

**Bill of Rights Forum Outreach
Final Report**

Contents

Summary	Pages 2-5
LGBT Groups	Pages 6-18
Carers' Groups	Pages 19-26
Travellers' Groups	Pages 27-34

Bill of Rights Forum Outreach Final Report

Summary

Since November 2007, I have endeavoured to create opportunities for dialogue and to raise awareness of the development of proposals for a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland in my role of part-time outreach worker for the Bill of Rights Forum, with three very distinct and diverse target groups.

Considerable effort was made at the beginning of the project to make contact through emails and telephone calls to directors, project managers and/or board members of 32 groups and organisations across Northern Ireland. Where key representatives could be identified, meetings were arranged where possible.

The late start of the outreach project, the time it took to clarify our role in November, the holiday period in December, and low capacity and resources among many of the target groups proved a considerable and often frustrating challenge. Given the part-time nature of the post, this work took up considerably more working hours over a longer period of time than was anticipated.

However, I managed to successfully undertake introductory meetings with 16 groups, and facilitated more comprehensive outreach with 10 groups.

A total of 24 separate meetings and outreach sessions with key representatives or target groups occurred over the course of 18 weeks (see page 2-3 for a detailed summary of activity).

**Bill of Rights Forum Outreach
Final Report**

Summary of Activity

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Groups	Email	Telephone	Introductory Meeting	Outreach (Representative)	Outreach (Target Group)
Causeway LGBT Group	✓	✓	✓		
CoSO general electronic mailing list	✓				
Dykes with Babes	✓				
Gay & Lesbian Youth NI	✓	✓	✓		✓
Gay Police Association	✓				
Indigo (lesbian & bisexual women's support group)	✓	✓	✓		
L+ Steering Group	✓	✓	✓		
Lesbian Advocacy Services Initiative	✓	✓			
Lesbian Line	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Limavady LGBT Group	✓	✓			
GLAD (Formally North Down & Ards LGBT Group)	✓				
Out & About Young Women's Group (YouthAction NI)	✓	✓	✓		✓
Oysters (trans peer support group)			✓		
Strabane LGBT Group	✓	✓			
The Rainbow Project	✓	✓			
TransFoyle			✓		✓
Traveller & Gay	✓				
University of Ulster - Magee LGB Students Group	✓				
18	16	10	8	1	3

Carers' Groups	Email	Telephone	Introductory	Outreach	Outreach (Target
-----------------------	--------------	------------------	---------------------	-----------------	-------------------------

**Bill of Rights Forum Outreach
Final Report**

			Meeting	(Representative)	Group
Armagh & Dungannon Young Carers Project	✓	✓	✓		
Belfast Carers Centre	✓	✓	✓		
Carers NI	✓	✓			
CAUSE	✓	✓	✓		
Craigavon & Banbridge Young Carers Project	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Crossroads NI	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Newry & Mourne Young Carers Project	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Rethink	✓	✓			
8	8	8	6	3	0

Travellers' Groups	Email	Telephone	Introductory Meeting	Outreach (Representative)	Outreach (Target Group)
An Munia Tober	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Armagh Travellers Support Group	✓	✓	✓		✓
Craigavon Travellers Support Group	✓	✓			
Derry Travellers Support Group	✓	✓			
Traveller & Gay	✓				
Traveller Movement NI	✓				
6	6	4	2	1	2

Total Groups Contacted	Email	Telephone	Introductory Meeting	Outreach (Representative)	Outreach (Target Group)
32	30	22	16	5	5

Bill of Rights Forum Outreach Final Report

Outreach

Where direct contact was achieved, introduction meetings provided groups with **information about the Bill of Rights Forum, the outreach programme, and my specific role**. Each group was then offered opportunities to arrange outreach sessions.

Depending on the time available, the degree to which they had previous knowledge and understanding of the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, and the particular interest of the person(s) attending, outreach sessions consisted of the following:

- § **the development of the concept of human rights,**
- § **the potential reasons for legislating to protect human rights,**
- § **the process by which a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland had been proposed and developed,**
- § **the current work of the Bill of Rights Forum, and**
- § **the particular issues, concerns and inequalities identified by the target group.**

This report contains a brief summary of key themes identified by each of the three target groups, followed by details of all contact with organisations and individuals within each of the three target groups throughout the duration of the outreach project.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Groups

Attached are the reports from the 8 LGBT groups visited.

The key shared themes that arose were:

- § Access to goods, facilities and services**
- § Association**
- § Education**
- § Employment**
- § Family, Marriage, Reproductive Rights**
- § Health**
- § Identity**
- § Prejudice, Discrimination & Harassment**
- § Privacy**
- § Religion**

Individual concerns that were not repeated across the groups are contained within the individual reports.

Bill of Rights Forum Outreach Final Report

Group:	Indigo
Key Contact:	(contact requested confidentiality)

Indigo is a social support group for lesbian and bisexual women in the Northwest area.

On 6 December, I met with two women in Derry, who belong to the Indigo support group. In spite of continued efforts to provide an opportunity for outreach, a future session could not be arranged due to capacity and resource issues.

Group:	TransFoyle
Key Contact:	Sean Morrin (The Rainbow Project)

On 6 December, I met with three young trans women (age 15-25), in Derry. They sought to address the problems of **extreme social isolation, lack of services and support, and transphobia** against trans people living in the North West area, by setting up a transsexual support group under the banner of "TransFoyle".

Follow-Up

A second meeting took place on 14 January, where a plan was agreed to co-facilitate a day in Derry for trans people in partnership with Sean Morrin from The Rainbow Project. Half the day would be given over to Bill of Rights outreach, and the other half would provide the group with an opportunity to identify their continuing needs as a group.

