

CHANGING IRELAND

Issue 59 - COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT - COLLECTIVE ACTION - EMPOWERMENT - SOCIAL INCLUSION - www.changingireland.ie



EMPLOYMENT:
Support self-starters
need to know about



COMMUNITY WORK:
Advice on how to
confront extremists
of all types



TECH TIPS:
Communities on
social media



AWARDS SEASON:
Meet the winners

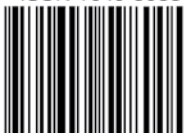
NORTH COUNTY DUBLIN:
New people, new opportunities,
new challenges



This publication is produced by Changing Ireland Community Media Ltd, an independent, not-for-profit NGO funded through the Department of Rural and Community Development.

ISSN 1649-5985

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The Universal Declaration of

HUMAN RIGHTS

Adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948, the Universal Declaration states basic rights and fundamental freedoms to which all human beings are entitled.

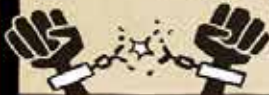
WE ARE ALL BORN FREE AND EQUAL

EVERYONE IS ENTITLED TO THESE RIGHTS

NO MATTER YOUR RACE, RELIGION OR NATIONALITY

EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO LIFE, FREEDOM AND SAFETY

No one has the right to hold you in slavery.



No one has the right to torture you.

You have the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

We are all equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of the law.

You have the right to seek legal help if your rights are violated.

No one has the right to wrongly imprison you or force you to leave your country.

You have the right to a fair and public trial.

Everyone is innocent until **PROVEN** guilty.

You have the right to privacy. No one can interfere with your reputation, family, home or correspondence.



You can travel wherever you want.

You have the right to seek asylum in another country if you are being persecuted in your own country.



Everyone has the right to a nationality.

All adults have the right to marriage and to raise a family.



You have the right to own property.



Freedom of Expression: You have the right to free thought and to voice your opinions to others.

Everyone has the right to gather as a peaceful assembly.

You have the right to help choose and to take part in governing your country, directly or through chosen representatives.



You have the right to social security and are entitled to economic, social and cultural help from your government.

Workers' rights: Every adult has the right to a job, a fair wage and to join a trade union.

You have the right to leisure and rest from work.

Everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their family.



Everyone has the right to education.

Your intellectual property as an artist or scientist should be protected.

We are all entitled to social order so we can enjoy these rights.

You have the responsibility to respect the rights of others

NO ONE CAN TAKE AWAY ANY OF YOUR RIGHTS

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INDEPENDENT

'Changing Ireland' is an independent not-for-profit publication.

ABOUT US

'Changing Ireland' engages in original journalism to highlight the impact of local and community development and social inclusion work across Ireland. We report on action on the ground and provide a space for reflection on what serves people and communities best.

The magazine was established in 2001, is based in Moyross, Limerick, and is core-funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

This year, we began to produce journalism to reflect social inclusion work funded or supported by an array of Government departments and agencies. At the same time, we provide space for those with empty pockets and nothing but community development in their hearts.

We are dedicated to promoting social justice, equality and fair play and to giving people who are rarely heard a voice.

While covering serious issues, we hope our style of journalism provides encouragement to workers, activists and volunteers nationwide, including civil and public servants and all involved in social inclusion in Ireland today. See page 4 for information about the team behind 'Changing Ireland'.

SUPPORT

'Changing Ireland' generates a small amount of social enterprise revenue. It is core-funded by Government since 2001, receiving support from the:



Department of Rural and Community Development



An Roinn Forbartha Tuaithe agus Pobail

UN DAYS - FEBRUARY-MARCH



Feb 4 Sunday - World Cancer Day
Feb 6 Tuesday - International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation
Feb 11 Sunday - International Day of Women and Girls in Science
Feb 13 Tuesday - World Radio Day
Feb 20 Tuesday - World Day of Social Justice
Feb 21 Wednesday - International Mother Language Day

Mar 1 Thursday - Zero Discrimination Day
Mar 3 Saturday - World Wildlife Day
Mar 8 Thursday - International Women's Day
Mar 20 Tuesday - International Day of Happiness
Mar 21 Wednesday - International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
Mar 21 Wednesday - World Poetry Day
Mar 21 Wednesday - International Day of Nowruz
Mar 21 Wednesday - World Down Syndrome Day
Mar 21 Wednesday - International Day of Forests
Mar 22 Thursday - World Water Day
Mar 23 Friday - World Meteorological Day
Mar 24 Saturday - World Tuberculosis Day
Mar 24 Saturday - International Day for the Right to the Truth concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims
Mar 25 Sunday - International Day of Remembrance of Slavery Victims and the Transatlantic Slave Trade
Mar 25 Sunday - International Day of Solidarity with Detained and Missing Staff Members

VOLUNTEER IRELAND AWARDS



About the Volunteer Ireland Awards

The Volunteer Ireland Awards recognise volunteers supported by the national network of Volunteer Centres and Volunteering Information Services.

"Volunteers are the backbone of communities across Ireland", said Volunteer Ireland CEO, Nina Arwitz, speaking at her organisation's tenth awards ceremony, in December.

"Volunteers are often unseen but the contribution they make to Irish society is immense. These awards give us a chance to say thank you and celebrate the difference they make."

"Sister Patricia exemplifies everything that is wonderful about the spirit of volunteering in Ireland, from her high-adrenaline sky-diving, to her long-term commitment to the local community."

"Mohammed Rafique demonstrates the huge contribution and positive impact that new arrivals to Ireland make, something we are proud to highlight," she said.

These awards specifically recognise volunteers supported by the national network of Volunteer Centres and Volunteering Information Services in the ROI.

For the first time, the ceremony took place outside Dublin - in Sligo - to help round off its designation as the European Volunteering Capital of the Year on a high note.

W: volunteer.ie

SR. PATRICIA WALL

Tipperary parachutist (79)

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

There's nothing like doing a skydive in your seventies to get attention. And that's precisely what community volunteer, Sr. Patricia Wall from Co. Tipperary, had in mind when she jumped from 10,000 feet for charity.

Sister Patricia performed the stunt four years ago, at the age of 75, raising over €25,000 for community groups in Slieveardagh and for Aware - which supports people with depression.

"I'm working in a rural area where there is a lot of isolation and an increase in depression and suicide," she said at the time of her skydive.

She battled depression herself while a missionary in New Zealand in the 1960s.

"I don't have family commitments. I use my time for the benefit of the community."

Turning 80 this year, she was named the winner, last December, of the 2017 Christine Buckley Volunteer of the Year Award*, for going "above and beyond the call of duty to secure funding for projects in the area".

In paying tribute, Volunteer Ireland said, "While it is her skydive for which she is famous locally, her commitment to the local area of Slieveardagh stretches back to 1996.

"Since her retirement as a school principal over twenty years ago, she helped set up three organisations to support the local community and is still involved in the day to day running of all three."

The three nominated her for the award - Millennium Family Resource Centre, Ballingarry Community Development and Slieveardagh Rural Development. She is chairperson of the latter, which provides a range of services in Glengoole, Killenaule and Ballingarry, Co. Tipperary.**

Volunteer Ireland said, "To give just one of many examples, she was the driving force behind the development of a historical corner in the village of Ballingarry, turning a derelict site into a beautiful tourist attraction and historical monument."

Sr. Patricia's success was a story with wings as far as RTE and the national press was concerned. Said the 'Irish Examiner': "The Flying Nun has been named Volunteer of the Year".

Not that she'd jump again, however: "It was a good PR stunt - we got a 'Late Late Show' appearance out of it and put Slieveardagh on the map. But, never again. Your man (her co-parachutist) did some spins on the way down and, though I didn't get sick, I felt sick."

Sr. Patricia has no problem whatsoever with the nickname, but is modest about her achievements and cool under questioning. Asked who cooks her dinner, given her hectic volunteering schedule, and who does the hoovering and so on, she smiled. She confessed to having a slight advantage over other - secular - volunteers.

"Since my retirement from teaching, my



congregation has made me available to the community. I'm a sister and I don't have to earn a living, which certainly helps."

Does that give her an edge over other volunteers?

"Maybe!" she smiled. "I agree. It certainly helps, because I don't have family commitments. I use my time for the benefit of the community. And they appreciate it."

"I spend a lot of time going around to the projects. We've a good team of paid workers, but you need volunteers," she said.

She retired twice, but keeps returning to volunteering, not in the slightest put off by age.

We met just before lunchtime and while her manager and I fretted about how long the queue for food was, Sr. Patricia disappeared, to look for seats, she said. Moments later, she emerged halfway up the line, ahead of us. Some people never miss an opportunity. Everyone around her was smiling.

She reminded me of another highly entrepreneurial and sparkling woman - my late grandmother - who came from Killenaule, one of the villages in the Slieve Ardagh area.

There's something good in the air out that way.

*** The award is named in memory of the late Christine Buckley - campaigner, activist and co-founder of The Aislinn Education and Support Centre. Christine was Volunteer of the Year in 2009.**

**** The project is part-funded through the Community Services Programme, which is under the remit of the Department of Rural and Community Development.**

is volunteer of the year



*Above & right:
Sr. Patricia
Wall.*



Category Winners

The other category winners in the Volunteer Ireland awards are:

ANIMALS & ENVIRONMENT

Suzanne O'Neill – Sean Walsh Memorial Park, Dublin.

ARTS, CULTURE & MEDIA

Treasa Martin – Ballymun Local Community, Dublin.

CHILDREN & YOUTH

James Dempsey – Big Picture Youth Cafe, Dublin.

COMMUNITY

Patricia Lynch – Dunshaughlin Local Community, Meath.

HEALTH & DISABILITY

Mae Murphy – Drumkill Day Care Centre, Monaghan.

SAFETY & EMERGENCY SERVICES

Michael Cardiff – St. John Ambulance Ballyfermot, Dublin.

SOCIAL WORK & SOCIAL INCLUSION

George and Mary Sugrue – Chernobyl Children International, Kerry.

SPORTS & RECREATION

Benny Grogan – WATCH Cycling Club, Louth.

OUTSTANDING GROUP

Ballyphehane & Togher Community Arts & Crafts Initiative, Cork..

VOLUNTEER MANAGER SPECIAL COMMENDATION

Eithne Kiely – Sligo Social Services, Sligo.

RECOGNITION FOR ROHINGYA ACTIVIST

It would be hard to surpass the achievements of Mohammed Rafique. He moved to Carlow in 2009 as part of a UNHCR resettlement programme. In Sligo, in December, he was presented with the top award for Campaigning & Awareness Raising.

Mohammed is Rohingya. Originally from Myanmar (aka Burma) he lived in a refugee camp in Bangladesh for 17 years, before being brought to Ireland.

Three years after coming here, he organised an art exhibition for fellow Rohingya refugees, giving them the opportunity to use art as healing and to share their experiences (and talent) with the Carlow community.

He is secretary, coach and an active member of the Carlow Cricket club, which he helped to re-establish in 2011.

He is also a member of Carlow Integration Forum.

On a practical level, many of the refugee community in Carlow do not have transport and Mohammed often coordinates lifts to cricket matches and other events.

Muslims in Carlow have no mosque and he helps fundraise to cover the costs of hiring hotel rooms.

Internationally, Mohammed volunteers as the media coordinator/PRO



Mohammed Rafique has also turned to art to express himself.

for the European Rohingya Council which advocates for the human rights of Rohingya people globally. The UN - among others - has accused the authorities in Myanmar of practicing genocide against the Rohingya people.

The National Traveller Community Survey 2017 found that compared to only 2% in the year 2000.

16% had completed their Leaving Certificate,

YOU'LL GET NO THANKS FOR THAT!



There was a time when you'd be told, 'You'll get no thanks for that'.

Not anymore!

Award ceremonies and presentations have really taken off in the Community and Voluntary Sector.

We have the hugely popular Pride of Place awards, the superb Volunteer Ireland Awards and the new Charity Impact Awards. And that's not to mention sustainable energy

awards, social entrepreneur awards and the recently held local authority awards.

It's got to the stage where we now have what could be called an 'Awards Season', around the end of every year.

They serve a purpose, drawing our attention to this country's great reliance... no, not on the banks... on people, volunteers, activists, good neighbours in the community.

They are appreciated most of all by those without a trophy to give them, those they advocate for, give a voice to, those whom they seek to empower.

Most of us who like to volunteer were first impressed by others who - for no worldly rewards - volunteered to improve the quality

of our own lives.

Youth club volunteers from my past spring to mind. Denis North, stand up and take a bow! Fr. Moore, take a bow.

* * * * *

Speaking of religious, this is the second time in 17 years that we've featured a nun on the front cover. (Our first edition featured Sr. Mary Carmel, a professional community art therapist).

Sr. Patricia Wall, or 'The Flying Nun' as she is called, is impressive to meet and worthy of her national award for volunteering. She knows from personal experience what it is to be depressed and she and her team work hard to tackle social exclusion in her part of rural Tipperary.

* * * * *

There is some great journalism in this edition, focusing on best practise in community development and social inclusion. Human rights is also very much to the fore, with this year marking the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

A special thanks to all our contributors.

Allen Meagher

FILE A REPORT FOR US!

If you believe in Community Development and enjoy writing, why not file a report for us about your community project and what makes it unique. 300-400 words is plenty (and a photo if possible). Certain criteria apply. Your first point of contact should be the editor.



Published By:

Established in 2001, 'Changing Ireland' is a national magazine focused on community development and social inclusion. It is managed and published by Changing Ireland Community Media CLG., through funding from the Department of Rural & Community Development.

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L: linkedin.com/company/changing-ireland

Also: Issuu.com

Production:

Editor: Allen Meagher

Editorial Team: Viv Sadd, Juan Carlos Azzopardi, Joe Saunders, Rosie Smyth and Allen Meagher.

Packing and Distribution: Speedpak, Dublin, an award-winning social enterprise.

Printed by: Davis Printers, Limerick.

Voluntary Board of Directors: Cathy Jones (chair), George Clancy (vice), Seamus McGiff (sec), Ellen Duffy, Andrew O'Byrne, Jude Meaney, Claire Gallery, Kay Flanagan and Viv Sadd

Thanks To . . .

'Changing Ireland' thanks everyone involved in the production of Issue 59.

