

Majella

LONDON
IRISH
WOMENS
CENTRE



Annual
Report
1999

Management Committee Report

Welcome to this year's annual report. The London Irish Women's Centre is delighted to announce that we have a new patron, Baroness Helena Kennedy Q.C. Baroness Kennedy has legally represented many high profile Irish political cases, and cases involving women and domestic violence. We hope that her involvement with the Centre will enable us to continue to highlight areas where Irish women face discrimination and oppression.

The London Irish Women's Centre is a feminist collective established in 1986. The Centre offers a unique service to Irish women living in London. The help offered covers a broad range of issues such as advice around housing, employment, benefits and domestic violence. The support varies from providing information and advice, to individual casework and counselling.

The Centre has developed in order to tackle the disadvantage and discrimination experienced by many Irish women. Our aim is to promote their interests, and particularly the interests of those who experience multiple discrimination for example, travellers, single mothers, lesbians and disabled women.

Over the course of the last year, in order to meet the specific demand for free or low cost counselling amongst the Irish community in North West London, the Centre has been working jointly with the Brent Irish Advisory Service. We have continued to maintain a high public profile

during the past year. In October 1998 the Irish Women and Mental Health Conference took place. Over 150 delegates from statutory and voluntary mental health organisations attended. A full report of the day has been produced and is available from the Centre.

In celebration of International Women's Day in March, the Centre hosted an open evening discussion on Women and the Peace Process. Ann Rossiter was our guest speaker. The discussion was interesting and informative and the event was well attended.

In July the Centre launched its most recent publication *Suirbhe na gCeardchumann - A Survey about Trade Unions and Ethnic Monitoring*. The report is based upon the findings of a survey of TUC affiliated unions carried out by the LIWC in October 1998 and calls for a more comprehensive system of ethnic monitoring to be applied by all unions. A copy of the report is available from the centre.



Angie Birtill, Maggie O'Keeffe, Fran Clayton, Clare Barrington (Irish Embassy), Caitriona Spellman, Margaret O'Keeffe at the launch of the Trade Union Survey Report, July 1999

Over the past year a number of changes have taken place with the aim of improving the operation of the Centre. We have set up three sub-committees – a Finance and Fund-raising sub-committee, a Users sub-committee and an Employment sub-committee. Each sub-committee meets every second month to discuss items that fall within their remit.

The sub-committees then report back to the subsequent management committee meeting. Much of the preliminary work involved in setting up the sub-committees took place during a review day in May.

The Centre is very fortunate to have a group of skilled and experienced staff who work hard to provide a consistently high standard of service to Irish women. The management committee would like to take this opportunity to thank the workers for their continued professionalism and commitment to the Centre and its users. The last year has seen the departure of Mary Cate McLennan (Receptionist) and Roisnaire McGill (Management Committee). Their contribution to the Centre will be sorely missed. We wish them both the best of luck in pastures new, and thank them for their contribution. On the plus side we are delighted to welcome the new workers Fran Clayton (Housing and Welfare Rights Advice Worker) and Andrea Carr (Finance Worker) to the Centre.

The management committee is proud to be a part of the work of the London Irish Women's Centre. Irish women in London can continue to look to the Centre for advice and assistance as we approach the new millennium.

