

Irish welfare Bureau
HAMMERSMITH – LONDON



EIGHTH
seventh
annual report
1979

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DIRECTORS FOREWORD

Presenting the 8th Annual Report is both easy and a satisfying experience.

It is relatively easy because everything spoken about in what follows has been made possible by the united efforts of literally hundreds of people.

And it is the deepening Christian attitude of all these people, who always rally to the call no matter how many times I ask, that makes the job of presenting the Report deeply satisfying as well. It is because of their practical Christianity that we have again this year been able to offer a very comprehensive service in the various welfare lines. When I think of the requests made to us - for jobs and jaunts and jeans, and for beds, boots, busfares and babyclothes - and the magician-like way in which each request is coped with and answered - when I cannot help remembering the fish shop in Dublin which prided itself on the slogan, "If it swims we sell it". Thanks to our many benefactors we too could display a similar notice, for we aim to provide any imaginable or unimaginable thing on earth (or even over the earth or under it - airfares and funerals). But we need not put up any notice; they all find us all right!

The Bureau is but one branch of the Irish Chaplaincy's widely spreading tree with its 44 priests and 17 religious and lay welfare workers. We all have a mutual dependance on each other, and all use the expertise and the various services which the Chaplaincy Scheme has established over the years. For example so as to keep stock of our own operations and to ensure the least possible duplication, we have two very worthwhile conferences each year, one in Dublin at Easter and the other in London in November. Also, during the past year we developed a stronger Welfare-link with South London Irish Society at Wimbledon. Not only did we advise on the setting up of their Welfare Department, but we also united forces with them for a very successful Field Day at Morden Park on the last Sunday in May - and Welfare did indeed have a "Field Day", with a profit of £3000.

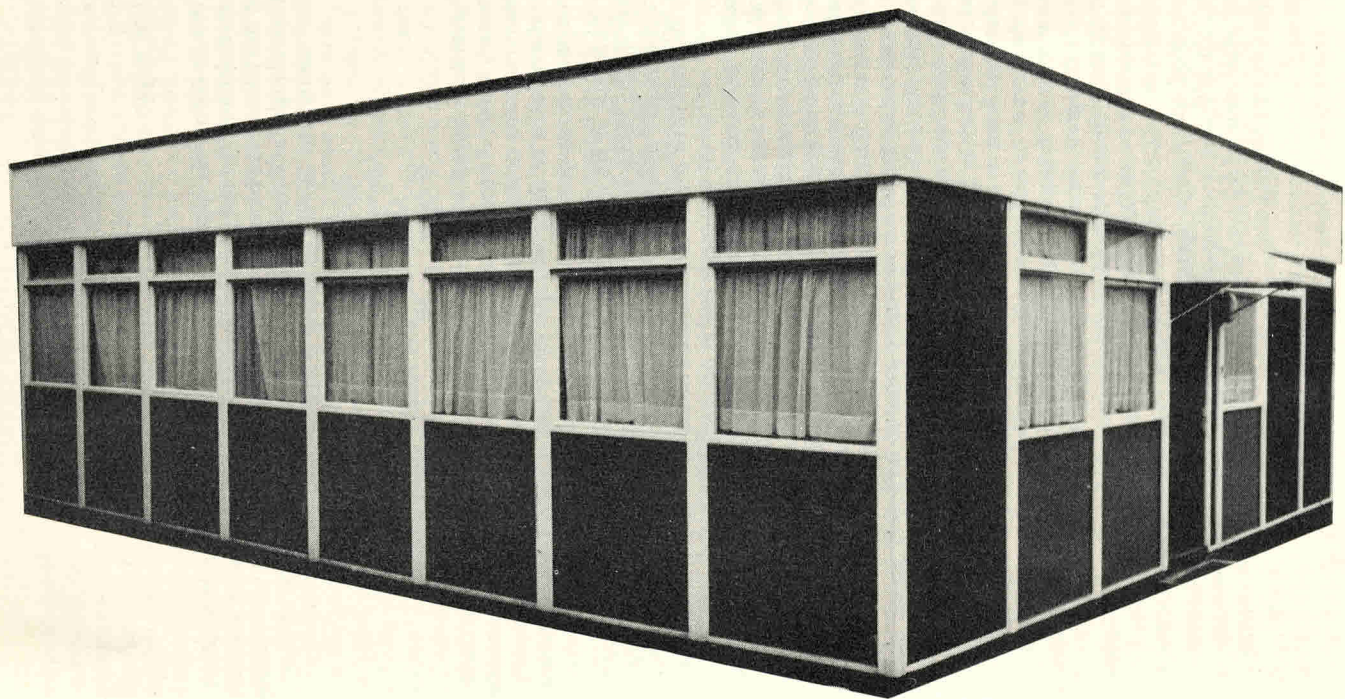
I say thank God every day for the wonderful bunch of loyal workers who give me everything in the way of support to raise the necessary financial backing to run the Bureau. It is to their credit that we can show a credit balance in both current and development accounts. I mention this last, the development account, as a very important matter just now, as we must look to the future concerning the offices which at present house the Bureau. Because part of the park in St. Augustine's Church yard (where the Bureau stands) comes into the New Hammersmith Broadway plan, we may have to be seeking new premises in the not too distant future; hence the importance of a small credit balance in our Development Account at this stage.