Follow-Up

A two hour outreach session took place on 23 February, with nine trans women who attended the day session in Derry.

The group was signposted to the Human Rights Commission and to the Forum, and Human Rights Coalition websites.

Key Discussion Points

1. Gender identity and gender reassignment
 - § a Bill of Rights needs to make specific provision for the protection of gender identity and gender reassignment in order to address the needs of transsexual children and adults, and people who are born gender variant/intersex
2. Goods, Facilities & Services and Employment
 - § Discrimination in shops, service, work placements and employment is common place
 - § Businesses need to be issued guidelines on protections provided by the EU gender directive and employment law and given training on how to meet the needs of trans employees and customers

Bill of Rights Forum Outreach Final Report

3. Education

- § Trans young people need to be protected from discrimination and abuse in school
- § Gender segregated school system has detrimental affect on trans pupils

4. Access to Health services and Gender Related Treatment

- § NHS treatment and services need to be provided locally and adequately funded
- § Services for children and adolescents needs to be provided in Northern Ireland

5. Harassment and discrimination

- § Transphobic abuse is widespread
- § The public needs to be educated about the truths, needs and experiences of trans people in Northern Ireland

Group:	Gay & Lesbian Youth Northern Ireland
Key Contact:	Liam Larmour, Project Coordinator

Gay & Lesbian Youth Northern Ireland is an organisation for young people in Northern Ireland who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or non-heterosexual. Since 1998 the service has provided a weekly youth group in Belfast City Centre, and befriending and e-mail support to young people aged 25 years and under throughout Northern Ireland.

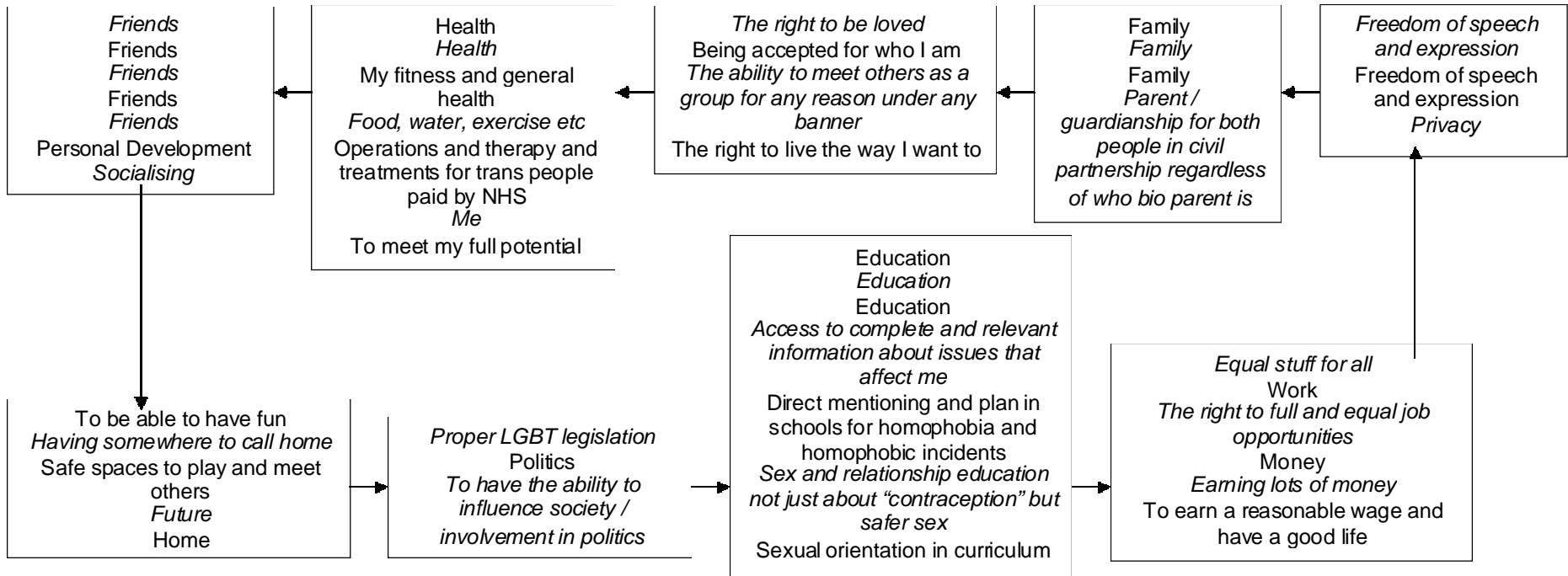
An outreach session took place on 28 January, with 10 young men and 2 young women (16-25) from the GLYNI youth group in Belfast, supported by Liam Larmour. The workshop lasted 2 hours and entailed a combination of group activities and discussions around:

- § **How we translate our needs into human rights**
- § **Background into the development of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland**
- § **Areas being focussed upon by the Forum.**

The group were asked to write words or sentences describing what was important to them (see page 7).

**Bill of Rights Forum Outreach
Final Report**

What's Important to Me...



- Access to Information - Education - Equality - Family - Free Speech - Free Expression - Freedom of Association -
- Friendship - Health - Home - Identity - Legal Protection - Love - Money - Parenthood - Politics -
- Privacy - Relationships - Quality of Life - Safety - Social Life - Work

Bill of Rights Forum Outreach Final Report

These were grouped into same/similar ideas, revealing common ground within the group about education, family and relationships, expressing their identity and opinions freely, health, employment, and the need to feel safe.

The group could therefore begin to see the link between what they value and the concept of an underlying “right”. Whether or not these issues were being considered by the Forum working groups was explored and discussed.

