Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Ireland: Questions of Racism and Social Work

Alistair Christie

Alistair Christie is Course Tutor on the European Social Work Course at University College, Cork.

Introduction

The arrival of asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland is creating new challenges and opportunities for the social work profession. Since the mid-1990s, Ireland has changed from being a country of emigration to one of immigration. With the rapid growth in the economy, Ireland has become a more attractive destination for returning Irish migrants, immigrants from the EU and USA, as well as refugees and asylum seekers. In this article I describe the position of asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland and the response by social workers. The relationship between the social work profession in Ireland, asylum seekers and refugees needs to be understood in the particular context of racism in Ireland. Therefore, I discuss whether racism takes a particular form in Ireland as suggested by Lentin (2001) and McVeigh (1992). I then identify some of the policy positions taken with regard to asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland and go on to consider the response of the social work profession to this new group of ‘potential clients’. In particular, I discuss the social work services provided to unaccompanied children seeking asylum. Finally, I raise questions about the development of ‘anti-racist’ social work practice in this field.

Racism and processes of racialisation in Ireland

In 1992, McVeigh argued against the common assumption that there is no racism in Ireland. Previously, it had been argued that because of anti-Irish racism, Ireland’s colonial and post-colonial experiences and the relatively low number of black people in Ireland that racism was not prevalent. However, McVeigh (1992) points out that before the high levels of immigration in the late 1990s, there were racialised communities in Ireland. There were approximately 20,000 black people, 3000 Jewish people and 21,000 Travelling people in Ireland in the early 1990s. Therefore, approximately 1 per cent of the Irish population belonged to a racialised community (McVeigh, 1992). Looking further back in Irish history, immigrants to Ireland included a variety of groups including Celts, Vikings, Normans, English, Scottish, Spanish, Huguenots, and Jews (Cullen, 2000). However, racialised groups have largely been excluded within the narrative of the Irish ‘imagined community’. Hence, in recent debates asylum seeker and refugees, racism is paradoxically considered to be both ‘new’ and a ‘part of human nature’ (Lentin, 2001). While new forms of racism and new processes of racialisation have emerged, racism in Ireland is not the consequence of asylum seekers and refugees who have arrived in Ireland since the mid-1990s. Even if Ireland did not include black and ethnic minority communities, racism would still exist. To suggest otherwise would be to blame these communities for racism (McVeigh, 1992). Therefore, theorising racism in Ireland needs to start by problematising Irishness itself and rejecting the prevalent notion of Ireland as a monocultural society (Lentin, 2001).

If racism in Ireland is not ‘new’ or ‘natural’, does it take particular form(s) in Ireland? McVeigh (1992) argues that there are two basic forms of racism in Ireland: one form imported from outside Ireland and the other, endogenous anti-Traveller racism. The former includes racism that has entered Ireland as part of the continuing influence of British culture and policies, and racism that was brought back to Ireland by Irish people who participated in British imperialism and colonialism. Through mass emigration Irish people encountered anti-Irish racism and also came into contact with other racialised groups. McVeigh’s (1992) argument is that the racism that existed in other countries such as the UK, USA and Australia was imported back into Ireland. While anti-colonialism was a key feature of Irish nationalism, it did not always, he suggests, result in the rejection of racism. Rather, nationalism lead to the oppression of particular groups, for example, the anti-Semitism in the early 1900s resulted in the Limerick pogrom (Keogh, 1998).

For McVeigh (1992) racist discourses were also imported into Ireland via the British and American media. Racism in Ireland, he suggests, “has it roots elsewhere and has been reworked in the Irish
context” (1992: p.40). However, he identifies one form of racism, anti-traveller racism, as having its roots in Ireland. Rather than being produced through imperialism and colonialism, anti-traveller racism is based on an ideology that emphasised attachment to the land and locality (sedentarism). Nationalism in Ireland, as elsewhere in Europe, emphasised the connections between ‘the people’ and ‘the motherland’ (MacLaughlin, 1999). Travellers moved within Ireland and crossed national borders and so were often viewed by the settled community as anti-nationalist. Lentin also argues that there is strong connection between nationalism and racism in Ireland. “Irish political élites mustered the people for nation-building by mobilising powerful ethnic memories and self-actualising myths developed in the course of a successful war of independence, and by addressing a homogeneous people (after the succession of Ulster unionists) with a strong sense of a distinctive historical identity” (2001: p.4).

