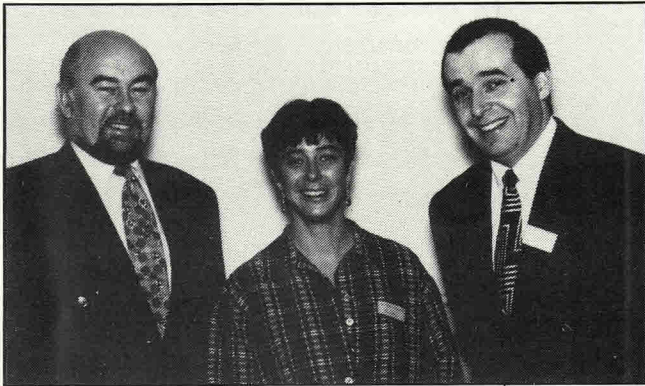


Minister Endorses Irish Community Profile



Irish Minister Ruairi Quinn (far left) with Lisa Murphy (AGIY) and Liamy MacNally (FIS) at the launch of "Developing A Community Response."

A new report reveals for the first time a number of issues of concern to the community such as the extent of racial and sexual harassment, domestic violence and the extent of mental health problems experienced by clients.

The report, "*Developing A Community Response - The Service Needs of the Irish Community*" was published by AGIY and the Federation of Irish Societies in mid September and records the experiences of over 1,000 Irish people who presented themselves to Irish welfare agencies in Britain over a three month period at the end of 1993. Twenty two Irish welfare agencies participated in the initial research associated with the study and a standardised computerised information collection system was piloted amongst eleven of these agencies.

The study was undertaken by Charities Evaluation Services, a national charity which provides training and evaluation services to the voluntary and charitable sectors. The information collection system has been revised and 11 agencies are currently participating in the

implementation of the new computerised system since the 3rd October. At the end of each quarter each individual agency will be able to produce a series of reports on the profile of their clients and AGIY/FIS will be able to produce a profile of clients from the collective data produced by the system.

Speaking at the launch of the report, **Mr. Ruairi Quinn the then Irish Government Minister for Enterprise and Employment**, whose Department supported the project said that "the report is a vital link in the chain of increased information about the Irish in Britain and the database has a wider relevance. For the voluntary sector as a whole it will ensure that there is a comprehensive picture of the needs of the Irish in difficulties in Britain. Agencies can compare their client profile with the general picture for the first time and will be able to identify gaps in their services more easily. It will be a most useful tool in the battle for funding from both statutory and charitable sources".

Mr. Chris Myant, the Head of Press and Publicity at the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), also welcomed the report and the

development of the database. "The CRE are alarmed at the scale of racial harassment experienced by Irish people which was revealed in the report."

"We will continue to work with the Irish community to combat racial harassment and we would urge Irish people to seek redress where racial harassment occurs," he said.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- The system should be developed further.
- There should be a concerted campaign against anti-Irish racism and the development of a network to achieve this.
- There should be continued funding of Irish agencies by statutory authorities in Britain and by both the British and Irish Governments to ensure the widest access to services for the Irish community and to promote the welfare of Irish people living in Britain.

The Listening Agency !

Over 50 representatives attended the first ever national benefits conference organised by AGIY for the Irish community, which was held in London on 14th September.

The conference was addressed by senior members of the Benefits Agency's Customer Relations Branch headquarters in Leeds and together with conference participants addressed workshop themes around access to benefits for Travellers, young people, Irish elders and homeless people.

Mike Garnett, the BA's Head of



Mike Garnett addressing the conference

External Relations in the Customer Services Branch said that *"one year ago a number of serious issues were raised about the difficulties experienced by Irish people attempting to access the social security system. Now one year on, although things are not perfect and a lot still has to be done , we*

look forward to continuing our dialogue with AGIY as the Irish community's customer service representative in order to improve the services that Irish people should expect to receive from the Benefits Agency."

AGIY are currently producing a report of the conference which will be available before Christmas.

- At the conference the Benefits Agency announced that they would be commissioning AGIY to undertake six more training days for BA staff on an Irish dimension to good practice in service delivery.

First Refuge for Irish Women

The first ever refuge for Irish women experiencing domestic violence opened in south London on 10th October 1994. The project was developed by Solas Anois, the Irish Womens Domestic Violence Project which was established in September 1993 in response to the growing awareness of the particular needs of Irish women escaping domestic violence. The project consists of individual Irish women and representatives of agencies working within the Irish community.

The refuge consists of 6 flats ranging from one bedroom to 3/4 bedrooms and comprises 20 bedspaces in total. Funding has been obtained from the London Boroughs Grants Scheme, the Irish Government and other charitable sources which is enabling Solas Anois to recruit a Refuge Manager, an administrator and a childcare worker.

