

SPECIALIST SUPPORT AGENCIES WHO WE ARE

INTRODUCTION INTRODUCTION INTRODUCTION

This information leaflet provides a summary of the work of the Specialised Support Agencies, funded by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and the Department of Social and Family Affairs as part of the National Development Plan. The six agencies are:

- Women's Aid, (Violence against Women)
- Blue Drum, (The Arts)
- City Wide Drugs Crisis Campaign (Drugs)
- DESSA, (Disability)
- NCCRI, (Racism and Interculturalism).
- Pavee Point (Travellers)

The need for specialised support agencies is reflective of the need for a thematic as well as a regional approach within the community development and Family Resource Centre programmes.

The role of Specialised Support Agencies is multifaceted and includes:

- Policy and advocacy
- National and local awareness-raising initiatives around particular issues
- Providing training
- Providing technical support
- Supporting networking
- Information and communications
- Increasing the participation of very marginalised communities in equality, anti poverty and social inclusion measures

The following provided a brief outline of the work of the Specialised Support Agencies:

WOMEN'S AID SPECIALIST SUPPORT AGENCY



Women's Aid has been working on the issue of violence against women for over 30 years. Over that period, the organisation has developed considerable expertise on Domestic Violence through service provision; training the community and voluntary sector; research and policy development and lobbying/campaigning for change. Women's Aid is a voluntary organisation offering information, support and access to services for women who are experiencing male violence. Women's Aid is a feminist, political and campaigning organisation committed to the elimination and prevention of violence against women, through effecting political, cultural and social change. In 1998, the organisation was appointed to act as a Specialist Support Agency to the Community Development Support Programme. Currently we provide support to the CDSPan to Family Resource Centre's throughout the country.

THE GENDERED NATURE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

Despite many developments in Ireland to progress the work to eliminate violence against women, as a society we have found it difficult to confront the reality that the worst abuse that women suffer is at the hands of men known to them and most commonly in their own homes. Also in recent times there has been much debate suggesting that domestic violence is not a gender issue, with the notion of a parity of violence between men and women within intimate relationships being proposed. Indeed it has even been suggested that men are more likely to experience domestic violence at the hands of their female partner, than the reverse. Such notions are gravely misleading and do a great injustice both to victims of domestic violence and frontline services providing support to victims. The United Nations and the World Health Organisation both clearly identify interpersonal violence as being deeply gendered with women overwhelmingly being the victims. The UN in its Declaration on The Elimination of Violence Against Women has noted the following regarding the gendered nature of violence against women:

*'violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women, and (that) violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men'*¹.



THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION HAS ALSO NOTED:

Although women can be violent towards their male partners and violence occurs between partners of the same sex, the overwhelming burden of partner violence is borne by women at the hands of men. In 48 populations based surveys from around the world, 10%-69% of women report being physically assaulted by an intimate male partner at some point in their lives².

Despite the work of organisations responding to the issue of violence against women, a silence still surrounds the area and a tendency to treat the crime of domestic violence as lesser than other violent crimes persists. Research commissioned by Women's Aid in 1999 for example, found that despite a relatively high arrest rate for domestic violence incidents (between 21% and 50% in the three research sites examined)³ – only between 1% and 6% of those arrests translated into a prison sentence for the perpetrators involved⁴.

The main objective of Women's Aid Specialist Support Agency is to highlight violence against women as a concern for community development and to encourage organisations and networks to respond to the issue. The agency also aims to address the development of responses for women who are experiencing and are further marginalised and excluded from accessing support due to additional barriers such as poverty; ethnicity; status; location; disability.

¹ UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted in 1993.

² World Health Organisation (2002) 'World Health Report on Violence and Health – Summary', p.15.

³ Rates of arrest are significantly higher than that of Northern Ireland where the arrest rate is between 12% and 16% of incidents reported. The Northern Ireland arrest rate is similar to that in the UK where Kelly (1999) found in the two police divisions she studied that the arrest rate was 14% of all call-outs.

