



# Local Development in Ireland

## Policy Implications for the Future

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# Parallel Universes: Gay & Lesbian Issues and Local Development

Kieran Rose

“Each partnership/community group should develop an equal opportunities policy, which involves its active commitment to ensure equality, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, disability, socio-economic background, age, religion, national or ethnic origin, marital status and responsibility for dependents.” (ADM, 1995:61)

“Those who are most excluded often find it very difficult to access and become involved in community organisations. This means that considerable effort must be made by local partnerships to identify those target groups and work with them in order to build their capacity to take part in what can be a complex and difficult process of local development” (CWC, 1997b:6)

## Introduction

The local development programmes provide significant opportunities to combat disadvantage amongst lesbians and gay men and to build the capacity of the lesbian and gay communities to contribute more effectively to social and economic development. Many of the elements necessary to realise this potential are now in place; there is a long tradition of gay community development with many recent dynamic initiatives, the public policy environment is now favourable, and there is a greater willingness in the community development sector to working with the gay and lesbian communities. Despite this positive context, to date there has been surprisingly little progress and some resistance to including gay/lesbian issues within mainstream community development programmes. Indeed, it could be said that lesbian/gay community development and mainstream community development have existed in parallel universes.

However, it should be stressed that there is a range of simple and straightforward initiatives which could be taken at local, national and European level which would result in significant progress to the benefit of both gay/lesbian and mainstream community development goals. In the medium term there is a need to develop a strategy for inclusion to combat lesbian/gay disadvantage which moves beyond the initial stage of ‘naming’ the issues, beyond equality proofing, and beyond making programmes accessible. It should also be recognised that the gay and lesbian communities have a great contribution to make to the development of a broad-based and powerful movement for greater equality.

## Poverty: Lesbians and Gay Men

“The study has provided an opportunity to hear the voices and experiences of lesbians and gay men who have been caught up in a circle of discrimination, poverty and social exclusion. It shows that discrimination and prejudice result in lesbians and gay men being disadvantaged and excluded from full participation in society. The study should contribute to putting poverty on the agenda of gay and lesbian organisations and putting gay and lesbian issues on the agenda of groups involved in tackling poverty and in promoting greater social equality and social justice.”<sup>1</sup>

The report *Poverty: Lesbians and Gay Men; The Economic and Social Effects of Discrimination* is shocking in its documenting of the harassment and discrimination which many gay people experience: (Glen/Nexus, 1995)

- Almost one-third of respondents were effectively homeless at some stage of their lives.
- Over half of those surveyed experienced problems at school because of their being lesbian or gay and thirteen respondents left school earlier than anticipated as a result.
- More than a third of those who had been on training courses experienced bullying because of being gay.
- Almost half of respondents experience harassment in the workplace.
- Many respondents' job opportunities were severely narrowed because they avoided work for which they were qualified (21%) or categories of work (39%) through fear of discrimination.
- A quarter of respondents had been punched, beaten, hit or kicked because they were assumed to be gay.
- Half of those who reported such incidents of violence stated that they occurred in their locality.
- Using the ESRI measure of psychological distress, responses to the survey show that many respondents indicated signs of psychological distress, particularly those in the poverty sub-sample.
- The study also documented more encouraging features, for example, almost all of those respondents who had come out to family members reported that it had improved their lives considerably or in some ways.

The survey results clearly show that there are significant cumulative and interlocking processes of discrimination operating in key economic and social

1 Anna Lee, Chairperson of the Combat Poverty Agency speaking at launch of *Poverty: Lesbians and Gay Men*, also referred to as the *Combat Poverty Report*. Glen stands for the Gay & Lesbian Equality Network.

areas which increase the risk of poverty for lesbians and gay men and further disadvantage those living in poverty. The study also showed how gay people avoid, cope with or resist discrimination. The report made 45 recommendations for a range of areas including family and youth, education and training, employment and unemployment, services, health, harassment and violence and emigration. A key recommendation is that a Task Force composed of representatives of government departments, the gay community and others would be set up to initiate action on the disadvantage identified in the report <sup>2</sup>.

