

Greater Shankill 21

Report and Action Plan

**Health
Action
Zone**
North & West Belfast

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Foreword

Health Action Zones have been established to tackle inequalities in health and wellbeing, and to focus energy on the root determinants of health. Addressing social exclusion and disadvantage brings sharp challenges and difficulties in North and West Belfast. In addition to concentrated patterns of deprivation, reflected in poorer health and performance on a range of other factors, the legacy of the past thirty years of conflict has had a disproportionate effect in the area, highlighted also by ongoing community tension. Conflict within communities was given new depths of expression with the feud which erupted in the Shankill during summer 2000, leaving many stunned and bewildered. The relevance of the Health Action Zone partnership in the face of such circumstances presented a fundamental challenge.

Greater Shankill 21 grew out of raw need, a community's concern for the future and a willingness to take risks. The first meeting represented a major milestone in individuals' preparedness to meet with one another and begin the process of working together in collaboration with key statutory agencies represented in the Health Action Zone partnership. The group sought to engage key sections of the community and those which had emerged during the emergency situation on the Shankill. Developing trust was an essential first step in advancing an agenda for change – trust within and between the different sectors in order to build a meaningful working relationship. The process has been intensely demanding for all members and I would wish to pay tribute to the commitment of all those involved and to their ability to set aside differences to work for the greater good of the whole community.

There is clearly a long way to go – this is the start of a process. The coming together of Greater Shankill 21 has in itself helped to build relationships and make a contribution to the broader social regeneration agenda currently being advanced. The energy of all those involved, coupled with a clear plan for the implementation of the report's recommendations, offers the opportunity of developing a co-ordinated approach to the outstanding areas of need, and ultimately to make a difference to the lives of people living in the Greater Shankill area.



Mary Black
Health Action Zone Leader
Chairperson Greater Shankill 21

1. Introduction

The Greater Shankill 21 group was set up in August 2001 to address the medium-term needs of the Shankill following the feud in the summer of 2000. This report sets out 36 recommendations to the Health Action Zone Council based on an analysis of a series of meetings of the Group. It also sets out actions which the Health Action Zone Council have agreed to undertake in response to the recommendations. The report explains the process of engagement between statutory agencies and community groups, as well as documenting the key areas of concern which arose during meetings of the Group.

In particular, the report highlights the impact of the events in the Greater Shankill area. This impact should not be underestimated — seven men died as a result of the feud, approximately 370 people had to move out of their homes and 130 children had to change schools. This degree of upheaval, coupled with intense fear and intimidation, perceived limited response by statutory agencies to the situation, and a lack of direction, combined to create a situation where people felt powerless and left a legacy of considerable feelings of hurt and mistrust on the part of community organisations. People in the Shankill feel that their situation has been ignored to a great extent, as the majority of people outside the square mile where the unrest took place have remained largely unaffected. A key theme throughout meetings of the Group was the need for recognition of the depth the impact of the feud and its ongoing and potential long-term effects.

The challenge of bringing together all the members of Greater Shankill 21 should not be underestimated either. The feud has left sharp divisions amongst community organisations and others. It is to their credit, and a sign of their genuine desire to improve the difficult situation in their communities, that members were willing to put aside their differences and work collectively with Health Action Zone partners to address common needs.

2. Background to the Group

The events of the summer 2000 shocked many people. During the immediate aftermath the Health Action Zone Council kept a watching brief on the Shankill during the emergency situation and took a decision that the situation was best met by the existing Interagency Working Group on Displaced Families (chaired by North and West Belfast Health and Social Services Trust). However, the Health Action Zone Council highlighted the need for a strategic approach to supporting the Shankill once the emergency subsided. Accordingly, a group was established to address the medium-term needs.

The Group decided to call itself "Greater Shankill 21" as it wanted to include the wider Shankill community and look to the 21st century, rather than the past. Greater Shankill 21 brought together community groups, statutory bodies, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, and the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister to discuss concerns and identify possible action. The Group was chaired by Ms Mary Black, Health Action Zone Leader. It should be noted that a further publication is planned which will evaluate the process of working and outcomes of the Greater Shankill 21 initiative.

3. Identification of Key Themes

Three broad phases of development were identified at the outset: the emergency situation, support and healing for individuals and communities, and the broader regeneration agenda for the Shankill as a whole. Greater Shankill 21's role was to focus on the second phase, that is, to address the need for support and healing in the medium term.

Defining the terms of reference (including the geographical boundaries) was a first task of the Group on which to reach agreement and they can be found in Appendix II.

In initial meetings, common issues of concern were identified - mental health, counselling, levels of medication, capacity building within the community, the need for healing and reconciliation within the community, conflict resolution, schools and education, lack of youth provision, physical environment of the area, and Housing Executive plans for the area.

The Group decided to identify priority needs and potential resource implications and to present its recommendations to the Health Action Zone Council in December 2001. A programme of action was developed in order to meet this tight timeframe. Four priority themes were identified and representatives of organisations with specific expertise were invited to engage in relevant meetings. A fifth issue — policing — subsequently emerged as a priority in its own right. The priorities for the Group were:

- **Environment, housing and planning**
- **Schools, education and youth provision;**
- **Policing;**
- **Mental health, medication and trauma;**
- **Funding, healing and reconciliation;**

The Group was aware that the agenda was ambitious. Nevertheless, there was a genuine desire on the part of Group members to take up the challenge and to make it work. The Group recognised that it was an important opportunity, and would link to the wider regeneration agenda of the Shankill and the process of healing and reconciliation within the community as a whole.

