

Information Sheet



BIAS

BRENT IRISH ADVISORY SERVICE
Community Development Agency
- BIAS INFORMATION CENTRE -
7E Salusbury Road, Kilburn
London NW6 6NY
Telephone 01-624 9951 anytime

B.I.A.S. - THE IRISH ADVISORY SERVICE IN BRENT

Established in January 1978, Brent Irish Advisory Service (BIAS) is an anti-racist community development and welfare organisation, which is non-party in politics and religion, and provides a practical essential service to all Irish people in the Brent area of north-west London.

The large and diverse Irish community in Brent forms a substantial proportion of the resident population in Brent, and is the borough's largest national group which originates from any single overseas country in the world.

The most recent census shows that there are now more than 50,000 people of Irish origin in the Brent area, forming a significant part of the multi-ethnic communities of Kilburn, Cricklewood, Harlesden, Willesden and other districts.

With an ancient cultural heritage, combined with a modern life style, Irish people can be seen as a distinct ethnic minority community with its own language, traditions, history, and national aspirations.

For more than a century, Brent has been home to Irish people who emigrated from their own country to find employment and make a new life. Even today, thousands of young migrants still come over to Brent each year 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 Irish elderly, mentally ill, handicapped, and single homeless people. And there are groups of Irish people who have particular needs, including women, youth, pensioners, travelling people, and the black Irish.

This is where BIAS comes in. Unlike other agencies, it was set up, and is run by, ordinary Irish women and men who have experienced the same kinds of problems as its users. For "they who feel it, know it".

Our main areas of community work include: INFORMATION, advice, and research; HOUSING for migrant workers, single homeless and youth; WELFARE of pensioners, disabled persons and children in need; and EMPLOYMENT for unemployed, redundant and handicapped workers.

INFORMATION WORK

Our base is BIAS Information Centre in Kilburn, which offers up-to-date information and confidential advice on peoples' rights in Britain, Ireland and Europe, including Housing, Employment, Education, Legal, Social Security, Pensions, Health and Welfare; and on Irish cultural activities and classes, including An Ghaeilge, Irish Dance, Traditional Music, Gaelic Games, and Irish Studies.

The personal experience of living and working within the Irish community of inner-city Brent and the years of dedicated work in the Information Centre has enabled BIAS staff and voluntary workers to accurately identify the community's unmet needs, seek the resources, and respond with innovative action when necessary.

We do various kinds of community work, including: helping people with something in common to start new groups and activities; carrying out research on issues affecting the Irish community; liaising between community agencies and Irish people in their homes, in hospital, in prison etc.; co-operating with other organisations on matters of mutual concern; advising people coming from or going to Ireland.

We publish the Irish in Britain Directory and assist in setting up new community groups and projects. We endeavour to provide a culturally-sensitive bi-lingual service using both Irish and English languages. Weekly drop-in advice sessions are held on Wednesdays 3 to 7pm and Thursdays 2 to 5pm, and at other times by appointment.

Our information and advice work enables us to research, identify and respond to the unmet needs of the Irish community. We produce evidence to highlight the unmet needs of the Irish Community and we seek positive action and adequate resources to meet those needs.

Despite its limited resources, BIAS has been to the forefront with a number of initiatives and innovations, and has assisted in setting up many new community groups and projects.

We have published the first-ever Irish in Britain Directory; received the Irish Post Community Award; initiated Brent's Irish Cultural Centre project; appointed an Irish Community Housing Worker; formed the Innisfree Housing Association Ltd.; helped set up the Brent Irish Mental Health Group, and much more.

HOUSING WORK

Irish people are particularly deprived as regards housing. This is particularly the case as regards older single people and childless couples. The lodgings, hostels and bed-and-breakfast guest houses which provide accommodation for many Irish people in Brent often involve a lack of privacy, inadequate fire precautions, no security of tenure and loss of personal dignity.

In addition to information and advice about housing rights and opportunities, we help homeless and badly housed couples and single people to find suitable accommodation, and assist homeless persons in priority need who are entitled to council housing. We also have a very limited number of nomination rights to the local authority and to housing associations, including Innisfree, which we helped to set up.

