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Winter 2014/'15

NOT FOR PROFIT

# CHANGING IRELAND

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Issue 48 • The national magazine of the Local and Community Development Programme

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## CIARA'S CALL:

TIME TO OFFER ALL  
DUBLIN 17 KIDS  
THE BREAKS  
SHE GOT

## ROSCREA STANDS UP!

HOW TO HARNESS  
PEOPLE POWER



AND REAP REWARDS



ANGER TO ACTION

## THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE

### TO INVEST NOW IN OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE

DOORS  
SLAMMED  
IN FACES  
NOW OPEN  
& KETTLE  
ON  
Pages 10-11

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STANDS  
UP!**



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Ciara Hurley, Darndale, Dublin. Photo by: A. Meagher

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Comhshaoil, Pobal agus Rialtas Áitiúil  
Environment, Community and Local Government

## THE LOCAL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The €48m Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP) is the main community development programme operated by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government in support of the voluntary and community sector.

The programme tackles poverty and social exclusion through partnership and constructive engagement between Government and its agencies and people in disadvantaged communities.

The Programme is due to conclude on March 31st, 2015, to be followed from April 1st by the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme which builds on the LCDP's success.



**WHAT'RE THEY SMILING ABOUT?! SEE PAGE 9.**



## CIARA'S CALLING & ROSCREA STANDS UP!



In preparation for the publication of this our 48th edition of 'Changing Ireland', we considered the need for the board, editorial team and other volunteers to head off for a 3-month strategic think-in on an atoll in the Pacific.

There's a lot going on in terms of State funding and what it will fund in communities these days and what it won't fund. Plenty to chew over in the mind.

And so the reports we carry in this edition of 'Changing Ireland' are intended to shake up your thinking, to examine the possibilities that are before us.

Ciara (front cover) calls for more investment in programmes such as the 'Challenger Programme' in Dublin 17 if we are to give everyone in our society the chance of a third-level education.

We've a strong focus throughout on projects that follow community development principles, the taking of collective action being one.

If people power - and it sure exists in this country - could be tapped and directed in a positive way, it seems Roscrea is pointing us in some of the right directions. Suicides and drug addiction hit the town hard and people have had enough. Obviously, they're learning as they go along, but they've set a

standard for small towns who despair that they are being left behind.

Notwithstanding the dedication of those involved in long-term community-based initiatives, Roscrea's new approach teaches us to stand up and be counted. Their new approach, in co-operation with Gardai, State agencies and community workers, seems to be working so far.

Things are also looking up here in Limerick (don't mind most of what you see on television or read in the 'papers'). The city has found a new way of dealing with conflict and it's working in schools and across communities.

Meanwhile, in Maynooth, one of the key messages from the annual community development conference was that charities obviously have their place, but if you want to tackle poverty you need to take a human rights approach. Makes sense in this new 1% versus 99% world of 'haves' and 'have-nots'.

Finally, on behalf of those suffering from cuts to the community, health and education sectors, we hereby lay a claim on any money Apple is obliged to repay in taxes due - let it be spent on social inclusion. Only right!

*Allen Meagher*

*Photo: A Meagher interviewing primary health care workers in Rathkeale, Co. Limerick. Credit: Tony Grehan Photography.*

### FILE A REPORT FOR US!

If you enjoy writing, why not file your own report for us. 300-400 words is plenty (and a photo if possible). Well over a hundred community workers and volunteers have done so over the years. The chief criteria - you must be involved as a volunteer, worker or board member with an LCDP-funded project (check our website). Alternatively, tell us something novel about your community that others could learn from. Contact details above.



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**MADE IN MOYROSS  
LIMERICK**

### Disclaimer

The views expressed in this magazine are those of the author concerned. They do not, by any means, necessarily reflect the views of the editor, the editorial team, the voluntary management board of Changing Ireland Community Media Ltd, or the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.

# THE 'CHALLENGER PROGRAMME'

## INTRODUCTION

TV3's 'Darndale, the Edge of Town' broadcast over three weeks in September presented a touching but sometimes stereotyped picture of the north Dublin suburb, REPORTS ALLEN MEAGHER.

Filmed over 12 months, the producers called it an "honest portrayal of Darndale's residents' lives" as they followed the day-to-day struggles of a former career criminal, a heroin addict and two single mothers struggling to make ends meet.

Ciara Hurley who is from Darndale said the programme did not provide an accurate portrayal of the area.

Her own story is inspirational in what she achieved. She always believed in herself and so did her parents.

Today, Ciara is highly educated and gives full credit to herself - "You

have to believe in yourself," she says. She gives full praise to her family first and foremost and to the Northside Partnership for the support it provided to her and hundreds of schoolkids through its 19-years-old 'Challenger Programme'.

Recently, she told her story (page 5 across) to a large attendance for the first time at a book-launch (see page 19) by the Irish Local Development Network for which community workers and leaders had travelled from throughout the country to attend.

However, Ciara also spoke up to highlight that much more needs to be done by the State because, as she pointed out, only 15% of people from Dublin 17 still go onto third level.

The rates have not changed since she was a schoolchild.

## About the 'Challenger Programme'

The Challenger Programme was set up by Northside Partnership in 1995 to tackle early school leaving and to improve progression to third level education in the Dublin 17 area.

The programme was expanded in 2010 to include two further schools in Kilmore West in Dublin 5.

Today, the Challenger Programme works with five schools located in the Darndale, Belcamp, Priorswood, Bonnybrook and Kilmore West in Dublin 5 and 17, where there is strong evidence of the need for this programme. The programme currently covers an area with a population of approximately 16,000.

According to the 2011 Census, just 6.5 per cent of adults in the 'Challenger' target area have a third level qualification, compared with 30.6 per cent of adults nationally. Similarly, 34 per cent of people in the 'Challenger' area have progressed no further than primary level education, compared with 16 per cent nationally.

To address this, the programme supports ambitious young people from these areas to stay in school, complete their Leaving Certificate and to go on to third level education.

Students commit to a seven-year programme and receive a range of supports from 6th class in primary school through to their final years in second level. The supports offered range from reading clubs, maths clubs, conversational Irish classes, public speaking classes and grinds in core subjects to cultural trips, Gaeltacht scholarships, visits to universities and individual career guidance.

Parents of 'Challenger' children must also commit to

supporting their child's education by taking part in a FETAC accredited course.

Over 300 students have completed 'Challenger'. By last year, 242 participants (80%) had finished their Leaving Certificate and 134 had gone onto third level.

6TH CLASS	Reading Club / Public Speaking / Discovering University / Conversational Irish / Cultural Events and Visits / End of Year Trip
1ST YEAR	Maths Club - Introduction to Mind Mapping - Science Workshop Drama Activity Linked to Third Level Education End of Year Trip
2ND YEAR	Conversational Irish - Maths Workshop - Gaeltacht Scholarships
3RD YEAR	Parents and Students Meeting on Subject Choices - Presentation Skills - Extra Tuition / Grinds
4TH YEAR	Mind Mapping Workshop
5TH YEAR	Study Skills Workshop
6TH YEAR	Third Level Information Meeting - One-to- one Meeting with Guidance Counsellor - Extra Tuition / Grinds - Option to Attend DCU Easter Revision Programme



Parents and students attend an information event about the 'Challenger Programme'.



# CIARA'S OWN STORY

## If Ciara could change one thing...

- Grateful beneficiary of 7-year-long 'Challenger Programme'.
- Triple graduate of St. Pat's, Maynooth & Bath.
- Now back teaching in the area she grew up in.
- Moves to 3rd level "still just 15%" in Dublin 17

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

"I'm from Darndale, I'm one of four children and the first in my family to go onto third level," says Ciara Hurley.

"Both my parents were early school leavers, they came from working class backgrounds, they worked hard all their lives and continue to do so to this day to support us to go to college.

"Growing up in a working class area like Darndale didn't mean this was unattainable.

"My parents planted the idea very early in my life. I always knew I was going to go to college. Having the full support of my parents both financially and emotionally was one of the biggest factors that added to this success in my life.

"Another factor was the 'Challenger Programme'. In 1999, I got the opportunity – in my final year in primary school – to join the seven-year programme and break the cycle of low education.

"It gave me a whole range of supports from grind to going to the Gaeltacht and was life-changing for me.

"The programme began a lifelong love affair for me with education... I became a member of a club for people with similar ambitions, we became a support network for each other and my parents met their parents. That was in 1999 and I'm still in contact with many of these friends today. The 'Challenger Programme' was about so much more than education, it was a way of life."

Ciara emerged with an Honours BA from St. Patrick's College and went onto NUI Maynooth and Bath, England,

from where she emerged as a qualified primary school teacher.

"I'm delighted to say I now work in St. Joseph's National School, Ballybrook, which is one of the five schools where Northside Partnership offer the 'Challenger Programme'. So things have come full circle."

"However, when I returned home (from England) I heard about a report from the Higher Education Authority which shows

that progression rates into third level education for young people from Dublin 17 is still just 15%.

"As someone who's come from in the area, has been to college and is now back as a teacher, I hope I can be seen as a role model.

"I know that young people from Dublin 17 are just as talented and have as much potential as young people anywhere else in the country. If they want to go to college – and it isn't for everyone – (they may choose) to pursue careers that will help end cycles of poverty and disadvantage that effect generations of families in the area.

"In my own life, education has been a powerful influence.

"I'm delighted to be back in Dublin 17 and to have the chance to make a real difference in children's lives. Sadly, a lot of children will not aspire to go to university – and to be fair it's not for everyone – but we need more children to consider it as a realistic option."

