

# FRONTLINE

The Social Work Action Network Ireland Bulletin



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## EDITORIAL: THE IRISH STATE AND 'INSTITUTIONAL CARELESSNESS'



The journalist, Madeleine Bunting tells us that **CARE** is

small word, so pervasive and overloaded with meanings that its significance has often been easy to overlook. It's the care given by parents that nurtures us into adulthood, and it's the care given by others that supports us in old age and as we die; and in-between, care is the oft overlooked scaffolding of our lives, on which wellbeing and daily life depend.

And yet, why in Ireland are institutionalised systems of 'carelessness' so embedded? The answer could have a lot to do with Irish elites' commitment to neoliberal economics and the shrinking of public provision. In terms of health care, in October, there were 535,000 people on our public hospital waiting lists accordingly to *The Irish Times* (5 November, 2016). If you can pay to go 'private' you're ok, if you can't you're fucked!

Let's look at what care means for children 'in care' in the Midlands...

Children in care are being placed with foster carers who are unapproved or who were refused permission to care for children in the past, according to a recent HIQA report produced by Niamh Greevy and her colleagues (HIQA, 2016). They are also being placed in overcrowded homes and being compelled to share bedrooms – and even beds – with other non-related children. Many carers categorised as 'relatives' do not, moreover, have any actual relationship with the children. The report also noted that almost half the children in the region did not have an up-to-date care plan. Astonishingly, the HIQA report of the fostering services provided by Tusla (the Child and Family Agency) found that **NONE** of the national benchmarks related to standards were met.

### 'Skilled and Competent' Social Workers Working in a Broken System

HIQA also pointed out the practitioners, were 'skilled and competent' but there were insufficient staff not enough foster-carers to provide a safe service for vulnerable children.

Children in care should receive a social-worker visit at least every three months for their first two years in placement, and every six months thereafter. While the majority had, a number had not been seen for more than six months.

Because of shortfalls – related to inadequate resources – HIQA inspectors pointed to a number of 'serious risks'. For example, at the time of the inspection, 27 children did not have a social worker. Many had children had also been 'unallocated' for a long period.

Some 45%, or 162 out of the 367 children in care in the region at the time, did not have up-to-date care plans. Some children had not had a care plan meeting in over two years, including young people aged over 16 who should be preparing to leave care.

## **'Bin Bag' Endings**

It was also revealed that, in some instances, 'children were treated in a disrespectful way [by foster carers], particularly around unplanned endings. For example, where children had to rely on black plastic bags to move their belongings or carers who refused to give children their belongings on leaving placement'.

The Midlands area did not ensure all carers were appropriate and able to meet the needs of children in their care. Furthermore, inspectors found that a small number of foster carers who had been refused by the foster care committee continued to care for children in care. At the time of the inspection, 12 foster carers had not even been assessed but had children placed with them - some for as long as nine years.

The ISPCC have argued that all these problems have to be related to the most recent budget statement which left Tusla €60 million short of what it was stated was needed to maintain adequate and safe provision. Indeed, the HIQA report declares on several occasions that limited resources had a direct impact on Tusla's ability to provide services. However, we clearly need to fund these services properly and standards must be met to provide safe and appropriate services.

***SWAN (Ireland) believes that we need an economy putting children first; not capital and profit first! CARE BEFORE CAPITAL! PEOPLE BEFORE PROFIT!***

In this issue...We begin, however, with an important article examining the social worker registration system introduced in England and Wales. Here, Kenneth McLaughlin points to worry trends which suggest that registration may be less about 'protecting the public' and more about using words such as 'professionalism' to enforce an ideological dress code. The article contains, therefore, messages for CORU registered social workers in Ireland. Then turning toward this issue's main theme, Wayne Dignam, from the Care Leavers' Network writes on the importance of social workers and those in care/post care working together to overhaul the system of 'institutional carelessness' which damages children. Hilary Jenkinson, from UCC, examines how the 'aftercare' could be reformed. The housing crisis is deepening, but a vibrant campaign is now up-and-running and this is reflected in the article from our friends in the Irish Housing Network. This is followed by an article on women and homelessness from the SWAN (Ireland) National Coordinator Méabh Savage.

Louise Bayliss (from SPARK) then discusses the poverty faced lone parents and their children. A year after the Carrickmines tragedy, Sindy Joyce and her colleagues from Hate and Hostility Research Group at University of Limerick highlight the state's continuing failure to recognise the Traveller community and to adequately respond to its needs. Steve Rogowski, a social worker and author, based in the UK, then looks back over his career as a radical practitioner confronting neoliberalism. Paul Fallon then reports from Dhaka.

***LOTS OF SEASONAL STUFF AND LOVE TO ALL OUR COMRADES, READERS AND SUPPORTERS!***

### **Reference**

HIQA (2016) *Statutory Foster Care Service Inspection – Midlands*

## ENGLISH LESSONS: CORU AND THE SURVEILLANCE OF PRACTITIONERS



### Introduction

*Kenneth McLaughlin is a senior lecturer at the Manchester Metropolitan University where he organises and contributes to modules on sociology, social policy, social work and mental health. Prior to this he worked as an approved social worker and manager of a statutory mental health team within Manchester social services. In recent years, he has become interested in the operation of the social worker register system in England and Frontline is delighted to be able to provide his overview. It clearly contains important messages for social workers in Ireland...*

The mandatory registration of social workers has been in place in England since 'protection of title' was introduced on April 1st 2005, firstly via the General Social Care Council (GSCC) and currently with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). From that date, only those on the social work register could legally work as, or call themselves, a social worker. Now that Ireland has followed suit, with social workers required to register with *CORU: Ireland's multi-profession health regulator*, it is timely to highlight some of the problematic aspects of the social work regulatory process in England.

### Examining the cases

A cursory glance at the cases of social workers brought before either the GSCC or HCPC demonstrates that there are certainly many individuals who deserved to lose their jobs and to be prevented from working as a social worker in future. Few will lose sleep over those struck off for cases of serious criminality and/or the abuse of vulnerable people who they were supposed to help. However, professional regulation is not needed to prevent such people working with vulnerable people; the Protection of Vulnerable Adults scheme (POVA) and the Protection of Children Act list (POCA) are available to bar them from such employment in future.

Nevertheless, there are also cases in which the professional competence of the social worker appears concerning, but what is often downplayed or ignored in many such cases is the wider organisational and resource issues that can impact negatively on an individual's performance.

