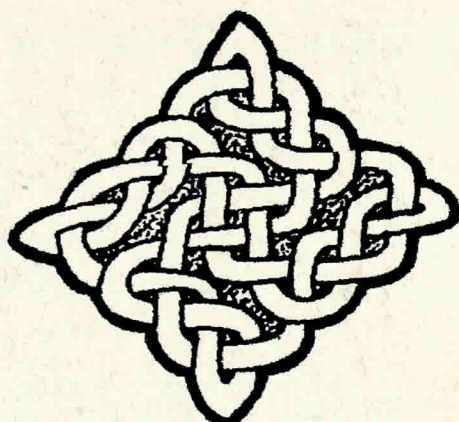


Irish Support



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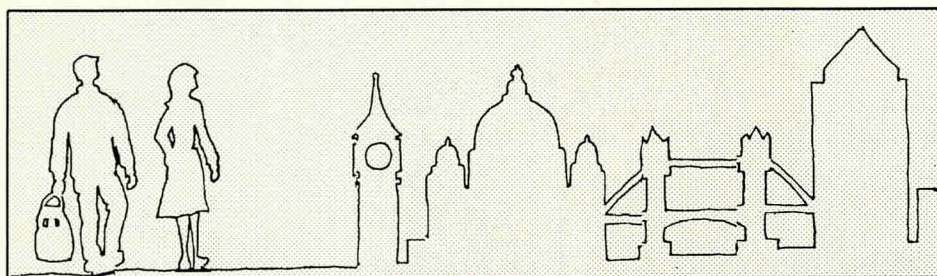
Advice Centre

ANNUAL REPORT

1992 - 1993

AN IRISH WELFARE BUREAU SERVICE

Registered charity No. 268435



WORKING WITH THE NEEDS OF THE IRISH COMMUNITY

IRISH SUPPORT AND ADVICE CENTRE

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AN IRISH WELFARE BUREAU SERVICE

Registered Charity No. 268435

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Irish Welfare Bureau (Charity No. 268435)
Parent Charity



Irish Support and Advice Centre

Management Committee

Director

Administrator
Project Worker
Social Worker

Volunteers

Austin House

Management Committee

Project Worker

Volunteers

Home to Home

Management Committee

Project Worker

Volunteers

Trustees of the Irish Welfare Bureau (Parent Charity)

Fr. Sean Dowling,

Fr. Bernard O'Connor,

Fr. Brian Lawlor

Management Committee of the Irish Support and Advice Centre (September 1993)

Enid Marron, (Chairperson) Stephen O'Kelly, (Treasurer)

Phyllis Merron,

Derek Kelly,

Pat Smyth,

Caroline Judge,

Kevin Whitaker,

Alice Kennedy,

Sarah Bynoe,

Bob Mulcahy,

Cllr. Sean Reddin,

John Reid

Editha Tharpe J.P.

Other people who have been members of the Management Committee in the last year:

Sr. Carmel McGowan; Patsy Corley; Cllr. Jacqueline Abbott; Maoiliosa O'Culachain;

Pauline Carroll; Cllr. Tony Hennessy; Fr Jim Kiely.

Staff

We had excellent locum workers in the past year. Theresa McDonagh and Brigid Montgomery as Social Workers, Geraldine Newcomen and Ann Flynn as administrators, Geraldine Teer as Social Worker/Administrator and Mark Brophy as Relief Worker. Eileen Crowe was acting Project Worker until the appointment of Joe McLoughlin in February 1993. Sr. Carmel rejoined the staff of the Centre in September after a years sabbatical study leave and Eileen Crowe returned to the Centre in October after Maternity leave. Eileen and her husband Mick now have two children Sarah and Ruairi.

From October 93 our staff group will consist of four permanent workers:

Director, Paul Murphy;

Project Worker, Joe McLoughlin;

Social Worker, Sr Carmel McGowan;

Administrator, Eileen Crowe.



Chair's Report



This year has seen a change of Director at the Centre. Fr. Jim had been Director for six years and left to take up his current position as Director of the Irish Chaplaincy Scheme in Britain. He still manages Austin House Hostels and the Home to Home Project which are sister organisations of our Parent Charity: the Irish Welfare Bureau.

During this year, the Trustees and the Management Committee were delighted to welcome Paul Murphy as Director of the Irish Support and Advice Centre, realising the long term plan of developing a more effective and professional management structure. For the previous five years Paul was coordinator at the London Irish Centre (Camden), he also currently holds the position of Chair of the Community Care Committee of the Federation of Irish Societies.

The Trustees and the Committee have been most impressed by the way that long term supporters and indeed everyone associated with the work of the Centre have been able to adapt to the many changes which have occurred over the past few years.

During 1991/92 the focus of our work as a management committee has been on consolidating staffing policies and procedures coupled with a review of other operational practices covering all aspects of the Centre's activities.

The first stage of this work is now nearing completion, enabling the emphasis for future work to shift to expansion and development within the Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham and indeed West London as a whole. We look forward to the new Centre and the development of the Irish Forum, which Paul will reflect on more fully in his report.

We are keen to maximise opportunities for developing our service to the community whilst retaining links built up through the years and will be looking closely in the year ahead at ways of achieving this.

