counselling but it was clear that they viewed these sessions as unsuccessful - people indicated that the formal sessions were very directive and that this approach was not what they needed at this stage.

A major issue, which arose in both residentials, was the phenomena whereby people were on a high throughout the duration of the residentials but began to feel 'down' when it came time to return home. This was an issue that was continually referred to throughout the residentials and reflected on what coping strategies people were using and what mechanisms were in place to help people deal with the situation. Another important aspect that came up during the residentials focused on the recollection of personal and cultural histories of both individuals and of families in and around the Road. The feud triggered a number of immediate problems in that it

awoke memories of what had happened to families in the past, feelings from past events were re-kindled and brought back to the fore to the extent that this was identified as a major by-product of the feud. The feedback from the residentials indicated that everyone wants counselling to continue in this format.

As for the future a meeting had been planned with the Community Relations Council to investigate further funding to facilitate other opportunities for residentials and PUP representatives were in discussions with the North and West Belfast Health and Social Services Trust in an effort to access further community-based counselling. The feud has highlighted the lack of accessible community based counselling available and there was a general conviction that the statutory sector had done little or nothing to alleviate the situation leaving people feeling less safe, more fearful and more insular than six months previously.

The gap between statutory and community sector has not diminished. This is clear by simply contrasting the community-based approach outlined above with the formal approach of the Trust. Through the Trust counselling was made available from 10a.m.-12p.m. and from 2-4 p.m. - a 'text book centre based formal approach' which had been availed of by only five people by the end of the year. Further discussions were also underway in relation to the possibility of introducing art therapy / play therapy for the younger children to address the issues which came up at the residentials e.g. changed sleeping patterns / aggression / behavioural changes (e.g. for 4 / 5 year olds who can't avail of Trust services).

The Displaced Families Committee is of the view that the counselling service needs to include the provision of a befriending service for individuals who wish to remain in their own homes - this would require that a number of volunteers be trained in the skills required of a home visitor. These home visits would offer visits of 20 / 30 minutes several times a week and a key aspect of such a service would be the preventative impact, highlighting potential difficulties. In essence the approach needs to be sufficiently flexible to cater for all needs, preferably with people individuals and

families can trust and in this way the negative impact of any power relationship could be avoided. Everyone believed that there is a great deal of potential in setting up a service locally working with the counselling sub-group which has been formed by the Interagency Group, so long as there is provision for home visits.

The EPIC counsellor explained the main layers of trauma people experienced. "There is plenty of evidence to indicate the length of approach required for post traumatic disorder. There is also evidence to suggest that people will have difficulty coping with their home life when suffering from the disorder. Gender, age, culture and class issues are also very pertinent. There is also evidence that for men they can be walking time-bombs".

The Role of The Ulster Democratic Party / Prisoners' Aid / Community House

Introduction

Community House is located in the Shankill estate in the Lower Shankill Road. Historically there has been a lack of community development in the area, which has lead to a weak community infrastructure. The Lower Shankill Community Association was formed in February 2000 and worked as a drop-in centre for advice and was associated with ongoing community development. In April 2001 Community House received funding to employ one full time development worker and a part time administrator. There is hope for positive growth in the area, although the workers recognise there is much work to be done. Due to its association with community development Community House was often a point of contact for the displaced families during the feud. The general feeling is that the statutory agencies tried to wash their hands of the entire situation and 'didn't want to know'. Community House believes that the statutory agencies were not proactive and did not take the initiative to inquire whether community representatives could use support during this difficult time. There was considerable distress

among the families and local community activists struggled to help as they could, often working long hours into the night.

Prior to the meeting with Peter Mandelson (October 24th) when Frank McCoubrey (UDP, Deputy Mayor) was asked to get together some of the intimidated families, Mr. McCoubrey had not been involved with the displaced. Just before the meeting he enquired if arrangements were in place for the emergency payments to be made whereupon he discovered that "no-one even knew what they were entitled to". When he asked who was helping the families he was told "no-one" which shocked him as, up until that stage, he like others was under the impression that "every thing was being sorted out and that support was available".

