

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2012

Celebrating 40 Years of
“Supporting the Irish Community,
solving problems, bringing people together”





Volunteer Training with Mary Kelly and Ann Laffey



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Registered Charity No. 1053278 Registered Company 313772

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The Irish Support and Advice Service (ISAS), provides a culturally sensitive service to meet the needs of the Irish Community in London by providing advice and support on social, welfare, law and health matters. ISAS services are independent, confidential and accessible to all people of Irish descent.

Aims

- Improve the quality of life of the Irish who live in London & need ISAS services
- Reach out to the most vulnerable, isolated, older members of the community
- Provide social and recreational meetings to reduce isolation
- Ensure clients can make informed decisions to access rights and entitlements
- Provide a service that is efficient, comprehensive, independent, free and confidential
- Publicise the work of ISAS in the community at large

PHOTOGRAPHS OF 40TH ANNIVERSARY



Veronica Power, Dr Mary Robinson, Fr Brian Lawlor founder of ISAS, Barbara Naughton



INTRODUCTION

The Irish Support and Advice Service (ISAS), is a registered charity which was first set up in 1970 to provide core support and advice to the Irish community in the Borough of Hammersmith. Since then, in one form or another, ISAS has been working to identify and meet the culturally specific needs of the Irish community in the borough and is now firmly established as a key Irish advice and advocacy agency operating in five London boroughs, with clients accessing our wide range of services. ISAS currently operates from the Irish Cultural Centre, in Hammersmith, West London.

- Over 1700 people accessed ISAS services in 2011 with 2100 attendances to the advice and advocacy service (representing 1101 people) and ISAS has over 600 members across the eight pensioner groups. We work in over five London boroughs and ISAS has over 350 people attending on a weekly basis with over 16000 attendances on a yearly basis.
- As one measure of how effective the service is, we know that for every pound received in funding in 2011, we were able to generate over £6 in previously unclaimed benefits for our clients. ISAS raised over £1,258,702 pounds in extra income during 2011.
- ISAS has developed a proven track record for delivering high quality, value-for-money services to the Irish community.
- ISAS involves volunteers in the planning and running of services which value life skills and experience; -we work with over 40 volunteers each year.
- Independent research confirms that support services for the elderly, such as those we provide, can result in improved morale, better mental and physical health, more fulfilled lives, and thus the greater likelihood of people remaining independent for longer.

ISAS contributes to the collection of data aimed at identifying the changing and unmet needs of the Irish community, as well as to developing strategies to provide relevant, alternative services that can best meet those needs.

It is our direct experience that many who came here in the 1940's, 50's and 60's, do not engage with mainstream services. Usually they become isolated because they lack support networks of family and friends, and are often in poor health. By tracking health changes amongst our own clients, we are able to identify changing needs and develop an additional range of appropriate services, as well as continuing to meet existing needs. Such developments depend on our securing the necessary funding, and this too is a major objective of our business plan. ISAS must meet changing needs, while continuing to draw in people who do not access or are overlooked by other service providers.

It is very pleasing to be able to report again that the Irish Support and Advice Service is in a strong position. Notably, we have won two three-year grants, the first longer term awards we have received for some time, one from the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham Council, the other from the City Bridge Trust. These awards have enabled us to expand the service, and are being used to introduce innovations in our outreach service in line with changing needs of some clients. The length of the grants will enable us to develop sustainable new methods of operation as well as achieve the desired impact set out in the goals determined for these projects. Other funding has matched the levels of previous years, so that we have been able to ensure that existing and other new clients are offered the advocacy and support they need.

Funding gets mentioned first because without it we would not be able to operate. However, it is important to look closely at what we achieve with our grants. Elsewhere in this report you will find details of the number of people who have come to us, as well as clients' stories, where the specific needs of an individual and the outcome that ISAS achieved for them are described. The stories and the statistics are evidence for the impact that we have in helping people access the services that they need and which bring improvements to their lives. As the stories make clear, a better quality of life may come from new housing, an allowance to pay for care, but also from a new group of friends and the social contact that they bring. We are confident that the service continues to help overcome isolation, vulnerability and need, in line with our objectives.

