

BRENT IRISH ADVISORY SERVICE

BIAS

ANNUAL REVIEW 2000-2001



CHAIR'S REPORT

The last year has seen a consolidation of BIAS Services. The pace and pressure on the voluntary sector to maximise resources and add better value to service provision continued. There are new accounting standards required by the Charity Commission, changing employment law, tightened funders requirements... I could go on and on.

I am confident BIAS is meeting and will continue to meet all these challenges. It is essential that BIAS has a local and wider presence to ensure improved ethnically sensitive and accessible services to the Irish community. There is still much exclusion and disadvantage in the Irish population at large.

The success of BIAS in meeting major change, while still providing an improved and wider service is no doubt due to the hard work and commitment of the staff and volunteers, all of whom I would like to thank. I would also like to thank my fellow members of BIAS Management Committee, who have supported me in my role as Chair for many years now.

Also, without the support of our funders, BIAS would not be able to provide such a diverse range of services to our community and I would like to pay a special tribute to them and to the many supporters of our work generally.

CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

The years seem to get busier and in my third year as Manager of BIAS this year has been no different. The demand for our services has grown dramatically over the year. The whole team (staff and volunteers), have worked together with dedication, commitment and enthusiasm to offer caring and sensitive services to the diverse Irish community. I feel privileged to lead such a team and would like to thank them all for supporting me in my role.

My priorities during the year were to secure and strengthen existing BIAS projects, while attempting at the same time to create a firm and sustainable base for the charity's future development. My mind was very much on improving staff retention (a major problem in the voluntary sector), improvements to BIAS' quality of service and ensuring the sustainable long-term provision of needs-led services by BIAS to the Irish community.

This involved much fundraising, the introduction of quality assurance across BIAS and a review and updating of operational systems and procedures, including administration and information systems. I was also involved in networking and liaison with Irish and other agencies to negotiate appropriate and improved service provision to the Irish community and raise the profile of BIAS in London. With this in mind BIAS' first Newsletter was launched in March 2001 and we held our first Irish in Harrow Conference in November.

I look forward with energy and enthusiasm to the coming year and particularly to the development of new Projects in BIAS but also securing funding for our Travellers Project. I can tell it is going to be a busy one !

FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT WORK REPORT

With quality of service very much in mind BIAS began its work towards achieving Level 1. of PQASSO. This is a quality system designed for small to medium sized organisations. There are three levels with twelve quality areas. BIAS is working towards achieving Level 1. by 31st December 2001. All BIAS stakeholders will be involved in this process and a number of staff, volunteers and management committee development days are planned.

It was also a busy time in respect of Policies and Procedures. With the introduction of the Stake holders Pension, much research and consultation was carried out with staff to prepare for an October deadline and it is hoped to nominate a provider by July 2001. BIAS introduced its first Reserves Policy in October 2000, to comply with new Charity Commission requirements and numerous other policies were re-visited, including the Equal Opportunities and Confidentiality Policies.

BIAS continued to use "Quickbooks" computerised accounting system during the year and on-going support was provided by CASH. For a second year running, BIAS' payroll has been carried out by an external supplier - Karen Warne. This has proved very successful and efficient with internal controls provided by BIAS' Finance Worker.

During the year we registered with Charities Aid Foundation America. This will enable us to receive tax-effective donations from individuals and companies in the United States and we are particularly targeting Irish businesses and companies there. We also registered with the Inland Revenue for Gift Aid and we hope to attract more individual giving in the coming year.

ADVICE AND INFORMATION

All aspects of the advice service were well used throughout the year. As with previous years, housing and homelessness continued to be the main type of enquiry dealt with by the service. Other frequent enquiries included information and advice on moving to Ireland; welfare/disability benefit applications and appeals; the Irish pre-1953 pension and general help with form filling.

There was a substantial increase in people aged over 65 who are accessing the advice service and home visits were made to those who had mobility difficulties. The fortnightly legal advice surgery was well attended particularly covering housing matters and wills and estates in Ireland.

During the year we established a monthly generalist advice service on the South Kilburn Estate. Also, a monthly legal advice service was also established in Harrow from our Rayners Lane office.

The majority of enquiries made on the London-wide telephone helpline derived from Brent, Harrow and Ealing respectively and again were related to "housing" issues.

