

AGIY - INFO

Raw Deal on Jobs for Young Irish

A new report based on a survey of recent emigrants reveals new information about the education training and employment experiences of young Irish people in London. The report also examines their housing and health experiences and highlights the effects of stress, prejudice and social isolation.

The report "Over Here - Young Irish Migrants in London" was written by an independent researcher, Geoffrey Randall, published by AGIY and funded by the Ireland Fund of Great Britain, the London Boroughs Grants Scheme and the RTE People in Need Trust.

The report was based on a survey sample of 136 young people aged between 16 and 25 who filled in a self completed questionnaire and a random sample of 45 who were selected for more detailed interview.

Key Findings:

Employment: A central feature of young Irish people's employment experience was their concentration in jobs that were insecure and lacked employment rights.

- 60% of the sample were employed in office/shop work 23% in unskilled work

11% in skilled manualwork and only 7% in professional occupations. Only 5% were members of a trade union and as many as one in five were not having national insurance payments being made by their employers. There was an underuse of Job Centres with only 15% of jobs being found there compared to 45% of vacancies which are advertised there.

Education: The young people surveyed were a well educated and qualified group and were therefore likely to have somewhat under-represented the problems experienced by young migrants in London.

- 70% had obtained their Leaving Certificate (equivalent to between "O" and "A" levels) and only 8% had left school with no qualifications which compares to 19% of school leavers in Britain who leave without qualifications.

The survey emphasises that there is clearly a mismatch between the level of educational achievement and the quality of employment obtained.

Health: A fifth said that there health had got worse since arriving in London.

- 44% said that they experienced depression compared to just 13% who experienced it in Ireland before emigrating.

A 23 year old engineer said:

"I am now living separated from the people who meant everything to me at home. I feel like a plant which has been uprooted and

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just cannot start regrowing after being replanted".

Anti-Irish Racism:

- 50% of the sample said that they had some bad experiences when asked what it was like to be an Irish person in London. 27% of the whole sample specifically mentioned experiences of racism.

RECOMMENDATIONS

"Over Here" makes 30 policy recommendations including a wide range of initiatives and policy changes by statutory, voluntary and private agencies in both Britain and Ireland. The report calls for improvements in service provision around education and training, housing and advice services, employment opportunities, equal opportunities and countering discrimination.

Report Launch

Attending the launch of "Over Here" at the House of Commons on 17th April **Tony Blair MP**, who is **Labour spokesperson on Employment** said that *"there is an urgent need for the Employment Service to ensure that young Irish migrants get access to jobs and training provisions."*

Jim Wallace MP, the **Liberal Democrats' Employment spokesperson**, said that *"further research was needed to devise policies to assist the Irish"*.

Sir Giles Shaw MP, Co-chair of the **British-Irish**

Inter-Parliamentary Body Sub-Committee on Emigration and a senior Conservative backbencher welcomed the report saying that *"it would be a valuable contribution to the work of this committee which was currently studying the Irish community in Britain"*.

The journalist, **Mary Holland** said that the report showed that *"further resources are required to examine and meet the needs of the Irish community in Britain."*

Copies of the report priced Stg £4.95 (incl. of postage and packing) are available from the Action Group for Irish Youth. An order-form is enclosed inside this edition of "AGIY-INFO"

Inter-Parliamentary Body Announces Irish in Britain Study Findings

The British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body Sub-Committee on Emigration has concluded that a joint Government permanent Inter-Departmental Committee should be formed and that both Governments should *"consider ways in which a comprehensive database on the Irish in Britain could be established"* to study and monitor the range of issues

affecting the Irish community in Britain.

The Committee's report which was made public at a plenary session of the Inter-Parliamentary Body on 7th May in London makes nine recommendations in total which will be forwarded to both Governments for consideration and for their official responses.

Introducing the report's findings, **Sir Giles Shaw MP, Co-chair of the Sub-Committee** with the Irish Labour Party leader, Dick Spring, said that their enquiry had revealed the paucity of information about the Irish community in Britain; concern at the lack of information for potential young emigrants and that there was clearly scope for providing more resources for voluntary organisations working with the Irish community in Britain.

Regarding the ethnic status of the Irish in Britain the report draws attention to the submission made to the Committee by **Nicholas Scott MP, the Minister for Social Security** who said that *"the general position of the British Government was to regard the Irish population as being no different from the rest of the British population"*.

