

**SECTION 1: BUDGET AND ESTIMATES**

**LANDMARK INCREASE IN FUNDING FOR YOUTH WORK SECTOR**

On 18 November, 2004 the Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science, Síle de Valera, T.D., announced that an additional amount of €5.265m had been provided for Youth Services in 2005, an increase of 18%. This brings the total provision for 2005 up to €33,889,000. This additional funding will cater for a number of developments under the Youth Work Act, 2001 and National Youth Work Development Plan, specifically the following:

- Further roll out of Youth Work Act, 2001 provisions, including appointment of Assessor of Youth Work.
- Expansion and development of the Special Projects for Disadvantaged Youth Scheme.
- Review, upgrading and expansion of the Youth Information Centre Network.
- Funding Review of youth work to be undertaken by consultants under the guidance of the NYWAC.
- Expansion of the National Child Protection Training Programme for those involved in the youth sector.
- Increased grants for the major national and regional youth work organisations funded under the Youth Service Grant Scheme and other Youth Schemes.

Of particular significance is the commitment that this funding is not once-off funding but will create a new benchmark for funding to the sector.

**FURTHER AND ADULT EDUCATION FUNDING INCREASES**

Minister Ms. Síle de Valera, T.D., announced that in the area of Further and Adult Education, expenditure would rise to approximately €138 million in 2005 an increase of €10 million as compared with 2004. Of the measures outlined a number are of relevance to those in the youth work sector, namely:

- Increase in excess of €2.5m. for Adult Literacy, which will allow for new initiatives to be introduced in 2005 in consultation with the VEC's and NALA. In addition to ensuring literacy services for up to 30,000 adults, extra provision will be made in 2005 to implement a national framework for assessing levels of attainment in adult literacy.
- Increase of €1 million or 7.2% for expansion of part-time options under the Back to Education Initiative in 2005. The number of BTEI part-time training places will increase by approximately 1,000 places to 7,000, catering for in excess of 10,000 participants.
- Allocation of an extra €800,000 for the roll-out of Phase 4 Adult Education Guidance Initiative. 24 projects currently running, providing an important service to learners in Adult

Literacy, Community Education and VTOS. This will allow the Adult Guidance Service to be extended into approximately 10 areas currently without a service.

- 7.3% increase in 2005 on childcare services in Youthreach, Traveller and VTOS programmes.
- New provision for trainees with special needs in Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training programmes to provide for extra tutor resources, educational assessments & education plans and adaptive technology, depending on the needs of the young people involved.

**REGIONAL DRUGS TASK FORCE PLANS FOR 2005**

On 18 November, 2004, Noel Ahern T.D. Minister of State for the National Drugs Strategy outlined some of some of the measures to be undertaken as a result of the 18% increase in funding for drugs programmes in 2005, announced in the Estimates. These included the further development and consolidation of the work being done through the Local Drugs Task Forces and the Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund and a number of new drugs initiatives through the Regional Drugs Task Forces that have been established throughout the country will be resourced. In drawing attention to the Regional Drug Task Forces the Minister stated that:

*"The RDTF's are currently drawing up their regional action plans to meet identified gaps in services in their areas and I look forward to approving these plans early next year. Through the plans, a number of new initiatives will be put in place dealing with prevention, education, treatment etc. and I am anxious that these projects will get up and running as early as possible next year".*

A number of measures aimed at tackling cocaine misuse will be rolled out in 2005. The proposals being funded will concentrate on the three areas of training, education and treatment and will build on existing work being done by the health authorities and community based projects in Local Drugs Task Force areas.

8% increase in funding for community programmes in 2005 to expand the number of community projects from 175 to 185, with development plans for a further 5 projects currently under consideration. The funding increase will also allow a number of community projects to take on a full time worker, and extend their opening to a full day service.

Finally, a number of new capital programmes for 2005 are planned through the Task Forces and the Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund. Under the YPFSSF, a number of large-scale community/youth facilities have been built in areas such as Donnycarney, Finglas, Cabra and the south inner city. Others will come on stream in 2005 in Bray, Clondalkin, Tallaght and Knocknaheeny, Cork City.