If Ciara could change one thing it would be to roll the 'Challenger Programme' out for absolutely everyone who wants it in Dublin 17.

"It should be offered to all children in the area," she said.

On 8th October this year, 154 parents and students turned up for an information meeting about the next rollout of the 'Challenger Programme'. Northside Partnership organisers describe interest as "huge".

"Looking back," said Ciara, "I can see that the supports the programme offered me were very valuable indeed. The programme opened many doors for me and linked me in with the Partnership where I got career guidance and financial support."

Ciara said however that the support of parents for ambitions children remains "crucial".



Ciara Hurley addressing members of the Irish Local Development Network on October 17th, International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

# PEOPLE POWER - WHAT ROSCREA D

## PEOPLE OF ROSCREA PIONEER C SOCIAL EXCLUSION - Anger at neglect turns to a

Roscrea, Co. Tipperary made headlines this year as the town that said "No more".

On July 24th over 500 people marched on the local Garda station in a spontaneous display of unity, following a series of suicides by young males in the town with little response from the authorities. The protest made national news at the time, but it is the follow-up work at grassroots level that is setting Roscrea apart as a place where people take action.

"A tipping point was reached when there were four tragic deaths of young men aged from 21 to 26 in a fourteen month period - there has been another one since," said Michelle Putti, social programmes manager with North Tipperary LEADER Partnership (NTLP). "There was a perception that the drugs problem wasn't being tackled and that people had to stand up. Thankfully people have responded in a constructive way."

Local man Derek Russell who organised the meeting that led to the march said: "None of us knew what to do but by coming together we found answers. There was anger towards the Gardai, anger towards a lot of things, but at the end of the day we all knew we could be



*A still from a video recording of the demonstration outside Roscrea Garda Station.*

doing a little bit more."

In the immediate aftermath there was a worry that vigilantism might take hold as the shocked town began to grasp for solutions.

Graffiti, naming suspected dealers, on several of the town's roads testified to the possibility.

Michelle Putti said, "There was a fear around what that response might look like

in the early days, but it bedded down into constructive actions."

"A lot of anger was vented and when that died down people started to focus on positive action. People realised there was a problem with drugs and mental health because we are having to deal with young male suicides.

"There are also broader issues involving unemployment and lack of opportunities, anti-social behaviour and environmental issues around particular areas.

"People also recognised that there should be more of a focus on youth and the integration of non-nationals into the community."

The community sprang into action and 'Roscrea Stands-Up' - the name adopted by Derek Russell and his team of community activists - identified key areas and set up working groups to investigate.

Individual working groups focused on drugs, mental health, youth, investment, environment and an integration group for non-nationals. There are now 36 people involved with these groups.

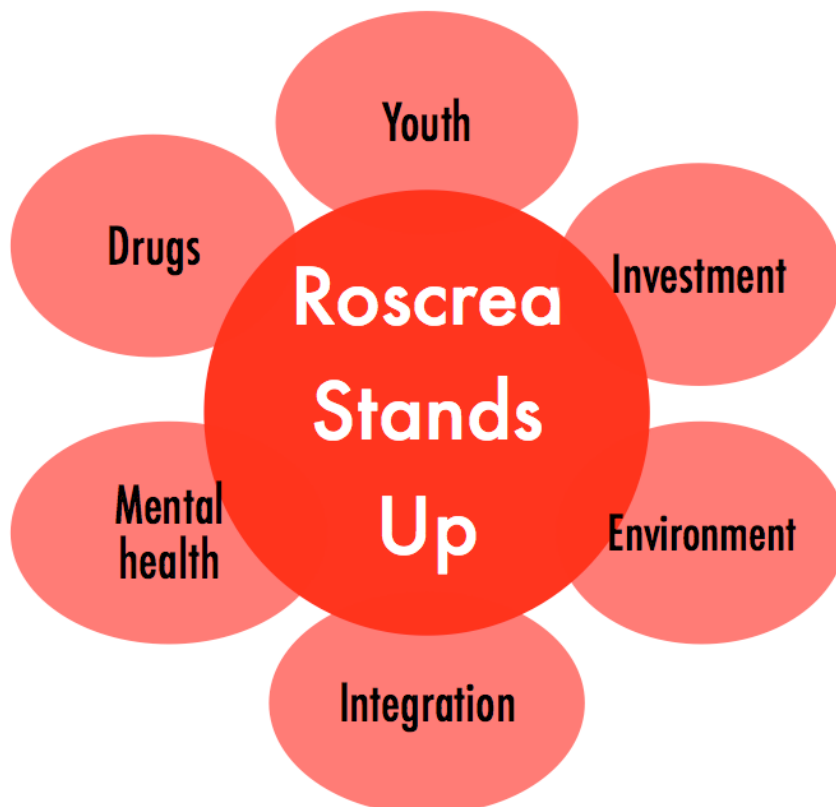
Some solutions are radical; an initiative to take two euros off each households in Roscrea to pay for a free counselling service has received strong support.

An expo for youths attracted 50 of the town's 52 voluntary organisations.

Derek Russell said, "All the children in the town got the opportunity to see what groups or organisations they might like to join or at least be aware of what's in the town."

How is the NTLP supporting these projects?

Michelle explained, "This is a very





# WHAT DID NEXT!

# GRASSROOTS RESPONSE TO

action for all

## BEN PANTER REPORTS FROM ROSCREA

organic movement, involving many people including those from areas of the town who wouldn't typically get involved with community activities or mobilisation of any kind."

Sandra Smith, development worker with NTLP said, "We are very keen to support Roscrea Stands Up but equally we are keen not to take over. What very often happens, when the 'perceived' experts come on board, the communities fall back and the ownership is lost."

"Some of the help we're providing has been very simple, like administration back-up and liaising with other organisations and agencies."

Eight new residents groups have been set up since August and supporting local groups is an area of work that NTLP specialises in.

"We were able to provide training to volunteers - in that many would have no experience of committee work or what best practice is," said Sandra. "The new Public Participation Network has a 'social inclusion pillar' and we are working to raise awareness about these structures at municipal, district and county level."

NTLP's Sandra continued: "It would be great for a student of Community Development to do some action research, to document this experience, because I think there could be a lot of learning for other communities."

"We are happy to support Roscrea Stands Up and the way the community has identified and taken ownership of their issues."

"Let's see how much to the front and centre Roscrea remains (in the public eye). That's important because when the media are focusing on a community - whether positively or negatively - it behoves organisations and statutory bodies to respond."

Michael Murray, NTLP's CEO sees the people in Roscrea as "pioneers": "We need to support them in what they are doing and lend our experience as and when they need it in their endeavours to bring about positive change. We have supported 'Roscrea Stands Up' in holding public meetings from the start," he said.

**Some solutions are radical; an initiative to take two euros off each households in Roscrea to pay for a free counselling service has received strong support.**

As Derek Russell points out, "It's like the town has woken up since we started this thing."



*Pictured in St. Anne's playground are: Minister Alan Kelly with members of the parents association and pupils from St. Anne's Special Needs School, Roscrea, as well as local cyclists and activists Tim Hennessy, Shane Lee and Marie Warren. Photo courtesy roscreaonline.ie*

"A local businessman has offered to donate unused premises for business start-ups and an indoor play area for children."

According to Derek the town has failed to use its resources in the past. He also criticised the authorities, giving one example: "Roscrea is an historic town, but it is not sign-posted as such, even though towns like Birr and everywhere else are signposted like that."

"We set up to make people aware of what's in the town. And what isn't in the town, we'll bring it in."

The tide might be turning for Roscrea which saw the first batch of new jobs in many years recently.

Locally-based Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Alan Kelly, said: "Roscrea town is showing great maturity, collective leadership and is very progressive in

tackling the drugs social and employment issues that it faces. There are a lot of people sitting up and taking notice."

But it is the coming together of the people in the town to take action that is the most powerful antidote to powerlessness and despondency.

For people suffering from the crushing oppression of addiction, depression, unemployment and a degree of neglect by the powers that be, a newly united community has brought in hope.

## LONG-TERM FOCUS: Credit where credit is due

Roscrea Stands Up is a new group, but there are many existing community-based, organisations in the town.

To take but three examples:

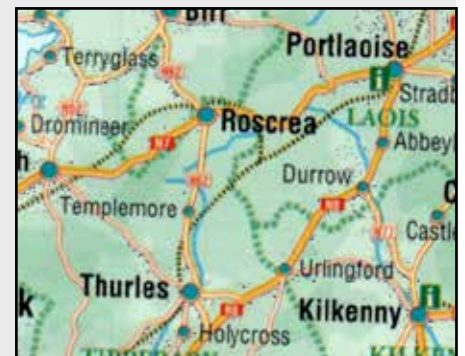
The local Citizens Information Centre, which has a hall in the town centre that is widely used, will celebrate its 40th anniversary in 2015.

The local branch of St Vincent de Paul works away quietly behind the scenes and is a real force for good in the town, involving many active citizens.

The Kickback Youth Café (supported by NTLP) has been providing a service to youths for many years in various ways. Community workers there said that this summer in Roscrea no less than 32 activities were organised for and with young people in the town.

People have been active in Roscrea for many years.

Now 'Roscrea Stands Up' adds renewed energy to everyone's focus.