The report also said that *"the Minister shares the view of those who would see the categorisation of the Irish in Britain as an ethnic minority to be a retrograde step"*.

Similar views were expressed by members of the body throughout the debate with the British members seeing little difference between the Irish and people from Scotland, Wales and Northern England.

Lord Prys-Davies also said that the treatment of the Irish as an ethnic minority *"would be a retrograde step"* while **David Wiltshire MP**, in a similar vein said that the aim should be *"to help the Irish to integrate"*.

AGIY's Response

AGIY welcomes the formation of an Inter-Governmental Committee and the recommendations in the report to establish closer links between government departments in the areas of employment, social security entitlement, pre-emigration advice, the provision of information to those coming to Britain from Northern Ireland and for further assistance to voluntary organisations working for the Irish community in Britain.

We also welcome the recommendation that the Committee felt there was scope for further effort at Government and community level to counter the incidence and perception of prejudice against the Irish community in Britain.

AGIY believe however that the report is fundamentally flawed because it fails to acknowledge the Irish as an ethnic minority.

By doing so, it firstly ignores the wishes of Irish community groups in Britain who have campaigned over the past number of years that "*our Irishness is our ethnicity*".

Secondly it fails to acknowledge the recognition by the Commission for Racial Equality of the Irish as an ethnic minority under the Race Relations Act and under ethnic classification systems and the recognition by a number of public sector bodies who already monitor Irish ethnicity in data collection.

Thirdly it fails to appreciate the statistical value of an Irish ethnic category in gaining a national picture of Irish needs and experience.

Through ethnic monitoring the structures required to provide information and data are already in place; a "new" and "separate" database established and approved by both the Irish and British Government is not required.

What is needed is an "Irish" dimension to existing data collection systems by means of a separate Irish category in ethnic monitoring programmes.

This would quickly, efficiently and satisfactorily meet the Committee's desire, and indeed the Irish community's desire, for comprehensive information on the Irish in Britain.

It would also justly recognise that Irish people, our needs and our experiences are not identical, but distinct from other groups needs and experiences and that that experience has to be assessed if Irish people in Britain are to be treated equally.

In conclusion, while AGIY acknowledges the recognition by the Committee and the emphasis the Study gives to the role and work of Irish voluntary organisations in Britain, there is marked lack of assessment, comment or suggestion on the role of the statutory services in Britain in meeting the needs of Irish people.

While there is some reference to local authorities providing accommodation for homeless families, and reference to the work of the Housing Corporation, there is no strategic analysis of how statutory bodies generally service the Irish community or how that service might be improved upon through equal opportunity programmes.

LBGS Budget at Last!

Irish Groups Update

LBGS has finally agreed an annual budget for grant-allocation to voluntary organisations in London at its meeting on 8th May.

However, the budget agreed at £28.625 m amounts to an overall cut of £1.5m from last year and a further reduction on the comprised budget of £29 m that was proposed by the Liberal Democrat grouping on the LBGS Committee.

The final budget was agreed unanimously by the 3 political parties on the Committee, Conservatives, Labour and Lib. Democrats. However, organisations due to receive grant-aid have, as yet, no indication when monies will be disbursed. At this stage cheque payments are already 6 weeks overdue.

7 Irish Organisations have been assured funding for 1991/92.

These include Brent Irish Advisory Service, An Teach Housing Assoc., London Irish Women's Centre, Action Group for Irish Youth, Cara Irish Homeless Project, Kilburn Irish Youth Project and London Irish Commission for Culture and Education.

The Ambassador and the Irish

AGIY's submission to the British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Sub-Committee on Emigration, prompted the following response from the **British Ambassador to Ireland, Sir Nicholas Fenn**, when the report was forwarded to him for information. His letter is reproduced in full.

"Thank you for your letter of 12 March enclosing a copy of your submission to the British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Sub-Committee on Emigration.

I have read your report with interest and taken good note of the bleak picture you paint. I well know that there are difficulties which are not of course confined to Irishmen. Young men and women from Ireland have been making their homes in Britain for many generations: as you say the numbers have increased dramatically in recent years. Some encounter hardship and prejudice. But the overwhelming majority live full, happy and rewarding lives and are welcome members of society.

You assert that anti-Irish racism is "overtly prevalent" in British society. It is of course true that there are unflattering stereotypes of the Irish in some areas of the British media and among some,

but far from all, British people. I offer four thoughts.