During the last year, then, ISAS has provided a much-needed and appreciated service to the Irish community in the boroughs where we operate. We monitor our work, and the levels of client satisfaction are high. The numbers of people who turn to us for assistance are still growing, and the range of problems that they bring is as wide as ever, covering health, housing, welfare, and being alone. For some time we have been aware of a growing proportion of clients who are housebound, and one of the ways in which we are adapting the service is to ensure that we can meet the needs of those who cannot, for whatever reason, leave their homes.

The capacity that the service has to adapt and develop new modes of working is essential to our mission, and the coming year will challenge us to show how successfully we can do this. The future of the Irish Cultural Centre, where we have had our offices for over sixteen years, is – at the time of writing – in doubt, and, whatever happens, it seems certain that we will have to move to new premises in 2012. In addition, over recent months we have been exploring the possibility of merging with the welfare service of the London Irish Centre in Camden. The aim of merging the two services is to strengthen the provision that we both make, to open up new possibilities in fundraising, and, as far as we can, to ensure the future of the service for our clients all over London. The precedents for this kind of merger are good, and the outcomes beneficial, but, of course, this change will demand commitment, effort and trust from all involved. As soon as it is appropriate, we will hold a General Meeting to decide whether to proceed with the merger.

continues over

On behalf of all in ISAS, clients, staff and Board, I give most sincere thanks to all those bodies listed below as well as individual donors who fund our work. ISAS continues to give excellent value for that support, and will continue to strive to ensure this is so. The funds provide the means to make real improvements in people's lives.

To the staff and director of ISAS, to volunteers, and to fellow members of the Board I give personal thanks for their commitment, enthusiasm, ideas and debate, input and effort which go to make this a successful, caring and learning organisation. There is no time to rest on our laurels but we can look round, see we are doing well and go on to achieve even more.

Dermot Murphy
Chair, Irish Charitable Trust



HRH Prince of Wales with Dermot Murphy, Chair of the Trustees and Mike McGing, Director

Pensioners Group Brighton Trip



Wednesday 12th June
Tickets £10 to include coach & lunch
Contact Mary or Ann 0208 741 0466
to book your place



Line Dance Evening



Saturday 30th July
at
St Augustine's Hall
Fulham Palace Rd

Tickets £5.00
Contact Mary Kelly for details
0208 741 0466



A culturally specific service such as ISAS is unique in its nature, real evidence for the idea that one approach does not suit all, and that is why our approach to service delivery for the Irish Community is so successful in reaching out to those often overlooked by mainstream services. We are passionate about the Irish Community and going the extra mile to ensure that both statutory services and entitlements are received by the Irish Community, and to that end ISAS works proactively with a number of partner organisations.

Small charities with very limited resources require a strong board of trustees with a wide range of skills and abilities, professional, flexible and hard-working staff as well as committed volunteers to manage, guide, and develop their services. ISAS has these, and they enable us to compete with larger organisations in these difficult and competitive times. The contribution they make is essential for ISAS to meet its aim of delivering a cohesive and effective service.

There are a number of challenges for ISAS and the Irish voluntary sector. It is my hope that the Irish sector can become stronger by working closer in partnership and by providing a platform for one voice which will further enable the Irish Community to have equal access to services and funding, as they are so often overlooked by both statutory and grant-making services in the United Kingdom. A phrase used by many Irish charities is the "forgotten Irish", and ISAS sets out to make sure that this does not apply to its clients.

On a very positive note, funding awarded to us by Hammersmith & Fulham Council and from the City Bridge Trust, in addition to our long term funder, the Irish Government, has enabled ISAS to make a substantial difference with the introduction of new projects and services. The generosity of other bodies including the Ireland Fund of Great Britain and St John Southworth Fund has enabled ISAS to maintain and develop its services.

It is particularly pleasing that ISAS reached the milestone of its 40th Anniversary in 2010 and continues to play a key role in the Irish community across London. The number of people we support each year through our information and advocacy outreach service and through our pensioner groups continues to increase. Once again last year we raised over a million pounds in extra income for clients. New funding has enabled us to increase the number of Irish Pensioners' Groups that we coordinate, with the consequent increase in yearly attendances. Our pensioner groups help to reduce isolation, and improve confidence and health; they specifically encourage the members to take an active role in the planning and running of these services, which aims to ensure sustainability for the future.

