

## DSS Computers deny benefits

The DSS move to computerisation in local offices already appears to be denying social security benefits to Irish clients.



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY  
206-210 Kennington Park Road London SE11 4DF  
Telephone 01-735-8855 Ext 214

Mr. Your reference  
Our reference DC1  
Date 11/11/89  
London SZA

Dear Mr.

As explained in our previous correspondence you will need a National Insurance number from 9th January to claim benefits.

We cannot trace a number for you so it would appear that you have never applied for one. We would therefore request that you call at our office to register for a National Insurance number. You will require proof of identity when you call and if you were born in this country you require a birth certificate, if from abroad you require a passport or an E.E.C Identity Card and if from Ireland a birth certificate and one other document as proof of identity.

The computer can only identify a claim to benefit from a National Insurance number so it is very important that you call at our office immediately.

When you arrive please show this letter to the reception clerk to avoid further delay.

Your co-operation is appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

In the letter above an Irish claimant was informed that since 9th January 1990 a National Insurance number would be required in order to claim benefits. This instruction clearly contravenes the DSS's own regulations concerning entitlement to benefits and a National Insurance number should not be a pre-requisite for claiming benefit.

The request in the letter for Irish people to provide a birth certificate and one other document as proof of identity is also discriminatory as people born in this country and other EEC nationals (besides Irish people) are only asked to supply one item of documentary evidence to prove their identity.

## Verifying ID

In a separate development the DSS have made a small revision to their instructions for verifying a claimant's identity. In December 1989 a circular was issued to local DSS offices saying that original birth/marriage certificates can again "contribute to confirming a claimant's identity". Original birth/marriage certificates were not deemed acceptable following the changes in social security regulations in April 1988. This revision however does not affect the vast majority of Irish claimants who do not have their original certificates with them and the DSS continue to say in the circular "do not accept recently issued copies of certificates".

AGIY and CLSSAF are currently in the process of producing a report "Identity Crisis: A Report on Social Security Identification Checks" which will be available shortly.

## LIWC - Uncertainty continues

At the last meeting of the London Irish Youth Forum members heard about the impending threat to the funding of the London Irish Women's Centre (LIWC) from the London Boroughs Grants Scheme (LBGS).

On 7th March the LBGS Committee decided to defer a decision on the LIWC's funding application to a further meeting of the Committee on 18th April 1990.

Within the LBGS Committee, the Tory group of Councillors indicated that they would not be supporting the LIWC while the Labour group supported and argued for immediate funding. The Liberals, who hold the balance of power on the Committee,

didn't indicate whether they would be supportive or not.

Meanwhile the workers at the LIWC are very encouraged by the response from community groups, agencies and individuals. With support growing, the workers intend to continue their lobbying efforts to protect the Centre's services and to secure it's funding.

If you would like to assist the LIWC in this effort, indicate your support by either (i) lobbying the Liberal Councillors on the LBGS Committee urging them to support the LIWC and its services by writing to Cllr. D. R. Williams, Municipal Offices, York House, Twickenham, Middlesex TW1 3QB and/or (ii) signing the LIWC's petition which you can obtain c/o LIWC, 59 Stoke Newington Church St. London N16 Tel. 249 7318.

## New Information Leaflets

As part of AGIY's efforts to make available accurate and up-to-date information for young Irish people on arrival in London two new leaflets are currently being produced.

An information leaflet called "*Young and Irish: The Poll Tax and You*" gives a detailed outline of the implications of the tax, registration procedure, obligation to pay, likely cost of the tax, how to pay ... It also includes information on rebate entitlement for those on Income Support or Low Incomes and explains "joint and several liability", obligation to register when people first arrive in Britain, when they change address, obligations of students etc. The leaflet outlines the implications of non-registration and non-payment of the tax. The leaflet is aimed at people intending to emigrate to Britain as well as young Irish people already living here.

The second leaflet is called "*Young and Irish: AIDS - Know the Facts*" and is jointly produced by AGIY and Positively Irish Action on AIDS. This leaflet aims to make young Irish people aware about the nature of HIV and AIDS and outlines steps that can be taken to avoid catching the infection and information on the transmission of the infection. Referral services in London are detailed as are support groups and help services. There is also a list of Irish organisations and contacts who provide a counselling and culturally sensitive service. For further information and orders contact Joan or Dave at AGIY Tel. 278 1665.

## Call to help West End homeless

Piccadilly Advice Centre (PAC) is a busy housing advice centre located in the heart of the West End in London. Established 10 years ago it has witnessed a huge increase in the numbers of housing queries (**from 1,166 in 1979 to 27,000 in 1989**) and has been to the forefront in responding to the present homelessness crisis.

Open 7 days a week, 365 days a year PAC provides a unique drop-in advisory service for homeless people. It also provides a range of free and cheap facilities including information leaflets, use of phone and bus tickets.

