

WEST TALLAGHT RESOURCE
CENTRE PROJECT:
VIEWS ON THE LOCAL IMPACT
OF THE PROJECT

By Valerie Watt
Contact Poverty Agency 1989

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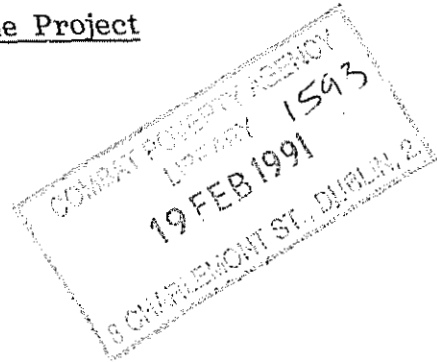
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WEST TALLAGHT RESOURCE CENTRE PROJECT

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Views on the Local Impact of the Project



Valerie Watt

Combat Poverty Agency
8 Charlemont Street
Dublin 2
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INTRODUCTION

The West Tallaght Resource Centre was set up by the Tallaght Welfare Society in 1985 with funding from the Second E.C. Programme to Combat Poverty. It was established as a community based response to poverty and has a catchment area of four local authority housing estates: Killinarden, Jobstown, Fettercairn and Brookfield.

The Project is a well recognised community facility providing many services including printing, photocopying, newspapers, use of telephones and meeting facilities. It also provides information and advisory services. The Project is involved in the running of many courses, one of particular importance being "Know Your Rights". In this area it has also produced leaflets on a range of welfare entitlements. The Project team has also represented local people in social welfare appeals. Due to its central location it is in an ideal situation to help in the co-ordination of social service workers. It meets this role through the organisation of monthly meetings for professionals working in the area which are of benefit to both professional workers and the community. The Project is also of assistance to many of the community groups in the area.

The aim of this study is to investigate the views of people on the local impact of the West Tallaght Resource Centre/ Project on the area. It is a small scale study and was carried out over a short period in July 1989. Informal interviews were the methods used to gather the information. Three sets of interviews were carried out: local people who called to the Project, representatives of some local groups who have contact with the Project and a sample of professionals working in the area who attend the monthly meetings at the Project. In all fifty-four people were interviewed.

PART ONE: THE VIEWS OF SOME LOCAL PEOPLE

A sample of local people who use the West Tallaght Resource Centre was interviewed over three and a half consecutive days in July 1989. All those who called to the Resource Centre on the days in question were asked to take part. All agreed except three. Two people called twice and were only interviewed on the first occasion. Four other callers were children under twelve years of age who had called for photocopying and to use the telephone; these were not asked to take part. In total thirty-one local residents were interviewed. Seventeen were women and fourteen were men.

RESULTS

Interviewees were first asked the reason for their current visit.

Reason for Current Visit

	n	%
<u>phone</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>67%</u>
<u>advice</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>12%</u>
<u>photocopying</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>6%</u>
<u>printing</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3%</u>
<u>to use newspapers</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3%</u>
<u>to use typewriter</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3%</u>
<u>help with letterwriting</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3%</u>
total	31	100%

The phone was the most popular service on the days in question. However, three of those who had called only to use the phone realised during their visit the full range of services on offer and went on to enquire for information on the Family Income Supplement, rent assessment, and housing respectively. Other services of advice, printing, photocopying, newspapers and typing were also used on the days in question. The facility of meeting

rooms was not availed of. Other services offered offered by the Project including courses, women's activities and training were not taking place when the research was underway.

How had people first heard about the Project?

<u>Source of First Information on the Project</u>		
	n	%
<u>friend, relative, colleague</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>64%</u>
<u>leaflet, newsletter, poster</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>20%</u>
<u>met someone from the Project</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>13%</u>
<u>passed the house and called in</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3%</u>
total	31	100%

Clearly, personal sources of information were the usual way people come to hear about the Project: 64% had heard about the Project by word of mouth from friends, relatives or colleagues. A smaller number (19%) had heard about it through local advertising and others had met someone from the Project.

Each respondent was asked the reason for her or his first contact with the Project.