**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 CLG, or the Department of Rural & Community Development.

SOCIAL INCLUSION & COMMUNITY ACTIVATION PROGRAMME

COMMITTEES CONTRACT 47 GROUPS FOR 5 YEARS

- Communities in three counties await outcome of further deliberations

Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) around the country have approved of 47 suitable applicants to provide services to disadvantaged communities over the coming five years.

All the successful organisations had previous experience in delivering on the ground as “programme implementers” for the €37.5m Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP 2015-’17).

All are not-for-profit organisations and most can trace their origins back over two decades. It was good news for those areas and for those organisations.

Community groups often wish for security of funding over a number of years. Under SICAP, the “programme implementers” are certain of support funding until 2022, and possibly 2023. (The Department of Rural and Community Development may decide to extend the programme by 12 months).

However, there was dismay in three counties - or four lots - where LCDCs failed to approve or fully approve a suitable applicant. This potentially affects communities and community groups in Dublin’s inner city and counties Wicklow and Wexford.

Had extensions not been granted, it would have left communities in those counties - and organisations and experienced staff, including community workers - cut adrift from national supports from January 1st last.

Nationally, the programme is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development, with support from Pobal.*

The applicant groups seeking to

overcome the challenge are Dublin City Community Co-operative (DCCC), Bray Area Partnership, County Wicklow Partnership and Wexford Local Development Company (WLDC).

There was relief across the board when the authorities agreed to three-month extensions to contracts under the old programme.

Of note, DCCC consists of 13 independent community development organisations.

“A negotiated procedure is now underway in each of the areas between the relevant LCDC and the Programme Implementer,” Minister Michael Ring announced in January.

The hurdles in Dublin and Wicklow are described by insiders as being relatively easily surmountable.

However, in Wexford, it is more complex as the existing applicant - WLDC - was flatly turned down on its bid and no company was awarded the contract. This caught people by surprise. The organisation has an enviable track record for instance in working with young people not engaged in education, employment or training and its work has been highlighted as an example of best practice.

The Department previously explained that SICAP was put out to tender “in accordance with the Public Spending Code, legal advice and in order to ensure the optimum delivery of services to clients.”

Through SICAP, LCDCs and their “programme implementers” provide services to disadvantaged communities and vulnerable groups.

On this occasion, the maximum number of lots that any company could apply for was five.

As Minister Michael Ring explained in the Dáil recently, “SICAP provides funding to tackle poverty and social exclusion at a local level through local engagement and partnerships between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies.”

He answered many questions from various TDs, including Wexford’s Mick Wallace (Independents 4 Change) and former communities minister Éamon Ó Cuív (FF).

He was asked everything from why Pobal, with an overall budget of over €300m, is registered as a charity, to how many reviews of programmes the Department is currently engaged in.



FOR-PROFIT BIDS

The sands have shifted for community groups in recent years. In the past, community-based organisations applied for grants and that is still largely the case, but now organisations may also need to know their “lots”.

A number of bids by for-profit companies were received by LCDCs in relation to the SICAP 2018-2022 lots.

None got over the line.

Among those that tendered was a company already providing a service to unemployed people through funding from another government department.

Tendering for anti-poverty work here began with the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme in 2015.

Generally, with regard to services across Europe, the EU expects work to be put out to public tender. We’re all familiar with the idea of private contractors bidding for road-building contracts.

Of course, the stakes are high - not just for communities, but also for the organisations that serve them. To lose a bid can mean closure for a long-established, locally-based community organisation. To win brings renewed confidence and some security of funding.

Local Development Companies have by now developed an expertise in this area - no easy task as bid documents can easily run to over one or two hundred pages.

There are even courses nowadays pitched at community groups, promising to show them how to prepare tenders.

While for-profit companies were unsuccessful on this occasion, communities do face the prospect down the line of companies profiting from programmes designed to address social inclusion.

There are various arguments for and against placing the work in such programmes under the hammer.

For now, it certainly keeps everyone on their toes, sharpens minds and demands hard work by LCDCs to do right by their communities.

- AM

* With co-funding under the European Social Fund (ESF) Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 214-2020.

NEW PROGRAMME SEEN AS IMPROVEMENT ON PREDECESSOR

SICAP aims to tackle poverty, social exclusion and long-term unemployment in Ireland.

It is particularly aimed at people who are often the hardest to reach.

The first SICAP programme ran for Two years and nine months (Apr 2015 - Dec 2017), whereas the latest iteration will run for at least five and possibly six years.

The first programme had three goals (replacing an earlier programme with four goals). The new programme will have two:

Goal 1 - Community development.

Goal 2 - Individual supports.

The programme’s redesign has been generally greeted with relief at grassroots level, taking on board many suggestions made by people working “on the ground”.

For 2018, the budget remains almost unchanged, taking inflation into account (up €500,000 to €38m).

It is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development with co-financing from the European Social Fund.

SICAP achieves its aims, say its creators, through “local engagement and partnership between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies.”

In previous years, the targets have often been surpassed.

The delivery of SICAP in each area (or lot) is overseen and managed by a Local Community Development Committee (LCDC).

From now on, LCDC’s can identify ‘emerging needs’ groups to more efficiently target supports in their area.

AWARDS SEASON

We've just emerged from the awards season in the Community and Voluntary sector. Over a hundred presentations have been made to groups and individuals making extraordinary contributions to society. They include volunteers who give their time, talent, expertise, patience, warmth and savvy.

The awards tell positive stories of community achievement and we bring together the award-winners nationally in this edition. Among the awards presented recently are the following:

- Pride of Place Awards (organised by Co-operation Ireland).

- Sustainable Energy Awards (organised by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland).
- Volunteer Ireland Awards (organised by Volunteer Ireland).
- Charity Impact Awards (organised by The Wheel).
- Social Entrepreneurs Ireland (SEI) Awards (organised by the SEI).
- The Community and Council Awards announced as we went to print (organised by the Local Authority Members Association).

In the coming months, the following

awards will be announced:

In **March 5th** - AONTAS's STAR Awards recognising innovative approaches in adult and community education.

Also in March - applications are being taken for the Chambers Ireland's Corporate Social Responsibility Awards (which will be announced in September).

Two more awards taking place later in the year include:- Foróige's National Youth Citizenship Awards and ECO-Unesco's Young Environmentalist Awards.

PRIDE OF PLACE WINNERS

800 attend event in Letterkenny as 49 receive awards

Over 800 people gathered in Donegal, in December, for the 15th annual Pride of Place Awards, to acknowledge the invaluable work undertaken by communities and groups across the island of Ireland.

Each year local authorities across Ireland submit nominations to highlight local groups that make "an outstanding contribution to supporting and strengthening their local community".

The competition began as a Co-operation Ireland programme and has grown, say the organisers, to become the largest event recognising community development achievements.

"It is important to recognise the role of local authorities, North and South, who work closely with their communities to support inspiring voluntary initiatives," said Michael Garvey, Chief Executive Officer of sponsor IPB Insurance.

Including runners-up, there were 49 winning groups this year.

MAIN AWARDS

Pop. 0 - 300: Attymass, Co. Mayo

Pop. 300-1000: Latton & Bawn, Co. Monaghan

Pop. 1000-2000: Slane, Co. Meath

Pop. 2000-5000: Carrigtwohill, Co. Cork

Pop. 5000: Clonakilty, Co. Cork

Community Based Youth Initiative

Galway County Comhairle na nÓg

Creative Place Initiative

Comharchumann Forbartha Gaoth Dobhair, (Gweedore Co-operative), Co. Donegal

Community Reaching Out Initiative

Maria Goretti Foundation, Co. Louth

Housing Estates

Kiln Lane, Mountrath, Co. Laois

Islands and Coastal Communities

Lady's Island Village, Co. Wexford

Urban Neighbourhoods

Newpark Close, Kilkenny City



Award winners at the Pride of Place ceremony in Sligo.

CITIES WINNERS

Urban Neighbourhoods / Villages

Pop. under 1000: Lower Oldpark, Belfast.

Pop. of 1000 - 2000: Grange Woodbine, Raheny, Dublin City.

Pop. over 2000: The Village Salthill, Galway City.

Community Environmental Initiative

Bonfire Night Community Volunteers, Cork City

Community Based Youth Initiative

Upper Springfield Youth Team, Belfast

Social Inclusion and Equality Initiative

Back of the Pipes Residents Association/
Flanagan's Fields Community Garden, Dublin City

Council Community Engagement Award

Fingal County Council

SPECIAL AWARD WINNERS

Fore, Co. Westmeath.

Erica's Fairy Forest, Cootehill, Co. Cavan.

Seamus Ennis Arts Centre, the Naul, Fingal Council Area.

Ballykeeffe Amphitheatre, Co. Kilkenny.

CLG Cuair an Chláir Health & Wellbeing Team, Co. Clare.

Barretstown Children's Charity, Co. Kildare.

W: volunteer.ie

CHARITY IMPACT AWARDS

CHERNOBYL VOLUNTEERS WIN LIFETIME RECOGNITION

- 30,000 voted in inaugural awards

Separate to the Volunteer Ireland Awards, the winners of a new competition recognising contributions to community life were announced, in Dublin, on December 13th.

The Charity Impact Awards night was organised by The Wheel and partners (see below).

Their Community Hero of the Year - a lifetime achievement award honouring volunteers who have made an extraordinary contribution - went to George and Mary Sugrue. The pair have volunteered with Chernobyl Children International for over 20 years. (This was their second award win in a fortnight - they also took an award at the Volunteer Ireland event).

Each of the following winners was chosen by an independent judging panel and public voting. Organisers said that over 30,000 public votes were cast across the island of Ireland.

Other award category winners were:

Charity Trustee of the Year, for a volunteer who has made an extraordinary contribution to an organisation:

- Derek McCabe, chairperson of a social justice charity called Extern.

2017 Community Impact Award for Small Organisations (no paid staff):

- 22q11 Ireland, which is a parent-led charity supporting families living with 22q11 deletion syndrome.

2017 Community Impact Award for Medium Organisations (with annual turnover less than €1m):

- Darndale Belcamp Village Centre's Golden Years project, which proudly delivers "essential" services for older people.



George and Mary Sugrue of Chernobyl Children International.

2017 Community Impact Award for Large Organisations (turnover over €1m):

- Barnardos (ROI) which is an offshoot of a British charity working in Ireland since the 1960s to support children whose well-being is under threat.

These awards evolved from an earlier video-story-telling competition. They were launched with the slogan, "It's time to let our light shine".

The awards were inaugurated so that more groups would tell their stories of positive achievement.

Seven not-for-profits and three for-profit companies provided special support for these new awards.

W: <http://www.charityimpactawards.ie>



22q11 Ireland supports people with the 22q11 disorder which impacts on different people in different ways. Signs and symptoms may include: cleft palate, heart defects and recurrent infections.

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS

THE SECRET TO CHANGE

Social Entrepreneurs Ireland (SEI) run an annual competition from which seven people and their project ideas emerge with backing.

Convinced that social entrepreneurs are "the secret to change", the SEI seeks out people with ideas that have the potential to address important issues in society.

Late last year, from 149 applications, the following awardees were chosen:

STEPHANIE O'MALLEY / EDUCATION DESTY

DESTY Island is a colourful, online, interactive world where children learn about emotions. For children experiencing mental health problems or going through significant life events, it helps them to process and express their feelings, building resilience and promoting positive mental health.

An evidence-based, emotional wellbeing programme that works with educators and children.

TAMMY DARCY / THE SHONA PROJECT

Supports girls by nurturing their self-esteem and educating, empowering, and inspiring them to embrace their abilities. They provide workshops in schools and communities and have online practical guides for the everyday issues and challenges experienced by girls.

DUNCAN WALKER / THE GREEN KITCHEN CAFE & GARDEN CENTRE

Supports people to realise their potential by providing targeted supports, training and work experience in hospitality and horticulture, ultimately leading to meaningful employment.

NIALL O'BRIEN / THE GROW DOME PROJECT

Turns wastelands into a community resource by creating a community garden with a geodesic dome that supports hydroponics - the growing of plants without soil. This regenerates areas while creating employment and training opportunities.

HUGH BRENNAN / Ó CUALANN COHOUSING ALLIANCE

Builds affordable homes by getting support from local authorities for discounted land and development levies waived.

It also promotes an ethos of inclusive co-operative communities where members come together to make key decisions about their neighbourhood.

ALICE D'ARCY & GRAINNE BAGNALL / STEAM EDUCATION

Matches industry experts and academics with primary school teachers to co-deliver fun, activity-based programmes in science, technology, engineering, arts and maths to complement and enhance the primary school curricula.

COLIN HEALY & JAMES LYONS / SAILING INTO WELLNESS

Sailing as a personal development tool for those with mental health issues, recovering from addiction or from disadvantaged backgrounds. Working together as a team, individuals learn to sail on the open sea.

In 2017, the SEI said social entrepreneurs that it had supported had a positive impact on the lives of over 1.7 million people across Ireland.

COMMUNITY FOCUS: North County

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

New meets old in fastest growing

- Fingal County Council, covering north Co. Dublin, was the 'Local Authority of the Year' in 2017.

The old, young and new take centre-stage as Fingal - the Local Authority Members Association's 'Council of the Year' (2017) - comes to terms with the county's rapid growth.

In responding to that growth, Fingal County Council and various community groups have won recognition for their efforts.

By year's end, the Council had also won a Community Engagement Award at the National Pride of Place Awards.

It's not all plain sailing.

Out of the window of Balbriggan Community Centre, the sea was barely visible through the encroaching mist. Construction work was underway in an adjacent estate. Pyrite, I was informed, was the cause of this building activity.

FASTEST GROWING

However, throughout Dublin 15, council facilities are of the high standard expected of buildings constructed for servicing the public. No pyrite here.

Ireland's fastest growing local authority area has mushroomed since the late nineties; even post-boom the population grew, according to the latest census results, by 8.1% (between 2012 and 2016).

"The influx of new communities was huge, because houses were cheaper than in Dublin and because of the proximity of Mosney" (once a holidaymakers' destination, now accommodation for asylum-seekers)," said community activist **Betsy Abu**, originally from Sierra Leone.



Betsy Abu.

"It depends where you get your figures," said the centre's community development officer **Mick Dunne**. "Between one-in-five people speak a language other than English in the

home."

"In the newer areas, levels of non-Irish are higher. Brackenwood, for example, houses over 60% non-native speakers," he said.

CHALLENGE

"Change is great, but there are challenges that come with it," said Mick, as he reflected on the potential dangers the seaside town faced.

