

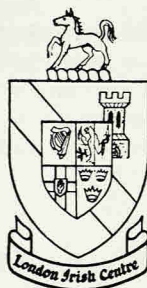
London Irish Centre Charity

36th Annual Report 1990



Contents

Administration and Staff	2
Director's Report	3
Community Services Report	6
Economic Picture	7
Problems Presented	7
A young man with problems	11
Volunteers	11
Homelessness	12
Missing Persons	14
Researchers	15
16 and 17 year olds	16
Irish Centre Hostels Report	18



Administration and Staff

President: Rt. Hon. The Earl of Longford
Vice-President: Mr. John Brannagan, JP KSG
Director: Rev. Tom Scully, OMI

Trustees:

Rt. Hon. The Earl of Longford	Mr. F. Caulfield
Dr. Larry Morton	Mr. Tommy Dunne

Administrative Committee:

Mr. Tommy Dunne, Chairman	Mrs. Mary McCormack
Mrs. Mary Allen	Mrs. Maura Fitzsimons
Ms. Mary Kenny	Mr. Tom Mangan
Mr. Eddie McCormack	Mr. Jim Myers
Mr. Chris O'Connell	Rev. Tom Scully, OMI
Rev. John Gordon	Mgr. George Stack
Rev. John O'Donoghue	Mr. John Walsh

Welfare Advisory Committee:

Mr. Raymond Hevey, Chairman	Mr. Donal Coffey
Sr. Carmel McGowan	Ms. Theresa Ganley
Dr. Larry Morton	Mr. Paul Murphy
Rev. Tom Scully, OMI	Mr. Tommy Dunne

Co-ordinator:	Mr. Paul Murphy
Social Advice Workers:	Ms. Theresa McDonagh

	Ms. Anne McDonald
	Ms. Geraldine Coyle
	Ms. Charlotte Curran
	Mr. Nicky Murray
Receptionist:	Ms. Maureen Rynne
Receptionist — Volunteer:	Ms. Mary Kenny
Researcher:	Ms. Josephine Vaughan
Administrator:	Mr. Paddy Keegan
Missing Persons — Volunteer:	Mr. Brian Duggan
Youth Leader:	Mrs. K. Fitzsimons
Day Centre — Volunteers:	Mrs. Una Cooper & Helpers
Conway House:	Rev. Frank Ryan, OMI & Assistants
St. Louise's:	Sr. Gertrude Gormley
	Sr. Brenda O'Neill

Directors Report

The second half of the 1980's witnessed emigration from Ireland comparable to the post-war period and the flood of young Irish to London continued in 1990. High interest rates and Poll Tax hit the booming economy of the South East of England and we suddenly found ourselves in a serious depression. Jobs were no longer freely available as the effect of the recession hit hard. Many students who came to London for Summer work, having tramped the streets in vain looking for employment found themselves penniless and homeless and became regular callers at the Centre seeking our assistance to get them home. This was very time-consuming for our Social Advice Workers but we were the only source of escaping the loneliness of London with its attractions to vice and degradation.

The message was gradually getting to Ireland that life in London was not what it had been, jobs were scarce, the demands for proper identification rigid and long delays in receiving Social Benefit. Payment of Benefits in arrears sent many young people to beg on the streets, squatting or becoming involved in petty crime.

The main trend in 1990 was the big increase in the number of *recalls*. Many returned to receive friendly advice, a cup of tea, the use of the phone to try again for a job, a few luncheon vouchers or further assistance in filling in application forms for jobs or benefits. To really appreciate the work done by our dedicated Social Advice Workers one should spend a day in the Centre or reflect deeply on how it feels to be alone, friendless and penniless in London. To our dedicated workers my sincere thanks and appreciation.

Our hostels were full throughout the year providing 252 beds per night — 133 for girls, 100 for young men and 19 for retired men.

An Caislean, our hostel for retired men and the Recreation Room at Conway House were officially opened by Mr. Nicholas Scott, M.P. and formally blessed by Cardinal Hume. Cardinal O'Fiach, of happy memory, was to have performed the opening ceremony but sadly he died on 8th May, 1990 in Lourdes. Go ndeana Dia trocaire ar a anam.

In September Conway House said farewell to Fr. Frank Ryan, OMI who had done trojan work in providing accommodation for 100 young men for over 12 years. Sincere thanks for such commitment and dedication and very best wishes in his new apostolate. We welcome Fr. Patsy Carolan, OMI who returned to the Hostel after 12 years in parish work.