To return to our Role as providers of goods and services. We have no doubts or false modesty about the value of our contribution to the local community. Our record is built on solid foundations and will ensure the future of the Bureau's work from whatever site. When "Big Daddy" decides that we must move, I trust that he will give deep consideration to the many thousands of voluntary hours that have been devoted to our organization by so many people throughout these last eight years. Like so many voluntary organizations our's was founded as a backing - up to the local Social Services, and the statistics in this Report will speak for themselves to some extent. But of course there are innumerable "invisible exports" which statistics cannot show — we are not so much papering over the cracks in the State's Welfare System as filling them in, with just that little extra which can prevent despair or "another burden on the rates" — warning inexperienced and bewildered people about the small print which could mean homelessness and hunger, even if only for a few days. To save anyone from beginning to slide down that very slippery slope is what matters most, far more than trying later on to pull him up and prop him up, that again is one of our specialities:- help now, not in due course.

Unlike so many people I was not glad that last year was over. I enjoyed '78 and was proud of the Bureau's many involvements and achievements. I hope that we can continue to offer a worthwhile service to the community in the coming year.

We have received much help and support from a number of organizations and various local - authority bodies. For this, and for many kindnesses and much sympathetic concern towards all our friends, I would like to say a sincere word of thanks. To the Monaghan Association in London, who early last year presented a cheque for £1000 towards Austin House, also my friends in Dublin who with aid of The Wolfe Tones and Blake raised £1500 I am extremely grateful. To my co-workers who know me so well it suffices to say "you made it all possible".

Brian Lawlor O.S.A.



AUSTIN HOUSE

Austin House is now two years in operation and continues to offer short-term accommodation, friendship, companionship, career - guidance, counselling etc. During this period one hundred and two lads have lived with us - twenty eight between the ages of fifteen and nineteen, and the average age of the others about twenty one. Our main intake is from cities:-

Dublin	-	29
Limerick	-	12
Cork	-	10
Galway	-	10

Ten are English-born but of Irish parents, seven of other nationalities, Italian, Polish, Mexican, Welsh, African. These foreigners are mainly students awaiting College accommodation or just passing through. The English lads are mainly accepted at the requests of social workers while they acquire more permanent residences or patch up some family breakdown.

Each of these lads, in his own unique way, has contributed much towards ensuring that Austin House is much more than just another Bed and Breakfast. An almost unbelievable family spirit permeates the whole atmosphere. One could easily be persuaded that all are brothers in the strict sense. Each new arrival is warmly welcomed and made feel at home right from the outset - helped to adjust to his new surroundings, find the most suitable employment available and acquaint himself with the snares and pitfalls of city-life. So happy and content are the lads that now all share in the running of the house - household chores, gardening, shopping etc. Anyone wishing to see this tremendous co-operation in action is welcome to descend on us at any time. An official, with four teenage sons, witnessing a cleaning - up performance one morning, assured us that if his sons were asked to help they would go sour for a month! Not only are our boys willing but really enjoy this sharing. I quote "I really love helping as it makes me feel that I am not just here to sleep and eat - that I am at home and really belong." "My mother won't know me when I go home - I can do things now that I never did at home" "Some day, the most of us will get married and all this experience will be very beneficial to us." "I never realized there was so much work to be done in a house - I'll be a great help to the missus when I find one!" etc etc. With all this fantastic co-operative spirit there is no need for the usual series of regulations found in boarding houses. We have just the one positive, all - embracing rule - CONCERN - what Dom Marmion O.S.B. calls the "golden" rule of all community living. Very often it is while I share some of these odd jobs with one or other of the lads, that he opens up, ploughs through layer after layer of his problems until he finally unveils the kernel and then begins to sort himself out.

