

The background of the cover is a photograph. The upper portion shows a tall security fence with a camera on a pole against a clear blue sky. Below the fence, a brick chimney is visible. The lower portion of the image shows a person in a purple shirt carrying a child on their back, walking through tall grass. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Interface Violence in East Belfast during 2002

The impact on residents
of Short Strand and Inner
East Belfast

Jonny Byrne

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INSTITUTE for CONFLICT RESEARCH

Go enjoy

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Short Strand and Inner East Belfast*

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All photographs by Frankie Quinn

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Executive Summary

Throughout 2002 there was persistent and recurrent violence in the interface areas of East Belfast around the Short Strand. Although the disturbances had been highlighted in the media, little work had been done documenting the scale of the violence and disorder, or of understanding what happened and why it happened from the perspectives of the residents and community representatives. The Institute for Conflict Research (ICR) was initially contacted by community workers within the Short Strand with the aim of carrying out a research project. Subsequent contact with community workers in the wider community in East Belfast indicated interest in developing a broader project to include both communities. This research offered members of both the Short Strand and Inner East communities the opportunity to present their opinions and views of what they experienced in 2002. It also provided both communities with a mechanism to begin to understand the experiences of the 'other' community, along with their perceptions as to why the violence occurred. The research was funded by the Community Relations Council (CRC) through the European Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation.

The research was conducted over nine months from January to September 2005 and involved a number of interviews and focus group discussions with community workers and their representatives, statutory and voluntary organisations, political representatives, and individuals and families who lived on the interface. Discussions focused on the large scale violence and disorder that occurred in and around Short Strand/Inner East Belfast throughout 2002.

Several themes emerged from these discussions which provide a comprehensive account of what happened. Participants talk about the history of Nationalist and Unionist communities living side by side in East Belfast, and the relative peace that had existed previously. The relationship between community workers from both sides was acknowledged as being a key component in controlling and monitoring behaviour along the interfaces prior to 2002. Discussions then focused on participants' views as to when and why the violence started. There was general agreement from all interviewees that the prolonged interface violence began on Saturday 11 May and continued throughout the year. Both communities had their own views as to why it began, with both attributing blame to the 'other' community.

There was general consensus from respondents that the area in East Belfast that highlighted the impact of the violence and disorder most vividly was the interface at Clandeboye Gardens/Cluan Place. Several respondents provided very detailed and moving accounts of their experiences of the violence in this area. It was apparent that residents from both communities suffered extensive damage to their homes, forced evacuations, physical injuries and high levels of mental anxiety and stress.

As discussions progressed it became evident that four parties were prominent throughout the communal conflict in East Belfast:

- Women
- PSNI
- Paramilitary groups
- Media

According to several respondents, women from both communities played a pivotal role in highlighting the incidents of violence and disorder and supporting people within their communities. However, there were distinctive differences in the way that women from the Short Strand and Inner East Belfast presented their arguments and conducted their protests, with some respondents indicating that women from the Loyalist/Unionist community often behaved in a confrontational, emotional and un-organised manner in comparison to those from the Short Strand.

The second group that came under scrutiny were the PSNI, with both communities indicating strong dissatisfaction and anger at the policing response to the violence and disorder. This was one of the few aspects of 2002 on which both communities held similar views and perceptions. Paramilitary groups were also prominent throughout the communal violence, with residents from Short Strand maintaining that Loyalist groups were orchestrating much of the violence. However residents from the Inner East were adamant that Republican groups were controlling the levels of violence and disorder emanating from the Short Strand.

The other was the role of the media, and their perceived bias or lack of interest in events that were unfolding in Short Strand/Inner East Belfast. Both communities heavily criticised the media, specifically on their portrayal of the impact of the violence on the residents from the two areas. Those from the Short Strand felt that the media often ignored their plight and presented the violence as tit-for-tat attacks. On the other hand, residents from the Inner East maintained that the media often

ignored incidents of violence perpetrated towards their community, and instead focused on the needs and issues of Nationalist residents.

The interviews concluded with discussions on why people believed the interface violence started and then continued for so long, and any issues that were currently prevalent within both communities. The communities held very diverse views as to why the violence began. Those from Inner East felt that the violence was orchestrated by the Republican movement to deflect away from negative publicity they were receiving; increased housing needs, and a desire to stop parades passing by the Short Strand.

However, representatives from Short Strand felt that it was orchestrated by Loyalist paramilitaries to recruit and blood new members; the PSNI were justifying keeping the Reserves, and Protestant community groups were looking for increased funding. Even though respondents from both communities had different views on why it began, there was a sense of acknowledgement that residents from both communities suffered.

It became clear that the violence and disorder in 2002 did not suddenly stop. Instead incidents around the interfaces became more sporadic and isolated. A number of reasons for the decrease in violence were discussed, these included: the input from community workers, elected representatives and independent organisations; the stopping of outsiders gathering at the interfaces; an increase in policing, and the economic implications the prolonged violence was having on both areas.

There were several positive points to emerge from the discussions. Firstly it appeared that representatives from both communities had begun to communicate and interact, these included discussions around monitoring and controlling behaviour at the interface, and the establishment of a Mobile Phone Network. It was noted however, that even though this communication was an improvement on relationships, it was not at the same level as pre 2002. In fact during 2005, there were several violent confrontations at the interfaces around Short Strand/Inner East Belfast along with protests around the parading issue. However, these incidents were dealt with by community representatives and failed to manifest into long term violent confrontations. Secondly, there was also an awareness that social and economic deprivation was something faced by both communities, regardless of people's religious background.

This research has given people the chance to discuss their perceptions and experiences of what happened throughout 2002. It has also allowed the residents of Short Strand and Inner East Belfast an opportunity to begin to understand what the 'other' community went through at that time and their assumptions as to why it happened.



INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

Throughout 2002 there was persistent and recurrent violence in the interface areas of East Belfast around the Short Strand area. The worst of the violence occurred at the Clandeboye Gardens / Cluan Place interface, but trouble also occurred at Madrid Street / Thistle Court; around Bryson Street and at the Strand Walk / Newtownards Road area.

Although the disturbances during 2002 have been well documented in the media (Chapter 13), little work has been done in documenting the full scale of the violence and disorder, or of understanding what happened and why it happened from the perspective of the residents of the interface communities, or of documenting the work that has gone into preventing trouble since then. This report provides residents and people directly involved in the violence and disorder with an opportunity to 'tell their story'.

1.1 The demographics of Short Strand/Inner East Belfast

The three electoral wards bordering the interfaces in Short Strand/Inner East Belfast are Ballymacarret, The Mount and Woodstock. According to the Noble Multiple Deprivation Measure (2001) these three wards are within the 10% most deprived wards in Northern Ireland. They also rank within the top 10% of disadvantaged wards in relation to education; social environment; unemployment and 4% most disadvantaged wards in relation to health.

The Short Strand is a predominantly Catholic area located across from the river Lagan between the Newtownards and Albertbridge Roads. Approximately 2,500 people reside within the area, with the lack of housing being a major issue. Residents seem to have great pride in their community, with the majority of people born in the area, and likely to reside there all their lives. This has added to the severe housing shortage, with approx 200 people on the Housing Executive waiting list. This has been further exacerbated by the large and extensive 'peace wall' that surrounds large parts of the area, which has limited the building of further properties (Herbert, 2004).

Many of the Protestant communities in Inner East Belfast, close to the interfaces with Short Strand, are similar to other interfaced Protestant working class communities in Belfast. This area, like the others, has experienced population decline with people moving out due to factors such as poor housing, social mobility, fear and the decline of traditional industries and community solidarity and cohesion (Shirlow et al, 2002).

As previously noted there has been limited research conducted with adults in both the Short Strand and Inner East communities. There have, however been several programmes and published documents highlighting young people's experiences of living in both communities (Todd, 2002).

1.2 Young people

A recent report conducted by the Farsset Community Think Tank Project (Hall, 2005) brought young people from both sides of the interface together to discuss issues of community safety, education and cross-community interaction. There was general consensus from all young people that there was a lack of adequate youth service provision in the area. They also acknowledged the increase in drugs and anti-social behaviour and the impact this was having on their own communities.

Previous studies by Hall 'Lower Newtownards Youth Speak Out (2003) and 'Short Strand Youth Speak Out' (2003) concluded that interface violence was having a detrimental impact on the two areas, and that one of the biggest issues facing young people was feeling safe when travelling into and out of their communities. The community background of the young people was viewed as a defining factor in determining what facilities they could access in East Belfast. Todd (2002) found that young people in the Short Strand were dissatisfied with adults in the community who policed their behaviour. They did not understand why certain adults should have so much authority and control over all aspects of their lives.

1.3 Programmes and investment in East Belfast

Over the last few years there has been approximately £14 million of Peace II funding in East Belfast, with a total of 74 projects having been funded. These projects reflect the priorities of Peace II, with the majority of the funding, in financial terms, focusing on economic renewal. A recent report 'Telling the story of Peace II' (NICVA, 2005) examined how projects within a specific geographical area interact, and ultimately what factors within that community have facilitated or impeded the development of Peace II objectives. According to the report, within East Belfast events on the ground had a dramatic impact on Peace II funding. That is not to say that the paramilitary feuds; interface violence; and the rise of paramilitary control within certain communities have lessened the impact of the funding. It has meant however that the implementation of projects and their long term success has been somewhat curtailed (NICVA, 2005).

In regards to peace building the report indicated that much of the peace and reconciliation work was seriously hampered by the interface violence of 2002, and the intra-community feuds. There was reluctance from people to be involved in peace and reconciliation work in this environment, because of a fear of possible repercussions in one's own community. It was not clear whether this pertained to the Nationalist or Unionist communities or both.

In reference to the Protestant community in East Belfast, it concluded that it was not a cohesive entity, and that internal differences had to be reconciled before any meaningful cross-community work could begin. The report also noted that for a number of people the lack of infrastructure and community cohesion has meant that East Belfast has been unable to take full advantage of the opportunities presented under Peace II (NICVA, 2005).

It is important to note that there have been some criticisms of the way Peace I and II programmes have been conducted in East Belfast. The East Belfast Community Development Agency (EBCDA) (2003) facilitated two meetings with members from community based organisations throughout East Belfast. The consensus was that the general process of Peace I and II was fraught with difficulties, sometimes to an unbelievable and illogical extent. In May 2003, EBCDA began a survey process which attempted to assess what money had come into the community sector in East Belfast through Peace I and II. The initial findings indicated that the amount of financial and monitoring information that was required for Peace II was astronomical and early indications were that the community sector was going to struggle to meet these demands (EBCDA, 2004).

1.4 Violence and disorder

In 2002 Short Strand and Inner East Belfast exploded with large scale communal violence, riots and disorder (Robinson, 2002). The events were well documented by the local, national and international media. Incidents of pipe, petrol and blast bombs along with victims of shootings, and cases of people being forced to flee their homes were constantly in the news throughout most of 2002. Chapter 13 chronicles the disturbances from 2002 through to 2004, highlighting the various incidents that both communities were experiencing. The articles also show that since 2002 Short Strand/Inner East Belfast has not had a repeat of similar levels of violence and disorder.

1.5 Summary

Communities in the Short Strand and Inner East Belfast suffer from unemployment and high levels of social and economic deprivation. There are also a high number of young people residing in the areas, which suffer from poor youth provision and facilities. Over the years there have been sporadic violent incidents along the interface between the nationalist and unionist communities. This report aims to examine the impact that the prolonged interface violence had on both communities throughout 2002. This will be achieved through formal and informal discussions with groups and individuals who were involved at some level in the events of 2002.

2. Methodology

The Institute for Conflict Research (ICR) was initially contacted by community workers within the Short Strand with the aim of carrying out a short piece of work with local people to try and assess their understanding of the violence and the impact of the violence from 2002 on their lives. Subsequent contact with community workers in the wider community in East Belfast indicated interest in developing a broader project to include both local communities, and the wider networks, businesses and organisations based in the area. The research was funded by the Community Relations Council (CRC) through the European Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation.

2.1 Methods

The research methods adopted were qualitative, involving interviews and focus groups with people who had experienced the violence and disorder in 2002, along with members of statutory and voluntary organisations and elected representatives. Five main issues were addressed throughout the research:

1. Documentation of the recent history and nature of the interface violence in the Short Strand/Inner East area from the perspective of local residents and other local interested parties;
2. Identification of the understandings of residents and community workers as to why the interface violence erupted so violently in 2002;
3. Examination of the impact that the violence has had on the lives of local residents and other people in terms of feelings of safety, health, sense of well-being and community relationships;
4. Recording and analyses of the initiatives that have been put in place to try to stop or reduce the violence;
5. Highlighted lessons that could be learned from recent events and actions for statutory bodies and local community and voluntary groups.

The research commenced in January 2005 and concluded in September 2005. The report sought to draw information from a number of sources. Two groups from within the area worked along with the researcher by facilitating meetings, interviews and focus groups with relevant parties. Representatives from these groups were also on hand to assist in any problems the researcher encountered while conducting research in the area. The two groups involved throughout the project were:

The Short Strand Community Forum which was established in 1991 in response to groups needing sustainability and support that would be housed in a purpose built centre. Within the Forum there are 23 constituted groups which include: A Women's Project; an Ex-Prisoners Group; a Community Relations Project; an Interface Contact Group and a Residents Group. The main aim of the Forum is to improve the quality of life for all the people living in the Short Strand community by providing a programme of social and economic development.

The Inner East Forum was established in reaction to interface violence in 2001/2002. It is an ad hoc body representing between thirty and forty groups in the Inner East Belfast area. According to Mason (2005) *'within Protestant, unionist and loyalist areas we tend to have an individualistic attitude to development so the forum aims to bring unity, strength and togetherness to the area'*. The forum deals with a range of issues including social problems, interface issues and employment. The forum is managed voluntarily, with approximately 35-40 people at each meeting held once a month.

A semi-structured interview schedule was designed to guide the interviews. All interviews were conducted in a setting chosen by the interviewee, and lasted approximately one hour. The majority of interviews were tape recorded on receiving permission from participants. Interviewees were briefed about the stringent methods employed to ensure the confidentiality of the interview; the safeguards on the security of the data collected and that any personalised information along with the taped interviews would be destroyed on completion of the report. The interviewees were also advised that they could decline to answer any questions and could terminate the discussion at any time.

2.2 Participants

In total 93 people participated in the research. Due to the sensitive nature of the research, several respondents indicated that they did not want their occupation or position within the community made public, therefore it was decided to limit the amount of information pertaining to the participants.

Interviews with residents directly affected by violence and disorder

The majority of interviews were conducted in the residents' homes, and involved several family members in open discussions about the impact of the violence in 2002 on their lives. The interviews were guided by a number of topics which included:

- interpretation as to why violence began and ended;
- personal accounts of particular incidents;
- impact of violence on young family members;
- statutory service provision;
- intra and inter community relationships;
- policing;
- role of the media; and
- future concerns.

Interviews with community representatives and workers

Interviews were conducted with those who played an active role in assisting the communities throughout 2002. These people both worked and lived in the local communities and had first hand accounts of the violence and disorder. Discussions centred on the impact that the violence and disorder had on the community as a whole, along with the support that was available during 2002. Topics included:

- history of the interface;
- interpretation as to why violence began and ended;
- impact on the community;
- needs of the community;
- access to services;
- statutory/voluntary support;
- policing;
- preventative measures;
- Short Strand/Inner East relationships;
- future concerns.

Interviews with statutory/voluntary organisations

Interviews were conducted with organisations who were involved in various capacities in dealing with the effects of the interface violence throughout 2002. Interviews took place with a range of groups who were involved in housing, health, policing, mediating and advising both communities. Their reactions to the needs of the communities have been documented, along with the difficulties they encountered in providing their services. Further topics included:

- interpretation as to why violence began and ended;
- immediate needs presented by the community;
- long term needs of the community;
- types of services provided;
- impact of the violence and disorder;
- funding issues;
- policy implications as a result of the violence.

Interviews with elected representatives

Members of the Short Strand Community Forum and the Inner East Forum identified the relevant political representatives who were involved at various levels in supporting the communities throughout 2002. Discussions with these individuals centred on the impact that the violence was having on residents in the area, along with the measures that were put in place to conclude the interface violence. Further topics included:

- impact of violence and disorder on the wider community;
- statutory/community support;
- policing;
- intra and inter community relations;
- economic impact of interface violence;
- preventative measures.

Table 1 provides a breakdown of the number of people involved in the research and their type of role in the community.

Table 1: Number of interviewees involved in the research

	Number of individuals
Statutory and community groups	20
Community representatives, workers and residents from Inner East Belfast	33
Community representatives, workers and residents from Short Strand	37
Elected representatives	3
Total	93

2.3 Issues

There were a number of issues that arose while conducting the research, these have been documented below.

Confidentiality

Several of the interviewees indicated that anonymity was crucial if they were to participate in the research. It was pointed out to the researcher that geographically the Short Strand/Inner East area was relatively small,

and 'everybody knew everybody', so the personal safety of participants was paramount. Taking this into consideration, it was decided to exclude respondent's age and place of residence, and refer to interviewees throughout the report as Unionist or Nationalist, Republican or Loyalist. For those participants who had no particular affiliation to either Short Strand or Inner East Belfast, they have been referred to as independent, and interviews with representatives from statutory organisations have simply been referred to as statutory.

Multiple roles within the community

It is important to point out that several interviewees often held two, sometimes three positions within their community. When they were discussing certain issues, they would often provide several perspectives on the one issue. As a result, when analysing these interview transcripts it proved difficult at times to put into context what exactly they were saying. More time was spent transcribing and analysing these interviews, to correctly determine their views with the particular role they had within the community.

Sensitivity

In addition to confidentiality, the researcher was aware of the sensitivity of the subject matter and how various groups and individuals might perceive the research. This report tries to reflect the views and opinions presented in an impartial and comprehensive manner. The following report presents a comprehensive account of people's experiences and perceptions of what happened throughout 2002. It is not part of the researcher's remit to determine responsibility for particular events. Nevertheless, by enabling people to recount their versions of events and then setting them alongside other contrasting interpretations of what happened, it may allow some light to be thrown on these divergent understandings.

Balanced reporting

The Institute for Conflict Research wish to indicate that two sections of this report may appear to be dominated by Nationalist/Republican opinion. Themes relating to the impact of the violence and disorder along with perceptions on parading include more Nationalist/Republican responses than Unionist/Loyalist. However the researcher provided both communities with the same opportunity to participate in the research. Despite repeated attempts to address the imbalance no further input was provided by the Unionist/Loyalist community who were fully aware of the researcher's concerns.

2.4 Structure of report

The following chapters have been divided into three sections. Section 1 outlines the history of the interface and the beginning of violence in 2002. Section 2 examines the roles of women, the police and the media. Section 3 documents the reasons why the interface violence decreased and highlights current issues within the two communities. The report begins with a brief history of the interfaces in Short Strand/Inner East Belfast, highlighting the relationships between residents and community workers. At the top of each new chapter there is a quotation which illustrates the theme being discussed. These quotes are not attributed. They are however representative of the majority of people who participated in the research, and reflect their views and opinions.

This is followed by people's accounts of when the interface violence first began in 2002. Following on from this, incidents surrounding the Cluan Place/Clandeboy Gardens interface have been documented. The next chapter offers people's personal accounts of the violence and disorder throughout 2002. The role of women and the media throughout the duration of the violence and disorder is examined along with the policing and security measures imposed. The final chapters look at why the violence started and what measures were implemented to decrease the community tensions.



SECTION ONE

3. History of the interface

There was a certain level of co-operation between the two communities in the immediate years after the cease-fires

To understand the events of 2002 it is important to put into perspective the history of the Protestant and Catholic communities that live side by side in East Belfast. The first barrier ever built to separate Catholics and Protestants was erected in the Short Strand area of East Belfast in 1920 (Heatley, 2004). The predominantly Nationalist Short Strand is surrounded by peace lines and security gates, and located between the predominantly Protestant Newtownards Road and Albertbridge Road. There has been a history of sporadic sectarian attacks from both sides. However the events that unfolded in 2002 were unlike anything previously experienced by either community.

Since the paramilitary cease-fires in August 1995 there had been a level of co-operation and communication between community representatives from Short Strand and Inner East Belfast. The Belfast Interface Project (BIP) was heavily involved in establishing the Inner-East Interface Project (IEIP) which created a forum for people to discuss issues and inform others about steps they were taking to control incidents at their respective interfaces:

There was a working relationship from the mid 90s, people were talking; there was communication (Unionist).

You know, people from all over used to look at the interfaces around East Belfast, and wonder why their areas were not as peaceful...we were held up as some form of model of how communities could live together without trying to kill each other (Nationalist).

It became evident that both communities participated in open discussions about issues that affected them. Nobody was saying that the communities 'were best buddies, with people from both areas going around hugging each other' but there was general agreement that working relationships had been established, and there was some degree of co-operation:

There was open dialogue between some community workers in both areas...there were many areas of commonality between the two areas; even though people were operating in different environments their challenges were very similar...there were sound working relationships; trust had begun to happen (Unionist).

In the years preceding the violence in 2002 community workers from both areas had good working relationships. Especially on issues like training; employment; women's issues and young people (Nationalist).

The relationships that had been developed between community workers and representatives from both sides meant that incidents and tensions on the interface were kept to a minimum.

3.1 Communication and interaction

A number of measures were put in place to assist both communities in controlling behaviour at the interfaces. One such mechanism was the development of a Mobile Phone Network (MPN) in 1995, which was one of the first networks established in Northern Ireland. The network involved five phone holders, and aimed to stabilise relationships and enhance living conditions for residents living at interfaces between the Short Strand, Lower Newtownards Road and Albertbridge Road, especially the area between Bryson Street and Madrid Street (Hamilton, 2001). Several of the interviewees had participated at some level in monitoring and controlling incidents at the interfaces from the very beginning:

After the cease-fires community workers from both sides established communications...telephone numbers. A lot of things that happen at interfaces are rumour orientated, so we decided that by contacting each other, you were eliminating the rumour...stop situations escalating into a riot...stop the rumours becoming truth (Nationalist).