Reason for First Contact with the Project

	n	%
<u>advice</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>39%</u>
<u>telephone</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>26%</u>
<u>printing and photocopying</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>17%</u>
<u>to use newspapers</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3%</u>
<u>womens meeting</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3%</u>
<u>getting forms</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3%</u>
<u>typing</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3%</u>
<u>letter writing</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3%</u>
<u>training of volunteers</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3%</u>
total	31	100%

Most people (40%) had first called to the Project seeking advice and information, usually about either social welfare, housing or health - the issues of most concern to the people living in the area. To use the telephones was also a popular reason for first contact with the Project: very few people in the area have a phone in their homes and public phones in working order, are few and far between. Again typing, printing and photocopying were well-used services: very necessary ones when attempting to set up a new business or group or when trying to organise a committee meeting. These are also services that can prove very expensive if sought privately. Others had gone to the Project in order to read the newspapers, made available daily, to attend women's meetings occasionally held there, to get forms or to get assistance with letter writing from the Project team.

The frequency of respondents' contact with the Project was also investigated. The majority of people (51%) called at the Project at least if not more than, once a week.

Frequency of Contact with the Project

	n	%
<u>Once a week</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>20%</u>
<u>More than once a week</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>32%</u>
<u>Once a fortnight</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3%</u>
<u>Once a month</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>10%</u>
<u>Every two or three months</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>20%</u>
<u>Every six months</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>6%</u>
<u>Once a year</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>6%</u>
<u>First visit</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3%</u>
total	31	100%

Of the sixteen who said that they called to the Centre at least if not more than once a week, twelve had called on this occasion in order to use the telephone. Printing, on the other hand, seemed to be a service used by people who called much less frequently - only a couple of times per year.

Interviewees were then asked about the individual services and how often they use them.

Average Frequency of Using each Service

	<u>OFTEN</u>		<u>SOMETIMES</u>		<u>NEVER</u>	
	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Advice</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>22%</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>39%</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>39%</u>
<u>Telephone</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>67%</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>13%</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>20%</u>
<u>Typing</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>16%</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>29%</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>55%</u>
<u>Printing/copying</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>32%</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>13%</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>55%</u>
<u>Newspapers</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>6%</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>19%</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>75%</u>
<u>Meeting rooms</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0%</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>10%</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>90%</u>
<u>Courses</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0%</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0%</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>100%</u>
<u>Women's Festival</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0%</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0%</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>100%</u>
<u>Training of volunteers</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0%</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3%</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>97%</u>

*The total number of replies for each Project service is n=31 and 100%.

The advisory and telephone services proved the most widely used. Only six (20%) out of the total thirty-one callers said that they had never used the telephone facility, proving a very limited local access to other phones. Well over half the callers (61%) said that they called regularly for advice and information. Quite a large percentage (55%) said they never used the typing, printing and photocopying services. Most had never used the meeting room facility (90%) or received volunteer training (97%). None of the respondents had ever attended courses or the women's festival.

Further enquiry investigated where respondents might go for the services of the Resource Centre if it did not exist.

Source of Services if the Project did not Exist

	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Tallaght village</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>50%</u>
<u>Don't know</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>32%</u>
<u>Public phone</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>23%</u>
<u>City Centre</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>10%</u>
<u>School/ another centre</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>10%</u>
<u>Private company (typing/copying)</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>7%</u>
<u>Do without</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3%</u>
<u>Get someone else to make my call</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3%</u>
	<u>*</u>	<u>*</u>

In some cases respondents gave more than one reply

This question met with a lot of shaking of heads and it seemed as if many of the respondents had never considered this at all. There were, however, many suggestions as to where the individual services might be found, often however combined with much travel and searching and involving expenses that the individuals just could not cope with.

"the village, but busfares are a pain and it is much more awkward with kids"

The opinion was unanimous that nowhere else would be as convenient for these necessary services as the West Tallaght Resource Centre. It is approximately three miles from the Resource Centre to Tallaght village and takes about an hour to walk the distance.

Respondents were then asked if they felt the Project had been of help to them and whether the community had benefited from it.

