

IRISH VOLUNTARY ACTION

"Going where other interventions cannot reach"

Voluntary Action, a national study of voluntary action in the UK, recently published by the **Home Office** and compiled by **CENTRIS** the Centre for Research and Innovation in Social Policy & Practice, acknowledges the pivotal role that Irish voluntary organisations play in meeting the needs of Irish people in Britain.

A section of the study examines the innovative and pioneering nature of voluntary action where it includes a detailed analysis of Irish organisations in England.

The report suggests that the "invisible" discrimination experienced by Irish people is *"to some extent alleviated by Irish-led voluntary organisations going where other interventions cannot reach"*.

The report examines the role of Irish organisations in the context of *"voluntary action stemming from the principle of subsidiarity"* - where it defines subsidiarity as *"actions being taken at the lowest level in any system"*.

The study acknowledges the hidden racism experienced by Irish people as a serious problem which has attracted almost no official recognition and recognises Irish voluntary action as a necessary initiative to combat that racism.

Information was collected on 65 Irish organisations, detailed information on 35 of

these and 12 were selected for case studies.

The report describes Irish voluntary organisations as less well supported than organisations in the mainstream voluntary sector, lacking in co-ordination and struggling to meet the demands on them.

It points to the failure of mainstream provision to meet the needs of Irish people and the celebration and promotion of a distinct Irish culture as motivating factors for the establishment of Irish organisations.

The following critical factors are outlined in highlighting the failure of mainstream services to work with Irish people:

- statutory provision is reactive and the take-up of services depends on the knowledge, willingness and ability of the user to do so - Irish people, unfamiliar with the network of provision, are at an immediate disadvantage;
- negative cultural values attributed by Irish people to welfare services contribute to a reluctance to seek help;
- a fear of "officialdom" from particular groups e.g. Travellers, older Irish men previously employed as casual labour in the building industry;
- compartmentalised service provision by statutory bodies dealing with only one aspect of need e.g. housing, welfare benefits, health etc;
- the lack of statutory duty to meet the needs of some groups of people e.g. single homeless.

While confirming the role of Irish agencies as accessing

Irish people into mainstream provision, the report also points to problems in achieving this due to the lack of recognition by English statutory & voluntary agencies of Irish people's needs.

Factors contributing to this were considered to be:

- anti-Irish racism - problems experienced by Irish people in dealing with the Department of Social Security were cited here as an example;
- a perception that *"the Irish like to look after their own"* - for example through Catholic schools;
- the absence of Irish ethnicity as a dimension to debates by British providers on equal opportunities.

This last point was seen as crucial in that it resulted in the needs of the Irish being overlooked in voluntary and statutory provision, by funders and in research.

It hides the fact that Irish people are a distinctive user group of services and means that the task of identifying and quantifying Irish needs falls squarely upon Irish organisations.

The study cited that during interviews with funders conducted for its research, there was never any mention of the problems faced by Irish people.

The report is available at a cost of £13.50 (inc. p&p) from:

**Directory of Social Change,
Tel. 071 284 4364**

Planning for 1994

Each year AGIY produces a plan which identifies the major focus of its work for the forthcoming year. The Work Plan provides the basis for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the service as well as being a mechanism for developing a more strategic and comprehensive response to welfare issues affecting Irish people in Britain.

Key aspects of the work programme we hope to achieve in 1994 are outlined below.