A series of meetings was held, and representatives of organisations with specific expertise were also invited to attend. At each meeting, community representatives were invited to speak first in order that their concerns shaped the agenda. This was followed by perspectives from statutory organisations on the issues raised. With each meeting, the level of trust deepened and the Group was able to discuss issues frankly and openly. Care was taken to ensure that each member remained involved so that the needs of different parts of the Greater Shankill area could be taken on board. Although some members were not able to attend all the meetings, they were kept fully informed of progress and were given an opportunity to contribute outside of the meetings.

4. Action Plan

An initial report which focused on the five main areas mentioned above was presented to, and endorsed by, the Health Action Zone Council in December 2001. The report showed clearly that the issues were inter-related to a considerable extent, emphasising the need for a holistic approach to address the needs in the Shankill area and the crucial importance of cross-agency working. Taking this on board, members of the Health Action Zone Council responded to the recommendations, stating what their organisations could do both individually and collectively. An Action Plan was drawn up and was endorsed by the Health Action Zone Council in April 2002. A Monitoring and Implementation Group, comprising representatives of statutory agencies and community groups, has been established to ensure progress. Its terms of reference can be found at Appendix IV.

The Greater Shankill 21 group was aware that many of the difficulties on the Shankill could not be solved quickly and would require a long-term strategy. However, the Group was equally clear that there were a number of issues which could be addressed in the medium-term and that the recommendations and actions contained in this report could realistically be implemented, making a real difference to the lives of people living in the Greater Shankill area.

Set out in the following chapters is a summary of issues raised in meetings of Greater Shankill 21, together with recommendations and actions which have been agreed in response to the recommendations.

Within the document, short-term should be taken to mean within 6 months, medium-term between 6 and 18 months, and long-term between 18 months and 5 years. In addition, it should be noted that "short-term" means that the action is to be initiated within 6 months. In some cases, the action will also be completed within this timeframe; in others it will continue.

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT

Housing

Concern was expressed about the current system of demolishing houses and allocating new housing. There was concern at the piecemeal nature of demolitions and the air of depression that was left in semi-derelict streets which could lead to an attitude of "If they don't care, we don't care".

A considerable problem is that of people moving away from the area. There is a feeling that once a vesting order is made, some of the dynamic people move away. Added to this, the fact that housing associations will not allocate properties until the builders have handed over the keys means that people will not wait and will start to look elsewhere for homes. Previous arrangements (when the Housing Executive built properties instead of bringing in a social provider) ensured that an opportunity was provided to show people plans and occasionally the actual location of their future home. People were generally content to wait, knowing that they were being allocated a certain property. This is no longer the case.

Concern was also expressed about the theft of bricks from inside derelict houses. This practice causes them to become unstable and they have to be demolished out of sequence. This action then has consequences for houses which are still occupied. It was reported that liaison with the police in this matter has been difficult.

Recommendations

- 1. The Housing Executive should ensure that housing associations allocate properties as soon as possible (within a maximum number of days/weeks) to people being rehoused.*
- 2. The Housing Executive should seek to ensure that housing associations show clients plans and/or actual locations for their new properties.*
- 3. The Department for Social Development should meet with community organisations, the Housing Executive, and local housing associations to explore how housing allocations can be improved.*

Action

Short term

In its role within the Health Action Zone, the Housing Executive will seek to ensure that the Department for Social Development meets Greater Shankill 21's request for a meeting between community organisations and all housing providers to discuss allocation of properties.

Action in this area is within the context of the expected Housing Sectoral Study which will determine the broader development in the longer term.

Medium term

A working group made up of the Housing Executive, Department for Social Development, housing associations and community organisations will be established to monitor housing allocation.

Environmental Services

There was agreement by all present that there is a lack of cohesion in street cleaning and environmental services. Belfast City Council, the Department for Regional Development, the Housing Executive, private landlords and housing associations are all responsible for ensuring that areas are cleaned, but they do not work in an integrated manner. Each is responsible for its own "turf" and there is often confusion over who is responsible for particular areas (e.g. the passage between Vara Drive and Ainsworth Passage).

Concern was expressed about areas of land such as Ewarts Mill which no one will take responsibility for clearing. The buildings have been demolished, leaving hundreds of thousands of bricks lying around which provide a ready source of materials for those taking part in disturbances. Everyone claims that responsibility lies elsewhere.

The Highfield Estate was given as an example of how an area could be turned around by participation in an environmental scheme. It was reported that the estate had once been treated as a "dumping ground" but is now very clean and people take real pride in their neighbourhood.

It was proposed that a scheme could be piloted in the Shankill where budgets could be pooled on an experimental basis and one lead agency given the whole budget. It was also suggested that communities could be directly involved in such a programme and the link with the "Creating Common Ground" initiative was cited as an opportunity. A similar environmental project was sited as being piloted in Dublin and proving very successful.