Sincere thanks and best wishes to Sr. Brenda who

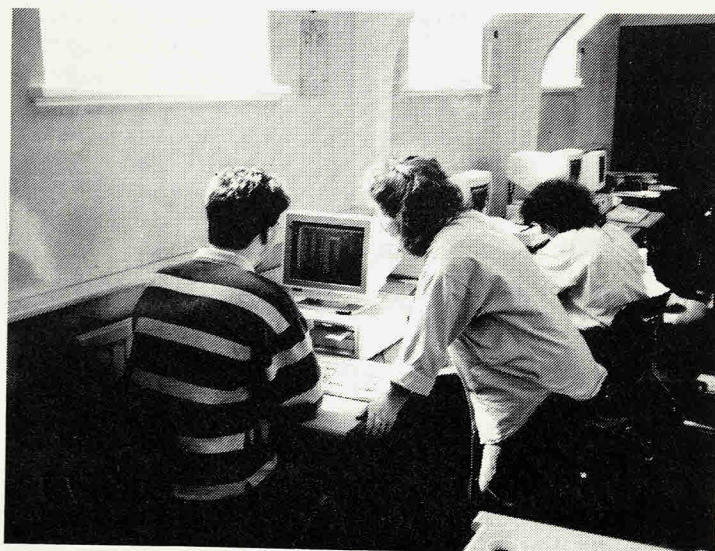
Directors Report Continued

departed St. Louise Hostel to take up an appointment in Scotland, leaving the establishment in the capable hands of St. Gertrude.

The Day Care Centre continues to provide a beautiful lunch each day and other activities for 90 elderly people. Over 7,500 three course lunches were served in 1990. They enjoyed a wonderful outing to Southend-on-Sea in September and also an afternoon before Christmas at the London Palladium.

The beautiful old Oratory on the second floor was converted into an excellent classroom for the Migrant Training Classes. Offices on the ground floor were converted into an Oratory to provide the facility of daily Mass for our Senior Citizens. The Administrative suite of offices were refurbished on the first floor in close proximity to Irish Centre Community Services. The new Secretary's office was set up to computerize the activities of the Centre.

The Migrant Training Company, set up in 1989 with matched funding from the European Social Fund and local Borough Councils, provided computer training courses for some 25 students at the Centre in 1990. On completion of the 6 month course the students sit the City and Guilds Certificate Examination. This gives the students a much better opportunity of finding gainful employment.



Our Computer Course in progress, creating better opportunities for employment.

1990 was a very busy year for Brian Duggan in the Missing Persons Bureau. Brian is one of our many volunteers. It makes his work and the work of the Centre all worthwhile when we receive a letter of gratitude from a grateful parent who has made contact with a long lost son or daughter.

The cultural, social and educational activities continued to flourish. The new education legislation linked with the abolition of the Inner London Education Authority

Directors Report Continued

brought problems for our Irish language classes. Thanks to the dedication of Siobhan Ui Neill these problems were solved and the classes are going very well. The young children enjoy the Irish dancing — they will always remember their wonderful visit to Lourdes in May. We were so proud of them as they marched, displayed their beautiful costumes at the Procession and were given pride positions at all the ceremonies. Our thanks to Marie Halpin and the organisers for a most memorable weekend.

We are most grateful to the Irish Government, the DION Committee, the London Borough of Camden, our generous benefactors and the many voluntary fund raisers for their contributions towards our services.

Finally, my personal sincere thanks to all involved in the Centre and Hostels who gave me such support since 1986, especially my thanks to Tommy Dunne, Paddy Keegan, the Committees, the Staff. To Fr. Denis Cormican, OMI who takes over as Director in January, 1991 my very best wishes and I pray that all Irish in London appreciate the great work done by the Centre and continue to give their full support and co-operation.

Fr. Tom Scully, OMI
Director.



