

# *The London Irish Centre*



## **Annual Report** **2001/02**



New Mini Bus being presented to the Irish Centre by the Committee of the London Irish Festival.

Serving the Irish Community for forty-eight years.

## Trustee's Report

During the course of the past year the London Irish Centre achieved the objectives that it set out in its development plan. A number of new initiatives were put in place and its existing services performed to a high standard. The Centre's services were externally monitored and evaluated during the past year. Once again the Centre demonstrated its ability to deliver a range of efficient and effective services that make a real difference to peoples lives. The Centre exceeded all best value criteria, it demonstrated excellent levels of performance and exceedingly high outcomes. The trustees deeply appreciate the excellent service given to the Centre by its staff, volunteers and committees. They are grateful to all who support the Centre through grants, fundraising and donations.

## Director's Report

The year 2001/02 was an important year in the life of the London Irish Centre. The various services of the Centre were delivered in an effective and efficient manner. We reached a high level of performance in most areas of work. The various services of the Centre supported a wide variety of people enabling some to escape from poverty and dependency. Once again we were able to increase our range of services.

### Key Characteristics of 2001/02

1. The Centre has received funding from the New Opportunity Fund for the launch of its website: [www.irishcentre.org](http://www.irishcentre.org)
2. The Centre continues to enable pensioners to increase their income through receiving additional income from an Irish pension.
3. The Return to Camden Town Festival continued to grow. The Festival is now the largest Irish cultural event in the London area.
4. The High and Dry Club continued to grow. Apart from the weekly club nights, the Club arranged a number of holidays to various places in Britain and Ireland.
5. A new Elder's Outreach Service will be provided in the Kilburn area.
6. The Centre made a significant contribution to the Irish Governments Task Force on Emigration.
7. The Centre hosted some of the key cultural events in the Irish Community during the past year including book launches, CD

launches, cultural days such as the Inis Mean Day and Irish County celebrations.

8. The Centre received a New Opportunity Fund Grant of £240,000 towards the development of a Healthy Living Centre.

The Centre is grateful to the various agencies that supported our work during past year – Irish Centre Housing, Cara Housing, An Teach, Innisfree Housing, ICAP, Camden Elderly Irish Network, London Irish Elder's Forum, Kiaros, Camden Social Services, Camden Homeless Persons Unit, Aisling Project, Kerry Emigrant Association, Job Powerhouse, Solas Anois, Voluntary Action Camden, Camden Volunteers Bureau, Camden Itec, London Arts, Quex Road Parish, Irish Chaplaincy, ICPO and the Federation of Irish Societies.

## Co-ordinator's Report

The mission of the Centre's 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

All of our Services operate a policy of maximal access. This means that we take referrals from any source, do not 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 continues to be 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.

Additionally in the past year there have been two significant developments in our service provision:

- Elders Outreach Project in Kilburn: for many years now we have offered an Elders Outreach service in the central Camden area. This service has achieved consistently high subscription levels. We had long wished to be able to extend it to the Kilburn area as its Irish elders population is so high. This has now been made possible through the generous grant assistance of DION and the Durkan Group. We have secured office premises in central Kilburn. We now look forward to playing a positive role in the amelioration of quality of life among Irish Elders there.
- Irish Healthy Living Centre: it is known that London's Irish population has experienced challenges and inequality in terms of health. We have recently been successful in securing 5 year funding for the institution of an Irish Healthy Living Centre at our Centre which will deliver a practical programme of health related activities to improve health and well being within our community. This development has been funded by the National Lottery's New Opportunities Fund with whom we have had a long and successful relationship.

Our cardinal commitment is to the delivery of service outcomes to our clients. The volume of service delivered in the past year is, we hope, indicative of this. Our thanks are due to our dedicated staff without whom this would not have been possible.



Queuing for the advice centre to open

## Welfare Rights Survey

A large part of our advice work concerns welfare rights. This year we decided to undertake a pilot study over a five months period to monitor how much income one Advice Worker raised for clients through welfare benefits. The Worker secured a total of £70,000. This points to a tendency of underpayment of benefit to clients not accessing advice services. Factoring the single worker figure across our full frontline staff, we estimate that we annually raise a sum in excess of £700 000.

