

In Partnership

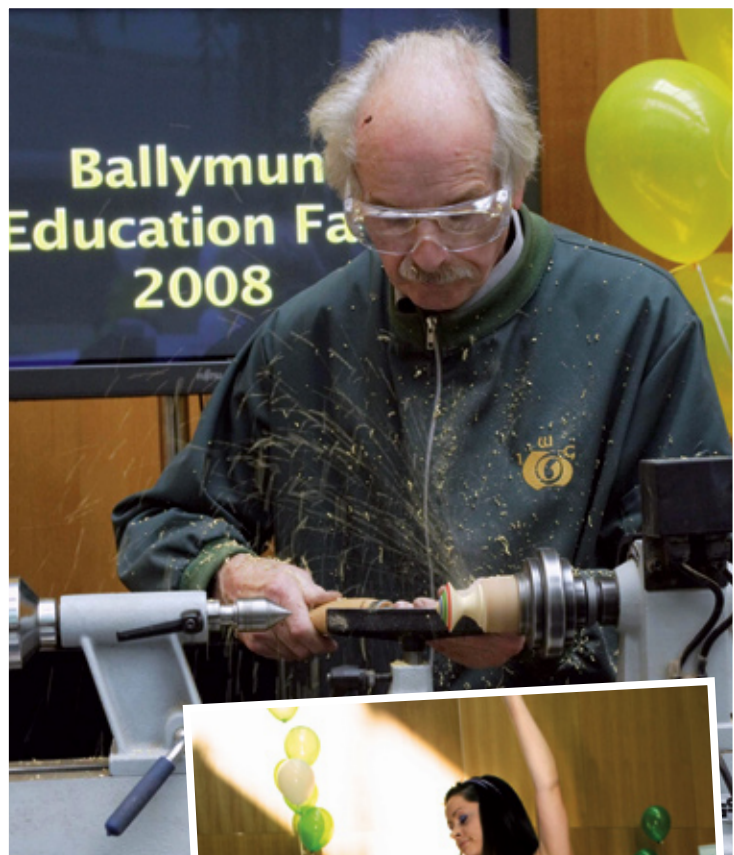
EDUCATION

Examples of the Work of the Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership
in the local community in relation to Education



**Ballymun Whitehall Area
Partnership** opportunity : renewal : progress





Visitors to Education Fair spoilt for choice!

The annual **Ballymun Education Fair**, organised by the Partnership, provides a unique opportunity to find out about education and training on offer in the area for all, and especially for adults.

The most recent Fair had over 40 displays, ranging from computer training to woodturning to belly dancing. The Fair attracts locals and celebrities including soccer international Ray Houghton who attended the last fair. Houghton signed autographs and also encouraged parents to get their children to do their homework and, if possible, to stay in school until they sit their Leaving Certificate.

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“It was very informative ... I just did not realise there were so many organisations ...”

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LOCAL RESIDENT



Let's all do something about it!

Ballymun School Attendance Community Action Initiative



Attendance levels in schools is a real issue for both teachers and parents, and deciding when a child is too sick for school or just hasn't done their homework is often tricky! Local school Principals wanted more help from community organisations to tackle the challenge of low school attendance, and so a community meeting was called by BEST School Completion Programme, which included all 12 Ballymun schools, local agencies, and community organisations. This meeting led to the formation of the **Ballymun School Attendance Community Action Initiative** which the Partnership now leads. As part of the Initiative, GPs have developed guidelines to help parents decide when a child is too sick for school. The three key reasons for keeping a child at home are:

- » a fever over 110.4 degrees F / 38° C
- » contagious illness or rash
- » the fact that a child may not be able to participate in class.

“As a GP, I often meet parents asking whether their child is too sick for school or not. I hope that the illness guidelines will be a clear and easy to understand reference for parents and for teachers as well. Sometimes you can get conflicting advice from different sources. The guidelines have been produced by local GPs and cover most of the common situations and illnesses that may cause uncertainty.”

DR. TARA CONLON, LOCAL GP

School Principals Work Together

Improving the experience of education – both results and life skills – in Ballymun is a key issue for local school principals. The **Ballymun Principals Network** was set up when the various Principals met to discuss the Partnership's education strategy document: 'Get It Right First Time'. Their key aims are:

- » to improve school attendance
- » literacy and numeracy development
- » encouraging use of information and communications technology

The Network is currently acting under each of these aims.

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“Through the support of the Partnership, the network has moved from isolation to co-operation and hope in making a difference in the lives of young people in Ballymun.”

