

# AGIYINFO

AGIY IS A REGISTERED CHARITY WHICH AIMS TO PROMOTE THE INTEREST AND WELFARE OF EMIGRANT IRISH YOUTH IN LONDON

## New Commission

### The future of Multi-Ethnic Britain

Just over twenty-five years ago, a major report *Colour and Citizenship* was published here in Britain. It set the agenda for public policy and also paved the way for the 1976 Race Relations Act. Since then many changes have taken place within Britain's ethnic minority communities and also in the mainstream views towards Britain's diversity. Currently Britain's ethnic minority population is about 8% of the whole. It is expected that it will double in the next twenty five years. As Britain enters the twenty-first century, there is need to ensure that the legal and policy frameworks as well as the overall public philosophy regarding race relations and diversity are relevant to current and future needs and experiences.

In 1994 The Runnymede Trust held a conference, *Challenge, Change and Opportunity* with speakers including Michael Howard and the Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, Herman Ouseley. It concluded that a commission should be set up to evaluate where Britain is now and how it should move towards a diverse yet socially cohesive society.

The Commission was launched by the Home Secretary Jack Straw on 27 January 1998. Sir John Burgh, President of Trinity College, Oxford (1987-1996), and formerly Director General of the British Council (1980-1987), is Chair of the Commission. It is an independent Commission, welcomed by government and with the backing of all major political parties.

The aims of the Commission are to:

- examine both positive developments in race relations and the growth of new forms of racism, discrimination and exclusion, and their impact on future generations

- ♦ survey the existing legal and policy framework in Britain and Europe and its continuing relevance in the twenty-first century.
- ♦ develop a conception of national identity and citizenship that both ensures social cohesion and accommodates ethnic and religious diversity.
- ♦ invite evidence on these matters from as wide a range of communities, organisations and individuals as is consistent with the target date of completion.
- ♦ make recommendations to government, other policy-makers and opinion leaders.

The final report to be published in 1999, will be addressed to policy-makers and opinion leaders in central and local government, and other public bodies and authorities, the media, the education system, churches and other religious bodies. Throughout its two years, the Commission will be in contact with communities around Britain and hold regular meetings with the media.

#### How the Commission works.

The Commission is conducting its work through:

1. Visiting communities in various parts of Britain including Tower Hamlets, Haringey, Bradford, Liverpool and Glasgow (on a recent visit to Haringey the Commission visited the Irish Community Care Centre).
2. Evaluating existing policy and legal approaches to race relations in Britain.



3. Receiving submissions from community organisations and individuals which set out each community's experiences and proposals for a future inclusive multi-ethnic Britain.

It is with the third of these areas of work we want to encourage Irish community groups to get involved. The Commission has produced a consultation document. The document sets out the Commission's overall approach. It also asks five questions which are:

1. Do our democratic institutions belong equally to all citizens?
2. Are we building a culture which facilitates mutual understanding and respect.
3. How can families be supported to provide security and a springboard for the next generation?
4. Do the opportunities and rewards for work recognise that employment dominates our life chances?
5. How can everyone feel safer in their communities and what is the role of justice system?

Groups are asked to make submissions to the Commission and in doing so to try and address these questions. However please do not feel in the least deterred by the questions. Feel free to send your own submission which should set out your views, backed where possible with hard evidence, of the Irish communities experience in Britain, and also your views of what an inclusive multi-ethnic Britain should look like in the future. Because the Commission has not heard from many Irish people yet, we would urge all groups to send in a submission. This Commission is highly likely to have an influence on future government policy in this area.

Please note the deadline for submissions is 30 June 1998. Submissions should be sent to the following address:

Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain  
133 Aldersgate Street  
London  
EC1 4JA

## New Health Publication

AGIY recently launched their new youth health publication *Staying Alive - Your Guide to Staying Healthy in London*. The packed colourful guide has information to help the young person make informed decisions about their own health lifestyle. The pocket size booklet covers all aspects of youth health issues; how to register with a doctor, dentist, optician; where to seek help in an emergency; tips on how to stay healthy; mental health, the use of drink and drugs. As well as practical information the guide has a well resourced list of contact numbers both for Irish community groups and for the many specialist health providers found in London.

Speaking at the launch Seamus Taylor (Chair, AGIY) considered the publication as a significant educational tool as it will help to raise awareness of health issues amongst young Irish people living in London but also provide them with practical information on how to stay healthy. Seamus emphasised the need to develop healthier lifestyles amongst young Irish people so that they can enjoy a healthier old age than their parents. The importance of providing opportunities to the young Irish was further highlighted by Seeromanie Harding (Office for National Statistics). Seeromanie's studies shows the persistence of poorer health of the Irish community compared with that of the whole population of all England and Wales. Furthermore, second generation, the children of those Irish born, also show higher death rates despite their improved socio-economic status. She stressed that socio-economic factors was a significant determinant in their health profile but lifestyle was also very important. The main causes of death were the same as the whole population for England and Wales - heart disease and cancers.

A third speaker, Susan Elizabeth, Director of Grants from the King's Fund echoed ONS' 'very stark statistical evidence about the health of the Irish in Britain'. The Fund, along with the Irish Youth Foundation and the Bridge House Estates Fund were the publication's main funders.