*The Staff of Irish Centre
Community Services.*

Irish Centre Community Services

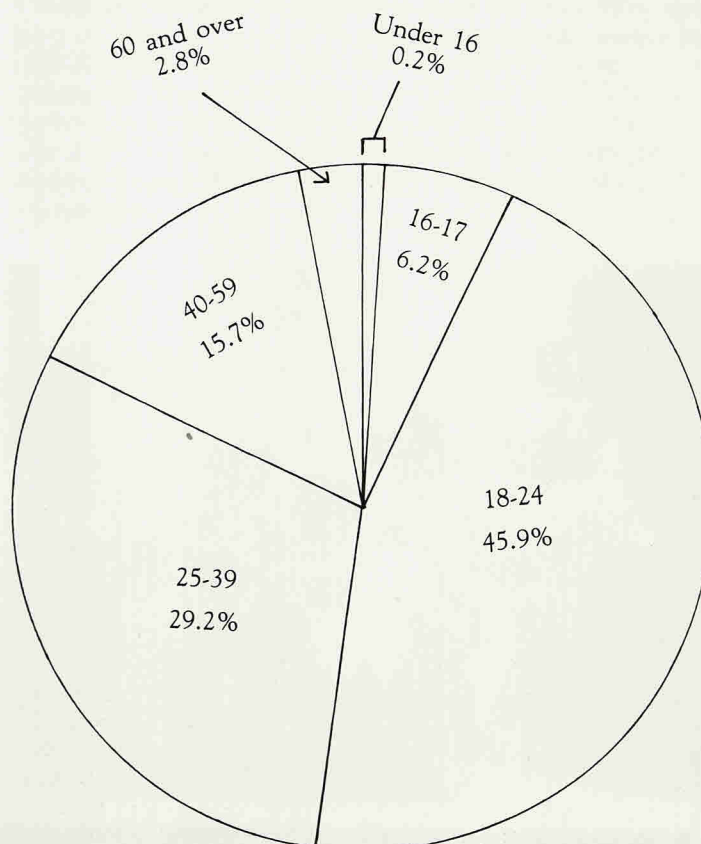
Annual Statistics — 1990

ENQUIRIES	19030
- By Telephone	10980
- By Personal Callers	8050

TOTAL CALLERS	10370
Telephone Callers	6100
Personal Interviews	4270

NUMBER OF CLIENTS	1880
Males	1391
Females	489

FIRST TIME CALLERS	1441
Males	1050
Females	391



Annual Report 1990

ECONOMIC PICTURE

Britain increased its yearly average inflation rate from 7.8% to 9.3% in 1990 and unemployment grew from 5.8% to 6.5%. By December 1990 the business failure rate in the South East had reached a rate of over 500 a month, with a figure of 11,000 bankruptcies for 1990. Monthly unemployment increases of almost 100,000 have come as the year closed. The prospects for the economy in 1991 are poor. The growth rate, GDP, for the first half of 1991 is forecast to be minus 2%. Britain entered the European Exchange Rate Mechanism in late 1990 and the forecast is that inflation will have fallen to 6.4% by the end of 1991. However there has been no appreciable reduction in the interest rate resulting in a continued lack of business confidence.

BUILDING

The Building and Construction Industry was one of the first sectors of the economy to feel the impact of this present recession. A high percentage of Irish people are involved at all levels in this industry. In the second half of the year few new projects were started and completed work meant the end of employment for thousands of construction workers. Many Irish workers going to see relatives at Christmas had to face the prospect of returning only to join the dole queue. Many decided to remain in Ireland and search for opportunities there. As we go to press in March 1991 those seeking work are forced to consider travelling to mainland Europe or the Persian Gulf.

Many major projects including Canary Wharf and the Channel Tunnel are close to completion but no firm dates have been decided for Kings Cross or Rainham Marshes developments. It is expected that the tunnelling work to extend the Jubilee Line will begin in the autumn of 1991. Many other rail and tube developments have been postponed indefinitely. Offshore oil and gas construction work shows some growth as does the energy industry onshore. These are the rays of hope in an industry which overall is in the doldrums.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment in Britain has passed the two million figure and rising and may well reach two and a half million. The traditional view of the country having a North/South divide in the 1980's still holds but the recession in the past two years by contrast has hit London and the South East harder than elsewhere. There are still extensive pockets of high unemployment in many Inner-London Boroughs, particularly Islington, Hackney and Tower Hamlets. The recession pattern in the country is not even with growth in such southern towns as Horsham, Newbury and Milton Keynes. The London Chamber of Commerce reported that in the last quarter of 1990 one in three service sector firms cut jobs — so the previously expanding retail, finance, hotel and catering industries will not be good prospects for 1991. In the manufacturing industry only one quarter of the firms are working to full capacity.

PROBLEMS PRESENTED

In 1990, the centre received 19,030 requests for help from the Irish community living in London. This accounted for 4270 face to face interviews by staff with a total number of 1880 clients. As each client normally presented more than one problem the total of problems presented was 8050. Requests on the phone accounted for 10,980 enquiries. People from the travelling background are represented in all of the sections below on problems presented.

Each client that approached the Centre for assistance was interviewed privately by a worker and appropriate action was taken. Approximately 50% of these clients were within the 18-24 years age bracket and 52% would have left the educational system with no qualification.

Therefore a lot of time was spent with these clients in order to assist them.

The percentages given below are an analysis of the 8050 problems presented by the 1880 individual callers to the Centre in 1990.

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation was the single largest problem presented to staff during 1990 and accounted for 71% of interviews. This meant dealing and liaising with landlords and landladies, B & B's, hostels, Housing Associations, other Housing Schemes, Homeless Persons Units and Night-shelters. Accommodation was successfully arranged in the vast majority of cases.

Our highly successful rate in finding accommodation is due mainly to our well established links with the contacts mentioned above. Obviously those who come with sufficient money can be placed in suitable accommodation much more easily but unfortunately the majority of our clients come within the difficulty classification.

