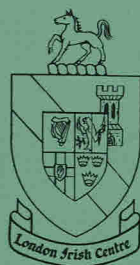


440 YEARS

**OF FRONTLINE SERVICE TO
THE IRISH COMMUNITY**



London Irish Centre
Annual Report 1994-5

Chairman's Message

The year 1994/1995 has been a period of continuity and re-appraisal. The Centre's Business, Social and Cultural activities continued to serve a limited number of existing community groups under concessionary management.

Welfare services have been maintained and developed by professional staff. Hostels, as a separate entity have further developed. Fundraising, principally through the London Irish Festival and the Grand Draw has mainly serviced our loan. An in-depth policy review of all aspects of the Centre's structures and activities has been conducted by the Management Committee.

We are at a juncture of rationalising our position after 40 years of service to the Irish Community.

My gratitude to all who contributed to the life and mission of the London Irish Centre during the past year - to the Director, staff and volunteers; to the Council of Irish Centres and the various Counties that support our centre. May we welcome and extend our gratitude to those who promote and organise Irish cultural, social and political events in the Irish Centre particularly those that enhance developments in the Northern Ireland peace process.

A very special thank you to all who supported and assisted with our fundraising efforts during the past year and to our major grant funders, the Dion Committee, Camden Council, The Lawlor Foundation and others.

Go raibh mait agat

Donie Egan



The London Irish Centre in Camden Square

New Director

In September 1994 Fr. Jerry Kivlehan was appointed Director of the London Irish Centre. For many years he has taken a keen interest in Irish cultural, social and political issues. Prior to his appointment he ministered in Liverpool where he played a prominent role in educational and pastoral re-organisation. We welcome him to the London Irish Centre. Our sincere gratitude to Fr. Denis Cormican for the commitment and service he gave to the London Irish Centre during his time as Director.



Jerry Kivlehan OMI

40 years of service

The ebb and flow of Irish emigration has always been determined by the economic climate at home and the attraction of better job prospects or self betterment abroad. In the mid-nineteenth century British emigration was mainly directed to the cotton mills of Lancashire and Yorkshire. Between 1847-1854 about 100,000 people annually emigrated to the United States. Emigration to Australia and to New Zealand was also quite substantial. In the mid-twentieth century, the American depression and the Second World War diverted the stream of Irish emigration to Britain.

It is estimated that between 1939 and 1946 a quarter of a million emigrated to Britain. Towards the end of the forty's the approximate figure for annual emigration was sixty to sixty-five thousand annually. With the post war boom in the 1950s the weekly immigrant influx reached one thousand, a situation unprecedented since the Great Famine.

Many of the newly arrived emigrants had to live in poor quality accommodation and they had to accept employment in poorly paid jobs. Many also were the victims of negative stereotypes developed through the centuries of history, propaganda, ignorance, racism and prejudice. The hierarchies of England and Ireland had, on many occasions, expressed their concern over the problems of Irish immigrants. In response to a Pastoral letter for Trinity Sunday 1955 and guided by the vision of Fr. Tom McNamara a committee was formed to address the problems of Irish immigrants.

It set itself a threefold task—

- 1** To form a social service bureau to give advice on various problems and to keep a register of decent lodgings for men and women.
- 2** To provide a hall for social and recreational functions.
- 3** To provide temporary hostel accommodation.

An appeal was launched to buy a suitable property. With financial assistance from the National Bank, 51 and 52 Camden Square were purchased and officially opened on 27th September 1955.

From those humble beginnings in 1955 the services of the London Irish Centre have grown and developed down through the years. The social service bureau has now developed into a well resourced and well staffed advice and information centre providing a wide range of personal and community services for the newly arrived immigrant and for Irish people living in Britain.

The social and recreational facilities of the London Irish Centre have developed greatly down through the years. The Centre has three large halls with catering facilities and it is proud to host and provide facilities for many of the key annual Irish events in London.

The Irish Centre Hostel has gone through many stages of growth and development down through the years. It is now known as Irish Centre Housing Ltd. and it is one of the largest Irish Housing Associations in Britain.

