



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



Galway City Partnership
Comhpháirtíocht Chathair na Gaillimhe

a tide for change
an taoide ag casadh

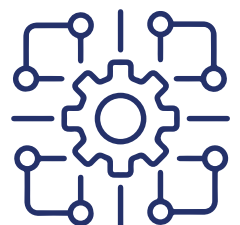


REPORT

The Development of a Monitoring / Review Framework
for Galway City Partnership Community Development Group Activities

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I. Introduction

The aim of this report is to describe the development and implementation of a programme of work focused on monitoring and reviewing the Community Development Group Activities of the Galway City Partnership (GCP). The intention of the document is that it serves as a record of the work, and while it contains commentary on its value, the report is not a research / evaluation report. The sources of the report are the facilitator's notes, notes on meetings with the Community Development Workers (CDWs), materials developed for meetings and written feedback / completed templates from CDWs on meetings with groups. The report is in five further parts:

- Context, Aim and Objectives
- Process and Implementation
- Outputs
- Value and Impact
- Full Implementation and Future Developments

II. Context, Aim and Objectives

This programme of work emerged from a wish by GCP to reflect on its Community Development group-work activities. Following preliminary meetings and contacts between the UNESCO Child and Family Centre and the GCP CEO, Professor John Canavan agreed to facilitate such a process. The publication of *Valuing community development through the social inclusion programme (SICAP) 2015–2017: Towards a framework for evaluation* (Whelan, McGuinness and Delaney, 2019) provided a national level context for the work. The early part of the process involved agreement on the focus and intention of the work and this resulted in agreement that the aim would be to develop a practice methodology that:

1. Supports ongoing reflection by Community Development Workers (CDWs) on their group support and development activities towards its improvement.
2. Aids supervision of CDWs in relation to their group support and development activities.
3. Offers a framework for the generation and collation of data on the **quality** and **value** of their group support and development activities to be used for organisation-wide reflection, review and planning.
4. Supports the provision of data to funders for advocacy and accountability purposes.

An additional focus was what can be learned about how to reach and involve highly excluded individuals within the context of CD group support and development activities. The agreed intended outputs from the programme of work were:

- i. Fully documented framework and process for Monitoring and Review of Galway City Partnership's Community Development Group-work activities.
- ii. Report on development of the framework and process.
- iii. Journal Article(s) based on the development of the framework and process.

The Work of CDWs in GCP

The GCP CDWs mainly carry out their work under the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) in principally three areas of the city: Ballybane; Ballinfoile-Castlegar; and Westside. Four workers are employed to carry out community development work; two are employed full-time and two part-time. Each worker is required to meet specific targets under SICAP when supporting local community groups (LCGs) across the city. LCGs include those that are most marginalised including Traveller groups, disability groups, community gardens, migrant groups, LGBTQ+ groups, women's groups and men's sheds among others. Groups are supported with different tasks including organising as a committee, building capacity, increasing participation, applying for grants, submitting returns and planning events.

As well as supporting groups, the CDWs support or sit on a number of interagency networks across the city including Let's Get Galway Growing, Early Years, Communities Against Racism and City East, North and West Family Services Networks among others. Other work includes extensive community outreach such as running coffee mornings, social mornings, coordinating community education courses and responding to community issues as they arise (e.g. Covid-19 pandemic, Ukrainian refugee crisis). Groups and issues that the CDWs prioritise are those living in disadvantaged areas and who experience marginalisation.

III. Process and Implementation

Fifteen meetings have been held in total:

1. **Two** preliminary meetings and one review meeting with the CEO of GCP
2. **Twelve** planned and facilitated meetings with CDWs and CEO focused on:
 - scoping the project
 - preliminary reflections and initial development of framework
 - piloting and reflecting on learning
 - preparation of second phase of pilot
 - initial implementation of second phase
 - learning from second phase baseline and follow up data
 - finalising the process and planning next steps

The work involved in the programme broke down into two relatively discrete phases. Phase 1 mainly comprised initial planning and testing of the meaningfulness and intelligibility of concepts. In phase 1, the initial focus was to move from an outline aim of reflection on, monitoring and evaluating practice to a testable framework. This required a scoping of CDW group work practice, including data gathering on numbers, types, location of groups worked with and workers' assessments of their developmental stage and needs. Critically, during this time, the *All Ireland Standards for Community Work* (Community Work Ireland / All Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work Education and Training, 2016) emerged as a document which could provide an acceptable conceptual basis for a monitoring and review framework for CDW activity and process. The standards document is a broad-based document focused on core 'values, knowledge, skills and qualities' to underpin Community Work in Ireland (Community Work Ireland / All Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work Education and Training, 2016, p.6).

