



Northside  
Partnership



Dublin North West  
Area Partnership

*Meeting Local Needs*

# North Dublin Joint Partnership Submission to DCU Strategic Plan 2018-2022



Social Inclusion &  
Community Activation  
Programme



Ireland's European Structural and  
Investment Funds Programmes  
2014-2020

Co-funded by the Irish Government  
and the European Union



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Northside Partnership (NSP) and Dublin North West Area Partnership (DNWAP) deliver a variety of programmes designed to address disadvantage and promote social inclusion in North Dublin City. Both companies focus their efforts on areas that experience entrenched socio-economic disadvantage and underrepresentation at third level. Both companies liaise and work with a variety of stakeholders such as state agencies, education providers, community organisations and employers to enhance opportunities for participation of local people in education and gaining employment.

Considering the importance of DCU in the field of third level education on Dublin's northside and beyond and following the incorporation of St Patrick's with DCU, creating the biggest education focused university nationally, providing courses for training at all levels — both Partnerships would like to encourage DCU's Strategic Plan to consider measures that will:

- address factors leading to increasing low participation rates in third level education;
- support people from structurally disadvantaged areas in North Dublin in accessing further and third level education;
- assist Partnerships in developing an approach that will facilitate the transition of students into paid jobs on completion of their studies;
- Increase awareness of and address inequality of access to third level education at policy level.
- Further build on the long and active relationship between the two Partnerships and DCU.

Students from low income families, from areas affected by structural disadvantage and from the lower end of socio-economic categories used by the Central Statistics Office have low participation rates in third level education. The National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019 details the differences in participation between some Dublin postal districts. This report highlights for example, in terms of third level education, Dublin 17 (15%) and Dublin 11 (28%) lag considerably behind the Dublin average (47%). We know that some individual schools in our catchment area have participation rates as low as 8%.

### **Interventions needed at a local level: Key priority issues agreed by the Boards of both NSP and DNWAP**

Both Partnerships acknowledge that through both DCU's Access Service and DCU in the Community some issues are already being addressed, while Northside Partnership welcomes the recent significant HEA funding award it has been involved with, together with DCU's Educational Disadvantage Centre and other local stakeholders, to establish community outreach lifelong learning hubs in the Darndale and Kilbarrack areas. This builds on the collaboration between Northside's Challenger Programme and the Educational Disadvantage Centre over a number of years. DNWAP also acknowledges the support of the DCU Educational Disadvantage Centre through its participation on the DNWAP (and prior to this Tolka Area Partnership) Board, through the Board Membership of Paul Downes (2009-2016) and Geraldine Scanlon (2017). Against this backdrop, we would welcome strengthening the development of regional and community partnership strategies for increasing access to higher education - in line with priority Goal 5 of the National Access Plan.



NSP and DNWAP discussed the issue of education inequality and agreed on a number of aspects and challenges that could benefit from inclusion in DCU's next strategic plan and that would have a positive impact on third level participation rates in local areas affected by disadvantage:

- 1. Third Level Access Programme** – The Third Level Access Programme would be a one year full-time preparation for higher education programme at DCU. The programme would prepare students personally and academically to pursue undergraduate programmes at DCU. It is a multi-disciplinary programme preparing students for entry into undergraduate programmes. Students who have successfully completed the programme should be guaranteed an offer of one of their DCU CAO undergraduate course choices.
- 2. Strengthen links from Further Education (FE) courses to Higher Education** – Pathways from further education to higher education must be improved to broaden opportunities for entry to higher education, meet national skills needs and support regional development. From our experience, students from our communities tend to gravitate towards the further education sector to continue their education journey after school. Stronger links and concrete pathways with local FE colleges would enhance the progression of students from our catchment area to DCU. This ties in with The National Plan for **Equity of Access** to Higher Education 2015-2019 Goal 4.4: To build coherent pathways from further education and to foster other entry routes to higher education.
- 3. Foundation programme for primary teaching** - The Primary Teacher Foundation Programme would be a one year full-time preparation for Primary Teacher Training programmes at DCU. Focusing on the Irish Component required for Primary Teaching would be welcomed, also considering the possibility of looking at alternatives to the Irish requirement to get accepted to Primary School Teaching. A key issue here is to offer more flexible Irish language entry requirements for applicants from the local target area, so that the focus is on students' standard of Irish upon leaving university rather than upon entry. This is a key issue if the university is serious about prioritising access to the primary teaching profession for students from some of the most marginalised areas in the country in DCU's local surrounding area.
- 4. Reduced points for students from key priority districts/ethnic backgrounds within local Partnership areas** - A number of years ago, the National College of Ireland had an initiative where students were accepted onto a degree programme with reduced points in their Leaving Certificate if their family lived inside the Partnership catchment area. The same initiative also supported mature students whose residence was located within the Partnership's catchment area. This initiative could also be linked to the Traveller community as a means to facilitate access for Travellers into Third Level. This initiative could be replicated by DCU in order to support families across our catchment areas.
- 5. Collaboration with NSP and DNWAP** – Both Partnerships agree that DCU offer initiatives in the local communities that give young people and adults an incentive to access DCU or



University in the future. Aspiration raising programmes such as the links with the Challenger Programme need to be added to and reinforced.

