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SCENE

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WITH DUE CARE

The recent revelation by a spokesperson for the Eastern Health Board that its counsellors had experienced a fall-off in the number of people coming forward for counselling in relation to sexual abuse since the policy of reporting all such cases has been put in place is a cautionary and timely reminder that the issue of the mandatory reporting of child abuse is a matter that must be carefully considered.

Taken in isolation, mandatory reporting is a rather blunt legal instrument and, as such, ought to be introduced if, *and only if*, an appropriate supportive environment (including a legislative environment) exists and is seen and known to so exist. People who, bona fide, come forward to report incidents of child abuse need to be assured that the final outcome of their making the report will truly be beneficial, in both the care and justice sense, for all concerned.

The N.Y.F., in its publication **Dealing with Sexual Abuse: Guidelines for Youth Workers**, has already noted that it is "*natural that youth workers may feel unsure and confused in relation to what they can or may do to respond to hurt and confused children in a way that is safe for them as workers, and appropriate and helpful to the child*" (p.7). The issue of mandatory reporting raises similar worries. Thus, while the concept of mandatory reporting may have much to recommend it in theory, it is in the practice of mandatory reporting that its true value will or will not be found. Practice, in this area, involves agencies, systems and personnel. Owing to the nature of child sexual abuse, any report will involve the garda and health board authorities working in harmony since there are both justice and health care issues involved. How satisfactory and effectively efficient is the current working relationship between these two important agencies? Is there an appropriate protocol covering their relationship? Furthermore, how functionally effective and efficient are the internal systems within these two agencies in relation to the handling of child abuse cases? The recently issued report on the Kelly Fitzgerald case has raised some serious concerns in this area in relation to the handling of child abuse cases? The recently issued report on the Kelly Fitzgerald case has raised some serious concerns in this area in relation to one of our health boards.

The National Youth Federation is not opposed in principle to mandatory reporting but neither does it provide the proposal with unqualified support *at this point in time*. That mandatory reporting will have its undoubted benefits (e.g. obliging certain categories of professionals to report allegations of child abuse while at the same time providing such individuals with legal protection) is undeniable but there are also problems/questions that must be satisfactorily addressed (e.g. the possibility of over-reporting, the making of false allegations, worries for the victims and their families). In a word, if mandatory reporting is to be effectively introduced this can only be done within a truly supportive climate wherein the public confidence will be both tangible and vindicated.

Whatever the outcome of the current debate on the introduction of mandatory reporting youth workers and other carers in the youth sector will continue to be called upon to provide the listening ear and the helping hand to those in need. Any change that has an effect on this trusting environment should be effected only with due care.

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TRANSFORUM ALLEY:

Breaking New Ground in Youth Work

Transforum Alley is an arts-based Youthreach programme run by the Kerry Diocesan Youth Service in partnership with the Town of Tralee V.E.C. It was originally set up as a 20 month pilot project, receiving 65% of its funding from the E.U. Horizon Programme.

The proposal for funding for Transforum Alley arose out of this Inter Agency Co-operation and was made jointly by the Kerry Diocesan Youth Service, the Probation and Welfare Service, Tralee and the Gardaí in October, 1992. It is representatives from these three agencies that came to make up the Steering Committee. Horizon funding was granted in November 1992 to set up an Arts based project for disadvantaged young people. In February, 1993, a Project Co-ordinator was employed. He set about networking with relevant agencies in Tralee and meeting young people who were interested in being involved with the project.

The Project began running its programme with the first intake of 15 young people in March. The programme was full-time for a period of nine months, and offered an allowance equivalent to FÁS rates. All of the young people on the project had left school before doing the leaving cert., most of them had no experience of employment and the vast majority of their families were dependent on social welfare on a long term basis. Over half of them were further alienated by their previous involvement in crime. The social exclusion experienced by the young people was further reinforced by the fact that they were at high risk of being long-term unemployed.

Aim and Ethos

The aim of the project is to devise an experiential and holistically developmental programme, incorporating creative, physical and educational activities. The project is concerned with the processes which contribute to the social, personal and emotional development of the young people. It aims to recognise and validate young people's own cultural values, interests and experiences but also to create opportunities and challenges which encourage them to extend those experiences and so grow in awareness and understanding.

The ethos behind the running of Transforum Alley is made up of several components:

Social Education can be defined as, *"the conscious attempt to help people gain for themselves the knowledge,*

feelings and skills necessary to meet their own and others' developmental needs" (Smith 1982 p.24). Social education incorporates respect for others, self awareness and participation in decision making. These are all aimed for in the curriculum of the project.

ARTS BASED: The activities of the project are primarily based in the arts i.e. Art, Drama, Video, Creative Writing. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, because art work is seen as a very effective medium through which to work experientially with young people (Randell and Mykill 1989 p.3) and secondly because there is a gap in training around this area in the region. Traditionally the arts have been the domain of the middle and upper classes. The project is aimed at breaking this mould and making the art forms accessible to their client group.

FORUM THEATRE: Forum Theatre is a type of drama developed by Augusto Boal, a Brazilian Theatre Director. It involves examining oppressive situations by acting them out and replacing the oppressed person in order to try out different ways of dealing with the situation. Through Forum Theatre the young people of Transforum Alley can rehearse for life and find solutions to everyday problems. The objective is to empower the individuals to return to reality better equipped to "transform" it (Boal 1979). The use of Forum Theatre has proved very popular with the young people and has been a very effective means of working through issues both at a personal and group level. The feedback on this aspect of the programme has been particularly positive. Here are some examples of the young peoples comments: *"I used to be shy in front of people, but since I did drama and more stuff I am not really shy any more". "I like the way you can express yourself through acting". "I find myself very confident because doing drama has helped me come out of my shyness".*

PREPARATION FOR LABOUR MARKET: In the present economic climate the issue of unemployment is the subject of much debate. The numbers out of work have reached record high levels. Early school leavers are one of the groups most severely at risk of being unemployed and in the light of this, Transforum Alley has orientated its programme towards preparing the young people for the labour market, further training, or returning to mainstream education. This is happening on two fronts:

Firstly through the raising of self esteem, improving communication skills and social skills. These are seen as

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an integral part of preparation for employment. This has become recognised both at National and European level. The National Training and Employment Authority, FÁS, has placed increasing importance on "personal effectiveness" as a core element of their training programmes.