An example of a case where we assisted was with a pensioner who presented to the centre for help with an Income Support claim. He had a number of disabilities. During the interview it emerged that he had received no benefit payments whatever for the prior six months. His Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit had also recently stopped. He had been relying on friends and family for support and had been subsisting on baked beans and generally living in abject poverty. We instituted an Income Support claim on his behalf and chased it up. We quickly secured payment of Income Support of £98.15 per week. We also negotiated for it to be backdated by six months. As a result of which he received over £2,700. We reinstated his Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefits. Finally, because he has disabilities, we helped him to make a claim for Disability Living Allowance.

## Development Worker

New to the London Irish Centre in 2001 / 2002 was the appointment of a development worker. Funded by the Irish Government through the Dion Committee this post is a crucial catalyst in maintaining and developing the financial resources of the Centre.

This is a much needed position in an organisation with 11 full-time and 4 part-time staff. To survive in today's funding climate it is imperative that we have a worker dedicated to the grant application work, annual and half yearly reporting to funders. Essential to the role of the development worker is the constant search for new funding for the core services we have and new services we need to develop.

Despite apparent fluidity of the Lottery Funds in its earlier years, where we received a revenue grant 1995 and later a capital building renovation and capital website grant we have now to compete in a much harder climate for more revenue money from them. Their priorities have changed and are

weighted to parts of Britain that received less Lottery money.

The demands on donor organisations and trusts are increasing inexorably. The environment for obtaining funds is ever more competitive. Maintenance of the development post is vital and needs to be integrated into our complement of core staff.

There is the constant pressure of maintaining adequate funding for revenue and some capital costs: all in the interest achieving our charitable objectives. Our practical way of demonstrating this commitment is seen in our maintaining long opening hours and providing a high quality of service with professional staff and volunteers.

After one year in post much has been accomplished in streamlining the funding work and reporting systems. The Post has proved its worth and our aspirations are to establish the post on a permanent basis.

## London Irish Survivors Outreach Service

The Service, now almost at the end of its second year, has seen client contact increase by over 100% since the last annual report.

The introduction of the Redress Board (Compensation Tribunal) accounts for some of the increase in client contact, i.e. advertising in the Irish press in the UK. Closer co-operation with the support groups and word of mouth has also helped make the service more widely known. Major emerging issues include access to legal services to assist clients in making their cases to the Redress Board, enquiries regarding medical records and family tracing.

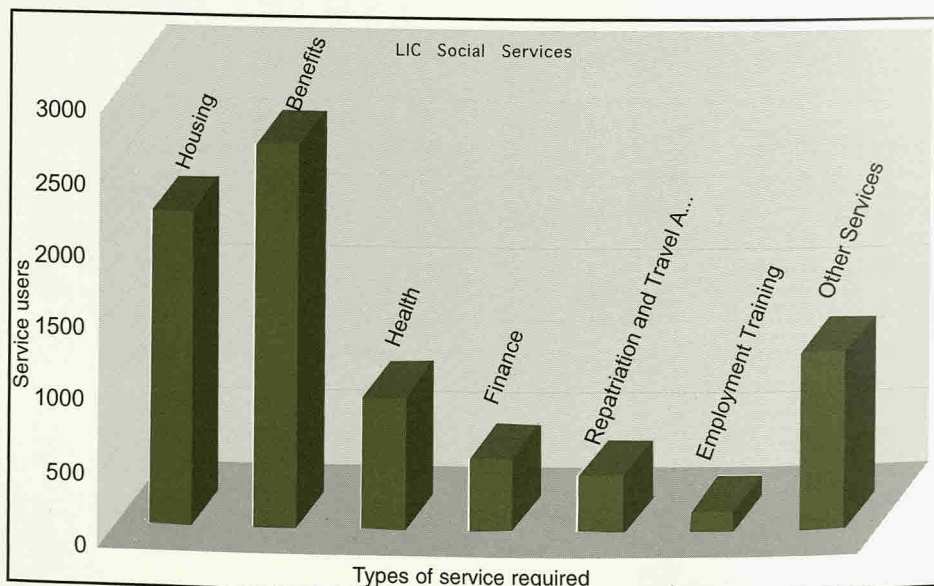
The majority of Survivors have chosen to engage Irish solicitors. Many because of age, disability or financial circumstances are unable to travel to Ireland for consultation with their solicitors and as a result tend to ring our service for advice.

Unfortunately we cannot give actual legal advice on an individual claim, we can give general advice on the Act under which the Board operates and of course we can help the client to access the legal advice they may require.