Recommendation

4. *The Housing Executive, Department for Social Development, Department of the Environment, and Department for Regional Development action a programme to secure Ewarts Mill and other properties left derelict. Mechanisms should be put in place so that responsibility for specific parcels of land can be easily established.*

Action

Short term

Representatives of the Housing Executive and Belfast City Council will invite representatives from the Department for Social Development, Department of the Environment and Department for Regional Development to form a working group together with representatives of community groups to identify areas of unclear ownership and responsibility and to take appropriate action. This working group should be made up of the same representatives as the group referred to under Recommendation 3.

Recommendation

5. *HAZ Council action a pilot project in the Shankill area, in which all agencies responsible for street cleaning pool their budgets.*

Action

Short term

Belfast City Council has established an all-party working group to examine the issue of litter and the attractiveness of the city. This group has had two initial meetings and a decision will be taken shortly about which pilot projects will be undertaken. HAZ Council's Belfast City Council representative will endeavour to ensure that the all-party group agrees to the pilot project set out in recommendation 5.

In the interim, the Housing Executive will continue to liaise at a local level through the Shankill Housing Consumer Panel to address local street cleaning issues.

Medium term

It is hoped to extend the practice of joint working, once the results of the pilot project are known.

Recommendation

6. *A consortium of community organisations, Greater Shankill Partnership and the Housing Executive explore the potential of links to the "Creating Common Ground" initiative and possible linkage with the Greater Shankill Task Force.*

Action

The Housing Executive has identified Lower Shankill and Lower Oldpark as two of three areas in Belfast prioritised for funding in 2002 as part of the Creating Common Ground initiative.

Short term

The Housing Executive anticipates that discussions between the local communities, the Housing Executive and consortium personnel which began in February 2002 to develop environmentally based plans will succeed in attracting Common Ground funding.

The Housing Executive will support links with the Greater Shankill Task Force.

SCHOOLS, EDUCATION AND YOUTH PROVISION

Schools and Education

Considerable concern was expressed about the emotional distress suffered by children due to the feud and its aftermath. The Group heard at length from the principal of one of the primary schools most affected by the events about the challenges for her and her staff in coping with what had occurred. Many children were deeply traumatised by what had happened to their families and the damage done is incalculable. The behaviour of some children has become very challenging and several children have had to be suspended from school. It is recognised that similar problems have been and are being faced in post-primary schools as well.

The question of identifying signs of trauma was also discussed, together with the issue of supporting teachers and principals. Some teachers and principals have had more experience than others in dealing with difficult situations. It was agreed that opportunities for sharing experience and best practice between primary schools, and between primary schools and post-primary schools would be useful. In addition, several people said that there needs to be training for teachers to recognise signs of emotionally disturbed children. Trauma can make some children very disruptive — equally it can make some children very quiet. The latter presentation of trauma means that it may be overlooked.

Psychology services are available in some schools but not in all. Concern was expressed by one member of the Group whose children had suffered considerable emotional upheaval, but had received no counselling. Trauma counselling is also required for parents, as parents' anxieties are transmitted to their children. Clearly, dealing with parents' problems will have an additional indirect benefit in terms of addressing the needs of children.

Similarly, some schools are very good at communicating with parents, whilst others are not.

Concern was also expressed at the fact that paramilitary organisations are trying to recruit children and are active in some schools. Other concerns included the fact that children bring paramilitary paraphernalia into schools. This poses considerable problems for teachers who in some cases have to focus on controlling classes rather than teaching. It was agreed that schools should remain neutral and be treated as "no-go" areas by paramilitary organisations. The Group learnt that the Loyalist Commission (which brings together politicians, paramilitary organisations and churches) was addressing this issue and planning to produce a "School Charter" to ensure that schools are free of flags and emblems and other paramilitary symbols. The Group also heard that Trócaire is leading a world-wide campaign against "boy soldiers" and that paramilitary organisations are to be included in this campaign.

General concern was also expressed about the low educational achievement in the Shankill area and the fact that many children leave school early with no formal qualifications. It is recognised that this will lead to long-term problems for the area. Many children no longer see the relevance of education and there is a need to explore alternative pathways for education and training. Attention was drawn to the EOTAS programme, which devises specially tailored curricula to help maintain children in education outside of school settings.

Specific mention was made of Mount Gilbert Community College and the particular difficulties faced by the school. While accepting that much effort is being directed toward improving the school and that some progress has been made, the Group recognised that many parents send their children to schools outside the Shankill area rather than have them attend Mount Gilbert. Mount Gilbert is designated a "Group 1 status" school which results in additional resources being made available to enhance staffing and provide extra elements to the curriculum. It is also one of the schools involved in the "Communities in Schools" initiative (a priority scheme of the Health Action Zone), and much potential exists to strengthen good practice.

Recommendation

7. *It should be recognised that principals and teachers need additional practical and emotional support. In particular, a forum/mechanism should be set up where teachers and principals from primary and post-primary schools can meet together and share experience and best practice.*

Action

Short term

Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) officers will use the existing principals' groups, the Shankill Principals' group and other appropriate opportunities to allow principals to share their experiences and to disseminate good practice. The issue of trauma is to be included as an agenda item in the twice-a-term meetings.

Once guidelines on identifying trauma have been drawn up, they will be provided to teachers as part of their in-service training days. These in-service training days will also provide an opportunity for teachers to discuss issues which they are facing.

Medium term

Elements of the guidelines will be expanded to meet emerging needs. An evaluation will be undertaken by BELB after 6-12 months.