I would like to extend sincere thanks to the following without whose help the Irish Support and Advice Centre, would not have been able to make such excellent progress over the past year :

- * The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham.
- * The Irish Government through the Dion committee.
- * The Ireland Fund for Great Britain, the Irish Youth Foundation and all others who have helped out financially during the year.
- * Individual Supporters.
- * My fellow Management Committee members for their dedication, professionalism and expertise.
- * All the staff, both long standing and new, both permanent and locum, for their immense commitment, enthusiasm and hard work.
- * The Trustees of the Irish Welfare Bureau for their support, confidence in us as a committee and expertise.
- * Numerous agencies in Ireland who help in a variety of ways networking with us for the sake of Irish people over here and over there.
- * The Federation of Irish Societies and the Council of Irish Counties for their networking and support.
- * Hammersmith and Fulham Association of Community Organisations.
- * To the users for their input and involvement.
- * And finally to our helpers for their patience and tolerance with all the changes. Their involvement is crucial in making the Centre welcoming, positive and functional.

Enid Marron

Chairperson, Management Committee, Irish Support and Advice Centre



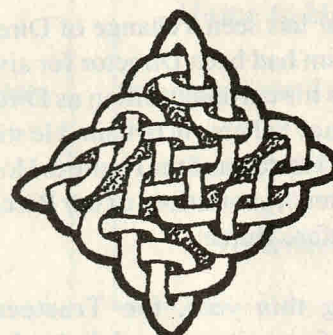
HISTORY



The Irish Welfare Bureau was established in 1969 by Fr. Brian Lawlor as an advice and welfare service. After a few years operating out of a coal basement, a pre-fabricated building was obtained in the early seventies and this blue and white "prefab" has been home to the Centre ever since.

In 1974 the Bureau became a Registered Charity and then in 1977 Austin House Hostels was set up to provide accommodation for the newly arrived Irish. In 1989 it formally divided into the Irish Support and Advice Centre and Austin House Hostels.

The efforts of the Augustinian Order are largely responsible for the setting up of the Irish Welfare Bureau and after Fr. Lawlor another Augustinian, Fr. Jim Kiely took over the role of Director in 1986 until 1992. The Irish Sisters of Charity have been instrumental in maintaining a Social Work Service at the Centre throughout this time, Sr. Carmel McGowan (I.S.C.) returned to the Centre in September '93 after a years sabbatical leave.



Over this period of time, the number of other people who have worked at the Centre is impossible to record but their efforts will always be remembered. Numerous hours of volunteers time have been put into the setting up and the work of the Centre. In addition to the work and commitment of the staff the tireless support of volunteers continues to be a valuable asset in all the Centre's activities.

For the first time in its history the Centre was staffed completely by lay people from summer '92 till summer '93. This has happened due to the reduction of voluntary clerical time available for this kind of involvement and has been facilitated as the amount of public funding for the Centre has increased and enabled it to employ more paid staff.

On a daily basis the Centre is now run by four full-time staff, but still assisted by a growing team of individuals from all walks of life, who help out voluntarily.

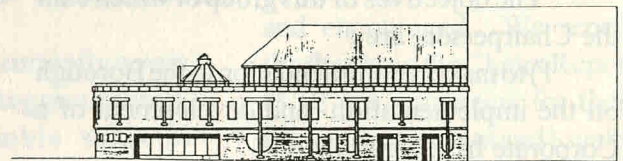


DIRECTOR'S REPORT



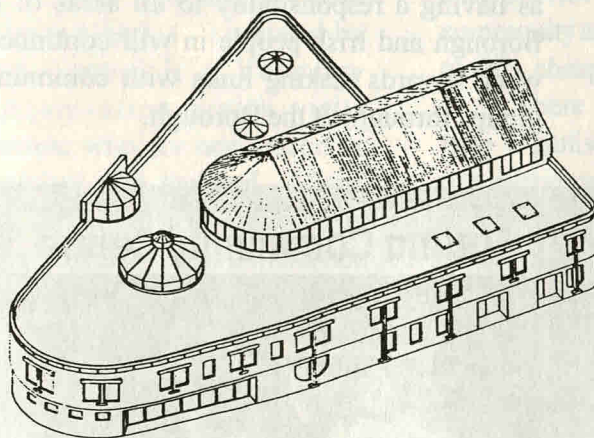
During my time as director I look forward to facing the challenges of advancing the work of Fr Jim Kiely and my other predecessors. The strong and prominent role of the Centre in the life of the local community and the Irish people in the West of London needs to be maintained. Our contacts with the councillors and officers of the Local Authority or with representatives of the Irish Government and its various ministries needs to be continued. Whether it be consultation with the L.A. on the annual Community Care Plan or meeting Mr Brian Cowen in November, then Irish Minister of Labour, our Centre is always willing to participate in the networking of services to Irish people.

A part of this building will be used by Hammersmith Community Trust. The developers of the new Broadway Complex have contributed £500,000 to the Borough for this project, and the balance of the building costs, at least £250,000, will be provided by the Borough Council. There is obviously great excitement among our staff, volunteers, friends and clients about this new departure.



The IRISH and the BOROUGH

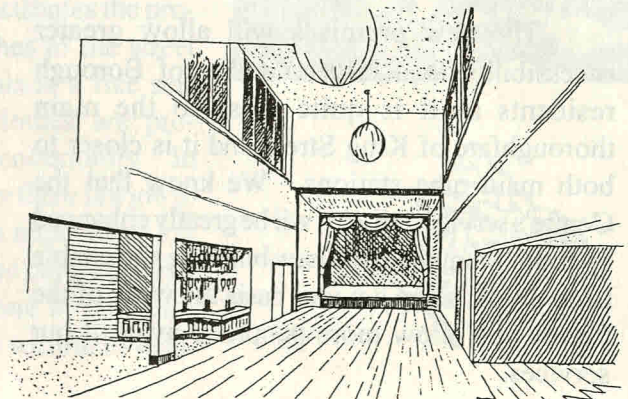
The fact that the Borough is prepared to invest this amount of money into a Capital project shows the interest in, and loyalty to, the ethnic Irish in Hammersmith and Fulham. This Borough has in fact set an example which other Boroughs with a similarly large Irish population must follow if they are to respond to the needs of their different ethnic groups. According to the London Research Centre, 6.7% of residents of Hammersmith and Fulham and 3.8% of Londoners in general are Irish born (See section on Emigration). When one includes those who are 2nd and 3rd generation Irish and those of mixed origins who identify themselves as Irish, it brings the number of Irish people living in the Borough to over 11%. It can be seen that this new amenity will meet a need common to a very large percentage of Borough residents.



