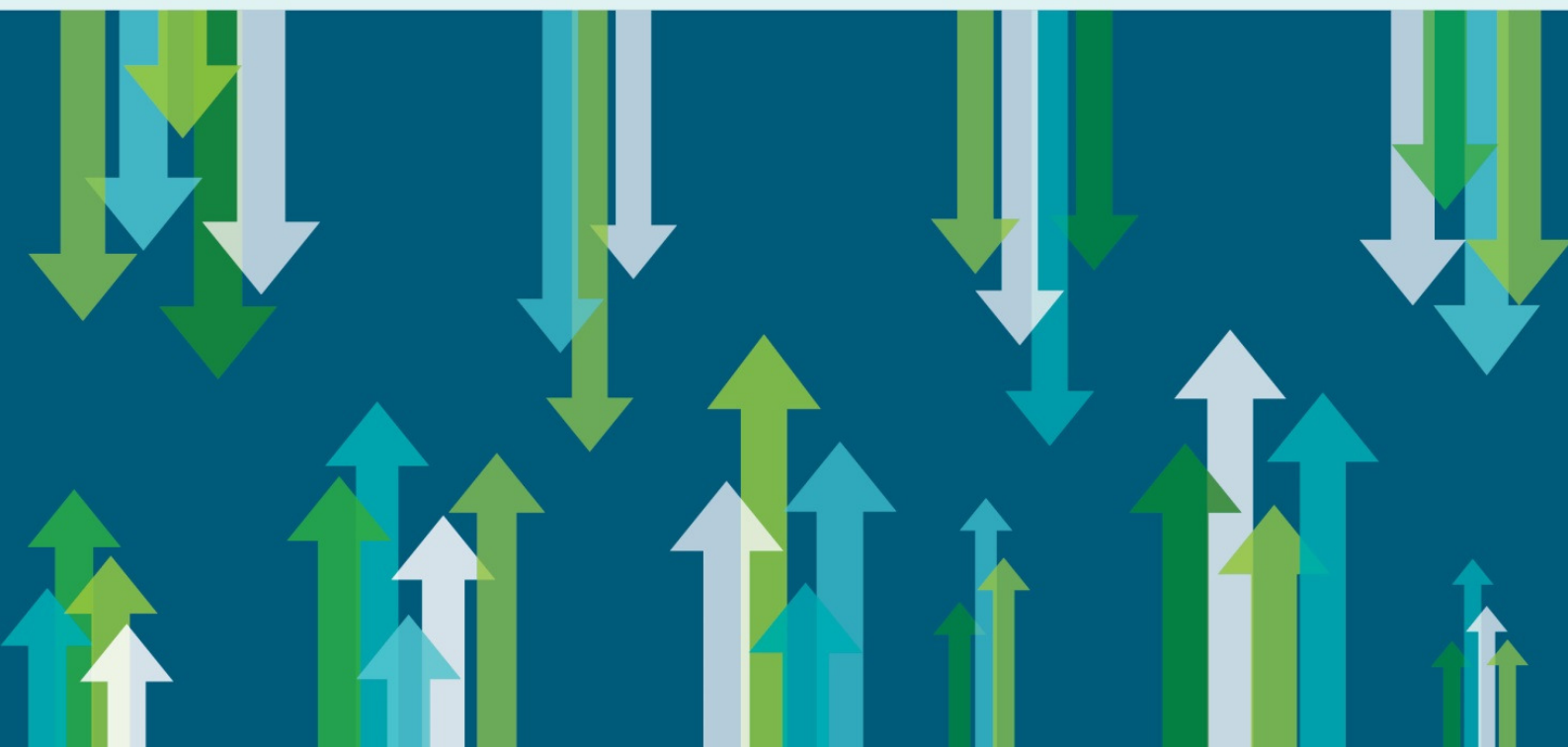


# *Understanding higher levels of volunteering: the case of Short Strand and Sion Mills*

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Dayson and Jenny Muir



***Recession, Resilience and Rebalancing Social Economies in  
Northern Ireland's Neighbourhoods: A Research Project  
funded by the Office for the First Minister and Deputy First  
Minister***

## **Understanding higher levels of Volunteering: the case of Short Strand and Sion Mills**

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***Disclaimer: This research forms part of a programme of independent research commissioned by OFMDFM to inform the policy development process and consequently the views expressed and conclusions drawn are those of the author and not necessarily those of OFMDFM.***

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# Executive Summary

This report is the third written output from an on-going, longitudinal study of resilience and neighbourhood change which is being funded by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM). The research is paying particular attention to the role that volunteering and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) plays in neighbourhoods, and the extent to which they contribute to resilience within them. This report falls under this strand of work and is concerned with explaining and exploring the high levels of volunteering that were found to exist in two of the areas examined by the study: Short Strand and Sion Mills. In doing so, it pays particular attention highlighting the key learning to emerge from this work.

The study comprises four case studies, two of which because they are interface areas, comprise two distinct neighbourhoods. Three of them may be defined (using deprivation indices) as being 'disadvantaged':

- Inner East Belfast, which comprises Short Strand and Lower Castlereagh
- Waterside in Derry / Londonderry, which comprises Top-of-the-Hill (which is also known as Gobnascale) and Irish Street; and
- Sion Mills, a village located close to Strabane.

The fourth case neighbourhood - Erinvale, in the south-west of the Greater Belfast conurbation - is not disadvantaged and was chosen to act as a 'better-off' comparator to the disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

The study is employing a mixed methods approach. This report draws on quantitative material from a 'Baseline' Survey of 939 residents, with the statistical technique, logistic regression modelling being used to interrogate the data. It also draws on qualitative data, specifically data garnered from in depth interviews with residents in Short Strand and Sion Mills and representatives of VCS organisations there. It looks at **two types of volunteering: formal volunteering**, which is defined as involvement with groups, clubs or organisations in the past 12 months, including taking part, supporting or helping in any way, either as an individual or with others; and **informal volunteering**, which is defined as any unpaid help given in the last 12 months to someone who is not a relative, such as a friend or neighbour.

## The key findings of the report are:

- While both areas have high levels of both formal and informal volunteering, in Sion Mills the latter is more prominent. And in Sion Mills more volunteering occurs locally than is the case in Short Strand.
- In both Short Strand and Sion Mills volunteers were most likely to be involved in sporting organisations, which was cited by 47 per cent and 43 per cent, respectively of respondents there. While common in both areas, children oriented volunteering was particularly prevalent in Short Strand.
- In both areas, many volunteers appear to be involved in more than one group.

- The most common form of activity undertaken by formal volunteers was fund raising, which was cited by 40 per cent of residents in Short Strand and 55 per cent in Sion Mills.
- Residents in Short Strand and Sion Mills formally volunteered more frequently than their counterparts in the other disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
- Residents in Sion Mills and Short Strand spent markedly more time volunteering than their counterparts in the other disadvantaged neighbourhoods: 91 and 77 hours respectively compared to 22 hours.
- Both Short Strand and Sion Mills have well developed VCS sectors. Many of the organisations that comprise the sector are relatively small and therefore below the radar.
- *Where* residents informally volunteered differed between Sion Mills and Short Strand. In the former area, most volunteering took place locally. The *types* of informal activity reported varied between Short Strand and Sion Mills. However, 'keeping in touch with someone' and 'baby sitting or caring for children' emerged as being commonplace in both areas.

The higher levels of volunteering in Short Strand and Sion Mills can be attributed to a number of inter-related and inter-connected factors:

- the characteristics of its residents
- high levels of children led volunteering
- the relative stability of the areas
- high levels of community spirit and cohesion
- the local volunteering tradition and culture
- geography
- plentiful opportunities to volunteer within them and the quality of local community spaces
- While both Short Strand and Sion Mills exhibited high levels of community spirit, how this had been generated differed markedly between the areas. A bundle of factors appear to have contributed to the strong sense of community in Sion Mills. However, the driving force behind the phenomenon is the existence in the village of a paradigm where: *"everybody went to school together, worked together, played together"*. Other factors contributing to community spirit in the area were: the profundity of local recreational amenities, particularly of a sporting nature; the (relative) absence of sectarianism within the area; the absence of 'incidents' within the village during The Troubles; and geography.
- In Short Strand, a number of factors have contributed to community cohesion. In addition to geography and opportunity, the area's experience of The Troubles and of ongoing conflict and tension since the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 has been a major contributory factor.

### The key learning to emerge from the study is:

- Formal and informal volunteering is highly context dependent and there are a variety of different contexts that are important. These include:
  - place and place based factors, including the demographic make-up of a neighbourhood, the form and function of the local social economy at a neighbourhood level, and levels (and perceptions) of 'community spirit'
  - individual motivations and reasons for undertaking volunteering, understood in the context of individual life courses and people's 'pathways' through different types of participation
- There are a number of **challenges** for volunteering at the neighbourhood level which potentially may limit its development and growth in the future:

- there are a number of 'risk' factors which may undermine its potential to grow and develop within a neighbourhood
- there is a need for greater conceptual and methodological clarity about volunteering, particularly at a policy level, in order for volunteering to be more consistently and effectively understood
- There are a number of **opportunities** for volunteering at the neighbourhood level that could provide a focus for its future development:
  - local people and the social economy organisations and groups that operate at the neighbourhood level in areas like Short Strand and Sion Mills have demonstrated considerable resilience, a 'resource' that potentially could be harnessed to develop volunteering in the future
  - there are a range of individual and societal benefits associated with high levels of volunteering which highlight the value of promoting, supporting and developing at the local level
  - Areas like Short Strand and Sion Mills may have considerable 'neighbourhood assets', assets which could be further developed to enhance the role of volunteers and the social economy at a neighbourhood level going forward

From these lessons **three messages** emerge:

- High levels of volunteering are a 'good thing' for a neighbourhood, as they are strongly associated with community spirit and social capital, both key ingredients of a 'strong community'.
- A 'one size fits all' approach to volunteering policy development is unlikely to be effective, and policies to promote volunteering should take account of neighbourhood context, seeking to maximise or build 'neighbourhood assets' as appropriate
- Volunteering should be understood as a spectrum of activity and participation within which a wide range of roles, functions and time commitments co-exist.



# Chapter One - Introduction

## 1.1. Introduction

This report is the third written output from an on-going, longitudinal study of resilience and neighbourhood change which is being funded by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM). The research is paying particular attention to the role that volunteering and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) plays in neighbourhoods, and the extent to which they contribute to resilience within them. This report falls under this strand of work and is concerned with explaining and exploring the high levels of volunteering that were found to exist in two of the areas examined by the study: Short Strand and Sion Mills. In doing so, it pays particular attention to highlighting the key learning to emerge from this work.

## 1.2. About the research

The Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research at Sheffield Hallam University is leading a research consortium, which also comprises Queen's University Belfast and the University of Sheffield, tasked by OFMDFM to explore how disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Northern Ireland are faring in a period of uncertainty and financial austerity. The study, which began in March 2012 and concludes in March 2015, is concerned with two issues in particular. First, it is interested in exploring how neighbourhoods (and their inhabitants) respond to a number of potential stressors, such as welfare reform and declining public sector expenditure i.e. how resilient they are. In doing so, it pays particular attention to exploring whether place, the VCS, and, linked to this, volunteering (both formal and informal) contribute towards the resilience of disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Second, at a time when public sector spend at the neighbourhood level is declining, it is concerned with exploring whether (and how) their social economies contribute to any re-balancing of local economies.

A case study approach has been used to explore these issues. The study has four case studies, two of which because they are interface areas, comprise two distinct neighbourhoods. Three of them may be defined (using deprivation indices) as being 'disadvantaged':

- Inner East Belfast, which comprises Short Strand and Lower Castlereagh
- Waterside in Derry / Londonderry, which comprises Top-of-the-Hill (which is also known as Gobnascale) and Irish Street; and
- Sion Mills, a village located close to Strabane.

The fourth case neighbourhood - Erinvale, in the south-west of the Greater Belfast conurbation - is not disadvantaged and was chosen to act as a 'better-off' comparator to the disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Overviews of each of the areas can be found later in this chapter (Short Strand and Sion Mills) and in Appendix 1

(Irish Street, Top-of-the-Hill, Lower Castlereagh and Erinvale). Appendix 1 also houses maps of **all** of the neighbourhoods and highlights the location of Short Strand and Sion Mills within Northern Ireland.

The study is employing a **mixed methods approach**. Some of the research methods used by the team may be described as being 'alternative' in the context of this type of study (policy funded research), such as photography (photo novella) and solicited diary keeping.

This report draws on:

- **Quantitative material from a 'Baseline' survey of 939 residents which was conducted at the end of 2012 and beginning of 2013.** In Sion Mills 220 residents were interviewed; in Short Strand 129<sup>1</sup>. One of the key issues explored in the survey was volunteering and respondents were asked numerous questions about both formal and informal volunteering. For example, they were asked *how* they volunteered, *where* they volunteered, how *frequently* they volunteered, and how much *time* they spent volunteering. In order to allow the data gleaned to be benchmarked, most of the volunteering questions used were borrowed from other surveys including the Citizenship Survey (Community Life Survey). It is important to note that some of these generic, 'tried and trusted' questions are not without flaws and may not always generate a perfect account of the issues that are intended for exploration (Gilbertson and Wilson, 2013). Extensive use of the statistical technique, logistic regression modelling, is used to interrogate the data from the survey.
- **Qualitative material gathered from in-depth interviews with resident panel members in Short Strand and Sion Mills.** In each of the case studies resident panels have been created comprising 20 members in the disadvantaged neighbourhoods and 15 in the comparator. Panel members are being interviewed on three occasions (2013, 2014 and 2015). This paper draws on the material garnered from the interviews conducted in 2013 and 2014. For those panel members that volunteered, either formally or informally, a significant proportion of the interview was devoted to the subject in both years.
- **Qualitative material generated by interviewing members of local VCS groups in Short Strand and Sion Mills.** These interviews are being conducted over three waves (2013, 2014, 2015), with this report drawing on material garnered from the first two years.

### 1.3. Short Strand and Sion Mills

#### 1.3.1 Short Strand

Short Strand is part of the Inner East Belfast case study, along with Lower Castlereagh. The two areas exhibit several very different characteristics including diverse levels of both formal and informal volunteering. The mainly Roman Catholic Short Strand is a small area located within the Ballymacarrett 1 and 2 Super Output Areas within Ballymacarrett ward, historically an industrial district of Belfast. In the 2011 Census, the Short Strand area had a population of 2,366 in 1041 households, and is predominantly of Roman Catholic community background (81 per cent). Some 36 per cent of households contain dependent children. Housing tenure is 36 per cent owner occupation, 48 per cent social housing, and 11% private rented. The area

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that the margin of errors associated with sample sizes of this size are relatively large. Therefore, cross tabulated results for the two areas should be treated as indicative not authoritative, particularly when used in isolation and not corroborated by other data sources.

contains high density housing, mainly from the 1980s on the city side of Mountpottinger Road and a mix of older and more recent housing on the other side extending to the Bryson Street 'peace wall'. The unemployment rate is eight per cent and six per cent of residents are economically inactive due to long-term sickness or disability; 37 per cent of residents have long term poor health.

Short Strand has been the site of considerable sectarian conflict with neighbouring Protestant areas from the 1880s onwards, in recent times most especially at the interfaces at Bryson Street/ Newtownards Road and Mountpottinger Road/ Albertbridge Road. The latest conflict, the worst since 2002 and sparked by a reduction of the flying of the union flag at Belfast City Hall, included extensive rioting on the Newtownards Road, Albertbridge Road and Castlereagh Street from December 2012 to March 2013 and low-level tension since then. This history has resulted in a very clearly delineated area which is largely isolated from the surrounding Protestant neighbourhoods despite some shared community activity and use of facilities. There are a few shops on Mountpottinger Road and a doctors' surgery at the end of Bryson Street; some residents might shop in Castlereagh Street or at the more distant Connswater Shopping Centre. City centre shopping is also reasonably close by. Residents would use Leisure Centres in the Lower Ormeau or the Falls Road rather than the recently refurbished Avoniel Leisure Centre off the Newtownards Road.

### **1.3.2 Sion Mills**

Sion Mills is a village in County Tyrone located on the A5 near the town of Strabane. The settlement of Sion Mills, which at the beginning of the 1800s comprised a few scattered properties, grew rapidly when the Herdman family from Belfast decided to build a linen mill in the village, taking advantage of the fast flowing River Mourne. The mill opened in 1835 and was in operation until 2004. Although some small scale work has been undertaken on the mill in recent years overseen, by Sion Mills Building Preservation Trust, it has fallen into disrepair. In July 2014, the mill was bought by a lottery winner from Strabane.

The Herdman family were philanthropists and when they built the mill they also created a model village, which still stands today at the heart of the village. They also created recreational amenities for villagers including a community centre (the 'Recreation Hall'), and cricket, football and bowling clubs.

The village has a population of 2,190 who reside in 868 households. It is a mixed community with 61 per cent of its residents being of Roman Catholic community background and 38 per cent of Protestant background. 33 per cent of households contain dependent children. The village has an integrated primary school. In terms of housing tenure, 61 per cent of housing in the village is owner occupied; 19 per cent social housing; and 13 per cent rented privately. In terms of the housing stock in the village, most is terraced or semi-detached.

The village may be described as being disadvantaged. Its unemployment rate is 7 per cent and economic inactivity due to long-term sickness or disability stands at 13 per cent. Furthermore, 39 per cent of residents have some kind of long term health condition.

There are several small shops in the village but residents shop mainly in Strabane, Omagh or Derry / Londonderry. This means life without a car is difficult. In addition to the model village, the village has a number of other historical buildings. It also has a number of green spaces. This, coupled with the scenic River Mourne and its environs, means that the village has an attractive physical environment.

#### 1.4. The rationale for focusing on Short Strand and Sion Mills

The report which showcased the findings of the baseline survey (the 'Baseline Report') developed a comprehensive picture of volunteering across the case study neighbourhoods. It considered two types of volunteering: **formal volunteering**, defined as being involved with groups, clubs or organisations in the past 12 months, including taking part, supporting or helping in any way, either as an individual or with others; and **informal volunteering**, defined as any unpaid help given in the last 12 months to someone who is not a relative, such as a friend or neighbour.

The analysis found that overall levels of volunteering in our case study areas were in line with Northern Ireland as a whole but lower than in other parts of the UK. However, two neighbourhoods - Short Strand and Sion Mills - stood out as having comparably high levels of formal and informal volunteering.

- *Formal volunteering:* more than two-fifths of residents in Short Strand (45 per cent) and Sion Mills (42 per cent) had been involved in formal volunteering in the past 12 months compared to less than one-fifth in the other three disadvantaged neighbourhoods (19 per cent), and around a quarter in the better-off comparator (27 per cent)
- *Informal volunteering:* more than two-fifths of residents in Short Strand (44 per cent) and more than a third of residents in Sion Mills (35 per cent) had volunteered informally in the past 12 months, compared to around a quarter in the other three disadvantaged neighbourhoods (24 per cent) and only one in eight in the better-off comparator (12 per cent)
- *Volunteering in general:* more than half of residents in Short Strand (59 per cent) and Sion Mills (56 per cent) had volunteered formally *or* informally in the past 12 months, compared to around a third in the other three disadvantaged neighbourhoods (34 per cent) and the better-off comparator (32 per cent).

Moreover, around a third of residents in Short Strand (30 per cent) and about a fifth in Sion Mills (21 per cent) had volunteered formally *and* informally in the past 12 months compared to fewer than one in ten in the other three disadvantaged neighbourhoods (nine per cent) and in the better-off comparator (six per cent).

