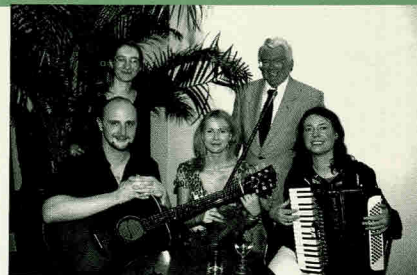


the London Irish Centre

years of frontline service



annual report
2000/01

Directors Report

The year 2000 was an important year in the development of the London Irish Centre. It was a year of growth and change. The Centre has been able to extend its range of in house and outreach services. The increased services will enable us to address in a practical manner the poverty and social exclusion experienced by a large sector of the Irish community.

Key Characteristics of 2000/01

1. The establishment of a service for survivors of institutions in Ireland who are now living in the UK.
2. Enabling a large number of pensioners to increase their income by receiving proper reward and acknowledgement for the contributions they paid during their working lives in Ireland.
3. The Return to Camden Town Festival is now recognized as the largest festival of Irish culture in Britain.
4. The appointment of a development worker and additional advice staff.
5. In partnership with other agencies we established Aisling, Return to Ireland project as an independent charity.
6. In partnership with other agencies we received the donation of a new mini-bus from the trustees of the London Irish Festival.
7. With a grant from the New Opportunities Fund we have developed our own community web site.
8. The Centre was privileged to host some of the key events organised by the Irish community in London in 2000/01
9. The Centre received the Irish Post Award 2000 for its services to the Irish community. We are deeply grateful to our funders, our trustees, committees, staff and volunteers for the excellent services given to our community during the past year. The Centre greatly appreciates the support it receives from the Irish Government, Camden Council, other voluntary and statutory organisation, Irish Housing Associations and Irish voluntary organisations in the delivery of its service.
10. Kivlehan OMI – Director.

Co Ordinators Report

The mission of the Centre's Centre Community Welfare Service is to respond to the unmet needs among the Irish people for culturally sensitive welfare services, particularly those of advice, support and training which celebrate and promote Irish culture and counteract the negative discrimination that the Irish people face as an ethnic minority especially in terms of their access to mainstream provision.

To that end we operate services in the following areas:

- Front-line Advice
- Youth Resettlement
- Elders Outreach
- Mental Health
- Survivors of Institutional Abuse
- Alcohol
- Daycentre
- Missing Persons
- Emergency Welfare

The Community Welfare Service operates a policy of maximal access which means that we take referrals from any source, will never insist on appointments and will see people regardless of age gender, personal status etc. Our clients are served through a combination of Centre-based casework,

outreach visits and group work. The volume of business is very high. By way of example, our monitoring system shows that our figure for client interviews alone this year is 4000. Without a dedicated staff team, this would not have been possible. Demand for our services shows no sign of abatement; the contrary is the case. It was pleasing therefore to have been successful in securing new funding this year to extend our staff team and range of services by the addition of outreach and administration workers to our Survivors project, a third Advice Worker and a Development Worker. We have also extended the operation of our Relapse Prevention Social Club to include weekend provision. We now have a very full staff complement. Our premises are at optimal occupation levels. Future expansion of our services will require us to seek extra accommodation.

Apart from the consistently heavy demand for our services, each year brings fresh challenges. This year work began on the securing of the Community Legal Service Quality Mark, an important badge of quality assurance. This is an testing though worthwhile process that we expect to complete in the coming year.



The advice service has been assisting Irish people since the 1950's. Though we have now entered a new millennium the needs of the Irish are as great as they have ever been. Many continue to find themselves socially excluded and face discrimination on a regular basis.

Social Security regulations result in the Irish finding it more difficult to claim state benefits than any other nationality in Britain. This results in not only great poverty and destitution, particularly among the newly arrived in Britain, but also makes it extremely difficult to secure appropriate accommodation. Many of the Centre's clients present as homeless with little chance of finding any accommodation in the immediate future.

One of the main functions of the advice service is to assist people to access the basic state services available to others. While the majority of clients require advice and assistance in relation to housing and welfare benefits the advice service also deals with a multitude of other issues, including health, material assistance, repatriation, domestic violence and substance misuse.