### Community development

“The first most obvious point to emphasise is that we are talking about a community, one that has organised its own resources to meet the most immediate and pressing needs imaginable in what is often a hostile environment devoid of effective external support” (GLEN/Nexus, 1996:67)

Organised gay/lesbian community development activity in Ireland dates from 1974 when the Irish Gay Rights Movement was founded. The struggle since then has been to survive and develop in a hostile environment, to provide basic community and social facilities, to help isolated people coming out, to campaign for (almost twenty years) for law reform, to combat anti-gay violence, to counter police harassment, to respond to the HIV/AIDS crisis, and to try to lessen the attacks of the Right including the leadership of the catholic church<sup>3</sup>. A continuous theme has been a struggle against groups, institutions and ideologies who would exclude us from; freedom of association (especially in the universities), equal citizenship, the definition of being Irish (the New York St. Patrick’s Day Parade is a case in point), the right to work and, not least, to our sexual identity and expression. In recent years, especially after law reform, there has been more time to celebrate and this is particularly evident in the exuberance of the annual lesbian/gay pride parades and the flourishing of cultural initiatives.<sup>4</sup>

There are still however great barriers of prejudice and discrimination, which continue to undermine the development of the lesbian and gay communities in Ireland today. Even in 1998, to come out is to risk rejection or hostility from family, friends, community, work colleagues or employers. This severely limits the numbers who can get involved in community development. It cannot be stressed enough that a gay person who is, for example, a teacher in a catholic

2 Research modelled on this study is now being carried out by Foyle Friend (Derry).

3 For a discussion of issues in relation to the catholic church see Rose ‘The Power of the Powerless’ in *Minorities: The Right to be Different*, The Social Study Conference (1994) Neil Collins (ed.)

4 For a more detailed discussion of the history of the gay and lesbian communities in Ireland see Rose (1994) and O’Carroll and Collins (1995). For cultural related issues see Eibhear Walshe (1997). For a critical assessment of the campaign by the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network see Dunphy (1997).

church school or social service, could be putting their career in jeopardy if they were to openly represent their community at a local partnership level. Equally, an unemployed person or someone on a low wage will have little economic independence and may not have the resources to be able to cope with or avoid or resist harassment arising from their coming out. For many, as the Combat Poverty study (op cit) showed, emigration or migration is the only option which in turn results in a negative cycle of underdevelopment of the gay community.

The other serious barrier to gay community development was criminalisation which was often used as a reason for not funding gay projects, for not allowing gay switchboards to advertise their services or for refusing recognition to gay organisations (for example gay youth groups). The lack of funding until recently has meant that gay community development has had to rely solely on volunteers who often cannot take part in daytime activities. This is a fundamental and self-reinforcing blockage in terms of participating in mainstream development activities (or even making applications for funding). Another aspect of discrimination is that landlords are often unwilling to rent premises or will only do so on the proviso that the address is not publicised. However, in some cases the gay group itself is reluctant to publicise its address for fear of harassment and violence. Hoteliers and others are often unwilling to hire out rooms for socials, fund-raisers or even meetings which makes any form of community development almost impossible. Not surprisingly, the Combat Poverty study found that a "combination of negative public attitudes and scarcity of funding has meant that most activities and services are housed in inadequate (often dangerous) conditions" (1996:68). These realities can result in a sense of hopelessness and disempowerment amongst gay people, as the Green Paper on the community sector put it; "The result for the marginalised is passivity, apathy, indifference and demoralisation" (Government of Ireland, 1997:22). According to the Community Workers Co-operative (CWC), this demobilisation requires that 'particular attention' be paid to facilitating the participation of gay and lesbian communities and other communities of interest. Capacity building is 'essential' and this involves the provision of resources and ongoing development and training supports to local communities (CWC, 1997:7).

However, despite all these problems, there is a sound tradition of gay community development, for example Gay Switchboard Dublin has provided a continuous service since 1974 without any public funding (until last year) <sup>5</sup>. More recently there have been significant new initiatives such as The Other Place and Outhouse,

5 The report, *HIV Prevention Strategies and the Gay Community*, is the first structured study of gay community development issues in Ireland.

6 *GCN* is a professional and free monthly news magazine which celebrated its 100th edition in 1997.

community centres in Cork and Dublin respectively; Foyle Friend (Derry) and Lesbians Organising Together (Dublin). There are also two very successful community businesses, Gay Community News (GCN)<sup>6</sup> and The Other Place Cork, which provide invaluable community services, and train, employ and empower significant numbers of gay people. Two other particularly innovative projects are outlined below.