**MARIAN HACKETT, PRINCIPAL,
HOLY SPIRIT GNS, MEMBER OF THE
PRINCIPALS NETWORK**

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Topsy and Tim move from Preschool to 'Big School'

It can be a big step when your child makes the leap from preschool to primary school. For some children it can be easy but also it can be a little bit frightening. In the same way, it can also be a happy or stressful time for parents. We wanted to see if the Partnership could help your child understand what to expect and to discuss their feelings about starting school. We spoke to preschools, schools and the Ballymun Adult Read and Write Scheme and now 14 preschool practitioners are working together on a **Story Sacks** programme

Story Sacks Transitions Programme: Moving to big school – What's Involved?

- » A large cloth bag containing a *Topsy and Tim Start School* book, dolls representing the book's main characters dressed in local school uniforms, props and scenery that bring the book to life when read either at home, in preschool or in primary school.
- » The sack also includes a fiction book on the same theme, a DVD on starting school, a language-based game, and a short guide containing questions to ask, words to consider and other ways to extend the reading activity.
- » 14 local preschools and 6 local schools will have the same story sack.

Experts tell us the move to 'big school' is really important for a child's development and Story Sacks is one thing that can make a big difference to how they feel when they get there. Guess what? Experts also tell us that if the first move is happy and comfortable, then children find it easier to move from classroom to classroom and from primary to secondary school.



Family is key to supporting children in schools

A survey of parents in Ballymun whose children are looked after by childminders, or attend crèches, primary or secondary schools, revealed that most parents have good relationships with their children's care givers. The key individuals involved in supporting a child in school were identified as mothers, partners, and grandmothers.

53% of parents interviewed felt that their child's school or preschool or childminder was good at engaging with them

(FINDING FROM PARTNERSHIP RESEARCH, 2009)

The survey also showed that around half of parents had used the web to access parenting information. However parents of children in secondary school believed that their views were not taken seriously enough. We are using the survey to develop further support for local parents.



Services supporting families in Ballymun/Whitehall



Addressing Classroom Behaviour

200 local teachers identified behaviour in the classroom as their single biggest challenge. In looking for ways to deal with this issue the Partnership came across the **Incredible Years Programme**. It sourced €10,000 to fund its start-up and undertook a series of local meetings which led to 11 people from six different organisations (including three local primary schools) signing up to train in the Programme. The Partnership paid for eight people to train, and bought the training manuals and puppets necessary to help them to get the Incredible Years Programme started.

The Programme was a success and since then has been expanded and continues to run through youngballymun.



There are lots of services working to support families in Ballymun/Whitehall and it's important that these services actively work with parents. A handy *Directory of Support Services for Parents in the Ballymun Whitehall Area* is now available. To get your copy, drop into us at the **Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership** office. The directory is also available online at www.ballymun.org. To make sure you as parents have a say, we have developed a *Building a Partnership between Services and Parents* resource pack for practitioners in education, health and family support services.

Parenting tips are also available on our website, where you can learn more from child psychiatrist Dr. Vincent Malony and his **Ten Commandments of Parenting**. You can also listen to Dr. Malony's humorous and real life examples of how parents can help children through each stage of life from birth to teens, as well as clips from the **Supporting Parents is Supporting Children** seminar.

"The pack from the Partnership was of great help in preparing for our meeting with parents. Having all the parents at the same time was a great success and inspirational."

SR. MALEN DEL VALLE, AISLING PROJECT

IMPROVING SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

Support for children and families comes from a number of different places, which can often leave parents trailing from one service to another to meet the needs of their child.

Children's Services Committees have been set up to improve and streamline services and the Partnership is a very active member of the pilot Dublin City Children's Services Committee. Areas in the UK have successfully set up similar committees to help in child development so we organised a study tour to Durham in North East England to learn from their experiences. Participants on the trip included representatives from the Children's Services Committee, the Office of the Minister for Children, the Health Services Executive (HSE), the Department of Education and Science, the Probation and Welfare Services and local representatives. The visit provided participants with a very useful idea of what is possible in Ballymun/Whitehall.



REGENERATION PROGRAMME CREATES NEW CHILDCARE SERVICE

The long awaited **Poppintree Early Education Centre**, chaired by the Partnership and supported by its partners, will open in 2010. It will contribute to the local economy by supporting working parents and creating employment in the area. This purpose built building will have up to 45 full time places for children aged six months to six years. As well as its own outdoor area, there is a fantastic playground located within the grounds of the Poppintree Sports Complex.

Education Working Group

There are over 25 member organisations in the **Partnership Education Working Group**. The Group gives members a regular and structured opportunity to meet, share information and discuss issues which in turn contributes to our work plan for education. There are three important sub-groups focusing on

- » **lifelong learning**
- » **third level entry**
- » **education supports for ethnic minorities.**

Membership of this group is open to all those contributing to the development of education in the area.

