



## Delivering Race Equality in Mental Healthcare: Policy, Practice & Research 21-22 February: A Conference Report by Mary Tilki



Dr Mary Tilki, FIS Chair

Director Delivering Race Equality Programme, to participate in an open forum about the statutory sector's ability to meet the needs of people from minority ethnic groups. My contribution to the Delivering Race Equality in Mental Health Care (DRE) strategy over several years and my persistence in keeping Irish mental health on the agenda were paid tribute to by Lord Kamlesh Patel of Bradford. While I hope this unashamed name-dropping is not distasteful, I offer it as a measure of how far Irish issues have been raised up the minority ethnic mental health agenda.

I was particularly pleased to meet many of my friends from different BME organisations all over the UK, but especially to catch up with those from Irish organisations or agencies working with the Irish community. It was great to know that Jim Lillis from Northampton and Bernie Folan from London Irish Centre were contributing to workshops along with

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Michelle Bhalroo, the dedicated Irish Community Development Worker (CDW) for Birmingham. I was encouraged to hear that following

I have just returned from the conference with a mix of both positive and negative feelings. At the risk of sounding immodest, I was invited by Professor David Sallah, National

the community engagement project in Northampton Jim Lillis has been appointed to a newly created CDW post for the Northampton area. I was equally delighted to hear that another CDW,

Charan Dulai, has been appointed to address Irish mental health for the Dudley region. I am also reliably informed that similar moves are afoot in Merseyside. My particular thanks to Asha Day, Ranjit Sanghera and Manjeet Singh, Race Equality Leads, for taking these issues forward.

Sadly it is fair to say that it is never safe to be complacent. Surinder Sharma, National Director for Equality and Human Rights Department of Health, outlined the physical and mental health disadvantage of different BME groups without mentioning the Irish. When I approached him he had no choice but to put his hands up and apologise; but have no fears, I will be writing to him in due course. The lack of leadership around BME mental health issues emerged consistently throughout the two days and this is a prime example which does not do justice to the commitment shown by other Department of Health officials.

There is still a long way to go for all BME communities and if we become complacent Irish issues could easily fall off the agenda. However, on balance, I feel progress is being made and there are examples of innovative and inspirational practice which can be adopted across different cultural and religious groups. I feel more hopeful about Irish and wider BME issues than I have ever done before but also aware that it's not yet safe to take an eye off the ball!

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05 MAR 2006



## Health Conference Report: by Conor McGinn

### Irish The ~~good~~ die young



L-R: Eithne Rynne, FIS Director; Michael Lonergan, Chair, Dion Committee; Caroline Flint MP, Health Minister; Dr Mary Tilki, FIS Chair

Senior health professionals and social care providers were present at a FIS-organised conference to look at ways of combatting the increased level of coronary heart disease amongst the Irish in Britain.

The conference, entitled “The ~~Good~~ Irish Die Young”, was opened with a keynote speech by Health Minister, Caroline Flint MP, who underlined the Department of Health’s commitment to cutting levels of smoking and promoting responsible diet and alcohol awareness.

There were also contributions from Dr Roger Boyle, National Director for Heart Disease at the Department of Health, and other senior professionals in the coronary heart disease arena, including the National Director of Health Improvement at the Department of Health, Bridget Riches. The conference was chaired by a stalwart supporter of FIS, Dr Gabriel Scally, the Director of Public Health for the Government Office of the South-West region.

FIS-compiled research shows that people of Irish origin living in the UK have significantly higher rates of heart disease than almost any other ethnic group, with several recent studies

showing that standard mortality ratios for ischaemic heart disease is elevated for Irish people, standing at between 11-14% higher for Irish men at all ages and between 2-9 % higher for Irish women compared to the general populations.

Chair of the FIS, Dr Mary Tilki, stated: “It is now urgent that agencies responsible for delivering services in health and social care and dealing with health promotion are made aware of the extent of coronary heart disease among people of Irish origin living in the UK.

No significant improvements are noted in second and third generations, suggesting that a number of intractable issues relating to lifestyle, early intervention, and delivery of treatment and prevention services must at long last be specifically addressed within local delivery plans and wider government health targets.”



FIS affiliates were able to give an insight into the work done by Irish organisations, and two of the most informative presentations were given by Vicky Smith, Healthy Living Coordinator at the London Irish Centre, and Karen McHugh, Director of The Brent Irish Advisory Service.

Summing up the day, FIS Health Development Officer, Conor McGinn, said: “The large attendance at this conference was an indication that, firstly, the health of the Irish community is a major issue that people are interested in and, secondly, that the work that our community organisations and FIS are doing is bringing these issues to the attention of key policy makers within the statutory sector. It is important to build on the success of this conference and I would encourage all Irish community organisations, and indeed the entire Irish community to continue to raise awareness of key health issues and ensure that they get access to the health provision available.”



Professor Roger Boyle, National Director for Heart Disease, Department of Health addressing the conference





## BIIPB Update: by Eithne Rynne

In Spring 2006 FIS were afforded the opportunity to submit a report to the British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body (BIIPB) on the needs of the Irish Community in Britain. This followed a submission to the Senate in Leinster House during which Senator Paschal Mooney, among others, strongly recommended that the needs of the Irish Community in Britain be brought to the BIIPB.