This year shows a slight improvement in the numbers who contacted us before arriving, but side by side with that, we had some shattering experiences. I take some random samples. A young lad, well - educated and possessing plenty of cash, arrived at Heathrow, hailed a taxi and asked the driver to take him someplace where he could get a "flat." To all acquainted with the accommodation situation in this country, that surely is pathetic. Fortunately for that youngster, the taxi - man, who was a catholic, took him to a priest who directed him to us. Had that taxi - driver not been an honest man, I shudder to think of where that youngster might be to-day - certainly he was easy and ready prey for all undesirables - drug addicts, homosexuals etc etc. Some weeks later I opened the door to a youngster of seventeen, well dressed and groomed but with a look of despair and terror in his eyes. Over a 'cupa', through stutters and stammers I gleaned the following. I quote "why do fellows returning home tell us of all the jobs and money in England? I am here nearly a week and I haven't found either. I had £80.00 which I really found difficult to get together. I paid £30.00 for bed and Breakfast for the first two nights, £22.00 for the next two. When I suddenly realized that my money was nearly spent and I had neither accommodation or employment, I nearly went out of my mind. I felt like doing myself in. However absent-mindedly, I flicked through the pages of a Telephone directory and finding your number chanced calling." Fortunately we were able to accommodate him, as, recently, applications far outnumber vacancies. Incidentally, we could do with another "Austin House" if cash and personnel were available for purchase and manning. However, I am glad, to relate that' that young lad had has recovered from his severe shock and is now happy and reasonably satisfied with his present employment.

All I have penned so far, brings clearly to my mind, the vexed and oft-repeated question - what must be done to prevent Irish youngsters descending upon this impersonal city without some pre-arranged reliable contacts? I know all involved in the "Irish Chaplaincy Scheme" in Britain are doing their utmost to eliminate this appalling situation. Still something further must be done. Could we, here, have co-operation from those involved in youth - formation at home - parents, priests, teachers, youth - leaders etc? I suggest that every parish priest be equipped with a copy of Fr. P. O'Herlihy's comprehensive and invaluable brochure - welfare and Information 1978 - and that the relevant contents be discussed, with all post - primary pupils commencing with the Intermediate class, at least once a year. Students may not assimilate the information now, but, later if they decide to emigrate, they are sure to recall at least, that there are people here, who are not only willing but very pleased to be of assistance. These same topics could be brought up, at least occasionally, at Parent - teacher meetings, at discussions in youth clubs etc. Most Irish parishes must have at least one priest who is very familiar with the London - scene and he would be an ideal one to carry through the above suggestion.

In conclusion, I would like to associate myself with Fr. Lawlor's "Thank You" and to add my own special word of appreciation to my own community, my provincial and all my friends, for their continued support and concern. Finally, I thank Fr. Lawlor himself, for his ever - readiness with a listening ear and willing hands. I continue to marvel at his retention of the minutest details concerning each and everyone of "our boys" both past and present.

SOCIAL WORKER'S REPORT

It is interesting to note that in a year when the number of new applications decreased slightly from 600 in 1977 to 595 in 1978 the total number of applications increased by 65 from 907 in 1977 to 972 in 1978.

This indicates the growing need for continuous welfare work among the settled and "unsettled" members of the Irish Community in Britain.

We have worked with and for new arrivals from Ireland who were quite competent to cope with life but needed our support and information until they became familiar with their new surroundings. Austin House - our hostel for young Irishmen proved a valuable resource for such persons and fortunately we were able to back this up with a few friendly landladies and other contracts.

There was a heartening increase in the number of young men who wrote to us before they left Ireland. Some took our advice and stayed at home, others waited and only came when we were able to offer them accommodation. However, we still had our quota of "The Ever Hopefuls" who come over to Britain with only a few pounds in their pockets and run into difficulties after a day or two. I suppose we must accept these as the "Poor we will always have with us".