6. **Communiversities** – Build on existing courses in local communities with DCU and Partnerships. The Northside Partnership currently runs the Communiversities programme in conjunction with NUI Maynooth and Dublin City Council Library Service. The Communiversities programme offers adults the opportunity to participate in a free university course, which is delivered in their local library - without the need to do exams or projects. The Modules could include areas that are linked to DCU degree programmes. The delivery style is discussion-driven, using adult education methodologies that are tailored to suit the demands of each participant.
7. **Reduced costs for attendees at Centre for Talented Youth** - Communities from our catchment areas that are characterised by entrenched socio-economic disadvantage and underrepresentation of people at third level should be supported in overcoming barriers associated with participation in third level education. We would recommend a fee reduction for the Centre for Talented Youth in addition to the Centre for Academic Achievement after school classes.
8. **The following measures could also overcome barriers**
  - Workshops in the community or part in the community/part on DCU campus
  - Make facilities available to community groups from the Finglas/Cabra/Ballymun/Darndale/Coolock/Kilbarrack local area, including free access to events at the Helix for such groups
  - Host community events at the Helix
  - Encourage community groups/ voluntary organisations to collaborate with student volunteers through the dedicated student volunteer website; studentvolunteer.ie
  - Parents events for local communities to raise expectations locally both for traditional and mature students
  - Access to sports facilities
9. **Teacher training** - workshops in academic aspirations. Students who have successfully participated in higher education often reflect on the role that an individual teacher played in providing them with the support they needed to realise their educational aspirations. Since teachers play a critical role in shaping student's educational experience and ambitions, it is vital to ensure that the role model function of teachers is acknowledged and supported through relevant continuing professional development (CPD) programmes. If DCU could provide post-primary teacher training workshops (CPD) to teachers in some of our most disadvantaged schools on the northside of Dublin, it would have a positive impact.

From working in the communities on Dublin's northside for over 20 years, both Northside Partnership (NSP) and Dublin North West Area Partnership (DNWAP) gained experience and insights in terms of how local realities impact on people's progression opportunities into education or work



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or both. A significant number of people live in areas characterised by high unemployment rates, low educational attainment levels and poor public services; in our experience, acknowledging that wider structural forces are at play that re-inforce disadvantage in communities, targeted interventions have had a positive impact on enhancing access to and progression in education.

There already exists, between the partnerships and DCU, a long standing relationship via Nordubco's Management Committee which has acted as an external advisory panel to the university's community engagement strategy. Re-invigorating this relationship involving Directors and staff of the two companies and senior staff across DCU would be a useful development. The partnerships remain open to collaborating with all stakeholders in the region.

NSP and DNWAP appreciate this opportunity to explore some of the interventions with DCU that we believe could make a positive impact on education in our communities. We hope that you consider some of our proposals, which are based on our experience at the local level, in the next DCU Strategic Plan.

Both Partnerships would welcome the opportunity to work close with DCU in order to maximise the number of young people and adults attending university and providing supports for people to successfully achieve their qualifications. We would be very interested to meet with senior representatives of DCU to further explore these options in the context of DCU's forthcoming strategic plan and its commitment to engagement with local communities, including a discussion on the development of indicators that could measure progress made by the interventions that we suggested.



## Appendix:

### Background to the Northside Partnership and Dublin North West Area Partnership Companies

Northside Partnership and Dublin North West Area Partnership are local development companies tasked to address social exclusion and poverty in areas affected by structural disadvantage. They are primarily funded by government departments and state agencies to deliver programmes and actions to work at local levels to deliver agreed outcomes. The Partnerships are companies limited by guarantee and have charitable status. Both companies are also registered charities.

The Partnerships were established in 1991 and operate in the Dublin North Central administrative area of Dublin City Council and the Dublin North West administrative area respectively. The key activities include matching people to employment, assisting individuals to become self-employed, addressing educational disadvantage and progressing individuals to higher and further education, community and local development, active and positive parenting and engagement with organisations to improve their capacity to deliver much needed services into local communities.

The combined companies of NSP and DNWAP have a staff of approximately 125 people and both operate a TÚS programme with circa 360 participants in total. The Board of each Company is drawn from four sectors, namely, Social Partners, Community and Voluntary, Local Government and the State. The Companies work with a partnership ethos, working with different bodies, agencies, public representatives, community organisations and interested parties to resolve problems and address social exclusion. The Company is subject to the Companies Act 2014 and the Charities Act 2009. Both Partnerships have committed to the Governance Code Journey.



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