⁴ Kelleher and O'Connor (1999) 'Safety and Sanctions: Domestic Violence and the Enforcement of the Law in Ireland', Women's Aid

BLUE DRUM THE ARTS SPECIALIST SUPPORT AGENCY



Blue Drum aims to support the community development sector in tackling issues of access to quality arts experience and in the use of creative methodologies in working towards social inclusion. We provide a range of direct supports and developmental initiatives. Some of these are focused on Community Development Projects and Family Resource Centres while others are open to the wider community development sector plus involved artists and arts organisations.

Information

We are developing an information service on all aspects of arts in community development. Information can be sought directly by phone or email and from December 2004, from our website. We would welcome your contributions by way of publications, case studies, reports and evaluations, press cuttings and videos etc.

Advice and Support

For CDPs and FRCs we can also provide advice and support on: pre development work; funding applications; negotiating partnerships; project planning and implementation; evaluation; advice on use of different artforms and addressing particular issues; acting simply as a sounding board for ideas.

Training

We are developing a number of training sessions. The first will be an introduction to Arts Based Community Development. This could be delivered, for example, to a project or centre management group or to a wider regional grouping. Further sessions will focus on emerging areas of interest or need.

Events and Networking

We organise national and regional events that investigate the practice of arts in community development, for example the "Community Music meets Community Development" seminar which was held in June 2004. These events aim to help build practical capacities, provide a forum for discussion and provide opportunities for networking.

Special Project – Arts in Health

We are currently working, through Combat Poverty Agency's Building Healthy Communities Fund, to research and develop creative methodologies which will enable groups to explore poverty and health issues in their community. The process will be documented and resource materials produced. We will host a national seminar on arts, health and community development early in 2005.

The Bigger Picture

We are undertaking a process of research and reflection entitled "The Bigger Picture". This sets out to involve a range of groups and individuals in building an understanding of arts in community development. It will identify principles of good practice and provide a framework for developing a documented body of evidence which will underpin future advocacy.

Current Staff Team

Manager: Jim Cathcart

Development Worker: Ann O'Connor

Administrator: Post to be filled

CITYWIDE DRUGS CRISIS CAMPAIGN SPECIALIST SUPPORT AGENCY



Citywide Drugs Crisis Campaign was established in 1995 by the Inner city Organisations Network (ICON) to bring together communities from across Dublin that were struggling with the heroin crisis. The Dept. of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs funds Citywide as a specialist support agency to the Community Development Support programme. While Citywide's work has been mainly concentrated in Dublin, it now has links with communities right across the county. Recent figures confirm that serious drug misuse is now an issue in many areas outside of Dublin. It is Citywide's belief that in 2004 we are still in a state of crisis in relation to the drugs issue and that crisis is now affecting more and more parts of the country.

Citywide works to promote and support a **community development approach to the drugs problem** – this means involving the people who are most affected by the problem in dealing with the problem – drug users, their families and communities.

The aims of Citywide are:

- To respond to the problem of drugs, in particular the heroin crisis, that has ravaged local communities
- To develop the capacity of local communities to respond to the problem in their areas
- To encourage an inter-agency response to the drugs problem

What does Citywide do?

Citywide delivers on these aims by:

- Providing support and facilitation to local groups working on the drugs issue to enable them to respond more effectively at local level
- Providing support and facilitation to family support groups and members
- Providing networks through which local communities can develop a co-ordinated response to issues of drug policy and services. Examples of current networks:
 - Local Drug Task Force Community representatives
 - Local Community drug projects
 - Special Community Employment (CE) Drug projects
- Responding to particular issues as they arise for communities e.g. the growing problem of cocaine use in our communities, through general meetings, focus groups, gathering and circulation of information and carrying out research.
- Campaigning and lobbying on issues relating to the drugs crisis
- Representing the community sector on national bodies and policy committees.

