



## Women's Network Sees Way Forward

The North West Inner City Women's Network has recently undergone a review process to help it to identify the best means of continuing to support the needs of women resident in the north west inner city.

Established in the early 1990s, the network originally operated as a support for a large number of women's groups in the Dublin 7 area.

Over the years, the contextual environment has changed significantly; many women who were involved in women's groups are now working or in training.

The women's network, recognising that its focus had changed, contracted Clarity Consultants to undertake a review that would assist with future planning. The research process involved interviews and an envisioning meeting with former and present members of the women's network, community projects and other local groups.

# Community Groups Meet to Review Progress

**DICP convened a meeting of inner city based community groups and organisations with a local development brief in February 2004. The objective was to review progress on the Partnership's 2001-2003 Implementation Plan and discuss the 2004-2006 Implementation Plan with the community sector and relevant partners.**

The meeting was also convened as a follow-up to a similar meeting held in April 2003. On that occasion, a number of issues were raised about resource changes impacting on the community infrastructure, and the necessity of implementing a collaborative approach to address these changes. In addition it is now necessary to respond to the new needs of the inner city population as identified

in the 2004-2006 plan.

The format for the meeting consisted of presentations on the plan and progress to date; review of policy, priorities and resource changes in local development; and workshops focusing on each measure of the plan.

There were approximately 130 participants at the meeting, representing a range of organisations such as schools, residents

associations, community networks, Drugs Task Force, childcare services, employment services, Community Development Projects, community-based organisations, the Docklands Authority, Health Board, RAPID, etc.

People providing direct support to unemployed clients seeking literacy, training or placement attended Workshop A and discussed effective methods of inter-agency collaboration that have directly resulted in the successful progression of inner city residents.

Workshop B looked at the impact of community-driven development programmes and

how groups can support socially excluded people who are experiencing multi-dimensional inequality and poverty. The workshop identified work priorities for the community for the 2004-06 period.

The third workshop focused on challenges facing education initiatives in the community and steps needed to address these challenges. The group decided that the DICP would look at a proposal in relation to moving the issues on. This would involve the establishment of/strengthening of area network education groups and / or the establishment of sectoral working groups.

## Tenants First

### New Initiative to Protect the Housing Interests of Local Residents

BY PATRICIA MCCARTHY

Community Technical Aid became involved in St. Michael's Estate as a technical support following the rejection of their plan for redevelopment by the Department of the Environment & Local Government.

We became aware that a process was taking place across the city in relation to public housing. CTA took the initiative to bring together the flats complexes across the city to develop a strategy in response to the profound changes being proposed in relation to housing policy.

The assistant manager of Dublin City Council, Brendan Kenny, signalled these changes in a discussion document titled: Discussion Report on Possible Transfer of Ownership of City Council Rented Housing Stock.

These changes essentially are: Dublin City Council are proceeding to adopt a P.P.P. (Public Private Partnership) approach to developing all the major flat complexes such as Fatima Mansions, O'Devaney Gardens, St Michael's Estate and smaller complexes in the North and South Inner City.

This is different in each case but basically it involves Dublin City Council land on which the development is to take place such as O'Devaney Gardens

where there are eleven acres of land that has a huge value to a developer. This developer then builds a majority of private units and an even smaller number of social/public housing.

The net result is a major overall reduction in the number of units of public/social housing. Other issues include the break up of close knit working class communities and the giving away of public land to private developers for profit.

Tenants First have been meeting since October 2003 and have developed a mission statement, a set of objectives and a membership form. It was formally launched at a very well attended meeting on 21st of January 2004. Eighty tenants from all over the city were in attendance.

Tenants First gave a very important presentation to the Strategic Policy Housing Committee of Dublin City Council on 29th of March. The Forum is continuing to meet and make a very significant critical response to fundamental changes in housing policy by Dublin City Council and the Department of the Environment.

CTA provides support to the organisations which are tenant-run. More information is available from CTA, telephone 855 7015.