In a comparative 'Qualification - Needs Analysis' of a worker under a conventional system and a modern flexible manufacturing system (FMS) Stahl et al identify changes in thinking with regards to skills a worker needs in order to be effective. They state: *"by far the greatest growth in qualification needs lies in the key or core qualifications of decision making and social competency"* (Stahl, n.d.p.34). Social competency includes co-operation and communication skills. It is vital that the person is a 'self managing person': thus, they claim, key qualifications of a social nature have an equal economic value for an enterprise as cognitive and technical qualifications (Stahl, n.d.p.35).

Secondly the participants are trained in practical job searching skills. This includes C.V. writing, applications, and interviewing skills.

Both these factors are also of prime importance in the consideration of gaining access to further training/education.

STAFF COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT: This is a key element of the ethos of Transforum Alley. It is seen as important that the staff work as a team, supporting each other and thus contributing to the welfare of the project as a whole. This sentiment is born out by Booton who states: "Support is widely recognised as a primarily professional need for every practitioner" (in Jeffs and Smith 1987 p.112). For this to happen it is vital that there is good open communication between staff members. This is facilitated on the project through weekly staff meetings, weekly supervision of each staff member, and outside professional supervision of the staff group as a whole on a monthly basis. This aspect of the project has been a crucial factor contributing to the open, supportive nature of the programme.

Benefits

The pilot phase of Transforum Alley has been very successful in meeting the aim and objectives established at its outset. Here are examples of some of the benefits:

As a community based, integrated response aimed at meeting the needs of disadvantaged youth in Tralee it has resulted in all the relevant statutory and voluntary agencies in the town working closely together, in co-operation, to further the welfare of their common client group.

It has given the young people who have dropped out of the mainstream education system, the opportunity to develop skills in areas they are specifically talented and interested in.

It has increased their self esteem and communication skills so they can pursue further training/education/

employment with more confidence and sense of control over their own lives.

As a result of the pilot phase of the programme the project has developed a detailed curriculum for each module on the course. The effectiveness of these has been continually evaluated and modified according to the needs of the group.

The young people have had significant success in their drama performances, having appeared in *Pairc Uí Chaoimh* with Macnas during the US concert in August, 1993. They have also staged several other public productions in Tralee; these proved very popular and were the subject of noteworthy local media attention. The group have also run a workshop in University College, Cork for Social Work and Youth and Community work students on using Forum Theatre.

Over one half of the participants have a known offending background. A key objective of the programme has been to divert their behavioural tendencies towards more socially constructive interests and practices. The project has been very successful in this regard as during the pilot phase 93.4% of the participants stayed out of trouble since they began on the programme.

Here are some of the young people's comments on their experience of being on the programme.

"The project was a good idea, because it gave people who had given up on themselves a chance to prove that they didn't give up hope for their future". "I have opened out a lot, I can talk in front of a crowd of people which I could never do before, it has made me stronger, it has given me confidence in myself which I never had". "You can express your feelings in paintings. It makes me happy and I feel good inside when a painting is finished". "I learn more being here than I did with all my years in school".

In conclusion, it can be said that the success of the pilot phase of Transforum Alley has outshone the hopes and expectations of those involved in its establishment from the beginning. The innovative programme involving arts and drama has proved to be an extremely effective method of working with young people, resulting in the increase of their self confidence and sense of self worth. The group have had a real sense of ownership of the project and it has come to be viewed as an integral part of the services for young people in Tralee, both by the agencies involved in youth provision and also by young people themselves. This is further reinforced by the willingness of the Department of Education and local V.E.C. to fund the project as part of mainstream Youthreach provision.

AN UPDATE ON THE NATIONAL ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY

by Hugh Frazer

In response to the UN World Summit for Social Development in 1995 the Irish government committed itself to drawing up a comprehensive National Anti-Poverty Strategy. This represents the most serious attempt ever to reduce poverty and tackle the problems associated with it in Irish society. Hugh Frazer, Director of the Combat Poverty Agency, outlines the progress to date on this initiative.

Under the Anti-Poverty Strategy, all government departments and state agencies will be expected to include the reduction and prevention of poverty as key objectives in the development and implementation of their policies and programmes. The Government commitment to agree and implement this strategy is now progressing steadily. The initial phases in the process of drawing up the strategy are complete, and it is envisaged that the National Anti-Poverty Strategy will be put in place by the end of 1996.

Reflecting the across the board approach taken by government, responsibility for overseeing the development of the strategy was delegated to an Inter Departmental Policy Committee which includes representatives of all government departments and some state agencies. Acting as Secretariat to the Strategy, the Taoiseach's Department, the Tanaiste's office, the Department of Social Welfare and the Combat Poverty Agency are playing a pivotal role in co-ordinating the development of the strategy.

Key to the initiative was a government commitment to involve those affected by poverty, the organisations that represent and work with them and researchers and policy makers in the process.

The first phase in drawing up a National Anti-Poverty Strategy therefore involved seeking submissions from interested groups and individuals - through public advertisement in the national media and the circulation of hundreds of brochures. This phase also involved collating existing research on poverty and exploring issues around institutional mechanisms that could be put in place to secure the implementation of NAPS across all Government departments.