North and West Belfast Health and Social Services Trust (Emergency payments)

The lack of statutory intervention convinced the UDP that it needed to get involved and so it invited the main statutory bodies to a series of meetings in City Hall. The North and West Belfast Health and Social Services Trust was challenged over services not being made available and that information was not reaching the people who needed it most. It is now of paramount importance to the Lower Shankill that local community workers are developed for their area. A key factor for the UDP will be to get together a number of community workers from both sides who are able to work together, "it can't be done by outside facilitators regardless of their ability because it needs to be generated by the area itself". In conversation with the Trust the UDP discovered that there was a development worker for the Lower Shankill area but "nobody seems to know who he is or what he was supposed to be doing". The Trust further indicated that money could be made available for a community worker and this idea would be supported by the UDP so long as the individual employed would be someone with local credibility.

Social Security Agency (Social Fund Payments)

The meeting with the Shankill Road DHSS was very

helpful in dealing with people who could not 'sign on' or get to the offices to fill in forms for payments. The UDP also had a meeting with the Social Security Agency from Corporation Street, which included the North Belfast Advice Centre, a community worker from Lower Shankill and Prisoner's Aid. The meeting ensured that arrangements were put in place to guarantee everyone could access payments. Initially, there were some problems filling in the forms as people were finding difficulties with the forms and were getting turned down. However, "any problems were quickly overcome e.g. dealing with the fact that people had left behind most of their possessions because of threats and therefore did not have enough time to contact the Housing Executive to get their possessions removed".

The Social Security Agency "was also a nightmare, the initial problem was to get written confirmation from individuals so that we could represent them, otherwise they (the SSA) would not discuss cases at a time when the families were in Community House asking for help - things improved by maybe the third month with the statutory bodies because they accepted that we were only interested in the progress of individual cases. At a recent meeting each of the statutory bodies conceded openly to UDP representatives that they should have learned a great deal more from the 1996 displacements so that the system would have been much more efficient than it proved to be". A problem highlighted was the fact that the Social Security Agency was not prepared to give loans or grants to anyone who was already in debt to them. Furthermore, the UDP felt that provision should have been made for a more flexible approach yet for the first two months "the Agency did not want to know" and used only the standard approach assessing each individual case, whereas after three months the Agency adapted its systems so that cases to be dealt with in bulk, thus facilitating the role of representatives.

The UDP established a working list of displaced families, around 60 families in all, and invited all those on the list to attend the meeting in the Hammer

Centre at the start of November. After this meeting they believed that the displaced were better able to support each other because "the people in the Lower Shankill are generally suspicious by nature they are not at ease with people from the 'outside' coming in, even if they are offering to help - this wasn't helped by the fact that public comments were made about how much money people were allegedly getting". Another problem which arose concerned the difficulty trying to establish who 'genuinely' was put out of their homes. In an effort to resolve this issue the UDP formed a sub group to liaise with the RUC to establish which cases were genuine and to move these cases forward with the statutory sector. "Most of the SSA cases went through without a hitch in the end, although there were problems initially as people filled in forms incorrectly and were turned down, this led to a number of cases where abuse was given over the phone in frustration". When the sub group explained to individuals that forms were completed incorrectly tempers eased. "The SSA bent over backward to help" and worked in tandem with the sub group which played a role in ensuring forms were filled in correctly. "Up until Mandelson's visit however it was the 'headless chicken' approach and no help was available". One problem that arose for those assisting with filling in forms was that after the forms were sent in no-one ever came back to say that they had been successful so in many cases the community representatives were unsure of how successful applications had been.

Northern Ireland Housing Executive

The role played by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (Shankill Office) was praised by the UDP, indeed it was of the opinion that despite all the pressure the Housing Executive was undoubtedly under, the local office managed to play a key role in the period following August 19th. The additional staff and extended opening hours were identified as key factors "despite the fact that at times people were jumping over the counter to give staff grief and a number of threats were made by individuals". The UDP also played a vital role in liaising with local organisations to remove any threat or perceived threat

and the UDP was therefore able to give assurances that no Housing Executive staff would be threatened again. Had these assurances not been received the UDP would have completely disengaged. As a result of local assurances the UDP holds the view that a number of individuals (including workers from the public sector) were using the feud to claim falsely that they were being threatened (and therefore could not work in the area).