"There are all sorts of issues, damage to cars in the council estate and anti-social behaviour in the playground. It's possible that some of these are racially motivated - there definitely is tension there and part of our work is trying to come up with strategies that ease them," he said.

HOLISTIC APPROACH

The facilities on show are an important resource in the drive for integration, but it requires more than that. In the modern Council offices in Blanchardstown, **Pat Queenan** explained that the Council was seeking a "holistic" approach involving the local authority's planning, operations and community development departments.



Pat Queenan, Principal Community Officer.

"We recognised the need in Flemington (in Balbriggan) for intensive community development, because of problems around anti-social behaviour. We have a new community built on the edge of a very old town and there are a lot of complexities."

"A lot of anti-social behaviour is about communities not having a sense of identity and, when you don't have that, you're less likely to respect the area."

"If you help them, work with them, work with their families to

raise their identity with that place - to have pride in that estate - generally you'll get some change."

INTEGRATION

Betsy Abu was at the front line of this work and was a key player in the local integration forum.

"When two or more people from different cultures meet, there are bound to be issues. Everyone has their own fears," she said. "Consultation was held and we found there was a need for this forum that involved every individual that lives in Balbriggan."

"Language became an issue and then we said 'Okay, people cannot just come. They want to work. They need to learn the language'. We went to the council and they gave us financial support," she said.

The integration efforts found



Mick Dunne.

fruition at the Balbriggan Annual Summerfest and afterwards, according to Betsy, attitudes - her own included - began to change.

"I had lived here for five years and didn't even know my neighbour's name."

"The first time we celebrated integration - through food and dance - people came to the tables and they'd ask you, 'How was this made?', 'Where did it come from?' and the conversation would lead onto something else."

OLDER PEOPLE

The holistic approach was also used elsewhere, as Dublin 15 found itself with a "huge cohort" of older people (defined by the World Health Organisation as those aged over 55) with time on their hands.

"Because of the crash, a lot of people took early retirement

and after two years of travelling around, they were left asking what they should do," explained **Louise Edmonds**, a community officer with responsibility for older people.

"Take Howth, a very hilly town; we are undertaking a walkability study and that takes 20 senior citizens working with the council to ensure that if there are pitfalls they can be addressed and solutions implemented."



Rafe Costigan led a group on a visit to Limerick, hosted by 'Changing Ireland', in 2010.

"In Skerries, Fingal Age Friendly identified a lack of somewhere to sit when walking, the paths were not wide enough for wheelchairs and lighting was inadequate."

This is a work in progress, building on the success of the LEADER-funded, age-friendly Floraville park, a joint initiative between the council and the local chamber of commerce.

Fingal has 88km of coastline, stretching from Sutton to Balbriggan, and Fingal County Council is "continuing to develop" a walkway along the coastline including through Skerries (Ireland's Tidiest Town in 2016). Progress on the coastal walkway is detailed here: <http://bit.ly/Fingcocowalks>

"If you are making things better for seniors, whether its widening footpaths or providing lighting and seating, you are automatically making it better for younger people, mummies and daddies with buggies," said Louise.

SCHOOLS MODEL

Tyrelstown probably has the youngest population in Ireland, according to community officer, **Rafe Costigan**, and it made sense to pilot the Fingal Schools Model there.

ng local authority area

of the Year' for the past 12 months. So, what are they up to?

BY BEN PANTER



Fingal County Council launched a beach-friendly wheelchair project on Portmarnock Strand last year. Then Mayor of Fingal Cllr Darragh Butler was pictured with local resident Joan Lupton enjoying the sea.
Photo by Kevin Mcfeely.



Shane O'Neill.

Balbriggan Community Centre was one of two 'Fingal Schools Models' I saw that day.

According to Rafe, the idea was pioneered by the Council which provided the land and the Department of Education of Skills which provided much of the funding. It is "now considered best practice."

The co-operation between the

Council and the Department of Education and Skills saw enhanced facilities, over and above what was standard for new schools. It allowed for facilities based on needs in the community and those needs were identified by the council.

It helped to ensure that facilities such as sports halls were not needlessly duplicated.

The manager of the Tyrrelstown Community Centre, **Shane O'Neill**, believes the model works.

"It makes a lot of sense to have everything in a one-stop-shop for young families who have children in the schools," he said. "We have a few anchor tenants, our childcare who are with us every day and after-school clubs. We also support a group called 'Praxis Care' which deals with young teenagers with autism. It's great to support those kids who are particularly marginalised," he said.

Other groups include martial arts, dance and an integration initiative 'Failte Isteach'.

"I meet with the Council in Fingal to see if the groups coming through are diverse enough (for the needs of the area). We need to know that there is something for everybody," said Shane.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

With its growing population and rate-paying tenants such as Ikea, Fingal has more resources than most County Councils. This was evidenced by the amenities I had visited that day, but in these fast-changing suburbs, it takes more than new buildings and a top-down approach to address the challenges and Fingal has sought to apply global thinking to localised problems.

For Mick Dunne, the solution is simple. "It's like this," he said, "Community development can play a major role in helping communities to integrate."

FINGALLIANS SIGN 5-YEAR AGREEMENT



Pictured in January signing a 5-year SICAP funding agreement for the delivery of services to tackle poverty, social exclusion and long-term unemployment:

Dr. Pat O'Connor, chair of Fingal Local Community Development Committee, **Adeline O'Brien**, CEO of Blanchardstown Area Partnership, and **Paul Reid**, CEO of Fingal County Council.

National SICAP update: page 7.

COMMUNITY FOCUS: North County

SNIPPETS FROM FINGAL

A TRIBE OF FOREIGNERS

Fingal is an administrative county, not a "real" county, and the area is more commonly called North County Dublin, perhaps a better name for the local authority to have chosen.

Fine Gall, the Irish for Fingal, means "the tribe of the foreigners".

FINGALLIAN ONCE SPOKEN

By 1830, English had taken over as the majority community language across North Co. Dublin. Before that, people spoke Irish, but even more popular was Fingallian, a local version of Middle English that was spoken between 1600-1700.

It sounded - according to two surviving poems - generally like English, but could be incomprehensible to outsiders: "Squib", "tambou", malavogue" and "moggy" are examples of words in Fingallian.

Today, languages from all corners of the world can be heard in North County Dublin.

STOP IN MALAHIDE!



A Florida-based Irish priest won €500,000 last December, having bought a quickpick Euromillions Plus ticket in Donnybrook Fair, Malahide. The unnamed cleric promised to share his winnings.

€64K VIA RAPID

Also in December, Fingal County Council was granted €64,500 through RAPID.

MALAHIDE TO LESOTHO

Action Ireland Trust is based in Malahide and recently raised over €300,000. The charity, which was incorporated in 2011, supports community projects in Lesotho.

FISHING CONCERNS

The British Government's decision (Brexit-related) to withdraw from London Fisheries Convention is a worrying move for all along the East Coast.

North County Dublin includes fishing communities in Howth, Rush, Loughshinny, Skerries and Balbriggan.

SKERRIES TO BRITTANY

Skerries is twinned with the town of Guichon in Brittany, France.

€141K FOR YOUTH

It was announced in late December that 29 local youth projects in Fingal are to receive funding totalling €141,000 through the Local Youth Club Equipment Scheme.

The national scheme is overseen by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and is part-funded by the the National Lottery.

TWO THOUSAND KIDS IS A NORMAL THING

– Push on so schoolchildren pick

BY BEN PANTER

"Tomorrow I've got two thousand kids coming for athletics in Donabate," said Fingal's senior sports development officer, Niall McGuirk, as he sat down for the interview.

"How to you manage two thousand kids?" I asked incredulously.

"You know how many of us it takes to organise it all?" he replied. "Seven of us!"

Others step in on the day to help.

Fingal's schools athletics programme started out ten years ago with 120 kids from five schools; now it involves 55 schools and the thousands mentioned.

"Initially it was just an athletics league to get kids running, but it progressed into what the teachers do at school, by implementing a regular training programme.

"We have modules on healthy heart, nutrition, the benefits of activity for mental health and for communities. Our events are the carrot."

The programme of events include January's Operation Transformation, 'Park Runs' and a 'Marathon Programme' that specifically targets sixth class pupils.

"We offer alternative sports to the traditional soccer and GAA. We offer rugby, athletics, tennis and cricket," said Niall. "Hopefully, we are giving them good habits that they can continue through secondary school and into later life."

Personally, I was always lacking in motor skills and was terrible at ball sports. Would children not naturally gifted miss out on the benefits they say that sports provides?

"We have sports conditioning coaches to help the kids with the basics of catching, kicking and

"It's a diversion that really works: 60, 70 or 80 kids kicking ball for two hours, after which they are exhausted."

throwing, so they can participate. And, we have a strong focus on individual sports like, swimming, running and cycling," replied Niall.

I felt a little envious such coaching wasn't available when I was growing up.

"What about the teenagers?" I asked. "I heard there are issues with adolescents in certain areas."

An initiative borrowed from America tackled just that.

'Midnight basketball' started in Maryland in 1986 as a way to tackle crime and anti-social behavior after it was noticed that rates were

ATHLETICS PROGRAMME UNCOVERED

*- Sports participation developed teenager's confidence
- He hopes to make athletics nationals in javelin (a*

Intrigued by Niall's McGuirk's mention (see above) of "the boy who had never thrown before", reporter BEN PANTER sought out javelin thrower Robert Moore:

Now 17 years old, Robert is one thousands of children who have passed through the athletics programme run by Fingal's sports development office.



He was coached in javelin by Gabriella Sztojalovszky (inset) to whom he is most grateful.

"I started out in the school athletics - Gabriella from the sports office came in and showed us the field events, javelin, shot-putt and discus," said Robert.

"My first few throws weren't amazing, but it just sort of clicked. I started training and after a few weeks was in my first competition, in Porterstown.

"I've been doing it pretty much ever since," he said. "It's given me confidence and it's improved

my social life - I've met loads of people."

He took a sabbatical recently to focus on his Leaving Cert, but that hasn't ended his involvement with athletics.

PE is set to become a Leaving Cert subject from this year. Students must complete a physical activity project, a performance assessment and a written exam. Around 50 schools nationwide have introduced the subject.

"PE becoming an exam subject at Leaving Cert is massive. It will be huge in Ireland," said Robert.

And with a 35 metre personal best to beat, he is "definitely" returning to javelin.

"I'd like to make the nationals - people have put so much time and effort in and I would do it for them."

Either way, Robert is likely to perform in front of a crowd one day, for he also has other ambitions:

"I would love to study Drama and Theatre Studies at Trinity," he said.

Dublin IDS AT ATHLETICS G HERE

Pick up great lifelong habits



Niall McGuirk of Fingal County Council's Sports Office, which is part of Sport Ireland's Network of Sports Partnerships nationwide.

highest between 10pm and 2am. (Mahon CDP in Cork has in the past organised late night sporting programmes with the same purpose).

"We ran it for the past six years or more, very successfully. And, it's gotten easier, because we have the facilities, the all weather pitches."

According to Niall, the Dublin 15 version - evening soccer - is a diversion that really works: 60, 70 or 80 kids kicking ball for two hours, after

which they are exhausted.

"Older people were saying to me that they're more likely to go down to the shops now of a Friday evening," said Niall.

He couldn't have looked for a better way to evaluate and endorse the programme. If things are made better for the youth, things automatically improve for everyone else.

TWO LOCAL DEVELOPMENT COMPANIES DELIVERING AT GRASSROOTS LEVEL



Blanchardstown Area Partnership has offices in Parkside, Mulhuddart & Beat Centre, Balbriggan.

There are 49 Local Development Companies (LDCs) in Ireland affiliated with the Irish Local Development Network.

Two operate in north County Dublin. They are Fingal LEADER Partnership and Blanchardstown Area Partnership.

Notwithstanding local authority successes in community engagement, LDCs are closer to the ground (and their work features regularly in 'Changing Ireland'). They are managed by voluntary boards and are community-based and not-for-profit.

They help deliver a range of government programmes to address social exclusion and work alongside local authorities.

W: fingalleaderpartnership.ie

W: bap.ie

W: ildn.ie

ROBERT MOORE'S HIDDEN TALENT

*ance and widened his social circle
nd enter world of theatre)*



Robert Moore's gives it his best shot.

STRONG TURNOUT



There was an impressive level of community participation evident in Fingal recently.

Over 200 community activists representing more than 140 community groups across Fingal county attended a plenary meeting of Fingal Public Participation Network (PPN).

Plenary meetings are where members decide on strategy and procedures to follow and the meeting was held in Swords in December.

Fingal PPN has over 500 registered member organisations. Its aim is to co-ordinate how the community in Fingal is represented.

It is one of 31 PPNs countrywide.

W: <http://fingalppn.ie>

COMMUNITY FOCUS: North County

Teaching people English is a privilege, - So, what do Fáilte Isteach students gain?

BY BEN PANTER

Changing Ireland is no stranger to Fáilte Isteach, a nationwide project where older people pass on their English language skills to people looking to improve.

The initiative has grown rapidly since its inception in Meath in 2008.

Tyrrelstown Community Centre adopted the programme in January 2012 and runs its own weekly classes every Wednesday.

When I visited, lessons were in full swing. I spoke to several pupils and volunteers who described what they were gaining from the experience.

AFTER 11 YEARS KRYSTYNA'S ENGLISH WAS "STILL BAD"



Krystyna (above) from Poland, had been in Ireland for eleven years. She had worked for the same company for eight years, but when she was let go a year ago, she realised she needed to improve her language skills. She has been attending ever since.

"My English is still bad," she explained.

Spending most of her time at home raising her two daughters, aged 5 and 15, plus her two dogs, she needed an outlet and said she found the whole experience "interesting."

EWA FROM POLAND'S FIRST TIME

Ewa, also from Poland, was attending for the first time; she looked so comfortable amongst new friends it would have been hard to guess.

"I got divorced, so this is a new start and I will definitely be coming back," she said. "I have been living here eight years, Ireland is home now."

ROMANIAN FLORIN'S DREAM

Florin from Romania was only in Ireland a month. Although qualified as a teacher in his home nation, he needed to move: "I cannot live there anymore," he said, without elaborating. "I want to work as a teacher in Ireland. I come to these classes to achieve that dream."

'FAILTE' HELPS MAEVA OVERCOME LONLINESS



Maeva (above) was a mixture of Spanish and French, she proudly informed me.

She was highly educated, having completed a law degree in Spain: "I don't know whether I want to do a Masters or something else but the first thing is to improve my English."

