



**LONDON IRISH
WOMEN'S
CENTRE**

**ANNUAL
REPORT 2001**



Staff team at October 2000. Standing L to R, Maggie O'Keeffe, Fran Clayton, seated L to R, Joan Woods, Andrea Carr, Caitriona Spellman.

Current Staff Members

Andrea Carr, Finance Worker p/t
Caitriona Spellman, Counsellor p/t
Fran Clayton, Housing and Welfare Rights Advisor f/t
Jennifer Trainor, Outreach and Group Worker p/t
Joan Woods, Locum General Advice Worker f/t
Maggie O'Keeffe, Information/Reception Worker p/t
Sandra Lewis, Cleaner p/t

The London Irish Women's Centre would like to thank staff members who have left in the past year, for their commitment and dedication to the centre.

Angie Smith, Cleaner
Angie Birtill, Housing and Employment Rights Worker
Katherine McLennan, Locum Finance Worker

Current Management Committee

Anna O'Brien
Kate Foley Chair
Nuala Conlon
Ailish Duffy
Majella Williams

Thanks to our Ex Management Committee members for their time and commitment

Kat Blake
Linda Diggins
Jo O'Leary

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Registered charity 1080966

CHAIR'S REPORT

The London Irish Women's Centre has been working through an exciting period of change over the last year. The Management Committee would like to pay tribute to the staff at the Centre who have continued to offer a high quality service against a backdrop of change and uncertainty, in particular to Angie Birtill, who left the LIWC in May 2000 after 12 years of committed service to the Irish Women's Community. She is missed by staff and clients alike. We all wish her well.

Funding from the London Borough Grants Committee gave us the resources to develop and produce a three year business plan and set out our shared vision for the centre, enabling us to expand and develop our services. It was agreed to move from a collective way of working to a more hierarchical structure, we expect to have a co-ordinator in post by Summer 2001. We have also developed and stabilised our funding base. To date these have resulted in successful new sources of funding from Nationwide and City Parochial as well as maintaining our existing base.

As well as our fundraising successes over the last year, we have been awarded the Community Legal Service Preliminary Quality Mark. Regular monitoring by the Community Legal Service ensures that the quality of advice you receive is accurate, professional, and accountable. We have also applied for and successfully obtained Charity Status, and are now registered with the Charity Commissioners as a registered Charity.

The Management Committee has been keen to ensure that our service base is maintained and extended while these changes are taking place. The latest monitoring returns show that we are on course to meet our new, more challenging targets in both the advice and counselling service.

We are looking now to strengthen the Management Committee and staff team through new appointments and to continue to develop our services to endeavour to meet the needs of the Irish Women's Community.

Kate Foley
Chair, LIWC
May 2001

CLIENT PROFILE - WHO USES THE SERVICES AT THE LONDON IRISH WOMEN CENTRE?

Out of 178 new clients who attended the centre for one to one appointments, 74% identified as White Irish, 3% as Black Irish and 15% as Irish Travellers. 33% of clients had dependent children and 98% of those were single parents.

60% of clients were between 25 and 44, and 38% of clients had lived in the U.K. for over 10 years, 25% had lived here their whole lives, representing those 2nd and 3rd generation women of Irish descent. 8% of our clients were lesbian and 80% heterosexual.

When asked about employment status, 28% of clients reported that they were unemployed, a further 19% were full time at home and 29% were employed.

95 clients reported that they had experienced harassment of some kind,

with nearly half of those experiencing domestic violence.

Neighbour harassment appears to be on the increase with 17% experiencing harassment from neighbours. 119 clients reported health problems, 33% of those had a disability of some kind, and 39% had mental health issues.

23% of clients declared themselves homeless, 28% were in Local Authority Housing, and 20% in private rented, only 7% of clients owned their own homes.

The statistics show a high percentage of disadvantaged and vulnerable members. Culturally and gender sensitive services like the LIWC reach a section of the Irish Women's Community and attempt to address those multiple and deep seated needs.

COUNSELLING SERVICE

Our Counselling Service is now in its fourth year having once again been successful in securing funding from the National Lottery Charities Board for both a counsellor and outreach/group worker (two part time posts). This is indeed recognition of the need within the community for culturally specific mental health support, and the quality of support provided by the Counselling Service.

We continue to target those isolated and marginalised women within the community who for many reasons are unable to access mainstream support. Many of these women speak of long histories of depression and unhappiness and when given a space to talk, often speak of personal histories which include abuse, violence and loss.

