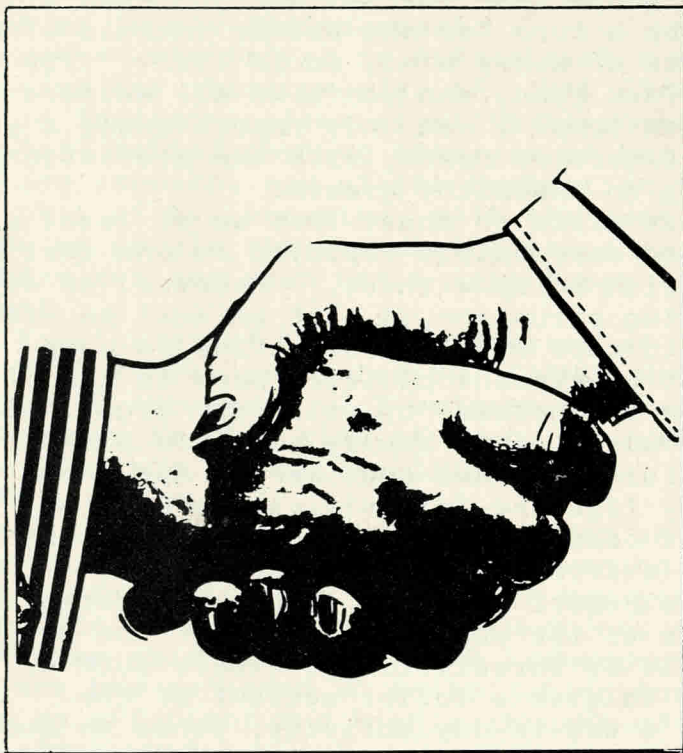


IRISH WELFARE BUREAU
HAMMERSMITH, LONDON.



TWELFTH ANNUAL
REPORT
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INTRODUCTION

When are we going to be able to say that it was a bad year for welfare? When will there be a turn for the better instead of more problems of every kind, as in 1982? The signs don't look good, and so (like all welfare organisations) I can only report sadly a year of ever-greater needs, with the statistics showing an unhealthy growth.

This claim or boast that we at least are more and more busily employed is one that we would wish to do without. However, an ever-worsening situation is what we must be prepared to cope with for some time to come. Present Government policies seem to take for granted an increase of voluntary organisations while human beings scurry about in all directions trying to make ends meet. For those already fighting for survival before the present economic crisis the outlook is bleak in the extreme.

The Report outlines in general terms some aspects of the work undertaken at the Bureau. It would be unrealistic to expect such a report to give a fuller account of the Bureau's day-to-day activity, since so much of what is done is a matter of human involvement and personal contacts; the sincere and continued concern that goes side-by-side with any material aid given, and often has more lasting value.

In this, my twelfth Report, I am more convinced than ever that the Bureau is a focal point, often the ONLY one, in the lives of a great number of our callers, irrespective of any tangible help given.

The bush telegraph communications that we receive in times of emergency are a clear indication of this - someone very ill in a skipper, the need for a visit to a hospital, sometimes a call to identify a "remains" or to speak up for someone for a job or in the Police-court.

One person who helped to create such a sense of belonging for these people, SR. JANE FRANCES, retired in September after eight devoted years. She has left behind lasting memories of her loyalty and concern, and of the dedication that was all part of her vocation, with the many thousands of people she met during those years. We all miss her and wish her a very happy retirement.

The Provincial of the Irish Sisters of Charity very kindly appointed SR. CARMEL McGOWAN as Sr. Jane's successor. I welcome her and she is no stranger to this kind of work, as during the late 60's she was at the Irish Centre, Birmingham.

On 6th July we had a large gathering in St. Augustine's Club for a presentation evening to wish SR. ROSARIO NOLAN Bon Voyage for her year's sabbatical in Rome. During the function, many tributes were paid to her for the tremendous success she had achieved in establishing Austin House as an efficient and highly thought-of Young Men's Hostel.

In September SR. NANCY O'SULLIVAN of the Kerry Mercy Sisters replaced Sr. Rosario. We were fortunate once again, and in welcoming her I would like to thank her Superiors for their co-operation.

Besides welcoming two new colleagues, it is also my pleasant task to acknowledge the presence of two people who have formed part of the team since the Bureau's beginning. For their invaluable contribution, my thanks to CHRIS WILLISON and KAY MAZUR.