Liam Larmour took the group through the Children’s’ Rights draft report, and explained the process and rationale for how it had been developed by the working group.

The group requested a second session to explore and debate these issues further.

Follow-Up

The second outreach session took place on 11 February, with 10 young men and 2 young women, who debated the issues, particular circumstances, barriers and rights required in the areas being addressed by the Forum (excluding Preamble, Enforcement & Implementation), from their perspective as an LGBT youth group.

The group was signposted to the Human Rights Commission and to the Forum, and Human Rights Coalition websites.

Key Discussion Points

Culture, Language & Identity

Issues

- § LGBT people exist and need to be recognised as a group
- § Being treated differently because you are gay
- § Abusive language
- § Sexual orientation transcends culture

Particular circumstances

- § Very religious culture, including government officials
- § Unique take on Gaelic/Ulster Scots language debate – the 2 main communities can abuse LGBT people in two official languages!
- § 2 segregated communities hold everyone back and pushes other issues to the side

Barriers

- § The first minister and the DUP party are perceived to be openly homophobic (e.g. Save Ulster from Sodomy Campaign in 1979 led by current first minister, and the more recent controversial comments made against gay people made by current junior minister)

Rights needed in this area

- § Right to promote and celebrate LGBT culture and history

Bill of Rights Forum Outreach Final Report

- § Right to freedom of association – in order to hold Pride* parades and events

*Pride – the worldwide yearly commemoration of Stonewall (New York, 1969).

Criminal Justice & Victims

Issues

- § Discrimination
- § Homophobic attacks
- § Equality issues within justice system
- § Public interest versus the need to protect individuals from outing in media reporting – should an LGBT person's right to privacy be a paramount concern?
- § Discussion about the recent cases of men charged with minor sexual offences committing suicide after police made their identities public, and shared information that revealed their sexual orientation.
- § When you commit a crime do you forgo privacy? DEBATED – NO CONSENSUS

Particular Circumstances

- § Homophobic political leaders
- § Religious hatred
- § It is possible that sexual offences committed by LGBT people are highlighted more than those committed by straight people and sensationalised by the media
- § LGBT people may not feel confident to report hate crime. DEBATED – NO CONSENSUS

Rights needed in this area

- § Full equality under the law
- § Sexual offences legislation needs to be balanced and equitable for all – not one rule for one gender or sexual orientation and another rule for another gender or sexual orientation

Economic & Social Rights

Issues

- § To have the same jobs and opportunities
- § To be loved
- § To have the support of the law

Particular Circumstances

- § Close minded religious society
- § Lack of accessible, local LGBT support organisations
- § Link between Free Presbyterian church and political leadership – discrimination in government

Rights needed in this area

- § Full equality under the law

Bill of Rights Forum Outreach Final Report

Civil & Political Rights

Issues

- § Right to family, guardianship and adoption
- § Right to be involved without prejudice in public life and politics
- § Age of consent different from Great Britain
- § Right to NHS treatment for trans people
- § Does hate crime legislation really act as a deterrent? DEBATED – NO CONSENSUS
- § Sexuality versus religion requires a balance of rights
- § Sexuality and personal belief

Particular Circumstances

- § Marriage and civil partnership – currently segregates on the basis of sexual orientation, we still need to achieve full equality
- § NHS Blood ban
- § Hidden nature of LGBT people
- § Concern about putting people into boxes versus self-identification
- § Lack of research and thus info about LGBT people
- § Lack of visibility of LGBT groups
- § Current government's underlying religious agenda
- § Lack of LGBT role models in politics

Rights needed in this area

- § Rights for all above points

Children

Issues

- § Confidentiality
- § Safer sex education not offered – focus on prevention of pregnancy and contraception
- § Sex and relationships education doesn't meet the needs of LGBT young people
- § Bullying
- § Protection of LGBT young people in foster care and adoption system (carers need to be suitable, imposing homophobic attitudes on children is a child protection issue)
- § Minimum wage for children needs to be fair and enforced

Particular Circumstances

- § Lack of adequate sex education let alone that which is LGBT related
- § High suicide rate among LGBT young people
- § No emotional support for LGBT children & young people
- § Religion
- § Lack of role models
- § Lack of educational tools
- § Parent's views are given more weight than the best interest of the child
- § Religious ethos in schools
- § Religious family backgrounds

Rights needed in this area

Bill of Rights Forum Outreach Final Report

- § Sexual orientation of children protected as confidential
- § Protection from abuse/harm
- § Adequate appropriate education
- § Freedom of expression
- § Freedom of belief

Women

Issues

- § The group asked why this was not more a inclusive Gender Rights group so it could include men and women, and particularly trans men and women, gender variant and intersex people?
- § Better sexual health – free access to safer sex information and contraceptives for women who have sexual relationships with women

Particular Circumstances

- § Needs of Trans women
- § Gender pay gap
- § Civil unions only came in last year
- § Few women in politics here and everywhere!
- § Abortion Act doesn't apply in Northern Ireland. DEBATED – NO CONSENSUS
- § The affects of misogyny and male dominated society on girls and boys, men and women. DEBATED – NO CONSENSUS

Rights needed in this area

- § Pro-choice laws DEBATED – NO CONSENSUS

Group:	L+ (Older LGBT) Steering Group
Key Contact:	Colin Flinn

L+ is a new LGBT group for older people in Belfast and beyond. It aims to provide a social and activity network organised by and for older people.

An initial meeting was held with Colin Flinn, chair of the L+ steering group to discuss the outreach project on 18 January.

