

AGIY INFO

AGIY is a registered charity which aims to promote the interest and welfare of emigrant Irish youth in London

PIAA fights on!

Positively Irish Action on AIDS receives overwhelming support

The news that Positively Irish Action AIDS (PIAA) was to lose core funding from the Inner London HIV Health Commissioners Group (ILHHCG) came as great shock to Irish community groups and individuals.

PIAA is the only health specific organisation working solely with the Irish community in this country. The community based project works with an Irish population affected by HIV/AIDS who do not have equal access to the information and health care required.

PIAA has developed as a unique and professional organisation addressing the practical and strategic needs -of Irish people affected by HIV - through client services and by carrying out community based research.

PIAA has successfully developed a culturally sensitive service for Irish people with HIV/AIDS. As the only front-line service for Irish people affected by HIV/AIDS PIAA responds to the unmet needs of a marginalised group within the Irish community. To lose such an outstanding voluntary organisation would be a major loss to the Irish community and in particular for PIAA's client group.

PIAA supported by many agencies, public representatives, and individuals from around the UK and from the Republic of Ireland began a campaign to have the decision of the ILHHCG reversed. The volume of letters, phone calls, petitions, demonstrated the importance of the organisation and the extent of anger at the "Commissioner's" decision.

This campaign has had some immediate short-term results. PIAA have secured taper funding amounting to 50% of present annual funding from the authorities involved. However the ILHHCG has requested that PIAA sign a waiver that prevents them from seeking further funding from their body. The immediate closure of PIAA has been avoided and the best way of preserving an HIV/AIDS service for Irish people is being considered. PIAA have been encouraged by the overwhelming support they have received from many Irish and non-Irish agencies throughout London.

The fight goes on to ensure that health authorities are meeting their responsibilities to Irish residents and to reinstate PIAA's funding.

The ILHHCG has pointed out that their decision in no way relates to PIAA's competency or integrity as an agency but is based on their opinion that an Irish-specific HIV agency is unnecessary.

However, the authorities' replies have yet to respond directly to specific queries raised by PIAA and organisations aware of its work. The integral statistical information supplied by PIAA should be addressed. It is essential to continue to challenge their approach, not just on PIAA's behalf but in the interest of the Irish community in Britain.

If you or your agency have received a letter from the ILHHCG and are unhappy with the way in which they have responded or you wish to support PIAA, then write again requesting further clarification. You may wish to incorporate the following points which PIAA has identified as being inappropriately addressed.

1. *Contracts are withdrawn where there is an alternative service.*

PIAA is the only culturally specific front-line service in Britain for Irish people affected by HIV. Mainstream services use PIAA to compliment their work with Irish clients. What alternative services exists, in particular which agencies will be responsible for undertaking outreach to Irish people who are out of contact with services?

2. *High management costs for small organisations.*

PIAA is a cost effective organisation providing additional income from DION and the European Commission to subsidise its work with Irish residents.

3. *Irish people have been identified as particular population able to access alternative services.*

Research undertaken on the Irish community has clearly found that Irish people do not readily access mainstream services. The fact that PIAA's client profile indicates that 52% were not in contact with mainstream services when approaching the project contradicts this evidence.

4. *Health authorities will be working closely with PIAA to link current service users into other services.*

The nature of PIAA's service is that many health authority residents are already linked into existing services, yet continue to use PIAA to address specific issues in a cultural context, such as emotional support, counselling, and concerns around children.

5. *Health authority services meet the needs of local Irish population.*

52% of clients were not in contact with mainstream services at the time of contacting PIAA. What measures will be taken to access this hard to reach group?

6. *Market Management Protocol.*

a) The Market Management Protocol and redistribution of funds was informed by certain priorities. The nature of PIAA's service and the client population would indicate that the organisation meets these.

Epidemiological need: The Irish community is considered to be one of the most heavily affected ethnic communities amongst HIV positive drug users. In addition 30% of PIAA's clients are gay men, many of whom are isolated and marginalised from mainstream services.

Front-line services: PIAA is the only frontline service for Irish people affected by HIV/AIDS.

Cost effectiveness and value for money:

PIAA brings added value to the HIV voluntary sector. Through its international work in the last four years the organisation has generated £245,000 from the European Commission and £75,000 from the Irish government, and over £150,000 from charitable trusts in Ireland and Britain.

Investment in services and interventions with proven health gain: PIAA has established a successful track record in working with a particular hard-to-reach and mobile population. Its flexible and proactive approach enables it to facilitate continuity of care and stabilise risk-taking behaviour.

b) *Review of effectiveness of HIV/AIDS services:*

A recent evaluation undertaken by Commissioners identified that PIAA was particularly effective in working with a client population who are out of contact with mainstream services.

c) *Needs assessment of local population:*

Could you provide evidence of the local needs assessment which related to Irish residents and explain why PIAA did not meet local priorities?