Benefit of the Project to the Community

	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Convenient services and facilities</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>38%</u>
<u>Helpful advice, information, entitlements</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>54%</u>
<u>Understanding</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>6%</u>
<u>Necessity</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>6%</u>
<u>Back-up</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3%</u>
<u>Meeting place</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3%</u>
<u>Don't know</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3%</u>
	<u>*</u>	<u>*</u>

* some respondents gave more than one reply.

There were very similar replies given by all respondents to this question. Everyone stressed the importance of the services offered by the Project, in particular advice and information.

"It is great to have somewhere to go for advice or anything."

"We would be lost without it."

There was also almost unanimous agreement that the staff were very helpful, friendly and understanding.

"People are very understanding and willing to help you a lot."

The respondents were finally asked whether or not they had recommended the Project to anyone else. A large majority (80%) said that they had recommended the Project to another person. This would seem to reinforce the idea that people often hear about the Centre through word of mouth and suggests a high degree of satisfaction with the services on offer.

SUMMARY

The findings of the interviews of local people show that the West Tallaght Resource Centre/ Project is a facility much needed in the area. The Project offers many services although some are used more than others. The services of the telephone, advice and information are used very heavily but the other services such as typing, printing, photocopying and meeting rooms are also used. The Project is also involved in training and in the running of courses. Most of the respondents in the study said they used the Project at least once a week. People felt they would be lost without the services of the Project and that it was of great benefit to the community. Most of the respondents said that they had recommended the Project to other people.

PART TWO: THE VIEWS OF SOME LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS

The survey of community groups took place through informal interviews in July 1989. A representative of eight community groups active in the area were randomly chosen from a list of fifteen groups who were recorded as having been in contact with the West Tallaght Resource Centre and the Project team. The groups were involved in a wide range of activities ranging from community enterprise and neighbourhood watch and Gaelic sports and community playgroup activities. After first establishing the nature of each group's activities, information was obtained on their first contact with the Project, their opinion of the project, its benefit to them and their overall impression of the services on offer.

RESULTS

The respondents were asked how they had first become aware of the existence of the Project.

Source of First Information on the Project

	n	%
<u>Friend, relative, colleague</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>39%</u>
<u>Leaflet, newsletter, poster</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>25%</u>
<u>Another centre</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>12%</u>
<u>Client</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>12%</u>
<u>Involved before Project began</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>12%</u>
total	8	100%

People had heard about the Project through various means but most commonly by word of mouth (39%) or through local advertising (25%).

Respondents were then asked how long it had been since their first contact with the Project.

Time since First Contact with the Project

	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Less than six months ago</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>13%</u>
<u>Between one and two years ago</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>50%</u>
<u>Between two and three years ago</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>25%</u>
<u>More than three years ago</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>12%</u>
total	8	100%

Most of the groups had been in contact with the Project for at least one year and three (37%) for as long as three years.

Each group representative was then asked the reason for the first contact with the Project.

Reason for First Contact with the Project

	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Typing</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>12%</u>
<u>Advice/Information</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>39%</u>
<u>Support</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>25%</u>
<u>To attend a course</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>12%</u>
<u>Working as a volunteer</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>12%</u>

All except one representative of the community groups had first called to the Project to use one of its services. The exception was a woman who was working as a volunteer at the Resource Centre from the time it opened. The most common services that the other respondents had called for were advice, information and support which all the groups found were necessary for the smooth running of their activities.

They were then asked if they had continued their contact with the Project for the same reason as their initial contact. Seventy-five percent said they still had contact with the Project for this purpose. Twenty-five percent had not kept up contact for the same purpose as their first visit. One of these was the woman who had worked as a volunteer. She had given this up when she got employment. The other was someone whose first contact had been for taking a course.

When asked if they called for any other purpose all respondents said that they did. Services for which they called included advice, information and to attend a course. However the highest percentage of the respondents (37%) came in to get practical help - typing, photocopying and printing. These services are available to groups from the Centre at very reasonable cost and are very useful especially when trying to put together material such as for a newsletter.

Purpose of Other Contact with the Project

	n	%
<u>Information/advice</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>25%</u>
<u>Practical help</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>37%</u>
<u>Support</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>25%</u>
<u>To attend a course</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>13%</u>
total	8	100%

Once the reasons for contact were established, the group representatives were then asked about the frequency of their contact with the Project. They were asked how often they would be in contact with the Project in an average month.