The push for modernity in the twentieth century resulted in nomadism and sedentarism being placed in opposition. Travellers are viewed as “a people without history in any progressive, cumulative, purposeful or nationalistic sense” (MacLaughlin, 1999: p.139, italics in original). The development of nation-states and modernity in Ireland and elsewhere has oppressed Travellers and Traveller cultures (McVeigh, 1997). The formation of nation states produces national borders that reduce the freedom to move and promotes a culture of property ownership resulting in fewer spaces for Travellers to move on to. The arrival of modernity encouraged a new rational ordering of the world. As argued by Bauman:

“In the city of reason, there were to be no winding roads, no cul-de-sacs and no unattended sites left to change - and thus no vagabonds, vagrants or nomads.” (1992: p.xv).

More recently, the modernisation of Ireland with the tourist oriented social construction of ‘the Irish countryside’ and the development of agribusiness, as well as the search for the only available employment, result in the Traveller communities being ‘pushed’ and ‘pulled’ into urban settings.

Sedentarism / anti-Traveller racism in Ireland and its ‘origins’ are contentious areas of debate (Helleiner,1995). The ‘origins’ and consequences of anti-Traveller racism also need to be further analysed in relation to gender, age and class. For example, the existence of Traveller women was obscured within a nationalist discourse of female domestication (Helleiner, 1997) while also highlighted with regard to the welfare of Traveller children whose ‘interests’ were used to promote state settlement policies (Helleiner, 1998). McVeigh’s argument that there are imported and endogenous forms of racism in Ireland is difficult to empirically test and may oversimplify the complex relationships between racism, imperialism, colonialism and nation-building. Also, his analysis does not recognise how other structural factors, such as gender and age, influence the reproduction of racism. However, his analysis provides an important starting point for considering the racialisation of asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland.

Lentin (2001) has developed McVeigh’s work by identifying four discursive processes that are specific to Irish racism. First, the “evocation of Irish cultural authenticity” (p.5) which suggests that a particular and largely fixed Irish culture has been established through anti-colonial and nationalist struggles. The Immigration Control Platform, a small but vocal organisation established in 1998, campaigns for tighter immigration policies and the control of immigration by EU citizens and others into rural Ireland (http://www.immigrationcontrol.org/aims.htm). This organisation argues that a largely fixed Irish culture is now being attacked by immigration from outside the EU and by movement within the EU. The second discursive process identified by Lentin, draws on Ireland’s experience of mass emigration which encourages the framing of current immigration to Ireland as the start of mass immigration. The Irish experience of mass emigration, rather than being used to promote empathy with current asylum seekers and refugees, may encourage fears that current immigration is uncontrollable and will result in ‘floods’ of immigrants ‘pouring’ into Ireland (Lentin, 2001). The third discursive process involves the blaming of immigrants and, in particular asylum seekers and refugees, for racism. Lentin points to the similarities of the arguments used by the Irish government restricting the immigration of Jews immediately after the Second World War and the language currently used in newspapers to argue for the introduction of tighter immigration policies. The racism encountered by the Jewish community is further evidence that racism is not a ‘new’ phenomenon in Ireland (Keogh, 1998). The fourth, discursive process identified by Lentin is that of projection. She argues that Irish people avoid
looking at the failings in Irish society by projecting these same failings onto racialised groups. This may be a contentious argument, but, it does suggest that racism cannot be analysed in isolation from the construction of Irish identity and social processes in Ireland. If McVeigh (1992) and Lentin (2001) are correct that racism in Ireland operates through these specific processes, then the question for social workers is what ‘anti-racist’ strategies can be developed for specifically Irish contexts? Before discussing that question, I first want to describe the current position of asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland and the response of the social work profession.

Asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland

While immigration into Ireland is not a new phenomenon, until the mid-1990s, Ireland was largely a country of emigration. Between the Famine in the mid-to late 1840s and the 1950s, more that 6 million people left Ireland (the most recent national census in 1996, found that approximately 3.6 million people lived in Ireland). Again, during the 1980s, Ireland experienced large-scale emigration with over 200,000 emigrating (Gray, 2000). The major growth in immigration has occurred since the mid-1990s with approximately 250,000 people migrating to Ireland between 1995 and 2000. Half of these immigrants were returning Irish migrants, 38 per cent from the USA and EU and only another 12 per cent from the rest of the world. Mac Éinrí (2001) estimates that only 10 per cent of all immigrants between 1995 and 2000 were asylum seekers. Since the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of refugees was signed by the Irish Government in 1956, approximately 2000 programme refugees have been admitted to Ireland (Fanning, 2000-01). Before 1993, there were less than 50 people per year applying for asylum in Ireland (Cullen, 2000). In 1991 there were 31 applications of asylum made in Ireland, in 1996 there were 1179 applications and in 2000 there were 10,938 applications (Irish Refugee Council, 2001). On November 17th 2000, when the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended) was implemented, some 11,437 individuals were still awaiting a decision from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform on their asylum claims. These asylum seekers originated from 65 different countries, but the majority come from Romania (40%) and Nigeria (34%). Two-thirds of asylum seekers are male and approximately 50 per cent aged between 24 and 32 years (Faughnan & Woods, 2000). One of the ways the government has tried to reduce the length of time asylum seekers have to wait before being assessed is by introducing an ‘accelerated’ or ‘manifestly unfounded’ process of assessing claims for asylum (Mullally, 2001). The UN defines ‘manifestly unfounded’ asylum applications as those which are ‘clearly fraudulent’. However, the Irish government is using broader criteria to deny asylum seekers the right to pursue their application for refugee status. Mullally (2001) found that applications were being defined as ‘manifestly unfounded’ when the decision-makers had no country of origin information. In 97 per cent of the 65 cases investigated by Mullally, the asylum seekers did not have access to legal advice before their assessment interview. This procedure appears to be open to considerable abuse and is inadequate to the task of dealing with the serious nature of asylum applications.

Until the 1996 Refugee Act, the Aliens Act 1936 provided the legal basis for the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees and this was supplemented by Ireland’s international obligations under the 1951 UN Conventions which was administered through an ‘informal’ agreement between the Department of Justice and the United Nations Commission for Refugees. This ‘informal’ arrangement indicated the low priority given by the Irish government to the issues of asylum seekers and refugees until the mid-1990s. The Refugee Act was subsequently amended by the Immigration Act and the Illegal Immigrants (Trafficking ) Act 2000. The former gave the government power to deport non-nationals and detain asylum seekers who fail to gain refugee status. The latter specifies time limits for judicial review and criteria for detention. Between 1996 and 2000, 1,533 individuals were recognised as refugees. In addition, some 2,385 individuals were given ‘leave to remain’ as a result of their constitutional rights as parents of an Irish born child (Fanning, et al., 2001). The Irish constitution provides that a person born on the island of Ireland (including Northern Ireland) has the right to Irish citizenship. Increasingly, the media are suggesting that the number of women asylum seekers giving birth in Ireland has caused increased demands on the health services and concerns have been raised about this means of gaining citizenship (O’Neill, et al., 2001). This situation may soon change as two cases are currently being considered in the High Court, in which the state is seeking to deport the asylum seeking parents of children born in Ireland. The outcome of these cases will have important
impact on asylum seeking parents who are having their application for refugee status assessed or have already failed to gain refugee status (Haughey, 2002a).

The Refugee Act 1996 (as amended) states that refugees are entitled to work, start a business and receive education (including English language courses provided by the Refugee language Support Unit). Refugees have the same rights as Irish citizens to medical services, social services and social welfare benefits. Refugees can also apply for citizenship after three years. Asylum seekers have the right to remain in the state until a decision on whether or not they are recognised as a refugees. It may also be decided that another state is responsible for processing their application. Asylum seekers have very few and increasingly restricted rights and entitlements (Refugee Information Service, 2001). Asylum seekers who made their application for refugee status prior to July 26th 1999 have the right to work (as long as they comply with all asylum regulations) and to receive unemployment and rent allowance. Those who made an asylum application between July 26th 1999 and April 10th 2000 are not entitled to work but can receive rent allowance. Since April 10th 2000, policies of ‘dispersal’ and ‘direct provision’ have come into force. Asylum seekers are initially accommodated in a reception centre in Dublin and then ‘dispersed’ to centres outside the Dublin area. They are given full board (i.e. accommodation and meals) and an allowance of 19.10 Euros per adult and 9.60 per child but are not entitled to work. Parents also receive national rates of child benefit and an addition payment of 25 Euros for children under the age of three. Community welfare officers can also make individual discretionary payments, but there is widespread variation on the levels and type of payments made (Stapleton, 2001).