Recommendation

8. *Training should be provided for principals and teachers (a minimum of one teacher in each school) on how to recognise signs of trauma.*

Action

Short term

An inter-disciplinary team of officers within BELB's education department is currently developing support programmes for principals and teachers on issues relating to identification, management and resolution of behaviours stemming from trauma, stress and emotional disturbance. These will be piloted by the team with a group of teachers before summer 2002.

Medium term

Following evaluation, the support programmes will be provided on a wider scale (including all schools in the Greater Shankill area) in the autumn term of 2002, and will aim to include a minimum of 2 or 3 teachers from each school.

Recommendation

9. *There should be clear means of access to psychological services in all schools.*

Action

Short term

BELB will continue to ensure that psychological services are made available to all schools. HAZ Council notes, however, that BELB is hampered in this by the current shortage in Northern Ireland of trained psychologists.

BELB Officers and Board members will continue to seek means of securing additional resources to enhance this service. Officers will also seek means of utilising external psychological services where appropriate and available.

Long term

BELB will lobby appropriate bodies to increase the number of places available on psychology courses and to promote educational psychology as a course of study.

Recommendation

10. *Guidelines should be drawn up for schools, stressing the importance of keeping parents informed of what the school is doing to meet pupils' needs.*

Action

Ongoing

BELB, as part of its management and in-service programmes, will remind schools of the need to engage fully with parents and the communities they serve. HAZ Council notes BELB's view that guidelines would be counter-productive and that it is for each individual school to develop mechanisms for communication with parents and the wider community. Nevertheless, BELB will seek to encourage such steps through contacts with individual schools and promoting models of good practice.

Recommendation

11. *Guidelines should be drawn up to assist schools provide for the needs of children who have suffered emotional distress, with particular attention to the children of ex-prisoners.*

Action

Short term

As part of the actions mentioned in 8, BELB intends that guidelines will be incorporated to assist schools in this matter.

Recommendation

12. *Support should be given to the development of the Loyalist Commission's School Charter and awareness raised amongst all relevant groups.*

Action

Short term

BELB would support all efforts which aim to make schools havens of peace and security so that teachers can focus on their prime purpose, namely pupil learning.

Youth Provision

The needs of young people recurred constantly throughout the series of meetings. Many members of the Group spoke of their concerns for young people in their community. People are alarmed at the fact that violence is increasingly seen as normal behaviour and at the rise in what has been termed "recreational rioting".

The value of youth workers was recognised, as was the fact that the service is limited and inadequately resourced. There is a great need for more youth workers, especially young people who can act as "peer educators". There is a clear need for positive role models.

Funding was highlighted as a major problem. The ARNE formula (Assessment of Relative Needs Exercise) was discussed and it was felt that it was detrimental to Belfast as it did not take such special situations into account. Other sources of funding are often provided on a short-term basis and this makes it difficult for groups to plan strategically. There seems to be less funding for youth work, yet the problems are greater than ever.

Staffing and volunteering were also issues which were raised. Volunteering is a great strength in the community but has been less in evidence more recently and has been accompanied by difficulties in recruiting people for paid positions.

In some areas, there is very little provision for young people, especially in the evening. It seems relatively easy for young people to become attracted by paramilitary organisations when there are few alternative activities open to them. There is considerable pressure on some young people to take sides and join a paramilitary organisation.

The Group heard that only a small number of schools in the Shankill area have become involved in out-of-school learning activities. A suggestion was made that more schools could be used for this purpose, and it was noted that the New Opportunities Fund provides funding for such activities. The Group also discussed whether more use could be made of school property during school holidays; for example, school buses could be used by community groups when schools did not require them, and more use could be made of school facilities outside of school hours.

Disappointment was expressed at the fact that the Probation Board no longer has a main focus on young people in general. Their emphasis is now on working with "high-risk" offenders, rather than with young people out on the streets.

Recommendation

13. *More youth workers should be recruited to work in the Greater Shankill area, which would also assist in developing volunteering.*

Action

Ongoing

BELB has secured funding to continue the employment of four youth workers until 31 March 2004, with two further permanent posts secured in the Upper Shankill area. HAZ Council notes that BELB recently worked with the community in the Mid/Lower Shankill area to secure five posts. This significant investment is in recognition of the needs in the area and BELB will continue to seek additional funding.

Recommendation

14. *Additional youth facilities, which can be used in the evenings, should be made available to provide real alternatives to paramilitary involvement. Attention should also be given to increased use of schools for community and youth activities.*

Action

Ongoing

Recognising that existing facilities could be made more accessible if volunteers could be recruited from the community to assist in the running of the units, BELB will continue to actively promote volunteering in the community. In addition BELB will continue to promote the use of schools by the community and will continue to seek the assistance of community activists in this task.

Short term

Belfast City Council will consider opportunities to open up Community Centre facilities at the Hammer, Highfield and Woodvale to the Youth Service for specific project work on some evenings and weekends.

Recommendation

15. *Training should be provided for youth workers to help them identify children and young people who are experiencing difficulties or trauma.*

Action

Short term

BELB will provide training for youth workers in parallel to that offered to teachers. BELB will endeavour to seek training from mediation networks in helping skills. HAZ Council notes that BELB currently offers part-time courses in helping skills to part-time staff, and that within recent months, a significant number of community-based workers have been recruited to the OCR youth work course in youth leadership skills. BELB will continue to monitor this situation.