# WHAT ROSCREA DID NEXT!

## SENSE OF DUTY DRIVES DEREK RUSSELL, FOUNDER OF 'ROSCREA STANDS UP'

- Movement seeks to be a life-saving, town-enhancing grassroots movement

**BY BEN PANTER**

Derek Russell is taking me on a guided tour of Roscrea. He is proud of the town, its people and their reaction to the tragic events that led to the headline grabbing march this summer.

"It's like the whole town has woken up since we started this thing."

Derek is a popular man.

We pull up in the town square alongside a bread van: "John have you e'er a loaf, anything at all for the reporter."

John pulls out a loaf and hands it to me. A few moments later we drive into one of the towns estates and chat to two more of his friends.

"Have you heard about the jobs announcement?" Derek asks.

Derek is a busy man.

When I arrived at his home early that morning he was on the phone to Minister Alan Kelly finding out the details of the latest jobs boost to a town whose fortunes may just be turning.

Between July 24th, the date of the march, and mid-October when we met, he's attended 242 meetings.

He takes me to Colaiste Phobal, the site of a meeting in which the townsfolk packed into a meeting to address the social problems and unemployment in the town. They were planning to hold an 'expo' (since held successfully) in the same venue on October 23rd.

Whilst in the hall we are treated to a smoothie by the caretaker.

Derek is a compassionate man.

"I was talking to an addict and his struggles to give up drugs, I can't give up minerals so I can't imagine how hard it is.

Some people's lives seem to have destiny inexorably marked on them. Experiences of their past set them up to be the ideal candidate when duty calls.

He lost both his parents young. His Father died when he was 11 and his mother when he was seventeen.



Derek Russell (right) with other members of 'Roscrea Stands Up!'. Credit: Press 22.



Roscrea school-children and local credit union members highlight their town's strengths.



The tragedy awakened his sense of duty. He went to work full time as a labourer in the monastery to help support his siblings through education.

Derek is a positive man.

"We were lucky, we had a close family, uncles stepped in, we have a big interest in the GAA and they were always there to take me to matches."

Later in life he battled with depression and ended up in hospital for 13 weeks: "It was the best place for me, I learnt to manage it without

the need of medication."

Derek is a caring man.

It was his parental responsibilities that led him into the role of community activist. As a single father of a three-year-old he felt people should be doing more to help the young.

"There is a team of soccer players buried in the graveyard and the oldest would be 29 if he was still alive, that tells its own story."

Derek is not alone. The whole community is involved in the voluntary endeavour to see their town and its people reach their potential.

## Kind but controversial: Derek pays off drug debts

In late November, Derek Russell revealed that he borrowed money from family and friends and paid off the drugs debts owed by some young people to dealers.

He said he spent €14,500 paying off the debts, but is no longer in a financial position to help others. Anyone he did help he insisted on them seeking proper treatment for their addiction.

One girl approached him in desperation after a gang threatened

to maim or kill her brother who has a disability if she didn't pay €2,700 in 24 hours.

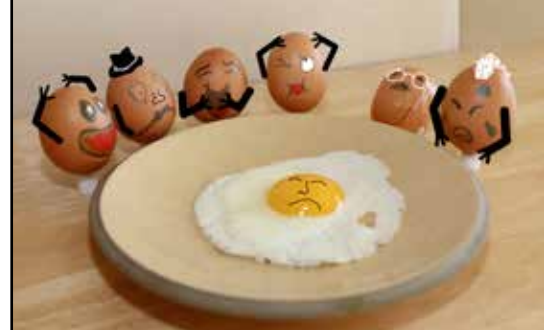
However, not everyone agrees with the approach. Dublin's Lord Mayor Christy Burke said that despite his good intentions Derek could be seen as a "crutch" or "a soft touch". He emphasised the importance of having Gardai and community workers involved in finding the long-term solution



# BREAKFAST CLUBS

## “ORGANISED MADNESS, BUT IT WORKS” - EYE-WITNESS

- Breakfasts in Bluebell are utterly unique
- Real fraternity replaces social isolation



### BEN PANTER REPORTS



*Members of the Bluebell Breakfast Club. The diverse membership play soccer and table tennis - it's not all about eating.*



*Tommy Coombes, community worker, and another member of the breakfast club, alongside their portrait shots taken by Garry Doyle.*

*Garry Doyle, photographer (right)*



A breakfast morning organised by Bluebell Community Development Project for men at risk of social isolation has grown into a sports club and inspired a photographic exhibition. It's now open to all-comers.

Lauran Kelly a placement student from the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown who helps organise the mornings elaborates:

“It’s organised madness, but it works. Breakfast kicks off at 10am and finishes at 12noon.”

This is no ordinary breakfast - Lauren describes its inclusive nature:

“What’s that expression ‘all human life is here’, well that definitely applies here. We’ve got old/young, black/ white, straight/gay, male/female, able and disabled all taking part and loving it.”

The breakfast club was founded in 2012 to give marginalised older men a social outlet and took off from there.

Activities are organised around the breakfast, so it’s about much more than cereals, sausages and eggs: “At the same time as the breakfast, there’s indoor football and table tennis, it’s unique,” said Lauren. The breakfast club members even set up their own soccer team, ‘Bluebell Angels’.

An exhibition by photographer Garry Doyle (featured here) captured the spirit of the mornings.

He said the portraits he shot relay “the overwhelming positive feeling that emanates from the people” attending the breakfast club.

Garry is no stranger to community development having been involved in video and photography in the Sector for 20 years but what he saw at the breakfast club inspired him to create his exhibition.

“I saw a wealth of diversity and felt a real sense of fraternity,” he said.

All photos on this page are his with one exception: The seven eggs are the work of young Holly, Brook and Alex Grehan (from Limerick) with dad Tony taking that photograph.



# TRAVELLERS OPEN DOORS THEY ONCE SLAMMED IN HEALTH-WORKERS' FACES

- Evaluation report shows how teamwork has transformed attitudes

**BY ALLEN MEAGHER**

The producers from 'Operation Transformation' rang 'Changing Ireland' recently because they had very few people applying from ethnic minority groups in Ireland and wondered if we could help.

A Traveller hasn't appeared on the show yet, but in any case Travellers are as a community quietly working on health and lifestyle issues themselves.

In Rathkeale, Co. Limerick, a report launched in November charted a sea-change in attitudes to health among Travellers.

Willie Harty - himself a beneficiary (he learned he was a diabetic and has given up smoking) - said eight years ago the health workers went house-to-house and had "doors slammed in their faces, but now they're going into those same houses and getting a cup of tea."

"I know people say you can go on the internet or go to a GP, but the GP doesn't have the time and it doesn't make you change your behaviour," he said.

He gave up smoking after gentle but persistent nagging from the Traveller Primary Health Care team in West Limerick.

"In future, I'd like to see much more focus by the team on suicide awareness because there's not a Traveller family anywhere untouched by suicide.

"Men's health is also important and we're slowly getting there.

I can't see Travellers doing without this service now. The girls (health workers) are spoken of now in the highest regard. They get into your heart and into your mind, they get your trust.

He pointed out the Primary Health Care was a nationwide network.

Hannah Hehir (Willie's sister) said: "We started with a BTEA



*Pictured attending the West Limerick Primary Health Care for Travellers Evaluation Report in the Rathkeale House Hotel, Co. Limerick. Photo Tony Grehan Photography*

course in Askeaton, followed by a six-week pilot course that led to three years' training.

"We explain about things such as cervical smears in great detail to people and tell them where they'll find the services.

"We are experts when it comes to our outreach work with Travellers," acknowledged health worker Myra O'Brien. "Now we're known and trusted to talk about sensitive issues."

There are around 300 Traveller households in West Limerick and the eight-person PHC team had 529 face-to-face meetings with people last year. Of those meetings 333 were with men, 196 with women.

Team leader Mo Foley said her team is aware of various models of behaviour and change and know how to support people to change themselves.

Mary Kennedy of the HSE said, "We need committed, professional Travellers and we need organisations to collaborate with us."

The evaluation's 13 recommendations are aimed at influencing national policy and local action, but as Mary said, "Most of all the report demonstrated the undeniable value for money and impact of the Primary Health Care programme for Travellers."

She called for the introduction of an ethnic identifier in CSO surveys for Travellers, which would make it easier to evaluate work in the future.

Other recommendations include:

- Developing new ways of working with service providers and partners, particularly the HSE.

- Continue to find ways to encourage people to use the services available and to consider changing behaviour.

- Find ways to reach out to more male Travellers.

Shay Riordan, CEO of WLC, congratulated all involved and said lessons were to be learned from the evaluation of the work and said Traveller PHCs around the country should learn from each other's work.



*PICTURED LEFT: Willie Harty from Askeaton, Co. Limerick, formally launched the report.*



# TRAVELLER PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

## No need to reinvent wheel - *Good practice in sharing resources & collaborating*

There's no need to reinvent the wheel when it comes to delivering Primary Health Care (PHC).

That is well understood by the Traveller PHC team operating under the umbrella of West Limerick Resources.

The team shop around nationally for resources to borrow or replicate. It's all about sharing best practice, they say.

They have distributed 90 DVDs produced by North Tipperary PHC to promote the importance of cervical cancer screening.

To highlight the scourge of drugs and alcohol, the team copied a DVD produced by Co. Clare PHC and distributed 89 of them. They also received and distributed 289 leaflets on the subject from Co. Clare.

Health worker Myra O'Brien said the team used a leaflet produced by Longford PHC to discuss domestic abuse with 235 women in person between 2011-'13.

The HSE's Mary Kennedy said West Limerick's Traveller Primary Health Care Project was "an excellent example of cross fertilisation and collaboration."



Mary Kennedy, HSE.