In addition to providing a direct frontline service PAC plays a major campaigning role around the issue of homelessness and continues to monitor and draw attention to changing trends.

Over the past few years PAC have been especially concerned about the growing problem of Irish homelessness (**17% of callers**) and have developed close working relationships with Irish agencies. PAC are however concerned about the lack of Irish

representation in the Management of the organisation. In order to improve its service PAC are inviting Irish organisations to seek representation with the membership and/or the Board of Directors.

For further information or any queries please ring PAC on 734 2533 and ask to speak to Reena Mukajh, Co-ordinator of PAC.

## Funding News

Thames/LWT Telethon Trust are currently accepting funding applications from voluntary organisations. Grant allocations will be funded from Telethon 90 which will be broadcast nationally in May 1990 by Independent Television. Groups do not have to be registered charities to apply but will be asked to find a registered charity to endorse their application. The Thames/LWT Telethon Trust has identified five priority areas that they will consider for funding as follows: **Projects for Older People; Projects for People with Disabilities and their Carers; Projects for Children and Young People; Projects reflecting the region's Special Needs and Self Help and Community Groups.** Closing date for applications is 30th June 1990 and further information including forms are available from: Alison Gaudie, The Thames/LWT Telethon Trust Ltd. South Bank Television Centre, London SE1 9IT Tel. 737 8623 or 620 1620

## Camden Irish Consultative Conference

On Saturday April 21st in the Town Hall, Judd St. NW1 from 10.00 - 5.00 p.m. a conference exploring the needs of the Irish community in Camden will be held. As well as representation from Irish people and or-

ganisations in the borough, local Councilors and Council officers are also being invited to attend. This conference follows previous successful consultations with Irish people in Haringey, Hammersmith & Fulham, Greenwich and Southwark and marks an attempt to record the needs of Irish people in Camden. It is hoped that the Conference will provide an opportunity to make a series of recommendations to the Council aimed at improving local service provision to one of the largest ethnic minorities in the borough. As well as keynote speakers the Conference will proceed by way of a number of workshops in the morning and afternoon identifying different areas of concern and suggesting ways of addressing these within the borough.

The Conference is open to all, there is no admission charge and evening entertainment is also planned.

## Irish Youth Festival

The fourth Kilburn Irish Youth Festival will be held on Sunday July 22nd this year and plans are already underway for organising the event. The Kilburn Irish Youth Action Group is inviting **volunteers** to join the Organising Committee so if you feel like checking out bands, designing posters, fundraising etc. come along to the next meeting on Tuesday April 2nd at 6.30 p.m. in the Abbey Community Centre, 222c Belsize Road, London NW6 or Tel. 624 8378 for further details.

## Agency Profile

### New Horizon Youth Centre

New Horizon Youth Centre is situated at 1 Macklin St., WC2 in Central London. It concentrates on providing information, advice, activities and a social education programme for young people aged 16-21

years. It is a drop-in centre for young people and as such aims to provide both friendly and pleasant environs.

There are two main aspects to New Horizon's work. The Youth Team has 4 full-time workers providing a range of social and educational activities such as art, weight training, dance, swimming, canoeing, discussion groups, to name but a few! In addition there are part-time tutors in music and photography which maximises the Centre's resources of a darkroom and a well-kitted-out music room.

The Advice Team has 2 full-time workers providing an advice, support and referral service. The Advice Team cover a range of issues such as housing, employment, education, welfare rights etc. In the near future it is hoped to provide training workshops on appropriate topics.

The post of Welfare Rights/Advice Worker has a particular brief to work with issues affecting young homeless Irish people and is funded by the Dion Committee.

Rita Gannon has just started work in this post and has been establishing stronger and new links with Irish youth and community groups.

For further information and details about New Horizon's services or if you wish to refer young people to the Centre telephone 405 1126 or 242 2238/0010.

## **London Irish Youth Forum**

**(LIYF)**

**The date of the next LIYF  
meeting is**

**Thursday 22nd March 1990  
at 2.30 p.m.**

**Irish Centre, 50 Camden  
Square, London NW1**

**The main agenda item will  
be: Irish Community and  
the role of the Citizens  
Advice Bureau.**

**Future Forum Meetings:**

**Thursday 2nd May 1990**

**Thursday 5th July 1990**

**AGIY INFO IS A SIX WEEKLY PUBLICATION. SHOULD YOUR GROUP WISH TO PUBLICISE ANY EVENTS, NOTICES ETC. SEND DETAILS TO EITHER JOAN OR DAVE AT THE ACTION GROUP FOR IRISH YOUTH ON TEL. 278 1665**

AGIY INFO is produced by the Action Group for Irish Youth, 5-15 Cromer Street, London WC1H 8LS.

AGIY is funded by the London Boroughs Grants Scheme and DION the Irish Government Committee for Welfare Services Abroad.