Belfast City Council will give consideration to providing facilities and support for tutor fees in assisting youth workers identify children and young people experiencing difficulties or trauma.

Recommendation

16. *BELB and the five area partnerships should consider leading a bid to the New Opportunities Fund for out-of-school learning activities.*

Action

Ongoing

BELB, as a member of the area partnership boards, will continue to promote partnership bids to seek additional funding from various sources. BELB has after-school provision in Glencairn and, with funding, would support similar ventures in Shankill and Woodvale.

Recommendation

17. *A programme should be developed and piloted with young people to discuss identity and personal development issues. This could be led by the youth service in conjunction with those working in community relations, history and culture programmes, in order to develop a model of good practice.*

Action

Ongoing

BELB is currently running a peer mentoring project in Mount Gilbert in partnership with Childline and Communities in Schools. In addition, youth workers in the Upper Shankill are currently delivering personal and social education programmes both with young people in centres and on the streets. Mid/Lower Shankill project has already initiated a single identity programme.

Short term

BELB will review and evaluate such practice and in the light of these findings plan appropriate action.

Belfast City Council Community and Leisure Services will link in with the Youth Service to support programmes for youth in directly managed centres.

Recommendation

18. *A number of longer term policy issues emerge, including the need to lobby to change the ARNE formula, and the need to link closely with the Greater Shankill Task Force.*

Action

Long term

BELB will continue to seek additional resources and challenge the ARNE formula at every opportunity. The support of the community is also needed on this issue as the formula does little to address the particular needs of Belfast. BELB will also seek to develop closer links with the Greater Shankill Task Force.

POLICING

Policing emerged as a significant issue during meetings of Greater Shankill 21. Previously a reasonably good relationship existed with the police but this has deteriorated more recently. It was agreed that there needed to be more dialogue among different parties. The current public order situation also means that community policing is suffering and that situations pose a potential risk for officers. Everyone recognises the value of "beat" officers, but when there is a problem, community policing is always the first service to come under pressure.

It was suggested that a working group could be set up to provide opportunities for regular dialogue between the police and the community. Community organisations could express their expectations of the police, and the police in turn could talk about what was achievable/practicable. Such a forum would foster the development of relationships which would support a process to address problems if they arose.

Concern was expressed at the educational qualifications needed to apply to the new Police Service of Northern Ireland. As referenced earlier, educational achievement in the Shankill area is not high which could preclude many young people from joining the new service. The Group highlighted the potentially damaging situation where working-class loyalists are disenfranchised, resulting in the police being regarded as a "foreign body", not belonging to the local community, and reflecting a further distance between marginalised communities and mainstream society.

Communication with the police was also raised as a matter of concern. The procedure for accessing the police service is not widely understood and this can lead to problems and dissatisfaction. It was agreed that an awareness raising campaign would be helpful so that clear lines of communication and responsibility could be widely understood by the community.

Recommendation

19. *An effective communication mechanism, which can be clearly understood by all parties, should be put in place.*

Action

Short term

The police will undertake to produce a draft document illustrating police structures and areas of responsibility within the Greater Shankill area, along with relevant names, telephone numbers and extensions and other means of communication. A statement of purpose will also be provided in terms of general policing along with undertakings relating to communications with departments and/or offices.

Medium term

Having done the above, the police will undertake either to produce a final document or work alongside others to do so.

Recommendation

Action

20. *A representative community police liaison working group should be established to provide opportunities for regular dialogue between the community and the police service.*

Action

Short term

The police will undertake to fully support the establishment of such a group and, having been established, the police will undertake to work closely with that group to further police/community relations. Whilst it would be appropriate that the make up and membership of the group be decided by the community as far as possible, the police will, if requested, provide their support to that process. The police will identify two designated officers whose roles will include that of liaison officer and deputy liaison officer to that group.

Recommendation

Action

21. *The police should make the community fully aware that if there is dissatisfaction with the service provided by the police, there is a clear procedure for making a complaint and for obtaining a response.*

Short term

The police will undertake to produce a draft document illustrating the process for making a complaint and obtaining a response along with information outlining the role and function of the Police Ombudsman. Relevant names, telephone numbers and extensions and other means of communication will also be provided. A statement giving undertakings relating to such communications will also be provided.

Medium term

Having done the above, the police will undertake either to produce a final document or work alongside others to do so. The liaison working group will review the effectiveness of these mechanisms.

Recommendation

Action

22. *Consideration should be given to ensuring that community policemen are not used in managing local riots or other disturbances.*

Ongoing

Police can confirm that it is local policy to avoid, as far as possible, the deployment of "community officers" in public order situations and such consideration is given prior to the deployment of officers. However, it should be remembered that such officers often fulfil a useful role in diffusing such situations because of their strong links with the local community.

Recommendation

23. *A number of longer term policy issues emerge, including the need to lobby for a stronger focus on community policing and specifically to make representation on police recruitment opportunities which may disadvantage communities such as the Shankill. One suggestion raised is the development of a PSNI "cadets" entry grade.*

Action

Ongoing

Police are committed to the implementation of the Patten recommendations which clearly state that the emphasis should be on community-based policing. However, Patten also recognises that such a model requires a full complement of police officers and a climate free from political violence and terrorism.

Short term

HAZ Council will raise issues regarding recruitment directly with the Policing Board and with the Greater Shankill Task Force.