An overview is provided in table 1.1. For ease of reference, for the remainder of this report survey data is presented to distinguish between the two '*higher volunteering neighbourhoods*' (Short Strand and Sion Mills, including a combined figure), the three '*lower volunteering neighbourhoods*' (Lower Castlereagh, Irish Street and Top of the Hill combined), and the better-off '*comparator*' (Erinvale).

**Table 1.1: Percentage of respondents involved in formal and informal volunteering in the past 12 months by case study neighbourhood**

	Higher volunteering neighbourhoods			Lower volunteering neighbourhoods	Comparator	All areas
	<i>Short Strand</i>	<i>Sion Mills</i>	<i>SS/SM Combined</i>			
Formal	45	42	43	19	27	30
Informal	44	35	38	24	12	27
Formal <i>or</i> informal	59	56	57	34	32	42
Formal <i>and</i> informal	30	21	24	9	6	14
Unweighted base	129	220	349	374	216	939

Source: Baseline Survey (December 2012-March 2013)

These disparities in the amount of volunteering undertaken lead to subsequent disparities in the 'value' of volunteering at a neighbourhood level. Table 1.2 combines baseline survey data on the number of hours of volunteering provided with 2011 Census population data to provide an estimate of the equivalent economic value (per capita and total value) of *formal* volunteering in each case study neighbourhood. Two estimates are provided: the low estimate is based on the national minimum wage;<sup>2</sup> the high estimate is based on the local median wage.<sup>3</sup> The data shows that in Short Strand and Sion Mills the per capita and total value of formal volunteering was higher than in the other areas:

- Formal volunteering contributed an estimated £563-£905 per capita in Short Strand and £476-£766 per capita in Sion Mills compared to £134-£215 per capita in the other three disadvantaged neighbourhoods combined and £300-£483 per capita in the comparator
- The total annual value of volunteering was estimated to be £1.33m-£2.14m in Short Strand and £1.04m-£1.68m in Sion Mills compared to £0.84m-£1.33m in the other three disadvantaged neighbourhoods combined and £0.48m-£0.77m in the comparator. It is interesting to note that in Short Strand and Sion Mills the total combined value of volunteering exceeds that in the other three disadvantaged neighbourhoods combined, despite their much greater population.

<sup>2</sup> £6.19 in 2012/13 when the survey was undertaken

<sup>3</sup> £9.96 in 2011 (based on the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, Northern Ireland Employees)

**Table 1.2: Estimated value of formal volunteering in the past 12 months by case study neighbourhood**

		Higher volunteering neighbourhoods			Lower volunteering neighbourhoods	Comparator	All areas
		<i>Short Strand</i>	<i>Sion Mills</i>	<i>SS/SM Combined</i>			
Low estimate	Per capita value	£563	£476	£521	£134	£300	£303
	Total value	£1.33m	£1.04m	£2.37m	£0.84m	£0.48m	£3.75m
High estimate	Per capita value	£905	£766	£838	£215	£483	£488
	Total value	£2.14m	£1.68m	£3.81m	£1.33m	£0.77m	£6.03m

Source: Baseline Survey (December 2012-March 2013), 2011 Census Small Area (SA) Key Statistics (KS101NI)

The baseline survey findings raise some fascinating questions about the nature of, and volume of, volunteering at a neighbourhood level. In particular, what is it about certain neighbourhoods that mean residents are more likely to volunteer across the spectrum of voluntary activity? And what does this tell us about the role of place in the functioning, value and development of the social economy and wider social capital in areas of social and economic disadvantage? This report aims to address these questions by mining empirical evidence (quantitative and qualitative) collected about volunteering in Short Strand and Sion Mills, in particular, to draw out findings, learning and recommendations about volunteering policy development more generally.

## 1.5. Timeliness of the report

This report will be of interest for both academics researching volunteering and the VCS and policy makers and practitioners working in the field. This is because:

- It sheds light on a relatively under researched issue - **how volunteering plays out at the neighbourhood level and, specifically, the factors that drive it at this level**. The volunteering literature has grown rapidly in recent years, and there are a number of excellent contributions within the context of Northern Ireland. These include outputs from both academics (see for example, Murtagh *et al*, 2014; Murtagh *et al*, 2012; Acheson, 2014; Acheson, 2013; and Molloy *et al*, 1999) and the policy and practice community (see for example, DSD and Volunteer Now, 2010; Volunteer Development Agency, 2007; DETI and DSD, 2013; NIVCA, 2014)). However, despite the undoubted importance of these contributions, the role of neighbourhood (and place) is relatively silent within them.
- By using logistic regression modelling and mining qualitative data, the study team is able to provide **fine grained and nuanced understandings of volunteering at the neighbourhood level**, something, which to date, the volunteering literature has largely not done.



- **The research will be of help to policy makers and practitioners operating in the VCS arena.** By understanding how volunteering works at the neighbourhood level, policy makers and practitioners are better placed to make decisions about how best to utilise their scarce resources. And this will become even more important in the future as it is likely that neighbourhood renewal funding will decline in the future (Inside Housing, 2014).
- **It sheds further light on how to map and understand the sector.** There have been a number of excellent studies on this issue in recent times (Dayson *et al*, 2013; Soteri-Proctor, 2011), with a number focusing on Northern Ireland (see for example, NIVCA, 2014; DETI and DSD, 2013). However, these studies have to some extent neglected the important role of below-the-radar volunteering.
- It pays particular attention to highlighting **the implications for policy of the research.** Indeed, the last chapter of the report is devoted entirely to doing so.

## 1.6. Scope of the report

It is salient to make two points about the scope of the report:

1. It focuses solely on volunteering in the context of Short Strand and Sion Mills, with broader discussion about volunteering taking place in other outputs produced by the team. In particular, the volunteering and VCS final report will provide a detailed examination of volunteering and the VCS across *all* the case studies, exploring how (if at all) the sector has changed over the course of the study.
2. It is important to see it within the broader suite of reports being produced by the study team and it is one of six outputs. Therefore, **it is important that it is read alongside them.** Three reports have already been published:
  - a report highlighting the key findings to emerge from the baseline survey of residents (Hickman *et al*, 2013)
  - a report which explores how residents were coping financially at the beginning of the study, and the extent to which they were getting-by and resilient (Hickman *et al*, 2014a)
  - a short report summarising the key findings of this report (Hickman *et al*, 2014b)

And in late spring next year, the following outputs will be published: a final report focusing on resilience; a final report concerned with volunteering, the VCS, and the extent to which the social economies of the case studies have rebalanced; and a short overarching final report, which pulls together the findings of these reports.

## 1.7. Structure of the report

The report is divided into four chapters, including this one. Chapter two is concerned with outlining the nature and form of volunteering in Short Strand and Sion Mills. In doing so it highlights how residents in the two areas volunteer. Building on the analysis presented in Chapter two, Chapter three is concerned with exploring the volunteering models in Short Strand and Sion Mills, and specifically why the areas have higher levels of volunteering. It draws on both qualitative and quantitative data to do so, and makes extensive use of logistic regression modelling. The final chapter is concerned with highlighting the key learning to emerge from the study.

# Chapter Two - The nature and form of volunteering in Short Strand and Sion Mills

## 2.1. Introduction

As noted earlier, the principal objective of this report is to explore why volunteering levels are higher in Short Strand and Sion Mills. However, before attention can turn to this task it is important first to shed further light on the nature of volunteering (both formal and informal) and the VCSs in the two areas. While this descriptive exercise is important in its own right, it also **fulfils an explanatory function - the data presented in this chapter also provide an insight into why volunteering levels are higher in Short Strand and Sion Mills.**

The chapter is divided into five sections, including this one. Section two explores formal volunteering in Short Strand and Sion Mills, in doing so providing an overview of the local VCSs. Section three is concerned with providing some insight into the nature of informal volunteering in the two areas, while the penultimate section explores the frequency of voluntary activity and highlights the time spent on volunteering by volunteers in the two areas. The final section provides bespoke profiles of volunteering in Short Strand and Sion Mills based largely on analysis presented in this chapter.

## 2.2. Formal volunteering in Short Strand and Sion Mills

The questionnaire used for the baseline survey included a number of questions relating to volunteering. For example, it asked volunteers to identify *where* they volunteered. As table 2.1 illustrates, this differed between Short Strand and Sion Mills. In the latter area, most volunteering activity took place locally: 65 per cent of respondents reported that all or most of their volunteering activities took place in the neighbourhood. This compares to 40 per cent of respondents in Short Strand who did the same.

There are a number of likely explanations for this difference, some of which will be explored later in this chapter. However, it is important to note that geography is undoubtedly an important contributory factor - reflecting Short Strand's central location in a large city, there are greater opportunities for residents there to volunteer outside the area, as will be explored later in this section.



**Table 2.1: Percentage of formal volunteers involved in formal volunteering within the neighbourhood in the past 12 months by case study neighbourhood**

Approximately how much of this time was spent helping group(s), club(s) or organisation(s) that are based in this neighbourhood?

	Higher volunteering neighbourhoods			Lower volunteering neighbourhoods	Comparator	All areas
	Short Strand	Sion Mills	SS/SM Combined			
All of the time	22	42	35	38	41	37
Most of the time (at least $\frac{3}{4}$ )	17	23	21	11	22	19
Some of the time ( $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ )	22	0	9	7	3	7
A little of the time ( $\frac{1}{4}$ or less)	16	0	6	11	14	9
None	19	35	29	32	17	27
Don't know	3	0	1	0	3	1
Unweighted Base	58	92	150	71	59	280

Source: Baseline Survey (December 2012-March 2013)

Another noteworthy finding of table 2.1 is that in Sion Mills most residents either volunteered predominantly locally or outside the area - none reported that they volunteered 'some of the time' or a 'little of the time' in the village. This compares to 38 per cent of respondents in Short Strand and 18 per cent in the lower volunteering neighbourhoods who fell into this category.

The baseline survey asked formal volunteers to identify which types of groups, clubs and organisations they were involved in. Their response, which is presented in table 2.2 below, provides a really important insight into volunteering and the VCS in Short Strand and Sion Mills. As the table reveals, in Short Strand volunteers were most likely to be involved in 'sporting organisations', which was cited by 47 per cent of formal volunteers. Short Strand has a number of sports clubs/ sporting activities.

**Table 2.2: Formal volunteering - types of groups, clubs and organisations respondents have been involved in in the past 12 months by case study neighbourhood (percentage of formal volunteers)**

Which of the following groups clubs or organisations have you been involved with in the past 12 months?

	Higher volunteering neighbourhoods			Lower volunteering neighbourhoods	Comparator	All areas
	Short Strand	Sion Mills	SS/SM Combined			
Sports/exercise (taking part, coaching or going to watch)	47	43	45	31	29	38
Youth/children's activities (outside school)	43	23	31	15	47	30
Hobbies/ recreation/ arts/ social clubs	31	42	38	14	10	26
Children's education/ schools	41	22	29	15	17	23
Local community or neighbourhood groups	33	23	27	20	10	21
Religion	12	13	13	14	25	16
The elderly	7	16	13	14	8	12
Education of adults	14	9	11	8	3	9
Safety, first aid	14	9	11	7	2	8
Health, disability and social welfare	9	10	9	1	3	6
Citizens' groups	3	4	4	8	0	4
Politics	5	7	6	1	0	4
The environment, animals	0	2	1	6	0	2
Trade union activity	2	1	1	3	2	2
Justice and human rights	3	1	2	0	2	1
Unweighted Base	58	92	150	71	59	280

Source: Baseline Survey (December 2012-March 2013)

The next most commonly cited types of organisations were 'youth/ children's activities outside schools' (43 per cent) and 'children's education/ schools' (41 per cent), and, in all, 55 per cent of volunteers in the area were involved in at least one of these activities. This is a much higher figure than the one for the other disadvantaged neighbourhoods (28 per cent) and for Sion Mills, as will be explored

below. Children and youth activities in Short Strand take place at the local primary school, the Doyle Youth Centre, and the Community Centre.

Only two other groups were cited by more than 20 per cent of volunteers in Short Strand: 'local community or neighbourhood groups' (33 per cent); and 'hobbies/ recreation/ arts social clubs' (31 per cent).

The largest base for community activity in Short Strand is the Short Strand Community Centre. It houses a number of projects including a café, IT training for young people, crèche and mothers and toddlers group, women's group, seniors' group, benefits and other advice, job club and youth services. Short Strand Community Forum provides advocacy for the area by working with local statutory services, for example, as part of the Inner East Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership. Both the Forum and the Short Strand Partnership (which runs the Community Centre) have paid workers funded by the Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership and the Centre's projects attract funding from various other sources. The Community Centre is currently undergoing refurbishment at a cost of £95,000, funded by Belfast City Council.

The smaller Doyle Youth Centre is also important in the area, with a membership of around 60 per cent of the local young people. It is funded by the Belfast Education and Library Board. It is managed by a full-time youth worker and there are six part-time staff. The Centre attracts a large number of volunteers, up to 30 at any one time; The Centre attracted capital funding for improved facilities, opened in 2012, but the wide range of activities (including some cross-community projects with the Inner East Belfast Youth Project) still necessitates meeting elsewhere. As well as sports activities, projects include: boys' personal development group, young women's group, after school project, awareness of bullying project, trips to America and Romania, mentoring and a community relations project with Lagan Village (Ravenhill area). The St Matthews' social club and a Pigeon Club are private facilities for adults. St Matthews' Church provides a group for children with special needs, run by volunteers.

The wider Inner East Belfast area includes a number of other community groups and initiatives, many church-based such as the new Skainos Centre on the Newtownards Road. The East Belfast Network Centre in Templemore Avenue provides space for a number of groups that involve Short Strand residents, such as the East Belfast Community Development Agency and the East Belfast Independent Advice Centre. The Network Centre is based in a Protestant area adjacent to the Bryson Street peace line and near a gate in the wall, thus providing relatively safe access to the Centre. Although there is an inevitable 'chill factor' associated with the loyalist flags and murals surrounding these premises, contact between community workers is good. The Oasis Caring in Action project on Castlereagh Street provides childcare, mental health support, employment training, a befriending service for elderly people and a cafe. Projects include a number undertaken on a cross-community basis such as crafts, photography (including exhibits at Short Strand Community Centre), cookery and a joint carol singing event with Short Strand Community Centre. Oasis is funded through government departments (grants and contracts), Big Lottery and private sector contributions.

With regard to Sion Mills, the picture is different with children related volunteering being less prominent. The most common organisations that volunteers were involved in were sport related or concerned with 'hobbies, recreation, arts and social activities', which were cited by 43 per cent and 42 per cent of formal volunteers, respectively. This finding is not unexpected as Sion Mills has a number of sports clubs, including two football clubs, a cricket team, a bowling club, and an angling club. The next most cited organisations were 'youth/ children's activities' and 'local community or neighbourhood groups', which were both cited by 23 per cent of formal volunteers.

The proportion of volunteers working in children's education/ schools was 22 per cent, with the overall proportion of volunteers working with children/youths being considerably lower than the proportion for Short Strand at 37 per cent.

Sion Mills has two active and vibrant community organisations. Sion Mills Community Association, which is run from a bespoke community building owned by the association, engages in a number of activities. It delivers activities for a range of population groups in the village including the elderly and children; and provides training. It has a relatively small financial turnover and funds itself principally through fund raising activities, although the external monies it has received have been vital to the organisation. While a number of individuals play an important role in the association, it has been reliant on the energy and commitment of one individual in particular.

This has also been the case for the village's other community organisation, Sion Mills Community Forum, which has also been driven by a highly motivated and committed local resident. While, as its name suggests, the forum is principally concerned with pulling together key local stakeholder groups in the village, including VCS groups, it also provides activities for local residents including football for local children, a youth club, and activities for older people. The forum has a small turnover and generates most of its income through fund raising activities. However, it has been successful in securing public funding, which for a short period paid for a youth development worker.

Sion Mills' two community groups were not identified by the recent DETI and DSD funded mapping exercise of the VCS in Northern Ireland. This is because they are relatively small making them effectively below the radar. And the village's other VCS organisations fall into this category.

Respondents to the baseline survey were asked to identify the sector(s) within which the groups they worked with were located. As table 2.3 reveals, as was the case in the other disadvantaged neighbourhoods, the majority of formal volunteering in Short Strand and Sion Mills was located in the community and voluntary sectors. In Short Strand, 57 per cent and 47 per cent, respectively fell into these categories while the proportions in Sion Mills were 67 per cent and 45 per cent, respectively. In both areas, the proportions for faith based volunteering groups were relatively low at around 10 per cent. But the proportion of groups that fell under the umbrella of the public sector differed: in Short Strand it was 14 per cent; Sion Mills, only three per cent.

**Table 2.3: Percentage of respondents involved in formal volunteering with different types of organisation in the past 12 months by case study neighbourhood<sup>4</sup>**

Which of the following four different types of groups, clubs and organisations best describe the group(s), club(s) or organisation(s) that you help

	Higher volunteering neighbourhoods			Lower volunteering neighbourhoods	Comparator	All areas
	Short Strand	Sion Mills	SS/SM Combined			
Public sector	14	3	7	13	5	8
Private sector	7	1	3	8	2	4
Voluntary sector	47	45	45	31	41	41
Community sector	57	67	63	51	25	52
Faith based	12	10	11	7	41	16
Unweighted base	58	92	150	71	59	280

Source: Baseline Survey (December 2012-March 2013)

Formal volunteers were asked to categorise the type of help they provided, with table 2.4 presenting their response. The first thing that strikes one about the table is the relatively high percentage of responses for all volunteering types, particularly in Short Strand and Sion Mills. This suggests that volunteers are involved in more than one group, a supposition that is corroborated by qualitative work undertaken by the team, which found that some residents were involved in a number of groups and activities. For example, Edward noted:

*"Well, all my life I was involved in sports. I'm also the chairman of the local community association for the last 21 years and I always got involved with sports, cricket, football, badminton, bowls. You name it, I got involved with it around the area....Well, I was a grade 2 referee at football and I was the secretary for the football, a secretary for the cricket, secretary to the outdoor bowls and the indoor bowls. [I] just love taking part. It gets you out too."* (Edward, Sion Mills, Wave 2 interview)

The figures are also indicative of the richness of the VCSs in Short Strand and Sion Mills, both of which provide numerous opportunities for volunteers to help out.

In Short Strand, the most commonly cited form of involvement was 'raising or handling money/ taking part in sponsored events', which was cited by 40 per cent of volunteers. Fund-raising was mentioned by several panel members in Short Strand, for example:

*"...there's a big thing every year and the girls in the club will be doing it – going in the marathon every year to get money for breast cancer. They are big into that and last year they got £4,000 and the year before £3,000 or £4,000. And there were a couple of big functions 2 or 3 lads in the area [who] had to get kidney transplants. So there were functions run for that, and they were run on account of the fact the boys were from the area, [they] live in the area."* (Finlay, Short Strand, Wave 1)

<sup>4</sup> Note that columns sum to more than 100 per cent as multiple responses were allowed.

The next most common forms of involvement cited by volunteers in the area were: 'organising or helping to run an event or activity' (29 per cent); 'visiting people' (29 per cent); 'other practical help' (19 per cent); 'leading the group/ member of a committee' (17 per cent); and 'giving advice/ information/ counselling' (17 per cent).