The facilitator analysed the document in detail and with the input of the CDWs devised a draft framework of practice monitoring and review based on the core values of Collectivity; Community Empowerment; Social Justice and Sustainable Development; Human Rights, Equality and Anti-discrimination; and Participation. Once this was achieved, the CDWs took the framework to a selection of groups to test the degree to which the general idea of the workers reflecting on their own and the groups' process was meaningful and intelligible and specifically, if the groups understood the concepts in the framework and found them to be meaningful and applicable to their group. The framework initially contained nine domains but increased to ten for the second phase of the pilot.

The main achievements during phase 1 of the pilot were:

- agreement among the CDWs on the possibility of monitoring and reviewing work (their own and that of the groups they support) along nine individual domains
- piloting of reflection framework comprising nine domains and associated indicators
- agreement on the relevance and suitability of nine domains based on the experience of the pilot with six groups
- Agreement to split the phase 1 single domain of Social Justice and Sustainable Development into two for phase 2 of the pilot
- agreement to implement the framework starting in September 2021 by undertaking a baseline analysis with a sample of community groups, with a follow-up to be undertaken before summer 2022
- recognition that further thinking was required on the application of the framework to network based group-work activities

In Phase 2, the main focus was to test the framework in practice. Specifically the objectives in this period were:

1. To test the monitoring and review framework as part of ongoing Community Development Work Practice within Galway City Partnership
2. To explore the applicability of the framework to network based group-work activities
3. To generate learning from the phase 2 pilot leading to an agreed monitoring and review framework and process. This would then be implemented as part of the day to day operation of Galway City Partnership

While each of the facilitated sessions involved preparation / review activities by the facilitator, the main part of the work has been the testing of the ideas by the CDWs in a series of meetings with the groups with whom they work.

Time and Timing

It is important to note that while this work has proceeded over three years commencing in September 2019, the work was paused from mid-March 2020 until mid-April 2022, about 13 months in total. It was agreed at the outset that the programme of work and the framework that emerged would fit alongside and not detract from the already full work agendas of the CDWs and the CEO.

Additionally, enough time was needed in Phase 2 to allow groups to respond to the aspects of the framework requiring attention as identified in their baseline process.