We had been involved in discussions for years prior to 2002...it was basically people from both sides using dialogue to tackle issues that arose out of the interface...the phone network did resolve things for a number of years (Unionist).

There was a consensus from the majority of people that the post cease-fire years were relatively quiet and stable along the Short Strand/Inner East interfaces. There was a willingness from members of both communities to create a peaceful environment where both communities could live side by side without the fear of violence or intimidation.

3.2 Paramilitary influences

Several interviewees felt that paramilitary organisations were also important in sustaining the low levels of violence at the interfaces throughout the late 1990s. One interviewee felt that the reason the Short Strand interface was relatively calm was because of the influence exerted by the UVE, a Loyalist paramilitary group who were close to the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) who were prominent throughout the negotiating of the Good Friday Agreement:

It seemed to be one of the few interfaces in Belfast that was controlled by the UVF, and that's an important distinction to make...from my understanding there was more of a sense of responsibility from the UVF factions...they tried to keep things quiet...as a result, apart from isolated incidents during summer months things were relatively quiet (Republican).

This view that the interfaces were peaceful appeared to hold firm until the beginning of 2000. Several of the interviewees felt that community tensions along with violent incidents were occurring more frequently along the interfaces from 2000 onwards. These respondents indicated that throughout the summer months there was an increase in the level of disruption and violent behaviour at specific points of the interface in Short Strand. There was a perception that the majority of these were isolated incidents that involved young people, but were still causing increased tensions within the unionist and nationalist communities:

There started to be a few more incidents around the interface, mostly kids...the blue bag brigade, throwing bottles and causing a nuisance (Unionist).

There was more violence during the summer months usually when there were parades...it was gradually getting more intense (Nationalist).

3.3 Hidden agendas

There were however, some interviewees who felt that the violence and disorder that preceded 2002 was more calculated and intentional rather than random acts by bored teenagers. One respondent from the Unionist community felt that the increased incidents of violence and interface trouble were not the result of 'drunken teenagers', but something more sinister. They were of the opinion that elements within the Republican movement were attempting to 'stir things up in Short Strand, for their own self gain'. There appeared to be a perception that certain individuals had a clear and concise agenda in the years leading up to 2002, and incidents prior to that summer were organised and planned with that in mind:

Then there was a number of incidents that arose prior to May 2002, and a number of Loyalists felt that the Republican movement were winding things up at the interface...there was a sense that low level violence was being orchestrated by members of the IRA who were involved in the Holy Cross dispute (Unionist).

Furthermore,

For a long time the residents group at Thistle Court and Madrid Street were trying to get the area into Short Strand blocked off...their houses were being attacked for years...some people were leaving...systematically houses were being emptied one after another...before you knew it a wee area that used to have 200 houses in it, had nearly halved because of destruction from Nationalists (Loyalist).

In contrast to this view, several respondents from within the Nationalist community felt that members of the Loyalist community had been targeting Catholic homes close to the interface, in an attempt to draw out a retaliatory response from Republicans. They believed that Loyalist paramilitaries had their own agenda which impacted on their standing within their own community, and by forcing Republicans into a confrontation they would have strengthened their own hand. These respondents felt that attacks against the residents of Short Strand had been used by Loyalist paramilitaries to encourage new people to join their organisations:

We are often like the meat in the sandwich. When them Loyalists fall out, they turn on us to make up. They blood young recruits by engaging in violence on the interface, and the Catholics are used as the targets (Republican).

3.4 Increased tensions

One respondent felt that in hindsight the events that unfolded in 2002 were not as unexpected as many people first thought. This participant had been working in and around the Short Strand/Inner East area during the summer of 2001 and had noticed an increase in tensions between the two communities, especially during the marching season. The respondent recalled incidents where members from both communities were engaged in rioting and close violent confrontations. The crucial point made from the respondent was that no work was done at the time to analyse why tensions were running so high. Nobody took responsibility to address issues that were prevalent within both communities, there was an assumption that things would be 'ok', and that by the time 2002 would come round people would have forgotten about the trouble from the previous year:

Not many people talk about the year before (2001). There was always this underlying tension there, particularly during the summer months. Young people were heavily involved, being directed by adults. When you got to the end of the summer it all sort of ended, but it wasn't dealt with. It was like a sore ready to burst...once spring 2002 came round it started again...I think that it really ignited in 2001. It had been lingering since then, was not dealt with...the fuse had been lit and exploded in May 2002 (Unionist)

This view has also been reinforced by a representative from a statutory organisation who personally experienced several incidents of riotous behaviour during the summer of 2001. The main areas of contention arose around 'sensitive parades' that passed close to the Short Strand:

There was a lot of trouble at the Twelfth of July parade in 2001...both communities couldn't see each other across the Lower Newtownards Road, but they started throwing vast amounts of missiles at each other...the amount of rioting that went on was phenomenal...that night tensions became raised in both communities (Statutory).

It is worth noting that not all of the participants felt that there was a gradual build up of violence and tension around the Short Strand from 2000. Several people who had lived on the interface all their lives failed to notice any obvious increases in the number of incidents, or dramatic changes in people's behaviour. In some ways they had become accustomed to interface violence, and rarely noted changes in levels of violence, unless they involved large numbers and resulted in the dramatic destruction of property. Based on their assumptions of previous summers in and around the Short Strand, they did not see any reason as to why 2002 would be any different to any other year:

There hadn't really been a build up to the trouble...living on the interface you were always going to have little niggily bits like when there were football matches and the blue bag brigade were on the streets (Loyalist).

The ferocity of what happened in 2002 really amazed me...it was so unexpected, there was no indication that it would happen like that, especially so early in the year (Nationalist)

3.5 Summary

It was clear that residents and community representatives from both the Short Strand and Inner East Belfast worked in various capacities to improve the quality of life for people from the area. The majority of interviewees point to the cease-fires as the catalyst for improved working relations between the two communities. Programmes focusing on employment, education, health and young people were on-going along with discussions about monitoring and limiting violent incidents at the interfaces. There was also agreement from both nationalists and unionists that from 2000 there was a gradual increase in the number of incidents at the interfaces, with blame being attributed to both Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries.

4. The beginning of violence in 2002

Nobody will truly understand what the people went through in 2002; it was like stepping back to the 1970s

The majority of participants agreed that their first recollections of the widespread interface violence which marred 2002 stemmed from a large scale conflict with Nationalists and Unionists in Madrid Street on Saturday 11th May 2002. The events in Madrid Street on the 11th of May involved a large number of individuals, and not just Protestant and Catholic residents of the area. People from outside the area were also drawn in or chose to involve themselves in the unfolding trouble. This section begins with personal accounts from people who were involved at the outset of the violence on that Saturday night. It is important to note that there are differences in opinion about the scale and nature of the violence and about who started it, depending on the community background of the participant. However, it is suffice to say that residents from both communities were affected by what happened, and were unaware of the extreme levels of violence that were to follow.

4.1 Madrid Street

Madrid Street runs through the Short Strand connecting Mountpottinger Road with Templemore Avenue, linking Nationalist Short Strand with the rest of East Belfast. The main section of the road that runs through Short Strand is made up of Catholic residents, with the remaining houses occupied by members of the Protestant community. There was never an interface barrier erected to divide the houses, although over the years there had been incidents of trouble and disagreement with members of the Catholic and Protestant communities.

According to one Unionist respondent, members of the Protestant community had been lobbying for years to seal Madrid Street between the Catholic and Protestant houses. They wanted some form of barrier to stop '*incursions from Nationalists into their area, which often resulted in damage to property and injuries to residents*'. In contrast Nationalist residents did not welcome the construction of another wall in their community. They used Madrid Street during the day as a route into East Belfast for accessing shops and services.

4.2 Saturday May 11th 2002

According to all of the interviewees, the origins of the violence and disorder that marred both communities in 2002 can be traced back to Saturday 11th of May. There is nothing significant about this date; it holds no symbolic meaning to either community but what happened that night set the scene for the next seven months. Although there had been in the preceding two years a gradual build up of tension at the interfaces during the summer months especially along Madrid Street, through July and August, what happened in May was unexpected:

We were shocked, totally taken by surprise...you expected something to happen during the summer months when the kids were off school, but not that early in May (Nationalist).

Several interviewees claimed to have been present in Madrid Street that Saturday night. They provided personal accounts of what they witnessed and experienced, along with their views as to who was responsible for instigating the violence and disorder. The following two accounts indicate how quiet Madrid Street was prior to the rioting, and how surprised people were by the violent confrontations between members of both communities. However, the accounts differ in relation to who was responsible and the numbers involved. There are conflicting stories, with members of both communities laying blame on each other:

I arrived home from being away all day at around 9pm. I ordered a Chinese and was sitting in the house, when I got a phone call telling me that there was trouble round in Madrid Street. It was about 10.30pm, I was very relaxed as I dandered round to see what was happening. It was obvious that there had been an incident, there were small crowds gathered at either side of Madrid Street (were the gate now is)...but it was all fairly relaxed, people were standing in their gardens talking. When I asked residents what had happened, they said that Loyalists had come down from Madrid Street and attacked some of the Nationalist homes in the Strand. I also heard conflicting stories from the other side; that Nationalists had went up and attacked Protestant homes. I was about to leave, I had got a sense that the people who were there, were not intent on starting anything (that was on both sides). I started to walk down the road, when two Loyalists came out of Thistle Court with blast bombs...they were no more than 70 yards away, and they lobbed them at the people gathered in Short Strand (both exploded). After that, all hell broke loose. People from Short Strand charged at them, people were coming out of everywhere on both sides...you could say that there was hand to hand fighting involving over one hundred people on both sides (Nationalist).

However, an interviewee from the Unionist community is adamant that residents from the Short Strand planned and participated in a large scale riot aimed at destroying Protestant homes. Their justification is based on the fact that large numbers of people emerged from the Short Strand dressed in Celtic football tops, which was to make them more easily identifiable to their friends:

On that Saturday night (May 11th) I had been down around Thistle Court/Madrid Street and it was quiet, this was about 7pm...so I went home to get something to eat and watch the tele. The next thing, I got a phone call to say there was trouble in the area. I arrived down and Madrid Street was packed, there must have been up to 300 Nationalists, lots in Celtic tops charging at the Protestants in the area, and attacking the houses in Thistle Court. There were maybe thirty or forty Protestants trying desperately to defend their own area with no support from the police (Unionist).

Further accounts from respondents highlighted the intensity of the violence and disorder that emanated from members of both communities that night. Rival youths fought hand-to-hand, missiles were thrown, including bricks, acid bombs and blast bombs, and the police responded with the firing of plastic baton rounds. There have been several criticisms of the police response that night, especially from members of the Nationalist community. One particular incident which resulted in a resident of Short Strand sustaining head injuries inflamed anger and frustration from large sections of the community. A prominent resident from Short Strand, who according to eye-witnesses was attempting to defuse the tensions within the Nationalist community by pushing young people back from the interface, was allegedly assaulted by a member of the PSNI as he tried to protest with the officers. The man had his skull fractured twice and had to undergo neurosurgery. He maintains that he was singled out by the PSNI because he was a known Republican from the area. One interviewee who was present that night provided their views on the police response:

The police that night escalated the violence. The police were very confrontational and seemed to look for trouble...they wouldn't let you walk on the footpath, so we had to climb through people's front gardens...they beat (named individual) that night, and I don't think that they should get away with it (Nationalist).

It must be noted that the PSNI deny the allegations of assault and an investigation into the alleged assault by police on a resident of Short Strand by the Police Ombudsman's Office concluded that the available

evidence did not substantiate the allegation that a police officer had been responsible for inflicting the serious head injury (OPONI (2004) Regulation 20 Reports, www.policeombudsman.org).

It is clear that a number of serious incidents occurred on Madrid Street, which involved large groups of residents from Short Strand and Inner East Belfast, but it is difficult to apportion blame to any one community. It is worth pointing out that both accounts highlight the lack of immediate police response to the interface violence, which may in part be due to the fact that like everyone else they were '*taken by surprise*'. This '*surprise*' was reinforced during an investigation by the Police Ombudsman's Office which noted '*that the police found themselves with insufficient resources in the area due to the rapid and spontaneous manner in which the violence escalated*' (OPONI (2004) Regulation 20 Reports, www.policeombudsman.org).

4.3 Main protagonists

Everyone has an opinion or a theory as to who was responsible for both instigating and conducting the interface violence at Madrid Street. These perceptions in most cases were determined by the community background of the respondent. Residents from the Short Strand contend that Loyalist paramilitaries played a major role in orchestrating the violence:

It was a planned attack, perfectly organised...it was all quiet, then two masked people came flying out of Thistle Court with two lit objects (pipe bombs) and threw them at the Nationalist houses in Madrid Street (Nationalist).

Furthermore,

There was a feeling that it had been orchestrated because of members of the Protestant community were very quick to come out with blast and petrol bombs that first night (Nationalist).

One respondent went further, indicating that the UVF were responsible for instigating the violence that Saturday night:

It was an unprovoked attack instigated by the UVF in Madrid Street on May 11th...that's why it started it was the UVF not the wider loyalist community. They do not represent everyone (Republican).

Those within the Unionist community squarely point the blame at Republicans for initiating the violence and communal disorder on Madrid Street. According to several interviewees a well known Protestant community worker was both verbally and physically threatened at the

interface hours prior to the violence starting. Although this story was mentioned on a number of occasions, it proved difficult to substantiate these claims.

However, there was a consensus among the Loyalist and Unionist community that Republican elements from within the Short Strand were manipulating residents and orchestrating the violence in pursuit of their own agenda:

As far as attributing blame, and I would be a very moderate unionist, but I have no doubt in my mind that it was orchestrated by Sinn Féin...but after that both sides became heavily involved (Unionist).

The fact that so many people were on the streets that night lent support to theories that the attacks were premeditated and designed to draw Loyalist paramilitaries into violent confrontations:

Look at 12:00 on a Saturday night you just don't get hundreds of people in Celtic tops out on the streets, of course it was organised (Unionist).

There was also a view that activities occurring throughout Belfast at the time would have implications for the Protestant communities in Inner East Belfast. Several interviewees felt that Nationalist and Republican communities were involved in interface disputes in and around North Belfast, and this would ultimately lead to an increase in the level of violence at the Short Strand interfaces:

When the Holy Cross dispute was coming to an end, and there was trouble at several interfaces across North Belfast we just knew they would try and kick something off over here...they are all cut from the same cloth (Loyalist).

There is no disputing the fact that large numbers of people participated in extreme incidents of violence and disorder on the Madrid Street Interface. It is much more difficult to determine whether those involved were aligned to any particular paramilitary organisation or even lived within both communities. As one interviewee concluded:

I think it was orchestrated...we saw video evidence of senior Republicans on the streets moving groups around, and then pulling them back at certain times. That's not to say that loyalists were innocent, because they weren't. Loyalists were every bit involved in starting the trouble at the interface (Unionist).

The accounts provided lend support to the assumption that there was a

certain degree of organisation within both communities regarding the violence. However ascertaining who was more responsible for the violence, who threw the first missile, and who worked to prevent it, are questions that remain unanswered.

4.4 Existing safety measures

It has previously been noted that since 1995 both the Short Strand and Inner East communities had been engaged in a number of initiatives to monitor and control behaviour at the interfaces. These initiatives proved to be reasonably successful until Saturday 11th May. A question that many have asked is what prompted the violence? A number of observations were made by respondents as to why they thought the violence both occurred and was allowed to escalate. It emerged that communication between key personnel from both communities stopped:

That Friday night, we tried on numerous occasions to phone our contacts on the Inner East side...all the phones were turned off (Nationalist).

And,

Loyalist groups unilaterally shut down their phone networks...there was a total blank on communications (Republican).

On the other hand, those from within the Protestant community contest that communication stopped on the Nationalist side:

The telephone mechanism was in place but we never received any calls...one of our group indicated that they had been threatened and it just all started (Unionist).

It is interesting to note that one interviewee who was not affiliated to either community felt that those within the Protestant community who were in possession of the phones may not have been in a position to answer them. These people were still part of the Protestant community, and if the community as a whole did not want to communicate, interact, or negotiate with people from the Short Strand due to the violence and disorder, then the phone holders probably had to cease communications.

According to several interviewees from the Unionist community, a breakdown in trust was the key factor in the build up to interface violence. One respondent felt that people within the Loyalist community were not prepared to accept any more lies or excuses from their

counterparts in the Short Strand:

On the day before the violence started...a group of Loyalists met, they had had enough...they did not believe what they were hearing coming out of the Short Strand. In their eyes 'it was the last chance saloon', and then 24 hrs later the Republicans go out and start a riot (Unionist).

There were differing views presented by both main communities, but it was clear that the lack of communication and trust between community leaders was a major factor in the progression of interface violence.

4.5 Security measures

Immediately after the rioting on Saturday the 11th, various security measures were implemented by a number of organisations. Formal security initiatives were undertaken by the PSNI and the army, with an increase in both vehicle and foot patrols and high visibility policing between the Catholic and Protestant houses in Madrid Street. One incident that increased tensions between the Catholic community and the police was the searching of Catholic homes during the afternoon of the 14th May. There was anger and outrage from many residents at the way the police searched Catholic homes in the Short Strand but ignored properties in Protestant Inner East Belfast:

The police came to my door a few days after Saturday night...they said they were here about the bombs...I said yeah, one landed here, right on my door step...no he said we are here acting on information to search your home for bombs...I thought they were here to take a statement...the loyalists were on the other side of the police lines roaring and shouting, they even videoed me and the kids leaving (Nationalist).

During the course of these house searches the police came under renewed attack from residents within Short Strand. The searches which coincided with young people returning home from school, along with the anger and tension that had been building since the previous Saturday night within the community, resulted in large scale rioting. Several residents along with members of the police and army were injured. At one stage the police and army fired plastic baton rounds, which resulted in four people being hit and taken to hospital:

They came into the community, firing those guns and beating the people around here. They never stopped to talk to us or listen to what we were saying (Nationalist).

The people of Short Strand were dismayed by the tactics employed by the

police, and many felt victimised and persecuted because of their community background. They were unaware of any police response into Loyalist communities which contributed to their view of biased policing.

Claims that the police reacted insensitively, violently and without due care and attention have been refuted by both the police and the Police Ombudsman. In relation to the incidents surrounding the firing of plastic batons, an investigation conducted by the Police Ombudsman's Office concluded that there was no evidence of any police misconduct. It was also noted in the report that at the time the violence experienced by the police was serious and that there was the potential for the loss of life, particularly among police and military personnel deployed on foot (OPONI (2004) Regulation 20 Reports, www.policeombudsman.org).

In a letter to the Irish News (23/05/02) the East Belfast District Commander pointed out that when the police were conducting house searches on the 14th May they had come under attack from acid and ammonia bombs. Furthermore, it was stated that in the last six months 90 searches had been carried out in Loyalist areas in comparison to only 8 in the Short Strand. According to one Nationalist interviewee *'this was an unprecedented decision made by the Commander, where he felt he had to defend the actions of the police through the media, and also highlighted the extreme pressures that the police were under'*.

A further security measure was the installation of an electronic security gate across Madrid Street to separate the Catholic and Protestant houses. The gate could be controlled manually by operators in the Mountpottinger Police Station, although the gate has never been opened. The gate, which was completed around the end of May 2002, led to mixed reactions from residents in both communities. It appears that the majority of people from the Unionist community welcomed the development, with those from the Nationalist community disagreeing with its construction:

We were not happy when the gate went up...look at the size of it. What difference does it really make? All that's changed is that you can't see the faces of the people throwing stones (Nationalist).

The gate was a relief...it stopped the ones from Short Strand coming up that road and breaking windows in our houses and cars (Unionist).

Loyalist paramilitaries also employed their own security measures in and around Madrid Street in the days after the interface violence. The measures involved the deployment of several members of their

organisations standing, observing and controlling behaviour on the Protestant side of Madrid Street. According to one interviewee 'the local community were crying out for our support, the boys would not have been there without their consent'. The Loyalists viewed this as a defensive role, and one that they had to take because the community did not feel that the state could protect them or their homes:

After the weekend rioting the Loyalist paramilitaries took control of the situation and wouldn't leave until the gate went up...there was no immediate violence, they were protecting the protestant community but also stopping anyone from attacking the residents of Short Strand (Loyalist).

The gate which was constructed soon after the riots in Madrid Street was welcomed by the Protestant community. It is worth noting that Protestant residents for years had been arguing for the creation of a divide between the two communities but all pleas had fallen on deaf ears. Some believe that it wasn't until the participation of Loyalist paramilitaries that authorities listened:

The residents said that they went to Stormont, the police, the council, the security minister, the NIO and nobody would listen...then the paramilitaries went on the streets and the gate was put up (Loyalist).

The security measures that were adopted in the wake of the violence that Saturday night appeared to limit the opportunity for communal violence between the two major communities. However, there was also a distinct lack of communication between representatives from both areas which inflamed the situation. There was thus no opportunity for people to address the reasons why there was such an escalation of violence on Saturday 11th May 2002.

4.6 Community fall-out

Not one of the interviewees was aware or even contemplated the view that what occurred on Saturday 11th May would only be the beginning of a prolonged period of violence and disorder. The general feeling was that it was an isolated incident, and that normality would be returned within a few days:

I must admit I couldn't believe the extent of the violence...after the first night I thought that 'this was it a big blip, but something that everyone will get over' (Unionist).