As was the case in Short Strand, the most common form of involvement in Sion Mills was fund raising (55 per cent). Given the nature of its VCS organisations, most of which are relatively small and predominantly self funded, this is not a surprise. The next most common form of involvement was organising an event or activity, which was cited by 41 per cent of respondents. Nearly a third - 30 per cent - of volunteers were involved in leading a group or being a committee member, which perhaps reflects the relatively large number of VCS groups in the village. The next most commonly cited forms of involvement in Sion Mills were: visiting people (16 per cent); befriending or mentoring people (15 per cent); and providing transport/ driving (14 per cent).

**Table 2.4: Formal volunteering - types of help provided in the past 12 months by case study neighbourhood**

During the last 12 months have you given unpaid help to any of the groups, clubs or organisations mentioned in any of the following ways?

	Higher volunteering neighbourhoods			Lower volunteering neighbourhoods	Comparator	All areas
	Short Strand	Sion Mills	SS/SM Combined			
Raising or handling money/taking part in sponsored events	40	55	49	14	31	36
Organising or helping to run an activity or event	29	41	37	24	20	30
Leading the group/ member of a committee	17	30	25	11	34	24
Visiting people	29	16	21	13	24	20
Other practical help (e.g. helping out at school, shopping)	19	10	13	27	14	17
Befriending or mentoring people	7	15	12	14	10	12
Giving advice/information/counselling	17	12	14	7	12	12
Secretarial, admin or clerical work	12	13	13	10	5	10
Providing transport/driving	7	14	11	3	12	9
Representing	7	13	11	6	7	9
Campaigning	5	8	7	4	12	7
Any other help	2	2	2	11	5	5
Unweighted Base	58	92	150	71	59	280

Source: Baseline Survey (December 2012-March 2013)

### 2.3. Informal volunteering in Short Strand and Sion Mills

As table 2.5 reveals, following the pattern for formal volunteering, *where* residents informally volunteered differed between Sion Mills and Short Strand. In the former area, most volunteering took place locally: 65 per cent of respondents reported that all or most of the time they spent on informal volunteering took place in the neighbourhood. This is in contrast to Short Strand where the proportion of residents falling into this category was 40 per cent, a figure which is also lower than that for the other disadvantaged neighbourhoods (49 per cent). It is not surprising that a higher proportion of Short Strand residents volunteer informally outside the area as it is

close to the city centre and also within a short distance of other Catholic areas such as the Markets, the Lower Ormeau and, slightly further away, the Falls.

**Table 2.5: Percentage of informal volunteers involved in informal volunteering within the neighbourhood in the past 12 months by case study neighbourhood**

Approximately how much of this time did you spend doing this kind of thing/ these kind of things for people that live in this neighbourhood?

	Higher volunteering neighbourhoods			Lower volunteering neighbourhoods	Comparator	All areas
	Short Strand	Sion Mills	SS/SM Combined			
All of the time	22	42	35	38	41	37
Most of the time (i.e. at least three-quarters)	17	23	21	11	22	19
Some of the time (i.e. between a quarter and three-quarters)	22	0	9	7	3	7
A little of the time (i.e. less than a quarter)	16	0	6	11	14	9
None	19	35	29	32	17	27
Don't know	3	0	1	0	3	1
Unweighted Base	58	92	150	71	59	280

Source: Baseline Survey (December 2012-March 2013)

Informal volunteers were asked to highlight the help they provided and table 2.6 presents the response to this question.



**Table 2.6: Informal volunteering - types of help provided in the past 12 months by case study neighbourhood**

During the past 12 months have you done any of the following things, unpaid, for someone who is not a relative?

	Higher volunteering neighbourhoods			Lower volunteering neighbourhoods	Comparator	All areas
	<i>Short Strand</i>	<i>Sion Mills</i>	<i>SS/SM Combined</i>			
Baby sitting or caring for children	42	35	38	43	28	39
Keeping in touch with someone who has difficulty getting out and about (visiting in person, telephoning or e-mailing)	44	29	35	29	36	33
Doing shopping, collecting pension or paying bills	47	22	33	34	24	32
Giving advice	18	35	28	25	24	26
Cooking, cleaning, laundry, gardening or other routine household jobs	39	25	31	21	20	26
Writing letters or filling in forms	18	23	21	21	8	20
Transporting or escorting someone (for example to a hospital, or on an outing)	18	21	19	18	28	20
Decorating, or doing any kind of home or car repairs	18	16	16	10	12	14
Looking after a property or a pet for someone who is away	9	18	14	13	8	13
Sitting with or providing personal care (e.g. washing, dressing) for someone who is sick or frail	9	5	7	13	0	8
Representing someone (for example talking to a council department, or to a doctor)	7	1	4	9	12	6
Unweighted Base	57	77	134	91	25	250

Source: Baseline Survey (December 2012-March 2013)

As the table reveals, in Short Strand, four tasks emerged as being particularly common: 'doing shopping, collecting pension or paying bills', which was cited by 47

per cent of respondents; 'keeping in touch with someone who has difficulty getting out and about - visiting in person, telephoning or emailing' (44 per cent); 'baby sitting or caring for children' (42 per cent); and 'cooking, cleaning, laundry, gardening or other routine household jobs' (39 per cent).

In Sion Mills, the picture was a little different. While 'baby sitting or caring for children', which was cited by 35 per cent of respondents, and 'keeping in touch' (29 per cent) emerged as being important, 'doing shopping, collecting pension or paying bills' (22 per cent) and 'cooking, cleaning, laundry, gardening or other routine household jobs' (25 per cent) emerged as being less important. And 'giving advice', which was cited by 35 per cent of respondents, also emerged as being more important in the area.

Interviews with panel members also provides an insight into how residents volunteered and who the beneficiaries of this help were. Many when asked to articulate how they informally volunteered reported that they helped out elderly neighbours:

*"I would do wee things for neighbours: the lady next door is very elderly and I call in every now and again and ask her: does she want anything? But that's just a neighbourly thing...she knows if she needs anything at all, she knows she can come to me. And I know if I have anything I need from any of them all I have to do is call into their houses and they would be the same with me."* (Victoria, Short Strand, Wave 1)

*"Maybe my wee neighbour who lives down the street; she's on her own and me and one of the other neighbours would call in and check on her 'coz, like she's on a wee walking frame. And then again not long ago the electricity went out and people would run down, and that, and make sure she was OK and make sure she had candles and things."* (Clarissa, Short Strand, Wave 1)

Further insight into the nature and scope of informal volunteering is highlighted in Daniel's volunteering story, which is presented below.

### **Daniel's volunteering story**

Daniel has lived in Short Strand all his life. He lives with his wife and daughter. Daniel is the treasurer of the local GAA club and is also on the committee of the Celtic supporters club. He has also helped out at the Doyle Youth Centre. Daniel outlined his motivation for volunteering:

*"It's [volunteering] just basically for the community. When I was growing up there was people looked after us; that centre's been going for over 40 years, so it just goes through a generational thing. I don't see the point in not doing stuff for the kids to bring them on, sometimes they're not great families that they're being brought up in and a wee bit of a push in the right direction does no harm for everyone."*

As well as volunteering formally, Daniel also volunteers informally in the form of helping out his neighbours:

*"Basically, in the bad weather you'd go out and grit the streets outside the elderly people's homes, you'd dig the snow out of the way for them. It's just everyone; if someone's passing with shovels you say: 'where are you going?' and go out and give a hand to clear someone's path or something."*

*"If friends or anyone need anything doing they'd certainly turn to me and if I have it they'll certainly get it...If anyone needs anything - next door or the other side - if they need to lend tools or need a hand [we'll help]. If we need anything done we'll always give each other some help."*

Daniel sees the benefits of both formal and informal volunteering in the neighbourhood:

*"It makes it a friendly place to live. Like all families you do have your disagreements now and again but you feel safe; you can walk about safely without fear of people attacking you or being mugged or anything. The general feeling of the area is one of friendliness."*

## 2.4. Frequency of volunteering and time devoted to it

The questionnaire used for the baseline survey included questions relating to the frequency of volunteering and the time devoted by volunteers to it. For example, formal volunteers were asked how frequently they volunteered and their response is provided in table 2.7.

As the table reveals, respondents in Short Strand and Sion Mills formally volunteered more frequently than their counterparts in the other disadvantaged neighbourhoods: 29 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively, reported that they did so at least once a month compared to 11 per cent of respondents in the lower volunteering areas who did the same.

**Table 2.7: Percentage of respondents involved in formal volunteering at least once a month by case study neighbourhood**

Overall, about how often over the last 12 months have you generally done something to help this/these group(s), club(s) or organisation(s)?

	Higher volunteering neighbourhoods			Lower volunteering neighbourhoods	Comparator	All areas
	Short Strand	Sion Mills	SS/SM Combined			
At least once a month	29	20	23	11	22	18
Less often/never	71	80	77	89	78	82
Unweighted Base	129	220	349	374	216	939

Source: Baseline Survey (December 2012-March 2013)

Table 2.8 highlights how frequently informal volunteers volunteered. Of all the case study areas, residents in Short Strand did so most frequently: 42 per cent volunteered at least once a month, which compares to 22 per cent in Sion Mills and 18 per cent in the other disadvantaged neighbourhoods. This, coupled with the fact that more residents in the area volunteer informally, as noted earlier, suggests that informal volunteering plays a bigger role in the volunteering paradigm in Short Strand than in Sion Mills, where the emphasis is more on formal volunteering.

**Table 2.8: Percentage of respondents involved in informal volunteering at least once a month by case study neighbourhood**

Overall, about how often over the last 12 months have you done this kind of thing/all the things you have mentioned?

	Higher volunteering neighbourhoods			Lower volunteering neighbourhoods	Comparator	All areas
	<i>Short Strand</i>	<i>Sion Mills</i>	<i>SS/SM Combined</i>			
At least once a month	41	22	29	18	8	20
Less often/never	59	78	71	82	92	80
Unweighted Base	129	220	349	374	216	939

Source: Baseline Survey (December 2012-March 2013)

Respondents were also asked how many hours a week they devoted to formal volunteering. As table 2.9 reveals, residents in Short Strand and Sion Mills spent markedly more time volunteering than their counterparts in the other disadvantaged neighbourhoods: 91 and 77 hours, respectively compared to 22 hours. By combining geographical data on volunteering with that relating to time spent on the activity it is possible to estimate how much time was spent on formal volunteering by volunteers *within* case study areas. This information is also presented in table 2.9. Residents in Short Strand and Sion Mills spent more time volunteering formally *locally* than their counterparts in the other disadvantaged neighbourhoods. But unlike the case for total volunteering hours, the figure generated for Sion Mills (65 hours) is higher than that for Short Strand (56 hours).

**Table 2.9: Estimated per capita formal volunteer hours within the neighbourhood in the past 12 months by case study neighbourhood**

	Higher volunteering neighbourhoods			Lower volunteering neighbourhoods	Comparator	All areas
	<i>Short Strand</i>	<i>Sion Mills</i>	<i>SS/SM Combined</i>			
Total hours	91	77	84	22	49	49
Within neighbourhood hours	56	65	61	15	31	34
Beyond neighbourhood hours	35	11	23	7	18	15
Social economy hours (all)	67	73	70	16	46	43
Social economy hours (within area)	41	62	51	13	30	31
Social economy hours (beyond area)	26	10	19	4	16	12

Source: Baseline Survey (December 2012-March 2013)

## 2.5. Place based volunteering profiles

As the analysis presented so far in the report has largely been configured thematically, it is useful here to pull it together by place to offer volunteering profiles of both Short Strand and Sion Mills.

### 2.5.1 Short Strand

- In terms of the overall volunteering paradigm in the area, it has high levels of both formal and informal volunteering. However, informal volunteering levels are particularly high in the area - nearly half (45 per cent) of respondents in the area reported that they had volunteered informally in the last year.
- Short Strand has a well-developed VCS based around the activities in the Community Centre, the Doyle Youth Centre and, to a lesser extent, St Matthews Church, the social club and the primary school. It is unclear to what extent residents also use facilities in Protestant East Belfast such as the East Belfast Network Centre, Skainos and Oasis, although that some do and there is formal joint working on some projects.
- The most common type of VCS organisations that residents were involved in were sporting organisations, which were cited by 47 per cent of formal volunteers. The next two most popular type of clubs were concerned with providing activities for the under 18s: 'youth/ children's activities - outside schools' (which was cited by 43 per cent of volunteers); and 'children's

education/ schools' (41 per cent). And in all 55 per cent of volunteers in the area were involved in at least one of these activities. This is a much higher figure for than for the other disadvantaged neighbourhoods and for Sion Mills. There are several children and youth related volunteering groups and initiatives in Short Strand and close by.

- Not unexpectedly given its central location, a significant proportion of both formal and informal volunteering undertaken by volunteers takes place outside the area.
- Notwithstanding this, formal volunteers in Short Strand still spent more than 50 hours per annum volunteering in the area, the second highest figure for all of the case study neighbourhoods.
- In terms of the types of formal volunteering activities undertaken by residents in Short Strand, the most common were: 'raising or handling money/ taking part in sponsored events' (40 per cent); 'organising or helping to run an event or activity' (29 per cent); 'visiting people' (29 per cent); 'other practical help' (19 per cent); 'leading the group/ member of a committee' (17 per cent); and 'giving advice/ information/ counselling' (17 per cent).
- With regard to informal volunteering in Short Strand, more than four out of ten volunteers undertook voluntary activity at least once a month. In terms of the types of activities undertaken by informal volunteers, the most common were: 'doing shopping, collecting pension or paying bills'; 'keeping in touch with someone who has difficulty getting out and about - visiting in person, telephoning or emailing'; 'baby sitting or caring for children'; 'cooking, cleaning, laundry, gardening or other routine household jobs', all of which were cited by around one in five volunteers.

### **2.5.2 Sion Mills**

- In terms of the overall volunteering paradigm, both formal and informal volunteering occur at high levels in the village. But it appears that there is a particular emphasis in Sion Mills on formal volunteering, which residents devote more time to than informal volunteering.
- Sion Mills has a well-developed VCS. However, most of the organisations that comprise it are relatively small and therefore 'below the radar'. The village has two community groups and a number of sporting and recreation clubs, including two football teams and cricket, angling and bowling clubs.
- Reflecting this, the most common type of organisations for volunteers to be involved in were sporting or concerned with hobbies, recreation, arts and social activities, which were both cited by 43 per cent and 42 per cent of volunteers, respectively.
- Most formal and informal volunteering takes place in the village itself, with this particularly being the case for informal volunteering. Given the relative isolation of the village, this is perhaps not surprising.
- Formal volunteering in Sion Mills may be described as being irregular in terms of its frequency - only one in five formal volunteers reported that they undertook voluntary activity once a month.
- The average formal volunteer in the village devotes 77 hours per annum to volunteering, with 65 of these hours being spent within Sion Mills itself.
- In terms of the types of formal volunteering activities undertaken by residents in Sion Mills, there appears to be a particular emphasis on fund raising activities in the village, with 55 per cent of formal volunteers reporting that they were involved in this activity. Given the nature of its VCS organisations, most of which

are relatively small and predominantly self-funded, this is not a surprise. The next two most common forms of activity were 'organising an event or activity', which was cited by 41 per cent of respondents, and 'leading a group or being on a committee' (30 per cent).

- Some 22 per cent of informal volunteers in Sion Mills reported that they volunteered at least once a month. In terms of the types of activity that informal volunteers were involved in, the most common were: 'baby sitting or caring for children', which was cited by 35 per cent of respondents; giving advice (35 per cent); and 'keeping in touch' (29 per cent).

## 2.6. Summary

This chapter has profiled volunteering and the VCS sectors in Short Strand and Sion Mills. It has found that:

- While both areas have high levels of both formal and informal volunteering, in Sion Mills the former is more prominent. And in Sion Mills more volunteering occurs locally than is the case in Short Strand.
- In both Short Strand and Sion Mills volunteers were most likely to be involved in sporting organisations, which were cited by 47 per cent and 43 per cent, respectively there. While common in both areas, children oriented volunteering was particularly prevalent in Short Strand.
- In both areas, many volunteers appear to be involved in more than one group.
- The most common form of activity undertaken by formal volunteers was fund raising, which was cited by 40 per cent of residents in Short Strand and 55 per cent in Sion Mills.
- Residents in Short Strand and Sion Mills formally volunteered more frequently than their counterparts in the other disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
- Residents in Short Strand and Sion Mills spent markedly more time volunteering than their counterparts in the other disadvantaged neighbourhoods: 91 and 77 hours respectively compared to 22 hours.
- Both Short Strand and Sion Mills have well developed VCS sectors. Many of the organisations that comprise the sector are relatively small.
- Where residents informally volunteered differed between Sion Mills and Short Strand. In the latter area, most volunteering took place locally. The types of informal activity reported varied between Short Strand and Sion Mills. However, 'keeping in touch with someone' and 'baby sitting or caring for children' emerged as being commonplace in both areas.

## Chapter Three - Explaining higher levels of volunteering

### 3.1. Introduction

Building on the analysis presented in the previous chapter, this chapter is concerned with further exploring the volunteering models in Short Strand and Sion Mills, and specifically *why* the areas have higher levels of volunteering. It draws on both quantitative and qualitative data to do so. In terms of the latter, it mines data generated by the baseline survey, in doing so using the statistical technique, logistic regression modelling, to understand the data. The chapter draws on two qualitative data sources: in-depth interviews with the resident panel members in Short Strand and Sion Mills that identified themselves as volunteers; and, in-depth interviews with representatives of VCS organisations in the two areas.

While the chapter identifies the factors that are related to informal volunteering, it pays particular attention to identifying the drivers of formal volunteering. In doing so, it focuses on identifying what is 'unique' about the voluntary paradigms in Short Strand and Sion Mills - as one might expect, in some respects they are similar to those in the other case study areas - and why their participation rates are higher.

It appears that the higher levels of volunteering in Short Strand and Sion Mills can be attributed to a number of inter-related and inter-connected factors:

- the characteristics of its residents
- high levels of children led volunteering
- the relative stability of the areas
- high levels of community spirit and cohesion
- the local volunteering tradition and culture
- geography
- plentiful opportunities to volunteer within them and the quality of local community spaces.

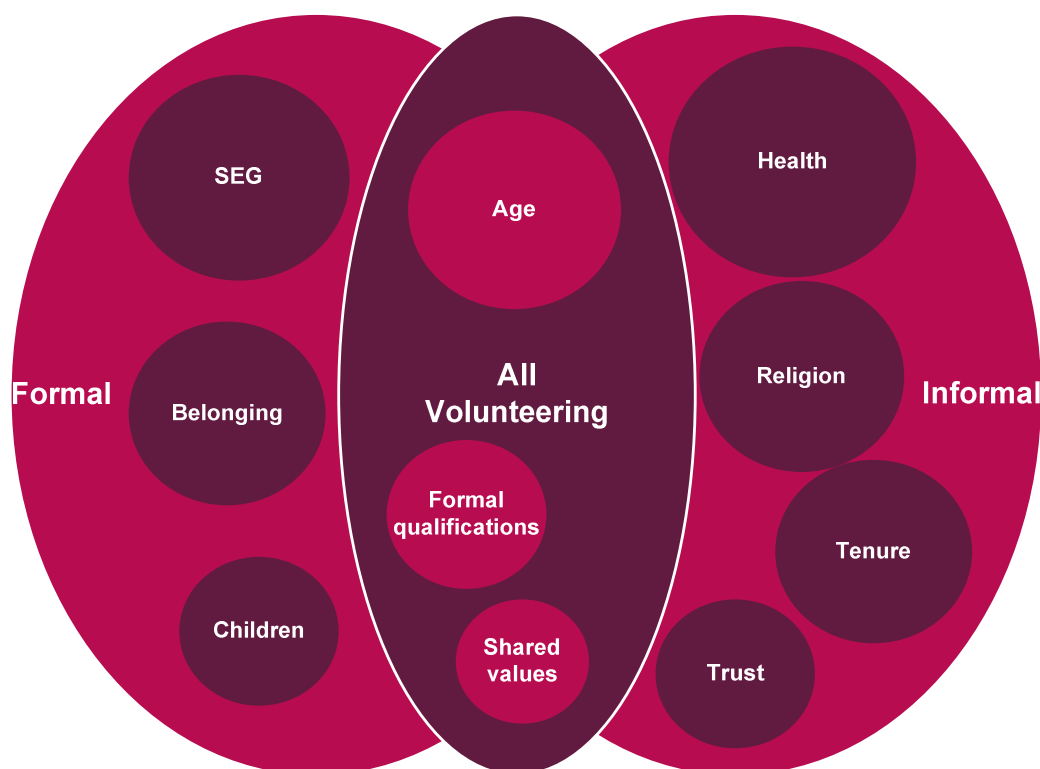
### 3.2. Characteristics of residents

Logistic regression analysis was used to provide an insight into the drivers of both formal and informal volunteering in the case study areas. The figure below presents



the results of the analysis for the aggregate sample, with circle size denoting the relative strength of the statistical association between variables and volunteering.

