

Irish welfare Bureau

HAMMERSMITH — LONDON



seventh annual report 1977

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Directors Foreword

Presenting the Seventh Annual Report is indeed a pleasant task, in retrospect it was an enjoyable year, bringing to fruition all the hard work and planning in the setting up of the men's hostel. In successive Annual Reports we have spoken about the needs of such a hostel so it is very satisfying to include a Report on its first year in operation.

The house was recommended for purchase in April 1974 as a suitable property for conversion into hostel use. The necessary steps were taken for change of usage and appropriate planning permission, while awaiting this an application was made to the local authority for financial aid, owing to cut backs at the time no grants were available. With no aid from the Borough and capital in the region of £55,000 needed it meant intensive fund raising. Our helpers responded magnificently, and because of their dedication we were able to undertake the responsibility of such capital expenditure. Today with only £5,000 outstanding on the debt Austin House is a credit to their loyalty and endeavour. If it were not for the generous contribution to the essential structural alterations and entire decorating by Moss O'Riordan our debt would be far greater. I would like to express my gratitude to him and say how much I appreciated his deep interest in the hostel project and his continued professional advice during the alterations.

The workings of the Bureau continued in much the same pattern as before, however things can never really be the same again. At 6.00 pm on Friday 21st October we received the sad news that a good friend and voluntary worker was dead, resulting from a fall Ollie Harte was killed. We all miss him very much, to his wife Ann and daughter we extend sincerest condolences.

No welfare report would be possible without the resources made available through fund raising. Once again the year had many activities that kept us on our toes. No matter what was asked of them, whether it was sticking Green Shield or Co-Op stamps, picking up furniture, selling

raffle or dance tickets or getting ready for a Jumble Sale, they always gave of their best. It was their spirit of togetherness that made many a hard day of pulling and dragging seem short and at times enjoyable.

We have had tremendous moral and financial support from South London Irish Association, they know how much we appreciate this kind of spontaneous sharing. We hope to offer some little help in the future organisation of their welfare development.

In January Sister Rosario arrived to undertake the running of Austin House. I would like to welcome her to the team and thank her Superiors and Community at Presentation Convent Middleton, Co. Cork for making it possible. My gratitude once again to Sister Jane Francis and voluntary staff, it is a real pleasure caring and sharing the Bureau problems together. To the numerous voluntary helpers, a simple thanks, you know how much I appreciate your loyalty. Finally, my thanks to the various County and Parish Associations who made donations during the year.

Brian Lawlor OSA.

Social Workers Report

The increase in the number of cases dealt with in 1977 confirm that the Hammersmith Irish Welfare Bureau continues to fulfil a needed role in the Community. The total number of cases dealt with was 907, of which 600 (involving 640 persons) were new applications and 307 were reapplications from persons previously in contact with the Bureau. Continuous supportive help was given in 200 cases. This group includes families, couples and individual clients who needed support and counselling with various types of personal problems.

The bulk of our work was done with people who have been resident in Britain for sometime. We had 57 new arrivals, by which we mean people who contacted the Bureau directly on arrival from Ireland, or very shortly afterwards. Many other clients had arrived from Ireland fairly recently but had originally gone to other cities in Britain before coming to London. Others had drifted around London since their arrival and only contacted the Bureau when they were stranded. Our new Hostel for young Irish men, capable of and willing to work, proved a very valuable resource in our work with these young new arrivals.

The problem of obtaining suitable accommodation at reasonable prices becomes more difficult and frustrating every year. We can do nothing whatever to house families and we would be grateful if priests and others in a helping situation would refrain from telling families, even couples with one small baby, to call to see us with the hope that we could find them accommodation. To do this is only giving them false hope and sending them on a 'wild goose chase'.

Pregnant unmarried mothers are not welcome tenants and find it a major problem to obtain accommodation suitable or otherwise. I wish to reiterate that the people to whom they come for advice ought to encourage them to use the services offered to them in Ireland, and to point out to them the fact that if they insist on coming to Britain they will have to pay for their care in Hospitals, as pregnancy is not an illness. This could cost them a few hundred pounds.

Many of these young women come to Britain because of the non accepting attitudes of their parents and relatives. This is an area in which an education programme to counteract these very unchristian attitudes is necessary.