However, it appears that communication between the key contacts in

both communities stopped after the initial disturbances. There was a lack of confidence and trust in what communities were saying and actually doing. Trust was a key factor in developing stability at the interfaces, and when this was gone, the potential for violent confrontations between young people and residents became more frequent:

I have no evidence whatsoever as to why it started...all I know is that it undermined all the trust between the key people, and once that broke down that was it finished (Unionist).

It became clear that rumour-mongering and mis-communications were rife around Short Strand/Inner East Belfast at this time. There was no opportunity for people to stand back, assess the situation and address the immediate problems:

There was never an opportunity to regroup and reflect about what was happening to both communities (Nationalist).

It is also important to note that several interviewees felt that 'nobody wanted to stick their head up above the parapet, and save the situation'. The situation after the first few days had spiralled out of control, and there is a view held by some in the community that no one person or organisation had control of the situation:

What I can say is that once the gate went into Madrid Street and became a permanent feature the whole thing moved over to Cluan Place/Clandeboye Gardens. The tensions in the community were so high and they did not have a way to release it...it was almost like a leak in a dam, you close one bit off and another spouts out (Statutory).

4.7 Summary

Through discussions with many of the participants it was obvious that nobody expected the violence and disorder to escalate and develop into a long term violent confrontation between the two communities. There was some degree of surprise from several interviewees at the ferocity of the violence on the Saturday night, but for others it was seen as inevitable. There are various perceptions as to why the existing safety mechanisms that were in place did not prevent the violence beginning or escalating. However, it is clear that on Saturday May 11th 2002 a violent confrontation took place in Madrid Street involving residents from the Short Strand and Inner East Belfast, and the majority of people there did not realise the impact their actions would have on both communities in the following seven months.

5. Cluan Place/Clandeboye Gardens

I have no idea why it started; I have listened to both sides and I am not even prepared to attempt to draw a conclusion...I cannot fathom it out...maybe better to let people draw their own conclusions

The violence and disorder that occurred around the Cluan Place/Clandeboye Gardens interface was viewed by many as the worst and most prolonged throughout 2002. The majority of recorded incidents in both the police files and media reports highlight this interface as bearing the brunt of aggressive behaviours from both communities. Furthermore, two videos, one released by The Inner East Forum 'Cluan Place: The Terror and The Truth' and the other by The Short Strand Community Forum 'The Siege of Short Strand' depict in graphic detail the extent and ferocity of the violence experienced by communities living directly on the interface. The films, both of which could be perceived as biased in their interpretation of who was orchestrating the violence, clearly provide the viewer with a sense of the anger, hurt, desperation and isolation that residents from both communities were going through.

This chapter examines the types of incidents that occurred at the Cluan Place/Clandeboye Gardens interface. Personal accounts from people directly affected by the violence and disorder have been documented, along with people who in some way have recollections of what occurred. It is hoped that this will provide the reader with a sense of what was happening, along with the devastating impact the events had on both communities.

5.1 Life before 2002

Clandeboye Gardens and Cluan Place were developed in the 1970s as a response to the housing shortage and poor living conditions people from East Belfast were under. Initially there was to be only one housing estate, which would have resulted in Short Strand developing onto the Albertbridge Road. However, near completion of the houses it was decided to place a small wall through the housing estate and thus create Clandeboye Gardens and Cluan Place. From then Clandeboye Gardens was perceived as part of the Short Strand, and therefore Nationalist; and Cluan Place part of Inner East Belfast and Unionist, although members of both communities lived in each area. It is important to note that this

area prior to 2002 was not known as a 'flashpoint' or 'interface', in fact very few people even knew where these housing estates were located due to the lack of disorder and communal violence:

Do you know that in the past if there was violence at Strand Walk or Madrid Street, people would have brought their kids round to Clandeboye Gardens, because nobody ever started anything here and they knew the kids would have been safe (Nationalist).

Several respondents had lived in Clandeboye Gardens for over two decades and they were very insistent on highlighting the fact that prior to 2002 there was no history of sustained violence between the two neighbouring communities:

Years ago there used to be a gate between the two estates, you could walk right onto the Albertbridge Road. The wall was never that high... if a ball came over you would just kick it back to the kids (Nationalist).

There was never any trouble around here...people had friends from both areas, we used to stand across the wall and talk to each other (Nationalist).

One resident who had lived in the area for fifteen years was more forthright in their thoughts, indicating that there had been sporadic disturbances and bottle/stone throwing over the years but it was unorganised and did not involve residents of either Cluan Place or Clandeboye Gardens:

There have been minor incidents of disturbance...but you could never have blamed it on the residents of Cluan Place. In most cases it tended to be transient people, sometimes bandsmen. Occasionally people would throw stuff over if they were drunk...but again, these incidents were very isolated, they were never orchestrated, nothing to the scale of 2002 (Nationalist).

5.2 The beginning of interface violence

As previously noted the first disturbances in the Short Strand/Inner East areas of Belfast were reported in Madrid Street during May 2002. As a result of these incidents a security gate was installed, separating the Catholic and Protestant homes. Approximately two weeks after the construction of the gate, incidents of stone, petrol and acid bomb throwing occurred around Cluan Place/Clandeboye Gardens (it is important to remember that this area was not referred to as an interface prior to 2002):

Once the gate went up there wasn't as much activity in Madrid Street...then all of a sudden people started saying that Clandeboyne Gardens and Cluan Place were being attacked. It was a surprise because nothing ever happened around there (Nationalist).

According to the interviewees there was an element of surprise when the violence erupted in Cluan Place and Clandeboyne Gardens. It was the last place many felt that tensions would boil over into violent confrontations between the two communities. There was however one interviewee who in hindsight felt that this was the perfect place to create and maintain an interface in East Belfast. Both estates are isolated from the rest of Inner East Belfast along with the Short Strand. Therefore any incidents of disorder can be both confined and controlled within a relatively small area. Furthermore, the majority of people from outside the area, especially the media, were not familiar with these areas, so by creating a new interface you were also creating a new news story:

In hindsight Cluan Place and Clandeboyne Gardens were an easy touch for the people who wanted to keep the violence going. Nobody could see you at the wall; you were free to lob missiles and it was in an isolated area that wouldn't affect other places in East Belfast (Unionist).

The majority of interviewees indicated that the first incidents of trouble in this area occurred around the 31st of May. The following quote is from a resident of Clandeboyne Gardens who has lived there for over fifteen years. Their story is very similar to that of other residents who lived in the area from the beginning of the violence:

I will never forget the very first night it started here. I was lying in bed, actually thought I was dreaming...I heard this screaming 'for God's sake somebody help us'. I got up and went outside and the noise was unbelievable...I walked round the path to the houses right beside the peace wall...next thing there was a large bang and I was blew across the car park. I came round a few seconds later and I thought it was raining...it was all the stuff coming over from Cluan Place: tins of paint, ball bearings, nuts, bolts, rocks, bottles and fireworks. I got up and looked around, and there were all these families standing there with kids in their pyjamas...I came home in total shock, I actually vomited. It went on all night (Nationalist).

Those who had first hand experience of the violence recounted how bottles, stones, ball bearings, paint and fireworks were constantly thrown over the peace wall from Cluan Place:

I was walking about outside...then bang all this crap came over the wall, and it couldn't have been the real residents of Cluan Place, and it wasn't kids...fireworks with nails attached, industrial ones that's what was coming over (Nationalist).

In Cluan Place the images were very similar, with one respondent who spent a lot of their time in the area indicating that:

Cluan Place looked like a war zone. There were broken bottles, scissors, tins of soup, knives and forks, bread knives, cleavers, arrows, irons, poker, golf balls, ball bearings and marbles lying around the place most mornings (Unionist).

It is quite clear that nobody expected Cluan Place and Clondeboy Gardens to become an interface in 2002. The images portrayed of both communities tell of the destruction and ferociousness of the rioting that engulfed the area. It is interesting to note that the violence only really started after the security gate was constructed in Madrid Street, but determining whether a relationship between the two events exists has proved difficult.

5.3 Escalation in violence

The initial incidents of violence at the interface involved missile, blast and petrol bomb throwing. However, over the first weekend in June there was a dramatic change which resulted in five people from the Protestant community being shot, with at least one being seriously injured. On the 2nd and 3rd of June 2002 gunmen positioned in Clondeboy Gardens opened fire on five Protestants who according to several interviewees were assisting people to leave Cluan Place and surrounding areas and board up windows of uninhabited properties.

The following account is from an individual who was shot in Cluan Place on Sunday 2nd June 2002:

I was up in my own housing estate working, getting ready for the Queen's Jubilee. I got a phone call to say that there was trouble down in Cluan Place. It was a Sunday night, just after 7pm...the Albertbridge Road was black...there were masses of people...we had been told that there was pensioners and young people stuck in Cluan Place and they couldn't get out because of the bottles, bricks and petrol bombs...so me the foolish person that I am, ran in and started trying to get people out. I went in and got one person out...went in and got a second one, and then on the way out, I felt something hitting my ankle...I bent down, grabbed my ankle...another one hit me in the back...it was then that I realised I had been shot. While the shots were being fired the police withdrew into their land

rovers...there was one on the street, and he tried to arrest me...I was shot and this policeman tried to arrest me, he thought I was rioting...after me already identifying myself. The next thing I remember was someone dragging me out onto the Albertbridge Road and I lay there for what felt like hours (turned out to be minutes) until the ambulance arrived. The police did nothing. You know what really annoys me, was the fact that there was not a police presence in Clandeboyne Gardens, they had been there earlier on in the day, but when the violence started they were out (that's where the shots were fired from). Apparently I was out of it...I don't really remember what happened after that...at first people weren't sure that I had been shot, it wasn't until the medic checked my back. I was then taken straight to the hospital. Do you now what the worst about it was...word went out that I had died while travelling to the hospital...my daughter who was nine at the time was told that night that her father was dead (Unionist).

One respondent talked about the sense of desperation that was flowing through the Protestant community just after the five people had been shot in Cluan Place. The violence had been taken to another level and there was a belief that ultimately people would end up dying. The Protestant community were in shock, with many unable to comprehend the fact that guns had been taken out onto the streets, and that members of their community who they perceived to be uninvolved in the rioting had been shot:

I can remember one night that I was absolutely convinced that it was going to blow up in a really major way...I was on the Newtownards Road and things were happening...there were Loyalist paramilitaries with guns and petrol bombs around the fences. The army were driving around Bryson Street. I left the area, realising that there was nothing else to do...things had gone too far, and by waiting around you were just waiting for the inevitable...there was nothing constructive to do, it had gone beyond sense. I went home thinking 'that's it, something terrible is about to happen'...I prayed that night...and then I got up the next morning and switched the news on...that's the bizarre thing, you became a complete news junkie the entire time. There was nothing reported in the news...it had ended just after I left, the people had simply gone home...it was extraordinary (Moderate).

Prior to the shootings there was a lack of communication between the two communities, but after the shootings it appears that there was a total breakdown of interaction involving anyone from either community. One interviewee from the unionist community who up until the shootings had kept an open mind, and was willing to participate in informal discussions with the other side, revealed that the shooting incidents changed everything:

I was in disbelief about what was happening...that changed the dynamics of everything. They took it to a new level. I had no desire whatsoever to talk to people from the Short Strand (Unionist).

5.4 Paramilitary response

Interviewees from the Short Strand were asked about the shootings, but no one was able to indicate who was responsible. However, it became evident that prior to the shootings people in the Short Strand were very apprehensive. They were fearful, with some stating that they thought 'Clandeboye Gardens was going to turn into another Bombay Street'. According to participants, the Loyalists had been increasing the level of attacks on the nationalist community over the weekend, and people close to the interfaces were near breaking point:

When those people were shot it was born out of people being in fear of their lives, and their homes being burnt to the ground (Nationalist).

That was people defending this district. This community has always defended itself since its inception. The shootings were a result of pressure by the people in the community who were on the verge of a nervous breakdown and were demanding protection (Nationalist).

The feelings and attitudes were perceived as being different on the Protestant side, with people 'screaming for retaliation'. According to the interviewees from the Inner East the entire community was in disbelief that five innocent and defenceless men were shot while attempting to assist people leaving their homes. Several respondents indicated that Cluan Place was not previously associated with any particular paramilitary organisation:

I think that the UVF primarily along with the Red Hand Commandos (RHC) were spearheading the defence of the area (Unionist).

But it was felt that whenever a Protestant community came under extensive attack there was a degree of co-operation within all Loyalist groups:

The territory surrounding the interfaces was loosely associated with the UVF and RHC...but when a riot occurs it becomes all Loyalist paramilitary territory including the UDA (Unionist).

People expected a strong military response from the loyalist groups. This was a view expressed by people from both communities. However, the

response that people were anticipating did not come. There was an element of surprise from people that the Loyalists did not respond in kind considering the amount of pressure they were under:

*People were going mad...these people from the Short Strand were shouting 5-0 and people from our own community were asking for the paramilitaries...questioning why are they not going in to blow the f***ing place up? They wanted action and people to pay...the paramilitaries were just about able to pull them back from the brink (Unionist).*

According to several interviewees the Loyalist groups realised the consequences to their organisations if they retaliated by shooting people in the Short Strand:

Loyalist paramilitaries showed an awful lot of restraint after the five Protestants were shot...they listened and realised that it was not the way forward (Unionist).

And:

I think that the loyalist paramilitaries realised that they would have been seen to break their cease-fire big time if they had of started shooting back at people in the Short Strand. There were a lot of people high up in the organisations who realised the need to curtail their actions (Unionist).

Apparently, the situation was very tense immediately after the five people were shot. Elements within the Loyalist groups were prepared to act on their own and seek justice for the Protestant victims:

Look there could have been Nationalists shot dead easy...or bombs planted in there and mayhem caused upon the Short Strand community...but sensible people were able to control and pull people back from the brink...they were so close, people just didn't realise (Unionist).

The legacy of the non-response to the shootings by Loyalist paramilitaries lives on in East Belfast. Sections of the Protestant community have not forgotten, and at particular times it is brought up to mock the leadership of each of the organisations:

The abuse they have taken since and continue to take is unbelievable...it is still a big thing. In some cases people have remarked 'what are you talking to them for, they let five of our people get shot and did nothing about it' (Unionist).

It must be noted that there were shots and pipe bombs fired into the Short Strand after the shooting incidents in Cluan Place. A bus was hit

along with several homes and the primary school. However, there were no recorded injuries to residents.

5.5 Impact of outsiders

A strong theme that ran throughout each of the interviews was the influence of outsiders on events in 2002. There was general agreement that residents from both Cluan Place and Clandeboye Gardens were not at the forefront of the rioting, but unfortunately it was in this area that the majority of incidents took place:

The majority of residents from Cluan Place and Clandeboye Gardens couldn't throw things over the wall...yet they are the ones living there and being blamed (Unionist).

On speaking to Nationalist and Unionist participants there was a perception that each side recruited large numbers of followers to assist in either the defence of their community or the attack of the other community. Those from Short Strand felt that groups of Loyalists from all over East Belfast would congregate at Cluan Place and the Albertbridge Road to attack Nationalist homes and people. These groups were perceived to be under the influence of paramilitary organisations and as such followed their orders and commands:

The violence was orchestrated, I saw members of the UVF, UDA and RHC all standing together in Cluan Place, there were others there from Tullycarnet and Ballybeen (Nationalist).

Likewise people from the Unionist community indicated that known Republicans and their followers from outside of the Short Strand were involved in the rioting from Clandeboye Gardens:

There were big men, not young people orchestrating the violence in the Short Strand...they were bussed in from the Markets, and taxied in from North Belfast, they were all headed by known Republicans (Unionist).

This is not a new phenomenon, previous research has found that many of the main participants in interface violence rarely live on or close to the actual interface. Jarman (2002) discussed the role of outsiders at interfaces and the difficulties incurred attempting to monitor and control their behaviour.

It must also be pointed out that not all the people who were congregating at the interface were participating in violence and disorder.

It appeared that many were *'bored, and with the long evenings it was a chance for them to get out of the house'*. Large groups of people, especially from the Inner East would gather close to the interfaces to both lend support and be kept entertained:

There was mothers with prams, people in chairs all watching the rioting...the chippy never made so much money...it was better than Coronation Street (Unionist).

5.6 Cluan Place

Interviewees indicated that most of the houses in Cluan Place were devastated in 2002. It appears that the majority of residents were forced to leave their homes at the outset of the violence. According to interviewees from the Inner East the families were not safe in the area, and their lives would have been in danger had they chosen to stay. However, several interviewees from Short Strand felt that Protestants residing in Cluan Place were ordered out of their homes by Loyalist paramilitaries who then took over the vacant properties and launched attacks into Clandeboyne Gardens. Neither of these claims has been substantiated, but it is clear that several properties in Cluan Place became vacant at the outset of the violence.

One particular group of women came to prominence during the interface trouble by basing themselves in a property in Cluan Place and championing the rights of the Protestant people. The East Belfast Concerned Women's Group (EBCWG) were frequently in the news and were widely known campaigners for Protestant rights:

Nobody else was helping the residents of Cluan Place...the residents were crying out for help...so we just wanted to do something (Unionist).

The actions of this group are documented in more detail in Chapter 7, however it is important to understand how they developed and where they came from. There has been some criticism levelled at groups and politicians who apparently used what was happening in Cluan Place as a means to pursue their own goals:

There were people and certain groups that sprung up and just jumped on the bandwagon and threw themselves into Cluan Place...there were groups that went in and had absolutely no remit in there whatsoever...I think that at times it was detrimental to the whole process of trying to resolve it (Unionist).

Regardless of what people think, the EBCWG were prominent throughout 2002. They spent many nights and days in Cluan Place and liaised with community workers, representatives and elected members. Several interviewees were proud of their contribution and felt that their support was crucial in resolving the conflict:

The women played an important role...they were a nuisance to everyone...persistent. Cluan Place is the only place in Northern Ireland that didn't fall in those circumstances, and it never will...Republicans picked up land and houses at all the other interfaces in Belfast, but they didn't realise that the women here would stand up to them (Unionist).

In relation to political representatives it was indicated on several occasions by a number of interviewees that one current Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) made his name from what happened at Cluan Place:

They were all there, each of the Unionist parties...I can think of one who got elected on the back of it...he has used this to further his political career (Unionist).

Criticism was also expressed about the way the First and Deputy First Ministers handled the communal violence. On one occasion David Trimble visited residents in Cluan Place, while Mark Durkan at the same time was with residents of Short Strand. Several interviewees felt that this simply reinforced the segregation and divisions, and offered no sign of unity or community togetherness.

People look up to them for leadership and guidance, but they just defined the boundaries of each community (Unionist).

It is important to note that positive comments about politicians were also made, especially in relation to the meeting the Sinn Féin mayor convened between residents of Inner East Belfast and Short Strand, and the communication and dialogue created by a Unionist MP between the Inner East Forum and their local MLAs:

The Mayor took a big risk bring both sides together like that, but it certainly helped the healing process (Unionist).

The meetings between residents of Inner East Belfast along with the Forum, and the MLAs in Stormont provided people with an opportunity to air their grievances (Unionist).

5.7 Clandeboye Gardens

The residents of Clandeboye Gardens could not understand why their small community was being targeted by Loyalists. The impact of the violence drove many to despair, with many feeling that it was never going to end, one likened it to living through a 'Vietnam movie'. The majority of interviewees talked about the strong sense of community that was created during the interface violence. There was a belief that everyone was in it together and people's doors were open to everyone:

The neighbours and the rest of the community were so supportive, they helped you through it...at the time I thought I am living through this, it wasn't until I stayed with friends that I realised I wasn't living it, I was surviving it (Nationalist).

There were some voices of disquiet about the way the Short Strand community reacted to the violence in Clandeboye Gardens. According to one interviewee many from the community liked to portray the image that they all stood together, but sometimes this was not the case. There were instances where people simply switched off and forgot that Clandeboye was under constant attack:

*I think that the Short Strand community at times turned in on itself...some people within the area let those in the most need down. I think that the IRA let us down. You know, there were nights that you couldn't even get out your front door for missiles coming down and the presence of brits and peelers, but if you went round to St Matthew's Club it would have been f***ing bunged. That place should have been closed down; they were sitting drinking while we were worrying whether our houses were going to be burnt down. Look a lot of people came to our aid, but there are others who I will never speak to again (Nationalist).*

5.8 Impact on the wider community

It was clear that Clandeboye Gardens and Cluan Place featured heavily in relation to the violence and disorder. However, there are two events in different areas that have to be highlighted. Firstly there was an incident at the Belfast Institute in Tower Street on the 7th June 2002. According to several interviewees and news media reports, a number of masked men entered the college and attempted to identify students from the Short Strand area:

They just went in wearing masks asking for any Short Strand Taigs...asking them to say the alphabet, if the kids said the letter H wrong then they were in trouble...it was as basic as that...the kids had to lock themselves in the storage cupboards (Nationalist).

This incident increased the fear and apprehension within the Short Strand community. There was a feeling of isolation and increased tension which resulted in people refusing to unnecessarily leave the boundaries of their community. It must be noted that there was strong condemnation of this incident from members of the unionist communities. One interviewee remembered clearly when the incident happened and sensed the revulsion that was evident through his community:

What happened at the college was nothing more than naked sectarianism...if it happened today it would have received larger coverage, but at the time it was just another event in East Belfast...people weren't overly shocked (Unionist).

The second event was more prolonged and involved protests by women from the Inner east area along the main roads surrounding Short Strand (the role of women in these protests will be considered in more detail in Chapter 7). One of the consequences of these protests was that residents from the Short Strand were unable to access essential services:

We couldn't get to the surgery, chemist, post office or the Sure Start programme that gives our babies free milk; people from the catholic community were not welcome outside of the Short Strand (Nationalist).

