



# BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Supporting Community Development  
Funded Initiatives (2005-2007)

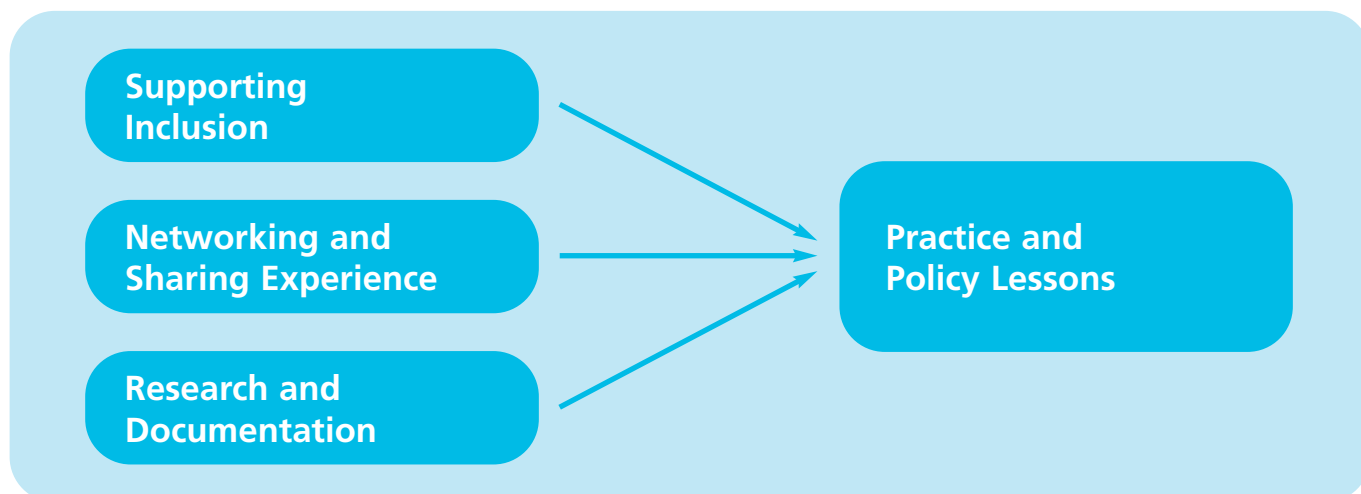


The Combat Poverty Agency is a statutory advisory body responsible for developing and promoting evidence-based proposals and measures to combat poverty in Ireland.

Under its Strategic Plan 2005-2007, Combat Poverty has developed work to support disadvantaged communities (geographical and sectoral) to tackle poverty and health inequalities. The Building Healthy Communities programme has the following key aims:

- To promote the principles and practice of community development in improving health and well-being outcomes for disadvantaged communities
- To build the capacity of community health interests to draw out practice and policy lessons from their work
- To inform and support policy initiatives relating to the links between poverty and health
- To explore mechanisms for effective, meaningful and sustainable community participation in decision making regarding health

There are four interlinked elements to the Building Healthy Communities programme



A community development approach to health has an important role to play in involving people who experience poverty and social exclusion in contributing to anti poverty and health-promotion policies and practice.

Combat Poverty has defined community development as "a process whereby those who are marginalised and excluded are enabled to gain in self confidence, to join with others and to participate in actions to change their situation and tackle the problems that face their community."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Role of Community Development in Tackling Poverty*, Combat Poverty Agency, 2000

## Supporting Innovation

In the first phase of the programme, Combat Poverty granted funding to thirty one initiatives to encourage innovation and capacity building by groups in exploring the links between poverty and health and in developing responses to health inequalities.

**In 2005, under the second phase of the programme, ten initiatives have been funded, eight for a three year period and two on a yearly basis\*.**

All tackle health inequalities in strategic and innovative ways using community development principles and practice. The Building Healthy Communities programme has been developed in collaboration with the Health Services Executive and the Department of Health and Children who have also provided financial support to the programme.

