

Irish Charitable Trust

incorporating the

Irish Support & Advice Service

Annual Report 2002 / 2003

**Working with the needs
of the Irish Community**

THE IRISH CHARITABLE TRUST

Incorporating
THE IRISH SUPPORT & ADVICE SERVICE
Registered Charity Number 1053278
Registered Company Number 3137725

Members of the Management Committee

Chair	Margaret Doyle (until Sept 2002) Gerry Kivlehan (From Sept 2002)
Vice Chair	Bob Mulcahy
Treasurer	Gerry Keegan
Company Secretary	Patrick Mc Nally

Alice Casey Kennedy
Gerry Crilly
(From March 2003)
Kay Curtin
Fr Bob Dunn
Ashley Glover

Stella Houlahan
Caroline Judge
(From February 2003)
Charlotte Kearns
Enid Marron
Jacqui Read

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Office hours Monday to Friday 09.30 – 05.30 pm
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Auditors Michael Bell & Co
Chartered Accountants
56 ST James's Street,
London E17 7PE

Solicitors Cliona O'Tuama,
Hamilton House
1 Temple Avenue,
London EC4V 0HA.

Bankers Allied Irish Bank plc.
Sovereign House,
361 King Street,
Hammersmith,
London W6 9NA

The Irish Charitable Trust

Background.

The Irish Charitable Trust began as the Irish Welfare Bureau. The name was later changed to the Irish Support & Advice Service. The Irish Support and Advice Service was renamed The Irish Charitable Trust in January 1999. The Irish Support & Advice Service (ISAS) continues to be run from the Irish Centre in Hammersmith as a Trust project. In addition, between 1996 and 2002 we provided an Outreach service programme aimed at the most vulnerable members of the immigrant Irish community.

Objectives of the Irish Support and Advice Service.

The object of the Service is to relieve poverty and distress amongst Irish immigrants to the United Kingdom with particular regard to: -

- Endeavoring to supply or gain access to the material and emotional support required by such immigrants in need,
- Assisting Irish and other immigrants to obtain the benefit of statutory and voluntary support networks
- Provide information generally for immigrants with regard to social and recreational activities
- Advising and assisting immigrants who wish to return home.
- Help Irish immigrants resident in the UK to obtain copies of their birth certificates and access to Irish pensions if they worked in Ireland prior to 1953.
- Assisting resident Irish immigrants, where required, to find suitable accommodation in the UK

Chairman's Report

The work of the Irish Support & Advice Service could not have continued over the past 30 years without the loyalty and ongoing support of many individuals and supporting organisations.

We are particularly grateful for the support of the statutory authorities and grant funding authorities in the UK together with the help from the Irish Government's DION Committee and various supporting bodies in the Republic with whom we have established a good working relationship over the years..

Our manager, Stella Houlahan resigned in August 2002 to take advantage of further opportunities to develop her career in Northampton. We wish Stella well in her new job.

Our Outreach funding came to an end during the year, and it was with regret that we had to lose Ann Laffy, who has been with us for a number of years. Ann is now working with HAFAD and doing similar work to that of our Outreach work. We have now managed to secure funding from Bridge House Trust to part fund an Outreach Worker post from the next financial year.

Our current lease at the Irish Centre will end in June 2003. We have been here seven years – and how quickly time has

passed- . We are in the process of negotiating a new lease with the Local Authority..

Our records show that we have provided a service to 2,590 clients over the course of the year. This figure is comprised of 1,896 clients, who have been seen on a drop-in or appointment basis, and 694 telephone advice queries.

The main area of concern has been the high proportion of clients who are not registered with a GP and their age range and background, confirmed by the census figures shows that they are especially vulnerable.

The future of any organisation depends on committed staff who deliver the service on a daily basis. This can be very stressful at times because of the nature of our client group. We are immensely proud of our staff and thank them for their commitment and skills, which helps the Irish Support & Advice Service to meet the needs of our clients.

Our volunteers are essential in supporting our service and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them on behalf of the Service and our clients for their continued trust and support.

For our part we aim to remain a dynamic, forward-looking organisation seeking continuous improvement as a matter of course

Fr Gerry Kivlehan
Chair

Our Service

Commitment to values.

The Irish Support & Advice Service provides a culturally sensitive service for all Irish people in need. We offer a free and confidential advice and material support to all those who turn to us.

The Service is committed to strive to achieve equal opportunities and seeks to challenge discrimination in all aspects of its work. We seek to recognise and deal with issues that face our clients. We will ensure that our management committee is representative of the Irish community who we seek to serve. If you feel that we are not meeting these aims, please contact a member of staff and ask for a copy of our complaints procedure.