The women were protesting at their perceived lack of rights for Loyalists and the increasing violence against Protestant homes on the interfaces. There have been mixed views on the success of these protests:

When your community is hurting you go to extremes and do things that don't seem right to people on the outside...Protestants sometimes have a way of doing things wrong, but they were hurting and so frustrated that they felt they had to do something...and I admire them for that (Unionist).

People from the Short Strand were shocked at the protests and could not believe the hatred expressed by the women. The protests inevitably meant that residents in the Short Strand had to travel distances into the city to both access essential services and collect their daily groceries.

5.9 Summary

What happened at Cluan Place and Clandeboye Gardens remains a mystery to many in the sense that they have no conception as to why these two communities became the battleground for major interface rioting between Nationalists/Republicans and Unionists/Loyalists. The general consensus is that residents from both areas were not the main

protagonists in the violence, but they did become the main victims. The shooting incidents represented the worst of the violence and disorder, which resulted in five Protestants being injured. The reasons behind the actions remain unclear but it is evident that the incidents in Cluan and Clandeboye had implications for all residents in both communities.

6. The impact of violence and disorder

Do you know what really drives me round the bend...is that now I live on one of the most notorious interfaces in Belfast...this is not an interface, this is my home...and I won't be told that I live in a flashpoint area, because it isn't the people from around here that are causing the trouble...that's the same for both sides.

Everyone who was affected by the violence has a story to tell. This chapter highlights the various effects the interface violence had on families and young people from both communities. The impact of the violence in some cases was short term, while in others the effects have yet to emerge. It is difficult to say that one community was more badly affected than another; and it is also both impossible and insensitive to judge one person's pain and suffering over another's.

6.1 Displaced families

According to several interviewees, more families from Cluan Place were forced to relocate than those in Clandeboye Gardens. For this reason it has been difficult to document the accounts of many of the residents who lived in Cluan Place at the time of the interface violence, as many who left never returned:

I think that only two houses remained occupied with residents out of twenty three properties in Cluan Place...how many left in Clandeboye? (Unionist).

Initially it was claimed that this was further evidence that the unionist community were more badly affected than the nationalist community:

Cluan Place I would argue got the worst of the lot...a 78 year old was literally carried out as she watched her home go up in flames...virtually everyone had to leave their homes...with gunfire going off in the background (Unionist).

And,

A lot of people, especially those from Cluan Place were scattered to the winds...some of the scenes were very heart rending...and I dare say there were Catholics on the other side who had to move as well...both sets of innocent people were subjected to this (Unionist).

However, it later emerged that the majority of people in Clandeboye Gardens owned their own houses; consequently they were not in a position to seek emergency accommodation through the Housing Executive:

The people in Clandeboye couldn't move, they owned their own houses...they couldn't just abandon them to be destroyed...they had to protect them (Nationalist).

Several participants from the Inner East recalled incidents where families and young people had to evacuate Cluan Place in the middle of the night, with no opportunity to gather their belongings:

Families were witnesses to shootings and riots at night...many had to leave their homes in the early hours of the morning in the clothes that they were wearing (Statutory).

The response from the statutory agencies has been commended by the majority of participants. Those families that had to be relocated in Cluan Place were seen to quickly, and repairs to property in both Clandeboye and Cluan Place were dealt with efficiently:

The agencies were very good, especially the Trust and the Housing Executive in relation to putting people into emergency accommodation and fixing roofs and windows (Unionist).

6.2 Young people

It became clear that there were two strands of thought on the impact that the interface violence had on young people in 2002. Discussions with young people revealed that they remembered the incidents as a time when *'things were exciting, and you just didn't know what was going to happen next'*. The young people were out most nights, participating in the violence, lending support to their friends or defending their community. It was the summer time and the nightly rioting broke up the boredom and offered the young people *'an escape from the normal youth programmes.'* It became apparent that it was difficult to keep young people away from the interfaces because they could not compete with the drama, intensity and adrenaline pumping emotions young people were experiencing:

It was exciting, bit of fun...kept us amused at night. We used to cheer our mates on as they threw missiles at them (Unionist).

This view was reinforced by one interviewee who worked closely with young people throughout the interface violence. He felt that the young people were enjoying the situation because it was different; it broke up the monotony of their lives and made them feel special because so many people were focusing attention on them:

I think the kids were badly affected...at the time several of the young people directly involved thought that it was exciting, especially moving out of their homes into hotels...and they were getting so much attention...the children viewed this as something different (Unionist).

One issue that needs to be raised is that several interviewees felt that young people throughout 2002 were being used and manipulated by adults within the Loyalist community to create tensions at the interface. This perception only emerged in respondents from Inner East Belfast, there appeared to be no similar view from people in the Short Strand. Although the majority of respondents did acknowledge that young people played some part in the violence and disorder. It was felt by Unionists that certain leaders in the Loyalist community used young people to prolong tensions on the interface:

There were elements within the community that were using young people...they were easily manipulated; some incidents were disgraceful (Unionist).

It then became evident that as the violence and disorder began to decrease, the young people were being instructed by the same adults to stop participating in interface violence. This must have been confusing and unsettling for the young people, receiving mixed signals from people in the community who were deemed to have some degree of authority:

Young people often received mixed signals from adults...so when the violence was coming to an end you had instances where adults who had previously been encouraging young people to defend their community and attack the Short Strand, were suddenly and without explanation patrolling the streets and telling young people that if they started throwing missiles then they would be in trouble (Unionist).

Discussions with adults revealed a very different perception of the impact the violence and disorder had on young people from both communities. There was a general consensus that young people were detrimentally affected, some more so than others, by the communal disorder in 2002. The children that lived directly on the interface were badly affected in that there were occasions when they had to be literally picked from their

beds and moved to more secure accommodation. Sometimes when they woke they were unsure of where they were, or why they had been moved:

There were several cases of children picked from their beds in the middle of the night still in their pyjamas and moved to friends or relatives houses (Statutory).

Something that people take for granted like dressing a child for school became a nightmare for some people caught up in the violence. One interviewee remembered a mother bringing her daughter into the community centre, the mother was in tears. In the middle of the night they had to leave their home, when she got up the next morning she couldn't take her daughter to school because she had forgotten her uniform.

Another interviewee who worked with young people noticed clear differences in their behaviour soon after the violence started. They were alarmed at the insecurity and fear shown by the young people, and distress caused from being away from their parents:

I was working with young people...the parents were bringing them into the community centre in the morning, and the kids couldn't separate from their parents...they couldn't physically let go...it was very frightening. The children had been happy and confident just a few weeks before (Nationalist).

In one case a respondent felt that the violence and disorder in 2002 had a long lasting effect on her granddaughter, resulting in dramatic personality and behavioural changes for the worse:

She was four at the time...see if that child hears a firework going off now she runs and grabs her mummy's leg and starts screaming...and if she hears a band playing, any type of band she just runs and hides (Nationalist).

A further interviewee who visited families and young people who remained in houses on the interfaces was shocked at the conditions young people were living in. In both Cluan Place and Clandeboye the visible signs of violence were everywhere, it was something that couldn't be hidden from a child:

I remember going into a house to visit a family who had children...it was such a normal home, with pictures on the wall...but there had not been any natural light in the house for weeks...and I wondered what it would be like to raise a family in this environment...even simple things, like getting kids to do their homework (Statutory).

There are two primary schools located either side of the interfaces in Short Strand and Inner East Belfast. Children were attending these schools throughout the month of June, and changes in the young people's attitudes and behaviour were noticed. It became apparent that what young people were experiencing at home and in the community was impacting on them through their responses in class and the way they acted in the playground. According to one interviewee:

Lots of young people were not receiving positive parenting at home...the parents were at their wits end...they couldn't explain to their children what was happening...the kids were being told things about the other community, but just didn't understand (Statutory).

As a result, young people were confused about what was happening to them. They didn't understand why they could not play outside when they left school or why people were trying to destroy their houses. This impacted on the way young people interacted and communicated with other kids during play time in school:

I noticed a difference in the young people's behaviour...when they were allowed out to play their behaviour became very aggressive; especially among boys...they pretended to be Taigs and Prods and fought with each other (Statutory).

One interviewee highlighted the impact helicopters had on young people. They associated the helicopter with an escalation of violence in the community, and whenever a routine helicopter would fly close to the children they would immediately panic:

Some of the children would freak out if helicopters were flying too low, even if the kids were nowhere near the interfaces. They were jumpy, nervous...struggling to settle down, they were constantly worrying about their parents (Statutory).

Several interviewees felt that young people had been heavily traumatised by their experiences in 2002. Large numbers of children suffered from bed-wetting, sleep and behaviour problems. Others at the time appeared not to be affected, but as one interviewee noted:

There was something very intense about the situation...at the time people do what they can to survive...problems and issues arising from the interface violence might not emerge for weeks, months, or years after the event (Statutory).

6.3 Impact on adults

The interface violence had a major impact on the lives of adults in the community. There was a sense of disbelief and denial that people who had lived for several years next to each other would target homes for no valid reason. Large sections of both communities felt that they were caught up in a conflict that they knew nothing about nor wanted to be involved in. Adults were primarily concerned with protecting their family and children, and seemed to get by each day on adrenaline with no regard for their own safety.

Several interviewees discussed the impact the violence and disorder had on their lives both at the time and since its reduction. One interviewee recalled the sense of fear running through the Short Strand community. They indicated that people were frightened to leave the confines of the area due to the protests on the Newtownards and Albertbridge Roads and steady incidents of violence. People became suspicious of strangers, and a sense of paranoia swept through the community:

One incident that really sticks in my mind was the lady in the community who had cancer...she needed her medication, but didn't know how to get it because of the protests. I had to drive down to the surgery to get her prescription, I was never so frightened...I stayed in the car with the engine running while she went in to collect it...that's what it was like, people were so paranoid and scared (Nationalist).

It appears that one of the difficulties that adults had was responding to the constant questions from their children about who was attacking their homes and why. In the majority of cases adults didn't have the answers, and sometimes this made them feel inadequate as parents, heaping more pressure on them:

It was difficult to answer a child when they asked you what was happening and you yourself weren't sure what was going on (Nationalist).

Furthermore, adults also found it difficult reassuring their children that everything would be alright, and that the violence would be ending soon. The adults themselves couldn't guarantee their own safety and didn't know when the interface violence would end. One interviewee recalled an incident which has long stuck in her memory:

It was my daughter's first holy communion and she was all dressed up. She wanted to walk out the front door of the house, but I didn't think that it was safe enough...we had to go out the back and climb over a wall (Nationalist).

The violence and disorder also had a direct impact on the health and well-being of the people living close to the interfaces. Several interviewees talked about the increase in prescription drugs being administered to both adults and young people to calm nerves and assist in sleeping:

You were scared to go to sleep...you just didn't know what was going to hit your house next...so I used to take a wee diazepam tablet every night... that would sort you out (Nationalist).

And;

*You were listening to them throwing things at your house every night of the week...you were just so f***ed...you actually felt sick...it near put me round the bend, I was ready for a nervous breakdown (Nationalist).*

Some people also felt that levels of alcohol consumption increased within the community throughout the period of disorder. Interviewees talked about people having to drink just to get through the nights when the rioting was at its worst:

People were living at their wits end...some were close to a nervous breakdown, a wee drink now and again relaxed you (Nationalist).

Some participants openly discussed the psychological impact that the violence had on them. They talked about feelings of depression and helplessness, along with anger and revenge. One interviewee in particular highlighted the sense of disbelief in the whole situation. They had been living on the interface throughout the violence and decided to get away for the night to have a rest and a peaceful nights' sleep:

On one occasion me and the wife decided to get out of the area for the night...we went away and checked into a hotel...just as she was coming out of the shower I said to her 'do you want to see our house on the television', and there it was on the news, just after being hit by a petrol bomb...it was depressing but it was nice not to have been there (Nationalist).

It also became apparent that the prolonged interface violence was having detrimental effects on adult and family relationships. Several participants talked about becoming socially withdrawn and non-communicative with their spouses. Conversations stopped, because in a lot of cases frustrations would boil over and result in arguments and rows. One interviewee became aware of the changes in his behaviour but did not immediately attribute it to the violence. However, after talking with neighbours, it became apparent to him that what he was experiencing at home was no different to what other families were going through:

I was so glad when other people told me about the distress they were going through...for a while I thought that I was the only one. It can have such a bad effect on family relationships. Your whole attitude and behaviour changes without you even realising it (Nationalist).

Another interviewee talked about the sense of anger and feelings of revenge that developed after repeated Loyalist attacks on his home and family. The respondent had lived right on the interface and had experienced incidents of pipe, blast and petrol bomb attacks on his home. Fortunately nobody from his family has been directly injured. However, one incident was to change all that, and ultimately change his views and feelings of the Loyalists who were, in his eyes, instigating the violence:

My daughter was sitting on the couch in the living room...I had just walked into the kitchen to get a juice, I had left the front door open...the next thing a bomb flew in and landed on my daughters leg...she was pregnant at the time...she ripped the trousers off and ran into the kitchen just before it exploded...I lost it there and then, I wanted to burn down all of Cluan Place (Nationalist).

The feelings of frustration were evident in many of the interviews, especially from those who lived in Clandeboyce Gardens. They could not comprehend why their homes were targeted by Loyalists. Many of them had invested their savings into their homes. They saw it as an investment for the future. To some, their homes were all they had, and they were proud of them. As a result of 2002, people's attitudes have changed and they have become despondent and no longer feel as proud about their investments:

You know we were going to buy this house prior to 2002...we have invested £22,000 in the building...see now, if someone came and offered it to me for a fiver, I would tell them to stick it up their arses, that's the God honest truth (Nationalist).

6.4 Summary

It is clear that all sections of the community old and young, Nationalist and Unionist suffered in some way during 2002. It became apparent that many of the families moved out of Cluan Place immediately after the violence began, but those from Clandeboyce Gardens stayed. It proved difficult to talk to families who lived in Cluan Place in 2002 as many chose not to return to the area. However, several families from Clandeboyce Gardens provided vivid accounts of what they experienced

throughout 2002. The recurring violence has had a lasting impact on many families in both Short Strand and Inner East Belfast, with in many cases young people being the most vulnerable to the effects of this violence.



SECTION TWO

7. Role of women

No matter what you can say about the women, at least they were there, doing what they thought was right for their community

Women throughout the history of the Troubles have played a prominent role in raising awareness on issues such as justice, law and order and human rights. Women have also been to the fore in campaigning and protesting against inequalities, sectarianism and for an end to the conflict. Unemployment, poor provision of services, social exclusion and a violence that has come from the security forces and paramilitary groups have, to differing extents, affected women from both nationalist and unionist communities.

Within academic literature, the activities of Loyalist women are discussed less than those of either Republican women or Loyalist men (Morgan and Fraser, 1994). Throughout 2002 women from both communities in East Belfast were visible and active participants in a number of activities. However, the roles undertaken by women differed dramatically in how they dealt with the interface violence and how they attempted to portray the impact of the violence within their respective communities.

It is important to draw attention to the various activities and roles women participated in and highlight the distinctive differences in behaviour expressed by women, so as to understand the anger, fear, hurt and despair which emerged from both communities. There are clear differences in the way female members of the protestant and catholic communities approached the crisis, and the level of their involvement in trying to support and assist fellow members of their community.

Discussions with all of the participants clearly pointed to the view that women and men had two very separate roles throughout the interface violence, which for the majority never overlapped. However, women did not take similar roles within their respective communities, and these differences have been documented below.

7.1 Women from within the Short Strand community

During several discussions with residents from the Short Strand it became clear that women of all ages played a significant role in reducing the impact of the violence and disorder on the wider community and highlighting its effects including the limited access to services. As

previously noted, Nationalist/Republican women have a long history of community participation and organisation throughout the conflict. This was also the case in 2002 with two interviewees noting that:

Women were central to the whole crisis. They played a major role in the Short Strand...it is fair to say that without them, this community would not have survived (Nationalist).

Women were a crucial and integral part of the defence of the area...they were the driving force while the men were on the street (Nationalist).

The women's role throughout 2002 according to many of the interviewees can be placed in two categories; working with young people and residents, and highlighting injustices against the people from the community. As previously noted, *'one consequence of the interface violence was the inability for people from the Short Strand to access crucial services due to a Loyalist blockade of the area'*. These included the doctor's surgery; chemist; post office; dentist; baby clinic and shopping centres. The knock-on effect was that many elderly people were unable to collect their pensions; people who were ill could not visit the surgery or collect prescriptions; and mothers could not receive baby food supplies. It emerged through further discussions that women from the area took it upon themselves to organise *'the relief effort for the community'*. They organised transport for people to collect their pensions at post offices not in East Belfast, and they facilitated the community centre as a makeshift surgery:

They helped the community so much. They organised the community centre so that the doctors could use it...kept it open so people could use it as respite, for a meal, even a quiet cup of tea...they were there to listen to people...and they travelled all round Belfast collecting prescriptions and pensions (Nationalist).

Several of the female respondents had in 2002 been central in organising events and activities for young people in the community. The aim of these programmes according to interviewees was to *'provide the young people with some sense of normality, and bring fun into their lives'*. It was noted that the summer of 2002 was especially hot, and many young people were unable to participate in 'play' outside their homes, within the confines of their community, for fear of being struck by a missile. It emerged that several women had organised a party to *'try and lift morale of the young people'*. The party involved young people taking part in fancy dress and games with food, sweets and drinks being provided. It was also felt that something needed to be done to brighten up the areas where the young people lived.

Boards had been placed over several of the windows on houses in Clandeboye Gardens, and along with the marks from paint, blast and petrol bombs the appearance of the area did little to lift the spirits of the residents. Therefore some women developed an initiative called 'bring back the sunshine'. This involved the children stencilling patterns and designs over the wooden boards that were protecting their windows:

The children got to paint sunflowers, the adults cleaned the outside of their houses, and for a while the area returned to some degree of normality (Nationalist).

The women also organised day trips out of the area for the young people and in some cases managed to place the children with families in other parts of Ireland for short breaks. Women from the area also instigated rallies and protests to highlight the conditions that residents from the Short Strand were living in:

These were peaceful protests, we would get together with banners that said 'we demand protection' and 'send in the United Nations'...the rallies were in relation to the abuse of our human rights (Nationalist).

Many of the interviewees were at pains to highlight the peaceful nature of these protests. They indicated that they were often family occasions with children present waving banners and flags. The rallies provided an opportunity to strengthen the community, and bring people into the Short Strand to listen and observe residents' experiences. Several women were also prominent in bringing in local politicians, national and international representatives and NGO's into the area. It was felt that the presence of these individuals and groups would help to internationalise the issues faced within the Short Strand community.

7.2 Women from within the Inner East community

Discussions with representatives from Inner East Belfast also centred on the role women had throughout 2002 and beyond. It became evident that women had a very vocal and visible role during the interface violence, highlighting the plight of Protestant families affected by the violence and disorder along with the perceived lack of rights for Loyalist women as two key issues.

There was a mixed reaction from several interviewees as to whether the Protestant women who participated in the protests had a positive or negative impact on the interface violence:

Some of the things they did were beneficial; others were a disaster (Statutory).

Initially women began protests on the Newtownards and Albertbridge Roads at the beginning of June 2002. According to several women who participated in these protests, they were in reaction to the injustices that people in their community were facing. They saw families and young people being forced to leave their homes as a result of Republican intimidation and the media attributing blame for the ensuing violence firmly at the door of Loyalists. According to one interviewee:

People were angry and frustrated, they felt helpless and nobody was listening to them...they marched and protested to make people see that there was another community hurting (Unionist).

Those who were interviewed indicated that at the commencement the protests were organised and managed well. Many women were present, often accompanied by their children, and the protests were peaceful with issues presented in an articulate and moderate way. However, many felt that as time went on some of those associated with the protests left as they felt that some women had alternative agendas and the original objectives were being lost:

Some of the women were more outspoken than others...some split away. People tried to tell the women that what they were doing was not helping their cause...their meaning was being lost (Unionist).

One interviewee who participated in the protests at the beginning reflected on an occasion where several female protestors, who were angry with the police for asking them to move on, began to single out an individual officer who they were familiar with in previous community roles. They verbally abused the person and their family at an unacceptable level, at which point this particular interviewee left the protest and never returned.

It is also worth noting that several interviewees from the Nationalist community indicated strongly that many of the female protestors were often accompanied by men in the background, with some wearing balaclavas. They felt that the women were being used to portray a media friendly image, while underlying sinister elements were orchestrating the intimidation against Nationalist residents:

I witnessed the women blocking the roads, but a lot of them were being wound up and manipulated by men. It was clear that the loyalist paramilitaries were stirring the pot (Nationalist).

It became apparent from interviewees that explaining to the women about the merits of their protests was difficult. They understood that the women were angry and felt that they had to do something, but to one interviewee, they were simply playing into the hands of Republicans:

The protests were a disaster...just like the Holy Cross protest. In terms of propaganda, it was the best thing they could have done for the Republicans (Unionist).

The East Belfast Concerned Women's Group (EBCWG) was formed in August 2002 as a response to Republican attacks on Protestant homes. They entered one of the empty houses in Cluan Place and developed it into a community house, where they stayed for several months. They remained while attacks continued on residents, and offered assistance in whatever way they could.

According to the women, they entered the house with the full knowledge of the Housing Executive and residents in the area were supportive and welcoming to the women:

The women have to be commended. There were often nights that they would be sitting in that community house and there would have been blast and petrol bombs going off all around them...but they never gave in (Unionist).

On the other hand there was strong criticism of the behaviour and actions of the women in this group from several interviewees, who felt that the women antagonised the situation and did little to draw it to an end:

The women in Cluan Place were having parties; playing loud music; drinking; rowing among themselves...they stayed too long (Unionist).

Furthermore, several respondents felt that the women took over the house in Cluan Place without the support of the community or the agreement of the Housing Executive:

They were not given permission to enter and take over a house, and it took several months to get rid of them...certain politicians felt that they were a calming influence, but most people were split on their role and how productive it was (Statutory).