"It can be lonely for me in this country and this is helping me settle."



VOLUNTEER TOM THRILLED

Meanwhile, volunteer Tom said: "It is very stimulating – I am retired so I was looking for something to do – it makes me feel wonderful."

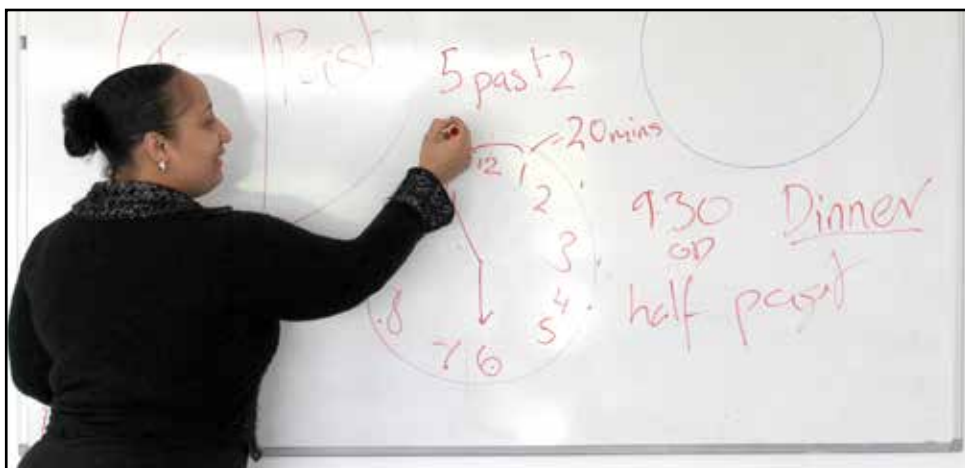
TUTOR LISA SEES TEACHING AS A PRIVILEGE

I sneaked in on another class led by tutor Lisa Crehan who was teaching her pupils how to read a clock in English.

Her assured manner suggested she was a teaching professional, although she informed me this was not the case.

Her class was English for beginners and consisted of people from the Dominican Republic, Eastern Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

She said, "It's a real privilege to teach people who have no English. It can be such a culture shock and a lonely place without it."



Maria Izundu on the white-board. Find out how if there is a group in your area, or you could set one up. To find out how, contact Fáilte Isteach manager, Liam Carey, or his colleagues Natasha Bagnall or Claire Dalton. T: 046-955-8497. Email Liam at: lcarey@thirdageireland.ie

Dublin

says tutor

RODDY DOYLE'S FIGHTING WORDS

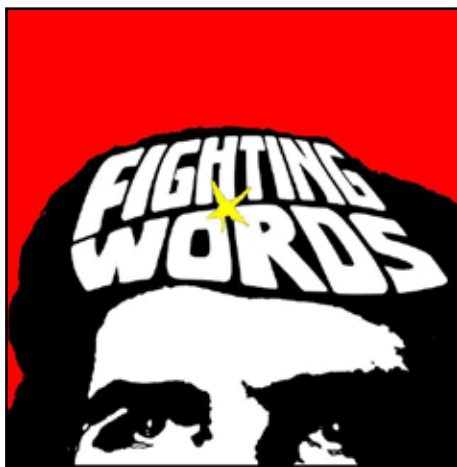
Lisa told about a project they were running to collect children's fairytales from around the world and publish them in a book.

The idea is backed by author Roddy Doyle, director of literary organisation 'Fighting Words' which provides free tutoring and mentoring in creative writing and related arts to children, young adults and adults with special needs.

A story featuring 20 fairytales from the Community Centre's Fáilte Isteach group now features on the Fighting Words website.

Link: bit.ly/FightTyr

On Facebook, you'll find the group under: [Failteisteachtyrrelstown/](https://www.facebook.com/Failteisteachtyrrelstown/)



About Fáilte Isteach

Fáilte Isteach was established by Third Age in response to the daily difficulties that new migrants were experiencing trying to integrate into communities while having little or no English.

Following its success as a pilot project in a small rural community, Fáilte Isteach was launched nationally in 2008.

Third Age place an emphasis on recruiting older volunteer tutors, recognise their skills, expertise and ability to commit time to a project.

There are now over 100 groups and over 1,000 volunteer tutors involved in helping over 3,000 immigrants annually to integrate locally. Every year, over 72,000 hours of free tuition is delivered.

It just goes to prove the value of piloting an idea for a community project.

W: thirdageireland.ie/failte-isteach/about

AWARDS

SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

Co-op of 12 Tipperary communities wins prize for new approach

- "Could easily be adopted by others"



Well done to all in the Energy Communities Tipperary Co-operative (ECTC). Pictured: Julie O'Neill (Chairperson SEAI), Aileen Campion (ECTC), Liam Lynch (ECTC), Marcella Maher-Keogh (ECTC) and Jim Gannon. (CEO SEAI).

The Energy Communities Tipperary Co-operative, which brings 12 communities in Tipperary together to carry out deep retrofits on homes, won the Community Award at this year's Sustainable Energy Awards.

The aim of the project is to save energy, save money, create warm homes and generate jobs. The Co-ops' action has seen home owners benefit from higher levels of comfort and less expenditure on energy, with €4 million in energy cost savings to date.

The project was backed from the beginning by North Tipperary Leader Partnership, which provided start-up funding, financial management and community supports (through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme).

The award was presented last November by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland.

The judges noted that the project brings together rural communities that have diverse needs, and focuses on what can actively be done to mitigate climate change, one step at a time.

"This approach could easily be adopted by other rural communities," said the judges.

When it was in its infancy, the project featured in 'Changing Ireland'.

Read more about Tipperary's pioneering work: www.energycommunities.wordpress.com

Other winners included: the National Ambulance Service, Waterford Institute of Technology, a research company, a private developer and Dairygold.

CHEAP, WARM & FAST HOUSING

Durkan Residential (design award winner) has developed cost-effective methods for building

energy-efficient houses.

The private housing developer has built 58 passive houses at its site in Citywest, Dublin.

Each house takes 12 weeks to build. They all meet Ireland's 2020 Near Zero Energy Buildings (NZEB) targets for performance and surpass the proposed Building Regulation standards for energy efficiency and renewable energy.

GREEN AMBULANCES

The HSE's National Ambulance Service has reduced fuel use and emissions through changing driver behaviour and adding in an 'eco-anti-idle system'. Also, built-in solar PV systems charge the vehicles' equipment while they are parked. To date, savings of over €750,000 have been made.

WORLD ENERGY SOLUTION

Exergyn Research is developing an engine to convert hot water to power. It is expected to be the only zero emission generator that can deliver reliable, low-cost power whenever it is needed. It could solve many of the world's energy problems.

Meanwhile, Waterford Institute of Technology (Energy Team of the Year) won plaudits for exceeding its public sector 33% energy saving target by 3% and it has consequently made cost savings of over €300,000.

Of interest to local authorities, among others, M50 Concession Ltd (Small Business winner) installed power controllers to reduce the amount of energy used for lighting, at set times of the night, depending on traffic flows. The project delivered 43% energy savings and cut costs by €300,000 annually. The controllers could prove to be a game-changer in street lighting efficiency.

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Horace's Diary

I'M GONNA MISS STEAK AND STANDARD DEFINITION

Given we're in a new year,
we asked Horace for a few
jokes.

Apologies in advance for the
ratio of GOLs to LOLs (groans
to laughs)! He also provided us
with his new year resolutions.
Have a great 2018, dear
readers!

TIME

Why did the community
development worker fling the
clock out the window?

She was fed up typing reports
and wanted to see time fly.

COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

What did the traffic light say to the
Family Resource Centre psychotherapist?
"Relax, I'm changing!"

CHANGE

How many community workers does it
take to change a light bulb?

Probably just one, but it could take six
months as they'd have to consult with
the community first, involve them in the
decision-making and they might not want
it changed anyway.

BY THE WAY

How many psychologists does it take to
change a light bulb?

None, but they'd listen patiently while
the light bulb changes itself.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Knock, knock!

Who's there?

Canoe.

Canoe who?

Canoe please stop knockin'!

INTERNATIONAL FUNDING

The manager of an international, not-
for-profit organisation found a magic
lamp.

She gave the lamp a rub and a genie
appeared and offered her one wish.

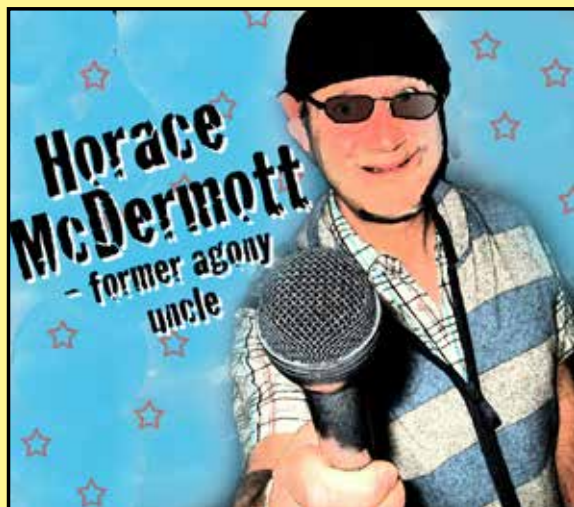
The Development Director said, "I
wish for one million euro to support my
community."

"Done!" said the genie. "Go to your office
tomorrow and it'll be there."

Next day, outside the door to her office
she found boxes containing three million
binder clips.

"What the hell!" she said to the genie, "I
asked for one million euro!"

"Yes," said genie, "but you didn't specify
that it couldn't be a payment-in-kind."



SOLUTIONS-FOCUSED

Dog owner resident to community
worker: "I lost my dog, can you help?"

Community worker: "I know! I can put a
notice on our Facebook page."

Dog owner: "Don't be silly, he can't read."

LOOKING BACK

After it was all over, why was Santa's
little helper shy to talk about his
contribution?

Because he had low elf esteem.

HORACE'S NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS

1. I resolve to give up some of my
superstitious beliefs.
2. I will keep doing the Lotto. You never
know your luck.
3. I will do less laundry and use more
deodorant.
4. I will work with neglected children...
my own.
5. I will stop repeating myself again, and
again, and again.
6. I will watch less TV in standard
definition (guess who got a new telly)
7. I will no longer waste my time re-
living the past; instead I resolve to
spend it worrying about the future.
8. I will become a vegan for a day and
subsequently learn that it was a
missed steak.

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.



Restructuring fine, once it's for the citizens' benefit

BY NOREEN BYRNE, CENTRE FOR CO-OPERATIVE STUDIES, UCC

The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) and the Citizens Information Services (CIS) face restructuring and centralisation that could have major implications for the locally-based companies currently providing the service.

The plan, as currently proposed by the Citizens Information Board (CIB), could change the nature of two highly effective services. The ambition is to "consolidate the current network of 93 local service delivery companies in CIS and MABS into 16 companies in 8 regions".

Breda O'Brien in a recent article in the 'Irish Times' articulated the sheer madness of this centralisation plan. She highlighted local opposition to the plan and the widespread consensus among TDs "who constantly refer people to both services, that replacing these local companies with remote regional structures is profoundly unwise". She highlights that this reorganisation plan will mean that these services will "lose the very thing that makes them so effective".

So what is the CIB's rationale for the restructuring of a locally based service into a regional one? The narrative that is generally used for this type of centralised restructuring is that there will be an increase in efficiency to enable the entity to provide a better service.

The CIB commissioned a report by KHSK Economic Consultants

and it outlines the rationale for the restructuring of MABS and CIS. It follows the usual narrative somewhat, particularly in relation to the discussion of efficiency.

However, the report pays hardly any attention to the 'how services will be better' part. At times, reading the consultant's report, it felt like it was efficiency for the sake of efficiency, even though the authors at times proclaim otherwise.

In terms of services, the report highlights that MABS and CIS see the "provision of information as their objective". This line is telling. It does not capture the broader role of both MABS and CIS.

In relation to MABS, research carried out by the Centre for Co-operative Studies, UCC, found that during a near two-year period (Jan. 2012 to Sept. 2013) one particular MABS office had 2,397 new clients and 81% of them required services beyond information. This 81% (1,938) needed MABS to help them with budget planning and in negotiating with creditors.

The researchers carried out telephone interviews with a sample of these clients. Almost 95% of them were satisfied with the MABS service. The service's value is well captured in quotes from clients:

"After my meeting with MABS, I got my first proper nights sleep in years."

They "gave me hope"... "shared my burden"... "treated me like a human being, not just a person in debt".

The consultant's report gives little idea of what MABS or CIS actually do. The focus is elsewhere. The report puts a lot of weight on discussing theory and market failure. Normally, such discussions give consideration to the client's needs, but not here, where it is discussed entirely from CIB's perspective. Perhaps, this is the root of

the problem.

The starting point should be the MABS client – what type of service is required and how then can this be provided efficiently. At least with this approach, while it would, more than likely, still require restructuring and efficiency measures, it would be intelligent restructuring. The current approach, as indicated by Willie O'Dea TD, is "akin to knocking down a house and rebuilding a house in another place for the sake of change – it is not good policy".

Like Breda O'Brien, we would also ask - "Can anyone stop this madness?"

The consultants report is available for download:

<http://bit.ly/KHSK-mabs-cis>

Breda O'Brien's opinion piece:

<http://bit.ly/BOB-mabs-cis>



EDITOR'S NOTE: The consultant's report points out that: "The use of the word 'market' in the term 'market failure' should not be interpreted as an indication of any intention to introduce market forces or any privatisation into the provision of citizens information."

"There is nothing in the material that has been produced by the CIB in relation to the proposed reorganisation that would support such an interpretation and nothing in this report such be interpreted in such a manner."



SOCIAL INCLUSION PROGRAMME

LET'S PLACE WOMEN AT THE HEART OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

- CATHERINE LANE, National Women's Council of Ireland

INTRODUCTION

The National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI) has welcomed the reinstatement of disadvantaged women as a target group in the new Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP).

This will see more resources being deployed between now and 2022 to support women, it says.

"We believe it will give a greater imperative to distribute and direct human and financial resources to disadvantaged women and women's groups," said Catherine Lane.

She works as a development officer with the NWCI.

SICAP seeks to promote equality and it has a particular focus on gender equality and anti-discriminatory practices.

This work was reported on annually. However, the NCWI argue that "the same rigour" was not applied to the monitoring and application of this as (should have been).

