

REPORT OF THE BALGADDY NEEDS ASSESSMENT
SURVEY



**PREPARED BY CLONDALKIN, PALMERSTOWN, LUCAN & NEWCASTLE
AREA PARTNERSHIP JUNE 2009**

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Particular thanks should go to the North Clondalkin Community Development Programme (CDP) participation, enthusiasm and assistance in making sure that the survey was as inclusive as possible. CPLN Partnership would also like to acknowledge the important work undertaken for the survey by Andrew Chapel of Clondalkin Travellers Development Group (CTDG) whose commitment and time was invaluable. Thanks also should go to Daniel O'Neil for data entry and statistical processing.

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1. INTRODUCTION:

This report will outline the findings of the 2009 Balgaddy survey which undertook to capture the understanding, feelings and perceived needs of residents of Balgaddy for their own area. The survey shows residents concerns in relation to what they believe are the major issues of the area; which included anti social behaviour, poor services, litter and the general environment.

It is hoped that this piece of research will become a key tool in helping to plan and implement a range of services and projects designed to suit the needs of local residents. In addition, the findings can be exploited by a range of agencies and services, both statutory and community based, when planning interventions and actions intending to deliver effective supports to the community.

The second purpose of the survey was to develop participation from the local community on issues that could motivate residents to take positive and direct actions through local groups and services.

2. BACKGROUND:

Balgaddy is located in South Lucan area of West Dublin. Balgaddy is a community that has experienced major developments for the last 25 years. Balgaddy consists of five estates of which three are totally state housing one private Rosse Court and one mixed development Foxdene. The estates are medium to high density housing with a large amount of mainly apartment type or mezzanine units with little or no private garden area and little communal recreational space, this is particular evident in the three state housing estates (Meile An Ri, Buirg An Ri, Tor An Ri).

According to the latest census of 2006 the population in Lucan Esker which includes Balgaddy has increased 733% from 1991 to 2006. These figures show that the increase of population has been 8 times more. It is not possible to provide exact statistics describing the socio-economic profile of Balgaddy because the area comprises parts of a number of different Electoral District Divisions.

Local residents mentioned that there is no development in place of community infrastructure in Balgaddy because of the mega increased numbers of population that

occurred in this area. Residents expressed their concerns about the lack of community facilities which makes integration and community participation more difficult. The provision of community facilities was ignored by developers and organisations responsible for the development of the area.

In general Balgaddy has been facing major changes over the last 25 years and residents expressed that it is difficult to adapt to this area in general. It was also suggested that the housing conditions in the new developments are very poor (Buirg An Ri, Tor An Ri, Meile An Ri), there are a big list of complaints about dampness and other major issues.

It was also noticed that there is a big division between the old community of Balgaddy, Foxdene; and the new communities. They constantly blame each other if any anti-social behavior happens in the area.

Residents said that Balgaddy is not a nice place to live in because of the environment; they clearly complain about conditions of the site next to Meile an Ri which is used as a meeting point for drug dealing and consumption of alcohol causing disruption to residents and negative reputation to the area in general. This site is used as a dumping ground which is causing vermin problems.

The research was commissioned by the CPLN Area Partnership and was directed by the Community Development Team of the Partnership. The catalyst for the research was the concerns raised by negative perceptions of the area from media sources and residents. As a new area in the Partnerships remit it was felt that before embarking on local actions an informed understanding of the issues should be gained. An informed opinion could only be achieved with the participation of local residents. The research was designed to solicit opinions from a broad cross section of residents with regard to a wide variety of issues affecting their everyday lives. It was felt important to use the feedback from residents to be able to be used to guide community based decisions and policy making concerning the issues within the community.

3. AIM & OBJECTIVES:

Aim:

To obtain local data and information that can be used to guide community based decisions and policy making around the issues important to the community within Balgaddy.

Objectives:

The key objectives of the research were:

- ❖ To examine the current status of local developments within Balgaddy.
- ❖ To identify the current needs of the area of Balgaddy in terms of environment, services, facilities and community in general.
- ❖ To determine how residents rank issues, problems and opportunities related to their community.
- ❖ To promote participation by local residents in the development of their area.
- ❖ To give residents a voice in determining policy, goals and priorities.
- ❖ To determine residents support for initiatives.
- ❖ Increase participation from local residents in community groups or activities in the area.
- ❖ To identify key issues and areas where future local development actions should target available resources.

4. RESEARCH & METHODOLOGY

A general survey was designed with the assistance and guidance of a small number of local residents and services active in the area. Every household received a survey which was later collected. It was felt that participation was important to ensure clarity, credibility and that the focus of the questionnaire was correct, appropriate and above all useful for the area. From these consultations a number of key thematic areas were selected for research to include:

- General Information:
 - Length of time living in Balgaddy
 - Whether or not residents enjoy living in Balgaddy
 - Particular concerns regarding Balgaddy
 - Possible changes to improve quality of life.
- Environment:
 - Most important issues that are affecting Balgaddy's environment.
- Services:
 - Services that people are aware of in the area, services believed to be needed in the area.
- Facilities
- Community
- Information to the Community

- Summary of quality of life

5. SURVEY RESULTS/FINDINGS

Survey Completed

The total households surveyed were 803 with returned surveys of 131. Residents from all five estates within Balgaddy were encouraged to submit completed surveys.

Returned surveys by estate

| | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|------------|
| Foxdene | 200 units | 38 surveys |
| Meile An Ri | 139 units | 14 surveys |
| Buirg An Ri | 84 units | 16 surveys |
| Tor An Ri | 100 units | 19 surveys |
| Rosse Court | 280 units (private) | 15 surveys |
| Surveys returned with no address | | 29 surveys |

Table 1

The age range of respondents was from 21 to 65 years old.

Length of Residency in Years

It was felt important to develop an understanding of the relationship between the different estates and the overall age of the developments and how long residents have lived in the area. It was also identified that there is a division and conflict between the old and new community of Balgaddy and perhaps this is the epicentre of issues happening in this area. The reality is that Government and authorities are not aware of the different situations that residents are facing as consequences of the fast changes that are occurring due to the massive developments.

