

**SECTION 1: POLICY DEVELOPMENTS**

**GOVERNMENT APPROVES KEY AMENDMENTS TO CRIMINAL JUSTICE BILL**

On 22 November, The Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Mr Michael McDowell, T.D., announced that the Government had approved proposals for amendments to the Criminal Justice Bill 2004 in the following areas:

- Provision to deal with participation in organised crime;
- Provisions to strengthen the existing sentencing provisions for drug trafficking offences;
- New offences of supplying drugs to prisoners;
- Provisions in relation to the establishment of a Drug Offenders Register;
- New offence of possession of an article with intent to commit certain offences;
- Provisions to allow for the electronic monitoring of offenders;
- New provisions to allow the courts to suspend or partially suspend or to adjourn sentences on conditions which will motivate the offender to stay away from crime, such as participation in drug treatment or sex offender programmes;
- **New provisions to deal with anti-social behaviour, including anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs);**
- Proposals for the establishment of a criminal law codification advisory group which would advise on the drawing up of a criminal code and monitor its implementation;
- New offence in relation to attacks on emergency workers;
- Provision to clarify the jurisdiction of the District Court judges in relation to the issuing of warrants;
- Provision to clarify the meaning of "torture" as defined in the Criminal Justice (United Nations Convention Against Torture) Act 2000;
- Proposals to tackle the illegal use of fireworks;
- Allow the Minister to deem certain firearms as "restricted" by reference to specific criteria, including the calibre, action type and muzzle energy of the firearm. In future any person wishing to obtain a certificate for such a firearm will have to apply directly to the Garda Commissioner;
- Introduce new offences concerning the modification of firearms such as "sawing-off" a shotgun.
- Increase fines and penalties generally for offences under the Firearms Acts
- Create mandatory minimum sentences, of between five and ten years, for certain firearms offences,

including possession of a firearm in suspicious circumstances, possession of firearm with criminal

intent, possession of a firearm with intent to endanger life or cause serious injury to property, possession of a firearm while hijacking a vehicle, and use or production of a firearm to resist arrest;

- Introduce a statutory basis for an amnesty during which firearms may be surrendered to the Garda Síochána before new penalties and minimum mandatory sentences are introduced. This will enable those in possession of firearms, who are not in compliance with the legal requirements, to regularise their position, and thus enable the Garda Síochána to concentrate on more serious offenders.

The Minister said he would also be implementing key recommendations from the Ferns Report, *in particular the recommendation that there should be a new criminal offence relating to "reckless endangerment" of children in relation to sexual crime.* In addition it was highlighted that the Minister of State, Mr. Brian Lenihan, was finalising other proposals to update the Children Act 2001, including provision for ASBOs for under 18 year olds, which would be brought to Government shortly.

The Bill as published already contains the following:

- Statutory power to preserve a crime scene;
- General power in relation to the issue of search warrants;
- Increased detention powers of up to 24 hours for arrestable offences;
- Some amendments to the Criminal Justice (Forensic Evidence) Act, 1990, in particular to reclassify saliva and mouth swabs as non-intimate samples;
- Extending the power of the prosecution to appeal in limited circumstances, in particular in relation to points of law;
- General provisions, mostly of a technical nature, to improve efficiency in the prosecution of offences;
- Provision on the admissibility of statements by witnesses, who subsequently refuse to testify or retract their original statements;
- Provision for a fixed penalty procedure in respect of certain lesser public order offences;
- Amendment of the Firearms Acts to require applicants for firearms certificates to satisfy the Garda Superintendent that they have provided secure accommodation for the firearm.

For further information contact:

**Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform**  
**94 St. Stephens Green, Dublin 2**  
**Tel: 01 6028202 Fax: 01 6615461**  
**Website: [www.justice.ie](http://www.justice.ie)**

**WHEEL SKILLS SECTOR LAUNCH**

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

Sector Skills is a new initiative being undertaken by The Wheel, which will result in a suite of new programmes to strengthen Community and Voluntary organisations' ability to access information on, and participate in, training courses in a more effective way. This programme has been made possible with funding from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, under the National Training Fund. Sector Skills was launched on Thursday 1st December by Tony Killeen, T.D., Minister of State for Labour Affairs.

The initiative will involve three linked elements:

- Web-based information about training opportunities, enabling people to access up-to-date, relevant data on appropriate and suitable training
- A Training Networks programme, providing supports and advice to organisations to enable them to participate in relevant, flexible and cost effective training
- A Leadership Development programme, to address acknowledged needs of organisations in times of increasing governance issues and heightened requirement for openness and transparency

Organisations within the Community and Voluntary sector will be eligible for Sector Skills. Criteria for selection for the Training Networks programme and the Leadership Development programme, which will provide for broadly based participation, will be published by early 2006. For further information contact:

**The Wheel**  
Irish Social Finance Centre  
10 Grattan Crescent  
Inchicore, Dublin 8  
Tel: 01 4548727 Fax: 01 4548649  
Website: [www.wheel.ie](http://www.wheel.ie)

## **SECTION 2: FUNDING**

### **LATEST GRANT ROUND OF IRELAND FUNDS**

The Ireland Funds is accepting applications for its latest grant round of funding for 2006 up to **31 January, 2006**. The funds support projects in four core areas as follows:

