

4.4 Ardara – Glenties Primary Care Team Area Profile

1. Background

Ardara/ Glenties Primary Care Team (PCT) area is in the South-West of Donegal and bordered by Killybegs PCT to the south-west, Dungloe PCT to the north, Donegal PCT to the south east and the sea on the west coast.

Figure 1. Ardara/Glenties PCT area



The Ardara/ Glenties Primary Care Team has been in operation for 7 years since late 2011. It started out as a very active team with GP involvement, HSE administration and facilitation support, and worked well initially. However, it has fallen off in the last number of years for the same reasons as other areas: cancelled meetings, lack of apparent HSE interest and support' overstretched HSE staff' and the withdrawal of HSE administration support. More recently the PCT has not been meeting with the last scheduled meeting being in September 2017, which was cancelled. There is no Community Health Forum in place. Interim community representatives were appointed with a view to formally electing community representation when the CHF was up and running. This proved difficult as there is a low level of community capacity and community infrastructure in the area, and there was never a groundswell of support or a demand for a Community Health Forum. Health and Wellbeing related projects in the area have included health screening events.

2. Overview of Area¹

The Ardara/ Glenties PCT covers two distinct areas; the town of Ardara and surrounds, and the town of Glenties and surrounds. Both are bustling, scenic popular tourist towns winning several tourism awards in the past, and Ardara is designated as a Heritage Town. They are separated by a distance of 10 km on the N56 route. One of the primary industries in the area is tourism and there are other traditional local industries such as tweed and knitwear production and retail outlets.

¹ The statistical data in the section is drawn primarily from the Area Profiles developed by the HSE Public Healthy Department using Census 2016 data and other relevant health data sources.

Public services are based around the two towns and the following services are available:

- 8 Primary Schools
- 1 Post Primary Schools
- 2 Libraries (restricted opening hours)
- 1 Fire stations
- 3 Day Centres
- 1 Primary Care Centre and 1 x health centres
- 2 public health nurses
- Local Community Radio (Owenea FM)
- Social Prescribing Programme
- The Dolmen Centre
- 2 Men's Sheds
- 2 Garda Stations

A Primary Care Centre opened in 2012 in Glenties and a Health Centre also operates in Ardara with GP's and Public Health Nurses operating in both.

There is one Family Resource Centre (FRC) in Downstrands covering the large area of Ardara, Glenties, Portnoo and Rosbeg, and two community centres. The FRC provides a range of after school activities for children, hosts a Foroige Club, provides services for parents and a range of other classes and activities for the local community. The Centre has also been instrumental in getting a local youth drop in centre off the ground in Glenties called 'The Hub' which offers after school drop in sessions, youth programmes and information and support to young people. The FRC also operates a Child and Family Counselling Service.

The area is well served by sport/ physical activity groups centring around GAA, football, watersports, walking, climbing, basketball, cycling, and there are a range of local community groups set up around heritage and tourism, music, drama and dancing.

For older people, Ardara has a Sheltered Housing complex contained 25 self contained apartments. In Glenties, there are 16 community houses available along with a day care centre. There are a number of Care of the Aged groups and Carers Groups in the area and a Community Alert Scheme.

Public transport is provided by commercial bus services with routes to Letterkenny, Ballybofey, Dungloe, Ardara, Killybegs and Donegal Town. Local Link provides services in and around both Ardara and Glenties and a weekly service from Ardara to Donegal Town on a Thursday. There are no rail links and the closest airport is Donegal Regional Airport at Carrickfinn, 40 km away that services Dublin and Glasgow.

Population Structure

The population of the Ardara/ Glenties PCT area is 4,667 with a decline in population of 4% since the Census in 2011. The birth rate (0-4 age group) has declined by 10%, a little above the national average but lower than the county figure of 15%. Two in every five people (40%) are either under the age of 14 or over the age of 65.

The most significant population shift is in the 20 – 29 age group where there has been a 35% decline in the 20 – 24 age cohort compared to the national figure of 8% and twice as high as the county figure of 18%. This means that one in every three of this age cohort has left the area.