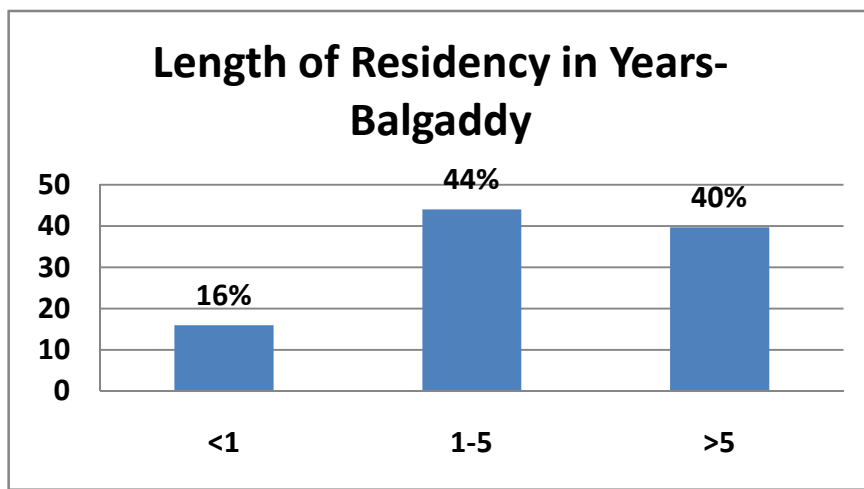


Chart 1

16% of respondents have resided in Balgaddy for less than a year, 44% of respondents have resided in Balgaddy no more than five years.

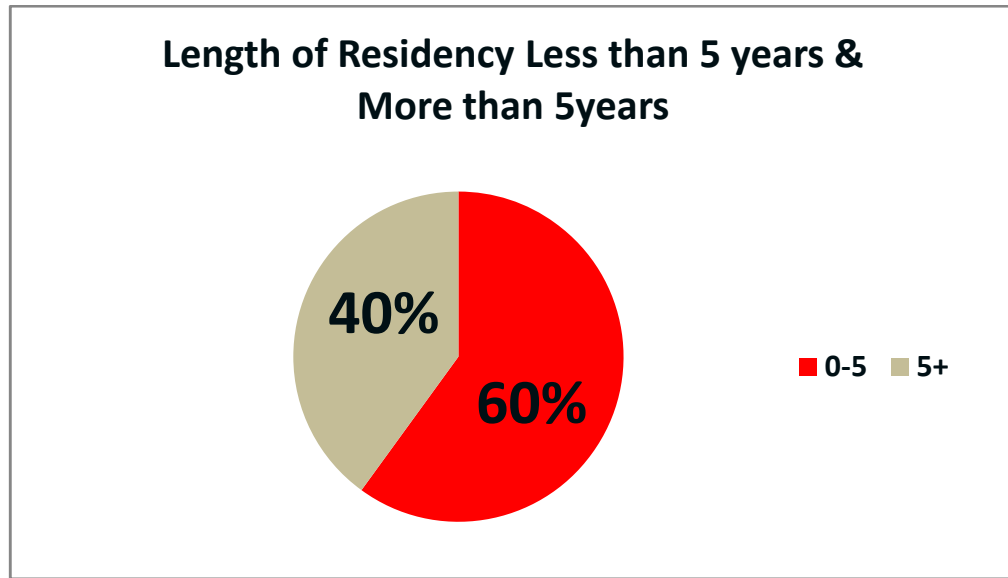


Chart 2

40% of respondents have resided in Balgaddy for more than 5 years. All residents who have lived in the area for over 5 years were located in the oldest estate within Balgaddy which is Foxdene with approximately 200 housing units. The 60% of respondents living in the area for less than 5 years relates to the new developments of Buirg An Ri, Tor An Ri, Meile An Ri and Rosse Court. It is evident that Balgaddy is an establishing community. Through this question it was possible to gauge and understand the reasons why residents showed some discontent living in the area and to look at residents' perspectives and expectation. The outcomes of this question indicate that Balgaddy is a young community presenting weak links of integration and low community participation.

Satisfaction of Living in Balgaddy

Respondents were asked to indicate on a point scale of 1-5 their satisfaction levels for living in Balgaddy. There was a largely negative response to this survey question.

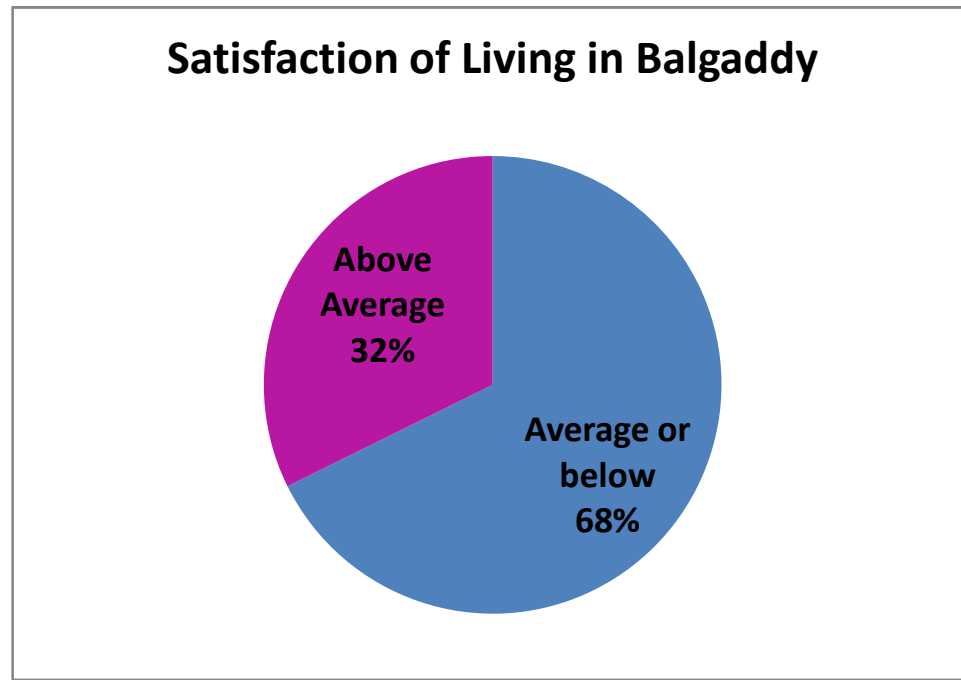


Chart 3

Almost two thirds (68%) of respondents indicated that they are not satisfied or do not enjoy, living in Balgaddy, and 32% responded with a score of average or above average satisfaction or enjoyment levels for living in Balgaddy.