The BIIPB is made up of key parliamentarians from both Irish & British Governments. Those who sit on the Body are MP's and Lords from England, Wales and Scotland and TD's and Senators from Ireland. It is representative of a cross section of political parties. The Body discusses issues of importance to both governments and makes recommendations on how these issues are addressed.

FIS presented to one of the Committees of the Body, Committee D, which is the Environment & Social Committee. The range of topics discussed included health of the Irish living in Britain, the needs of the elderly community, the expansion of cultural and sporting needs within second and third generation Irish, and issues relating to those wishing to return to Ireland. FIS also commented on areas such as Free Travel for elders visiting Ireland and the availability of Irish television and radio coverage in Britain. The main concerns raised were around lack of recognition and monitoring of the Irish by statutory organisations resulting in poor access to health and other services.

The Committee recommended to the main Body that they investigate further and identify the gaps in service provision to the Irish community. It recommended that further evidence be taken from the Federation of Irish Societies, the Embassy of Ireland, Dion Committee, and from key strategic authorities.



Committee D of the British Irish Inter Parliamentary Body visit Leeds Irish Centre in January. Photo from Jim Mulhearn.

Committee D made two visits to Britain, one to London and the other combining Manchester and Leeds where FIS and the Embassy coordinated trips to the London Irish Centre, Cricklewood Homeless Concern, Leeds Irish Health & Homes, Leeds Irish Centre, Irish World Heritage Centre Manchester and projects run by Irish Community Care Manchester. They also met with key local strategic partners and councils in these areas.

The Committee will be drafting a report on their findings and presenting this to the BIIPB meeting in autumn this year. FIS believe that this will be a key document in support of the valuable and much needed work carried out by Irish Community organisations and one which can be used to highlight models of good practise. In addition it will be a document which can be brought to the attention of key government departments to highlight areas of concern in the provision of funding and services for the Irish community. The Federation of Irish Societies welcome the support of the BIIPB and in particular the members of Committee D who under the excellent chairship of Lord Alf Dubs have given significantly of their time to this important issue. FIS would also like to thank the Embassy of Ireland for all their support to FIS during this process.

*FIS exists to represent and develop our Community*

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### FIS HEALTH PROMOTION BUS

Come and visit the Federation's Health Promotion Bus at the St. Patrick's Day Festival in Central London on Sunday 18th March. We'll be situated in Leicester Square throughout the day.



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## Go smoke-free or cough up, can you afford not to be prepared ?



Managers / committees who fail to stop smoking in their units will face new fines of up to £2,500, the Government has warned. From July, England will see a total ban on smoking in public places, including offices and other communal workspaces. Employers will be responsible for enforcing this ban in the workplace, with hefty penalties for those who do not comply.

They will also face fines for allowing cigarette ends and litter to be dropped at the front of their buildings under separate proposals from the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Defra's proposals have been published saying that businesses should be responsible for litter in the immediate area of their premises, including that created by their customers. It is proposing that local authorities should be able to insist these areas are kept clean or fine organisations £110 on the spot.

But organisations could be hit by even larger fines of up to £2,500 if they fail to prevent employees or visiting customers from smoking in the building, which would break the rules of the smoking ban being brought in by the Department of Health (DH).

To enforce the law, the DH also announced it was providing £29.5 million over two years to help local authorities prepare for the introduction of the smoke-free legislation. This will pay for thousands of council staff such as Health and Safety staff and Environmental Health Officers to be trained in how to impose on-the-spot fines.

As presented in the clubs forum, we should be mindful of the advice from the Irish Landlords who said that it was very detrimental to the operations of those that did not plan ahead. There are many opportunities to manage and prepare for the process but the most important thing is to do something and do it NOW.

If FIS can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to call John Gradwell (Manchester Office) or Keith Fox (London Office), the Clubs and Community Centres Development Officers.

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## Opportunity To Get Money Back From The VAT Man!! Legally



**Yes, it's True! If you have gaming machines (AWP's / fruit machines) in your club.**

We have been advised that there is an opportunity for clubs to prepare and submit claims in respect of VAT paid on their gaming machine takings to HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) over the **past three years**.

**This opportunity is time critical** as the amount that a club could recover will reduce over time so we strongly recommend that you take the time to consider whether it is in the best interests of your club to submit a claim.

Preparing a claim is, in our view, something that most club treasurers should be able to do themselves. However, it is important to note that the claim submitted must be complete and accurate. The more difficult issue in dealing with the claim comes with the administration and managing HMRC (replying to their letters, lodging a claim and ensuring that the process stays on track over the timeframe).

To help support affiliates in this area the Federation is working alongside a leading accountancy firm to put together the information which it will make available to affiliates. Alternatively you can contact Her Majesty's revenue and Custom department who will send you all the relevant details, (only if you are VAT registered). This is best done via telephone as the information is not available on line at present. HMRC telephone: 0845 010 9000

This opportunity could add up to hundreds of pounds DON'T MISS OUT!

Should you require further information (when available) please contact: Keith Fox (London Office), Clubs & Community Centre Development Officer.

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