NEW CENTRE

Over the last couple of years there has been much discussion and debate both among the Irish community and in the Council Chambers about the provision of a new building from which the work of the Irish Support and Advice Centre can be carried out more fully.

After lengthy deliberation both on the choice of site for this building and its architectural design, planning permission was granted in June. Building work is expected to begin soon on the new **Irish Cultural and Community Centre**. The approved site is currently vacant and is bordered on three sides by Black's Road, Hammersmith Bridge Road and Queen Caroline Street, it was formerly the site of "The Broadway Cinema".





Director's Report



FORUM

Another new development in the Borough has been the Hammersmith and Fulham Community Forum. It is recognised and acknowledged within their constitution that the Irish Community have suffered discrimination and stereotyping and their cultural, social and economic contributions have gone unnoticed.

The objectives of this group of which I am the Chairperson, are :

1) to make recommendation to the Borough on the implementation and development of a Corporate Irish Strategy;

2) to promote the needs of the Irish in the Borough;

3) to work towards the elimination of racism;

4) to cooperate with voluntary and statutory Irish organisations and individuals in undertaking activities compatible with those of the Forum;

5) to identify and make recommendations on gaps in service delivery to the Irish community in the Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham;

6) to ensure that the Forum in it's work and service delivery will incorporate equal opportunities policies at all stages;

7) and to develop joint policies between agencies in addressing the needs of the Irish community.

ACCESS

The new premises will allow greater accessibility to a larger number of Borough residents as it is quite close to the main thoroughfare of King Street and it is closer to both main tube stations. We know that the Centre's service delivery will be greatly enhanced by the movement to the new building and enable us to publicise on a wider basis the work of the Centre and allow more people to avail of our services.

OUTREACH

Our statistics of previous years show a strong gender bias towards single men but it is hoped that the new surroundings will encourage more women, children and families to use our services. There is also a large community in the north of the Borough who do not benefit fully from our services. We are at present overcoming this problem by expanding our outreach programme (this has been facilitated by a grant received in the previous financial year from the **Ireland Fund for Great Britain**). This programme includes an advice session led by the Project Worker one afternoon a week at the Fatima Community Centre. We see ourselves as having a responsibility to all areas of the Borough and Irish people will continue to work towards making links with community groups throughout the Borough.



The outreach work of the Project Worker and the Social Worker is instrumental in our achieving higher equal opportunity standards in our services. Currently our statistics show an improvement in the range of people and diversity of problems encountered. **Paul Murphy.**



VOLUNTEERS



The Centre has always had a large volunteer base which it has been able to call on to help in the workings of the Centre. Indeed the Centre was formed by the efforts of the Community and the Augustinians. Without the help of the Community working on a voluntary basis the Centre would not be providing the level of service which it now does. Some of the work of the Centre's volunteer helpers is detailed below.

The Community Care Group which was initiated by the Centre, is a Voluntary Organisation which visits people who for one reason or another feel isolated. Visits are arranged on a weekly basis and this acts as a contact for those without any other support networks.



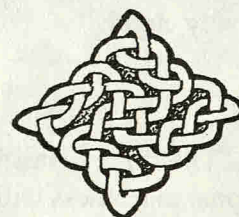
There is currently a very active fundraising group which organises jumble sales bi monthly. As well as income for the Centre, jumble sales also provide a service to the community as they supply good quality cheap clothes.

There are others groups who organise events such as our participation in the London Irish Festival at Roundwood Park every summer. People from this group are always on hand to help with the various events where we publicise our service during the year.

One of our volunteers, comes in everyday and has taken over the job of sorting clothes, this facilitates the provision of clothes to the street homeless. This is a free service as the clothes are provided by the community. In short whenever there is a job to be done which requires an extra effort we are confident that there is someone in the community who is willing to help.

The Irish Pensioners Group which is based in the Adult Education Centre on Macbeth street, has had close links with the Centre. The work of the volunteers leading this group and it's regular activities and trips has to be admired and encouraged. We repeat the thanks in the Chairs Report to all our volunteers for their time, commitment and loyalty without which the services of the Centre could not continue.

The Centre has always been funded to some extent by voluntary donations and fundraising events and indeed during it's infancy it relied totally on these sources for money.



ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE LONDON

At the time of going to print - September 1993 - the prospects for the economy in Britain particularly London, are still unsure. Britain has experienced a very deep recession and London has felt this intensely particularly when the situation is contracted with the boom in the late 1980s. The effects of the abolition of European trade barriers in January '93 with the introduction of the Single European Market brought excitement to the economy but it will take some time before the expected economic benefits will be experienced by people in general

Rather than write about the recent dismal times experienced under the recession I am going to quote below from the *London Chamber of Commerce Quarterly Economic Review of July 1993*. Recent economic indicators show that recovery in one place in Europe or the world is not sufficient on its own - we are interdependent cities, rural areas and nations - general European and World economic recovery is vital for growth and maintenance of adequate standards of living for all.