It should be noted that Foxdene stood out as the only area that a largely positive response was given to this question. Foxdene residence viewed Foxdene separate to the new estates of Balgaddy and a significant number of responses from Foxdene indicated a poor view of the new areas and the impact they had on the older community and area of Foxdene. In particular there were a large number of responses that indicated extreme dissatisfaction and unhappiness concerning behaviour of particular groups within the area.

Foxdene clearly stated in the surveys collected that they have a sense of community and they are happy to participate in community activities, this could be related to the length of time living in the area which helped to develop integration in their community.

During the collection of surveys in the area of Rosse Court many of the residents were reluctant to participate and complete surveys. They seemed to be fearful of providing information. 280 apartments were surveyed and only 15 surveys were returned. It was Rosse Court residents come from different countries and there is a lack of integration and interculturalism action among the different cultures. The process of interculturalism is “essential about creating the conditions of integration, understanding, equality of opportunity and respect. It is about ensuring that cultural diversity is acknowledged and catered for with inclusion of minority ethnic groups by design and planning, and not as a default or add-on”. (MCRI, 2006, p. 118-112)

Major Issues

Respondents were asked what they liked least about living in the area and the concerns about living in Balgaddy.

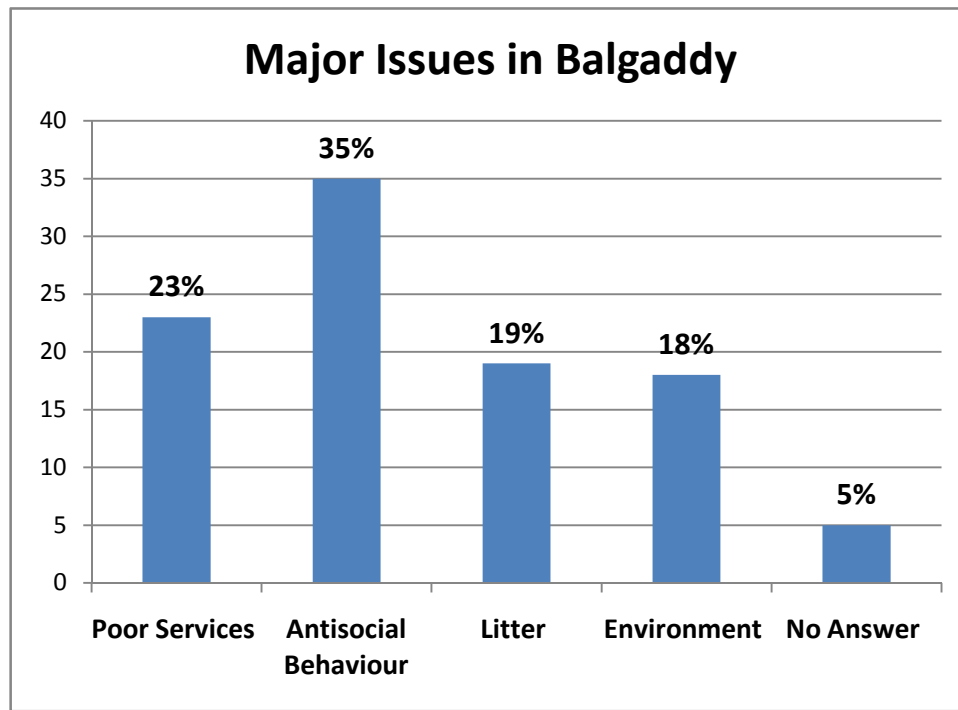


Chart 4

The responses were summarised as the major issues of concern.

The following section reports the three priorities of concerns from participants in relation to the sub sections of the major issues. The sub sections were found to be anti social behaviour, poor services and the environment. Litter was reported so highly that it is necessary to be referred to outside of the environment issues.

The largest area of concern was antisocial behaviour (35%) which relates to:

- drinking in public areas
- drug dealing
- intimidation
- noise produced by cars/motorbikes

A high number of responses from the more settled and older area felt a good deal of discontent or unhappiness with the new housing developments and spill over of the above issues into their area.

Antisocial Behaviour was shown to be the number one issue for a large number of the respondents. In particular loitering and intimidation was held to be a problem. Some of the residents expressed that there is no youth activities to offer and engage young people in the area.

A first concern in Buirg An Ri State was drugs and related issues, which, it was felt, was having a detrimental affect on the reputation of the area.

Drug issues were either the first or second concern for most of the estates in the area.

The third concern for most of the estates in Balgaddy is the noise produce by motorbikes. A notable exception was the respondents from Meile An Ri who expressed that their third concern was racial discrimination. The survey does not make it clear whether racism was a factor in the anti social behaviour stated as a first concern in this or any of the estates.

Major Issues: Anti Social Behaviour

| | <u>First Concern</u> | <u>Second Concern</u> | <u>Third Concern</u> |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Foxdene | Antisocial Behaviour-Loitering | Drugs | Noise Motorbikes |
| Meile An Ri | Antisocial Behaviour-Loitering | Drugs | Racism |
| Buirg An Ri | Drugs | Antisocial Behaviour-intimidation | Noise Motorbikes |
| Tor An Ri | Antisocial Behaviour-Intimidation | Drugs | Noise Motorbikes |
| Rosse Court | Antisocial Behaviour-intimidation | Drugs | Noise Motorbikes |

Table 2

Poor services were also a major factor (23%) with issues such as:

- no play area
- no community facilities
- no youth services
- no security in the community
- lack of Garda presence.

Litter was also highlighted as a major concern for the residents. As a single issue, litter was one of the top issues concerning Balgaddy residents with 19% referred to litter only.

A Significant number of responses indicated the environment is a major issue (18%) which relates to:

- traffic
- lack of green space
- not enough parking
- poor housing conditions.

5% of the respondents did not answer this question.

The main issues of poor services as highlighted by estate:

- For Meile An Ri and Rosse Court the absence of a playground area was the top priority.
- Foxdene neighbourhood expressed that poor services from Gardai has been provided and a lack of security.
- In Buirg An Ri and Tor An Ri it was the lack of facilities and no community resources available.