Delay and erratic payment of Housing Benefit and the introduction of the Poll Tax added further to the difficulties of the client, our staff and those offering accommodation. A client, as a result can spend his/her first few weeks or months in temporary accommodation. Staff assist with the processing of housing benefit forms and relevant documents required to validate the claim. Each time the client moves accommodation the process has to be reactivated.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment accounted for 50.8% of problems presented. This work involved assisting clients in preparation for work, e.g. CV preparation, completion of application forms, interview techniques and procedures and confidence building. It also involves permitting clients the use of the centre's phones to seek employment. We provide lists of companies, appropriate agencies, job centres and job clubs to assist them in finding employment. The centre receives job bulletins from various agencies and councils and has

local and national papers for reference. When a job interview is arranged help with travel may be provided or in the case of a job being offered a limited amount of assistance is given to help them travel to the work place for the first week.

IDENTIFICATION

Proper **identification** is an absolute necessity for the newly arrived emigrant to Britain as it is required by employers, the DSS, Housing Benefit Offices, Council Housing Departments, or even to opening a Bank Account. A high % of the clients that use our services come to London ill prepared or are living in unsettled accommodation squats, nightshelters, or temporary accommodation with friends. Almost 37% of problems presented related to identification. In such cases we applied to the appropriate General Register Offices for Birth certificates or Marriage certificates or to the local parish for a Baptismal Certificate. Those living in precarious conditions like squatters or travellers often lose their identification or it becomes soiled and dirty. It is not uncommon for such clients to come more than once a year seeking Certified copies of their Birth Certificates.

REPATRIATION

Repatriation is the term we use to describe a request to return home to Ireland. Some 18.8% of our clients sought repatriation for a variety of reasons such as family death, illness in the family, unemployment or that they are finding it too difficult to cope here in London. Practically all requests were from clients who were unemployed or had insufficient money to pay for their fare. This can be a very lengthy process as staff have to contact friends/relatives to organise a guarantor for repayment. This may not always be possible or practical therefore alternative advice or assistance was given. Staff make an extra special effort in the case of bereavement.

ADVICE

General Advice accounts for 62.3% of problems presented. Advice and information on a wide range of issues was provided. This included requests on how to register with a doctor, travel directions and cost, request for furniture, information on services in Ireland, Irish services in London such as recreational and leisure services, clubs and events, welfare benefits and welfare rights. Where there is a problem with a benefit, staff liaise with the appropriate office to sort out the problem.

BASIC NEEDS

The **Basic Human Needs** of the individual — food, shelter, clothing and showers accounted for a high percentage of requests for help as can be seen from Table 1 below. 58.6% of problems presented were for food and 27.6% for clothing and showers. This chiefly was from those who are homeless or in squats and points to the increase in poverty due to the present recession. Single parents are among the most vulnerable, with many caught in the poverty trap. Unable to go out and work because of their domestic commitments many of our female clients are caught in a long term cycle of poverty and lack of personal development. The valiant efforts by staff to help

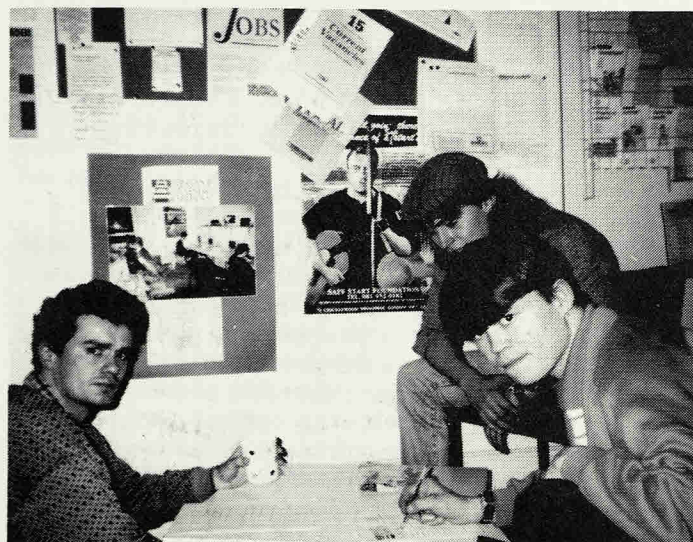
these women or men are often met with frustration due to the overwhelming number and complexity of problems the client has to face.

SUMMARY

In 1990 we interviewed 4270 personal callers and answered 6100 telephone enquiries. Altogether we handled 19,030 problems presented to us by some 10,370 clients. The chart below gives a breakdown of problems in terms of classification and applicable numbers handled in the year under review.

