

## **SECTION 1: POLICY & LEGISLATION**

### **LAUNCH OF REPORT ON AGE OF CONSENT CONSULTATIONS**

The Minister for Children, Brian Lenihan T.D. has said parents have a role to play in the quality of sex education being taught to their children. Mr Lenihan was launching the Report on the outcome of consultations with teenagers on the age of consent for sexual activity on Monday 13 November. The Minister had sought the views of teenagers on this subject following the Supreme Court Judgment on Statutory Rape last May.

Acknowledging that the quality of sex education and the lack of information about sex was the strongest finding to emerge from the consultation, Mr Lenihan said the participants had made some very practical and valuable recommendations which he would raise with the Minister for Education and Science.

A total of 210 teenagers aged between 15 and 18 took part in the consultation which was conducted by the *National Youth Council of Ireland, Foróige* and *Youth Work Ireland* on behalf of the Office of the Minister for Children at facilitated workshops in Dublin North, Dublin South, Cork, Tullamore and Sligo during October 2006. Pavee Point also consulted with a cross-section of Traveller teenage boys and girls. The report on the outcome of these consultations was presented to the Minister for Children and the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Child Protection on 3 November 2006.

Four key issues emerged from the consultation:

- The need for improved sex education in schools;
- The lack of information and resources on sexuality and sexual behaviour;
- The need for equality between girls and boys under the law;
- The lack of information on sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and accessible services for young people with such infections.

Mr Lenihan noted that participants want information on sexuality to be available in schools, **youth services** and any other venues where young people meet.

Teenagers, who participated in the consultations at different locations around the country, spoke at the launch and highlighted some additional recommendations from the consultations, including some which will be of particular interest to youth services:

- Sex education needs to be mandatory in schools starting in 6th class in primary school. It should be delivered by experts with a medical background,

who are interested in young people's sexual health. There was also a suggestion that this service might include some peer education elements.

- Unbiased information on STIs, pregnancy, sexual orientation and the consequences of sex should be available in schools.
- Adults need to take responsibility and ensure young people get enough information on sex.
- Young people should be able to attend a GP or sexual health clinic in confidence and parental consent should not be required for young people over 15 to attend sex education classes or access information on sex and sexual health.
- There should be confidential STI services specifically for under-18s.
- **There should be more multi-functional youth services that incorporate youth health café's, such as 'The Gaf' in Galway and 'Exit' in Tallaght.** This would reduce stigma and embarrassment about STIs.
- **Sexual health services which already exist in youth health cafes and sexual health clinics should be promoted in youth services and schools.**
- The issues of rural isolation in accessing services and information on sexual health and STIs needs to be addressed.

The Minister noted the participants' view that any new law must treat boys and girls equally but sounded a note of caution on their view that there should be a "two year gap" provision which would allow, for example, an 18-year-old male to engage in consensual sexual activity with a 16-year-old female without being criminalised. *'The problem with this proposal is that where there is a dispute between persons within the two year band about the facts; consent becomes an issue in such proceedings'* said Mr Lenihan.

The full report can be downloaded from the Office of the Minister of Children website at: [www.omc.gov.ie](http://www.omc.gov.ie)

### **AGE OF CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY CHANGE COMES INTO LAW**

The Minister for Children, Brian Lenihan, T.D. announced on 16 October the commencement of legislation effectively increasing the age of criminal responsibility from 7 to 12 years. The new provisions come into effect immediately. Under Part 5 of the Children Act 2001, as amended by the Criminal Justice Act 2006, a child under the age of 12 years cannot be charged with an offence. An exception is made for 10

and 11-year-old children charged with the most serious

## Youth Work Ireland Local Member Youth Services Current Awareness Update

offences on the statute book. Under the new legislation:

- Children under 12 cannot be charged with an offence
- An exception is made in the case of 10 and 11 year olds charged with murder, manslaughter, rape or aggravated sexual assault
- No proceedings can be taken against a child under the age of 14 without the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions

Where a child under 12 is suspected of committing an offence, he or she will be taken to his or her parents by a member of the Garda Síochána. Intervention by the HSE will be provided where the child and his or her family are in need of such support. Additional resources for the HSE have been provided to support interventions with troubled children.

Further provisions in the Criminal Justice Act 2006, to be introduced shortly, provide for the participation of 10 and 11 year olds in the Garda Diversion Programme. For further information contact:

Office of the Minister of Children  
LoCall: 1890 209030  
Website: [www.omc.gov.ie](http://www.omc.gov.ie)

### HOME SCHOOL COMMUNITY LIAISON SCHEME EXPANDED

The Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin T.D., announced On 30 October that an additional 80 Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) teachers will be appointed after mid term, to work full time outside the classroom to help children at risk of dropping out of school or not being able to participate fully in the education system.

The HSCL scheme is a targeted project under the new Action Plan for Educational Inclusion, DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools). A local coordinator from the staff of the schools involved in the scheme will be assigned to a school or school cluster in disadvantaged areas to work with school staff, parents and community agencies in advancing the educational interests of children. For further information contact:

Department of Education and Science  
Marlborough Street, Dublin 1.  
Tel: 01 8896400 Email: [info@education.gov.ie](mailto:info@education.gov.ie)  
Website: [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)

## SECTION 2: FUNDING

### €6.2M INCREASE FOR YOUTH SERVICES ANNOUNCED IN ESTIMATES

On foot of the announcement of the Annual Estimates, the Minister for Youth Affairs, Ms. Síle de Valera, T.D., outlined that the financial provision for youth work in the 2007 estimates would be €51.266m, an increase of €6.2 million over the 2006 provision.