**Figure 3.1. Factors with a significant association with volunteering (all areas)**



As the figure reveals, for both formal and informal volunteering, most variables that were associated with volunteering were concerned with the attributes of residents: of the 10 variables that were found to be statistically related to formal and informal volunteering, seven fell into this category. In terms of the drivers of both formal and informal volunteering, logistic regression modelling revealed two demographic attributes to be associated with both:

- age: people aged 16-29 were most likely to volunteer with people over the age of 60 being considerably less likely to do so
- formal qualifications: people with formal qualifications were more likely to volunteer than those without.

In terms of those variables associated with formal volunteering only, the following demographic variables were found to be important:

- Socio-economic-grouping (SEG): people from the 'higher' ABC1 SEG were more likely to volunteer than those from the 'lower' C2DE group
- households with dependent children: people from households with dependent children (including single parents) were found to be more likely to volunteer than those without children.

In terms of informal volunteering, the following variables were found to be associated with it:

- health: people in good health were more likely to volunteer than those whose health was poor

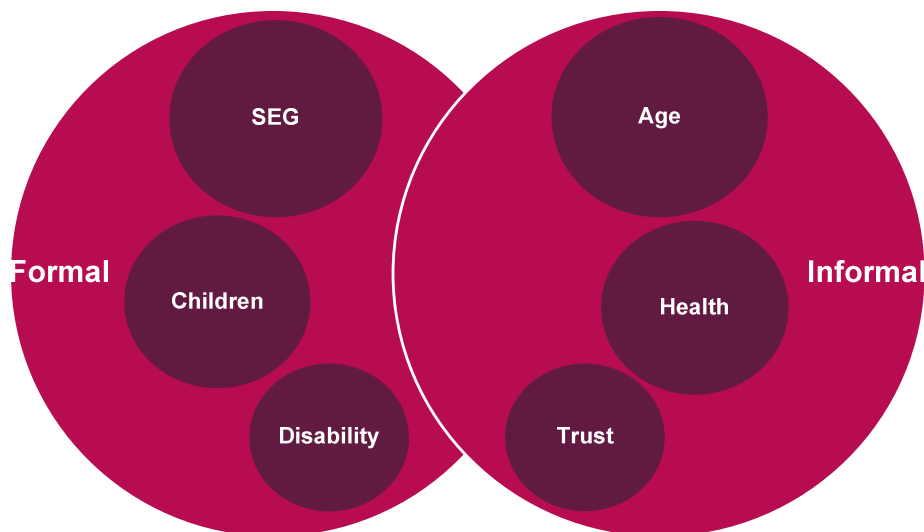
- religion: people from Catholic households were more likely to volunteer than those from other backgrounds.

Another attribute relating to the circumstances of residents was also found to be associated with informal volunteering: tenure, with social and private renters being more likely to volunteer than owner occupiers.

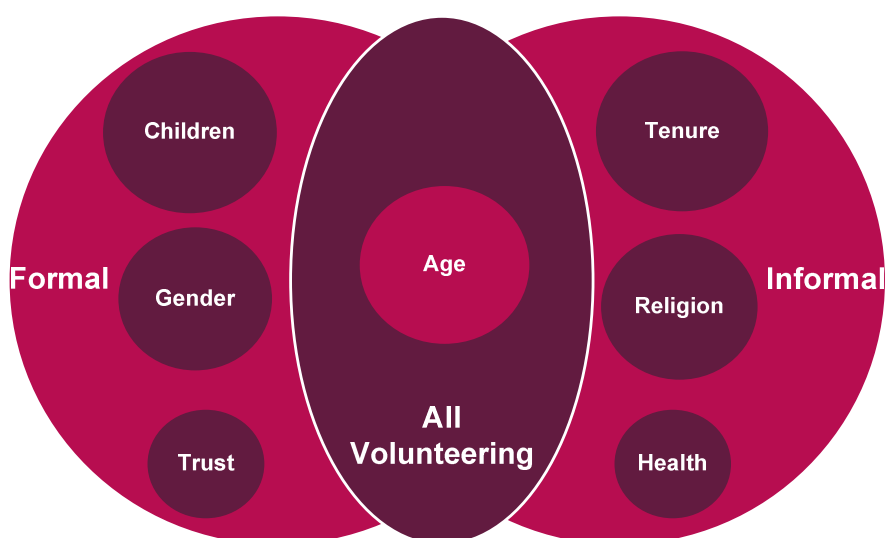
In Sion Mills and Short Strand, most factors associated with volunteering also related to the characteristics of residents, although their configuration and salience was different in the two areas, as the figures below reveal. With regard to formal involvement, having children emerged as being the only variable associated to volunteering in both areas. And as will be explored in the next section, high levels of children led volunteering appears to be one of reasons why formal volunteering in both areas is particularly high. In terms of other variables associated with formal volunteering, disability (respondents with a disability were less likely to volunteer) and SEG emerged as being significant in Short Strand, and age and gender in Sion Mills, with women being more likely to volunteer.

In terms of informal involvement, health and age emerged as being statistically important in both areas, with religion being associated with volunteering in Sion Mills.

**Figures 3.2 Factors with a significant association with volunteering (Short Strand)**



**Figure 3.3 Factors with a significant association with volunteering (Sion Mills)**



As was the case for the aggregate sample, not all the factors identified in the figures above were related to household circumstances: one relating to place - trust - was also found to be important. Furthermore, and although not included in the analysis presented, it is important to note that throughout the quantitative analysis neighbourhood consistently emerged as a significant factor associated with volunteering. The role of place-based factors is explored later in this chapter.

### 3.3. Children oriented volunteering

It appears that one of the reasons that formal volunteering rates are higher in both Short Strand and Sion Mills is that children related volunteering plays a bigger role in the areas than in the other case studies. This is reflected in the magnitude of the association between the variables, 'dependent children' and 'volunteering', which was the strongest association in Sion Mills, and the second strongest in Short Strand. It is also reflected in the high levels of child related volunteering reported in Short Strand and Sion Mills - in both areas, children related volunteering was far higher than in the other disadvantaged neighbourhoods, as noted in Chapter Two.

A number of resident panel members reported that the voluntary activity they undertook related to their children. For example, Sharon from Sion Mills noted: *"Just sometimes I work at the play park in the summertime; they do a summer scheme there for the kids. And it's really, really, good. And sometimes I go up and help out; you just sit there and make sure no-one goes on the road and things like that."* (Sharon, Sion Mills, Wave 2)

And two panellists in Short Strand noted:

*"People put themselves forward. If they have some of their family, they'd bring their kids to the Doyle on a Saturday morning. They'd get involved. In the last year what I've seen in the Doyle is school coming round and they're having a school day... St Matthew's school, which was good, all the mothers and fathers was there during the summer. Down in the swings down there...which mothers and fathers took part. So the mothers and fathers in the district take an interest in their children. [I'm] not saying all but a good percentage, or it's their grandparents going with them. So there is a community thing there."* Cameron Short Strand, Wave 1)

*"Well, there'll be a meeting and they'll say: 'any volunteers?' And people just stick their hands up. If it's to help the kids you do it. I bring about 10 kids on a Friday night into the pigeon club when the racing starts and they're all looking at the birds and getting them interested. Cos they're the future." (Dylan, Short Strand, Wave 2)*

### 3.4. Stable communities

Another factor that appears to be behind the relatively high levels of volunteering in Short Strand and Sion Mills is that both are relatively stable communities with comparatively high proportion of long term residents, as the table below illustrates. The population is particularly stable in Short Strand where 91 per cent of residents have lived in the area for at least five years. This compares to 84 per cent of residents in Sion Mills, and 80 per cent in the other disadvantaged neighbourhoods, who had done the same.

**Table 3.1: Length of residence by case study neighbourhood (percentage of respondents)**

Roughly how many years have you lived in this neighbourhood?

	Higher volunteering neighbourhoods			Lower volunteering neighbourhoods	Comparator	All areas
	Short Strand	Sion Mills	SS/SM Combined			
Less than a year	2	7	5	4	4	4
1 years or more but less than 3 years	2	6	5	9	7	7
3 years or more but less than 5 years	3	5	4	7	6	6
5 years or more but less than 10 years	10	13	12	9	10	10
10 years or more but less than 20 years	24	23	23	21	19	21
20 years or more	58	46	51	51	54	52
Unweighted Base	129	220	349	374	216	939

Source: Baseline Survey (December 2012-March 2013)

Many panel members in Short Strand and Sion Mills highlighted the stability of the two areas, where people grew up together:

*"As I say, I grew up in this street and my best friend was my best friend 25 years ago. and she grew up in no 16; my aunt lived next door and then they bought a house up here but she died last year. But everybody in this street bar two or three houses have lived here from I remember. The neighbours have always been the same. And those [new] houses are up about 20 years and there's*

*maybe about... two or three families [that have changed] and that's it."* (Monica, Sion Mills, Wave 1)

*"It [volunteering] is just growing up with each other and if you can help you will help...It's always had a great community spirit round here. People have always stuck together and growing up I'd never any hassle and I was never bullied or anything like that. I think most of the people growing up in the area would find the same. Families know each other. They're interlocked really. You couldn't throw a stone without hitting a relative in this place. Yeah, I've four brothers and two sisters that live in the area; all their children live in the area as well, apart from one in County Kerry - he went down there to work when he was 16 and hasn't come back, so he's there about 16 years."* (Daniel, Short Strand, Wave 2)

As alluded to in the last quote, it was felt that this phenomenon had contributed to community spirit and the creation of a local volunteering 'tradition' in the areas, two factors which have contributed to the higher levels of volunteering within them, as will now be explored.

### **3.5. The local volunteering tradition and culture**

In both Short Strand and Sion Mills an important factor contributing to the higher levels of formal volunteering there was the tradition in both areas of volunteering, a tradition which was passed on from generation to generation and 'learnt' by younger generations. For example, Kevin from Sion Mills (in his Wave 2 interview) noted: *"I know when I was the same age as the kids, looking up at the leaders, then. Them leaders are gone but knowing what experience I got from them, I can follow on that experience and keep the circle going, and to me that would be a greater achievement than going out and earning £300 or 400 doing the same thing somewhere else. To me it's giving back something."*

In a similar vein, Shirley from Short Strand (in her Wave 1 interview) noted: *"I just think it [volunteering] is in the way you're brought up. I would like to think that if I was older somebody living beside me would do the same."*

Many residents in Short Strand and Sion Mills appear to have been brought-up valuing volunteering, which was perceived to be: *"just the right thing to do; like if you can't do a good turn don't do a bad turn and that was always my mother's attitude...but it's just the way you were brought up."* (Finlay, Short Strand, Wave 1)

### Bob's volunteering story

Bob, who is in his 70s, is a long-time resident of Sion Mills. He was educated at the village's integrated school and worked at Sion Mills mill for most of his life. Bob is retired. He has been volunteering in the village for more than 20 years. He is actively involved in the village's bowls club, which takes up a lot of his time (up to 30 hours per week in the summer):

*"I'm xxx [a committee member] of the bowls club...I spend a lot of time doing it, especially in the summertime and then indoor bowls in the wintertime. But in the summertime I would do a lot of work on the ground as well...I would do the cutting of the grass and the preparing of the green and that sort of thing."*

Bob also helps out at his local church where he maintains the grounds. Despite his formal volunteering commitments, Bob still finds time to help his neighbour when he can: *"[I help out] the wee girl next door when she'll be going on holidays or for a day out, or look after her dogs."*

Although time consuming, Bob draws a lot of satisfaction from his voluntary activities:

*"You get satisfaction from seeing it and satisfaction to see the pensioners coming down and having a nice time in the summertime... It makes me feel good that I'm giving something back into the village."*

Bob is determined to keep volunteering for as long as he can: *"Whenever my health gives up I'll give up, not till then. When I'm not able to do it."*

### 3.6. Sense of community

The greater sense of community that appears to pervade in Short Strand and Sion Mills appears to be another factor contributing to higher levels of volunteering there. However, it is important to recognise that there is a reciprocal nature of the relationship between the two: volunteering is likely to result in greater community spirit.

Both qualitative and quantitative data collected by the study team suggests that the areas have the greatest sense of community of all the case study areas. In terms of the former, the baseline survey questionnaire included a number of questions relating to community, including:

- To what extent do you agree or disagree that people in this neighbourhood share the same values?
- The extent to which residents in the neighbourhood could be trusted
- To what extent do you agree or disagree that people in this neighbourhood pull together to improve the neighbourhood?

As table 3.2. reveals, residents in Short Strand and Sion Mills were more likely than their counterparts in the other disadvantaged areas to report that they shared the same values as other people in the neighbourhoods: 75 per cent and 86 per cent, respectively, agreed with this assertion compared to 62 per cent of residents in the other disadvantaged neighbourhoods who did the same.

**Table 3.2: Proportion of respondents who believe that people in this neighbourhood share the same values by case study neighbourhood (percentage of respondents)**

To what extent do you agree or disagree that people in this neighbourhood share the same values?

	Higher volunteering neighbourhoods			Lower volunteering neighbourhoods	Comparator	All areas
	<i>Short Strand</i>	<i>Sion Mills</i>	<i>SS/SM Combined</i>			
Strongly agree	35	46	42	14	19	26
Agree	40	40	40	48	43	44
Disagree	13	9	10	14	31	16
Strongly disagree	3	1	2	6	3	4
Don't know	9	4	6	19	5	11
Unweighted Base	129	220	349	374	216	939

Source: Baseline Survey (December 2012-March 2013)

Residents in Short Strand and Sion Mills were also more likely than their counterparts in the other disadvantaged neighbourhoods to report that they trusted ('many' or 'some' of) people in their neighbourhood. As the table below reveals, 81 per cent and 83 per cent, respectively did compared to 76 per cent of respondents in the other disadvantaged neighbourhoods who did the same. Furthermore, logistic regression modelling revealed the variable, 'trust', to be related to formal volunteering in Sion Mills and informal volunteering in Short Strand. However, notwithstanding this, it is important to bear in mind that residents in the areas with the lowest volunteering rate, Irish Street, had the highest proportion of all the case study areas of respondents who trusted their neighbours.

**Table 3.3: Proportion of respondents who trust people in their neighbourhood by case study neighbourhood (percentage of respondents)**

Would you say that...

	Higher volunteering neighbourhoods			Lower volunteering neighbourhoods	Comparator	All areas
	<i>Short Strand</i>	<i>Sion Mills</i>	<i>SS/SM Combined</i>			
Many of the people in this neighbourhood can be trusted	44	50	48	30	31	37
Some can be trusted	37	33	35	46	40	40
A few can be trusted	18	15	16	17	26	19
None of the people in this neighbourhood can be trusted	1	2	1	6	2	4
Unweighted Base	129	220	349	374	216	939

Source: Baseline Survey (December 2012-March 2013)

As the table below reveals, residents in Short Strand and Sion Mills were most likely to report that people in the neighbourhood pulled together: 88 per cent and 80 per cent, respectively, of respondents there did so compared to 64 per cent in the other disadvantaged neighbourhoods who did the same.



**Table 3.4: Proportion of respondents who reported that 'people in this neighbourhood pull together to improve the neighbourhood' by case study neighbourhood (percentage of respondents)**

*To what extent do you agree or disagree that people in this neighbourhood pull together to improve the neighbourhood?*

	Higher volunteering neighbourhoods			Lower volunteering neighbourhoods	Comparator	All areas
	Short Strand	Sion Mills	SS/SM Combined			
Definitely agree	47	40	42	21	17	28
Tend to agree	41	40	40	43	46	42
Tend to disagree	9	12	11	17	28	17
Definitely disagree	1	1	1	7	6	5
Nothing needs improving	0	0	0	1	0	0
Don't know	3	7	6	12	2	7
Unweighted Base	129	220	349	374	216	939

Source: Baseline Survey (December 2012-March 2013)

Numerous panel members in both areas also highlighted how residents pulled together in the face of adversity:

*"The best thing would be if something happens the community come together. This morning I went to a funeral that one of the local residents that's been here years, the whole community came to it and it really brings you together, that kind of thing." (Kevin, Sion Mills, Wave 1)*

*"Well, everybody knows everybody. Now sometimes I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing because everybody knows your business. But then again if something does happen everybody does sort of get together." (Clarissa, Short Strand, Wave 1)*

*"Yeah, people still pull together.... it's just a tight knit community." (Dylan, Short Strand, Wave 1)*

Furthermore, narratives of community cohesion and spirit were a reoccurring theme in interviews conducted with panel members and local stakeholders. For example, a panellist in Short Strand noted:

*"I just think there's a big sense of camaraderie in the area, you know. We are all from the Short Strand, as they call it now, and we would still argue over in the club at times: 'is it Short Strand'? or Ballymacarrett'? And the older ones are all: 'it's Ballymacarrett'. We'd have lived on the other side of the Mountpottinger Road and when we were young your enemies were the Short Strand; the ones from the same religion but different gangs, when you were in school and that [laughs]." (Finlay, Short Strand, Wave 1)*

In a similar vein, Judith, from Sion Mills, highlighted the sense of community in the village, linking it to an issue raised earlier, population stability: *"I would pride the village on having a very good community spirit and fantastic neighbours, [and] also long term residents particularly in this street."* (Judith, Sion Mills, Wave 1)

While both Short Strand and Sion Mills exhibited high levels of community spirit, how this had been generated differed markedly between the areas, as is highlighted in the next two sections.

### **3.6.1. Understanding community cohesion in Short Strand**

In Short Strand, a number of factors have contributed to community cohesion. In addition to geography and opportunity, which as noted above are addressed later in the chapter, the area's experience of The Troubles and of on-going conflict and tension since the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 has been a major contributory factor and is addressed here. The impact of conflict on the area is intertwined with the importance of community stability (section 3.4 above). The account below distinguishes between the consistent narrative of 'pulling together' during The Troubles and the more nuanced view of responses to more recent conflict.

#### ***The experience of The Troubles***

Unlike Sion Mills, Short Strand was greatly affected by The Troubles and was often a flashpoint. This is understandable given its status as an interface area and as a Catholic enclave in a predominantly Protestant area of Belfast. Indeed, conflict in the area can be traced back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The 1970 'Battle of St Matthews' is one of the early episodes marking the re-emergence of the IRA in the recent Troubles (Bardon, 1992) and there is a long tradition of paramilitary activity. Sinn Féin is the strongest political party in the area.