Plans for the coming year include establishing a specialist housing advice project, developing satellite advice surgeries in other parts of Brent and working towards achieving the Community Legal Services Quality Mark, which is a new requirement for Advice Services in general.

SOCIAL WORK/ FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICE

This children and families social work service is operated through a Service Level Agreement with the London borough of Brent, renewed annually and offers culturally sensitive social work support to Irish children and families in need or at risk in the borough of Brent.

The majority of the users of this service were living in temporary or other shared accommodation and some of the presenting issues included housing, domestic violence issues, depression and isolation, school exclusion, parental substance misuse and child protection issues.

During the year the Project established an Irish Women's Support Group. This was facilitated in partnership with the BIAS Irish Traveller Women's Worker and was held weekly at Brent Community Health Council, to whom we are grateful.

In the year ahead, this service will work closely with a newly funded Sure Start Family Support Project for Irish families with children aged 0-3 and the On Track Project for families with children aged 4-12. At the year end we had not recruited a Family Support Worker despite two attempts at advertising in the public press. However, the service was established and links were made and support provided to families in the Project Catchment area.

TRANSITION TO OLD AGE PROJECT

This service provides a range of support services to Irish people in the 40-65 year age group who have a health, housing or social care need in Brent. It is funded through the former Brent Joint Finance programme for a three year period until August 2002. The project works on an outreach basis in close partnership with local agencies in Brent, including Brent Community Alcohol Service (BCAS), Cricklewood Homeless Concern and the Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) and other agencies and individuals as appropriate.

The project works from CHC every Wednesday and offers twice weekly office appointments sessions at BIAS office. The project worker will also visit people who are not able to get to the office due to mobility or other access difficulties.

During the year, some of the main areas dealt with by the service included mental health and substance misuse issues; welfare benefits, particularly DLA; and by far the greatest again is housing and poor housing conditions, with large numbers living in unsuitable housing or of "no fixed abode".

Plans for the coming year include continuing weekly street outreach with BCAS targeting the hidden homeless and street drinkers. Also, to continue the weekly advice and support service at Brent's only homeless day centre for single people (CHC). The service will continue to offer twice weekly advice and support sessions at the office.

IRISH ELDERS PROJECT

Our day care service to Irish Elders continued during the year thanks to interim funding received from Brent Social Services. This funding enabled us to continue our twice weekly day care project, one of which we run in partnership with Brent Elders Voice. We also were fortunate to receive funding from Age Concern England to develop a Volunteering Project to visit housebound and isolated Irish elders in Brent and Harrow.

At the year-end we had 15 new volunteers working on our Elders Project, all of whom had to go through an in-house training and induction programme. During the year we provided advice, assistance and support on a number of matters, including the pre-1953 Irish pension, welfare rights/entitlements, moving to Ireland and housing matters.

The year ahead will focus on developing the volunteering service in Harrow as well as establishing a specific day care service there. The need for such provision was identified in a needs analysis completed by BIAS in 2000.

We are also in consultation with Brent Social Services to secure a Service Level Agreement to develop a high care Irish Day Care service in the borough and we hope funding for this will be agreed to commence the new service in September 2001.

BIAS TRAVELLERS PROJECT

BIAS' Travellers Project continued to provide a vital service to Irish Travellers living in the London boroughs of Brent and Harrow primarily, with the Youth at Risk Service working London-wide. Funding for the core Project (from The Community Fund) comes to an end in May 2001 and at the year-end we were not able to confirm continuation funding. Numerous funding applications have been submitted, including the Community Fund and we remain optimistic that our work with Irish Travellers will continue. The Project Business Plan outlines plans to work in other London boroughs particularly boroughs surrounding Brent and Harrow and where there are no existing Irish/Travellers specific services.

YOUTH-AT-RISK PROJECT

This London-wide project which is funded primarily by Comic Relief was established in 1999 and works with young Irish travellers who are (i) at risk of offending (ii) currently in the Criminal Justice System and/or (iii) ex-offenders.