The UDP representative who worked closely with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive indicated that complete records of cases dealt with were unavailable for analysis. There was an acceptance that record keeping in general through the feud was not a strong point (it should also be noted that some case information was lost in the attack on the UDP offices). "We are more interested in helping people rather than keeping accurate records". (Note: - estimates ranged between 60 and 85 cases overall, with over 40 cases within the first two weeks). The view was summed up by the statement that "the PUP is more interested in getting statistics together whilst the UDP side is more interested in repairing the community - the paperwork is a secondary issue". Upon reflection the UDP representative acknowledges the value in keeping records on the number of families Community House helped, however, he also believes that it is important to move forward and not dwell on the past events.

Initially, this housing related function was centred in the UDP offices until the offices were attacked in the first week of the feud. The areas covered by the caseload were from all over the Shankill area but in the main from the area from the Crumlin Road to mid-Shankill, Canmore Street, Crosby Street, around the Northern Ireland Club and Tennent Street. Most cases came during the first two months during that time "it was impossible to get all the details and keep everyone happy. We had many difficulties getting the Housing Executive to move people and as a result many people moved themselves". The UDP organised teams of men with vans or lorries to assist

people moving and helped rehouse people as necessary. This process hindered by the fact that people constantly reported back that they were attacked during the moving process. "In the end the Housing Executive were basically no help in the removals". A great deal of anecdotal evidence has been given to the UDP that in many cases the "RUC just stood by and refused to intervene as people were intimidated and displaced, yet they came in to Community House (looking for weapons) and wrecked the place a couple of days after the feud started".

An additional issue throughout the period was the difficulty in getting the Housing Executive to undertake repairs of property. The UDP was aware that Housing Executive workers / DLOs had refused to come in to the Lower Shankill to do the repairs citing the area's reputation as full of "drug dealing nut cases". The UDP's view is that the Mid and Upper Shankill had more resources applied to their situation. At the time of interview (February 2001) housing repairs were still an issue. For the UDP, there is plenty of proof that the Housing Executive did not have enough houses and accommodation to deal with the displacements and they state that many people were moved into houses which were extensively damaged. In effect, this caused many more problems because people had to sign for houses before the Housing Executive would undertake repairs and even when people had signed for new houses it remained extremely difficult to get the Housing Executive to take action. The same is true for the technical services (bin men) who were reluctant to come into the estate.

In general the UDP had difficulties with the bureaucratic approach of the statutory sector. It seemed that most of their time was spent filling in forms at a time when people needed instant help "and were not in the mood for form filling, people were finding their own houses so we would get the Housing Executive to remove shutters or else doors were forced open by families who wanted to move into the houses". The UDP also liaised with the Housing Executive in relation to re-establish electricity supplies for families

and again it is reported that the Housing Executive was not particularly quick, or at least not quick enough for the families in performing this task.

The general view is that the Housing Executive "did their best in the situation" although the UDP believes that many of the problems arose from the fact that in each case the Housing Executive budget for repairs was limited.

Community Development / Maintaining Contact with Displaced Families

One of the major problems throughout this period, highlighted by the UDP, has been the difficulty of getting people in the Lower Shankill to co-operate, whether "its through shame or fear but people just wanted to lock their doors and did not want to speak to anyone". A public meeting organised by the UDP and community representatives was held in the Hammer Center (1/11/00, See Appendix 5)) and was attended by both political and statutory agencies. As a result the UDP ensured that legal advice was made available to the displaced after the public meeting in the Hammer Centre. "People were complaining, asking 'why are our people doing nothing for us' when the other side is having public meetings and working closely with the statutory bodies". In general people continued to be very suspicious and needed to be comfortable with anyone before a working relationship could be established. This was the case when two community workers spoke to the families in the early days of the feud. This issue of acceptance was highlighted when the SICDP Director was photographed in the Shankill Mirror with PUP representatives "which led to a great deal of suspicion".