Secondary concern for Foxdene, Buirg An Ri and Tor An Ri is the demand of playground in the area. There is a need of youth activities/services in Meile An Ri. Respondents in Meile An Ri expressed that there is nothing to offer to young generations. Respondents from Rosse Court indicated that their second concern is the lack of security for residents and support from Gardai.

Third concern for most residents in Balgaddy is the lack of community facilities, youth activities and services to offer to young people in the area

Major Issues: Poor Services

| | <u>First Concern</u> | <u>Second Concern</u> | <u>Third Concern</u> |
|-------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Foxdene | Security and support from Garda | No Playground | Lack of Facilities |
| Meile An Ri | No Playground | Youth Activities/Services | Lack of Facilities |
| Buirg An Ri | Lack of Facilities | No Playground | Youth Activities/Services |
| Tor An Ri | No community Resources | No Playground | Youth Activities/Services |
| Rosse Court | No Playground | Security and support from Garda | Youth Activities/Services |

Table 3

Table two illustrates considerable commonality between the 5 estates regarding the major issues facing the area.

Thorough out all the estates in Balgaddy litter was seen as the first concern.

Foxdene estate made special observation about the existence of broken glass in the area which had the potential to be a major health hazard and prevented children playing in the locality.



Community Centre Meile An Ri not in operation.

Major Issues: Litter

| | <u>First Concern</u> |
|-------------|--|
| Foxdene | Litter on the streets /Broken glass |
| Meile An Ri | Litter on the streets |
| Buirg An Ri | Litter on the streets |
| Tor An Ri | Litter on the streets |
| Rosse Court | Litter on the streets |

Table 4

Environment

Residents in Foxdene and Meile An Ri expressed concern over traffic, making particular comment that they found it a danger to children in the area. Tor An Ri's also expressed concern highlighting the amount of speeding cars. For Buirg An Ri's concern was raised over parking limitations which is causing an uncomfortable and belligerent atmosphere between residents. While all estates mentioned the lack of a green space for Rosse Court this was their number one issue in relation with the environment.

The second concern for residents in Foxdene, concerning the environment, is the dissatisfaction with the new housing developments in Balgady. Meile An Ri and Rosse Court's second concern is limited parking which again is causing a problem for residents in the area. Tor An Ri is also concerned about the need of a green space.

A Third concern for residents in Foxdene is limited parking, Tor an Ri are unhappy with the neighbours, Meile An Ri expressed that they do not have green space, Buirg An Ri are concerned with the large amount of unsightly graffiti in the area. For Rosse Court's a concern was raised regarding vermin, in particular rats.

Major Issues: Environment

| | <u>First Concern</u> | <u>Second Concern</u> | <u>Third Concern</u> |
|-------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Foxdene | Traffic | Dissatisfaction with new estates | Parking |
| Meile An Ri | Traffic | Parking | No Green Space |
| Buirg An Ri | Parking | Traffic | Graffiti |
| Tor An Ri | Speeding Cars | No Green Space | Unhappy with neighbours |
| Rosse Court | No Green Space | Parking | Rats |

Table 5



Tor an Ri Litter



Foxdene Green Space



Foxdene Green Space

Perceived Services in the Area

Residences were asked the question:

What services are you aware of that are available in Balgaddy

Over half (52%) of the respondents answered that there were no services available to them in the area.

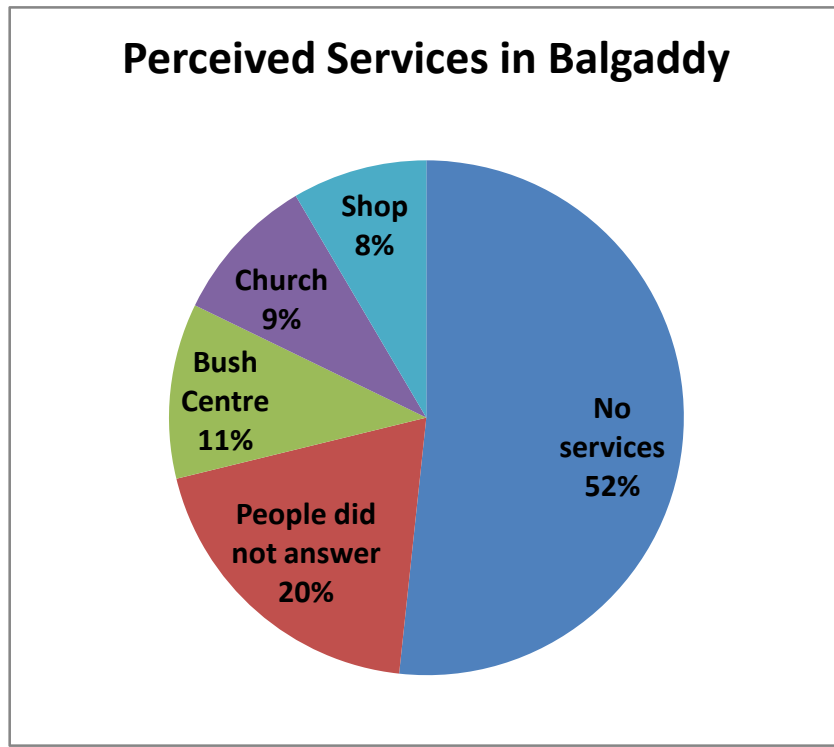


Chart 5

The Bush Centre is the most known facility in the area (11%). The Bush Centre is the only centre providing services and facilitates in the area such as a crèche in addition to room rental for community space and events.

The remaining facilities known by respondents were a shop and the church. It is relevant to mention that at the time of writing the only shop in the area, located in Rosse Court, is closed until further notice. It is significant that no responses referred to agencies or services that while not located in the area do have a remit to engage and work with local residents

Is there any particular Need for change in Balgaddy

Over three quarters (79%) of the responses indicated a desire for change within Balgaddy.