Business confidence has strengthened and service sector growth accelerated in the second quarter of 1993 heightening hopes of a sustained economic recovery in London. However, manufacturing exports have suffered a set-back.

Despite the optimism about general economic recovery, the downside has been in employment levels.

"The outlook for investment and jobs is still very cloudy"

Manufacturing

"Domestic activity has risen across the board, especially among large firms; 35% of which, on balance, report a rise in domestic orders."

"The upbeat domestic message is checked by a slowdown in manufacturers' export activity."

Service Sector

"Whilst an upturn in domestic activity is ensuring a modest recovery, export activity also picked up (unlike the manufacturing sector) with 42% of service firms reporting a rise in service exports, whilst 15% reveal a fall. Such growth is expected to maintain its momentum in the coming months."

Employment

In an upbeat tone the report says :

"The number of jobless in London is reacting more rapidly to signs of recovery than in previous periods, and job-shedding has slowed." Explaining this comment it gives the current, yet still negative figures, for its survey of London businesses.

"26% of service firms have reduced staff against 16% increasing staff. 26% of manufacturing firms have reduced staff compared with 13 % increasing staff."

Investment

"Firms continue to axe capital expenditure plans for the third consecutive year, but at a much reduced rate. The investment outlook has strengthened, with more firms in services and manufacturing expecting to authorise investment in the next 12 months."

Conclusions

"The survey clarifies our hope for a sustained recovery in the Capital. However, above average personal indebtedness will ensure only a modest recovery and economic growth that is expected to be less than the national average."



EMIGRATION



MIGRATION PATTERNS

In the service of Irish immigrants for almost 20 years the Centre has endeavoured to respond to the changing patterns of their needs. We see the newcomers to Britain - the young hopefuls - raw and inexperienced. We see the people who have been in other parts of Britain, generally one of the other cities and have travelled to London in the hope of improving their chances this time around.

The Irish migrant population contains employed and unemployed sectors, people who adapt well to their local environment, and those who can experience severe dislocation, culture shock and homesickness. However, all would benefit from a sensitive advice service, delivered by Irish professionals cognisant of their client groups' cultural background.

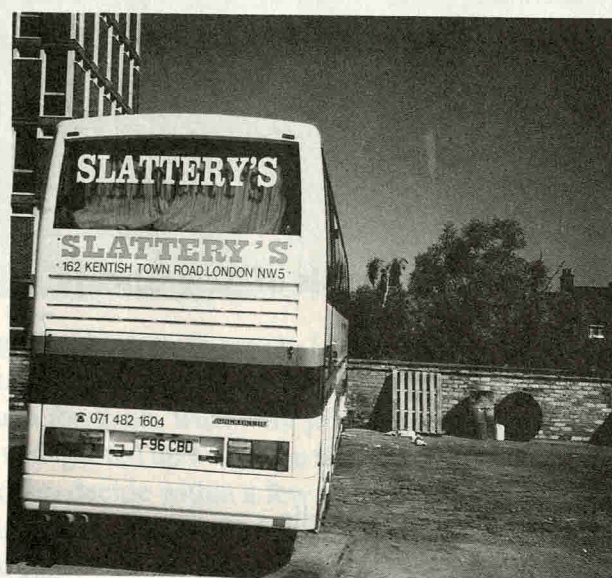
The responsibility for caring for the Irish immigrants of the previous decades who now are in the autumn of their lives lies fundamentally with this country where they have worked and paid national insurance and taxes. The reality though is that they need Irish agencies both to provide an Irish point of contact and a base for them to meet but also as a catalyst to activate the highest quality of service for them in their place of retirement. In the event of failing mental or physical health an understanding Irish worker can be the vital facilitator in obtaining the appropriate response from the local statutory agencies.

The message is certainly hitting home that the work situation in England has deteriorated and the typical bastions of Irish Migrants, namely the construction industry, nursing and bar work seem to be hardest hit. Construction and recreational activities are almost economic barometers of the economic situation at a particular time in London.

CURRENT TRENDS

The health cuts enacted in the last few years have meant that nursing is a shrinking profession and increasingly the Irish who may like to work in this profession in England are having to turn to other areas of employment. In conclusion we say that more research is needed into the situation to help agencies both in Ireland and in the U.K. to focus on the changing needs of our users.

The census defines the Irish community as being heads of households from within the Republic of Ireland. This seriously under counts the true extent of the Irish Community for three main reasons. Firstly, it omits Irish born in Britain. Secondly, it omits Irish born in the six counties of Northern Ireland. And thirdly, it omits Irish non-heads of households. The actual number of the Irish Community in the Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham may be as high as 11-12%, or over 16,000 people in an area of less than six and a half square miles.



Statistics on our clients

1st April 92 to 31st March 93

Status of Clients

Total Enquiries	9,792
Interviews New + Return	4,243
New Clients	948
New clients (male)	639
New clients (female)	309
Telephone Enquiries	5,549

Age of New Clients

Under 18	16
18-21	105
22-25	144
26-30	60
31-40	85
41-49	112
50-64	134
65-80	36
80+	6

Problems Presented

(Excluding phone enquiries)

Accommodation	1239
Employment	473
General Advice	988
Information	895
Welfare Benefits Advice	864
Counselling	95
Education	83
Birth Certificates	258
Passports	42
Repatriation	135
Food	487
Miscellaneous	102
Finance	127
Clothes	1138

Source of Referrals of New Clients

Clergy	23
Social Services	15
Friends/Clients	152
Irish Agencies	7
Personal Applications	721
Police/Probation	5
Statutory Services/Media	25
Voluntary Agencies	20
TOTAL	948