There have been significant increases in the 65 – 69 (29%) and 70 – 74 (30%) age group, but a fall off in the numbers of people aged 74 – 84 which does not reflect the trend in other areas in the County. There has been a slight increase in the over 85 year olds with 124 people of this age now living in the area.

In relation to population projections for this area, it is predicted there will be no change in the numbers of people living in the area by 2025. There will however be significant changes within the various age brackets. The 0-4 year old age group will decline by-14% and the 5-9 age group by-16% reducing the number of children in the 0 – 9 age bracket. The proportion of the population under the age of 15 by 2025 will be 22%. From age 15 onwards, the population in the subsequent age brackets will increase with the biggest increase coming in the 20 – 24 age bracket at 56% (doubling the current number of this age group in 2025).The population projections show a decline in the numbers of people in the 30 – 39 age group. The next biggest population shift however comes in the 70+ age group which sees significant increases come 2025. The numbers of people in the 75 – 79 age bracket alone will double in this time period (increasing by 56%). The proportion of the population who will be over 65 in Ardara/ Glenties by 2025 is calculated at 25% (1,170), or one in every four people in the area.

Age Dependency

Given the population statistics presented above, it is no surprise that there is a high age dependency ratio of 64% (the ratio of the number of people aged under 15 and over 65 year olds as a % of the working population). This is above the County figure of 60% and the national figure of 53%. What this means is that for every 1 person working in the area, there are 2 people dependent on public/ state services. This has significant implications for services in the area i.e. greater numbers of people dependent on public services but a shrinking of the working population that helps to pay for them. The old age dependency ratio is particularly high at 33% compared to the County figure of 25% and the national figure of 20%. The young age dependency ratio however is relatively low (19%) compared to other PCT areas reflecting a smaller young person population (under the age of 15) in this area.

Nationality & Ethnicity

The majority of the population across the area identify as 'Irish' with 10% identifying as being from elsewhere, primarily the UK (3.8%) with a further 2.5% from elsewhere in the EU. There are no members of the Traveller community living in the area.

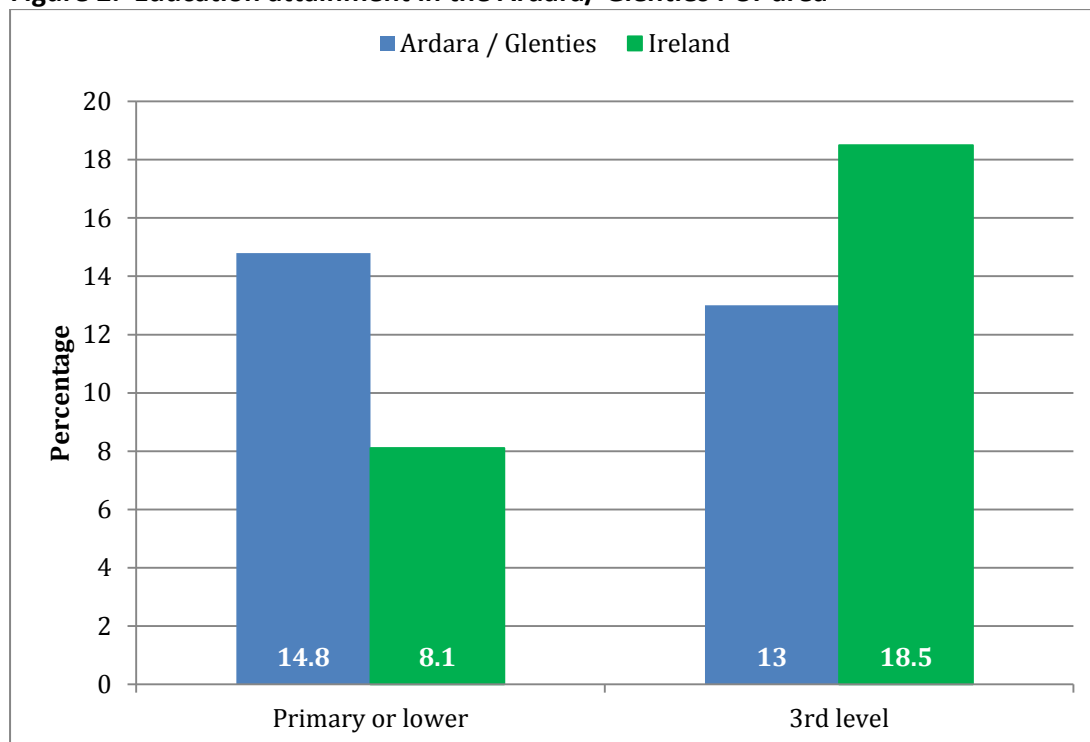
Socio-economic Grouping

Nearly one in every five persons (18.2%) falls into the semi or unskilled category which is above the County (16.6%) and national (14.1%) average. The proportion of people falling into the 'professional' category stands at 5% of the population.