All other areas of the service also continue to be well utilized. These include referrals to counselling services, advice on health, housing, welfare rights, records and family tracing. Accessing records and family tracing is still very problematic. The main reasons being, firstly the sheer numbers of people trying to access records via the Freedom of Information Unit. Secondly, it seems sadly the case that Industrial School records were commonly either never, or very poorly, kept by the congregations in charge.

There is now a network of services for survivors that extends across the UK with offices now up and running in Coventry, Manchester, Sheffield and Camden and Haringey in London. All services provide a confidential service to Survivors and all have adopted a unified approach to service provision.

**An independent client satisfaction survey was undertaken earlier this year. The results show a very high level of service user satisfaction.**



## Travellers- an Advice Worker's Perspective

As a front line advice worker you gain a first hand experience of working with the Irish community. The high number of callers to this Centre reflects the poverty, health difficulties and social isolation which Irish people can face. However travellers face not only prejudice and discrimination from the mainstream services but by society in general. A high proportion of our service users are Travellers. This is perhaps not surprising as we have maximal access protocols that are virtually unique in advice provision. In my first year working at the Centre I have noticed certain abiding issues among Travellers.

The incidence of literacy difficulty seems high. This further exacerbates their social exclusion as they then need to attend agencies such as ours for assistance with many basic administrative matters. Also I have seen many travelling women who have experienced domestic violence. There seems to be a pattern of continuing to live with the violent partner. This has a negative effect on self esteem and mental health. Those who move away from a violent partner often find themselves ostracised by members of their own family. A negative cycle then builds of moving from one local authority area to another in order to escape resultant threats and in some cases, actual violence. This in turn has a negative effect upon their children as they often miss out on schooling - thus embedding literacy difficulties.

### Case History

Winifred presented to the Centre as a separated mother of six children. The family had been residing in local authority bed and breakfast for two years. Her separation from her partner was after years of domestic violence. She was suffering with depression. On being pressed, and after the Centre secured the services of a solicitor on the family's behalf, the local authority agreed to offer a four bedroomed housing association property. The family moved in and we continued to support. The property was infested with insects. To rectify this required extensive advocacy with the housing association and the local authority's environmental health and pest control teams. These difficulties were compounded by rent account issues not referable to the family. Winifred's very limited literacy meant she could not progress these without assistance. As might be imagined these distresses had an adverse effect on her mental health. After much work the arrears issue was sorted out and an agreement was secured with her ex-partner whereby he would assume a more active parenting role. The family continue to be supported by our advice services.

### Patrick and Theresa

Patrick and Theresa are both aged 22 and from an Irish traveling background. They emigrated to London as a young married couple when they had three young children. They presented to our Youth Resettlement Worker for housing assistance. The worker assessed their situation, advised and briefed them on making an application to the Local Authority under Section 7 of the Homeless Persons Act. We then referred them to the Unit, where they were given temporary accommodation while their case was assessed. Eventually they were housed in a council flat.

Subsequently they presented again to our Youth Resettlement Project as their flat had become infested with mice. Repeated efforts to eradicate the infestation had failed. The Worker wrote to the Council Housing Department on their behalf and detailed the case of the permanent unsanitary conditions they live under, conditions which were outside their control. High on the issues raised was the deleterious effect on development of their four children. They were duly assessed by the Housing Department and found suitable for alternative accommodation. The Worker then made a successful application for a Community Care grant from the Social Fund of the DSS and also made an application to the Family Welfare Association for a furniture grant.

### Mimi and Sean

Mimi and Sean are a young married couple with a seven month old child. He was badly abused as a child - physically, emotionally and sexually. This abuse has left him psychologically scared and he has received outpatient psychiatric treatment in Dublin for several years. Despite his traumatic childhood experiences he stayed on at his mother's house until his early 20's (apart from the occasional few months away from there). In 2000 he and Mimi were married and they lived in his mother's flat. In January 2001 his mother sold the house, moved into a small flat, and effectively made him and his wife homeless. There was a distinct rift with any family ties at this stage as this was a signal from his mother that 'she didn't care' any more.

Faced with housing problems in Dublin the couple decided to emigrate to London. She was by then pregnant. They presented to us in April. The issues in their case were written up and a referral made to the local Homeless Persons Unit. They were allocated council accommodation. The Worker then assisted them with welfare benefit claims and continues to offer assistance with further issues as they arise. High on the list is to refer Sean to psychiatric services as he needs to have professional help in order to enable him to lead an emotionally balanced life. Presently he is not sufficiently mentally stable to be able to hold down a job. The support of a Community Welfare Service is crucial to the maintenance of their family equilibrium in this new emigrant environment.