The STRIVE fund is part of the Millennium Partnership Fund for Disadvantage and it is administered by Dublin Inner City Partnership with the objective of supporting low-income students from the inner city to access and complete third level courses, be they accredited Post-Leaving Certificate courses in Colleges of Further Education, or Certificate, Degree and Diploma courses in Institutes of Technology and universities. This fund is an important support to students facing significant barriers to accessing third level education. In some areas of the inner city access to third level education is still almost negligible. The expense incurred and the obstacles faced by inner city residents who do attend third level are considerable. The fund is designed to support students with the extra costs associated with being a student, for example travel, child and eldercare, books, stationery, special equipment, field trips, etc. The vast majority of those eligible for support are recipients of a maintenance grant from either the local authority or the VEC, which covers their fees (if applicable) and registration.

This year the Dublin Inner City Partnership disbursed grants to 74 students from the

inner city, of whom:

- Twenty were females under 25 and twenty-four were females of 25 or older (forty-four females altogether)
  - Ten were males under 25 and twenty were males of 25 or older (thirty males altogether)
- In terms of prior employment status:
- Seventeen beneficiaries had been long-term unemployed
  - Three had been short-term unemployed
  - Seventeen had been in part-time employment
  - Thirty-seven had come from full-time education

The target groups covered by the fund this year were:

- Five early school leavers
- Twenty-eight people from low-income families
- Three disadvantaged men
- Fourteen lone parents or others with caring responsibilities
- Ten foreign nationals
- Fourteen disabled people

The type of institutes attended by the beneficiaries were:

- Twenty-nine attending Further Education / VEC Colleges

- Fourteen attending Institutes of Technology
- Thirty-one attending universities

Nineteen of this year's beneficiaries had received support in the previous academic year.

One beneficiary commented on the value of the initiative: "The reason this fund is useful to me is because books are so expensive. I have been unemployed and on the dole and could not afford to buy books for college. The fund really helps as now I can buy books and continue with my education."

The amounts disbursed were small, as the fund is designed to support students with particular expenses.

Payments varied from €250 to €800, with a few higher payments due to extraordinary circumstances. Payments of €800 or more were paid to Lone Parents with high childcare costs.

The DICP hopes to continue to administer this fund, thereby contributing in some small way to widening access to third level education for inner city residents.

For further information contact Molly O'Duffy on 872 1321.

## Strive Fund Millennium Partnership Fund for Disadvantage: Third Level Access

## DICP Encourages North/South Collaboration to Measure the Effectiveness of Services to the Unemployed

On Thursday 1st April the DICP was represented by Peter Nolan at the Belfast GEMS Inter-Agency Advisory Group meeting marking the completion of the 27-month 'Pilot Phase' of the South and East Belfast local employment service initiative.

During the 27-month period 348 local people were supported into employment, while 347 residents of South and East Belfast progressed into training or education initiatives.

Belfast GEMS, with the support of the South Belfast Partnership, has successfully tendered for one of four Labour Market Intermediary Services operating within Belfast city under the remit of NI Department of Employment & Learning.

Belfast GEMS achieves its Job Placement and Client Progression Annual Targets using an operational model designed in conjunction with the DICP's Inner City Employment Service.

Strategic links between the employment services in Dublin's inner city and Belfast GEMS are set to continue.

Currently DICP is encouraging continuing north / south collaboration between ICES, CTA and Belfast GEMS personnel. The local effectiveness of the Employment Barriers Assessment procedures, designed by Belfast GEMS, and now being piloted in Dublin's inner city by ICES and CTA, being the main focus point. Other plans for 2004 include an exchange visit to Dublin's ICES by members of the Belfast GEMS Inter-Agency Advisory Group.

## Intercultural Learning Site Visits



The Intercultural Working Group of the North West Inner City Area Network is mid-way through a programme of 'cultural awareness visits' that is being funded by the Know Racism programme. The aim is to raise awareness and appreciation of the different cultures, customs, religions and traditions that are part of the inner city community. The first visit, to the Irish Jewish Museum in Dublin 8, took place in November 2003. Local residents and workers in community based projects were invited to participate on the visit, which included a tour of the museum and a talk on the history of Judaism and the Jewish diaspora to Ireland.

The second visit brought a group of community workers to the Islamic Cultural Centre and Mosque in Clonskeagh.

The third trip was to the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin Castle, where the group learned about

Western, Islamic and Asian art and religious artefacts. Subsequent visits are planned to:

- ~ The Bosnian Project
- ~ Romanian Community
- ~ African Cultural Project
- ~ Baha'i Centre
- ~ St. Michan's Church
- ~ And an Irish language group

There is no cost to participants. The group would like to express gratitude to all the centres that have facilitated the visits to date and to the Gardai for providing transport to some of the sites.