## Evaluation asked simply: Are we making a difference? (Yes)

Sheila Cahill who conducted the research with Whitebarn Consulting was exceptionally impressed by the openness of the health workers from the start: "I'm doing this type of work for the past ten years and it was the first time a group agreed to conduct a baseline survey first. That hardly ever happens."

"Most groups won't do it because it takes time, costs money and you've to stick your neck out. But it's important because then you can measure the changes in later years."

Travellers in West Limerick were very co-operative when it came to evaluating the work of the primary health care team - 43% of the population were interviewed in 2011 and '13.

One drawback in the evaluation is that - for reasons beyond the evaluators' control - they couldn't interview HSE frontline staff on their

level of awareness of the issues around Traveller health.

The lack of an ethnic identifier when taking details about people availing of services also makes it difficult to see if people do actually follow advice and avail of services. Yet, the HSE wants to measure its work in terms of "key performance indicators".

Sheila said there was no point in the HSE predicting "fantasy outcomes" when it's not possible to measure the outcomes.

The aim of the evaluation was to answer one major question - are we making a difference, and if not what do we need to change? This is a move away from the idea of good work resulting from "your heart being in the right place". We want to know what are the most effective ways of supporting change?" said Sheila.

## Traveller health: Why the fuss & what's being done?

The average lifespan for a member of the Traveller community is below average. Literacy levels are lower and suicide rates are seven times higher than average. However, by raising awareness about services and encouraging people to take responsibility for lifestyle choices, lives can be extended and enriched.

West Limerick Resources launched its Primary Health Care Project for Travellers in 2010 as a joint initiative with the HSE. It is delivered by a team of community health workers and is part of a national initiative.

Rather uniquely, the projects' backers decided to monitor and evaluate progress from the start, to measure the work's value.

Today, more Travellers say they know more about health issues and the services available and are availing of them.

Much of the Primary Health Care work has focused on promoting cervical, bowel, breast and diabetic screening and nearly 1,000 people were made aware of screening.

Through local community radio programmes, the primary care team talked about issues such as tanning injections to breastfeeding, suicide prevention and mental health.

## Would you take the Step Challenge?

The 'Step Challenge' asks people "How active are you daily?" and gets them walking and for the past four years Travellers in West Limerick have been wearing out more shoe leather than before.

"It has normalised walking for Travellers in West Limerick," said team leader Mo Foley. Their evaluations found for example that average waist measurements dropped from 42 to 41 inches among participants within a few months.

How does it work? All participants wear a step counter which counts their steps each day over four weeks. The community health workers encourage adults to aim to walk 10,000 steps daily - the minimum all adults should be doing for good health.

When people return their counters, their average number of steps each day is worked out and they are given a gold pin if their average is 7,500 steps or more. People under-18 have to walk twice that much for their pin.

The Step Challenge is about being active in everyday life and 74 men and women completed it in West Limerick this year.

# URBAN COMMUNITIES

## Inchicore regeneration – at last!

President Michael D. Higgins has formally opened a new 75-unit building development in Inchicore, Dublin.

The complex built on the former St Michaels Estate was officially opened on September 9th.

Though she regretted the 10-year wait, Caroline McNulty, a resident who had been involved in the regeneration process said:

“It’s a great achievement, especially in the current climate where Dublin City Council (DCC) isn’t building anywhere else.”

Rita Fagan, a member of the regeneration board and co-ordinator of St. Michael’s Family Resource Centre (which operates under the umbrella of the Canal Development Partnership) and a member of the regeneration board said:

“St Michael’s fought for 75 of the most high standard houses in Ireland for the eleven families that came back.

“The fight allowed other families to come off the housing waiting list.

“This shows the struggle of community development and that persistence pays off,”

she said.

Children were at the forefront of the project’s plans, the complex features a central playground, its own purpose built crèche and a homework club.

The crèche will cater for 36 children and the homework club for 90 more.

The regeneration project made national headlines in 2008 when property developer Bernard McNamara fell victim to the crash.

A contentious Private Public Partnership (PPP) between DCC and the construction magnate had been agreed in 2007.

The plans involved a mixture of social and private housing and civic amenities such as a library, café, bar, sports facilities and a youth centre.

Following the collapse of the PPP, plans were drawn up to build 75 houses and apartments and a new contractor started work in 2010.

Although Thornton Heights has had a stuttering history Caroline said, looking at her new home, that “it was worth the wait”.



Past to present: Inchicore residents’ protest (courtesy Paula Geraghty) and President Higgins arrives to open the new housing development.



## Clonmel’s ‘Field of Dreams’

A video capturing the work of local activists and community workers in Clonmel shows how any community can transform a derelict or neglected area once people persevere.

The video titled “Field of Dreams” has been viewed almost 1,000 times, in community settings and on Youtube.

“This is an example of what happens when a community comes together,” say South Tipperary Development Company which lends support to the Cooleen’s Close residents’ group.

The residents have utterly transformed weed-filled acres into a communal outdoor place of work, play and serenity.

The film captures it perfectly and the ‘go-pro’ photography and superb editing help to keep the viewer glued. Denis Vahey was the



Maurice Lynch in Cooleen Close’s ‘Field of Dreams’.

director of photography. Strong characters emerge onscreen in the film’s eight short minutes.

You can watch the video here: <http://bit.ly/1tiBc2k>

In late November, a second longer video from the project was also released.

Prior to filming, Cooleen’s Close Project featured in our Summer 2013 edition. (page 14).

# CO-OP NEWS

## INTRODUCTION: Research report acknowledges co-operatives, but...

There was much fanfare recently when a new initiative was announced to deliver high-speed broadband to all rural areas by 2020. The scheme should prove attractive to big corporations such as Eircom and may be the solution. However, the idea that co-operatives could provide such a service was never seriously considered.

The broadband announcement follows the adoption by the Government recently of recommendations in a report called “Energising Ireland’s Rural Economy”. The Government over the summer also appointed Ann Phelan TD as a new Minister for State with special responsibility for Rural Economic Development.

Since then, UCC students of ‘Co-operative Business & the Rural Economy’ have analysed the Government’s commitment to promoting co-operatives and argue that it falls short.

They say that co-operatives were not mentioned in the newly adopted Government strategy for rural Ireland’s economy.

In November, ‘Changing Ireland’ put this to Minister Phelan. She accepted that while co-operatives were not mentioned in the all-important ‘Energising Ireland’s Rural Economy’ report, she pointed out that an independent research report published at the same time made many references to co-operatives. The research report also identified how to improve the operating environment for co-operatives. Minister Phelan also indicated that she had a very useful meeting with ICOS to discuss the potential of co-operatives soon after taking up office.

To launch the start of a two-year publishing partnership\* with the Centre for Co-operative Studies, UCC, a competition was held among students to see who would write the best article on the subject for ‘Changing Ireland’. The winner was Emily Mary Deasy.

Some of the extracts from the research report referred to by Minister Phelan are quoted beneath Emily’s article.

## ‘Changing Ireland’ & UCC

\*‘Changing Ireland’ and researchers and students attached to the Centre for Co-operative Studies in UCC are teaming up to bring incisive coverage of issues that go under the radar in relation to community affairs, particularly regarding co-operatives.

The initiative will give a voice to students and staff. Once they can make it interesting!



# CO-OPS OMITTED FROM MAIN RURAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

BY EMILY MARY DEASY



Emily Mary Deasy.

**The report published recently by the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA) and adopted by Government omitted one very important factor. It failed to incorporate the use of co-operative organisations in achieving its vision.\***

The CEDRA Report failed to recognise that co-operatives and their mutual enterprises have been particularly resilient during the economic crisis in the EU. For instance, while most of Spain's economy was in

recession, 19,000 jobs were created in the co-operative sector in the last quarter of 2011 ('The Guardian', March 12, 2012).

The CEDRA report also overlooked the fact that the co-operative economy accounts for 16% of GDP in Switzerland, 13% of GDP in Sweden and 21% in Finland. It is particularly strong in Europe's strongest economy, Germany.

It is estimated that co-operatives have over eight hundred million members worldwide, creating one hundred million jobs today. It is a sector of enterprise that plays a crucial role in the everyday life of the people who are dependent upon its services.

Globally there has been a wave of positivity and motivation about what co-operatives can achieve. Not only do they create jobs and security for members, but they also create a sense of community spirit.

However, Ireland's regulatory structure and policies do not encourage the creation of co-operatives as in other countries. Co-operatives here, such as credit unions, face excessive regulation which is placing a large burden on smaller co-operatives, especially those dependent upon the good-will of the members to volunteer their spare time. Also, there is a striking disparity between Ireland and other countries in the sectors

in which the co-operative movement has chosen to concentrate itself.

Globally, groups have used co-operatives to address government shortcomings in areas such as renewable energy schemes, drainage and water supply schemes, housing co-operation, finance through credit unions. In Brazil, they have even been created to improve medical services.

Co-operatives are responsible for promoting and supporting entrepreneurial development, which in turn raise incomes helping to reduce poverty while enhancing social inclusion. While co-operatives directly benefit their members, they also have a transformational impact in society.

Whist aiming to energise Ireland's rural economy, the CEDRA report's oversight of an area which would enable the people to address their concerns at the same time as empowering them, has been an error.

Time will tell if the recommendations that made it into the final report will give a significant boost to Ireland's rural economy.

\* CEDRA's vision statement reads: "Rural Ireland will become a dynamic, adaptable and outward-looking multi-sectoral economy supporting vibrant, resilient and diverse communities experiencing a high quality of life, with an energised relationship between rural and urban Ireland which will contribute to its sustainability for the benefit of society as a whole".