This brochure contains a brief description and initial contact details of the funded initiatives 2005-2007. For further information on the overall Building Healthy Communities Programme contact:

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## Addressing Isolation and Stigmatisation Among Lone Parents (OPEN One Parent Exchange and Network)

OPEN is a national network of 80 local lone parent self-help groups. During consultations on its Strategic Plan in 2004, lone parents were found to suffer high levels of isolation, poverty and exclusion. Stigmatisation was a key issue. These factors had implications for the mental health of lone parents. Anecdotal evidence showed depression among lone parents and an over-reliance on prescription drugs as a response.

OPEN secured funding for a three-year mental health project to address related issues of isolation and stigmatisation among lone parents. The project will explore means of addressing these issues in a holistic way within the community, as an alternative to a medical model. Focus groups were set up in four urban and rural communities to research issues, explore initiatives already under way and to provide recommendations for action. These recommendations provide the basis of the agreed programme of work. Lone parents from OPEN member groups will be encouraged to discuss their needs and to participate in the project. The project will be evaluated in the third year to identify mainstreaming options.

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## Action Learning on Community Approaches to Health (CAN)

CAN is a community development organisation that uses community development principles and practices to promote a more just and equal society. CAN is currently piloting a Community Development and Health Course, FETAC, Level 5 in three communities – Dublin 8, Cork city and with minority ethnic communities. An action research programme is in place to document and disseminate the learning across the three communities with a view to informing policy in relation to health inequalities.

The Building Healthy Communities programme is funding an in-depth evaluation of the course in Cork in collaboration with Northside Initiative for Community Health (NICHE), the host organisation. It is also resourcing the co-ordination of a Learning Unit, facilitated by CAN for the key stakeholders in this pilot programme.

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### Women Together Network (Schizophrenia Ireland)

Schizophrenia Ireland supports people who have mental health issues, and their families. It found a need for a specific space to allow women to explore their mental health and recovery needs. The concept of recovery is important, giving hope and a way forward from a diagnosis that otherwise might seem like a life sentence.

Funding was secured in 2005 to set up a national network for women with mental health issues, following an earlier series of national workshops. Development work for the network took place in 2005. Combining social and work activities, it will enable women to research the idea of a recovery pathway in general and also develop their personal recovery plans. These may include education and employment - two areas to which there are major barriers at present - and using creative activity as a recovery tool. The network will hold five weekend seminars in 2005 – 2006. It is anticipated that the research conducted in 2005 will be channelled to health agencies at a later date.

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### Promotion of Irish Sign Language to Health Services (Irish Deaf Society)

The Irish Deaf Society promotes the rights of deaf people and their access to all aspects of life, primarily by upholding the status of Irish Sign Language (ISL), which is the language of communication and culture for the deaf community.

Communication and language barriers are the main health obstacles facing deaf people. The health sector lacks ISL with which to communicate health information and services. This impairs access and heightens health risks.

Funding was provided for a three-year project to promote health services and information for deaf people in ISL. The society is currently producing a health information DVD in sign language which builds on earlier work to identify needs and produce health information in deaf-friendly formats. It will evaluate this work so as to produce guidelines for health professionals and official policies to ensure health equality for deaf people at the end of the project. The long-term aim is to form partnerships with the Department of Health and Children and other health service providers.

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### Effective Participation for Asylum-seekers and Refugees

(Galway Refugee Support Group)

Galway Refugee Support Group is a community development organisation that works with asylum-seekers and refugees to ensure the provision of appropriate services, supports and resources and opportunities to participate in all aspects of Irish society. Health is a key issue for this community. There is a need to build the capacity of asylum-seekers and refugees to identify and voice their health issues through the Health Service Executive's (HSE) consultative structures. Service providers also require training on cultural diversity and the specific needs of different communities.

Much of the activity in 2005–2006 will build on the work carried out in previous years. Research on the health needs of the community will be the focus of discussion and lobbying with the HSE. Over the next three years MARTA (Migrants Asylum Seekers and Refugees Training for Action) will work to develop training with HSE personnel to create more effective communication and consultation mechanisms. It will devise training for community health representatives and build peer support networks within different asylum-seeker/refugee communities.

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### Residents-led Community Health Agenda

(Fatima Health Initiative, Fatima Groups United)

The Fatima Health Initiative in Dublin's south inner city is building on previous community development health initiatives to ensure that the social regeneration of Fatima in the area of health is community led and driven. Co-funding from the Building Healthy Communities programme allowed the earlier initiatives to be greatly expanded.