Counties of Origin of New Clients

	Total	%
Antrim	18	2.29
Armagh	3	0.38
Carlow	4	0.50
Cavan	11	1.40
Clare	15	1.91
Cork	77	9.80
Derry	7	0.89
Donegal	17	2.16
Down	4	0.50
Dublin	154	19.61
Fermanagh	0	0.00
Galway	52	6.62
Kerry	19	2.42
Kildare	8	1.01
Kilkenny	7	0.89
Laois	8	1.01
Leitrim	10	1.27
Limerick	54	6.87
Longford	10	1.27
Louth	10	1.27
Mayo	23	2.92
Meath	19	2.42
Monaghan	4	0.50
Offaly	11	1.40
Roscommon	11	1.40
Sligo	8	1.01
Tipperary	27	3.43
Tyrone	6	0.76
Waterford	36	4.58
Westmeath	11	1.40
Wexford	12	1.52
Wicklow	8	1.01

Other Nationalities

England	68	4.00
Scotland	16	2.75
U.S.A.	4	0.38
Others	33	1.15
Total	948	

Qualification : In the coming year we will implement a new system of statistics collection which will allow us to give improved information on return callers, who are an increasing caseload.

A Day in the Life of the Centre

On the way to work, I bump into well-known faces. "How are you, are you open yet? When will you be open?" I race to the office to find that already several enthusiastic people have left messages on the answering machine. "Tell Joe to phone about X's housing problem." I leave messages, open the post, do the routine office chores and make tea. The other workers arrive and the doors open.

Sometimes it's a rush that can leave your head swimming, a seemingly endless procession of people with problems, with requests for clothes or a cuppa, with offers of help of various kinds. I sort them out, A is to see the Project Worker for assistance with finding employment, Y has a complicated marital problem and she is seen by the social worker. I make cups of tea, chat to people, admire children and explain unavoidable delays.

The phone rings constantly with calls for various people. I take messages, transfer calls, deal with queries which vary from "Where can I find a solicitor who understands Irish culture and Irish legal problems" to "Where can I learn Irish or Irish dancing".

It sometimes seems incongruous, the amazing variety of services we provide, but after all that's what makes the job interesting. I run around madly, telling people "the Embassy is on the phone", while I search for a directory which will tell me where the best shops are for buying shamrock or Gaelic football T-shirts.

In between all this I type letters and reports, do mailshots, type up application forms. I keep records and prepare statistics. When I have a moment free, and I am not drowning in a mass of paper or pulling out recalcitrant sheets which have stuck in the photocopier, I handle requests about clothes and birth certificates.



Most days see a steady stream of people through the door, some new to London, and amazed and horrified by what they find here, the hugeness, the impersonality, the harshness of the big city where nobody wants to help you. Many find it all too much for them, what with jobs promised that never materialised, the cost of accommodation, the friends who get fed up with them sleeping on the floor, the difficulties of getting benefits without ID, and they often decide within a few days that life in London is not for them. They come to us to ask for help in going home. Others find in us a helping hand to assist them over these obstacles and when we have helped them find accommodation and/or training often come back to tell us they now have a job and are settling in happily.

A Day in the Life of the Centre



Other clients are regulars, they've been here for years. They come in looking for a helping hand. Many regulars are street-homeless and come to us for clothes, assistance in getting medical attention and a cuppa. "Mick" has lived rough for years because of his drinking. He visits us for help with his welfare benefits, clothes and support. He calls today for a shirt, as the hot weather is making him uncomfortable in his heavy overcoat. He also wants a letter for a medicinal bath, so he can get rid of the lice which plague him, because of his lack of regular washing facilities. I find him a shirt, hastily write a letter introducing him to the local baths and am startled to hear a loud splashing sound as if a waterfall had installed itself in the waiting area. I dash out, to find that Mick is staring in amazement as a litre of milk spills from his inside pocket onto the carpet. He seems powerless to stop it, and is very apologetic, offering to clean it up if I could lend him a mop.

I give him his shirt and letter, and decide to clean it myself. Mick doesn't mean any harm, he's just a bit accident-prone.

Eric, one of our volunteer helpers, who sorts the clothes and does odd jobs, comes in and tells me that someone has given us a huge bag of clothes. He takes them off for sorting and then puts them in neat piles according to size. The phone rings, someone wanting to know how many women clients we have; what sort of problems and what age groups? I promise to consult my statistics files and to call her back. The social worker has been tied up for ages with a family who are homeless. I dole out tea to refresh them as she makes phone calls. When this is over she will go on a home visit to an elderly lady who is isolated and lonely. She doesn't go out much, most clients call in, some simply for a chat to talk about their problems or worries.

I spend some time with my trusty calculator, going through the statistics, then I type up minutes from the staff meeting and make notes on the next meeting's agenda with the Director. New ideas will be floated, we will talk about fund-raising. I answer a phone call about a birth certificate. It will be here in a few days, and someone will now be able to claim benefit. I type a couple of letters which have to go off today and my last task of the day is to collect everyone's letters and make sure that they catch the 5.30 post. Just before leaving I conduct a search for shoes for a client with Size 11 feet. Miraculously, someone has left in two such pairs today, in answer to an advert in the parish newsletter. I tidy up and find that I have locked away the stamps. Muttering I unlock the cupboard and stamp the letters. The door is now closed, as it's 5 o'clock but there are still clients being cared for; a young man wanting to go back to Ireland is waiting, and the workers are trying to arrange it.

I collect my post, and leave. It's been a tiring day and for the other workers, it's still not over. It's only over when the last client is finished.

Geraldine Newcomen.



