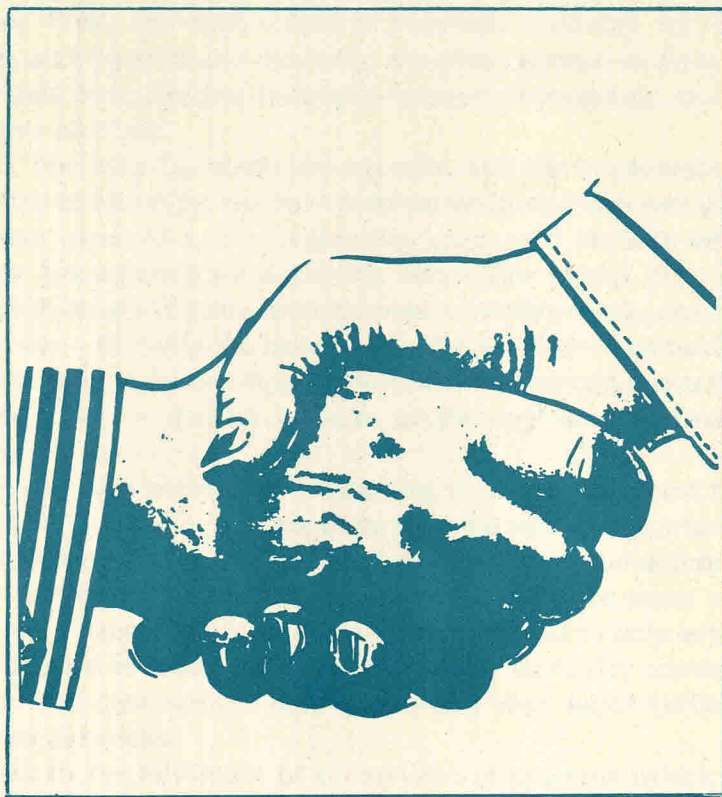


Irish welfare Bureau
HAMMERSMITH – LONDON



ninth
annual report
1980 *79*

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DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

In this year's report there are two main points which need special mention. First, the need (sharply increased recently) for voluntary agencies such as ours, and secondly, the great increase in the number of our friends now needing long-term support increasingly as the years bear down on them.

First: The need for voluntary agencies, and the importance of their role in the community, has been emphasised during this past year much more than previously. The 'tightening your belt' attitude which Mrs. Thatcher has adopted since coming into office means that, wherever one goes at local-authority level for help in welfare work, one meets the same story – that it is the belts of our clients which must be tightened; that certain plans cannot now be fulfilled; that certain grants have now dwindled away – and all because of the cut-backs in Government spending.

I mention this point at the beginning of this year's report because I feel that far too many organisations play the role of voluntary agency and yet depend almost entirely for funding on the local authorities and the Government. Because of their lack of initiative some voluntary bodies seem happy and content when asked for aid to dole out the very same response as many departments of local authority are content to give over and over again – that is, to blame their lack of efficiency on the recent cut-backs.

Thanks to the fulfilment of a hard year's programme (which involved all kinds of fund raising activities including the Bazaar, jumble sales, the Field Day, the Feis, dances, cabaret nights and donations) the Bureau's dedicated helpers raised in excess of £18,000.

Because of this kind of support and loyalty, or should I say because of this unstinting commitment to the aims of the Irish Welfare Bureau and to our responsibility to the local community, our work has in no way been curtailed. We are not in the fashion; we have not had to plead cut-backs! On the contrary, as our figures will show, the number of our friends needing and receiving continued support showed a large increase.

The second point mentioned at the beginning is a topic which is getting greater prominence among the concerned Irish Welfare Groups as well as in the Welfare Committee of the Federation of Irish Societies.