Contact with the Project in an Average Month

	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Once or twice</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>37%</u>
<u>Once a week</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>13%</u>
<u>More than once a week</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>50%</u>
<u>total</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>100%</u>

Sixty-three percent of the respondents said that they were in contact with the Project once, if not more than once a week, on average. This confirms that the Project is a real source of advice and support as well as practical help for the community groups working in the area.

Following on from this the groups were asked if they found the Project of help to them in their activities. There was one hundred percent agreement that the Project had been of help.

At this point the groups were asked to state how the Project had been of help to them and also to give one concrete example of where the Project had been of help. In some cases groups gave more than one example of ways in which the Project had given them help. Again advice, information, encouragement and back-up were the main areas in which help had been given. Other group representatives mentioned meeting facilities, courses and the facilities of the Resource Centre such as printing and photocopying as being important areas where they had received help from the Project.

Areas in which the Project had been of Help to Groups' Activities

	n	%
<u>Information/advice</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>50%</u>
<u>Back-up/encouragement</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>37%</u>
<u>Services of Resource Centre</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>13%</u>
<u>Meeting Facilities</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>25%</u>
<u>Courses</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>13%</u>
	*	*

*In some cases more than one answer was given.

A wide range of areas given was mentioned as concrete examples of help received from the Project. The Kiltalown Neighbourhood Watch for example had found the courses run by the Project and FAS such as social analysis, very worthwhile. Other groups said that they had received great help from the Project team in running seminars, discussions and parents' groups. Again groups stressed help they had received in terms of advice, support and encouragement and also the inexpensive and very adequate printing facilities available from the Resource Centre.

Respondents were then asked if they had ever recommended the Project to other people or groups. Eighty-seven per cent of the respondents had done so, suggesting a high degree of satisfaction with the service. When asked why they had recommended the Project to people, answers ranged from information and advice to encouragement, back-up and courses. The Project itself, however, had seldom referred people to the community groups. When it did, it was in order to do Project work or because an individual had an interest in the activities of the group in question.

The group representatives were then asked which aspect of the Project they had found most useful. Most people gave a number of replies.

The Most Useful Aspect of the Project

	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Services of the Resource Centre</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>87%</u>
<u>Advice and information</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>63%</u>
<u>Meeting facilities</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>13%</u>
<u>Community development</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>25%</u>
<u>Co-ordination of activities</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>13%</u>
<u>A Response to Unemployment</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>13%</u>

* *

* some respondents gave more than one reply

Again, all services were found useful but the services of the Resource Centre, and in particular the availability of advice and information, were found to be the most useful.

Following on from this, people were asked how they might get these services if the Project did not exist. People seemed a little anxious at the thought of having to seek these services elsewhere. Some answers were given, but people feared that this would involve expenses they could not really manage. Others admitted not knowing where they might go without the Project. The representative of Neighbourhood Watch recalled their experience when the Project printer had been out sick.

"had to find a printer somewhere else and he charged us so much we couldn't afford to put out our newsletter."

Source of Service if Project did not Exist

	n	%
<u>Don't know</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>25%</u>
<u>Tallaght village</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>13%</u>
<u>Another centre</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>13%</u>
<u>Head offices</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>13%</u>
<u>Parish team</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>13%</u>
<u>Private printing company</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>25%</u>
	*	*

* some respondents gave more than one reply

Lastly, respondents were asked their opinions on the actual running of the Project - dislikes and changes or new services they might like to see introduced. The interviewees were also asked their opinion of the Project's impact both on their own group but also on the community in general. Finally, they were asked to predict the outcome should the Project come to an end.

As regards dislikes and possible changes to the Project, people seemed to think that the Project had really little room for improvement. There were suggestions for longer opening hours and more staff but the overall impression was that the Resource Centre offered an extremely good service with their present financial resources.

"They cover an awful lot already, nothing more they can do without a much bigger place."