ISAS has maintained its track record for delivering high quality, value-for-money services to the Irish community and has exceeded performance targets and expectations with the successful help of key volunteers. However, with limited resources available, we are not always able to do what we want to and believe is necessary.

Finally, I would like to highlight my special thanks to the board of ISAS, staff and volunteers for all their hard work, commitment, enthusiasm and humour over the last twelve months. This has enabled ISAS to continue to expand and develop services, improving the lives of so many needy and isolated older Irish.

Mike McGing
Director

TREASURER'S REPORT

ISAS' financial position remains stable, with a continued ability to fund activities from our various income sources.

In the year to the end of March 2011, the scope of ISAS' operations has remained similar compared to the previous year and outgoings are consequently similar to the prior period.

The financial goal for 2009-10 stated at the last AGM was the further diversification of funding sources. This goal has been met emphatically with the proportion of funding from the Irish Government falling from over 90% in 2008-9 to less than 70% in 2010-11.

The major funding source continues to be the Irish Government's Emigrant Support Programme, but new funding from the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham and City Bridge are highly significant. Other funding sources such as the Ireland Fund of Great Britain and St John Southworth Fund have made valuable contributions to ISAS projects and to the organisation.

St Raphael's Church and Our Lady of Fatima (White City) have supported ISAS pensioner groups with support in kind with free hall hire, which has been a great help to enable us to run groups that would not otherwise be financially viable.

The summarised financial information contains extracts from the Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31st March 2011. Our total income for the year to 31st March 2011 was £237,055 and our expenditure was £215,629 compared to £189,326 and £195,139 respectively for the prior period. ISAS at this time has five full-time and two part-time members of staff in addition to a number of unpaid volunteers to whom the Board remain ever grateful.

Our accounts indicate that ISAS continues to operate a lean and cost-effective service. For every £1 received by ISAS the Service generates over £6 of income for clients in the form, for example, of pension that may be owing to them, or benefits to which they are entitled.

David Perkins
Treasurer

Active Ageing Project (Hammersmith & Fulham Council)



The Active Ageing Mind and Body project aims to enable elderly Irish residents of Hammersmith and Fulham to make informed decisions, address social isolation and improve health and wellbeing. This has been enabled through the provision of advocacy and advice, membership of pensioner groups, development of a befriending service and recruitment of volunteers. National and local health studies have established a strong link between social isolation and poor physical and mental health. Research has established that older people respond more positively to a culturally sensitive intervention.

- In the first year the project has provided advice and advocacy support to 266 older Irish residents of Hammersmith and Fulham (many of whom have multiple support needs).
- An additional £100,975.62 in extra benefits was raised for Irish clients in the borough
- 103 residents are registered members of our pensioner groups with 95 members attending clubs on a weekly basis.
- A survey conducted in August 2011 found that 88% of those who attend the social clubs reported that as a result of participating in the activities provided at the clubs, their health and wellbeing levels have either been maintained or improved.
- 20 older Irish residents receive wide ranging support from 17 befrienders.
- 14 older Hammersmith and Fulham residents undertake a range of volunteering roles including befriending, social club support and administrative duties.

Older Londoners (City Bridge Trust)



Funding from the City Bridge Trust has enabled ISAS to extend Pensioner Services throughout West and South London through social activities and health events. This has enabled a reduction in isolation, improved health and encouraging active ageing through volunteering. Project aims include:

- Enable older people live healthier independent lives
- Involve older people in the management, planning and delivery of projects
- Reduce isolation of older people & improve confidence through participation and volunteering

ISAS Outcomes and Partnerships

- The project has enabled three new pensioner groups to be launched and capacity within the five existing groups has been increased, resulting in a seventy-five percent increase in membership during 2011. ISAS supports eight pensioner groups over five London boroughs.
- ISAS supports over 350 people on a weekly basis with over 16000 attendances on a yearly basis. Many of the groups that we support have waiting lists and are testimony to the demand and success of our groups.