There is a belief that there is still a great deal of resentment in the community and that it will probably be a generation before things really settle down. Indicative of the thinking and attitude of many people in the Lower Shankill is an often repeated phrase to people who have recently offered to help - summed

up as "well what the hell have you done to help us over the years!". The local view is very much rooted in the belief that if the Lower Shankill had not become so run down these problems would not have arisen. The UDP had a meeting with Reg Empey, the IDB and LEDU and the PUP (contrary to popular belief the UDP and PUP were able to continue to have a working relationship during the feud) in which the view was stated that the statutory sector "had a cheek asking for a meeting on account of the feud when for years they had been inactive in the Shankill at a time when the area was losing many jobs".

As a consequence of having a less developed community development infrastructure, the UDP feels that most of the funding attracted into the Shankill area was concentrated in and around Mid and Upper Shankill, which is generally associated with the PUP constituency. The UDP would claim that Lower Shankill, Woodvale, Glencairn, Springmartin and Highfield areas have missed out. "The biggest issue is figuring out how to tap into monies (funding generally) when so far we have been relatively unsuccessful". Furthermore the UDP was disappointed that none of the major community organisations locally (Churches and Youth Organisations, for example) offered any help. In its view there were a number of individuals within the context of the feud "who were clearly more interested in presenting themselves as 'Mr. Shankill'".

Now the major focus is on attracting funding, which will in time assist with the introduction of youth and development workers in the area. The scale of the task is not underestimated, which adds to the annoyance caused by the perception that "the PUP and EPIC have been taken by the hand but the UDP side are only getting crumbs from the table". On a positive note a working relationship has now been established with the Belfast Regeneration Office and there are several other funding applications pending.

Media Portrayal

Another source of annoyance was the fact that

representatives from the Lower Shankill were not invited to the Interagency Group meetings and as a result the UDP felt that only one side of the story was being presented. This issue reflected a greater problem with the media portrayal of the feud and its effects in that, for the UDP, the media facilitated the PUP version of events. They believed that during the feud the PUP and EPIC dominated the public face of the Shankill. This view was supported by a community worker in Community House who stated that "we have been the victims here and they are the perpetrators". The UDP in the short term identified that it needs to address the problem of the media through the development of a media strategy to overcome the negative image "we are stuck with because until we do the funders will be reluctant to support us".

Legal Aid

Following the public meeting in the Hammer Community Centre legal representation was made available to the displaced in the Lower Shankill area. The UDP made contact with a firm of solicitors with a view to collecting statements for claims in relation to criminal injury and criminal damage which were then passed on to the solicitors and filed with the NIO. However, compensation claims have been very slow and families are still dealing with red-tape and inflexible procedures.

Community-based Counselling

For the future the key aspect the UDP is keen to develop is that of counselling services to be made available to anyone affected by the feud (although to date the Prisoners Aid office has provided an informal counselling service to help in the process of easing fears). They acknowledge that there is long-term damage and often 'counselling' has been simply people talking, sharing information and supporting each other. The community workers interviewed agreed that it is vital that the Lower Shankill rebuilds itself first before putting out the hand of friendship. Significantly, they also acknowledged the fact that

there are very few individuals in the area with enough influence and 'local clout' to take on the rebuilding task. A further issue highlighted and related to the counselling surrounds the fear and mistrust of individuals and families towards the social services. Some feel that if their cases are fully recorded for the authorities their parenting skills might well be called into question and that there could be a case for parents losing their children. It is crucial that North and West Health Trust understand this apprehension when they offer counselling services in the future.

Reflections on the Response of the Statutory Sector

A community representative in Community House believes that "if the statutory sector would admit to making some mistakes then that at least that would be progress but to date they have defended everything they did and now the Trust is trying to put the whole thing to bed". Despite the fact that Community House is an accepted representative of the Lower Shankill community the representatives from the area as well as the Lower Oldpark reported that they had virtually to elbow their way on to the Interagency Group because they never received any official invitation to attend the meetings. There is a general conviction that (some of the) statutory representatives are being told to avoid the Lower Shankill community workers. An example of this sidelining occurred when counselling was offered to the Lower Shankill / Lower Oldpark areas but their community representatives claimed that they never received any information on the service - evidence, they would claim, that they are excluded from the mainstream.