Research recently undertaken by myself and two colleagues (Jadwiga Leigh from the University of Sheffield and Aidan Worsley from the University of Central Lancashire) found numerous cases in which issues such as organisational conflict, inadequate supervision, staff shortages and lack of resources were factors that adversely affected social workers' ability to do their job properly. Failure to maintain up-to-date case records and/or missing deadlines and timescales for visits and/or reports are frequently held against individual social workers without the wider organisational problems being held to account.<sup>1</sup> Such a procedure-driven, risk-averse approach to practice, with its concern to have the correct boxes ticked at the right time can create a fearful, defensive and prescriptive approach to social work.

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<sup>1</sup> These papers are currently going through the peer-review process.

## The register and the experienced practitioner

What initially surprised us in the cases we analysed, (we excluded cases of criminality and abuse and focused on practice issues), was that of those struck off the social work register, in the 18 cases where a reasonable inference could be made, the length of service was an average of 15 ½ years. This seemed counter-intuitive as we assumed that it would be younger, less experienced practitioners who would be more likely to struggle with workload management and the complexity and pressure of the role. On reflection, we reached the reasonable assumption that perhaps it was the more experienced workers, who had practised before the current procedural/prescriptive climate gained a grip on the profession, who were more likely to fall foul of the new micromanagement and neoliberal regime. Resisting the current trajectory, trying to prioritise people over form-filling, and using initiative rather than a prescribed way of working can lead to conflict with management and other professionals, and ultimately lead to a referral to the regulatory authority.

## Curtailing discretion?

A recent case, not covered in our research but which demonstrates this well, is that of a vastly experienced social worker and qualified therapist in a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). He was suspended by the HCPC for recommending an intervention 'outside [a social worker's] scope of practice'. He had proposed a course of action where a girl would only self-harm on set days and times, with her mother attending to wounds without comment. The fact that he had considered the risk factors 'in his head' and 'on the hoof' as opposed to formalising them amounted to misconduct according to the panel.

Of interest is that the panel accepted that the systemic techniques he recommended are approved by CAMHS and his local authority employer, and so

to that extent 'he was not acting improperly'. Nevertheless, it would appear that for a qualified social worker to use initiative and assess and decide in the messy environs of people's lives in real time is now considered 'foolhardy in the extreme' and is liable to lead to their fitness to practise being questioned. Despite the FTP panel acknowledging that he had not been adequately managed or supervised for a 'significant period of time' he was still suspended from the social work register (Stevenson, 2016, online).

## Intruding into Private Lives, imposing neoliberal ethics?



There are also the cases that have you rubbing your eyes to make sure they are not misleading you. For example, there was the case of the black social worker, whose formative years were likely to have been around the times of the inner-city riots of the 1980s, protests that were, to a large degree, a response to structural racism and police harassment. Fast forward 30+ years and she finds herself before the HCPC with one charge against her being that she accused the police of being racist (I kid you not I attended her hearing).

The new morality of acceptable thoughts and behaviour focuses on the individual as opposed to structural issues. For example, it is well documented that social services' provision for asylum seekers is woefully inadequate. Indeed, one UK Court of Appeal judge lambasted Leicester City Council's policies towards asylum seekers as tantamount to

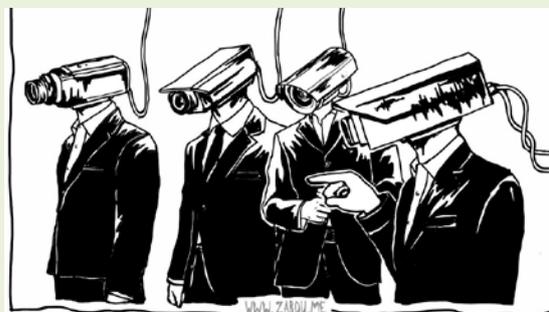
'starving immigrants out of the country by withholding last resort assistance' (quoted in Humphries, 2004, p.103). Such issues are rarely viewed as concerning by the regulatory authorities. In fact, around the period of the aforementioned judge's comments the GSCC was more concerned with the private life of an individual social worker, whom it suspended for two years for bringing 'the profession into disrepute' for advertising herself as an escort. As I noted at the time, if the main concern of professional regulation/registration is to improve the practice and provision of care offered by social workers, then surely Leicester's policymakers are more damaging to the profession than the private *legal* activity of an individual social worker (McLaughlin, 2006)

If anything, the HCPC is more intrusive into the private life of social workers than was the GSCC. Indeed, it has been accused of acting outside its remit and breaching social workers' human rights, particularly Article 8's right to a private life (Bohraer, 2014). Whilst it is acknowledged that the regulator is entitled to take account of the private life of a professional, many believe the HCPC is crossing the line and also sanctioning social workers for issues that should be dealt with internally by their employer.

## Appeals

Appeals against CORU's sanctions have to be made to the High Court. This is similar to the HCPC process and is extremely problematic. A High Court appeal will incur significant expense, a cost that is likely to be beyond most social workers (especially given the legal costs already incurred). For all its faults, at least the decisions of the GSCC could be appealed to the Care Standards Tribunal, a significantly less costly option, and it was not uncommon for social workers to exercise this right (McLaughlin, 2010). This scrutiny of contested decisions meant the GSCC had to take into account Tribunal decisions. As Allan Norman, a dual-qualified social worker and lawyer, has pointed out. 'The GSCC eventually had to pull itself in line

with what its appellant body was telling it, but when it comes to the HCPC that's not the case because its appellant body is telling it nothing' (quoted in Bohraer, 2014, online). It would appear that CORU will also face little appellant scrutiny.



CORU Inspectors' Training Day

## Conclusion

I hope that the lessons from England will alert those in Ireland to the fact that just because something is couched in the language of professionalism and public protection does not mean it cannot be used for the implementation of regressive measures and increased state surveillance of both professional and private conduct. Welcome to the world of the 24/7 social worker – not always on watch, but always being watched.

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## **CARE LEAVERS' NETWORK – A VOICE FOR REAL CHANGE!**



*Growing up in foster care and residential care from the age of three, Wayne Dignam is now the Chairperson of the Care Leavers' Network. Frontline is delighted with his enthusiasm for writing this short piece for Frontline...*

As a care leaver, I understand the challenges faced by many frontline social workers in the care system. Although I am out of the care system over twenty years now, I have regular contact with many other care leavers, social workers and foster parents. A lack of resources is obviously making it very difficult for many social workers to carry out their roles in a responsible manner. This has, of course, been reflected in the recent HIQA report of the Midlands region.

### **Working together for radical change**

I am joined by many other care leavers in the Care Leavers' Network who are now speaking out about the need for more resources and support for social workers and foster parents who have a very difficult task of looking after vulnerable children in care around the country.