Problems Presented:

Accommodation	3375
Employment	2204
Repatriation	753
Advice/Information	2771
D.S.S.	684
Identification	1690
Counselling	49
Finance	292
Travel	2057
Food	2551
Clothes/Shower	1269
Other	350
General	588
Letter	397
	<hr/>
	19030



*Finding a welcome at
the Irish Centre*

A Young Man with many Problems

CASE HISTORY

Eolan (19) left Northern Ireland on the spur of the moment. He arrived in London with no money, identification, accommodation, or employment. He had to leave without saying farewell to his mother or younger sister (16). Eolan suffers from severe depression from time to time due to his history of being isolated from his family while in care.

Eolan needed a lot of support and advice and help was also given in the form of food, identification, accommodation, how to claim social security, travel, employment and other advice whenever needed. We applied for his birth certificate in order for him to claim benefit and to have identification for hostels. We then referred him to a small hostel but Eolan had problems adjusting to his situation and was later asked to leave. He was then referred to a nightshelter and broke a very strict rule and was asked to leave. The only hostel that had a vacancy at this time was a DSS resettlement unit and Eolan was referred there until a more suitable vacancy arose. Eolan stayed there one night. He slept rough for two nights due to the conditions of the resettlement unit. He returned to our centre the following day very depressed, lonely and disillusioned. He wanted to return home to his mother. He was given a change of clothes and a shower and a lot of time was spent trying to convince him that it was impractical to return home. This was very upsetting for both staff and Eolan at the time and it was decided that a family environment was the best solution for Eolan that night. He was referred to a bed and breakfast which was partly paid for by the centre. Eolan was then sent to a private accommodation as we found a landlord that was willing to take Eolan without rent in advance or a deposit. He returned home for one day to see his family.

Eolan returned to London a lot happier and willing to settle down. He uses the centre to phone for employment and works as a general labourer whenever possible. He is at present staying in a bed and breakfast and we are encouraging him to do a course to further his prospects for full time employment. The Centre provided fourteen interviews for Eolan over a month and continues to give support and advice to him and many other Irish emigrants in similar circumstances in as many ways as is possible.

Volunteers

A number of Irish people living in London seek to involve themselves in voluntary work. Many who have been interviewed here have been placed within the work of the Centre while others have been referred to projects and groups throughout London who use volunteers in their work. In a massive urban complex like London service as a volunteer has helped fulfill the lives of many Irish migrants. Their personal situation is such that they have time, energy and talents to offer in service of deserving charities.

Homelessness

As we move into a new decade the staff at the Irish Centre are still very concerned at the number of homeless Irish People that are using the Centre. In the last few years homelessness has attracted a great deal of media attention forcing the government to accept some responsibility, their response was to offer a meagre £80 million to be given to various housing organisations for specific projects to provide housing for homeless people. Nobody knows what impact this will have on homelessness but at least there has been, at last, some political response to the issue.

Irish people feature prominently among the street homeless in Central London. Street workers in the West End found that 23% to 30% of homeless clients approached in the streets were Irish. The staff at the Centre are in a privileged position, employed to sit down with homeless people, over a cup of tea, and discuss the problems faced by them, and assist in the best possible way. The staff are privy to much personal information relevant to why the single man or woman, couple or family are without a permanent roof over their heads. Listening to the experiences of homeless people certainly does not encourage you to blame them for their situation.. Homelessness is not a simple problem, each homeless person has a different story. Lumping all homeless people together does not help explain the story.

There is rarely a simple answer as to why a young person is homeless, but government changes in benefit and housing legislation have played no small part in heightening the incidence of young homelessness. There is a dearth of cheap and comfortable accommodation for young people who may be starting work in a low paid job. Staff have found since the introduction of benefit changes relating to 16/17 year olds and the transfer of B & B charges to housing benefit, that there has been a dramatic reduction in the number of hostel places for 16/17 year olds and the number of landlords who will accept benefit claimants.

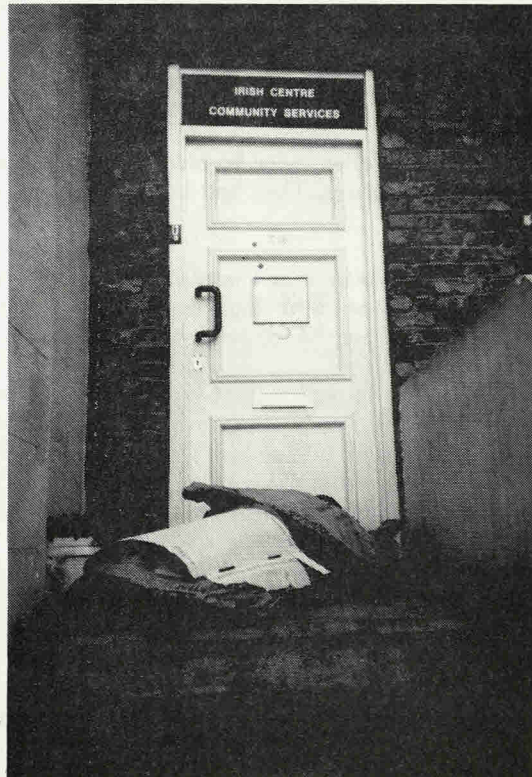
The new Centrepont Nightshelter and the launch of their 'Off the Streets' project have helped towards coping with the homelessness problem for young people. Other homeless people have been helped by new hostels opened by CARA and our own An Caislean has given a home to 19 elderly men. The allocation of £80 million by the Government to combat the homelessness problem was made in 1990 but apart from a 30 bedspace nightshelter opened by the Passage and Cardinal Hume the results of this expenditure have yet to be realised.

