



INCORE MEETING WITH BELFAST INTERFACE GROUPS
Friday 25th June 2004

Attendees

Michael Atcheson - LINC Resource Centre
Una Calvert - Ligoniel Improvement Association
Kate Clarke - North Belfast Interface Network
Tommy Gorman - Interaction
Ken Groves - LINC Management Committee
Pauline Kersten - Intercomm
Helen Lewis - INCORE
Joe Marley - Ardoyne Focus Group
Rab McCallum - North Belfast Interface Network
Eddie McDowell - LINC Management Committee
Billy Mitchell - LINC Resource Centre
Malachy Mulgrew - North Belfast Interface Network
Roisin O'Hagan - INCORE
Gary Robinson
Joan Totten - North Belfast Alternatives
Tim Spence - Community Relations Worker

Apologies

John Loughran
Gerard O'Reilly
Kelly Haggarty
Jim Potts

Summary of points discussed:

- It was pointed out that the group are getting together for their round-table meeting on 6th July and it would make more sense for INCORE to have their workshop directly after the round-table meeting. INCORE will endeavour to change the workshop from the 5th to the 6th July.
- Much discussion took place around the gap between academia and the work going on 'on the ground' and the need to bridge the link between the two. It was pointed out that from a community perspective, there was a lack of community representation at previous INCORE workshops.
- The difficulty in 'measuring,' 'valuing' and setting targets for the work currently being done on the ground was discussed. It was highlighted that it is important to measure the impact of this work over time. It is often the case that the impact of the work of community groups is under-estimated.
- INCORE can take the views of community groups to policy people. With enough community representation, there is scope to present a strong package to policymakers.

- Opportunities for learning from international practice were discussed. Some members of the group have had positive experiences in working with 'on the ground' projects and practitioners in the US and have learned much from U.S. approaches to 'gang' issues. It was pointed out that as part of its Local International Learning Project, INCORE has funding to arrange international study visits for Northern Irish policymakers and practitioners. INCORE staff are currently investigating potential places to visit.
- Despite the fact that North Belfast is one of the most disadvantaged areas in Northern Ireland, appropriate policy has yet to be developed to target this area's needs. Several members of the group felt that policymakers simply 'throw' money at the problem rather than try to address key long-term issues.
- It was noted that community relations involves more than just 'being nice', although policymakers still seem to interpret the concept in this way.
- It was pointed out that it is not just the physical interfaces that need to be addressed, but the interfaces that exist within communities e.g. the interface between youth and the PSNI.
- Community groups are often asked for their 5-year plans as part of funding proposals, yet community groups do not hear from policymakers as to what their 5-year plans are. It was suggested that Duncan Morrow, CRC could come and present the CRC's 5-year plan to the group.
- Discussion took place about INCORE's role. It was suggested that INCORE could highlight the gaps and recommend improvements in the work carried out by North Belfast Interface Groups. This analysis could be based on interviews and visits to each of the groups that would help give a 'real feel' for ongoing interface work. INCORE could also attend one of the Conflict Transformation Forum meetings.
- It was suggested that the group as a whole should 1) focus on specific issues - building up appropriate recommendations that can be sold to policymakers, and 2) document good practice.