Follow-Up

The steering group was addressed at a regular meeting on 23 January, and an invitation was extended to arrange an outreach session on the Bill of Rights at a future date. Unfortunately, the group could not make a date until the end of March, making it impossible to pursue further.

Group:	Causeway LGBT Support Group
Key Contact:	(contact requested confidentiality)

The Causeway LGBT Network is a social and support group of LGBT people, and their friends and family, who live, work, learn, and socialise in the Causeway Coast area (Portrush, Portstewart, Coleraine, Ballycastle, Ballymoney, Castlerock, Bushmills and Limavady).

Bill of Rights Forum Outreach Final Report

Through a key representative I attended a Causeway LGBT Support Group's general meeting on 4 February, in Coleraine.

After initial introductions the five members attending and I discussed my role, the Bill of Rights Forum's work to date, and the outcomes of a previous outreach event in Coleraine facilitated by CoSO through the Community Foundation grant programme.

Members considered issues affecting LGBT people living in the Causeway area and I offered the opportunity to plan an outreach session to explore how some of these issues may pertain to a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. The group agreed to arrange for their representative to get back to me with a suitable date. No further contact was made by the group.

Key Discussion Points

1. Community and Social Development

- § Perception that LGBT groups concentrate in large cities (Belfast & Derry) and do not represent the views and needs of rural LGBT people
- § Few opportunities to meet and socialise with other LGBT people leading to isolation – particularly in rural and remote areas
- § Need for support to develop locally organised, autonomous, LGBT community groups outside urban areas

2. Lack of access to appropriate services

3. Transportation

Group:	Lesbian Line
Key Contact:	Mairead McCafferty

Lesbian Line aims to help provide support, promote equality and improve the status and dignity of lesbian & bisexual women in all walks of life, through the provision of a confidential helpline, befriending and counselling services for lesbian & bisexual women, 'drop-ins' and events during the year. The group raises awareness and influences policy and change to legislation through lobbying, highlighting and addressing those issues of relevance to their community.

Three volunteers attending a meeting in Belfast on 19 February, which was led by Mairead McCafferty, who sits on the Bill of Rights Forum.

Mairead provided information on her role on the Forum. The group discussed whether we need a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, and explored issues Lesbian Line volunteers encounter in their work with women through their weekly telephone help and information line, group meetings, and social events.

Bill of Rights Forum Outreach Final Report

Key Discussion Points

1. Right to Found a Family and Reproductive Rights
 - § Women who have children from previous heterosexual relationships face particular fears and challenges in terms of childcare and custody
 - § Need for equality in reproductive services and adoption
 - § Need to move from civil partnership to full marriage equality

2. Employment Rights
 - § The affects of working in an homophobic environment
 - § Lack of awareness of lesbian/bisexual women among employers
 - § LGBT people self-select out of jobs that they perceive to be hostile.
 - § Need to promote “non-traditional” jobs for lesbian/bisexual women and promote work place rights.
 - § Concerns around being asked to provide information to employers that reveals sexual orientation and being outed at work
 - § Personal safety and freedom from harassment

3. Religious Freedom
 - § Right of lesbian/bisexual women to hold religious belief, to religious expression and worship

4. Social Isolation
 - § Isolation of rural women
 - § Lack of resources and facilities for lesbian and bisexual women
 - § The invisibility of lesbian and bisexual women in public life is reinforced by fears and internalised homophobia among women who do not feel they can come out (especially complicated for women who have family/children/caring responsibilities)

5. Homophobia in the education system
 - § Occurs among children, teachers and throughout the curriculum
 - § Failure to act in the best interest of the LGBT child
 - § Lack of educational attainment due to bullying and exclusion
 - § LGBT pupils must have the right to identify, to freedom of expression, and to freedom from harassment and intimidation

6. Health care and positive mental health
 - § Lesbian/bisexual women specific provision is required
 - § Affects of homophobia significantly impacts on lesbian/bisexual women’s physical and mental health
 - § Public policy does not adequately articulate the affects of homophobia on girls and young women, in spite of local data suggesting high rates of mental ill health and self harm. The needs of lesbian/bisexual girls and young women must be addressed

7. Housing
 - § Because of the gender pay gap families headed by lesbian/bisexual women often live on lower incomes and can expect smaller pensions, therefore require affordable housing

Bill of Rights Forum Outreach Final Report

8. Right to Private Life
9. Older LGBT people
 - § Lack of resources and support, particularly for the bereaved
9. Access to Goods, Facilities and Services
10. Right to Affective Remedy
 - § Shouldn't be dependent on money
 - § Need system whereby a third party can take class action
 - § It would be useful to have an ombudsperson and/or a minister or commissioner responsible for sexual orientation

Group:	Out & About / Young Women's Group (YouthAction)
Key Contact:	Gail Neill

YouthAction Northern Ireland is a regional, voluntary, youth organisation with bases in Armagh, Belfast, Crossmaglen, Ballygawley and the North West.

A brief meeting was held on 25 February, with Andrea who is a young woman currently doing her youth work student placement with YouthAction. We agreed the details of an outreach session being planned for young women that week.

Follow-Up

Six young women (aged 18-26), from Belfast (4) and Newry (1), met at YouthAction in Belfast to discuss the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland on 29 February. Four of the young women attending participate in the Out & About group for young women who identify as other than heterosexual. The session was supported by Gail Neill, research coordinator (Gender Equality Unit), and ice-breaker activities were facilitated by Andrea.

The workshop lasted 2 hours and entailed a combination of group activities and discussions around:

- § **What is important to us / what do we need in life?**
- § **How we translate our needs into human rights**
- § **A history of the development of the concept of Human Rights**
- § **Background into the development of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland**
- § **Areas being focussed upon by the Forum.**

The young women were signposted to the Human Rights Commission and to the Forum, and Human Rights Coalition websites.