Families appear to have got the message that the chances of getting family accommodation in London is practically minus. In our work for home= I we greatly appreciate the emergency accommodation provided by "Riverpoint Hostel", for single people and childless couples.

We continued being involved in the burial of lone Irish people. The experience gained in this area of our work has helped us to develop a service to people who have no financial problem when faced with bereavement but who needed a lot of help with the practicalities of making funeral arrangements, applying for death - grants probate and/or attending at Coroners Courts in the cases of sudden or accidental deaths.

Many of our single homeless clients have psychiatric problems. The mental health policy which expects the local community to support and contain such persons probably works quite well for people who have families and friends to support them. It is however very hard for the single homeless people who, in the absence of sufficient suitable accommodation, have to cope in Bed and Breakfast establishments with shared sleeping accommodation. We give them whatever support we can through building up a friendly relationship, counselling, providing material aid when necessary and helping them to return to hospital when their condition deteriorates.

Elderly people who live alone, one parent families and families under stress from unexpected illness of one or other of the parents, were given a lot of support and in some cases material aid. Some were helped to cope with their rent, light and gas accounts. It is very gratifying to work with a family which co-operates in clearing arrears especially if it is the first time they have run into debt. Help at this stage often reduces the possibility of the family developing a history of rent etc., arrears and all the attendant stress.

Help with clothing and meal vouchers was given to people who "sleep rough" and also to people who live in Bed and Breakfast establishments with shared sleeping accommodation and survive on casual jobs or Social Security Benefit. Accommodation at our expense was provided for many such people who had no accommodation and wished to re-organise themselves on Social Security Benefit while seeking employment.

Many clients needed support, advice and counselling with personal, practical or family problems. In specialised areas we see our role as being that of a Referral Agency. We are prepared to offer continued friendly support to those we refer to other agencies, if the clients feel they have need of such support. Pregnant unmarried girls were mostly referred to The Crusade of Rescue.

People with marriage problems who needed the particular expertise offered by The Catholic marriage advisory Council, were encouraged to contact this agency.

We deal with many alcoholics and help by listening, advising and encouraging them to use the specialised services available to them and we help them to contact these services. We are very fortunate to have an alcoholic counselling unit and Day Centre in this area which is known as Accept. We have a good working relationship with this unit and with some A.A. groups. We also appreciate the "Detoxification Unit" provided by the Salvation Army in Whitechapel. The personnel of these agencies have been most co-operative when any of our clients have used the services they offer.

The good relationship we try to build up with our clients can be very valuable in dealing with alcoholics. It encourages them to return to us to report "Progress" or for support if and when their efforts to overcome their addiction has broken down. We encourage them to start again.

Hospital visitation is considered a very important area in our work, especially visiting Irish people who have no relatives or friends in the area. All the staff in the Bureau have taken part in the visitation in Hospitals especially when the patients were in need of a lot of support to help them come through some particularly traumatic experiences.

Irishmen and women (and those of other nationality) have been supported when appearing in Court on various charges and visited in prison and written to when sentenced to imprisonment. On their release some needed help with finding accommodation and many needed clothing.

The pattern of our work is obviously the same as previous years but we deal with so many new and different types of problems it can never be said that the "Work" is always the same. It never becomes boring or just a "chore" no matter how pressurised or demanding it may be. We all find our work most rewarding and realise that it is privilege to be of service to those who seek our help.

*Sister Jane Frances
Social Worker*

SIMPLE ANALYSIS OF REFERRALS

Age Groups.

15/17	18/19	20/24	25/29	30/39	40/49	50/59	60+	Not known
24	53	112	76	145	91	66	37	19
<u>Types of problem</u>					<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>	
New arrivals from Ireland					98	57	99	
Financial					213	133	140	
Accommodation					199	214	249	
Employment					71	52	52	
Information					29	29	40	
Advice					33	52	41	
Material aid (Clothing, etc.)					160	216	185	
Personal					30	15	16	
Marital					21	24	30	
General Welfare					24	52	25	
Emotional & Mental					31	27	24	
Ex-offenders					27	24	24	
Alcoholic, drugs, etc.					17	30	25	
Pregnant & unmarried mothers					14	17	14	
Repatriation					10	10	5	
Males					447	460	456	
Females					207	180	182	
Families					76	57	52	
Cases continued from previous year(s)					248	307	377	
Domiciliary visits					416	375	300	
Hospital visits					70	104	143	
Prison visits					10	8	8	
Supportive appearance in Court					8	14	13	
Continued supportive work					147	200	200	
Telephone enquiries					2820	2880	2585	
Escort to trains, planes, etc.					17	13	6	
Interviews in Bureau						2266	2424	