The NWICAN Intercultural Group welcomes new members, particularly people who live or work in the north west inner city area. Current participants include representatives of Access Ireland, DICP, CDVEC, the Gardai, Chinese Cultural Project, An Siol CDP, Aosog, Step by Step, the ICON Multicultural Resource Centre and local residents.



(Above) Participants in the NWICAN Intercultural Group's visit to the Irish Jewish Museum in Dublin 8.

## Inner City Employment Service 2004 Staff Development Day

On Friday 2nd April, nineteen members of staff from the four Inner City Employment Service locations participated in the 2004 ICES Staff Development Day held in The Sanctuary, Stanhope Street, Dublin 7 and made possible by a financial contribution from Community Technical Aid's EQUAL Initiative.

Four ICES Managers, the ICES Employer Liaison Officer, three of the four ICES Employment Guidance Advisors, 9 ICES Mediation staff members (both full-time and part-time officers), and 1 local ICES Administrative Assistant were joined for part of the day by the DICP Employment & Enterprise Co-ordinator.

The facilitated day provided the opportunity for all ICES personnel to meet together, to exchange views on current service delivery issues and also to review ICES methods of operation.

The opportunity for the ICES staff cohort to collectively meet

together – outside their specific workplace - is rare. This is due to the autonomous nature of the inner city network and also, more recently, to financial cutbacks resulting in the withdrawal of the ICES Staff Development & Training budget heading. The DICP wishes to extend its appreciation to CTA and to the ICES Managers for making the 2004 ICES Staff Development Day possible

### New EU Citizens

Citizens from the ten new EU Accession States do not now need an Irish Work Permit to be employed in Ireland.

They remain ineligible for all FÁS training and employment programmes until the Dept of Enterprise, Trade & Employment clarifies to FÁS any change or adjustments to the policy.

## The Participation and Practice of Rights

### Test Project in North Inner City

A new project has commenced in Dublin's north inner city that aims to develop a rights-based approach to redressing many of the socio-economic deficits in the area.

The project developed as a local response to a larger initiative that looks at the participation and practice of rights in Ireland. This initiative, spearheaded by Inez McCormack of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, commenced in 2001 and, in collaboration with partner organisations, held a north-south conference which stimulated regional meetings on the topic.

In the local area, the key players are the area networks (ICON and NWICAN), DICP, residents and tenants groups, and community projects.

Funding was received from Atlantic Philanthropies at the end of 2003 to support a six month planning and feasibility study for a pilot project exploring how human rights concepts and tools can enable those experiencing poverty and social exclusion to participate in processes and policies that affect them.

#### First Stage

The initial elements of the north inner city project include:

- Collation of existing surveys and needs analyses;
- Support for specific actions to address the violation of rights in certain areas (e.g. housing, education);
- Development of a rights based system of indicators;
- Education and training for local residents in the rights-based agenda;
- Creating a database of supports available in civil and human rights law, trade unions and the media.

#### Aims

The undertaking of these actions will contribute to the development of a strategy to secure long-term funding for the rights-based programme.

#### Objectives

1. Working through existing local infrastructure to explore the notion of combating poverty and social exclusion through the appropriate language and practice of social, economic and cultural rights;
2. Develop a 'learning by doing' approach to participation and rights by identifying and facilitating the delivery of appropriate and relevant rights capacity training/workshops for local tenants;
3. Through participatory action research with local individuals and groups; identify the barriers to attaining an adequate standard of living;
4. Identify a local benchmark to guide the effectiveness and efficiency of local statutory service provision including housing, policing, health and education;
5. Develop local targets and indicators to measure progress/regress from benchmark;
6. Establish a local group to monitor the participation and rights based approach to community poverty alleviation and social exclusion.

#### Links to North Belfast

A partner project is also taking place in North Belfast, and the Dublin groups will work in parallel with the community in the north. For further information contact Patrick Gates, Community Regeneration Worker, DICP on 872 1321 or pgates@dicp.ie

## New National Guidance Forum

At the European Conference 'Lifelong Learning: Harmonising Policy & Practice' held in Dublin on 30th April, the Minister for Education & Science, Noel Dempsey TD, announced the creation, in collaboration with the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment, of the National Guidance Forum.

