



WORKING WITH THE IRISH COMMUNITY

Annual Report
1995/96

BIAS' MISSION STATEMENT

BIAS aims to give accurate, skilled and impartial information, advice and support to Irish people in need, in London.

BIAS is contracted to provide services through :-

- 1. BIAS Community Services*
- 2. BIAS Information, Training and Consultancy Services*

Address : *Premier House, 313 Kilburn Lane,
London W9 3EG*

Telephone : *0181-968 6914*

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*BIAS is the logo of : Brent Irish Advisory Service, a Company Limited by
Guarantee Registered Number: 2269918 Registered Office: 76-82 Salusbury
Road, London NW6 6NY*

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BIAS provides commissioned services, through contracts and service agreements with a range of agencies. BIAS would like to thank the following for their continued support :-

- *London Borough of Brent Education, Arts and Libraries Department*
- *London Borough of Brent Children and Young People Commissioning Unit*
- *Brent and Harrow Health Authority*
- *London Borough of Harrow*
- *London Boroughs Grants Scheme*
- *NHS Ethnic Health Unit*
- *Irish Government (Department of Enterprise and Employment)*
- *BBC Children in Need*
- *The Housing Associations Charitable Trust*
- *Age Concern England*

BIAS - Working with Irish People

BIAS was established in 1978 as a not-for-profit organisation and we are now in our eighteenth year of operation. BIAS is a community development and service provider organisation which is non-party in politics and religion and which provides a practical, essential service to Irish people in North-West London and beyond. The large and diverse Irish community forms a substantial proportion of the resident population in London and is one of the Capital's largest national groups originating from a single overseas country.

With an ancient cultural heritage, combined with a modern lifestyle, Irish people who emigrated from their own country to find employment and make a new life have contributed much to the development of industry, commerce and services in Britain. Even to-day, as we move through the 1990's, young migrants still come to Britain to seek work and accommodation.

As foreigners in a strange land, many Irish people, especially those from rural and Irish-speaking backgrounds, may experience culture shock, alienation and racism. Some of them may have problems with housing, jobs, social security and welfare.

Within the Irish community, there is a disproportionate number of older Irish, people with disabilities and mental ill-health, and homeless people. There are also groups of Irish people who have particular needs, including women, young people, pensioners, travelling people and the unemployed. This is where BIAS comes in.

Chairperson's Report

BIAS' information, advice and support services continue to be well used by the Irish Community. As we move towards the end of the decade and a new millennium, the demand for BIAS' services as well as that of other Irish agencies across London and Britain, shows no sign of relenting.

In an era of strict financial budgets set by local authorities, health agencies and government departments, it is vitally important that the needs of Irish people are not only recognised but also met by these statutory agencies. Increasingly though, needs will only be met if they fall within the criteria of legislation that, for instance, governs community care, children's, and housing, services.

It is in such a climate in 1995 and 1996, of financial cutbacks and streamlining of services by statutory authorities, that BIAS has been able to successfully develop in partnership with local authorities and health agencies, in North-West London particularly and London-wide generally, a range of specifically commissioned services for Irish people.

BIAS is now contracted to provide services for children and families and older people within the Irish community. In the year ahead, we will not only be aiming to consolidate these achievements but also to build on them and to develop similar quality, professional contracted services throughout London. To enable us to achieve these goals, we have established a Community Services Team at new offices in Brent - this will give BIAS a springboard for developing into the future.

I would like to use the opportunity of this Annual Report to thank our funders for their continued support. I would also like to express my sincere thanks for all those individuals and agencies who have supported BIAS' work over the year, and in particular to offer my personal thanks to the staff team and to my colleagues on the Management Committee.

At this point, I would like to pay a tribute to a committee member who left during the year - Louise McKeon. Louise who left because of work commitments, played a significant part in helping BIAS develop to meet the challenges of contracted services. I wish Louise every success for the future.