Citywide also facilitates the work of the Citywide Family Support Network, which brings together family members and groups from across the country to support each other and to address issues of particular concern to families. The Network set out a workplan at a major national conference in 2002 and has recently produced a resource pack that includes a directory of family support groups across the country. The Network also organises the Annual Service of Commemoration and Hope in Sean McDermott St. Church to remember those who have died from drugs and to remind us that people are continuing to die.

DESSA SPECIALIST SUPPORT AGENCY



DESSA, the Disability Equality Specialist Support Agency, was established in 2001 to work with community development organisations promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities at community level through their involvement in community development activity. Over the past ten years significant positive change, tackling the experience of disadvantage and disability in Ireland, has been grounded on a rights-based approach and has been underpinned by recent anti-discrimination legislation; the Employment Equality Act 1998 and the Equal Status Act 2000. Even in this context of social and legislative change, barriers to participation and discriminatory practices continue. People with disabilities, as a community of interest and as individual members of their local community, experience high levels of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion. The Community Development principles of empowerment and the anti-poverty focus of the projects DESSA works with can offer people with disabilities an opportunity to enhance their participation, to represent their issues and concerns and, in so doing, to challenge the discriminatory practices and procedures that still exist in Ireland.

DESSA has three strategic aims:

Strategic Aim 1: To Enable, Support and Undertake Capacity Building Strategies within the Community Development Programme and the Family & Community Services Resource Centre Programme, thereby facilitating the Inclusion of People with Disabilities.

Strategic Aim 2: To Undertake Policy Development in order to Maximise the Impact of the Community Development Programme and the Family & Community Services Resource Centre Programme in Raising Awareness of Disability Issues in Wider Society

Strategic Aim 3: To Network with Statutory, Community and Voluntary Organisations to Foster a Culture of Co-operation and Partnership around the Issue of Disability Within the Community Development Programme and the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme in Raising Awareness of Disability Issues in Wider Society

DESSA will enhance the capability of community development projects to develop actions and ways of working to ensure the full involvement and inclusion of people with disabilities in community life. It is in using the Principles of Community Development that DESSA tackles issues of exclusion and inequality that affect people with disabilities. In doing so DESSA adopts a Partnership Approach to its work, establishing working relations with organisations such as the Forum of People with Disability, the Disability Legal Resource, the Mental Health Alliance, Disability Federation Ireland, County & City Development Boards, Community-Based Networks, Comhairle, Partnership Companies, WorkWay, and many more.

DESSA plays a vital role in Linking the Community & Disability Sectors, and is proactively engaging community and disability organisations, at a local level, in identifying and implementing joint actions to promote the participation of people with disabilities. DESSA is presently piloting such a process in the North eastern region in conjunction with Triskele RSA and Disability Federation Ireland.

DESSA identifies Disability Rights as Human Rights and acknowledges the responsibility of society to facilitate people with

disabilities in overcoming barriers to full and equal participation in the social, economic, cultural and political life of their communities. In this regard DESSA will provide information on rights and legislation through the delivery of training seminars and the provision of information via our website and newsletter.

DESSA's Training & Development Programme will enable projects to develop knowledge and tools to combat exclusion and establish Good Practice systems within projects. The Programme comprises of 4 separate training courses, which complement and build the development of skills and knowledge: Disability Awareness Training; Equality Training and Training for Trainers; Tools of Inclusion Workshops; and Human Rights and Disability.

THE NATIONAL CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON RACISM AND INTERCULTURALISM (NCCRI)



The National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) is an independent expert body that seeks to provide advice on, and to develop initiatives against, racism and to work towards a more inclusive and intercultural society in Ireland.

NCCRI undertakes its work through the NCCRI partnership, which involves both government and non-government bodies.