MENTAL HEALTH, MEDICATION AND TRAUMA

The issue of trauma and its effects underpinned most of the meetings of Greater Shankill 21. The feud has impacted on every aspect of people's lives. The long-term effects are not yet known, but it is clear that there will be problems for some time to come.

A key point is that people no longer feel safe in the Shankill. The internal nature of the feud has destroyed the feeling of security that people had and this is leading to higher levels of aggression. In addition, young people are getting no "down" time and this is manifesting itself in increased levels of drug and alcohol abuse. Rioting is sometimes seen as another way of getting rid of the aggression.

Many members of the Group spoke about children having "lost their childhood". They have been inappropriately exposed to "adult" issues and are increasingly talking about things that they would not have known about before, such as paramilitary organisations and their activities. In addition there are serious concerns about young people's sense of identity.

Help has not always been available when most needed. One member, having been burnt out of her home, spoke about being told that she would "just have to deal with it".

The issue of access to locally-based counselling services for adults and children was discussed at length. The benefits of having a local service were recognised by everyone as it was clear that people are reluctant to travel too far, with the Family Trauma Centre in South Belfast considered as too remote. The service set up by North and West Belfast Health and Social Services Trust at the Spectrum Centre was singled out for particular praise. It is local and many people felt safe accessing services in this way. However, the service is for a limited duration as funding for mental health services remains an ongoing problem for the Trust. The group noted the provision of accredited services such as the Shankill Stress and Trauma Group. All the services are working at full stretch and have real difficulty responding to new needs.

The Group also recognised that counselling was not always necessary — very often there is simply a need to have someone to talk to or someone to listen. The value of befriending services was highlighted, as were social networks and support.

The short-term nature of funding for counselling services was raised. The Group heard that the BELB commissions counselling services from an organisation which may have to close down because its funding is coming to an end. As with other services, it is very difficult to plan strategically and to develop relationships when funding is so uncertain.

The Group heard that mental health services traditionally focus on those people over 18 years of age who have serious mental illnesses such as schizophrenia or manic depression. There are very few resources available for those suffering from less acute mental health problems such as anxiety or depression.

Research from the University of Ulster shows that one in three people in North and West Belfast going to their GP presents with a psychological problem. There is twice the level of suicide in North and West Belfast as in the rest of Northern Ireland

Concern was expressed that the issue of trauma, although mentioned in the Executive's Programme for Government, was not carried through to departments' Priorities for Action.

The Group was pleased to learn about the Eastern Health and Social Services Board's plans to develop the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and a specific opportunity was offered to contribute to its further development.

The Group was also pleased to learn that the Trauma Advisory Panel is currently working to produce guidelines on child bereavement for schools, emergency services and all those who are the first point of contact with the public. It is hoped that the publication of guidelines will be followed by resources for training.

The Group touched on the issue of medication, but was hampered by not having direct input from a GP. Anecdotal evidence, coupled with the professional opinion of GPs, supports the view that use of medication has increased since the feud. There was some feeling that doctors too often prescribe medication which can result in high degrees of dependency. One member referred to her experience at a weekend residential event for a community organisation. By the end of the weekend, several women realised that they had forgotten to take their medication which they attributed to feeling that they were in a safe environment. This small step was acknowledged as important by the women and needs to be built upon in the future.

The Group heard about examples of alternative therapies being used in the treatment of trauma, such as art therapy, music therapy and story-telling and agreed that it would be useful to investigate the role of such therapy in the future.

Recommendation

24. *High quality, well-supported, non-stigmatising counselling services should be made available for adults and children, and should include alternative therapies such as art and music therapy and drugs counselling.*

Action

Ongoing

NWBHSST will continue to secure the counselling service based at the Spectrum Centre while this is required. The Trust is seeking additional resources to expand this service.

NWBHSST will continue support to the Shankill Stress and Trauma Group which provides a range of services including counselling, drop-in and befriending services, for people experiencing anxiety, stress and other needs associated with trauma.

NWBHSST will continue to support their partnership with the Forum for Action on Substance Abuse (FASA). The Trust has submitted a proposal for Executive Programme Funds and to BRO for a community strategy to address alcohol and substance misuse and FASA are a key partner in this strategy.

Short term

NWBHSST will work with the NSPCC and relevant community projects to develop counselling services for children.

NWBHSST will carry out an evaluation of its work.

Medium term

EHSSB notes the recommendations in relation to the matter of counselling and levels of prescribed medication for depression and anxiety. EHSSB will discuss these issues with the Local Health and Social Care Group which covers the Shankill area when it gets underway after April 2002. EHSSB believes that, since these needs have been identified in the community and the services would be community and primary care based, the new Local Health and Social Care Groups will be keen to see how they can incorporate the issues on their work programme.

GPs agree that there is a need for community support services such as those provided by the Shankill Stress and Trauma Group, including befriending and counselling services. GPs are strongly of the view that any additional counselling services, if they are to have sufficient credibility to attract referrals, should be based on good evidence, and be accredited and accountable.

Recommendation

25. *Access to counselling services should be increased locally.*

Action

Ongoing

NWBHSST has negotiated with the Regional Family Trauma Centre for provision of an outreach clinic at Lincoln Avenue Health Clinic.