Today the Trustees and Administrative Committees of the London Irish Centre are deeply grateful to all who contributed to the success of the London Irish Centre over the past forty years. We look forward to being of service to Irish people for many years to come.

Development plan

Within the financial year 1995-96 we are working towards:

Review of Internal Policy Work

1. To review the employment policies and equal opportunities policies of Community Services by December 1995
2. To redraft employment policies and equal opportunities policies by February 1996
3. To implement revised employment policies and equal opportunities Community Services Policies and Procedures by March 1996

Development of Human Resources

1. To identify the training and development needs of staff by December 1995
2. To develop a training and development plan for all staff by February 1996
3. To implement the training and development plan for all staff by April 1996

Increased User Involvement in development of Community Services provision

1. Staff member to facilitate user support groups in order to develop user involvement/representation in regular team meetings by March 1996
2. To organise Open/Review Day for Community Services' users, staff, management/advisory committees, funders and referral agencies by April 1996

Development of Specialist Services – Alcohol

1. Initiate, in conjunction with Drink Crisis Centre staff, Alcohol Advice Sessions for users by April 1995.
2. Apply for funding from Camden Social Services to carry out alcohol rehabilitative assessments, under community care legislation, for users by September 1995.
3. Facilitate alcohol assessment training for staff by Drink Crisis Centre by October 1995.
4. Implement alcohol rehabilitative assessments for users by Drink Crisis Centre consultant and member of staff by November 1995.
5. Negotiate alcohol rehabilitative assessment contract with Camden Social Services by May 1996
6. Apply to Camden Social Services/Joint Commissioning Health Authority for funding of Alcohol Worker/Outreach Worker based at Community Services by May 1996

Development of Specialist Services – Mental Health

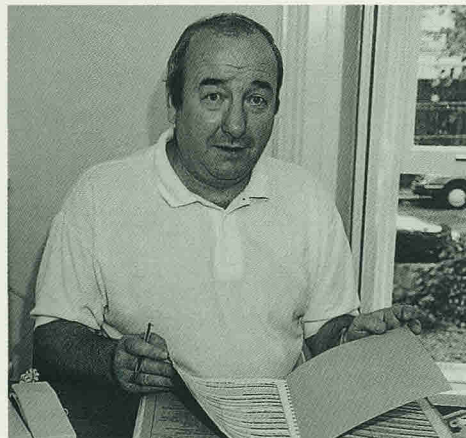
1. Organise training for staff in Positive Mental Health Workshop Facilitation through Camden and Islington Health Promotion Service by December 1995. (Positive Mental Health workshops include Stress Management, Assertiveness Training etc.)
2. Initiate a range of mental health support groups for Irish women and men facilitated by staff by March 1996.
3. Apply for funding for 'Suaimhneas', the Irish Mental Health Project, which consists of two Mental Health Workers, one Alcohol and Drug Worker and one Counsellor, during the current year.

Development of Specialist Services – Children

1. Apply for funding of seasonal playschemes for children of users by April 1995.
2. Apply for funding for development of children's play area in Community Services for children of users by June 1995.



Christine Mohan



John Glynn

Homelessness and housing

Irish people in Britain are disproportionately represented in figures on homelessness, residence in temporary accommodation and residence in private rented accommodation. Community Services aims to enable homeless/badly housed Irish women, men and children to have the option of decent, affordable housing through imparting knowledge of their housing rights and through practical assistance in terms of applications to Homeless Persons Units and Housing Associations, referrals to hostels, bed and

breakfasts and private rented accommodation.

Between April 1994 and March 1995 the Advice Workers assisted homeless families to gain housing through local authorities, Irish women and Irish men to gain housing through housing associations, Irish women and Irish men to gain housing through referral to hostels and Irish women and Irish men to gain housing through private rented accommodation.

Our client statistics for this period show

a 5% increase in referrals to hostels, 60% compared to 55% in 1993/94. For this reason we are networking extensively with a number of homeless hostels in order to increase referral rights. Also we are involved with the Irish Housing Forum in order to lobby the Housing Corporation, the National Federation of Housing Associations and local authorities for more equitable housing provision in relation to Irish people as an ethnic group.