Most of the respondents felt that the services currently offered were very adequate. There were, however, a few suggestions for more and the most up to date information and some new courses. Those suggested included secretarial and legal advice. There was also a suggestion that they might employ a legal counsellor. Someone also suggested that they continue their present work but make a special attempt to reach the 'real risk families' in the area.

All groups felt that the Project had a very positive impact on their activities and that they benefited from contact with it through encouragement, advice, information and back-up. Many also felt that by working with the Project they increased awareness of local issues and events and developed new contacts.

The community group representatives felt that the Project had a positive impact on the community too. People felt it was a good meeting place with great facilities but also that it offered privacy which you wouldn't get in a community centre for example. The general opinion was that it encouraged community development. It was also felt that the Project team has a real interest in local people and their problems.

" Very helpful, showed an interest in the people themselves rather than just the problem, not just labelled."

Finally, all respondents felt closure would result in a worsening of the situation in Tallaght. People felt it would be a great loss, and that closure would most definitely be detrimental to community development. The groups themselves felt that they would be lost without the facilities of the Resource Centre and also from the support and back-up of the Project team.

" Loss of services would create financial burden for various groups. Without advice and help, they wouldn't operate as successfully."

SUMMARY

Many community groups in the West Tallaght area are in contact with the Project. These include Neighbourhood Watch, community enterprise, parents groups, sports clubs and community play groups and which cover a wide range of activities. Many of the groups have been in contact with the Project for as long as three years. All groups found the services of the Project, especially advice, information and support, very useful and many of them

them also use the printing at the centre, meeting rooms and sometimes they attend courses. Everyone found the Project team very helpful and understanding. There was little criticism of the Project except calls for longer opening and for a bigger staff. Everybody felt that the area had benefited from its establishment and the community groups all said that they would have difficulty in getting the services on offer without the Resource Centre. All those interviewed felt if the Project were to close it could mean disaster for both the community and local groups' activities.

PART THREE: THE VIEWS OF SOME LOCAL PROFESSIONALS

In total, fifteen professional workers from the Tallaght area were interviewed in July 1989. They included Corporation and County Council staff, some members of the Parish team, Gardai, social workers and representatives of other organisations providing services in the West Tallaght area, such as Tallaght Youth Service, Focus Point, Tallaght Centre for the Unemployed and Barnardos. These individuals are invited to the Project every month for a meeting which takes place as a working lunch. At each meeting, a group gives a talk on its particular area of activity. This means that everyone working in the area has an opportunity to find out exactly what work is taking place and by whom. It also enables the individuals to make contact with others working in the same area and can thus be a vital source of support, advice and information. A random sample of those normally invited to attend the monthly meetings was selected for interview. An original sample of nineteen people were chosen, this number being fifty percent of the total number invited to the meetings. However, eight of those were not available for interview, mainly due to holidays. Four others were then chosen and interviewed giving a total of fifteen.

People were first asked in the interviews about the work in which they were involved. Further questions focused on how they had first made contact with the Project and why and also on how often they had contact with the Project since. Respondents were also asked about the Project's usefulness to them, how it benefited their organisation and the community and lastly their opinion of the consequences of the Project closing.

RESULTS

One of the first questions asked how people had heard about the Project. Most had heard about it by word of mouth, either from a friend, relative or colleague or through meeting someone from the Project team. Others had heard about it through other welfare centres.

First Source of Information on the Project

	n	%
<u>Friend, relative, colleague</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>40%</u>
<u>Met someone from the Project</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>40%</u>
<u>Heard about it from another Centre</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>14%</u>
<u>Approached before it was set up</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>6%</u>
total	15	100%

Most respondents were in contact with the Project for over two years.

Time of First Contact with the Project

	n	%
<u>Less than six months ago</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>6%</u>
<u>Between one and two years</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>20%</u>
<u>Between two and three years</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>34%</u>
<u>More than three years ago</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>40%</u>
total	15	100%

People had many different reasons for first visiting the Project.