Colum Moloney
Chairperson

BIAS Management Committee 1996

Chairperson Colum Moloney

**Vice-Chairperson/
Company Secretary** Jim Glackin

Treasurer Marie Dalton

Members Mary MacNamara
Louise McKeon
Tony Donnellan
Helen McCarthy
Donal MacCraith
Margaret Gallagher
Jim Smith

Auditors Levy and Partners
86/88 South Ealing Road
London W5 4QB

Bankers Bank of Ireland
127 Kilburn High Road
London NW6 6NY

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

Sinclair, Taylor & Martin
9 Thorpe Close
Portobello Road
London W10 5XL

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Registered Number 2269918

Registered Office 76-82 Salusbury Road, London NW6 6SF

BIAS Staff Team

Management and Administration

Co-ordinator

Stan Quirey

Administrator

Anne-Marie Keaney

Office Cleaner

Rita Rafferty

Information Service

Information and Advice Worker

John O’Gorman

Community Services

Community Services Team Leader

Karen McHugh

Children and Families Social Worker

Therese O’Meara

Travellers Health Access Project Worker

Mary O’Dwyer

Elders Community Care Worker

Jeanne Dermody

Transnational Community

Marion O’Donohue

Care Project Worker

Harrow Research Project Worker

(to be recruited)

Social Work Student Placement

Hussain Saleh

BIAS Elders Worker is assisted by a team of voluntary workers in her work with older Irish people. Their commitment, hard work and enthusiasm are valued and appreciated by the Management Committee.

During the year Carol Colton (Children and Families Social Worker) and Catherine O’Reilly (Information and Advice Worker) left. BIAS’ best wishes go with Carol and Catherine.

London-wide Information and Referral Service Helpline

Achievements

The telephone helpline service dealt with 6,504 enquiries during the year. This represents a slight decrease in the number of enquiries compared to last year. The reduction undoubtedly reflects the reduction in the overall number of hours that the helpline service was open - BIAS reduced the opening times slightly to ensure a more efficient and responsive service to telephone enquirers.

Level of enquiries :

<i>1992/93</i>	<i>1993/94</i>	<i>1994/95</i>	<i>1995/96</i>
<i>6,182</i>	<i>6,313</i>	<i>6,818</i>	<i>6,504</i>

Analysis of the number and nature of enquiries for 1995/96 revealed the following :-

- a) a continued increase (compared to last year) in the number of people seeking information and advice because of homelessness/housing need*
- b) a significant increase in the level of enquiries from people, either having difficulties in obtaining the welfare benefits and services they were entitled to, or, requiring information on claiming new benefits such as the Incapacity benefit*
- c) continued increase in number of enquiries from people (particularly people over 60) considering moving/returning to Ireland*

The table below details the number and nature of enquiries dealt with by the Telephone Helpline Service

<u><i>Nature of Enquiry</i></u>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
<i>Housing need (homeless/threatened with homelessness)</i>	893	1376	2269
<i>Welfare, benefit entitlements (income difficulties)</i>	1174	698	1872
<i>Moving to Ireland</i>	503	271	774
<i>Personal health and social services</i>	548	284	832
<i>Employment and training opportunities (finding work, training and further education)</i>	196	295	491
<i>Irish social and cultural activities</i>	169	97	266
<i>TOTAL</i>	3483	3021	6504

Personal Caller Advice Service

The advice appointment service offered Irish residents of the Borough of Brent the opportunity to discuss individual queries with an advice worker at BIAS. Monitoring of the type and level enquiries at the advice sessions revealed the following :-

<i>Nature of Enquiry</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Housing need (threatened with homelessness/ inappropriately housed/homeless)</i>	146	287	433
<i>Income difficulties (welfare benefit claims unemployed/low-pay/debt)</i>	195	179	374
<i>Personal social services (poor health/ community care needs)</i>	128	137	265
<i>Moving/returning to Ireland</i>	87	96	183
<i>TOTAL</i>	556	699	1255

Publications and Reports

During 1995 and 1996, BIAS distributed the following publications and reports to Irish people and to individuals and agencies working with the Irish community.

