

Case Study - Riverview Housing Estate

River View Housing estate is a local authority housing estate in Kilmallock Co. Limerick under the responsibility of Limerick County Council. The estate is comprised of two sections (A) the original built in the early 1980's and (B) the newer section which was built in 2003. There is a mix of age groups in the estate ranging from older people to young families with children. There is also a mix of accommodation type including one, two and three bedroom houses and apartment with a high concentration of young children and one parent families.

Riverview was initially identified as a priority in 2006 when development work was carried out by the HSE West and Ballyhoura Development. An Independent research on the needs of families in Kilmallock was commissioned by Ballyhoura Development and the HSE West It indicated that

- The number of lone parent houses was higher in Kilmallock than on national or county figures.
- Kilmallock has a higher traveller population than on the county or national figures.
- Higher level of unemployment than the county and national figures.

Furthermore the research indicated that there was a need for

- Access to frequent and affordable transport
- Access to employment
- Access to social and leisure facilities
- Access to education and training
- Health and security
- Childcare

In light of the research, an application was made to the Family Support Agency for a Family Resource Centre for the town of Kilmallock. While the application was initially successful, the programme was no longer offering new contracts.

While this research indicated the situation in the whole of Kilmallock, it was determined by further informal research that a high concentration of disadvantage in Kilmallock was present in Riverview Estate. In addition to this, there was a perceived barrier between the estate and residents of the town and for the most part residents in the estate did not get involved in main stream community activity.

Support by Ballyhoura Development and HSE West in late 2006, a residents group was formed in Riverview Estate and a parent and toddler group facilitated by Hospital FRC and funded by HSE West was formed to support young parents from the community and targeted at young parents who had just moved into the newer part of Riverview estate.

Due to staff changes in late 2007 development work in Kilmallock ceased for approximately six months. During this time the residents group in Riverview estate ceased functioning.

In March 2008, the Kilmallock Family Support Network jointly co-ordinated by Ballyhoura Development Limited and HSE West was formed. The network consists of a number of agencies and community groups working with families in the community of Kilmallock and includes representation from Ballyhoura Development Ltd, HSE West, Forogie, Gardai, Department of Social Protection, County Limerick VEC, local schools, Limerick Social Services, ADAPT House, Kilmallock Community Childcare and Kilmallock Partnership.

The aim of the network is to co-ordinate the support to families in Kilmallock. Riverview Estate was identified as a priority by Kilmallock Network in 2009 and a community profile conducted by Ballyhoura Development Ltd staff was carried out (Profile attached).

Unfortunately attempts to form a new residents group in Riverview estate were initially unsuccessful as residents who felt marginalised from the services and organisations in the town of Kilmallock did not want to engage in an official process.

Ballyhoura Development, on behalf of Kilmallock Family Support Network made an application to the HSE West for funding for a worker to support the work of the Network. The application was successful and the worker commenced employment in September 2010. This worker works closely with the Community Development team of Ballyhoura Development Ltd and working with Riverview Estate was a key focus of the work.

The work in Riverview took a two pronged approach from September 2010

1) To establish a residents committee and develop an estate management plan for the estate

Due to a number of issues on the estate at the time, the residents were very enthusiastic in working with staff. A residents group was formed and they were facilitated to draw up an estate management action plan. The residents were also facilitated to meet with Limerick County Council and the Gardai in relation to actions in the plan. Limerick County Council were very supportive of the plan and regularly attended meetings of the Residents Group meetings. The group were successful, due to the co-operation of Limerick County Council and the Gardai, in solving the initial issue so this gave the group credibility both for their own self esteem and their reputation within the estate.

The group completed committee skills training under Ballyhoura Community Training Initiative funded under the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013. Following this training, officers were appointed in the group and the group continues to meet regularly supported by the Family Support Worker.

In early 2011 the opportunity arose for the group to apply for the services of a Landscape Architect through Ballyhoura Developments Landscaping initiative. The group were successful and plans were drawn up with the view to addressing some of the issues identified in the plan. All residents on the estate as well as Limerick County Council particularly the Land Engineer were consulted when drawing up the plan. The main aspect of the plan include extra parking spaces, securing of green areas, playground, walkway along river, additional speed ramps, play areas with markings and general landscaping/planting.

Limerick County Council submitted the plans to the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government and secured €50,000 for funding to complete works in the plan.

2) To build relationships between families on the estate and staff of Ballyhoura Development Ltd and to build the capacity of residents on the estate through education and training initiatives and recreational activities. `

Throughout the process, Ballyhoura Development staff engaged with residents on the estate through linking them to training and education organised by other agencies and by Ballyhoura Development Ltd.

In addition to training and education, recreational and social activities were organised for residents on the estate. These included estate clean ups, gardening projects, Halloween and St. Patricks Day parades, planting projects, a sun flower competition and family fun days. All the activities were organised in co-operation with the Residents group and with the members of Kilmallock Family Support Network, have helped build the capacity of residents on the estate, build links between residents of the estate and the rest of the community and build relations and trust between residents and staff of Ballyhoura Development.

While the Residents Group and residents of Riverview Housing estate are working well together and have achieved a number of successes to date, they are still at a very early stage of development and will require intensive support from staff of Ballyhoura Development and other agencies. The Support Worker continues to work with the group and continues to link residents with services and activities in the town of Kilmallock.

Over time the Residents Group will become stronger and more autonomous and will require less support from Ballyhoura Development and other agencies.