Key Discussion Points

- § Right to vote
- § Access to services
- § Confidentiality & privacy

Bill of Rights Forum Outreach Final Report

- § Self-determination and to make informed choices
- § Free or at least accessible education
- § Reproduction and respect for all forms of family (regardless of sexual orientation)
- § Equality of employment and pay
- § Family/work balance
- § Maternity/Paternity Leave
- § Right to love who you love and acceptance from others
- § Equal rights
- § Identity, culture and religion
- § Leisure time, and ability to pursue hobbies and social activities
- § Decent Standard of Healthcare
- § Freedom to associate with others regardless of ethnic or cultural background
- § To have opportunities to participate in society regardless of age
- § To have a say and give feedback about laws etc. and to receive information in easy-to-understand language
- § Government should make greater use of TV/cinema/media to communicate policy and raise public awareness
- § Freedom from harassment

Carers' Groups

Attached are the reports from the 6 Carers groups visited.

The key shared themes that arose were:

- § Education**
- § Health**
- § Income, Benefits and Employment**
- § Social Isolation & Exclusion**
- § Social Services**

Individual concerns that were not repeated across the groups are contained within the individual reports.

Bill of Rights Forum Outreach Final Report

Group Crossroads NI Key contact Emma O'Neill, Young Carers Project

The Crossroads NI Young Carers' Project aim is to provide support for children who 'care' for another member of their family who may be ill, disabled, have mental health problems or maybe an addiction to alcohol or drugs. They offer social activities, befriending on a one-to-one basis, practical help, and respite.

The project aims to raise awareness about young carers amongst health, education, social work and leisure agencies, to identify young carers, to offer support services to young carers and their families, to reduce social exclusion for young carers, and to reduce physical, emotional and social problems among young carers.

On 18 December, I met with Emma O'Neill. The project operates a policy of restricting direct access to their young carers by outside agencies to protect and promote good practice with the young carers' involved in their project. Therefore further outreach was agreed to be through the young carers' officer, Emma O'Neill.

Key Discussion Points

Crossroads has found the following issues through their work with young carers:

1. Rural provisions
 - § Under-resourcing
 - § Issues around financial commitments
 - § Lack of capacity in non-urban areas
2. Crossroads NI data analysis has found that current census figures underestimate the number of actual young carers in Northern Ireland. The inaccuracy of official figures are due to the following:
 - § There are a significant hard to reach young people who are not being identified or referred to services
 - § There is a lack of awareness among young people that they **are** carers
 - § There is stigma attached to identifying yourself as a young carer
3. Substantial issues around sustainable funding
 - § Organisations need mainstream funding targeted in this area
4. Education
 - § Few young carers enter 3rd level education
 - § Many young carers enter the caring professions which are traditionally low paid
 - § Experience of bullying widespread
 - § Lack of academic achievement because of caring responsibilities
 - § How discipline is administered to young carers (i.e. can't stay after school for detention, so give up social time during the day)
 - § Young carers have fewer opportunities for study, leisure/social, and recreational activity

Bill of Rights Forum Outreach Final Report

5. Health Problems
 - § Mental health issues
 - § Back problems (young carers cannot get lifting and handling training because trainers will not train minors due to concerns about liability)
 - § Some young people come from families with a history of substance abuse and or mental ill health, which is not socially acknowledged as “caring”

6. Financial Hardship
 - § Young carers can only access education maintenance allowance
 - § The caring role young people fulfil within the home is not formally recognised as “work” because they are underage
 - § To get carers allowance you must be in receipt of incapacity/income support, but you have to be over 16 to get these benefits, therefore many young carers struggle financially

Follow-Up

A second meeting took place on 15 January, to review the Children’s Rights draft, so that the organisation could consider its views and begin the process of formulating ideas for a formal submission to public consultation in the future.

Groups	Armagh & Dungannon Young Carers Project Craigavon & Banbridge Young Carers Project Newry & Mourne Young Carers Project
Key contact	Tracy Powell, Lesley McClelland, Tom Bogues (respectively)

An introductory meeting was held with representatives of three young carers groups on 19 December, in Banbridge.

The Armagh and Dungannon Health and Social Services Trusts’ Young Carers Project is for young people between the ages of 8 and 18 who provide care to someone, usually a parent or relative, who is physically or mentally ill, disabled or struggles with alcohol and/or drug problems.

Lesley McClelland from the Craigavon & Banbridge reported that their project works with young people between 8 and 18. The project works with 150 young people in total – 60 of whom are currently active. They meet once per month (approx 30 per meeting, dependent on caring responsibilities at the time) to engage in social activities.

Tom from Newry and Mourne reported that they estimate 10-12% of the total population of young people identify as young carers, while almost as many don’t identify as young carers. This is primarily because (a) they don’t see their role as being as “carer”, particularly where mental health and or substance abuse in the home is present and its associated stigma; (b) they don’t want to be labelled as “different” from their peers or to “stand out”. Tom

Bill of Rights Forum Outreach Final Report

believes that young carers within the 18-25 age range are the most invisible and hard to reach, and there is inadequate structured support for this group. He finds that young people they work with tend to have developed enough confidence to move on to other young projects by approx 16, and gradually lose contact with the carers' project.