The core aim of the forum is to improve the provision of guidance services. It will have the particular remit to improve guidance services available to socially disadvantaged people.

The establishment of the Forum was a key recommendation detailed in the recent OECD evaluation report on guidance services in Ireland. The Minister named Professor Joyce O'Connor, President of the National College of Ireland and Chairperson of the DICP Board as the Chair of the Forum.

Peter Nolan, the Partnership's Employment & Enterprise Co-ordinator, will also participate on the Guidance Forum and represent the interests of the LESN.

## Attention Schools & Education Providers

### European Funding for Education and Culture

#### The Grundtvig Action under the Socrates European Programme for Education

aims to promote the European dimension in adult education and to ensure that all European citizens have continued access to learning opportunities throughout their lives.

The action provides the opportunity for ALL players in adult education, from the university to the community group, to participate in transnational European projects and/or avail of professional development/training in European countries.

There are currently 23 Grundtvig Learning Partnerships funded around the country and up to 27 people involved in delivering adult education have availed of a Grundtvig training grant since 2001.

#### Comenius – European Funding for School Projects and Teacher Training

The Comenius action under the Socrates European Programme for Education provides the opportunity for schools and teachers to participate in transnational European projects and avail of professional development/training in European countries. Managed by the Education Service of Léargas, the action aims to enhance the quality of teaching, strengthen the European dimension in schools and promote language learning. The action has also a priority to support disadvantaged groups, and to tackle exclusion and under-achievement at school.

There are currently 133 schools involved in Comenius Projects around the country and since 2001 up to 400 teachers have availed of grants to assist their professional development in a variety of subject areas.

To get further information about Comenius and how you or your school might benefit from the programme consult our website at: [www.leargas.ie/education](http://www.leargas.ie/education) or telephone: 01 8731411

# DICP Community Regeneration Strategy - Facilitating & Co-ordinating Social Inclusion & Community Regeneration

BY PATRICK GATES

The DICP community regeneration strategy is an attempt to provide a framework for sustainable community regeneration with an emphasis on partnership and community-based responses. The Partnership intends to invest in a community-driven infrastructure to operate as a catalyst and brokerage role to support more effective and efficient delivery of public services, stimulate local economic development and lever inward investment to our targeted areas, groups and individuals.

As a social inclusion agency that has been operating in the inner city of Dublin for over a decade, the Dublin Inner City Partnership is aware that no simple solution exists to overcome inherited poverty and inequality. Sustaining community regeneration and strengthening social fabric requires a holistic and long-term strategy that adopts a multi-interventionist approach. This firstly combats the causes and consequences of social exclusion and inequality for existing residents and secondly provide for the social, economic, environmental and cultural needs of new and future residents.

The DICP would caution against policies that result in displacement of indigenous communities (this can have a negative knock-on effect on the communities where the displaced residents settle). 'Clearing out' existing tenants to offer a 'sanitised' or more attractive development site to private developers is counter to the principles of sustainable community regeneration.

The DICP approach to regeneration and its sustainability is holistic and strategic. The approach:

- Puts local people at the heart of the process; sustainable regeneration programmes work best when local residents are engaged as active and proactive participants, in order to combat social exclusion, inequality and strengthen communities by encouraging a more balanced and equitable economic and social development approach.

- Takes an integrated and long-term approach that recognises that multi-deprived neighbourhood problems have complex inter-linked social, economic, environmental and cultural causes and therefore require inter-linked solutions.

- Pursues a knowledge-based and learner centred approach, which is essential to empower local people to enable them to make informed judgement and choices about their development options.

- Improves the quality of the local environment to enhance external safety, greening and physical/visual appearance of the community.

Overcoming area-based social exclusion and multi-deprivation requires special interventions. The DICP can provide this by operating as a facilitator to enable a collaborative and joined-up approach between local statutory, community and voluntary service providers to more effectively service inner city individuals and families experiencing exclusion and poverty.

Through its direct investment in an independent community-driven development infrastructure, the DICP provides an assertive and independent community voice that will empower and advocate for the hardest to reach residents in disadvantaged areas.

An independent community voice will also support greater accountability in local development by facilitating more inclusive and democratic decision making. It is essential that local people are at the heart of the process. Local people should no longer be viewed as users or choosers of policies and services but embraced as makers and shapers of the realities that affect their lives (Cornwell and Gavanta, 2001). Effective, informed and deliberative community involvement is essential for successful regeneration. Local people's involvement must be deep and informed and must not be reduced to mere cosmetic or tokenistic

consultation processes.