Reason for First Contact with the Project

	n	%
<u>Advice and information</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>33%</u>
<u>To attend a meeting</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>27%</u>
<u>Taking part in a report</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>7%</u>
<u>Training</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>7%</u>
<u>To use meeting facilities</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>13%</u>
<u>Management Committee</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>13%</u>
total	15	100%

Among the reasons given by the professionals for first calling on the Project were attending a meeting, taking part in a report, training and using the meeting facilities. The single largest proportion however, a third, had called to get advice and information. This would seem to be a very important service considering the nature of the work. All respondents spoke highly of the Project team who were said to be always available with advice and encouragement.

Eighty-six per cent of people still called to the Project for the same reason as on the first occasion.

All respondents said that they still were in contact with the Project regularly. Forty per cent had weekly contact. One respondent said he contacted the Project on a daily basis usually for advice and information.

Frequency of Contact with the Project in an Average Month

	n	%
<u>Once or twice</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>33%</u>
<u>Three or four times</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>20%</u>
<u>Once a week</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>40%</u>
<u>More than once a week</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>7%</u>
total	15	100%

People were next asked the reasons for this contact. The reasons were varied and some respondents came for a number of different reasons.

Reasons for Contact with the Project

	n	%
<u>Advice/information</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>46%</u>
<u>Facilities of Resource centre</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>13%</u>
<u>Monthly meetings</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>46%</u>
<u>Source of Contacts</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>13%</u>
<u>Womens festival</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>29%</u>
	*	*

* some respondents gave more than one reply

Almost half the respondents, 46%, said that they called regularly for advice and information, and that the Project team are always willing to help in this way. An equally large number said they regularly attended the meetings held monthly for professionals working in the area, which have

proved to be a vital source of advice and support. Others said they called in order to use the facilities of the Resource Centre - telephones, typing, printing, photocopying, and meeting rooms. Some found the Project an important source of contacts.

People were asked where they might go in order to get this service if the Project did not exist. Some replied that they did not know, while others suggested trying to establish separate contacts, calling to separate organisations or departments, visiting Tallaght village or the city centre. All respondents felt that without the Project their jobs would be much more difficult.

Source of Service if the Project did not Exist

	n	%
<u>Head Offices</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>15%</u>
<u>Other community organisations</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>33%</u>
<u>Tallaght village/city centre</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>7%</u>
<u>Establish separate contacts</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>20%</u>
<u>Do without but with difficulty</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>33%</u>
<u>Don't know</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>20%</u>
	*	*

* some respondents gave more than one reply.

Each respondent was asked to describe as he or she saw them the activities of the Project. Almost all respondents mentioned information (86%), advice (66%), and the practical services provided by the Project.

Smaller numbers of people mentioned training, placements and courses.

One-third of respondents mentioned meeting rooms and forty-six per cent referred to the co-ordinating role of the Project. It is probable that the activities mentioned by the smaller numbers were the activities people were least aware of and those not so widely used or needed.

Perceived Activities of the Project

	n	%	
<u>Advice</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>66%</u>	*
<u>Information</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>86%</u>	*
<u>Practical Help</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>73%</u>	*
<u>Meeting facilities</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>33%</u>	*
<u>Running courses</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>13%</u>	*
<u>Co-ordination of activities</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>46%</u>	*
<u>Work experience placements</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>13%</u>	*
<u>Lobbying of issues</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>7%</u>	*

* Possible total for each activity is n=15 and 100%

The benefits of the Project to professionals working in the area was then examined. All respondents said that it was of benefit to them. When asked how, many areas of benefit were mentioned. Sixty percent of respondents said they had benefited from contacts they had made through the Project. Similarly, sixty percent felt that they had benefited through support and encouragement received from the Project team. Almost half of those interviewed (46%) said that they benefited from advice and information provided by the Project team. Other activities mentioned include the co-ordination of professional activities, the services of the Resource Centre such as the telephone and printing services, training and meeting facilities. Some said the Project had given them greater awareness of what was happening in the area, and that their lobbying helped secure rights for the area, for example a new school.

Benefits of the Project to Respondent Organisation

	n	%
<u>Source of contacts</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>60%</u>
<u>Encouragement/support</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>60%</u>
<u>Advice/information</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>40%</u>
<u>Meeting facilities</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>27%</u>
<u>Services of the Resource Centre</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>20%</u>
<u>Co-ordination of activities</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>7%</u>
<u>Decrease in workload</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>7%</u>
<u>Training</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>7%</u>
<u>Awareness of happenings in the area</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>7%</u>
<u>Lobbying of issues by Project team</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>7%</u>

The respondents were then asked to rate the usefulness of the Project; all except one respondent said that they found the Project 'very useful'.