- Arts and Culture
- Community Development
- Education
- Peace and Reconciliation

Detailed criteria for these four headings under which funding will be considered is outlined in an application pack. The maximum award available is €30,000 and there is no minimum award. The average award for 2005

was €6,000. Applications Packs and further details are available from:

**The Ireland Funds**  
5 Foster Place, Dublin 2  
Tel: 01 6627878 Fax: 016627879  
Email: [grantsinfo@irlfunds.org](mailto:grantsinfo@irlfunds.org) Web: [www.irlfunds.org](http://www.irlfunds.org)

## **VOLUNTEERING IRELAND'S VOLT SMALL GRANT SCHEME**

National Irish Bank has made euro 5,000 available for the Volunteering Ireland VOLT Small Grants Scheme 2005. These grants will consist of five grants of euro 1,000 they will be made available to volunteer-involving groups and are intended to encourage volunteer involving groups to achieve more through valuing and celebrating their volunteers. The closing date for applications is **23rd December 2005**. Applications and guidelines are available from:

**VOLT**  
Volunteering Ireland, Coleraine House  
Coleraine Street, Dublin 7  
Tel: 01 8722622  
Email: [info@volunteeringireland.ie](mailto:info@volunteeringireland.ie)

## **SECTION 3: ROUND-UP**

### **NCO CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

The National Children's Office has recently produced a set of guidelines for all staff and volunteers involved in any event with young participants. These guidelines are based on "Children First – National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children" and "Our Duty to Care – The Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People".

In accordance with these documents, it is good practice for all organisations, which have contact with children and young people to introduce a child protection policy. This policy also helps to provide safeguards and support for staff when they are working with children and young people. The guidelines can be downloaded from the NCO website at: [www.nco.ie](http://www.nco.ie)

### **NEW GUIDE ON GOOD GOVERNANCE PRACTICE WITHIN CHARITABLE COMPANIES**

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

To mark International Volunteer Day, Boardmatch Ireland is launching the first of their *'Sharing Knowledge'* guides. Compiled by Arthur Cox Solicitors, the guide provides an overview of Directors roles and responsibilities and good governance practice within charitable companies. The guide is intended primarily for people either thinking about joining, or already volunteering on the boards of charitable companies. The guide is available on the Boardmatch website at [www.boardmatchireland.ie](http://www.boardmatchireland.ie)

## **ISPCC LAUNCHES SCHOOLMATE DRUG AND ALCOHOL PILOT PROGRAMME REPORT**

On 18 November 2005 the ISPCC launched 3-year statistics for the Schoolmate Drug and Alcohol Pilot Prevention Programme. This service, established in 2003 with the support of the AIB Better Ireland programme, provides a direct-access support service to vulnerable young people who are at risk of early school leaving, due to drug and substance misuse.

It aims to build young people's psychological resilience and self-esteem and to ensure the necessary support frameworks are in place within their own communities to promote the young people's psychological well-being

Statistics from the first three years of operation indicate that the service has worked with 6,669 children and young people across the country. The service provided individual professional support to 157 young people, individual mentoring to 219 and worked with 3,170 young people in groupwork settings. The statistics indicate that 64% of the total numbers of service users are young males, a positive sign given the traditional difficulties in engaging young males in support services.

The Children's Research Centre has independently evaluated the Programme on an on-going basis. This on-going evaluation has allowed the service to grow and develop and as a result, the ISPCC is now in a position to launch the new 4me Service as part of the "Citizen Child" Strategy. This new service will provide a direct-access, combined face-to-face, telephone counselling and mentoring service to a wider range of vulnerable children aged between 13 and 18 and will develop a web-based counselling initiative.

While continuing to focus those at risk of drug and alcohol misuse, the service will also target vulnerable

children becoming isolated from mainstream society because of their anti-social behaviour or mental health problems.

The ISPCC also launched two information leaflets for parents and young people: *"Top Tips for Parents – Drugs and Alcohol"* and *"Top Tips for Young People – Drugs and Alcohol"*. Both leaflets are available free from ISPCC offices nationwide or by email: [ispcc@ispcc.ie](mailto:ispcc@ispcc.ie)

## **CHILDREN IN ASYLUM SEEKER ACCOMMODATION CENTRES POLICIES LAUNCHED**

On 21 October The Minister of State with Special Responsibility for Children, Mr Brian Lenihan TD, launched two policy documents for children in asylum seeker accommodation centres. Both documents were developed by the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA), an office of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, in conjunction with the Health Services Executive (HSE), and aim to ensure children's safety, improve their life opportunities and promote their welfare, health and happiness. The two policies are:

***Child Protection Policy for Accommodation Centres***  
Developed by the RIA, in conjunction with the HSE, in recognition of the Agency's responsibilities under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. .

***Infant Feeding Guidelines for Direct Provision Centres***

Developed in line with the recommendations from UNICEF and the WHO. They recommend some changes within reception and accommodation centres aimed at improving the health and nutrition of babies and children resident in these centres.

For further information please contact:

**Reception and Integration Agency  
Block C, Ardilaun Centre  
112 - 114 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2  
Tel: 01 4183200 Fax: 01 4183271  
Email: [RIA\\_Inbox@justice.ie](mailto:RIA_Inbox@justice.ie) Web: [www.ria.gov.ie](http://www.ria.gov.ie)**

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