Networking & Developing Policy Responses	Information Work	Training Work	Research Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To convene and service 6 issue-based meetings of the London Irish Youth Forum ● To develop and review the services provided by the London Irish Youth Forum ● To continue liaison and policy development with the appropriate divisions of the Benefits Agency around the recommendations outlined in the report "Identity Crisis : Access to Social Security and ID Checks" ● To work in consultation with the appropriate voluntary and statutory agencies in Ireland regarding the development of pre-emigration services. ● To liaise with the NHS, the Department of Health and other bodies promoting the inclusion of an Irish dimension to national ethnic monitoring of NHS users. ● To assess, by survey, the inclusion of Irish ethnic monitoring by mainstream statutory and voluntary agencies. ● To continue to promote the findings and recommendations of the reports "Racial Attacks & Harassment of Irish People" and "Over Here Young Irish Migrants in London" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To research, write, produce and promote a revised 4th edition of A Guide to London for Young Irish People. ● To research, write, produce and promote the following leaflet series: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » a revised edition of "AIDS KNOW THE FACTS" » a new leaflet on "Health Issues and Accessing Health Services" » a new leaflet on "Rights at Work/Working in Service Industries" » a new leaflet on "Identification and Accessing Social Security Entitlement" » a revised and edited version of "Young & Irish English Equivalents to Irish Educational & Training Qualifications". ● Write, produce and distribute the Newsletter AGIY INFO to agencies working with emigrants and intending emigrants. ● Promote "On the Sites" photographic exhibition amongst the construction industry, trade unions and the Irish community. ● Produce a revised and updated Resource Handbook on the Irish in Britain. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue to develop and implement, with the Benefits Agency, training on improving service delivery to Irish customers. ● Develop and implement training for local authorities on addressing the needs of Irish people. ● Promote training in agencies in fields of work already established e.g Probation Service, Careers Service, Homelessness. ● Develop and implement with RDLDF, courses on Advising and Assisting Complainants against Racial Discrimination. ● Develop a series of issue-based "open" courses for individuals and small groups. ● Undertake Training Needs Analysis to determine the needs, range, and content of courses. ● Arrange Funding Awareness Conference ● Arrange Organisational Development Seminar. ● Arrange further conferences/seminars/training for staff, volunteers and MC of welfare agencies according to results of the Training Needs Analysis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Oversee and manage with the Federation of Irish Societies, the feasibility study into establishing a centralised database on Irish users of welfare/advice services. ● Work to implement the recommendations of the feasibility study. ● Develop, fundraise, and manage a substantial proposal to research the experiences of young Irish people in the criminal justice system. ● Carry out data analysis and collation of statistical information from the 1991 Census on particular aspects of the welfare of Irish people in Britain. ● Produce and publicise this data in an accessible form and in a series of Census Briefings.
			Other Work
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Publish Annual Report ● Fundraise to maintain and develop the organisation ● Monitor and evaluate services provided by AGIY ● Produce a Policies & Procedures Handbook.

Job Centres in London & South East to distribute info. leaflet for young Irish people

A new information resource offering comprehensive information on educational and training provision in Ireland and England as well as providing an easy-reference table of English equivalents to Irish educational qualifications was launched recently at the London Voluntary Sector Resource Centre.

The leaflet, produced by AGIY, was prompted by research evidence demonstrating a serious mismatch between young emigrants' employment experience in England and the high level of their educational qualification achieved in Ireland.

Urging distribution of the leaflet amongst young Irish people, Careers and Employment Advisors, schools & colleges and advice and housing agencies, AGIY's Chair Seamus Taylor said:

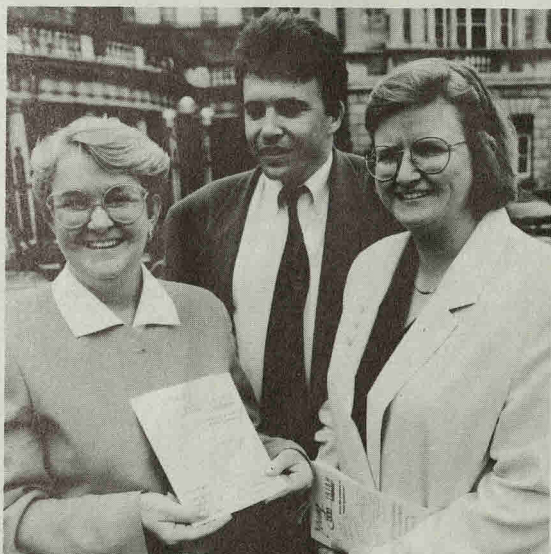
"young Irish people are very often unaware of the value of their educational and training qualifications. At the same time, British employers and employment advisors are also unaware of the status of Irish qualifications."

Bridging this information gap, the leaflet will help young Irish people get jobs equal to their abilities."