Each respondent then gave one concrete example of help they had received from the Project. Many spoke highly of the Project team who had been of great assistance with advice and support in the setting up of various self-help and other groups. Others spoke of help they had received in the form of contacts established through the monthly meetings. In this way for example, a social worker could find out from a Garda background information on particular household. Others spoke of specific information they had received on issues such as rent payments and social welfare increases, barring orders and homelessness and other issues beyond the scope of many working in the caring services.

Interviewees were then asked if they had ever referred people to the Project. Almost half the respondents, forty-six percent, replied that they referred people to the Centre often, thirty-three percent said they referred people sometimes.

Frequency of Referring Others to the Project

	n	%
<u>Very often</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>7%</u>
<u>Often</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>46%</u>
<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>33%</u>
<u>Rarely</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>7%</u>
<u>Never</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>7%</u>

total 15 100%

Respondents were asked for what purpose referrals had been made. Although a number of reasons were given, the majority (80%) had recommended the Project as a source of advice and information. Other reasons were to use the Project facilities such as telephones, help in establishing and running self-help and other groups, for attending courses, and as a source of support and encouragement.

Reasons for Referring Others to the Project

	n	%
<u>Advice/Information</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>80%</u>
<u>Facilities of Resource Centre</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>33%</u>
<u>Courses</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>7%</u>
<u>Support</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>7%</u>
<u>Self-help Groups</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>7%</u>

* some respondents gave more than one reply

Respondents were then asked if the Project team had ever referred people to them. Well over half the respondents, sixty percent, said that people were sometimes referred to them by the Project.

Frequency of the Project Referring People to Respondent

	n	%
<u>Often</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>7%</u>
<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>60%</u>
<u>Rarely</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>26%</u>
<u>Never</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>7%</u>
total	15	100%

In most cases the Project had referred specific problems to the most relevant caring organisations. Minor disturbances and neighbourhood quarrels were referred to the Gardai, problems of a social nature were referred to the social workers, housing and rent problems were sometimes referred to the Corporation or County Council and so on. Other reasons for referrals were newsletter suggestions, advice, information, contacts and Women's Festival.

What are the most useful aspects of the Project?

Co-ordination of activities was ranked the most useful aspect(67%),while advice and information was mentioned by sixty percent of the respondents.

Most Useful Aspects of the Project

<u>Co-ordination of activities</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>67%</u>	*
<u>Advice and Information</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>60%</u>	*
<u>Services of the Resource Centre</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>27%</u>	*
<u>Community Development</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>20%</u>	*
<u>Facilitation of meetings</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>15%</u>	*
<u>Response to unemployment</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>15%</u>	*
<u>Women's activities</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>7%</u>	*

* Possible total for each aspect is n=15 and 100%

After describing the most useful aspects of the Project interviewees were then asked what they thought was the worst aspect of the Project. People didn't seem to think that there was anything major amiss with the Project. Many didn't know of any 'bad' aspect at all. However, some did mention problems of funding and resources.

"Not enough people know about it. People sometimes are unaware of it."

Others thought that more people should be aware of the Project and that it should reach a wider catchment area.

"lack of resources means that they can't expand."

Respondents were also asked if there was anything they would like to see changed or anything new they would like to see introduced. Again people seemed very positive about the Project. Many couldn't think of any changes that were needed and those that did call for change only wanted more staff, more resources and expansion.

"more money so that they can expand, it's limited having only two full-time people"

There were a few suggestions for new services to be introduced including new courses in literacy and money management. Others called for integration of the community and others asked that new technology such as printing equipment be updated and perhaps a computer installed. There was also a call for the needs of the area to be further examined and for helping services in the area to be better co-ordinated. Some also asked that the Project try and reach the 'special need families' in the area.