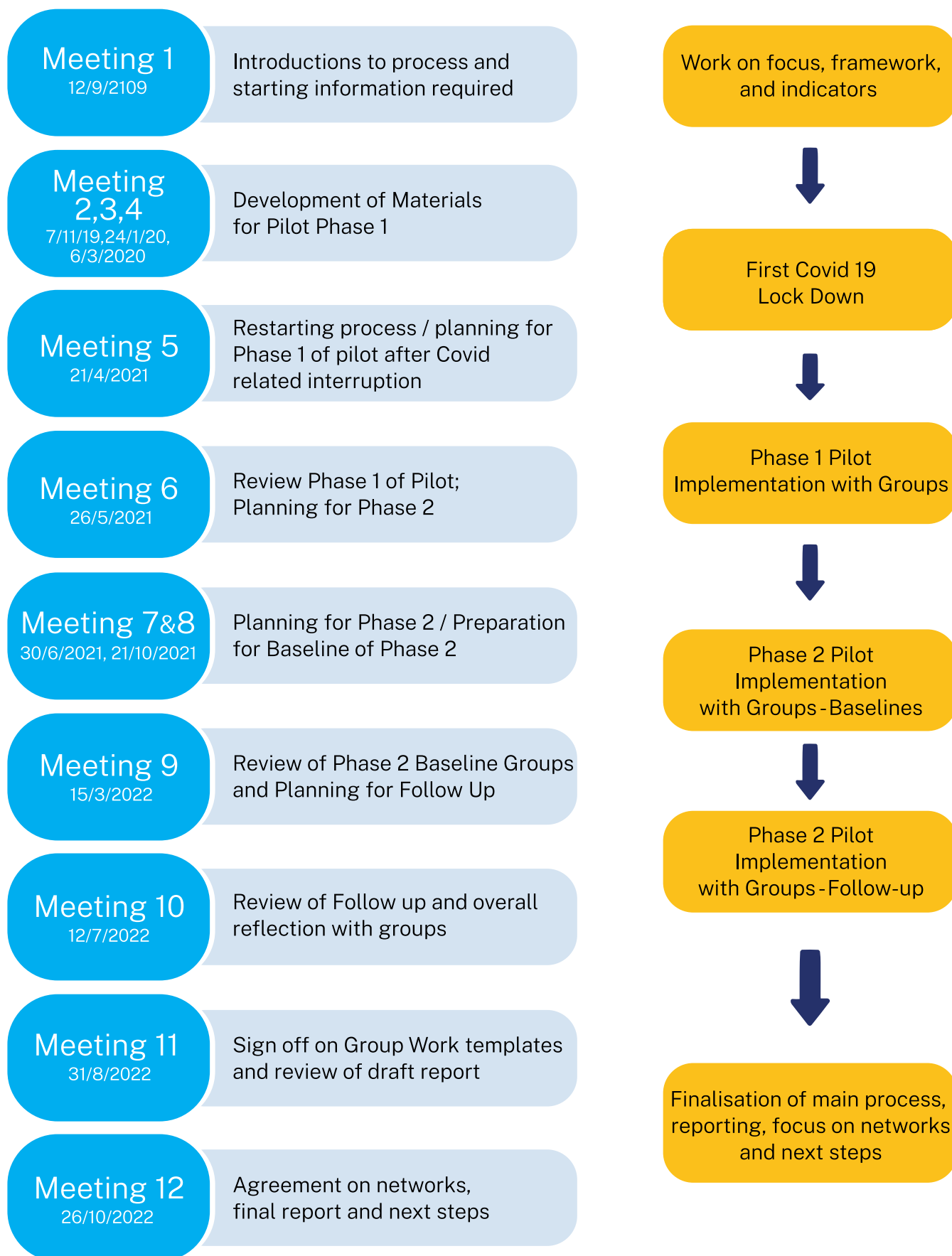


Figure 1 – Timeline and Programme Workflow

IV. Outputs

The main outputs from the process are:

1. Guidance note for CDWs on steps involved in the overall Monitoring and Review process.
2. Script for CDWs for use in explaining the process to the Community Groups.
3. Framework for Reflection comprising ten domains covering values and good practice in Community Development, selected indicators for each domain, and indicative questions to use with the groups when applying the framework. The framework is also useable in a more flexible way with the networks, depending on the role of the CDWs in the network.
4. Framework for recording comprising space for self-rating by groups/workers in each of the ten domains, for summary comments from the discussions with the groups, and specific targets for the groups arising from the discussions.

V. Value and Impact

A key criterion by which the programme can be judged successful is its impact at the level of the CDW, the groups with which they work and the wider GCP organisation. Throughout the process, there has been consistent feedback from the CDWs on the value of the process. At a minimum, the programme has allowed the CDW team time-out to reflect on their practice, the nature of the groups worked with, their roles as workers and areas of change, improvement or a different approach. It is important to state the value of time-out to reflect on practice within a very busy and demanding context of work. The CDWs found the framework was helpful in clarifying their role with groups and getting buy-in to the approach and values of GCP. Having a framework provides a clear structure against which CDWs can review their own practice and the operation of the groups they work with. Because the framework is for all CDWs, it is the basis of shared expectations of what should guide practice and provides a common language for mutual support within the team.