The result of this first phase was the publication of three documents by the Inter Departmental Policy Committee; An Overview Statement on Poverty, A Summary of Submissions, and a consultation paper on Institutional Mechanisms.

Overview of Poverty

The first of these documents, An Overview Statement on Poverty, Social Exclusion and Inequality in Ireland, draws on research over the last decade. It contains a working definition of poverty, outlines the extent of poverty, describes who is living in poverty, summarises the experience of poverty, its main causes and consequences, and details current policy measures to address poverty.

It concludes by identifying five key policy areas that need to be addressed in the NAPS: educational disadvantage, unemployment (particularly long-term unemployment), income adequacy, regenerating disadvantaged communities with concentrations of poverty and tackling poverty in rural areas.

The Overview Statement also proposes eight key principles which should transcend and inform the development of the strategy:

- Ensuring equal access and participation for all
- Reducing inequalities
- Recognising issues related to gender
- Developing a partnership approach
- Actively involving the community and voluntary sector
- Encouraging self-reliance and empowerment
- Engaging in consultative processes
- Guaranteeing the rights of minorities, especially through anti-discrimination measures.

Summary of Submissions

The second document is a summary of key points emerging from submissions made to the Inter-departmental Committee. Over 240 submissions were received, which, given the short time scale, was a very high response. Furthermore, many of the submissions were based on local consultations or were from networks involving a larger of number of local groups.

46 per cent of the submissions came from small and regional voluntary organisations and 16 per cent from national voluntary organisations. Some 17 per cent came from individuals working mainly in social service type

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organisations and 7 per cent of submissions came from statutory and voluntary bodies.

The submissions contain a wealth of information and ideas which will be very useful when specific actions are being identified in the later stages of developing the strategy. Interestingly the issue that emerged most strongly from the submissions was that of education. Submissions emphasised and re-emphasised the key role which education has to play in combating poverty and the links between educational disadvantage and social exclusion.

Institutional Mechanisms

The third document is a consultation paper on the question of what type of institutional mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that the issue of reducing poverty and social exclusion is firmly on the agenda of all Government Departments and agencies and that there is appropriate coordination across and between Departments on policy in this area.

Following an examination of a number of initiatives, both in Ireland and further afield, the Interdepartmental Committee has identified a number of key issues that need to be considered when recommendations are being drawn up on appropriate mechanisms to put in place. In considering how these key issues might be taken on board a number of questions were identified. The Committee is now seeking comments and suggestions in response to these questions.

Consultation Seminars

The three documents were circulated widely - to every group or individual who made a submission or expressed an interest in being consulted further - over 500 groups and individuals in total. A series of consultation seminars to discuss the documentation and give people an opportunity to respond to the material were held in Monaghan, Cork, Galway and Dublin early this year and attracted over 400 representatives from a wide range of organisations and groups.

National networking organisations which reflect the voice of those affected by poverty took a special role in making sure that as many local groups as possible were given a chance to participate in the process. A separate seminar specifically for the academic and research community was also convened, and the Minister for Social Welfare, Proinsias De Rossa addressed a plenary session of the National Economic and Social Forum on the subject.

A wide range of comments and ideas were put forward at the consultation seminars and a number of groups and individuals have subsequently made further written

submissions. The National and Economic Social Forum has contributed an opinion on the initial documents. All of these views will be taken into consideration by the Interdepartmental Policy Committee when revising the Overview Statement and developing the next phase of the Strategy.

At the seminars there was considerable support for the inclusion of the five key policy areas identified in the Overview Statement as key themes in the Strategy with a special emphasis on the importance of education. However, three other issues were also raised repeatedly.

First there was the view that the issue of discrimination should be given much more emphasis in the implementation of the Strategy. Secondly many people felt that the gender dimension of poverty was inadequately reflected in the Overview Statement. Thirdly there was considerable support for the introduction of a basic income system as part of the Strategy.

Next Phase

The next stage of developing the Strategy involves examining each of the five key themes or policy areas in more detail. This examination will draw on the proposals and discussion contained in the submissions, the feedback from the consultation seminars and events, and currently available research and policy analysis.

Targets and timescales on each of the themes will also be set. This stage will include identifying long-term goals, identifying the range and type of policy actions and setting short-term measurable targets. There is a commitment to further consultation during this phase of the process. The Inter Departmental Committee is also working on preparing proposals on institutional mechanisms in the light of comments it has received and is concerned to ensure that the Strategy works closely with the Government's Strategic Management Initiative.

Work will also be undertaken on related areas such as what monitoring mechanisms need to be put in place and what public awareness/education strategies are required to support the NAPS. The Inter Departmental Policy Committee intends to finalise the Strategy, get governmental agreement and put it in place by the end of this year. For further information the Inter Departmental Policy Committee can be contacted at the Department of the Taoiseach, Government Buildings, Merrion Square, Dublin 2, tel: 6624888.

How Safe is the Internet for Young People

by Fran Bissett

In the second of the series of articles on the potential of information technology in the youth service, Fran Bissett explains Multimedia & CD ROM and explores the current debate that has emerged around the availability of 'undesirable' information on the Internet.

Supporters of the Internet argue that one of its biggest strengths is that the information is produced by its users and is not controlled or censored by any one individual or group. This fact, they argue, makes the Internet the one true independent form of media free of political & commercial interest, bias or censorship. Whether this is true or not is debatable. However, it is this perceived strength that the 'Net' is uncensored that has created a controversial and heated debate in Britain and the U.S.A. on the availability of particular information, predominantly pornographic material, on the Internet.

A recent American report commissioned to investigate the Internet's potential as an advertising medium by Marty Rimm of Carnegie Mellon University in Philadelphia, concluded after analysing nearly a thousand pornographic images taken from the Internet that pornography was one of the largest recreational applications of computer networks. On Usenet, which accounts for about one tenth of Internet traffic, Rimm discovered that 20 per cent of all communications and 83 per cent of all pictures downloaded or saved on to a PC were sexual in content. This has led to a concerted public campaign in America, particularly by the 'christian right' for greater controls and censorship of the Internet.

