

Bridge – An assessment of health and social care needs within 3 communities:

- North Lurgan
- Corcrain
- Aghagallon

Used random selection procedure to:

- Select households
- Select individuals within households

Questionnaire drawn up which covered five main topics: Area, Services, Housing, Employment, Health.

A team of community interviewers recruited and trained to conduct the fact-to-face interviews.

A separate community report has been written for each area. Also a composite report bringing together the key findings.

THE SAMPLE: A total of 842 houses were randomly selected from the three communities to be involved in the Bridge project from which 540 individuals agreed to take part in an interview. This represents an overall response rate of 64%. Response rate was lowest in the rural area (Aghagallon) with 58% of individuals approached participating in the study, compared to 65% in each of the other areas.

Of the interviews obtained, the majority (64%) was from the Corcrain area. 24% of interviews were obtained from individuals residing in North Lurgan and 12% from Aghagallon.

Age and Gender: 59% of individuals interviewed were female and 41% were male. Ages ranged from 18 to 93 years, with an average age of 45 years.

Religion: Three-quarters of individuals identified their religion as 'Roman Catholic'. 23% were 'Protestant' and 1% stated 'neither or 'none' with regards to their religious identity. Only 1% of individuals were unwilling to answer this question.

AREA: There was a high level of resident stability within the three communities with 55% of individuals having lived in the Craigavon area for twenty or more years. Over half of individuals interviewed (52%) held a positive view of their community, believing it to be a *'good area, a good place to live'*.

- Overall, the areas were characterised as being safe places in which to live (83%), as having potential (81%) and areas with a good community spirit (80%).
- The majority of individuals from across the three communities (86%) stated there were inadequate facilities in their area for teenagers.
- 59% of residents perceived alcohol abuse as a rising problem.

SERVICES: The majority of residents reported easy access to general community facilities.

- 58% reported difficulties in accessing hospital casualty. This was a particular problem in the Aghagallon area with 80% of residents stating they found it difficult to get to hospital casualty.

- Overall, almost half of individuals interviewed (48%) experienced difficulties in accessing their doctor's surgery. This ranged from 39% in North Lurgan to over two thirds (67%) in Aghagallon.
- Access to a chemist was difficult for 61% of residents in Aghagallon and one third of residents in North Lurgan. The majority of residents in Corcrain (91%) reported easy access to a chemist.
- Individuals were asked what they considered to be the 3 most needed services within their area. The most frequently mentioned services included:
 - Facilities for Youth (27%)
 - Children's Play Area (26%)
 - Health Centre (24%).

HOUSING: In total, there were 1562 individuals residing in 540 households giving an average of 2.9 individuals per household. 36% of households included children aged 12 years and under. Of these, 43% were one parent families (parent either single, separated/divorced or widowed).

Overall, 34% of individuals mentioned one or more household complaints. Of these, three-quarters were made by individuals residing in the Corcrain area.

EMPLOYMENT: Using the Census criteria, 40% of all individuals interviewed were in employment, 113 males and 104 females.

- The percentage of employed individuals across the three areas ranged from a low

of 37% in Corcrain to a high of 53% in Aghagallon.

- Using the same classification system as the NI Census, 59% of individuals interviewed as part of Bridge were economically inactive. This is higher than the Craigavon Census figure (1991) of 39.3%.
- Individuals were asked if they would like to be in a paid job at present. 55% stated they would like to be in paid employment.
- 8.5% of individuals interviewed were involved in voluntary activity. This ranged from 5% in Aghagallon to 9% in Corcrain.

HEALTH: Over three quarters (77%) of individuals rated their health positively.

Overall, 29% of individuals stated they had an illness/disability which affected their day to day living (63 males, 93 females). Aghagallon had the lowest level of reported illness (17%). This increased to 27% within North Lurgan and almost one third of individuals (32%) in Corcrain reported having an illness. The most common type of illness included arthritis, angina, heart conditions and depression.

To obtain an indication of 'emotional stress' levels within the community, individuals were asked to rate how much they had experienced any of the following in the two weeks prior to interview: sleeplessness; feeling anxious, isolated, exhausted and depressed.

- Three quarters of individuals had experienced at least one of the above at

least sometimes during the previous two weeks.

- 14% stated they had experienced none of the above feeling/emotions in the previous two week period (36 males, 39 females).
- 16% of females interviewed had experienced all the emotions/feelings, the majority of whom were aged between 18-39 years.
- 10% of all males interviewed had experienced all the emotions/feelings, half of whom were aged under 39 years.
- With the exception of feelings of loneliness/ isolation, females were significantly more likely to experience each of the above feelings/ emotions 'very often' in comparison to males.

Prescribed Medication: Individuals were asked if they had been prescribed various types of medication within the past 12 months.

- Overall, 51% of individuals had been prescribed **painkillers** from their G.P in the past year. Females were significantly more likely to have been prescribed painkillers in comparison to males. In addition, individuals who had been prescribed painkillers had a higher average age (48 years) compared to those who had not (42 years).
- 21% of residents had been prescribed **anti-depressants**, more females than males. Over one quarter (26%) of all females interviewed had been prescribed anti-depressants in the past year in comparison to 13% of males.

- 19% of individuals had been prescribed **sleeping pills**. Individuals who had been prescribed the medication were significantly older (average age 54 years) compared to those who had not (average age 43 years).
- One in ten individuals had been prescribed **tranquillisers** within the past year.
- There was no significant difference in prescription rates between the three areas, although Aghagallon had slightly lower levels compared to the other two areas.

The Troubles: Overall, 58% of individuals stated the troubles had a 'great effect' on the health of their community. However this varied greatly between the areas. The main difference was between Aghagallon and Corcrair. Whereas 70% of individuals residing in Corcrair believed the troubles had a 'great effect' on community health only 9% of individuals in Aghagallon stated the troubles had a 'great effect' on their community. The majority of individuals in Aghagallon 39% stated the troubles had 'no effect' on their community.

Overall, the majority of individuals (46%) stated that the troubles had 'no effect' on their personal health. Only 13% felt the troubles had a great effect on their own health, most of whom were from the Corcrair area.

Carers: Overall, 10% of individuals were caring for a person/s on a regular basis (17 males, 36 females). This ranged from 7% in Corcrair to 17% in North Lurgan.