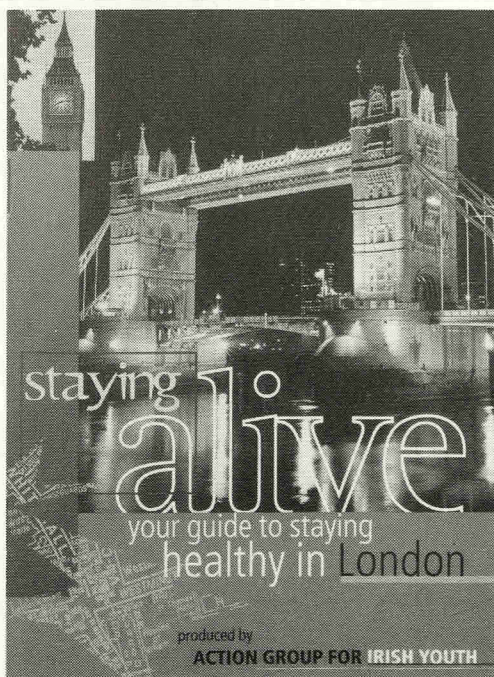
Susan highlighted the Fund's main priorities in offering groups grant assistance.

The three main categories are:

- Projects which support equal access to healthcare.
- Projects which break down barriers to effective health care.
- Projects which strengthen the voice of user of health services.

Susan went on to welcome the Kings Fund support of the publication, "It is an excellent example of the way in which voluntary organisations can develop new kinds of health information, which build on a deeply rooted understanding of the target audience. This booklet presents a wealth of health advice in a direct and readable style, with an honest recognition that experimentation, risk taking and having fun are important in the lives of many young people".

Two final speakers - Dr Des Coffey and Fr. Brian Russell - concluded the launch by giving an insight into the day-to-day running of a busy London day centre. Amongst the many needs is the provision of accessible information for their clients. Coupled with this need is the provision by social services of culturally specific health care.



Copies may be obtained directly from the AGIY office; Telephone 0171 700 8137.

## Writers Read for AGIY



AGIY's annual fundraiser was held on March 14 at the Union Chapel Project, Islington. This year's writers were Maeve Binchy, Michael D. Higgins, Joe O'Connor, Cherry Smyth, Dermot Healy and Josephine Hart.

Seamus Heaney (AGIY's patron) in his programme address welcomed the commitment of the writers. "By coming together to support us, they prove that they themselves are a very special kind of Action Group for Irish Youth. The words they have written reinforce our awareness of what it means to be alive and responsible at this critical time and we are grateful for their solidarity on this gala occasion"

AGIY's management and staff are grateful for the support and help given by the night's sponsors; The Irish Post, Islington Council, Tara TV, and the Department of Foreign Affairs (Comhar Cultura Eireann). Thanks also to the many individuals who supported the event in so many ways.

The money raised by the night's readings will go to assist in AGIY projects that help to promote the needs and concerns of Irish youth living in London.

*Requested 10/6*



## New Research Publication

AGIY are pleased to announce the forthcoming publication of the report - *HIV and a Migrant Community: the Irish in Britain* by Dr Robert Power and Oonagh O'Brien. The report details findings of a research project on Irish migrants affected by HIV and AIDS living in Britain. The project was initiated by Positively Irish Action on AIDS (PIAA) prior to their closure in 1996, and completed through a partnership between AGIY and the Department of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) at the University College London Medical School. The report was sponsored by the DION committee (Irish Government) and the Elton John AIDS Foundation.

The research has found that risk behaviour for HIV infection changes on migration, and that some of these changes increase the likelihood of transmission and/or HIV infection. Health promotion messages, particularly those around safer sex, were not being acted on consistently by Irish migrants vulnerable to HIV infection, in particular Irish gay men (the majority of whom believed themselves to have become infected in Britain) and Irish migrants who are current or ex drug users.

The research recommends that specific strategies on HIV prevention and support are required if successful interventions are to be made with the Irish community in Britain. It is hoped that the findings of the report and the recommendations will be a useful guide to Irish organisations and mainstream health and social services working with Irish clients affected by HIV, or those who wish to develop this area of work.

THE  
ACTION GROUP FOR IRISH YOUTH  
AND  
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON  
MEDICAL SCHOOL

ANNOUNCE THE PUBLICATION

OF

### ***HIV and a Migrant Community The Irish in Britain***

TUESDAY 30 JUNE 1998

11.00 A.M.

AT

THE LONDON VOLUNTARY SECTOR  
RESOURCE CENTRE  
356 HOLLOWAY ROAD  
LONDON  
N7 6PA  
(NEAREST TUBE PICADDILLY LINE)

### **GUEST SPEAKERS**

ROBERT POWER

OONAGH O'BRIEN

### **Other Guest Speakers to confirm**

RSVP BEFORE THURSDAY 25 JUNE  
TEL: 0171 700 8137  
FAX: 0171 700 0099

#### **AGIY STAFF TEAM**

BRIAN MCCARTHY - CO-ORDINATOR  
DONAL MCKINNEY - POLICY, INFORMATION  
& ADMINISTRATOR

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