## Co-ops to become easier to set up

The research report (see 'Introduction') acknowledges the often crucial role of co-operatives.

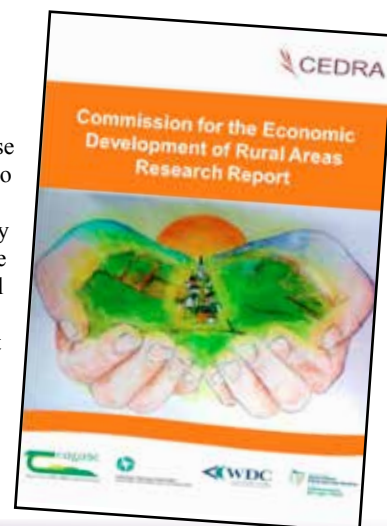
It says that new rules "will make it easier to run a co-operative as an alternative form of enterprise organisation (and) that an increasing number of social enterprises will at least give consideration to establishing as co-operatives type structures (including worker co-operatives)."

The easier environment for co-operatives is due to the introduction of new co-op rules developed by the Irish Co-operative Organisation Society with the agreement of the Revenue Commissioners and the passing of the Friendly Societies and Industrial and Provident Societies (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2013.

In talking about "community energy co-operatives", it says: "There is the belief that any Government proposals to boost micro and local level energy production will fail unless local groups are sufficiently fostered."

It also referred extensively to 22 recommendations from a 2007 Forfás report on social enterprise, including for example community enterprise projects with export and replication potential.

CEDRA said it "supports the findings and recommendations" of the Forfás report.



# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TODAY - VII

## BIG QUESTIONS

*- How do you think the future looks for Community Development?*

*- What looks promising? What are the pitfalls?*



**Valerie McDonald**  
- *"It's promising that there's been heavy investment in working with the unemployed..."*



**Tommy Coombes** - *"In my heart I can't step back from this work. I'm in it for the long haul. But we're being hurt."*

**W**e asked community workers to tell us what looks promising about their work today and what pitfalls may lie ahead.

Valerie McDonald, a community worker based in Carlow, said it was "promising" that there was "heavy investment in working with the unemployed such as accredited training", but warned "the danger is that people are falling through the cracks".

Eilish Comerford, who works in Inchicore, said, "What looks promising is that people have begun to get more radicalised, they've got a feeling of a little bit of power and are seeing the value of coming together and how that makes things shift."

Tommy Coombes saw his project expand in size in recent years with more CE workers taken on and new initiatives launched.

"In 2010, Bluebell CDP stayed open and the Partnership funded two Community Development workers and now we've got six workers, some through CE, in the project," he said.

Jason Hyland said, "Look at the good example shown by Peter McVerry who got billions allocated to provide housing. However, by the time that's spent, there'll be a further six thousand families homeless and living in hotels."

There's a lot in the air at the moment and the people we interviewed had more to say about pitfalls ahead.

Valerie said, "A big question on everybody's mind is the future of Local Development Companies."

Eilish Comerford felt that local authorities may in future have more of a say over Community Development in their areas. That "will take away from the radical nature of our work," she said.

"For example, we work on housing issues – are the council going to allow people to be critical of their practices? I feel like my profession is being watered down," she said.

Tommy Coombes from Dublin was also concerned about the new closeness to local authorities. He said: "We're currently running an anti-dampness campaign. Is the Local Authority going to be saying 'We don't want him bringing us to court, hitting us with human rights law'?"

But his motivation is resolute. He spoke of walking to work and seeing young people on the ground with needles hanging out of their arms, of the "slavery conditions" in asylum-seeker centres, of people needlessly dying.

"In my heart I can't step back from this. I'm in it for the long haul. But we're being hurt."

Everyone we spoke to felt Local Development Companies had become "less empowered" in recent years. The bigger question is 'Have communities become more or less empowered in recent years?'

Taking a wide view, Eilish asked, "Who will champion Community Development work in the future in the way it should be practiced?"

Meanwhile, everyone we spoke to knows the value of getting people jobs or helping to create their own employment and while the LCDP has had incredible success in getting hundreds of thousands of long-term unemployed people into training and work, critics say there is an over-emphasis within the LCDP on job-creation as a catch-all solution to poverty.

Eilish said, "There are other issues besides getting people into work and education – housing is an issue, so is community safety, and people having enough income to live on."

Other issues were also raised by people we interviewed (including some not quoted here) which we will look at in our Spring 2015 edition.

## CONTRIBUTORS

**T**hanks to Ben Panter, Ray Lucey, Robert McNamara and all the interviewees for contributing to this coverage. - Editor



# NEWS ON THE GROUND

## IS THE WORK YOU'RE DOING DIFFERENT TO 5 YEARS AGO?

We asked a randomly-chosen selection of community development workers if the work they're doing today is different to what they were doing five years ago. We also asked - Is it the same or different to what they expected to be doing when they began work in this area/profession?

Valerie McDonald said, "I would in the past have spent more time with local committees and dealt with grant applications," she said. "Now funding is limited and we don't give grants out anymore."

Nowadays, she spends much of her time "arranging training courses" for people who are unemployed.

Fran O'Donoghue, based in Co. Clare, said he is "still doing the same job, although there is more and more administration as the years go by."

Edel Geraghty who works in Limerick noticed big changes in her work: "The focus is now on numbers, outputs and outcomes – that's economically driven."

"Four or five years ago, we were building the capacity of communities to deal with their own issues."

"Now the focus is on getting individuals into employment or education, and securing your own project funding."

"The other thing that's different is that we're not resourced to provide a meaningful service to all the people who need it."

"It's much more about service delivery than about Community Development and social change," she said.

Eilish Comerford's work today is "different": "There's more bureaucracy attached to the work, so there's less time for engaging with people. There's much more emphasis on working in an integrated way and demonstrating the value of the work you do, as opposed to getting out there and doing the work."

Tommy Coombes said, "As a Community Development worker, for me it was all about addressing inequality and social justice and working on the ground with marginalised people. I started in Dolphin House... Now, I manage a project in Bluebell on behalf of the Partnership and a lot of my time is spent sourcing funding and challenging the structures around working on the bottom. It's very difficult with the cuts over the last number of years, we're being torn asunder."

Jason Hyland (see column on right), a graduate of Community Development, compared what he was taught in college with the reality in the workplace.

For the past two years, Jason has worked voluntary in a frontline role for a non-government organisation working with homeless people and those addicted to drugs.

He compared what he was taught in college with the reality in the workplace and said that the theory doesn't always apply. Some courses were more relevant than others, he felt.

He said he was "also surprised" how much the NGO he works with is reliant on volunteers: "In Merchants Quay, out of six of us in my section, one was paid and the rest of us are volunteers. That's been the situation for the past two years. Very recently, a second paid person was taken on as a paid worker in our section."



**Edel Geraghty - "Four or five years ago, we were building the capacity of communities to deal with their own issues."**



**Eilish Comerford - "Now, there's more emphasis on... demonstrating the value of the work you do, as opposed to getting out there and doing the work."**

## Unpaid worker & graduate Jason remains optimistic



Jason Hyland (above) is a graduate of Community Development who readers might recall took out an advert\* in our Summer edition seeking work.

His phone hasn't stopped ringing since he advertised with us.

If only.

"I've nothing concrete yet," he said.

After graduating from NUI Maynooth with a BA in Social and Community Development, Jason joined others on the job search in a Sector where funding is declining.

"Out of the 50 who graduated with me, two girls are now working part-time in childcare. They're in the field at least. It's appalling for the rest of us."

He believes it might be best to "freeze" the course for a few years "since there's no jobs there".

"We were always told it was hard to get work, but it's nearly impossible. We're finding work in shops and in jobs we were in before doing the degree."

He questions the Government's approach to internships, citing Jobbridge and Tus.

He says money should be invested in internship programmes at community level so that 60% of interns get offered full-time employment on completing their apprenticeship time.

Meantime, Jason has worked on his LinkedIn connections, has become "cheekier in introducing myself" and has kept conversations going with some interested parties.

He continues to volunteer a few days every week with Merchants Quay and has returned to education once again.

He remains optimistic that he'll make a breakthrough eventually into paid community/ social inclusion work.

# RESTORATIVE PRACTICE

## LIMERICK UNVEILS "PAINLESS" WAY OF ENDING CONFLICT

- *Alternative response to anti-social behaviour at school and in community*
- *200 volunteers trained and ready to provide support*
- *Work happening without publicity for five years*

**BY ALLEN MEAGHER & BEN PANTER**

Crime journalist Paul Williams made an appearance on the 'Late Late Show' in November to drive sales of his true-crime thriller based on Limerick.

It retells stories - now bordering on historic - about crime in the city and presents a different picture to what's happening on the ground in Limerick today.

Although the city has been an unemployment blackspot, in the past year thousands of new jobs have been created in the Mid-West. Jobs in the region are being announced at an average rate of over 500 per week, over the past three months. At the same time, high-profile people such as Steve Collins who left the city out of fear for his family's safety are returning. The city is also currently Ireland's culture capital.

Meanwhile, away from Late Late Show spotlight, a project that seeks to end conflict before it escalates has achieved momentum. It's called the 'Restorative Justice Project' and involves 200 volunteers from communities across the city and six second-level schools.

The old feuds that haunted Limerick for a decade began according to popular wisdom over a falling out in a school playground. Adults became involved, including people involved in crime, and shootings followed.

