

Victims + Survivors

A CRC NEWS Supplement

Published by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

JUNE 2008

Welcome to the latest edition of **Victims + Survivors**, our annual supplement of the CRC News. Our hope is to give you some insight into the work of the CRC and that of our funded groups. We have also included information about upcoming events that you may be interested in attending.

Please feel free to contact any member of the Council's Victims & Survivors Programme Staff for further information about any of the work highlighted in this issue.

Brian T. Mullan
CRC Development Officer

FUNDING UPDATE

Victims + Survivors Development Grant Scheme

Following ongoing discussions with the Victims Unit (OFMDFM) we are pleased to announce an initial increase to our Victims Development Grant Scheme from £700,000 to £1.5million for this financial year.

The scheme is currently open for application, if you would like more details please contact Carol Taylor or Frances Dennison on 02890 227 500.

Community Relations Council



THE COMPETENT HELPER

The COMPETENT HELPER is a cross-community helping and listening course which builds on the experience and skills of people who are survivors of violence. Its aim is to further peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and to respond to community needs in a realistic and proactive way.

In 1996, at the request of community groups, a cross-community counselling/listening/supporting skills programme was developed. This is called THE COMPETENT HELPER. The first course started in 1997.

It is non-academic and is aimed at people who are working in communities and whose lives may have been affected by the Northern Ireland conflict. The course is provided by the Institute for Counselling and Personal Development (ICPD). The first run of the course started in 1997 and to date over 800 people throughout Northern have completed the programme which lasts for 20 weeks. Most of these graduates are now actively working within their communities in a variety of roles. Some have used this non-academic course as

a springboard for more formal training – indeed one went on to complete a doctorate at the University of Ulster- but the majority of people value the non-academic approach and the boost this gives to their confidence as they provide realistic help and support to people with a variety of problems.

The course content is quite ordinary but what continues to make it a success is the process of self-resolution that takes place as people listen to one another with sensitivity but without any loss of ownership. The resolution that they achieve is to the level that they are comfortable with. They find it possible to retain their values and yet give honest respect (and friendship) to other members of the group. This is done in typical Northern Ireland fashion and



Graduates of the ICPD course receive their certificate.

sometimes the catalyst for deeper understanding is through shared humour. It makes group discussion and shared tasks become a gentle way to achieving a peace of mind and better quality of life. The course can be a confidence booster that allows them to make best possible use of their skills when working in their local community.

Course facilitators use the skills and life experience of participants to reinforce and develop basic helping skills. Feedback from individuals and community groups throughout Northern Ireland indicates that the course remains relevant to present community needs.

From the beginning the Competent Helper has received backing and

practical support from the Community Relations Council.

For additional information about The Competent Helper please contact Prof. Chris Conliffe, Director ICPD, Pembroke Lodge, Pembroke Loop Road, Dunmurry, Belfast BT17 OPH. Tel. 028-90610345. Or email chris@theicpd.com

Befriending... An Update

The Gift of Time

During the 2007-08 year over 80 volunteers have completed their befriending training.

There are now befriending services operating in Tyrone, Derry, Coleraine, Strabane and Armagh with a potential new service in North Belfast currently being developed.

As part of the goal to promote on-going development and promotion of excellence a review of existing services has been carried out. The findings of the review will be implemented in the new 2008/09 programme and will include increased support and training as well as the identification and recording of models of good practice.

A DVD has been produced which outlines the befriending service and included are interviews with a co-ordinator, a Befriender and a person in receipt of the befriending service. The resource aims to capture the essence and value of the service and copies are available from CRC staff.

Below is an interview with a Befriending Co-ordinator who has received support from the Council's Befriending Scheme.

able to offer this service to a much wider circle of members.

(CRC) Can you give us a couple of examples of the work your volunteers do?

(D) Well generally speaking some of the volunteers visit members in hospital or in their own homes. They might take a small gift or a bunch of flowers with them. Volunteers may also take members to visit the grave of a loved one or out for a cup of coffee whilst doing some shopping.....