Displaced families rehoused through the UDP offices moved into the Shankill estate and in general people have reported that they are fairly happy in their new houses. Despite the disruption the UDP is certain that the estate will recover. A community activist believes that "many would move back at the first chance". There has been a great deal of social dislocation of families and their social networks which people have found hard to deal with. Many people have found it

difficult to cope with the fact that they were displaced despite having no connection to any political party or paramilitary organisation or perhaps suffered because of a friendship or a vague family connection to individuals. Overall the mood of the displaced is that "they are unhappy with their lot mainly on account of being moved away from their extended families".

Lower Oldpark Community Representatives

The Lower Oldpark was very much involved in the feud as one of the deaths occurred in the area. The only statutory sector representative reported to have made contact with community workers in the area was a representative from the North and West Belfast Health and Social Services Trust. He had worked in the area previously and over a number of weeks, addressed the lack of representation on the Interagency Group for both the Lower Shankill and Lower Oldpark. Through the help of the Trust representative local community workers in Lower Oldpark finally accessed the Interagency Group. At the meetings of the Group they report that "there seemed to be many community representatives for families above Agnes Street but none for below Agnes Street, in either Lower Shankill or Lower Oldpark. That is why only one side of the argument was being presented". Eventually there was contact, but as a result of their late arrival in the Group and the resultant lack of representation of their community, the community representatives believe they have had to constantly play 'catch up'.

Concerns were also voiced by community workers that some of the independent external groups who were working in and around the Shankill during the feud were, in fact, representing the interests of Mid and Upper Shankill. This perception was reinforced by local reports of the meeting with Peter Mandelson and the resulting photographs in the Shankill Mirror. The concern was compounded for the community representatives by the fact there were no representatives from Lower Oldpark invited to the Mandelson meeting.

The Lower Oldpark community worker emphasised that it had been a struggle to continually make the point, at a variety of meetings, that Lower Oldpark had its own difficulties both pre and post feud. "It is vital to realise that the community here was already weak and cannot cope with more families leaving the area". The community representatives report that the Housing Executive was actively encouraging people to apply for 'A1 Intimidation' status so that they would leave the area altogether and "there is plenty of evidence from the community that the statutory agencies, particularly the Housing Executive, were using the feud as a way of operating their own agenda". This reflects a commonly held view that the Housing Executive needs the area for Nationalist housing. Locals in the area have challenged the 'public' version of events put forward, in their view, by the PUP and Sinn Fein. "Many myths have been created which are getting in the way of the truth, press coverage has also been very poor and often facts are ignored or mis-reported. Does the Northern Ireland Office have a role in keeping events away from the press and television?"

The community worker from Lower Oldpark had been to Corporation Street to represent cases to the Social Security Agency and from this experience would suggest that "the staff in SSA need a good course in customer care, people were very ignorant towards them (applicants). Generally people find the statutory agencies very difficult to deal with. Serious questions need to be asked about the system being used by SSA, including their approach and the levels of payments". The community representative is convinced that the statutory sector must have been aware of the issues building up over the years in the Greater Shankill, and that only through the efforts of community workers and local groups did they manage to keep a temporary lid on the tensions.

The representative from the Lower Oldpark contends that "the issues in this area have to be seen in the context of the overall needs of the area in terms of the urban regeneration of the Greater Shankill, otherwise the Catholic/Protestant peace line will be moved to Agnes Street and then it will be a real issue for the

Shankill. There is a view held locally that the statutory sector would not mind if the Greater Shankill area never recovered".

Conclusion

The community sector no doubt played a central role acting on behalf of the various displaced families in the Greater Shankill community. Community representatives were at the fore from day one, organising in the first instance, temporary accommodation and then lobbying the statutory sector at every turn to ensure the maximum return for the community. This was done, on many occasions and in many situations, despite the fact that many community representatives were 'learning the ropes' in relation to working with the displaced.