BREAKING THE MOULD



Project Worker's Summary of what our Users Experience

In recent years the relative trend of emigration has slowed; the underlying trend however indicates that by the end of the century 47% of Irish born will at some point or other in their lives have emigrated from Ireland. So what are the newly arrived Irish to expect in the Metropolis? There are Irish services in existence in London; Irish Advice Centres serving the four compass points, Irish Housing associations, the Council of Irish Counties, myriad watering holes and social clubs, Gaelic football leagues and employment and training programmes. The problem is one of access - how to link the newly arrived in with new, dynamic and existing services? Avenues of employment into which historically the Irish have been stereotyped : Labouring, Nursing, Domestic Help, have been devastated by a period of stagnant construction, a contracting Public Health Service and falling demand. Both by force and design there is some progression away from these ghettoised areas of employment as recognition of Irish qualifications and of the standard of Irish education takes root within the English job market and the Irish positively react against stereotyping. The talent for networking and keeping an ear to the ground together with the effectiveness of word of mouth ensures the vibrancy of the Irish in Britain and has enabled many newly arrived to secure work.

At the Irish Support and Advice Centre we make links with prospective employers, match up our users to job vacancies and training, assist in preparation for interviews and ultimately empower people to make informed choices about their lives based on full awareness of the opportunities available.



Over Represented & Under Resourced

The flipside to this however is that as noted in the report "Equal Opportunities the Irish Dimension" the emigrant Irish are the only ethnic minority whose life expectancy falls on arrival in Britain; for all other ethnic minorities it increases.

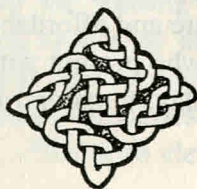
The Irish in Britain continue to be over represented among those with Mental Health problems, among the street Homeless and among those appearing in British Courts. The search for secure and affordable accommodation for those who present with special needs consequently plays a major role in our service provision.



BREAKING THE MOULD



Legislation to criminalise squatting which will come into effect in October will see even greater pressure placed on under resourced areas of accommodation provision. Over 60,000 people currently squatting, if evicted, would mean a huge increase in street homelessness. The Housing Corporation estimate that less than 50,000 new housing units are built annually, contrasts wildly with the 100,000 new units currently needed each year. This unmet need aside we aim to find accommodation or make relevant referrals for single and street homeless, homeless couples and families and those trapped in unsuitable and temporary accommodation. Under the auspices of the Irish Welfare Bureau we have referral rights to accommodation at Austin House and the Home to Home hostels. The further service provision is a mixture of referrals to direct access Hostels B&B's and Nightshelters, Housing association's shared and self-contained housing and to Local Authority Homeless Persons Units when appropriate. We also assist in the search for private accommodation through access to borough wide vacancy lists, Irish landlord contacts and letting agencies ensuring as far as possible that prospective tenants are briefed in advance of their rights. While our service users are in temporary accommodation we maintain a supportive relationship with them; helping them to search for employment, assisting with benefit queries and ultimately aiming to secure, or at least enable our users to consolidate the process towards securing permanent accommodation.



ADDRESSING THE SHORTFALL

Now and in the coming year we are tackling shortfalls in our provision targeting "hidden homeless" Irish Women. We are aware that the street homeless and homeless merry-go-round per se is so threatening and precarious that women endure their situations domestically, in tied accommodation or in private rented accommodation, rather than risk the uncertainty of the street, statistically less visible they continue to remain in poor housing conditions often in fear for the own safety. We are also targeting Travellers who face further discrimination through the reform of the 1968 Caravan Sites Act, removing all Local Authority requirements to provide designated sites, cutting all grants for such provision and encouraging Travellers to abandon their whole culture and move into housing. Such infringements of Human Rights will not go unchallenged and cases currently under examination in the European Courts may yet bear fruit, for our part we will be monitoring the issue very closely. Our position clear we hope through a mixture of teamwork and support, networking and outreach to further open up our service to Irish women, Travellers and to the whole Irish community in West London to ensure the fullest representation for that community offering a confidential, non-judgemental and culturally sensitive service.

Joe McLoughlin.

SOCIAL WORKER'S REPORT

April 1993 witnessed the implementation of the **National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990**. The Act's main aim is to enable people to live as independently as possible in the community. This is being done by co-ordinating services between the voluntary and statutory agencies which should lead to a greater range of choice for service users. Voluntary agencies such as ours have a vital role to play in development towards providing services that reflect the cultural, emotional and physical needs of our Centre's users. Through the varied aspects of our direct client-centred work we try to meet a wide variety of differing needs.

These needs can be either short-term or long-term, and range from advice and assistance to counselling those who feel vulnerable and are frequently marginalised by statutory service provisions. Many clients are isolated and lonely and one of our key aims is to make a comprehensive assessment of an individual's needs, which is undertaken by liaising with a multidisciplinary team of health and care workers. Our Centre has liaised with statutory social workers undertaking the case management of the assessment and we have much to contribute to the consideration of cultural factors. Elderly people are often isolated and we undertake home and hospital visits for those that find it difficult to visit the Centre.

There are a number of voluntary and statutory based services for the elderly and we pass on information about what is currently available.

We try to provide support for people, and through counselling, enable them to make decisions about their future. In the current socio-economic climate, funding for community care is a key issue, and many of our clients suffer directly from the cuts in Mental Health and Alcohol services.

It will be some time, before we can realistically assess how the implementation of Community Care is affecting service delivery.