### **Gay HIV Strategies**

The links between health status and disadvantage are well documented and, according to *National Anti-Poverty Strategy*, “poverty has been found to manifest itself in psychological distress, physical ill health and reduced life expectancy” (Government of Ireland, 1997:77). Various epidemics, such as TB, have always affected the disadvantaged more severely and HIV/AIDS is no exception. As one writer put it, “AIDS is still a disease of minorities, the disinherited, and the stigmatised” (quoted in GLEN/Nexus, 1996:35). This is true for Ireland as it is for the rest of the world, a fact remarked upon by President Mary Robinson when we presented her with a copy of *‘HIV Prevention Strategies and the Gay Community’* (*ibid*). In the early stages of the epidemic in Ireland, the USA and many other countries, prejudice and criminalisation meant that the state and other mainstream agencies did not properly fund HIV/AIDS programmes directed at gay men. This official neglect undoubtedly cost many thousands of lives internationally.<sup>7</sup>

Happily, in Ireland, especially after law reform, there has been considerable progress in terms of official support for issues relating to gay men and HIV/AIDS. In 1994 the Department of Health funded what was effectively a needs/strategy analysis which was published as, *‘HIV Prevention Strategies and the Gay Community: Phase One Report; A Baseline Study’* (GLEN/Nexus, 1996). The study clearly documented that measures to promote the self-esteem of gay men and to promote gay community development are essential to effective HIV prevention work. There is clear evidence that disadvantaged gay men and those disconnected from the gay community find it more difficult to adopt and sustain safer-sex practices. Accordingly, community development programmes, youth services and other projects should focus on providing the support and positive environment for (disadvantaged) gay men to develop a positive sense of their gay sexuality, to be enabled to come out, and become part of the gay community. There are some, especially young, gay men who are particularly at risk including early school leavers, those who are homeless, or who have been victimised and have very poor self-esteem. Very often, the services dealing with such young

<sup>7</sup> Paul Monette has written extensively on these issues based on his personal experiences and *Last Watch of the Night* is especially powerful.

people at risk ignore a central problem, which is prejudice, discrimination and harassment because of the persons gay sexuality.

Arising from the recommendations of this report, the Department of Health agreed to provide core funding for a community development and advocacy project to significantly improve HIV prevention work for gay men by facilitating new programmes, resources and linkages. This is a great opportunity to develop more effective HIV prevention strategies for gay men based on a partnership between the gay community, the statutory sector and relevant other sectors such as the community development sector. We are hopeful that the Eastern Health Board (EHB) will establish a working group chaired by the programme manager and including gay community groups with the remit to develop a HIV prevention plan of action for gay men for the EHB area.<sup>8</sup>

### **Lesbian Education and Awareness (LEA)**

LEA/NOW is an education and training project for lesbians from throughout Ireland funded under the New Opportunities for Women programme (NOW). The aim of the project is to design, develop and provide a training programme which prepares participants as education/information providers on lesbian issues to a range of target groups including voluntary/community groups, educators, trade unionists, state agencies and the media. It is the first lesbian project funded under the NOW programme. Sometimes it is erroneously thought that the European Union is very progressive on gay/lesbian issues: while the European Parliament has voted for numerous pro-gay policies, the European Commission response has been almost entirely negative.

### **Policy developments**

Equality measures seek to guarantee a range of rights to disadvantaged groups and to eliminate various forms of discrimination against them. The term target group refers to groups experiencing exclusion or marginalisation in society on grounds of gender, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, colour, nationality, national or ethnic origins including membership of the Travelling community, or any combination of these factors (NESF, 1996:11)

The policy context for gay and lesbian initiatives has improved significantly in recent years. The Combat Poverty report and recommendations are beginning to have an impact as evidenced by the recent National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) report '*Sharing in Progress*' (Government of Ireland, 1997:71-72) which

<sup>8</sup> Other gay health projects include the Gay Men's Health Project (Eastern health Board), the Southern Gay Health Project, Rainbow Project (Belfast) and Gaypoz. AIDS Help West has a gay health worker and the Red Ribbon Project (Limerick) will be advertising for such a position.

dealt with issues of discrimination and inequality. It recorded that evidence has been documented on discrimination leading to poverty for a number of groups and referred to Travellers and lesbians and gay men. It also referred to the “ongoing debate on the extent to which discrimination can increase the risk of poverty for some groups in society”. It stated that:

“While homosexuality in itself does not necessarily place one at risk of poverty, the impact, experience and perception of discrimination may limit the full participation of gay men and lesbians in society, and may in some cases place them at risk of poverty”

In developing the NAPS, a number of principles have been adopted which underpin the overall strategy. These principles are:

- Ensuring equal access and encouraging participation for all.
- Guaranteeing the rights of minorities especially through anti-discrimination measures.

The National Economic and Social Council (NESF, 1996) report, *‘Equality Proofing Issues’* specifically included gay men and lesbians although admitting that that its particular focus was on women, people with disabilities and Travellers. The report stated that the approach of the Policy Appraisal and Fair Treatment (PAFT) procedure, which has been in operation in Northern Ireland since 1994 and which includes sexual orientation, could be a model in the south. The report recommended that equality objectives should focus on, *inter alia*, “respecting diversity rather than promoting homogeneity, and facilitating the creation of new relations between different communities”. (*ibid*:37)

The report also recommended that equality proofing procedures should apply to the voluntary and community sectors.