No introduction to this report would be complete without my recognition of all the people who help the Bureau with their generous giving of time and effort - those many volunteer helpers whose role is so vital in bazaars, jumble sales, dances, prize bingo, barbecues and furniture deliveries, and in giving literally tons of clothing.

The Bureau received annual Grants from the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham (£4,250) and from the Committee for Emigrant Services of the Irish Government (£3,753). These financial aids are much appreciated, and my thanks to both sources for their continued support.

Brian Lawlor OSA

SOCIAL WORKERS REPORT

The unemployment problem is once again reflected in Hammersmith Irish Welfare Bureau's Statistics for 1982. The pressure of work not only continued unabated but actually increased. This is clearly evident in the fact that 5,488 Interviews were given in the Bureau, an increase of 1,020 interviews (on the 1981 figures).

The number of clients newly arrived from Ireland, mercifully, continued to be small although there was a marginal increase. The ages of the majority of these clients ranged from 17 to 23 years. Many of these were accommodated in Austin House - a Hostel owned by the Bureau or in Hostels for young Irish men provided by other Irish Agencies. Accommodation was also provided for women and girls but the number seeking such accommodation was much smaller than the number of men.

The largest group of clients dealt with continued to be the Single Unattached men who have no permanent home of their own in Britain. These are usually referred to as the Single Homeless. Men who had a good life style while they were able to find employment with good wages when work was readily available in the Construction Industry, have now to face the comparative poverty of having to live on Social Security Benefits, and as they can no longer afford good lodgings are faced with the indignity of having to sleep in shared sleeping accommodation (often 4 or 5 to a room) in Hostels or so called bed and breakfast. A bed is often the only furniture provided and this costs on average £30 per week. They generally have to spend the daytime walking the streets.

Some clients who cannot bear to sleep in shared accommodation or Hostels live in old disused houses in which they find some privacy. A minority seek company and solace by joining drinking schools in public parks often ending up as "Meths" drinkers. These eventually drop down to the real "down and out" situation.

Accommodation at our expense was provided for many of the newly arrived clients to this area. The provision of 4-5 nights accommodation is also often necessary when people lose their employment and accommodation and need an address from which to claim Social Security Benefit. The cost of this service for 1982 (£4,209. 40) is some indication of the extent of the problem. Again this year we wrote to Ireland for numerous Birth Certificates to help clients sort themselves out with the Department of Health and Social Security. Take away meals were provided in a local Cafe for those who were in need of a meal (£1,809. 85). In addition to this £316. 60 was spent on pre-paid bus tickets and travel vouchers to take clients to interviews or to live-in work.

The amount of money clients receive from Department of Health & Social Security Benefit barely covers the cost of Bed/Breakfast accommodation and meals which must be bought in Cafes. The cost of such meals is quite high so there is very little left from which to provide clothing or footwear. There was then a growing demand for the Wardrobe Service provided by the Bureau. Through the goodness of many supporters a regular supply of used suits, trousers, jackets, suits, underwear, socks and shoes is maintained. Also dressing-gowns, pyjamas and slippers, very necessary items when clients are in need of Hospital treatment.

Furniture and household goods were given to clients who due to having a chronic illness or disablement qualified under the Housing Act for Council accommodation in flats or bedsitters. Families were also helped with clothing, furniture and when in need of food they were given grocery parcels. The Bureau spent £1,699. 09 on groceries and on keeping our clothing store stocked with shoes, socks and underwear.

Through contact with the Bureau many clients built up a strong lasting relationship with the staff. Through this they are helped to come to terms with personal problems. They call when they are physically or mentally ill and are guided to the particular Services they need. They are visited if they are admitted to Hospital. Clients who go to prison usually write to us and if they so wish they are visited in prison and supported in Court appearances.

Several of our clients died lonely and sometimes tragic deaths in Squats, Lodgings, Flats and in the Street. The families of some took responsibility for their burial and either took the bodies back to Ireland or authorised and paid the cost of burial in Hammersmith Cemetery. Those who had no relatives to take responsibility were buried at the expense of the Bureau with Requiem Mass in St. Augustines Church. The cost of burials for 1982 was £1,060. 00. Two of those buried were women. One an elderly Irishwoman living alone, who died suddenly and alone in her flat. The other was a comparatively young mother of a one parent family.