Catherine drew attention to the recently published National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017 – 2020 which commits to supporting women at local level. It states:

"In the context of supporting a greater focus on women's participation and on gender issues at community level, SICAP will provide key supports to those most in need in our communities, including disadvantaged women, Traveller and Roma women, and women with disabilities, in all local authority areas".

It continues:

"Programme implementers (LDCs) will also ensure gender equality is reflected in their own internal practices regarding their employees and regarding relationships with sub-contractors and suppliers etc. This will depend on (LDCs) reflecting on their human resources processes to tackle unconscious bias and to create a workplace where both women and men can advance into leadership position." (Pg 59 Action 4.6)

This strategy has also committed to bringing a gender perspective to the Action Plan on Rural Development.

"This is necessary to ensure that women in rural communities are at the table, so their experience and expertise are part of the solutions and responses," said Catherine.

CATHERINE LANE WRITES:

Irish Rural Link and Longford Womens Link both have clearly outlined the particular disadvantages experienced by women in rural communities. These include:

- Access to public services,
- Lack of transport,
- Fuel poverty,
- Access to and the cost of childcare,
- Eligibility for activation and employment supports,
- And the stigma associated with accessing supports around mental health and domestic violence, if and when these services are available.

In the concluding observations of the UN Convention Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, it was recommended that the State



The National Women's Council of Ireland wants to see:

The NWCI's work includes ensuring that women's equality and rights are placed "at the heart of local government reform and all local development processes, policies and programmes", says the Council's Catherine Lane.

"We want to see: women's representation and participation in local life; women benefitting from policies and programmes at local level; and targeted action to ensure the voice of marginalised women is represented in all decision-making structures.

"A significant proportion of its membership comes from the Community and Voluntary Sector and includes a cross-section of diverse groups," she said.

reports on the overall situation of rural women and highlight the impact of any measures implemented.

Women are frequently disadvantaged by policies and practices in Irish society that do not recognise their different realities and experiences, such as:

- Unequal and lower pay,
- A greater share of care responsibilities,
- Barriers to advancing into leadership positions
- Gender-based violence.

Gender data that is separated into its component parts is vital to measuring the work done with women. It's vital to understand the experiences of women in local communities. IRIS captures some of those statistics; From the 2016 annual report, we know that 45% of the 'individual caseload' were women. We also know that more women received educational supports than employment supports.

To inform programme development it is vital to reach out to women and women's projects in local communities. One of our member groups, the National Collective of Community Based Networks has 17 branches and expertise and knowledge on engaging with marginalised women.

Understanding the particular barriers experienced by women and recognising the gendered nature of women's roles will inform appropriate responses.

Local Development Companies (LDCs) through the delivery of SICAP, LEADER and other programmes, have a key part to play in advancing equality for women and in providing leadership on gender equality at local level.

Many LDCs carry out innovative and targeted work with women in local communities and continue to be flexible in responding to the needs of disadvantaged women. For example, we have worked with one of our member groups, IRD Duhallow, to empower older women to join the campaign for pension equality.

Local Development Companies can now show a strong example in meeting and exceeding the target for gender balance on their boards. Currently the ratio of board members is 32.4% female and 67.6% male.

All monitoring and performance mechanisms for LEADER and SICAP must measure outcomes and impacts on women.

CONTACT: Catherine would be glad to meet with LDCs to chat about the good practice happening and supports to bring a gender perspective to the work. General enquiries also welcome. **T: 01-6790-1000. E: catherinel@nwci.ie**

** Catherine Lane works as the NWCI's Women and Local Government & Development Officer. Her work with the NWCI is supported through the Scheme to Support National Organisations which is administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development.*

MIND YOURSELVES!



Rob Bresnan in two action shots (above and below). The top photo proved to be a winner.



BRESNAN'S GYM GOES FROM ZERO TO 70 MEMBERS IN 6 MONTHS

- Soaring membership proves value of self-employment.
- Support came via the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme & the European Social Fund.

An award-winner who emerged with a degree, but found it difficult to find paid employment has proved the value of starting up a small business with government support.

Rob Bresnan - also known by his nickname 'Bomber Bresnan' - has a degree in Strength & Conditioning from Limerick Institute of Technology. Yet, he struggled to find sustainable employment.

Over the course of the 12 months leading to Christmas 2016, it became increasingly clear to Rob that self-employment was his best option in terms of a sustainable living.

Rob received support through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP). It actively promotes self-employment as a viable employment option and it works with individuals to develop their capacity to set up small businesses.

Rob then developed a gym that he believed would draw a client base in Waterford city.

With supports to assist him into self-employment from Lisa Murphy and colleagues in Kilkenny LEADER Partnership's SICAP team, last Spring, Rob opened his new fitness gym Ultra-Performance.

Within six months, he had taken on 70 clients and still had room for more. He took on two trainees under the Linked Work Experience Programme. Both are now training in the sector and may have the opportunity

to become full time employees, should the business continue to grow.

Rob says that the fitness industry is "a busy place". And, while every gym is different, "they all want to stand out, develop and grow", he says.

He lists some of the qualities that his gym concentrates on:

- Setting high standards;
- Building strong relationship with clients;
- setting goals;
- Coaching clients (not training them);
- Having a hunger for knowledge;
- Motivation.

In November, Rob's work won further recognition.

As part of the 'Europe in My Region' campaign, a national SICAP ESF photo competition was held. People were invited to submit photos that showed off the work of SICAP projects supported by the European Social Fund and the Youth Employment Initiative.

Kilkenny LEADER Partnership submitted the winning photo which featured Rob.

The prize-giving ceremony took place in Rob's gym. As attendee, Rosie Smyth, from the Department of Rural and Community Development, remarked, "It was great to see his business in action. Rob's story is inspiring."

If you wish to join Rob's gym (shameless plug coming) here's the kind of coaching you can expect.

You have the option of signing up for 16 sessions (over 4 weeks) where you are on a training programme that focuses on: body composition analysis, training to meet your specific needs, and a diet plan.


The price is €120.


Rob might just give community workers a discount if they say they are involved in SICAP.

Some of us could do with it!

- AM

Follow Rob and his Ultra Performance Training Gym on social media:

 <http://bit.ly/BresnanGym>

 <https://web.stagram.com/bomberbresnan>

More info on SICAP supports:

Via the ESF: <http://bit.ly/ESFsicap>

From Pobal: <http://bit.ly/Pobalsicap>



Rob hosts visitors to his gym: Declan Rice, CEO of County Kilkenny Leader Partnership; Catherine Ormsby, European Social Fund Managing Authority; Rob Bresnan, Ultra Performance; Lisa Murphy, County Kilkenny Leader Partnership; and Rosie Smyth, Department of Rural and Community Development.

Photo courtesy of Ruth Pritchard from Pobal.

STIGMATIZATION

Hidden Identities

- Sometimes, people need to hide their identity in public

BY CIAN MATTHEW KEARNS

If your identity meant exclusion, discrimination and limited opportunity, would you hide it? Three quarters of Travellers say they experienced discrimination based on their identity in the last year.

Fewer than one in ten settled Irish people want a Traveller marrying into their families and only a quarter would accept a Traveller as a work colleague. These results, from a recent survey commissioned by Traveller organisations, paint a stark picture.

This "land of a thousand welcomes" is not for all.

At a recent Traveller Pride event, Sindy Joyce, activist and PhD student, laid bare the situation: "A lot of the time, to access services, to access goods, to have access into public space, for example, Travellers have the tactic to hide their identity and blend in with everyone else in order to be accepted."

Eoin DeBhairdúin, who attended the same event in Ballyfermot (see Autumn edition, 'Changing Ireland') agreed:

"Every day, there's struggles and barriers, and issues that many people don't even realise that comes from being a Traveller," he said. He pointed to "the real damaging concealment of identity in order even just to get basic services."

He has a point.

It is widely recognised that people with stigmatizing identities prefer to hide them. In fact, in the past, academics in the fields of sociology and psychology recommended this approach. Today, we question the value of this thinking.

A study in 2014 found that although people often hide their identity to fit in, the deception rarely benefits them in the way they planned. The researchers found that the very act of hiding your true identity prevents - rather than fosters - a sense of belonging. Because you are forced to conceal certain, personal information, your ability to forge new relationships is fettered.

Take, for example, a member of another stigmatised group, the LGBTI community. They might withhold their partner's name from work colleagues for fear of rejection or exclusion. Social events involving partners are declined. Gradually, by hiding their identity, they build barriers between themselves and their co-workers. Instead of belonging, they feel distant.

And the risk is more than just alienation. Researchers also found the deception needed to conceal your identity causes high levels of stress, guilt and damage to your self-confidence. By hiding yourself to fit in, you fail to be "true to you".

And this has a cost. You end up questioning your own value and self-worth, possibly even sabotaging yourself through self-defeating behaviour.

Sally Flynn is a young woman keen to pursue a worthwhile career. When she started

a course in social work she was anxious about what her classmates would think of her. "When I started college, I was like, 'Oh God, I don't know how this will go'.

"But, as I got into it I realised that my Traveller roots are so important to me; that's what makes me really. And I'd never hide my Traveller identity, because I believe I belong in the world as well."

Telling someone from a group that is widely discriminated against in society, both overtly and subtly, that they should be true to their own identity lays the blame at the wrong feet. The issue is not that someone chooses to hide their identity. The problem is that they are forced to make that decision in the first place.

Being forced to hide your identity damages the concealer and their community. But it also damages society as a whole. Instead of celebrating diverse, culturally rich

communities and discovering different ways of viewing the world, some groups are marginalised and ignored. Everyone loses.

Eileen Flynn, another young, well-educated woman sums it up best: "I've just finished a course in Maynooth and if I don't get a job because of my address, because I'm a Traveller woman, did I fail? No, I didn't. That there is the system failing me."

DEAR READER? TELL US YOUR STORY!

Dear Reader - Have you a burning 'hidden truth' issue that you'd like to write about or share with us? Would you like to name an 'elephant in the room' - write about it, or we can follow up on your lead or suggestion. - Ed.

The issue is not that someone chooses to hide their identity. The problem is that they are forced to make that decision in the first place.



Photo by C.M. Kearns

Ireland close to ratifying UN disability convention, says Minister of State McGrath

- We will be the last country in Europe to do so



Ireland may be ready to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities "in February", according to Finian McGrath, Minister of State for Disability Issues.

He tweeted after a cabinet meeting in late January: "UNCRPD proposed ratification timeframe - Mid Feb, passing of Dail Resolution; End Feb Ratification."

Ireland will be the last country in Europe to ratify the Convention.

Speaking in December, Anne Marie Flanagan of the Clare Leader Forum said, "We made a big deal wanting to be one of the first to sign it.... In Ireland, so many people are in congregated settings and this is in breach of international law."

National disability rights organisation 'Inclusion Ireland' defines congregated settings as: "Ten or more people with a disability housed in a single living unit or placed in a campus or institution."

Anne Marie said at the time: "There is a suggestion we could ratify the convention and then seek exclusion from that article, but of course it would be easy to take out the most significant element."

Her comments followed the International Day of People with Disabilities on December 6th. They also came days after Inclusion Ireland condemned the HSE "for its failure to protect residents of Áras Attracta from abuse", after a critical report from the Health Information and Quality Authority.

BACKGROUND

In December, Minister McGrath announced that he would "submit draft legislation" and ask "the Government to approve publication of these provisions on Deprivation of Liberty for public consultation".

"The Deprivation of Liberty provisions are

intended to provide safeguards for older people, persons with a disability and certain categories of people with a mental health illness," said the Minister. "The new safeguards will apply, when admitting people to residential facilities when they do not have the capacity to make such decisions."

Minister McGrath's statement (December 3rd) pointed to a €75m increase in funding for disability services this year, which sees overall disability funding reach €1,763m for 2018.

He said there are now less than 2,600 people living in congregated settings and €100 million capital funding over five years has been allocated for properties to house individuals.

NEW FILM

Meanwhile, a new film 'Sanctuary', which features an intellectually disabled couple breaking the law in their quest for intimacy, has been touring the country.

Disability activist Dermot Hayes, said, "This highlights the issue of how the law treats people with such disabilities. It shows the need to reform the law going back 130 years. It is one of the key reasons for the ratification of the UN Convention."

"It was a surprise to a lot of people that a couple like this cannot get married, or have intimacy."

"Another issue is congregated settings which is where there are groups of people or mini institutions situated across the country such as Áras Attracta in Mayo. These have to go," he said.

AUDIO: Listen to Ben's interview with Anne Marie at: <http://bit.ly/DisabAMFClare>

TEXT: Read Minister of State McGrath's full statement here: <http://bit.ly/MosMCgrathRatif>

2016 CENSUS: 13.5% IN IRELAND HAVE A DISABILITY

In the 2016 census, 643,131 people said they had a disability, representing about 13.5% of the Republic's population.

Census 2011 showed about 600,000 people (about 13%) self-reported having a disability.

There were some differences between the 2001 and 2006 censuses in how disability was measured.

In 2006, the census found that about 400,000 (9% of the population) had a disability.

As the National Disability Authority points out - unlike age or gender - 'disability' is not sharply defined. Figures from different countries cannot be easily compared, unlike for instance education levels.

W: nda.ie/Disability-overview/Disability-Statistics/ and cso.ie

CONVENTION RATIFIED BY 175

To date, 175 countries have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It carries the force of national law.

Ireland is one of the few that has signed up, but has yet to ratify the Convention, placing this country alongside Belarus, the USA, Libya, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

Botswana, Somalia and South Sudan are among the few yet to sign up.

To see the state of play mapped, see page 30.

For everything else you need to know about the Convention, visit: bit.ly/unconv175

TANZANIA HAS RATIFIED THE CONVENTION

Tanzania is among the 175 countries to have signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Read our community development report from Tanzania, by Cian Matthew Kearns, on pages 22-23.

SDGs AND DISABILITY

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include seven targets that refer to people with disabilities and six more targets for persons in vulnerable situations, which include people with disabilities.

CRAFTY APPROACH IN TANZANIA

INTRODUCTION

Here, Cian Matthew Kearns visits a café, craft workshop and a guesthouse in Tanzania that appears to be a superb example of community development. Neema Crafts - with its workshops, café and guesthouse - specialises in supporting people with a disability. It has earned a reputation as a project that has changed the lives of many people with disabilities in Iringa city (population 100,000). People have gone from begging on the streets to employment and to building their own homes.