The recent Department of Social Welfare Green Paper on the community and voluntary sector, *‘Supporting Voluntary Activity’*, recognised the role of organisations representing the lesbian and gay communities and, most importantly, it stated that networks concerned with gay and lesbian issues could be eligible for funding under the category of national anti-poverty networks (1997:63). The Department of Health has produced a number of policy documents, which stress issues of equity, strengthening community action, prioritising vulnerable groups, and promoting safer sexual practices. (Department of Health, 1994, 1995 and GLEN/Nexus, 1996). The *‘Report to Government of the Second Commission on the Status of Women’* (1993) discussed the needs of lesbians and made recommendations in a section entitled

“Women in situations of disadvantage”. Another significant development in public policy is the Ombudsman’s guide to standards of best practice for public servants which includes sexual orientation and other categories in an anti-bias clause.<sup>9</sup>

The Area Development Management (ADM) guidelines, ‘*Integrated Local Development Handbook*’ (ADM, 1995:61-62) contain policy and recommendations on equality, which includes sexual orientation (see above). It states that implementing an equal opportunities policy requires a positive action programme and positive action aims. It recommends targeting of local groups to ensure full participation. In practice this means “a proactive approach, involving outreach work, consultation, capacity building, liaison with established groups and networks”. A follow-up publication, ‘*Towards Gender Equality in Integrated Local Development*’ (ADM, 1996) includes practical advice on how to develop and implement equal opportunity policies including a warning on such policies “being confined to the filing cabinet”. The ADM equality committee is now producing a report in relation to disability and the role of the committee could now be expanded to include lesbians and gay men.

Support for the Combat Poverty Report (Glen/Nexus, 1995) recommendations has also come from the Community Platform (of which GLEN is a member) in its negotiations on Partnership 2000 and in its subsequent publication ‘*Achieving Social Partnership*’. Of particular importance, the Platform stated its support for the approach of bringing together relevant agencies and groups to develop a policy focus in particular areas of inequality and discrimination and considers that it should be extended to encompass other groups starting with a Task Force on Discrimination against Lesbians and Gay Men (1997:36,48). The Platform also called for the strategic expansion of the Community Development Programme with a particular focus on communities of interest such as the gay and lesbian community (1997:35). The Platform also affirmed that its focus on equality emphasises gender equality but places a “particular focus” on disadvantaged women, Travellers, people with a disability living in poverty, and gay and lesbian people living in poverty (1997:35). In assessing the value of participation in Programme 2000, the report states that lesbians and gay men are not mentioned in the agreement and commitments to addressing their exclusion are “minimal” (1997:18).

The Community Workers Co-op. (CWC) recent guide, ‘*Strategies to Encourage Participation*’ states that community development seeks to involve strategies which confront prejudice and discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity,

9 One of the suggested equal opportunities statements is included in the resources section

class, religion, socio-economic status, age sexuality, skin colour or disability (1997:3). However, there is no gay or lesbian case study in the sixteen presented.

As far back as 1987 the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) launched a radical and action-orientated policy document, '*Lesbian and Gay Rights in the Workplace: Guidelines for Negotiators*', which was uncompromising in its demand for equality, its rejection of 'heterosexism' and its recommendations for positive action by trade unions. The following year the public service employers adopted an anti-discrimination code which stated that discrimination on the basis of medical condition or sexual orientation "will not be tolerated". In 1990 the Irish Council for Civil Liberties published a wide-ranging and progressive policy document, '*Equality Now for Lesbians and Gay Men*'. In both cases, gay men and lesbians were part of the working groups, which drafted the documents.

### **Legal progress**

The most radical public policy development in recent years was the 1993 gay law reform which not only decriminalised homosexuality but provided for full legal equality with a common age of consent of seventeen and no special privacy or other restrictions. Almost as important as the law reform itself was the enthusiastic welcome for this equality measure displayed by legislators from all political parties (a fact that should upset the easy cynicism of some towards our politicians). Other legislation which specifically protects lesbians and gay men includes the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act (1989), the Unfair Dismissals (Amendment) Act (1993), the Health Insurance Act (1994), the Refugee Act (1996), the Powers of Attorney Act (1996), and the Domestic Violence Act (1996). The latter two pieces of legislation are important in that they give implicit recognition to lesbian/gay partnerships.