Educational Attainment

The percentage of the population educated to primary level only is 14.8%, slightly higher than the County figure of 13.4% and much higher than the national figure of 8%. At the other end of the education continuum, 13% of the population have a third level qualification, and while this figure is improving from the last Census period, it is still lower than both the County (14%) and national figure (18.5%).

Figure 2. Education attainment in the Ardara/ Glenties PCT area



Unemployment

The rate of unemployment in Ardara/ Glenties area stands at 7% which is similar to the County and CHO 1 figure. The rate has declined since the last Census in line with the national trend, but it is difficult to know whether this decline is attributable to (a) more jobs being created in the area (b) people emigrating from the area as evidenced in population stats or (c) more people entering retirement or (d) people moving onto labour market schemes. It is likely that it is a combination of all three factors.

Occupation

The total number of people at work in the Ardara-Glenties PCT area in 2016 was 2,618 accounting for 53% male and 47% female. The greatest numbers work in the Professional Services, Commerce and Trade and Manufacturing (outside of the 'Other' category).

| Industry | Total | Male | Female |
|--------------------------------|-------|------|--------|
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing | 246 | 228 | 18 |
| Manufacturing Industries | 372 | 251 | 121 |
| Commerce & Trade | 507 | 260 | 247 |
| Professional Services | 670 | 521 | 149 |
| Building and Construction | 192 | 177 | 15 |
| Public Administration | 166 | 73 | 93 |
| Transport and Communication | 122 | 92 | 30 |
| Other | 343 | 158 | 185 |

Family Structure

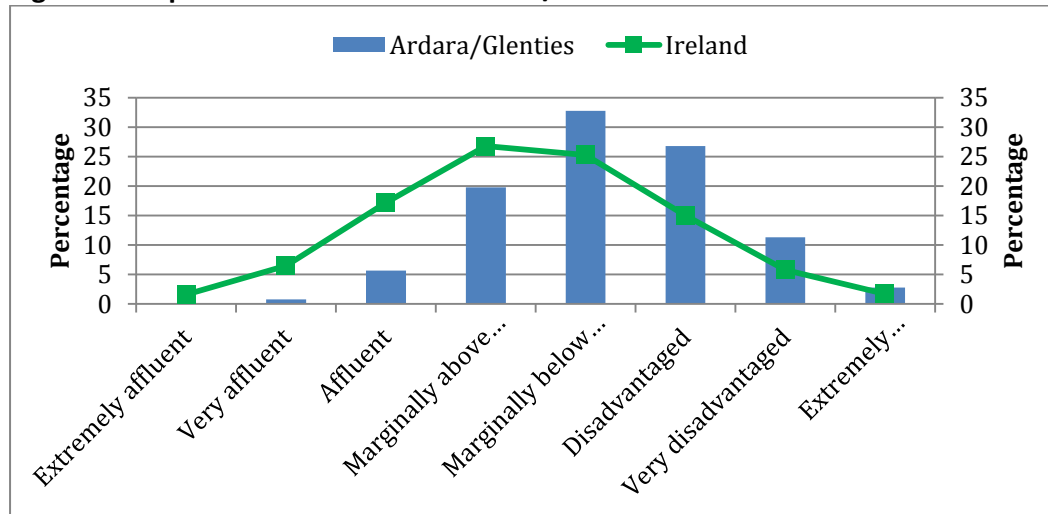
There were a total of 1,789 families in the Ardara/ Glenties area in 2016. A significant number of these families had children in the early school and pre-adolescent categories (24%), which is higher than the County figure of 20% and the national figure of 23%. This has implications for service and support provision for children and families of this age group.