Because of the secured funding, we can now offer clients sessions for up to 12 months. This has enabled a much deeper level of therapeutic work to be done. Every woman that contacts the Centre is offered an initial assessment appointment and this is an opportunity for counsellor and client alike to think about their needs together, ensuring that the support offered is appropriate to individual needs.

We are hoping that as the demand for service continues to increase that we can expand the services available for women both in terms of individual and group work. With the recent appointment of our Outreach and Group Worker, Jennifer Trainor, we are confident that Irish women will continue to benefit from our work.

ADVICE AND ADVOCACY SERVICE

During the year April 2000 to March 2001, 178 new clients attended the London Irish Women's Centre for advice or counselling, making a total of 255 visits in all. 32% of women attending needed assistance with housing, 33% had problems with their welfare benefits, and 53% of clients reported that they had experienced harassment of some kind. Housing and Homelessness continue to be major problems for Irish Women.

We have had a high success rate with securing housing for women in

challenging Local Authority decisions on homeless applications, and also for obtaining Disability Living Allowance for Irish women and Children. The majority of these DLA cases were for Irish Travellers and were won at Appeal Tribunals. We generated £59,500 from benefits and charities for our clients. We have expanded our service to include home visits and outreach visits to sheltered schemes, day centres etc., and we continue to develop our services to the outer London boroughs.

INFORMATION SERVICE

1024 people contacted the organisation during this period seeking basic information or advice. 24% of these were referred internally to our advice or counselling services. Again the most common queries were related to Housing and Welfare Benefits Rights. The Information telephone service has been expanded and our telephone lines are now open four and a half days a week, making our service more accessible to clients.

DEVELOPING OUR OUTREACH SERVICE

We are currently developing our outreach service for both advice and counselling. An advice worker is now available to make home visits, visit groups at different projects and sheltered housing schemes. Part of the counselling service remit now includes developing outreach and group work within the Irish Women's Community. We will develop liaisons with relevant professionals, in order to establish stronger links between services. Initially researching the needs of Irish women, then setting up culturally sensitive groups to meet the needs identified.

NETWORKING AT THE LONDON IRISH WOMEN'S CENTRE

The LIWC continues to be involved in different areas of interest that affect the Irish Women's Community in London. We are members of the steering group 'Room to Roam', which is a Travellers' research project. Our involvement is in partnership with Brent Irish Advisory Service and Action Group for Irish Youth.

We also attend and make input into the Irish Housing Forum and the Irish Equalities Working Group.

More recently, in association with the London Irish Elders' Forum, we have attended Open Days for information on Irish Pensions take up.

An important issue for Irish people at the moment is the 2001 Census, where we are officially given recognition for the first time. We held two open days in April assisting people in filling in their Census forms, and have campaigned among our 2nd generation Irish clients to identify as Irish on the form.

We continue to network and campaign on Women's issues, and have attended Domestic Violence Conferences and the Greater London Authorities Women's Day.

THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS FOR THE YEAR 2000/2001 :

London Borough Grants
National Lottery Charities Board
DION
Lloyds TSB
London Borough of Hackney
Irish Fund of Great Britain
Irish Youth Foundation

THANKS TO THOSE HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS WHO GIVE US REFERRAL RIGHTS, ALLEVIATING HOMELESSNESS FOR SOME OF OUR CLIENTS :

Islington and Shoreditch Housing
Association
Single Homeless Project
Cara Housing Association
An Teach
Innisfree Housing Association
Industrial Dwellings Society
Eaves Housing for Women
St. Mungo's, Church Walk
Patchwork

**THE LONDON IRISH WOMEN'S CENTRE
BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31ST MARCH 2000**

	2000		1999
	£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS			
Tangible Assets			31,791 <u>36,043</u>
 CURRENT ASSETS			
Debtors	2,404		4,776
Cash at Bank and in hand	<u>35,557</u>		<u>39,929</u>
	37,961		44,705
CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one	<u>19,403</u>		<u>19,816</u>
 NET CURRENT ASSETS			<u>18,558</u> <u>24,889</u>
 TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES			50,349 60,932
 CREDITORS: Amounts falling due after more than one year			<u>28,878</u> <u>33,446</u>
 NET ASSETS			<u>£21,471</u> <u>£27,486</u>
 FINANCED BY:			2,492 -
Restricted funds		79	19,478
Unrestricted funds		<u>18,900</u>	<u>8,008</u>
Designated funds		<u>£21,471</u>	<u>£27,486</u>

The directors have taken advantage of the exemptions conferred by Part 1 of Schedule 8 to the Companies Act 1985, on the grounds that the company is entitled to the benefit of those exemptions as a small company.

AUDITOR :
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