We again appeal to the Clergy and Social Work Agencies in Ireland not to give the fare to Britain to inadequate persons or young persons who claim to have relatives in Britain, without first checking on the addresses given and confirming that these relatives are indeed willing to accept responsibility for them. We have had cases where such clients have stated that their fares to Britain had been paid for them. It is a great pity to spend money on an exercise which only helps these people to a life of near destitution and perhaps prostitution in the Cities of Britain.

Employment Agencies also ought to have a responsible attitude to the young persons they recruit for employment in Britain. We have met some persons so recruited who proved utterly inadequate to cope with the pressures of life over here. One is left wondering how much 'indepth' interviewing is done in such cases.

We have on the other hand evidence of a very responsible attitude on the part of many priests and Social Service Centres in Ireland who have contacted us and consulted us on the advisability of helping young persons to come to London. In many cases we have discouraged them from doing so. Where we thought the young person concerned could cope and where it was to the client's benefit we have been prepared to co-operate and have accepted responsibility for the young person.

The following example of such co-operation will illustrate this point. 'A sister Social Worker from a Social Service Centre in Ireland phoned the Bureau on behalf of a young 18 years old boy she was interested in. This young man was born and reared in England and had returned to Ireland

with his family which had returned to live in Ireland in recent times.

He found it impossible to get employment in Ireland due to the lack of job opportunity for youth. In these circumstances knowing the background and being given a week's notice of his arrival in London we agreed to offer him accommodation in Austin House and try to obtain employment for him when he arrived. He called to the Bureau on the day appointed and because he knew what he could do and wanted to do, jobwise, he was helped to obtain employment within 48 hours of his arrival while he still had some of the cash he brought with him to tide him over until he drew his wages'. We were happy to co-operate in this case but we think it a great pity that such a fine young person was lost to his family and to Ireland due to lack of job opportunity for youth in Ireland.

The general pattern of our work remains basically the same from year to year but each year some particular aspect or area of need becomes highlighted. This year the area so highlighted was that of aged Irish people living in isolation in the London area. This area of need comprises two groupings of people. One is that of single or widowed and childless persons who for some reason never become fully integrated into the local community and now live alone and isolated in their flats or bed sitters.

The other group is that of the single homeless (mainly men) who are not 'down and outs' but men who, when young and able for heavy work, worked on the construction camp sites and building sites in the Post War II re construction programme in Britain. Their work often meant they had to move from place to place and never had permanent homes. They drifted into casual work and portering jobs in the catering trade when they could no longer cope with work on the building sites. They now live in shared sleeping accommodation in Bed and Breakfast Lodging Houses for men or in Mens Hostels. They form one of the most vulnerable groups in the community especially when they meet with illness which is inevitable with advancing age.

Sister Jane Frances, R.N.S. Dip. Soc. Wk.
Lect. Soc. & C.M.W.
Social Worker,

We had many referrals to visit people in both these groups in their homes or in hospitals. We undertook the burial and funeral arrangements in three such cases and helped elderly relatives in Ireland by organising the return to Ireland of the remains of an elderly working Irishman who had been dead for quite a while in his flat before being discovered. We were asked by an Irish 'down and out' to have a fellow Irish 'down and out' taken to hospital from the empty house they were sleeping in. This was done and he died within a short time of admittance to hospital having been fortified by the Rites of the Catholic Church.

This problem of the Aged Irish in Britain is an area which in view of the large number of Immigrants who came to Britain from Ireland during the 2nd World War and in the immediate post War years, will increase rapidly in the future. To meet such emergencies we acquired some graves during the year to ensure a decent and Christian Burial for fellow Irishmen and women. All our future planning and development must take this area of need into greater consideration. The seriousness of this situation has been recognised by all those working in the field of Welfare among the Irish community in Great Britain.

The Welfare Conference under the auspices of the Federation of Irish Societies have put this area of need on the programme for discussion and thereby hope to bring it to the attention of the various Irish Societies with a view to developing Welfare Aid to meet the needs arising in this area in the future.

May I take this opportunity to thank the Statutory and Voluntary Services and the Staff of Hostels, Hotels and Guest Houses who co-operate with us in our work for these particular clients.

The views and sentiments expressed in this report have been endorsed by my colleagues in the Irish Welfare Bureau whose support and co-operation help the team to operate efficiently in a happy caring atmosphere.

Sister Jane Frances. Hons Dip.Soc.
Econ. Std. & C.M.W.
Social Worker.