There are two strands. One is the employment by Fatima Groups United of three local women as part time community health workers to drive a resident-led community health agenda within the regeneration. They will work from community development principles and practice. The second strand is working within a wider local area. The aim is to bring local community groups in the Rialto and Donore Ave area into a Community Health Forum. This will develop a Community Development Health Strategy for the area that will directly influence and feed into the planned Dolphin's Barn Health and Well-being Centre. The Fatima Regeneration Board has provided funding for a project leader to drive the development of this centre.

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## Travellers' Health Impact Assessment

(Galway Traveller Support Group)

Travellers have continually identified accommodation poverty as being a key factor in causing poor health. It has been stated in the National Health Strategy for Travellers that: "it is clear that an immediate improvement to the living environment of Travellers is a prerequisite to the general improvement in health status".

This project will carry out community-led Health Impact Assessments (HIA) of selected accommodation sites to determine proactive responses from the resident Travellers in partnership with state agencies, such as local authorities, the Health Service Executive and local Traveller representative groups.

The Health Impact Assessment model incorporates participative community development methods in evidence gathering, and developing community responses to issues raised during the HIA process.

The project aims to develop an understanding among Travellers and health professionals of the links between accommodation standards, poverty and health, and to enable the Travelling community to initiate a community development response to addressing issues raised.

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## National Health Forum for Ethnic Minorities

(Cáirde)

Cáirde seeks to improve opportunities for better health and well-being for ethnic minorities by building their capacity to address issues affecting their communities and to influence change. With funding in previous years, Cáirde set up a Dublin-based Ethnic Minority Health Forum and organised training on community development approaches to health and on Irish healthcare and policy systems.

In 2005 Cáirde received funding to set up a National Ethnic Minority Health Forum. This involved making contacts with ethnic minority groups around the country and building regional health fora, which will form the basis for the national forum. The 2005 work involved consultation, setting priorities, sharing experiences, empowering ethnic minority communities to engage with policymakers and organising towards the national forum. Creating a newsletter and website, based on this work, will be part of this process. In 2006, the regional groups will organise and set the goals and priorities for a national conference, which will inaugurate the National Ethnic Minority Health Forum.

In 2005, Cáirde commenced NAPS training for minority community groups, which will continue into 2006.

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**\*The two projects below are funded on an annual basis subject to the availability of funding.**

### **Piloting a Rural Model of Population Health\***

(West Offaly Integrated Development Partnership)

The West Offaly Integrated Development Partnership was set up to support rural communities in Offaly to counter disadvantage and address quality of life issues in a community-based way. It has been funded under the Building Healthy Communities programme to help communities in west and south Offaly to identify health needs and draw up action plans to address them.

Each year a local health partnership, comprising community and statutory agency representatives, is set up in two communities to identify needs and target groups for support. These partnerships enable service providers to tailor their programmes to each area's distinctive needs. They also act as a catalyst for local participation in community development. Current partner agencies involved in this project include: Health Service Executive – Midlands Region, Offaly County Council, Offaly VEC, Offaly County Childcare Committee, Offaly Interim Sports Partnership and South and West Offaly YOUTH MATTERS Initiative.

The focus in 2005 has been to pilot a rural model of population health that will be sustainable over time. The process is working towards the establishment of a regional health partnership through which policy can be influenced at a higher level.

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### **Supporting Community Participation in Determining Health Needs\***

(Fettercairn Community Health Project)

Fettercairn Community Health Project aims to provide a community-led health service that will promote the health and well-being of people living in Fettercairn, West Tallaght. In order to counteract stress and promote good health, the project is working to provide the community with a place where alternative therapies and courses can be offered and where people can be referred on to other services if need be. It will be based in a planned extension to the community centre in Fettercairn and local people will be trained to run it. In addition to this, it is hoped that the centre will house a GP who will have a holistic approach to treatment.

The Building Healthy Communities programme provided funding to consolidate the project by building up the steering group, linking with service providers and policy makers, providing training, identifying needs and raising awareness in the area. It is envisaged that the centre will open in 2007.

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