Two major pieces of legislation, the Employment Equality Bill and the Equal Status Bill, which would have fundamentally improved the economic and social circumstances for gay people and all groups vulnerable to discrimination, were passed by the Dail and Seanad with the support of all political parties. The Bills were not signed into law because the Supreme Court found some sections, dealing with disability and enforcement matters, to be unconstitutional on grounds of conflict with the rights of private property. The re-enactment of amended legislation and/or a Constitutional referendum must now be campaigned for as a matter of urgency.<sup>10</sup>

An Irish Government proposal to attach an anti-discrimination clause, including the category sexual orientation, in the new European Treaty was recently adopted.<sup>11</sup> The 1996 '*Report of the Constitution Review Group*' recommended that a new

anti-discrimination section be added and that the categories specified should include sexual orientation. The Report also recommended that recognition be given to families not based on marriage. The interim report of the Commission on the Family, '*Strengthening Families For Life*' (Commission on the Family, 1996) recommended that family policy should include "protecting minority rights". Specifically, in Principle No.6 it recommended that "A diversity of family forms and relationships should be recognised". (1996:14)

### Practice

"Communities of interest will not automatically benefit from economic and social development strategies that are area based, unless they are specifically named and targeted for inclusion (Farrell, 1996:118). In practice, there is very little or no action on issues of lesbian and gay disadvantage in the local development programmes. Despite the Department of Social Welfare's policy statement that the Community Development Programme is for groups and individuals who experience social exclusion because of unequal treatment and a denial of rights such as Travellers or people with disabilities (1995), there would seem to be resistance to including the lesbian and gay community within the remit of the programme. Similarly, lesbian and gay disadvantage is seen by some not to be included within the target categories of ADM supported local development.<sup>12</sup>

A quick survey of local community development programmes reveals that there is little action in terms of gay disadvantage at a local level.<sup>13</sup> One response was that "it would be a fair old struggle to get it on the agenda". Many responded that gay issues had not arisen, that there were no gay groups operating in the area of the project and that no action had been taken.

However, there are a number of partnerships where there has been notable progress. The Drogheda lesbian/gay group participated in the preparation of the area action plan, has been involved since then, and has been resourced by the partnership. The gay group "Outcomers" feels that this participation has been most valuable in terms of "raising awareness and encouraging acceptance".

However, the lack of a full-time worker precludes their participation in daytime events. The Clondalkin partnership has developed a detailed draft equal status policy (see appendix), which includes, *inter alia*, both sexual orientation and

10 The Equality Campaign (initiated by GLEN in 1991) is a suitable framework for such a campaign as it is broad based and includes organisations representing Travellers, people with disabilities and others.

11 The Treaty of Amsterdam of June 17, 1997 states that the European Union may take appropriate action to combat "discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion and belief, disability, age or sexual orientation".

12 How this is reconciled with the ADM equality policy is unclear.

13 I would like to thank all those who responded to the informal survey at such short notice.

antibody status. In Cork, the gay group has been involved in the work of the partnership, Comhar Chathair Chorcaí Teo. The partnership have appointed an equality officer and the equality policy set out in the development plan (which includes sexual orientation) is being further developed. One response was that partnerships needed to be “much more proactive in relation to promoting equality in general”.

In addition, it is clear that many community workers are supportive and willing to take up gay/lesbian issues but they are uncertain about what precisely the issues are and what concretely should be done at a local level. Many workers stated that they would welcome suggestions for positive action and were particularly open to the suggestions regarding accessibility (set out below), indeed some said that they would include a statement in their next newsletter or stock *Gay Community News*. The Combat Poverty report is a major resource (as is the HIV prevention report). However both are detailed policy orientated studies and there is an urgent expressed need for other resource materials (posters, leaflets etc) and other support for local development groups who would like to respond to issues of gay disadvantage.

Some workers had a developed analysis of why there might not be local gay groups and why there is a need to relate to gay groups outside their area: “Fear, probably the greatest barrier to establishing lesbian and gay community groups is something that can be addressed through an open show of support of the actions of lesbian and gay community groups.”

Other workers suggested that partnerships could highlight gay issues around unemployment and social exclusion and that special consideration could be given to lesbians and gay men as a target group (in a manner similar to Travellers or women or people with disabilities). It was also suggested that partnerships could assist and provide resources for the setting up of a network which would be charged with ensuring that the partnership was inclusive of the lesbian/gay issues and that gay groups would be involved in the partnership process (e.g. on various management committees). Another suggestion was that partnerships could fund local lesbian/gay groups, or support the development of groups where none currently existed. It was also suggested that partnerships could influence policy to include gay people. One respondent asked a central question “how do you do community development while incorporating the needs of lesbians and gay men?”