Work with Irish families and with isolated elderly Irish persons in the settled community continued to be part of the work done by the Bureau. Many families are self referred as

they feel happier to come to an Irish Agency especially if there is an Irish dimension to their problem. The Social Services and other helping Agencies refer Irish families who they feel would benefit from contact with people of their own nationality especially in cases of bereavement, longterm illness or when they need material help not available from any statutory source. Several grants (£522. 81) were given in answer to appeals for financial help towards holidays, rent, gas and light arrears.

Advice and information is another aspect of our work. Many people call to seek advice and counsel on some personal, mental or material problem such as housing rights. Irish people either personally or through other helping Agencies request information on the Welfare and Health provisions, Social Assistance, accommodation and social life in Ireland. This information is generally sought by people who are considering returning to live in Ireland. Information re: Benefits available in Britain is also sought and given.

Four persons were repatriated this year costing £97. 80. The total amount spent directly on Welfare in 1982 came to a staggering £9,717. 55. A special word of appreciation is due to Fr. Lawlor and our voluntary workers who work so hard each year to raise this money.

I have often thought that perhaps the greatest contribution the Bureau makes to the Welfare of the clients is that it provides "A Place" such as Paul Tournier discusses in his book "A Place for you". The Place may be a very simple set up, but it provides the emotional and psychological support which helps persons to grow and to adjust to the effects of mental illness, adverse conditions or traumatic experiences. It offers a focal point in a

disorganised existence which gives to clients an opportunity to release strength which will help them to cope in spite of adversity. Long may Hammersmith Irish Welfare Bureau remain such a place.

The Bureau's involvement in the work of the Community Care Sub-Committee of the Federation of Irish Societies continued. The Committee is very concerned about the hardship which unemployment has brought to a large section of the Irish Community in Britain and continues to encourage member Societies to consider the need for Community care in their local areas. A training day was organised in October, 1982 for the Community Care Officers and was also attended by the Professional Social Workers from the Welfare organisations within the Federation.

The team spirit of the Director and staff of the Bureau and the support of our voluntary helpers made it possible to cope with the volume of work undertaken in 1982. A very sincere thank you to Fr. Lawlor, Kay and Chris for their continued co-operation. It is also a great source of strength and support to work as part of the Team of Irish Chaplains in Britain. This movement launched by the Church to bring Spiritual and material aid to Irish people needing help was the spearhead of Community Care among the Irish Community in Britain. May God continue to bless all involved in this apostolate.

Sr. Jane Francis. I.S.C.

Sr. Carmel McGowan. I.S.C.

(Social Workers)

Postscript: I retired from my position as social worker in the Bureau in late September,

1982. The Bureau was fortunate in that I was replaced by Sister Carmel McGowan, a member of our Congregation who is also a qualified Social Worker and has had many years experience in Community Care among the Irish Community in Birmingham. I wish her every success in Hammersmith. I would also like to thank all my friends and colleagues in the community care field for all their help and support during my eight years in Hammersmith and especially for their generosity and good wishes on my retirement.

Beir Buadh is Beannacht.

Sister Jane Frances.

AUSTIN HOUSE

Austin House continues to offer accommodation to twelve men and is constantly fully occupied, in fact, if we had another bed space we would gladly use it. The majority of men that use it are Irish.

Last September I came in to a well-established, wonderfully organised hostel, so all that was left to me to do was to try to keep it going effectively, efficiently and caringly as Sr. Rosario had so successfully done for a long time. Being only a short time here it would be impossible for me to give any kind of detailed report.

Each person here has his own unique characteristics, each with his own strong and weak points. Sometimes the weaker traits come to the surface and are tough to cope with especially if one is on his own. To help them through most times, all that is needed is someone to listen to them, someone to show a bit of understanding, concern and support and encourage them to face up to reality, to face life again.

But when you are helpless and alone life continually knocks you down and it takes a lot of patience with ourselves and others to renew our self respect and self worth. A lot of us don't know what it's like to be hungry, vulnerable, rootless, caught in a structure which gives little hope of escape.