It is time to start uniting our voices! Within the Care Leavers' Network, we gathered many opinions over the past few months, which helped us to develop

a pre-budget submission and Care Leavers' Charter, requesting a range of resources for those responsible for looking after children in care. We received coverage in many media throughout the country, and met Ministers who were willing to listen to our stories. We are willing to speak out from personal experience, in order for the public and politicians to understand the risks of not having enough social workers. *The care system is at risk of becoming a careless system* – where social workers are forced to spend less time with children, and more time in front of computers writing reports.

We hear more about so-called 'business plans', 'key performance indicators' and 'corporate plans'. We hear less about words like love, compassion, understanding and support. I doubt that this was the ambition of many students as they spent four years in University with the hope of helping to beneficially change children's lives. The only way this situation can alter is by raising awareness, publicly, about these risks prompted by the lack of resources. This requires a strong, unified voice. The Care Leavers' Network is more than willing to support you.

### **Our lived experience of the system**

We represent many care leavers who experienced different levels of trauma, poverty and neglect as children. We therefore wish to ensure the best possible experience for the thousands of children currently in the care system. Children in care must receive greater attention and adequate consideration by the governments when budgets are decided upon.

We wish to be very much part of the solution and we will use our voice to represent our peers, advocate on their behalf and call for change to systemic problematic areas of our protection and welfare system. Here's our Charter that summarises our position. You may not, of course, agree with every single point, but we certainly look forward to continuing the discussion with SWAN,

Frontline readers, social workers and related workers in the future.

## The Care Leavers' Charter

### Before – Prevention and Early Intervention

We believe a *proactive, supportive and empowering approach* must be taken by the State to support those who are about to become *parents*. This could be achieved by providing pre and post parental courses to all parents and focused training for 'at risk' parents to ensure attachment between parents and children in the first three years.

We must create an approachable, supportive and empowering relationship between families and social workers in each and every community. This could be achieved by a national information campaign, together with the presence of *child and family protection teams* in communities. For an emphasis on prevention, we propose *family support workers* to replace the traditional role of social workers when initial risks develop in families.

We must greatly reduce the exposure to neglect, trauma and abuse suffered by children, through *timely and stable intervention*, which must be available for all children at risk.

Ireland should develop a *national policy* to prevent child abuse and neglect.

### During – During Time in Care

*Sibling relationships*, where it is suitable and safe, must be protected. Relationships must be supported and actively encouraged. This could be achieved by providing sibling group placements, regular contact time, therapeutic and holistic group support and activities that foster self-confidence.

Every child in care must have an *allocated social worker*, every foster parent must have an *allocated link worker*, and this must include regular contact time to develop strong working relationships. Every child in care should

have access to *therapeutic support* when required.

We must introduce a *national red flag system* in place for complaints and concerns. This must be available to all children in care and enable an open and swift response to complaints / concerns raised by children in care, which could be sent to three people: Principal Social Worker(s), The Office of the Ombudsman for Children and the Health Information and Quality Association (HIQA).

The rights of all children and young people who are in contact with Tusla and who are in care must be *respected, protected and fulfilled*.

### After – Life after care

We must stop the practice of placing those who leave state care into *homeless accommodation*. This can be achieved by securing accommodation for those moving to independent living before their eighteenth birthday.

Providing a *continuum of care*, which promotes independent living for those who are vulnerable, must be pursued for all care leavers. In addition, the full implementation of Action 64 from the implementation plan on homelessness, section 5.16 must be pursued.

We must provide continued support to those not engaged in education. This eligibility for aftercare support based on the continuation of education in a traditional fashion is greatly unfair to vulnerable care leavers: especially those leaving care from a residential setting, where they may have had multiple placement breakdowns and negative educational experiences between placements. We can change this by making an *exception case clause* in aftercare legislation. We must strive to break the cycle, not the care leaver.

The Care Leavers Network - [www.careleaversnetwork.com](http://www.careleaversnetwork.com)

## **AFTER-CARE: WE NEED A COMPREHENSIVE SERVICE, NOT AN AFTER-THOUGHT!**

Last week I attended 'Out on my own,' a conference on Aftercare jointly run by EPIC (Empowering People in Care) and Care Leavers Ireland. As well as strong words on the importance of aftercare by President Michael D Higgins, the most powerful aspect of that day, for me, was hearing the accounts of young care leavers of their experiences of leaving the care system. Some spoke of their positive experiences of inspirational (and persistent!) Aftercare workers who played key roles in supporting young people in their transition from being in care to setting up on their own, transitioning to college, and accessing the particular supports they needed along the way. However, far more commonly young people spoke about receiving little or no preparation for leaving care, and a sense of being abandoned by their 'corporate parent' (i.e. the State) once they reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. One young person stated, 'One week I was putting up my hand to ask the teacher could I go to the toilet, the next week I was expected to be a totally independent adult'.

This is in a society where the average age for young people leaving home is now 25 or 26.

### **Huge Upheaval**

Children and young people in the care system have already encountered huge upheavals and challenges in their lives by virtue of the issues which led to their care placement, the experience of being placed in care, and being separated from their families and often communities. Surely these young people are in all the more need of, and entitled to, a comprehensive aftercare service which begins their preparation for leaving care well in advance of them turning 18, and continues to provide them with on-going support in their journey to independence.

Currently in Ireland we are at a key moment in terms of aftercare provision. To date provision is patchy, inconsistent and inadequate, often depending on location (Report of Oireachtas Committee on Aftercare Bill July 2014). Great advances were made in this regard by the passing of the Childcare Amendment Act (2015) last December which progresses aftercare from being wholly discretionary ('Where a child leaves the care of the Child and Family Agency, the Agency *may*...assist him for *so long as the Agency is satisfied for his need for assistance* – Childcare Act 1991), to being something which must be provided to all young people leaving the care system.

### **Examining the legislation**

The main provisions of this new legislation are:

- *Every* care leaver *entitled* to aftercare plan and aftercare support, based on an assessment of need
- Assessment covers education, finance, training and employment, health and well-being, personal and social development, accommodation, and family support
- This plan can be reviewed upon request where need identified
- Aftercare support provided up until age 21 (or 23 if in education)

However the Act falls short in that it states that the implementation of the young person's aftercare plan is 'subject to the resources available'. None the less, this legislation is a very significant step forward as it clearly places some sort of responsibility on the State for all young people leaving care, albeit limited.

Surely that has improved the situation for young people leaving care in 2016? Unfortunately it hasn't. The government are stalling on the implementation of the legislation – it has not yet been enacted.