Our service is open to all ages, and we aim to make all our users feel equally welcome and valued. By developing and maintaining strong links with other agencies we hope to provide an effective service built on sound knowledge of community resources and services. Co-working with other Irish centres, has resulted in a number of families that use our Centre going on a much-needed break to the seaside at Margate this summer. Children and families work is undertaken in a pro-active way and in accordance with the key principle of the **Children's Act**, namely that the welfare of the child is paramount.

At the Centre, we are eager to further develop our work with children and families and to provide a service that reflects their needs. The pressures placed on families by social and economic factors can not be overestimated, and the additional impact of emigration and differing cultures can also cause stresses for the entire family. Again, our support and advice covers a wide range of difficulties and queries. Some families are seeking advocacy work with housing departments, some need information about local resources and access to community facilities. Others need counselling and support to talk around relationship difficulties within the family or feelings of isolation. Again, linking people to services is a key aim. Within the Children's Act, there are strict guidelines that state services for children and families should reflect the cultural and religious aspects of the families' lives and reflect the multi-cultural society in which we live. The aim, to develop services that are accessible to all, is an exciting part of service provision developments and one we are keen to promote. **Brigid Montgomery.**

Irish Support and Advice Centre

(Under the Auspices of the Irish Welfare Bureau)
Income and Expenditure Account
Year ended 31st March 1993

	EXPENDITURE	INCOME
Income		
LB of Hammersmith & Fulham		41,464
Dion (The Irish Government)		48,730
Donations		2,050
Irish Youth Foundation		5,500
Fund Raising Events		3,163
Bank Interest		3,246
Maternity Grant Award		5,273
		109,426
Property Expenses		
Rent, rates & water	5,000	
Repairs & renewal	527	
Cleaning	747	
Light & heat	1,257	
Insurances	177	7,708
Administration Expenses		
Wages & NIC	32,932	
Motor & Travelling	1,639	
Insurance	234	
Telephone	1,372	
Equipment rental	625	
Staff training	1,433	
Printing, postage & stationery	3,367	
Subscriptions	283	
Advertising & publicity	1,957	
Bank charges	49	
Audit & accountancy	1,500	
Sundry expenses	185	
Depreciation	1,037	
Legal expenses	1,444	
Publication	2,000	50,057
Programme Expenses		
Wages	37,211	
Telephone	1,372	
Grant Aids	1,856	
Volunteer Expenses	567	
Advertising & publicity	652	
Birth certificates	275	
Sundry expenses	357	
Repatriation	295	
Insurance	235	42,820
		100,585
Surplus for year		8,841

Accounts audited by Allen, Tully & Company. The Irish Support and Advice Centre has it's Bank Account at the Allied Irish Bank, King St., London W6.

THE HOME TO HOME PROJECT

Home to Home is another part of the Irish Welfare Bureau.

Young, Irish and Homeless :

Homelessness is a problem that continues to be faced by disproportionate numbers of Irish people in London. Evidence from a wide range of sources indicates that this is not a passing phenomenon:

“32% of all residents in London’s short-stay hostels are Irish.”

(London Irish Women’s Centre)

“44% of women hostel occupants aged 18 - 26 years were Irish.”

(Cara Westminster Report 1988)

Many young Irish people can only obtain low paid work which is often temporary. Financial hardship and the subsequent inability to afford their own accommodation can force young Irish people into difficult situations. The combination of homelessness, imminent homelessness and cultural alienation with the possibility of other problems can leave such individuals in vulnerable and stressful situations.

The Project :

The Home to Home Project started as a joint initiative between the Irish Welfare Bureau and Shepherds Bush Housing Association. It was established with an overall aim of providing low to medium level supported accommodation for young single people, self defined as being of Irish origin.

Supported Accommodation :

The Project, independent of its sister organisation, Austin House Hotels, manages two properties in Hammersmith, with capacity for thirteen residents in all. A Project Worker is on hand to receive referrals from other agencies and to interview applicants.



New residents are encouraged to make use of support provided locally either by other voluntary organisations or by the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham.

There is a close link between the Home to Home Project and the Irish Support and Advice Centre and workers at the Centre not only refer applicants to the Project but also offer practical assistance once they have moved into the hostel. Only informal counselling is provided by Home to Home. The Project Worker will also offer advice on rent, other tenancy matters, welfare benefits, life skills, finding employment, voluntary work, training and education.

The Project strives to create an independent, but homely, environment for residents whilst at the same time making it clear that support is, at all times, available. The Project is particularly suited to people who are experiencing difficulty in coping with culture shock, crises of confidence, bereavement etc.

Tenant participation is actively encouraged and we aim to consult tenants on all matters of policy and initiatives. Regular housemeetings are held to foster a sense of community amongst residents and again to highlight the supportive aspect of the project.

THE HOME TO HOME PROJECT



The Future :

Home to Home is a new and dynamic project. We see that we have tremendous potential for growth. Already our project targets many young Irish-born women and this is a trend which we would like to see continuing.

In London, Irish women are often concentrated in substandard housing, they are overly dependant on private-rented and council housing and they are poorly represented in owner-occupied housing.

Hidden Homelessness is a term which is aptly used to describe the situation in which many Irish women find themselves. Whilst they are not often seen as 'street homeless', they are commonly trapped in unsatisfactory relationships, living with friends or surviving in unsuitable accommodation. Coming from a society wherein they are already marginalised and alienated, they are reluctant to come forward for help. Thus the need for improved housing provision, particularly within a supportive environment, is often overlooked.