- **First, British stereotypes of our other friends and partners are every bit as unflattering: the French, the Germans, the Americans.**

- **Secondly, Irish stereotypes of the British are also less than generous: arrogant, pedantic, insensitive. Some passages in your report illustrate this well. In my travels throughout the Republic I have encountered great friendliness and hospitality. I have also encountered hostility, mockery and physical threats.**

- **Thirdly, the prevalence of caricature is regrettable. But perhaps understandable if not excusable in view of the prevalence of terrorism. Mortar attacks on Downing Street by the IRA, even though they are a tiny minority of Irish people, stimulate uncharitable thoughts.**

- **Finally, British caricatures of the Irish do not approach in malice the Irish gift for caricaturing themselves. A cursory reading of Irish literature and casual conversation in Irish pubs would lead the unwary foreigner to believe that Irish violence, poverty, drunkenness and ignorance are in a class by themselves. Foreigners who live here (Ireland) know better.**

The British and the Irish enjoy a truly "special" relationship - intimate, neighbourly and volatile, blending ancient antagonisms with a capacity to love and laugh with each other second to none in Europe. We British are learning how to be a multiracial society. It takes time, but we go on trying. Prejudice is indeed the enemy. I hope with all my heart that your report may help to dispel it.

Yours sincerely, Nicholas Fenn."

Note: AGIY's submission to the Inter-Parliamentary Body provided an overview of the experiences of the Irish in Britain including a summary of the most up-to-date research available. AGIY hope to publish the submission in report form providing an invaluable resource and reference manual on data for agencies and individuals interested in the Irish experience. The report will be called "The Irish in Britain - An Assessment of Need". Watch this space!

NI Survey of Emigrants

The Migration Research Unit at Queen's University, Belfast is currently undertaking a project on the migration of people from Northern Ireland to Great Britain. The aims of the project include:

- the identification of migration histories (origins, initial destinations, subsequent destinations);

- ascertaining why migration is occurring and what the migrants intentions are on returning;
- identifying where the migrants fit into the labour market in Great Britain; ascertaining if the migrants differ in any way from the Northern Irish population at large - are they more qualified, more enterprising or successful;
- and identifying general characteristics - age, sex, marital status, religious denomination.

A two stage process is involved.

First the migrants were identified by the completion of a short interview with Christmas/New Year and Easter travellers to the Province at the ports of entry.

During the interview the migrants were asked if they would be willing to complete a second more detailed postal questionnaire. This second questionnaire is currently being distributed to the migrants who agreed to this.

This method of investigation creates the problem of how representative the sample is of **ALL** migrants who leave Northern Ireland.

Only the more recent migrants, those who wish to return and those that can afford to return to the Province will be included in the survey **(for example only 2% of the sample are presently unemployed.)**

Therefore any help in distributing this questionnaire to those Northern Irish migrants that we cannot reach, especially those who do not wish to return to the Province and those that are unemployed, would be greatly appreciated. If you feel that you can help please do not hesitate to contact us at:

The Migration Research Unit, School of Geosciences, Queen's University, Belfast BT7 1NN Tel. 0232 245133 Ext. 3367

"Irish " Bedspaces in London

Homelessness continues to remain a particular problem faced by Irish people in London.

The lack of access to suitable affordable permanent accommodation leaves disproportionate numbers of Irish people stuck in a cycle of hostel living.

Irish voluntary housing groups have made a positive response to these growing needs.

Table 1, on next page and compiled by the Housing Initiatives Project Worker, William Miller, gives a useful update on the provision being made.

The efforts of Irish voluntary groups alone are not enough to tackle the housing disadvantage faced by Irish homeless people.

Mainstream housing agencies must play their part.

The CARA based, DION funded Housing Initiatives Project has contacted over 150 housing agencies, raising awareness of the needs of Irish homeless people and gathering information on what provision, if any, agencies make for Irish people.

The response to the project's work has been positive, with a number of organisations proposing new developments for Irish clients, while others are actively considering review of allocations and referral policies in the light of increased awareness of the needs of Irish homeless people.

For further information contact

William Miller, Project Worker at CARA.