## Aftercare – Do you Care?

Last week the young people of EPIC (EPIC Youth Board) launched a campaign (Aftercare – do you care?) calling on the Minister for Children Katherine Zappone to enact this aftercare legislation, and properly resource aftercare in Ireland. It is no important that the social work community (practitioners, students and educators) join with them in this and use their influence to progress this issue which has a profound impact on the lived experience of care leavers every day in Ireland.

It is vital to support these young activists!

All young people need support transitioning to independent living, most young people in Ireland have the support of parents and families well into their 20s. It is so wrong that those young people, whom the State has had the responsibility of parenting are often left, on their 18th birthday with no aftercare services, zero support, and are left to fend for themselves, resulting in many facing huge challenges and often ending up in homeless services.

## How can we support this campaign?

The petition can be found @ <https://my.uplift.ie/petitions/real-aftercare-for-real-people>

SWAN urges everyone to sign the petition and to circulate it via social media platforms. So...

- Communicate (email, letter, Twitter) with your local TDs and Government Ministers calling on them to enact the Childcare Amendment Act 2015 and properly resource aftercare services. Given that the current stalling in relation to the legislation is occurring at a

political level, pressure needs to be applied here to move it on.

- Raise this issue at a media level – again bringing this issue to the attention of relevant media correspondents via email or social media.
- Raise this issue among colleagues, and within agencies – the higher profile it can get, the more attention it will receive

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## DEMANDING A DECENT HOME FOR ALL AND FIGHTING FOR JUSTICE IN HOUSING



The housing crisis in Ireland runs deep. Beyond the headline figures of 6000 people homeless across the country, there is the overcrowding, poor and unsuitable living conditions, rent hikes and mortgage difficulties. Beyond immediate material conditions there is the stress and pressure of housing problems, the struggle with mental health, the break down in community, all exasperated by community and social cuts. Beyond this there are specific groups victimised and mistreated. These

include women who escape domestic abuse to face a lack of shelter and thus homelessness, travellers who see their need for a home, a community, and for cultural appropriate accommodation denied and we see asylum seekers locked up in direct provision.

## Beginning the Campaign

All of this can seem overwhelming, but in May 2015 a number of housing and homeless action groups and campaigns including SWAN set up to begin to organise to challenge and change all of these, to achieve a decent home and community for all. All groups agreed there was a need to work together, share resources and information and take action together to tackle the growing housing and homeless crisis. All groups also agreed that the voices of those directly affected were usually marginalised in action groups and campaigns in favour of political groups and activists with campaigns quickly appearing and then disappearing. As a result all groups wanted to put those affected first and build sustainable groups and campaigns.

Together since May, the Network has grown from 6 groups to 19. Together we have taken on direct action, by occupying councils and the department of the environment. Together we have opened up, fixed up and ran the Bolt Hostel. Since May 2015 together we have supported families in a number of anti-eviction and occupation efforts in homeless accommodation, supported rental and mortgages demonstrations and started organising campaigns to stop the sale of public land. Finally since 2015, aside from all the action there has been a great focus on care and education. Support groups have been set up to empower those affected to support each other in order to lead their own actions. The network has set up teams, such as media, finance and outreach, to cases and research to help with education, training and support with and among groups in the network.

## What SWAN, Social Workers and Care Professionals need to do NOW!

Social workers and social care professionals are in a unique position to contribute to and challenge housing injustice. Firstly social workers and care professionals are often caught in a system that does not work. They are forced to work crazy hours, for poor pay, understaffed and under resourced with a complex range of issues to deal with a long with sheer volume. They are often blamed or internalise blame for the failure of the system as a whole and the decisions of management, the governments and private companies. Social workers and care workers need to support each other and organise each other to challenge these things. This will not only help the ordinary members in the profession but strengthen clients and service users. SWAN could be a great space to support, care and organise each other.

With social workers and care workers organising for their own profession and the well-being of themselves and their clients, spaces like the Irish Housing Network will allow SWAN members to come together with many other fields and groups. Our voices are stronger together, and solidarity goes a long way to starting to build all of our strength. In the Irish Housing Network SWAN members can help with support groups, group well-being sessions, organising, admin, training, education, community fun days and actions. The housing crisis is not just about housing it is about all our lives, the communities we want to live in and the world we want to raise children and have family in. Together we are on the long road to challenging and changing not only the housing system but all of our communities together.

Contact:

[Irishhousingnetwork@gmail.com](mailto:Irishhousingnetwork@gmail.com)

[Outreach.ihn@gmail.com](mailto:Outreach.ihn@gmail.com)

Alternatively, the Irish Housing Network on Facebook for more information

## GENDERING WOMEN'S HOMELESSNESS



Women's homelessness has come to the fore as a more prominent issue in Ireland and internationally in recent years. Increasingly, women have been identified amongst the various populations of homeless sub-groups<sup>2</sup>; as well as there being a largely 'hidden' facet to many women's homeless journeys (Mayock *et al.* 2015). A specific gender-dimension to women's homelessness has also been recognised within numerous research studies, which identify the prevalence of poverty, child abuse, gender and sexually-based violence, motherhood and mother-child separations amongst the narratives of homeless women (Barrow and Lawinski 2009; Mayock and Sheridan 2012; Quilgar and Pleace 2010; Reeve *et al.* 2007; Revolving door-St. Mungos 2010; Welch-lazoritz *et al.* 2014; Young 2010).

However, within the policy domain homelessness tends to be viewed predominantly through a hegemonic gender lens, which prohibits the development of gender-sensitive

<sup>2</sup> Studies have identified three sub-groups; 'transitional (people who use emergency accommodation for brief periods of time and do not return); episodic (people who move repeatedly in and out of emergency accommodation); and chronic (people who are long-term users of emergency accommodation and who may have repeated experiences of living rough)' (O'Sullivan 2012, p.13).

responses to women's homelessness (Savage 2016). For instance, where homeless women feature in policy discourse on homelessness they tend to be categorised dualistically; as either part of the family homeless population or as single women. The separation of women into distinctive categories, according to their family status, has been shown to influence the range of options made available to address the 'causes' of women's homelessness, because these rigid gender categories influence how women's needs are assessed and responded to.

### Current Categorisation

Current categories used to conceptualise women's homelessness fail to recognise the fluidity of maternal experiences, and how the conditions of homelessness can impact on the family status of women, meaning that a significant proportion of 'single' homeless women are fact mothers who are unaccompanied by their children (Mayock *et al.* 2015; Reeve *et al.* 2006). The rigid gender categories then influence the range of options and supports offered to homeless unaccompanied mothers. Research by Hoffman and Rosencheck (2001) and Barrow and Lombarde (2008) identify how mothers who are homeless and unaccompanied by their children often do not have their mothering status recognised when assessments of their needs are being carried out. Failure to recognise the care-giving needs of homeless mothers unaccompanied by their children means that family reunification is often overlooked as an option for this group of mothers.