In adopting a more focused approach to target those most excluded and hardest to reach in the inner city areas of multi-deprivation the DICP infrastructure will:

- Co-ordinate local social inclusion activities to maximise the effective use of scarce resources;
- Disseminate information to ensure local people have access to relevant information to make informed decisions and choices about their development options;
- Empower individuals to participate in decisions that affect them, to assert their rights, entitlements and become socially and economically self-reliant;
- Support organisational capacity building to enable community driven organisations to participate and represent their community in an assertive, informed and structured manner;
- Facilitate local people's involvement in monitoring local service provision (e.g. health, education, housing, employment etc.) to hold local State, community and voluntary organisations accountable to the people they are serving, ensuring they do what they say they are doing.

## Conclusion

Community regeneration programmes must prioritise addressing existing social exclusion and inequality and focus on delivering on the needs and rights of the most deprived areas, individuals and families that suffer from accumulation of social, economic and environmental poverty. Sustaining community development and regeneration will only succeed by adopting a strategic and cohesive approach, which seeks to address the social exclusion and inequalities of existing residents and provide for the social, economic, environmental and cultural needs of new and future residents.

## Second-level Schools Submit Plan

The Second-level Schools' Network, consisting of principals of eleven inner-city schools, has been working over the last four years to draft a plan for presentation to the Minister for Education and Science.

A delegation of SSN members met the Minister, Noel Dempsey TD, and two members of the Social Inclusion Unit of the Department of Education & Science on Wednesday 5 May and presented him with the plan.

The plan 'Targeting Educational Inequality' outlines the major difficulties facing second-level schools in the inner city and makes the following recommendations:

- Staffing procedures to be put in place to enable principals to develop 3-5 year staffing allocation plans that would meet the needs of all young people and ensure an optimum number of subjects.
- Non-teaching duties, e.g. year head to be included in teachers' timetables.
- School Completion Programme clusters should be smaller and all inner city schools should be included in the Programme.
- A pilot project to be set up between schools and the Education Welfare Board to tackle the high levels of absenteeism in the inner city.
- Services to young people should be integrated on an area level based on a school or a cluster of schools; a pilot project of integrated services to young people to be set up in the inner city,

based on existing models that have had some success (e.g. Integrated Services Process in North-East Inner City).

- To address the high incidence of disruptive behaviour in schools there should be increased provision for counselling services for young people, in-service for teachers and places for young people not suited to mainstream schools.
- The National Educational Psychology Service should adopt an area-based approach to the provision of psychological support to primary and secondary schools.
- Strategies should be developed to enhance teacher morale and improve teacher retention.
- In-service should be delivered locally to teachers, and should be based on their needs. This should encompass strategies for working in schools in a disadvantaged area.
- Rationalisation of funding for schools in order to ensure that maintenance and insurance costs are covered, without eroding the educational budget.

The Minister listened attentively to the delegation's comments on the plan and accepted that there was a need to develop a "different way of doing things" and adopt a bottom-up approach to initiatives on disadvantage. He proposed ongoing meetings between the SSN and his officials to look at how such an approach could be developed.



Principles from inner-city Second-level present their plan to the Minister for Education and Science, Noel Dempsey TD in May 2004.

## Training Supports for the Early Education Sector

Over the last number of months the Inner City Childcare Network has focused on supporting local childcare projects with training appropriate to improving standards of care and early education in the community.

### Keeping Safe

The South Western Area Health Board recently ran two Keeping Safe courses for childcare groups in the south inner city. The first course took place in November and December 2003, and the second course in January and February 2004. Thirty-six people completed the training. Keeping Safe training is designed to assist voluntary and community

groups to meet their responsibilities under Children First - National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children.

### Hepatitis and HIV Awareness

The Dublin Aids Alliance delivered two workshops in January and February on the topics of Hepatitis and HIV Awareness for the childcare setting.

Twenty-four people participated in the first workshop and eighteen in the second. The training aimed to help people to recognise signs and symptoms of Hepatitis and HIV, and covered universal precautions that all care workers should adopt.