One volunteer for example visits an elderly widow in a very rural area and she takes her for a bowl of soup every week. The elderly widow says this means so much to her as she rarely gets out.

(CRC) What help can you give the volunteers?

They are paid mileage and any necessary expenses from CRC i.e. the "bowl of soup". I also meet them monthly for supervision and go through any problems that may have arisen for them. We also hope to recognise their efforts in the new year when they will receive Certificates and have a nice bite to eat.

(CRC) On a more personal note what do you think of the scheme?

(D) Having worked with bereaved families for the last 16 years, initially as a befriender, I have always thought that this service is the backbone of what Victims groups are all about and I hope it will continue to flourish in the years ahead.

Interview between C.R.C and Dorothy Meenagh from F.A.I.R

(CRC) Tell us about how you came to be interested in work with victims as a Befriender?

I worked as a befriender with WAVE and then moved to South Down Action for Healing Wounds as a Co-ordinator.

(C.R.C) How did you become involved in Volunteering and Befriending?

I was pleasantly surprised but delighted when Fair approached me and asked if I would be interested in becoming Volunteer Co-ordinator of a Volunteer Befrienders group which was being set up and after a meeting with Joan Clements from CRC to find out the details, I said I would give it a go.

(CRC) What was the first step you took to develop the scheme?

Identifying the befrienders was the first step but my job was made easy in the

fact that Fair had already a band of volunteers helping out but without proper structure or proper training. I interviewed every one of them and all were delighted that their efforts were at last being recognised and were very interested in training.

(CRC) What happened next?

We held one full day's training plus a weekend residential with a few anxious people in tow. Eileen the tutor soon put everyone at ease and all thoroughly enjoyed the course having had their fears and concerns dealt with.

(CRC) How many volunteers are trained?

To date we have a band of 8 trained befriending volunteers looking after 58 families and already our second course has begun, so by Christmas we will be

The Wider Circle

The Wider Circle is a cross-community voluntary organisation with the aim of helping and supporting those who have been affected as a result of community or other violence, abuse or any other action. The charity provides a range of support services and information to individuals or groups who have suffered the devastating effects of trauma which very often is 'Troubles' related. It is estimated that over 200,000 people here are suffering as a direct result of the Troubles alone. Symptoms associated with trauma include isolation, alienation, depression and anxiety as well as other symptoms.

The Wider Circle to achieve its aim facilitates a process of self-healing in the form of group therapy programmes and publishes books and other literature to help sufferers to better cope with their problems as well as helping those who come into contact with them, to better understand what it is like to suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

The Wider Circle is well known for its book 'The Sky Before The Storm' which explains in very simple terms, what trauma is and how to cope with it. Now a new book for children will also be available entitled *Jimmy and the Island of Magic*. This book was written in response to a request from a State Children's Centre in N.Ireland. It will be a useful resource to anyone working with troubled children.

The following is an extract from the foreword from Dr Sandra Bloom MD, the American Internationally respected expert on Trauma.

Jimmy and the Island of Magic

Some people think that the use of imagination is the special domain of children and artistically gifted adults. But we all use imagination every day. Imagination takes us out of ourselves and out of our usual patterns of existence. It allows us to visualize alternatives before we pursue them. Imagination provides us with the opportunity to change, to do things differently, to see ourselves in different times and different places.

For a young child for whom scientific notions of cause and effect do not yet exist, the world is filled with magic and phantasm, heroes and monsters, angels and demons. But for some children, monsters and demons are all too real, while heroes and angels are in short supply. Children are just learning about the nature of the world, about what safety means and about the nature of human nature. When children are hurt by adults, they internalize the anger, the hurt and the unfairness of what was

