



NEWSLETTER

Racist Incident Referral and Support Service (RIRS) Project
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Mission Statement

The Sligo Family Centre seeks to serve all families without discrimination, in a warm, caring and open environment. We continually strive to identify on-going and changing needs and to respond to them in a positive fashion. We aim to provide support, information and development courses of the highest standard to families in the Sligo area.

Do we really need a service like this in County Sligo?

Different reports and studies show that racism has increased recently during the economic downturn as indicated by the Immigrant Council of Ireland. At local level, the Sligo Peace and Reconciliation Partnership Committee Action Plan: 2011 – 2013, states that “Racism appears to have increased and become more public toward asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers in Sligo during the economic downturn” (page 51). Since this is becoming a reality and a stumbling stone to our peace and intercommunity good relations, both the Sligo County Community Forum (SCCF) and the Sligo Peace and Reconciliation Committee Reports towards Integration in Sligo (April 2011) state that there are limited reports of racist incidents to statutory authorities; making the large proportion of racist and sectarian being unreported and unchallenged. No wonder a report commissioned by the Sligo Peace and Reconciliation Partnership Committee, conducted by Claire Galligan entitled Racist Incident Reporting Service for County Sligo (2012) has recommended and highlighted the “benefits to having a racist incident reporting service in Sligo” (page 7). This report has confirmed that different incidents of racism are still happening in Sligo on a daily basis. Obviously, it would be hard to challenge any wrong doing or discriminatory practice without having informed cases and on-ground evidence. This can only happen if there is an independent and confidential recording system and support mechanism. It was in light of the above that Sligo Family Resource Centre received a grant from the PEACE III to establish a reporting system which will capture racist incidents, provide support and referrals

to victims and witnesses alike and strive to challenge racism and sectarianism through lobbying policy and legislative changes/reforms and through advocacy work.

We are proud that our experience and links with ethnic minority communities and our collaboration and networking with Garda Síochána, social authorities, sporting bodies, government department ,



Padraig Cuffe, Robert Olama and Frank Ballantyne

social partners and broader civil society including cultural groups and special groups such as asylum seekers and refugees living in Sligo has put us in a central position to set up an interagency working group. It will work towards setting up a third-party reporting and referral system geared to supporting and advocating for people who experience or witness racist and sectarian incidents in County Sligo”.

At the launch of the Racist Incident Referral and Support Service on 17 June 2013, Deo Ladislav Ndakengerwa (Project Coordinator) said that: “Fighting against racism and sectarianism is not merely the sole responsibility of Government. It is in the interest of every good will- thinking member of Irish society given the fact that the vast majority of our society disagree with this evil act”.

Therefore, in order to further progress inclusion and harness participation of everyone to the project, we will provide capacity building to frontline staff and volunteers in various main service providers’ organisations and agencies. In addition, we will provide capacity building to a peer support team of ethnic, religious and cultural groups’ volunteers who will act as first contact to those experiencing or witnessing racist/sectarian incidents. They will be empowered with skills /confidence and knowledge which will enable them to provide support and referral to anyone looking to report racial incident. At the end of the project, (November 2013), it is expected that we will have set up an independent and confidential third - party reporting system which will record racist and sectarian incidents into a computerised database. This database will be monitored and analysed on annual basis by the leading agency which will be decided by the Interagency Group.

Support

We are an independent and confidential service. We strive to abide by your rights as a victim or a witness and always represent your interests. We will also aim to raise awareness about your issues. In some cases, whereby deemed necessary, you may be referred to the most competent statutory or voluntary service for further support. In all cases, we will seek your consent before any referral is made.



Racist Incident Referral & Support Service

Our Aim:

To promote a culture where racism is not tolerated and to contribute to eradicating racism and sectarianism in County Sligo. To provide advice, support and referrals (if appropriate) to those experiencing and witnessing racist incident.

Objective

To co-ordinate the work of all stake-holders including the inter-agency working group in order to put in place protocols, mechanisms and policy statements in favour of setting up a third-party independent and confidential racist incident referral and support service in County Sligo.

To facilitate capacity building and empowerment of key personnel and ethnic minority volunteers who will take part in recording and supporting victims and witnesses.

Our Method

Maintaining peace is everyone's business. We believe that every individual member of the broader Sligo community can play a pivotal role in improving and safeguarding peaceful relations amongst diverse Sligo communities. In fostering that vision, we have established an interagency group which brought together statutory and non-statutory agencies, Ethnic Minority groups and the broader Sligo civil society in general. This group will play a crucial role in ensuring and promoting sustainability and credibility of the service.

A group of key personnel (staff and volunteers) from our main public service providers will be recruited and enabled to deal with racist incidents in their respective agencies/organisations.

Also a platform of Ethnic Minority Representatives will be formed and empowered to serve as peer - support in their communities.

What we do

The provision of quality assured independent, confidential and non-judgemental advice and referral service to victims and witnesses of racist/sectarian incidents is a key function to ensure that individuals have the right support. This includes providing accurate information about individual rights and allowing individuals to make informed decision about the course of their complaints process. To us no incident is too small to be given attention.

The database will be analysed on an annual basis and the information generated will help us in our lobbying and advocacy work.