Panel members agreed the community stuck together during The Troubles and that adversity created a sense of cohesion. Several had personal memories of those times:

*"Now, it was bad as you know you grew up in it same as myself it was very bad - you couldn't even have walked over that bridge at times."* (Dylan, Short Strand, Wave 1)

*"We weren't allowed out of the district during The Troubles as kids. As I got older I would venture out, but sometimes you get stuck out of your own district and you need to get home."* (Victoria, Short Strand, Wave 2)

The local social clubs were important for support and protection:

*"It's just always been the way. Now, I'm going to say something to you. There was 12 bars in this place; in this wee place; 12. And everybody just knew everybody. Now there is just two, now. But there was 12 in the Short Strand and everybody knew everybody, so if one person was in trouble everybody would help them. Even going back to the 70s during the [Ulster Workers' Council] Strike there were bonfires in the street and everybody worked together and that's how you got your dinner. My kids laugh at me when I say that but it happened in The Troubles like."* (Dylan, Short Strand, Wave 1)

Finlay (Short Strand, Wave 1) described the founding of the St Matthews' social club:

*"F: ... people couldn't go out of the area and into town or that. Like, it used to be when we were young that Friday night was the night you went into the town and had a few drinks and then into the dances"*

*I: but with The Troubles all that stopped?*

*F: yeah, that all stopped so they formed the club. In fact, there were two or three clubs here at the time but there is only one left now, you know."*

### **Conflict since 1998**

The 'peace process' and 1998 Good Friday Agreement followed paramilitary ceasefires but did not stop all violence and community tensions, especially in interface areas such as inner East Belfast. Examples included interface rioting around Cluan Place for most of 2002 (Byrne, 2005); rioting connected with Orange Order marches (either in East Belfast or elsewhere) in 2005 and 2009 (but to some extent every year); and the 'flag protests' and riots in 2012 and 2013. In addition, regular parades along the Albertbridge Road and Newtownards Road require substantial police resources and restrict the movement of residents. Therefore, conflict remained an important context for community cohesion:

*"In 2009 when the rioting was going on for so long people were just doing absolutely anything for you. It's unbelievable how the community comes so close together when times are hard and I think it's brilliant cos it should be like that, looking out for each other." (Emily, Short Strand, Wave 1)*

There was an agreed narrative about the impact of The Troubles and a majority view from panel members and community groups that the positive impact had remained:

*"I think it's maybe cos of what the area's gone through over the years with The Troubles. Being such a small area it's lost an awful lot of the local people to The Troubles, percentage wise a lot of people: I think over 60 people for such a small area over the years. I think the community spirit that built up over the years of The Troubles has really stayed on and people help each other out". (Daniel, Short Strand, Wave 2)*

However, not everyone who remembers those days agreed:

*"When I was a kid living in houses that was much closer to each other, I think there might have been more support then cos The Troubles had just started. I was born in 61 - I was eight when The Troubles started. And cos there was that. Everybody trying to keep each other safe. There was much more interaction and support whereas now, cos there isn't the same level of trouble, we all keep ourselves to ourselves." (Victoria, Short Strand, Wave 2)*

Shirley described the two sides of living in a close-knit community which still experiences violence. On the one hand, she felt scrutinised by her neighbours:

*"... everybody wants to live in everybody else's pocket, where everybody wants to know everybody else's business, what's going on in your life and no matter what happens even if it's a small thing. It's like Chinese whispers, you know, by the time it gets to the end of the day." (Shirley, Short Strand, Wave 1)*

However, in the same interview:

*"My wee fella goes to a wee special needs group ... [at the] parochial hall just down there behind the chapel. And there were petrol bombs threw that night and the whole district went bananas. And like there were cars just straight into it, and like my wee fella was home here to me before I even knew anything had happened. And the district went ballistic not even because it was at the chapel; it was because the special needs group was going on that night. And I was talking to the girl that runs it and she said it was actually young fellas run in, just*

*run into it to get the kids out so the kids wouldn't panic."* (Shirley, Short Strand, Wave 1)

Although many respondents continued to value the work done by local organisations, there was concern about the impact of increased drug-taking and dealing in the area:

*"It is a good area compared to other areas, but it is going to spiral out of control [because of the drug dealing]." (Aidan, Short Strand, Wave 2).*

*"Some of the people that would answer that if they're not suffering or their sons or daughters, first-hand experience of what we've been talking about [drug dealing], then they don't think it's as serious as it is until it comes to their own door..." (Aidan, Short Strand, Wave 2)*

*"I think they need to do more for like the teenage ones because it is so easy for them to fall the wrong way."* (Shirley, Short Strand, Wave 1)

### **Legacy of The Troubles and subsequent conflict**

Unlike Sion Mills, Short Strand has been severely affected by The Troubles and subsequent conflict. The experiences are within living memory and have shaped community interaction within the area and with those from outside:

*"I think in a positive way, I think it [The Troubles] has made people better. The Troubles, it's also .... it made strength in people."* (Dylan Short Strand, Wave 2)

This has made the community self-reliant and thus arguably 'resilient':

*"... if anyone needs anything, as it has for years round here, they'll always turn to their friends or family first."* (Daniel, Short Strand, Wave 2)

*"... if you require a carer... you have to pay for that. So that is why [young woman] comes down to help me. That's my mate's daughter and I would rather give her a few pound than pay a stranger."* (Finlay, Short Strand, Wave 1)

One panel member felt that the new return to the state – in the form of reliance on the police and politicians – is not as effective as the previous paramilitary 'law enforcement' approach, for example, in relation to drugs:

*"They [Sinn Féin] are turning a blind eye. I'm not saying for selfish gain. I'm saying are they doing it cos they don't want to face the problems that will entail. That's what I believe. Cos the minute the IRA has left the scene there was no-one there; the hairy chest guy with the guns or the baseball bats. And they can do whatever they do...so the people in Sinn Féin are just like the rest of us now but they're not going to face the problem."* (Aidan, Short Strand, Wave 2)

Therefore, an important question for the future of Short Strand is whether a community whose cohesion and identity has been forged largely in response to an external threat (which still applies) can continue to maintain high levels of cohesion if the external threat is removed and/or if new threats to cohesion (such as poverty, drugs and anti-social behaviour) begin to emerge from inside the community itself?

### **3.6.2. Understanding community cohesion in Sion Mills**

A bundle of factors appear to have contributed to the strong sense of community in Sion Mills. However, as highlighted by one resident panel member, Bob, the driving force behind the phenomenon is the existence in the village of a paradigm where: *"everybody went to school together, worked together, played together."*

### ***Integrated education***

As noted in Chapter One, the primary school in the village has always been integrated, schooling both Catholic and Protestant children. Most villagers, including many members of our resident panel, have been educated at it. There was a consensus amongst resident panel members and stakeholders that integrated education had contributed to community cohesion and the sense of community within the village:

*"It's the same round the village; that always was the way. We went to school together: it was a mixed school from 1927 and [it's] still the same. They've got a new school over here now. It's still the same: a mixed school." (Edward, Sion Mills, Wave 1)*

*"[We] Went to the same school, worked in the same place. Everybody was happy." (Bob, Sion Mills, Wave 2)*

### ***Working together in the mill***

As alluded to in the above quote, in addition to being educated together, many Sion Mills residents have also worked together. As highlighted in Chapter One, Sion Mills emerged as a significant settlement when a linen mill was built in the village in 1835. Until its closure in 2004, it was the principal employer in the village, employing a very high proportion of the working age population of the village:

*"The first houses in Sion was built with the mill. Anyone you ask around Sion: 'where did you first work?' They would say the mill. Nearly everybody here has worked in the mill, that was their first job. I had an uncle who worked in the mill; my father worked in the mill; my granda worked in the mill; my uncle played cricket for Sion; they still play cricket; I had a cousin played cricket for Sion." (John, Sion Mills, Wave 1)*

The high proportion of local residents working together had helped create a shared 'pride' in the village:

*"I would say 90 per cent of the people went to work in the Mill so everybody grew up together, everybody worked together. Everybody had pride in the village at that time." (Bob, Sion Mills, Wave 1)*

### ***Sporting and recreational facilities***

In line with their philanthropic objectives, the owners of Sion Mills mill, the Herdman family, created comprehensive and excellent recreational opportunities for their employees. These facilities provided residents with the opportunity to 'play out' outside of work, further contributing to community cohesion within the area. The Herdman's formed a recreation club which was responsible for running a range of facilities and clubs including a social and community centre (the 'Recreational Hall'), and football, bowling and cricket clubs.

*"I'd say we're one of the only villages that had facilities. People bring their children to get involved. We called it Sion Mills Recreation Club and anybody that worked in the Mill paid two pence a week - that was your membership, but if you're going away to play a tournament they paid their expenses." (Edward, Sion Mills, Wave 1)*

*"Aye, Herdman's always .... [provided] tennis, bowls, cricket - one pitch was football; one pitch was hockey; and then the recreation club at the bottom of the street. Them was all provided by Herdman's and you paid four pence a week out*



*of your wages to be a member, no matter what sport you were in. The only thing you needed, you had to buy your own boots, Herdman's supplied the rest. It was a good set up. But going on, and as far as the council are concerned, they're not a bit interested."* (Edward, Sion Mills, Wave 2)

*"It's [the Mill] always been there. You get football pitches, I'm sure somewhere else, but everything down there is together... it was the Mill."* (Keenan, Sion Mills, Wave 2)

In addition, the mill, through the guise of the Recreation Club, also organised day trips and excursions: *"When the mill was open the mill was bringing up stuff to the school and getting us involved and trips down to the school and stuff there."* (Finn, Sion Mills, Wave 1)

### **Sectarianism and The Troubles**

There was a consensus that one of the factors that had contributed to the high level of community cohesion in Sion Mills was that sectarianism was not - and had not been - a major issue in the village:

*"It's very quiet and everybody knows everybody else, nobody bothers fighting and there's no aggression or sectarianism or anything like that."* (Norma, Sion Mills, Wave 1)

*"I suppose probably for me it's reasonably sectarian free."* (Graham, Sion Mills, Wave 1)

A number of resident panel members posited that the relative absence of sectarianism in the village was a result of the high levels of 'mixing' and social integration within the village:

*"I don't know, maybe [sectarianism is not an issue] cos the school is mixed and we try and mix the children religiously ... Yeah, cos the school is mixed so then instead of kids going to one and the other they've just been friends from school."* (Sharon, Sion Mills, Wave 1)

*"Sion Mills in general is a good area to live with amenities, the river being the main one. But it's a mixed village: you've two religions here but most of them have grown up together through the generations, we all knew each other since school and we went through The Troubles and.... the old times as well. Sion didn't get a lot of The Troubles, they had bombs but there was not much sectarian as there was in other areas."* (Keenan, Sion Mills, Wave 1)

As alluded to in the above quote, unlike Strabane and many of the villages that surround it, Sion Mills escaped relatively unscathed from The Troubles, with it having relatively few 'incidents'. This, it was felt, had also contributed to community cohesion in the village:

*"The situation in other areas - the conflict between the Loyalists and the Republicans - this didn't happen in our area cos everybody was together; everybody went to the one school and everybody respected everybody else's religion. But other places were up in arms and led to The Troubles and [in] these areas, nobody forgets that. History's history and they would keep coming back to the thing of sectarianism, which we never had."* (Bob, Sion Mills, Wave 2)

## Geography and opportunities

Two other factors have undoubtedly contributed to community cohesion in Sion Mills: geography (specifically, the settlement's size and isolated location) and volunteering opportunities (as alluded to above, and highlighted in Chapter Two, Sion Mills has a plethora of VCS organisations). These two issues are explored in separate sections (3.7 and 3.8) - as they are also major direct contributory factors to volunteering in Short Strand and Sion Mills.

### Sharon's volunteering story

Sharon and her son live in Sion Mills. She suffers from depression which, she reports, prevents her from doing full time work:

*"I'm on Income Support cos I suffer from depression at times. So I don't think I could do a full time job and there's very little out there for a couple of hours a week; there's not a lot in Sion for employment."*

In addition to volunteering with the local meals on wheels service, Sharon helps out with schemes and activities for local children, particularly those run in the summer:

*"In the summertime when they're running the summer scheme, they need an extra lot of people to help out cos the kids are outside more; they've got snooker tables and stuff in the winter for them. And in the summer there's a play park outside, and so I would go up and look out for the. And if they're going on a day trip I would help out."*

She likes volunteering on children based activities as she is not comfortable working with people she does not know - through her son, she knows most of the other volunteers on the children oriented schemes she is involved in:

*"I don't really like being around people I don't know, and I know more mothers and stuff there through my son and it's easier."*

Sharon does not run schemes or groups but volunteers in an irregular way when her health allows her to do so, and volunteering in a more regular and systematic way would be problematic for her.

## 3.7. Geography

In both Short Strand and Sion Mills, geography appears to have contributed to higher volunteering rates. Specifically, the relative (small) size of the areas appears to be a factor, as does their comparative isolation (in very different ways).

### 3.7.1 Size

A number of respondents in Sion Mills highlighted how the relatively small size of the settlement had contributed to its high levels of volunteering:

*"Well, the community was always smaller. It was just the village; everybody worked in the mill. Nobody had anything more than anybody else so if anyone was in trouble everybody helped everybody else out. And everybody went to the one school and that was inter-denominational so everybody just helped one another."* (Bob, Sion Mills, Wave 2)

*"Well, everybody knew one another - the village was smaller at that time." (Bob, Sion Mills, Wave 1)*

*"[It's] Just the way people are. It's small enough so everybody would know everybody else and would help you out if you were stuck. Not like some big city even neighbours are strangers to you. It's always been the kind of place where there's a strong sense of community." (Tom, Sion Mills, Wave 2)*

Tom perceived the scale of city life to not be conducive to social interaction and volunteering: but this has not been the case in Short Strand, whose relatively small size and very distinct geography, has meant that in many ways it has effectively formed a village in an urban environment:

*"It does surprise me [people volunteering]. [But it maybe] because like other areas.... a country place: maybe a small place like this, too, which people unite together. Smallness means something, bigness means not as close. We're friends here; it's small and it can be managed." (Cameron, Short Strand, Wave 2)*

*"Maybe it [high level of volunteering] is because it is small and if something happens, when it needs to pull together, it does maybe cos it's small. If something happens to somebody you always seem to know a member of the family so it pulls at the heart strings a bit. But aye, there it is." (Shirley, Short Strand, Wave 2)*

*"It's a close knit community cos we're so small. We're surrounded and all that. And when hardships do come people gel together; all that there that people would find it very easy to help out." (Aidan, Short Strand, Wave 2)*

### **3.7.2 Isolation**

As alluded to in the last quote, the relative isolation of Short Strand also appeared to have contributed to the high levels of volunteering there, with the factor also playing a key role in Sion Mills. The nature of the isolation in the two areas is, of course, very different.

In Sion Mills, isolation takes the form of the settlement being located three miles away from the relatively small town of Strabane, which itself is comparatively isolated. In addition to the temporal element of isolation - i.e. the time required to travel to other areas, particularly for residents without a car - there was a cost element to it in the village. Specifically, for some of its residents, particularly those without a car, volunteering outside the village was not a feasible option because they could not afford to travel to other areas. This was the case for Sharon who noted in her Wave 2 interview: *"If it was far off there would be travel too, you'd have to pay out for the buses and stuff so it would have to be round the village, anything I would do."*

In terms of the nature and form of isolation in Short Strand, as noted earlier, it is isolated because it is a Catholic enclave in a predominantly Protestant part of Belfast, and is physically bounded at Bryson Street by an imposing peace wall, and on other boundaries by discreet walls and by main roads. In Short Strand, there was another dimension to isolation - there was a sense that the space outside the area was not passive (as was the case with Sion Mills), with the area being 'surrounded', a term which reoccurred in interviews with residents and local stakeholders:

*"Cos everybody knows everybody, it's a tight knit community. People say: 'how do you live here, you're surrounded?' But that's why we're so close. Everybody knows everybody. Somebody dies; everybody's at their funeral.... Because*



*being surrounded the kids have nothing, somebody had to step in and give them something to look forward to."* (Dylan, Short Strand, Wave 2)

### **3.8. Plentiful opportunities to volunteer and the quality of local community spaces**

As noted earlier, both Short Strand and Sion Mills have well developed VCSs, which comprise a number of organisations, including active and vibrant community groups. The opportunities to volunteer in the areas are greater than in the other case study areas, which have less well developed sectors. Furthermore, both areas have excellent community spaces.

Sion Mills has a number of community spaces. These include: the community centre owned by Sion Mills Community Association; the Recreation Hall; the gymnasium at the local school; and, 'Bog Hall' (i.e. Sion Mills Parish Hall). Short Strand is particularly well appointed given its size, although the rest of Inner East Belfast contain more and larger facilities and serve a larger population. Within Short Strand, the focus of volunteering activity is the Community Centre, which includes a café, IT project, crèche and mothers and toddlers group, benefits advice, job club and youth services:

*"Yeah, the community centre is the hub of the district. They run things for the elderly and well woman's centres; they have loads of things going on."* (Victoria, Short Strand, Wave 1)

*"If they [the community] can organise something to do to keep going they will. And most of them, like as I say, - the community centre will come round and put a note round the doors if they are doing anything. And they'll ask if you have any ideas to let them know."* (Finlay, Short Strand, Wave 1)

The Doyle Youth Centre was also spoken of highly by everyone, and several panel members had volunteered within it:

*"...the only other one that I'm thinking is the Doyle Centre; the fella that runs that is amazing Jesus Christ if you had nine lives you couldn't do what he does. He runs the kids football, takes the kids, does cross community and all that there."* (Shirley, Short Strand, Wave 1)

## Aidan's volunteering story

Aidan works part-time and also spends a lot of time volunteering at a homeless hostel elsewhere in Belfast city. When we interviewed him in 2013 he was volunteering for six to eight hours a week at the hostel:

*"...a lot of it is just sitting, listening. Or if they want to say a prayer and we usually do the rosary every night. Some of them come in and really enjoy that. [We] serve them their food and drinks, make supper, clean the tables, brush the floor."*

Aidan enjoyed the work:

*"I would like to do more work with the homeless but I have to remember that I have a family and help out and make sure that everything is in order that way first. I really like helping out with people who are struggling. The elderly are very close to my heart - the homeless, people with addictions and the sick and I would like to be able to do more in that field."*

When we spoke to Aidan a year later, he had added home visiting to his volunteering, through the church which also ran the homeless hostel:

*"... I go out and spend time with elderly people who can't leave the house; sick people who can't leave the house and sometimes terminally ill people. [I] spend time with them and bring them holy communion from the church. But just as important is to spend the time with them and talk to them and listen to them, and ask do they need anything done or help out in small ways."*

In addition, he helped the priests in his church every day: *"It becomes a bit too much at times. But the lovely thing about the voluntary work is you're not held to it - if you can't make it you can say you can't make it and that's not a problem."*

Aidan and his wife are also engaged with informal volunteering, in particular through supporting an elderly neighbour: *"We make his evening meal every day, get his papers every morning, call in, does he need anything..."* They would also lend money to neighbours on a regular basis.

