

Are you actively seeking work?

From 9th October 1989 the Social Security Act has made major changes in the law on "availability for work". In addition to being available for and capable of work, unemployed people are now expected to demonstrate that they are taking reasonable steps to "actively seek employment" every week. If they fail to satisfy the Employment Service (ES) that they are taking reasonable steps they will lose benefit for the one or two week period in question.

The Act has also narrowed the grounds on which a claimant can reject vacancies. The onus is now on the claimant to show that they have "good cause" for turning down a job.

How do claimants show that they are actively seeking work?

Claimants are now asked to keep a record of any visits (with dates) they have made to employment agencies and Job Centres, of newspapers or trade journals they have used to find vacancies and of any contacts they have made to look for work. They are also expected to keep

- job advertisements they have responded to
- letters from employers they have applied to
- and a record of their application letters.

Interviews

Claimants will now be subjected to regular interviews where their job seeking activities will be assessed. If a claimant's job-seeking activity is called into question they

will be given a warning letter which spells out up to five steps that they should take to look for work and told that they will have to come back for an "Actively Seeking Work Review" interview. This will take place within two or at most four weeks of their next signing day.

If the claimant fails to take the steps outlined or it is thought that the claimant is not "actively seeking" work benefit will be suspended for the one or two weeks in question and the case referred for adjudication.

Benefit Penalties

If benefit is suspended Unemployment Benefit will be stopped and Income Support will be reduced by 40% or 20% of the personal allowance. When a suspension for not actively seeking work takes place the claimant will be informed in writing and will be able to appeal against the decisions.

Refusing a Job

The Act now restricts claimants' rights to reject vacancies which are "unsuitable" on the grounds of their previous experience and training and it also says that "after a permitted period the level of remuneration (pay) will not be a good cause for claimants turning down or failing to take advantage of an employment opportunity".

"Good Cause" for Refusing a Job?

There are some factors which count as good cause for refusing a job which include:

- the time it would normally take from home to work and back again;
- the expenses which would be incurred in the course of the employment.

In addition other matters will be taken into account and claimants may well be able to argue that their age or their state of home-

lessness, for example, makes a particular job inappropriate.

Implications of the New Rules

Although Employment Ministers have said publicly that they do not intend to make adult training and government employment training schemes compulsory it seems that the "actively seeking work" condition will make participation in such schemes an offer that many claimants cannot refuse. Young Irish claimants who already experience great difficulty obtaining access to welfare benefits are likely to be put through more hoops in order to qualify for benefit.

AGIY are particularly keen to learn how these new rules are being applied to Irish claimants. Details of such incidences can be forwarded in total confidence to AGIY.

For Further Information the Unemployment Unit has produced an advice booklet "Actively Seeking Work and Signing on as Unemployed". It is free for claimants who send a stamped addressed A5 envelope. For non-claimants it is available for £1.00 including post and packing. Bulk orders are available on request. Telephone 734 5948 for details.

AGIY would like to acknowledge the assistance of the Unemployment Unit and the Child Poverty Action Group in the production of this article.

AGIY in IRELAND

Galway Youth Centre

Following an invitation from Galway Regional Technical College SIMON Group, AGIY were represented last week at a seminar in Galway on the "Housing and Homelessness Situation of Irish People in London". In acknowledging the need for information and preparation by emigrants before leaving Ireland,

widespread concern was expressed when it was learned that the **GALWAY YOUTH CENTRE** is threatened with imminent closure due to lack of funds.

Last year (Sept. 88-Sept.89) Galway Youth Centre provided pre-emigration advice to 1,541 people which represented 32% of their total clients. Without further and immediate funding this service will be denied to many more young people.

If you would like to express support for the work of the Centre and the necessity and urgency of its service please write to **Martina O'Brien, Ozanam House, St. Augustine's St., Galway, Ireland.**

Guide to London

The AGIY will be in **Cork, Limerick, Kilkenny and Dublin** on a non-stop visit to Ireland on the **7th and 8th November** next.

AGIY will be hosting a press conference and meeting politicians in each venue to highlight the situation facing young Irish emigrants in London and to increase awareness about the implications for intending emigrants of ever-changing legislation in Britain. AGIY will also use the opportunity to promote and publicise the availability of "A Guide to London for Young Irish People" through the national and local media and with the assistance of youth and community groups.