Can any of our readers suggest cafés or restaurants in Ireland that might compare to the one Cian visited in Iringa?

For example, the 'The Melting Pot' in Roscommon town is a café/shop run by people with disabilities and part-funded, like many more community enterprises, through the Community Services Programme.

We are aware that across Ireland there are community cafés that employ people traditionally at high risk of marginalisation.

Now, over to you to tell us about your favourite community café or craft shop! Where does equality and sustainability reign supreme? Where is the craic mighty? Who's got the best coffee?



Photo by C.M. Kearns



Cian with Pauline Mselem at the café.

What makes Pauline's story particularly interesting is that she is a Maasai. Traditionally, they would not be involved in any business other than cattle trading.

Also, while she walks with a limp from a childhood illness, she managed to bring her brothers and sisters to the town and pay for them to go to school. That was due to her work at Neema.

She now runs Neema's business courses for local traders and want-to-be traders. It runs for two evenings a week for three months and the courses are heavily subscribed. - CMK

HOW TABOOS D COMMUNITY DE

CIAN MATTHEW KEARNS REPORTS FROM IRINGA

On a quiet road, just off Iringa's Main street, sits a broad, two-story building. A wide balcony and open porch hint at a colonial influence. Inside is a shop, a café, a guesthouse and, spread across the back yard, a variety of craft workshops. The place is a hive of activity. And while everyone is busy, they are all quick to share a smile. They are working in one of Tanzania's community development success stories: Neema Crafts.

Owned by the Anglican Diocese of Ruaha, the non-profit organisation was set up in 2003 with a goal to, "train, empower and employ people with disabilities." Almost every member of Neema's 115 strong staff suffers from one or more disabilities. Over 60% are deaf.

Others are amputees or suffer complications from childhood illnesses; polio is a significant culprit for many of the older staff. In Tanzania, almost one-in-ten people have some form of disability. In a country of 55 million, that is a lot of people.

However, the law of the land does not protect those with disabilities in the same way as in Ireland and discrimination and marginalisation is widespread and chronic. Neema Crafts works to change this in the Iringa area.

The project has changed the locals' views. Before Neema, many people with a disability were considered a liability.

Titus Mbwawa is dressed in a light shirt, and mustard-yellow chinos: stylish and practical in the Tanzanian heat. He is the store manager and, when he enters a workshop, the crafters sit up straighter. You hardly notice his limp; he has an artificial leg from the hip down.

Titus brings us on a tour of the workshops. Jewellery, bags, clothing, furniture and paper are all made here. The crafters smile and wave. Dexterity and fluidity marks their skill. Despite the clack-clacking of wooden looms and the machinegun tat-tat-tat of sewing machines the workshop seems oddly quiet. It takes a minute to realise that voices are missing. Then I notice one colleague gesturing to another and I realise that there are signed conversations going on all around - a visual hullabaloo!

Titus explains that Neema Crafts has been life-changing for many of its staff.

"People here get a wage; they don't have to go beg on the street," he says.

Along with providing employment and job security, the initiative also helps with housing. The project subsidises construction costs and offer plots of land to those who otherwise couldn't afford them. When I ask Titus if he is happy here, he looks incredulous. "Neema bought me my leg. I'm very happy to be here," he says.

In an office just off one of the workshops, I meet Katie Ray. She is the co-director of Neema Crafts. Her husband, Ben, is the other half. A young, British couple, they took over the project six years ago when they were appointed by their bishop. She is busy: emails to write, exhibitions to plan and staff queries to manage.

Although Neema Crafts is linked to a UK based charity, the entire business is self-sufficient for all its day-to-day running costs. Profits are fed back into the organisation locally and these allow them to support the house-building project for staff and other initiatives.

We move to the café upstairs. The menus come with simple diagrams of basic sign-language: hello, thank you, goodbye. We order by writing directly into the waiter's docket book. He scans over it and nods - he can read my writing!

Katie tells us the project has changed the locals' views. Before Neema, many people with a disability were considered a liability and even a source of shame to their families.



ISAPPEAR WITH VELOPMENT



She tells a heart-breaking story of one staff member who contracted Polio as a child of three. His family kept him hidden from then on. "He could hear the other kids playing outside but he was locked indoors."

Gradually, things are improving. She admits, "there's still a long way to go, but from what our staff say, there's been a massive change."

"Our dream would be to see the Neema model replicated across Tanzania," she says. "It's a model that works in a lot of ways."

It's not just public acceptance. Neema offers its staff an opportunity and a chance to build their self-confidence. Perhaps most importantly, it provides a sense of togetherness.

"A lot of people said that, before Neema, they didn't have any friends. What Neema has given them is a community," says Katie.

Our order arrives, served with a silent smile. The food is good, the coffee excellent. As we sit back to enjoy our meal, I notice the waiters by the counter, gesturing animatedly and smiling broadly.

Neema is an impressive example of what a successful and sustainable community development project can be.

* *Cian Matthew Kearns travelled to Tanzania with the support of the **Simon Cumbers Media Fund**. The Fund is supported by Irish Aid to increase the quantity and quality of coverage of development issues in the Irish media.*

W: To find out more about the Neema project, its background, achievements and the network of local and international organisations it collaborates with, visit its newly revamped website:

www.neemacrafts.com



56% of people surveyed in Ireland last year would like
- TheJournal.ie/RTE's Claire Byrne Live

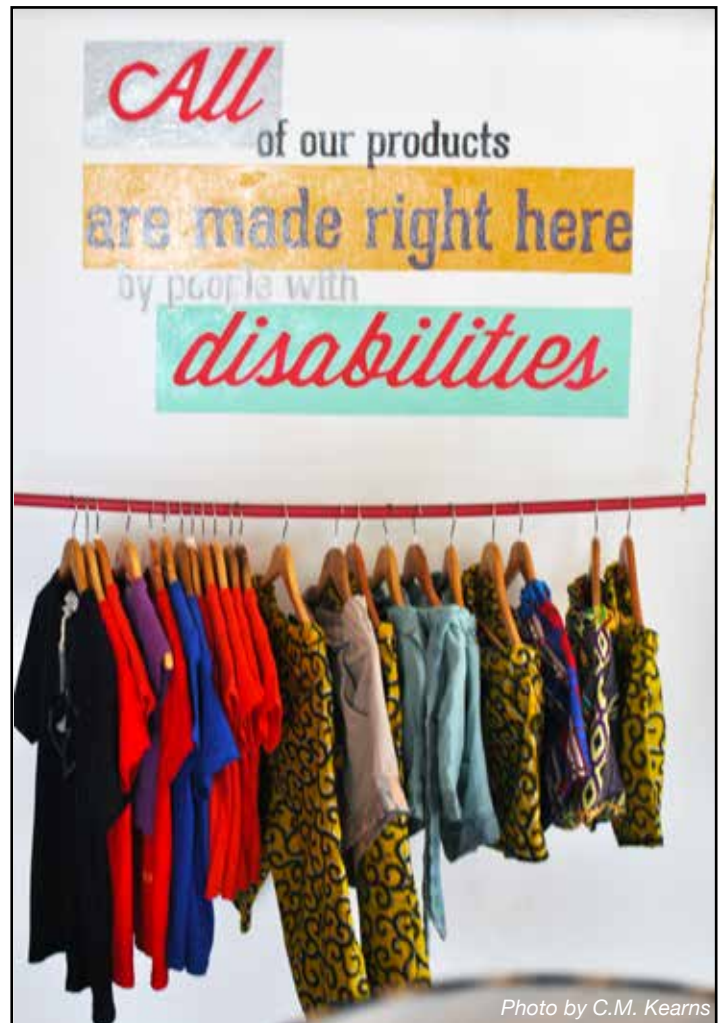


Photo by C.M. Kearns



Photo by C.M. Kearns

HUMAN RIGHTS: In the community

NOTHING SHOULD BE TABOO SECTARIANISM AND FUNDAM

- Community workers are in pivotal positions to nurture intercultural



Tehmina Kazi.

INTERVIEW BY ALLEN MEAGHER

Human rights activist and community worker Tehmina Kazi worked in her native London to counter religious extremism as well as anti-Muslim sentiment. For seven years, she was the director of a small charity called British Muslims for Secular Democracy. She is also a trustee of an anti-fascist organisation called 'Hope Not Hate'.

She moved to Ireland two years ago.

"I was looking for a new challenge and wanted to live in another EU country before Brexit kicks in," she said.

She also had personal reasons to move - her husband at the time was an Irish Muslim convert. She herself was a practicing Muslim for 12 years.

Tehmina is outspoken on freedom of expression, religion and human rights. She was outspoken in the country of her birth and, now, in Ireland, she is one of a small number who are comfortable speaking publicly about the sensitive issues that arise in an intercultural society. She was invited to Brussels recently "to talk about the importance of building alliances to counter extremism".

Today, Tehmina works as a Policy and Advocacy Officer with the Cork Equal and Sustainable Communities Alliance (CESCA), an alliance of 18 community groups that decided to work together and to pool their expertise and resources and to challenge social exclusion and inequality.

She spoke to 'Changing Ireland' in a personal capacity. From a person with lived experience - we are providing her with a platform to reach people who live, work and volunteer in communities across Ireland. She believes in standing up to fundamentalism, while standing up for people's religious beliefs so long as they don't conflict with our human rights. Here she shares some tips and insights.

She believes all of us, including community workers, must be "equally vociferous in condemning both anti-muslim sentiment and far-right extremism".

HOW DO YOU BE BOTH?

Q. How do community workers - who haven't been trained in this area - both stand up for Muslims who are being abused or discriminated against because of their religion, while opposing other Muslims whose beliefs are considered fundamentalist?

"You have to be equally vociferous in condemning both. That was a balancing act that I hopefully managed to strike when I was

working with British Muslims for Secular Democracy. I was involved in a lot of projects... combating Islamist extremism.

"On the other hand, I'm still a trustee for 'Hope Not Hate', one of the most successful anti-fascist organisations in the UK."

WE SHOULD HAVE A 'TELL MAMA'

"I'm also on the advisory board of 'Tell Mama' in the UK, the Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks project.

"Personally, I think we should have a tool similar to 'Tell Mama' here. It's already going to be extended to Northern Ireland - I asked them to do that actually.

"It's time we had a tool like that in the Republic as well. It means people can go online or phone in and report anti-Muslim attacks and abuse. It's powerful."

STANDING UP FOR MUSLIMS FACING DISCRIMINATION

Q. Can you give examples of negative sentiment towards Muslims in communities in Ireland?

"A Muslim takeaway owner was racially abused at work. An Irish customer came in - she seemed drunk - and said 'Go back to your country'. She used lots of derogatory slurs against people from Pakistan. It was a horrible experience for him."

"I got in touch and (encouraged) him to report it to www.ireport.ie. If you don't feel comfortable going to the Gardai, at least that way it's logged on a national database about discrimination and hate crime."

"In another incident, Imam Ihab Ahmed, the imam of a mosque on Blarney Street, Cork, was spat at and attacked on the street while wearing his religious robes.

"And buildings have been vandalised. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Mosque had its windows smashed with stones."

RELIGION WRONGLY BLAMED

She said sometimes people falsely interpret social issues as being "a Muslim problem".

"Some people view forced marriage as being an Islamic problem, when it may be a cultural issue: The religion gets the blame when, in fact, most complaints to the Forced Marriage Hotline (in Britain) relate to one country, Pakistan."

PUBLIC SERVICE DUTY

Q. What advice have you for people working in diverse communities?

"You're trying to challenge racism. Equality and human rights is the way forward. We have the legal framework and, for public sector organisations, it's now a duty. Public Sector organisations have to actively promote a culture of respect for equality and human rights.

"What I love about (the Public Sector Duty) is the fact that the nine grounds of discrimination are covered. So members of minority communities have to understand that if they are discriminated against on grounds that apply to them, they (should) extend respect to other people who are protected under other grounds.

"For example, if there's a Traveller man who has been discriminated against - and he has a problem with gay people - you can say to him, 'Equality law is here to protect everyone and if you're benefitting from that law, it's only right that the same protections are given to other minority groups as well.'"

PROTECTING MUSLIMS FROM ABUSE

Q. Are people ready to embrace our Muslim citizens and

TACKLING RACISM, FUNDAMENTALISM

/ relations

residents in the aftermath of a bombing here by perceived Muslim bombers?

"We have to be mindful that anti-Muslim sentiment is going to spike at those times. The attack on the mosque in Galway took place right after one of the terrorist attacks in the UK."

HOT BUTTON ISSUES

Q. If a bombing takes place here and people are killed, how can community workers be best ready the very next day to do the right thing in their communities?

"Have as many events as possible emphasising the unity of the community. Emphasise that we won't be cowed into fear. Do what the best of intercultural dialogue and interfaith work does - bring the different communities together so that they can understand each other better and can discuss controversial hot button issues."

Q. How can communities talk about hot button issues without difficulty?

"Ensure that you have good moderation. Ensure that everyone adheres to a code where they respect each others right to hold an opinion. Challenge the argument, not the person."

"Cork's been quite diverse for 10 years. But some smaller towns in Ireland have had a sudden influx of refugees and they don't know quite how to deal with all these sometimes very subtle issues."

HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH

Q. "Can I as a community worker take a human rights perspective in judging religions and in opposing some of the beliefs they promote?"

"You very much can do that, when those beliefs are imposed on other people without their consent. Or when they are put forward in the public sphere and are unlawful. A very good example of this is gender segregation, where a religiously mandated norm happens to run counter to equality law".

"For example, the Equality and Human Rights Commission published guidance to say that gender segregation at public events in universities was definitely unlawful, even if the people involved had agreed to it. (It's not unlawful at prayer events at universities)."

ISLAM PUTTING WOMEN IN 2ND PLACE

Q. In your opinion, does Islam put women in second place?

"In practice, it does exactly that. That's one of the reasons I left. I had a problem with, for example, Verse 4.34 which says that as a last resort you are allowed to beat your wife lightly."

Q. Is it fundamentalist to believe that men are a step above women, that we are not equal.

"Yes, of course it is."

REVERSE DISCRIMINATION

Do you know of Irish people who have experienced discrimination or racism here by people from abroad?

"I recently gave advice to someone Irish who experienced such discrimination in her workplace. I suggested that the company introduces mandatory equality and diversity training for all employees. I would recommend the same for anyone who encounters this in a community setting."