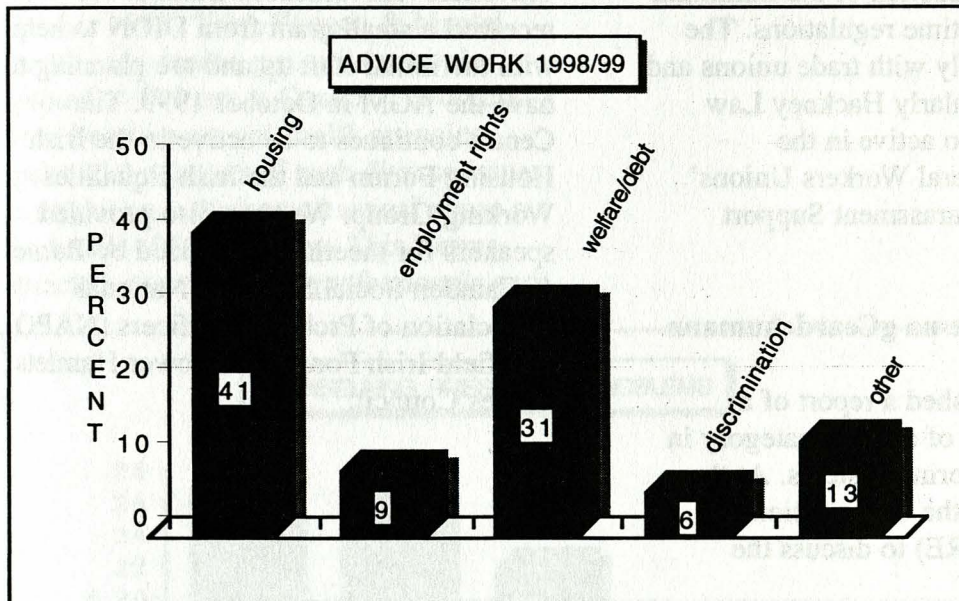
Emma Ketterer

Annual Statistics 1998/99 Contacts/Enquiries for 1998/99

The Centre received a total of 6884 enquiries relating to advice, information, counselling, general queries and administration.

Our advice workers and counsellor saw a total of 200 clients, many of them returning for follow up visits over the year.

have succeeded in persuading local authorities and housing associations to rehouse many of our clients over the past year. The latter have included Irish Housing Associations, An Teach, CARA and Innisfree and mainstream housing associations; including Eaves Housing for Women, Patchwork, Industrial Dwelling Society, Islington & Shoreditch Housing Association and Single Homeless Project. We are planning to increase our referral rights to mainstream housing associations over the coming year.



Advice Service

The Centre offers a free and confidential employment, housing and welfare advice service. Advice sessions are held at the LIWC. We also hold housing and employment evening advice sessions in Kilburn twice a month.

Housing

Homelessness and housing problems form the major part of our casework. We offer advice and representation for women who are approaching local authority homeless persons units. We take action on behalf of women who are experiencing domestic violence or racial harassment. We deal with disrepair, housing transfers and assistance with returning to Ireland. We

Welfare

We offer advice and representation on all Social Security Benefits and apply to relevant charities on behalf of Irish women. We provide support from the initial application to representation at reviews, appeals and Social Security Commissioners. We offer a benefits check to all our clients and assist them in applying for the relevant benefit. We were successful this year in raising £18,000.00 for Irish women in Social Security Benefits and charities. The majority of this income was raised in successful claims for Disability Benefits and representation at Disability Living Allowance appeals. We hope to continue and expand the welfare service with targeted take up for specific groups in the coming year.

Employment

The Centre offers advice and representation on a range of employment issues from maternity rights and dismissals to discrimination and harassment problems. This year we have successfully intervened on behalf of women facing disciplinary action and have supported women in preparing claims for Employment Tribunals. We have also spent a considerable amount of time giving detailed telephone advice to callers following the introduction of the minimum wage and working time regulations. The Centre works closely with trade unions and law centres (particularly Hackney Law Centre). We are also active in the Transport and General Workers Unions' (TGWU) Sexual Harassment Support service.

Launch of Suirbhe na gCeardchumann

This year we published a report of a survey into the use of an Irish category in trade unions monitoring systems. At the conference held at the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) to discuss the

Conference this September and we are continuing to use it as a means of raising awareness of Irish issues among the trade union movement.

