



Ballyfermot  
Chapelizod  
Partnership

*'Building an inclusive community'*

# SICAP CASE STUDY 2020

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## COVID-19 Community Response SICAP Lot 2-1: Dublin Ballyfermot & Chapelizod Theme: A Goal 1 & 2 Project

This case study will highlight the community response delivered by Ballyfermot Chapelizod Partnership over the period March – July 2020 in response to the early months of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Community Response was delivered under Actions 1.2 (Ensuing Wellbeing is Valued & Supported) and 2.1 (Personal Development & Wellbeing) in the 2020 SICAP Annual Plan in collaboration with local community & statutory agencies. All names have been changed to protect the privacy of our clients.



## Background

In the early weeks of March 2020, few could have fully comprehended the scale of the crisis that was unfolding and the deep impact the COVID-19 pandemic would have on individuals and communities. In Ballyfermot & Chapelizod, a number of key agencies came together to plan a coherent and comprehensive response to the unprecedented situation that was emerging. Of immediate concern was the closure of the St. Vincent De Paul foodbank in Cherry Orchard. This food bank had been providing food supports to 180 families but had to close in the early stages of the pandemic due to the risk to volunteers, many of whom were older people. It was agreed that a coherent, multi-agency response was required in order to respond to this and the wider challenge of supporting the most vulnerable in Dublin 10. As a local development company with the stated mission of ‘building an inclusive community’, the core of many of the activities of Ballyfermot Chapelizod Partnership, is bringing people together whether in community groups, training programmes or one to one meetings in order to achieve better outcomes. The organisation, its staff and volunteers, needed to quickly switch focus to keeping people physically apart yet nonetheless connected in order to provide much needed supports in a way that was safe, controlled and meaningful for all concerned.

## Collaboration

A wide range of statutory, community and voluntary agencies were engaged in planning and executing the community response in the communities of Ballyfermot, Chapelizod & Cherry Orchard. Ballyfermot Chapelizod Partnership, in agreement with Dublin City Council, took on a key coordinating role in the community response, drawing on support and resources from St. Vincent De Paul, De La Salle GAA, the Gardaí, Ballyfermot STAR, Familibase and local schools all of whom were keen to put supports in place. Ballyfermot Chapelizod Partnership recognized early in the project that without adequate co-ordination some households may receive multiple supports from different agencies with others potentially ‘falling through the cracks’. A number of initial planning meetings convened by Ballyfermot Chapelizod Partnership with a division of tasks agreed. Dublin City Council focused their supports on the older person’s complexes, while St Vincent de Paul offered resources, referrals and guidance based on their experience of running the food bank in Cherry Orchard. De La Salle GAA provided volunteers and vehicles while St Ultan’s, the Family Resource Centre and Familibase agreed to prepare and deliver hot meals to older persons and vulnerable families. Ballyfermot Chapelizod Partnership

**Behind The Numbers** Rose made contact with the BCP phone line late one Friday. She had heard that there may be support available with groceries. An older woman, living alone, Rose was understated in requesting support but the phone answering team nonetheless ascertained that she may be urgently in need of basic supplies.

A member of the team was dispatched to Rose that evening with essential food & supplies. Rose lived alone on the top floor of a local flat complex. When she answered the door Rose burst into tears, she was grateful for the support and told our team member she had not seen anyone for nearly three weeks. Rose continued that she was terrified to leave the house and did not have friends or family living nearby. She said the days were so long because she used to listen to the radio to pass the time but the constant coverage of the pandemic was just making her more anxious.

Rose was prioritised for weekly deliveries of food, cleaning supplies, staff donated books and prepared activity packs to help her to keep occupied. The delivery team were conscious of ensuring they had the time to stop and chat with Rose and check on her wellbeing. As the weeks went by the team observed developments in her confidence and positivity.





agreed some funding via SICAP to expand on existing meals on wheels services as well as establishing a community phone line and offering our Drumfinn office as a hub for the wider food security supports. Other community organisations offered their staff and vehicles to assist with the community response while a number of local residents also came forward as volunteers. Local schools agreed to pool their resources and delivery lists for school meals to avoid duplication. As the project developed, additional partners were identified including Food Cloud, a social enterprise aimed at redistributing surplus food to those in need and Glanmore Food who supplied school lunches as well as donations to the wider food bank project. Throughout the community response contact was maintained with all multi-agency partners through the distribution of regular progress reports and Zoom calls to ensure alignment between the partner organisations.