Short term

NWBHSST has submitted a proposal to the DHSSPS for development of a locally based Trauma Service and will work with local communities across its catchment area in the design and planning of this service.

Recommendation

26. *Additional resources should be targeted at responding to the needs of people with anxiety and depression.*

Action

Short term

NWBHSST is strengthening the staffing of the Shankill Community Mental Health Team to provide better support to primary care in the management of depression, anxiety and stress related disorders.

Recommendation

27. *Research should be commissioned to show whether levels of prescribed medication have risen since summer 2000.*

Action

Short term

NWBHSST accepts this recommendation and is considering the best framework for taking this forward.

Recommendation

28. *Guidelines and training should be produced on recognising the signs of trauma.*

Action

Short term

NWBHSST is discussing with victim and survivor organisations the development of joint training in this area. The Trust negotiated an initial one day training workshop with staff from the Regional Family Trauma Centre and this took place at the end of February. Further days are planned and 50% of places will be offered to the community sector.

Medium term

NWBHSST will carry out an evaluation and assessment of future training needs.

Recommendation

29. *Existing services (whether statutory, voluntary or community) need to be better co-ordinated in order to respond to the high level of need at local level.*

Action

Short term

NWBHSST is working with victim and survivor organisations to agree a co-ordination framework.

Medium term

EHSSB recognises the needs in the Shankill area and in the wider North and West Belfast area. EHSSB was pleased to see the Ministerial announcement in relation to increased provision for North Belfast and hopes that it signals an interest generally in provision of local services for trauma.

EHSSB is keen to develop the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, especially those aspects of the services which are provided at local level. As and when its funding allows it to do so, it will be proposing investment in improving these services.

Recommendation

30. *Models of good practice should be sought from other parts of Northern Ireland and abroad.*

Action

Ongoing

NWBHSST has networked with the Omagh Trauma Team, the Family Trauma Centre and with their international networks. The Trust believes it is important to develop this network in an inclusive way with the community sector.

Recommendation

31. *A number of longer term policy issues emerge, including the need to lobby for additional funding in order to meet existing, emerging and long term needs. This issue should be raised within HAZ Council member organisations and regionally in relation to the Programme of Government.*

Action

Ongoing

As reported above NWBHSST has submitted a proposal for development of local services to the DHSSPS. The Trust jointly commissioned with the EHSSB research into the impact of the Troubles on the provision of health and social services (the report *Caring Through the Troubles* was recently launched). The Trust has agreed with the EHSSB on a joint strategy to promote the need for additional investment.

Medium term

GPs in North and West Belfast agree that the provision of an adequate mental health service is their top commissioning priority. They will support any bid for funding and any structural reorganisation within mental health services which would lead to this end.

GPs are firmly of the view that an acute mental health assessment centre is required to serve North and West Belfast or the Greater Belfast area. This centre would provide a base for the assessment of acutely distressed individuals and would co-ordinate the integration of acute and community mental health services.

FUNDING, HEALING AND RECONCILIATION

There is a belief that the special needs of Belfast as a whole, and the Shankill in particular, have not been recognised. There is a need for healing in individuals, families and the community as a whole, and this will require funding.

The Group highlighted the fact that although the feud is over, its effects are still on-going. It is difficult for those outside the area to have a real feel for the severity of what has happened. People in the Shankill area feel that their experience has not been fully recognised. Although it was appreciated that front-line staff in statutory agencies deserved credit for their response and care, it is also true that the gaping needs have never been officially recognised, or seen as having as much importance as other issues. Media attention has focused more recently on North Belfast. There is a general feeling that wider society believes that the Shankill brought the situation on itself and is therefore less deserving of help than, for example, the victims in Omagh who were seen as blameless. There is also the perception that the feud is over and that people "should just get on with it."

There was concern that attention was only paid to those people who had suffered tangible loss that is, those who had been affected directly by being shot or burnt out of their house. However, if the loss had been less tangible, then people believed that there was nothing to complain about. The Group heard that people still living in areas which so many people have left also need some recognition.

Recognition of hurt was a recurring theme. People need to feel that their trauma and suffering is recognised. Sometimes people simply need to be listened to. An example was given of a project funded by the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust where representatives of statutory agencies came together and were addressed by local people. This had a great healing effect on those taking part as they were listened to with respect. Acknowledgement of what has happened can help in the healing process.

One of the main concerns emanating from the community was youth provision and the need for positive role models for young people. It was cited that paramilitary organisations are actively recruiting. One Group member spoke of witnessing a member of a paramilitary organisation trying to get a group of young people to join up. The Group member had gone to speak to the families of all the young people concerned, but two of them had still gone ahead and joined. It was agreed that there is no point in simply telling young people not to do something — there must be alternatives. There is a fear that the paramilitary recruitment will have repercussions for years to come.

It was suggested that the best way of healing the wounds in the community and bringing about reconciliation would be to work with children as it was felt that the wounds in the adults were still too raw.

A cause for concern was the definition of "victims". Funding bodies often use differing definitions and this can create problems when making applications for funding. It was felt by the Group that people should not be divided into "good" and "bad" victims and that any sense of a hierarchy amongst victims should be avoided. The Group was pleased that the draft Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland stated, in relation to the rights of victims, that "a broad and inclusive approach must be adopted so that the suffering and hurt of all those affected can be adequately addressed", which means, it is presumed, that families of ex-prisoners are included. (See Appendix III) It is noted that the Victims' Unit at the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister has since formulated a new definition of victims.