In a beautiful house like this the basic necessity of accommodation is the most easily provided for, but it's the other, deepfelt sentiments like loneliness, rejection, depression, lack of contentment and sometimes misery, that become unbearable and impossible to cope with. For some, our only value in

life is the work we do and if we are deprived of that, deprived of being able to express and re-create ourselves we have very little left and are inclined to just drift along.

How does one give a person a meaning in life, a reason for living when all hope is gone? Our world is too big and the problems too complex to go it alone any longer. We need one another, to befriend, encourage and show that we love and care for one another.

Thank God I get lots of support, especially from the Staff at the Bureau and all the anonymous help around me.

Sr. Nancy O'Sullivan.

ANALYSIS OF REFERRALS

Total number of callers dealt with in 1982=5488*

*This figure includes)	A. Cases carried forward from previous years	696
	B. New cases referred in 1982	772
	C. Repeat Callers	4,020
		5,488

This case load entailed	1980	1981	1982
Domiciliary Visits	230	232	225
Hospital Visits	80	134	115
Prison Visits	11	25	20
Supportive Appearance in Court	8	1	1
Telephone Enquiries	2460	2105	2025
Escorts to Trains, etc.	15	12	4
Ongoing Supportive Work	512	469	484
Number of Persons Repatriated	4	8	7
Number of Burials	6	2	4

NEW REFERRALS

Age Groups

15-17	18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
6	24	90	115	206	201	96	54

	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>
Males	609	651	669
Females	172	139	123
Families	23	47	24

Types of Problems of New Referrals

New Arrivals from Ireland	100	57	60
Financial	329	505	530
Accommodation	304	306	269
Employment	32	54	52
Information	40	24	16
Advice	42	46	32
Material Aid	243	237	243
Personal	16	25	19
Marital	27	14	21
General Welfare	17	21	10
Emotional & Mental	13	27	15
Ex-Offenders	20	15	30
Alcoholics, Drug addiction, gambling	37	45	27
Pregnant and unsupported mothers	6	15	2
Application for repatriation	16	11	7

SOURCES OF REFERRALS OF FIRST USERS

	1980	1981	1982
Alternatives	-	-	30
Apostleship of the Sea	-	-	1
C.A.B.	1	2	3
Centre Point	11	15	8
Child Guidance	-	-	1
Clergy	124	105	120
CSS Prisoners	-	1	3
D.H.S.S.	1	1	1
D.R.O.	8	2	1
Friends/Clients	207	324	345
Good Neighbour Centre	6	-	3
G.P.	-	-	1
ILEA	-	-	2
Irish Organisations	11	1	12
Job Centre	-	1	4
LBH Housing Aid Centre	-	1	2
Medical Social Workers	-	2	3
Nazareth House	-	5	9
Personal Application	100	235	155
Piccadilly Advice Centre	-	6	2
Police	-	-	3
Probation Service	-	5	6
Riverpoint	-	8	18
Salvation Army Welfare	-	-	2
Samaritans	-	-	1
Simon Community	-	1	2
Single Homeless Project	-	2	2
Threshold	-	-	3
<u>Boroughs</u>			
Hammersmith & Fulham	8	15	21
Islington	1	1	3
Kensington & Chelsea	4	3	2
Lambeth	-	-	2
Wandsworth	6	-	1

PLACES OF ORIGIN OF NEW REFERRALS

<u>Counties of Ireland</u>		1980	1981	1982
Antrim		26	29	36
Armagh		5	7	6
Carlow		4	3	1
Cavan		4	11	3
Clare		16	15	11
Cork		79	61	76
Derry		16	14	14
Donegal		25	24	27
Down		4	18	12
Dublin		76	86	89
Fermanagh		3	8	2
Galway		29	33	37
Kerry		28	28	25
Kildare		15	10	12
Kilkenny		5	7	7
Leitrim		3	2	8
Limerick		27	40	33
Longford		5	8	8
Louth		5	4	5
Mayo		19	31	24
Meath		6	6	8
Monaghan		7	5	4
Offaly		4	5	3
Roscommon		10	9	12
Sligo		9	16	8
Tipperary		30	46	24
Tyrone		15	9	17
Waterford		17	26	19
Westmeath		6	18	12
Wexford		13	16	6
Wicklow		5	5	5
County not known		19	6	5
<u>Other Nationalities</u>				
England		121	109	130
Scotland		42	38	70
Wales		14	12	10
Other Countries of Origin		20	22	23