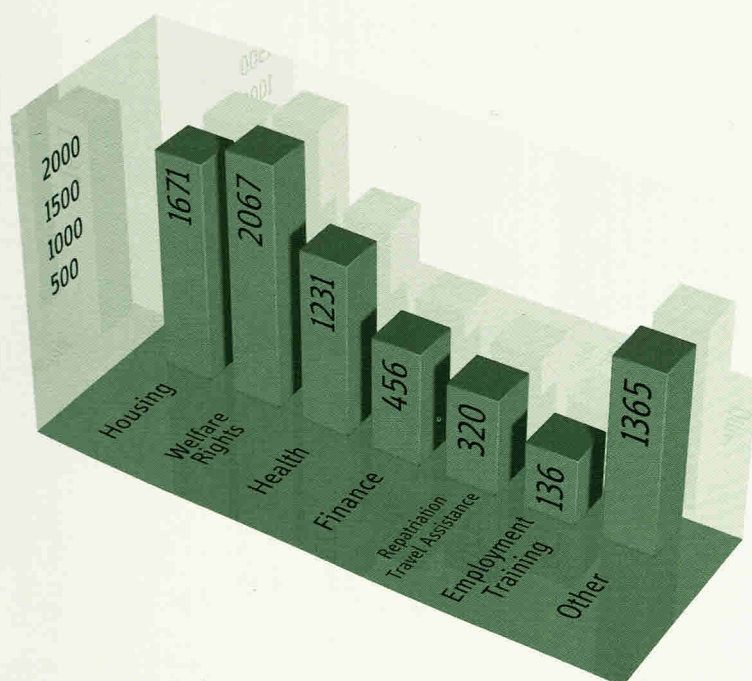
The advice service has been extremely busy in the past year with a large number of clients calling. However, through the endeavours of its dedicated staff, the service

managed to keep the doors opened every day and advised and assisted every caller to the fullest extent. This will continue as the advice service has now received funding for three full time social advice workers. Due to this extra funding we now look forward to increasing the range of services we provide to clients in the coming year.

Case History

Mary is a thirty five year old woman with three young children. After suffering domestic violence for many years she fled her home in Galway and came to London with her children. She knew nobody in London and had no money and nowhere to stay. On the advice of a passer-by she called to the Centre. She was extremely worried of what would become of both herself and her children and was terrified that they would become destitute living on the streets. The advice team made an immediate application to the local authority for emergency accommodation. She was placed in a local shelter. The team continued to work with Mary, assisting her to claim the appropriate benefits and referring her to a counselling group where she is able to discuss her many years of torment. Mary and children are now living in a three bedroom council house and finally feel happy and secure.

Number of Items of Service Delivered in 2000



The High and Dry Club is an abstinence based social club for those recovering from alcohol and substance problems. It is now widely recognised that the lack of social opportunity for those in recovery can severely inhibit the recovery process itself.

Our High and Dry Club seeks to counteract this in a positive way. Every week the Club meets. There is a range of activities for members. A meal is served. There are trips and outings. The Club is professionally facilitated in tandem with a committee of its users. Now in its fourth year of operation, it is jointly funded by the London Borough of Camden and the Camden and Islington Health Authority. In recognition of its value, funding has been doubled in the past year so that the Club now has weekend provision as well.

Daycentre

We are fortunate in having an equipped daycentre area within the Centre. It has wide ranging usage but it is principally used for older persons activities. There is a Luncheon Club which operates three days per week providing the opportunity for elders to meet socially, friendships to be formed, the opportunity to enjoy a meal in the company of others. The Luncheon Club provides an ideal venue to provide information sessions. So far this year the community Dietician has visited to advise people on healthy eating and discuss and inform on special diets. Occupational therapists have visited to inform people on the services which they provide.

There are weekly classes of Keep Fit to music tailored to individual abilities. Art classes have been in place since September 2000 and are a new experience for most of the participants who have also enjoyed visits to galleries. An annual outing to the seaside is also arranged.

The Missing Persons Service has operated for over 25 years and has always been a vital part of the Centre's Community Welfare Service. Loss of contact with loved ones has been an abiding factor in the Irish emigration experience. The purpose of the Service is to locate loved ones and family members with a view to facilitating right reconciliation and restoration of relationships.

Since its formation it has dealt with many thousands of enquiries and has had over a thousand successful outcomes. It continues to deal with 150 enquiries a year. Of these, 50 are basic information requests and can be dealt with quickly. The remaining 100 are dealt with as Service casework involving contact with many agencies, voluntary and statutory, throughout the UK and Ireland.

The Service has grown from palpable community need. It offers the means of healing profound and abiding distresses for many Irish people. It has proved a vital life-link for many, often those in greatest need, for whom emigration has proved an unhappy and in many cases, involuntary experience.