An important aspect of the framework is that it supports the workers to challenge their own practice and the operation of groups. For example, a number of the discussions between CDWs and the groups centred on issues of participation, inclusion and anti-discrimination (returning to one of the initial aims of the work of attention to highly excluded individuals). Issues identified by CDWs included non-inclusive sentiment held within well-established groups and resistance to change. The practice of implementing this monitoring framework allowed for an open discussion which may not take place in regular interactions with groups. This awareness offered guidance to the CDWs on the direction of future work and training with community groups.

Because there was not scope within this project to undertake fieldwork with the community groups involved in the process, it is not possible to reach any strong conclusions regarding the impact at this level. Feedback from the CDWs thus far demonstrates first, that the framework is meaningful and understandable, and second, during phase 2 of the pilot, it was the basis through which areas for work and development were identified, planned for and addressed. The benefits for GCP as an organisation is that there is now a clear policy guideline in place on expectations for CDW group work practice. For the future there are clear potential benefits as:

- the basis of mutual support and advice among the CDW group;
- a tool for supervision of CDW group work practice;
- a quality review tool for CDW group work practice; and
- the basis for a wider organisational operational review.

VI. Full Implementation and Future Developments

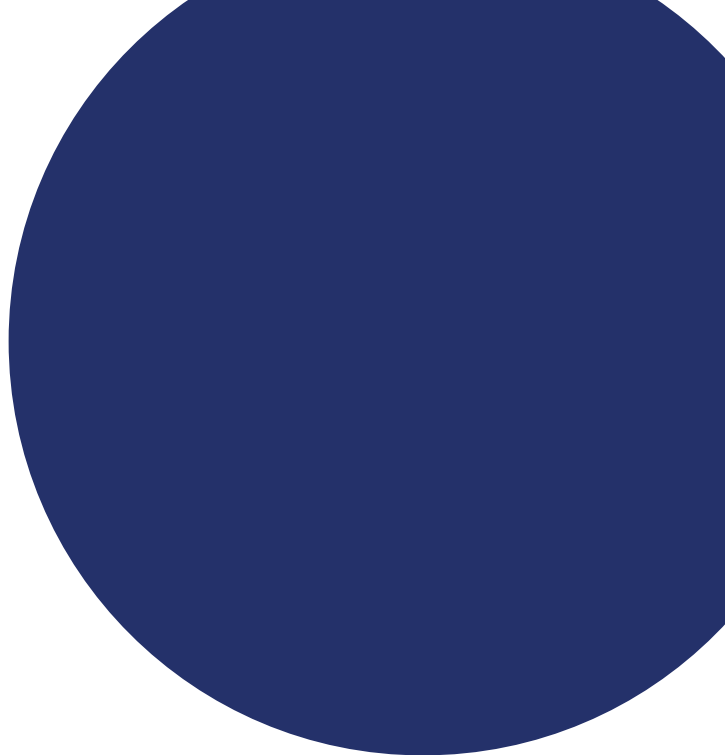
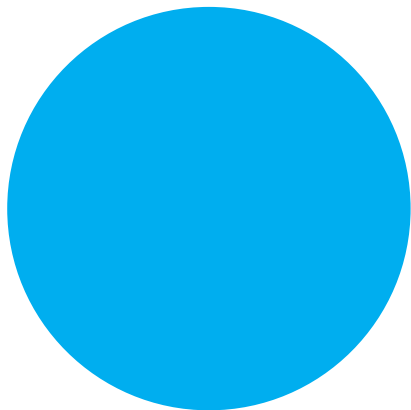
The next stage is the full implementation of the framework with a selection of Community Groups from September 2022 forward. The programme facilitator John Canavan will review the experience of the framework as an expected part of CDW practice and GCP business in the summer of 2023. There is a risk that implementation of the framework will not be prioritised in the absence of the structure provided by the pilot nature of the work to-date, and the regular meetings with the facilitator. Two approaches can mitigate this risk. First, the framework could become part of individual / group supervision and support for the CDWs, and second, the CDWs could create an internal peer-driven support and review process.

To formally end the work, two final meetings of this process took place, one on August 31 st , 2022 and one on October 25th , 2022. These covered the finalisation of a report on the process, the potential for the framework to be used to support the network activity of the CDWs, and the status of the baseline and plans for the year ahead. An academic output based on the work is being prepared.

VII. References

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