To date the NCCRI has been involved in:

- The development of the Government's forthcoming National Action Plan Against Racism
- The planning and implementation of the Government's 'Know Racism' national public awareness programme
- Working closely with the Equality Authority as the National Focal Point against racism in Ireland (designated by the European Monitoring on Racism and Xenophobia based in Vienna)
- Focussing on family and community diversity in Ireland

NCCRI has a number of units, which are as follows

Policy and Research Unit: (Anna Visser)

Training and Resource Unit: (Kensika Monshengwo and Jennifer Wallace)

Information and Communications Unit (Jacqueline Healy)

Community and Regional Unit (Catherine Lynch, Hazel Murphy)

Administrator: (Lisa Bryan)

Director: (Philip Watt)

Part of NCCRI's overall role is to operate as a specialised support agency with the Community Development Programme and Family Support Centres. This Work is funded through the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and the Department of Social and Family Affairs Family Support Agency.

The priority over the next three years to build on the work undertaken to date and in particular:

- Policy work
- Work with marginalised communities
- Participation of the community sector in awareness-raising initiatives
- Provide enhanced technical assistance to projects within the community development support programme and Family Resource Centres to enhance their capacity to work with new communities in Ireland.

Policy work

To continue to bring issues identified from the CDSU work to the relevant policy makers. To work with community groups and political parties to ensure that elections are inclusive of minority ethnic groups including information explaining the political process in Ireland to potential voters in newer communities and encourage political participation.

Work with marginalised communities

Developing initiatives to address the specific needs and develop the contributions of women and other particularly marginalized groups within the refugee and broader migrant community, for example work with women and the Roma community.

Participation of the community sector in awareness-raising initiatives

To ensure active community participation in national anti racism public awareness initiatives, including a focus on community participation in March 21st International Day Against Racism. Many community groups and an increasing number of family resource centres participate in March 21 (see our website for further details for 2005).

Information

NCCRI publishes a journal 'Spectrum' and circulates a monthly e-mail bulletin. Please contact us if you wish to subscribe to this information (provided free of charge).

CONTACT DETAILS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

WOMEN'S AID

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BLUE DRUM

Blue Drum
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CITY WIDE DRUGS CRISIS CAMPAIGN

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DESSA

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PAVEE POINT

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PAVEE POINT TRAVELLERS CENTRE SPECIALIST SUPPORT AGENCY:



The overall aim of Pavee Point's work as a Specialist Support Agency and as a Traveller development agency is the appropriate inclusion of Travellers and the Traveller agenda in the focus and work of community projects and family resource centres and other initiatives. This work is carried out using a community development approach.

Overall aim:

The overall aim of our work as a Specialist Support Agency (SSA) is to create the conditions for the increased involvement of Travellers in a range of community initiatives and to provide support at local, regional and national levels to ensure Travellers are appropriately included in policy and services, resulting in positive outcomes for the Traveller community. It also involves promoting diversity and equality within the work of the CDP, the FSA and at a wider policy and societal level.

We achieve this through:

- Working with existing Traveller CDP's and emerging Traveller organisations to develop their analysis and work
- Working with CDP's, FRC's and local and sectoral players to support the development of culturally appropriate responses to Travellers
- Working with policy makers and service providers to promote Traveller inclusion in any new developments at local and national levels and in monitoring existing commitments and services
- Seeking to address Traveller issues through a combination of community development, lobbying, advocacy and media work
- Promoting an analysis and understanding of anti-racism, equality and diversity within the CDP programme and the work of the FSA and at a wider societal level

Examples of work we have undertaken as an SSA include:

- Training on Traveller inclusion, cultural awareness and anti-racism
- Compiling and disseminating information on Travellers and developing resource materials including fact sheets, newsletters, videos, web-site
- Developing and making policy submissions
- Undertaking research on Travellers
- Promoting Traveller participation
- Supporting the Roma community in Ireland
- Providing media training
- Working on data gathering issues

Pavee Point's overall work is informed by a community work approach, which recognises the importance of Traveller participation, self-determination and collective action. It also recognises that the majority of the problems that Travellers experience are as a result of racism and a failure to recognise them as a minority ethnic group. These key tenets of the organisation are reflected in the work and approach adopted by the community development team as a specialist support agency.