## Barriers

The recent progress in terms of lesbian/gay issues within the mainstream community sector is very much to be welcomed. However, it does seem surprising that, ten years after the ICTU policy and four years after our politicians enthusiastically legislated for equality, the mainstream community sector should only now be beginning to respond. It is useful to further consider the possible reasons for such barriers to development so that we can at least better understand the context and come up with some solutions. Part of the problem of course arises from the fact that both mainstream and gay community development are under-resourced and under-pressure.

One basic factor that cannot be ignored is the strong ideological resistance to the rights of lesbians and gay men which is powerfully sustained by the leadership of the catholic church and by its supporters in the lay organisations. The church still controls wide areas of social, health, educational and youth services and intervene in policies and programmes. It is instructive to note that, in the recent debates around the equality legislation, the churches insisted on the right to be able to discriminate based on "religious ethos". Of course, there are very many ordinary religious people who have been most supportive of the rights of gay people, what is at issue is the anti-gay political position of the leadership of the church and the manner in which it deploys its considerable power to that end. There are also residual elements of a narrow leftist antipathy to sexual politics in general and homosexuality in particular. This approach is summed up in the notorious phrase that homosexuality is a "bourgeois deviation". A related barrier is the view that lesbian/gay issues may be worthy but of little importance to "real, grass-roots" community development. A variation of this theme is that gay rights is only a middle-class issue, similar to George Colley's remark that all feminists were "well-heeled and articulate".

Given the strength of anti-gay prejudice, most organisations and decision-makers will make a conscious or unconscious calculation of the risks involved in taking an initiative supportive of lesbians and gay men and it would be foolish to deny that there are risks. I remember Kevin O'Driscoll of IMPACT telling me a few years ago that every time the Union took a pro-gay stand, a few members rang him up to resign. The recent attempts by the tabloids to generate a furore over the Department of Social Welfare funding for Lesbians Organising Together (LOT) are also a case in point. My experience over many years in many different areas (e.g. trade unions, civil liberties, party political, public sector and semi-state

14 Many of the struggles of the lesbian and gay movement focussed on creating or defending places where we could socialise freely. The modern lesbian and gay movement began when patrons of the Stonewall bar in New York in 1969 fought back against years of police harassment of such gay meeting places.

agencies) is that commitment at leadership/decision-making level is vital for progress, otherwise the usual excuses for inaction will be proffered; "personally fully supportive but policy problems, resource constraints, the Board/the membership/the clients/the workers are strongly opposed, come back next year". Lesbian and gay issues are also suspect because they are concerned, *inter alia*, with sexuality, desire, affection, and the "frivolities" of socialising and popular culture.<sup>14</sup> However, if community development discounts these human needs and realities, it is partial and flawed.

### **Accessibility**

Study after study, has shown that lesbians and gay men either will not seek help or will hide their sexual orientation from various service providers because of fear of prejudice and discrimination. The resulting "invisibility" is a major problem in itself. Service providers and community development agencies can be genuinely unaware that they have a gay target group and so no remedial or gay positive action is taken. Recently, we met a young gay man working in a gay venue, he is from a disadvantaged background, he was delighted with his new job and sense of himself in a gay friendly environment, but he warned us not to tell a friend we had in common where he was working. This friend is a prominent community worker in the area where the young man lives, we were fairly sure that he would have been supportive, but the young gay man did not feel that support.

'*Opening Doors*', a study of youth services in Canada, makes a series of excellent suggestions to break the negative cycle of invisibility. They describe their recommendations as the four Ps; public profile, policies and procedures, professional development, and programme development. One of the "simplest and most effective ways" of conveying a message of welcome and acceptance to gay youth is through the public profile the agency presents including agency brochures, gay positive posters and literature and outreach work (Central Toronto Youth Services, 1994:33). For example, agency brochures could state that lesbians and gay men will be welcomed (not just tolerated). Reception areas could contain *Gay Community News* (GCN), or gay positive posters or leaflets. Any negative reactions from staff or other clients could be used as an opportunity for raising awareness. Finally, agencies could engage in outreach work into the gay community by, for example, placing advertisements or articles in GCN.