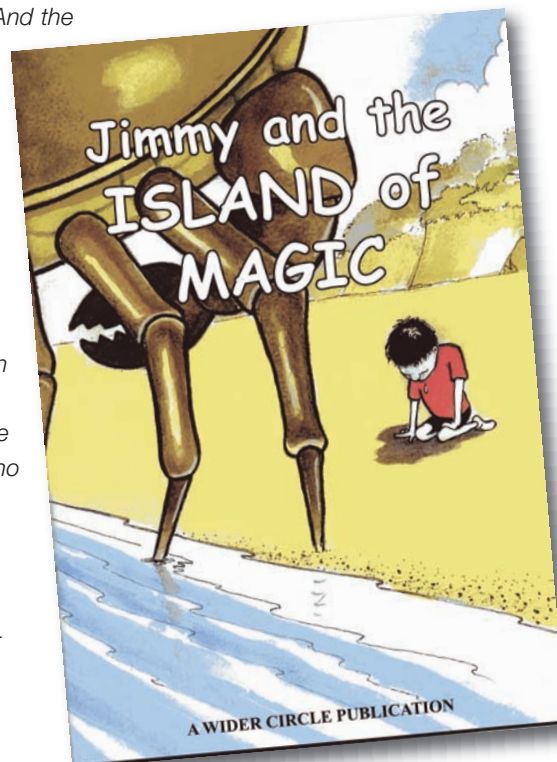
done and blame themselves. In such ways children become poisoned by other people's pain.

Children can suffer unimaginable harm at the hands of adults. And the most long-lasting harm may be inflicted on their imaginations. Children who must constantly worry about life and death – whose bodies are recurrently struggling to manage the enormous biological changes associated with the arousal of fear – cannot afford to exercise imagination. Children who live in households dominated by terror are too busy empathically responding to the emotional needs of their families to imagine the alternatives to lives grounded in fear.

Such children as these need help from adults who care about them, but quite frequently that help cannot be directly given. Instead, adults who understand childhood dilemmas find ways to activate children's capacity to fantasize other realities and in doing so, may help them find new and innovative ways to draw on inner strengths. The story of Jimmy and the magic island he discovers has been designed and funded by The Wider Circle to provide adults with the opportunity to gently help young children draw upon those inner resources to find strength, guidance, and support.

Jimmy and the Island of Magic is so sensitively and subtly written. It appeals both as an ordinary story, and as a means of communicating to the young people that they can feel safe again. The care and gentleness of the text, through the use of metaphors, is used to help young people deal with sensitive issues, which are so magically and safely brought to life by the beautiful images.

**Dr. Francesca Doherty, BSc PhD
Assistant Clinical Psychologist**



Victims Commissioners



Brendan McAllister was the Director of Mediation Northern Ireland from 1992 until April 2008. In his earlier social work career he was employed by the Probation Service for 12 years. He has been active in the peace movement since the early 1980's with Pax Christi and with Corrymeela.



Bertha McDougall has a wide experience in the education field. She was formerly the Interim Commissioner for Victims and Survivors and has worked on behalf on Victims and Survivors over many years.



Patricia MacBride has worked for the Bloody Sunday Trust during the Tribunal as press officer and project manager of the Museum of Free Derry. She also undertook a Winston Churchill Fellowship researching Historical Memory Projects in Countries Emerging from Conflict.



Mike Nesbitt has over 20 years experience as a broadcast journalist, covering the Northern Ireland conflict and the peace/political process. His areas of interest include how the education and business sectors can support victims and survivors.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

Victims Commissioners public meetings programme

Monday 15th & Tuesday
16th September 2008

The 5th Annual Conference for Groups Working with Victims & Survivors of the Troubles

Radisson SAS Roe Park
Resort, Limavady.

Location	Venue	Date	Time
Ballymoney	Joey Dunlop Leisure Centre 33 Garryduff Road	11/6/08	7.30pm
Belfast	Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action 61 Duncairn Gardens	16/6/08	7.30pm
Derry/Londonderry	St Columb's Park House 4 Limavady Road	17/6/08	7.30pm
Enniskillen	The Clinton Centre Belmore Street	18/6/08	7.30pm
Newry	Sean Holywood Arts Centre 1A Bank Parade	23/6/08	7.30pm

For further details on our events please feel free to contact any member of the team at 028 90 227 500.