In Britain there has been a great deal of activity taking place to try to arrest the flow of such information. A group called Parents Against Computer Porn, has been set up to lobby parliament for tougher restrictions on the use of computer pornography. Britain also has an Internet investigator, Detective Inspector David Davies. His first Internet related case comes to court soon following the arrest of two men charged with offences under the Obscene Publications and Protection of Children Acts. There is also a group made up of officials from various government departments which investigates child pornography on computers. The concentration however, is on the exchange of paedophilia on computer discs and not Internet related pornographic material. (Morris, R., 1995)

As can be seen the focus of the debate to date has centred on pornographic material. Far less attention has

been given to the numerous bulletin boards and interactive newsgroups that contain racist, neo-nazi and white supremacist material. As stated earlier the campaign in America is being led predominantly by right wing groups such as the Christian Coalition and their record on racial and ethnic minority issues is questionable. It is a purely personal opinion, but having seen some of this material and the virulent nature of its content I would regard it as potentially more damaging and corrupting to a young person than becoming exposed to pornographic material. While many children and young people are aware when they see something 'naughty' or 'rude' I would suspect that it would be very difficult for them to see through some of the sophisticated propaganda being used on these bulletin boards and newsgroups

The argument can be made that the availability of pornography on the Internet or any other undesirable information or images is no different from its availability through any other medium. However, while there are some restrictions and regulations relating to TV, video and magazines to protect young people from exposure to such images, the same has not applied to the Internet until recently. Work has been taking place on developing a system of making Internet Service Providers responsible for the information they provide. In America provision was made within a new Decency Act banning the sending of sexually explicit material to minors over computer networks. However as soon as the Act had been signed into law this provision was challenged successfully in the courts as an infringement to the Freedom of Information Act, thus highlighting the difficulties involved in attempting to regulate the flow of information. On a more positive note, it has been predicted that before the end of the year a pre-screened version of the Internet will be available from some service providers with material deemed unsuitable for young people having either been removed or with the access to such information being denied.

In the short term there are no easy answers. If your child has access to the Internet or you are using the Internet with a school or youth group, it is a case of monitoring the information to the best of your ability, informing them of the dangers, and watching this space for further developments.

The final article in the series will look at the developments in Ireland in terms of information technology that should be of interest to those in the youth & community work sector.

IRISH YOUTHWORK CENTRE

Many of these titles and others on related topics are available on loan from the Irish YouthWork Centre, the official sales agent in the Republic of Ireland for Youth Clubs UK and the National Youth Agency. The wide range of topics covered by the materials available for the Centre include youth service management policy and curriculum, detached and rural youth work, health education, art education, social and political education, leaving home, counselling, club work, games and simulations, youth work training and working with girls and young women. Further information: **Irish YouthWork Centre**, National Youth Federation, 20 Lower Dominick Street, Dublin 1. Tel: 01 8729933 Fax: 01 8724183

PEER EDUCATION

PEER TUTORING

by Network Educational Press Ltd

Peer Tutoring has been the subject of much research in recent years. As a learning strategy it can take place in innumerable forms and in many different contexts. This book contains a detailed introduction to the concept of Peer Tutoring and examines fourteen case studies in which Peer Tutoring was employed as a central technique in a range of contexts including health education, literacy and bullying.

WORKING WITH YOUNG MOTHERS

RESIDENTIAL CARE FOR YOUNG MOTHERS A Guide for Staff Training

by Tricia Skuse

Resource manual aimed at staff, social workers, care workers and anyone working with young mothers in a residential context. Topics Covered Include; Staffing e.g. recruitment, training, supervision, problems faced by staff; Issues of Race and Culture e.g. racism, persons of Mixed Race, health, diet, traditions; Violence e.g. definition and incidence of violence, the nature of violence in residential care, dealing with violence; Working in Partnership e.g. working with local authorities, with residents, and with families; Resettlement and Aftercare e.g. living independently, strategies for resettlement, resettlement as a process; and Implications of Good Practice e.g. working in residential care, defining good practice. Each chapter identifies practical way in which problems can be addressed and suggests ways in which resources can be used to their full potential. Also includes suggestions for other useful agencies and resources for those working with young parents.

YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

by Nick Frost and Mike Stein

Training and resource pack for all those working with young people leaving care. Contents include; Transition and leaving care; Understanding the care experience; Preparation for leaving care; Assessment, planning and review; Employment, education and training; Accommodation and young people; Promoting the health of young people; Support for living independently; Organisational and policy context; and listings of useful organisations and addresses

DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE: making global connections in youth work

by Douglas Bourne and Ann McCallum

The Development Education Association, with funding from the Overseas Development Administration, commissioned a research project in January 1995 to ascertain the level and nature of development education activities in youth work in the UK. The report is in three parts; a context and framework - looking at the views of young people, the role of the Youth Service and what development education means in practice; current activities on global perspectives in: development NGOs, youth organisations, local authorities and local projects work; and proposals for future work including clarification of terminology, training programme, resource needs and the role of policy makers. The report concludes that whilst there is a great deal of excellent work taking place, there is no coordinated national strategy to promote global perspectives within youth work. It recommends that development education work should be made an integral part of youth work and a focus for social education work and activities carried out by youth organisations.

TRAINING

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT IN IRELAND: Context, Policy and Practice

by Thomas N Garavan, Pat Costine, Noreen Heraty

Training and Development in Ireland provides a comprehensive review of training and development in the Irish context. It draws extensively on Irish, British and American research, as well as the personal experiences and research activities of the authors. It will also be invaluable for training and development practitioners and for human resource managers and others who are responsible for the training and development function in their organisations.