Comments and complaints on our services are valued. It helps us to improve our service delivery and to identify new needs. A summary of complaints and comments is available to the management committee on a regular basis

Advice

We offer advice on a number of matters such as welfare rights, housing, family matters, law, discrimination, battery gay rights and addiction. Where we do not have the appropriate experience we will refer the client to a more specialist referral agency.

Our client group lies in West London and we find that they are reluctant to visit other agencies.. We need to encourage them to do so in order to claim their rights. Many of our clients are extremely distressed and often in

need of reassurance before anything practical can be undertaken on their behalf.

We have had some success with appeals and tribunals on behalf of clients refused benefits. Unfortunately many elderly Irish people do not take up their right to appeal benefits decisions and assume that if they are refused it is because they are not entitled to the benefit in question, which may not in fact be the case.

Levels of advice provided.

- A diagnosis of client problems
- We give information and explain any options available
- identifying further action the client can take.
- Giving basic assistance. This may include contacting third parties on our client's behalf..

In addition the Service will help to obtain welfare benefits, and older people benefits where they are justified.. This can involve taking action on behalf of clients, such as putting the client's case to a third party with the intention of getting the third party to make or change a decision in the client's favour. Third parties may include central and local government departments, housing associations, employers and tribunals.

Welfare benefits

We provide support and advice on the following matters

- Obtaining Irish Birth certificates
- Incapacity benefits
- Means tested housing or council tax benefits

- Means tested income support; job seekers allowance working family's tax credits and disabled persons tax credit
- Overpayments
- Pensions (including Irish pensions enquiries)
- Review and Appeals

Outreach Service. for the elderly

We help to facilitate referrals to Social Services by carrying out an assessment of client needs. This can include

- Welfare benefits and pensions
- Income-related benefit (income support)
- Means-tested housing and council tax benefit
- Retirement benefit.

Material support

Our main mandate is to offer advice. However many clients come to us seeking material support. As an Irish agency, clients often find it easier to approach us for help or we are able to direct them to more appropriate agencies. We direct hungry people to the Broadway project. We have been able to secure Christmas hampers for a number of our most vulnerable clients. We have also been able to provide underwear, socks and other clothing to very needy clients who had been offered a free holiday in Ireland, in some cases the first visit in over fifty years. British Home Stores has been most generous in their support.

Irish specific needs

Birth and Marriage Certificates.

We help clients who need to obtain birth certificates for identifying purposes, which are necessary on reaching

retirement age. We can also obtain copies of marriage certificates by contacting the appropriate registrars in the Republic or Northern Ireland.

Repatriation

Repatriation back to Ireland is a big decision especially for people who have not been home for many years as the situation in Ireland has changed so radically after the success of the "celtic tiger economy". We direct clients to the appropriate information and help them with the necessary arrangements where we can. We find that many young people wish to be repatriated to Ireland and in a number of cases we have been able to obtain funding from the St Vincent de Paul Society in Ireland. We would like to acknowledge our thanks on behalf of our clients for their continued support.

Pre 1953 Irish Pensions

We have many enquiries in regard to Pre 1953 Pensions from Ireland. We help prospective claimants to understand the criteria and the procedures involved. The process on a claim can take between 12 - 18 months from inception to completion.

Target setting

We aim to carry out an initial assessment of needs within five minutes and will try to see the client on the same day or arrange an appointment depending on the urgency of the need.

Confidentiality policy

The Service is registered under the Data Protection Act. All client details are a matter of strict confidentiality. No disclosure of client details can be made without the written consent of the client. We operate an open access policy for users

The Irish Charitable Trust

Statement of Financial Activities – Year Ended 31st March 2003 (Including a summary of Income & Expenditure)

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2003	Total Funds 2002
	£	£	£	£
Incoming Resources:				
Donations	4,127	0	4,127	53,650
Activities to further the charities objects:				
Grants receivable	0	139,089	139,089	106,328
Investment Income	181	0	181	260
Total Incoming Resources:	<u>4,308</u>	<u>139,089</u>	<u>143,397</u>	<u>160,238</u>
Resources Expended:				
Charitable expenditure	0	86,120	86,120	109,543
Management & administration	6,738	52,969	59,707	55,714
Total Resources Expended:	<u>6,738</u>	<u>139,089</u>	<u>145,827</u>	<u>165,257</u>
Net Movement of Reserves:	-2,430	0	-2,430	-5,019
Balances brought forward	23,549	0	23,459	28,478
Total Funds at 31/3/03	<u>21,029</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>21,029</u>	<u>23,459</u>

The charitable company has no recognised gains or losses other than the results for the year as set out above.

All of the activities of the charitable company are classed as continuing.