"In general, if you are discriminated against by an employer or landlord or service provider, the recourse is quite straightforward. You make a written complaint and if that is not dealt with satisfactorily, you can escalate that under the Equal Status Act, for example to the Workplace Relations Commission."

COMMUNITY WORKERS FACE SEXISM

Q. Community workers begin by meeting people where they're at and building relations. However, what can community workers do when they encounter sexist attitudes among people in the community who they are employed to engage with?

"The community organisation should have a 'Dignity At Work' policy* that covers this. That would be the first port of call."

Q. Female community workers funded through the SICAP programme have met male immigrants or temporary residents in Ireland who look down on them because of their gender.

"The organisation might decide that the community worker would have no further meetings with this person. Although it doesn't deal with the root cause, the work could be assigned to a male member of staff (if there is one)."

Q. What if the person sneers, sits back in their chair, with their legs spread and stare out the window? They convey their sexism through non-verbal behaviour.

"The organisation could make it clear to the individual that if they're not willing to engage, then they are not going to benefit from the services. At the same time, the organisation would write to agencies awaiting the outcome of the meetings, to say we can't deal with this person due to their attitude towards our employees."

WON'T SHAKE HANDS V DOMINANT CULTURE

Q. What if people won't shake your hand?

"I've had it, where Muslim men won't shake my hand," said Tehmina. "What they do instead is this", she said, holding her hand to her chest."

Q. What if someone who objects to this custom applies for a job with a community-based organisation where they would be expected to meet and greet people?

"You wouldn't hire such a person. And you'd ask why is the applicant applying anyway when some of the duties conflict with their deeply held religious beliefs."

Q. Is it ok for this dominant culture to impose itself on people coming in from abroad?

"When it comes to culture and customs, it's very simple - if you want to be full integrated in the mainstream, if you want to work in jobs where handshaking might be necessary, then you have to adapt to the local culture and customs."

IDEOLOGICALLY WRONG, PRAGMATICALLY RIGHT

Q. A Muslim female attended for an interview for a place on an internship programme in a Community Sector workplace. She was accompanied by her husband who felt he had a duty to be



HUMAN RIGHTS: In the community

there. The manager allowed the male custodian to sit in for the interview. Were they right or wrong?

"They were ideologically wrong, but pragmatically right. If that's what you have to do to get the person to engage with your services, then having the husband there in person is okay."

"That's so long as there are no confidential things being discussed; if there are then that's a real issue and I would insist he not come along."

MOSQUES IN COMMUNITIES: WHAT ARE THE MAJORITY OF IMAMS LIKE?

Q. What are the majority of imams in communities around Ireland like?

"I hate to say this, but I've been to mosques like Clonskeigh and others in Dublin, and I wouldn't regard any of them as particularly moderate, in my eyes anyway."

"The imams are quite good at condemning violence. What they're not so good at is challenging socially conservative attitudes, especially those proving harmful to other people. Like negative and prejudiced views of LGBT people which they publicly put on their Facebook pages."

"They have a façade of being welcoming."

"Certain Imams and religious leaders are completely out of step on subjects such as free speech."

LEFT SOMETIMES BLIND TO FUNDAMENTALISM

"There is a problem with some anti-racist groups, especially on the left who whitewash Muslim fundamentalist thought and practice - because they feel 'Muslims as an oppressed minority and we can't be seen to be criticising them'. Even when the criticism would be justified."

Q. Justified under the nine grounds of discrimination, etc?

"Yes, that's right. And the UN Declaration of Human Rights."

Q. What are the dangers of turning a blind eye to discriminatory practices?

"You give them a license to continue. They can say such-and-such a group support us unconditionally, one-hundred percent, and they use that as leverage to continue with oppressive practices."

ANTI-FUNDAMENTALISM WORK

Q. Is there any project or anybody in Ireland doing the work you did in Britain - and you were one of many - tackling people who've been brainwashed to believe in ISIS?

"There are individuals who are doing this sort of work. The imam, Dr Umar Al Qadri, is very vocal against violent extremism, though he's quite socially conservative. We strongly differ on LGBT people."

"Also, there are consultancies. For example, Lucinda Creighton and her colleagues in Vulcan Consulting, recently organised an event in Brussels along with the European Foundation for Democracy."

"They're probably the closest thing Ireland has to counter-extremist experts at the moment."

"There's also the Radicalisation Awareness Network... they held an event in Dublin recently."

Q. Are they speaking generally to a wide audience, or are any working one-to-one with people?

"The imam (Al Qadri) definitely would. There are other imams like him, although they're not as vocal as they used to be. There's one called Shaykh Satardien, from South Africa, who had a mosque in Blanchardstown and he was known as one of the moderate imams in Dublin."

INCLUSIVE PROGRESSIVE MOSQUES

"I've come across mosque movements that have are completely different from the norm. I was a volunteer with the inclusive mosque initiative, which was a pop-up prayer space in the UK. They had openly LGBT people on their committee and everyone was welcome. Whether you were an Ahemedy Muslim, a feminist Muslim, or an openly gay Muslim bringing your partner, they'd welcome you with open arms."

Q. There is something similar in Germany, but it is the exception rather than the rule.

"That's my point. What I'd call the truly inclusive progressive mosques are very much in the minority both in the UK and in Ireland."

"There is room for someone to set up an organisation similar to BMSD in Ireland. So, you could have an Irish Muslims for Secular Democracy."

"You really need the right person to set it up, a Muslim who is really committed, who understands the issues and who is committed to challenging all forms of religious fundamentalism."



Tehmina Kazi.

COMING TO IRELAND CLASSES / NORWAY'S APPROACH

Q. Should people coming from abroad be made do a test to learn about Irish culture and customs?

"In the UK, we've had citizenship tests for years, around the cultural aspects."

Q. A liberal Muslim told me she believed her own (fundamentalist) husband should not have been left into the country because of his beliefs. Should there be a test to see if people's beliefs are compatible?

"That's a bit draconian, especially when it comes to beliefs rather than behaviour. It is behaviour that the Irish State should be more interested in policing."

Q. What about people with fundamentalist beliefs coming here?

"They would just lie in any test."

Q. Should newcomers be expected to attend 'Coming to Ireland' classes online or in person, as part of a welcome-education package?

"Yes, I think so. I think you could do it with training and education. I really like what they've done in Norway with male refugees. They cover the cultural norms that you are expected to follow. They give them classes on gender relations, teach them things such as that sexual harassment is wrong and what constitutes sexual harassment. Something like that would hopefully work here."

DIVERSE IRELAND A BETTER COUNTRY

Q. Do you think Ireland will be a better country with this mixing of cultures?

"Very much so. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission - in their latest round of grant funding - prioritised groups working on intercultural dialogue. When your national human rights institution sees that this is a big priority, that says it all really. It's to encourage people to mix, not just in formal settings, but beyond that - to make friendships and to socialise."

"My hope is we'll see a lot more inter-racial, intercultural and interfaith relationships and marriages. That's the true test of integration."



NEWS BRIEFS



CLEAR EVIDENCE OF NATIONAL IMPACT

Public Participation Networks

The first annual report of the work of Public Participation Networks (PPNs) nationally has been published.

PPNs are established in all local authority areas and over 12,000 community, voluntary and environmental groups and organisations had joined their local networks by the beginning of 2017.

The first PPNs were set up in 2014.

Social Justice Ireland, which has backed the idea of the networks from the start,

welcomed the publication, saying it “shows that the 31 PPNs contribute to local policy and decision making”.

Launching the report in December, Minister of State, Sean Kyne, echoed those views, saying that the report demonstrated “clear evidence of the tremendous work that has been undertaken by PPNs in such a very short space of time.”

“PPNs are the future. They are the main link through which the local authority connects with the community, voluntary, environmental and social inclusion sectors.

“They are uniquely placed to bring a diversity of voices and interests to the decision-making process,” he said.

Minister Kyne encouraged organisations that have not yet joined to do so.

Download link: <http://bit.ly/PPNreport>



Development.

The CSP, with a budget of €46.2 million, supports community businesses that deliver services and create employment for people from disadvantaged groups. Not-for-profit organisations are funded under the programme and recruit unemployed people to work in the projects.

Many people encounter CSP projects when they interact with home insulation schemes, disability transport and meals-on-wheels.

100 ENERGETIC COMMUNITY GROUPS

Making life more sustainable

There are now almost 100 members of the Sustainable Energy Communities (SEC) network, across all regions of Ireland.

All kinds of community groups can join, whether communities of interest, of locality, or even a number of local groups wishing to work together.

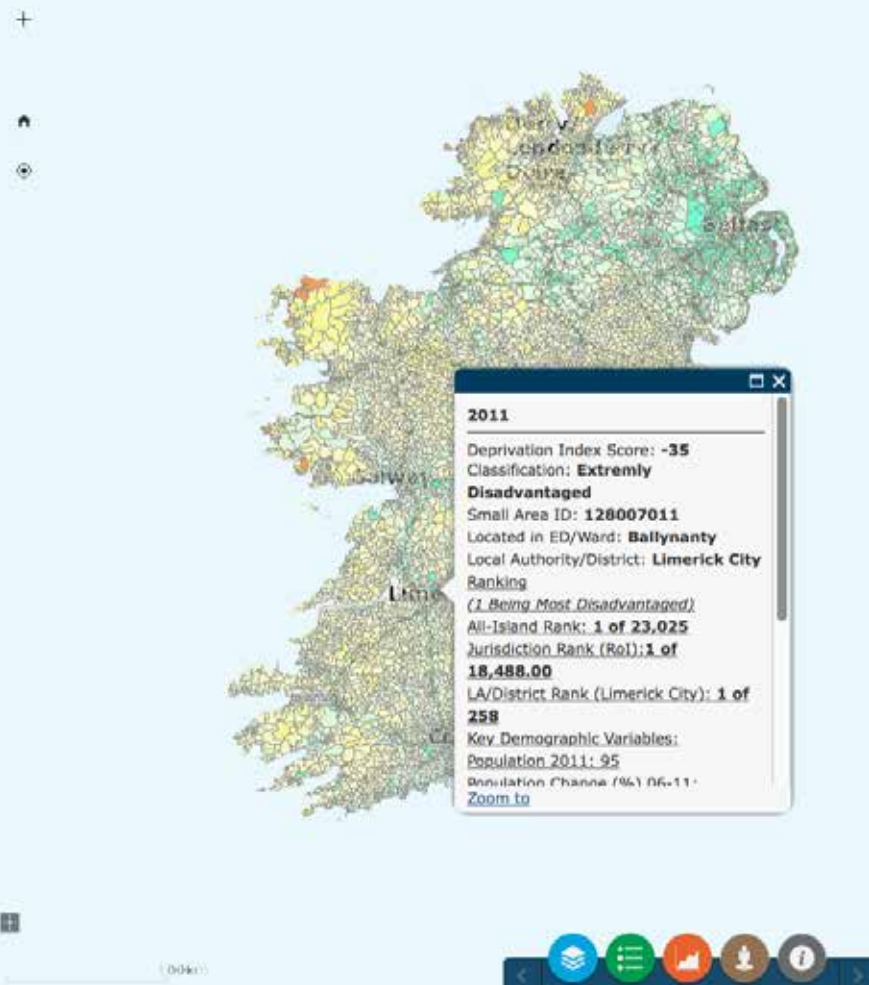
To find out more, or to join the SEC network, just complete the short registration form (downloadable here: www.bit.ly/secapp1) and return to sec@seai.ie The programme website has additional information on www.seai.ie/SEC/

For more on sustainable energy, see page 15.

€46M MOVE

Community Services Programme

The Community Services Programme has been transferred from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to the Department of Rural and Community



Who wants to be number one?

NOBODY

The top five places in the 2011 HP Deprivation Index, which ranks poverty nationally, went to Limerick city. Will the 2016 maps & stats tell a new story? Has Regeneration been so successful?

Watch this space...



NATIONAL STRATEGY

CHALLENGE FOR GOVERNMENT

New Traveller/Roma strategy promises to make the difference

The new National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017 – 2021 was launched by David Stanton, T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality, with responsibility for Equality, Immigration and Integration, last June.

The development of the Strategy involved a comprehensive public consultation process, including two rounds of public meetings and engagement with Traveller and Roma organisations at national level.

In launching the Strategy, Minister Stanton said that “This Inclusion Strategy builds on the wave of positivity arising for Travellers from the Taoiseach’s recent statement of formal recognition of Travellers as an ethnic group of the Irish nation. The challenge now is for Travellers and Government to work together in a sustained way to address the issues the community faces so as to bring about real improvements in the everyday lives of Travellers.”

Arising from the consultation process, the following ten overall themes were identified as central to the success of the Inclusion Strategy:

- cultural identity
- education
- employment and the Traveller economy
- children and youth
- health
- gender equality
- anti-discrimination and equality

- accommodation
- Traveller and Roma communities
- public services.

Amongst the key commitments in the new Strategy are:

• **Cultural Identity** - the State will provide supports to promote knowledge of, and pride in, Traveller culture and heritage;

• **Education** - investment by the State in community-based support mechanisms to ensure earlier access and greater retention of Traveller and Roma children and youths in the education system;

• **Employment and the Traveller Economy** - there will be a range of assistive and targeted measures including proposals for internships, promotion of existing opportunities, anti-racism and cultural awareness for public sector employees as well as supports for social entrepreneurship;

• **Children and Youth** - Traveller and Roma children and youth will be given a stronger voice in participative structures and their views will be considered in the development of policy;

• **Health** - reinvigorated efforts by the State to ensure that Travellers and Roma interact fully with the public health sector in order to address some of the underlying health-related challenges facing those communities

• **Gender Equality** – initiatives will be undertaken to assist Traveller and Roma

women to engage effectively with stakeholder groups and community leadership programmes in gender equality will be supported;

• **Accommodation** – the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 will be reviewed, the budget for Traveller accommodation will be ring-fenced, in conjunction with the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee. More robust mechanisms will be put in place to monitor expenditure and delivery, including periodic reviews to assess progress in meeting needs and to identify new and emerging needs

• **Community** - in consultation with Traveller representatives, a sustained intervention will be designed and implemented to tackle feuding within the Traveller community;

• **Public Services** - a new system of ethnic identifiers will be developed across the public sector to help to track progress of, and/or challenges for, the Traveller and Roma communities in Ireland.