When the Irish Chaplaincy scheme began in 1957, many priests arrived from Ireland to fulfil a request from the English Hierarchy. They rendered great service to the many Irishmen who worked in the building trade, and especially to those housed in temporary camps on remote power-stations and the like. If some of those chaplains were working in our Welfare Centres today they would no doubt recognise many of the men coming to us for advice, for help, and above all for a permanent type of accommodation. Much sadder than this, they would recognise some who have sunk to the lowest rung of the social ladder, living in conditions which range from Reception Centres through 'skipping' down to sleeping 'underneath the arches' or on the park bench. These are the men who now, twenty years on, only too often need continual support on a long-term basis. During the coming year it is hoped that our greater awareness as a group of the needs of those older people will conceive a new development from within the Chaplaincy scheme, a development that will link up with the services already available. Let us hope that in some small way we can tackle the problem of accommodation for some of these men. I know only too well the problem of the single homeless, but equally I know the pain, suffering, and bitter humiliation that these ageing men go through when they find themselves heading for the scrap heap.

During the past year the Bureau has continued to develop its involvement in the community. We have had greater liaison with social workers, in the statutory as well as in voluntary organisations. Over the years I have spent many long hours sitting in courts, magistrates' courts, crown and county courts, even the Old Bailey and because of this and my prison visits I find a greater involvement with probation services and after-care. I must say that the experience I have picked up over these years while attending courts in a supportive role has proved very valuable in some recent cases. I now see court work as a real priority when some lad calls to the office who is due to appear in court. The fact that you can guarantee accommodation, or put in a good word in genuine circumstances, can mean the difference between a fine, a suspended sentence or an actual prison term.

We are happy to be associated with Riverpoint Ltd., which is a project providing emergency accommodation for single homeless people of both sexes over the age of 16. For over a year now, we of the Bureau are members of the management committee, and we find the project very helpful when extreme emergencies come our way.

My sincere thanks to all those people who have given so much time and energy in order that the Bureau can provide a service that we are indeed proud of. The beginning of this report speaks louder than any words of the loyalty of the Bureau's friends. As we look to the 1980's I am confident that your support will be ever present in whatever way it may be needed.

To my fellow workers in the office and in the hostel I would like to say a simple thanks once again for your continued dedication.

Brian Lawlor OSA.

SOCIAL WORKERS REPORT

Hammersmith Irish Welfare Bureau enters the 80's very much alive and growing. The number of cases dealt with in 1979 shows an increase on previous years. These total 984, of which 583 were new applications and 401 cases were brought forward from previous years. The 583 new cases include 463 males and 165 females but **does not** include the children of the 46 family cases listed in the statistical tables attached.

The Press and Radio coverage given to Reports on the work of the Bureau in 1979 brought quite a big response from people in Ireland anxious about some members of their families in London. We usually follow up such referrals and offer our help to the persons concerned if there is a need and they are willing to accept our help. This not only helps the persons in London but also benefits the Irish relative, some of whom keep in touch by phone and/or letter.

However in the case of missing persons there is very little we can do in most cases. London is a very easy place to 'get lost' in and many 'missing persons' wish to remain 'missing'. We can only direct people to contact the Salvation Army's International Investigation Service, 110 Middlesex Street, London, E1. This organisation will only undertake the task of trying to trace a missing person on the personal request of a close relative with a view to reconciliation. The persons sought must be willing to have their addresses or whereabouts disclosed before any such information could be given. Letters could be accepted by the organisation and forwarded to the person concerned if that person was willing to be contacted in this manner. Please note that adopted persons seeking to discover their natural parents **can not** be helped by this organisation.

Local Social Services Authorities apply from time to time for local information on Irish areas from which a client came or back-ground family information re relatives in Ireland to which children in their care may be going for holidays. The Catholic Social Welfare Bureau, Dublin, St. Francis Zavier's Welfare Centre, other agencies and individuals in Ireland have been most co-operative in such matters. Home visits in Ireland have been made at our request. Father Lawlor and I have both visited relatives of our clients while on leave in Dublin. We also availed of visits to Dublin to collect Irish birth certificates for clients in London and to deliver letters to agencies during the long postal strike.

A development in the advice and information aspect of our work took place during 1979. Irish people, either personally or through other helping agencies, requested information on The Welfare and Health Provisions, Social Insurance, Social Assistance, Job Opportunities, Accommodation and Social Life opportunities in Ireland. They needed this information when considering the possibility of retiring or returning to work in Ireland. The need for such information, which is an important area in Welfare Work with the Irish Community in Britain, was recognised by the Sub-Committee for Welfare of the Federation of Irish Societies (of which we are active members). It organised a very worthwhile conference on 'Returning to Ireland' in November 1979. There was a considerable response from members of the general public who attended the conference due to the newspaper publicity.

