

## **Areema Community Audit**

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#### **Executive Summary**

In the spring of 2006, the Institute for Conflict Research (ICR) conducted a community audit of the Areema estate, which formed part of a larger piece of research that was being conducted in the area. All houses in the Areema and Oakvale areas were surveyed, with one questionnaire distributed per household. Residents of the area completed a total of 121 questionnaires out of 230 that were distributed, a response rate of 53%.

The survey recorded that 49% of respondents identified themselves as coming from a Catholic community background, 26% from a Protestant community background, and 18% from a mixed community background. Protestant respondents were more likely to be older than their Catholic counterparts, with 43% of respondents from a Protestant community background being over 60 years old compared to 16% from a mixed community background, and 13% of respondents from a Catholic community background.

A significant majority of respondents felt that Areema was a good place to live, with only 2% strongly disagreeing. The main reasons cited for staying in the area were the good location of the estate (60%), a perception of the area as friendly (45%), and the perceived lack of paramilitary activity in the area (45%).

The majority of respondents believed that the area was mixed in terms of community background (59%), however this figure was higher among Catholic respondents (70%), than respondents from a Protestant (54%), or mixed community background (50%).

The area has become increasingly owner occupied in recent years, with just 10% of residents who have moved into the area in the last year renting from the Housing Executive (NIHE) compared to 50% only 6-10 years ago. Catholic respondents were more likely to be more recent arrivals to the area, with 76% of arrivals in the last 1-5

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years coming from a Catholic community background, 18% from a mixed background, and only 3% from a Protestant community background.

The most concern in the area appeared to revolve around perceived anti-social behaviour and crime, such as damage/vandalism (57%), burglary/theft (48%), and underage drinking (47%). Respondents did not appear to be particularly concerned with issues around sectarianism or cultural manifestations, with only 17% of respondents very concerned at the prospect of parade violence, and similarly only 10% were very concerned at issues around flags.

The highest rated services in the area were deemed to be education and health provision, which were rated to be good by 27% and 26% of respondents respectively. The poorest rated services were identified as senior citizens' facilities and facilities for young people, which were deemed to be poor by 55% and 65% of respondents respectively.

The majority of respondents had heard of the work of the Areema Residents' Association (63%), with 25% not aware of the specific nature of their work, and a further 6% saying that they had never heard of the Residents' Association at all. The most popular activity organised by the Association was the summer festival, which 31% of respondents indicated that they or someone from their household had taken part in. However, 50% of respondents stated that they had never taken part in any organised activities. The majority of respondents felt that the Association should focus their resources on organising activities for young people (36%), with several residents also believing that the Associations' work could be improved by greater transparency and openness to new members, and conducting more work in the Oakvale area.

## **1. Introduction**

This report documents research conducted in the Areema area between January and May 2006. The report provides a description of the research procedures and contains a summary of the main findings.

### **1.1 Background**

In the autumn of 2005, the Institute for Conflict Research (ICR) contacted the Areema Residents' Association to discuss the possibility of conducting a community audit of the area to begin in 2006, this would form part of a larger piece of research that ICR was conducting in the area.

### **1.2 Methodology**

The Community Audit was designed to establish the basic demographics of Areema, since reliable census statistics for the area are difficult to obtain, and to also assess community attitudes and concerns. It was also felt by the Residents' Association that the work would provide an invaluable opportunity for an assessment of how they and their work were perceived in the local community. The Audit was to consist of a household survey distributed to each house in the Areema and Oakvale areas, leading to 230 questionnaires being distributed and 121 completed questionnaires collected by ICR staff. The survey data was subsequently processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The report is based upon the findings of the 121 completed questionnaires (a response rate of 53%).

## 2. Survey Findings

The following section highlights the main findings of the questionnaire. The survey contained 21 questions, with the first section relating to demographics and the second section relating to community attitudes and perceptions of the area, services in the surrounding areas, and relationships within the community.

### 2.1 Demographic Information

The survey began by asking respondents how many people over the age of 18 lived in their household. This indicated that a total of 277 people lived in the 121 households that completed the survey. The data recorded that 55% of residents were females over the age of 18 years, and 45% were males over the age of 18 years. The largest number of respondents (49%) stated that they were from a Catholic community background, 26% were from the Protestant community, 18% were of mixed community background, while a further 4% were of “Other” community background. The survey also asked respondents how many persons in the household were under the age of 18. Table 1 shows the demographic pattern that emerged for the local population.