Second Tier work

The Centre has been involved with other Irish groups in setting up the Irish Travellers' movement. This is a new and challenging project and was greatly influenced by the success of the Travellers' movement in Ireland. We received a small grant from DION to help with the initial start up and are planning to have the AGM in October 1999. The Centre continues to be active in the Irish Housing Forum and the Irish Equalities Working Group. We have also provided speakers for meetings organized by Barnet & Camden Social Services, National Association of Probation Officers (NAPO), Sheffield Irish Forum and Tower Hamlets Trades Council.

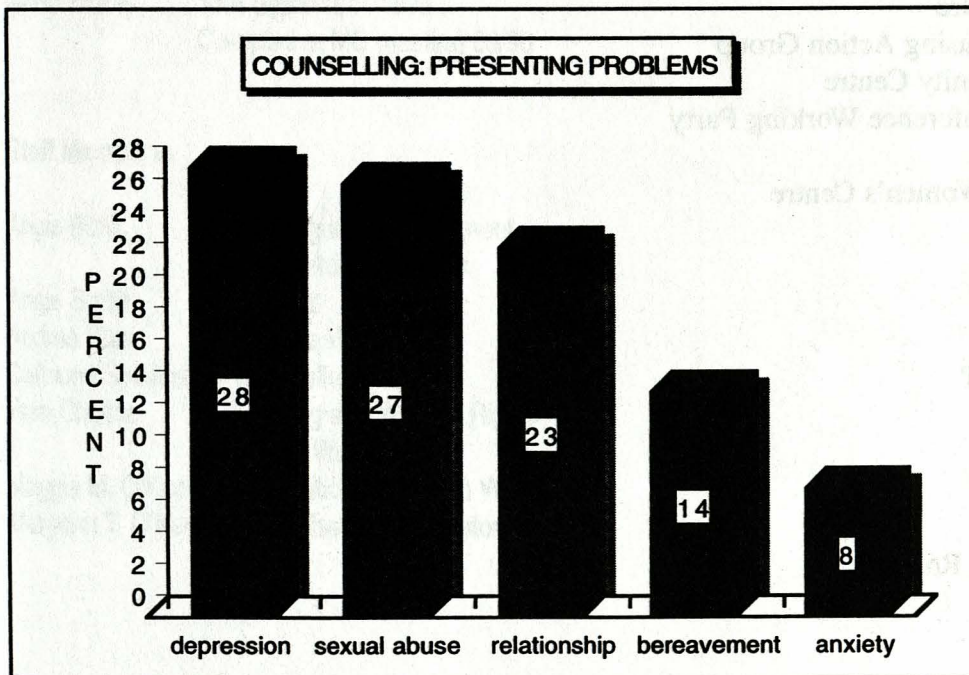


Left to Right: Shelagh O'Connor (Management Committee), Angie Birtill (Advice Worker), Mary Jo McAllister (CAPO), Aoife Donoghue (UNISON), Kamiljeet Jandu (TUC)

report, several speakers spoke in support of its recommendations. These included representatives from Irish community groups, the Trades Union Congress (TUC), trade unions and the CRE. The report was distributed at the TUC's Annual

Counselling Services

We continue to provide a confidential counselling service to Irish women London wide and have now established a satellite service in partnership with the Brent Irish Advisory Service to provide counselling support in this part of London. Having successfully ran the first Irish women's group for survivors of sexual abuse earlier in the year we are hoping in the coming years to extend and develop more group work with other agencies. The centre has also held its 6th conference in October 1998, "Irish Women & Mental Health – na daoine gan aird (a people ignored) – Culture & Context". Workers from frontline mental health agencies spoke of the impact of such diverse issues as migration, religion and sexual abuse on the health of Irish women. This forum attracted more than 150 professionals and



users of the Mental Health system and was instrumental in highlighting the centre's expertise and knowledge relating to Irish women's mental health needs. We hope to carry forward the recommendations of the conference into the development and extension of the service.