Some of our single homeless clients have reached retirement pension age. They found they could not cope with their application forms or with obtaining their Irish Birth certificates. We have steered them through the process. We have to act at times as 'Pension Book' minders.

We continue to be very involved at many levels with single homeless persons (in broad sense of the term). We help with accommodation in Local Authority and Private lodging houses and hostels. We supply a considerable amount of clothing from our wardrobe and only refer them to the Women's Royal Voluntary Services clothing stores when we cannot meet their particular needs. A good suit can be a great help in getting a job. Clean smart clothes always help them to keep their human dignity. They are especially sensitive about this when they need to go to hospital for check up or to the casualty ward with some minor injury. Meals can be provided at a nearby cafe when they are a genuine need.

These practical services are a means through which we build up a friendly relationship with them and keep them in contact with us. They feel secure enough to confide in us when they need help with their deeper personal health and mental problems. We give them the advice and the support they need with their problems. We visit them in hospital, prison and elderly peoples homes. We help those who are discharged from prison or hospital to re-organise themselves. We have been involved in the burial of persons known to us or to contact of ours, when there were no relatives available to take responsibility for their burial.

There is some easing in the accommodation situation of those who have reached retiring age and those who are at risk due to a mental or physical handicap. Under the 1977 Homeless Persons Act responsibility for housing them must be accepted by Local Housing Authorities. Several of our clients have been given council flats. We then helped them out with furniture and household goods. This supplements the grant they get from the Dept. of Health and Social Security. These are the lucky few. The accommodation situation of the single homeless in Britain is still an overwhelming problem.

Families come to London from Ireland looking for accommodation. Many of them claim that they are penniless on arrival. They get very upset and aggressive when they find that the only help we can offer is to refer them to the Local Authority Housing Aid Centre. Families ought to be aware that while the 1977 Homeless Persons Act places the responsibility for housing all families with children on the Local Housing Authority, the Act only legislates for England, Scotland and Wales. There is a clause in the act which they should know about. It states that the Local Housing Authority has no responsibility for persons or families who are intentionally homeless i.e. having rendered themselves homeless by giving up their previous home to move to another area. Such a family coming from Ireland could be faced with the situation that they might be offered a night or two in Bed/Breakfast Accommodation and if they claimed not to have the money for their fares back to Ireland would be offered to have their fare paid for them. In these circumstances NO other help is available.

To work with families in the settled Irish communities where we consider there is a need for our particular kind of Irish Service. We give long term casework support where needed. Most of our families are one parent families.

The number of young persons we received directly from the train was 78. This figure is relatively small but we get many more who have been a short time in London or some other area in Britain. These are generally referred to us through agencies working for homeless and rootless youth in London. Young persons can obtain low paid jobs but find it impossible to get decent accommodation at a reasonable price. We are fortunate to have a resource such as Austin House which is so ably run by Sr. Rosario. We can accommodate a limited number of young Irish men between 18 – 25 when there are vacancies available. We can still back this up with help from a few friendly landlords.

People come from Ireland who have no possible hope of surviving in London due to mental, health or deep personal problems. We advise these to return home as soon as possible. We help them to contact their families for help with their fares home if they are willing and their families can afford to help them. In cases in which they cannot help themselves and their families cannot afford to or refuse to do so, we will repatriate them if they so wish or if on discussion they agree with us that it is the only responsible solution to their problem. People who come within the terms of reference of the Irish Embassy's Repatriation Scheme are repatriated in co-operation with the Irish Embassy. We organise the journey to Ireland and the cost of the train and boat fares from London to the Irish Port nearest to their homes is refunded by the Irish Embassy. We always encourage these clients to refund the cost of the fares when and if they are in a position to do so.

I appreciate all the co-operation and support of the Social Workers in all the Irish Welfare Agencies and the Local Authority Agencies. My special thanks is due to my colleagues at the Bureau whose help makes the work run smoothly and efficiently.

I am very fortunate to work in a salaried position which gives me such great opportunities to love and serve the Lord in His needy ones. I thank God for this and for all His great kindness shown through the generosity of all who help us and co-operate with us in our work. May He continue to Bless and prosper our work.