WELFARE WORK

Our planned programme of community welfare is designed to benefit the

IRISH ACTIVITIES, CLASSES AND RESOURCES IN THE BRENT AREA

These are just some of the cultural activities and educational provision for children and adults who may be interested in the Irish Language, Dance, Drama, Gaelic Games, History, Irish Studies, Literature, Traditional Music, etc. For further information and advice contact the address or telephone number given or BIAS INFORMATION CENTRE, 76 Salusbury Road, Kilburn, NW6 6NY (01-624 9991).

AN GHAELIGE - THE IRISH LANGUAGE

CHILDREN'S CLASSES (Saturday mornings):

Irish Centre, 52 Camden Square NW1 9XB (485 0051);

ADULT EVENING CLASSES (Beginners, O Level, A Level):

Aylestone Community School, Aylestone Avenue, Brondesbury Park NW6 (451 0088); Kilburn Polytechnic, Priory Park Road, Kilburn NW6 1YB 328 8241).

DANCE

CHILDREN'S CLASSES:

Burnt Oak - Geraldine Naughton (961 0917);
Cricklewood - Theresa Kinsella (450 5598);
Harlesden - Marie Halpin (459 5336); Eileen Long (567 6582); Irene Naughton (961 0917);
Kilburn - John Dempsey (624 7684); Marion/Seamus Kennedy (969 7768);
Maureen Noonan (328 8978); Margaret Troy (886 5325);
Willesden - Lillian Massey (451 0271);
Wembley - Richard Griffin (940 4745).

ADULT TUITION:

Kilburn - Sorcha Ni Mhuimhneachain:

CEILI VENUES:

Galtymore, Cricklewood NW2 (452 8652);
Mazenod Social Club, Kilburn NW6 (624 5517);
The Irish Centre, 52 Camden Square NW1 9XB (485 0051).

DRAMA

Irish Drama and Folk Ballet Company - Rosemary Kennedy (361 0678);
Irish Centre Drama Group - Doris Daly (485 0051);
Londerin Drama Group - Stephen McGeever (960 4542);
London Wexford Mummers - Maureen Grace (262 9060).

GAELIC GAMES

GAELIC FOOTBALL:

An Ríocht/Kingdom (969 3634); Brothers Pearse (459 0758); Fr. Murphy's (459 1791); Glen Rovers (328 7269); Naomh Mhuire (451 2766); Parnells (459 4225); Tara (452 2794); Tir Conaill Gaels (451 1998); Wembley Gaels (902 2752);

PLAYING FIELDS: Barham Park, Wembley; Gladstone Park, Cricklewood; Roundwood Park, Harlesden;

ENQUIRIES: Gaelic Athletic Association - Pat Griffin (450 2772); GAA Sports Ground & Social Club, West End Road, Ruislip (841 2488).

HISTORY

Brent Irish Socialist History Association, 17B Claremont Road W9;
Irish in Britain History Centre, 76 Salusbury Road, Kilburn NW6 6NY (624 7438);

IRISH STUDIES

ADULT EVENING CLASSES (History; Traditional Music, Song and Dance; Prehistory and Archaeology; Drama and Literature; Irish Language; Current Affairs; The Irish in Britain; etc.):

Aylestone Community School, Aylestone Avenue, Brondesbury Park NW6 (451 0088);

Kilburn Polytechnic, Priory Park Road, Kilburn NW6 1YB (328 8241)

MUSIC

CHILDREN'S CLASSES:

Cricklewood - London Bantry Pipe & Drum Band (452 6851);

Kilburn - Agnes O'Connell Pipe & Drum Band (286 6481); Quex Road Ceili Club, with adults (459 5336);

Kingsbury - Celtic Folk Culture (328 3300);

Willesden - Brendan Mulkere School of Music (328 3300);

TRADITIONAL MUSIC WORKSHOP (Adults):

Kilburn Polytechnic, Harlesden Centre NW10 7AN (961 2962/3000);

TRADITIONAL MUSIC SESSIONS:

Green Man, 109 High Street, Harlesden NW10 (965 7307);

FOLK MUSIC VENUES:

Harlesden - Mean Fiddler; Willesden Junction Hotel (965 5150/0767);

Kilburn - Biddy Mulligans (624 2066); Prince of Wales, Kilburn Park; Ye Olde Bell (624 2672);

Wembley - Village Inn (902 1673/0051)

ENTERTAINERS

Ceili - Caravelles duo (452 8642); Dunloe/Galtymore (794 6447); Folk/Traditional - Cara (450 2750); Crannog (340 9705); Dingle Spike (340 7486); Irish Mist (348 4553); Lissadell (289 3824); McCarthy Family (348 1584); O'Sullivan Family (348 9724); Peelers (794 8000); Sliabh Luachra (247 4781); Pipe/Drum - London Bantry (452 6851); London Girls (286 6481); Storyteller - Ultan O'Carroll (427 0820); Musicians - Adrian Burns, flute (452 5044); Bobby Casey, fiddle (485 0518); Paddy Hayes, accordion (965 7460); Tommy McCarthy, uilleann pipes (348 1584); Brendan Mulkere, fiddle (586 1788); Mick O'Connor, banjo (450 2750); Siobhan O'Donnell, flute/singer (455 6631); Annette Roland, banjo (969 5202); Peter Sheridan, fiddle (450 2116); Noel Whelton, mandolin (459 7211);

IRISH COMMUNITY CONTACTS

BRENT IRISH ADVISORY SERVICE (BIAS), BIAS Information Centre, 76 Salusbury Road, Kilburn NW6 6NY (624 9991); BRENT IRISH AGAINST RACISM (BRIAR), 76 Salusbury Road, Kilburn NW6 6NY; BRENT IRISH CULTURAL & COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION (BICCA) Ltd., 76-82 Salusbury Road, Queen's Park NW6 6NY (625 9585/624 0276); BRENT IRISH MENTAL HEALTH GROUP, 76 Salusbury Road, Kilburn NW6 6NY; BRENT IRISH SOCIALIST HISTORY ASSOCIATION, 17B Claremont Road W9; BRENT IRISH SOCIETY, 117 Fleetwood Road, Willesden NW10 1NP (452 6851/459 2454); BRENT IRISH WOMEN'S GROUP, 232 High Road, Willesden NW10 (459 7660); BRENT IRISH YOUTH ASSOCIATION, 58 Avonhurst House, Coverdale Road NW2 4DF (451 3186); BRENT NALGO IRISH GROUP, Room 211, Brent House, 349 High Road, Wembley. (904 1244); CARLTON IRISH COMMUNITY GROUP, 60 Bronte House, Cambridge Road, Kilburn NW6 5BG; CELTIC FOLK CULTURE, 26a Hawthorn Road, Willesden NW10 (459 7211); CLANN NA hEIREANN (Irish Workers' Organisation), 22 Odessa Road, Harlesden NW10 (965 3809); COMHALTAS CEOLTOIRI EIREANN (TRADITIONAL MUSIC ASSOCIATION), 28 Nant Road, Cricklewood NW2 (455 6631); CONNOLLY ASSOCIATION BRENT, 389 High Road, Willesden NW10 (459 2835); CONWAY HOUSE, Men's Hostel, 20 Quex Road, Kilburn NW6 (624 2918); COUNCIL OF IRISH COUNTIES, 52 Camden Square NW1 9XB (485 0051); CUMANN LUTHCHLEAS GHAEL (Gaelic Athletic Association), 144 Burnley Road, Dollis Hill NW10 (450 2772); DEVELOPMENT OF IRISH YOUTH ASSOCIATION/IRISH DISSENT, 12 Links Road, Neasden NW2 (450 1942); HOMELESS CONCERN CRICKLEWOOD, 60 Ashford Road, NW2 (208 1608); INNISFREE HOUSING ASSOCIATION Ltd., 76 Salusbury Road, Kilburn NW6 6NY (624 9991); IRISH ARTISTS' GROUP, 44 Crediton Road, Kensal Rise NW10; IRISH CENTRE COMMUNITY SERVICES, 50 Camden Square NW1 9XB (485 0051); IRISH CHAPLAIN, Clergy House, Peter Avenue, Willesden Green, London NW10 2DD (01-451 4677); IRISH CHAPLAIN, New Priory, Quex Road, Kilburn NW6 4PS (624 1701);