*We would like to thank and acknowledge
the continued support of our funders*

LB Hackney
National Lottery
London Boroughs' Grants
Ireland Fund of Great Britain
Dion

**Special thanks to our members and
supporters**

We would also like to thank those
organisations that have supported us in
various areas of our work. With particular
thanks to the following with whom we
have worked on specific projects:

Action Group for Irish Youth
Brent Irish Advisory Service
Commission for Racial Equality
Cricklewood Homeless Concern
Hackney Law Centre
Irish Women's Housing Action Group
Kingsgate Community Centre
Mental Health Conference Working Party
Shelter
West Hampstead Women's Centre

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The London Irish Women's Centre is
affiliated to the Federation of Independent
Advice Centres (FIAC).

Management Committee Members since 31st March 1999

	Appointed	Resigned
Roismaire McGill	December 1996 Elected AGM December 1996	18th May 1999
Shelagh O'Connor	10th October 1995 Elected AGM October 1995	
Katie Foley Treasurer	28th April 1998 elected AGM April 1998	
Emma Ketterer Chair	14th July 1998 co-opted at MC meeting 07/98	
Ailish Duffy Secretary	14th July 1998 co-opted at MC meeting 07/98	
Gerry Hickey	14th September 1998 Co-opted at MC meeting 09/98	

Staff Members:

Angie Birtill	Housing and Employment Rights Advice Worker
Angie Smith	Cleaner
Andrea Carr	Finance Worker
Caitriona Spellman	Counsellor
Fran Clayton	Housing and Welfare Rights Advice Worker
Maggie M. O'Keeffe	Information/Reception Worker
Margaret T. O'Keeffe	Fundraiser/Administrator

Publications

Roots and Realities; a profile of Irish women in London in the 1990's; revised December 1996.

What to do if you are Homeless (yellow booklet) updated March 1998.

Information for the Single Homeless and Private Tenants (blue booklet) published May 1993, updated June 1995.

Rights for Travellers, published December 1995.

Irish Women and Mental Health - na daoine gan aird; Culture and Context; Conference Report October 1998, published January 1999.

Trade Union Survey; Suirbhne na gCeardchumann, published July 1999

**The London Irish Women's Centre
Income and Expenditure Account
For the Year Ended 31 March 1999**

	1999 £	1998 £
Income		
Grants	159,749	143,473
Deferred Grant	<u>(5,244)</u>	<u>-</u>
	154,505	143,473
Other Income	6,188	2,235
Interest Receivable	<u>1,579</u>	<u>1,325</u>
Total Income	<u>162,272</u>	<u>147,033</u>
Expenditure		
Staff Costs	123,341	107,657
Depreciation	6,220	7,584
Other Operating Expenses	<u>26,006</u>	<u>24,937</u>
Total Expenditure	<u>155,567</u>	<u>140,178</u>
Surplus for the Year Before Taxation	6,705	6,855
Taxation	<u>(331)</u>	<u>(278)</u>
Surplus for the Year After Taxation	6,374	6,577
Reserves at 1 April 1998	<u>21,112</u>	<u>14,535</u>
Reserves at 31 March	<u><u>27,486</u></u>	<u><u>21,112</u></u>

**The London Irish Women's Centre
Balance Sheet As at 31 March 1999**

	1999 £	1998 £	£
Tangible Fixed Assets		36,043	<u>39,738</u>
Current Assets			
Debtors	4,776		1,588
Cash at Bank and in Hand	<u>39,929</u>		<u>42,033</u>
	44,075		43,621
Creditors: Amounts Falling Due Within One Year	<u>19,816</u>		<u>24,233</u>
Net Current Assets		<u>24,889</u>	<u>19,388</u>
Total Assets Less Current Liabilities		60,932	59,126
Deferred Capital Income		<u>(33,446)</u>	<u>(38,014)</u>
Net Assets		<u><u>27,486</u></u>	<u><u>21,112</u></u>
Reserves			
Designated Funds		8,008	5,702
General Funds		<u>19,478</u>	<u>15,410</u>
Total Funds		<u><u>27,486</u></u>	<u><u>21,112</u></u>

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part VII of the Companies Act 1985 relating to small companies.

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