An increase of nearly €5.9m or 16% over 2006 figure will be for the main funding line which supports the 31 national and major regional Youth Work organisations, the special projects for Youth Scheme, a network of 32 Youth Information Centres as well as other Youth initiatives. The 2007 provision for this will now be €42.6m. An increase of nearly €336,000 over 2006 levels for the Young Peoples Facilities and Services fund will raise the total allocation for this fund to over €8.5m.

Increased funding for 2007 will enable the continued delivery on the following priority areas:

- Increased support in baseline funding for organisations funded under the Youth Service Grant Scheme
- The continuing development of Special Projects for Youth to two worker projects as well as increased support in baseline funding
- Extra financial support to meet the costs arising from the newly introduced Garda Vetting Procedures for the youth work sector
- Further roll out of the Youth Work Act, 2001 and the National Youth Work Development Plan, as set out in Towards 2016.
- Increased provision for 2007 will also support the National Youth Work Development Unit in its remit to research and develop guidelines for best practice in youth work, to manage and co-ordinate research as well as piloting innovation and new initiatives.

### €19M INCREASE FOR FURTHER AND ADULT EDUCATION ANNOUNCED IN ESTIMATES

The Minister of State with responsibility for further and adult education at the Department of Education and Science, Ms Síle de Valera T.D. also announced increased funding for the further and adult education sector arising from the Estimates.

Adult and further education, expenditure will rise to approximately €169 million in 2007. This provision represents an increase of nearly €19m or 12% as compared with the position on 2006. Just over €113

## Youth Work Ireland Local Member Youth Services Current Awareness Update

million was provided for sector in 2002.

- An increase of € 7.4 million or 21% in the budget for Adult Literacy and Community Education, which will allow for 3,000 additional literacy places in 2007.
- This increased literacy provision includes €1m to allow for a doubling of the funding for intensive literacy tuition as a result of a very positive evaluation of an Intensive Literacy Project piloted last spring. This project enabled literacy and numeracy learners to participate in a programme of 6 hours per week for 14 weeks. This compares to the current 2 hours per week provision.
- An increase of €3.5 m for Youthreach in 2007 to cater for the expansion of the number of places by 400 bringing the total to approx. 3,700. This is to further assist young people who are leaving school early.
- An increase of €1.35m for the expansion of part-time options under the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) in 2007. The number of BTEI part-time training places will increase by 1000 places to 9000 catering for in excess of 24000 participants.
- €0.5m is being made available for the first time to assist with childcare for those on the Back to Education Initiative.
- €110,000 to consolidate women's participation in community education through the extension of mainstreaming of the quality framework initiative.
- €120,000 which will enable research into adult and community education, lifelong learning and civic society to be carried out.
- An additional €1m is being made available to further expand the adult education guidance initiative.

For further information on these increases in Youth Service and Further & Adult Education funding please contact:

Department of Education and Science  
Marlborough Street, Dublin 1.  
Tel: 01 8896400 Email: [info@education.gov.ie](mailto:info@education.gov.ie)  
Website: [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)

## €16M FOR IRISH YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE IN ESTIMATES

A total of €16.2m (of which €12.6m is for capital purposes) has been allocated within the Estimates for this year for the restructured youth justice service established by Government earlier this year to bring together responsibility for young offenders together under one roof. This will be supplemented by a further tranche of funding early in the New Year, which is being transferred from the Department of Education. This

funding will enable a programme of rejuvenation of youth detention and training facilities in 2007.

In addition, a total of €16.8m from other areas of the Justice Vote and the Garda Vote is being allocated to Youth Justice Programmes, Mentoring Programmes and other initiatives comprehended by the Children Act. This includes an amount of €9.8m for the expansion of Garda Youth Diversion projects by a further 16: - bringing the total in operation nationwide to 100 by the end of 2007.

For further information please contact:

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

## SECTION 3: ROUND UP

### LATEST REPORTS IN NATIONAL CHILDREN'S STRATEGY SERIES LAUNCHED

The Minister for Children, Brian Lenihan, T.D. launched the following two new reports in the National Children's Strategy Series on 27 November:

**The Child's Right to be heard in the Healthcare Setting: *Perspectives of children, parents and health professionals.***

**Giving Children a Voice: *Investigation of children's experiences of participation in consultation and decision-making in Irish hospitals.***

For further information/copies of these reports please contact:

Office of the Minister for Children  
St. Martin's House, Waterloo Road, Dublin 4.  
Tel: 01 2420000 Email: [omc@health.gov.ie](mailto:omc@health.gov.ie)  
Website: [www.omc.gov.ie](http://www.omc.gov.ie)

Copies of all publications and documentation highlighted in this edition are available for reference or loan purposes from the Irish YouthWork Centre  
Tel: 01 8729933 Fax: 01 8724183  
Email: [fbissett@youthworkireland.ie](mailto:fbissett@youthworkireland.ie)  
Website: [www.iywc.com](http://www.iywc.com)