Our Role

As a leading agency, Sligo Family Resource Centre will coordinate drafting of policies / statement aimed to promoting antiracist/sectarianism in service



Deirdre Rooney & Bernadette Maughan

R.I.R.S. Launch

The launch was attended by many people: individuals from ethnic minority communities; representatives of various organisations working in Sligo and surrounding counties; national organisations such as the Immigrant Council of Ireland, the Irish Network Against Racism, the Irish Refugee Council, Sport Against Racism in Ireland and the Northern Ireland Council of Ethnic Minority (NICEM) and some politicians.



Looking at the very happy and determined faces present at the launch, it's obvious that such a vibrant and united group is second to none in rebuilding and cementing our intercommunity's good relations and peaceful environments. To many of us, it was a call that nobody should tolerate racism/sectarianism or any other division/discrimination anymore. Racism divides us, the fight is common and together we can promote a culture where racism and sectarianism have no room.

provision. We will also facilitate establishment of a recording system and coordinate analysis of data and on-going support and upskilling of key personnel and Peer- Support members.



RACIST AND SECTARIAN INCIDENTS MUST BE REPORTED

We aim to establish a third-party computerised database which will capture and record all racial and sectarian incidents and provide support and referrals to people experiencing or witnessing racism and sectarianism in County Sligo. This project has been funded by the PEACE III Programme through the European Union's European Regional Development Fund managed for the Special EU programmes Body by Sligo County Council on behalf of Sligo Peace & Reconciliation Partnership Committee.

Mr. Deo Ladislas Ndakengerwa, Coordinator of Racist Incident Referral and Support Service Project says : "There can't be a peaceful and harmonious community if everyone is not welcomed and valued regardless of skin colour, ethnic origin, religious beliefs, accent,... So fighting racism and sectarianism should be everyone's duty, those experiencing it and witnessing it alike" .

By the end of November 2013, members of the interagency group will have agreed practices, mechanisms and protocols which would allow setting up of a recording system and a supporting service. Ten key personnel from main service providers, organisations and agencies will be trained, and ten volunteers from ethnic minorities will have received capacity building training. These two groups will act as the two pillars in ensuring that all incidents are recorded and the victims/witnesses are supported or referred if necessary.

Interagency Group Meeting

The Interagency Group is a platform of different agencies , voluntary organisations and Ethnic Minority groups/associations who have come together to advance the establishment of a racist incident recording system and support service.

Because these come from a broad spectrum of community and service provision, they have a stake in ensuring that their respective environments are dedicated to helping breaking the silence about racism /sectarianism and supporting those experiencing and witnessing racist incidents alike.

During our first meeting on 17 June 2013, the following people attended:

Gilla Cornelius (Rape Crisis Centre), Trisha Greavy (Sligo Traveller Support Group), Pat Hearty (Sligo FRC), Liz Martin (HSE), Cliona Ward (Sligo Traveller Support Group), Kathleen Strokes (Sligo Traveller Support Group), Willy Pineda (Sligo-Leitrim Filipino Association), Mary Haugh (Sligo Education Centre), Josette Newman (Diversity Sligo and Sligo Leader Partnership), Nike Egan (Springboard), Chris Folliard (Bridgestock), Cecilia Regio (Sligo Filipino Community), Geraldine Timlin (Sligo County Council), Bernadette Maughan (Sligo Traveller Support Group), Claire Dineen (Ballymote FRC), Trish McLaughlin (Sligo Family Support), Pat Hegarty (West Sligo Family Resource Centre), Deo Ladislas Ndakengerwa (Project Coordinator) and Elizabeth King (Sligo Family Resource Centre Coordinator). We hope that those who were unable to make the first meeting will be able to join the next meeting . This first session of a series of 3 half-days and 3 full days was facilitated by Shane O'Curry, Director of Irish Network Against Racism (ENAR).



Liz Martin (HSE), Deo Ndakengerwa, Josette Newman (Sligo Leader)



Deo, Martina Kilgallon & Liz King



Members of the Inter-Agency Group in a meeting on 17th June 2013





ETHNIC MINORITY REPRESENTATIVES CAPACITY BUILDING TRAINING

As part of our endeavour at helping people who have been subjected to racist treatment to break the silence and at creating a culture where racism was not tolerated in County Sligo; Racist Incident Referral and Support Service project is inviting you to join the Ethnic Minority Representative Forum which will act as first-stop Peer contact and support in the communities. This forum will also provide a vibrant voice and opportunity to the setting and sustaining of Racist Incident reporting and supporting service in County Sligo. We will provide you with a capacity building programme aimed at:

(a) Developing the capacity, knowledge and confidence of groups representatives/volunteers in addressing issues relating to sectarianism and racism and

(b) Providing educational/practical skills in regard to racism/sectarianism incidents and how to contribute at breaking silence around the same.

Participants will gain skills and knowledge in recording incidents and supporting victims and witnesses alike and an understanding of referral mechanisms. This will empower them to actively participate and contribute to both the forum and the racist incident Referral and Support Service.

This capacity building training consists of three sessions (probably evening sessions) which will run over the month of August/September 2013. A certificate of attendance will be issued to those attending and completing the three sessions.

As a leader/ representative or active member of a cultural, religious, migrant workers or students, refugees or asylum seekers, ethnic background or other ethnic minority, you are cordially invited to register for the training. Please note that only one representative from each group/association or community will be trained.



For registration, please submit your name and contact details before 31 July 2013 to:

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49 The Mall,
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Sligo Family Resource Centre support equal opportunity.