Aidan's motivation for volunteering is largely religious:

*"I like to help people. I don't mind putting myself out to do this. I wonder is this because of my Christian outlook, or my parents parenting. Anyway I thank God for it. I wish people would help each other out more instead of getting caught up in the rat race."* (Wave 2 diary)

In 2014, Aidan and his wife had heard that they were to lose child benefit payments for their two youngest sons (due to their ages) and they were aware this could constrain their informal volunteering in future, which was a source of distress to them both.

### 3.9. Summary

The higher levels of volunteering in Short Strand and Sion Mills can be attributed to a number of inter-related and inter-connected factors:

- the characteristics of its residents
- high levels of children led volunteering
- the relative stability of the areas
- high levels of community spirit and cohesion
- the local volunteering tradition and culture
- geography
- plentiful opportunities to volunteer within them and the quality of local community spaces.

While both Short Strand and Sion Mills exhibited high levels of community spirit, how this had been generated differed markedly between the areas. A bundle of factors appear to have contributed to the strong sense of community in Sion Mills. However, the driving force behind the phenomenon is the existence in the village of a paradigm where: *"everybody went to school together, worked together, played together"*. Other factors contributing to community spirit in the area were: the profundity of local recreational amenities, particularly of a sporting nature; the (relative) absence of sectarianism within the area; the absence of 'incidents' within the village during The Troubles; and geography.

In Short Strand, a number of factors have contributed to community cohesion. In addition to geography and opportunity, the area's experience of The Troubles and of ongoing conflict and tension since the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 has been a major contributory factor.

## Chapter Four - Key Learning

### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter builds on the previous two to highlight the key learning to emerge from the study. In particular, it highlights where (and how) this learning can be applied to better understand and develop volunteering in other neighbourhoods in Northern Ireland. The chapter draws on the evidence and data already presented along with additional empirical data and the research team's own insights, to highlight a series of transferable lessons of practical use to policymakers and practitioners interested in promoting, developing and supporting volunteering in communities across Northern Ireland.

Learning is discussed under three headings: the context in which volunteering occurs; challenges for volunteering at a neighbourhood level; and opportunities for the development and promotion of volunteering going forward. Under each heading a range of different themes are discussed, and the potential for transferable learning highlighted. However, it is important to note at the outset that not all of the lessons from Short Strand and Sion Mills are transferable: both places are unique and some factors cannot be transplanted to other places.

The chapter concludes by discussing the implications for the development of volunteering that may be of use to policy makers and practitioners with an interest in promoting volunteering at a neighbourhood level.

### 4.2. The importance of understanding the context in which volunteering takes place

It is clear from the analysis presented in Chapters Two and Three that formal and informal volunteering is highly context dependent and that there are a variety of different contextual factors that are important:

- the importance of place and place based factors, including the demographic make-up of a neighbourhood, the form and function of the local social economy at a neighbourhood level, and levels (and perceptions) of 'community spirit'
- the need to understand motivations and reasons for undertaking volunteering in the context of individual life courses and people's 'pathways' through different types of participation.

This section discusses each of these contextual factors in turn.

#### *Neighbourhood demography and geography*

Chapter Three has highlighted the importance of demographic and geographic factors in understanding the likelihood of a particular individual participating in formal

and informal volunteering. This is consistent with wider research on the subject of 'who participates' (see for example work on the 'civic core' by Mohan and Bulloch (2012)). Age, health, religion, economic status and household type were all found to be associated with the likelihood that someone would volunteer or not. Similarly, the relatively small scale and isolated locations of Short Strand and Sion Mills contributed to volunteering in these neighbourhoods. It therefore follows that neighbourhoods with the 'optimum' demographic compositions and geography (in terms of maximising participation) will exhibit higher levels of 'naturally occurring' volunteering than those neighbourhoods where these circumstances do not exist.

### ***The local social economy***

It is clear from Chapter Two that Short Strand and Sion Mills have well established and vibrant social economies alongside 'volunteering traditions', and that these are characteristics that distinguish them from the lower volunteering neighbourhoods. In Short Strand there is a busy community centre that acts as a hub for a variety of youth and community services, whilst the Forum provides important advocacy functions. Furthermore, a well-regarded youth centre provides an additional focus for families. In Sion Mills two active community groups complement a wider range of sport and recreational activity with roots in the village's unique industrial past. Much of this social economy activity occurs 'below the radar': many of the clubs and groups identified are not formally constituted, have not received funding from major grant makers or public sector bodies, and do not engage with sector umbrella bodies. As such, they do not appear on any centralised lists or registers of third sector organisations, and their activities are not captured through top down studies. This highlights the importance of bottom-up approaches to understanding volunteering at a neighbourhood level, and combining the evidence generated by them with top down evidence when developing policies and programmes.

Although the form and function of the VCS in both neighbourhoods are distinctly different, both may be described as being 'vibrant'. As a result there are many opportunities for local people to volunteer and participate in their local community. Although the relationship between the numbers of people volunteering and opportunities to volunteer is likely to be linked - voluntary action creates opportunities to participate - there appears to be a critical mass in each area of organisations needing volunteers and people wanting to volunteer that leads to this vibrancy.

### ***Levels of community spirit***

Levels of community spirit (or social capital) are higher in Short Strand and Sion Mills than in the lower volunteering neighbourhoods. Local people are more likely to have shared values, trust their neighbours and pull together and this cohesion is inextricably linked to volunteering through a mutually reinforcing relationship. This is consistent with wider research that documents the links between social capital and volunteering. However, this research also provides a note of caution for policy and practice, highlighting that the rate of both formal and informal volunteering is unrelated to the level of social capital after controlling for area deprivation. This raises concerns about the ability of volunteering to change the social characteristics of deprived areas independently of their material circumstances (see McCulloch *et al*, 2012).

### ***Understanding motivations for and pathways through participation***

Collectively, the contextual factors highlighted above can be understood as the key constituents of an individual's motivations for, and 'pathways' through, participation during their life course: an individual's personal circumstance at a given point in time, including their age, economic status and where they live, will all have a bearing on

the likelihood that they will volunteer, and what they do when they participate in volunteering. Similar findings have emerged from wider research. The high profile 'Pathways Through Participation' project (see NCVO/IVR, 2011) found that individual participation is shaped by a range of factors that change over time and are actually shaped by the impact of participation itself. The study identified factors operating at different levels, including individual motivations, personality, identity and resources; and people's relationships and social networks, including family, friends, neighbours, colleagues and wider social networks.

### 4.3. Challenges for volunteering at a neighbourhood level

Chapters Two and Three demonstrate that there are a number of challenges for volunteering, at a neighbourhood level and more generally, and that these have the potential to limit its development and growth:

- the sustainability of volunteering and the variety of 'risk' factors associated with its potential to be sustained, grow and develop within a neighbourhood
- the need for greater conceptual and methodological clarity about volunteering, particularly at a policy level, in order for volunteering to be more consistently and effectively understood.

These challenges are discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.

#### ***Risks to sustainable volunteering***

Social economy organisations across the UK are in a precarious position. In particular, they are facing an unprecedented challenge of meeting growing demand whilst seeing the financial resources available to support their work reduce considerably. In Northern Ireland these problems have been compounded by the extent of deprivation, the withdrawal and reduction of 'additional' grant funding streams such as the Peace programme, the reorganisation of local government, and (most recently) cuts to mainstream budgets flowing from the current Executive budget crisis and wider UK Government austerity. In areas such as Short Strand and Sion Mills where volunteering rates are high, this raises the question of how existing levels of social economy activity can, as a minimum, be sustained. In lower volunteering areas there is the challenge of how the social economy can be developed and increase despite the scarcity of resources to support this.

There are also individual level risks to volunteering. Many research participants highlighted the challenge of having time to volunteer even if they wanted to, prioritising family and work commitments over community participation. This is likely to be compounded during times of economic hardship, as people may be more inclined to focus inwards, supporting family and close friends experiencing hardship, before engaging in wider neighbourhood based activity.

This is a view shared by the New Economic Foundation who note (NEF, 2012, p.5):

*"As people have become less economically secure, they have tended to turn inwards, focusing on just getting-by from day to day, with no time or energy to connect with others or take local action. This has led to a general weakening of the core economy – a term used to describe all the unpaid time, caring, support, friendship, expertise, giving, and learning that underpin society and the formal economy. The Big Society vision relied on a strong core economy. But people have found their time and capacity increasingly stretched by reduced local public services, changes to working and child tax credits, and insecure, low-paid employment."*

Finally, there may be specific, unforeseen risks to the sustainability of volunteering in a particular neighbourhood. Sion Mills provides a salient and current example of this. The relationship between the new owner of the mill and the sports clubs that use its facilities has become fraught in recent times. This has resulted in, at various points, both the cricket and bowling clubs being denied access to the grounds they play on (Belfast Telegraph, 2014; Ulster Herald, 2014), with a member of the bowling club reporting that the club had been locked out of its green. If the dispute between Sion Mills' sporting clubs and the mill owner is not resolved, then their very existence is under threat.

### ***Consistent approach to 'defining' volunteering***

The question of what constitutes formal and informal volunteering was raised by a number of participants in the research. For example, someone 'helping-out' on an *ad hoc* basis at a local sports or youth club that their child is involved with often would not see themselves as a volunteer, particularly when compared to their neighbour who serves on the management committee of the local community association. Similarly, someone who regularly does the shopping for an elderly neighbour will perceive their own informal volunteering very differently to someone who grits their street on an icy morning. This lack of a common understanding of what it is to be a volunteer, particularly the type of commitment required, can make it difficult to promote and develop volunteering, particularly in neighbourhoods where levels of participation are historically low.

### ***Consistent approach to measuring volunteering***

'Measuring' volunteering also presents a significant methodological challenge. In order to enable benchmarking with other studies, the survey used for this research used questions from the Community Life Survey (formerly the Citizenship Survey) which the Cabinet Office uses to produce a UK wide volunteering benchmark. However, some of these questions are imperfect, yielding responses that are, to a degree, ambiguous and open to interpretation (Gilbertson and Wilson, 2010). It is therefore important to understand what precisely it is you are measuring when you measure levels of formal and informal volunteering, and interpret the data appropriately.

## **4.4. Opportunities for volunteering at the neighbourhood level**

Although this research has been undertaken during a period of considerable social and economic upheaval, the data collected in Short Strand and Sion Mills has highlighted a number of opportunities for volunteering at a neighbourhood level that could provide a focus for the development of volunteering going forward:

- despite the risks identified in the previous section, local people and the social economy organisations and groups that operate at a neighbourhood level have demonstrated considerable resilience that could be further harnessed to develop volunteering in the future
- there are a range of individual and societal benefits associated with high levels of volunteering which highlight the value of promoting, supporting and developing at a local level
- Short Strand and Sion Mills exhibit considerable 'neighbourhood assets', and these could be further developed to enhance the role of volunteers and the social economy at a neighbourhood level going forward

These opportunities are discussed in more detail in the sections below.



## **Resilience**

The social economies in Short Strand and Sion Mills have demonstrated considerable resilience over time and this should stand them in strong stead to face the risks to their sustainability identified in the previous section.

## **The benefits of volunteering**

Volunteering is associated with a range of positive benefits. At an individual level these include health, well-being, self-esteem, and even economic outcomes such as employment and qualifications. At a societal or neighbourhood level these include high levels of community spirit and social capital, and a strong and vibrant social economy. These factors combine to highlight the importance of volunteering, particularly for people in deprived communities, and demonstrate why the promotion, support and development of volunteering is an important policy objective.

## **Maximising neighbourhood assets in higher volunteering areas**

Short Strand and Sion Mills have considerable 'neighbourhood assets' (see Green *et al*, 2005). These can be understood as: fixed capital such as community buildings and sporting facilities; human capital, particularly volunteers and the local knowledge, skills and experience they provide; environmental capital, in the form of neighbourhood spaces and amenity; and social capital, through the strong bonds, trust and understanding that exist between local people. By contrast an effective mix of these assets is less evident in the other case study areas covered by this research.

These assets represent a considerable resource in Short Strand and Sion Mills that could be utilised even more effectively. For example, in Sion Mills (and to some extent in Short Strand as well) there is very little engagement between social economy organisations and the statutory sector and very little funding is provided. As such, opportunities may be being missed to meet the wider needs of local people, particularly in response to deprivation and the wider economic downturn.

## **4.5. Implications for policy and practice**

This final section briefly considers the implications of this learning for policy and practice. In particular, it highlights three messages that can be taken from the research:

- **High levels of volunteering are a good thing for a neighbourhood and residents recognise and value this:** volunteering is strongly associated with community spirit and social capital, both key ingredients of a 'strong community'. This highlights the ongoing importance of policies that seek to promote and develop volunteering at a neighbourhood level
- **A 'one size fits all' approach to volunteering policy development is unlikely to be effective:** policies to promote volunteering should take account of neighbourhood context
  - in neighbourhoods where volunteering is low, or likely to be low, and where the social economy is under-developed, clear volunteering 'pathways' may need to be developed. This may include supporting the development of neighbourhood assets, creating new opportunities to volunteer and developing the infrastructure that promotes the benefits of volunteering and links local people with opportunities to volunteer, including support to participate in those opportunities.



- in neighbourhoods where volunteering is high, and where the social economy is more vibrant, there are possibilities to utilise this vitality more effectively. This may include exploring how the role and function of the social economy can be extended or expanded to meet a wider series of local needs in areas such as health and well-being.
  - in neighbourhoods coming out of conflict, and in which cohesion and social capital have been generated as a result of this, a review of the impact of changing circumstances and new opportunities should be undertaken, including a review of current and potential cross-community activity.
- **Understanding volunteering as a spectrum of activity and participation:** the findings from this research suggest that volunteering and community participation needs to be understood a 'spectrum of formality', extending from clear roles and responsibilities in a registered organisation on side, through irregular or ad hoc involvement helping a local group or club with which you have a personal connection, to helping a neighbour with day to day tasks.

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# Appendix 1: Case Study Neighbourhoods

## A1.1. Introduction

These case study outlines are the beginning of a **work in progress**, to build up the profile of each area as work progresses. All figures used in the profile are from the 2011 Census unless otherwise stated. Five statistical tables are included in section A1.4 of this appendix. Profiles are provided for: the Derry/ Londonderry case study; the Lower Castlereagh neighbourhood of the Inner East Belfast case study; and Erinvale. Maps of all the case study neighbourhoods are provided in A1.5.

## A1.2. The ‘disadvantaged’ areas

### *Inner East Belfast: Lower Castlereagh and Short Strand*

A divided and disadvantaged inner urban area in the city of Belfast, which has been the site of considerable sectarian conflict over the years. The area comprises two areas: Lower Castlereagh and Short Strand, which is profiled in Chapter One.

The Belfast case study is located in the Inner East Belfast area of the city, including Lower Castlereagh and the Short Strand within the Ballymacarrett and The Mount electoral wards (Maps A1.2a/b). Interfaces at Bryson Street/Newtownards Road and Mountpottinger Road/Albertbridge Road have been the site of conflict over the years. The recent protests over a reduction of the flying of the union flag at Belfast City Hall have seen extensive rioting in the area from December 2012 – March 2013.

The Lower Castlereagh area has a population of 3891 in 1897 households. Although considered to be predominantly of Protestant community background, it actually contains 65.54 per cent Protestant and 20.48 per cent Catholic residents, along with the highest proportion in the case study areas claiming to be brought up in no religion (12.59 per cent).<sup>5</sup> 27.04 per cent of households contain dependent children. The area includes part of the Mount electoral ward, which recorded the fourth biggest decrease in the recorded Protestant population between 2001 and 2011.<sup>6</sup>

Housing tenure is 24.15 per cent owner occupation, 43.96 per cent social housing and 25.94 per cent private rented. The built form is low rise and predominantly terraced (whatever the age of the houses), with some semi-detached housing and small apartment blocks. Castlereagh Street, the Albertbridge Road and the Newtownards Road provide local shops and other facilities, and the nearby Connswater Shopping Centre includes many larger shops including supermarkets

<sup>5</sup> A note of caution: this category is commonly acknowledged to be more likely to be used by the Protestant population.

<sup>6</sup> Shuttleworth, I. and Lloyd, C. (2013) Statistical Summary: Ward level religious segregation in Northern Ireland 2001-2011. Unpublished briefing paper for the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council.

and other chain stores selling a wide range of goods. Public transport links to the nearby city centre are also good. The local Avoniel Leisure Centre is currently being refurbished. Unemployment is 7.12 per cent and economic inactivity due to long-term sickness or disability is 9.70 per cent; 38.94 per cent of residents have some kind of long term health condition.

The area includes a number of community groups and initiatives, many church-based such as the new Skainos Centre on the Newtownards Road. The East Belfast Community Development Agency (EBCDA) is about to move into new premises on Templemore Avenue that will include space for new social economy businesses and the historic Templemore Baths has now re-opened as the Templemore Swim and Fitness Centre. However, the area remains blighted by sectarian territorial markings such as murals and flags, to a much greater extent than the other case studies and more so in Lower Castlereagh than in the Short Strand. Community activity in Lower Castlereagh appears fragmented.

### ***Top-of-the-Hill and Irish Street, Waterside, Derry/Londonderry***

A divided and disadvantaged urban area in the city of Derry/Londonderry.

The Derry/Londonderry case study is located in the Waterside area of the city, including Top-of-the-Hill (Gobnascale) and Irish Street within the Clondermot and Victoria electoral wards (Maps A1.3a/b). The area includes an interface along Irish Street at which there are sometimes minor disturbances.

The Top-of-the-Hill area has a population of 1,843 in 716 households and is predominantly of Roman Catholic community background (92.73 per cent). 44.69 per cent of households contain dependent children. Housing tenure is 48.05 per cent owner occupation, 29.05 per cent social housing, and 18.16 per cent private rented. Much of the built form is low to medium rise housing including a number of apartments. There is little green space apart from a park higher up the hill. A school has recently closed. Unemployment is 9.73 per cent and economic inactivity due to long-term sickness or disability is a high 12.59 per cent; 28.97 per cent of residents have some kind of long term health condition. There are several very active community groups and a Community Forum. A large parcel of vacant land exists due to the demolition of a school a few years ago, and a regeneration process for the area was announced recently.<sup>7</sup>

The Irish Street area has a population of 476 in 234 households, and is predominantly of Protestant community background (88.87 per cent). 20.51 per cent of households contain dependent children. Housing tenure is 64.11 per cent owner occupation, 22.22 per cent social housing, and 11.54 per cent private rented. The area is an enclosed estate of mainly semi-detached houses originally built by the Housing Executive, with a small amount of green space and a few shops, most of which are unoccupied. However, shopping facilities are good due to the proximity of the Lisnagelvin Shopping Centre and Crescent Link. Unemployment is 6.32 per cent and economic inactivity due to long-term sickness or disability is again a relatively high 12.07 per cent; 42.23 per cent of residents have some kind of long term health condition. The Irish Street Community Centre occupies a fairly new building in the area but reports difficulty with community engagement.

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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.derrycity.gov.uk/News/Top-of-the-Hill-Regeneration- per centE2 per cent80 per cent93-A-new-plan-for-the-](http://www.derrycity.gov.uk/News/Top-of-the-Hill-Regeneration-per centE2 per cent80 per cent93-A-new-plan-for-the-)

### A1.3. Comparator ‘better off’ case study: Erinvale

A popular suburban area on the outskirts of Belfast.