COUNTIES OF EIRE AND NORTHERN IRELAND

	1976	1977	1978
Antrim	22	16	9
Armagh	5	5	2
Carlow	4	4	3
Cavan	5	7	6
Clare	8	9	7
Cork	56	74	42
Derry	5	7	3
Donegal	17	14	21
Down	7	5	25
Dublin	75	83	72
Fermanagh	4	-	4
Galway	27	33	22
Kerry	17	20	23
Kildare	4	4	9
Kilkenny	14	17	11
Laois	5	1	2
Leitrim	5	5	7
Limerick	28	30	27
Longford	9	6	9
Louth	7	2	10
Mayo	21	22	16
Meath	12	8	4
Monaghan	3	6	6
Offaly	-	4	3
Roscommon	8	6	8
Sligo	16	11	6
Tipperary	28	22	26
Tyrone	7	6	9
Waterford	20	18	14
Westmeath	5	7	4
Wexford	13	3	9
Wicklow	11	6	4
"Irish" (county unknown)	28	11	9

OTHER NATIONALITIES

	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>
<u>UNITED KINGDOM</u>			
England	68	82	109
Scotland	40	32	42
Wales	3	6	11
Austria	-	1	1
Brazil	1	-	-
Burmah	-	1	-
Canada	-	1	-
Ceylon (Sri Lanka)	1	-	-
Egypt	-	2	-
Ethiopia	-	2	-
Fiji	-	-	1
France	3	-	-
Germany	1	-	1
Ghana	-	1	1
Greece	-	1	1
India	2	-	1
Iran	1	-	1
Italy	2	1	1
Japan	-	1	-
Mauritius	-	-	1
Mexico	-	1	-
Nigeria	-	-	2
Morocco	-	1	-
Philippines	-	2	-
Poland	-	-	1
Portugal	-	1	-
Rhodesia	1	-	-
Signapore	-	-	1
South Africa	1	1	-
Spain	2	1	-
Syria	-	-	1
West Indies	3	-	1
Venezuela	1	-	-
Nationality unknown	3	4	-

SOURCES OF REFERRALS

	1976	1977	1978
Allied Irish Banks	7	1	-
Acton's Wms. Aid	2	1	-
Blenheim Project	2	1	2
Cath. Social Welfare Bureau	4	7	9
Centrepoint	7	4	6
Chis. Wms. Aid	-	2	-
Clergy	172	185	157
Contact House	-	1	-
Councillor, L.B.H.	-	-	1
Crac	1	3	1
Crusade of Rescue	1	-	1
Cyrenians	-	2	2
Department of Employment	-	-	7
D.H.S.S.	2	-	-
Domestic Agency (Private)	-	-	4
F.S.U.	2	1	-
Family Welfare	1	-	-
"Friend"	174	160	180
General Practitioners	1	1	1
Health Visitors (L.B.H.)	-	2	1
Irish Centre, Camden Town	4	3	7
Irish Counties Association	4	8	1
Irish Embassy	-	2	1
Legion of Mary	1	1	-
L.T. Guild	1	2	2
Medical Soc. Workers (Hospitals)	10	4	9
New Horizon	-	-	2
Nucleus	-	-	1
Personal Application	171	135	137
Probation Service	1	1	-
Relatives	6	30	34
Riverpoint	-	1	10
Roof	1	-	-
St. Mungo's Comm.	-	1	-

S.V.P.	1	2	-
Samaritans	-	3	-
Shac	2	1	-
Shelter	1	-	-
Simon Community	-	1	-
U.C.M.	-	1	-
Wandsworth Wms. Aid	-	1	-

SOCIAL SERVICES

Eire

Donegal			1
Sligo			1

LONDON BOROUGHS

G. L. C.	-	-	1
Hammersmith	21	24	10
Hounslow	-	1	-
Islington	-	-	1
Kensington & Chelsea	1	2	3
Lambeth	-	-	2
Newham	-	1	-
Tower Hamlets	-	-	-
Westminster	3	1	-