During the year the Project Worker had the support of an experienced social work student and together they established monthly Irish Foreign National Groups (IFNG) in Brixton and Wandsworth prisons. Negotiations are taking place to establish monthly IFNG groups in Brixton, Feltham and Wormwood Scrubs prisons and we look forward to these new developments later in the year. The fundamental aim of the IFNG is to provide equality of treatment by addressing and highlighting the specific needs and disadvantage Irish people experience in the prison system.

The issues are wide-ranging and include shower refusals, unheated cells, self-harm, suicide/attempted suicides, literacy difficulties, limited and often no contact with families or friends and a general lack of awareness of rights/entitlements. The project has also observed there is a general lack of awareness within the Criminal Justice System of the needs and culture of Irish/Irish Travellers and the Project will be offering cultural awareness training to address this.

The project identifies the need for a resettlement project and a mentoring project and plans are being made to secure funding to establish these services in the year ahead.

The Project works in partnership with agencies across London, including the Metropolitan Police, National Association of Probation Officers, The Howard League and others to secure better services for young Irish Travellers "at risk". The Project also sits on London-wide forums representing the views/needs of young Irish Travellers "at risk".

WOMENS PROJECT

This project works with Irish Traveller women and their families who live in the boroughs of Brent and Harrow either on the established Traveller sites or in housing. The Project Worker provides a range of advice, information, support and self-development services to clients. The Worker also represents the views of Irish Traveller Women to key local policy and planning forums (e.g., Health and Race, Domestic Violence Forums) and networks with statutory and other bodies of relevance.

There was an overall increase in the number of enquiries to the Women's project during the year and some of the presenting issues were housing/site issues, domestic violence, discrimination/harassment, depression, self-harm and welfare rights/entitlements. Direct casework support was offered as well as joint-work or referrals to other agencies where appropriate.

In partnership with Brent Adult & Community Education Service (BACES) the project helped establish literacy classes and a successful ten-week programme was held. In partnership with Harrow College, the Worker helped to set up cookery classes for Traveller Women in Harrow. It is hoped that classes in Information Technology (IT), assertiveness and literacy will follow in the coming year.

Plans for the coming year (pending funding) also include expanding this project to work in other London boroughs and to change the post to a Families Worker to work with the entire family unit, including the men.

YOUTH PROJECT

This youth project works with Irish Traveller youth who live in the boroughs of Brent and Harrow either on the established Traveller sites or in housing. The role of the youth service revolves around a number of key areas of work with Young Irish Travellers, such as providing advice and information on training, education and employment and supporting the development of sport, recreational and cultural activities.

During the year there was a change of staff and the Project employed two youth workers on a job-share basis. One of the new workers is a Traveller. Further links were established and maintained by the Project during the year notably with the Traveller Education Services, BACES, Harrow College, Brent and Harrow Youth Services to ensure appropriate, accessible and new services to Irish Travellers.

During the year, the project held many youth events including a Christmas Party in Harrow. The project also took a group of children to Butlins in partnership with the Roundwood Club in Brent. Other regular activities included football, swimming and play sessions.

Plans for the coming year include establishing a Drug and Alcohol Awareness programme in a Harrow school where there are large numbers of Traveller children. Also, to establish football teams and a football league across boroughs. Of course all our plans depend on the service securing funding.

BIAS PROFILE 2000/2001

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Colum Moloney	Chairperson
Jim Smith	Secretary
Mary Mac Namara	Treasurer
Tony Donnellan	
Marie Dalton	
John Healy	
Ursula Taylor	
Margaret Gallagher	

BANKERS

Bank of Ireland, 127 Kilburn High Road,
London NW6 6SF

AUDITORS

John M. Gould Chartered Accountants,, 66 York Road,
Weybridge, Surrey KT13 9WT

SOLICITORS

Brent Community Law Centre, 389 High Road,
London NW10 2JR

STAFF TEAM

Karen Mc Hugh	Co-ordinator
Anthonia Marchington	Administrator
Richie Butler	Finance Worker
Marian O' Donoghue	Team Leader/Advice Worker
Irene Gaffney	Volunteer Organiser
Mary Mc Loughlin	Children and Families Social Worker
Anne Nagle	Outreach Worker
Maureen Keogh	Day Care Worker
Gabriel Mackintosh	Information Worker