Health

Irish born people in Britain are the only migrant group whose life expectancy/longevity decreases on arrival in this country, (Cochrane and Bal, 1982). Community Services aim is to enable Irish people to access appropriate health care facilities. Often the Advice Workers provide the vital link between the user and the service provider.

During April 1994 to March 1995, 23% of users defined themselves as having some problem around mental health ranging from depression to schizophrenia, 28% of users defined themselves as alcohol misusers and 8% of users defined themselves as drug misusers. Advice workers referred 15% of users to supportive day projects and 10% of users to specialist mental health teams as appropriate. The majority of these clients approached the Centre with multiple problems, eg., of the clients that defined themselves as having problems around alcohol/drug misuse 50% were homeless and received assistance with access to hostels/private rented accommodation and 26% requested advice on welfare benefits.

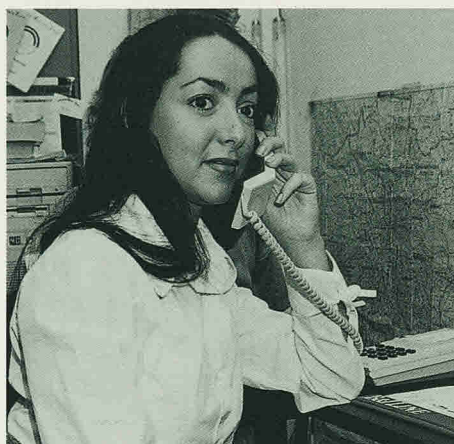
The high number of users with alcohol/drug dependency problems led to the initiation of Alcohol Advice sessions, in conjunction with Drink Crisis Centre, and constant networking with other alcohol agencies in order to maximise the number of referral rights to de-tox programmes. Our role is mainly that of crisis intervention and our hope, through the above services, is to enable these clients to have more control/choice in their situation and to provide support for families.

Women's services

Users last year comprised 35% women and 65% men. Community Services continues to encourage more women to use the Centre by employing female Advice Workers, promoting children's play area/seasonal playschemes and craft workshops, provision of emergency toiletries/baby food and use of kitchen to heat up milk bottles, etc., facilitating accessibility in terms of opening hours both in the morning and afternoon.

30% of women and children users in period April 1994 to March 1995 were fleeing domestic violence. All staff have undertaken domestic violence awareness training and have developed close links with Solas Anois, Irish Women's Domestic Violence Project and Refuge, to whom we referred 50 women and 86 children last year.

Next year, we hope to facilitate Women User Support Groups and apply for funding for a Childcare Worker to further empower Irish women users of the Centre.



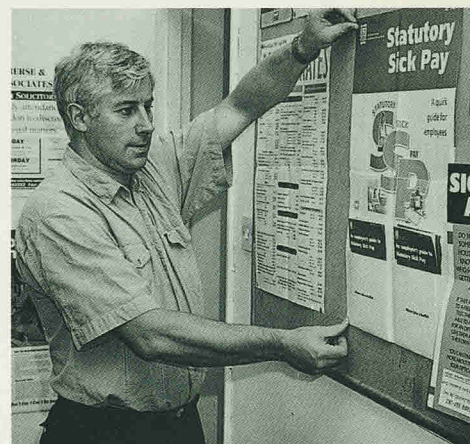
Deirdre Robinson

Welfare Benefits

Community Services aim to ensure Irish people are made aware of their social security entitlements, to maximise the most impoverished peoples' incomes and to challenge discriminatory procedures, malpractice or inconsistency in policy from D.S.S. offices.

68% of clients were assisted last year with obtaining suitable forms of identification in order to apply for their entitlements, 32% of clients were aided with applications to the Social Fund for Community Care grants, 26% of clients were assisted with income support applications, 29% of clients with housing benefit, 13% of clients with Disability Living Allowance and no of clients with other benefits.

In order to challenge the level of discriminatory practice at local D.S.S. offices, staff members participate in regular Benefits Agency liaison meetings and are part of an on-going training programme to maintain an up to date knowledge of benefits available.