Key Discussion Points

1. Education
 - § Low academic achievement
 - § Attendance issues
 - § Bullying
 - § Failure to recognise what young carers are, what it involves, and to identify young people within schools as being carers
 - § There needs to be greater leadership from the top to address young carers' issues
 - § Awareness of carers issues in schools needed to reduce bullying and encourage more young carers to come forward and identify themselves for support from local agencies and organisations

2. Social isolation
 - § young carers have fewer opportunities for social/leisure time and play
 - § transportation issues exclude some young carers from getting involved
 - § the nature of the disability that the cared for person has, and the level of caring responsibilities required of the young person at home can make participation difficult

3. Low Income
 - § It has been established that homes in which care is required experience a significant drop in income

4. Gender
 - § Young women are often expected to take on greater caring roles and domestic responsibilities more than young men

5. Mental Health
 - § Self esteem and confidence is affected

6. Healthy Eating
 - § Cooking programmes are not available to young people under 16, and projects often encounter young people bringing packed lunches and snacks consisting of junk food rather than healthier options, usually because it is seen as more convenient or because of lack of awareness about healthier eating options among young people

7. Training
 - § The projects report that young people they work with are very responsive to training opportunities, e.g. one project has run a very successful mental health programme involving young carers in a "chill out day" for 8-16 year olds

Bill of Rights Forum Outreach Final Report

- § The projects are planning a “safety in the home” session with young people in January
 - § however they have found that no one will facilitate lifting and handling training to children
8. Implementation of the Children’s Order
- § Young carers are legally classified as “children in need” under the Children’s Order and are therefore entitled to a needs assessment by social services, above and beyond the needs assessment carried out for the person in need of care. However the projects report that their experience is that none of the young people they work will get assessed.
 - § There is the perception that social workers don’t recognise the significant contribution of caring work by children in the home, and therefore do not refer young people to their projects
9. Lack of Resources and Funding
- § Transport is a major issue for young carers’ projects. If the projects can’t cover the cost of taxis etc, young people can’t participate
 - § There has been an historical lack of core funding, and funding from Peace II has dried up, putting considerable strain on projects to sustain themselves
 - § Lack of resources leads to lack of capacity to promote their services, which in turn leads to fewer referrals. Fewer salaries and time for workers also affects capacity.
 - § Luckily this situation will be rectified in April when significant statutory funding will be provided to local groups

Following this meeting Tom Bogues forwarded the following documents which were forwarded to the Forum:

- § Carers lose.doc
- § Caring before their time.pdf
- § YoungcarersReport2004.pdf
- § Info on young carers.doc

Due to maternity leave, Armagh & Dungannon Young Carers’ Project would not be able to take part in further outreach.

Group	CAUSE
Key contact	Dr May McCann

An introductory meeting was held with Dr May McCann on 24 January, in Belfast. Dr McCann is one of nine care advocates who is responsible for work in the Sperrin Lakeland area.

CAUSE is a peer-led charity directed and staffed by past and present carers who aim to provide practical and emotional support to relatives and carers of people with serious mental illness. The organisation was developed 12 years ago by of people with mental ill health. Care advocates operate across the

Bill of Rights Forum Outreach Final Report

Trust areas, setting up local support groups, and lobbying within the Trusts and other decision making bodies. CAUSE also offers 1-to-1 support, a help-line and training.

Dr McCann gave the name and contact of Cathy Magowan, carers' support worker for the Western Health and Social Services Trust area, in order to explore the possibility of meeting with rural carers in Fermanagh. This was pursued but a meeting was not possible.

Key Discussion Points

1. Financial Hardship

§ There is a significant link between mental ill health and debt.

People experience mental health in peaks and troughs therefore don't require continuous care, and therefore carers find themselves unable to qualify for benefits.

§ Due to the nature of mental illness, carers often require additional leave and flexible working conditions. Where that is not available they either have to cover the cost of getting alternative care themselves, or are forced to work part-time, both leading to a loss of income.

§ Often people with mental ill health have difficulty managing their own money, but usually the carer has no right to manage it for them (unless they are legally declared incapable). This puts further financial strain on families who find themselves in the position of supplementing the cared-for person's income when their benefits are spent.

2. Social Impact

§ Carers often find their social life curtailed by their caring responsibilities

§ Siblings often face the stigma of having a brother or sister at home in need of care through mental ill health.

3. The "right to privacy" paradox

§ Many carers find that the health system does not provide the information they need to provide adequate care, because of blanket data protection policies designed to protect the patient's right to privacy. In order to be a carer in partnership with statutory bodies, you need information. There therefore needs to be a differentiation between different types of information, rather than a policy of no information.

Groups	Craigavon & Banbridge Young Carers Project Newry & Mourne Young Carers Project
Key contact	Louise Headley, Tom Bagues (respectively)

A second meeting was held with Tom and Louise on 5 February, to review the draft recommendations being made in the Children's Rights working group.

They reviewed the notes made from the first meeting and the suggested that they would pass information on the proposals along with their key discussion

Bill of Rights Forum Outreach Final Report

points to representatives within their established network of carers' groups for their comment.

Groups	Craigavon & Banbridge Young Carers Project Crossroads NI Young Carers Project Newry & Mourne Young Carers Project
Key contact	Louise Headley, Emma O'Neill, Tom Bogues (respectively)

A final follow up meeting with the three groups took place in Banbridge on 28 February, at which the representatives discussed their views on the final proposals being put forward by the Children's Rights Working Group and shared their opinions from previous outreach meetings.

Tom Bogues reported that he had sent information through the carers' networks, but no feedback had been received.

The groups agreed to continue contact and explore the opportunity of coordinating a submission to the future public consultation on the Bill of Rights collectively on behalf of the young carers' sector.

