NEW COMMUNITIES PARTNERSHIP

IASW - Migration Special Interest Group
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DANIELA JURJ
NATIONAL COORDINATOR
MIGRANT FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICE

NEW COMMUNITIES PARTNERSHIP, 53 UPPER DORSET ST DUBLIN 1, TELEPHONE: 01 872 7849
NEW COMMUNITIES PARTNERSHIP
EMPOWERING AND REPRESENTING ETHNIC MINORITIES AND THEIR ORGANIZATIONS IN IRELAND

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION
165 MIGRANT LED COMMUNITY GROUPS
70 DIFFERENT NATIONALITIES
OFFICES IN DUBLIN AND CORK
OUTREACH SERVICES
WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH STATE AGENCIES

NEW COMMUNITIES PARTNERSHIP, 53 UPPER DORSET ST DUBLIN 1, TELEPHONE 01 872 7842
Over 9200 drop ins to the NCP services in 2015

- **Citizenship Application Support Service (CASS)**- over 13,000 individuals supported
- **English Language and Homework Support Service** - 3 schools, 60 students of 10 nationalities, 15 volunteer teachers
- **Social Inclusion and Community Activation Program (SICAP)** - 116 individuals and 37 groups supported
- **Migrant Family Support Service (MFSS)**
  - over 3500 calls (200% increase from 2014)
  - 133 families of 26 nationalities sought support
  - 80% of referrals come from Tusla- Child and Family Agency
- **Cultural Support Ireland (CSI)** - new service launched
NEW COMMUNITIES PARTNERSHIP
ESTABLISHED IN 2003

MEET A PART OF OUR SUPPORT TEAM
AUGUST 2016 - NCP MAIN OFFICE (Dublin)
15 STAFF, OF 4 CONTINENTS AND 13 DIFFERENT NATIONALITIES, SPEAKING 16 LANGUAGES
NCP MIGRANT FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICE

Funded by TUSLA- Child and Family Agency

Independent service

Grass root work

Hands on service

Focus on clients and their experiences

HOLISTIC APPROACH
Intervention

1. **Information and support for migrant families** with children in care or currently experiencing child protection interventions

2. **Cultural support** for front line professionals - Social Workers, Mental Health Professionals, Solicitors, Guardians ad Litem, Gardai

Prevention

3. **Awareness raising about Child Protection practices in Ireland** for migrant, religious and community leaders, migrant NGOs and Direct Provision Centres:

   - Child Protection Training
   - Information sessions and coffee mornings
   - Develop and distribute information literature

NEW COMMUNITIES PARTNERSHIP, 53 UPPER DORSET ST DUBLIN 1, TELEPHONE 01 872 7842
Who We Are
We are a new communities support group who assist families experiencing childcare protection interventions.

We are non-judgemental. We listen. We assist families through the challenges that they meet. We offer a FREE service.

We Offer
- One to one support service for families experiencing child protective interventions or that have had their children taken into care
- Outreach services
- Awareness raising
- Cultural support for front line professionals

Contact
Migrant Family Support Service

Dublin
New Communities Partnership
53 Upper Dorset St, Dublin 1
Tel: c1 87 27 842
E-mail: family_support@newcommunities.ie

Cork
New Communities Partnership
107 Shandon Street, Cork
Tel: 021 23 99 910
E-mail: ncp_cork@gmail.com

www.newcommunities.ie
The Migrant Family Support Service is funded by the Irish Government and the Family Support Agency.

GUIDELINES ON HOW TO BEST SAFEGUARD A CHILD
What is Child Abuse?

For Free Support & Information Call
Migrant Family Support Service
53 Dorset St, Dublin 1
Tel 01 8727842

Migrant Family Support Service supporting families experiencing child protection interventions.

www.newcommunities.ie
Guidelines On How To Best Safeguard A Child

An adult’s behaviour can cause a child significant harm, knowingly or unknowingly. This can be in the form of neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse or sexual abuse.

Failing to prevent any of these instances happening to a child is also putting a child at risk or harming a child.

Having knowledge of a child being abused and not reporting it is a criminal offence. Sometimes, child abuse can be willful, other times adults might not realise they are putting a child at risk.

Who Is There To Help You?

If you think or have any concerns about a child please get in contact immediately with

- An Garda Siochána - Luísphone 999
- Child and Family Agency www.luisa.ie - contact your Local Duty Social Worker in your local area.
- Parentline - telephone 1890 92 72 77 or 01 873 35 00
- Your local GP or Public Health Nurse.
- NCP – Migrant Family Support Service telephone 01 872 7842

What Is Physical Abuse?

- Any action that causes a child pain or discomfort (i.e. cigarette burns, hot oil).
- Physical punishment as a way of disciplining a child.
- Hurting a child by shaking, hitting, beating, slapping, punching or kicking a child.
- Force feeding a child.
- Depriving a child of sleep.
- Allowing a child no recreation time.
- Choking or drowning, poisoning or suffocating a child.
- Delay in seeking medical help if a child is injured, sick or has a disability.
- Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a form of both physical and emotional abuse.