The policies of dispersal and direct provision have been much criticised, particularly in relation to their impact on asylum-seeking children. Fanning et al. (2001) note that these children:

“were found to experience extreme material deprivation despite the best efforts of their parents who used their own cash allowances to buy necessities such as baby formula, nappies, clothes and non-prescription medicines.” (p.4). They argue that direct provision contravenes the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) and that both parents and children may experience extreme deprivation with, for example;

“Malnutrition amongst expectant mothers, ill health related to diet amongst babies, weight loss amongst children, hunger amongst adults as a result of within household rationing of available resources in an effort to provide for the needs of children and babies.” (Fanning, et al., 2001: p.5).

As well as material deprivation, the policies of dispersal and direct provision produce social isolation. Because they are accommodated in hotels, hostels and other centres, asylum seekers have limited contact with Irish citizens. While the work of voluntary groups such as NASC, The Irish Immigrant Support Centre (http://homepage.eircom.net/~nasc) in Cork and other such non-governmental organisations, helps to breakdown social exclusion, many asylum seekers remain isolated and subject to racism.

Irish government policies are constructed in line with EU agreements on immigration (e.g. the Treaty of Amsterdam, and the Dublin and Schengen Agreements) as well as wider international treaties. However, the Irish government is particularly responsive to any changes in British immigration policies and procedures. The Common Travel Area, which has been in existence since the early 1950s, gives Irish and British citizens the right to freely travel between the two countries without a passport (Meehan, 2000). As a consequence, Ireland was unable to sign the Schengen agreement which allows free travel between specific EU countries, without being prepared to erect border controls with the UK, in particular on the border with Northern Ireland. A North / South land frontier is unachievable for practical as well as political reasons. This is the case not least because those born in Northern Ireland are entitled to Irish citizenship under the Belfast Agreement (1998). Many continental European countries have a national identity card system which helps to monitor movement within and between countries. Ireland and the UK have different legal traditions which protect the rights of the individual and the introduction of national identity cards in the UK and Ireland would be highly controversial (Mac Éinrí, 2002). Within the current agreements between Ireland and the UK, the Irish government seeks to discourage movement of asylum seekers from the UK to Ireland by enforcing equal or less favourable conditions for asylum seekers.

The role of social workers

The close links between welfare, social exclusion
and immigration have been debated since the mid-1980s (Cohen, 1985; Williams, 1987). Welfare states are built on the fundamental contradiction between the potential to be liberating and oppressive. Support is provided to the most vulnerable in society and a fundamental aim of welfare states is to ensure a continuous supply of healthy and educated labour for work and war (Hayes, 2000). The British welfare state produced a workforce to rule over the colonies and its welfare state was strongly influenced by these processes of colonisation (Crosskill, 2000). The ‘civilising’ processes in the colonies that produced the ‘other’ were imported back into European countries, to produce an ‘internal colonisation’ of the working class through the administration of welfare and, in particular, the construction of ‘welfare identities’. The welfare state having been established, has been used as a mechanism for the control of immigration, selectively encouraging and discouraging the arrival and integration of groups and individuals. Social workers have been central to these processes as gatekeepers to particular resources and have reinforced a particular view of the nation (Hayes, 2002). Humphries (2002) argues that the:

“contradictions of the positioning of social workers are clear. Their professional values urge them to help wherever they can, yet they are asked to assess immigration status, on which that help is now dependant.” (p.131).

With the arrival of asylum seekers in Ireland since the mid-1990s, social workers have been increasingly drawn into more explicit ‘policing’ of the internal and external boundaries of the state. In Ireland, the social work profession rapidly expanded in the late 1990s, largely in response to child abuse inquiries and the Catholic church’s withdrawal from providing social services, such as residential care for the learning disabled. However, the number of social workers remains small with approximately 1,528 being employed in 1999 (National Social Work Qualifications Board, 2000) and 83% of these working for the Health Boards. Nevertheless, this relatively small profession has access to material resources and expertise that may benefit asylum seekers. Even these limited services are not always available to asylum seekers in direct provision or to the increasing number of asylum seekers who have had their applications refused and are living ‘illegally’ in the country.