Figure 1: BCP Staff Grainne & Fiona preparing Food Parcels

## Preparation

Flyers were created, displayed and distributed throughout the wider community. In response to the significant volume of enquires and the closure of a number of local services, Ballyfermot Chapelizod Partnership extended our on-site office opening hours from 9am – 7pm during the week and also began opening on Saturdays. The office was open to the public in a limited way to allow for collection of documents and essential face-to-face enquiries, while most queries came in via the widely publicised phone line. Within a week, Ballyfermot Chapelizod Partnership was receiving a huge volume of enquiries daily and a bespoke database was created on the Salesforce CRM platform which was used (with appropriate data consent & protection) to compile details of households requesting food security supports directly to Ballyfermot Chapelizod Partnership and to other agencies such as local schools, Dublin City Council, youth services and others. This database, once operational, was key to the central coordination of food security, grocery and prescription collection and friendly call supports across the wider Dublin 10 area. Regular progress reports were drawn from the system and distributed to the partner agencies to monitor progress and ensure that households were not being missed.

**Behind the numbers** Samir, his wife and their three young children live in Cherry Orchard. Samir had been working in a hospital via an agency before being diagnosed with COVID-19 in early April. Samir did not have sick pay in his contract of employment so as well as the stress the family experienced in terms of self-isolating and caring for Samir, they also found themselves suddenly without their only source of income. Having moved to Ireland relatively recently, Samir and his family were without the support network many of us take for granted.

Samir's wife Anna made contact with BCP having seen our delivery team at work in her neighborhood. They requested assistance with food for the children and support in signing on for a COVID-19 Illness payment. The family received weekly deliveries of food, supplies and even some Easter Eggs for their children! They were also contacted by a member of our employment team who supported them through the process of applying for a DEASP payment. After a number of weeks, Samir was cleared to return to work and the family contacted BCP to remove themselves from the delivery list.



As local schools began to compile their delivery lists for those in need of school lunch supports, it became apparent that there was a risk of oversupply of perishable items to certain households as multiple siblings in a household who attend different schools could receive multiple deliveries. By centrally coordinating the delivery lists of local schools, Ballyfermot Chapelizod Partnership staffs were able to identify where this may occur and agree standard geographical delivery lists across the 6 schools for whom we were carrying out deliveries. Other schools (who were directly delivering) also shared their lists which were cross checked against the database. Adopting an area-wide approach to school lunch supports enabled schools to avoid duplication and potential oversupply to some households allowed the schools to expand their delivery lists to prioritise families they might otherwise not have been able to support given the limited resources available.

**Figure 2: BCP Staff Mick & Austin preparing for their next round of deliveries**

Ballyfermot Chapelizod Partnership as supply chains were created, value for money ensured, volunteers recruited and inducted and vehicles secured. In an early planning meeting it was agreed that all staff and volunteers carrying out deliveries to homes in the community would be Garda vetted, a measure necessary to ensure the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.

In addition to creation, fine-tuning and population of administrative systems, the early weeks of the lockdown period were a hive of activity in

### Engagement/Target Groups

Within a number of weeks from commencing the Community Response, the database of households referred for or seeking support grew to over 1000 unique households. The breakdown of referrals by source is presented in Figure 2 below. A range of agencies made referrals to the project including, Ballyfermot Traveler Action Project (BTAP) Ballyfermot Club for the Physically Disabled, Addiction Services (Ballyfermot Star, Fusion CPL), Tusla, Barnardos, the HSE (Mental Health, Occupational Therapy, Social Work) and local representatives. 154 households self-referred to the community response in this time period. In promoting the service Ballyfermot Chapelizod Partnership prioritised engagement with traditional SICAP target groups such as new communities & the Traveller community and were also cognisant of the needs of emerging target groups such as older people, those experiencing financial difficulty due to COVID-19 and those with underlying health conditions.