### **Recommendations**

The basic recommendation is that each organisation concerned with disadvantage, exclusion and community development should consider its

potential role in terms of the findings and recommendations of '*Poverty: Lesbians and Gay Men; The Economic and Social Effects of Discrimination*', and in particular:

- Lesbian and gay disadvantage and lesbian and gay communities should be specifically named and targeted in community development programmes. Proactive equal opportunity programmes including capacity building, outreach work and liaison with existing gay organisations should be developed.
- The Local Employment Service (LES) and FÁS should respond to the particular employment/training/personal development needs of gay men and lesbians having regard to the high levels of discrimination and harassment on training courses and in the workplace documented in the Combat Poverty Agency report. These issues should also be included in training for LES mediators and FAS officials.
- Community development organisations should contribute to HIV prevention efforts by promoting the self-esteem and empowerment of gay men within their target groups and by supporting gay community development.
- Youth services, particularly those for disadvantaged youth, should develop accessible and appropriate programmes for gay youth.
- Focus groups on how to integrate lesbian/gay issues into mainstream community development programmes by means of short-term action plans should be organised by ADM, Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs (Community Development Programme), the Community Workers Co-op, local groups and others.
- ADM, the Department of Social Welfare and local community development programmes should resource the lesbian and gay communities to assist the integration of gay/lesbian issues into their policies and work programmes (for example information/publicity materials, awareness training).
- The European Union (EU) should fund a pilot programme on combating social exclusion of the gay community and measures to include gay/lesbian issues in mainstream EU social exclusion and community development programmes. Such action should build on the Combat Poverty Agency report and recommendations.

- The significant potential of gay/lesbian community enterprises, in particular Gay Community News and The Other Place, should be examined via an action research project to identify practical projects in other towns and in relation to other enterprise areas.
- Immediate short-term measures that could be taken to make mainstream community development programmes more accessible to lesbians and gay men include actions such as promoting a public profile that is gay/lesbian friendly e.g. having Gay Community News (GCN) and suitable leaflets and/or posters etc in reception areas. Outreach work could include arranging for advertisements or articles to be placed in GCN and have articles on lesbian/gay issues included in newsletters etc.
- The Combat Poverty Agency could organise a focus group and appoint a staff member to progress the recommendations of the report 'Poverty: Lesbians and Gay Men'.
- The lesbian and gay community, having regard to its limited resources, needs to clarify its strategy and proposals for actions (beyond just issues of accessibility and naming) in terms of mainstream community development programmes.

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## Appendix 1: Clondalkin Partnership Equality Statement (draft)

The Clondalkin Partnership is committed to actively opposing racism, sexism and all forms of discrimination on the following grounds: gender; marital status; disability; race; skin colour; ethnic or national origin, including the Traveller community; antibody status; sexual orientation; economic status; age; political or religious beliefs; or responsibility for dependents\*. The Clondalkin Partnership as the agency with responsibility to deliver the Local Urban and Rural Programme in the Clondalkin area recognises its particular role in addressing equality issues.

The Clondalkin Partnership declares, therefore, that it will introduce measures that will combat all direct or indirect discrimination in employment practices and in the provision of goods, facilities and services and will campaign with those groups in the area fighting to achieve these ends. As part of these measures the partnership will seek to implement a programme of positive action to make this policy fully effective and will make sure that no job applicant receives less favourable treatment on the grounds identified in the first paragraph.

The Clondalkin Partnership will ensure that the management committee has a balanced representation from all sectors of the local community; and ensure that the service it provides really meets the needs of all the community in the most appropriate way. To this end materials will be developed that are appropriate to and inclusive of those covered by the grounds identified in this Equal Status Policy. Communications with the general public will be in a language and imagery that reflect the commitments made in this policy. The Clondalkin Partnership will strive to make accessible to all of the groups covered by this policy all of its materials and communications.

The Clondalkin Partnership intends to ensure that equal opportunities in the employment and non-employment areas become a reality in practice and not simply a paper commitment. Therefore, all procedures implemented as part of the above commitment will be regularly monitored for effectiveness, and changes made where appropriate. The Manager of the partnership will be given responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of this Equal Status Policy in conjunction with the Equality Group of the partnership. Training will be provided for all staff, board members and those active on working groups to ensure an understanding of the Equal Status Policy and its appropriate and effective implementation.

### Implementing it

The Board agreed that each of the working groups of the partnership would be requested to discuss the Equal Status Policy adopted by the Board on the 25th of June and that they would be requested to identify actions to address equality issues in their workplans for 1998.

These identified actions would form the basis of the monitoring of the Equal Status Policy in a years time which would be carried out on behalf of the board by the Equality Working Group and the Manager.

The Board also agreed that, as part of the funding criteria, groups applying to the partnership for funding would be asked, if they have not already done so, to adopt their own equal status policy in an agreed timescale.

The Board agreed that information on the Equal Status Policy would be disseminated to all the groups in the area through the Partnership's newsletter.

\* Responsibility for dependents includes lone parents, those caring for older relatives or relatives with a disability.

**Appendix Three: Contacts:**

**Gay Community News** and the Pink Pages web site have a full and updated listing of all lesbian and gay organisations and facilities.