Key discussion points

The groups wished to see the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland use the following definition of "young carer":

*"Children and young people, aged up to 18 years, who have a substantive caring role for a member of their family, and
Children and young people, aged up to 18 years, whose health or development is affected due to caring responsibilities."*

Group	Belfast Carers Centre
Key contact	Ricky Devlin

A meeting was held with the director of Belfast Carers' Centre, Mr Ricky Devlin on 22 February. The discussion comprised of what affect the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland would have, and where carers' rights featured within the current proposals being made by the Forum.

Mr Devlin did not wish to avail of further outreach, but was keen to be kept informed on future developments. A commitment was made to email details of what proposals are being made by the Forum that pertain to carers' rights.

Travellers' Groups

Attached are the reports from the 2 Traveller groups visited.

The key shared themes that arose were:

- § Access to goods, facilities and services**
- § Accommodation & Housing**
- § Cultural Identity**
- § Education**
- § Prejudice, Discrimination & Harassment**

Individual concerns that were not repeated across the groups are contained within the individual reports.

Bill of Rights Forum Outreach Final Report

Group	Armagh Travellers Support Group
Key contact	Jacqueline Connolly, Children's & Family Development Worker

The Armagh Travellers Support Group currently works with approximately 50-55 local families, and the majority of their services users are young women. The project runs a young women's group, an adult women's group and a parent and toddlers' group. The young women do dance and drama, while the adult women's group engage in educational programmes.

They have also had a young men's group but find it difficult to get, and keep, young men involved in the project. The project is in contact with several young people with disabilities, whom they report get good support from local social workers and mainstream disability organisations.

Lack of capacity and time makes it difficult for the project to respond to consultations or get involved in the human rights debate, as all their resources are used in meeting the needs of the local travellers' community.

An introduction meeting took place on 17 December, with Jacqueline Connolly, and I was invited to attend a brief celebration with Traveller women who were receiving certificates for the completion of a course.

Jacqueline introduced me to the women and made a commitment to pursue an opportunity to arrange an outreach session.

Key Discussion Points

Issues that are commonly seen by the project are:

- § Access to goods and services – refusal of local businesses to allow entry into pubs, shops, and hotels for weddings, etc.
- § Education – participation in local school activity is difficult for local young travellers, particularly where pupils are charged a fee to participate

Follow-up

On 20 February, time was set aside to discuss the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland during two development and capacity building classes that ran consecutively that day. 11 women attended the classes in total.

Key Discussion Points

1. Tenancy and accommodation

- § There is a general lack of housing to meet demand in the Armagh area
- § All travellers in the Armagh area live in houses
- § Travellers tend to marry in their mid-teens, but cannot get accommodation if they are under 18
- § Young traveller women prefer to live close to their mother and extended family members

2. Education

Bill of Rights Forum Outreach Final Report

§ The Traveller community has a good relationship with local schools and report that their children are treated well

4. Health

- § There is a shortage of dental care in the area
- § Travellers coming into the area find it difficult to get registered with local doctors, many can only get temporary registration because of not being able to procure a fixed address

3. Community relations

- § Most Traveller families have been in the Armagh area for a long time
- § Relations with local settled community tends to be good

4. Access to Goods, Facilities and Services

- § The group report having little difficulty in local shops
- § There is a problem with local hotels who are always “booked up” because of past experiences with other travellers, so the entire community is blacklisted
- § Many travellers have difficulty getting credit cards, and therefore booking by credit card is often used as a way to exclude them.
- § The group felt that government issuing guidelines to businesses would be useful

Group:	An Munia Tober
Key Contact:	Una Tohill & Mark Donohue

An Munia Tober provides a variety of services to the Traveller community in Belfast. It has been formed through the amalgamation of Belfast Travellers Support Group (BTEDG/BTSG) and Belfast Travellers Education Development Group.

On 28 January, a meeting was held with Una Tohill to introduce myself and to explore the possibility of providing an outreach session for their members.

Follow-Up

An outreach session took place on 30 January, at which 11 women from the Traveller community who are currently taking part in Advocacy and Health programmes, met for two hours to discuss the Bill of Rights.

The group welcomed the opportunity to discuss the Bill of Rights process, and progress to date. Through the course of that lively and impassioned discussion, the group identified many issues as being relevant to their rights. They requested that these points be summarised and be forwarded to the relevant working groups for their attention.

Key Discussion Points

Culture, Language & Identity

“They don’t give us somewhere to live, and they won’t let us stop at the side of the road, so what are we supposed to do?”

Bill of Rights Forum Outreach Final Report

The group is aware that there are various policies and regulations in Northern Ireland that acknowledge the Travelling community as a distinct racial/cultural group. However, they strongly felt that lack of adequate sites, coupled with clamping, fines and confiscation of property denies the Travelling community the right to express their identity and heritage.

They believed that the equality regulations that exist are contradicted by the Encampment Order (2006), which denies Travellers the right to the very thing that defines them as Travellers.

Civil & Political Rights

“We want to live by the law, but the law needs to live by us.”

The women felt that decision makers do not do enough to consult with the Travelling community. They thought that local politicians didn't stand up for Travellers, or appeased the settled community, because they could generate more votes.

They discussed the fact that you cannot vote unless you have identification, and you can't get identification without utility bills, and you can't have utility bills if you have no utilities.

They reiterated that the Encampment laws infringe on their right to freedom of assembly and association, as well as freedom of movement.

The women talked about Travellers being prevented from moving into housing. They recalled a recent case of a Traveller family being prevented from moving into a house allocated by the Housing Executive, when the local residents came out onto the street en masse to block them. The group didn't believe that anyone was disciplined for this. They asked the questions: How do local residents know who is moving into a house before they get there? Why are they being told? They believed that the authorities were giving this information to local communities, and that this is a serious infringement of their right to privacy.