- We have over 24 active group members supporting the running of the groups which supports sustainability. ISAS ensures that the groups are client led and involves members through focus groups, client questionnaires and through elected members.
- “My Time Active”, who provide a range of health-related services on behalf of Hammersmith and Fulham Council, work in partnership with ISAS to provide advice and support to club members in improving diet and exercise in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

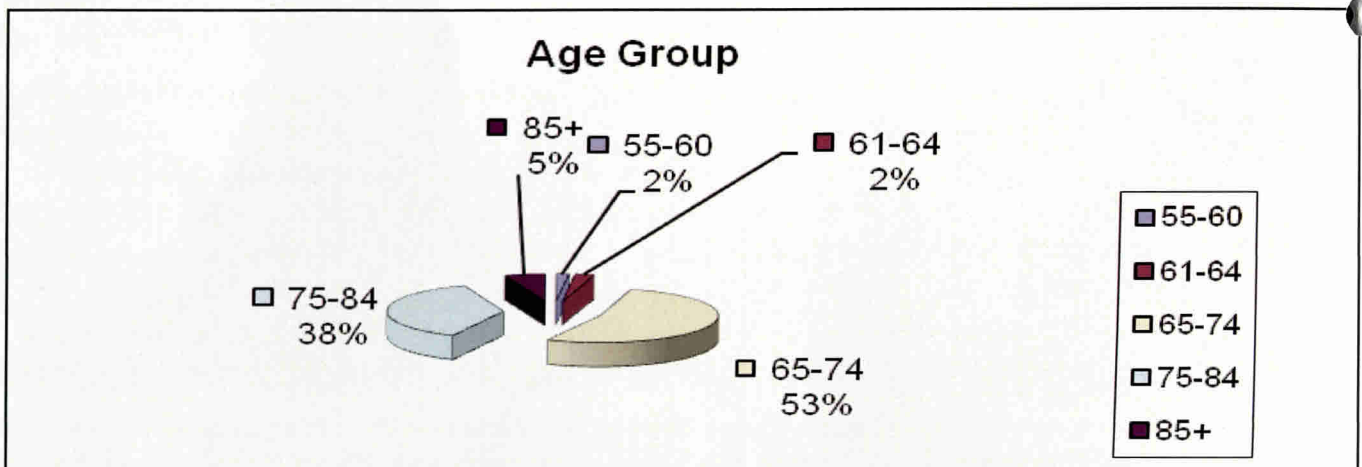


Chart A - As you can see with the above breakdown - 96% of members attending our pensioner groups are between 65-85 plus years old (ISAS surveyed five pensioner groups - 242 people in total).