The lesson was not lost on education and community leaders. Five years ago, local leaders from the community and education sectors asked what could be done.

Their response - the 'Restorative Practice Project' - now operates in six post-primary DEIS schools and community services in Moyross, Ballynanty and Southill.

It aims to "build the capacity to manage conflict and tensions while repairing harm and building relationships."

At the launch of a new website on November 9th, Tom Prendergast, Coláiste Mhichíl school principal, said he was "overwhelmed" at what was achieved in a

short time.

Since the project began, in June 2013, over 200 people have participated in training, with half of them working in communities and the other half in education.

The long-term aim is to embed the restorative practices approach in all services and institutions for children, families and young people in the city.

Mary Griffin, senior probation officer said it was begun by "people with a vision for social justice and for giving young people a voice".

She said it was a challenge for the adults as well who have to move away from disciplinary methods they've grown up with.

Similar projects also operate in Dublin and Cork.

However, she said what was happening in Limerick was "groundbreaking" in bringing together government agencies, voluntary groups and schools, along with engagement by the community and education sectors.

"We've a lot more to do and I hope the partners to the project remain committed, because restorative justice can truly transform relationships in our city," she said.

Ingrid Colvin, restorative practices officer, said, "Literally hundreds of people across Limerick city are using restorative practice now."

Gardai, youth workers, teachers and law professionals



L-R Elaine Slattery (Ceim Ar Cheim), students from Ceim Ar Cheim, Minister Jan O'Sullivan, Annie Barry and Kim Brown (both Ceim Ar Cheim staff).

**[www.restorativepracticeslimerick.ie](http://www.restorativepracticeslimerick.ie)**

The importance of having an effective way of resolving conflict before things escalate is of concern in every one of society's dealings, from the family to community, national and international level.

The UN is basically an imperfect attempt to deal with conflict and to resolve differences between countries.

Within countries, the traditional role of the criminal justice system - and its failings - is well known. However, there have always been alternatives. Dublin singer Damien Dempsey says the old Irish clan system and old Irish Brehon Law was fairer and more effective.

The 'Restorative Practices Project', which is steered by Limerick City Children's Service Committee, grew out of a justice model, which focuses on repairing the damage caused by crime.

The process seeks to give all parties some responsibility for working out a solution.

A project spokesperson said the website was developed "at very low cost" and is for people who want to know more and it shows how "restorative practices" are being used on the ground.

The Project is funded through the Programme Innovation and Development Fund (PIDF), a funding initiative of Atlantic Philanthropies and Government.

**For more information, contact Ingrid Colvin, restorative practices development officer.**

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**E: [respracdevoff@gmail.com](mailto:respracdevoff@gmail.com)**



# FLICT BEFORE IT ESCALATES

## mmunities

including judges have all adopted the practice.

The launch of the project's website - by Jan O'Sullivan, Minister for Education and Skills - marked the first time the project sought publicity.

Minister O'Sullivan gave credit to those behind the project for finding something that "replaces the traditional way to deal with incidents by the criminal justice system and actually works for communities."

"The growth of restorative practices has relied on leaders in our schools and leaders in our communities. It is now going from strength to strength in schools, youth services and communities.

"I hope the effects spread out much more broadly."

Acknowledging that it will take time, she said, "To my mind, it's much more likely to lead to positive and fruitful development than the traditional way of dealing with problems."

"It's a cultural change for Limerick from the more authoritarian way of dealing with criminal justice issues," she said.

She claimed that Limerick was now "a leader in this area."

Acting deputy principal of Coláiste Mhichíl, Jenny Harte said:

"It's amazing that when you actually sit down with a student and ask the question 'What happened?' - Their responses are so frank and honest. I can leave school at the end of the day without worrying that the situation will escalate or reoccur".

The process revolves around a set of questions designed to help students identify how they felt about an incident, how they made others feel and how they can come to a resolution.

The practice is not just about conflict resolution. As it gives all members of a group an equal voice it has proved a useful tool in community development across a diverse range of disciplines.

## The Probation Officer

John Brosnahan, former senior probation officer, said: "Passion made this project work" and described it as "unique and transformative."

He said that at a meeting of 40 people, five years ago, they looked at the very ambitious plans and asked "Should we bother?"

"Thank God we did," he said.

The project has built up an example, four people are

infrastructure and capacity. For now trained to run 'train-the-trainer' courses.

Funding is safe until June 2016.

## EXPERIENCE

### The Teacher



Acting deputy principal of Coláiste Mhichíl, Jenny Harte, said that now "everybody has a voice". It begins with first years "circles" which create a sense of community and trust.

A schoolroom once called 'The Interrogation Room' by students is now called the "Conference Room"; the days of wagging fingers and imposing discipline by traditional methods are gone.

"You sit the students down and they appreciate being heard... relationships are repaired and rebuilt and there's no

further fallout from the students concerned," she said.

The success of the new approach is partly because it is fair.

"Parents are also recognising the benefits. We've had phone calls from parents to say that our school dealt with an issue in a fair, calm and respectful manner."

## The Community Worker



Cathal Dillon (inset above) is a youth worker with Southill Area Centre and has ten years experience working with young people. He says restorative practice is "all about building relationships."

"We've regularly used restorative practice circles (see photos) as it encourages young people to listen to one another, they learn things about each other and it prevents the breakdown in relationships by encouraging communication. It only works though if you continue to use it."

He said impromptu "conferences" are sometimes called, usually following name-calling, bullying or fighting.

Giving a real-life example of dealing with the aftermath of a fight at a soccer game, he said that by asking restorative justice questions in a circle the issues were resolved.

He described the process as "painless and it works."



# Training for self-starters

## FATEFUL DAY WHEN SIMON'S PERSISTENCE & TRAINING PAID OFF BIG-TIME

**- Grateful LDC insist on first aid for all**

### BEN PANTER REPORTS

When Simon Reynolds was turned down for a place on a sponsored Fás FETAC Level 5 motor vehicle course, his refusal to accept "No" for an answer resulted in life-saving heroics.

The man Simon saved, Jimmy Derham, is the father of a worker with the Clare Local Development Company (CLDC) who sponsored the course.

Months earlier, out-of-work carpenter Simon arrived uninvited on the first day of the course and made an impassioned plea to join the ranks of the would-be mechanics.

Course tutor Pat Quigley and CLDC's education and training co-ordinator Samantha McCarthy held an impromptu meeting and agreed to let Simon start training.

The fateful day happened at the end of July:

"A man came in looking for some work on his car," said Simon. "We asked him to move his car but he didn't respond. He was collapsed on the front seat.

"We assessed the situation, I thought he was dead, I rang 999.

"I kept doing CPR, instinct took over. There was no pulse nor nothing and then he gave a little cough.

"I was on the phone and they were telling me they were on their way it took seven or eight minutes for them to arrive and get the defibrillator out.

"When the paramedics arrived I was so pumped up I kept doing the CPR. I was shaking after it."

Looking back, he said, "It was painful listening to the first aid course but Jesus it paid off."

The first aid course was jointly funded through FAS and the LDCP.

Samantha said, "We add first aid to all our courses, because employers value it. They say it's worthwhile and they look for it. This course had eight modules, but we always add on a whole suite of training and supports around all our courses. We



Simon Reynolds at work.

bring in employers and guest speakers to talk to the participants and do a lot with them around personal development."

Samantha's work colleague Helen Derham told 'Changing Ireland', "We are extremely grateful that Simon was there at the time and knew what to do, we can't thank him enough."

She said that "it was a little ironic" that it was her father who needed the life-saving first aid that Simon learnt. Simon's former tutor Pat Quigley had high praise for his life-saving pupil: "He was probably lacking a bit of direction when he started the course but he has that now. He had a great attitude. He was a great student who loved the practical side and was great cráic."

On completing the course, Simon found paid employment with N18 Auto's in Newmarket-on-Fergus, Co. Clare.

After gaining experience he started a car-valeting business in an adjacent workshop where he works with pal Kale Moroney, who completed the same FETAC course.

Simon says the course gave him more confidence: "It wasn't just mechanics we studied but also things like communications and obviously first aid."

Unfortunately the course ceased in 2012 but Samantha says the CLDC have put in a funding application to start another one.

Simon's determination has proven that education not only has the potential to change lives, it can literally save them.

\* State training agency FÁS was replaced with a new, reformed authority named SOLAS in July.



Simon Reynolds with fellow course graduate Kale Moroney.

## NEWS BRIEFS

### ADVOCACY INITIATIVE HANDS ON 5

The Advocacy Initiative has shut down, handing on five of its projects to others, having been in operation for three years.

It never intended to exist beyond 2014.

Prior to shutdown in August, seven "legacy partners" were chosen to take on social justice advocacy projects between now and 2017.

The website remains as a resource and has details on the projects being continued.

W: [www.advocacyinitiative.ie](http://www.advocacyinitiative.ie)

### TRAVELLERS & FINANCE

The National Traveller Money Advice and Budgeting Service now has six people working in four pilot projects in Navan, Wicklow, Limerick and Balbriggan.

The projects are called 'Key Worker Projects' and all are "running successfully", according to national co-ordinator Liz Daly.

The pilots were launched after a report published in 2012 called for Travellers to receive more support around finance.

For more information, contact Liz on 076-1072230.

E: [liz\\_daly@mabs.ie](mailto:liz_daly@mabs.ie)

W: [mabs.ie](http://mabs.ie)

### URBAN HORSE CAMPAIGNER



Colm Cantillon. Photo: Tony Grehan.