The community response was, in the early phase of the feud, almost entirely conducted in an ad-hoc fashion with key players struggling to identify for themselves their role, key functions, areas of influence and lines of communication. This inevitably led to tension within and between community groups. Despite this the sector demonstrated flexibility and a capacity to adapt to most situations. Gaps in knowledge were quickly identified and overcome by engaging with a wide range of community representatives who provided guidance and advice at key times. For many established community representatives, and particularly for the relatively new crop introduced after August 2000, the learning curve was steep.

Most, if not all, the main community representatives would concede that engagement strategies for dealing with the statutory sector were not highly developed in August 2000. The relationship between the community and statutory sector was often tense as both 'jockeyed for position'. There is a great deal of evidence which would suggest that early in the period the statutory sector relinquished the lead role contenting itself with 'dealing with' rather than 'engaging with' the community representatives.

Perhaps the most important service provided by the community sector, a service not provided by anyone else, was that it actually worked face to face with the displaced, as it listened to them, empathised, championed their cause and understood the depth of their suffering.

Section 3 details the response of the statutory sector and consists of interviews from North and West Belfast Health and Social Services Trust, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Social Security Agency. Moreover, this section highlights the role and the response of the Interagency Working Group for Displaced Families. As we stated in the beginning of the report, there are inconsistencies in the different accounts as well as points disputed by community representatives, who worked on the Shankill during the disturbances. Again, we hope that the report will spark debate with a willingness to change and take responsibility for providing improved public services.

been in relation to the number of claims. It became painfully clear to all concerned that the Social Fund was not designed to adequately deal with the effects of displacement. Moreover, its bureaucratic implementation ensured that the payments process was cumbersome and anything but 'user friendly'. This is especially frustrating given that the community sector pointed this out as a problem during the disturbances in North Belfast in 1996. The inflexibility of the system proved to be the greatest annoyance to applicants and their representatives. In response to community sector criticism the systems employed by the Agency, if anything, became less adaptable. Communications between the Agency and its statutory partners was also criticised by the community sector, particularly in relation to information on the storage of items.

Perhaps the greatest concern associated with the Agency was the level of payments made available by the Social Fund, an issue on which all parties involved were united (See above, Table 2). The payments made available via the Social Fund were extremely low and were in no way sufficient to assist people in the most difficult of situations. The inability of the Social Fund to address the need to replace 'like with like' renders it inadequate at best. Community representatives questioned what year the amount for replacements items was created and pointed out that the amount provided was less than satisfactory. Again, displacement is not straightforward. Not only was there discrepancies in the amount received from the Agency and the actual costs to replace items, but there was no consideration regarding the associated costs of purchasing items, such as transportation to and from the stores and delivery costs. More worryingly, it is apparent that the Social Fund is not even designed to give meaningful financial assistance since the effect of the legislation is to punish those who have suffered most. The DHSS has produced a Citizen's Charter, which helps to clarify its 'duty of care'. This is a role above and beyond the processing of

payments, yet in this case it seemed content to hand over this responsibility to the community sector.

Following a series of discussions with other organisations that have experienced of the operation of the Social Fund it is apparent that the failure of the Social Fund is not limited to the situation addressed in this report. As a result, it is now appropriate to call for a strategic re-appraisal, at the highest level, of all aspects of the Social Fund.

Conclusion

The lessons drawn from 1996, of which there were many, have not been of great benefit to the Agency in this situation, primarily because of the scale of recent events. Whilst the Agency believed it had gained considerable knowledge and expertise from this recent experience it stated that it would continue to employ the same approach again, in a similar situation. It is resigned to the fact that it cannot change the Social Fund scheme as, inter alia, this would have a major impact on expenditure for the Treasury. In their view, "it might be better to consider the introduction of a different scheme to cover a situation like this if it happened again. We don't have the power to change the system". The Agency remains open to suggestions regarding how the system could be improved and highlighted the systems introduced for the release of prisoners earlier in the year that was Government led. In this case, the Government put in place a system for the prisoner releases and statutory bodies simply operated the given procedures. This, for the Agency, is a good example of how a system can work when it is led from the highest level.