### BUDGET SNIPPETS

The following is a brief but not comprehensive overview of some other budgetary developments outside of those already covered that may be of relevance of to those working on the youth and community work sector:

#### Childcare

Over the next five years half a billion € will be provided for the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme. The immediate impact of this announcement is an increase of €15.2 million in the Programme for 2005. This brings the total funding available for childcare in 2005 to €83.4 million compared to €68.2m in 2004, an increase of 22% overall. The impact of the additional funding between now and 2009 will be the creation of an estimated further 17,000 childcare places. This funding will also support the improvement of existing childcare places, through capital and staffing funding, and continue the development of the Childcare sector through improvements in co-ordination and quality.

#### Disability

- A scheme of grant aid support is being introduced in 2005 for voluntary sector projects. Support will be given to once-off projects which demonstrate an innovative and cost-effective approach to service provision for people with disabilities and which have the capacity to be mainstreamed in the future.
- €1m in special funding for Comhairle to set up of a personal advocacy service for people with disabilities
- Cumulative additional current spending will amount to €594 million in the period 2006 – 09 and capital spending will total €300 million in the same period.
- Additional funding to enhance the provision of education services for adults with disabilities, to expand the role of the National Council for Special Education, to increase the level of pre-school provision and to introduce new appeals processes as envisaged in the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004.
- Introduction of a special new €35 weekly personal payment to persons resident in institutional settings who are not receiving Disability Allowance.

#### Mental Health

- €10 million for the Mental Health Commission.
- €15m allocated to Mental Health Services to provide and staff an additional 14 beds at the Central Mental Hospital; **further develop child and adolescent treatment services**; expand community-based adult mental health teams; provide additional community residential places; open new mental health facilities; **support voluntary organisations**.

#### Policing and the Courts

- Confirmation of the go-ahead for the new state-of-the-art Criminal Court complex at Infirmary Road. Other major

infrastructural projects will include new courthouse construction and refurbishment in Belmullet, Bray, Fermoy and Tullamore.

- Introduction of the new Garda Digital Radio system.
- Construction of a new 150 capacity prisoner accommodation block at Portlaoise Prison at an estimated cost of €20 million will commence by March 2005 and will also include new education, work training, and other ancillary facilities.
- The building of new facilities at Limerick Prison to provide for education, medical and other ancillary services at a cost of approximately €6 million.
- Prison Service examining provision of additional prisoner accommodation at Wheatfield Prison.
- The estimated cost of the works at Portlaoise Prison will be €20m approximately while the project at Limerick Prison is expected to cost €6m approximately, over the next two to three years.

#### Social Services and Poverty Measures

- Anyone of minimum wage is taken out of the tax net.
- Family Income Supplement (FIS) weekly income thresholds to be increased by €39.
- One Parent Family Payments recipients to receive transitional half rate payment for six months
- Additional €2 million funding for expansion of the Family and Resource Centre Programme
- Increase of €600,000 in grants for Marriage/Family Counselling.
- €100,000 to provide for development of programmes increasing awareness of anti-poverty policies.
- Two streams of additional funding for the Money Advice and Budgeting Service. €700,000 will be committed to develop more innovative ways of tackling over-indebtedness: €300,000 to develop a specialist fully automated payment system.

## SECTION 2: ROUND-UP

### MINISTER LAUNCHES SSI REPORT

On 30 November, 2004 the Social Services Inspectorate's (SSI) Annual Report and the first Pilot Inspection of Foster Care Services were launched by Minister Brian Lenihan, TD in Phoenix Park, Dublin. Findings included the following:

- Three quarters of young people in residential centres were between 13 and 19 years however, inspectors were concerned to find that one quarter were under 12 years of age. The average centre had 4 to 5 children but there were 22 centres that cared for only one child. The overall occupancy rate of children's residential centres was 77%
- Day-to-day care of children generally good, with warm relationships, contact with families, hobbies and growth of sensible policies to allow children have normal experiences, e.g. sleepovers with friends.