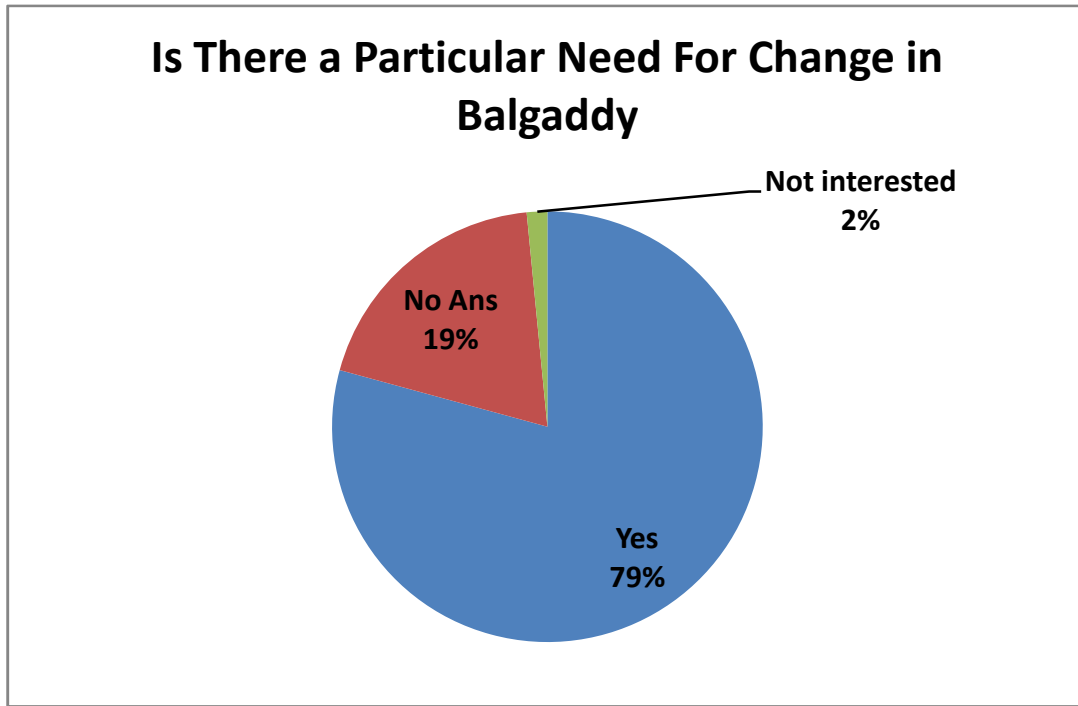


Chart 6

The following issues were positively indicated:

- community participation
- gangs in the area
- anti-social behaviour
- development of youth activities
- reducing litter and graffiti
- negative perception concerning the new housing developments
- racial discrimination
- drugs misuse and drug dealing
- rat infestation
- fence on wall
- Garda patrolling
- Improvement of the area in general.

Suggested Improvements to the Area

The survey asked residence in an open ended question to note three things that would make Balgaddy a better place. The nature of the improvements was broad and is fully cited in chart 8.

The top response (27%) referred to the environment with clear statements that this issue had to improve in the following aspects:

- tidiness/littering (this was by far the top priority with the majority of the respondents naming this one aspect of the highest need)
- Traffic
- Street lighting
- access to transport
- traffic calming measures
- pest control
- green areas
- new entrance to connect shops (accessibility)

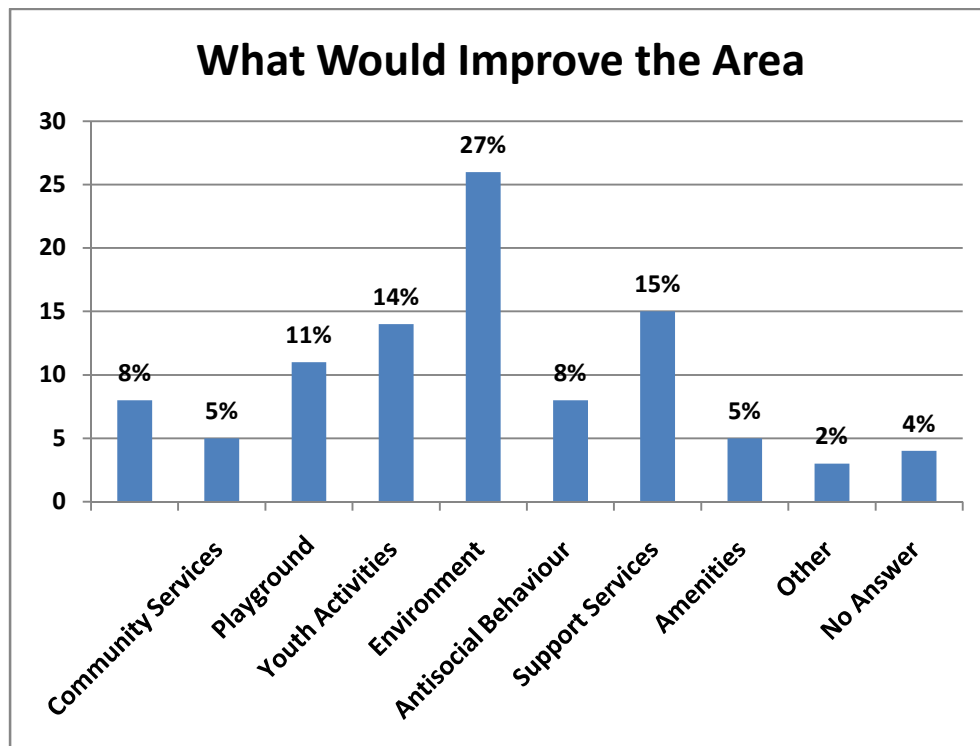


Chart 7

Youth services were also featured high from respondents (15%) stating that the area would improve with better services aimed at the youth and safe dedicated playground areas (11%). A marked number of responses named the need for greater community services in general and capacity for community meetings including women's groups and adult education (14%).

The survey shows that residence strongly believe that the development of integrated support service is important (17% in total). The support services concentrate on the perception of personal and property safety with respondents citing greater emphasis on a Garda presence, Local Authority support, CCTV and neighbourhood watch schemes to be put in place. Many responses specifically made reference to the need to tackle antisocial behaviour, drug misuse, graffiti and racial discrimination. Animal control, including removing the horses from the area was highlighted.

General Amenities were also an issue for a number of residences. A local shop accessible to all areas, a Post Office and general improvement in the parking and recreational facilities were specific suggestions that were felt that if implemented would have a significant improvement in the area

Services and Facilities Needed

Over half respondents (55%) pointed to the need for community facilities one of the top one is youth club/facilities, community centre, sports club, playground area, green area and services to tackle drugs. It was mentioned that residents do not have any meeting point where residents can meet and work towards community developments. There was no evidence that any kind of consultation process had taken place among residents in order to allocate services i.e. shops.