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT COMPETENCE by Jill Brookes

Timely book which provides a guiding framework for those in the training and development profession.

Each practical, stand-alone chapter covers one aspect of the training cycle, and contains activities enabling the reader to assess and extend his or her knowledge. This empowering book will be of immediate value to trainers, consultants, line managers, assessors, personnel officers and training managers.

BUILD ON YOUR SKILLS: a training resource pack by The Open University

Build on Your Skills is a comprehensive and flexible resource pack for training providers offering workshops and courses in personal development for people who are; working on short-term training or employment schemes; facing redundancy; exploring various employment possibilities; returning to education and training; working in voluntary and community groups; and school leavers. The Pack combines guidance for users with freedom of choice with ready-to-use sessions plans that can be mixed and matched to suit different contexts, and meet individual and group needs. There are photocopiable handouts and record sheets for participants who can build up a personal portfolio of transferable skills.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

AIDS: THE HIDDEN AGENDA IN CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

by Chris Bennetts, Mae Brown and Jane Sloan

A child sexual abuse case potentially involving HIV/AIDS infection is a nightmare scenario for any social worker. But it is one which, tragically, you may have to face. AIDS: the Hidden Agenda in Child Sexual Abuse is relevant for all

those involved in child care. The book equips workers with the skills and knowledge required to deal with devastating experience and will give them the knowledge to carry out the right procedure in cases of suspected infection.

BEREAVEMENT

DEALING WITH BEREAVEMENT A CURRICULUM PACK FOR YOUTH WORKERS by The National Youth Agency

Dealing with bereavement not only acknowledges, explores, and validates young people's experience, it also proposes that youth workers have a special role to play in enabling them to cope with grief, to support each other at times of bereavement, and to understand and accept death as a natural event. In all this, it recognises - and encourages a recognition - that death, bereavement, and grief have different meanings for different cultures and religions.

TRUANCY

KEY EDUCATION MANAGEMENT INFORMATION FOR 1990'S: Issues in School Attendance and Truancy by Dennis O'Keefe and Patricia Stoll, Truancy Unit, University of North London

Truancy is a high profile issue in many schools. This book discusses the growing problem, suggests ways of managing it, examines the underlying causes of truancy, and offers strategies to prevent absenteeism.

SEX EDUCATION

SEX EDUCATION MATTERS: A workshop for professionals working with children/young people by Eve Brock

Training package aimed at assisting staff become aware of the issues surrounding sex education. It deals with issues such as; why it matters; what to teach; and how to respond to the concerns of pupils and parents. All the material needed for a training day are contained in the pack, including leader's guide, background notes and handouts. Photocopying permission is included.

A GUIDE TO GOOD EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE IN THE COMMUNITY & VOLUNTARY SECTOR

BY JANE CLARKE. PUBLISHED BY COMBAT POVERTY AGENCY. (Cost £6.00, 120 pages)

It is fair to say that all voluntary and community sector employers would aspire to have good terms and conditions of employment for all staff regardless of their position in the organization. Unfortunately, it is also fair to say that for some, good employment practice has remained just that, an aspiration. The voluntary and community sector has blossomed, resulting in increased employment opportunities and ever higher levels of responsibility and accountability for those in management positions. In many instances those of us designated management find ourselves employers with little formal training or relevant experience.

My experience over the years suggests that the areas of financial management and good employment practice are equally challenging to inexperienced voluntary management; too often in the past we have relied on good will, flexibility and informal structures to see us through. We can all cite instances where this approach has proved an inadequate response to many of the issues that arise in employment practice. Goodwill and flexibility are important attributes in any voluntary organization. They are, however no substitute for documenting clear guidelines and policy in relation to good employment practice.

The *Guide to Good Employment Practice* provides clear information on both the legal requirements of employers in relation to workers and identifies suggested "generally accepted standards of good practice" that can be adopted by community organizations.

Other Management Guides

This guide is the third book that Jane Clarke has written for the Combat Poverty Agency and is the latest in a series of publications designed "to provide good quality information and practical assistance on aspects of organizational management and development" in the community and voluntary sector.

In common with both of Jane's other books, *What about Management* (1990) and *Managing Together* (1993), the *Guide to Good Employment Practice* succeeds admirably in providing clear information that is of practical benefit to those involved in the management of voluntary and community organizations. While the earlier publications took a broad overview of management structures and functions in the community sector, this guide concentrates solely on the area of employment practice and treats us to

an extensive, in-depth examination and explanation of the issues involved. The result is a large format, 125 page, spiral-bound guide to the essential elements of good employment practice.

The stated purpose of the guide is to provide "a sample terms and conditions of employment document, along with relevant information and explanations in order to promote and encourage the development of improved employment practices in the voluntary and community sector". A written contract is only part of the documentation that should be given to employees; a terms and conditions of employment document details the rules and standards in a variety of employment practices.

What is a Terms and Conditions Document?

"A terms and conditions document helps both the management committee and staff to be clear about rules and responsibilities, policies, procedures and practices. It tells employees what the organization expects of them and also what they can expect from the organization. It sets out the legal rights of employees and defines how the organization intends to treat them."

Jane Clarke acknowledges that for many groups the idea of documenting in such detail can appear "too formal and inflexible". She points out, though, that all organizations operate a set of policies and procedures even if they are not written down. Often they only become apparent or necessary in the face of potential difficulties, not a good time to be trying to negotiate clear terms and conditions.

Each organization will have its own unique aspects and needs, not all of which can be covered in a "sample" document. The sample document covers a lot of the groundwork creating a general framework which can be adapted to suit the needs of individual organizations, as well as identifying those non-negotiable aspects that are legal requirements and applicable to all situations.