Thanks to a grant from the New Opportunities Fund we have developed an information and advice website targeted to the needs of the Irish Community. The funding comes from a government initiative to promote Life Long Learning. It is particularly focused on getting more people acquainted with the learning and information possibilities provided via the Internet. Even if a person does not have their own computer there are now many Learning Centres, (often in libraries), where one can access the Internet and read and learn about the information and advice available. Our website is www.irishcentre.org

We have aimed to make a user friendly website which offers, in the space allowed, some guidelines on a variety of subjects of interest to Irish migrants and people of Irish origin living in Britain. There are many links to other sources of information, many of which are websites, which offer additional sources of advice and information.

News

Recent news from the London Irish Centre. See Culture / Links, TV, Radio and Newspapers for sources of Irish News.

About Us

All about us and our services. Council of Irish Counties Association.

Culture

Irish dancing, costumes, schools, language classes, music, TV, Radio, Newspapers, Festivals.

Jobs and Training

Employment Contacts Britain. For Ireland see Returning to Ireland Section. Education: Adult Learners' Gateway, Learndirect, etc.

Accommodation

Advice Key Issues, Irish Housing Associations.

Benefits

Advice Service, UK Benefit System (summary), Notes for Irish People, General Guidelines and Benefit Helplines. Also list of Telephone Helplines and Website Addresses for these Helplines.

Missing Persons

Our missing persons service re Irish people in Britain.

Care Services

Irish Pension Information. Funeral Information Contacts. Our Day Centre, Mental Health and Older Persons services. Counselling services - Irish organisation.

Returning to Ireland

Web Links, General Guidance, Useful Addresses, Job Opportunities, Irish Travel Guide.

Irish Community

Irish Community Organisations in London. Irish Community Organisations Outside London.

E-mail an advice worker at: info@irishcentre.org

Survivors Outreach

The London Irish Survivors Outreach Service has been up and running at the London Irish Centre since January of this year. The project, which is funded by the Department of Health and Family Service in Ireland, was set up in response to the lobbying by Irish Survivors of Institutional Abuse here in Britain. The project aims to inform survivors of abuse about the statutory remedial options available to survivors viz. the Commission of Enquiry into Child Abuse, the Investigative Committee and the Residential Institutions Redress Board. It also assists survivors to access counselling services here in the UK. Finally, it provides to survivors generic assistance with welfare matters. In this context there is much work in the area of accessing records under the Freedom of Information Act in Ireland. The project is based at the Irish Centre because of the broad range of

complementary experience and services that the Centre can offer. At present there is a outreach worker and an admin assistant working within the project. The project although only in its first year has been successful in its aims. It has achieved good subscription rates and has developed good relations within the Irish sector here in the greater London and South East of England. It is hoped the service will continue to develop to ensure Survivors of Industrial Abuse in the UK receive the same services as their counterparts in Ireland.

Case History

Mary was born in an Industrial for unmarried mothers in Dublin. She remained at the school with her mother until the age of 2 and was then sent to another school outside Dublin. She has

never seen her mother since. For the next 15 years, Mary was sent to 5 different Industrial schools around Ireland. Mary says that during her time at the Industrial School she was beaten, starved, and made to work from an early age. Mary now in her fifties came to the project to get information regarding the Commission and asked us to write on her behalf to the Department of Education regarding records. Mary is unable to read or write, as she was never sent to school. Mary has a long history of mental health problems and has attempted suicide on many occasions. She also regularly self-harms. Since Mary contacted the Service, this pattern has been arrested. We are now in regular contact with her. She calls the office when she is feeling particularly low and we visit her at home when necessary and liaise closely with Mary's Community Mental Health Team.

Older Persons Outreach Report

The Older Persons Outreach Project service is now in its fourth year and continues to target isolated elders needing support within the community. Outreach work provides the opportunity for elderly people to be interviewed in their in their home environment which allows for real insight to the problems that people encounter and a holistic approach by providing information on the services which people can avail of to make improvements to their lives.