Several interviewees did however acknowledge that there were people from within the Protestant community who admired and respected what

these women were doing in protecting Protestant homes from a perceived Nationalist invader.

7.3 Summary

The actions and behaviour of women were significant within both communities throughout 2002. They were visible and prominent and in most cases were seen to be benefiting their communities in relation to the interface violence. There is no doubting the claim that women were feeling threatened, frustrated and helpless and their actions were in direct response to these emotions. However, the way women from each community portrayed these emotions differed dramatically. Women's groups from the Short Strand appeared to be more structured and organised, and understood clearly the boundaries of their positions within the area. Women from the Protestant side, according to several interviewees, were more disorganised, volatile and often let their emotions get in the way of their goals. However, there were other participants who were proud of the input provided by the Protestant women, and felt that they raised awareness and morale, and protected Unionist communities in East Belfast.

8. Policing

One of the biggest problems in both communities was the lack of intervention...many believe that with proper police intervention the incidents of 2002 would not have happened.

Throughout the history of Northern Ireland, policing has always proved to be a controversial issue. Unsurprisingly, this was the case in Short Strand/Inner East Belfast throughout 2002. The topic of policing was extensively covered within each of the interviews. There were strong differences of opinion from both Protestant and Catholic participants in relation to policing strategies, behaviour, and conduct. The general view from the Protestant community was that the police ignored attacks from Nationalists and instead forced down Protestants who were trying to defend their own communities. On the other hand, large sections of the Catholic community felt that the police facilitated Loyalist attacks on their area and ignored their calls for assistance. In fact, both communities were similar in their negative perceptions of the police, with very few supporting voices emerging from the discussions.

This section is divided into several parts, initially highlighting the views of interviewees from the Short Strand and Inner East Belfast, then dealing with views of the police. It is important to note the similarity in the quotes from respondents in relation to their experiences of the police regardless of their community background.

8.1 Short Strand perceptions of the police

The general view of the police from residents and representatives from Short Strand was one of disdain, anger and lack of respect. A common perception was that the police had ignored the plight of Nationalist residents and '*beaten, verbally abused and intimidated Short Strand residents at any given opportunity*'. Several interviewees indicated that they had witnessed over-aggressive police behaviour on several occasions:

The police charged at them...battering them like robots, and they were just a bunch of women (Nationalist).

I witnessed the police coming into this area and treating the residents like absolute shit and doing nothing for the people. They would be standing around or sitting in their jeeps while loyalists stood on the roofs and threw pipe bombs (Nationalist).

Facilitated Loyalists

There were also claims from residents that the police assisted Loyalist rioters in gaining access to positions where they could attack Nationalist homes freely and more accurately:

One Sunday they attacked the Catholic houses on Mountpottinger Road beside the Credit Union. I saw the police break their cordon and the Loyalists ran straight through and started attacking the houses from a few feet away (Nationalist).

This view was not held by all Nationalist interviewees but some felt that the police could have done more to prevent Loyalist attacks against the residents and property in Clandeboye Gardens. Interviewees recalled incidents where the police had been told that there were rioters in Cluan Place and that petrol bombs were being launched at will. However, repeated calls for the police to intervene fell on deaf ears, and this led many to believe that either the police *'had no interest in quelling the violence'* or *'supported the actions of the Loyalists'*.

A more sinister claim was presented by three interviewees regarding the restriction of emergency vehicles into Short Strand by members of the police. They claimed that on several occasions the police stopped the fire brigade from entering the area to attend house fires caused by Loyalist petrol bombs. As a result, residents within the Clandeboye estate had placed their own fire hoses close to houses on the interface:

The emergency services were noted on a number of occasions not being allowed into the area by the police...I don't know why they were turned away...but we had our own hoses to control the fires (Nationalist).

Police behaviour

The manner, attitude and behaviour of the police have come in for much criticism from Nationalists. It became apparent that people were intimidated by the tactics deployed, with the perception that the police automatically assumed that residents from the Short Strand and specifically Clandeboye Gardens were the main protagonists in the interface violence:

They used to come in here at 6pm and take over the whole place...they were like the Gestapo...all dressed in black, all you could see were their eyes (Nationalist).

This perceived attitude from the police immediately disrupted communication and interaction with the residents, resulting in further

alienation. There was no dialogue, which led to mis-information and rumour-mongering:

The police drove in and nearly knocked two kids down...they were so aggressive...they were all dressed in riot gear...they were really nasty to talk to; they were frightening the kids, and treated us with absolute disdain. Once, I burst out crying with frustration (Nationalist).

Police tactics

One recurring theme throughout each of the interviews was the tactics deployed by the police at the preliminary stage of the interface violence at Clandeboye Gardens/Cluan Place. Geographically, Cluan Place is a cul-de-sac with one entrance onto the Alberbridge Road. Similarly Clandeboye Gardens has one entrance in and out to the rest of Short Strand; however there is a small pedestrian access onto the Mountpottinger Road. What residents from the Nationalist community could not comprehend was 'why the police did not simply block off entrances into both areas with a couple of jeeps and only let people in and out who lived in there?' This question was repeatedly put to the researcher, because for many it represented the failure of the police to protect their community:

All it would have taken that night would have been one jeep at the bottom of Cluan Place only letting people who lived in the area in...but they chose not to do that (Nationalist).

After four months of intense interface violence the security forces took the decision to deploy large numbers of army personnel into both Nationalist and Unionist communities around the interfaces. This was heavily condemned by residents from the Short Strand, who felt that their presence was purely intimidatory and confrontational:

The army came in with the combat gear, riot gear on...batons drawn, shields, dogs...facing the crowd in the Short Strand. They didn't enter in an interventionist way or focus on the Protestant community (Nationalist).

Several respondents felt that certain members of the army showed no respect for the property or people of Clandeboye Gardens with some referring to incidents where the army used the backs of houses and footpaths as toilets:

It antagonised the situation, also it didn't help that it was the RIR...they are absolutely sectarian...I think that it was just to heighten tensions (Nationalist).

The majority of interviewees did however think that the introduction of the army brought calm to the situation, but for some it was a return to images from the height of the Troubles:

The army came in and we started to get a decent night sleep (Nationalist).

Just lines of soldiers who didn't make a difference...if anything it was making the whole thing worse...it was like watching pictures from the early 70s (Nationalist).

One interviewee had an interesting take on why they thought that police tactics were so wrong. They had informally met with a police officer in authority and had been given the impression that the police thought that both communities could have resolved their issues without police assistance. They had not thought that it would have escalated to such an intense level. From this discussion the interviewee felt that:

The police got it all wrong...probably with bad intelligence...but part of me also thinks that they adopted an attitude of to hell with it, let them sort it out themselves (Nationalist).

Differential policing

Many of the residents in Short Strand felt that throughout 2002 the security forces policed Unionist communities along the interface more favourably. This perception was based on a number of rumours and incidents which reinforced the assumption that Nationalists were being persecuted. Residents in Clondeboy who's homes had been attacked felt that the police were ignoring rioters in Cluan Place, as this was the only point where missiles could have been launched:

One of the things that really frustrated people here was they were being told from outsiders...they were saying that when they came into Clondeboy they were seeing the riot squad and people dressed in black like Darth Vader...and then they were going into Cluan Place and they were seeing the police standing with their helmets off, relaxing...drinking tea (Nationalist).

The policing...you mean the lack of policing, it was outrageous...so we did the job for them. Any time an incident happened we logged it, and noted when the police failed to respond (Nationalist).

Furthermore, many interviewees thought that the police were either unwilling or had no interest in responding to their call-outs. Over several months in 2002 residents from Clondeboy repeatedly contacted the

police in relation to pipe bomb attacks on their homes. The majority of times these calls resulted in people being told '*we haven't got the manpower to deal with your call at the minute*'. Eventually residents did not see the point in contacting the police. One interviewee recalled an incident where the police ignored a crime scene, which could have led to people being injured or killed:

There was an incident where pipe bombs had been thrown at a house...the police were called and came to investigate. They were told about the pipe bombs, but they failed to examine the crime scene and quickly left. We happened to walk around the house, and came across three un-exploded pipe bombs which the police had missed (Nationalist).

The people from Short Strand felt very strongly about the security forces' handling of the interface violence in 2002. They are adamant that the police treated the two communities very differently, and this has had a lasting impact on policing in the Short Strand. One interviewee summed up the effect of the situation and residents' views of the police:

Any idea that the hierarchy within the police thought that they were going to win the hearts and minds of Republican/Nationalist people is gone completely from this community...they would not respond to calls; they watched while people's homes were being burnt down; they stood and let Loyalists throw paint, blast and petrol bombs; they would never declare scenes of crime, and they would drive past pipe bombs lying in the road...they ignored the pleas of this community (Nationalist).

8.2 Inner East perceptions of the police

The interviews and discussions with residents and representatives from Inner East Belfast also reflected negative views of the police response and attitude to the interface violence in 2002. There was a consensus that the police failed in their duty to protect the Protestant community from Nationalist/Republican intimidation, violence and disorder. Furthermore, there was general agreement from the respondents that the police assumed that the Unionist community was responsible for most of the violence, with one noting that '*the police were always at the Protestant community, facing them down as if they were the instigators*'.

Biased policing

Many participants maintained the view that throughout 2002 the policing was very one-sided, with the majority of police resources focusing on the Unionist community. Respondents were adamant that the police ignored people throwing missiles from Clondeboye Gardens into Cluan Place on a regular basis:

I saw the police standing in Cluan Place with the loyalists and all this stuff coming over from Clandeboye...yet they were arresting the loyalists for defending their community and ignoring people from the catholic side (Unionist).

There was a strong perception that the police were either scared to enter the Short Strand, or were under instructions from their superiors not to antagonise Nationalists/Republicans by raiding the Short Strand community:

Community workers from the Protestant side were taken into Short Strand in the back of police land rovers, and they saw that the area was not being policed. They were actually told by the police that they were not allowed to go into the Short Strand (Loyalist).

This theory that the police were under orders not to enter Short Strand was prevalent throughout several interviews, with the argument being that 'the government were trying to get Sinn Féin to join the Policing Board, and to heavily patrol within the Short Strand would have been detrimental to their objectives'. Furthermore, some respondents felt that the police, on occasions, attempted to pacify Republican discontent by drawing right back away from the interface:

They were not policing the Short Strand...the police actually let people out of the Short Strand, right up Mountpottinger Road which resulted in hand to hand fighting with people from both communities (Unionist).

And,

The police tried to say that the Nationalists didn't know they had crossed into a Loyalist area...Stevie Wonder would have knew he was in a Loyalist place (Unionist).

The introduction of the army brought criticism from several participants, who felt that they were there to control and 'spy' on the Unionist community. The attitude of the army and the confrontational stance that they took did little to appease people from the Protestant community:

My opinions of the police worsened throughout 2002...the army was put in against the residents in Cluan Place. They were not brought into protect the Protestant community, they were there to contain them...it was all about watching people (Unionist).

Poor police response

There was general consensus that any actions or policing initiatives conducted within Inner East Belfast during 2002 were done so without

motivation or effort. People felt that the police '*just didn't care*' and were quite happy to let the communities fend for themselves. One interviewee recalled an incident where the police came out to investigate an alleged blast bomb attack against a house close to the interface:

The police officer came out and said that it wasn't a blast bomb, but instead a firework. Now, this was a can with nails wrapped around it...the police left, saying there was nothing they could do. That was the attitude of the police. Policing around here was an absolute joke (Unionist).

Several interviewees also held the view that the poor police response was due to the fact that the police were unprepared and panicked. They felt that the police did not have adequate resources to deal with the increase in violence or the capability to bring normality to the situation:

Personally I think that the police panicked, they panicked the very first time the riots broke out in Madrid Street and they didn't stop panicking until October. That was the great flaw in how the police handled the whole thing (Unionist).

Police aggression

There was a widely held belief that the police were more aggressive and confrontational towards the Unionist community than the Nationalist community. Many interviewees recalled how the police repeatedly faced the Protestant people with their land rovers and moved them back, indiscriminately firing plastic bullets at the crowds:

The police always said that they face the perceived threat, and they were always facing the Protestant people...so they must have been deemed the threat (Loyalist).

Several interviewees felt that the police behaved in an over-aggressive manner, battering down people who were defending and protecting their community. Some recalled incidents where the police simply charged at groups of people standing on the Albertbridge Road who were there just to lend support. In fact two interviewees alleged that they had been assaulted by the police in an unprovoked attack:

The police wouldn't help. The police actually attacked me and some others with their batons and their shields...we were trying to talk to them and the others slammed the door in our faces...they just didn't want to listen...we were crying (Unionist).

One interviewee offered an interesting account as to why they thought the police attacked members of the Protestant community. They felt that

the police were under extreme levels of pressure and stress and when the opportunity arose to release it, the Protestant community were easy targets because the police could not gain access to the Nationalists:

I think that the police were frustrated. I mean they couldn't go into the Short Strand...they said on a number of occasions that they didn't have the resources, yet they could swamp the protestant communities...so who else could they take it out on, except the protestant people (Unionist).

The shooting incidents

One incident that appeared to totally alienate the Protestant people from the police was the occasion when five members of the Protestant community were shot in Cluan Place (June 2002). The general consensus from several of the Protestant interviewees was that '*five people had been shot and nothing had been done about it; there would be no justice for those victims*'. It is important to highlight the feelings and emotions that this incident created within the Protestant community, because for many it represented the reason why they had so little faith, support or praise for the police in their community '*there was so much frustration because the police did nothing about it*' (Unionist).

The initial police response to the shootings was an example to many of the residents of how low a priority it was. According to two participants, it wasn't until two weeks after the event that the police actually returned to the scene and made general enquires:

*After things had calmed down two police cars came into Cluan Place. I was sitting with the residents when the police got out with flip boards and started taking measurements. They came up to us and asked if they could make some enquires about the shootings. One of the residents replied 'are you f***ing kidding, two weeks after people were shot, get the f***k out of here'. They practically chased them out of the area (Loyalist).*

This attitude incensed many within the community, and reinforced their views that the police were uninterested in the plight of the Unionist community, and being over sensitive with the Nationalists. Even though the shooting incidents occurred in June 2002, there has been no further movement in apprehending the persons involved. Concerns surrounding the investigation have constantly been raised in the local media (East Belfast Observer, Jan 6th 2005), to the NIO and at local District Policing Partnership meetings (Belfast Telegraph, June 27th 2005). Recent DPP meetings in East Belfast have become heated affairs with several questions from the floor centring on the police operation to apprehend the people that shot the five Protestants:

I have asked the police and they have said that they have come up against a dead end...there is nothing much more they can do. They will never find out who shot them...that gun is long gone (Unionist).

There was genuine concern from all of the interviewees at the lack of police progress in the investigation. This was further heightened by the amount of perceived effort and resources that were put into the investigation of the Robert McCartney murder in January 2005. As one respondent noted:

I admire and applaud the police for the amount of time and effort they have put into the McCartney murder. I also despise the police, for in June 2002 five people were shot and they were not afforded the same recognition (Unionist).

8.3 Police perceptions of 2002

Discussions with the police in relation to their response to the violence and disorder highlighted the complex issues and outside pressures they were facing. The police were surprised at the intensity and the number of incidents that occurred throughout the year. Previously the police had been involved in short, isolated incidents of interface violence, but in 2002 their resources and ability to protect the community were stretched to the limit.

According to a police representative, what marked 2002 from previous years was the length of time it took for the violence to stop, along with the contributions made from outsiders:

The really serious rioting around Cluan Place started at the beginning of June...because of the previous tensions in the area, it just built up and got way out of control. This wasn't helped by people travelling from all over Belfast to both observe and participate in the rioting (PSNI).

And,

I can verify lots of people came in mini-vans and buses from outside the area, because people from both communities were shouting for people to come and support them. The police were stopping vehicles transporting people to the interfaces (PSNI).

One of the central criticisms of the police from members of the Protestant community was that they failed to properly monitor and control behaviour in the Short Strand, and instead focused all of their resources and attention on Protestants who were defending their own community in the face of inadequate policing. The police were aware of these criticisms '*one of the big issues amongst both communities was how we were policing it*' (PSNI).

According to the police the geography of the area was a massive factor in determining the extent of policing and the number of officers who could be deployed. Therefore, Short Strand and specifically Clandeboye Gardens, by their very design, made it difficult for the police to work in a safe and productive environment. However, Cluan Place was more expansive and easier to form defensible positions. In relation to the Short Strand:

Clandeboye is a very difficult place to manoeuvre in...the topography and the layout of the road means that there is one way in and out (choke road as the army would call it)...it is a maze of alleys and houses at different angles, and it is very hard to police in a defensible way (PSNI).

The police had a different view of policing within Cluan Place:

You could circle your vehicles in Cluan Place, something that you couldn't do in Clandeboye. You could have a safe, defensible space (PSNI).

The police realised that there was a difficulty in reflecting fair policing on both sides of the community. They were aware of complaints from members of the Protestant community about their use of resources and the number of officers being deployed within both areas. However, they clearly made the point that this was not reflective of who they thought were the instigators of violence, but more an effect of the environment in which people lived.

Discussions relating to the shootings in Cluan Place, in which five people from the Protestant community were injured, were limited as it is still an ongoing police investigation. However, it was evident that people from the Inner East community were angry and frustrated at the apparent lack of police intervention at the time. This was acknowledged by the police representative, who recalled the intense clashes between members of the Protestant community and the police that resulted in the firing of baton rounds:

All hell broke loose on the Protestant side and they took their anger out on us. The police were shot at several times on the Newtownards Road, and the police fired a number of baton rounds. There was serious disorder...it was mayhem (PSNI).

The police were involved in heavy clashes with rioters from both communities. On several occasions the police were beaten out of Clandeboye gardens, and shot at along the Newtownards Road.

According to the police, from May to August 2002, 75 police officers and 21 soldiers were injured in disturbances.

The reasons for introducing the army were touched upon, along with the impact that the communal disorder was having on police resources and morale. The prolonged nature of the violence meant that police officers were constantly required for East Belfast.

There was a time that the army were deployed when the police realised that they couldn't contain it on their own...there were interfaces nearly everywhere around the Short Strand, the police were being stretched. The army were needed to relieve the pressure, because at one stage I think that we had every mobile support unit in Northern Ireland that was available to us in East Belfast (PSNI).

The police were being stretched, and their capacity to monitor and control behaviour around all of the interfaces in East Belfast was near breaking point. Subsequently, the decision was taken to deploy the army. The police realised the sensitive issues surrounding the introduction of the army, but understood that both communities needed time and space to bring an end to the interface violence:

For some reason near the end of August it started to build up again...at that point we felt enough was enough. We felt that the community as a whole needed breathing space...so we saturated the place with army, which was a situation we had tried to hold off from (PSNI).

The discussions with the police revealed how difficult a situation it was for them to control in 2002. At times they were under attack from both communities, and their actions were more often than not perceived by both communities as being biased and politically influenced. However, the police contend that they did limit the number of violent and disorderly incidents that emanated from both communities, and eventually brought a degree of normality to the situation.

8.4 Summary

There were some voices of support for the police response in 2002, with one participant acknowledging the difficult position that they were in 'I think that they reacted to the situation in the best possible way...the police were in a no-win situation' (Unionist). Those that did agree that the police were placed in an impossible position also indicated that they sometimes became victims of the rumour mill that was circulating at the time. That is, people started to believe unsubstantiated claims and in effect distanced themselves from the police without provocation.

There is no doubting the complex issues that the police faced in 2002, and it is also important to note that there were several areas throughout Northern Ireland that suffered from community tensions that summer. This would have had an adverse effect on the resources available to the police. What is clear from these discussions is that people from both communities were critical and dissatisfied with the police and army response, which resulted in a deepening crisis and alienation between the people of Short Strand, Inner East Belfast and the security forces. As one interviewee concluded:

Policing was ridiculous...they turned on both communities; they were heavy handed...they just did not handle the situation at all...same for the army; they came in force...the army did not calm the situation (Nationalist).

There is no doubting the difficult situation that the police faced in 2002. Clearly they were in a no-win situation, and faced large scale criticism for their actions from both communities. Their resources were stretched to the max, resulting in the deployment of the army, which received little support from the wider community.

9. The media

I have no doubt that both sides were used and both sides were victims...what annoys me is that it was allowed to happen, if it had of been two communities off the Malone Road would it have been allowed to happen to the same degree?

The media representation of what was happening in Short Strand/Inner East Belfast throughout 2002 has been heavily criticised from both sections of the community. In general, there were very few positive comments about the media. However, those that criticised the media, depending on their community background, did so for very different reasons. There were clear distinctions between Nationalists and Unionists on how they felt the media portrayed both their community and the incidents of interface violence.

9.1 Inner East perceptions of the media

Feelings from several participants on the media representation of the interface violence created heated debates, with the majority indicating strong criticisms and disdain at the way the Protestant community were often portrayed as instigators of violence. There was a view that the media focused primarily on the impact of disorder on the Nationalists and implied that they were victims of Loyalist attacks:

The media was all one sided...the television was constantly about the Short Strand under siege, it was never about the protestant community under siege. Protestants only got negative coverage (Unionist).

This perception that the Short Strand community were under siege was ridiculed by many participants as merely a publicity stunt, orchestrated by Sinn Féin and picked up by the media and used to garner support for the community:

The media handled it terribly... Sinn Féin /IRA had a propaganda wagon running and they had the media on their side. They had everything well rehearsed...any incidents where the Protestant people were victims never made the headlines (Unionist).

Residents also felt that incidents where Protestant families were attacked and injured rarely made the headlines. There was a view that the media were only interested when the victims were Nationalist. Many believe

that the media coverage of the five people who were shot is a perfect example of the lack of fair media representation. At the time of the shootings very little media coverage was given to the victims or their families, and many feel this snub was simply because the victims were Protestant:

The media weren't helpful...if I had of been a Republican or someone living in the Short Strand I would have got all the media attention, but because I was a Protestant the media didn't want to know (Unionist).