The National Press Launch of the Guide will be held in the **National Youth Council, 3 Montague St., Dublin 2 (Tel. 784 122)** and all groups are welcome and urged to attend.

For further information contact AGIY (278 1665)

Training/Conferences

"EUROPE A FAIRER FUTURE FOR THE UK?" A National Conference organised by

the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) on Sat. 11th November. For further information contact CPAG, 4th floor, 1-5 Bath St., London EC1V 9PY

"RACE AND HOMELESSNESS" A conference on Sat. 16th Nov. organised by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) and the Federation of Black Housing Organisations. Various workshops including one on Irish Families. For further information contact Housing Section, CRE. Tel. 828 7022 Ext. 219

"WORKING WITH IRISH YOUNG PEOPLE" A series of one day workshops on Sat. 16th Nov. for all youth workers to raise awareness of the needs of Irish young people. For further information contact ILEA Youth Service Training Unit, 1st Floor, Ebury Teachers Centre, Ebury Bridge, Sutherland St., London SW1.

Funding News

Irish Community Funding Awareness Conference

AGIY are organising a one day national funding awareness conference for Irish community/welfare/voluntary organisations on **Wednesday 29th November 1989 in Rooms 10 and 11, Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ from 9.30 a.m. - 5.00 p.m.**

The purpose of the conference is to appraise Irish community organisations of the variety of sources of funding available to projects and to provide information to community groups on the steps required to obtain access to these funds.

Speakers from both central and local government will address the conference on funding avenues that can be pursued by Irish groups through for example, the DSS, Home Office, Department of Environment, local authorities and Government Quangoes. Representatives from charitable

trusts will also be in attendance to provide information about specific trusts and there will be speakers to advise on the methods to use in identifying and targetting appropriate trusts for funding purposes.

In addition there will be speakers on applying to the EEC for funds and how private sector/business funding can be harnessed for the benefit of Irish community groups. There will also be opportunities for community groups to question the speakers at the conference.

For further information contact AGIY (Tel. 278 1665)

DION Funding

AGIY has learned that the DION Committee is currently considering funding applications from community groups with a view to announcing the allocation of its second round of grants in December 1989. The DION Committee has £500,000 at its disposal of which approx £250,000 has already been distributed.

Agency Profile

This month AGIY features the work of **Acton Homeless Concern** which has recently received funding for the first time from DION the Irish Government Committee for Welfare Services Abroad.

The project which is situated in Emmaeus House was opened in November 1988 to provide a drop in centre in a welcoming and friendly environment for the homeless and the disadvantaged. A substantial number of Irish clients use the project's services.

Facilities

The building has been completely refurbished and now comprises a large room at the front where clients can have meals and a smaller room and kitchen also on the

ground floor. Upstairs there is a bathroom and a room for storing and distributing clothes, as well as an office and a consulting room.

Services

The project provides for a wide range of services to clients including free hot meals, bathing and hairdressing facilities and practical assistance in obtaining furniture.

In addition to this, a full time advice/advocacy/support worker is available to individual clients and to liaise with the Council, Department of Social Security and other agencies on their behalf.

On Wednesdays between 12 and 3.00 p.m. the project is open to women only and in addition to providing information and support, specific courses for women are organised. Counselling for alcohol abuse is also available on Tuesdays between 12 and 3.00 p.m.

The role of committed volunteers is crucial to the functioning of the project. Acton Homeless Concern is also involved in campaigning and group work and plans to develop a role as an access point to bring statutory services closer to the local community.

Opening Times: Tues. Wed. Thurs 12.00 - 3.00 p.m. Wed. is Women Only. Fri. and Sun. 12.00 - 2.00 p.m.

For further information contact Annette Figueiredo, Advice Worker or from 13th November Katherine Gregory, Central Organiser, Acton Homeless Concern, 1 Berymead Gardens, London W3 Tel. 992 5768.

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

London Irish Youth Forum

(LIYF)

The date of the next LIYF meeting is

Thursday 2nd November 1989

at 2.30 p.m.

Irish Centre

50 Camden Square

London NW1

The main agenda item will be: ILEA, the Youth Service and Young Irish People

Speaker: Enda Cullen, Youth Worker, ILEA.

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