Sister Jane Frances
Social Worker

AUSTIN HOUSE

'Young people of Ireland I love you'. These dynamic and never-to-be-forgotten words, of Pope John Paul, keep recurring to my mind, as I gather my thoughts to prepare my third Annual Report on Austin House. The electrifying response, evoked by these words from the 300,000 mainly young people, gathered in the Galway racecourse, show clearly the hunger of young people for our words of love. Young people of Ireland, living now in England and those who may arrive presently, I tell you with absolute certainty, that these words of Pope John Paul can be uttered, with the same warmth, enthusiasm and sincerity, by each and every member of the Irish Chaplaincy Scheme in Britain. We are willing and happy at all times to be of any assistance to you.

Austin House continues to offer temporary accommodation, companionship, friendship, counselling etc. to newly arrived lads up to the age of twenty five years – twelve at a time. During the past year seventy three passed through our hands, two English, three Italians and the remainder Irish. We find that lads of the same age-group get on very well and also that the younger ones are the ones most in need of our care and attention and are most likely to benefit by same. However on request from clergy and social workers we made exceptions. Some fitted in nicely and had much to contribute whilst the remainder were so practised in gambling, drinking etc., that exceptional vigilance was necessary to safeguard the younger lads. The loving, caring atmosphere apparent from the outset continues to flourish. Lads develop very close friendships which last long after they have found permanent accommodation. It is encouraging to note how all, irrespective of family background or education, get along so harmoniously. All continue to enjoy lending a willing hand with household chores, shopping, gardening and all the other odd jobs. In fact most unburdening of problems counselling or career-guidance proceed during these periods of relaxation. Periodical house-masses and faith-sharings, at the request of the lads continue. Attendance is always optional but the majority show great enthusiasm. Recently I notice that the percentage of regular church-goers is on the increase. One of my latest arrivals, on noticing my pleasure when he made enquiries about the nearest church, exclaimed 'Oh, yes, I go to mass every Sunday, I was in Galway to see Pope John Paul'.

I understand from Fr. P.J. Byrne, Emigrant Commission Secretary that Fr. Pat O'Herlihy's invaluable booklet 'Welfare and Information Brochure' is now widely circulated. Also that relevant data from same is being discussed with post-primary pupils, with the intention of forearming future emigrants descending upon this vastly populated and impersonal city. This is very consoling news, but never-the-less youngsters are still arriving unprepared for the cultural shock and with no arrangements re accommodation or reliable contacts. So once again I appeal to all involved in any kind of youth guidance in Ireland for future diligence in this serious matter. I make a very special appeal to all school chaplains. It was satisfying indeed, one day recently, to open the door to find a young lad with Fr. Pat's brochure and the information he needed well underlined!

Parents you have the grand privilege, coupled with a grave responsibility, to prepare your family for the day when they must leave home and set out on their own. 'Sister I never saved a penny before this, my mother spoilt me. I had a good job back home, great wages and my mother only asked for £4.00 a week. I had loads left for smoking, drinking and so on. When I came to England I couldn't part with the money for accommodation so I dossed about and lived rough'. It was thus one of our boys poured forth as he was about to return home for a few days at Christmas. He was only with us six weeks and in that time, he had saved sufficient for his ticket, some new clothes, Christmas gifts and had still sixty pounds pocket-money. Once the lads are out of debt we encourage them to open a Savings Account. We facilitate them by doing their lodgments as sometimes it is difficult for themselves to manage during working-hours. So, lovely Irish mothers, your very own sons are the first to admit that you are doing them a dis-service by overprotection. Once they have got a job it would be well to ensure that they give you a reasonable rent. Accustom them to be responsible for their early rising, the required time for a good breakfast and consequently set out for work well fortified. Punctuality is an absolute necessity in this country. Dismissal follows late arrival. After this has occurred a few times lads loose heart as they trudge along seeking other employment. Depression can easily set in and thus begins a downward path. So what about an alarm clock as a next birthday present? When your son moves into a flat, he must do some cooking, laundry and household chores, so why not allow him the golden opportunity of practising these necessary skills whilst under your sheltered roof and with your loving direction? It would be most beneficial if you would encourage, persuade if needs be, your son to open a Saving Account. It

is so sad to find lads who had been working at home for three or four years arrive here without a penny. These same lads with a bit of encouragement, or direction, or persuasion or all three, can have a sizeable bank-account after a couple of months in London.