Tel. 081 800 2744

Irish Voluntary Housing and Advice Agencies - Update of Housing Provision

Table 1

ORGANISATION	CURRENT PROVISION	PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS	CLIENT GROUP	CONTACT NO
AN TEACH	Shortlife Housing shared accommodation; 7 properties providing 18 bedspaces; 2 nominations to Haringey Co.	8 bed shared House Hammersmith (10 yr. life)	M&F	081 365 1751
BENBURB BASE	12 bed hostel project		M	071 607 7968
CARA IRISH HOMELESS PROJECT	10 Housing projects with low/medium support; providing 64 bedspaces; 14 nominations to housing assoc./local authority	5 further projects in development or with funding secured providing 38 further bedspaces; a further 11 projects are awaiting bids; if successful these would create a further 96 bedspaces. Awaiting funding through Housing Corp. and Govt. Homeless Initiative.	M&F	081 800 2744
CONWAY HOUSE HOSTEL	100 bedspace hostel ; 18 bedspaces for older men in bedsit accom. with shared facilities. 5 nominations to L.B. Camden	Seeking funding from Housing Corp. for further 36 units of bedsit type accommodation	M	071 624 2918
LONDON IRISH WOMEN'S CENTRE	Front-line advice agency 7 nominations to Housing Assoc.	Seeking further nominations	F	071 249 7318
IRISH SUPPORT AND ADVICE CENTRE, HAMMERSMITH	Frontline advice agency Current provision 32 bedspaces - 26 units in hostel; 8 units in shortlife	7-8 bed hostel for women	M&F	081 741 0466
BRENT IRISH ADVISORY SERVICE	Frontline advice agency; ensuring that State authorities fulfill their obligations to the Irish community under Housing Act 1985; 17 Noms. to Housing Assoc/Local authority		M&F	081 459 6286
INNISFREE HOUSING ASSOCIATION	Over 100 units of Shortlife; 12 units in shared housing projects (not shortlife) 8 referrals to mainstream housing agencies.	Neg. underway for further 52 units of shortlife; seeking Housing Corp. funding and have bid via Govt. Homeless Initiative for a range of other projects	M&F	081 451 5199
SAFESTART FOUNDATION	Frontline advice agency 6 bed hostel 30 Noms. to Housing Assoc.	Seeking Housing Corp funding for 14 bedspace hostel project.	M&F	081 452 0182
ST. LOUISE HOSTEL	130 bedspace hostel		F	071 222 2011

Agency Profile

Safe Start Foundation

Based in Cricklewood Broadway, the Safe Start Foundation aims to be a one stop shop for young people and new arrivals.

A wholistic service, the staff seek to enable people to make practical steps according to their own goals.

Advice giving is therefore only in the context of a verbal contract involving two parties orientated toward very specific goals with regard to employment, training, accommodation, social life, financial planning and issues of self esteem.

Four staff specialise in particular aspects of the work and use a database of employment and accommodation opportunities that is both comprehensive and quality controlled. All aspects of employment are examined including the use of a nationally recognised careers advice database through CV production to job placement.

The Accommodation Officer collates housing provision information from all sectors in the housing market and makes this

available as appropriate. The Accommodation Officer also manages the Safe Start short stay property in Harlesden where there is no resident staff.

Demands on the service meant that the following plans will be implemented this Summer:

- A JobClub/classroom facility will be opened in West Hendon in June.
- A new staff person will be dedicated to finding more employment and training opportunities in a pro-active capacity.
- The "Living in London" program will be launched in July based on the Safe Start wholistic philosophy which will incorporate elements of life skills training and actual work and accommodation placement.

Safe Start was founded by a group of business people in 1988 and continues to receive one third of its funding from private donors. The remainder comes from the Irish and British Governments as well as Private Trusts and special events.

Contact Safe Start Foundation,
71 Cricklewood Broadway,
NW2 3JR

Tel. 081 452 0181, 081 208 1058
Fax. 081 4506225, 081 208 1059

Joe McKenna (Director), Ruth McKeeman (Employment and Training), Geraldine Duddy (Accommodation) and Seamus McCormack (Accommodation & Special Projects).

London Irish Youth Forum (LIYF)

Next LIYF meeting
Thursday 16th May 1991
at 2.30 p.m.

Irish Centre, 50 Camden
Square, London NW1

The Main Agenda Item will be:

Trade Unions in Voluntary Organisations: union recognition and union membership; contracts of employment, terms and conditions etc.

Speaker:

Mandy Player, Voluntary Organisations' Union Representative.

There will be an opportunity for questions.

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