

Ionaid Phobail in Eirinn

COMMUNITY CENTRES IN IRELAND

**A report prepared for Muintir na Tíre in association
with Dublin County Council and the Youth
Employment Agency.**

An Foras Forbartha

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Readers should note that the functions of the Youth Employment Agency were transferred to FAS, the National Training and Employment Authority, on its establishment on 1 January 1988.

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SUMMARY

The findings reported here are based on a questionnaire survey of community centres, visits to carefully selected centres, discussion with the management committees of these and other centres, and written submissions by Muintir na Tire and other interested parties.

The Principal Conclusions of this report are:

- Many centres are successful, and contributions of immense value, at low cost, are made by management committees to their communities and society.
- During the planning phase, insufficient attention is given to the future management, maintenance, furnishings and equipment requirements of centres, their financial viability and existing facilities and competing activities.
- The standard of centre design is low, in many cases the design is based on a particular type of industrialised system building rather than the needs of the community.
- More account needs to be taken of the social context and scale of operation when designing organisational and management systems.
- Even successful centres, managed by dedicated committees, often lack public support as expressed by levels of attendance at AGMs and willingness to accept responsibility.

The Principal Recommendations are:

- Some unit or agency should have responsibility for providing advice on the planning, design and management of community centres and grants should be conditional on consulting with this body.
- When planning centres it is vital to undertake a needs assessment in order to generate an informed dialogue between the development committee and all intended users.
- Community facilities should be provided within a hierarchical and regional framework. In overall the scale of provision should be proportionate to the population base.
- More attention should be given to organisational and management structures taking account of the social context and scale of operation.
- Consideration should be given to the election of management committees on the basis of secret ballots and constituencies.

