

The following is a reproduction of an article which first appeared in the Spring, 2004, Edition of the Equality in Education Newsletter, The Newsletter of Education Personnel of Partnerships and Community Groups.

### **Children with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties A Community Response in Clondalkin**

“ Children and parents caught in the nightmare of emotional and behavioural difficulties need, demand and deserve the very best care and expertise that this country can offer” this is how Catherine Holmquist summed up her article on the Clondalkin Partnership initiative in October 2002 when we launched the research “In Trouble from Day One” Since then we have moved ahead and are now realising many of the recommendations set out in the research.

The demand for effective programs to assist those children who are experiencing emotional and behavioral problems has never been greater. As we struggle to come to terms with an upsurge in youth related crime and unrest, the search for some effective way to prevent and reverse this tendency or trend has become a priority at both national and local levels.

The Clondalkin Partnership, building on its published Report ‘In Trouble From Day One’ employed a development worker who examined a number of early intervention and preventative programs with a view to establishing a model of intervention which could be applied to school and community organizations within the area. The EBD Task Group were aware that emotional and behavioral difficulties is a complex behavior pattern which involves both the individuals disposition and social context. Most of the programs examined focused only on the individuals disposition and failed to address the reinforcements for negative behaviors in the social contexts where the child or adolescent lived, with the result that positive changes in the individuals behavior or emotional state achieved through the interventions quickly dissipated when they returned home to their family neighborhood and friends.

One program, however, stood out, ‘The Incredible Years’ programme which is a set of three comprehensive multi faceted and developmentally based curricula for parents, professionals and children is designed to dovetail together in order to promote educational and social competence and prevent, reduce and treat behaviour and emotional problems in young children and adolescents.

Developed by professor Carolyn Webster Stratton in the university of Washington, the programme has been shown to reduce the incidence of conduct disordered and maladjusted behavior in 8 out of 10 children identified as experiencing difficulty using clinical measures. This evidence-based programme is now the primary treatment intervention mechanisms for conduct disordered children in the United States, the UK and Scandinavia, and is supported here at home by both NEPS and the Health Board. A number of local representatives from local schools and community based organizations were invited to attend a conference in Bangor, Wales so that they might have an opportunity to assess for themselves the value, validity and effectiveness of the

programme. The feedback from this conference was entirely positive and consequently a decision was made to introduce the program into the area on a pilot basis over the coming months.

Since January 2004, 25 professionals working across the community in Clondalkin have traveled to the university of Wales to access training in Parent Group Leader and Small Group Therapeutic Dina. We are now set to begin the task of selection and implementation of the training with parents and young children 4—8 year. This process will be assisted and supported directly by Drs Reid and O Reilly of the Lucenna Clinic. Further guidance has come from both NEPS and The Health Board who are committed to this pilot process.

A further week of training will take place in June including Dina School Classroom management for classroom teachers.

A National conference will open the week of training and will take place on June 21<sup>st</sup> in Red Cow Inn, Moran's hotel. The keynote speaker will be Lois Hancock from The University of Washington where the programme has developed over the past 28 years. For further details of the conference see our website [www.clondalkinpartnership.ie](http://www.clondalkinpartnership.ie). For further information about Webster Stratton's "Incredible Years" programme, including all research publications [www.incredibleyears.com](http://www.incredibleyears.com)