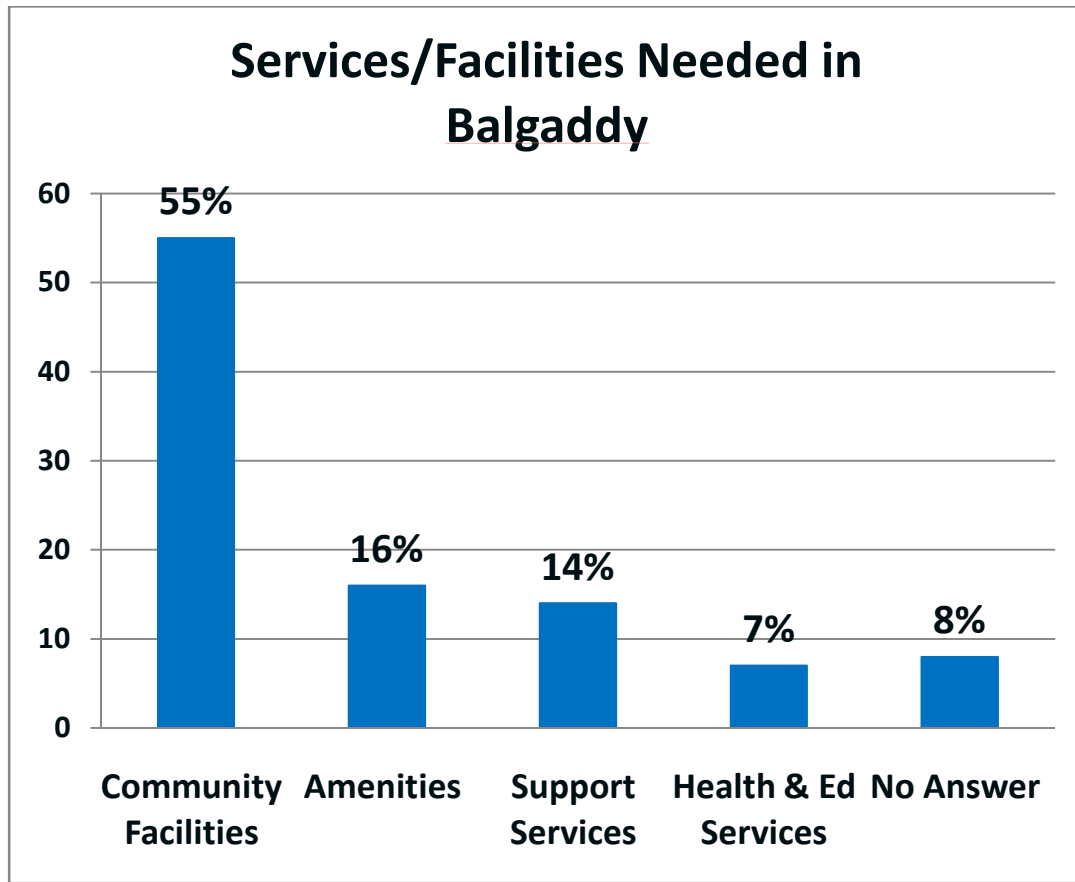


Chart 8

16% of respondents pointed out that amenities are needed in Balgaddy such as shops, post office and accessible parking for residents.

14% of respondents pointed out that support services are needed in Balgaddy, they requested to have more support from Gardai, organising of a Neighbourhood Watch Group and support from the local authority.

7% of respondents expressed the need of health & education services.

8% or respondents did not answer this question.

Interest in Community Participation

Of the 131 overall respondents 28% indicated that they would like to get involved in community activities.

The majority of respondents indicated that they either were not interested in becoming involved in community activities (57%) or that they did not answer this question (15%). This is evidence of a lack of a participatory feeling and low community spirit in Balgaddy.

It was stated that between the Rosse Court and New State Housing Developments there is a large fence of division. Rosse Court residents showed concerns about it and they said that they do not have access to schools.

Lack of participation is a big issue in Balgaddy, new and old residents have seen many changes happening so quickly. Residents from Balgaddy said that they were extremely unhappy about the conditions how developers left extended areas of trash which has created a dumping ground for litter.

The trash left by developers has also been used to build small shed which is used as a meeting point for drug dealers and the consumption & abuse of drugs and drinking alcohol. All these incidents had reflected negative impact on communities. Balgaddy has already gained a bad reputation and people lose the enthusiasm for living there.

Another major problem identified was parking which is causing serious stress to residents. Community members from the new state housing developments mentioned that there is not enough parking mainly in Meile An Ri State.