Those taking part in the interviews were then asked their opinion about the impact of the Project, first on the organisation with which they were working and secondly on the community in general. All respondents felt it had a positive effect on their work. Everyone found the Project very useful in that it helped in the co-ordination of organisations and their

work in the area, especially through the monthly meetings became a source of contacts, information, advice, support and encouragement.

"meeting place for various people in the community....

source of information, services, awareness of people working."

People also felt that they themselves had become more aware of what was happening and of those working in the area, and could thus become more involved in community activities. An important aspect of the Project was as a means of establishing links between the helping organisations and the community.

People also felt that the Project had had a positive impact on the community. First they saw it as an invaluable source of services - advice, information, telephones and printing equipment to mention but a few. Secondly, through the Project people were also helped in their dealings with the bureaucracy and became more aware of their rights. Thirdly, the Project gave the people of West Tallaght an identity and a means through which the voices of the people could be heard. It was felt that local people were more confident knowing they have somewhere to go with either a problem or an idea. The area now has the resources for development as people are being helped to help themselves. People who once had a feeling of isolation now feel they have support and back-up especially as the work of the caring services becomes more co-ordinated.

"Positive impact, given people more awareness of their rights,
removed feeling of being isolated and has been supportive to them."

The final question asked of respondents was their opinion of the effects of closure of the Project. Everyone felt closure would be a disappointment, some even replied that it would be disastrous for the area. People said that the Project was vital and that closure would mean a great loss of services for the area and also a great loss of support.

Tallaght village was too far away for people to go for necessary services and it was a struggle to get there with children. Nowhere else, they felt

could possibly provide the same services so close at hand. If the Project was ended the co-ordinated aspect of community work would disappear, as the professionals working in the area would no longer have a place to meet or a platform to express their ideas.

"From our organisation's point of view it would be a loss of support. As regards training and social welfare advice, campaigning on issues, it is very difficult to find such effective information so close. People who use the Project would feel they'd lost a support in their dealings with 'officialdom'. It is next to impossible to provide it themselves as their own resources are very limited."

SUMMARY

Professionals working in the West Tallaght area found the Resource Centre a very useful and necessary facility. A total of fifteen people were interviewed including Priests, Gardai, Social Workers. They attend monthly meetings held in the Resource Centre to try to co-ordinate organisational work and to establish contacts and to act as a source of support and advice to each other. Most of those interviewed began visiting the Project at least two years ago and all respondents called regularly to the Project - at least once or twice a month. Everyone found the Project a vital source of advice, information, contacts and support and many also used the facilities of the Resource Centre such as telephones, printing and meeting facilities. They all agreed that without the Project their work would prove much more difficult. Everyone was positive about the work being carried out by the Project and all felt it was having a positive impact both on their work and on the development of the community. When asked if there were any changes they would like to see, there were very few suggestions. They mainly called for more of what was already available - more staff who everybody found very helpful and friendly, and more

resources. They also mentioned a few new courses they would like to see introduced. All respondents then agreed that closure of the Project would have a disastrous effect on the community.

OVERVIEW

In total fifty-four people were interviewed as part of the study. They included thirty-one local people who were using the services of the Project, representatives of eight community groups in regular contact with the Project and fifteen professionals working in the area who attend the monthly meetings organised by the Project.

The consensus of opinion was that the Project had been a significant help to the development of the community . People use a wide range of services from the Project varying from basic facilities such as telephones to printing, photocopying and typing facilities. Other services include help with letter writing and representation on social welfare appeals and newspapers which are always available. All respondents found the Project team very helpful, friendly and interested and the Project is well known in the community as an invaluable source of advice and information.

Local people found the service of the telephone particularly useful and this facility was used very frequently. Community groups also found meeting and printing facilities very worthwhile, as well as finding the Project team a great source of support and encouragement. Professionals working locally in caring services also benefited from the support of the Project team. In addition they found the Project a valuable source of contacts. They also found the monthly meetings organised specially for them very useful.

No-one really knew where the services could be acquired if the Project was closed. Everyone agreed its closure would have disastrous consequences for the development of the community. It would make the lives of all concerned much more difficult due to absence of local facilities such as telephones and printing and the other services of the Resource Centre including help with letter writing, advice and information and the back-up and encouragement of the Project team.