The introduction of the Poll Tax has in itself played no small part in the number of homeless. Young Irish people sleeping on friends/relatives floors find that they are being prevented, by their hosts, from using their address to claim benefits

Homelessness Continued

because of the fear of being registered for the Poll Tax at that address. Co-inciding with these developments staff have seen a dramatic rise in the numbers of young people squatting in empty and disused properties. Is it any wonder that young people are taking the option of squatting, begging and getting casual work when the housing and benefit system discriminates against people with immediate needs. This marginalisation is encouraged by:-

- (a) lower rate of payment of Income Support for young people.
- (b) paying benefit two weeks in arrears.
- (c) removal of facility of paying deposits on accommodation by doing away with single payments from D.S.S.
- (d) withdrawal of benefit to 16/17 year olds, unless in special circumstances or on Youth Training Scheme.
- (e) stringent identification checks on Irish people.
- (f) introduction of the Poll Tax.



This is Thomas, 16 years old. He came to London for personal reasons and had not sought any advice before coming. Unable to "sign on" without going on a YTS Scheme, he turned to living rough. Our staff found him when they arrived in the morning. He was repatriated that day.

Missing Persons Section

This section started the year with a balance of 21 cases, carried forward from last year. During 1990 we received a further 172 cases making a total of 193 cases to be dealt with in 1990.

Results	Methods
93 Located by us	45 Found through DSS/NHS
13 Returned by own accord	27 Found through Irish Centre/Conway House records
6 Not accepted	4 Found through Quarterly bulletin
7 Received letters from us through DSS/NHS — No reply rec'd	17 Found through other Irish Agencies
62 Unsuccessful	
12 Carried forward	
193 TOTAL	93 TOTAL

Renewing contact with the missing person and restoring broken ties is the hoped for conclusion and the Irish Centre does what it can to smooth this process. If the missing person does not wish to disclose her/his location the Centre respects her/his privacy. Often it is able to set as a link in communication, exchanging correspondence to reassure the enquiring family. It brings joy if this tenuous link later leads to reconciliation as this is the most satisfactory part of the operation. The Irish Centre is the only Irish Voluntary Agency working in the field of Missing Persons.

CASE HISTORY — Example 1

The Metropolitan Police called to me to report a Martin as a missing person. They had been contacted by the Gardai in Dublin.

I suggested to the Police that I would contact the Gardai in Dublin with a view to having Martin's family complete a Missing Persons Form. They were happy with this.

In the meantime, Martin's mother contacted me direct. She was very worried as Martin was only 17 and had not been away from home before. She gave me his date of birth and said he could be using the name Patrick I discussed the case with Paul Murphy, our Co-ordinator and he remembered interviewing a client some days previously called Patrick We checked the card and everything seemed to indicate that Martin and Patrick were the same person. He had been sent to Centrepont but did not arrive. Some days afterwards Paul Murphy told me there was a young man in the waiting room calling himself James who Paul thought was in fact Patrick whom he had mentioned some days before.

Missing Persons Section Continued

I took James to my office for a chat and discovered he was in fact Martin, our missing person. I assured him that he was not in any trouble with the Police and his mother only wanted him to contact her. I offered to telephone his mother and let him talk to her. I assured him that he would not have to return to Ireland, if he did not want to and we could fix him up in a hostel. He agreed to this. I telephoned his mother who was very happy at making contact.

Hostel accommodation was arranged for Martin and he telephoned his mother again, who was overjoyed at finding her son and accepted the fact that he wished to stay in London.

CASE HISTORY — Example 2

Haringey Irish Cultural and Community Centre forwarded me a letter they had received from a Mr. He was in fact trying to locate his sisters whom he had not seen since they came to England in the 1940's. He had the correct date of birth for one of them. She was born in 1924. I wrote to the Central Records of the DSS but they had no record of Miss, I then wrote to the Central Records of the NHS. From their records they informed me that Miss was registered with a doctor and they would forward one letter on my behalf through the relevant family practitioners committee. I duly forwarded the letter for Miss to the NHS. Subsequently I had a telephone call from Mr. informing me that his sister had contacted him. Through her he was able to contact his other sister.