Mark Stockdale from London & South East Employment Service said that the leaflet would shortly be available through Job Centres in the region and welcomed its availability.

Melaine Pine, Chairperson of DION and Stan Newens MEP also welcomed the leaflet as a practical and vital resource for any young Irish person in search of employment or education and training opportunities.

Copies of the leaflet, funded by the Irish Youth Foundation and DION, are available from AGIY Tel. 071 700 8137.



AGIY workers, Joan O'Flynn and Dave Murphy with the Irish Minister for Education Niamh Bhreathnach TD outside the Irish Parliament, Leinster House, where she received copies of the leaflet "Young & Irish - English Equivalents to Irish educational and training qualifications."



From l.to r. Seamus Taylor, AGIY's Chair with Mark Stockdale, Melaine Pine and Stan Newens MEP at the leaflet launch.

Database Pilot on Schedule

The piloting of a common data collection system amongst 13 Irish agencies in Britain concluded this week.

Rough estimates of data input suggest that up to 1,000 cases of Irish people using these agencies have been recorded during the 8-week pilot.

The data collected during this time will therefore provide the most current record of issues and experiences affecting Irish people and will also constitute one of the largest survey samples of Irish people.

The proposed timetable for the remainder of the project is:

- Centralised collation of data and analysis - December 1993
- Draft report on feasibility study - January 1994
- Consultation meeting with Irish agencies - 25th January 1994
- Final report and recommendations - February 1994.

For further information contact the AGIY/FIS Steering Group members.

Training Opportunities in 1994

AGIY is running a series of 4 training courses early in 1994 at the London Voluntary Sector Resource Centre. These are:

- **Alcohol & the Irish - Myth & Reality on 19th January.**

Issues addressed are how vulnerable are the Irish to alcohol abuse, how does Irish drinking compare to similar communities, what part does the Irish experience of emigration, disadvantage & discrimination play in alcohol abuse.

Facilitated by Rugby House Alcohol Project and AGIY.

- **An Irish Dimension to Equal Opportunities on 18th February.**

This course offers guidelines on how to practically incorporate an Irish dimension to equal opportunities policies & practices and how to improve service delivery to Irish users/customers. *Facilitated by AGIY.*

- **Social Work - an Irish Dimension to Good Practice on 11th March.**

Recent legislation requires services to take into account users' racial, cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. Are services applying this to Irish users? This course outlines an Irish dimension to social work and provides practical exercises and guidelines on how to incorporate an Irish dimension to good practice.

Facilitated by AGIY.

- **Racial Discrimination - Definitions and how to act against it on 22nd March.**

An introductory course on identifying racial discrimination including direct and indirect discrimination and victimisation. Aimed, mainly, at advice workers, volunteers and management committees of Irish community groups and welfare agencies. *Facilitated by AGIY and Racial Discrimination Legal Defence Fund.*

Training Costs:

Voluntary Sector Agencies/Individuals.....	£50 per person
London Irish Youth Forum members discounted fee	£40 per person
Statutory bodies	£65 per person.

New Appointment for AGIY Worker

Joan O'Flynn, Policy & Information Worker at AGIY is returning to Ireland in the New Year.

After 7 years with AGIY, Joan is returning to Dublin in February to take up a new appointment as Information Manager with the Combat Poverty Agency.

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**Season's
Greetings
to all our
readers**

**"Agus Nollaig
Shona Duit".**

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Join the London Irish Youth Forum and subscribe to AGIY-INFO

The London Irish Youth Forum meets 6 times yearly and brings together a broad range of service providers from 50 agencies working with Irish people.

By affiliating to the Forum, agencies:

- receive *free* copies of the AGIY-INFO;
- attend bi-monthly Forum meetings;
- receive *discounted* training fees;
- receive *cut-price* copies of A Guide to London for Young Irish People;
- receive *free* stocks of specialised information leaflets for young Irish people.

In the New Year, AGIY will be contacting agencies to renew their yearly subscriptions. For the year January to December 1994 the new subscription rates are:

Voluntary Agencies	£40
Statutory Bodies	£60
AGIY INFO only	£20.

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