



BRENT IRISH ADVISORY SERVICE

SUPPORTING  
OUR COMMUNITY  
ACROSS LONDON



# OUR ROOTS

BIAS' roots lie in the late 1970s, a time when discrimination against the Irish in London had reached something of a crisis point. Faced with mounting evidence of an anti-Irish bias in the provision of key public services, a group of concerned Irish people in the Brent area made the decision that the time had come to act.

They conceived a grass-roots organisation that would provide the Irish community of Brent - and London more generally - with a much-needed advice service on vital matters of health and welfare. Community based, independent and largely voluntary, it would be an organisation free of any religious, sectarian or political ties.

This idea quickly came into fruition in the form of the Brent Irish Advisory Service. In the spring of 1979, after much concerted effort, our organisation was proud to open its doors to the public for the very first time.

# OUR SERVICES

London has an Irish population of over 220,000 people, with the largest numbers (18,313 - Census 2001) living in the London Borough of Brent, where BIAS is based. There are over 75,000 Irish people in Brent and the surrounding Boroughs.

Our Advice Services include a Generalist Advice Service, a Housing Advice Service and a Disability Advice Service. Our Specialist Support Services include a Children and Families Social Work Service, an Outreach Project targeting 40-65 year olds, Community Care services targeting older people which include a Day Care Project and a Luncheon club, a Criminal Justice Project which facilitates Irish groups in specified London prisons and a Travellers Youth Project.



# OUR GROWTH

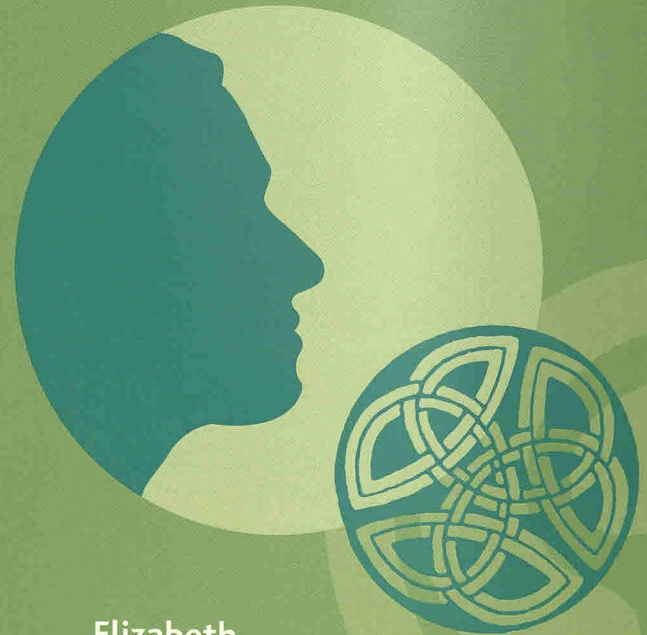
No one in the early days could have possibly predicted just how far our services would evolve. What began life as a small voluntary organisation providing generalist advice has since grown to become a fully-established registered charity with fifteen staff members and operations right across London.

Our growth has seen a huge increase and diversification. Irish community is not a homogenous group and BIAS works to ensure its services are accessible to all sections of our community. Our current service provision aims to reflect its diversity but we are continuously assessing gaps in our service provision and working to develop services to meet those needs. We are the only Irish specific organisation in the borough, despite the Irish community being one of the largest migrant and ethnic groups in the borough. Brent also is home to the largest proportion of Irish people outside of Ireland.

# CASE STUDY 1

Elizabeth presented as an elderly lady, very distressed, slightly incoherent and confused. Elizabeth, who was ill, had been recently widowed and was in financial despair. In an informal chat, she informed me that she had been totally reliant on her husband for care and financial management of their daily lives. She was now trying to survive on a very small pension and was finding this impossible and was worried that she would be evicted.

Elizabeth's income has now increased by £106 per week, she received financial assistance towards her husband's funeral expenses. Her application for Attendance Allowance was successful, she is in receipt of Housing Benefit and Council Tax and now has a care package in place. She still visits or telephones the office on the odd occasion for assistance in managing her financial affairs, and seeking advice and information but is managing extremely well.



**Elizabeth**

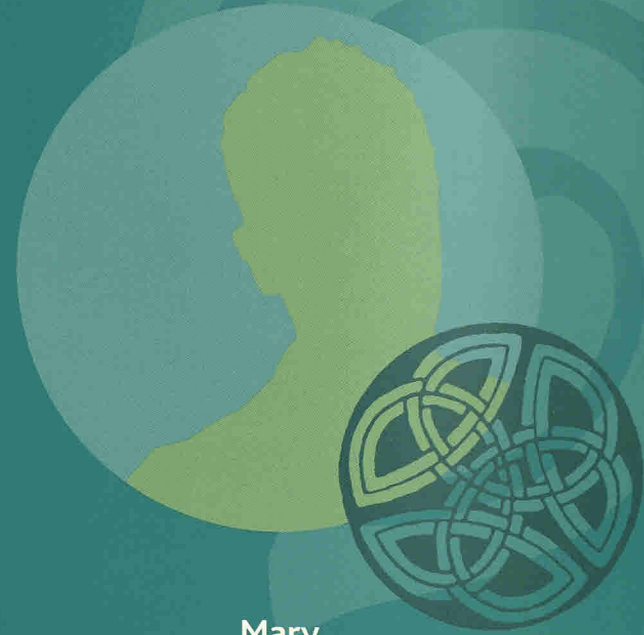


## CASE STUDY 2

Mary, aged 19, had been barred from our organisation and many others as a result of her erratic and sometimes dangerous behaviour. She came to our drop-in one Wednesday and pleaded for help as she was street-homeless, using drugs and alcohol and asked to be given a second chance. Mary had been drinking and smoking since the age of 10 and roofless since the age of 16. For many reasons her relationship with her family had broken down.