Looking at the type of families in the area, 52% were couples with children and 18% were one parent families. This is one of the highest rates across all the PCT areas (the highest rate in Ballyshannon/ Bundoran and Lagan Valley but is consistent with County and national rates).

Deprivation

Just over 40% of the population in the Ardara/ Glenties PCT area is classified as 'disadvantaged' (26.7%), very disadvantaged (11.3%) or extremely disadvantaged (1.7%). This is nearly double the national average of 22.5% and also higher than the CHO 1 figure of 32.2%). The 'very disadvantaged' percentage (i.e. one in every 10 people) is high compared to national figure of 5.8%.

Figure 3. Deprivation Levels in the Ardara/ Glenties PCT area



Health Indicators

Nearly 2% of the population (88 people) rate their health as ‘bad’ or ‘very bad’ which is similar to the figure across Donegal and the CHO 1, area but higher than the national figure of 1.6%. There is a slightly above average proportion of people with disabilities in the area (15.6%), above the County and national figure of around 14%. The figure for the number of carers in the area stands at 234 people (5%) which is also higher than the County and national average.

Connectivity

The distinctly rural nature of this area and limited public transport means a heavy reliance on the car as a mode of travel. However, 12% of the population do not own a car. In terms of digital connectivity, nearly one in every four people do not have internet access (23%) with 65% of the population with broadband.

3. Consultation Findings

Overview

One consultation meeting was held with the PCT in this area with 6 people in attendance and another PCT member made her views known through a teleconference with the consultant. Given there is no CHF in the area, a wider community consultation was not possible. Further views from the area were elicited through the online survey which provided an additional 3 responses. This section also incorporates findings from the consultation meeting held as part of the Healthy Ireland Community Engagement process where meetings were held across the 5 Municipal Districts (the MDs of Glenties most relevant here) on health and wellbeing issues in Donegal.

It is important to note that this section directly reflects the views of the people who attended the focus groups, and has not been filtered in any way. Where possible fact checking has taken place, but there is the possibility that some feedback reflect personal viewpoints which may or may not be wholly accurate. However, people’s perceptions reflect their own reality so if views

are considered 'inaccurate' then this can be taken as a communication issue that needs to be addressed.

Access

(a) Transport. The people living in the area are isolated from services and rely on public or private transport to get them to and from appointments. The limited Local Link service is welcome but not all the vehicles have wheelchair access. Some people with behavioural problems have been asked not to use the Local Link service, which can leave these individuals very isolated. Equally, the Bus Eireann service does not cater for people with disabilities. The Glenties Day Centre have their own bus (joint funded by HSE and St Vincent de Paul) which has good wheelchair access. The Social Prescribing Programme works very well in the area but some people cannot access the service as they don't have transport to and from the prescribed activities.

(b) Information. With the CHF not functioning, there is a vacuum around information sharing between Primary Care professionals in the first instance and then to the wider community. The Municipal District consultation suggested a district wide bulletin or newsletter both online and printed, that would be of great use for sharing and accessing information around classes, health and wellbeing supports, and community services.

Services & Community

The Social Prescribing Programme is great in the area, but as mentioned above many people cannot access activities as they have no transport. Many of the activities take place in the Downstrands FRC in Portnoo and the Social Prescribing Co-ordinator has no budget for travel.

The condition of the paths and pavements in Ardara is poor, making it particularly difficult for wheelchairs, buggies or anyone with mobility problems to get around the town, leaving some people confined to their houses. This issue has been repeatedly raised with the DCC Roads Department but to no avail. There is a very good Community Development Committee in Glenties which links in with the Council around lighting, pavements, bridges etc.

St. Shanaghan House offers supported accommodation for vulnerable adults, but it could be used more effectively. Some people who see their GP don't need to be sent to Emergency Department, they just need monitoring. Short-term local care could be provided in a supervised environment. Another service that could be provided is step down care linking in with Home Helps and GPs. The single bed apartments could support and prepare people for going home in a non-hospital environment. This idea has been floated before and was well received by top management but it needs commitment to make this happen. A formal proposal to make better use of the accommodation by opening one more day each week and to broaden their services to include older people, and to offer step-up/step-down respite accommodation (and reduce the pressure on secondary services), was submitted to the HSE more than 6 months ago, but to date no response has been received.