Austin House

On the 25th January 1977, Austin House opened its doors to welcome newly arrived emigrant boys who find themselves in West London homeless, jobless and with no relatives or friends to come to their aid. While our main concern is Irish lads we have not refused admittance to anyone. We cater specially for school leavers and lads up to the age of 25 years, as we feel these are the ones most in need of care and attention.

Austin House is a four-storeyed house containing all necessary amenities. It is centrally heated, exceptionally comfortable and very artistically decorated. It has two single-bedded rooms and five double-bedded ones, besides my own bedroom and office combined. In the basement there is a spacious lounge, with a colour T.V. set, kindly donated by the South London Association. Also in the basement are a brightly coloured dining room and a modernly equipped kitchen. The smallness of the concern coupled with the indescribable comfort contributes to making Austin House a 'home from home' the original idea conceived by its director Rev. Fr. B. Lawlor, OSA. The family atmosphere, the friendly and caring spirit present from the outset continues to develop. It is most encouraging to witness the concern of the lads for each other - to quote St. Paul speaking to the Corinthians 'All make each others welfare their common care' their willingness to share their last 5p with each other, the warm welcome extended to each new arrival.

The majority of our boys are school leavers and away from home for the first time, so consequently are lonely and home-sick. They go through a terrible period of frustration whilst job-hunting. During this time they need much sympathy, great care and support. Even though some are skilled or with a profession they accept for a start the most available employment - labouring. This task is extremely tiring and frustrating for lads unaccustomed to manual work and there is a great need of much encouragement and understanding to keep them pressing forward. From the outset we discourage living on Social Security benefits longer than is absolutely necessary. On the other hand we

have lads who are very stable and sure footed. These are an example and inspiration and great help to the others who find it so difficult to cope with their new surroundings and often demanding employers. A new problem arises on receipt of their first bulky pay-packet! They simply 'dash' it. It takes time and repeated efforts before one can lead them to disciplined spending and finally get into the habit of saving. Another element which contributes to further frustration for some is the lack of communication with their families. Some left home due to some family dispute and it takes time before wounds are healed sufficiently to allow one to persuade them to, at least, let their parents have their address or even their telephone number.

Austin House offers only temporary accommodation - the period varying from one to another depending on many circumstances. All get sufficient time to settle in to their new way of life, new surroundings and find at least some kind of job satisfaction. On the whole they show great appreciation of this chance of a good start.

Our ex boys are frequent visitors, so maintain contact with the old friends and make new ones. It is very gratifying to find the lads return for advice whenever they meet new problems.

Austin House is a tangible expression of Fr. B. Lawlor's dedication and unselfishness, his care and total commitment to those in need. It is the result of endless days and nights of long-term and careful planning of never ending fund raising campaigns. It must now be very encouraging for him to find that it is working out as he anticipated. As this goes to print we have had in all fifty boys, some of these returning a second and even third time. I would like to offer my personal congratulation to Fr. Lawlor on this unique and fantastic accomplishment, the first of its kind in London. No doubt he has much more campaigning to do before he finally clears the debt. I would like to join with Fr. Lawlor in thanking sincerely our pains-taking architect, builders and decorators and voluntary helpers for their part in making Austin House such a masterpiece. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Sister Lucy and Sister Anthony who so kindly released me from my school duties, thus enabling me to assist Fr. Lawlor in the running of Austin House. A very special thank you to each member of my own community, my many friends in Middleton for all their very generous support and keen interest during the year. Lastly I thank Father Lawlor for the privilege of sharing with him the very needy and essential social work carried out through Austin House.

Sister Rosario.

SIMPLE ANALYSIS OF REFERRALS

Age Groups

15/17	18/19	20/24	25/29	30/39	40/49	50/59	60+	Not known
14	44	114	82	141	115	69	45	16

<u>Types of problem</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>
New arrivals from Ireland	96	98	57
Financial	207	213	133
Accommodation	229	199	214
Employment	58	71	52
Information	32	29	29
Advice	54	33	52
Material Aid (clothing, food vouchers etc)	157	160	216
Personal	28	30	15
Marital	22	21	24
General Welfare	45	24	52
Emotional and Mental	33	31	27
Ex-offenders	21	27	24
Alcoholic, drugs etc.	20	17	30
Pregnant & unmarried mothers	21	14	17
Repatriation	9	10	10