### Fit Tots

Fizzical Limited ran a Fit Tots course, designed to help childcare workers to introduce physical activities and games into the care routine. The course showed how to develop toddlers' movements through different activities, and what activities are appropriate to the development of children of different ages.

Key components of physical fitness are aerobic fitness, strength, flexibility, and balance. The Fit Tots training shows how childcare workers can increase all these levels of fitness in children through activities and games.

### Paediatric First Aid

Berrick Occupational First Aid Resources delivered a Paediatric First Aid course to eleven childcare workers in April 2004. This course was accredited by Heart Beat and Berrick.



Participants in the First Aid Training delivered in April 2004.

### Marte Meo

On 14 May the NAHB delivered a morning workshop on the Marte

Meo method of supportive communication, which is a video-based intervention programme. There were 23 participants in the workshop.

DICP has given financial support to all of these training events. Training scheduled for later in the year includes a workshop on children's nutrition, and it is hoped to run a follow-up to the Hepatitis training using a case study approach.

In addition, the childcare network will be involved in the consultation process for the early childhood curriculum, and will be responding to the document 'Towards a Framework for Early Learning': A Consultative Document.

# GETTING OUT, STAYING OUT

On the 30th of March the research report, 'Getting Out, Staying Out,' was launched by the Governor of Mountjoy Jail, John Longeran. The report was compiled by Gearóid Ó Loinsigh.

This launch event marked the culmination of a long period of work, instigated by the Dublin Inner City Partnership, and taken up by CTA and the WIDE project in collaboration with the Partnership.



The research, *Getting Out, Staying Out*, is an examination of the experience of prisoners upon their release from prison. Getting out of prison is, in many ways, the easy part. This study was an examination of the issues and difficulties that prisoners and ex-prisoners find upon their release, including

preparation for release, timing of releases and access to services required upon release.

As the research found, many were released late in the afternoon and early evening when many of the services that they have to access are closed. With little money, no accommodation and no one to turn to, what is one to do in such circumstances? Prisoners also face problems accessing methadone clinics, obtaining medical cards, social welfare payments, emergency accommodation etc, all of which could be sorted out well in advance of the prisoner leaving prison.

The research also discussed that the issue of prisoner reintegration is not just for the Irish Prison Service, nor indeed any other service, it is also one that the community must face. All prisoners come from a community and many return to their own community. Whether a community accepts or rejects the return of ex prisoners is also of crucial importance. Prisoners need supports from the community as many, particularly long term prisoners, lose contact with their families and friends and have no one to turn to in their hour of need.

The impetus for this research

stemmed from a conference held by the Dublin Inner City Partnership in January 2003. At that meeting CTA expressed an interest in carrying out research, through the WIDE project on which the DICP are active participants.

## THE WIDE PROJECT



It was under the WIDE project that the research was funded and carried out. The overall aim of the WIDE project is to facilitate access to the labour market for the long-term unemployed and other groups with specific needs in the Inner City of Dublin. This involves challenging the institutional and cultural blocks experienced by these groups. The project focuses on those people in Dublin's Inner City who have the most difficulty accessing the labour market, including;

- | Long-term unemployed
- | Ex-drug users
- | Ex-prisoners
- | Minority ethnic communities, including Travellers
- | Women parenting alone

The WIDE project seek to address these gaps through the combined resources of the Development Partnership. The members of this development partnership are:

- | FÁS (National Training Agency)
  - | Dublin Inner City Partnership
  - | Dublin City Council
  - | Community Technical Aid
- CTA is the facilitating partner, responsible for delivering the programme and administrative requirements.

*Getting Out, Staying Out* is available from Community Technical Aid info@cta.ie.



**EQUAL is one of four Community Initiatives co-financed by the European Union 2000 – 2006, which seeks to identify and address fundamental forms of discrimination and inequality in the labour market.**

## Apology

The correct contact details for the Co-ordinator of the Computer Clubhouse are:

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# Progress on Disability Equality

The DICP is beginning a process of looking at how it can best encourage the participation of disabled people in the inner city. According to the latest census figures 10% of inner city residents have a disability (10,785 people). Often when we think of disability we think of people who use wheelchairs, but among this 10%, apart from people with a physical disability there are people with a sensory impairment (hearing or visual), with a mental health impairment, with a learning disability and with a hidden impairment, for example people with a kidney transplant.