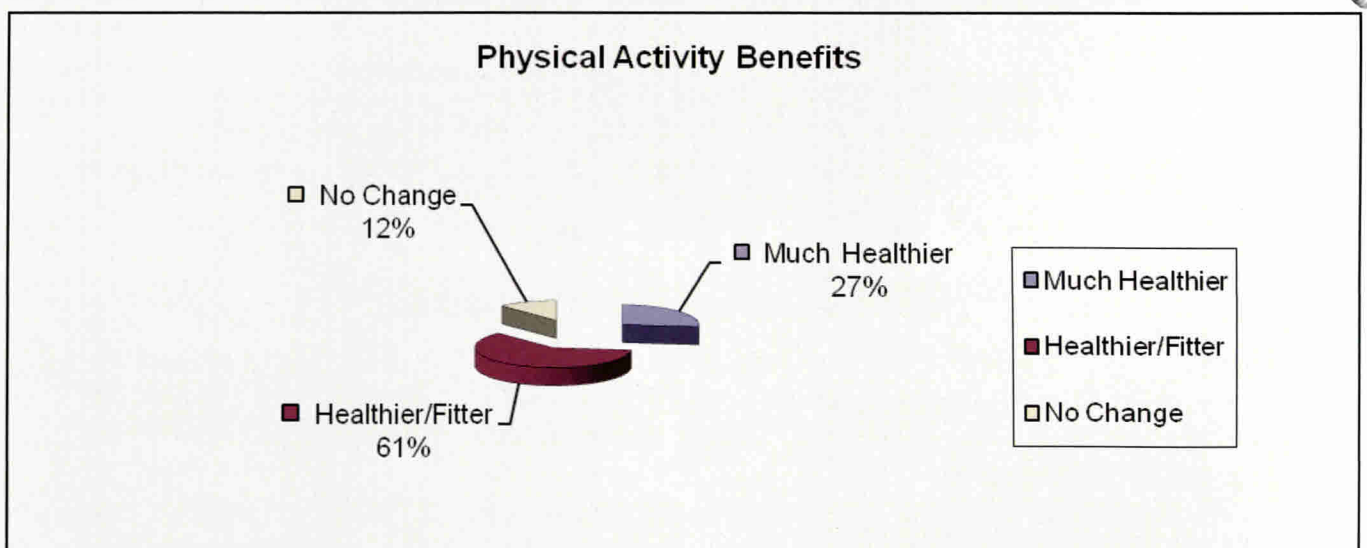


Chart B - 96% of clients have maintained or improved health (when considering your health declines with age this a testimony to the active projects we deliver).

FOCUS ON PROJECTS & OUTCOMES

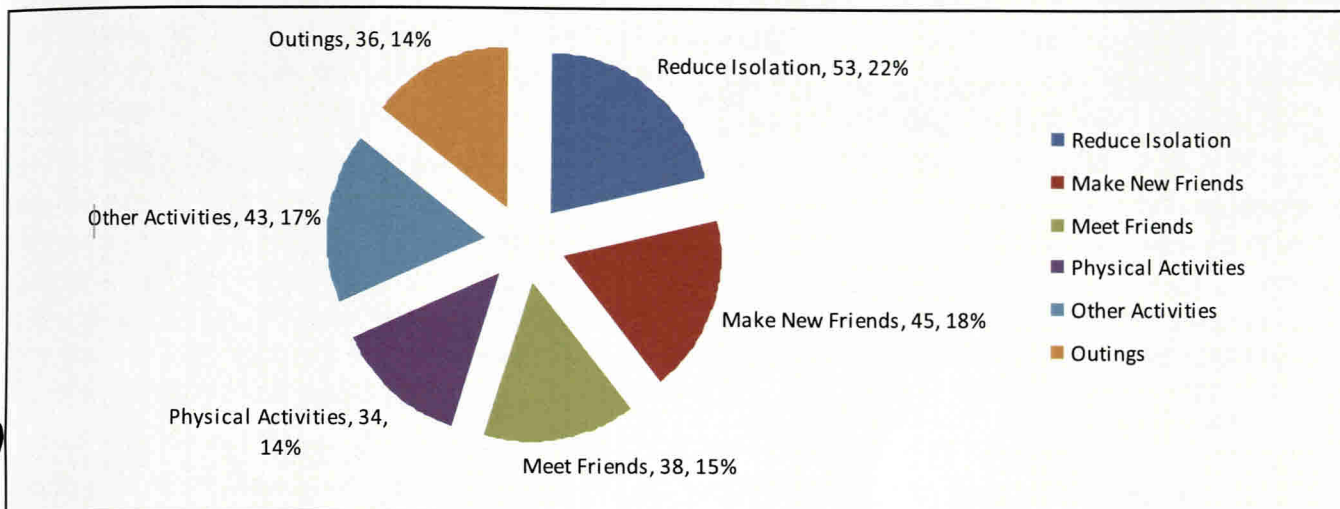


Chart C Hammersmith pensioner groups surveyed – many have indicated one or more reasons for attending (100 people consulted).