Minister Stanton emphasised that: “The Inclusion Strategy is as a living document, with monitoring of its implementation a key and integral part of its potential success. It has been my privilege to chair the Strategy Implementation Steering Group – comprising Traveller representatives and representatives of Government Departments and agencies – which will remain as the key mechanism for driving implementation.”



Minister of State for Equality, Immigration and Integration, David Stanton (third from right) said at the launch that the Strategy includes 149 actions to be taken across 10 areas including education, children and youth, accommodation and public services. The Minister acknowledged that imposing sanctions on local authorities who fail to deliver adequate Traveller accommodation would be a “very last resort”. Penalties have been sought by Traveller groups and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

Pavee welcomes shift to new partnership approach

Pavee Point welcomed the new National Traveller Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS) which has the potential to change the quality of life for Travellers and Roma.

Used to being critical of government for failings over the decades, it was keen this time to commend the work undertaken by the Department of Justice and Equality and Equality Minister, David Stanton, for leading and steering the process.

The Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre (to give the project its full title) said that the Strategy provided "a much-needed roadmap for Traveller and Roma inclusion that outlines positive commitments across departments and agencies".

"The new Strategy reflects a partnership approach," is said. This was demonstrated through the development of the NTRIS steering group and national consultations.

Martin Collins, co-director, Pavee Point, said they could now work "in partnership with departments and agencies to ensure that the strategy has impact and positive outcomes in the lives of Roma and Travellers.

He said that "specific measures" relating to education were "particularly important". Only 13% of Traveller children complete secondary education, in comparison with 92% of the general population," said Mr Collins.

Finding "safe and secure housing" for Roma people is "a major issue and still needs to be explicitly addressed in the Strategy," said **Ronnie**

Fay, Pavee Point co-director.

"Roma families are facing homelessness and living in abandoned warehouses and unsafe buildings – the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government will need to take action to address these issues," she said.

Pavee Point welcomed the fact that there will be an independent review of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, as part of the NTRIS.



Martin Collins has featured as a spokesperson for Travellers for some years. He is pictured here from earlier editions of 'Changing Ireland', in 2006 and 2010.

"STUNNING" INTERCULTURAL TRAINING

There's nothing like the endorsement of customers or past pupils to impress others.

Partners Training for Transformation, a national, not-for-profit based in Dublin, have a solid reputation in supporting intercultural work, since 1990.

Marie Corcoran-Tindill, who works on an integration programme for refugees in Donegal, said it provides "stunning training."

She particularly likes two of Partners's courses - 'Working Interculturally' and 'Creative Facilitation'.

"It's practical, reflective and relevant to the daily work of community workers," she said.

"One of their training books is 'Partners Intercultural Companion to Training for Transformation' which I draw on a lot in my work and life," she said.

The book helps readers to understand culture, identity, racism, power and many other areas of intercultural work. It covers theory and practice and includes exercises proven to work with intercultural groups.

Partners takes a Paulo Freire approach to all its work.

Freire, from Brazil, wrote a highly influential book on education called 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed', in 1970.

W: trainingfortransformation.ie/

Community rep likely to join review

Minister Michael Ring announced late last year that he intended to review the operation of Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs).

The review is being carried out by the Department of Rural and Community Development and a steering committee has been established to advise on the review. Speaking in

the Seanad in December the Minister committed to adding a community rep to the Steering Committee.

Sr. Maureen Lally has since been invited to participate as a community rep and joins members drawn from the Minister's Department, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, local authorities and the Northern

and Western Regional Assembly.

The Minister noted that LCDCs had been operational for three years and had been involved in important programme management and community planning work.

"As the term of office for members is three years, LCDCs are also currently going through the first round of rotation of membership. In this context, a review of the structures is considered timely," said Minister Ring.

The aim is to develop and strengthen the existing structures. The review is examining LCDCs' governance and structure, strategic efficiencies, participation and engagement and administrative support and development.

LCDCs have been established in all 31 local authority areas and have responsibility for bringing about "a more joined-up approach to local and community

development" in their areas.

The structures were introduced in 2014 by former minister and current EU Commissioner, Phil Hogan, to bring about an "alignment of local government and local development".

As part of its work, the review steering group is looking at all aspects of how LCDCs operate and how to further develop the structures. It is conducting "online surveys, workshops, widespread consultation and questionnaires to gain as much feedback as possible".

Saying it was "the one thing missing", Minister Ring thanked Senator Victor Boyhan (Ind) for making the point about ideally having someone representing communities on the committee.

Sr. Maureen Lally, a well-known community development worker credited with pioneering the Tóchar Valley Rural Community Network, is this year's Mayo Person of the Year.



MAKING HUMAN RIGHTS REAL

CESCA'S EQUALITY DAY CONFERENCE

"I don't mean to be cynical, but how long were we waiting for Traveller recognition!"

By **TEHMINA KAZI** (Cesca)

AN Equality Conference called "Making Human Rights Real" took place on December 4th last, at St Mary's Health Campus, in Gurrabraher, Cork.

Organised by the Cork Equal and Sustainable Communities Alliance (Cesca) it focused on taking human rights out of the pages of textbooks to make them real in the lives of ordinary people.

Deputy Lord Mayor of Cork, **Fergal Dennehy** opened proceedings, followed by a keynote speech from **Minister David Stanton**. A panel discussion then focused on Ireland's failure to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

Disability Federation of Ireland policy worker, **Meredith Raley**, remarked that Ireland had delayed ratification for over a decade, with very little to show for it.

Suzie Byrne, a blogger, highlighted the absurdity of this by pointing out that even North Korea had ratified the Convention.

Rosaleen McDonagh, Traveller activist and playwright (pictured above) warned: "I don't mean to be cynical, but how long were we waiting for Traveller ethnicity?"

A second panel discussed hate crimes in an Irish context, with contributions from UCC's Senior Lecturer in Contemporary Islam, **Dr Amanullah De Soudy**. He urged



British and Irish Muslim communities to root out sectarian and homophobic attitudes, and made the audience laugh with tales of how his father regaled his mother with risqué Punjabi songs.

Shane O'Curry, stressed the value of reporting hate crime on 'ireport.ie'.

UCC's incoming Director of Equality and Diversity, **Dr Karl Kitching**, presented evidence of an over-focus on "good migrant behaviour" in educational settings.

Deirdre Toomey works as the Public Sector Duty Manager with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. She explained how the Public Sector Duty works. Travellers from North Cork described

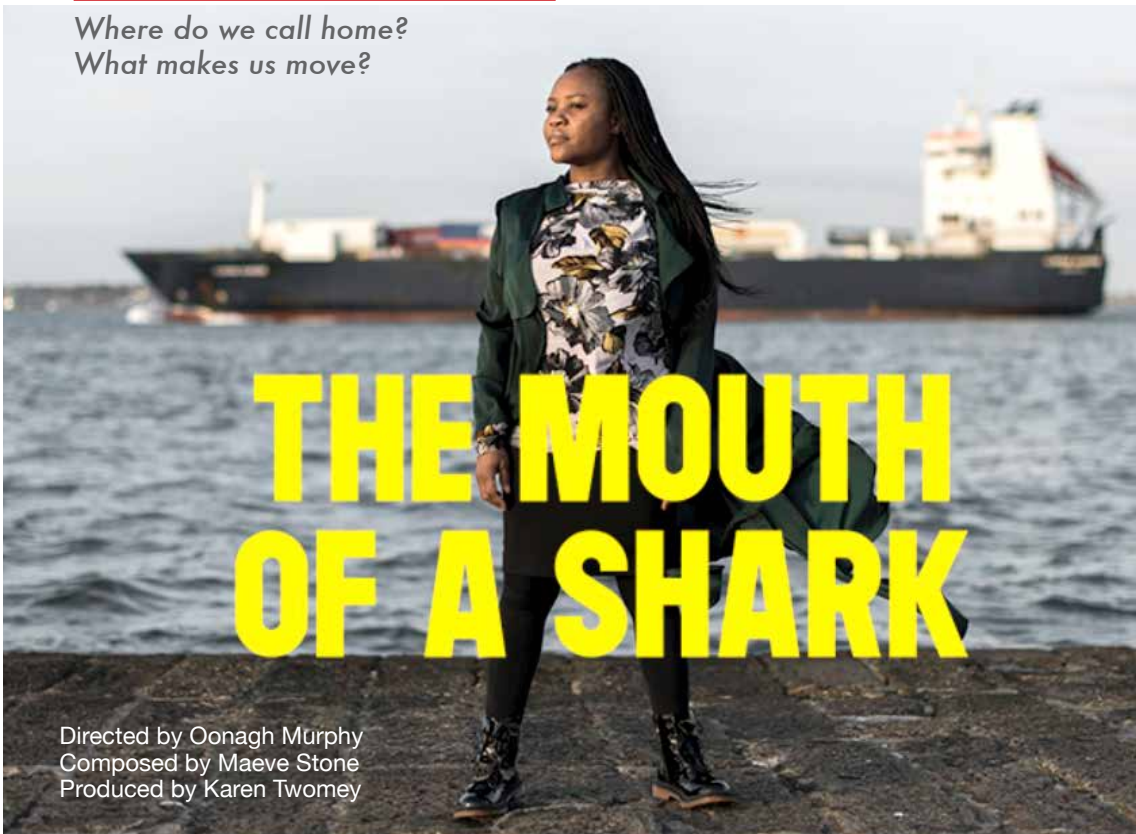
terrible conditions several Travellers are forced to live in, with stories of rats running across beds. They explained how Belfast-based Participation and Practice of Rights (PPR) helped them create their own Accommodation Rights Charter (which was promptly held up in solidarity by conference attendees).

Dessie Donnelly, PPR's development director, warned there could be immense tensions between the State and NGOs agitating for human rights, which could result in funding cuts to the NGOs in question.

Tribute was also paid at the conference by **Ronnie Dorney** to the late CESCA co-chair and LGBT activist Dave Roche.

WHERE WE LIVE

Where do we call home?
What makes us move?



Directed by Oonagh Murphy
Composed by Maeve Stone
Produced by Karen Twomey

Amigrant community choir will feature in an upcoming theatre production in Dublin. An open call went out for singers in January.

Called 'The Mouth of A Shark', the show's title comes from British-Somali poet, Warsan Shire, who wrote: "No-one leaves home, unless home is the mouth of a shark."

Producer Karen Twomey, said, "It counterpoints Irish emigration stories with the contemporary experiences of those seeking asylum here in Ireland."

The show opens on March 11th and runs until March 15th (times vary).

Venue: 'The Complex' on Little Green Street (off Capel Street) in Smithfield.

The show is a co-production by 'Change of Address' and 'Thisispopbaby', in association with Wicklow Arts Office and supported by CREATE.

W: <http://thisispopbaby.com/shows/the-mouth-of-a-shark/>

TECH TIPS / PARTICIPATION

Communities are like ducks to water on social media - but do learn to swim



By Pat Kennedy,
eTownz

Communities across Ireland have taken to social media like ducks to water, but some dive in before they're fully ready, attracted by the way online platforms offer:

- Quick communication with the community.
- Access to feedback from the community.
- Coordination for activities and an easy way of raising awareness on local issues (everything from when local soccer training is on, to safety updates during storms).

For community-based organisations looking to make best use of social media as a local development tool, we would advise the following:

1. At the outset, prepare guidelines for (a) people managing your community profile and (b) for followers. Sometimes, unwanted situation arise. Yet, simple rules set in place at the start can help deal with future problems - simple things like, no abusive language towards others, etc.
2. Create a simple wall management plan for a given week, month or year. This might include local history, promotions, competitions, event promotion, and so on.
3. Ask a local camera club, film club or local people to contribute content. If the onus is on the page manager to find material, the workload can become too great.
4. Start off with a Facebook page as it has the largest reach. Make a group decision to roll out on Twitter, Instagram, Youtube or



other platforms only when things are going well on Facebook and there are adequate resources to manage them.

5. Make sure to follow local clubs, groups and causes as they will be a great source of content.

6. Look at communities with a strong social media presence to learn successful strategies for managing the community online platforms.

Pat Kennedy is the founder of eTownz which specialises in developing digital tools for the community development sector. He will be writing a series of short "how to" articles advising Changing Ireland readers on digital topics in the coming issues.

If you have any questions, feel free to email the editor and we will pass on your queries.

W: etownz.com

Greetings from Athens!

Go on! Send us a photo of yourself reading 'Changing Ireland' in an interesting or exotic place.

You don't have to be abroad. You could be chilling in a community cafe, canoeing or climbing a mountain.

Over to you! Send to: editor@changingireland.ie

Here, community worker Gearóid Fitzgibbon takes to the hills to read his copy.

The setting: The Temple of Poseidon, God of the Sea, near Athens, Greece.

He has long been a fan of 'Changing Ireland' and wrote, volunteered and chaired at various times for the project.

Recently, a group Gearóid worked with in Tipperary won a national award (see p15).

“Volunteering with VSO is one of the most professionally and personally rewarding things I have ever done and it truly has a lasting effect in the communities you work in. I highly recommend that anyone who is thinking about taking a career break to give VSO a call.”

- Maria Casey who volunteered in Karamoja last year



VOLUNTEER WITH VSO IRELAND AND HELP YOUNG GIRLS GO TO SCHOOL IN UGANDA

Do you have experience working with community organisations or minority groups in Ireland? If so, VSO Ireland wants to hear from you!

We urgently need qualified Community Development Specialists to volunteer on a new education programme in Karamoja, one of the poorest and least developed regions in Uganda. Shockingly, in some areas of Karamoja, only 6.4% of girls finish primary school at all. As an experienced community worker, you have skills needed to help Ugandan communities have a voice in decisions affecting education services and understand the importance of educating their young girls.

A typical working week might include:

- Facilitating community consultations so more local people can voice their views on inclusive education
- Supporting community development staff in local government offices
- Implementing and monitoring an agreed community development operational plan

- Ensuring community mobilisation and education promotion is conducted at sub-country and school level
- Planning and organising outreach support services to girls and boys in the community

These roles are ideal if you have a degree in social sciences, social work, community development, gender or special education and at least five years' relevant experience. A comprehensive support package, including flights, accommodation, medical insurance, training and a monthly allowance, is provided to all VSO volunteers.

If you'd like to find out more about their roles and register your interest, please call **01 640 1060** or email your CV to **volunteer@vso.ie**. You can also attend our Meet VSO information evenings, which take place on the first Thursday of every month in the VSO Ireland Dublin 2 office. Please visit **www.vso.ie/meetvso** for more details.