There were interviewees who in hindsight felt that both communities would have negative perceptions of the media in 2002. They based this assumption on the fact that people rarely look for the positive portrayals of their own community in the news, but instead look to see how the other side have been viewed:

I would suggest that both communities would say that the media was biased...the funny thing is you don't actually see what the media is saying about your own community. You only see what it says about the other...and you base your feelings on this (Unionist).

One politician felt that criticisms made against the media were unjust, as the media were being led in the most part by information stemming from the police. They felt that the police were acting on a political agenda, and it was in their interests to have the media portray the interface violence as a confrontation between two communities, and not simply Republican attacks against innocent Protestant families:

The media were getting their briefings from the police...and for the police to maintain their cover for not going into the Short Strand and dealing with the rioters they had to give the impression that this was very much a two-sided problem (Unionist).

9.2 Short Strand perceptions of the media

Several participants from the Short Strand were extremely negative of the media coverage in 2002. According to the majority of people from the Short Strand, Loyalists and their supporters were responsible for most of the interface violence and communal disorder. Subsequently, they expected media coverage of events to portray similar views and perceptions to their own. However, this was not the case, with many news stories highlighting the fact that there were victims on both sides of the interface:

The media...they were disgraceful. There were several cases of bias reporting, and instances where they portrayed both sides as the same. I was told that the media had to show a balanced view, so all they talked about was tit-for-tat rioting, and that was not the case (Nationalist).

Furthermore, some residents felt that the media failed to convey accurately the depth of suffering being experienced by people living in the Short Strand. According to one interviewee, after a short period of time the media began to lose interest in the daily attacks experienced by Nationalists. They felt that the media were looking for a new angle, or better story other than people being attacked by blast bombs:

Our local rep was phoning the media and they were telling him that for them to report it, it would have to be newsworthy. He told them there were paint bombs, pipe bombs, houses being burnt, people being intimidated off the street, community under siege...and all the media said was they had reported it already, was there anything new happening? It was so frustrating...I think they were looking for deaths (Nationalist).

Others felt that the media simply ignored the plight of Nationalists and 'listened to the lies emanating from the Unionist people and especially their politicians'. There was a perception that television news reporters took for granted what people in authority were telling them, and didn't bother to fully investigate the issues:

What happened to investigative journalism...they have to report both sides (Nationalist).

The media were also criticised for not drawing on the fact that Loyalist paramilitaries were perceived by many to be the main protagonists in the interface violence. Those from the Short Strand were adamant that Loyalist groups were orchestrating and prolonging the violence, yet they often saw the media insinuating that much of the disorder was caused by young people:

The media just saw it as groups of young hooligans from both communities (Nationalist).

There was a lot apathy shown towards the media, and people began to lose trust in what they were reporting:

There was no journalist there who could have genuinely called themselves a proper reporter of news...they would just come in, get a story and leave (Nationalist).

In fact, people from the Short Strand began to record incidents of violence and disorder against their community themselves, so as to have an accurate document of what occurred in the area. Members of the Short Strand Community Forum also produced a video that depicted violent incidents against their community and distributed it to various media outlets and organisations, the purpose being that many felt that residents' stories and experiences were not being fairly presented in the media, and people had to be aware of what was happening in the Short Strand:

The media were good at times, but there were large parts of the media who just didn't care, in some cases they didn't even bother to film or tell the stories...got to the stage where we told them to go away of they didn't start telling the truth (Nationalist).

A similar type of video was produced by the Inner East Forum, because they felt that their views and experiences were not being highlighted by the media. This video provided residents from Inner East Belfast with an opportunity to 'tell their story' and bring attention to their pain and suffering.

9.3 Summary

The media have been heavily criticised by both sections of the community for their portrayal of the interface violence throughout 2002. Both Nationalists and Unionists felt that the media reflected their community in a negative light. There was also a perception that the media quickly tired of reporting on communal disorder along with damage to property.

The lack of coverage given to the five people from the Protestant community who were shot and the perception that Nationalists were involved in tit-for-tat attacks infuriated residents from both communities. Subsequently, members from both communities documented incidents against their own people and produced video footage of attacks to get their message out to the wider population.

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SECTION THREE

10. Why did it start?

Does anybody really know why it started; I think that some group had an agenda but it all got of hand and escalated into a bloody nightmare

From the outset it was always going to be difficult to provide a definitive account as to why the violence and disorder erupted so ferociously in 2002. However, it is possible to present the various views and perceptions from residents and community representatives as to why they believe the violence originated, and also why it continued through much of 2002. It is hoped that by providing accounts from both sides of the community and opportunities to present viewpoints, that members of the Short Strand and Inner East communities may gain an understanding as to why the prolonged interface violence began.

The majority of respondents had their own opinions and theories as to why the interface violence started, these varied considerably depending on people's community background and position within their community. There was a general consensus from the interviewees that the violence first started on Saturday May 11th 2002 in and around Madrid Street/Thistle Court and continued in some form up until Christmas of that year.

10.1 Short Strand perspective

Several respondents have developed interesting theories as to what contributed to the interface violence. Residents and community workers from the Short Strand maintain that three distinct organisations gained from the rioting in 2002; Loyalist paramilitaries, Protestant community groups and the PSNI. They do not feel that these groups co-operated and worked to the one agenda, but there is a widely held belief that each group saw the opportunity to extract as much benefit to their own organisation as possible.

1. Loyalist paramilitaries

As previously noted, some people perceived that whenever Loyalist paramilitaries were in the middle of a feud, or were trying to 'blood new members' they would attack the residents of Short Strand. Some believe that in 2002 the UVF along with the UDA were entrenched in a power struggle in and around East Belfast, and in an attempt to increase their own group numbers they pursued activities of violence and disorder against residents of the Short Strand community:

I think that the agenda of recruiting young people into the loyalist paramilitary groups through interface violence basically worked (Nationalist).

By selecting Short Strand and specifically Clandeboye Gardens, the Loyalist paramilitaries were in a position to 'actively recruit members, flex their muscles and limit the impact of the disorder to a few Protestant families'. It was also noted to the author that residents from Strand Walk and the Newtownards Road end of Short Strand were victims of petrol and pipe bomb attacks throughout 2002, but the Loyalists and media chose to hype up the Cluan Place interface.

There was also a perception that the Loyalist paramilitaries were attempting to provoke the IRA into breaking their cease-fire and retaliate against Loyalist attacks on the Nationalist community. This was not an isolated opinion and many felt that Loyalists were finding it difficult to justify their existence when the IRA no longer had an active presence in the community:

There was a political agenda that was more devious than people think...I believe they were trying to draw the IRA out of their cease-fire and force violent confrontations (Nationalist).

One final perception was that Loyalist paramilitaries were losing support within their own areas and needed to create an interface to portray the image of defenders of the community. One interviewee felt that the introduction of the gate at Madrid Street highlighted the influence paramilitaries had within the community:

The people were after that gate for years, they wanted to close in the Nationalists...bit of violence, the paramilitaries out in force on the streets and next thing the gate goes up (Nationalist).

2. The PSNI

There is a strongly held view within the Short Strand that the police were prominent in both facilitating and prolonging the interface violence. The general consensus was that the police saw what was happening in East Belfast as the perfect opportunity to press their claims to keep the police reserves. A decision from the Chief Constable was to be made in September 2002 regarding the fate of the PSNI Reserves, with many speculating that prior to the violence in 2002 the Reservists would have been abandoned. However, it turned out that a decision on the Reserves was postponed for three years and many feel this was a direct consequence of what happened in the Short Strand/Inner East Belfast:

There was agendas being played out...the police Reservists according to Patten were to be phased out, but of course they were kept (Nationalist).

The people from the Short Strand are adamant that the violence originated from Loyalist groups. They also believe, therefore, that if the police had wanted to stop the spread of interface violence all they had to do was restrict people going in and out of Cluan Place and protect other interfaces that surrounded the Short Strand. This according to many Nationalists did not happen, and reinforced their perception that it was in the police's interest to create as much disruption and disorder in East Belfast:

They had an agenda...all they had to do was put two land rovers over the entrance to Cluan Place and everything would have stopped...but that didn't happen, and they were on the streets for six months separating the communities (Nationalist).

3. Protestant community groups

Some participants felt that several groups emerged from the interface violence with increased funding and promises for better facilities. It is important to note that there wasn't total agreement from respondents regarding this theory. Those who felt that this was the case stated that though it may not have been the reason for the violence to begin, certain people soon realised the benefits of having an interface in their community and did little to bring it to an end:

Well I had heard rumblings that the only way you can get money/funding was by starting violence and creating an interface...now I believe people had agendas in the Protestant community (Nationalist).

10.2 Inner East perspective

Similarly people from Inner East Belfast have their own views as to why the interface violence began in 2002. Their perceptions are primarily based on previous experiences of the Sinn Féin propaganda machine; the housing shortage facing the residents of Short Strand; and the issue of parades. Each of these theories received widespread agreement from participants, and are representative of many of the views people who lived through the interface violence in 2002 have.

1. Deflect away from negative Republican publicity

This perception was consistently repeated in discussions with people from Inner East Belfast. There was a view that Sinn Féin orchestrated the interface violence to take pressure off demands that were being made to

their political party in relation to Stormont. Several respondents felt that Republicans had a history of creating news stories which portrayed their people as victims whenever they were being criticised:

When anything negative was on TV about Sinn Féin they seemed to up the ante in Short Strand, to deflect away and change the headlines (Unionist).

The Republicans needed something to distract away from criticism they were getting in the wider political arena...this was part of their strategy (Unionist).

There was a strong perception that everything that was occurring at the interface was conducted with the full knowledge and support of the Republican movement, to advance Sinn Féin politically:

Nothing happens without a reason...my interpretation is that it was politically motivated to deflect away from the pressure facing Republicans to participate in Stormont, hand in their arms and join the Policing Board (Unionist).

One interviewee felt that the 'Florida Gun Running' story at the beginning of 2002 along with intense pressure placed on the IRA to totally disarm were reasons enough for the Republican movement to prolong the interface violence in East Belfast.

2. Housing expansion

There was universal agreement from all of the participants that an expansion of housing was one of the key factors in people from Short Strand instigating the interface violence. It has been widely accepted that Short Strand is facing a housing shortage, and attention has been drawn to long housing lists for the area. Therefore, most people believe that the aim of the violence was to remove protestant families from their homes and expand the Short Strand east towards Templemore Avenue:

*It was all about houses, they are growing and they needed more, you knew they wanted houses...look at their councillor he was well caught, and he reckoned he was supplying housing for the community...he was lining his f***ing pockets (Unionist).*

Even though the violence originated in Madrid Street, the majority of people still feel that the Nationalists' long term objective was to take over Cluan Place. The introduction of the gate restricted the potential for Nationalist expansion so Cluan Place became the obvious target for housing:

Because they wanted the street, and it was a Loyalist street and they wanted to try and take it over...it was like ethnic cleansing (Unionist).

3. Parades

The issue of parades as a factor in the interface violence was mooted by several participants. They based this theory on the assumption that Nationalists wanted to expand into Loyalist areas due to a housing shortage. This would also mean that Nationalists would be located directly on roads that serviced several 'Orange parades' throughout the year:

The next thing would have been blocking the parades, turn it into flash point areas, either at the top of Mountpottinger Road or the bottom of the Newtownards Road (Unionist).

Many unionists felt that residents from the Short Strand had a hidden agenda on parades, and have set long-term goals to have them stopped:

There are always rumours that the long-term game plan is to turn the Albertbridge Road and Lower Newtownards Road into 'no-go' areas for parades by claiming houses on the roads, and then turn it into a Garvaghy Road type situation...people's fears are not groundless (Unionist).

It was clearly evident that Unionists found it very difficult to believe anything that was coming out of the Short Strand. There was a feeling that Sinn Féin were orchestrating the violence for their own benefits and were using their propaganda machine to blame the Unionist population.

10.3 Summary

Both communities have various theories and assumptions as to why they believe the interface violence started and continued for so long. Nationalists primarily maintain it was the actions of Loyalist paramilitaries which led to the violence, whilst Unionists insist it was a Republican initiative to deflect negative publicity and expand housing within Short Strand.

Nobody can be certain why the violence occurred, but these views are widely expressed within both communities. They shape people's attitudes and behaviours and can impact on people's ability to move on from the past and create the future.

11. Decreasing interface violence

Don't forget it was the people from both sides living right on the interfaces who were suffering...not the people who were keeping it going...they were the victims, they were the ones crying out for help

The interfaces between Short Strand and Inner East Belfast are currently calm compared to what was being experienced by residents in 2002. Throughout the many interviews conducted, nobody was able to clearly identify a specific date when the violence subsided and finally ended. Everyone was able to point to the beginning, but there was great difficulty in identifying an end. The most common response from both communities was that the violence gradually became more sporadic and isolated near the end of 2002:

It started to fizzle out...saying that it ended is wrong. It never ended; it just became less and less of an issue...there is no interface in Northern Ireland where an interface is totally quiet (Unionist).

Several participants have identified a number of reasons why they feel the intense interface violence gradually declined, which will be explored below. It must be noted that some assumptions as to why the violence ended have not been documented because they were provided by individuals who continue to participate in sensitive work and still remain in the community.

11.1 Community input

The majority of interviewees felt that community representatives had a major impact in bringing an end to the interface violence. It appears that after the long summer of constant incidents, both communities were suffering from the strains and pressures of communal disorder. A number of community leaders were prominent in creating an environment where hostilities could be brought to an end:

It was down to numerous factors...not least the amount of hard work put in by people...you don't really see the work people do. There were genuine people in the Protestant community who didn't advertise the work that they were engaged in (Nationalist).

It became clear that people living along the interface could not go on anymore 'there was a burn out factor, people were tired'. The families and young people directly affected by the violence were not prepared to live in that environment anymore, they wanted to return to a normal existence:

It was a case of this could go on for years...look it is all very well for people coming from the top of the Newtownards Road and the Markets to participate in interface violence...but then they can return to their quiet areas at the end of the day. It is the people who live around the interfaces who have to pick up the pieces (Unionist).

It has also been suggested that both communities realised that nothing was to be gained from the violence, and that the people most affected by it were being used by groups in both communities to pursue their own self interests:

The people in Cluan Place and Clandeboye Gardens realised that they were being used, that they were pawns in a larger game...they stopped people using their areas to pursue their own interests (Unionist).

And;

People were getting fed up...going through the same daily routine; going down throwing stones and bricks, going home and doing the same the next day, and so on...it wasn't achieving anything (Unionist).

It may also be relevant that levels of violence and disorder dropped considerably in September, which coincides with the re-opening of schools and the beginning of autumn, thus providing commitments other than street violence.

11.2 Outside support

Several of the interviewees were quick to praise the efforts of organisations from outside the area and elected representatives who contributed to decreasing the interface violence. Certain groups facilitated indirect discussions with community representatives and created the environment where decisions could be made and agreements brokered. Independent monitors from BIP, Mediation Northern Ireland and TIDES were also placed in and around the main interfaces to observe behaviour. The MPN was also established and this was monitored by an independent organisation who fed back information (facts and figures) to both the Short Strand Community Forum and Inner East Forum. Political representatives were also important in developing an environment where discussions and interaction could take place between representatives from both communities:

The politicians handled it reasonably well...situations like that are very difficult, knowing what is best for their community...they threw their weight behind the community, and any time we needed help and assistance they provided it (Unionist).

11.3 Paramilitary influence

There was agreement from several interviewees that paramilitary organisations played a significant role in stopping the interface violence. However, to one interviewee this was a contradiction in itself:

Even though Loyalists and Republicans were the main contributors to the violence, they also made positive contributions to bring it to a close...herein lies the contradiction (Unionist).

According to several interviewees from Inner East Belfast, Loyalist groups became very proactive during the autumn months in limiting confrontations along the interface, 'the paramilitaries wanted to be seen to be helpful, rather than hinder development'. One of the ways this was achieved was by controlling the behaviour of young people by notifying parents if their kids were seen at the interface.

11.4 Increased security presence

A further influence on the decrease in violence was the impact that the police and army had after the summer months. According to participants, the police became more committed and visible in September 2002, and appeared to efficiently target people who were instigating violence at the interface in both communities. Furthermore, the introduction of the army was seen as having a major impact on the number of violent incidents:

The RIR came into both areas and just swamped the place...they were everywhere...they stayed all night; one of the first times people got a good nights sleep (Unionist).

The introduction of the army may not have directly impacted on the levels of interface violence, but it did allow for a degree of calmness to emerge within both communities. This then allowed for community leaders and representatives to re-group, assess the situation and decide how best to move forward.

11.5 Economic implications

Several of the interviewees felt that the prolonged interface violence had a detrimental effect on both the economy and potential economic regeneration programmes for the area. None of the interviewees indicated that the financial impact of the violence was the sole factor in the violence diminishing; however there is no doubting the lasting consequences it had on the Short Strand/Inner East communities:

On the Albertbridge Road a number of traders told me about the impact that it was having on their businesses...not just the physical rioting (they were having to board up their windows every night)...but also nobody was wanting to travel home on the road, so they were losing all their passing trade. Customers were going to safer places...so it had an effect on the wider social economy of the district (Unionist).

One interviewee explained how businesses had suffered from the interface violence even after there was a dramatic decrease in the number of incidents:

The manager from a large store told me that at Christmas time the number of kids who had been to see Santa in 2002 was down nearly 50% on previous years...he realised that there were very few kids called Seamus, Paddy or Michael turning up to meet Santa...he felt that this was a direct result of the violence (Unionist).

It was also pointed out that the long term damage to the area is the legacy that the interface violence leaves behind, with nobody wanting to invest money and jobs in an area that has the potential to erupt into communal violence and disorder:

I don't think that it had a lasting effect in terms of the commercial interests around the place...but it certainly had an impact at the time. As soon as you get an area that is associated with violence then anybody who wants to start up a business is inclined to look elsewhere...the area generates a reputation (Unionist).

This view presented by several of the interviewees has been reinforced by the East Belfast Statement of Need (2003) which also highlighted the lasting impact the violence has had in East Belfast:

The most recent violence on the interface has clearly had an impact on East Belfast business – transport disruption impacting both on staff getting to and from work, firms unable to receive deliveries on time and shoppers getting elsewhere. While most of the businesses based on the interface remain, attracting any new investment is an uphill struggle against this backdrop (East Belfast Statement of Need, March 2003).

11.6 New programmes and initiatives

Following on from the interface violence in 2002 a number of programmes and initiatives have been developed primarily between the Short Strand Community Forum and Inner East Forum to re-build

relationships between the two communities and put mechanisms in place to prevent any further outbreaks of interface violence. As previously noted, Mediation Northern Ireland first became involved in monitoring the interfaces during the Twelfth fortnight in 2002. They were then brought back into the area in December 2002 and continued in a monitoring role until 2004. During this time, Mediation Northern Ireland liaised with both communities in an attempt to address issues emanating from the interface. This brought a degree of normality to the situation and allowed for lines of communication to be established.

Since then a number of initiatives have been developed, some of which have involved interaction between representatives from both communities, and others which have focused on building confidence and sustainability within communities on their own.

11.7 Contact group

One of the most important developments has been the establishment of a contact group with people from the Short Strand and the Inner East Forum. The group is made up of residents and community representatives from each area, with no paramilitary representation. This group first met in December 2004, and has continued to meet on a regular basis. This provides people with the opportunity to discuss sensitive issues and also limits the opportunity for rumours and myths to escalate in relation to the interface.

11.8 Mobile Phone Network

The updated Mobile Phone Network (MPN) was established in May 2005 and is fully supported by all the members of the Inner East Forum and the Short Strand Community Forum. There had been no system in place since the outbreak of violence in 2002. The MPN allows both communities in Short Strand/Inner East Belfast to act early in response to any incidents in and around the interface that could lead to serious acts of violence and disorder. This is done by having contacts (phone holders) within the Protestant areas in and around the interface, contacts in the Short Strand community and back-up support from prominent community leaders from within the two communities. Essentially the MPN is empowering residents from both communities to take responsibility for behaviour in their respective areas:

We have given ownership of the network to the people...and it is all about the people...it is not about the paramilitary groups or politicians...it is about the people who live on the interface, and them trying to build up a rapport where they can talk to people on the other side (Unionist).

11.9 Paramilitary flags and murals

According to Bryan and Gillespie (2005) there have been dramatic changes in relation to the scale and number of flags that are flown on parts of East Belfast. In July 2001 along the Albertbridge Road and Templemore Avenue there were a large number of UVF and UDA flags. However in July 2004 these had been replaced with smart pennants showing King William on an orange background, or the Queen on a Union Flag background. This was seen to make a significant difference on the main roads leading into the city centre. It was also reported that there had been similar changes to the flying of flags on the Newtownards Road, with a decrease in the number of paramilitary flags, but an increase in Union and Ulster flags. It was noted however that in some sensitive areas, for example near St Mathews Church, the flying of paramilitary flags continued, although they were removed soon after the Twelfth celebrations.

Over the last year (2004/05), the UVF have taken the decision to transform several of their militaristic murals into more cultural representations of the community. There appears to be a new emphasis on celebrating achievements in sport, literature and music, and moving away from the gun, grenade and balaclava. Among the new images are paintings of footballing legend George Best and the children's writer C.S.Lewis.

11.10 Loyalist paramilitary co-operation

The three main Loyalist paramilitary groups in East Belfast (the UVF, UDA and RHC) also agreed to make their members take orders from rival organisations, in a deal to stop trouble at interface areas. The groups noted in the past that attempting to remove people from the interface who were affiliated to particular paramilitary organisations proved difficult. Therefore, the three main groups made it clear to their supporters and associates that bad behaviour would not be tolerated around the interfaces and if they are instructed to move on they must do so.