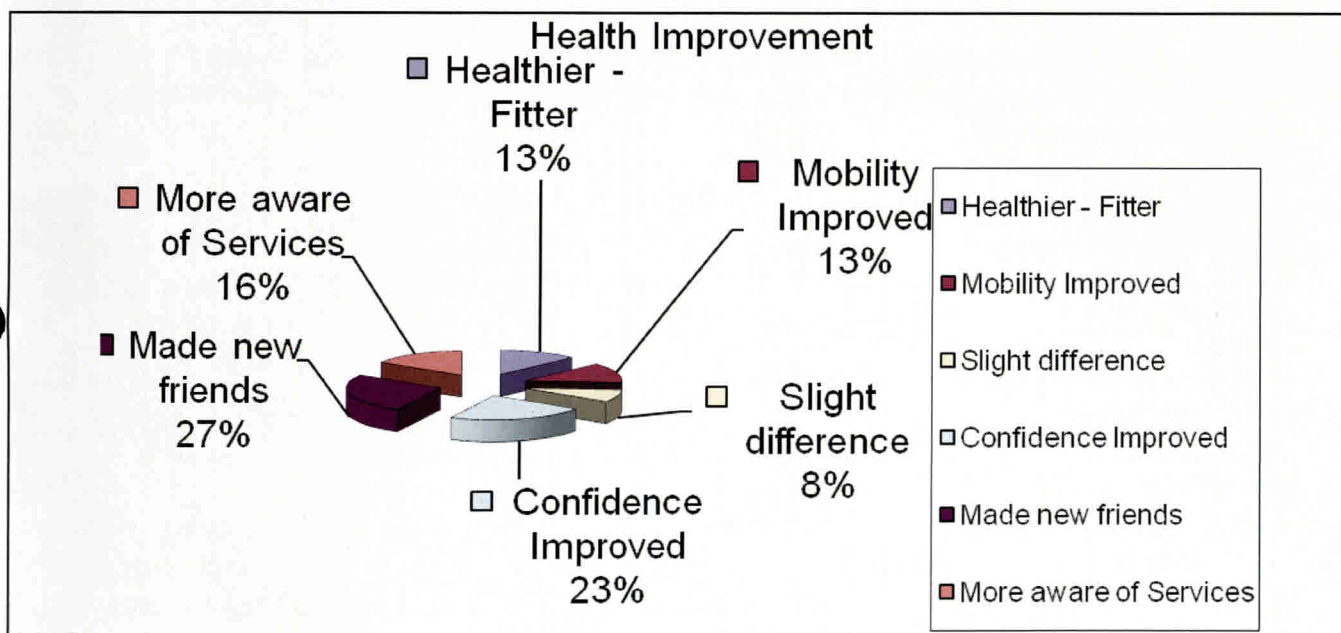


Chart D Health improvements physical or mental across all the groups surveyed.

AUDITED ACCOUNTS

THE IRISH CHARITABLE TRUST (A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (Including Income & Expenditure Account) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2011

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2011 Total Funds £	2010 Total Funds £
Incoming Resources					
<i>Incoming resources from</i>					
<i>Charitable activities</i>					
Grants	3	0	214,200	214,200	169,650
<i>Incoming resources from</i>					
<i>Generated funds</i>					
Donations and Grants		3,904	0	3,904	1,508
Clients' Grants	3a	0	9,065	9,065	6,903
Pensioners Groups		7,247	0	7,247	8,674
Income Generation		1,311	0	1,311	888
Investment Income		1,328	0	1,328	1,703
Total Incoming Resources		13,790	223,265	237,055	189,326
Resources Expended					
<i>Charitable activities</i>					
Salaries / ENIC		0	156,027	156,027	137,597
Other Staff Costs		0	2,661	2,661	1,792
Clients Welfare		0	11,922	11,922	5,977
Pensioners Group		0	9,188	9,188	13,279
Website		0	0	0	728
Promotional Literature / Events / Launch		0	7,771	7,771	4,133
Volunteers Expenses		0	246	246	391
Premises Costs		0	11,095	11,095	11,760
Operational Costs		0	13,514	13,514	12,699
<i>Governance costs</i>	4	3,105	0	3,105	6,783
Total Resources Expended		3,105	212,424	215,529	195,139
Net incoming (outgoing) resources					
For the year		10,685	10,841	21,526	(5,813)
Balance brought forward at 1 April 2010		56,197	65,150	121,347	127,160
Balance carried forward at 31 March 2011		66,882	75,991	142,873	121,347

Michael. ISAS first became aware of Michael when his sister made contact to ask for help in appealing against a decision by the Department of Work and Pensions not to award him Attendance Allowance. Michael had lived and worked in London for most of his adult life, having migrated from Cork in the early fifties. He never married and had led a very private life and his sister said that before he became ill she had very little knowledge of how he lived his life.