What Is Emotional Abuse?

- Humiliating a child.
- Shouting and cursing at a child.
- Excessively criticising a child, not showing him her affection.
- Preventing a child from having social interaction, isolating a child.
- Having your child witness incidents of Domestic Abuse is also a form of emotional abuse.

What Is Neglect?

- Not caring for a child properly by leaving them alone and unsupervised (under the age of 16). Leaving an older sibling to supervise and care for younger siblings.
- Not providing suitable housing/shelter arrangements for a child to live in.
- Not attending to a child’s physical needs by leaving a child hungry, dirty or not clothed according to the weather requirements.
- Not attending a child’s medical or psychological appointments.
- Not providing a child with affection and emotional support.
- Lack of school attendance.

What Is Sexual Abuse?

- Involving a child in any sexual relations with an adult.
- The Irish law states that a person must be 17 years of age to consent to heterosexual intercourse. The age of consent is the same for males and females.
- Intimidating, coercing or persuading a child into touching his/her private parts or kissing.
- Involving a child in inappropriate naked or semi-naked photographs or videos.
- Sending a child text messages or other online communication with explicit content.
- Marrying a child to an adult.
- Forcing a child into prostitution.
REASONS FOR MIGRANT CHILDREN COMING INTO CARE

- Lone parents struggling after years of Direct Provision
- Parental mental health or cognitive needs not being met
- Domestic Violence
- Children being left unsupervised
- Physical punishment
- Lack of understanding of Irish child protection legislation

NB- The above are based solely on cases observed by the MFSS in their engagement with the service. Same findings also mirrored by the CCLRP.
Disproportionate number of migrant children coming into care

Different understandings of parenting and family dynamics in various cultures

Parents not aware of certain parenting practices not acceptable anymore in Ireland. Children learn more about CP in school than what their parents know. (ALL parents)

Lack of cultural awareness training for front line staff and foster carers

Confusing system- institutions, services, who does what and WHY? – ie purpose of access,

Social Worker vs Social Care Worker vs Social Welfare

WHAT’STHE PLAN? – “Goal posts keep changing” (MFSS Client)

Preconceptions about certain professionals-“You don’t find a SW, a SW finds you”. “LAB solicitors work hand in hand with the SW, sure they are all Government” = lack of trust

Fear and distrust of parents of institutions in their own countries of origin- ie Somali ladies and Gardai

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CHALLENGES, CONCERNS, OBSERVATIONS ARISING BASED ON MFSS CLIENT’S EXPERIENCES

- Courts: In Camera Ruling vs packed corridors
- Statements interpreted out of context
- Lack of knowledge about complaint mechanisms available
- View of family reunification
- Access vs Working on mending/ improving the child/ parent relationship
- Grey areas - understanding “The best interest of the child”, what constitutes “Good enough parenting”, age of children to be left unattended
- Extended family support networks lost due to the migration process
- Social isolation
- Language barriers
- WHAT’S WRONG vs WHAT’S STRONG
CHALLENGES FOR THE SYSTEM

- Balancing the constitutional rights of the family with the rights of the child.
- Court is seen as adversarial
- Maintaining a holistic view of the family unit
- The impact of the interventions on the front line staff- interventions in profound crisis in some families. Who cares for the carers?
- TIME
FACING FAMILY DIFFICULTIES - THE EXPERIENCE OF OUR CLIENTS

“You are so kind and respectful. You really changed my situation. I did not know so much before and I was making bad choices as a parent. But I wasn’t all wrong. I just didn’t know what those people meant (SW, GAL and Services). Now I know and I make different choices. I keep praying for you and all your offices so that God continues to give you love and kindness and wisdom to guide others. This is all that I can give you to repay your support. You have been very, very helpful. You are all so down to earth.”

Parent, MFSS Client
WHY LISTEN TO THE PARENTS?

“Only when parents develop an honest relationship with their social workers can they contribute effectively to planning the care and hence the well-being of their children.”

(Sinclair and Grimshaw 1997)
WHAT SILENCES THE PARENTS INVOLVED IN CHILD CARE CASES?

Migrant parents' voices are not always being heard because of:

- Lack of TRUST in the professionals
- Intimidating number of professionals attending a Child Care Case Court hearings
- Immigration status
- Shame is silencing. Social stigma of having a child in care. Cultural perspective on parenting.
- Isolation within own communities
- Lack of self confidence. Not understanding the terminology used by professionals.
- Fear of Courts
- Lack of English and illiteracy
- Bereavement
HOW TO IMPROVE THE PARENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IS GOING ON

- Legal representation is a must.
- **NCP advocates as cultural brokers.**
- Understanding processes and making clear and informed choices. Build up the confidence in the system.
- Greater transparency is needed.
- Summons and plans to be explained to the parent before being sent.
- Reports available before Court, explained to parents, amended if needed.
- Core professionals meetings before Court- creative solutions reached through mediation.
- Private consultation rooms when in Court.
HOW TO IMPROVE THE PARENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IS GOING ON

- Leaflets explaining procedures, rights and supports ARE already available. Please use these.