Three outstanding servants of the Irish Centre passed away during the last year.  
May they rest in peace.  
The Rt. Hon. Lord Farnham  
Lord Longford  
Brian Duggan.



*Launch of website by Irish Ambassador*

# Older Persons Outreach Report

The Older Persons Outreach Project is now in its fifth year. The project targets people aged 55 and onwards who require support and services in order to maintain independent living within the community.

## The Project Aims:

- To inform older people about the services and encourage the take up of such services which will improve quality of life.
- To advocate on behalf of older people to ensure that their needs are understood and appropriate services are provided.
- To inform about and check individual's entitlement to Benefits, encourage the take up of Benefits which are relevant to older people in order to increase income.
- To minimise the risks of isolation and loneliness by encouraging older people to make links with Day centres, Lunch Club, Tea-Dance.
- To link vulnerable housebound older people with volunteer befrienders.
- To promote and encourage activities which will benefit health.

## Outreach Checklist:

Older people are visited by appointment in the familiar environment of their own homes. The following checklist is used to gain insight about persons needs;

- **Living Conditions**
- **General Health** - registered with GP, contact with other health professionals
- **Income/Benefit checks**
- **Daily Living Tasks** - ability to attend to personal care, meal preparation, shopping and household chores.
- **Social Networks / Hobbies.**
- **Family Contacts**

This checklist enables the older person and the outreach worker to look at all the relevant issues, discuss options and with permission make referrals.

In addition to the psychological and physical aspects of the ageing process the needs of older people are very varied. Homelessness due to alcohol misuse, breakdown in family relationships is not uncommon. Mental ill-health, especially depression, is a common factor.

## Outreach Volunteers

The project is linked to Age Concern Camden's 'Good Neighbourhood Scheme'. We have currently seven volunteer befrienders who offer support to vulnerable older people by visiting regularly, providing social contact, accompanying outdoors, encouraging exercise, sharing information and monitoring the risks. The volunteer befrienders offer invaluable support and the elderly people are very appreciative of the service they offer.

## Case History

John is sixty eight years old. He lived until recently in a small bed-sit in a large housing estate experiencing problems such as high crime, anti-social behaviour. John's physical health is affected by Arthritis and he is visually impaired. John was unhappy with the environment in which he was living, it caused him great anxiety and he often felt depressed. He experienced disturbed sleep most nights. Living in these conditions affected his health and well - being. He often relied on alcohol to suppress his anxieties. He was fearful about going outdoors after dark and almost became a prisoner in his own home.

John was informed about alternative housing options. He was encouraged to be referred for sheltered housing. Through our services, John was assessed and accepted on the sheltered housing waiting list in December 2001. He was offered a sheltered flat in a location of his choice in May 2002. John was apprehensive about the move at first, he was encouraged and supported with the practical tasks throughout. He has now settled in well and reports of having undisturbed sleep. He feels comfortably relaxed in his new secure environment. He is able to invite friends to his home; in his previous flat he was embarrassed by his surroundings of which he had no control over. He now has an enhanced quality of life in which a sense of personal and social worth are being restored.

## Daycentre

The project is fortunate in having a Luncheon Club at the Centre. This operates on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. It provides older people the opportunity to meet socially, to form friendships and enjoy lunch in the company of others.

Monday is activities day - Gentle Exercise classes to music in the morning. Research has proven that exercise increases physical strength, improves balance therefore reducing the risk of falls, relieves problems associated with Arthritis and Osteoporosis. The class is appreciated and attended by 8 participants. Monday afternoon - Art Session. This class is now well established and enjoyed by 10 regular participants. They have enjoyed visits to The National Gallery and The British Museum. They have also enjoyed the excitement at the invitation by the Mayor of Camden Roger Robinson earlier this year to have their work displayed at the Diorama Arts Centre. The work which they displayed was highly credited. A quote from one participant: "I feel 100% better since coming here - it is better than any tonic".

## Did you know?

- 800 people visit the London Irish Centre's website each day.
- The Centre makes 27,000 phone calls on behalf of service users each year.
- The Centre receives 28,000 telephone enquiries each year.
- Over 4,000 different people attended the Return to Camden Festival 2002. 44% were Irish.
- The London Irish Centre's Missing Persons Service located 50 people in the past year.
- The Centre is now in its 48th year delivering front line services to the Irish Community in London.