The group urged government and community leaders to take a proactive stance against the widespread and seemingly acceptable prejudice levied against Travellers. They gave examples of daily harassment and discrimination happening to Travellers, and believed that when these abuses happen, it isn't considered as serious as when it happens to a member of the settled community, both in the eyes of the authorities and the general public, because of the negative myths and stereotypes about Travellers that are allowed to flourish unchallenged.

The group felt that prejudicial attitudes against the Travellers were fuelled by the media and discussed several recent examples of this on local public opinion programmes where callers were allowed to express extremely stereotypical negative views of the Travelling community. They believed that

Bill of Rights Forum Outreach Final Report

if callers had made similar comments about other groups they would have been reproached and condemned as racists.

Economic & Social Rights

“They say we’re dirty, and don’t want to work, and don’t want to pay. I work. I pay taxes. And believe me, there’s nothing cheap about living in a caravan.”

The group felt that lack of sites coupled with legislation prohibiting them from stopping at roadsides was the main source of their difficulties.

However, they also discussed lack of access to goods, facilities and services at length, from being barred from pubs and hotels, to being ejected from or refused entry into local shops, to being turned away from holiday caravan sites, B&Bs and hotels. They discussed how their young people try to “dress like settled people” to get into pubs and clubs, but are turned away when their accents are heard. They felt that overt and blatant discrimination was commonplace, and believed that most settled people felt above the law because nothing would be done about it.

Often they would resort to getting friends from the settled community to ring and book hotels for christenings, weddings and funerals, and even then they often found creative excuses being made to turn them away when they arrived – such as mix ups with bookings, and water leaks. The most extreme example was of an entire village shutting down their shops on the day that a Traveller funeral was taking place.

They also gave examples of being denied hire-purchase items when providers discovered they were Travellers, and where addresses known as being Travellers’ residences were blacklisted.

The group felt that it was very difficult to prove a case of discrimination, and they did not feel adequately supported by the Equality Commission to take such cases forward because they were not considered “strategic” enough.

Travellers are traditionally self-employed, and work seasonally and/or intermittently. Travellers also experience discrimination in employment both directly – giving several examples of men losing their jobs in Belfast when employers discovered they were members of the Travelling Community – and indirectly due to low academic achievement and major problems with accommodation. Given that you have to give up benefits as soon as you start work, and have to open a new claim every time you stop work, Travellers can find themselves with no income whatsoever at times, which negatively impacts on the entire family.

Many Travellers therefore find themselves in a poverty trap. In order to offer Travellers a way out of this, they suggested that Northern Ireland implement a system similar the Fas Community Employment Programme that allows Travellers in the Republic of Ireland to do apprenticeships and work

Bill of Rights Forum Outreach Final Report

placements, and to work intermittently while keeping some of their benefits, so they never lose the basic income their family needs to survive.

They discussed English regulations preventing canvassing, and were concerned that Northern Ireland could follow suit. The group felt that if men can't canvass, everyone in the Travellers' community will be forced onto benefits.

Children

"Our children need an education. It's the only way out."

The group was deeply concerned about their children's education and were therefore pleased to learn that the working group was addressing the rights of children from the Travellers' community.

They explained how their younger children are educated separately from the settled children. Many women in the group told stories of their children being verbally and physically bullied in mainstream local schools, and felt that schools dealt more harshly with their children than settled children. They suggested that Traveller awareness training should be given to teachers so they know how to deal with Traveller children properly.

The women also discussed the need for Traveller children to learn traditional skills, and knowledge about Traveller culture. They believed that the Encampment Order (2006) negatively impacted on the informal education children received while travelling. Lack of sites and basic facilities, and not being able to travel freely denied their children the opportunity to learn the skills central to the Travellers' way of life. The group felt that putting Travellers into houses was destroying their young men, who were growing up with no qualifications and no skills, and being drawn into drug and alcohol abuse like local settled youth.

They explained that young couples didn't want to live in houses, but faced the problem of nowhere to put their caravans. The women who were living in houses said that neighbours shunned them, and that their children were the regular target of bullying so they therefore keep their children indoors all day.

Preamble, Enforcement & Implementation

"Give us the way to use it properly."

The group felt that current regulations meant to protect Travellers don't work because they don't seem to have any teeth, and cases are difficult to prove.

They were keen to protect their rights, and stand up as community, but felt they needed support to do so. They therefore felt that government should have to promote the Bill of Rights so people knew how to use it, that financial support is necessary so people can take cases, and that local community organisations must be resourced to raise awareness of human rights, and to advocate for members of the Travelling community.

Follow-Up

Bill of Rights Forum Outreach Final Report

On 11 March, 2008, a final follow up meeting was arranged through Mark Donohue, which was also attended by Paddy Mongan, and Catriona who is a member of the Travelling Community currently doing work placement with An Munia Tober.

They requested an update on the proposals being made in the final working group report. Copies of the reports were provided and we discussed what specific areas were mentioned pertaining to Travellers Rights.

Key Discussion Points

1. The right to be nomadic or to be settled
 - § If provision is made to protect the right to be nomadic or to be settled, it will be fully inclusive of the needs of Travellers who travel, Travellers who are settled, and the needs of the settled community

2. The right to accommodation
 - § The group did not feel “culturally appropriate housing” went far enough to protect the needs of Travellers or to address lack of basic facilities and utilities and substandard living conditions endured by many Traveller families across Northern Ireland.
 - § The group felt that term “housing” insinuated houses, and suggested that the word “accommodation” is more inclusive as it can include a wider range of living options (temporary pitches, permanent sites, communal housing, houses etc)