Information Guides

IRISH IN BRITAIN DIRECTORY, 5TH EDITION

Comprehensive guide to all aspects of Irish life in Britain, includes sections on; Irish Information & Advice agencies, Social & Community groups, Education, Arts & Culture and, Business and Commerce.

MOVING TO IRELAND

Practical guide for anyone planning to move, or in many cases, return to Ireland. Includes a directory of useful telephone numbers and contacts in Ireland.

MOVING WITHIN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

A concise guide to living and working in other European countries.

Research Reports

THE HIDDEN MINORITY (produced with Equal Access)

A 1996 research investigation into mental health and the Irish experience in Brent.

ALCOHOL AND THE IRISH IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

Comprehensive and in-depth research investigation into alcohol consumption within the Irish community in Brent.

WHO CARES FOR THE IRISH COMMUNITY?

A report on the Community Care needs of single homeless Irish people, experiencing mental distress, in the London Borough of Brent

IRISH HOMELESS FAMILIES IN LONDON

Difficulties Irish families experience in securing housing

THE IRISH IN EALING

First major study on the Irish in the London Borough of Ealing

THE IRISH COMMUNITY AND "MENTAL HANDICAP" IN BRENT

Examines the experience of "Mental Handicap"/Learning Disability within the migrant Irish community

Children & Families Social Work Service

BIAS Community Services is contracted by the Children and Young People Commissioning Team of London Borough of Brent Social Services Department, to provide support services, under the Children Act 1989, to Irish children and families in need, in the borough. Under our current contract a direct referral can be made by Brent Social Services for work with Irish children and families who currently live in the Brent area.

During the past year BIAS Social Work Service provided the following services for the London Borough of Brent's Social Services Department :-

- **Assessment** work with or without London Borough of Brent Social Worker.
- **Joint casework** with LB Brent Social Worker.
- **Family work, direct work, group work**
- **Consultancy** on specific issues relating to work with Irish families
- **Advocacy work** - representing the client /advocating on behalf of children

BIAS Children and Families Social Work Service worked with **27** families referred by the Social Services Department in the past year.

The work undertaken by BIAS involved dealing with issues such as:-

Child Protection, Joint Investigations with Social Services, facilitating Contact between the parent(s) and a child 'looked after' by the local authority, family work, advocacy and consultancy.

BIAS Community Services

Premier House

313 Kilburn Lane

LONDON W9 3EG

Tel:- 0181-968 6914

Elders Community Care Services

Westbrook Day Centre Project

Achievements in 1995/96

BIAS Community Services in co-operation with Brent Elders Voice provided commissioned community care services for Irish elders in the Harlesden area of the London Borough of Brent.

These services provided under contract since 1990, were held at :-

Venue	:-	The Westbrook Community Centre Knowles House 51 Longstone Avenue Harlesden London NW10 3UN
Open	:-	Every Tuesday 12.00 - 3.00pm
Number of Places	:-	22
Services Provide	:-	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hot meal• Irish social and cultural activities (music/dance)• Information/advice on housing and welfare services/benefits

During 1995/96, 924 places were provided at the Westbrook Day Centre Project

Copland Day Centre Project

Achievements in 1995/96

During 1995/96, BIAS Community Services provided commissioned community care services for Irish elders in the Wembley area of the London Borough of Brent.

These services provided under contract since 1992 were held at :-

Venue	:-	Copland Resource Centre 1 Copland Avenue Wembley Middlesex HA0 2EN
Open	:-	Every Wednesday 2.00 - 5.00pm
Number of Places	:-	14
Services Provided	:-	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Traditional Irish afternoon Tea• Irish social and cultural activities• Information/advice on housing and welfare services/benefits

During 1995/96, 572 places were provided at the Copland Day Centre Project.

Housebound Visiting Service

Achievements during 1995/96

The team of voluntary workers managed by BIAS' Elders Community Care Worker continued to provide a housebound visiting service to isolated and frail older Irish people in Brent.

Support on a wide variety of issues was provided by the voluntary visitors - issues included, accessing community care services, using health services and taking part in Irish social and cultural activities.