The issue of claiming criminal injuries compensation was also raised. Compensation can only be claimed if people were in the house at the time that an attack took place. People have suffered trauma, regardless of whether they were in their homes at the time or not. In addition, ex-prisoners are debarred from receiving criminal damage compensation.

Group members stressed the complexity of the situation in the Shankill and that a catch-all solution which meets everyone's needs is not practical or desirable. Each person has a different experience, both in terms of what happened and in their reaction to it. Some people may want to join in activities, whilst others may need individual support.

There was recognition that funding organisations want to help, but that often (as in the immediate aftermath) it is not clear how best they can help. There is a need for a coherent strategy, avoiding a piecemeal approach to individual groups. It was agreed that it would be helpful if clear strands of proposed action were drawn up and agreed by statutory and community organisations. They could then be used to provide guidance to funding organisations.

It was agreed that Greater Shankill 21 was positive and timely in relation to the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) being established to lead out Peace II programmes for peace and reconciliation. The LSP in Belfast will comprise the principal statutory bodies, elected representatives, business and the community and voluntary sectors. The LSP will be looking at vital services and could, for example, consider the proposal for a pilot project for environmental services.

The Group also informed about the proposed Shankill Convention which is being organised by key community organisations. A number of tensions and difficulties remain between different community groups, but progress has been made and the Convention offers a major opportunity for the whole Shankill community to come together.

Recommendation

32. *There is a need to demonstrate to the people of the Shankill that their situation is recognised and is being addressed. The production of this report is a first step in this acknowledgement; a further opportunity exists with the publication of the 'Feud and the Fury' report.*

Action

Short term

The Health Action Zone team will present the Greater Shankill 21 Report to community groups in the Greater Shankill area to explain the process and to seek feedback on its implementation. It will also present the report to the Local Strategic Partnership to heighten awareness of the needs of the Shankill.

Recommendation

33. *A clear definition of victims should be determined which avoids any sense of hierarchy of victims.*

Action

Short-term

The Health Action Zone Council is in agreement with the inclusive definition of victims as set out at Appendix III of the report.

Recommendation

34. *Additional mechanisms should be put in place by which people can feel they are being listened to, for example community groups, befriender services, counselling services, forums for discussion.*

Action

Short term

NWBHSST will continue to address the issue of increasing resources. Clear quality standards will be promoted in relation to such work.

Recommendation

35. *Clear strategies should be drawn up to enable funding organisations to assess and address needs in the Shankill in a coherent and integrated manner.*

Action

Short term

BRO has adopted the role of co-ordinator amongst the various funders associated with Greater Shankill 21 and has collated information from them on potential sources of funding. BRO will continue to work with funders and the Greater Shankill 21 group to identify areas for assistance and the most appropriate avenue of funding to seek.

BRO will assist agencies/departments as they attempt to secure BRO Action Plan funding that will enable them to meet their responsibilities under the Greater Shankill 21 report.

BRO will also have a role to play with regard to funding projects both from its Inner West Team budget and potentially through its Action Plan. It is expected that a number of projects developing from the Greater Shankill 21 report could qualify for assistance. BRO will continue to work with groups that arose from the feud as well as funding various autonomous projects within the Greater Shankill area.

Belfast City Council's current grant-aid policy will continue to provide core funding to a range of local groups in the Greater Shankill area through a comprehensive needs assessment.

BCC has recently established a Community Chest which will assist groups specifically in interface areas.

BCC will give support to new groups to meet the criteria for funding of revenue, project and summer scheme costs.

BCC will use its Funders' Forum to assist in developing strategies to achieve a more integrated approach to funding in general.

BCC will develop Community Support Plans in 2002 which will operate until March 2005 (these plans will be based on a needs analysis), and its Best Value Review will take a comprehensive look at all services.

BCC will continue to support the Greater Shankill through the Advice and Resource Centre and will offer support to new groups. In addition, Community Development Workers will assist established groups presently in receipt of funding

Recommendation

36. *A presentation should be made by the Health Action Zone team to the Local Strategic Partnership as a vehicle to develop a co-ordinated plan of action. Such a move will require further consultation with a wide range of groups, with the potential of setting aside competition for a bigger gain.*

Action

Short-term

Through the Health Action Zone, members of Greater Shankill 21 will make a presentation to the Local Strategic Partnership on 25 June 2002 to consider how best the issues could be included in the LSP's plans and how the Health Action Zone could support the implementation of such plans.

5. Conclusion

The communities of the Greater Shankill area have experienced enormous trauma and upheaval. There is a now growing sense of stability. The process of working in Greater Shankill 21 has made a small but significant contribution to this developing sense of confidence. Nevertheless, severe divisions remain which will require constant energetic action. Communities are coming to terms with a new kind of Shankill. It is clear that the needs and concerns of local people are serious and that the impact of the feud will cast a long shadow for some time to come.

A number of practical steps to address medium-term needs are outlined in this report. The report is not exhaustive; rather it represents the key priorities emerging after the feud. There is a much wider regeneration agenda and the development of linkage between this process and other positive developments. However, agencies have signalled their commitment to implementing the recommendations, and it is now incumbent on all involved to make the most of this opportunity and focus energies for the future development of the Shankill.