An ISAS advisor visited Michael at home to assess his situation and it was obvious that he was a very sick man. He could barely walk, was emaciated and had little energy; even talking seemed to tire him. As Michael told his story, it emerged that he had felt unwell for some time, but he hadn't discussed this with anyone because he "didn't want to bother them". He said he had not visited his GP for over 20 years. When he suffered a collapse of major organs, Michael was admitted to hospital as an emergency, and spent three weeks in intensive care. He was discharged with a care package after three months.

Having lived a very private life, Michael found it deeply distressing to have what he referred to as "strangers" being so closely involved with his personal care. It was at this point that Michael had asked his family for help and it was decided that his sister and her family would take over responsibility for Michael's care. Having agreed to this, the family then made an application for Attendance Allowance which was refused.

ISAS worked closely and extensively with Michael, his family and GP to prepare an appeal against this decision. This was successful, as was a subsequent application for Severe Disability Premium, which, with the Attendance Allowance, gave him an additional income of £128.90 each week. The awards mean that Michael now feels back in control and direction of his care needs, as he can contribute towards the expenses incurred by his family in providing him with essential support.

Noreen followed her husband to England just after the war, following the death of her first child. The couple went on to have a second child, who tragically also died in early infancy. After the heart break of losing two babies, Noreen and her husband decided not to have any more children.

Noreen lives alone after the death of her husband ten years ago. She has a few distant relatives who she rarely sees.

Noreen was referred to ISAS by Hammersmith & Fulham Enablement Service as a result of concerns raised about Noreen's state of mind by her neighbours. The enablement service reported that Noreen had little or no social contact and was very depressed as a result. Noreen refused the offer of the enablement service's offer of a referral to a day centre. The enablement service hoped that Noreen might respond more positively to the culturally sensitive services the Irish Support and Advice Service could offer.

An ISAS advice and advocacy worker visited Noreen in her home to how they could help Noreen. In common with many older Irish people, Noreen refused the offer of help to apply for the additional benefits to which she almost certainly entitled, saying that she was OK for the moment. Noreen did however accept the offer of being matched with an Irish volunteer who would phone her every week for a chat. The telephone friend offered Noreen plain old fashioned friendship, she phoned every week and they would chat, amongst other things, about the old times in Ireland or what had been on the television that week. Noreen benefited from having regular social contact and through the regular telephone calls and the occasional visit and as a result was a happier person.

CHRISTMAS ACTIVITIES



Staff Team

Carole Fox	Pensioners Worker
Mary Kelly	Community Coordinator
Ann Laffey	Pensioners Coordinator
Mike McGing	Director
Sarah Taylor	Senior Advice Worker
Katie Westbrook	Advice Worker
Frances Whelan	Advice and Outreach Worker

Management Committee

Maggie Beirne	Director	Appointed 2009
Maeve Buckley	Director	Appointed 2010
Peter Curran	Director	Appointed 2009
Kevin Germaine	Director	Appointed 2010
Kathy King	Director	Appointed 2010
Marie Linnane	Director	Appointed 2008
Francis McGuinness	Director	Appointed 2007
Robert Mulcahy	Director	Appointed 1970
Dermot Murphy	Chair	Appointed 2008
Gary O'Brien	Director	Appointed 2007
David Perkins	Treasurer	Appointed 2010

Bankers

Allied Irish Bank
Wembley

Auditors

Smartwise Management

Acknowledgements

The Irish Support & Advice Service would like to thank both existing and past funders to the service.

The Emigrant Support Programme of the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs

The Ireland Fund of Great Britain

The Irish Chaplaincy

Society of the Sacred Heart (Hammersmith)

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

St John Southworth Fund

St Raphael's (Yeading) and Our Lady of Fatima (White City)

The City Bridge Trust



IRISH SUPPORT AND ADVICE SERVICE

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