7. *Irish people have not been identified as a particular population at risk from HIV.*

Data on HIV incidence amongst the Irish remains unavailable. HIV statistics do not provide an ethnic breakdown which includes an Irish category.

8. *PIAA sees only a small number of client.*

One of the aims of ILHHCG is to cut bureaucracy and help stabilise small organisations. However, PIAA unlike other cross London organisations was not offered a contract. PIAA saw 300 clients this year (and nearly 1,000 since its inception) and works with a population who are not in contact with mainstream services.

NEW JOBSEEKERS HELPLINE FOR NEWLY ARRIVED IN LONDON

The Employment Service, United Kingdom and FAS, Employment and Training Authority, Ireland, have established a three-month pilot project to provide a telephone help-line. The service is aimed at *Jobseekers newly arrived in London, particularly from Ireland*. Callers can obtain help and advice on issues relating to employment, training, job seeking techniques and benefits. The project begins on 29 April 1996: operated by Alan Ronayne.

HELPLINE TELEPHONE : 0171- 853 -4550

CONSTRUCTION SAFETY CAMPAIGN ABESTOS CONFERENCE

June 1 1996
10.00a.m. - 4.00 p.m.

Hallam University , Sheffield
(Opposite BR Station)

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The Construction Safety Campaign (CSC) has organised a conference which is to look at the issues relating to the use of asbestos in the construction industry. The CSC estimate that between 3000 to 3500 people in Britain are killed by asbestos every year. One in ten building workers aged between 40 and 50 are at risk of contracting one of the main asbestos diseases: lung cancer, mesothelioma, asbestosis. In March 1995 the HSE launched an official campaign targeted at building workers. However, the reality of working on a building site is that many workers are still at risk from asbestos.

Speakers will include: George Brumwell UCATT, Alan Dalton TGWU, Tony O'Brien CSC and speaker from Asbestos Victim Support Groups.

Issues to be addressed at the conference include;
~getting asbestos banned from all construction work
~removing asbestos safely by unionised labour
~justice for asbestos victims
~tougher penalties for those who break the asbestos laws.
~the building of a united campaign of workers, tenants and all affected by asbestos
For further information contact the Construction Safety Campaign, 255 Popular High St, London E14.
Tel: 0171 537-7220 or 0171 358 0322

Agency Profile: London Irish Women's Centre

59 Stoke Newington Church Street
London N16 0AR
Tel: 0171 247-7318

Celebrating a decade of achievement

In February 1986 the London Irish Womens Centre opened their premises in Stoke Newington, Church Street and this year celebrates 10 years of being opened as a 'Centre'.

The LIWC has developed to meet the unaddressed needs of Irish women immigrants living in London. The issues included domestic violence, the lack of reproductive rights, low-pay, anti-Irish racism, infringement of civil liberties, clustering in non-skilled and low paid employment, poor housing conditions, benefit problems, homelessness, etc. Fundamental to all these issues is *a lack of recognition of Irish women.*

Throughout the 1980's the LIWC hosted a number of Irish women's conferences, bringing women together to articulate their experience and to place the needs of Irish women on the agenda: *creating a voice for the voiceless.* Throughout the decade the centre has promoted innovative cultural activities, and has supported individuals and groups of Irish women experiencing discrimination.

The centre operates as a feminist collective.

The success of the LIWC stems not only from the personal commitment of management and staff but also from the style of collective management. The staff and management believe that working as a collective boosts the stability of the project. Collective working adds to the centre's sense of purpose working within in the framework of feminist principles.

The London Irish Womens Centre Offers:

- ~ Housing and welfare advice
- ~ Counselling and Support
- ~ A Telephone Information Line
- ~ A Creche
- ~ A young women's advice group
- ~ Special Outreach services
- ~ Speakers at seminars and conferences
- ~ Low cost Shiatsu and massage

Frontline Work

The main focus of the centre is frontline work - housing and welfare rights, practical information, drop in counselling and support. Many *Irish women feel safer going to the centre than visiting other advice agencies.* Staff at the centre apart from being well qualified, also have a specialised understanding of situations which are particular to being Irish, to being an immigrant and being a woman. The development of outreach services and activities for older Irish women are among the priorities of the LIWC.

DID YOU KNOW?

*There are more than 300,000 Irish women in Greater London with 136,887 being born in Ireland

*Since 1981 the population of young Irish women (20-24 age group) has increased by 81.5% and older women by 22.1%.