Table 1: Age Breakdown of residents

Age	Number of residents	% of residents
0-18	70	25
18-24	28	10
25-29	17	6
30-44	83	30
45-59	29	11
60+	50	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>100</b>

NB: The total number of 277 individuals appears to be at odds with the 121 questionnaire responses. However, one person per household responded for all those individuals living within their household.

Of the age groups, the largest was those between 30 and 44 years (30%), with a quarter (25%) of identified residents being under 18 years of age. A further 18% of

residents were over 60 years old, while only 6% of residents were between the ages of 25-29. Interestingly, the survey highlighted that Protestant residents were significantly older than their Catholic counterparts, with 43% of Protestant adults over 60 years of age, compared to 13% of Catholic residents and 16% of respondents from a mixed community background.

The largest age group for under 18 year olds was the 6-10 year old age group (28%), followed by the 1-5 year old group (24%). However, there were also a large number of teenagers in the area, with 43% of young people between 11-18 years old. Young males were more likely to be younger teenagers aged between 11-14 than young females (15% compared to 7%), with young females more likely to be older teenagers between the ages of 15-18 (13% compared to 8%).

In the following sub-sections, the survey tables and statistics refer only to information regarding the individual who completed the survey.

The survey highlighted that the area has become increasingly owner occupied in recent years, with the numbers of Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) tenants decreasing in proportion from 50% 6-10 years ago, to just 10% for those who have moved into the area in the last year. As Table 2 illustrates, in total 59% of respondents owned their own homes, with a further 35% renting their accommodation from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). Only 3% of respondents rented from a private landlord, while only 1% rented from a Housing Association. A further 1% were in co-ownership of their home.

Table 2: Accommodation

	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
Owned	71	59
Rent (private landlord)	3	3
Rent (Housing Executive)	42	35
Co-ownership	1	1
Rent (Housing Association)	1	1

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Respondents were subsequently asked how long they had lived in Areema. Table 3 documents the responses. The majority of respondents (70%) had lived in the area for at least 6 years, with 30% having lived in Areema for more than 11 years and 17% having lived there ‘always’.

Table 3: Length of residency in the area

Length of residency	Number of respondents	% of respondents
Less than 1 year	10	8
1-5 years	25	21
6-10 years	28	23
11 years or more	36	30
Always	20	17

Table 3 also highlights that 29% of respondents had moved into the area within the past 5 years. Furthermore, of those who had moved into Areema in the last 1-5 years, 76% came from a Catholic community background, 18% of a mixed community background, and only 3% from a Protestant community background.

### 2.2 Occupational background

Each household was asked to specify the occupation of everyone in their household over the age of 18. The largest number of respondents (39%) said that they worked full-time, with a further 9% working part-time. A total of 20% of respondents were retired, with 7% of respondents indicating that they were homemakers, and a further 7% were unemployed. There were 6% of respondents in Further Education, with 4% at university, and 1% currently on a training course.

Table 4: How many people in your house over 18 are currently?

	Number of respondents	% of respondents
Employed Full Time	74	39
Retired	39	20
Employed Part time	18	9
Homemaker	14	7
Unemployed	13	7
Further Education	12	6
Other	12	6
University	7	4
Training	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>99</b>

Technical note: The percentages given in the tables have been rounded up to the nearest whole number, and thus may not add up to 100%. Missing responses have been excluded, so base numbers may not always be consistent.

### 2.3 Perceptions of Areema

All respondents were asked whether they liked living in the area. The general perception was that respondents liked living in the area. Only 14% of respondents disagreed that Areema was a good place in which to live, and only 2% strongly disagreed with this statement.

Table 5: Areema is a good place to live?

	Number of respondents	% of respondents
Strongly agree	31	26
Agree	65	54
Disagree	17	14
Strongly Disagree	2	2

Technical note: The percentages given in the tables have been rounded up to the nearest whole number, and thus may not add up to 100%. Missing responses have been excluded, so base numbers may not always be consistent.

Participants were subsequently asked whether they perceived the Areema area to be a mixed area, or more generally affiliated with one community or the other. The majority of respondents felt that the area was mixed (59%), although this figure was

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significantly higher among Catholic respondents (70%), than Protestant respondents (53%) and respondents from a mixed community background (50%).