It is worth noting the level of co-operation and communication in East Belfast between the three main paramilitary groups. According to several participants, the violence and disorder in 2002 brought them together and since then they have worked closely with the community to control and monitor behaviour around the interface.

11.11 Community interaction

There are a number of programmes that have been developed in East Belfast that involve members from both the Short Strand and the Inner East communities:

Inner East Task Force

The Inner East Task Force was established by the East Belfast Partnership in February 2003 in response to the requirement identified in the East Belfast Statement of Need to focus Partnership activity in the four most disadvantaged wards in East Belfast, namely Ballymacarrett, Woodstock, Island and the Mount. Membership of the Task Force comprises a sub group of Board members with a specific interest in the area and additional representation from the Inner East Forum and the Short Strand Community Forum.

East Belfast Lantern Parade

The parade first commenced in December 2003 involving 41 community, voluntary and statutory groups from East Belfast, and one from across the border. There was no representation in the parade from groups from the Short Strand. Over 600 people participated in a lantern procession down the Holywood and Newtownards Roads, finishing at the Connswater Centre. The effects of the lights, costumes, floats, and music created a powerful spectacle for the spectators and participants. The parade has continued annually since then, and it is hoped that in the near future young people from the Short Strand will participate at some level in the actual parade.

Environmental projects

In June 2002, Groundwork NI started a Youth and Environment Project in Short Strand and Inner East Belfast. This is a unique project for Groundwork for at least three reasons: it involves having two members of staff employed for three years to work in neighbouring interface communities; the members of staff are individuals who come from the communities in which they work and both have been actively involved in community work in their areas prior to their employment with Groundwork; and the project focuses specifically on young people, and while one aspect of the remit is environmental regeneration, another distinctive element is a focus on the mental health needs of the young people.

Although on one level the programme involves two parallel strands of single identity work, much of which is focused on local environmental improvement, the programme has been developed so that the two strands are interwoven and connected on a number of different levels. These include: the two workers co-ordinate their work so that parallel activities take place on either side of the interface broadly simultaneously; a youth forum drawn from both communities has been established and is involved in the programme development; a number of cross community programmes have been developed including sports

events, an arts project, a conference and video training workshops; the project has involved community relations training for young people with the aim of establishing a rolling programme of peer trainer groups; and the two members of staff follow a common training programme and thus build stronger working relationships between them.

11.12 Summary

The interface violence in 2002 did not simply stop. There was a gradual decline in incidents and violent exchanges between people from the two communities. There have been a number of suggestions as to why the violence decreased, ranging from an increase in security measures to the influence of community and political representatives. One of the legacies of the violence in Short Strand/Inner East Belfast was the development of an interface at Cluan Place/Clandeboyne Gardens, and like many interfaces throughout Northern Ireland, they are never totally peaceful, therefore, determining when the violence in 2002 ended has proved difficult. Maybe it is better to conclude that it became more sporadic, isolated and less violent.

It appears that people living along the interfaces grew tired and despondent and that the main protagonists in the violence did not live directly on the interfaces. It is possible that this is the defining reason why the violence decreased, those most affected by it decided enough was enough, reclaimed their community and created the environment where discussions could take place to resolve the conflict.

Since 2002 there have been a number of programmes and initiatives developed within the two communities that have enhanced confidence and eased tensions along the interfaces. The development of the contact group is a key component for future relationships, and allows the opportunity for both communities to discuss their issues and concerns.

12. Current issues and concerns prevalent within both communities

The peace lines in the Short Strand haven't changed, nor have the demographics...what was previously defined as Protestant and Catholic is the same as twenty years ago...in 2002 nobody won, everyone lost

The following section outlines several growing issues and concerns that have been expressed by residents from both Short Strand/Inner East communities. Although these issues appear unrelated to the interface, they do have a direct bearing on relationships between the two major communities.

12.1 Parades

According to several interviewees, the issue of parades has the potential to manifest itself into violent confrontations with people from Short Strand and Inner East Belfast. It is a sensitive topic that up until now has remained largely free from violence and disorder. Over the last few years both communities have worked extremely hard at making sure parades that pass by the Short Strand have not resulted in rioting or other incidents of disorder. However, there are some within both communities who are sceptical as to how long this can continue:

The thing with parades is that they have the potential to create an environment which can lead to violence and rioting...the followers are drinking and the residents protesting and the police in the middle (Nationalist).

The people in Short Strand want to turn it into an issue...they want to create trouble there so the parades will be banned (Unionist).

For some people the parades are nothing more than a form of triumphalism influenced by Loyalist paramilitaries. According to one interviewee, the people of Short Strand are not opposed to the parades, they recognise that people want to march and have a history of marching, but they don't understand why they insist on taking them by the nationalist Short Strand when they are not even travelling across the Albert Bridge:

The parade organisers have no intention of sharing their celebration with the majority of unionists in East Belfast, instead they want to inflict their parade on the people of Short Strand...it is conducted through a sense of supremacy (Republican).

And,

You know one parade I think took place on Christmas eve, and several marchers dressed up in Santa Claus outfits and they marched right down to the corner of Short Strand...now with the greatest respect the last thing people in this community want to see at Christmas is a load of orange men dressed as Santa (Nationalist).

To large sections of the Unionist and Loyalist communities in East Belfast, parades remain an important aspect of their culture and tradition. Several participants were clearly angry at suggestions that the parades were a form of triumphalism, or were paramilitary led and deliberately designed to antagonise residents from the Short Strand. One interviewee in particular was very passionate about the parades, and was adamant that residents' groups would not restrict his ability to watch and support them:

I remember standing outside my house as a child watching the parades and listening to the Sash, and I am still doing it today with my own grandchildren, and nobody is going to stop me...it is my right (Unionist).

However, there are others who feel that Republicans will use the previous history of violence at the interface as justification to stop the parades from passing by. They believe that the long term aim is to turn the area into a similar situation as Garvaghy Road. They cannot understand why parades in East Belfast have only in the last decade become such an issue:

I can see parades being made into a contentious issue...if people in the Short Strand want to turn up the heat, then this is one of the issues that they will start complaining about (Unionist).

Representatives from the Nationalist community have two further issues with parades that pass by their area. Firstly the security presence that is put into place means that many residents of Short Strand have their movement restricted (the two largest parades that pass by the Short Strand and require the most police security are the Battle of the Somme Parade July 1st and the Twelfth of July Parade):

The policing of parades is very one sided, like we are just hemmed in...curfewed, cannot get out of the area (Nationalist).

Secondly, residents cannot understand how parades that they believe are illegal are allowed to proceed. These illegal parades are the highly publicised incidents in East Belfast involving the Number 6 District Lodge Ballymacarrett. The Parades Commission refused to accept their 11/1 forms on a technical point, thus several of their parades were deemed to be illegal. However the parades continued and representatives from the Short Strand were dismayed at the failure of the police in allowing these parades:

When they do break the rules there is never any action taken against them...there has been a number of illegal parades and nothing gets done about that (Nationalist).

A Short Strand Residents group has written approximately ten times to the local Orange Order requesting some form of dialogue relating to the issue of parades in the area. However, the Number 6 District Lodge Ballymacarrett has declined any opportunity to discuss the topic of parades with residents from the Short Strand. It must also be noted that repeated attempts were made by the author of this report to discuss the topic of parades with the Parades Commission. The Parades Commission failed to respond to this request.

12.2 Economic regeneration / employment

Like many inner city areas throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland unemployment and community regeneration are key concerns. Regardless of community background, both Short Strand and Inner East Belfast suffer from high rates of unemployment:

There is nothing for the unemployed, disabled, young people, senior citizens in this area. Issues to these people, is what is important...getting pensioners out of their homes and providing young people with proper facilities (Unionist).

Furthermore, several shops and business have been forced to close on the main Newtownards Road and Albertbridge Road. There is a lack of investment and infrastructure in this part of East Belfast, which needs to be addressed:

The social and economic issues have come to the forefront because one affects the other and it can all indirectly lead to interface violence (Nationalist).

And,

It has everything to do with the social and economic issues...we need to socially regenerate the entire area...look at the shops on the two main roads, closed...those that are open are not getting a turn...we have to give people a reason to like their community (Unionist).

12.3 Anti-social behaviour and lack of policing

Anti-social behaviour and lack of policing were consistent themes that emerged from discussions regardless of the participant's community background and were a growing concern within all communities, especially in relation to young people. Incidents of underage drinking, drug use, car crime, burglary, graffiti and assaults were noted to be on the increase throughout East Belfast. Both communities were aware of these problems but unsure of the most productive and suitable way to deal with them.

The relationships between the police and the community have already been touched upon in this report. However, it is important to reinforce the negative attitudes all sections of the community appear to have for the police. People note the rise in crime and anti-social behaviour, which are not related to issues of sectarianism or communal disorder, and do not see an adequate police response to these incidents. There is no reasonable discussion between the community and the police; too many barriers have been constructed through previous police actions. There is a strong degree of resentment from the community towards community policing. It appears that current police initiatives have failed both communities, meaning relationships will be fractured for the foreseeable future:

Policing in Protestant communities is just awful. There are two community police officers for this area, and you would be lucky if you saw them walking the streets twice a month (Unionist).

There is no police force on our community, for obvious reasons (Nationalist).

12.4 Paramilitary organisations

The role of paramilitary groups emerged as a key theme in relation to issues facing both Nationalist and Unionist communities. During 2005 both communities were affected by incidents involving paramilitary organisations. On January 30th 2005, Robert McCartney, a father from Short Strand was murdered. Accusations as to who was responsible for this murder have included members of the IRA. According to several media reports, reaction to the murder has split the Short Strand community:

'For now at least, the people of the Short Strand have turned against them...Graffiti has appeared denouncing 'PIRA scum'; women have stopped youths from rioting against the security forces; shops and businesses are displaying posters from the PSNI appealing for help in their inquires' (The Sunday Observer, 13/2/05).

Several interviews from the Nationalist community acknowledged that the incident had created a degree of turmoil within the community, but that the community as a whole was still a strong, cohesive unit that would rally around in times of need. Furthermore, one interviewee with a Republican background insisted that the controversy surrounding the murder had a minimal impact on long term relationships within the Short Strand. However, there were those from the Unionist community who felt that the murder would have major implications on the ability of the Short Strand community to rally support for political issues:

With what has been happening in the Short Strand in relation to the McCartney murder...I think that the community have their own problems to work out (Unionist).

There have also been several incidents involving the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF) and the UVF. On the morning of the 1st July 2005 a man was murdered on the Newtownards Road. According to several media reports, the murder was part of a Loyalist feud between the two organisations (www.bbc.co.uk/NI/1/07/05). This lack of stability within Loyalist paramilitary groups has caused some degree of concern within the Nationalist Short Strand. There are some who feel that increased tensions within the Loyalist community enhance the potential for violence at the interfaces:

The unsteadiness within Loyalist paramilitaries in East Belfast would heighten people's fears, especially if previous experiences are anything to go by (Nationalist).

There were also several violent incidents at the interfaces around Short Strand/Inner East Belfast during the summer of 2005. Over the July fortnight a number of attacks occurred at the Cluan Place/Clandeboyne Gardens interface (www.bbc.co.uk/ni/14/07/05). There were further incidents over the August 20th weekend in Cluan Place/Clandeboyne Gardens which involved up to 400 people who rioted with bottles and bricks. Up to five shots were also heard during the rioting. Paramilitary groups are alleged to have been involved in the violence (www.bbc.co.uk/ni/21/08/05).

12.5 Concluding comments

This research has provided people with an opportunity to recount their understandings, experiences and perceptions of what happened in the Short Strand/Inner East area of Belfast throughout 2002. The report is an attempt to offer an overview of the events as they were perceived by local

residents. No presumptions or judgements have been made, however it has become evident that many people suffered from both sides during a series of incidents.

Everyone had an opportunity to tell their story, subsequently this report has tried to convey the differing and sometimes contrasting interpretations that people from the two communities have of what happened, and why it happened. Their accounts and opinions have been presented equally, as honest indicators of what happened from the position of people who were often deeply involved at the time. There is no doubt that people from the Short Strand and Inner East communities see things differently. They each hold a particular perspective, but it is hoped that this report offers each community the view from the other perspective.

It is apparent that one of the problems that occurred in Short Strand/Inner East Belfast was that both communities appeared to deny the reality of the other side's experiences through ignorance. It became easier to portray the other community as the aggressor and their own community as the victim. However, it has become clear that it is important to acknowledge the other community's reality and experiences, without such acknowledgement the situation will remain intractable.



Short Strand/Inner East

Chronicle Of Disturbances

2002 / 2003

This chronology of various disturbances and violence in Short Strand/Inner East Belfast has been compiled from local newspapers (Belfast Telegraph and Irish News) and the BBC/Northern Ireland web site. It is not necessarily a complete account of the full range of events in this area but it does give an indication of the scale of the unrest and violence experienced by residents in the area. It also shows the dramatic decrease in incidents throughout 2003 compared to 2002.

2002

12 May-BBC Northern Ireland News
Shots fired at police in riot

Several officers were injured in sectarian clashes in the lower Newtownards Road area, with at least 20 petrol bombs along with acid bombs, stones and bottles being thrown. A police spokesman said 11 shots were fired at officers and a police Land Rover was burned out as they tried to keep rioters apart. Police officers fired several plastic baton rounds in response.

13 May-Belfast Telegraph
Man is hospitalised after violence erupts on streets

A man remains ill in hospital with head injuries today after weekend rioting that saw bombers and a sniper back onto the streets in East Belfast. A father of two in his late thirties was in a stable condition this morning after receiving neurosurgery. A police officer also received hospital treatment for a facial injury and two other officers were injured in the trouble, which flared in the Madrid Street area on Saturday night.

13 May-Irish News
Sectarian clashes spread to east of city

A Catholic man was in a serious condition in hospital last night after undergoing neurosurgery following intense sectarian clashes in East Belfast. Relatives claim the 40-year old was trying to push back a crowd

of nationalist youths from the flashpoint Short Strand/ Newtownards Road area when he was baton-charged by police.

13 May-BBC Northern Ireland News

Call for security gates after riot

Security gates should be erected immediately at Madrid Street to prevent more serious rioting in East Belfast, Sir Reg Empey has said.

14 May-BBC Northern Ireland

Violence follows police searches

Petrol bombs were thrown and plastic bullets fired during clashes between nationalists and police in the Short Strand area of East Belfast. More than 400 people were involved in the disturbances which followed police searches of a number of homes in the Mountpottinger district. Four civilians and a number of police officers were injured.

14 May-Irish News

Calls for 'breathing space' after violence

An East Belfast councillor last night called for a 72-hour period of calm to allow nationalist and loyalist community workers to get into talks after weekend violence.

15 May-Irish News

Residents frustrated at 'heavy police tactics'

Frustration boiled over yesterday on the streets of the Short Strand as nationalist residents claimed police were 'pulling the place apart'. The inhabitants of the Catholic enclave in East Belfast claimed their homes had been attacked by five loyalist blast bombs on Saturday night, and were last night angry that it was nevertheless their area which was targeted in police searches.

15 May-Irish News

Probe into injuries in East Belfast riots

Fresh clashes between nationalists and the security forces, which saw a 16 year old shot in the chest with a plastic bullet, are to lead to a two-pronged investigation of police conduct.

16 May-Belfast Telegraph
Empty house burnt in rioting

The Madrid Street area of East Belfast was calm this morning after another night of rioting at the interface. Loyalists and republicans today blamed each other for being behind the disturbances. There were no reports of any injuries. However, a derelict house was set on fire in the Protestant half of Madrid Street.

16 May-Irish News
Army denies targeting photographer

The British army last night denied that a baton round was 'fired deliberately' at a Irish News photographer during disturbances in the Short Strand area of East Belfast on Tuesday.

19 May-Sunday Life
UDA muscle 'on standby'

More than 100 UDA terrorists were on the verge of going into battle during a night of intense violence in East Belfast last week. The Sunday life can reveal that a large contingent of men were put on standby at the junction of Templemore Avenue, and told to retaliate if the area was attacked by republicans.

31 May-BBC Northern Ireland News
Parade 'could lead to disorder'

A loyal order parade must not pass close to a flashpoint area of East Belfast because of fears of sectarian clashes, the Parades Commission has said. The Apprentice Boys Parade was to parade close to the nationalist Short Strand area, but the ruling said that 'a real possibility of damaging community relations with a consequent effect on the likelihood of public disorder.'

31 May-BBC Northern Ireland News
Police officers injured in rioting

Ten police officers have been injured during rioting at an East Belfast interface. Trouble between republicans and loyalists broke out in the Bryson Street area of the republican Short Strand. Two blast bombs were thrown at police by loyalists at the lower end of the Newtownards Road and the police said that shots were fired by both nationalists and loyalists.

3 June-BBC Northern Ireland News

NI police chief warns of 'fresh nightmare'

The acting chief constable said someone would be killed unless steps were taken to move back from 'the abyss'. Three people were shot and wounded in rioting in the Short Strand/Albertbridge Road area of East Belfast.

4 June-BBC Northern Ireland News Ceasefires to be reviewed after riots

The status of paramilitary ceasefires is to be reviewed following another night of violence in East Belfast. At one point in the Short Strand area the police were shot at and returned fire hitting a gunman, who was dragged away and has not yet been admitted to hospital.

5 June-BBC Northern Ireland News Cars hijacked in Belfast trouble

There has been fresh trouble at a sectarian flashpoint in East Belfast. Roads have been blocked and vehicles hijacked. A stand-off took place between loyalist protesters and security forces on the lower Newtownards Road following a fourth successive night of violence.

5 June-BBC Northern Ireland News Reid bid to halt Belfast rioting

Northern Ireland Secretary John Reid has held talks with loyalists and republicans in an attempt to end the rioting in East Belfast.

5 June-Irish News No riot repair work until staff are safe

Homes destroyed during the violence in East Belfast will not be repaired until the Housing Executive feels it safe to send its workers into the area, it has emerged. Dozens of homes on both sides of the Short Strand interface have been attacked during four nights of fierce rioting which resulted in several people being shot and Catholic churches targeted.

5 June-BBC Northern Ireland News IRA behind violence says Trimble

The IRA is behind rioting and shooting in East Belfast, Northern Ireland's First Minister David Trimble has said. He was speaking after meeting the Prime Minister to discuss worsening violence in East Belfast.

5 June-Irish News

Politicians call for an end to violence

Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams last night called for an immediate halt to the violence in East Belfast. He spoke out after a fourth night of fierce rioting on the fringes of the nationalist Short Strand.

6 June-BBC Northern Ireland News

Violence 'worst for years'

Recent trouble in East Belfast has been among the worst witnessed in the last four years, according to Acting Chief Constable Colin Cramphorn. There has been sectarian violence in the Newtownards Road and Short Strand areas for the last six nights. Six people have been shot since Sunday evening.

6 June-Irish News

Nothing's sacred

An East Belfast family were yesterday forced to carry their mother's coffin out through the rear vestry door after a loyalist mob attacked the church during the funeral. More than 200 loyalists, some masked, had gathered outside the church after a confrontation with nationalists at the nearby post office and pharmacy used by both communities.

7 June-BBC Northern Ireland News

Gang 'terrorises' students

A further education college in East Belfast has closed for the day after masked men terrorised students. Students said a number of masked men entered the college and attempted to identify students from the Short Strand area where sectarian clashes with loyalists have taken place over the past week.

8 June-Irish News

Rising walls 'are just the first step'

Both communities in East Belfast yesterday gave a cautious welcome to new security measures announced by the NIO. Work is expected to begin within days on heightening a wall which divides nationalist and loyalist streets in Short Strand. Security Minister Jane Kennedy said the army would move in to build a screen on top of the existing walls which will divide the two communities. Walls dividing the loyalist Cluan Place and

nationalist Clondeboyne interface as well as the loyalist Thistle Court and nationalist Bryson Street will be heightened.

10 June-BBC Northern Ireland News
Violence on Sinn Fein talks agenda

There is nothing to suggest the IRA orchestrated recent violence in East Belfast, Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams has said. He was speaking in Downing Street after talks with the Prime Minister.

12 June-Irish News
Terrified students to get compassionate hearing

Students left terrified after masked loyalists broke into their classrooms will be given a 'sympathetic hearing' if they are experiencing exam difficulties.

12 June-Irish News
Meeting to focus on violence

Senior investigators from the Police Ombudsman's office will today meet nationalist residents from the Short Strand. According to a spokesperson 'we have received a number of complaints and this meeting is part of addressing those issues.'

14 June-Irish News
Short Strand 'turning into a Warsaw ghetto'

The husband of a woman injured in a loyalist blast bomb attack last night said his wife was lucky to be alive. Two blast bombs were hurled from the loyalist side of the newly erected Madrid Street peace line during the latest outbreak of sectarian violence in East Belfast.

14 June-BBC Northern Ireland News
Move to defuse NI tension postponed

An initiative aimed at reducing tensions at interface areas of Belfast has been postponed as a result of fresh trouble in East Belfast.

18 June-BBC Northern Ireland News
Minister calls for security review

A senior Ulster Unionist minister has demanded an urgent review of security policy in the wake of the continuing violence in an area of East

Belfast. The Minister described the police and Army response to the violence and disorder as 'totally unacceptable'.

19 June-Irish News

Parties lock horns in row over violence

A senior SDLP and Ulster Unionist politician were last night locked in a bitter row over who was behind the trouble in East Belfast. The war of words erupted after Protestant women from the east of the city gathered at Stormont saying they were living in a war zone. A petition with 4,000 signatures was handed to First Minister David Trimble which claimed that the fringe Protestant community was under siege due to Sinn Fein and IRA agitation, aggression, and nationalist expansionism.