Exploring the Issues

This guide is essential reading for both management and employees, though it puts a particular onus on employers to develop good employment practices. The layout and format is good with heavy quality paper which will bear

much thumbing through. The guide is structured into five sections which are in turn sub-divided:

1. Introduction
2. Sample terms and conditions with explanatory notes
3. Appendices
4. Useful Contacts
5. Glossary

SECTION 1: Introduction:

Set the scheme and context of development of employment practice. It also includes a useful two page guide on how to use the publication.

SECTION 2: Sample Terms and Conditions of Employment Document and Explanatory Notes:

This section covers the bulk of the book covering some 56 pages detailing such areas as recruitment and selection policy, job description, method of payment, leave entitlements, training and development, disciplinary and grievance policies, sexual harassment policies, health and safety policies, etc.

The layout of this section is useful, detailing clauses of terms and conditions of employment in blue ink on the left hand side of the page and providing notes of explanation in relation to each clause in brown ink on the right hand side of the page. These notes explain the clause and clarify:

- (a) what is legally required;
- (b) what is good employment practice.

This format gives the opportunity to work through the issues involved, make choices relevant and appropriate to each organization in order to develop a good work environment and to ensure that workers' rights are protected.

"Documenting policy means that issues are taken out of the realm of personal relationships and put on a 'professional' footing. Too often in voluntary organizations we depend on people's ability to 'get on' without paying enough attention to employer/employee dynamics."

SECTION 3: Appendices:

This is a particularly useful section and unlike many appendices is really worth reading. There are 5 appendices in all covering:

- A. Sample contract;
- B. Explanation of industrial relations structures and processes in Ireland;
- C. List of key legislation that will have an impact on employment practice eg equal status bill and the

EU Directive on the organization of working time, both due to be implemented shortly;

- E. Sample terms and conditions of employment.

This section documents clearly and explicitly those issues that can often cause confusion and uncertainty not to mention resentment. It means that both employers and employees can be unambiguous in their understanding of employment practices. The beauty of documenting policy in areas such as this is that issues are taken out of the realm of personal relationships and put on a 'professional' footing. Too often in voluntary organizations we depend on people's ability to get on without paying enough attention to employer/employee dynamics.

SECTION 4: Useful Contacts:

Gives a list of useful contacts as well as an overview of their area of interest. Examples of contacts are Health & Safety Authority, Legal Aid Board, Labour Court, etc.

SECTION 5: Glossary:

This section is very important both in terms of the clarity of the information it gives and also in ensuring that commonly used terms are clearly agreed and understood. Some 37 terms ranging from arbitration through increment and unfair dismissal are lucidly explained.

Under the 1994 Terms of Employment (Information) Act, all new employees and regular part-timers i.e. those working over 8 hours per week, should receive a written statement of their terms of employment within two months of commencement. Existing employees are entitled to one within two months of requesting it. This requirement offers management in the voluntary and community sector a mechanism to acknowledge the value of the levels of responsibility and dedication shown by workers in this sector. Too often because of limited funds and pressure on resources, staff needs are not prioritised, leading to high levels of stress, burn-out and staff feeling under-valued, particularly given the insecurity of funding and its effect on employment security.

Taking the time to prioritise creating and documenting terms and conditions of employment shows leadership and foresight and most importantly demonstrates a commitment to the values of equality, justice and respect for the individual which underpin our work.

Reviewed by Catherine Prendergast, Director, St. Vincent's Trust, Dublin. Reproduced from Simon Newsletter, (Feb 96) with the permission of the Simon Community.

NATIONAL LOTTERY STUDY HIGHLIGHTS POOR DEAL FOR VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

The Policy Research Centre of the National College of Industrial Relations has recently published two books on the National Lottery. Both have been written by well known researcher Brian Harvey. The first is entitled "A Guide to the National Lottery for Voluntary and Community Organisations" and is self-explanatory. The second entitled "The National Lottery: ten years on" chronicles the dispersal of lottery money since its inception and the purposes for which it has been used.

The findings are quite disturbing and show quite clearly that the original commitments that lottery money would not be used for general governmental purposes and that voluntary organisations would be the main beneficiaries have not been honoured. The report shows that between 89% and 92% of lottery money to date has been used on programmes/initiatives which were funded by the Exchequer in 1986 before the inception of the lottery. It also highlights the fact that only 37% of national lottery money goes to the community and voluntary sector with the remaining 63% going to government, statutory or semi-state agencies. The report is available in the *Irish YouthWork Centre* for reference purposes.

Both publications are available from: **Policy Research Centre, National College of Industrial Relations, Sandford Road, Ranelagh, Dublin 6.**

MINISTER ANNOUNCES NEW HOMELESSNESS INITIATIVE FOR DUBLIN

A new initiative aimed at improving the level of co-ordination and delivery of services for homeless people in the Dublin area was launched by Ms Liz McManus, Minister for Housing and Urban Renewal on 18th December, 1995. A number of new measures aimed at improving service delivery, with the provision of extra funding to implement them, were announced by Minister McManus. These new measures are:

- A new administrative system to be established jointly between Dublin Corporation and the Eastern Health Board to oversee and co-ordinate services for the homeless in the Dublin Region which covers Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow.
- A Management Group will be established which will include senior managers from Dublin Corporation and the Eastern Health Board. This Management Group will appoint an Administrative Director who will have overall responsibility for co-ordinating the provision of services for the homeless by both statutory and voluntary agencies in the region.
- An Advisory Board will be set up comprising representatives of the major housing authorities, the Eastern Health Board and all the voluntary agencies providing services for the homeless in the region. This Board will replace the existing Dublin Housing Forum and will advise the Management Group on all matters pertaining to the provision of services for the homelessness.

SPORT FOR FUN

Sport For Fun organises recreational sports sessions for young people (4-16 years of age) and operates in the Dublin area. They cater for school classes, youth groups, company fun-days, summer projects, and birthday and Christmas parties. Their sessions include co-operative games, educational games, development games, new ball, music and parachute games and drama activities.