Through the Outreach service people are informed about their entitlement to benefits and encouraged to take up benefits such as Attendance Allowance and Disability Living Allowance thus allowing for the chance to maximize their incomes, support and guidance is provided with filling in claim forms. We provide people with information and referral to sheltered housing, offering support through the assessment process for such housing and advocating on behalf of individual needs. We encourage people to be assessed for community services e.g. Homecare, personal care assistance, Meals on Wheels, Home adaptations. We encourage health checks by liaising with doctors, chiropodists etc. to promote this. We attend group meetings of Camden Health Improvement Project for Older

People to keep informed of changes, discuss issues and promote the needs of Older Irish people. The Project is also very fortunate to enable elderly people to access the many other services, which are provided within the Centre such as specialist advice, the legal surgeries, the clothes store etc.

We are a lead agency in Age Concern's "Good Neighbourhood Scheme". There are currently eight volunteer befrienders who offer support to the project and invaluable support to isolated elderly people by visiting on a regular basis, escorting, accompanying outdoors. Volunteers are encouraged to attend training on various topics related to working with older people. With Camden Elderly Irish Network and the London Irish Elder's Forum the London Irish Centre dedicated a great deal of time and resources to dealing with issues relating to pensions from Ireland. Through our endeavors the weekly income of many pensioners has been greatly improved.

Case History

Mr X, aged 87 found himself in Camden's Hostel for homeless people following a period in hospital. He attended the Irish Centre for

some general advice in May 00. The advice worker was concerned Mr X was in a hostel due to his age and health, he was referred to me. I visited him at the hostel, discussed his housing options with him, referred his case to sheltered housing team, supported him through the assessment. He was offered a flat following this assessment in July 00. I provided practical support through this period by organising furniture to be delivered from a furniture project. I assisted him in registering with a local GP. I had regular contact to check that he was coping. He enjoyed the space, communal garden area, and the independence of his new home; the security that sheltered housing provides i.e. the warden and "Careline" facility. On visiting him in February 01, I found he was unwell, arranged with the warden for his doctor to visit, he was admitted to hospital where he remained for three weeks before his death. I visited him in hospital; he was kept comfortable and pain-free. He did not have any live family members but he had an appointed person who was responsible for his affairs – together we made arrangements for his funeral ensuring he had the church service and burial with the dignity that befitted him.

E-mail an advice worker at: info@irishcentre.org

Youth Resettlement Report

The Youth Resettlement Service targets Irish people under 25's in the Greater London Area. The project aims to assist young Irish people to gain a footing in London and help them to gain access to housing, the Benefits system or employment as well as statutory and voluntary services as needed. The project aims to undertake long term work with young people to assist them to maximize their potential.

While numbers of young immigrants to London has decreased with the recent changes in the Irish economy, many young people still see London as providing the best opportunity of providing a new life. Those that gain secondary and third level educational qualifications can easily find employment while the more marginalized and those who haven't achieved fullest participation in the education system in Ireland are still forced to emigrate to find employment and housing.

The pattern of emigration has changed, with emigration from the traditionally poorer areas along the Western Seaboard declining and

numbers from cities and larger towns increasing proportionally.

Generally the needs of new arrivals are higher than previous years. Issues of mental health, addiction and domestic violence featured notably. The main categories of advice and assistance provided were housing, welfare benefits/identification and accessing health services.

For the first year since records were started the numbers of women who presented for assistance exceeded the no of males- Female 51%, Male 49% of first time callers and Female 55%, Male 45% of total callers. In a twelve month period to July 01 a total of 514 young people accessed the service of these 173 were new clients.

Case History

Annette was referred to us by her key worker at a short stay hostel where she was. Owing to her health issues, they were experiencing

difficulties in resettling her to more permanent accommodation.

Annette has the severe inherited disorder of Cystic Fibrosis, which affects the lungs, sinus cavities and digestive tract. She requires regular treatment to ensure her lungs don't become clogged with mucus. Apart from medication, she also has special dietary requirements.

She fled a violent relationship in Ireland and initially went to Liverpool. Her former partner followed her there and continued to harass her until she escaped him and came to London. She initially secured accommodation in the short stay hostel.

Following full appraisal of her options it was agreed that an application to the Local Authority under the relevant housing legislation was the most appropriate option for her. With the assistance of the YRP she made an application for housing to Kensington and Chelsea Council. They offered her one bedroom accommodation suitable to her needs.

Cultural Activities

The highlight of our cultural programme for 2000/01 was the Return to Camden Town Festival. This year the Centre was able to invite some of the internationally known musicians, singers and dancers to Camden. Our cultural programme in 2000/01 was as follows:

Monday

Irish music classes (fiddle, whistle, flute, banjo etc..) The music classes are organised by Karen Ryan, Kathy Walton and Barney Morgan.