The comparator ‘better off’ case study, Erinvale, is a suburban area on the outskirts of Belfast, including part of the Finaghy electoral ward (Maps A1.5a/b). Erinvale has a population of 1587 in 688 households and is of predominantly Protestant community background (71.33 per cent) although 3.02 per cent of the population identifies as having an ‘other’ religious background, higher than other case studies. 24.42 per cent of households contain dependent children. Housing tenure is 88.52 per cent owner occupation, 1.75 per cent social housing, and 7.70 per cent private rented. Of the owner occupiers, 41.38 per cent have mortgages. Thus the tenure structure is (intentionally) very different from the other case studies. The built form is mainly semi-detached housing built for sale around 60 years ago, in an area off Finaghy Road South accessed via Erinvale Avenue. The area is popular due to its accessibility to Belfast (including a direct bus route) and also to Lisburn. There are local shops on the main road and good local schools and sporting facilities. Unemployment is low at 2.67 per cent and economic inactivity due to long-term sickness or disability is 3.83 per cent; 33.02 per cent of residents have some kind of long term health condition. There is no community ‘centre’ as such but there are churches, schools, neighbourhood watch and sports clubs nearby.

### A1.4. Case study tables: 2011 Census

**Table A1.1: Religious background**

	<b>Erinvale</b>	<b>Short Strand</b>	<b>Lower Castlereagh</b>	<b>Irish Street</b>	<b>Top-of-the-Hill</b>	<b>Sion Mills</b>
All usual residents (base)	1587	2366	3891	476	1843	2190
Religion or religion brought up in: Catholic ( per cent)	18.97	80.90	20.48	7.35	92.73	60.78
Religion or religion brought up in: Protestant and Other Christian (including Christian related) ( per cent)	71.33	14.88	65.54	88.87	4.67	38.17
Religion or religion brought up in: Other religions ( per cent)	3.02	1.78	1.39	1.05	1.03	0.09
Religion or religion brought up in: None ( per cent)	6.68	2.45	12.59	2.73	1.57	0.96

**Table A1.2: Unemployment, dependents and long-term health conditions**

	<b>Erinvale</b>	<b>Short Strand</b>	<b>Lower Castlereagh</b>	<b>Irish Street</b>	<b>Top-of-the-Hill</b>	<b>Sion Mills</b>
All households (base)	688	1041	1897	234	716	868
No adults in employment in household: With dependent children ( per cent)	5.67	14.22	10.81	5.56	15.08	8.87
No adults in employment in household: Without dependent children ( per cent)	33.58	38.23	38.85	41.88	29.61	34.68
Dependent children in household: All ages ( per cent)	24.42	35.54	27.04	20.51	44.69	33.29
Dependent children in household: Aged 0-4 years ( per cent)	10.76	15.18	13.34	10.68	19.13	12.33
One or more people in household with a long-term health problem or disability: With dependent children ( per cent)	5.38	12.97	8.17	5.98	13.13	12.56
One or more people in household with a long-term health problem or disability: Without dependent children ( per cent)	33.58	37.56	37.01	41.45	28.21	41.94

**Table A1.3: Economic Activity**

	<b>Erinvale</b>	<b>Short Strand</b>	<b>Lower Castlereagh</b>	<b>Irish Street</b>	<b>Top-of-the-Hill</b>	<b>Sion Mills</b>
All usual residents aged 16-74 years (base)	1200	1684	2934	348	1295	1590
Economically active:						
Employee: Part-time: Aged 16-74 years ( per cent)	15.67	14.90	11.90	14.94	13.90	10.31
Economically active:						
Employee: Full-time: Aged 16-74 years ( per cent)	40.58	25.00	33.57	34.48	26.49	29.12
Economically active: Self-employed: Aged 16-74 years ( per cent)	5.50	2.49	2.25	4.60	5.17	8.11
Economically active:						
Unemployed: Aged 16-74 years ( per cent)	2.67	8.25	7.12	6.32	9.73	7.17
Economically active: Full-time student: Aged 16-74 years ( per cent)	3.50	3.44	2.52	2.87	3.71	2.26
Economically inactive: Retired: Aged 16-74 years ( per cent)	21.42	10.63	11.01	16.95	7.49	14.09
Economically inactive: Student (including full-time students): Aged 16-74 years ( per cent)	3.50	6.24	3.85	2.30	8.19	5.35
Economically inactive: Looking after home or family: Aged 16-74 years ( per cent)	1.83	8.08	7.67	3.16	7.34	6.04
Economically inactive: Long-term sick or disabled: Aged 16-74 years ( per cent)	3.83	5.61	9.70	12.07	12.59	13.02
Economically inactive: Other: Aged 16-74 years ( per cent)	1.50	2.04	3.07	2.30	5.41	4.53
Carried out voluntary work: Aged 16-74 years ( per cent)	14.67	3.66	5.24	10.63	10.66	12.14
Unemployed: Aged 16-24 years ( per cent)	0.25	0.74	1.34	1.44	2.93	1.76
Unemployed: Aged 50-74 years ( per cent)	0.83	0.58	0.61	0.86	0.69	0.82
Unemployed: Never worked: Aged 16-74 years ( per cent)	0.08	0.69	0.95	2.01	2.39	1.32
Long-term unemployed: Aged 16-74 years ( per cent)	1.67	1.43	2.17	2.30	4.40	3.33



**Table A1.4: Types of long term health condition**

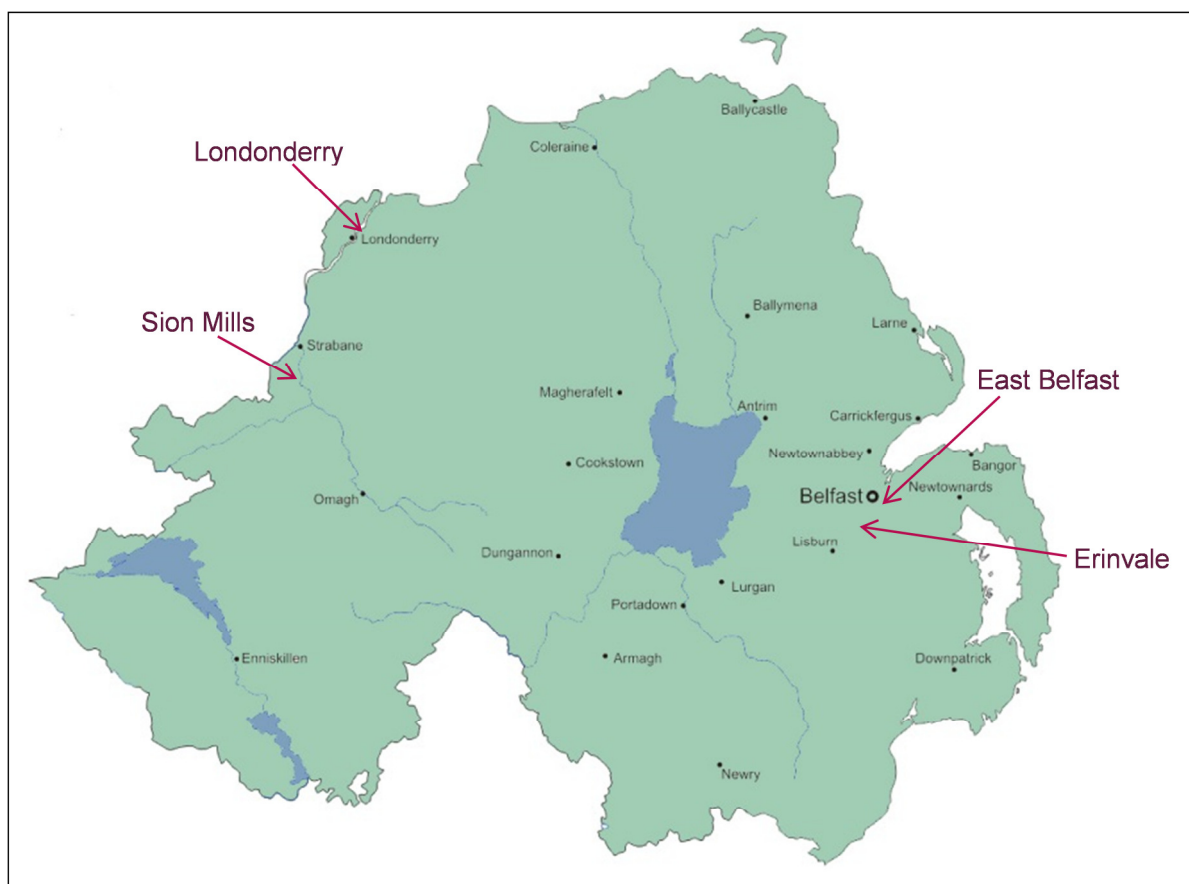
	<b>Erinvale</b>	<b>Short Strand</b>	<b>Lower Castlereagh</b>	<b>Irish Street</b>	<b>Top-of-the-Hill</b>	<b>Sion Mills</b>
All usual residents (base)	1587	2366	3891	476	1843	2190
Type of long-term condition: Deafness or partial hearing loss ( per cent)	6.93	4.61	6.19	8.40	4.07	6.07
Type of long-term condition: Blindness or partial sight loss ( per cent)	2.33	2.07	2.31	2.73	2.06	2.69
Type of long-term condition: Communication difficulty ( per cent)	1.01	2.58	1.62	2.10	1.36	3.01
Type of long-term condition: A mobility or dexterity difficulty ( per cent)	13.36	14.92	15.52	18.70	10.42	16.39
Type of long-term condition: A learning, intellectual, social or behavioural difficulty ( per cent)	1.95	3.59	3.52	2.52	2.17	2.79
Type of long-term condition: An emotional, psychological or mental health condition ( per cent)	4.85	10.31	10.18	9.66	8.68	9.63
Type of long-term condition: Long-term pain or discomfort ( per cent)	10.96	12.76	12.77	14.29	8.30	14.57
Type of long-term condition: Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing ( per cent)	8.25	11.67	12.80	9.87	8.84	12.24
Type of long-term condition: Frequent periods of confusion or memory loss ( per cent)	1.51	2.32	2.72	2.94	1.68	2.33
Type of long-term condition: A chronic illness ( per cent)	7.94	7.99	7.92	10.29	5.48	8.95
Type of long-term condition: Other condition ( per cent)	6.11	5.96	5.42	7.35	3.96	5.98
Type of long-term condition: No condition ( per cent)	66.98	62.72	61.06	57.77	71.03	60.59

**Table A1.5: Housing Tenure**

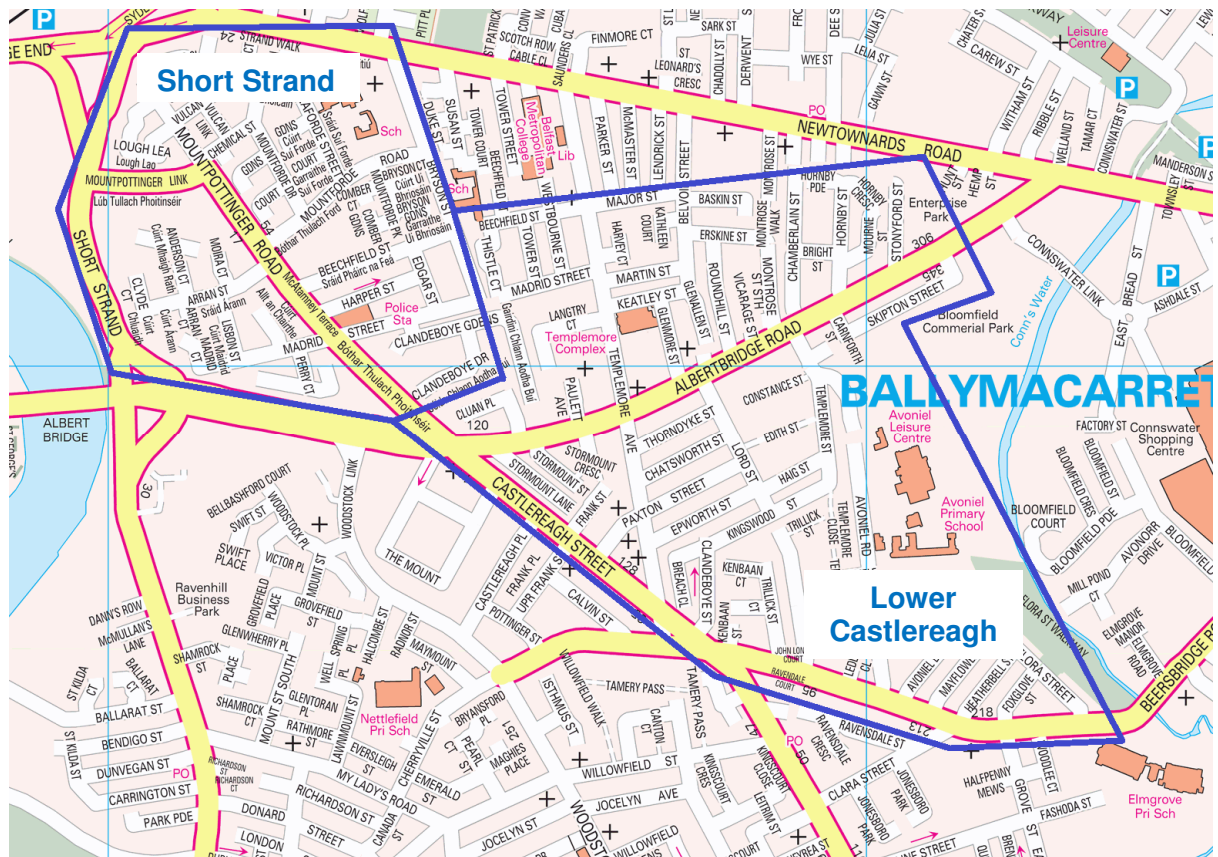
	Erinvale	Short Strand	Lower Castlereagh	Irish Street	Top-of-the-Hill	Sion Mills
All households (base)	688	1041	1897	234	716	868
Owner occupied: Owns outright ( per cent)	51.89	14.51	9.86	35.90	12.71	32.26
Owner occupied: Owns with a mortgage or loan ( per cent)	36.63	21.71	14.29	28.21	35.34	28.69
Shared ownership ( per cent)	0.44	0.38	0.74	0.00	0.70	0.58
Rented from: Northern Ireland Housing Executive ( per cent)	0.73	29.78	39.48	22.22	27.65	14.98
Rented from: Housing association or charitable trust ( per cent)	1.02	18.25	4.48	0.00	1.40	4.38
Rented from: Private landlord or letting agency ( per cent)	7.70	10.76	25.94	11.54	18.16	12.90
Rented from: Other ( per cent)	1.02	1.44	0.90	0.43	1.26	2.07
Lives rent free ( per cent)	0.58	3.17	4.32	1.71	2.79	4.15