They also organise workshops aimed at youth leaders, teachers, and anyone involved in child care to enable them to safely lead groups in non-competitive sporting activities. These workshops cover: introductory stages; safety aspects; observation skills; games & activities; and evaluation and assessment.

For further details contact: **Mary A. Donnelly, Tel: 01/8427430.**

RACISM AND XENOPHOBIA CAMPAIGN UPDATE

The EU Consultative Commission on Racism and Xenophobia has submitted its final report to the EU Heads of State. One of the main recommendations that has received particular consideration and is already at a development stage is the setting up of a European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia. Its brief would be to gather and analyse information on the incidence and causes of racism and xenophobia in Europe, and to co-ordinate the work of existing agencies in the field.

At a national level the Irish branch of the campaign will be launching an annual Youth Awareness Day on 21st March to coincide with International Day for the Elimination of Racism and Discrimination. Throughout the country young people will be invited to organise events in their locality to raise public awareness of racism and discrimination.

The campaign have also produced an education activities pack for youth groups entitled "Ireland All Different All Equal". The pack focuses on issues of racism, discrimination and intolerance in Ireland with particular reference to Travellers, black people living in Ireland and prejudicial views of Northern Ireland. The pack is available at a cost of £2.00 to youth groups and £5.00 to schools and individuals.

For further details on all of the above contact: **Conall O'Caoimh, NYCI, 3 Montague Street, Dublin 2. Tel: 01/4784122, Fax: 01/4783974.**

VOLUNTARY OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The Youth for Europe III programme is calling for applications under Action A.11.2 Periods of Voluntary Service. This action offers young people the opportunity to undertake a period of voluntary service in any Member State of the EU including their country of residence. All of the 15 EU Member States are eligible plus Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. The deadline for completed application forms is 1 April, 1996 and the activities will take place between 1 July, 1996 and 30 June, 1997.

For further details and application forms contact: **Youth Work Service, Leargas - the Exchange Bureau, Avoca House, 189/193 Parnell Street, Dublin 1. Tel: 01/8731411, Fax: 01/8731316.**

YOUTH INFORMATION FUNDING

Deputy B. Smith asked the Minister for Education the specific allocation made in 1995 to each voluntary organisation and statutory body towards the provision of youth information services. In response Minister Bhreathnach supplied the information sought in table form (see table 1).

TABLE 1	£
Catholic Youth Council	46,003
City of Cork VEC	34,134
City of Galway VEC	35,123
City of Waterford VEC	20,909
Co Dublin VEC	47,957
Dun Laoghaire VEC	45,959
National Youth Federation	257,685

MINISTER ADMITS THAT NO STATISTICS EXIST ON THE USE OF ECSTASY

Deputy Quill asked the Minister for Health the level of abuse of the drug ecstasy and what efforts if any he would be undertaking to provide more resources for the medical treatment of ecstasy abusers. In response Minister Noonan stated that there was no statistical data available on the number of people misusing ecstasy. With regard to providing increased resources. The Minister stated that his Department would be concentrating on primary prevention, through education and awareness campaigns, and would be increasing resources in this area. The Minister pointed to the fact that the preparation of a media campaign on the issue, to be launched early in 1996, was at an advanced stage in his Department.

NO NEW INITIATIVES FUNDED BY YOUTH SERVICE GRANT IN 1995

Deputy B. Smith asked the Minister for Education what new initiatives, if any, had been funded by her Department under the youth services grant scheme and the special scheme for disadvantaged projects in 1995. In response Minister Bhreathnach stated that there had been no new initiatives funded in 1995 under the youth service grant scheme. With regard to the scheme for disadvantaged projects the Minister stated that four new initiatives had been undertaken by her Department under the scheme for disadvantaged projects: Bishopstown, Cork City; Ballyphehane, Cork City; Listowel/North Kerry; and Dolphin House, Rialto, Dublin City.

EU FUNDING AVAILABLE FOR YOUTH SERVICES

Deputy B. Smith asked the Minister for Education if funding was available to her Department for Youth Services under the Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 1994-1999 or any other operational programme or other EU programme. In response Minister Bhreathnach stated that funding as such was not provided for youth services under the EU-aided operational programmes. However she pointed to the fact that a number of measures under the Community Support Framework aided educational and vocational training services for young people and she outlined these and the aid given to them in table form (see table 2).

With regard to other EU funding available for the youth service she drew the deputy's attention to a number of initiatives and programme headings under which such funding was available: the Employment Community Initiative (Horizon, NOW, Youthstart); the Adapt Community Initiative; the INTERREG Community Initiative; Peace initiative; Youth For Europe 3; Socrates European Community Action Programme; and the Leonardo da Vinci Programme.

TABLE 2.

Community Support Framework 1994-99
Measures Funded by Dept of Education
and Aided from Structural Funds

Measures	Total Expenditure 1994-99 £m.	Total Aid 1994-99 £m.
Preventive Actions	21.000	15.750
Early school Leavers	64.278	26.770
Vocational Preparation and Training	316.867	212.628
Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme	91.808	61.419
Apprentice Training	62.166	46.625
Tourism Training	38.568	27.910
Certificate and Diploma Courses (RTCs/DIT)	568.296	263.557
Advanced Technical Skills	49.442	37.080
Advanced Technical Skills	8.395	4.487
Graduate Training/Enterprise Development	48.059	36.043
In-Career Development (Training of Trainers)	3.500	2.625
In-Career Development (Training of Trainers)	11.195	8.395
Equal Opportunities Actions Certification		
Sub-total: ESF-Aided Measures	1289.574	743.289
Vocational Training Infrastructure [ERDF AIDED]	182.130	103.625
GRANT TOTAL	1465.704	846.914

NOTICEBOARD

Noticeboard contains information on conferences, seminars and training events of relevance to those involved in the youth and community work sector.