Mary was referred to a housing association and is now living in supported accommodation. Her relationship with her father and mother has improved and she spent her first Christmas with them for many years. Her alcohol and drug use have decreased and she is meeting with a Project Worker on a weekly basis.

"Without BIAS, I don't know where I would be today. Thank you."



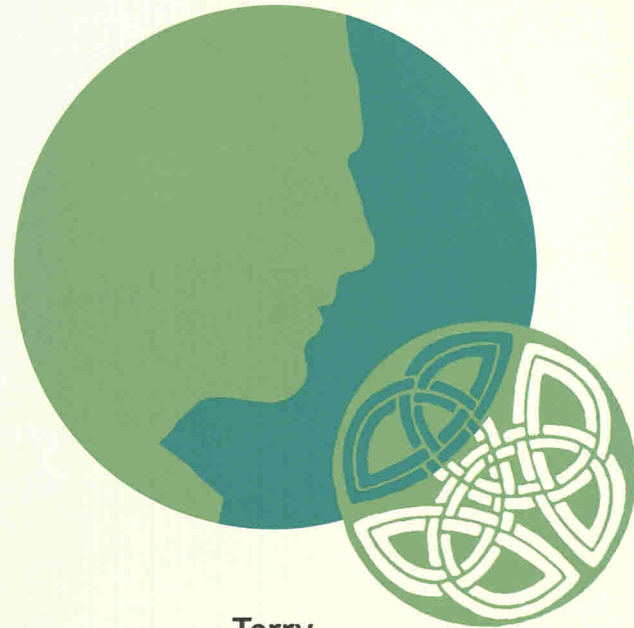
Mary



## CASE STUDY 3

Young Irish Traveller Terry had a family to support but was finding it hard to make a living. He had very poor literacy skills, so tried his hand at painting and decorating to support his wife and baby son. Knocking on doors to drum up trade, he fell foul of the law and received an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) for hawking his services. He was later charged for driving a vehicle without a licence and spent six months in prison.

It was during his time there that we were able to turn Terry's life around. Through the BIAS Prison Support Project, we were able to provide him with literacy classes and help him apply for a provisional driving licence. We gave him support to set up his own registered business, and helped him with the creation of advertising material. Thanks to our efforts, he was able to receive a Princes Trust grant after he was released from prison, and is now doing very well with his own painting and decorating business.



Terry

“

Getting this piece  
of paper is better  
than winning  
the Lottery!

”



## CASE STUDY 4

Jim had never been registered at birth and as a result was unable to get identification to access the benefit system even though he was ill. Jim had mental health issues surrounding the non-registration of his birth, and quoted "I'm a non-entity - I don't exist, I may as well not exist". He felt he was also hampered by the fact that he was illiterate.

Jim is now in receipt of the appropriate benefits, and has since got a passport and been on holiday abroad for the first time. But the highlight of Jim's visits to our office was when he first came in with his Birth Certificate and quoted "getting this piece of paper is better than winning the Lottery!"



**Jim**

## CASE STUDY 5

Eleanor, a mother in her 40s, came to us in a desperate situation. She, along with her youngest three children, had been the victim of terrifying domestic abuse at the hands of both her husband and her eldest son. They needed a safe refuge - and needed it fast - but for one reason or another had been turned down for housing on two separate occasions.

The first thing we did in response was to contact Brent Council. Through our intervention and persistence, we were able to quickly secure her emergency accommodation elsewhere in the Borough. And when that proved to be unsatisfactory as she was after all trying to leave the area completely, we contacted a whole range of other agencies on her behalf.

After extensive networking, we were finally able to get Eleanor and her three children out of Brent. They are now living in safety in permanent accommodation based in the Home Counties.



**Eleanor**

“

They are now living  
in safety in permanent  
accomodation.

”

# OUR FUTURE

Sadly, the need for our services is just as great now as it ever was. Despite the Celtic Tiger, thousands of new Irish emigrants come to London every year. Of these, a significant and disproportionate number will experience disadvantage, ill health and exclusion from mainstream services.

It's true that the Irish in London have made – and continue to make – an immense contribution to the economic, social and cultural life of Britain. Yet despite this, we as a community still suffer from disproportionately high rates of unemployment, homelessness, and drug and alcohol problems.

It's our duty at BIAS to do everything we can to redress this imbalance. It's not going to be easy - the demand for our services increases year upon year. That's why we need your help to make sure we continue our vital work.

The background of the entire page is a repeating pattern of stylized, swirling green shapes. These shapes resemble thick, hand-drawn lines that form continuous, organic, and somewhat abstract forms, similar to a marbled paper or a decorative wallpaper. The colors range from a light, pale green to a slightly darker, muted green, creating a textured and rhythmic visual effect.

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