Colm Cantillon is campaigning to have an urban horse project established for people in Limerick city. He is currently attending the Clonshire Equestrian Centre in Croom, Co. Limerick.

Colm and others behind the campaign are seeking support. For coverage of urban horse projects in other parts of the country, see our Autumn 2013 edition.



# BOOK LAUNCH

## 'LEAVE NOBODY BEHIND'

- Network publishes book on community-based social inclusion work...
- Chair John Walsh decries country's poverty
- Minister Ann Phelan determined to "energise rural areas"

"Leave Nobody Behind" is the mantra for today," said John Walsh, chairperson of the Irish Local Development Network, at the launch of a new book on October 17th, **REPORTS ALLEN MEAGHER.**

The book showcases the anti-poverty work of 44 Local Development Companies (LDCs) nationwide.

The date for the launch was carefully chosen as October 17th is the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

"People are in poverty and it's not their fault and new people are becoming poor," said Mr Walsh. "We should be somewhat ashamed - there's enough food in the country."

He said it was unfair of the EU to "put austerity on top of us for the next 50 years".

"It used to gall me to look at the Troika over the past few years checking was the noose right around our neck. Now, for every five euro we spent, one euro goes to Europe; if that could be kept here it would alleviate our poverty."

Mr Walsh welcomed Minister Ann Phelan who officially launched the book. He said her presence demonstrated Government commitment to alleviating poverty and promoting equality.

Minister Phelan said she was "very proud" of the work done by Local Development

Companies: "I'll be trying to energise rural areas and you are the experts - it's you I'll be working with."

She highlighted the LDCs' handling of the Tus programme nationwide as a notable achievement.

She also spoke highly of work by LDCs in counties Kilkenny and Carlow with which she is most familiar.

The book the Minister launched is full of case-studies, photographs and statistics and is easy to read, brightly illustrated and concise in its descriptions. People whose lives were changed tell their stories. Each individual brings their own life and work experiences to the book and it really does show the difference LDCs make locally and nationally.

The range of anti-poverty work done by LDCs is broad, and is delivered through a variety of programmes and initiatives, such as the Local and Community Development Programme, the Local Employment Services, the Tus scheme, Care and Repair, and Mental Health Care services.

The book is officially titled 'Local Development Companies Combating Poverty & Social Exclusion'.

*It is available for download from the ILDN website: [www.ildn.ie](http://www.ildn.ie)*



Ann Phelan, Minister of State at the Departments of Agriculture, Food and Marine and Transport, Tourism and Sport with Special Responsibility for Rural Economic Development, with John Walsh, chairperson of the Irish Local Development Network.

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## Charity not a solution to poverty; rights are!

- NUI Maynooth annual Community Development conference

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

The charity approach to dealing with poverty got the thumbs down in October in NUI Maynooth, not surprisingly perhaps as it was felt that Community Development which looks at the causes of poverty is under attack like never before.

In the face of "neo-liberalism", cuts and new-style contracts that NGOs have to bid for, a call was made to challenge the structures that are inflicting "violence" on people particularly those on the margins.

The two-day annual Community Development conference in Maynooth gives people in the Community and Voluntary Sector time to draw breath, cease work on funding applications and kick back and reflect on where they are now and what they want to do about it.

All with the best interests of people in poverty and the structures responsible for it foremost in their minds. This year,



Rita Fagan - "structural violence" is real.

Irish guest speaker Rita Fagan from St Michael's Estate Family Resource Centre, Dublin, spoke about the "structural violence of austerity" and the "illegitimate debt" the country had taken on:

"Structural violence is not accidental – it equals power and control from above and if we're serious about challenging oppression, we must challenge the structures."

She gave an energetic review of community action in the face of top-down governance, saying, "We're not going to stop, we're not going away."

The conference heard again and again that "the market is swallowing up civil society", we now live in a contract culture and face a struggle to find independent space to express our views.

There followed an inspiring contribution from Sinead Smith on the challenges facing migrant communities and how to do community work in an unwelcoming climate.

Martin Collins said the Sector was being "colonised" and that the latest social inclusion programme proposed by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government was "the biggest threat to community work with Travellers".

Anna Lee, former manager of Dodder Valley Partnership in Dublin, characterised the relationship between the Community Sector and the State as "deeply unequal" and said "trust has been severely undermined".

Sinead Smith of Cultúr put it succinctly when she said that State-funded community workers are being forced to work with the effects of injustice, rather than the root causes.

"The needs of the economy trump society every time," remarked Juan Carlos Azzopardi from Limerick.

The conference was organised by the Department of Applied Social Studies, Maynooth University and the Community Workers' Co-operative.



Martin Collins - sector being "colonised".

speakers came from Romania, England and Canada to take part.

Magda Tancau from Romania spoke of the de-politicisation of community development and the scale of neo-liberalism in her country.

Another guest speaker from abroad, Marjorie Mayo from Goldsmiths University of London, provided clear and optimistic insights into the value of activism in the face of neoliberalism.

She analysed "the economics of the 1%" and highlighted the scale of the challenge for community development in the face of neo-liberalism globally. However, she said there was "plenty of space for subversive citizens" and provided examples. Singer Sinead O'Connor would have approved.

Marjorie also said there were clear similarities between the situations in Ireland and Britain regarding market penetration of civil society. She stressed the necessity of moving away from charity models towards rights-based models to defeat poverty.



# OPINION

# SPEND APPLE TAX REFUNDS ON SOCIAL INCLUSION

- Spread it among community programmes, health & education

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

There's a possibility that Apple will be obliged in the coming months to repay taxes to Ireland, possibly billions of euro.

However, our finance minister has no plans for how to spend it, at least not ones that are known to the public.

He was recently quoted in the 'Irish Times' downplaying the likelihood of Apple having to pay us backtax.

However it is the EU that will ultimately decide and we found that 'Changing Ireland' readers are not short on suggestions on how to spend the windfall if it comes.

And everyone we spoke to said it should be spent on social inclusion measures.

They said it should be spread across the community, health and education sectors.

It must "address social inequality", said Edel Geraghty, development worker with Limerick Women's Network.

Eilish Comerford from St. Michael's Family Resource Centre Community Development Project, said, "They could use it to redress cuts to home help, drugs work, youthwork, to reverse health cuts and some should go on social housing."

If he was finance minister, Jason Hyland, a

volunteer with the Merchants Quay Project, would "spend 60% of any repayment on Community Development projects, community centres, drug services, services for the elderly and health initiatives".

Most of the remainder he'd spend on education. "Spread it across the board," he

They should also consult the Community Workers' Co-op, he said.

Separately, Tommy and Eilish stressed that the level of cuts to the Community Sector to date has been "extremely disproportionate".

Tommy asked why the cuts to the Sector are "over 40%":



said.

Shane Hayes from Sligo Sports Partnership would spend part of any repayment on "mental health and wellbeing programmes".

Meanwhile, Tommy Coombes from South Dublin Communities Partnership said the Government should talk with "people who are working directly with communities on the bottom to see how best to spend it."

"Is it because we're weak, not as strong as other sectors, or is it they that don't want to upset the multi-nationals? What I mean by that is if you raised corporation tax by between 1% and 2%, you could reverse many of the cuts."

If Apple are obliged to repay Ireland, it presents an opportunity for the State to improve services that promote social inclusion across the board.

## "Top-down has replaced bottom-up development"

The criteria for receiving State-funding for Community Development work continues to change as the Government replaces one funding programme with another, the NUIM conference on Community Development was told recently.

Successive governments have implemented policy as a result of which "Top-down has replaced bottom-up development", delegates were told.

Juan Carlos Azzopardi from Limerick City Community Development Project said he had "observed huge disillusion among staff and volunteers who say, 'This is not what I signed up for.'"

The table here which he presented at Maynooth demonstrates how the work as he sees it has changed. It compares the current Local and Community Development Programme with the programme that ran for 18 years before it.

•COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME	•Local and Community Development Programme
•Bottom up	•Top down
•Needs based	•Target based
•Collective action	•Individual activation
•Local focus	•Citywide focus
•Community ownership	•Volunteer disconnect
•Autonomous	•3rd party contractor
•Catalyst for change	•Service provider

Juan Carlos views the new Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) as a further move towards serving individuals above

and beyond developing communities, despite what is said in the programme outline about the supposed importance of Community Development.

# NATIONAL COMMUNITY WORK

## 3-month extension offered to projects

While most LCDP-funded projects (including this one) have been granted a three-month extension to their funding into 2015, funding will be reduced in some cases. Island and Women's projects have received assurances and Traveller representatives were due to meet the Minister as we went to press.

However, Maureen O'Sullivan TD (pictured) has asked for a rethink of "a potential 38% cut" to LCDP-funded community projects in Dublin's inner city.

She asked Alan Kelly, the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, to meet with the groups, to consider the impact of their work and the fact that the area suffers high unemployment and "the highest number of lone parents".

"These projects in communities are working," she said.

Minister Alan Kelly, in response to Deputy O'Sullivan confirmed that he will meet the groups.

While he said there was no getting away from SICAP "which needs to be executed" as tendering had begun, he added: "But I'm determined to ensure that a fair solution to the issues raised by a number of deputies relating to the SICAP model or whatever measures need to be taken in parallel with that as well."

"I want to assure you directly that I will be keeping a close eye on this to ensure there is a fair distribution going forward."