IRELAND

ECSTASY AND YOUNG PEOPLE

National Youth Federation, Dublin

8-9 June, 1996

Two-day seminar that will examine the increasingly prevalent problem of ecstasy use by young people in Ireland. It will also attempt to provide a clear picture on the current position and look beyond much of the myth and contradictory information supplied by the media. The seminar will look at: the onset of ecstasy into Ireland and its close linkage to the rave culture; the physical and medical effects of ecstasy; current usage from both the legal and police perspective; personal experiences; and profiles of drug awareness/education projects.

Cost: £40.00

Further Details: Fran Bissett, Irish YouthWork Centre, National Youth Federation, 220 Lower Dominick Street, Dublin 1.

Tel: 01 8729933 Fax: 01 8724183

WORKING WITH THE AFTERMATH OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Cork: Newtown House Centre

1-5 July, 1996

Comprehensive five-day course which will provide participants with an in-depth knowledge of child sexual abuse and the therapeutic skills required of a professional working in this area. Themes covered will include; Introduction to therapy; working with young people; working with non abusing parents; working with abusers; working with survivors; family dynamics; treatment plans for the family; care for the carers; and psychodrama.

Cost: £425.00 before 24 March - £500.00 thereafter

Further Details: Newtown House, Doneraile, Co. Cork.

Tel: (022) 24117

ISSUES IN SEXUAL ABUSE COUNSELLING

Dublin: Rape Crisis Centre

19 April, 1996

A one day seminar focusing on issues of disclosure, crisis management and support counselling.

Cost: £40.00 (deposit £20.00)

Further Details: Education Officer, Rape Crisis Centre, 70 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin 2.

Tel: (01) 6614911

BRITAIN

MEN AND THEIR CHILDREN

London

30 April, 1996

One-day international conference that will explore the role of fathers and fatherhood and why the contribution of men to family life is often ignored. Topics covered will include absent fathers, black fathers in Britain, father friendly workplaces and new images of fatherhood.

Further Details: Jane Franklin, Institute for Public Policy Research, 30-32 Southampton Street, London WC2E 7RA.

Tel: 0044 171 4706100

Fax: 0044 171 4706111

E-mail: ippr@easynet.co.uk

PERSONAL SAFETY FOR VOLUNTEERS

London

9 May, 1996

One-day course designed to assist participants in understanding types of aggression, what provokes it and

how to provide strategies to manage difficult situations successfully. Participants will be helped to formulate policy and procedures for their organisations and the day will also explore steps that workers may take if they need to defend themselves.

Cost: £85.00 (discount price for organisations with income under £100,000), £95.00 (over £100,000)

Further Details: The Training Unit, The Volunteer Centre, Carriage Row, 183 Eversholt Street, London NW1 1BU.

Tel: 0044 171 388 9888 (Ext 214/216)

Fax: 0044 171 383 0448

STAFF-VOLUNTEER RELATIONSHIPS

Leeds

4 June, 1996

One-day course designed to focus on identifying roles and responsibilities and developing techniques for improving relationships between staff, volunteers and committee members. Look at ways of clarifying boundaries and dealing with conflict, the implications of involving volunteers in relation to paid staff, and how to build a strong volunteer programme with effective volunteer/staff teams.

Cost: £85.00 (discount price for organisations with income under £100,000), £95.00 (over £100,000)

Further Details: The Training Unit, The Volunteer Centre, Carriage Row, 183 Eversholt Street, London NW1 1BU.

Tel: 0044 171 388 9888 (Ext 214/216) **Fax:** 0044 171 383 0448

OPEN CONFERENCE ON ROMANI STUDIES AND WORK WITH TRAVELLERS

Venue: To be arranged

9-11 July, 1996

Three-day conference aimed at community workers, Traveller activists, academics, and anyone involved in working with the Travelling Community.

Further Details: Romani Studies Conference Committee, School of Social Science, University of Greenwich, London SE9 2HV, England.

DEVELOPMENT TRAINING BEYOND 2000

Ambleside, Cumbria

11-12 July, 1996

Special conference to mark the 50th anniversary of the Brathay Hall Trust. Topics covered will include taking stock, what we have achieved, sharing good practice, current issues and visions for the future.

Further Details: Steve Lenartowicz, Youth Training Manager, Brathay Hall Trust, Ambleside, Cumbria, LA22 OHP, England.

Tel: 0044 15394 33014

Fax: 0044 15394 34424

EUROPE

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES IN OUR SOCIETY, 17TH IFS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Helsinki, Finland

10-15 June, 1996

The key aims of the Helsinki Conference, which will feature plenaries, working groups on a wide range of topics and an afternoon of special workshops, are to:

- enable participants and their organisations to discuss their work and gain real insight into different approaches;
- promote discussions on the quality of work to assist participants in improving their own individual approaches;
- enhance the process of practical co-operation between community organisations before the and after the Conference.

Cost: Members FIM 2.700

Further Details: The Conference Office, Suomen Setlementtiliitto r.y., Sturenkatu 11, Fin-00510, Helsinki.

Tel: 00358 0 770242 **Fax:** 00358 0 7019575

Now available from the Irish YouthWork Centre

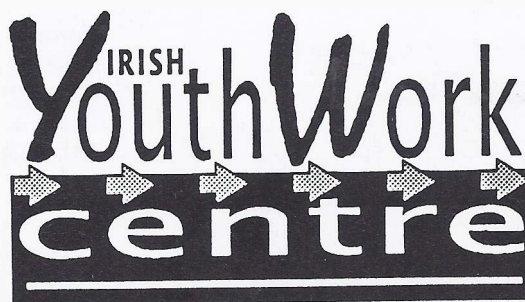
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Guidelines for Youth Workers Series

SUICIDE

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