IRISH COMMISSION FOR CULTURE & EDUCATION (ICCEL) 76 Salusbury Road,
 London NW6 6NY (624 3158/9990);
 IRISH COMMUNITY ACTION, c/o 9 Brondesbury Road, Kilburn NW6 6BX;
 IRISH IN BRENT PENSIONERS' GROUP, Carlton Centre, Granville Road NW6
 5RA (328 2688/624 3480);
 IRISH INTEREST GROUP, 84 Harrowdene Road, North Wembley. (902 3799);
 IRISH PENSIONERS' ACTION GROUP, Carlton Centre, Granville Road NW6 5RA
 (624 3480/328 2688);
 IRISH PROFILE, Weekly Programme (Sun. 1-3pm), JBC Radio 105FM, 126a
 Roundwood Road, Willesden NW10 (459 1063);
 IRISH SCENE, North-West London Press Ltd., 313 Kilburn Lane W9 3EQ;
 IRISH SECTION, Kilburn Bookshop, 8 Kilburn Bridge NW6 (328 7071);
 IRISH SECTION, Kilburn Library, Salusbury Road NW6;
 IRISH VIDEO PROJECT, 307 Chapter Road, Willesden NW2 5ND (459 1036);
 KERRY ASSOCIATION LONDON, St. Brendan's, Men's Hostel, 4 Craven Park,
 Harlesden NW10 (965 9089);
 KEYES SCHOOL OF IRISH DANCE, 45 Hiley Road, Kensal Green NW10 (960
 4146);
 KINSELLA SCHOOL OF IRISH DANCE, 38 Attewood Avenue, Neasden NW10 (450
 5598);
 LISTOWEL & DISTRICT ASSOCIATION, 9 Brondesbury Road, Kilburn NW6 5BX
 (205 2842);
 MANDY'S IRISH SHOP, 161 High Road, Willesden NW10 (459 2842);
 MASSEY SCHOOL OF IRISH DANCE, 155 High Road, Willesden NW10 (451
 1271);
 NAUGHTON SCHOOL OF IRISH DANCE, 5 Buchanan Road, Harlesden NW10 (961
 0917);
 QUEX ROAD CEILI CLUB, Mazenod Community Centre, Mazenod Avenue, London
 NW6 (459 5336);
 UNION OF SISTERS OF MERCY (KERRY), 15 Eversley Avenue, Wembley Park,
 Middx. HA9 9JZ (01-904 5900);
 WEXFORD ASSOCIATION, 153 Ellesmere Road, Willesden NW10 (452 3443);

RESOURCES

BOOKS, TAPES & LPs: loaned free to members of Brent Public Libraries;
 Music-cassettes, Kilburn; Cassettes/LPs, Willesden Green & Town Hall.

ENTERTAINERS: Dancers, Musicians, Poets, Singers, Storytellers for
 concerts and events may be obtained through relevant organisations.

INFORMATION SHEETS & POSTERS: free on request from the Irish Embassy,
 17 Grosvenor Place SW1 (235 2171) and Irish Tourist Board, 150 New
 Bond Street W1Y 0AQ (493 3201).

IRISH BOOKS in Irish and English languages are sold at Kilburn
 Bookshop, 8 Kilburn Bridge NW6 (328 7071);

IRISH FOOD, NEWSPAPERS, RECORDS, TAPES, etc. are sold at Mandy's, 161
 High Road, Willesden NW10 (459 2842);

SPEAKERS & TUTORS - for classes, talks, meetings etc. are available
 from many of the organisations listed in this leaflet.