Some people believe that University students with their standard of education are not in need of our assistance. This is far from the truth. Many of them come from very sheltered homes, are away perhaps for the first time and can be very vulnerable. These students fall into two categories, the lads who really need cash to meet the following year's college fees and expenses and secondly the lads of wealthy families coming as they say 'to look around', 'to kill time', 'avoid boredom' and so on. Those in the first category, though needing direction and care, get on nicely and return home untainted. Our wealthy friends are at great risk. Since they have little need to work, they often loiter around and come in contact with all sorts of evil, drug-addicts, homosexuals etc. When their cash runs out, as it must, they begin to live rough. Parents, priests, professors and anyone who can influence these wealthy lads should dissuade them from coming to London. The lad reared in an orphanage is another type of lad who causes us great anxiety. Usually, these lads have no place they can call 'home', no place where they can feel they 'belong' and have no known relatives. In the weeks previous to Christmas we had one of these sad cases. As the remainder saved every penny possible and talked excitedly about their forthcoming trip home, it was pathetic to watch the pain and loneliness written on that poor lads' face. I know only too well, that all involved in orphanages, do a tremendous job. I know also, that many good christian families befriend various orphans but somehow, some like my friend above get away without anyone befriending him. I know I am making great demands, but a family to take an interest, at least in the most needy cases would be very beneficial and would I am certain prevent many from the psychiatric unit. Also high up on our list are the lads who leave home because of a disagreement with dad. Dads, I know only too well, that there are two sides to every story but if you would only see how long those deep wounds, inflicted by hot words, take to heal you would be saddened, so perhaps it would be helpful to be more tolerant of their growing sons and try a little more dialogue. 'Nearly all troubles that plague family life', says psychotherapist Dr. T. C. McGinnis', are caused by ineffective communication.'

Irish boys, think twice before you leave home and fatherland. Then if you must come 'across the sea' do a bit of homework, make certain before embarking that you have some reliable contact and bring at least £100.00 to keep you going whilst you seek employment. Beware of descending unannounced on relatives as you might find that their accommodation may be inadequate for themselves. If you are depending on a work-mate or friend, check out the address a few days before arrival as single people in this city change flats frequently. In my opinion, the safety procedure is to get in touch with your local clergy who will furnish reliable and accurate information. Finally, when you arrive make no apology for your nationality. As the old song goes 'walk tall' keep your head up high'. If you encounter any difficulty at any time feel certain that ourselves, or people in the same work, will be only too pleased to come to your aid.

In conclusion, I want to express my very sincere thanks to many people, for their much appreciated support and co-operation during the past year — my Provincial, my community in Midleton, the management and staff of Hythe House and Charles House, the members of the Chaplaincy Scheme and all my numerous other friends. The boys wish to associate with me in a very special thank you to Fr. Lawlor and the Bureau staff. I pay special tribute to Fr. Lawlor for the inspiring example of his life of great dedication and endless self-sacrifice.

Sr. Rosario P.B.V.M.

SIMPLE ANALYSIS OF REFERRALS

Age Groups

15/17	18/19	20/24	25/29	30/39	40/49	50/59	60+	Not known
20	34	85	91	111	91	67	47	43

<u>Interviews</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>
Males	460	456	463
Females	180	182	165
Families	57	52	42
Cases continued from previous years	307	377	401
Domiciliary visits	375	300	243
Hospital visits	104	143	130
Prison visits	8	8	20
Supportive appearances in Court	14	13	19
Telephone enquiries	2880	2585	2431
Escort to trains, planes, etc.	13	6	25
Interviews in Bureau	2266	2424	2346
Continued supportive work	200	200	195

Types of problem

New arrivals from Ireland	57	99	78
Financial	133	140	222
Accommodation	214	249	234
Employment	52	52	33
Information	29	40	33
Advice	52	41	28
Material aid (clothing, etc.)	216	185	145
Personal	15	16	17
Marital	24	30	26
General welfare	52	25	25
Emotional & Mental	27	24	34
Ex-offenders	24	24	14
Alcoholic, drug addiction, gambling	30	25	32
Pregnant & unsupported mothers	17	14	6
Repatriation	10	5	11