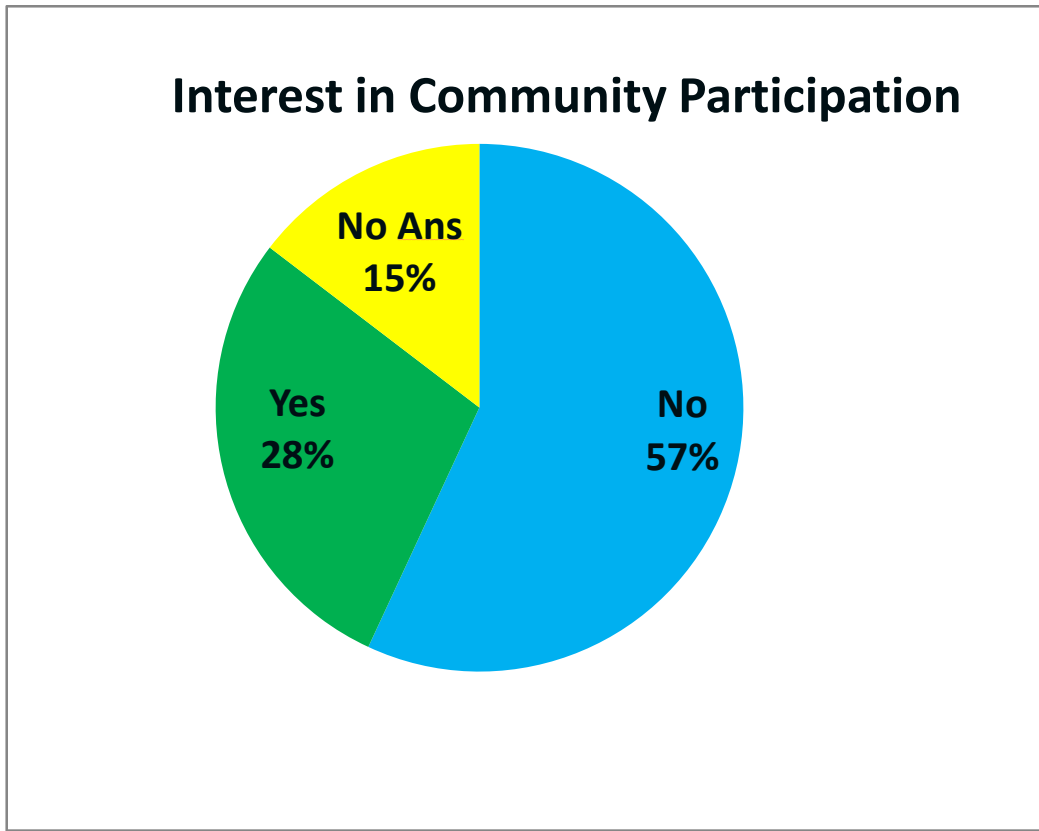


Chart 9

Breakdown of Participation

From the 28% of respondents that stated that they would like to get involved in community activities 18 respondents (50%) expressed an interest to take part in community activities i.e. sports, community meetings and 25% of respondents would like to take part in youth activities and clubs. The remaining 25% of respondents showed a preference for environment groups and tidying groups and residents groups.

Through this needs assessment survey residents were also asked to provide their contact details in order to be part of community groups and the follow up of the information collected from this survey, 54 respondents offered their contact details which will be very useful in promoting community participation.

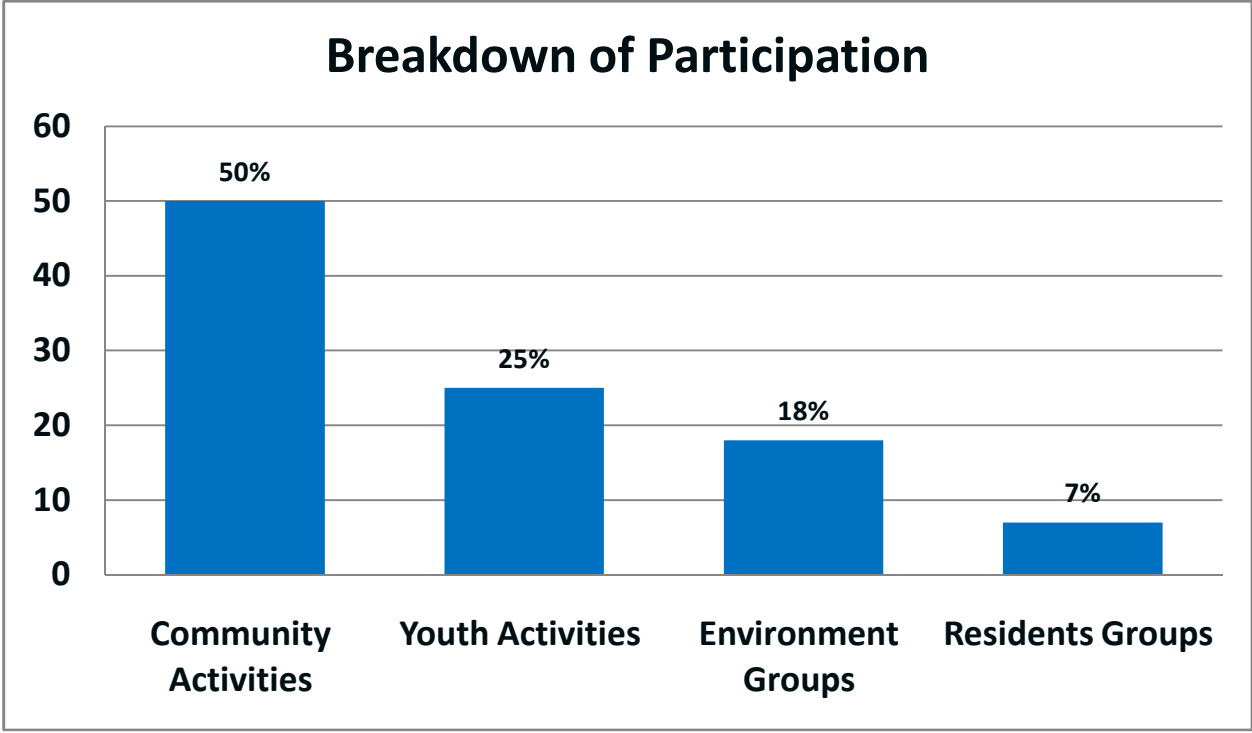


Chart 10

Preferred Information Format

The following reports the feedback from residents when asked the question how they would like to be informed about services and activates. This question was felt important as full and appropriate engagement with the local community was seen as vital to the future planned activities and subsequent developments of the area.