There is a real need to promote early years development in the area promoting healthy play outdoors, activities and pre-schools and schools.

Health Services

Homecare packages is a huge issue in the area and it seems to be a constant battle to get what people need. Issues include:

- One size does not fit all and more flexibility is needed in the service
- A more consistent service across the County is required
- Clarity is required on the Home Care policy to both HSE staff and the public so it is clear who is entitled to what
- The application form is 18 pages long and needs to be reviewed and shortened
- Accessing Homecare for people with mental problems is nearly impossible
- People are being left in their beds for more than 15 hours leading to concerns over skin integrity
- The role of the Home Help is currently limited. Training should be offered to allow them to administer medication, help people up if they fall etc.

The Primary Care Team is not working effectively in the area and this is part of the reason there is poor communication between HSE staff at Primary Care level. In the past, 'all the right people' (OT, Physio, community Mental Health nurse, GP, PHN, SLT) were around the table and issues could get resolved or at least aired. That is not happening any more and is leading to delays and mis-communication. The administration support that had been vital to clinical members of the team (one day a week) was withdrawn some time back so too much of clinicians time is now spent on paper work, sorting appointments etc. rather than on their professional clinical role.

Respite care for adults and children is very limited, particularly for those with Intellectual Disability (ID). Seaview House in Mountcharles is not open all the time due to staff shortages. The ID service covers everyone from the age of 18 – 75 but people with all different types of needs from mild to severe, are put in together and no attempt made to meet the needs or potential of the individual. It is like a 'dumping ground'. There used to be a good system in place that dealt with dual diagnosis of ID and mental health problems, good links between the consultant Psychiatrist and the Community Mental Health nurse but this is no longer the case.

Morale among Day Centre staff is very low and many staff on their days off spend time fundraising for the centre so that they can purchase the necessary equipment, as the HSE will not provide basic equipment required to effectively operate the service.

Other issues relating to the health services raised include:

- HSE Appointment Letters are not always easy to understand. The details are not clear and there are too many instructions for some people to follow, leading to increased risk of missing the appointment (DNA)
- The local health centre has a 2 week wait to renew a prescription. This is a particular issue for vulnerable adults/people with ID
- The GP surgery in Ardara is very hard to access for some people as it is at the top of a hill and there is no wheelchair access. This is particularly hard for some older people
- The HSE does not provide cover for maternity or sick leave. This exacerbates already long waiting lists and also suggests that the role is not needed or valued
- There is not one emergency respite bed in the County
- Many HSE buildings are not fit for purpose e.g. Ardara Woodland Centre and the Cleary Centre in Donegal Town had to temporarily close for refurbishment as it was uninhabitable.

- Promoting home births and follow up supports in baby care and breastfeeding is important but nursing support is getting increasingly scarce and their time is limited.
- There is no Psychology or Speech and Language Therapy available for people with Intellectual Disabilities

Mental Health

The long waiting lists for AMHS and CAMHS and Psychology are unacceptable. At community level, more GROW and AWARE meetings locally will support improved mental health.

Economy and Disadvantage

Employment provides a real purpose in life and important social links and therefore plays a huge role in good mental health. There is a need for the Local Enterprise Office, IDA, Enterprise Ireland and Udaras to look at disadvantaged areas and plan for their development to provide local job opportunities that would help serve to lift the whole area. Labour market schemes provide lifelines for many communities in providing and supporting essential local services but there has to be something at the end of them for people to move into.

Vulnerable Groups

A number of groups were singled out for special attention as being more vulnerable and at greater risk of health inequalities:

- People with Intellectual disabilities as discussed above.
- People with Mental Health problems in terms of accessing supports and services taking so long that they are often left unsupported and vulnerable to 'self medication' with drugs or alcohol, or their problems exacerbating as they are getting not help
- Young people who are not getting enough exercise linked to overuse of screens and lack of outdoor playing time

Positives identified in Ardara/ Glenties

- The Physiotherapy department is working well; waiting lists are within target and they can get equipment when needed
- The Self Harm Clinical Care programme (SHCCP) at the Emergency Department in Letterkenny University Hospital is very positive but needs to be extended to weekends and longer opening hours to reflect need
- The Primary Care Suicide Crisis Assessment Nurse (SCAN) service is very good
- The new Community Mental Health service building 'Ard Nua' in Donegal Town is very good and has brought all the allied professionals together
- The Hub Youth Centre in Glenties is a great asset. It is near the school and offers a broad range of activities/supports (LGBTI Group, after school, careers guidance, IGNITE Programme, Foroige, Youth Clubs).

