

3 New Irish Reports Launched

The pre-Christmas period saw the publication of three new reports based on research into the Irish experience in Britain.

The first report "Equal Opportunities The Irish Dimension - An Agenda for Change" was published by the London Borough of Haringey and draws together existing data highlighting the Irish experience of disadvantage in Britain and sets out on a practical basis how such disadvantage and discrimination can be tackled within an Equal Opportunities framework.

The report specifically analyses and explains the reasons for employment, housing and health disadvantage experienced by the Irish in Britain and describes and explains how anti-Irish racism contributes to such disadvantage. The central recommendation of the report is that "all public, private and voluntary sector bodies undertaking Equal Opportunities monitoring include the Irish as a distinct ethnic category given the scale of disadvantage and experience of the Irish in Britain".

Copies of this free report are available from:

Central Equalities Team, London Borough of Haringey, Civic Centre, Wood Green, London. N22 4LE. Tel. (081) 862 2943

The second report to be published "Access to Housing for Irish Single Homeless People" was produced by the CARA based Housing Initiatives Project funded by the Irish Government's DION Committee. The report was based on a survey undertaken to ascertain the level of access single homeless Irish people had to suitable permanent accommodation.

60 housing Associations responded to the survey but only 8 could provide an accurate analysis of the numbers of single Irish people who had applied or had been referred to them for housing.

The report found that "the monitoring and recording of allocations of accommodation to Irish single people compared unfavourably with overall levels of monitoring and allocations to single people".

The report makes 12 recommendations which are targetted at Housing Associations, Local Authorities, the Department of the Environment and calls on the Housing Corporation to "address the particular needs of Irish people and ensure that resources required to meet these needs are not overlooked in terms of the Corporation's strategy for Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Associations".

Copies of this free report are available from:

CARA, 424 Seven Sisters Road, London. N4 2LX. Tel. (081) 800 2744.

The third report was produced by Piccadilly Advice Centre, the West-End advice and information service for single homeless people newly arrived in London.

Based on a six month survey of Irish callers to the Centre in 89/90, "Under Piccadilly's Neon - Irish and Homeless in London" found that Irish 16/17 year olds were six times more likely to be sleeping rough or in emergency accommodation compared to their white British counterparts. In general across all age groups Irish callers "were significantly more likely to be sleeping rough with 40% of Irish callers sleeping rough compared to 32% of white British callers".

Copies of this report are available free from:

PAC, 100 Shaftesbury Avenue, London W1V 7DH. Tel. (071) 437 1579.

Send for copies of all reports

19/2/92

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Standstill DION funding

In the Irish Government's Budget announced at the end of January, the allocation from the Department of Labour to the DION Committee for funding organisations working with Irish emigrants in Britain remained at £IR500,000.

The grant has remained at this standstill level since 1989 and has also failed to keep pace with higher inflation levels in Britain. Groups funded by the DION grant have experienced increased costs over this time while in effect the real value of their funding has diminished.

Forum File

The Probation Service & Irish People

At the last Forum meeting in December, Brendan O'Keeffe from the Inner London Probation Service addressed the attendance on young Irish people's experience of the Criminal Justice System and the role of the Probation Service.

Brendan began by outlining the role of the Probation Officer and in particular referred to their role in the Courts both in the writing of Social Enquiry Reports on individuals before a Magistrate or their support/advice role when working with people on bail or in custody.

In 1989 32,000 people were placed on probation by the Courts and each individual has an entitlement to a Probation Officer while serving a sentence - this is called "thru-care". The Probation Service can also offer support and assistance when somebody is released or on parole. This is called "after-care".

There are no accurate statistics on numbers of Irish people with whom Probation Officers work though some caseloads are known to be as high as 25%

The Inner London Probation Service has taken a number of initiatives aimed at increasing awareness amongst Probation Officers on levels of Irish need in London and increasing liaison between the Service and Irish community groups.

Both AGIY and Positively Irish Action on Aids have facilitated training sessions for Probation Officers and further work in examining the experience of Irish people in the justice system is being developed.

Camden MPs to meet Irish

The Camden Irish Forum is holding a Public Meeting on Tuesday 3rd March for prospective parliamentary candidates in the Hampstead/Highgate and Holborn/St. Pancras constituencies.

The meeting is to be held in the **Kennedy Hall at the Irish Centre, 52 Camden Square, NW1 at 7.30 p.m.** The meeting is open to all Irish people and there is likely to be a very lively debate covering all issues of interest to the Irish community.

Amongst those candidates attending will be Glenda Jackson Labour candidate for Hampstead and Highgate as well as candidates from the Conservative Party, Liberal Democrats and the Green Party.

The Camden Irish Conference Report which details decisions and recommendations from the Camden Irish Conference in April 1990 has been sent to all candidates and will form the basis for discussion at the meeting.

The meeting will include a variety of issues including the demand for recognition of the Irish as an ethnic minority, housing and

employment, Britain's role in Ireland, civil rights and the PTA.