Brian Duggan.

Researchers

Many visitors and researchers call to the Centre to learn about the problems faced by Irish people in London — both those newly arriving and those living over here. They come from a variety of welfare and educational agencies as well as commercial organisations in Britain and Ireland. They come to see the services provided and hear at first hand the problems encountered by staff. Some researchers are students wishing to gain insight into the various facets of Irish migration. Many profitable hours have been spent here by these people meeting staff, reading the many booklets and pamphlets we have on the situation facing Irish migrants.

16 & 17 Year Olds

The plight of the 16 & 17 year olds seeking assistance from the centre continues to cause our staff great concern. The Government have consistently refused to review their entitlement to Income Support. Entitlement to this benefit is, for many, the key into housing as it shows the person has an income and can be easily assessed for Housing Benefit (Rent allowance). If a young 16 or 17 year old is living in a Nightshelter he/she is automatically considered for Income Support: however if there is a change of circumstances and he/she moves out of the shelter, they have to make a new claim. In these cases Income Support is only awarded when the young person fills certain criteria e.g. estrangement from their family. This is no easy task and is not only a very lengthy and bureaucratic process but can be a frightening experience for a young person just arrived in a strange country.

During 1990 we saw 110 young people aged 16 or 17 — 76 male, 34 female. 62 males and 31 females were new callers to us in 1990. With these 110 clients we had 350 interviews during which 688 problems were presented to our staff. It is very seldom in any interview that only one problem is presented: however we found that working with this age group not only did each individual present more problems but finding solutions is more difficult and demanding.

PROBLEMS PRESENTED FOR 16 & 17 YEAR OLDS

	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Accommodation	132	42	174
Employment	67	18	85
Repatriation	38	13	51
General Advice	89	30	119
DSS	17	5	22
Financial	4	1	5
Travel	78	37	115
Food	47	22	69
Identification	22	21	43
Shower/Clothes	16	5	21
TOTAL	494	194	688

As is evident from the above chart accommodation was by far the biggest problem for young people in this age group. The type of help given with accommodation depended on the situation the young person was in. The majority of the young people we saw had no money and nowhere suitable to stay. We find that the problem of homelessness among young people is frightening. Of the new males 50% were either staying in hostels for the homeless or we referred them to one. The corresponding figure for new female callers is 30%. We value the interagency support we have with Centrepont Nightshelter with whom we are regularly in contact when dealing with this age group.

Requests for repatriation were significantly high among this group and such requests came after the young person had tried in vain to find accommodation or employment and finally decided to return home. The bulk of the repatriations we successfully arranged in 1990 were for 16 & 17 years olds.

We find that working with this age group can be very stressful and a great deal of work is needed to get them sorted out because of the lack of facilities for them. Young people of this age group do not always take advice, especially if the options provided by staff are complicated or do not measure up to their expectations. Then the young people sometimes try to sort things out for themselves and end up worse off.

In conclusion, we strongly advise that people under 18 should not attempt emigrating whilst present conditions prevail.

Case Study — Mary, Aged 17

Mary spent most of her life in Care. She left in early 1990 to come to London with her boyfriend to make a new life. They rented a room and got on very well for the first 6 months. Then they started having problems with the landlady and were illegally evicted. About 2 weeks after this together with another friend they approached our Centre for help as they were sleeping rough. They were tired, hungry and dirty as the Landlady had kept all their belongings claiming they owed rent.

In the first interview we agreed to contact the Landlady about getting their clothes back. We referred them to Bed & Breakfast and helped with food, travel and clothes. After 2 weeks they had to leave the B & B as the proprietor was having difficulties with the housing benefit department who were refusing to pay the rent. Again through no fault of her own Mary was homeless.

At this stage Mary and her boyfriend had to separate and go into different hostels. Because Mary was coming in on her own we got the opportunity to talk to her. It was at this point that she disclosed she was being beaten by her boyfriend and that she thought she was pregnant. She had felt all alone and didn't know where to turn. After much discussion and when the pregnancy was confirmed Mary decided to return home (her mother readily agreed to this) and we arranged the repatriation. We also managed to get her belongings back from the Landlady but only after the staff agreed to collect them.

Mary has since written to us and thanked us for our help, she is now living in her own accommodation in Ireland and quite content.

Irish Centre Hostels Limited

Irish Centre Hostels Ltd. provides hostel accommodation for 130 girls at St. Louise's Hostel and 100 young men at Conway House. There is also a Retirement Home, An Caislean for 19 elderly men.

Plans to develop 20 single flats for young adults (both sexes) are at an advanced stage as we go to press.