Table 6: Perceptions of Areema

	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
Mixed	71	59
Mostly Catholic	38	31
Don't know	8	7
Mostly Protestant	0	0

**Technical note:** The percentages given in the tables have been rounded up to the nearest whole number, and thus may not add up to 100%. Missing responses have been excluded, so base numbers may not always be consistent.

Respondents were then asked why they stayed in the area, rather than move elsewhere, with respondents allowed to select more than one reason. As Table 7 indicates, the main reason that residents cited for remaining in the area was the good location of Areema (60%), with a further 45% stating that the friendly character of the area and lack of paramilitary activity (45%) were other reasons for staying. The perception in some quarters of the area as being mixed in terms of community background was suggested by 31% as persuading them to stay in the area.

Table 7: What reasons are there for staying in Areema?

	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
Good location	73	60
Friendly area	54	45
Lack of paramilitary activity	54	45
Religious make up of the area	38	31
Access to facilities	30	25
Affordable house prices	26	22
Family connections	25	21
Schools/Services	25	21
Always lived here	23	19
Other	9	7



## 2.4 Community concerns

The second section of the survey addressed the concerns of local residents. The findings indicate that the major concerns for residents are associated with anti-social behaviour and crime, rather than any activities associated with a sectarian element (Table 8).

Table 8: Community Concerns

	<b>Very concerned (%)</b>	<b>Concerned (%)</b>	<b>Not concerned (%)</b>	<b>Did not answer (%)</b>
Damage/Vandalism	57	18	8	17
Burglary/Theft	48	22	7	23
Underage Drinking	47	26	6	21
Teens causing a nuisance	46	26	9	19
Dog-fouling/Litter	45	27	6	22
Drugs	43	23	12	22
Joyriding	40	22	8	30
Attacks on elderly	37	16	18	29
Graffiti	30	33	10	27
Attacks on young people	25	24	14	37
Noise	22	16	26	36
Paramilitary activity	21	15	22	42
Car parking facilities	20	18	26	36
Parade violence	17	12	27	44
Fighting with police	17	15	27	41
Street lighting	12	21	26	41
Traffic	12	19	27	42
Flags	10	12	34	44

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The two main issues that residents identified as being ‘very concerned’ about were damage/vandalism (57%), and burglary/theft (48%). However, perceptions of incidents of anti-social behaviour by young people were also a significant concern, with only 6% of respondents not concerned at under-age drinking occurring in Areema, and only 9% not concerned at the possibility of teenagers causing a nuisance.

A number of respondents also cited the presence of a number of dogs in the area as an issue, with 45% of respondents very concerned about dog-fouling/littering. As suggested, participants did not appear to be overtly concerned with manifestations of sectarianism, with the least concerned about activity being issues concerning flags (10%).

### 2.5 Services

All of the respondents were subsequently asked to rate service provision in the area. The highest rated service was education, with 27% rating educational provision in the local area as good. Similarly, there were few concerns around health provision, with 55% of respondents believing health services to be at the least, adequate. Dissatisfaction was highest concerning facilities for young and old alike, with respondents indicating that the poorest facilities in the area were youth provision (65%), and senior citizens’ facilities (55%).

Table 9: How do you rate the local services in Areema?

	<b>Good (%)</b>	<b>Adequate (%)</b>	<b>Poor (%)</b>	<b>Did not answer (%)</b>
Education	27	26	15	32
Health	26	29	22	23
Bus Services/Shelters	21	28	26	25
Roads/footpaths	17	45	20	18
Play areas	17	29	31	23
Shops	17	45	20	18
Youth facilities	4	11	65	20
Senior Citizens’ facilities	3	17	55	25

Respondents were asked to identify which facilities their children used in the surrounding areas. The survey results revealed that participation in various activities in surrounding areas was very low, with the highest level of participation being involvement in church groups in Dunmurry (5%). Participation in youth clubs was also extremely low, with only 3% of young people using facilities in Dunmurry, 4% in Twinbrook, and 3% identified elsewhere.

## 2.6 The Areema Residents' Association

The last three questions of the survey focused on the Areema Residents' Association. When asked whether or not they were aware of the work of the Residents' Association, 63% of respondents stated that they were, with 25% not aware of their work. A further 6% had never heard of the Residents' Association at all. Respondents were subsequently asked which activities if any, they or members of their household had taken part in.