For further information contact Angie Birtill Tel. (071) 625 5938 or Chris O'Sullivan Tel. (071) 387 3035.

PTA figs. increase

In written reply to a Parliamentary question, new figures for the number of "searches" of Irish people on police records at ports of entry have been released. Since the last figures were published in 1986 when 56,000 "searches" were made the figures have substantially increased to:

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| • 81,600 in 1987 | 77,474 in 1988 |
| • 101,766 in 1989 | 83,753 in 1990. |

107 people were actually detained under the PTA in the first nine months of 1991 of which only one person was subsequently charged with a criminal offence.

This and other data is published in a bulletin from the Repeal the PTA Campaign. The bulletin also includes case studies of Irish people harassed under the PTA as well as an outline of the Campaign's submission to the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice.

Copies of the bulletin which cost £1.50 each can be obtained by writing to Repeal the PTA Campaign, PO Box 1340, London. N22 4TA.

Agency Profile

This month's profile initially focusses on the experiences of Irish Travellers in Britain and secondly on the work of a statutory team who advise and support them. Brian Foster who works with the Travellers Education Team outlines below some aspects of the Travellers experience.

Irish Travellers have lived in London and other British cities for centuries but their right

to be here is still questioned and they are denied basic human rights across the board.

Irish Travellers are discriminated against both as Irish people and as Travellers.

Among Travellers they face the greater prejudice by being distinguished from the romantic stereotype of the "true gypsy". The prejudice which Irish Travellers face from the settled population in Ireland is perpetuated by some sections of the Irish community in Britain.

Travellers experience great difficulty in gaining access to a decent place to live. Many London boroughs only provide the legal minimum of 15 places and some have provided none. If the sites are any good they will be full and have waiting lists.

Irish Travellers tend only to get places on the sites which are badly built and located. Haringey's Wood Green site is a notable exception to this rule.

Some boroughs operate non-harassment policies where Travellers are not needlessly evicted and are offered very basic facilities such as water, chemical toilets and refuse collection. Travellers on several of these tolerated camps are campaigning to have them upgraded to permanent sites. Most of the families on these tolerated camps are Irish Travellers.

Travellers without places on official sites or tolerated camps have the hard choice between life on unauthorised camps, without basic facilities and under threat of frequent eviction, and the squalor, isolation and prejudice of the temporary housing sector.

Families move into and out of housing depending on the pressures they face. It should not be assumed that by applying for housing they are giving up on their culture or way of life. Travellers in housing may suffer from the absence of the support from their

extended family and community; in this sense their culture may become more important to them in housing.

Over the last few years there has been an exciting development in work with young Irish Travellers made possible by the greater stability of families on tolerated camps. There are Youth Projects in Camden and Southwark and a Women's Writing Group in Southwark. There is a training initiative being planned by Haringey Travellers Support Group and an Adult Literacy programme by Hackney Adult Education Institute.

Travellers Education Team

The Travellers Education (formerly Teachers for Travellers) was set up in 1975 by the ILEA to work with Travellers and their children.

The team currently consists of seven teachers plus secretarial support and two education social workers. The education social workers are concerned with every aspect of the welfare of Traveller children and as Travellers are often kept ignorant of statutory rights, a considerable amount of work is involved in providing the welfare advice required. This work is crucial to enable the children to attend school and also to establish positive relationships with the families.

The sites will be visited as soon as possible by the Travellers Education Team to determine what school places are required. The Team's priority is to alert schools to their responsibility to meet the educational needs of Traveller children. The Team liaise between school and family to facilitate entry to school and they aim to help form working relationships and promote continued attendance.

For more information contact: Travellers Education Team, c/o Ilderton School, Varcoe Rd., SE16 3LA. Tel. (071) 237 1174.

An Eye on Ireland

From time to time AGIY INFO focusses on issues affecting young people in Ireland.

This month we feature a new initiative called **CONDOM SENSE** which has been established to campaign for legislative change around the sale and availability of condoms.

Irish legislation prohibits the sale of condoms in outlets other than chemists, health centres, STD or Family Planning Clinics. A possible widening of this law has been unsuccessfully addressed in the Dail (the Irish Parliament) but it is expected that further discussions will take place in the near future.

Bearing in mind the importance of condoms in HIV/AIDS, other STDs and pregnancy prevention, **CONDOM SENSE** has been established by a number of individuals from different parts of Ireland who are

active in HIV/AIDS help and awareness agencies.

The campaign hopes through practical action, public support and debate and lobbying of politicians and existing organisations to increase the accessibility of condoms. The campaign also hopes to encourage health education and other bodies to promote education on the need for, and the correct use of condoms.

To launch the campaign **CONDOM SENSE** will install a number of condom vending machines in pubs, clubs and other outlets around the country on St. Valentine's Day.

CONDOM SENSE are seeking support by asking agencies to associate their name with the campaign.

If you wish to support **CONDOM SENSE** or would like more information write to: **CONDOM SENSE, PO Box 3367, Dublin 4 Ireland or Tel. Dublin 010 353 1 282 7331.**