CONWAY HOUSE (100 bedspaces)

Conway House is primarily concerned with providing accommodation to young Irish immigrants. However, we also provide support and advice to many young immigrants who gravitate towards Kilburn due to the large Irish community in the area. We get many callers enquiring about work, accommodation, social benefits, repatriation, passports, assistance at court or perhaps looking for food. Consequently our work is very demanding and extensive. We are on duty 24 hours per day. A large percentage of our callers come between 5.30pm on Friday and 9.00am on Monday morning. This is a time when most welfare agencies are closed.

Conway House is not a Care Hostel although a high degree of support and advice is given to help the newly arrived integrate into his new environment and this includes helping them to find employment. Ideally we would like our residents to move into a room or flat within six months of their arrival. We also assist them to find such accommodation. Our future lies in bedsit type accommodation using our present hostel as a base. Our young Irish people should have the best and we will try and do everything in our power to provide it.

In 1990 Conway House accommodated 428 young men and provided advice and information to a further 3,000 either by personal interview or by telephone.

We enhanced the facilities of the Hostel in the past year in constructing and equipping a new Recreation Hall for our residents.

Sincere thanks to all our staff and volunteers for their devoted service. A very special work of thanks to Fr. Frank Ryan, O.M.I. who left us in September after 12 years of dedicated service to Conway House and Irish Centre Hostels. As a gesture of appreciation the new Recreation Hall is called the Fr. Ryan Hall. We wish him well in his new ministry.

ST. LOUISE HOSTEL (130 bedspaces)

The tradition of St. Louise's has always been a hostel where girls of every nationality between the ages of 17 and 24 years coming to London for the first time would receive hospitality and a warm welcome. There is always a big demand for hostel accommodation and as a result we are completely booked throughout the year.

Irish Centre Hostels Ltd Continued

The hostel caters for working girls. During the past year we have taken in girls who have had little or no money, no identification, some have been wandering the streets alone or at risk. We have been approached on many occasions by people who see these girls at railway stations and other such locations hoping that we can help as we have the name of helping those less fortunate.

In the past year our residents have included prisoners wives and children and relatives of hospital patients. It gives us great joy to be able to help these people.

We also had the privilege of a visit from Mr. Austin Currie, T.D., one of the Presidential candidates. He was accompanied by Mr. Jimmy Deenihan, T.D. and Senator Maurice Manning.

Poll Tax:

One of the many expenses facing our young immigrants is the Community Charge or Poll Tax. It is £195.00 per person in Westminster. The charge has to be paid by every resident over the age of 18 years. Many of the girls are on low wages and find it very hard to pay. It is a charge they could do without.

Maintenance:

During the year many rooms have been re-decorated. When a room becomes vacant it is totally re-decorated before a new resident moves in.

With Gratitude:

We would like to wish Fr. Ryan and Sr. Brenda every success in their new posts and we thank them most sincerely for their help and co-operation in the past. We thank the Management Committee of Irish Centre Hostels, the Irish Centre, Oblate Fathers and our own staff at St. Louise's for their support in the smooth running of the hostel.

During 1990 the hostel provided accommodation for 360 girls, 258 of them from Ireland. We also dealt with a further 1,150 referrals.

AN CAISLEAN

This is the latest development by Irish Centre Hostels and is situated at 18 Quex Road, Kilburn. Due to high emigration from Ireland in the 1940's and 1950's there are now many Irish pensioners in London in need of comfortable accommodation. The Management Committee of Irish Centre Hostels were conscious of this need and were also anxious to fulfill the Secondary objective of their Rules ('to provide housing for the elderly') purchased a site at 18 Quex Road.

Here they developed a specially designed house to accommodate 19 residents in single bedsits with communal facilities.

The Official Opening and Blessing was arranged for the 23rd May, 1990. Cardinal Hume and Cardinal O'Fiach promised to oblige. Unfortunately, Cardinal O'Fiach died suddenly in Lourdes a short while prior to the event. May he rest in peace. We are indebted however, to Mr. Nicholas Scott, M.B.E., J.P., M.P. who so kindly obliged to assist Cardinal Hume at such short notice.

Many distinguished guests from Ireland and London including His Excellency, Ambassador Andrew O'Rourke, Irish Ambassador to Britain, Lord Longford, President of the Irish Centre, Lord Farnham, Sir Geoffrey Finsberg, M.P. and Mr. Jimmy Deenihan, T.D. attended the Opening. Representatives of other Irish agencies in London, local industry and statutory bodies were also present.

We are grateful to the Housing Corporation for their generous Grant towards making this most necessary development possible.

An Caislean was filled to full capacity shortly after it opened. The residents are delighted in their new surroundings. A nurse visits each day and attends to their health care needs. The staff of Irish Centre Hostels are always at hand 24 hours a day to attend to any emergency.

We look forward to further developments in this area in the not too distant future.



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