

SOUTH TIPPERARY COUNTY DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Thirteenth MEETING REPORT

Meeting held: September 2, 2002
Members present: 23 (80% of members)
Chair: Cllr Michael Fitzgerald.

SUMMARY

Cllr Michael Fitzgerald was elected as the new chair of South Tipperary County Development Board.

The Board carried out a social inclusion review of the county at its September 2002 meeting. The following baseline data in relation to key groups was presented by Seamus Moore, Chair, Social Programme Management Group and the Social Inclusion Measures Working Group.

| Groupings | Numbers | Significant features |
|-----------------------------|----------------|--|
| Unemployed | 3839 | Increasing at 200 per month. |
| Lone Parents | 1165 | Only two towns in county with full day childcare |
| Travellers | 101 (families) | Average life expectancy 20 years lower |
| Asylum seekers and refugees | 83 | Numbers in south east relatively low |
| Elderly at risk | 1504 | 2% higher than national average |
| Disabled | 1421 | Meaningful partnerships with voluntary sector |
| Children at risk | 146 | 111 in foster care |
| Other Welfare allowances | 2667 | 916 qualified under assessment of housing need |
| Smallholders | 949 | Likely to increase |
| Rural transport | 9500 | Unmet needs in terms of transport provision |

The main priorities emerging from the Social inclusion review include the need to focus: on life long learning (benefiting from education and upskilling); on wealth creation and distribution; on measuring the performance of social inclusion programmes; and on agency interlinking especially in addressing concentrated target groups. A major obstacle to social inclusion was perceived to be the lack of flexibility in public funding allocations.

The County Development Board also recommended that the Social Programme Management Group would review the Board's current operating principles. Potential principles emerging from the Board review included: reviewing the progress of programmes and communicating outcomes; of agency interlinkage; and service integration (operationalising this principle is to be tested in the RAPID pilots).

1. Social Inclusion Watch

Seamus Moore, Chair, Social Programme Management Group and the Social Inclusion Measures group presented a social inclusion review. The key points in the presentation were:

- Definitions: Social inclusion is about creating an integrated, equal society with an equal distribution of power, resources and opportunities for all. Social exclusion, on the other hand, concerns the exclusion of individuals, families, groups and communities from participating fully in society as a result of experiencing poverty and not having access to social, cultural and recreational opportunities.
- In relation to poverty indicators, a major concern for South Tipperary is that it has the fifth lowest nationally average disposable income per capita. Other proxies confirm this standing. South Tipperary has 28521 patients using means tested medical cards representing 36% of the population (and approximately 3% above the national average). While no figures are available for South Tipperary, County Tipperary is 15th in the national league in terms of third level entrants. Mol on Oige research indicates that 80% of those who enter second level education in County Tipperary successfully complete it.
- Those groups potentially at risk of social exclusion include:

| Groupings | Numbers | Significant features |
|------------------------------------|----------------|---|
| Unemployed | 3839 | Increasing at 200 per month. Many living in the 2435 rented local authority houses in the county |
| Lone Parents | | Only two towns in county with full day childcare |
| Travellers | 101 (families) | Average life expectancy 20 years lower |
| Asylum seekers and refugees | 83 | Numbers in South Tipperary relatively low |
| Elderly at risk | 1504 | 2% higher than national average |
| Disabled | 1421 | Meaningful partnerships with voluntary sector |
| Children at risk | 146 | 111 in foster care |
| Receiving other Welfare allowances | 2667 | 916 qualified under assessment of housing need 287 local authority houses under construction and planning |
| Farm smallholders | 949 | Many located distant from good employment centres |
| Rural (lack of) transport | 9500 | Unmet needs in terms of transport provision (limited or no access to a car and no public transport alternative) |

- Deprivation has been mapped spatially based on 1996 census figures. Five of the seven most disadvantaged district electoral divisions (DEDs) actually lost population between 1996 and 2002. These five include Ballingarry, Clonmel West Urban, Fethard, New Birmingham and Tipperary East Urban. The other two most disadvantaged DEDs (Carrick on Suir Urban and Cashel Urban) had much smaller population gains than the county average gain of 4.9%.