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- Standard on school attendance was good and compares favourably with international findings. Health care was also generally good, but boards were urged to pay more attention to medical histories, the health of adolescents on admission and the mental health of the young people.
- Safeguarding and child protection practices were generally good. However, only two of the 32 centres inspected had full vetting of staff in place at the time of the inspection; gaps were usually that either Garda clearance was received after the person had started work or there were insufficient references taken up.
- Over 70% of children had a care plan, but for many it was a historical record rather than a map for the future.
- The management of problematical behaviour posed difficulties for one third of the centres inspected. Most centres could access psychological and psychiatric services, but psychiatric services were generally not available for 16 and 17 year olds.
- Over half the managers in acting positions and just under half the staff were employed on temporary contracts. Inspectors stressed the need for capable leadership and stable staff team for all children, but in particular for centres that cater for children with challenging behaviour.

The Report of the Pilot Inspection of Foster Care Services gave an account of the first inspection against the National Standards for Foster Care (2003) and a national audit of key aspects of foster care across all health boards. Three health boards volunteered a community care area for the pilot. The pilot reported that general services were good and included a national self audit of all health boards on young people in care, foster carers and social workers. Primary findings were:

- While there were more foster carers than children needing foster care, there was a shortage of carers for sibling groups and adolescents.
- The audit found that one third of children in foster care were cared for in foster care provided by relatives.
- 29% of general foster carers had been recruited in the past three years, showing that despite other societal changes, people are still willing to foster.
- Criticism that all health boards had some children placed with relatives who had not been formally assessed. Overall, 44% of relative foster carers had not been assessed, and this varied between 5% and 84% in different areas, although health boards reported that half of these were undergoing assessment during 2004.
- Children in relative foster care less likely to have care plan or allocated social worker than those in general foster care.
- In the latest year that verified figures were available, 2001, there were approximately 1,000 separated children seeking asylum. Health boards report that this figure has reduced since then and have stated that unaccompanied asylum seeking children are now accommodated in hostels separate to adults.

- Centres for under 16 year olds should now be inspected and registered against the National Standards for Children's Residential Standards.

For further information/copies of the report:

**Social Services Inspectorate, Floor 3, 94 St.  
Stephens Green, Dublin 2. Tel: 01 4180588  
Fax: 01 4180829 Email: [issinfo@health.irlgov.ie](mailto:issinfo@health.irlgov.ie)**

## **MINISTER LAUNCHES NCO YOUTH RELATED RESEARCH**

On 23 November 2004 Brian Lenihan T.D., Minister for Children launched findings from the National Children's Office **Children's Research Programme** on *child well-being, youth suicide and bullying* in the Westbury Hotel Dublin. The research included:

- Secondary research, which was the starting point for developing the **National Set of Child Well-Being Indicators** which will be published early next year.
- Research project **Acculturation, Adolescent Mental Health and Youth Suicide in Modern Ireland**
- Research with children on their perceptions of *well-being*, aimed at giving them a voice in the development of **National Set of Child Well-Being Indicators**.
- **Understanding Children's Experiences of Bullying in Schools: A Child-Centred Project.**

For further information contact:

**National Children's Office, 1st Floor, St Martin's  
House, Waterloo Road, Dublin 4  
Tel: 01 2420000 Email: [nco@health.gov.ie](mailto:nco@health.gov.ie)**

## **NEW BOOKLET AIMED AT EXPLAINING MENTAL ILLNESS TO CHILDREN LAUNCHED**

On 30 November Brian Lenihan TD, Minister for Children, launched **Learning about Mental Illness** in the Coach House, Dublin Castle, published by Schizophrenia Ireland in association with Barnardos and specially designed for children whose parent, brother or sister are experiencing mental ill health. The booklet looks at mental health, mental illness, understanding when a person is unwell, and different kinds of treatments. It also explores with the child the many and varied feelings that may arise. Copies of are available for free from Schizophrenia Ireland and Barnardos or free to download from [www.sirl.ie](http://www.sirl.ie) or [www.barnardos.ie](http://www.barnardos.ie) .

**Copies of all publications and documentation highlighted in this edition are available for reference or loan purposes from the Irish YouthWork Centre**

**NYF Local Member Youth Services Current Awareness Update**