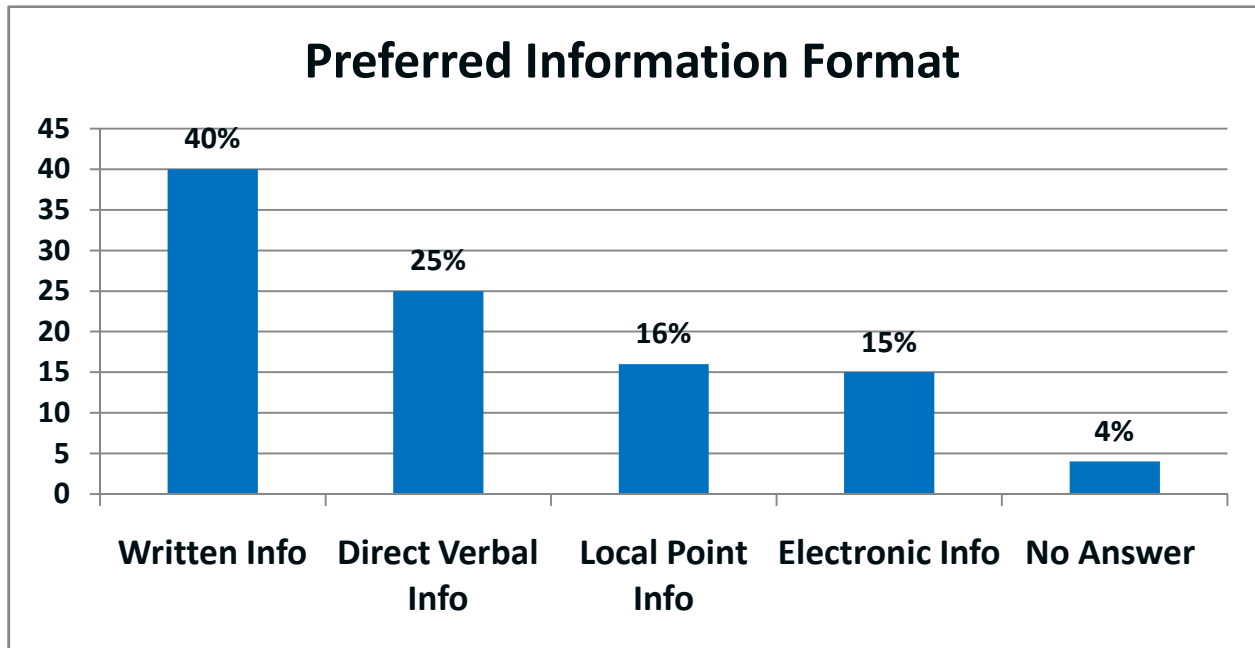


Chart 11

- 40% of respondents prefer to be informed about community events through written information such as newsletter, brochures and local media.
- 25% of respondents favourite information format is direct verbal information such as face to face, meeting and through the phone line.
- 16% of respondents favourite information format is a local information point that must be located in a visible area for the community.
- 15% of respondents favourite information format is electronic information e-mail and website
- 4% of respondents did not answer this question.

Summary

Balgaddy is a relative new community consisting of recently built housing estate developments (Tor An Ri, Buirg An Ri, Meile An Ri) and private development Rosse Court. Balgaddy is a young community and it is in the first stages of development presenting some signs of instability.

Foxdene is the oldest estate established in 1985. Residents in Foxdene responded positively to their own estate and seemed to enjoy their neighbourhood and expressed a clear and good sense of community. However, they also indicated some discontent with the new and neighbouring housing developments in the area.

Rosse Court is a private housing development which presents early stages of community development, this estate as a new development where residents are eager to participate in community activities. Families in this estate come from different cultural backgrounds.

The low level of responses and from the responses the high level of dissatisfaction but the low participatory willingness of the residence may be seen as a lack of community spirit. The lack of community spirit could be argued to be a natural response to the perceived lack of interest from agencies and services.

Key Action Themes

There is a number of key action themes arising from the conclusions drawn from the research conducted in conjunction with the CPLN Area Partnership – Community Development section. These recommendations focus on the critical issues to be addressed in future local development service planning.

1. Community Information
2. Youth Services and Facilities
3. Environment
4. Community Participation
5. Integration
6. Community Facilities
7. Play ground

Community Information

There is a lack of community communication strategy in place in Balgaddy. There is only one newsletter "The Buzz" distributed by the North Clondalkin Community Development Programme (NCCDP) on a monthly basis. However The Buzz Newsletter is distributed throughout its catchment area which encompasses the whole of North Clondalkin, a long established area with many separate issues and focus from that of Balgaddy. In addition, the "The Buzz" does not cover Rosse Court.

There is little promotion of the availability of community services near to Balgaddy. There is an absence of ways to ensure that community information points promote services and community events available in the area. The lack of information was reflected in the responded surveys as a barrier to greater community participation and active citizenship.

Actions to be taken are to develop an effective ways of communication. Design and build a local information point; a civic centre which would be multi functionary and address many of the capacity issues of the area. In addition, examine other possible and low cost communication tools such as: text messages, newsletter, website.

Youth Services and Facilities:

There are some but limited youth services within Balgaddy mostly provided by Ronastown Youth Services. The youth services that are in place at present suffer from being stretched to capacity in trying to meet the needs of the area. Balgaddy presents anti-social incidents as a ongoing concern therefore there is a need to look at significant resource budgets on a multi-annual basis to continue to expand the services being provided and the number of youth actively engaging in those services. This is a high priority issue to tackle one of the main concerns of Balgaddy: antisocial behaviour.

Environment

There is a special concern about the environment in Balgaddy. Litter on the streets is one of the major issues in the area. There is a need to organise some community activities to improve their environment and gain support from relevant organisation. Another major issue is the traffic and not enough parking mainly in the new housing developments.

The empty side left by the developers in such conditions is a focus antisocial behaviour and dumping trash and vermin.

Integration & Community Participation

According to the survey findings a low number of residents at present would like to take part in community activities such as youth activities, environment groups and residents groups. The community needs to believe that the community belongs to all the residents and to do this engagement is needed from as wide and diverse membership of that community as possible. Motivating, capturing and utilising resident energy is a complex issue, many residents did not feel safe enough or held a strong enough sense of belonging to the community to want to engage which needs to be addressed by a number of initiatives.

In order to improve community participation rates it is suggested that better communication links should be developed with local residents, organisation of public meetings, events and festivals to highlight significant occasions.

Community Facilities

There is evidence in this research that there is no community facility in Balgaddy that could provide a base for the delivery of a wide range of services to the community. Unfortunately there is one community facility located in the new developments Meile An Ri that was designated to provide youth and community services. That is not in operation due to the lack of funding.

The Bush Centre provides crèche services to the local community and rental room for various local groups request.

The reality is that large housing development was undertaken in a short period of time with little or no capacity for available community facilities in the area. The development of community facilities including shops and amenities is a key priority for action.

The remaining facilities known by respondents were a shop and the church. It is relevant to mention that at the time of writing the only shop in the area, located in Rosse Court, is closed until further notice. Residents are struggling to get access to shops.

Playground

Balgaddy only presents a newly developed play ground in Rosse Court which was vandalised recently.

References Used

Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (2006) Realising Integration: Creating the Conditions for the Economic, Social, Political and Cultural Inclusion of Migrant Workers and their Families in Ireland.

www.cso.ie/census