- The South Tipperary County Strategy is now live and the inter-agency actions included in the Strategy address some of the key issues such as upskilling the workforce, provision of more childcare places, targeting potential early school leavers, etc. Updates on the progress and lack of progress on each action is available on the website but an analysis based on a Knockanrawley Resource Centre needs and gaps identification in Tipperary Town suggests that the County Strategy if implemented does add value to meeting the needs of the socially excluded.
- There are a number of challenges in implementing the county strategy. The first relates to constraints in public spending which will put more of an onus on the CDB members to apply available resources more productively. This involves a change of mind set. How do we reconfigure what we plan to do? Can we become better at interlinking and build on our many successes in inter-agency co-operation? Are we communicating with each other well enough to cope with this first challenge?
- A second challenge was explored at the last meeting in terms of facilitating the re-growth of the voluntary sector. Lifestyle and work changes impact on the way in which people wish to volunteer. How can this change be accommodated? There are also more jobs available in the voluntary services sector area but these posts are often difficult to fill in a changing work place environment requiring more qualifications.
- The main priorities emerging from the Social Inclusion Review include the need to focus on life long learning (benefiting from education and upskilling) and also on wealth creation and distribution. A third challenge is that the members of the County Development Board continue to innovate and avoid being straight-jacketed in addressing these priorities.

Key points in the discussion arising from the presentation included:

- Progress needs to be noted. Ten years ago the focus of a social inclusion review would have been entirely on addressing unemployment. Now the focus is on increasing the capacity of vulnerable groups to access a better quality of life.
- South Tipperary has strengths in terms of a good network of urban centres, all with schools and potential training facilities.
- Jobs especially in industry are becoming much more knowledge based and the existing labour force is not always equipped to take on those jobs. How do we raise the skills levels of the workforce? Also there has been low investment by many employers in human resources. How can that issue be addressed. A third challenge from the economic perspective is that infrastructure (broadband, electricity, good roads, good rail services) is becoming largely concentrated in the bigger urban centres. This could have implications for the distribution of jobs in the future if investment in infrastructure is not made in the smaller towns.
- Education and training measures are very important One proven measure in that regard has been the Community Employment Scheme which addressed the needs of vulnerable people in terms of bringing them into

employment, giving them back their dignity and making it possible for many of them to gain entry to the Celtic Tiger. Community Employment Scheme also suited the re-integration of lone parents into the workforce especially when their children were in school. The Community Employment Scheme is under threat. But one would wonder why when it has been successful by any standard?

- There is a need to examine all social inclusion programmes. Are the programmes meeting the needs being targeted? The key programme is education? But up to 40% of children are deemed to have needs unmet by the school system, especially arising from the methodology used of imparting information largely in an abstract way. New programmes are beginning to make school more relevant but the uptake in these programmes is falling below expectation. There are related matters such as parental attitude to education which may be based on parents' poor experience in school themselves. Funding is not the main issue in relation to school completion rather it is cultural change both within and outside the school. The Department of Education has resourced two pilot School Completion Programmes in South Tipperary which may identify better solutions to meeting the unmet needs of children in the education system.
- Is there an opportunity in public cutbacks for a new approach that might deliver better results on the ground? The target group issues are interlinked. For instance a large number of approved housing applicants are lone parents? Considerable public and community supports are being targeted at other services that can benefit lone parents; childcare facilities; parent and toddler groups; pre-school education; and formal schooling. One advantage of the concentration of this target group in local authority housing is that services can be targeted to certain areas mainly in the large towns. Do we cope with public cutbacks by doing less of the same or would an option be to interlink and even integrate services enable more effective services be delivered for less public resources?
- A practical difficulty is that public sector allocations can generally only be spent on very defined aspects. The approach to these allocations at local level can only be bureaucratic as little leeway is given to be flexible, innovative or even applying the resources differently and achieving far greater results than the original targets. For example, budgets in relation to disabled persons grants are currently used up. In some cases, the grant makes a difference between a person staying at home or having to be subvented at a cost of 500-€600 by the Health Board in a nursing home. Yet there is no flexibility to transfer the budgets so that a problem can be addressed before it costs the public purse far more.
- Will the County Development Board provide the leadership to meet the challenge of greater participation in education and training, the challenge of creating more wealth and the challenge of a more equitable distribution of that wealth in the county? The downturn in public spending could impact on the most vulnerable, whose issues were not resolved in the very good times. Cultural change at any level, whether it is bureaucracy,