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Males	465	447	460
Females	229	207	180
Families	95	76	57
Cases continued from previous year	246	248	307
Domiciliary visits	385	416	375
Hospital visits	80	70	104
Prison visits	10	10	8
Supportive appearance in Court	-	8	14
Continued supportive work	64	147	200
Telephone enquiries	2450	2820	2880
Escort to trains, planes etc.	28	17	13
Interview in Bureau			2266

SOURCES OF REFERRALS

	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>		<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>
Allied Irish Banks	1	7	1	Irish Club, SW1	-	1	-
Acton Wms. Aid	-	2	1	Irish Counties Assoc.	-	4	8
Blenheim Projects	1	2	-	Irish Embassy	-	-	2
Cath. Soc. Welfare Bureau (Dublin)	11	4	7	Legion of Mary	1	1	1
London Transport Catholic Guild	-	1	2	Medical Soc. Workers (Hospitals)	6	10	4
Centre Point	30	7	4	Metropolitan Police	-	1	-
Chas	1	-	-	Personnel Department Unigate	-	-	1
Chiswick Womens Aid	3	-	2	Personal application	194	171	135
Citizens Adv. Bureau	3	-	2	Portobello Project	-	-	1
Clergy	183	172	185	Probation Service	-	1	1
Contact House	-	-	1	Relatives	24	6	30
Crac	-	1	3	Riverpoint	-	-	1
Crusade of Rescue	-	1	-	Roof	1	1	-
Cyrenians	1	-	2	St. Mungo's Community	-	-	1
DHSS	2	2	-	St. Vincent de Paul	1	1	2
FSU	-	2	1	Samaritans	3	-	3
Family Welfare	-	1	-	Shac	2	2	1
'Friend'	127	174	160	Shelter	-	1	-
Fulham Cons. Assoc.	-	-	1	Simon Community	-	-	1
General Practitioners	-	1	1	Union of Catholic Mothers	-	-	1
Health Visitors (LBH)	1	-	2	Wandsworth Women's Aid	1	-	-
Irish Centre, Camden Town	2	4	3				

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SOCIAL SERVICES

Liverpool	-	-	1
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LONDON BOROUGHS

Greater London Council	-	-	1	Kensington & Chelsea	1	1	2
Hammersmith	14	21	24	Newham	-	-	1
Hounslow	-	-	1	Wandsworth	7	4	2
				Westminster	2	3	1

COUNTIES OF EIRE AND NORTHER IRELAND

<u>County</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>
Antrim	19	22	16
Armagh	5	5	5
Carlow	1	4	4
Cavan	4	5	7
Clare	16	8	9
Cork	65	56	74
Dublin	62	75	83
Derry	9	5	7
Donegal	25	17	14
Down	1	7	5
Fermanagh	4	4	-
Galway	30	27	33
Kerry	29	17	20
Kildare	11	4	4
Kilkenny	12	14	17
Laois	-	5	1
Leitrim	3	5	5
Limerick	26	28	30
Longford	6	9	6
Louth	4	7	2
Mayo	31	21	22
Meath	4	12	8
Monaghan	6	3	6
Offaly	8	-	4
Roscommon	3	8	6
Sligo	15	16	11
Tipperary	23	28	22
Tyrone	6	7	6
Waterford	12	20	18
Westmeath	6	5	7
Wexford	11	13	3
Wicklow	4	11	6

'Irish' (unknown) 11.

OTHER NATIONALITIES

<u>United Kingdom</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>
England	78	68	82
Scotland	33	40	32
Wales	8	3	6
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Australia	2	-	1
Brazil	-	1	-
Burma	1	-	1
Canada	1	-	1
Cylon (Sri Lanka)	2	1	-
Egypt	1	-	2
Ethiopia	-	-	2
Fiji	1	-	-
France	2	3	-
Germany	-	1	-
Ghana	-	-	1
Gibraltar	1	-	-
Greece	-	-	1
Guyana	1	-	-
India	1	2	-
Iran	-	1	-
Italy	-	2	1
Japan	-	-	1
Jordan	1	-	-
Malta	1	-	-
Mexico	1	-	1
Morocco	-	-	1
Philippines	1	-	2
Poland	11	-	-
Portugal	-	-	1
Rhodesia	-	1	-
South Africa	2	1	1
Spain	1	2	1
West Indies	4	3	-
Venezuela	-	1	-

Nationality unknown 4.