21 June-Irish News

Sinn Fein deny UPRG claim of IRA violence

The IRA is being bussed into interface flashpoints by senior republicans in an effort to drive a wedge between the Catholic community and the new police force, it has been claimed. Member's of the UPRG are claiming that the IRA's third Belfast battalion is behind recent sectarian clashes in the north, east and south of the city. Last night a Sinn Fein spokesman said there was 'no truth whatsoever' in the claims.

28 June-Irish News

SF backs call for interface observer

A Sinn Fein councillor has called for talks with Sir Reg Empey after the Ulster Unionist assembly member backed calls for international observers to be used at an East Belfast interface.

29 June-BBC Northern Ireland News

Fresh violence hits East Belfast

Two police officers have been injured in disturbances in East Belfast. A crowd of 150 attacked the police with blast bombs, petrol bombs, stones and bricks when they were called to the Short Strand area on Saturday morning. Two houses in the loyalist Cluan Place were damaged by fire, one severely, after they were hit by petrol bombs.

4 July-BBC Northern Ireland News

Family escape injury in bomb attack

A family of five have escaped injury after a pipe bomb was thrown at a house in East Belfast. The device exploded at the rear of a house in Bryson Court in the nationalist Short Strand area shortly after midnight on Thursday.

5 July-Irish News

Pipe bombing 'makes mockery' of strike policy

Loyalist political leaders believe loyalist paramilitaries 'no first strike' pledge remains in force despite yesterday's pipe-bomb attack in the Short Strand area of East Belfast.

8 July-BBC Northern Ireland News

Petrol bombs thrown during attack

Several petrol bombs have been thrown at a house in East Belfast. The missiles were thrown into the nationalist Short Strand area on Sunday. The house was unoccupied at the time and nobody was injured.

10 July-BBC Northern Ireland News

Petrol bombs recovered in East Belfast

Police have discovered petrol and paint bombs in the Short Strand area of East Belfast. Twenty-two of the devices were recovered in the Strand Walk area on Wednesday.

11 July-BBC Northern Ireland News

CCTV cameras damaged

The attacks against the cameras took place in sectarian interface areas at Madrid Street and Albertbridge Road on Wednesday night. East Belfast DUP councillor Robin Newton blamed republicans from the Short Strand area, claiming that they wanted to carry out attacks on Protestants without being caught.

17 July-BBC Northern Ireland News

Heavy security in place after riots

All sides have appealed to the communities to end the violence which saw several hundred loyalists attack houses in the nationalist Short Strand area in East Belfast in the early hours of Tuesday morning. Crowds threw petrol bombs, acid bombs, a blast bomb and shots were fired at the police, apparently from the loyalist side. Loyalists claimed shots were

fired at them from the Short Strand side of the peace line on Monday evening.

28 July-BBC Northern Ireland News
Row over camera at flashpoint area

A row has erupted after loyalist residents in East Belfast erected a camera on a rooftop overlooking houses in a nationalist area. The police have asked the Protestant residents to remove the camera amid continuing tensions on both sides of the sectarian interface at the Short Strand.

5 August-Irish News
Minister hails success of CCTV

CCTV cameras have led to the arrest of 11 people involved in street violence in the Short Strand since their installation, security minister Jane Kennedy has revealed.

8 August-BBC Northern Ireland News
Riot response to be scrutinised

The Police Ombudsman is to investigate police action during recent disturbances in East Belfast. It follows a High Court action alleging the Ombudsman's office failed to investigate a complaint against a police inspector. The complaint was made by the mother of a sick child who said she was denied access to a doctor's surgery by a loyalist crowd in the Short Strand area.

11 August-BBC Northern Ireland News
Officers injured in clashes

Two officers were seriously hurt in clashes between nationalist and loyalists in the Short Strand area on Saturday. One officer is being treated in hospital for serious head and neck injuries after he was hit on the back of the head with a brick. A number of petrol bombs were thrown and the police fired one plastic bullet.

15 August-BBC Northern Ireland News
Trouble at flashpoint area

Loyalists clashed with the security forces during trouble in East Belfast on Wednesday night, the police have said. The police said loyalists clashed with security forces in Cluan Place and fireworks were thrown from the nationalist Clondeboye area.

17 August-Irish News

Police treat Short Strand as no-go area: Robinson

DUP deputy leader Peter Robinson has claimed violence along an East Belfast peace line will not end unless police stop treating the nationalist Short Strand as a 'no-go area'. The demand followed another night of serious street clashes between loyalists and republicans along the Short Strand interface. Thirteen police officers were injured during the disturbances which lasted for about five hours.

18 August-BBC Northern Ireland News

Officers injured in Belfast riot

Six police officers have been injured in fresh rioting in East Belfast. Police said that they were attacked while trying to keep hostile crowds apart close to the area of Clandeboye Gardens and Cluan Place. They were pelted with missiles, including bricks, fireworks, bottles, nuts and bolts.

21 August-Irish News

Talks needed to end violence

Sir Reg Empey met NIO minister Jane Kennedy about the situation in the Short Strand area of Belfast yesterday.

21 August-Belfast Telegraph

Several explosive devices found

A number of police officers were injured and several explosive devices were discovered during another night of rioting in East Belfast. Six police officers sustained minor injuries. Representatives of residents on both sides of the Clandeboye/Cluan peace line blamed the other side for starting the violence.

22 August-Irish News

Family escapes death in bomb attack on home

A Catholic man whose home was engulfed in flames during interface violence said yesterday his family had a lucky escape. The house at the corner of Clandeboye Gardens in the nationalist Short Strand enclave of East Belfast was struck by a blast bomb and a number of petrol bombs.

27 August- Irish News

Executive repair work 'hampered by loyalists'

A builder- who has been hired by the Housing Executive to repair properties damaged in the ongoing trouble in East Belfast- says his work is being hampered by loyalists intent on violence. The man-who has been working in the Short Strand since July- is the only contractor willing to enter the area.

29 August-Irish News

Soldiers injured in Belfast clashes

Sixteen soldiers have been injured and plastic bullets fired during another night of disturbances in East Belfast. Trouble flared between Protestants in Cluan Place and their Catholic neighbours in Short Strand on Wednesday. Fireworks were thrown at nationalist homes, and several petrol bombs thrown at Cluan Place.

30 August-Belfast Telegraph

Heavy security presence prevents violence

An interface area in East Belfast was quiet overnight, following a change in security tactics and remarks by a senior police officer blaming the IRA and the UVF for orchestrating recent violence. The Assistant Chief Constable pledged that last night there would be double the number of officers policing the nationalist Short Strand enclave and surrounding loyalist areas.

30 August-Irish News

UUP member's wife is burnt with acid

The wife of an Ulster Unionist councillor has been treated in hospital for acid burns while logging incidents at an East Belfast interface. She was in Cluan Place at the edge of the nationalist Short Strand when she was injured.

31 August-Belfast Telegraph

DUP backs police strategy over riots

The DUP has called for the police strategy used in East Belfast this week to continue. Councillor Robin Newton said that the last two nights had been the quietest experienced since the present violence had started.

3 September-Belfast Telegraph

Cautious reaction to loyalist vow

Nationalists last night reacted with caution to the latest statement by the Loyalist Commission pledging to do all it can to encourage a 'period of calm' at troubled interfaces. The group admitted being involved in the ongoing violence but claimed it was 'only in a defensive capacity'.

5 September-Belfast Telegraph

Loyalists 'causing most violence on streets'

Loyalist paramilitaries are orchestrating most of the street violence at Belfast's sectarian flashpoints, police chiefs said yesterday. In the east of the city 38 people were arrested for rioting, 29 loyalists and 9 nationalists.

5 September-Irish News

Banners and jibes greet the Secretary of State as he goes walkabout in flashpoint East Belfast.

Secretary of State Dr John Reid was yesterday dubbed 'Dr Dolittle' by loyalists and accused by nationalists of conducting a 'publicity stunt' during a visit to both sides of an East Belfast interface. He visited loyalist and nationalist homes in the Short Strand and Cluan Place yesterday, the scene of more than four months of sectarian violence.

13 September-Belfast Telegraph

CCTV cameras for East Belfast interface

CCTV cameras will be erected on either side of an East Belfast interface where there has been vicious rioting, it was announced. Security minister Jane Kennedy said consideration was being given to the location of the cameras and the system would be put in place over the coming weeks.

22 September-Irish News

No excuse for violence now

Last night's murder bid in East Belfast is a worrying development in the current wave of violence. A number of men were working at premises in the predominantly nationalist enclave of Short Strand when an intruder fired shots at them.

1 October-Belfast Telegraph

Short Strand anti-riot policy 'failure'

Five US Congressmen have accused the Government of failing to protect East Belfast Catholics from loyalist gangs, it emerged today. They wrote

an open letter to the Secretary of State in which they requested a summary of the actions being taken by the Government to stop loyalist rioting in the Short Strand.

2 October-Irish News

'Loyalist targeting elderly Catholics'

Loyalist mobs are engaging in psychological warfare against elderly Catholics, residents living at a flashpoint interface claimed last night. One elderly resident, who asked not to be named, said the majority of people living on Strand Walk, at the lower Newtownards Road peace wall, were pensioners. Most of the houses' roofs have been covered in corrugated iron and grills have been put on most windows to protect from future missile attacks.

7 October-Belfast Telegraph

Violence shatters a fragile month

The Government was today urged to fulfil its promise to introduce CCTV cameras for a flashpoint area of East Belfast after the interface suddenly erupted in violence. This followed the first trouble for more than a month at the Cluan/Clandeboyce peace line. The police said a number of petrol bombs were thrown into houses in Cluan Place, on the Protestant side of the divide.

8 October-Irish News

'Clashes prompted by Old Firm match'

The security wall at an East Belfast flashpoint (Clandeboyce/Cluan Place) interface is to be heightened following a fresh outbreak in sectarian violence. Hours after the first Celtic and Rangers clash of the season ended in a draw, a number of petrol bombs, fireworks and missiles were thrown.

9 October-Belfast Telegraph

Loyalists 'didn't start' violence

A senior police officer today said that a Protestant street in East Belfast (Cluan Place) came under attack from nationalists and was followed by attempts to 'manipulate the media' with false allegations of loyalist attacks.

10 October-Belfast Telegraph
Interface 'on verge of erupting again'

Fears are growing that an interface area in East Belfast is on the verge of erupting again, after several weeks of quiet.

15 October-BBC Northern Ireland News
Pipe bomb attack on homes

A number of people have escaped injury in pipe bomb attacks on houses in East Belfast. Two devices were thrown into the nationalist Bryson Court area of the Short Strand on Monday night. It was the third time since July that one of the homes had been targeted.

23 October-BBC Northern Ireland News
Teenager injured in street violence

A 14 year old boy hit by pipe bomb shrapnel in East Belfast has said he was lucky not to have been seriously injured. The device was thrown into the nationalist Bryson Court. The incident followed a night of sporadic violence in the area.

29 October-BBC Northern Ireland News
Houses attacked in East Belfast

Houses have been attacked with petrol bombs and the police have come under attack during trouble in East Belfast. Residents living on the loyalist Cluan Place and families living on the nationalist Clandeboye Drive blamed each other for the attacks. The police said they were attacked by gangs throwing nuts and bolts.

30 October-Belfast Telegraph
East Belfast attacks under investigation

Trouble has flared overnight in the Short Strand area of East Belfast. The was rioting between nationalists and loyalists from the Clandeboye and Cluan Place areas.

19 November-Irish News
Shots fired as trouble flares

There were reports of shots being fired as violence flared for a second night running in East Belfast. Trouble broke out around the nationalist

Short Strand/loyalist Cluan Place area where a house was targeted by petrol bombers.

19 November-BBC Northern Ireland News

Fresh trouble in East Belfast

There has been a fresh outbreak of trouble in the Short Strand area of East Belfast. There are reports of missiles being thrown from both sides of the peace line at Madrid Street. A senior policeman in East Belfast blamed the trouble on both nationalists and loyalists.

20 November-Irish News

Police claim shooting came from Short Strand

Police yesterday insisted that shots were fired from the Short Strand during serious rioting on Monday night. However, nationalists rejected the claims calling on police to identify strike marks. The police said that they had witnessed shots being fired from the nationalist Clondeboyne Gardens during some of the worst rioting in recent months.

2003

17 January-Irish News

Violence in Belfast after Old Firm clash

Violence erupted at flashpoints across Belfast hours after the latest Old Firm football match ended. In East Belfast police were called out after a bang was heard in the Bryson Street/Madrid Street area of the nationalist Short Strand enclave.

22 January-Belfast Telegraph

Church leader praises mural removal

The President of the Methodist Church in Ireland today commended people in East Belfast who have begun to remove anti-Catholic slogans and murals in interface areas.

23 January-Irish News

Welcome for Loyalist graffiti move

A Sinn Fein councillor last night welcomed moves by loyalist paramilitaries in East Belfast to remove sectarian graffiti and paramilitary murals.

8 February-Belfast Telegraph

Image of area hitting trade, says councillor

Traders at interfaces in East Belfast are facing ruin and one developer may pull the plug on a £1 million scheme due to the area's bad image and security problems. The claim was made by DUP Assembly member for the area Sammy Wilson who says business people in the Albertbridge and lower Newtownards Roads are in dire financial straights.

19 March-Belfast Telegraph

Belfast pipe bomb made safe

Bomb disposal experts sent to East Belfast made safe a pipe bomb found on an interface as trouble flared in the Bryson Street area of the city. The discovery came as rival gangs of youths clashed on the interface and pelted each other with stones and fireworks in what police have described as 'minor disturbances' in the area.

20 March-BBC Northern Ireland News

Loyalists knock down camera

A closed circuit television camera has been bulldozed to the ground at an East Belfast interface. The incident happened on the Lower Newtownards Road at the Bryson Street junction opposite St Mathews Catholic Church.

21 March-Irish News

Police admit to 'overwhelming' loyalist attack

Police last night admitted they were overwhelmed by loyalist paramilitaries who demolished a CCTV camera with a digger in East Belfast and managed to escape. The attack came amid increased violence at the flashpoint interface, which police have confirmed has included six pipe bombings in the last four days.

28 March-Belfast Telegraph

Probe into police action at Short Strand

The Police Ombudsman is to investigate the force's alleged failure to protect a family during riots in the Short Strand area of East Belfast last summer (2002).

6 April-Belfast Telegraph

UVF denies links with interface group

The UVF leadership in East Belfast last night denied claims that it had formed a community watch-style group in the area. After a series of meetings, a local community initiative, the Inner East Forum, set up the Community Safety Group in a bid to tackle the issues of crime and sectarian violence. But shortly after the group was launched, a number of Belfast councillors expressed concerns over the group's alleged links to terrorists.

11 April-Belfast Telegraph
Men injured in shooting

Two men were recovering today after they were shot in a paramilitary-style attack in East Belfast. The victims sustained leg injuries when they were attacked by two other men at Humber Court off Dee Street shortly before midnight last night.

7 May-Belfast Telegraph
Loyalists to release video of attacks

New footage of fierce sectarian fighting at an East Belfast flashpoint will refute republican propaganda over the violence, it was claimed. Loyalists have compiled an unseen video dossier they say proves republicans were to blame for many of the gun and bomb attacks that followed. The new video has been produced by the Community Safety Group, an organisation involving churchmen, politicians and loyalist paramilitaries, using camcorder footage.

12 May-Belfast Telegraph
Loyalists told to pull back after clashes

Rival loyalist paramilitaries the UDA and the UVF were today urged to pull back following violent clashes between the two groups in East Belfast which left two men seriously injured and sparked fears that tensions could spill over into another loyalist feud.

31 May-BBC Northern Ireland News
Parade 'could lead to disorder'

A loyal order parade must not pass close to a flashpoint area of East Belfast because of fears of sectarian clashes, the Parades Commission has said. The Protestant Apprentice Boys lodged an application to parade close to the nationalist Short Strand area which has seen clashes between nationalists and loyalists in the past.

6 June-BBC Northern Ireland News
'Peace walls' extended

Work has begun on extending two so called peace walls in east and west Belfast. In East Belfast, almost 15 feet of wire mesh is being added to the existing structure on Bryson Street. The peace wall, close to the Short Strand area and lower Newtownards Road, has already been extended on several occasions following last summer's violence.

6 June-BBC Northern Ireland News
Green light for loyal order parade

A loyal order parade in East Belfast has been given the go ahead along a revised route.

The Parades Commission has placed no restrictions on the new route for Saturday's parade by the Protestant Apprentice Boys, to celebrate the anniversary of the Queen's coronation. The loyal order agreed to change its route to minimise the time it spends close to the Short Strand.

7 June-Irish News
Nationalists hit out at parade reroute

Nationalists have hit out at a revised Parades Commission ruling on a contentious parade in East Belfast today which will now pass Catholic homes. No restrictions have been placed on a new route for the Apprentice Boys of Derry march this afternoon.

9 June-Belfast Telegraph
'Riot proof' roofs for houses

Homes on the peace line interface between the nationalist Short Strand area and the loyalist Cluan Place are being supplied with solid steel roof tiles over the next few months. Homes on both sides of the divide are also getting triple-glazed security windows. The move by the Housing Executive is intended to fortify the roofs and protect them from anything up to a sizeable explosion.

17 June-Belfast Telegraph
Flashpoint group award hope

A charity that has helped ease flashpoint Belfast tensions through environmental work is in the running for a UK-wide accolade. The judges

have selected it for its work on the Short Strand/Inner East Interface in East Belfast with young people.

24 June-Irish News

Increased tensions at interface

Tensions were increasing along an East Belfast interface last night, with nationalists and unionists accusing each other of weekend sectarian attacks. Sinn Fein Short Strand councillor Joe O'Donnell claimed nationalist houses in the Clandeboye estate had come under attack from the loyalist Cluan Place for a four hour period on Sunday evening.

9 July-Belfast Telegraph

Police urged to protect parade

Senior Orange Order Officers in East Belfast today demanded greater police protection for local Orangemen parading on the Twelfth of July. The call came following an attack from the Short Strand on Orangemen parading on July 1 to commemorate the Battle of the Somme. One Orangeman and one police officer were reported injured as the parade passed along the Albertbridge Road.

10 July-Belfast Telegraph

Shots reportedly fired during Belfast riot

The PSNI are investigating reports that shots were fired during disturbances in East Belfast last night.

5 August-Belfast Telegraph

East Belfast interface to get a makeover

Housing Executive managers are awaiting Department of Social Development approval for a project of demolition and reconstruction at the Madrid Street flashpoint. The area has been suffering from urban decay and mutual distrust for many years and a gate was built to separate the two communities last autumn.

22 September-Belfast Telegraph

Teenager hurt in gang attack

An 18 year old was walking along the Albertbridge Road, close to Templemore Avenue, at around 6.30 pm yesterday, when he was attacked by five men. The victim was punched and kicked and thrown to the

ground, suffering numerous cuts and bruises. According to the police the attack is being treated as sectarian.

21 October-Belfast Telegraph

Opening gate 'an act of madness' warns DUP

Unionist fury flared today after police said they were considering opening an interface gate in East Belfast at selected times to protect the human rights of residents. The electronic gate was installed in Madrid Street last spring to separate the two communities following sustained sectarian rioting.

14 November-Belfast Telegraph

Interface gate will not be opened yet: PSNI

Police have said that there is 'no desire' to see a gate between communities at a notorious interface in East Belfast opened – but have not ruled out removing it in the future, it emerged today.

3 December-Belfast Telegraph

New arrivals bring hope for flashpoint

The Cluan Place/Clandeboye Gardens interface has enjoyed more peaceful times in recent months, and has also benefited from an investment programme by the Housing Executive. Now two sister-in-laws who moved into Cluan Place after the disturbances have brought home the first of a new generation of residents.

2004

21 February-Belfast Telegraph

999 station may close if attacks on crew persist

The Templemore Avenue base has been at the centre of safety fears in recent weeks. And on Thursday night, ambulance staff were relocated away from the station after a mob had gathered outside. Earlier this month, a crew member was attacked and threatened with a knife in the station grounds.

25 February-Belfast Telegraph

SF Fury as O'Loan says police were right to fire baton rounds

The Police Ombudsman said officers who came under siege at one of the city's sectarian flashpoints helped restore order by hitting back. Her probe centred on two nights of trouble at the Short Strand district in August 2002 when up to 400 rival loyalists and republicans clashed.

30 March-Belfast Telegraph

Anger as memorial to murder victims is defaced

Tensions at one of Belfast's most volatile interfaces were raised today following a paint attack at a monument to two IRA murder victims. Plants were uprooted overnight at the small memorial garden on the Newtownards Road.

31 March-BBC Northern Ireland News

Church damaged in attack

A Catholic church has been vandalised in East Belfast. Paint was thrown at St Matthew's Church on Bryson Street on Tuesday night, damaging the walls and a stained glass window. The police are looking at a sectarian motive.

1 July-BBC Northern Ireland News

Parade passes without incident

An Orange Order parade through East Belfast has passed off peacefully. Hundreds of people lined the route as the parade made its way along the Albertbridge Road and onto the Ravenhill Road on Thursday. The Short Strand residents staged a peaceful protest during the 45 minute parade.

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Videos

Cluan Place The Terror and The Truth (2003) The Inner East Forum

The Siege of Short Strand (2002) The Short Strand Community Forum



Throughout 2002 there was persistent and recurrent violence in the interface areas of East Belfast around the Short Strand. This report draws upon a number of interviews from residents, community workers, elected representatives and statutory and voluntary organisations who provide their experiences and perspectives of the violence and disorder that affected both communities. From the discussions a number of themes have emerged which provide a detailed account of what exactly happened; the impact of communal violence on the residents and the mechanisms in place to prevent a repeat of the prolonged interface violence and disorder.

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Community Relations Council

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