The Irish Charitable Trust
Detailed Income & Expenditure Account

Year Ended 31st March 3002

	2003	2002
Income:	£	£
Department of Environment	34,010	0
Outreach donor	0	33,00
Other donations	2,453	4,910
Tea Dances/Raffles/Sundry	1,674	301
Ireland Fund	0	4,231
Irish Youth Foundation	0	4,500
Marathon	0	4,748
Association of London Governments	31,141	0
Dr. Edwards/Bishop Kings	0	1,960
DION	51,841	32,238
L.B. Hammersmith & Fulham	22,097	29,000
L.B Hammersmith & Fulham Community Care	0	45,090
Bank Interest Receivable	181	260
	<u>143,397</u>	<u>160,238</u>
Total Income		
 Direct Charitable Expenditure:		
Wages, N.I.C.	50,035	41,000
Rent (Community and Outreach)	0	556
Outreach expenses/salaries	21,189	34,063
Community Care Salaries/Costs	10,000	23,052
Repatriation	168	350
Welfare Disbursements	2,225	3,415
Volunteer expenses/training	2,503	6,416
Fund-raising	0	691
	<u>86,120</u>	<u>109,543</u>
Carried forward	<u>57,277</u>	<u>50,695</u>

The Irish Charitable Trust

Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2003

	2003	2002
	£	£
Fixed Assets:		
Tangible Assets	1,928	3,388
Current Assets:		
Debtors/prepayments	0	24,866
Cash at bank and in hand	23,138	4,142
	<u>23,138</u>	<u>29,008</u>
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year:	4,037	8,937
	<u>4,037</u>	<u>8,937</u>
Net current Assets:	19,101	20,071
	<u>19,101</u>	<u>20,071</u>
Total Assets Less Current Liabilities:	<u>21,029</u>	<u>23,459</u>
Reserves:		
Designated Funds	21,029	23,459
Restricted	0	0
	<u>21,029</u>	<u>23,459</u>

These financial statements were approved by members of the committee on the 8th October 2003, and are signed on their behalf by:

Fr G. Kivlehan – Chairman

Mr P. McNally – Company Secretary

A typical day in the life of a Volunteer Outreach Worker

I meet a wide variety of clients with their own particular needs. Each client is different and how we identify the clients needs can vary

The following are a selection of clients who have come to us seeking our help

One client was a Galway man who had been severely mugged several times and suffered memory loss

Many years previously he had been employed in plastering work for an elderly lady and refused any payment for his work. They had kept in contact over the years. When she had heard that he had been mugged she sent her nephew to see how he was.

He expressed a wish to be reunited with his sister with whom he had lost contact. We were contacted by the ladies nephew to see if we could help. We began a search to reunite him with his sister.

We asked the Irish Post to help us. They were wonderful in their support. Before a week was out his sister had contacted us and they were reunited with tears and

laughter and also two other long-lost brothers were located. His sister now visits him frequently and sometimes stays overnight and they are now reunited as a family.

Recently a County Wexford man asked us to help trace his family as he had been separated at an early age.

He was able to advise us that his brother had at one time been in the Irish Army. We contacted the Irish Army Records Office in Dublin and they were most helpful in tracing his brother. They have now been reunited.

An elderly Limerick man came to us for help. He had been brought up in institutional establishments all over Ireland, and had suffered severe beatings, leaving him a disturbed man.

He asked us to help him when a supermarket store accused him of theft. They humiliated him and interrogated him and then found on their till roll that he had paid.

They offered him cash in compensation, but he wanted an apology and we are trying to help

him. However staff changes in the store means that there is now no member of staff who can recall the incident.

A travelling lady whose daughter's children were taken into care came to us for help.

Thought no fault of hers, she had difficulty in reading and writing.

We are trying to help her to obtain custody of her grandchildren. and a deportation order against her daughter cancelled

She is a lonely lady and it is plain to see because of her accent she is not getting much help. It is hard not to admire her when in the middle of all her problems she got her young son beautifully turned out for his confirmation. We are continuing to offer her our support

A Cork lady came to see us recently. She had lost a lot of weight and was in great pain from her back asked for our help.

We contacted her GP and the District Nurse got her a support electric type-moving mattress.

We also found out that her neighbours upstairs were making a lot of noise which was very

upsetting. We therefore contacted her Housing Officer. He has been a great help and after his intervention the noise has been considerably reduced to her delight

Another disturbing case was that of a County Cavan man who had been cajoled by a salesman into getting his power supply from a new energy company.

The offered scheme purported to offer a reduced tariff and be cheaper than his own supplier,

It has been a long and complicated effort but eventually we have had his power supply restored to his original power supplier and he is now a happier man.

A young Dublin man was discharged from prison into hospital with Crohn's disease He had no money and was homeless.

We contacted an organisation that helps ex-offenders with rehousing issues and we asked his hospital social worker to help him complete the necessary forms as he has difficulty in coping with forms. He has now been rehoused to his satisfaction.

Mary Bolger