The categories used to define women's homelessness also influence the range of welfare entitlements available to this group of mothers, and whether or how they engage with housing officers and services, and can exacerbate their experiences of hidden homelessness (Reeve *et al.* 2007; Savage 2016).

Specifically, women's 'single' status may ... produce a trajectory of particular invisibility through homelessness

because... Mothers who are homeless for more than one year are more likely to lose custody of their children, and therefore less likely to qualify for welfare entitlements and others forms of support available to children

(Caton *et al.* 2007 cited in Mayock *et al.* 2015, p.4)

### **'Bad Mothers'**

Lack of understanding of the circumstances that have led to mother-child separations, means that homeless unaccompanied mothers are frequently labelled as 'bad' mothers, without regard for how the conditions of homelessness have impacted on the resources they have to provide love and care of their children (Savage 2016). The stigmatising of this group as 'bad mothers' is often internalised by mothers as a source of shame, and may also prevent women from exiting homelessness, as they seek to avoid negative interactions with housing or welfare personnel (Hutchinson *et al.* 2014).

Where mothers experience homelessness, because of a lack of economic, political and social support to nurture, develop and sustain primary care relations, homelessness represents more than simply a housing issue. It is also a care issue, a form of affective injustice. Affective inequality occurs where those providing love and care are deprived of an adequate standard of living because they are prevented from accessing the necessary resources to support relationships of love and care (Lynch 2007). Because women continue to be held primarily morally responsible for providing love and care to children, affective inequality is a gendered issue (Lynch and Lyons 2008).

### **Conclusion**

To enable women to exit homelessness the range of institutions and structures that hinder women's opportunities to develop affective relations, including the conditions of poverty and homelessness, need to be challenged and transformed, because failure to do so represents

significant injustices (Lynch *et al.* 2009). To ensure socially just responses to all homeless women, the affective<sup>3</sup> domain should be incorporated into frameworks for understanding and defining women's homelessness because the affective domain represents a key site for analysing the multiple inequalities that shape women's experiences of homelessness (Savage 2016).



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**Méabh Savage, SWAN (Ireland)  
National Coordinator**



**RESIST**

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## LONE PARENTS, CHILDREN AND POVERTY: SINGLE PARENTS FIGHT BACK!



*Frontline welcomes an article from Louise Bayliss of SPARK...*

A hundred years after the Easter Rising, Ireland has a worryingly high child poverty rate. The overall consistent poverty rate in Ireland is 8%, yet for children it is 11.2%. However, if we break down consistent poverty rates for children by household composition, a different picture appears. The consistent poverty rate is 22.1% for children in lone parent families and 7.9% for two parent families with less than four children (EU SILC 2014). Any discussion about reducing child poverty must therefore focus on children in lone parent families.

### Changes to One Parent Family Payment

A lot has been written about the changes to One Parent Family Payment which now stops once the youngest child turns seven. Many people believe this is in line with international best practice and point out internationally parents can lose this support when a child turns 3 or 5. However, although parents are expected to seek training or a job before their child turns seven, once they do, there are financial and other supports available to enable their participation. In the UK for example, a lone parent working 12 hours per week is entitled to working credits, they can breach the benefits cap and are also entitled to

higher housing benefit to reward them for working.

Work is seen as the route out of poverty, but for lone parents, the infrastructure must be in place to ensure work pays. The recent changes in Ireland cut the income of a parent working 20 hours on minimum wage by 17%. In many cases, due to rules around rent supplement and high childcare costs for many lone parents, this loss now means they are financially better off by not working. Far from encouraging economic independence, the policy is trapping lone parents into long-term social welfare dependency. This is something SPARK always predicted and which has now been validated by more recent research (Millar and Crosse, 2016).

We are also out of step internationally by ignoring a parent's care role once a child turns 14. In the UK, a lone parent is recognised until the child turns 16 or 19, if they are in full time education and similarly in Australia and most EU countries. We believe that teenagers still require a parent and even more so where there is only one parent at home. We are concerned for the long-term consequences to a policy that expects parents to leave a teenager alone for up to twelve weeks during summer holidays.

### Entangled in the *Intreo* Web

Lone parents who are not working and are in receipt of JST (a payment for lone parents with children aged 7-13) are exempt from seeking full-time work, but they are expected to engage with *Intreo* officers and take up training courses. In many cases, these courses are simply unsuitable for lone parents as their payment is deducted for time missed and makes no allowance for a parent who may have to leave a course due to a sick child/ unscheduled school closure/child's medical appointment etc. Parents will also have to pay for childcare to attend these courses. The new Single Affordable Childcare Scheme announced in Budget 2017 means the ending of existing schemes which caps

the maximum contribution a parent pays towards childcare. While lone parents may be entitled to the maximum subsidy, there is no cap on how much crèches can charge and there is a real possibility that their contribution will be higher than the €29.80 per week they receive to feed and clothe a child, which means in reality they will not be able to access training courses.

We are one of the few countries that do not have a statutory maintenance agency and custodial parents are forced to seek maintenance through a combative court system and they are also responsible for pursuing non-payment. Even when maintenance is paid, 100% of it is deducted from rent supplement or 50% from other social welfare payments. Child maintenance could be used as a lever to reduce child poverty. One of the greatest anomalies of the changes is in relation to maintenance. Under OPF, the 'other parent' has a legal obligation to the Department of Social Protection to pay maintenance. This now stops when a child turns 7 and the Department writes out telling the "liable relative" they have no further obligation to the Department. This resulted in 28% decrease in parents receiving maintenance. Despite this, lone parents are now being told that unless they seek maintenance, they will face financial sanctions. This ignores the reality that a lone parent cannot pursue maintenance if they do not have an address for the other parent or that it may be safe to make contact with the other parent.

## Demands

Lone parents need affordable childcare, affordable housing, family friendly work options, flexible part time education course and a robust child maintenance system that directs money to the benefit of the child. The recent changes provided none of this, but cut the income of working lone parents and closed the door for parents trying to escape the social welfare trap.