Of those who received food security supports during the project, just under half were children & families, 23% were older people (over 65), 9% had a disability or an underlying health condition and 4% were members of the Traveller community.

It became apparent early on to the delivery teams that the provision of food and essential supplies was only part of the value of the home visits and that the support and social interaction, the ‘chat on the doorstep’, was also a vital lifeline for those experiencing social isolation. In order to better provide these person-to-person supports, a system was developed of matching staff and volunteers against specific delivery lists. This enabled volunteers from De La Salle GAA to take the lead on the delivery of school meals, allowing them to maintain relationships they had built with young people locally through coaching and to encourage physical activity – the lack of which was a concern held by schools for young people during the harshest of the COVID-19

restrictions. Similarly those referred from addiction services locally were delivered to by staff and volunteers with experience of working with people with a history of substance use, enabling the identification of possible relapse and signposting of appropriate supports. A specific delivery list of men experiencing mental health challenges was created and delivered to by BCP’s Mental Health Programme Coordinator, enabling them to build relationships with men who might have previously have remained unknown to our services due to their isolation within the community. Of these men, 8 have now progressed to commencing the ‘Heads Up’ programme in mid-September which will support them to improve aspects of their mental and physical health and connect with other men living locally.

Finally, delivery lists were assigned to consistent delivery teams week on week. This allowed for the building of relationships of trust on the doorsteps and enabled the delivery teams, over time, to observe changes in the people we were visiting. A number of cases of suspected domestic violence and child protection concerns were picked up and referrals made to statutory services. These may not have been identified had relationships not been built up through consistent and targeted outreach carried out by appropriately trained and experienced staff and volunteers. For safety reasons all home visits were carried out in teams of two and appropriate PPE was used at all times for food packing and delivery.

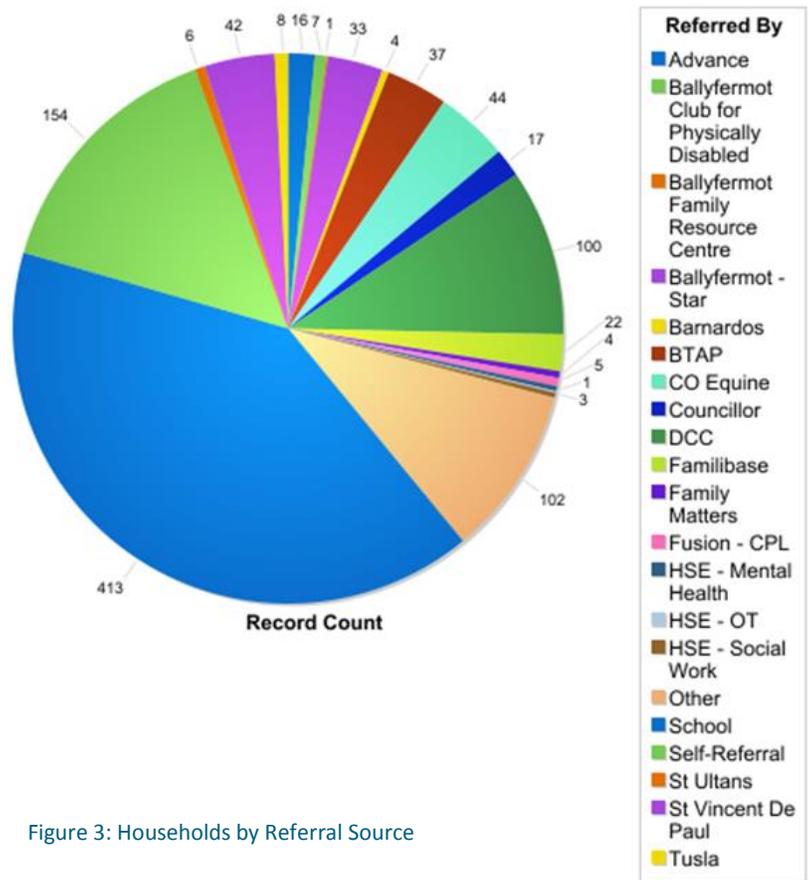


Figure 3: Households by Referral Source



## Outcomes

By the time the food security project was wound down in July 2020, 1,022 households had received support via the Community Response. Throughout the project a total of 7,430 home visits were carried out, averaging at 7 visits per household. 3,035 school meals were delivered, 828 hot meals supplied to families across the area, 229 care packs (comprised of essential personal hygiene and cleaning products) were delivered along with 108 activity packs for young and old. 3,389 food parcels were delivered across the community along with numerous check ins, doorstep chats, connections made and referrals to other services.