In the mid-1990s asylum seekers first started to appear at Community Care Teams in Dublin, requesting accommodation, food, healthcare and immigration advice. Rather than allocate specific social workers to the asylum seekers, the community care teams responded to their concerns through a duty system. As asylum seekers moved / were moved through the dispersal policies to live in other areas of Ireland, Community Care Teams outside Dublin started to respond to this ‘new’ group of clients. The main concentration of asylum seekers outside Dublin has been in Ennis, County Clare because of its proximity to Shannon airport (over 550 asylum seekers from more the 30 countries now live in Ennis (Ni Eilí, 2001).

Health Boards have particular responsibilities for unaccompanied children seeking asylum i.e. individuals “under the age of 18 years of age who are outside of their country of origin and separated from both parents or previous legal/customary care giver” (Irish Refugee Council, 2001, p.9). The majority of children seek asylum in Dublin. In 2000, there were 300 unaccompanied children applying for asylum and in the first 7 months of 2001, 425 unaccompanied children applied for asylum in Ireland (King, 2001). In 2000, 155 applicants were from Nigeria, 28 from Romania and 20 from Sierra Leone. Other countries of origin include Algeria, Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (King, 2001). Unaccompanied children are not placed in ‘direct provision’ but receive normal weekly social benefit payments and are placed in hostels, B&Bs, residential care or foster care. After concern was raised that adults were claiming to be under the age of 18, a medical test has been introduced to test the age of asylum seekers. There is concern about accuracy of this test, but its use in extreme cases has been accepted by the Irish UNHCR representative (Haughey, 2002b).

Once immigration officers and/or the Refugee Applications Commissioner have identified an unaccompanied child seeking asylum, they are required under the 1996 Refugee Act to refer the child to the local Health Board. The Health Board are then responsible under the 1991 Child Care Act for the provision of social services and meeting the accommodation, medical and financial needs of the child (King, 2001). The Health Board decides whether an application should be made on behalf of the child. To meet the appropriate needs of the child, social workers interview the child to establish a social history and circumstances. These interviews and the decision whether to make an application for refugee status, draw social workers into the immigration assessment process. It is likely
that records of these interviews could be used in court cases determining the immigration status of the child.

Social workers are responsible for arranging accommodation and determining whether the child has parent(s) or guardians in Ireland. They also refer all children to a medical unit for examination. A court order needs to be obtained for children under the age of 16 to receive a non-emergency medical examination. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) requires that unaccompanied children should have a medical examination. O’Neill et al. (2001) argue that there are too few public health nurses to provide an adequate service and that the lack of interpreters often make examinations problematic. The lack of interpreters also creates difficulties for social workers attempting to support the children making applications for asylum. Inevitably, social workers have a role in explaining immigration procedures to the children. While social workers can offer support and guidance to unaccompanied children, they may not have the expertise to offer adequate or impartial advice on the application for asylum. There is no requirement in law, policy or social work professional guidelines that they should have this knowledge.

The UNHCR Guidelines (1997) recommend that a guardian or adviser is allocated to each child to offer impartial advice and advocate on their behalf. This service is not provided in Ireland and the limited number of social workers working in this area suggests that only a minimal service is provided by the social work profession to most unaccompanied children. Research in 1999 by Mac Neice and Almirall (1999) found that most unaccompanied children had contact with social workers, but some children had not had any contact. The same research found that some of the children were inappropriately housed with adult asylum seekers of other nationalities. Services have improved since 1999, with most children under the age of 12 being placed in foster care and many teenage asylum seekers being accommodated in residential care. Two new residential homes for unaccompanied children are expected to open in 2002 (King, 2001). In addition, a specialised social work team has been established to work with unaccompanied children seeking asylum (O’Neill, 2001).

Under Article 22 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), ratified by Ireland in 1992, refugee children and children seeking refugee status are entitled to special protection. This applies to all children whether unaccompanied or accompanied by a parent / guardian. UNHCR (1997) Guidelines on Polices and Procedures in Dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum also recommend that children should be assisted in tracing their family members whether in the children’s country of origin or any other country. Voluntary family reunion is advocated as in the child’s best interest. Again, the small number of social workers employed to work with asylum seeking children in Ireland result in the UN and UNHCR recommendations remaining aspirational rather than everyday reality. To reduce the uncertainty for young asylum seekers the Irish Refugee Council (2001) recommends that all unaccompanied children claiming asylum should have their applications prioritised and processed within six months. If the application is not processed within this time, the Council recommends that children should be granted ‘leave to remain’ in Ireland. In addition, they recommend that a legal guardian should be assigned to each child to ensure that their social and legal rights are protected and decisions are to be taken in their ‘best interest’.