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## REMEMBERING 'CARRICKMINES' AND ITS AFTERMATH ON THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY



**HATE & HOSTILITY  
RESEARCH GROUP**

### Introduction

*Over one year ago, on Saturday the 10 October 2015, a horrific fire devastated the homes of three families in Carrickmines in South Dublin. Ten people, including five children and a pregnant woman, lost their lives. Fifteen survivors were left homeless following the blaze. In the aftermath of such tragedies, it is usual for local and national communities to rally in support, to see public expressions of sympathy by political figures and public commentators, and to expect swift action on the part of authorities to meet the practical and emotional needs of those left behind. The victims of the tragedy were, however, Irish Travellers, and as such both discursive and tangible responses to the fire have been shaped by the historical and contemporary oppression of the group within Irish society (see for example McLaughlin 1995; Helleiner 2001). This Frontline article by **Amanda Haynes, Sindy Joyce and Jennifer Schweppe (from Hate and Hostility Research Group, University of Limerick)** outlines the context of this exclusion, including the persistent refusal of the Irish state to recognise the ethnicity of the Traveller community, and how the Carrickmines tragedy illuminated the normalisation of anti-Traveller prejudice not only in the*

*community, but in political and media discourses.*

## **A 'minority ethnic' group?**

According to the most recent Irish census, Irish Travellers number less than 30,000 strong in the Republic (0.6% of the population), although Traveller advocacy organisations argue that the community continues to be undercounted, while some argue that self-identification is hampered by the continued stigmatisation of Traveller identity (Griffen and MacÉinrí, 2014). Irish Travellers, unlike Roma members of the community, are an indigenous minority. DNA testing performed as part of a television documentary produced in conjunction with the national broadcaster in 2011 confirmed that Irish Travellers have been a self-perpetuating Irish minority for more than a thousand years. Jim Wilson from the University of Edinburgh has stated that 'Travellers are a distinct genetic group, as different from the settled Irish as Icelanders are from Norwegians'. In England and Wales, Irish Travellers are recognised as an 'ethnic minority'. In Northern Ireland they are protected under the category of 'racial group'. Leading Traveller organisations in Ireland, such as the Irish Traveller Movement and Pavee Point, have long lobbied the State for ethnic status in Ireland.

Nonetheless, the Irish State continues to deny Irish Travellers' ethnicity in their homeland, stating to the European Committee of Social Rights in 2013, 'whilst Ireland admits that Travellers (like many minorities) can and do suffer discrimination which Ireland seeks to combat and prevent, Travellers are not an ethnic or racial group'. Concomitantly, Travellers are subject to virulent prejudice in Irish society. One in five Irish people surveyed have said they would deny Travellers citizenship (McGreil, 2010).

## **A history of exclusion**

A traditionally nomadic people, only a minority of Travellers continue to live in trailers (mobile homes) and many of

these families are permanently stationary. Movement has become ever more restricted with the decimation of traditional sources of mobile employment, the privatisation of common land, the introduction of legislation specifically designed to criminalise Travellers use of public space and the more general 'fixing in place' required by the State to access public services (see also Joyce 2015). The CSO states:

Between 2006 and 2011 the percentage of Irish Traveller households residing in caravans or mobile/temporary structures halved from 24.7 per cent to 12.3 per cent. In 2011, 920 households with Irish Travellers resided in such temporary accommodation.

Some Travellers have chosen to move into majority housing. For some, living in a trailer remains an essential means of maintaining a connection to their historical nomadism. For others, living on a halting site, whether in a trailer or not, is a means of maintaining contact with the traditional extended family unit. Despite a statutory obligation under the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 on councils to provide for the accommodation needs of Travellers, there is a shortage of options available to the community. Research by the Irish Traveller Movement found that between 2009 and 2013 only 9 of 34 city and county councils met their own targets in relation to the implementation of the State's Traveller accommodation programme. According to the analysis, Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Council where Carrickmines is located was 15% short of its 59 unit target by 2013, with close-by Fingal County Council among the worst performers providing 69% less units than its target of 161. Traveller advocacy organisation Pavee Point highlights:

With the onset of Austerity, funding for Traveller accommodation nationally was cut by 85%. Of what was left, 64% was spent, but 36% was not.

Commenting in the media, Irish Traveller Movement spokesperson Jacinta Brack links these failures to populism: 'The difficulty is where politicians are reliant on votes, it is not popular for them to be voting in Traveller accommodation'. In this context, it is noteworthy that between 2007 and 2012 local authorities' underspent their Traveller Accommodation allocations to the tune of €50 million. Indeed, some Irish politicians openly curry votes explicitly by opposing Traveller accommodation.

## Responses to the fire

Reactions to the fire foregrounded the 'growing polarisation in public attitudes towards Travellers' and the depth of hostility which the aforementioned survey highlighted. While the immediate aftermath to the tragedy prompted widespread expressions of solidarity from the sedentary (non-Traveller) community in Carrickmines, from numerous political and public figures, and from the general public – numerous books of condolences were opened across the country and flags were flown at half-mast on all public buildings – any comfort the survivors and the community of Irish Travellers might have drawn was tarnished by simultaneous expressions of outright hostility and by the manner in which prejudice shaped emergency interventions.

In the aftermath of the fire, questions immediately arose in the media as to the relationship of the loss of life to the families' accommodation in trailers located in close proximity to what was built in 2008 as a temporary halting site. Private and public, named and anonymous majority group commentators debated the suitability of mobile homes as permanent housing; whether the victims should be accorded blame for living in trailers; and whether the Council might have reneged on its duty to ensure fire safety on the site. Stereotypes of Traveller life combined with victim-blaming in speculation that the fire might have been started by a bonfire. While there were many

expressions of solidarity and empathy, multiple media and individual commentators took the opportunity to share their perception of Traveller culture as inherently defective and the structural inequalities which Travellers experience in the areas of education and accommodation for example as the consequence of life-style choices. Ireland's most popular online newspaper, *Thejournal.ie*, was forced to shut down its comments section as a consequence of the outright racism being expressed by anonymous commentators.

Three days after the fire, on the 13 of October the Council disseminated a letter to local residents explaining that the survivors would be accommodated in a new temporary halting site, which was to be constructed in a greenfield site nearby the location of the fire. This decision would mean, at least, that the survivors would continue to live in their community and the children, now including orphaned children, would be able to continue to attend the same school. Within minutes, a small number of local residents had moved their cars to blockade the entrance to the proposed site. The Council's response was to negotiate with the residents and eventually cede to their demands for the survivors to be accommodated elsewhere, citing fears that legal challenges would delay the re-homing of the survivors in justifying their submission. The Taoiseach (Prime Minister), who had attended or sent his aide to represent him at the three family funerals held for the victims, publically stated on national radio that it was appropriate that residents be consulted regarding the location of Travellers' halting sites in their area: 'It is necessary to consult, of course, with the local communities, and I can understand the balances need to be got here'. Ireland's newspaper of record, *The Irish Times*, held a poll in which 72% of 4,800 readers stated that they supported the protestors. Following this protest, the families were located in trailers in a council car park lacking sewage facilities. Indeed, the Council itself admitted it was unsuitable.