institutions, families or communities, is a very difficult task. For instance when community employment schemes were introduced the Trade Union movement was generally opposed to them because they were perceived to be a threat to existing jobs at a time of high unemployment. However the culture changed as the schemes proved to have real value. Members of the County Development Board need to lead their organizations in co-operatively addressing the needs of those at risk of social exclusion.

- Another group at risk of social inclusion by lack of public transport is young men who are finding it more and more difficult to access affordable insurance. Young people generally are affected by lack of public transport, even in cases of getting to and back from home at weekends.
- The downturn (including poor weather) in agriculture has resulted in an average farm income drop of €5000 in 2002 in South Tipperary. This will increase the number of farmers in the county who are earning considerably less than the average industrial wage and put additional pressure on linkage services facilitating access to training and employment.

The County Development Board reviewed its operating principles in relation to addressing the challenge of social inclusion. These principles included:

- ✓ Principle of working for the common good of the
- ✓ Principle of members effectively representing the contribution of their sector –
- ✓ Principle of member inclusion and equity
- ✓ Principle of value
- ✓ Principle of efficiency
- ✓ Principle of clarity and brevity –
- ✓ Principle of targeting special needs .

Recommendation: That the Social Programme Management Group would review these principles, especially in the context of the CDB social inclusion review. Potential principles emerging from the Board review included:

- Principle of reviewing the progress of programmes and communicating outcomes (a web based communications structure was agreed by the Social Inclusion Measures Working in September 2000)
- Principle of agency interlinkage (which is incorporated in the county strategy)
- Principle of service integration (operationalising this principle is to be tested in the RAPID pilots).

2. Implementation of the County Strategy

The Community Development Framework Group has met and has agreed to guide an action already included on the County Strategy on piloting an integrated planning and training project in two communities. The two communities chosen will have different issues in terms of population trends and differing resources in terms of community leadership. The Group will also work with the South Tipperary Platform in relation to the Platform developing a strategic plan and also in training community leaders in meeting

management, facilitation skills, committee skills, area planning, team building and community representation.

A web-based template for monitoring the implementation of actions in County Strategies is currently being finalized by the Task Force (chaired by Minister Cullen). Inputting information on each action will be the responsibility of a designated nominee of the lead agency which has agreed to lead the specific action. The template is similar to that already being used in South Tipperary (updates on all actions in the County Strategy are provided on the southtipcdb.ie website).

3. Other Information

Cllr Michael Fitzgerald is the new Chair of the County Development Board having replaced Cllr Denis Bourke.

New members of the County Development include: Cllr Michael Anglim, Brian Conroy (IDA), Cllr Mattie McGrath and Cllr Phil Prendergast.

Further CLAR funds (€57,647.38) have been approved to group water scheme and road initiatives.

The focus of the RAPID work programmes in all three towns (Carrick on Suir, Clonmel and Tipperary town) is on the integration and co-ordination of public and community services across a range of service areas. All three Area Implementation Teams have had their first meeting and agreed a programme of work up to December 2003.

The Rural transport service ‘Ring a Link’ has been launched in West Tipperary. The rural transport audit is available from Breda O’Connor ([052-34597](tel:052-34597) or bmoconnor@southtippcoco.ie).

Local area plans for Killenaule, Cullen, Clonoulty and Hollyford are currently being finalized after being on public display.

Clonmel Technical Institute and St Ailbe’s School (Tipperary Town) will participate in a new integrated Department of Education Initiative, called the School Completion Programme.

A community based CCTV grant scheme has been announced by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.