## OFFSHORE COMMUNITIES WANT RETURN OF ISLANDS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

- Groups say new community programme model "doesn't fit"
- Minister McHugh visited islands & "understands" projects' importance

**Communities on nine non-Gaeltacht, off-shore islands who were "shocked" to almost have their funding pulled want the Government to re-establish an Islands Development Programme, REPORTS ALLEN MEAGHER.**

Funding for the five amounts to €600,000 per annum. Although they have now secured temporary funding until March 31st, they described this as "insufficient" and remain "most concerned".

Joe McHugh, Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht described the funding extensions as "very positive developments" and promised his support for the work the companies do.

He said, "There was a general agreement amongst my Department and my colleague, Minister Alan Kelly TD, and his Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, that this funding was essential to the continued developments of these islands."

He was confident "an appropriate solution will be found" and said "both Departments will examine ways of supporting the continuation of these vital island structures and services."

The islands involved include Inishbofin, Inishturk, Clare Island, Bere Island, Sherkin Island, Dursey Island, Whiddy Island, Long Island and Heir Island.

Over the years, as funding regimes changed, the five island projects responsible for supporting these nine communities moved from one Government programme to another. However, they ran into difficulty this year when details of the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme were announced.

The island projects faced possible closure after December 31st.

Shocked at the turn of events, their representatives assembled in Dublin on November 19th to address Oireachtas members. They learned then of the offer of a three-month funding extension.

Simon Murray, Inishbofin, said, "On behalf of non-Gaeltacht Islands, we need the Government to bring back the Island Development Programme that was in place from 1994 until 2009. The programme needs to be implemented and funded directly by a Government Department working directly with the five island Community Development Companies."

Michelle O'Mahoney, Clare Island, pointed out that the islands are "key economic drivers in their respective regions" and are a major draw for Irish tourism.



They say they're different: Mary Heanue, Inishturk, Tim O'Leary, Cork, Simon Murray, Inishbofin and Michelle O'Mahoney, Clare Island.

The island companies are managed by local voluntary committees who run community offices and employ staff to engage in community development\* and deliver community services.

"The Community Offices have become the heartbeat of the islands," said Tim O'Leary from the West Cork islands. "The islanders have come to rely on the offices to drive initiatives and programmes on their behalf."

Development worker Mary Heanue from Inishturk warned if their core-funding was discontinued it would have "disastrous short, medium and long-term effects on the island communities" and the islands would "never recover".

However, Minister Joe McHugh, who recently visited the community offices on Sherkin and Bere islands said, "Both Departments fully understand the importance of these island community development offices" and "we have agreed that we will work together to ensure that the services they provide are retained and supported by both Departments."

Repeating their call for a new programme for islands, Simon Murray said the model for SICAP due to be begin next April "simply doesn't fit the islands".

\* The companies work in addressing disadvantage, social exclusion, and isolation and provide hubs of social, economic and community activity.

**"The Community Offices have become the heartbeat of the islands," said Tim O'Leary**



# SEASON'S GREETINGS

## HORACE'S CHRISTMAS CRACKERS 2014!

- WELL, THEY'RE ORIGINAL

Horace is currently doing some contract work for a new company called Irish Water and was unable to provide a full column on this occasion. But he wishes you all 'Merry Christmas!' and sent in some original Christmas Crackers to get the party started:

**If Horace was elected president of Ireland where would he live?**

Horace an Uachtarain!  
\* \* \*

**If Horace's life was made into a movie what would it be called?**

Horace Dump!  
\* \* \*

**Did you hear Horace's Xmas Party was cancelled?**

It failed an Elf and Safety Assessment!  
\* \* \*

**If Horace was a car from the '60's what would he be?**

A Horace Minor!  
\* \* \*

**What do you call it when Horace is confronted by citizens while he kindly goes about installing equipment to help people measure their water usage?**

Workplace horacement!  
\* \* \*

**Did you hear Horace got his favourite singer on CD for Xmas...**

Elf-is Costello's Greatest Hits!

### HORACE'S MOTHER

Meantime, Horace's mother now runs 'Ballybog Says No (to most things)' and she's told him not to expect any card from her this year and there'll be no gravy with his Christmas dinner either.

Horace replied on her Facebook page, saying "I'll be cruising the Carribean Mum, so it doesn't meter."



### ABOUT HORACE:

A former civil servant, community worker and agony uncle, Horace knows it all.

He has addressed everything from world poverty to extraordinary rendition and estate enhancement, and has a huge readership among people seeking change in their pockets.

A few of his better columns are available exclusively on the 'Changing Ireland' website.

## 368 DAYS OF HIGHLIGHTING DOMESTIC ABUSE

- "Most successful" campaign in Ireland to date

**BY BEN PANTER**

Woman's Aid has hailed this year's '16 Days of Action' campaign to highlight domestic violence as "the most successful to date" in Ireland.

Over 130 organisations held events including mass balloon releases, seminars, discussions, plays, art competitions, exhibitions, film screenings, postcard and poster campaigns, information stands and media campaigns.

This year also saw Woman's Aid celebrate its 40th anniversary.

According to Margaret Martin, director of Woman's Aid: "This 40 year period has witnessed a massive shift in Ireland, but unfortunately we as a society still haven't put in place a system to make it possible for women and their children to leave (abusive relationships) in safety and dignity."

She said one in five women have experienced domestic violence: "The campaign not

only highlighted that fact but was also an opportunity to show solidarity with local services.

"We wanted to break the silence on domestic abuse across communities in Ireland," she said.

The Woman's Aid website also ran an online campaign which featured a video, daily blog posts, guest blogs and pointers to information on resources and events.

The organisation receives LCDP funding.

The '16 Days' campaign began in 1991 and involves 187 countries. The campaign has now seen over one full year of 'Days of Action' on the issue.

**More information:** [www.womensaid.ie](http://www.womensaid.ie)

**Women's Aid National Freephone**

**Helpline: 1800 341 900 (10am-10pm, seven days a week, 364 days of the year).**



Balloon launches have become a big part of the '16 Days of Action'.

# TOP 10 SONGS THAT CHANGED IRELAND

## - What are your favourites?

**What songs by Irish artists have given a lift to people seeking social change, justice and equality in this country?**

Many song-writers have churned out fresh tunes about Irish Water, but which songs captured the public imagination and made a difference in the past?

Across the English-speaking world, many songs are famous for their social if not revolutionary impact – eg ‘Free Nelson Mandela’, ‘Feed the World’, ‘Strange Fruit’, ‘Blowin’ in the Wind’, ‘We Shall Overcome’. But can you name 10 Irish tunes that helped to change Ireland?

The Advocacy Initiative raised the question last Spring (as it prepared to wind up operations) and ‘Changing Ireland’ has come up with its own competing ‘Top 10’.

So, which list does it for you and what you would add or remove? You might add Geldof’s ‘Band Aid 30 – Do they know it’s Christmas’. It’s not on our list.

### ‘CHANGING IRELAND’S TOP 10

- 1) Ghosts of Overdoses - Damien Dempsey
- 2) Thousands Are Sailing – The Pogues
- 3) Sunday Bloody Sunday / Running to Stand Still - U2
- 4) Rat Trap - Boomtown Rats
- 5) Ordinary Man / Go Move Shift - Christy Moore
- 6) Hiroshima Nagasaki, Russian Roulette - Moving Hearts
- 7) The Island or Nothing but the Same Old Story - Paul Brady
- 8) The Fields of Athenry - Paddy Reilly
- 9) Alternative Ulster - Stiff Little Fingers
- 10) Zombie - The Cranberries

### Damien Dempsey - ‘Ghosts of Overdoses’

*Hey little baby I want to take you from here  
I want to take you away from here  
Hey little baby I don't want to see you on the gear  
It's so hard to find your way back  
Hey little baby it's every parent's worst fear  
For their child to end up on smack*

### THE ‘ADVOCACY INITIATIVE’S TOP 10

- 1) Tiny Dancer - A Song for Lily-Mae
- 2) Banana Republic - The Boomtown Rats
- 3) Big Decision - That Petrol Emotion
- 4) Fairytale of New York - The Pogues and Kirsty MacColl /
- 5) Girl in the Grotto - Cry Before Dawn
- 6) Men Behind The Wire - The Wolfe Tones
- 7) My Land is too Green - Mary Coughlan
- 8) Ship Ahoy - Marxman with Sinéad O’Connor
- 9) The West’s Awake performed - Damien Dempsey
- 10) Up Went Nelson - The Go Lucky Four

## KILDARE COMMUNITY ACTIVISTS AMONG FIRST TO HIGHLIGHT TREATMENT OF ASYLUM-SEEKERS

The treatment of asylum-seekers, and particularly children born into the direct provision system, led to national outrage this year, with Government ministers now promising radical reforms.

However, before the national outcry, Local Development Companies were working to improve life for asylum-seekers in a variety of ways and one in particular took a strident, human-rights approach to the issue.

From the start, Kildare Leader Partnership was exceptional in the level of support it provided to residents of a centre in Newbridge. The centre there was supplying

adults and children alike with cheap toxic toothpaste and conditions generally were very poor. KLP documented the case – and others – and assisted in every way they could the asylum-seekers’ support group.

They filed complaints (the toothpaste was eventually withdrawn) and constantly raised questions with the justice department at a time when it was not popular or common to do so.

The toxic toothpaste story featured in our Summer 2008 edition (Issue 26). Also see: Issue 40, Autumn 2012, on our archive: [www.changingireland.ie/archive.html](http://www.changingireland.ie/archive.html)



### WHAT'RE THEY SMILING ABOUT?! SEE PAGE 9.