In response to these developments, Martin Collins, co-director of the Traveller advocacy organisation Pavee Point has stated 'Once again Travellers' rights to a decent place to live come second place to the demands of the majority population...This situation is a sad indictment of our society and raises issues that need to be urgently addressed'. Speaking about the actions of the protestors, he stated "I have never witnessed such depth of hostility and hate towards my community as I have on this occasion ... I think their actions are only compounding the stress and the trauma that these Travellers families are already enduring'. *Minceirs Whiden* (an all Traveller forum) led a protest outside the Dáil on 28 October to highlight Travellers' living conditions. Martin Collins, of Pavee Point, asked why the police had not been called to move the blockade and questioned why none of those 25 local authorities who have failed to meet their Travellers' accommodation targets will face sanctions. Speaking to the crowd, Brigid Quilligan, Director of the Irish Traveller Movement, said 'If you are a Traveller, you are demonised from an infant to an elder. Things have to change for Travellers and change doesn't come for people who ask nicely. Change comes when people demand it'.

### **The role of the state: Accommodating prejudice, failing to tackle racism and discrimination**

Speaking in a *Dáil* debate on the recognition of Traveller ethnicity, Minister for State for New Communities, Culture, Equality & Drugs Strategy referred to the blatant racism evident in Irish society in relation to the Traveller community, referencing the successful Marriage Equality referendum and asking what the outcome would be if a similar process were required in the context of the recognition of Traveller ethnicity: 'could you imagine if we put that question to the people, because in this country you can pretty much say or write in a newspaper anything you want

to say about the Traveller community and get away with it'.

In the year marking the centenary of 'Easter 1916' and the promises made about developing a truly democratic Republic, both the central Irish State and local authorities are acting as engines of discrimination. In doing so, they have served to legitimate anti-Traveller hostility and the related stereotypes which serve to justify residential segregation. In November 2015, Sinn Fein tabled a motion in the Dáil, which among other proposals, called on the Irish government to recognise Traveller ethnicity.

The impetus for this motion came as we extended our sincere condolences and sympathy to the Lynch, Gilbert and Connors families on the tragic loss of their loved ones in the Carrickmines fire. We offer solidarity and support to the wider Traveller community. For too long, the State has failed in its responsibility to treat Irish Travellers as full and equal citizens (Gerry Adams)

The coalition government of Fine Gael and Labour responded by proposing an amendment removing reference to ethnic recognition. This amendment having been rejected, the Dáil voted on 4 November. The motion was defeated 58 votes to 39. The governing parties required their members to vote against the motion, applying the party whip. Paradoxically, the Minister for Equality who had previously spoken in favour of the motion chose to absent himself from the vote.

On announcement of the tally, a Traveller representative present at the vote exclaimed 'Shame on You'. As 2016 draws to close this cry echoes throughout our Republic.

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## **THIS MUCH I KNOW: REFLECTIONS FROM A RADICAL PRACTITIONER**

*Steve Rogowski is a well known and respected figure. In addition to having practiced as a social worker in the UK mainly with children and families across five decades, he is an established author and has written a number of books on the profession and the challenges it faces.*



### **Ready for Business: Thatcher and the lads**

It is a certainly a great pleasure to be asked to write a short piece for SWAN's *Frontline*. It is great to see a critical, indeed radical, voice within social work in Ireland. Don't be bullied, hang it there and fight for social justice!

When I contemplated a career in social work during the early 1970s it was during the social democratic consensus of the post war years, a consensus that embraced much of northern Europe. The state, through the government of the day, had a role in directing the economy and ensuring the well-being of citizens via a welfare state addressing health, education, housing, employment and social security. The situation was, of course, very different if you were Catholic and nationalist and lived in the six counties, but – certainly for me – the 1970s seemed more benign politically.

In the UK, as Labour and Conservative governments alternated from the late 1940s until the early 1970s, differences between them amounted to a little more or less government spending and planning. For those on the political right it was a means of staving off communism while for many on the political left it was a stepping stone towards socialism.

The aforementioned consensus saw remaining social problems as the preserve of the new profession of social work and a new breed of practitioners were optimistic and enthusiastic about working with individuals, groups and communities to ensure their needs were met (Rogowski 2010, 2016). Little did I know that the economic crisis of 1973, which followed sharp increases in oil prices, along with deeper problems within capitalism, would change all this.

The political left rightly argued that the crisis reflected changes in the structure of power whereby monopoly and multi-national capital eroded Keynesian economic policies and undermined the sovereignty of the state. However, the Conservative New Right saw the economic difficulties in terms of the excessive power of trade unions, the size of the state, particularly the welfare state, and growth of public expenditure. They were also against 'self-serving' professionals in the public sector including social workers who were seen as being on the side of the 'welfare dependent'. Who would have guessed, when I embarked on my social work

career in 1975, that Margaret Thatcher's general election victory of 1979 would enable New Right ideas to be put into practice leading to the eventual hegemony of neoliberalism.

Thatcher, along with her ally President Reagan in the US, was the flag bearers of what is now globalised neoliberalism. This new consensus involves the state no longer having a responsibility to ensure the needs of citizens by directing the economy and maintaining the welfare state. Instead, the free market is accepted as the best way to achieve human well-being with values including individualism and self-responsibility to the fore. The welfare state and social work have been subjected to reform and 'modernisation', this including the processes of privatisation, marketisation, consumerisation and managerialisation (Garrett 2009).

Privatisation, the involvement of corporate capital in the provision of public services, has been actively pursued. Marketisation, the creation of markets which are seen as dynamic, innovative, and customer-centred way of delivering welfare, has been encouraged. Consumerisation which positions service users as consumers/ customers who are free to exercise choice has taken place. Moreover, managerialisation, involving the belief that more and better quantitative measurement can transform services and organizations, has become embedded. Simultaneously, the level of welfare benefits has declined with eligibility tightened and more conditional. In short, the model of social citizenship, based on collectivism, has been dismantled in favour of incentivizing work and abolishing so-called welfare dependency, notwithstanding dependency on the market is lauded.