For many of the older Irish people using the housebound visiting service, the worker from BIAS was often the main visitor, and therefore continued to play a crucial role in ensuring that any potential crisis (be it housing, health or income related) for the person being visited, could be quickly identified.

During 1995/96, 584 home visits were made.

New Developments for 1996

In 1996 BIAS will be developing a number of new projects in partnership with a range of statutory and non-statutory funders.

Irish Travellers Service

Travellers Health Access Project

BIAS Community Services have been commissioned by the NHS Ethnic Health Unit to work with Irish Travellers in the London Boroughs of Brent and Harrow.

The Health Access Project aims to improve Irish Travellers access to Primary health care services in the 2 boroughs.

Children's Project

BBC Children in Need have funded BIAS Community Services to develop play activities for Irish Traveller children in the London Borough of Brent.

London Borough of Harrow Research Project

BIAS has been commissioned by the London Borough of Harrow and Brent and Harrow Health Authority to research the community care needs and the needs of children within the Irish community in the Borough of Harrow.

Moving to Ireland Development Project

Financially assisted by the Housing Associations Charitable Trust and Age Concern England, this project will respond to the community care needs of older Irish people by developing greater opportunities for them to move to Ireland.

Equal Opportunities Policy

Statement of Intent

BIAS accepts that in society certain groups and individuals are disadvantaged and, as a result, the agency is committed to taking positive steps to redress the balance in terms of its employment practices and service delivery. BIAS also believes that passive policies in themselves do not provide equality of opportunity. BIAS has therefore committed itself to the task of establishing and implementing an effective Equal Opportunities Policy. In addition to the responsibility outlined above, BIAS also accepts the statutory requirements laid down by the Race Relations Act, the Sex Discrimination Act and the Employment Acts.

BIAS wishes to employ the most suitable staff and therefore intends to ensure equality of opportunity so that no person will be discriminated against, either as actual or potential employees, particularly on the grounds of race, nationality, religion, gender, disability, sexuality, class, marital status or unrelated criminal conviction.

BIAS is also committed to ensuring that it's services are accessible and safe to users of the agency. To this end, BIAS employees will actively work to ensure that this is the case, which will include challenging discrimination, abuse or harassment by individuals in contravention of this policy. Our interview offices are wheelchair accessible.

Responsibility

Each member of staff has a responsibility to work to implement this policy in all aspects of their work.

Recruitment

There is a separate recruitment procedure, a copy of which is available from BIAS' office.

Training

Staff will be made aware of training opportunities available to them, and will be positively encouraged to take these up. This will apply to all staff, whatever their position in the organisation. In particular, training will be provided in order to realise potential where formal qualifications and experience may be lacking.

Monitoring and Review

The Co-ordinator in co-operation with the staff team will provide an Annual Report on the implementation of this policy, analysing in detail failures and successes to the Management Committee. To assist in this process, all monitoring information on recruitment and service delivery which has been collated during the previous year, will be used and commented upon, and acted upon where necessary.

Contracted by...



**Brent and Harrow
Health Authority**

**BBC Children
in Need**

**NHS Ethnic
Health Unit**



BIAS Information Training and Consultancy Services

BIAS Information, Training and Consultancy Services offer specialist and professional services to the Irish community, and to statutory and non-statutory agencies working with Irish people.

SERVICES PROVIDED :

London-wide Information and Referral Service Helpline

Open Monday to Friday (9.30am - 1.00pm)

Postal Enquiry Service

The Service ensures a quick and accurate response to queries received by post

Publications

BIAS specialises in producing publications and specialist research reports. Most recent titles include: 1996 research report with Equal Access - The Hidden Minority (Mental Health and the Irish Experience in Brent), Moving to Ireland, Moving within the European Community (EC), and the Irish in Britain Directory (5th edition).

Research & Development

In conjunction with BIAS Community Services, the Service undertakes an extensive programme of research and development.

Training and Consultancy

BIAS can provide training and consultancy to the Statutory and Independent sectors on the experiences of the Irish migrant community.

Media

BIAS works effectively with all branches of the Media to ensure accurate coverage and to raise public awareness of issues.