Making Referrals

Solas state that frontline Irish welfare agencies will be able to make direct referrals to the refuge. An agency will need to identify a named female member of staff who will then be informed of the refuge phone number by Geraldine Caldwell who is currently being seconded from Cara Housing Association to work in the refuge. In addition agencies can refer through London Womens Aid who operate a 24 hour phonenumber on (071) 251 6537.

Solas are also currently in the process of setting up links with various Local Authority Homeless Persons Units and mechanisms with agencies in Ireland so that referrals can be made to the refuge.

For further information about Solas Anois contact: (written enquiries only)

c/o Vaughan House, 46 Francis Street, London SW1P 1QN.

(telephone enquiries only) contact:

Kathleen Egan, Tel. (081) 800 2744.

NACAB Introduces Anti-Irish Racism Policy

The National Association of Citizen Advice Bureaux have announced that they will be including an Irish dimension to their Equal Opportunities Policy Statement for the first time since its foundation in 1939.

The policy comprises a comprehensive information section on Irish people in Britain and a five point policy which clearly demonstrates the organisation's recognition of the Irish community as an ethnic minority, in accordance with the Commission for Racial Equality's recommendation.

The policy states: *"In all aspects of its employment and service delivery policies and practices, the CAB service opposes anti-Irish racism*

and is committed to ensuring that all its services are equally available to all people. Anti-Irish policies and practices will be resisted and challenged by all within the CAB service."

It undertakes to :

- identify the needs and interests of Irish people
- develop practices and services to meet these needs
- ensure the service is relevant and accessible
- monitor employment and service delivery
- make use of relevant sections of the Race Relations Act for recruitment and training.
- provision of Irish equality training for staff

NACAB have already included a

separate Irish category in their employment and service delivery monitoring procedures.

The service seeks to establish effective liaison and productive relationships with Irish community groups. This includes actively seeking to involve Irish people at all levels of the service, including management committees, area committees, and Council.

Representatives from AGIY recently met with NACAB to discuss their plans to implement this new dimension to their equal opportunities policy. A number of possible initiatives were discussed, including the possibility of disseminating AGIY information materials via the CAB information system, which services over 800 bureaux throughout Britain.

Getting Ready for Census 2001!

AGIY have recently learned from the OPCS that they are currently having preliminary consultations with Census users to identify topics which may give rise to new and/or substantially revised questions in the next census.

The OPCS say that one of the topics on the list *"is the possibility of revised categories (including Irish) for the ethnic group question."* Beginning in the spring of 1995 the OPCS plan to carry out a series of tests involving the public to assess acceptability and quality

of answers to any new and/or substantially revised questions.

In a related development the London Research Centre, the Greater London Action for Racial Equality and the African Caribbean Community Development Unit are establishing a Forum on London-wide race and minority ethnic research which is open to agencies working in the private, public and voluntary sectors.

AGIY are members of this Forum and will be reporting back on its first meeting and discussing representations that can be made to the OPCS at the next meeting of the London Irish Youth Forum on 8th December.

In October the OPCS published the results of an exercise to estimate the number of people writing in "Irish" in response to the ethnic group question in the 1991 Census. Due to a computer processing fault the number of Irish write-ins were under-recorded. OPCS estimate that some 11,000 people wrote Irish in response to the ethnic group question and that 10,000 of these people lived in Greater London. In addition there was an estimated further 20,000 people in Greater London who ticked the "white" box on the Census form and also wrote in "Irish". The highest number of "write-ins" was in the London Borough of Brent.

LONDON IRISH YOUTH FORUM

The date of the next LIYF meeting is

Thursday 8th December 1994

at 2.30 p.m. in

**London Voluntary Sector Resource Centre,
356 Holloway Road, London N7 6PA
Nearest-⊖ Holloway Road**

TOPIC

The Criminal Justice Act and the Irish Community

SPEAKER

**Andrew Puddephatt
General Secretary, Liberty**

New Irish Mental Health Group Formed

A Steering Committee is currently being formed to address mental health issues in the Irish community. This development follows the organisation of a mental health conference for the Irish community in Britain by Dochas in October which was attended by a number of Irish community groups.

For further information contact:

**Phil Mac Giolla Bhain, P.O. Box 3609,
London NW9 7EN.**

**Seasons
Greetings to
all our
readers**

**"Agus Nollaig
Shona Duit"**

New Pastures for AGIY Staff Member

After nearly 8 years with AGIY, **Dave Murphy**, the organisation's Policy and Information Manager is taking up a new appointment in the New Year as Senior Fundraising and Public Relations Officer with the **Housing Associations Charitable Trust (HACT)**.

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