- Parents and professionals to keep each other informed of the small details, in order to build a trustful relationship. Communication is key.

- Use pictures, videos, practical examples- COMMON SENSE IS ONLY WHAT YOU KNOW.

- When using interpreting services, check credentials of the interpreter

- People don’t always get it right, but it’s important they try. A little word of encouragement goes a long way.

- Being mindful of own attitude and values. What are your own cultural lenses?

- Communicate in plain English. Make no presumptions.

- Child protection training
Some statements

“I never knew I was doing something wrong!”

“They need to listen to what we have to say!”

“They just don’t get it, do they??”

“Tell me what I need to do, not only what NOT to do!”

“You’ve turned my hopelessness into hopefulness!”

“Nothing we do is ever good enough with them.”

“What’s the story with the hair care?”

“Meeting a child’s needs? Aaaah sure, it’s the Maslow pyramid!”
HOW TO IMPROVE THE MIGRANT PARENTS’ UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IS GOING ON

TRUST:
- Clients trust NCP as they can see a connection
- TUSLA- Child and Family Agency identifying NCP as the link to fill the cultural gap

NCP uniqueness in service delivery:
1. Proved track record (2003- present) of working with:
   - State agencies
   - Migrant communities in Ireland
2. Constant connection and relationship with migrant communities in Ireland. Practical, hands on, grass-root work.
3. NCP’s ethnic and minority diverse team

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GOOD NEWS!
YOU’RE NOT IN THIS ALONE!

NCP supports:
- FREE
- No catchment area
- No waiting list
- No lengthy referral process

“The MFSS has been an invaluable resource in the local community that serves the families our Agency works with. The staff are very accommodating and professional in how they deliver the service. Families and professionals alike really benefit from the service and it has filled a huge gap in community service provision that has been long awaited.”

Social Worker- TUSLA Child and Family Agency

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HOW TO IMPROVE THE PARENT’S UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IS GOING ON

Invest TIME and TALK

Talk TO parents, rather than AT parents.

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Case sample 1

(No real names, nationalities or age used)

Mary is a single mother of a 13 years old Autistic child with a lot of special needs. Mary does not work, she is very socially isolated. She moved to Ireland 2 years ago and has very little English. Her daughter is not going to school and has no access to support services. DOC and SW are involved with the family. Mary is referred to the MFSS as there is a risk of the child coming into care. SW asking MFSS to link the mother with the Hungarian community in Ireland. Within 8 months of SW, DOC, MFSS working with the family:

- The child is enrolled in a special needs school, starts speech therapy, OT, enjoys a swimming club regularly, has transport for school, made friends with kids in the street, started playing the guitar.
- Mary has a respite service linking in, receives Social Welfare benefits, attends 5 times a week an English class when her child is in school, has made friends with another single mother of an Autistic child, volunteers with Special Olympics Ireland and is actively taking steps to have her qualifications recognized by the Irish Teaching Council. Mary has no interest of engaging with any Hungarians in Ireland.

Case is due to be closed.

New Communities Partnership, 53 Upper Dorset St Dublin 1, telephone 01 872 7842
Stella is from Congo. She came to Ireland as an asylum seeker. She had a baby while in Direct Provision. When her daughter was 4 she came into care as Stella had to be admitted in a Psychiatric Hospital. Her husband, Tom, travelled to Ireland to take care of Stella and their daughter. The SW could not put the child in the father’s care until DNA tests and police checks were carried out. After 6 months, Stella was discharged from the hospital. The child did not returned to Stella’s care or the father’s.

5 years later, Stella’s daughter still remains in care. For the past 2 years the family has been told they are part of a reunification plan and that there are no child protection concerns. Stella’s family of 3 lives in 3 different counties, with 3 different immigration statuses. Stella’s daughter wants to live with the foster carers and not her parents.

In the last 2,5 years, the family has been supported by the MFSS, has had 6 SW and 6 SWTL moving on and at times no SW, 5 LAB solicitors, 2 parental capacity assessments each and a 3rd one due, various other assessments and meetings in the SWD. Currently access has been reduced to 1,5 hrs/week for the mother and no access for the father, due to conflict between the parents, foster carers and the SW. A plan has been put together to promote the child’s cultural heritage and identity needs without the parents being involved or the MFSS.

5 years on, Tom is still waiting on his Garda Vetting to be conducted and remains hopeful of raising his daughter a proud Congolese, someday soon.
THANK YOU!

Daniela Jurj
MFSS National Coordinator
**New Communities Partnership**
53, Upper Dorset St, Dublin 1

**Phone number:** 01 872 7842

**Contact:** daniela@newcommunities.ie

**Web:** [www.newcommunities.ie](http://www.newcommunities.ie)