## A1.5. Case Study Maps

**Map A1.1: The location of each case study neighbourhood in Northern Ireland**

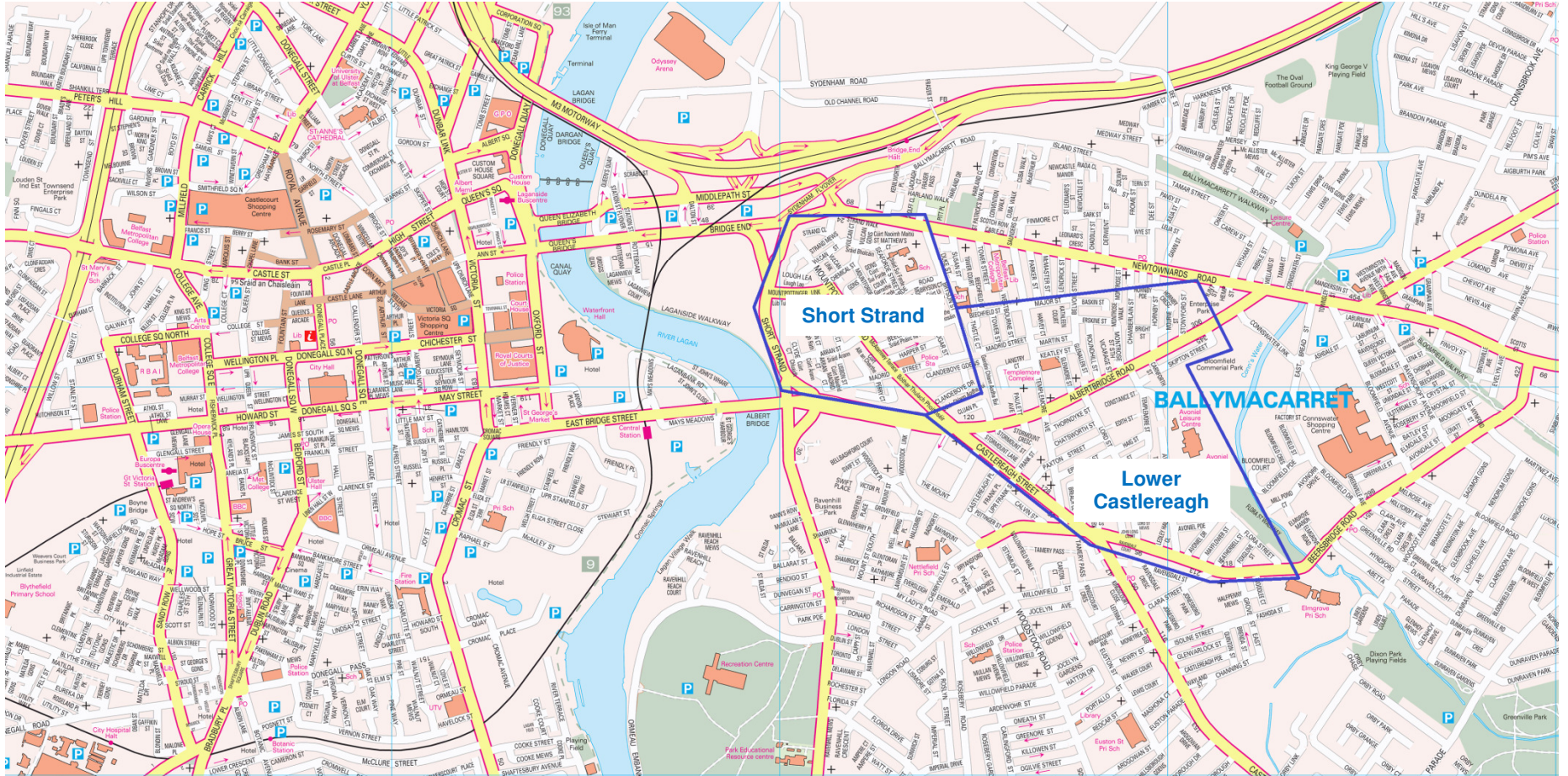


**Map A1.2a: East Belfast: Short Strand and Lower Castlereagh - neighbourhood scale**



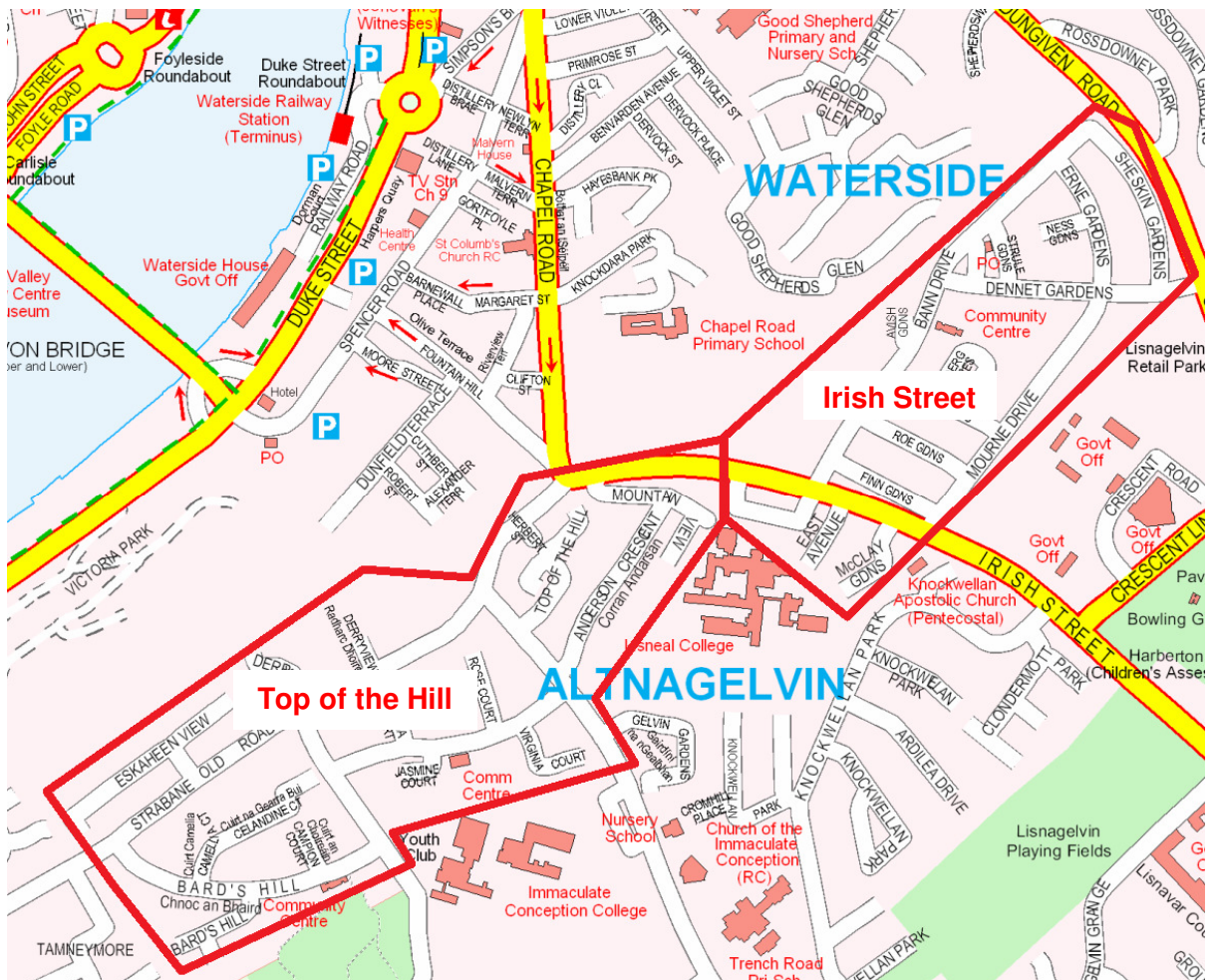


Map A1.2b: East Belfast: Short Strand and Lower Castlereagh - city scale



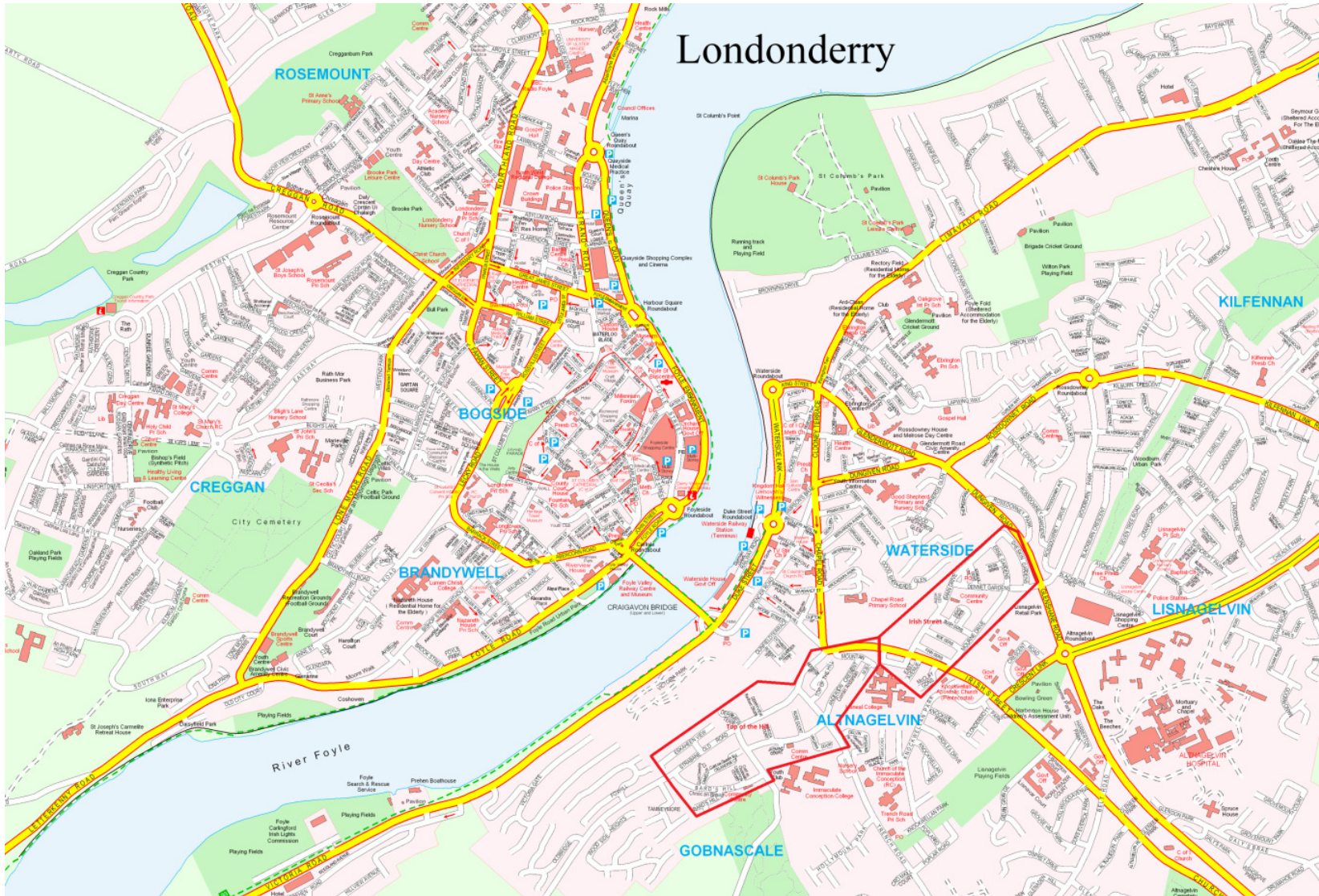


**Map A1.3a: Derry/Londonderry: Top-of-the-Hill and Irish Street - neighbourhood scale**





Map A1.3b: Derry/Londonderry: Top-of-the-Hill and Irish Street - wider scale



Map A1.4a: Sion Mills- neighbourhood scale

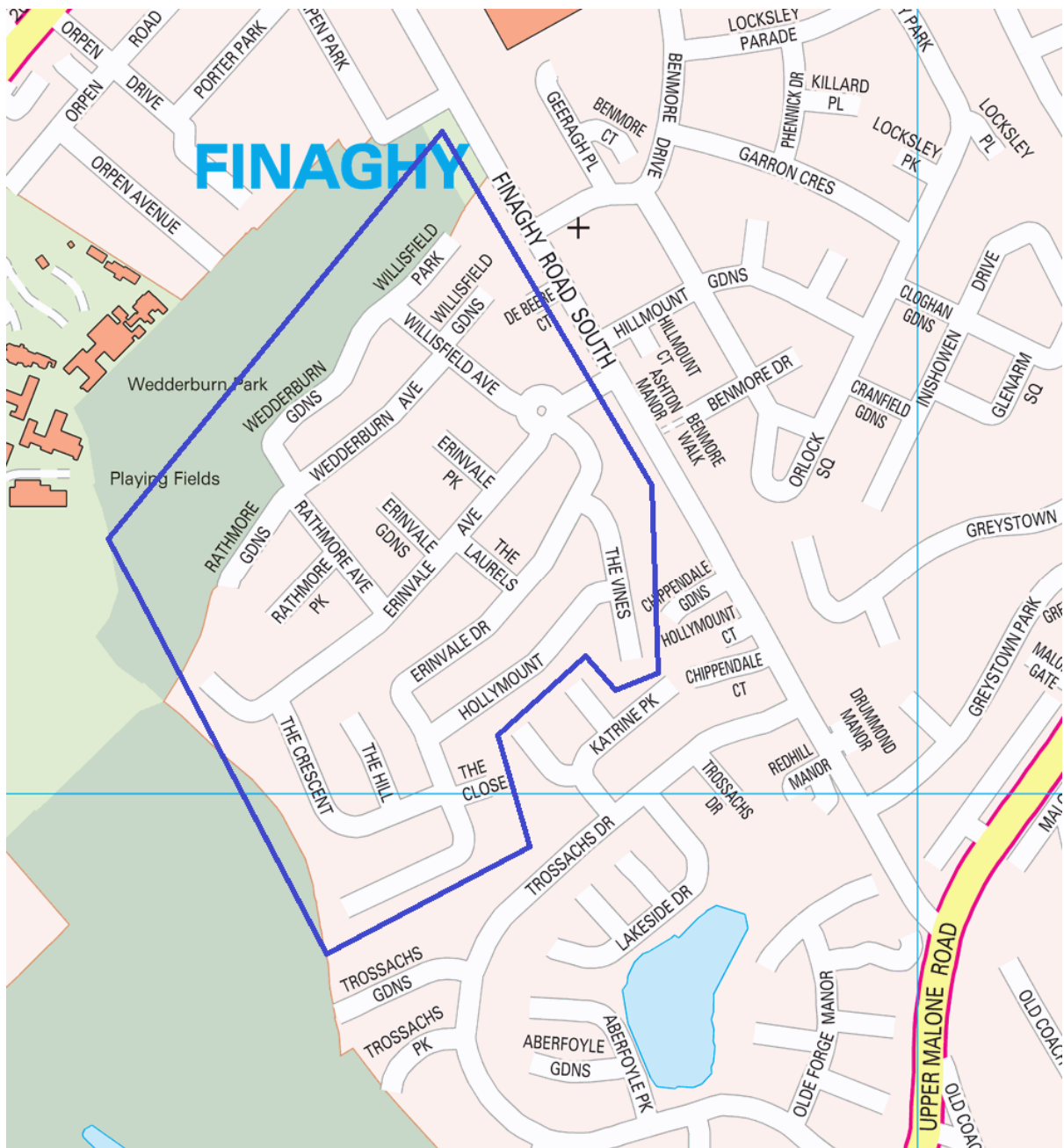




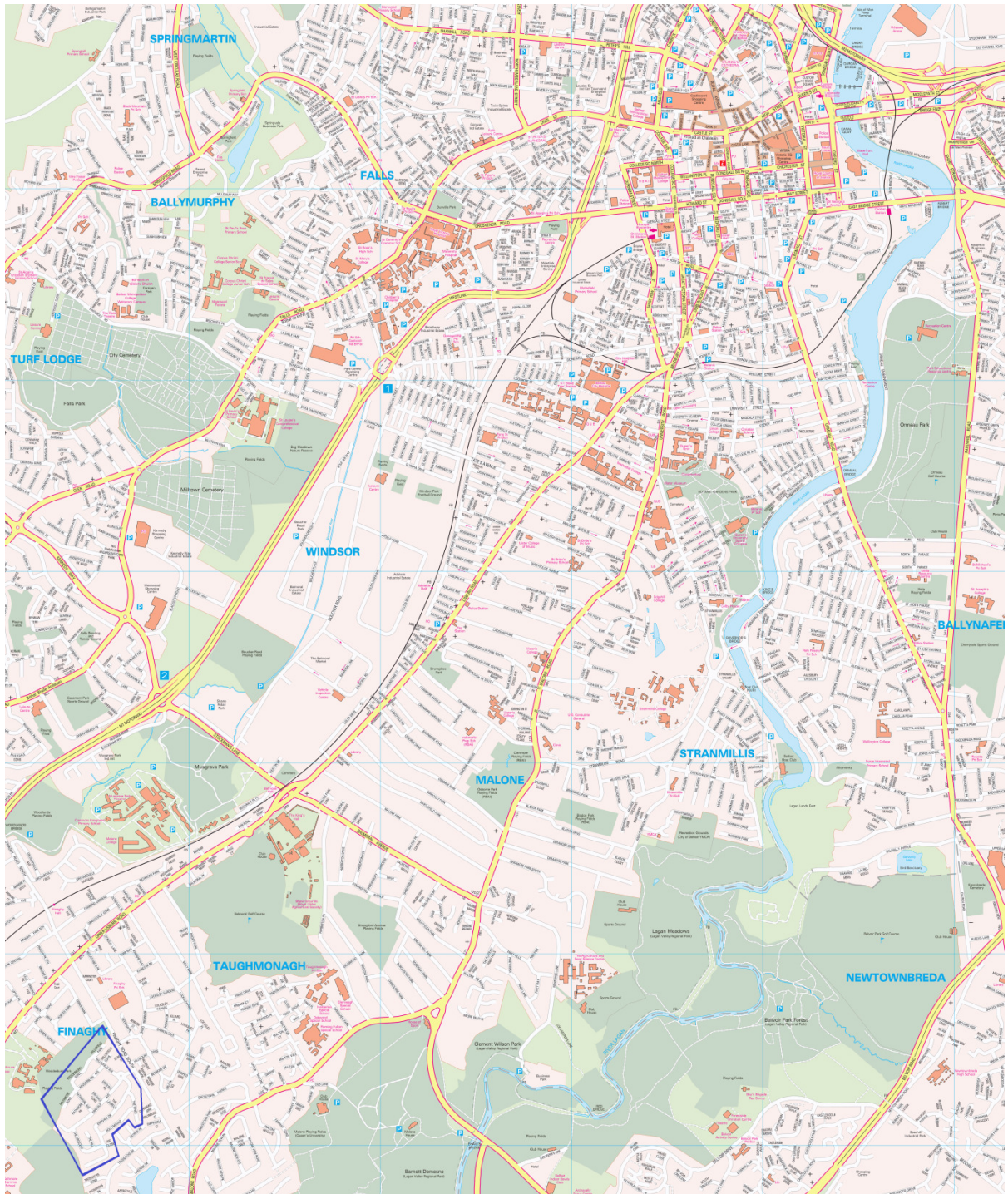
This is a detailed topographic map of the Strabane area in Northern Ireland. The map shows the town of Strabane, Carricklee Hill, and Sion Mills. Key features include the Moy River, several reservoirs, and a network of roads including the A5 and B72. Landmarks such as the Rec Centre, Golf Centre, and various schools are marked. The map also shows contour lines and a grid system.



Map A1.5a: Erinvale - neighbourhood scale



Map A1.5b: Erinvale - wider scale



# Appendix 2: Logistic Regression Model Data



Table A2.1: Factors (covariates) explored through logistic regression

Variable Type	Variable Name	Variable Category
Respondent demographics	Age	16-29
		30-59
		60 and over
	Gender	Male
		Female
	Formal qualifications	At least one formal qualification
		No formal qualifications
	Disability or long term illness	Self-reported disability/illness
		No disability/illness reported



Household characteristics	Religious composition	Catholic
		Protestant
		Other (inc mixed)
	Socio-economic group (SEG)	ABC1
		C2DE
	Housing Tenure	Owner occupier
		Social renter
		Other
	Household receiving universal means tested benefits (UMBR)	In receipt of UMBR
		Not in receipt of UMBR
	Household with dependent children	Dependent children
		No dependent children
Health and well-being	Self-reported health	Lone parent
		Not lone parent
	Household experienced a financial shock	Financial shock
		No financial shock
Social and community	Trust in neighbours	Poor
		Not poor
	Subjective well-being (life satisfaction)	Low (6 or less)
		Medium-high (7-10)
	Trust in neighbours	Many/some can be trusted
		A few/none can be trusted
	Feel local people pull together	Agree
		Do not agree
Social and community	Feel local people share the same values	Agree
		Do not agree
	Neighbourhood belonging	Strong
		Not strong

**Table A2.2a: Understanding formal volunteering: all areas**

Variables with a strong association with volunteering	Significance <sup>i</sup>	Wald <sup>ii</sup>
Age	0.016	8.226
Formal qualifications	0.031	4.659
Dependent children in household	0.012	6.352
Neighbourhood belonging	0.006	7.465
Feel local people share the same values	0.025	5.012

<sup>i</sup> This provides an indication of the likelihood that a the influence attributable to this variable can occur by chance. If this value is below 0.05 it can be considered significant.

<sup>ii</sup> This provides of the strength of this association and its overall importance to the model

**Table A2.2b: Understanding formal volunteering: Short Strand**

Variables with a strong association with volunteering	Significance <sup>i</sup>	Wald <sup>ii</sup>
Socio-economic group	0.009	6.878
Dependent children in household	0.024	5.067
Disability or long term illness	0.028	4.820

<sup>i</sup> This provides an indication of the likelihood that a the influence attributable to this variable can occur by chance. If this value is below 0.05 it can be considered significant.

<sup>ii</sup> This provides of the strength of this association and its overall importance to the model

**Table A2.2c: Understanding formal volunteering: Sion Mills**

Variables with a strong association with volunteering	Significance <sup>i</sup>	Wald <sup>ii</sup>
Gender	0.009	6.792
Age	0.043	6.275
Dependent children in household	0.006	7.576
Trust in neighbours	0.035	4.458

<sup>i</sup> This provides an indication of the likelihood that a the influence attributable to this variable can occur by chance. If this value is below 0.05 it can be considered significant.

<sup>ii</sup> This provides of the strength of this association and its overall importance to the model

**Table A2.3a: Understanding informal volunteering: all areas**

Variables with a strong association with volunteering	Significance <sup>i</sup>	Wald <sup>ii</sup>
Gender	0.033	4.549
Age	0.000	16.756
Religion	0.045	6.182
Formal qualifications	0.043	4.088
Housing tenure	0.063	5.529
Self-reported health	0.005	7.810
Trust in neighbours	0.049	3.888
Feel local people share the same values	0.091	2.848

<sup>i</sup> This provides an indication of the likelihood that a the influence attributable to this variable can occur by chance. If this value is below 0.05 it can be considered significant.

<sup>ii</sup> This provides of the strength of this association and its overall importance to the model

**Table A2.3b: Understanding informal volunteering: Short Strand**

Variables with a strong association with volunteering	Significance <sup>i</sup>	Wald <sup>ii</sup>
Age	0.051	5.941
Self-reported health	0.039	4.277
Trust in neighbours	0.022	5.238

<sup>i</sup> This provides an indication of the likelihood that a the influence attributable to this variable can occur by chance. If this value is below 0.05 it can be considered significant.

<sup>ii</sup> This provides of the strength of this association and its overall importance to the model

**Table A2.3c: Understanding informal volunteering: Sion Mills**

Variables with a strong association with volunteering	Significance <sup>i</sup>	Wald <sup>ii</sup>
Age	0.017	8.173
Religion	0.096	4.691
Housing tenure	0.032	6.881
Self-reported health	0.040	4.225

<sup>i</sup> This provides an indication of the likelihood that a the influence attributable to this variable can occur by chance. If this value is below 0.05 it can be considered significant.

<sup>ii</sup> This provides of the strength of this association and its overall importance to the model

*Understanding higher levels of volunteering: the case of Short Strand and Sion Mills*

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