4. Recommendations from the Ardara/ Glenties Consultation

Primary Care Teams.

Investment of both time and funding is required by the HSE in the Primary Care Teams if they are going to work

- a PCT Facilitator Role needs to be put in place to drive the process
- Staff cannot make the time to attend meetings because of other work commitments and yet are 'allowed to go', but no time is given within their role for this to happen as other priorities take over.
- The PCT needs to be more than a talking shop and become a space where Primary Care issues are identified and resolved either directly or by referral to PCT/HSE management.
- Review the current approach for PHN administration as it is not working at the moment
- Improve access to the GP surgery in Ardara
- Carry out a County wide review of reasons for Did Not Attends (DNA) for health appointments. The current policy is that if a person does not attend an appointment without prior notice, they are automatically put to the 'the back of the queue'. Account needs to be taken of unavoidable circumstances that mean people cannot attend.

Home Care Packages.

This area needs a complete review to see how it could be improved and there must be a consistent approach across the county. Suggestions include:

- Home Care co-ordinators spending some time on the ground to see how things work in reality
- There needs to be clear communication and clarity about each persons role in the Home Care process
- Trusting the professional clinicians who are working in the community with the individuals requiring the service
- Clarity on policy around who is entitled and to what
- Review the 18 page application form to make it more accessible and useable
- Train home helps to do additional tasks like administering medication, assistance with falls etc.
- Include home assessments with home care package assessment e.g. smoke alarms, trailing wires etc., and provide guidance on what the client can and cannot do for themselves

Disability Services.

- Improve age and disability level appropriate supports and services to people with Intellectual Disabilities e.g. respite and Day Centre services, in line with the New Directions policy
- Review prescription renewal times and align with national policy to reduce stress and anxiety for people with ID and mental health problems
- Provide Psychology and Speech and Language Therapy services for adults with Intellectual Disabilities
- Improve respite services in the County
 - o Staff Seaview House to meet the need, so it can remain open all the time. Apparently recruitment has taken place, but staff have not been appointed
 - o Provide emergency respite beds in the county (not one at present)
 - o Do not cancel planned respite. People and families are getting very late notice of respite being cancelled and this leads to cancelled plans which is unfair on families. Improved planning and notification is needed.

Older People Services.

- Provide St. Shanaghan's with bus transport to get people out and about (beyond the Day Centre).

- Review St. Shanaghan's proposal to provide additional and extended services
- Many families are stuck in the home with the person they are caring for leading to loneliness and isolation; respite is essential as carers need a break
- HSE designate Respite as a 'non-essential service' but this needs review as it is essential for the health and wellbeing needs of the individual and the family.

Mental Health.

- Reduce waiting lists for all mental health services
- Review the Psychology Assessment process as it is extremely difficult to get required Psychological assessments done
- HSE management to facilitate access to past reports which will be beneficial to the individual that was assessed and still requires support.

Transport

- Review Local Link Priorities so that people with certain conditions are able to access the service
- Improve transport links to other parts of the County
- Explore whether appointments in Dublin/ Galway can be scheduled no earlier than mid-morning for people who have the farthest to travel, (so people can arrive on time and not incur cost of travelling the day before and overnight expenses.
- Explore the piloting of a Volunteer driving assistance scheme

Information

- Primary Care and other local supports and services need to be promoted locally in terms of what is available, at what times, where services are located, and what people are entitled to. A PCT wide bulletin or newsletter both on-line and printed would be of great use for sharing and accessing information around classes, health and wellbeing supports, community services.

Positive Mental Health

- Provide more GROW and AWARE mental health supports locally

Physical Activity

- Improve pavements and footpaths in Ardara and Glenties