The most popular activity was the 3-day summer festival run in August, with 31% of respondents stating that they or someone in their household had taken part. The Christmas and Halloween parties attracted 20% and 14% of respondents respectively, with the Easter Treasure Hunt attracting the lowest levels of participation (3%).

Table 10: What activities have you or your household participated in?

	Number of respondents	% of respondents
Summer festival	38	31
Christmas Party	24	20
Halloween Party	17	14
Coffee mornings	10	8
Computer training	10	8
Ladies' night	9	7
Youth sports	9	7
Crochet/Knitting activities	5	4

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Easter Treasure Hunt	4	3
Not taken part in any	60	50

(Participants were allowed to tick more than one category)

However, 50% of respondents stated that they had never taken part in any form of activity organised by the association at all, perhaps indicating that there is a core group of residents who access many of the same activities offered by the Association.

Respondents were finally asked to identify what activities in particular they feel that the Residents' Association should focus on. There were 64 comments made from the 121 questionnaire responses, with 36% of respondents believing that the Residents' Association should focus on activities for young people. One respondent commented;

*I think they should focus on the youth and give them something to do, whether it be trips, or organising youth nights (local resident)*

Many participants felt that if young people had something to do, the perceived levels of anti-social behaviour in the area would decrease. A number of respondents also referred to a need to try and keep the area "clean and tidy", while another main issue related to the use of quad bikes and scramblers driving at high speeds up and down Areema Drive. Some respondents felt that the area needed a flexi-bus service for older residents who found it difficult to go to shops in surrounding areas.

Respondents suggested there was a generally positive view of the Association, with many believing that the Association worked under very difficult conditions, on a voluntary basis with very little funding. However, several problems were identified. Some respondents were of the opinion that they could not get involved in the group as it appeared to be a closed group, or "circle of friends", and several respondents suggested greater attempts at openness in the area were needed.

Some respondents were of the opinion that the Residents Association should promote more openness within and around the group to encourage greater participation from other members of the community, by letting people know what was going on in the area, how to become a member of the Association and so on. Several respondents

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were of the opinion that they would like to see more attempts to involve residents of Oakvale in any activities organised, as some respondents at present felt quite isolated but “*would like to get involved*”.

### 3. Conclusions

The survey has shown that the majority of respondents feel that the Areema area is a nice place in which to live, mainly due to its good location (60%), perception as a friendly area (45%), and the lack of a visible paramilitary presence (45%).

The majority of respondents perceive the area to be mixed, (59%), although this perception was significantly higher among Catholic respondents (70%), than respondents from a Protestant (53%), or mixed community background (50%). The basic demographic overview of the area appears to show that the area is indeed mixed to a degree, with 49% of respondents coming from a Catholic community background, 26% from the Protestant community background, and 18% of a mixed community background.

However, the ability of the area to remain mixed in future may be in doubt if current trends continue, with 76% of residents who have moved into the area between the last 1-5 years coming from a Catholic community background, compared to 18% from a mixed background and just 3% from a Protestant community background. Protestant residents are also more likely to be older with 43% of Protestant adults over 60 years old, compared to 13% of Catholic residents and 16% of residents from a mixed community background.

The survey highlighted that the provision of facilities for both senior citizens' (55%) and young people (65%) were a particularly salient concern. A number of respondents felt that the Residents' Association should focus their resources on activities for young people, which some respondents also suggested would reduce levels of anti-social behaviour as it gives young people "something to do".

This concern at levels of anti-social behaviour is highlighted by the fact that the main concerns in the area are, damage/vandalism (57%), burglary/theft (48%), and underage drinking (47%). Manifestations of sectarianism or political differences appeared to be quite low on the agenda for residents.

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A majority of respondents had heard of the work of the Residents' Association (63%), however 25% had not heard of their work. The summer festival attracted the highest amount of household participation (31%). However, 50% of respondents indicated that no one in their household had taken part in any activity whatsoever, indicating that it may be the same individuals taking part in different activities.

When asked how the work of the Residents' Association could be improved, several respondents suggested that by promoting the group as more accessible to anyone wishing to join, and by publicising their activities to a greater degree, particularly in the Oakvale area, the association may be able to engage even more members of the local community in their activities. The perception of a lack of youth facilities in the area also led to 36% of comments posted on the survey suggesting that the Residents' Association should focus on activities for young people specifically.