*Irish women have an exceedingly high rate of admission for the diagnosis of depression - more than twice that for Irish men and 2.5 times the rate of English born women

*Irish women are well below the white/UK born population in owner occupation figures (44% compared to 59%)

*Irish women are over-represented in privately rented housing (17% compared to 12% in the overall population).

Information and research

The LIWC successfully combines front-line work commitments with the production of significant publications; addressing the information needs and documenting the experience of Irish women in London, *putting their needs on the map!*

PUBLICATIONS OF LIWC INCLUDE:

What to do if you are homeless.

Provides information for women who may be entitled to help from local authorities under Part 3 of the Housing Act 1985.

Information for the Single Homeless and Private Tenants.

This booklet is intended for those not eligible for local authority housing. It covers, preparation for emigration, housing options once in London, information on sources of advice, and specialist groups dealing with women, children, domestic violence, rape, disabilities, ex-offenders, HIV/AIDS, lesbians, mental health and older women.

Roots and Realities - A Profile of Irish Women.

A profile of Irish women in London based on data derived from the 1991 census and various Labour Force surveys. The publication contains challenging discussions on: Irish women's culture, anti-Irish racism, mental health, civil liberties. It covers the perspectives of marginalised groups within the Irish women's community including; Travellers, lesbians, women with disabilities and Irish women born in Britain.

Rights for Travellers (Cearta na dTaistealaithe)

Provides information on existing site provision for Travellers in London, placing Travellers in an historical and political context. The report also examines the impact of discriminatory legislation upon Travellers' lives and advocates for improved service provision and culturally sensitive policies.

The Staff of the LIWC: Angie Birtill, Geraldine Hickey, Brid Boland, Maggie O Keefe, Kathy Walton, are happy to give further information on the work of the LIWC.

If you wish AGIY - INFO to include information on your agency contact AGIY on Tel: 0171 700-8137

Kilburn Irish Youth Project New Irish Counselling Service

Kilburn Irish Youth Project have established an innovative counselling service, offering both individual and group approach for its users. It is a free service and available to young Irish people between the ages of 16-26 years. Initially the service will target young Irish people in the boroughs of Camden and Brent.

The service is the only counselling project in London providing Irish counsellors specifically for young Irish people. Kilburn Irish Youth Project is aware of the many experiences and difficulties confronting young Irish people living in London and through its culturally sensitive service, aims to provide emotional support so as to allow young people to live a healthier life.

By offering *Irish counsellors, the project makes counselling more accessible*; offering young people a choice, and meeting specific requests from some young Irish people for Irish counsellors.

Kilburn Irish Youth Project recognises the uniqueness of each young person and values his/her subjective experience. It believes that through a person to person therapeutic relationship, each young person can explore and understand his/her difficulties and through increased awareness of self, others and the world, each person has the ability to create a life of personal meaning.

The service is managed on a daily basis by a qualified counsellor who works alongside suitably trained and supervised volunteer Irish counsellors. Referrals from agencies and self-referrals are welcome. For further information contact Willie Gleenane on: 0171 372-1764

Kilburn Irish Youth Project
Kingsgate Community Centre
107 Kingsgate Road
London NW6 2JH

The London Irish Youth Forum

The London Irish Youth Forum is an umbrella group of agencies working with young Irish people. The Forum facilitates an exchange of information between agencies and provides an up-date on contemporary issues that affect young Irish emigrants. New members to the LIYF are welcome.

AGIY Staff Team

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London Irish Youth Forum

BENEFIT ISSUES FOR YOUNG IRISH 16/17 OLDS

Wednesday, 15 April 1996
10.00 a.m.

at

The London Voluntary Sector Resource Centre
356 Holloway Road, London N7 6PA
(Tube - Holloway Road - Piccadilly Line)

Blabir Chatrik - Director of YouthAid
An Overview on Benefits for 16/17 year olds

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Jackie Mc Manus - Capital Careers

The difficulties experienced by Irish 16/17 year olds

The procedure for claiming Income Support is very complex for all young people in this age group. The London Irish Youth Forum will examine the circumstances when Irish 16/17 year olds can claim Income Support and how they can be supported by advice workers in accessing their welfare rights. Of particular concern is that Irish young people are not deemed as eligible for Income Support during the *Child Benefit Extension Period (CBEP)*. An up-date on the present situation will be given at this meeting.

* When are 16/17 year olds entitled to Income Support?

* Irish 16/17 year olds denied *Child Benefit Extension Period*!

* When is discretionary Income Support given so to avoid *severe hardship*?

* Bridging Allowances

* What are the implications of the *Jobseekers Allowance* to be introduced in October 1996?

How best can the London Irish Youth Forum respond to the issues?

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AGIY would be grateful if you would confirm your attendance at the meeting. Tel: 0171 700-8137