Possible responses by the social work profession to racism, refugees and asylum seekers in Ireland

The Irish government has just launched Know Racism - The National Anti-Racism Awareness Programme (www.knowracism.ie). The programme aims to “increase our knowledge and awareness of racism and to help create the conditions that make it difficult for racism to exist here”. The programme brings together a wide variety of organisations and funding to support local anti-racist projects. The National Social Work Qualifications Board’s requirements for qualification uses similar language to the Know Racism campaign, stating that:

“social work students should have: ... an awareness of the structural and other causes of the marginalisation of groups in society due to difference ... an understanding of the impact of stigma and discrimination on grounds of difference ... an understanding of the need to promote policies and practices which are humane, non-discriminatory and inclusive” (1999: p.17).

The Know Racism programme recognises that racism exists in Ireland and draws on well-tried methods of racism awareness to counter racist
behaviour. While it is difficult to criticise this approach, the analysis provided earlier by McVeigh (1992) and Lentin (2001) suggests that it cannot be assumed that awareness and understanding of racism and discrimination always results in development of anti-racism. The recent Citizen Traveller Campaign, which ran from 1999-2001, and provided information on the Traveller Community as Irish citizens, appears to have had little impact on the general public’s racist attitudes towards the Traveller Community (Holland, 2001).

Having argued that awareness and understanding are not enough, a critical understanding of sedentarism / anti-traveller racism appears to be a good starting point for social work training in Ireland. Rather than focusing on racism as a ‘new’ phenomena, it might be more helpful to examine the history of the social work profession in relation to the Traveller community. What have been the successes and failures of providing anti-oppressive social work services to this ethnic group? Perhaps, dialogue between the Traveller Community and the social work profession might provide opportunities for the development of specific and local anti-racist strategies. A further starting point might be to examine anti-Irish racism against Irish communities living outside Ireland. Again, rather than a focus on racism as a new phenomena, a focus on anti-Irish racism in Britain might help to explain the relationships between race, colonialism and nationalism as part of the integrated history of Ireland and the practices of Irish people. Before developing new anti-racist strategies, it might be helpful to consider why the social work profession has only limited success in developing policies and practices with existing racialised groups.

Alongside emphasising the continuity of racism in Ireland and the social work profession’s history of responses to racism, there is a need for social workers to develop appropriate services to meet the specific needs of asylum seekers and refugees. The social work profession, in Ireland as elsewhere, has a history of being reactive rather than proactive in the developing such services. Humphries (2000) identifies three particular resources for social workers in challenging oppression: valuing subjugated knowledges; developing an interactive universalism; and internationalism. Social workers are often involved in bureaucratic processes of identifying and labelling the ‘other’. A potentially less oppressive approach is to value the knowledge of groups which are discriminated against in society. This would involve social workers proactively developing dialogues with racialised groups and exposing their practices to critique by these groups. The challenge is to be prepared to negotiate and re-negotiate knowledge and values rather than to assume that they are fixed. Humphries (2000) argues that there is a need to develop both universal services and services that respond to differences within groups. Lentin (2001) argues that an analysis of racism in Ireland needs to include a deconstruction of ‘Irishness’. This might involve the ways in which assumptions of Irishness ‘in common’ gloss over the many differences that exist between Irish citizens and the fact that existing services recognise at least some particularities. Lastly, Humphries argues that social workers can work across national boundaries and have contact with groups in asylum seekers’ countries of origin and groups who are critical of social workers’ roles in supporting internal and external immigration policies. As the social work profession has been closely linked to the nation-building project, it is perhaps time that social workers helped to develop new visions of a post-national welfare state that promotes new forms of social solidarity.

References


Haughey, N. (2002b) ‘Legal cases will test immigrant
parents’ status’, *The Irish Times*, 19.3.02.
Holland, K. (2001) ‘Campaign on attitudes to Travellers fails to make impression’, *The Irish Times*, 17.7.01.