### Impact on Social Work

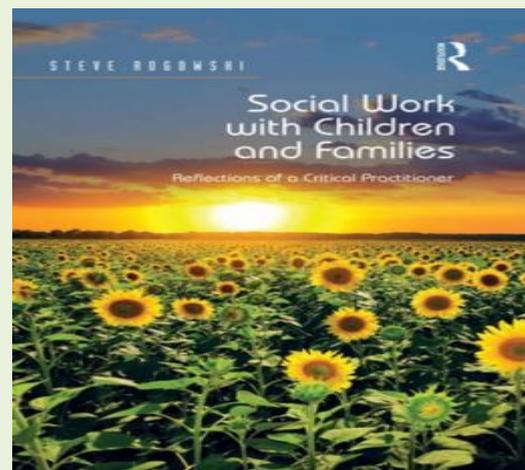
Social work has changed significantly with it now having a narrower, more truncated role; it is subject to tighter managerial control and the imposition of bureaucracy and targets. The focus is on rationing, risk assessment/management and community surveillance. I am sure

these processes have also taken place in Ireland too.

To the extent that any advice, let alone help and support, is offered, in relation to children and families, for example, it can be limited to telling parents to change their behaviour/lifestyle or lose their children to adoption. Neoliberal social work certainly dominates in the UK

## Critical/Radical Possibilities

However, it is not all doom and gloom because, despite challenges, critical, even radical, possibilities for practice remain (Rogowski 2013, 2016). SWAN is actively involved in pursuing such issues and overall this is why I retain a sense of radical optimism for the profession. Let's put more socialist cats amongst the neoliberal pigeons!



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## INTERNATIONAL NEWS: A REPORT FROM DHAKA

**Paul Fallon**, a community development worker based in Galway, is also the resettlement officer for Syrian refugees with Galway County Council. Earlier this year he was chosen by the Simon Cumbers media fund to go to Bangladesh and research and write about workers' rights in Dhaka. The aim of the Fund is to assist and promote more and better quality media coverage of development issues in the Irish media. Here is his report.

### Dhaka

Dhaka is one of the fastest growing city in the world with its current population standing at over 17 million people and the UN predicts that the population will reach 20 million by 2025. It is the fourth least liveable city in the world according to the Economists intelligence unit rating just ahead of Lagos, Tripoli and Damascus.

A large portion of Dhaka's city dwellers are living in slums and do not have access to basic rights, such as fresh water and sanitation, education and health services. UNICEF estimates that over 43% of the population in Bangladesh is currently living below the international poverty line. The number of slums across the country has reached a staggering 14000 with over 3000 in Dhaka city alone.

I met with several organisations during my trip from garment workers associations to children's rights associations to take a closer look at the innovative ways in which they were tackling the most pressing issues affecting workers in Dhaka.

### Child Labour

According to the ILO, nearly 3.5 million children in Bangladesh between the ages of five and fifteen are actively working. With a staggering 1.2 million of these engaged in life threatening and

hazardous work. Over half of the children working in Dhaka are doing so in the readymade garments sector and their work is an economic necessity for their families' survival.

Some child labour is visible in Dhaka with young children selling goods to motorists or working at public stalls, but most child labour is hidden from view in the many thousands of factories around the city and in domestic work, making implementation of national labour laws nearly impossible.

A persistent cycle of poverty causes families in the slums to send their children to work, often in hazardous and low-wage jobs, such as brick-chipping, construction and waste-picking. Children are paid less than adults, with most working up to twelve hours a day. Full-time work frequently prevents children from attending school, trapping them into what is in many cases amounts to modern slavery.



## Alternatives...Sohay

I was lucky to encounter a very progressive organization working under very difficult conditions that is aiming to address the issue of child workers – Sohay. I spent a week with the organisation and its founder Zamila Sultana who explained her motivations in setting it up:

*In the beginning I wanted to help women who had no rights, those experiencing domestic violence, from there we have grown to tackle other issues and now we provide a range of supports to underprivileged women and children in fifteen slums with over 50 staff who assist me in doing this'*

Sohay focuses on raising awareness in slum communities about human rights and provides support through education and skills development programmes.

*We start out helping people with the most basic of tasks, teaching them to write their own names, learning to spell, to understand the written word, building their confidence all the time and then moving on to giving them skills, teaching them sewing and embroidery, giving them confidence in having a useful skill that could also bring some money into their homes.*

I toured factories and classrooms and met with groups of young people who managed to exit the cycle of bonded labour to receive an education with Sohay. They had begun working in factories at age ten, 12 hour shifts, six days each week in order to provide much needed income for their families.

Now, as teenagers, Sohay has been training them in IT skills and tailoring, giving them skill sets that will ensure they gain employment in good working conditions as adults in order to break the cycle of poverty they have been born into, the boys I meet are learning how to fix mobile phones, some of them have taken up work with local phone shops, the girls have been learning how to sew and are taking up employment with local tailors, working in conditions that are

worlds apart to the 12 hour shifts in factories that they had become so accustomed to. Zamila wants to expand Sohay's work, but she explains the many challenges that lie ahead:

*Last year we helped 1,540 children to leave hazardous work and 2,125 vulnerable children – those in danger of entering work – into school, but there are some children that you cannot reach, because their income is part of their livelihood, they have come here from remote villages, sent to work as there is no work in the villages, but they are locked into bonded labour, factory owners give them food and shelter in exchange for work, without this they would not survive, we try and negotiate with the factory owners to let them out for an hour or two each day so that we can give them a basic education in the hope that one day they can break the cycle.*

Sohay's diversionary programmes are potentially life altering for these women and children, offering them a strategy to experience a different life from that of bonded labour. This huge societal challenge is all being done from its small facilities dotted throughout the slums on tiny funding budgets.

Dhaka may be the fourth least liveable city on the planet but there are many organisations like Sohay striving to ensure that the future holds a much better quality of life.

***Sohay welcomes volunteers from Ireland who wish to spend time working with them. They provide food and board to international volunteers. <http://www.sohay.org/>***

## CHRISTMAS GREETINGS FROM VELMA!!!

Hi guys, good you are still reading us!!! This is me and my mate Aoife, from the Fostering and Adoption Team, heading off the Tusla office party at the Cobblestone. Really looking forward to seeing you again in 2017. HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO EVERYONE...Now where are our drinks? Fingers crossed for the New Year after they were stupid enough to elect that 'feckin pig in a wig'.

Sending all our love to you guys...Velma and Aoife XXX



Remember also our social media stuff...Twitter (SWAN\_IRL) and Facebook (SWAN Ireland) accounts along with...Our blog (<https://socialworkactionnetworkireland.wordpress.com/>)

Website (<http://www.socialworkfuture.org/who-we-are/ireland-swan>)