The general approach of society to disabled people is that they need a cure or rehabilitation, that they need to be cared for and pitied, and that there is no point in them having the same expectations as non-disabled people. Traditionally, disabled people have been sent to different schools where standards and expectations were very low. Home and institutions were considered the best place for them to be and there was no provision for them to get into public buildings, public transport, or recreational settings or even cross the street. The mindset that led to these attitudes and to the segregation of disabled people is referred to by them as "the medical model of disability" and they have rejected it in favour of the "social model of disability".

The social model of disability says that it is not the impairment (i.e. the condition that the person has, e.g. polio, schizophrenia),

that disables the person, but the barriers that society places in the way of his/her participating in society. These barriers can be summarised as attitude, access and communication.

## Attitude

The medical model underpins the attitude of most non-disabled people to disabled people. This leads non-disabled people to forget to include disabled people, to think of them as a "problem" if they want to participate, and to underestimate their ability. Because the general image of a disabled person is of a passive person, grateful for all the "help" they receive, often non-disabled people are threatened by a disabled person demanding his/her rights.

*The social model of disability says that it is not the impairment ...that disables the person, but the barriers that society places in the way of his/her participating in society.*

## Access

Most of our footpaths, transport systems, public buildings etc. are not accessible to many people with a physical disability. Many public buildings and information centres do not cater for people with a sensory impairment, for example there are generally no loop systems provided in meeting rooms which would assist a hearing impaired person to hear better, films are not routinely subtitled in cinemas for deaf people, documents are not provided in

large print or on tape for people with visual impairments, etc. Many disabled people are excluded from education, recreation, work, information gathering etc. for the simple reason that they cannot cross the road, get on the bus, get into the building, read the information, fill out the form, etc.

## Communication

Part of the communication barrier is due to poor attitude, for example the classic scenario where someone asks the friend of a blind person "Does he take sugar in his tea?" instead of addressing the blind person directly. Other difficulties are due to the failure to provide aids which would make communication easier: for example the absence of lipspeakers or Sign Language interpreters for deaf people, the lack of assistive technology to enable visually impaired people to use IT, etc. Another communication barrier is the language used about disabled people, much of which they find offensive, e.g. referring to people as "cripples", "mentally handicapped", "schizo" instead of referring to people who have a physical, learning or mental health disability. We also place another communication barrier when we use complicated language. This prevents those with learning disabilities (and many others) from understanding what we are talking about. Disabled people claim that far from them having to find a cure or be rehabilitated, society has to change in order to enable disabled people to participate.

Changes are slowly coming about in urban landscapes, public buildings, public transport etc. but the latter are still largely inaccessible to disabled people. Disabled people claim that they have a right to the supports they need to lead independent lives, whether that be assistive equipment, adapted housing, personal assistants etc.. (A personal assistant is a person employed by a disabled person to assist him / her with independent living). At the moment they are demanding that the forthcoming Disabilities Act must enshrine their rights into law – the right to an independent assessment of need, to access the services necessary to meet those needs, to an accessible environment, to legal redress if their rights are violated, etc.

DICP has begun a process of linking with disability organisations in the inner city, with DESSA, the Disability Equality Specialist Support Agency, the Centre for Independent Living, and

*Disabled people claim that, far from them having to find a cure or be rehabilitated, society has to change in order to enable disabled people to participate*

with other inner city community groups that are working on the issue of disability. We are also interested in looking at the issue of educational provision for disabled children and students.

If you are interested in working with us on this issue please contact Molly O'Duffy or Emer Coveney on 872 1321.

## MACRO Disability Information Morning

MACRO Community Development Project in conjunction with DESSA held an information morning on 13 May 2004 on the topic of disability in the community.

Speakers included Tommy Crosbie from the Centre for Independent Living, Richard Handon from Schizophrenia Ireland and Mary Keogh from the Forum of People with Disabilities.

A meeting has been arranged for 17 June 2004 in the MACRO building on Green Street at 10 am for the purposes of trying to establish a Disability Working group for the area.

## Disability Equality Training

The Partnership has organised a two-day Disability Equality training course that will take place in June. Partnership staff, board members and community projects have been invited to participate.

Training will focus on the social model of disability. Group work exercises will be used to explore an experiential appreciation of disability, the language associated with disability and an exploration of the differences between impairment and social barriers.

The second day will focus on challenging negative representations, analysis of recent research and identification of achievable actions.