**Gay Community News and National Lesbian and Gay Federation**, 6 South William Street Dublin 2. Tel 01-6710939 and 6719076. Fax. 01-6713549.e-mail gcn@tinet.ie.

Home page <http://homepage.tinet.ie/~nlgf>

**Gay HIV Strategies**, c/o Nexus, Fumbally Court, Fumbally Lane, Dublin 8. Tel.01-4730599. Fax.01-4730597. e-mail. ghs@nexus.ie. Web page:

<http://www.iol.ie/nexus/ghs.htm>

**Gay and Lesbian Equality Network**, c/o Outhouse, 6 South William St. Dublin 2. LEA/NOW: 5 Capel St., Dublin 1. Tel./Fax. 01-8720460. e-mail: leanow@indigo.ie.

Web site: <http://indigo.ie/~leanow/>

**Gaypoz Ireland**, GPI, P.O. Box 5187, Dublin 6, e-mail gpi@poz.iol.ie

**Pink Pages**, <http://indigo.ie/~outhouse>

**Belfast**

Cara-friend, Tel. +1232-322023 (telephone helpline)

Rainbow Project, Floor 2, 33 Church Lane Belfast BT1 4QN. Tel +1232-319041.

Fax. +1232-319031

**Cork**

The Other Place, 8 South Main Street Cork. Tel. 021-278470. Fax. 021-278471.

e-mail [lesgay@indigo.ie](mailto:lesgay@indigo.ie) (community centre).

Southern Gay Health Project, c/o The Other Place 8 South Main Street Cork.

Tel. 021-278745

**Derry**

Foyle Friend 37 Clarendon Street Derry BT48 7ER. (community development)

Tel/Fax. +1504 263120. E-mail [nwgay@iol.ie](mailto:nwgay@iol.ie)

**Drogheda**

Outcomers, Resource Centre for the Unemployed, 7 North Quay, Drogheda

(community group)

**Dundalk**

Outcomers, Tel. 042-39444 (community group).

**Dublin**

Gay Men's Health Project, 19 Haddington Road Dublin 4. Tel. 01-6602189

Gay Switchboard Dublin, Carmichael House, North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7. Tel. 01-8721055. Fax. 01-8735737. e-mail [gsd@iol.ie](mailto:gsd@iol.ie). Web site <http://www.iol.ie/~gsd>

Lesbians Organising Together: 5 Capel St., Dublin 1. Tel. 01-8727770. Fax. 01-

8720460.

Outhouse 6 South William Street Dublin 2. Tel/Fax. 01-6706377. E-mail

[outhouse@indigo.ie](mailto:outhouse@indigo.ie). (community centre)

**Galway**

AIDS Help West Ozanam House, Galway. Tel.091-566266. Fax. 091-564708.

Galway Gay and Lesbian Helpline, P.O. Box 45 Galway. Tel. 091-566134.

**Limerick**

Gay Switchboard Limerick P.O. Box 151 GPO Limerick. Tel. 061-310101.

Red Ribbon Project 94 Henry Street Limerick. Tel. 061-314354 (HIV/AIDS).

**Waterford** Gayline South East, P.O. Box 24 GPO Waterford. Tel. 051-879907.

# Contents

## Introduction

Local Development and Local Governance – Challenges For The Future	<i>Stasia Crickley</i>	7
--	------------------------	---

## Section 1 Local Governance and Local Development

### Nordic Substance and Celtic Mist:

A Comparison of Local Democracy in Sweden and Ireland	<i>Aiden Lloyd</i>	15
Local Partnerships, Sustainable Development and Agenda 21	<i>Sadhbh O'Neill</i>	27
Partnership in Northern Ireland – A European Legacy	<i>Susan Hodgett</i>	45

## Section 2 Rural Development and Local Development

The Rural Condition – Take Two Aspirin and Hope for The Best!	<i>Chris McInerney</i>	57
Targeting Disadvantage and Low Income Farm Families Through Local Development	<i>Maura Walsh</i>	70
Capacity Building and Identification of Training Needs in Rural Development	<i>Deirdre Hardiman</i>	78
Networking with Rural Womens Groups and Linkages with the Peace and Reconciliation Programme	<i>Marie Crawley</i>	86

## Section 3 Equality and Local Development

Equality Proofing and Local Development	<i>Niall Crowley</i>	97
Gender Issues in Local Development	<i>Ursula Barry</i>	109
Developing Services for the Elderly Through Local Development	<i>Gerry Behan</i>	117
Housing, Homelessness and Local Development	<i>Mary Higgins</i>	126
Parallel Universes: Gay and Lesbian Issues and Local Development	<i>Kieran Rose</i>	134

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