Travellers Project

Patricia O'Farrell	Team Leader
Patsy Twomey	Administrator
David Augusta (to Sept 2000)	Youth Worker
Geraldine Clancy and Leanne O'Leary	Youth Workers
Cecilia Greene	Womens Worker
Yvonne Mac Namara	Youth at Risk Worker
Patricia Mc Crossan	Social Work Student
Jonathan O'Dea	Development Worker (Irish Traveller Movement)

Also many thanks to our regular volunteers who worked primarily on the Elders Project and include :- John Plank, Sheral Francis, Bridget Quirke, Ellen Sheehan, Peter Coleman, Mary O'Connor, Bridget Timlin, Teresa Foley, Sean Gorman, Rosa Gan, Margaret Gavigan, Jim Donnelly, Patricia Corr, Fiona O'Keefe.

BIAS FUNDERS

PROJECT FUNDERS

London Borough of Brent
London Borough of Harrow
Comic Relief
Brent and Harrow Health Authority
Irish Youth Foundation
Sure Start Central Brent
DION (Irish Government)
Age Concern England
National Lottery Charities Board
(now The Community Fund)
London Borough Grants
(now The Association of London Government)
Lloyds TSB
Edward Harvist Trust

CLIENT WELFARE FUNDING

The Holiday Club	Capital Radio
Family Fund	Clancy Group
Invalids at Home	Bank of Ireland
The Mean Fiddler	Irish World
St. Martin in the Fields	Westbrook Bequest
St. Vincent De Paul	O'Farrells Butchers
O'Sullivan & Smith	Mann Construction
The Matthew Trust	Mc Govern Haulage
Pearsons Holiday Fund	Mick Moss Garage
Glasspool Charitable Trust	Harrow Community Trust
Family Welfare Association	
Daniel and Harris, Solicitors	
Procaccini & Farrell Solicitors	
Willesden Green Library Centre	
Salvation Army Harrow	

BIAS The Old Library Building, Willesden Green Library Centre, 95 High Road, London, NW10 2ST

Tel :- 020 8459 6655 (Central Office); 020 8459 7638 (Travellers Project)

E-Mail: bias.brent@cwcom.net

Charity No: 1059801; Company No: 2269918

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2000/01

Total Income	£331,726
Total Expenditure	£318,320
Excess	£13,406
2000/01 Balance	£44,364
Fund Balance at 31 March 2001:	£57,770

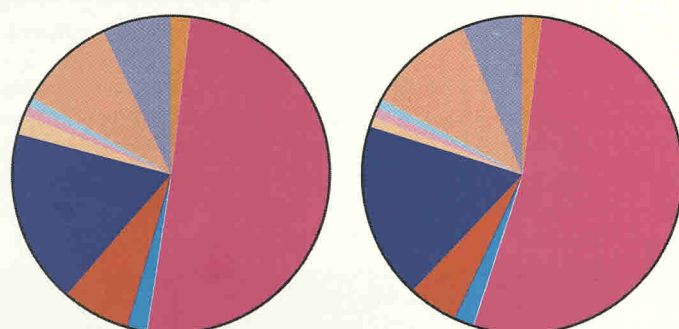
The Fund Balance is predominantly Restricted Funds.

(Full Set of Accounts are available from BIAS Office on request).

FACTS AND FIGURES

London-wide Telephone Helpline Enquiries

1999/2000 2000/2001



1999/2000
Total 7018

2000/2001
Total 7497

■ Barnet	2	2
■ Brent	51	53
■ Camden	2	2
■ Ealing	7	5
■ Harrow	18	18
■ Islington	2	1
■ Kensington & Chelsea	1	1
■ Westminster	1	1
■ Other London	10	11
■ Outside London	7	6

CLIENT ISSUES

1999/2000

2000/2001

Housing Need/ Homelessness	955	1332
Poverty/ Welfare Rights	513	1104
Social and Cultural	320	226
Equal Opportunity/ discrimination	190	206
Moving to Ireland	280	192
Health and Social Care	522	828
TOTAL	2780	3888

PROJECT CASE/GROUP WORK

1999/2000

2000/2001

Social Work	239	312
Elders	2501	2846
Advice	2016	2080
Transition to Old Age	150	480
Travellers Womens Project	610	531
Travellers Youth and Youth-at-Risk Projects	440	620
TOTAL	5956	5869