The Challenge:

Home to Home recognises and takes up the challenge which this presents. We hope to liaise closely with other organisations which prioritise the needs of Irish women and together we would aim to create a greater awareness of the problems they encounter. This awareness, together with our commitment to providing decent affordable accommodation will, we hope, go some way towards alleviating the difficulties encountered by Irish women in London. **Colette Wrynn.** (*Colette is the first person to occupy the role of Project Worker at the Home to Home Project, and she currently does so under the Directorship of Jim Kiely*)

Home to Home Project & Austin House Hostels

72 Hammersmith Grove
London W6 7HA



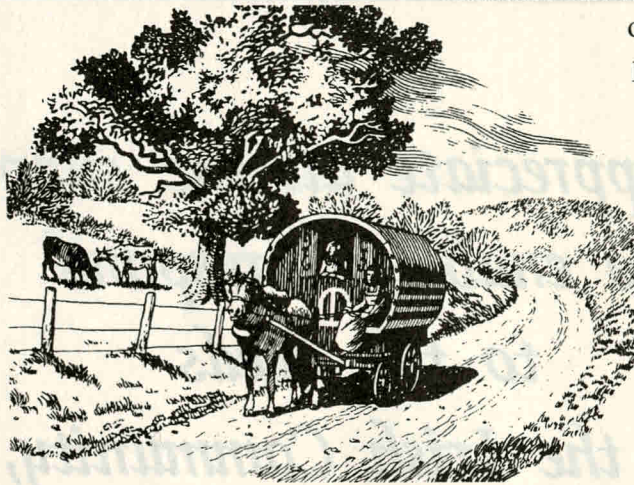
Austin House Hostels



Austin House Hostels was set up in 1977 to provide temporary accommodation for 17-25 year olds who are actively seeking work, who are working or who wish to train for a trade/skill. It is a service of the Irish Welfare Bureau and a sister organisation of the Irish Support and Advice Centre with which it works in co-op and offers a complimentary service.

Austin House Hostels started out with just one house, 72 Hammersmith Grove. In 1989 the Hostel opened its doors to women, and shortly afterwards a second hostel at 76 Hammersmith Grove, exclusively for women, was opened.

There are now equal spaces available to both men and women and another property has been purchased which is currently under redevelopment to provide an alternative type of accommodation. It is planned that an office will be incorporated in the building to service the hostels. This has been a direct and much needed response to the ever increasing accommodation crisis and the huge influx of young Irish during the 1980's when emigration from Ireland reached enormous proportions.



Even though Austin House has as its aim the provision of temporary accommodation, recent trends have indicated that the current recession has created a situation wherein the tide of emigration has ebbed. Concurrently, those who are presently living in London are experiencing greater financial hardships and increased emotional pressures as a consequence of the scarcity of suitable employment. This ultimately causes crises of confidence and feelings of inadequacy and insecurity.

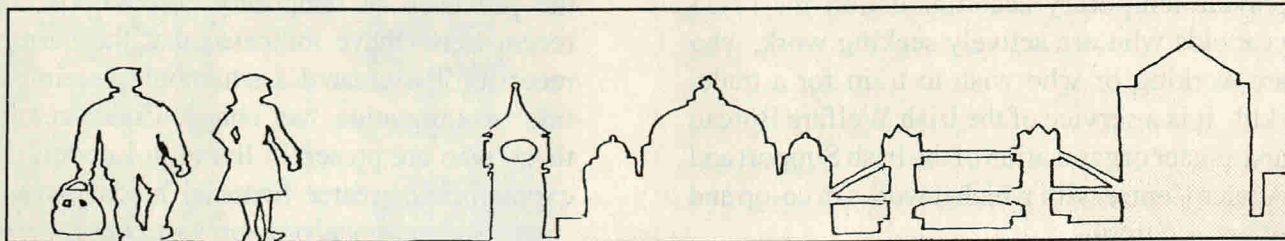
Austin House has responded to these changed circumstances by relaxing its stipulation that residents may only stay at the Hostels for a maximum of 3 months. In this way it is hoped that residents will benefit from

an increased sense of stability.

Life at Austin House can be fun, challenging and exciting. For many residents, it is their first time away from home, they are in a different city, in a different country. An atmosphere of mutual support and understanding is fostered amongst residents, giving them the opportunity to make new friends and to adapt to life in London. For those newly arrived in London the hostels can act as a valuable "stepping stone" allowing them to make a relatively smooth transition from life in Ireland to life in Britain.

However, conscious that hostel life can lead to overdependence and institutionalism, residents are encouraged to strive for greater independence and self reliance.

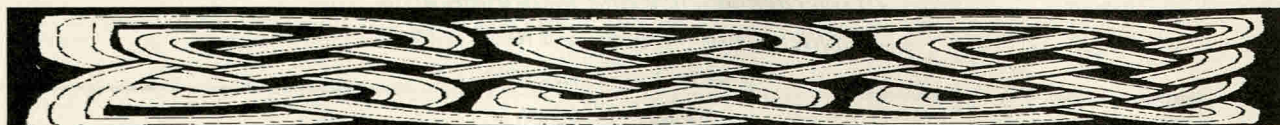
Irish Support & Advice Centre



*We appreciate all the support
to enable us respond
to the needs
of the Irish Community,
Please fill in
the enclosed covenant form
or send your donation to :*

The Irish Support and Advice Centre
55 Fulham Palace Road London W6 8AU

AN IRISH WELFARE BUREAU SERVICE REGISTERED CHARITY No 268435



IRISH SUPPORT AND ADVICE CENTRE

55 Fulham Palace Road
Hammersmith
London W6 8AU

TEL. 081 741 04 66

FAX. 081 741 10 06

AN IRISH WELFARE BUREAU SERVICE

Registered Charity No. 268435

*people aren't born in the gutter,
they're pushed*