Irish Step Dancing Classes for adults by Maire Clerkin.

Tuesday

Set dancing co-ordinated by Geoff Holland.

Wednesday

Tea dance organised by Molly Ormonde

Friday

Friday night dance organised by the Social Committee.

Members of Conradh na nGeilge and Comhluadar Uí Neill meet in the Centre.

Saturday

Irish language classes were co-ordinated by Mairead Holt.

Sunday

Ceile, old time and sets organised by Anton Coyle.

Organisations Based at the Centre

Irish Centre Housing

Tel. 020.7485.8889

Job Powerhouse

020.7916.9191

Federation of Irish Societies

020.7916.2725

Irish Chaplaincy in Britain

Tel. 020.7482.5528

Irish Commission for

Prisoner's Overseas

Tel. 020.7482.4148

Camden Irish Elder's Network

Tel. 020.7428.0471

London Irish Elder's Forum

Tel. 020.7813.1478

Travelers Chaplaincy

Tel. 020.7482.5525

Comhaltas Ceoiltoirí Éireann

Tel. 020.7916.8727

Auditors

Allen Tully & Co.

156 Harcourt Ave,

Sidcup, Kent DA15 9LW

Welfare Committee

A. Finan

T. Gallagher

A. Watson

F. Thornton

J. Coote

T. Ganley

C. Miedziolka

A. Glover

F. Farrell

M. Lyons

Staff Team

J. Kivlehan OMI Director

J. Twomey Co-ordinator

T. McEneaney Manager

P. Murphy Development Worker

M. Cooke Administrator

P. King Youth Resettlement

B. Folan Elder's Outreach

C. Morris Advice Worker

A.M. O'Rourke Advice Worker

R. Farrell Advice Worker

R. Connor Survivor's Service

P. Morgan Survivor's Service

A. McDonald Aisling

M. Heath Day Centre

B. Boylan High and Dry

C. Buckley Student

Cultural Programmes

Irish Music - Karen Ryan

Irish Music - Kathy Walton

Set Dancing - Geoff Holland

Step Dancing - Maire Clerkin

Ceile Dancing - Anton Coyle

Irish Language - Mairead Holt

Social Club - Mary O'Brien

Tea Dance - Molly Ormonde

Comhaltas - Jim Myers

Council of Irish Counties

Mary Allen.

Return to Camden Town Festival

Karen Ryan / Geoff Holland.

Funders

London Borough of Camden, Donegal

Association, Dion (Irish Government), Offaly

Association, Irish Youth Foundation, Wicklow

Association, Bridgehouse Estates Trust, Clare

Association, Ireland Funds, Society of St.

Vincent de Paul, Benevolent Society of St.

Patrick, London Irish Festival, Family Welfare

Association, Hunt Foundation, Allied Irish

Bank, Campden Trust, The Irish World

Newspaper, London Arts Board, Council of

Volunteers

M. Kenny

E. Horacek

E. Malone

T. Lynagh

Sr. H. Bohane

Sr C. Smyth

B. Brennan

S. Cummins

M. O'Reilly

P. Kelly

M. McCready

K. O'Neill

M. Smith

Irish Counties, Private Donations, Cavan Association, Irish Centre Social Club, Comhaltas Ceiltoirí Éireann, Bank of Ireland Merrill Lynch.

Trustees

Mr. J. Higgins

Rev. Paul Byrne OMI

Mr. P. Fitzpatrick

Solicitor

Prince Evans

77 Uxbridge Rd

London W5 5ST

Social and Cultural Committee

T. McAsey

M. Fitzsimons

P. Hynes

M. Kenny

M. Sills

D. Kelleher

M. Allen

M. O'Brien

P. O'Brien

J. O'Brien

J. Donohue

Additional Services

A. Slavin - Missing Persons

C. Nolan Elder's Keep Fit

M. Rolfe Elder's Art Class

F. Farrell Legal Advice

D. Long Legal Advice

Bankers

Allied Irish Bank

629/635 Holloway Road

London N19 5SS

Bank of Ireland,

43-45 Seven Sisters Rd,

London N7 6BA.

Annual Accounts 2000/01

	2000/01	1999/00
Fixed Assets	1,935,816	1,925,288
Current Assets	201,099	221,599
Debtors	110,522	125,639
Cash in Bank	90,577	95,960
Creditors	(83,341)	(80,875)
Total Assets less Liabilities	2,053,574	2,066,012

The London Irish Centre

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www.irishcentre.org