SOURCES OF REFERRALS

	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>		<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>
Allied Irish Banks	1	—	—	Irish Centre/ Liverpool	—	—	1
Acton Wms. Aid	1	—	—	Irish Counties Associations	8	1	1
Blenheim Project	1	2	—	Irish Embassy	2	1	1
C.A.B.	—	—	1	Legion of Mary	1	—	2
C.S.W.B., Dublin	7	9	1	Lond. Trans. Guild	2	2	1
Centerpoint	4	6	6	Med.Soc./Workers/ Hospitals	4	9	9
Chis.Wms.Aid Clergy	2 185	— 157	— 133	New Horizon	—	2	1
Contact House	1	—	—	Nucleus	—	1	1
Clr. L.B.H.	—	1	1	Personal App.	135	137	142
Crac	3	1	—	Probation Service	1	—	2
Crus. of Rescue	—	1	—	Relatives	30	34	24
Cyrenians	2	2	2	Riverpoint	1	10	29
D.O.Emp.	—	7	9	St.Mungo's Comm.	1	—	—
D.H.S.S.	—	—	2	S.V.P.	2	—	1
Dom.Agencies	—	4	—	Samaritans	3	—	—
F.S.U.	1	—	1	Shac	1	—	—
Friend/Client	160	180	175	Simon Comm.	1	—	—
Gen. Pract- itioner	1	1	—	U.C.M.	1	—	1
Health Visitors	2	1	—	Wandsworth Wms. Aid	1	—	2
i.C. Camden	3	7	8				

SOCIAL SERVICES

EIRE

Donegal	—	1	—
Sligo	—	1	—

LONDON BOROUGHS

G.L.C.	—	1	—	Kensington &			
Hammersmith	24	10	19	Chel.	2	3	2
Hounslow	1	—	—	Lambeth	—	2	—
Islington	—	1	1	Newham	1	—	—
				Westminster	1	—	2
				Wandsworth	—	—	2

COUNTIES OF EIRE AND NORTHERN IRELAND

	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>
Antrim	16	9	2
Armagh	5	2	10
Carlow	4	3	2
Cavan	7	6	6
Clare	9	7	6
Cork	74	42	44
De rry	7	3	7
Donegal	14	21	19
Down	5	25	20
Dublin	83	72	40
Fermanagh	—	4	4
Galway	33	22	19
Kerry	20	23	25
Kildare	4	9	4
Kilkenny	17	11	7
Laois	1	2	—
Leitrim	5	7	6
Limerick	30	27	30
Longford	6	9	7
Louth	2	10	3
Mayo	22	16	14
Meath	8	4	4
Monaghan	6	6	5
Offaly	4	3	4
Roscommon	6	8	7
Sligo	11	6	8

Tipperary	22	26	21
Tyrone	6	9	2
Waterford	18	14	13
Westmeath	7	4	5
Wexford	3	9	7
Wicklow	6	4	7
"Irish" (County unknown)	11	9	11

OTHER NATIONALITIES

	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>
England	82	109	125
Scotland	32	42	43
Wales	6	11	10
Argentina	—	—	1
Austria	1	1	1
Burmah	1	1	—
Canada	1	—	—
Ceylon (Sri Lanka)	—	—	1
Egypt	2	—	—
Ethiopia	2	—	—
Fiji	—	1	—
France	—	1	—
Germany	—	1	—
Ghana	1	1	2
Greece	1	1	—
Hungary	—	—	1
India	—	1	—
Iran	—	1	—
Iraq	—	—	2
Italy	1	1	3
Japan	1	—	—
	—	—	1
Mauritius	—	1	—
Mexico	1	—	—
Nigeria	—	2	—

Morocco	1	—	—
Philippines	2	—	—
Poland	—	1	—
Portugal	1	—	—
Rhodesia	—	—	1
Singapore	—	1	1
South Africa	1	—	2
South America	—	—	1
Spain	1	—	1
Sweden	—	—	1
U.S.A.	—	—	3
West Indies	—	1	2
Nationality unknown	4	—	1