15/12/86 BRENT IRISH ADVISORY SERVICE, 82 Salusbury Road, Kilburn,
 London NW6 6NY (624 9991). E&OE. Corrections & Amendments welcomed.

most deprived, isolated and inarticulate members of the Irish community in the Brent area. Our research shows that in proportion to their numbers in the population as a whole, Irish people tend to be over-represented among the homeless; unemployed; elderly; mentally ill; young offenders; illiterate and educationally disadvantaged, etc.

We provide practical assistance and welfare support to Irish people in need or at risk. In addition to specialised information and advice about welfare rights and benefits, we offer a regular visiting service by volunteers to housebound and isolated people, especially elderly, disabled, and mentally ill people. The proceeds of our fund-raising social events and dances, which bring the community together, enable us to provide additional activities like parties for pensioners.

EMPLOYMENT WORK

Jobs, like housing and other services, are one of the priority needs of the Irish community. For economic recession and high unemployment in the construction, manufacturing and service industries - the traditional areas of employment for Irish workers in Brent - has hit thousands of Irish people and families particularly hard.

Many of the estimated 5,000 unemployed Irish people in Brent have good education, training and skills but cannot find a suitable job. Others may need a second chance in further education, or training for a new occupation. And a recent report showed a very high level of unemployment among the youth arriving daily from Ireland.

In addition to information, advice, assistance and support, we provide placements for social and community work students, and for MSC Community Programme trainees. We also run a drop-in careers advice session on a pilot basis with Brent Careers Service, and we plan to start a new course for Irish migrant workers in the near future. In our small way we try to give new employment and training opportunities to an increasing number of job seekers.

AIMS & OBJECTS

Since its establishment in 1978, BIAS has endeavoured to fulfil its five original aims and objects:

- 1 To promote the social, cultural and educational welfare of Irish people and to improve their position in society through equality of opportunity;
- 2 To co-ordinate existing resources and groups within the Irish community and to encourage and support the development of new resources and groups if necessary;
- 3 To co-operate and liaise with statutory and voluntary bodies with a view to improving the services offered;
- 4 To create an awareness of the social, cultural and historical background of Irish people and to promote a better understanding of their needs and aspirations;
- 5 To work for the elimination of racial discrimination and disadvantage within a multi-racial and multi-cultural society.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

BIAS is operated and controlled as a community organisation by its voluntary members who elect a Management Committee annually. The Management Committee is responsible for the operation of the service and the appointment of staff and voluntary workers.

We have an enthusiastic team of committed voluntary workers of all ages and backgrounds, who have a wide range of experience, skills and interests. We have a short training course for prospective voluntary workers and we provide opportunities to attend other relevant courses.

Membership is open to all who agree with the aims and objects of the organisation, are proposed and seconded by two existing members, and are approved by the Management Committee, who meet monthly and more often if necessary, as set out in its Constitution.

We receive annual grant-aid from Brent Council to employ our staff. We also receive some financial assistance from the Irish government toward social work services. Additional funds are raised from sales and services, benefit dances, social events and donations.

Despite its limited resources, BIAS has endeavoured to make the best use of the Irish community's own abilities, talents and skills, and to provide a publicly-accountable and value-for-money specialist advisory service which is second to none.

In working for the elimination of all forms of personal and institutional racism, BIAS seeks positive action and a fairer share of community resources in housing, social services, education, leisure and other fields to achieve full equality for Irish people.

SOME BIAS MILESTONES

- 1978 started BIAS Information Centre with volunteers;
- 1979 awarded Urban Programme grant by Brent for Community Organiser;
- 1980 set up 'short-life' housing project for single homeless;
- 1981 published the Irish in Britain Directory;
- 1982 received the Irish Post Community Award;
- 1983 organised Brent Irish community centre steering group;
- 1984 appointed Irish Community Housing Worker;
- 1985 formed the Innisfree Housing Association Limited;
- 1986 helped to develop the Brent Irish Mental Health Group.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

Community Organiser/Development Worker - Donal Mac Craith;
Irish Community Housing Worker - Jim Smith;
Secretary/Receptionist - Nora O'Donnell;
Trainee - Mary Kilburn.