*Volunteers receiving their certificates*



# Cultural Programme

The highlight of our cultural programme for 2001/02 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 2001/02 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. Irish language classes were co-ordinated by Donal Kelleher.

## Wednesday

Tea dance organised by Molly Ormonde.

## Friday

Friday night dance organised by the Social Committee.

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

## Sunday

Ceile, old time and sets organised by Anton Coyle.

## Organisations Based at the Centre

Irish Centre Housing

Tel: 090 7485 8889

Job Powerhouse

Tel: 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 Ceoltoiri Éireann

Tel: 020 7916 8727

Federation of Irish Societies

Tel: 020 7916 2725

Camden Safety Net

## Trustees

Rev. P. Byrne OMI. OBE.

Mr. J. Higgins

Mr. P. Fitzpatrick

Mr. J. Quinn

## Recently appointed

Mrs. M. Allen

Mr. S. McGarry

## Photographers

Mel McNally

Malcolm McNally

Paul Murphy

Tony Gay

## Welfare Committee

A. Finan

T. Gallagher

A. Watson

F. Thornton

J. Coote

T. Ganley

C. Miedzolka

A. Glover

M. Lyons

## Staff Team

J. Kivlehan OMI Director

J. Twomey Co-ordinator

T. McEaney Manager

P. Murphy Development Worker

M. Cooke Administrator

P. King Homeless Outreach

B. Folan Elder's Outreach

R. Mahon (C. Morris) Advice Worker

A. M. O'Rourke Advice Worker

R. Farrell Advice Worker

J. Ferguson Youth Resettlement

R. Connor Survivor's Service

P. Morgan Survivor's Service

A. McDonnell Aisling

M. Heath Luncheon Club

B. Boylan High and Dry Club

## Cultural Programmes

Irish Music – Karen Ryan

Irish Music – Cathy Walton

Set Dancing – Geoff Holland

Step Dancing – Maire Clerkin

Ceile Dancing – Anton Coyle

Irish Language – Donal Kelleher

Social Club – Mary O'Brien

Elder's Tea Dance – Molly Ormonde

Comhaltas – Jim Myers

Council of Irish Counties – Mary Allen

Return to Camden Town Festival

Karen Ryan / Geoff Holland

## Additional Services

Missing Persons – A. Slavin

Elder's Keep-Fit - C. Nolan

Elder's Art Class – (M. Rolfe) J. Bennett

Legal Advice - D. Long

## Funders

Dion (Irish Government), Dept. of Education and Science (Irish Government), Dept. of Health (Irish Government), Bridge House Estates Trust Fund, London Borough of Camden, Irish Youth Foundation, New Opportunities Fund,

## 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

R. Vujnovic

Nuffield Foundation/Phoenix Fund, City Parochial Foundation, Arts Council, Donegal Association, Offaly Association, Wicklow Association, Clare Association, Ireland Fund of Great Britain, 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 Irish Counties, Private Donations, Cavan Association, Irish Centre Social Club, Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Éireann, Bank of Ireland, Camden Central Community Chest, Lloyds TSB Foundation, Durkan Group, Westminster Kingsway College.

## Auditors

Allen Tully & Co.

156 Harcourt Ave

Sidcup,

Kent DA15 9LW

## Solicitor

Prince Evans

77 Uxbridge Road

London W5 5ST

## Social and Cultural Committee

T. McAsey

M. Allen

P. Hynes

P. O'Brien

M. Sills

M. O'Brien

M. Fitzsimons

D. Kelleher

M. Kenny

J. O'Donohoe

J.O'Brien

## Bankers

Allied Irish Bank

629/634 Holloway Road

London N19 5SS

Bank of Ireland

43-45 Seven Sisters Road

London N7 6BA

## Annual Accounts 2001/02

	2001/02	2000/01
Fixed Assets	1,899,042	1,933,490
Debtors	119,916	110,522
Cash in Bank	143,569	90,577
Creditors	(80,552)	(83,341)
Net Current Assets	182,933	117,758
Total Assets less Liabilities	2,090,529	2,053,574

## The London Irish Centre

50-52 Camden Square, London NW1 9XB

Tel: 020 7916 2222 (Community Services)

020 7916 7272 (Social and Cultural)

Email: [info@irishcentre.org](mailto:info@irishcentre.org)

[www.irishcentre.org](http://www.irishcentre.org)