From the over 1000 households, 256 individuals with multiple needs were registered over the phone and referred for additional support through SICAP and other programmes in areas such as employment & social welfare payments, education, mental health support, housing, parenting support and assistance with home schooling.

In more qualitative terms, Ballyfermot Chapelizod Partnership, through involvement in the community response, have seen strengthened relationships with other community and statutory service providers locally as well as an improved standing and hugely positive feedback from the wider community. Interaction with the Partnership's online channels strengthened significantly during the community response and the project also received coverage in local media [link](#). Though the project was certainly not undertaken for PR purposes, feedback on the ground is that individuals and groups who may not have engaged with Ballyfermot Chapelizod Partnership previously, have an increased awareness of and appreciation for, the organisation, its mission and its values.

Finally, the Community Response provided a constructive and positive focus for both staff and volunteers alike during a period of professional and personal uncertainty for many. Though undoubtedly hard work, the team rose to the challenge with grace, commitment and good humor and many spoke of a sense of satisfaction and gratitude of having been able to make a positive contribution in a time of such challenge for the communities in

**Behind the numbers** John was referred to the Food Bank by HSE Mental Health Services. John lives alone in lower Ballyfermot and was experiencing isolation and a number of mental health issues. John's anxiety had greatly increased since the onset of the pandemic and he was unwilling to leave the house for shopping.

The first time the delivery team called to John he was wary of having callers and quite resistant to receiving the support. Cognisant of this, John was assigned to a regular weekly delivery list to be carried out by a staff member with expertise in men's mental health. As the weeks progressed and the team returned consistently with essential food and care packages, John became more open and engaging with the delivery team, often speaking with them for half an hour or more at the doorstep. Regular contact was maintained with John and weekly doorstep check in visits were carried out even after the easing of the restrictions. Having developed a relationship with the programme coordinator through the delivery of food supports, John has now agreed to take part in a 'Heads Up', men's mental health programme due to commence in Autumn 2020.

Without being referred to the food security programme it is unlikely that John would have come forward to avail of SICAP supports. He will now be supported to engage in a programme to address his mental & physical health and develop a network of other local men for additional support



Dublin 10 and across the country.

## Lessons Learned

In terms of lessons learned, Ballyfermot Chapelizod Partnership would emphasise the need to be action-orientated and timely in responding to unprecedented circumstances. To quote Dr. Mick Ryan (Executive Director of the WHO's Health Emergencies Programme) 'when it comes to emergency response, the perfect is the enemy of the good.' Many aspects of the response were refined as the weeks went on including the development of targeted delivery lists and tools to assist in the assessment of need. If the organisation and its partners had waited until all systems and processes were in perfect working order there would have been a delay in providing supports at a time when it was most needed.

A second key lesson was the importance of collaboration and adopting an area-wide approach to the provision of supports. By pooling information, resources and staffing, local agencies were able to respond to the pandemic in a way that was well-thought-out and comprehensive. The novelty of the situation that organisations found themselves in, combined with the need for an urgent response, allowed for flexibility and openness to working together that can at times be absent in multi-agency work, where territorialism and a sense of competition between agencies can, at times, impede progress. The COVID-19 community response in Dublin 10 was characterised by a strong sense of being 'in this together' and the outcomes for the community were greatly strengthened as a result.

Finally, the experience of implementing the community response to COVID-19 has reinforced to Ballyfermot Chapelizod Partnership, the significant value of engagement on the doorstep as a meaningful and effective outreach approach to reach vulnerable and isolated members of our communities. Feedback from our delivery teams throughout the project was that the supplies provided were overshadowed in value by the human connection and conversations had on the doorstep.

**A picture paints a thousand words...watch the Community Response in action here:**

<https://youtu.be/Bkl29ydrfa0>