Hundreds of swaps at Book Exchange



"This is a great thing. I am delighted because I go through so many books. This way, I have a great choice of books all the time"

**CAREEN DOYLE, LOCAL
RESIDENT AND BOOK
EXCHANGER**

Books are expensive, particularly when money is tight. The idea of the Book Exchange, organised once a month by the Partnership, is that adults and children can bring a book and exchange it for another for free! One of the key benefits of the Exchange is that it gets people excited about books and reading. Donations of books to the Exchange are always welcome. Book Exchange happens on the first Thursday of the month in Ballymun Civic Centre. ALL WELCOME.

'The existence of an Education Working Group gives a platform to educationalists to network and to plan lifelong learning in the area in a coordinated manner.'

**MARY LOVE, BALLYMUN
ADULT READ & WRITE
SCHEME**

Supporting Local Students access Third Level Education

Education after secondary school is an expensive business. The **Millennium Partnership Fund** was set up to support ways into higher education. The Fund is managed by the Partnership and administered by Ballymun Initiative for Third Level Education (BITE), and Ballymun Job Centre. It is guided by an Advisory Group made up of people from across the community. The Fund helped 127 individuals to get to college in 2009-2010.

How does it work? Students living in the area apply to the fund for support. If their application is successful they get money to put towards their college expenses which can include fees, books, travel, childcare, accommodation and subject support like extra tuition or grinds.

Students from BITE pictured at graduation



Local Childminders and Childcare Providers

We offer support to local childcare workers and childminders through four organisations.

- » The **Childminders' Advisory Service** offers information, support and training for Childminders who usually work from their own homes and can become cut off from the local community.
- » The **Dublin North West Childcare Resource Centre** is a drop-in centre that offers information and advice to people involved in any aspect of childcare services, including parents. Since the HSE now requires all childcare workers to have a FETAC qualification, the Dublin North West Childcare Resource Centre set up courses in 2008/9 and trained 66 childcare workers in the area.
- » The **Partnership Childcare Working Group** and the **Ballymun Childcare Providers Partnership Network** both provide the opportunity to meet, share information and discuss issues that contribute to our work plans for early childhood development. The Childcare Providers Partnership Network is a great help for discussing issues like the preschool regulations, funding, and for developing quality services.

Due to the success of the Childcare Providers Partnership Network in Ballymun, we have begun organising similar meetings for childcare providers in the Whitehall area. Now childcare providers from Ballymun and Whitehall meet at joint events organised by the Partnership.

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“I don't feel we are working in isolation any more. Now we have a forum and are kept up to date with information ... the group identified our needs and has done something about leveraging funding.”

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**MARY BRADY, BALLYMUN
CHILDCARE PROVIDERS
PARTNERSHIP NETWORK**

Bringing Local Trainers Together

A variety of organisations in Ballymun offer different types of training. We commissioned research to examine the needs of local trainers and discovered that they wanted a peer support network. The **Trainers Network** was launched in 2008 to help people involved in the delivery of education and training programmes. Events organised by the network have included quarterly meetings, a seminar on official qualifications, equality training and training on motivating learners. An online list of local trainers and their training courses is currently being drawn up and can be viewed on the Partnership website www.ballymun.org



Teachers learning about Ballymun

Two Day Teacher Induction to Ballymun

Getting to grips with new classes can be challenging for teachers and coping with a new school in a new place can be an even bigger test. We have developed a two day programme to help teachers get to know Ballymun and the wider area. It allows teachers in classrooms with your children to get to know street names, the area and its history, as well as the community facilities and community workers.

“*‘What was most useful from this programme was seeing where most of the pupils live and where they come from’.*”

LOCAL TEACHER

OTHER BALLYMUN AND WHITEHALL AREA PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

- » An Intergenerational Local History Project in primary schools - *Talkin' 'Bout My Generation*
- » A Traveller Retention Programme for Second Level Students
- » The Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship programme
- » Initiatives on Connecting Services and Developing Education
- » A Pre-school Education Initiative for Traveller Children
- » Coordination of local events during National Parents Week
- » Initiatives to promote parental involvement in Education, Family Support and Health Services
- » Initiatives that promote quality in early childhood development



Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership opportunity · renewal · progress

Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership is a community based organisation. We work for the social and economic development of our area, and especially for those most in need of help. Established by Government in 1991, we deliver programmes that deal with childhood development, education, employment, enterprise, economic, and community development issues. Our funding comes from a variety of sources, including the Irish government and our programmes are delivered in association with a wide range of other local and national organisations. *If you want more information about any of the stories in this publication, if you feel the Partnership can help you in any way, or if you think that you can help us, then we would love to hear from you. You can drop into our offices in the Ballymun Shopping Centre or contact us at:* Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership, Shopping Centre, Ballymun, Dublin 11
Telephone: (01) 842 3612
E-mail: info@ballymun.org
Website: www.ballymun.org