Mossie Lyons

Adjunct services

Counselling Service. During this period Professional Counsellor Frances Cummins has provided a counselling service on a voluntary basis to 276 clients on a one-to-one basis, and 230 clients by telephone.

Aisling Return to Ireland Project involving Community Services staff in conjunction with Arlington Housing Association, fundraised for and facilitated a rehabilitative one week break in Ireland for 13 Irish women and 13 Irish men with support needs, eg., problems around mental health.

The Legal Surgery, which is run on a voluntary basis for Irish people in London by practising Irish solicitors and barristers

on Saturday mornings at the Centre, dealt with 384 cases, (183 women and 201 men), involving a range of issues including racial harassment and discrimination, housing, domestic violence, and health/accident compensation.

Literacy classes. A four week pilot scheme assisted 12 Irish people in various levels of literacy skills and will be part of an ongoing programme at the Centre.

Seasonal Playscheme. 54 children of users availed of a month long Summer Playscheme last year which involved craft workshops, educational and leisure facilities.

Travellers' services

Community Services has a close link with the Travelling community and strongly opposes any reforms, eg Criminal Justice Act, which could jeopardise their unique way of life.

14% of users were Travellers, of which 21% were assisted with applications to the Homeless Persons Unit and 24% with access to social security entitlement.

We hope to further facilitate access to the Centre for Travellers with Gaelic speaking staff, child friendly premises and User Support Groups.

Missing Persons

One of the very valuable services provided by the London Irish Centre is our Missing Persons Bureau. This service is managed by one of our very committed volunteers, Brain Duggan. Over the past ten years Brain has been successful in locating and reuniting up to five hundred missing

persons with their families. Because of his outstanding work and the efficient manner in which Brian has delivered this service, he was awarded an Irish Post Award in 1995. The management and staff at the Centre congratulate Brian for the quality of his work and for receiving this award.



Brian Duggan receiving his award

London Irish Festival

The management and staff of the London Irish Centre extend their congratulations to the committee of the London Irish Festival on their 21st year. This year's festival was launched in the Irish Centre on 17th June and the festival took place on 2nd July.

Also on 17th June the management and staff of the London Irish Centre presented Ambassador Joseph Small and his wife Mary with some Irish crystal as a token of our gratitude to them for the support they gave to the London Irish Centre and to the Irish community in London.



The London Irish Festival committee

Irish cultural activities

The London Irish Centre continues to provide a comprehensive range of Irish Cultural Activities. Irish language classes take place on Friday evenings. The Halpin School of Dancing provides Irish dancing classes for children and young adults each Saturday morning. Sunday night is Ceili Night and on Monday evenings Anton Coyle teaches Ceili dancing. Set dancing lessons are given by Geoff Holland on Tuesday evenings and on the first Sunday of each month. Interest in Irish music has grown greatly over the past year. Karen Ryan and Kathy Walton give Irish music classes on Monday evenings and with the assistance of Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann uilleann pipe classes take place on Thursday evenings. The Irish Centre was proud to host many prominent events for the Irish community during the past year such as the Green Ink Book Fair, the Gerry Adams visit to London, Irish painting exhibitions and a number of important meetings relating the social issues and Northern Ireland Peace Process.

Social Club

I want to tell you of a lovely experience I had.

I am English and sixty years old. I love old time dancing. For the first time recently I went to the London Irish Centre in Camden Square on Friday night to dance in the Hyde Lounge.

They had good music and what lovely, friendly people they were. I was charmed to see how they mixed with one another.

I would say there were four age groups at the dance, but it made no difference. Young danced with old, the old danced with young.

All I can say is that I had a jolly good night and I intend to go there every Friday night.

Jane, London

(A letter sent to the Irish Post)

Our thanks to Peggy Finnuane, Mary Kenny and the members of the Social Committee for the dedicated work throughout this year

Facts and figures

Place of Origin of all the London Irish Centre Clients

Place of Origin	%
Armagh	1
Antrim	3
Cork	8
Clare	4
Cavan	1
Carlow	1
Donegal	2
Down	1
Dublin	25
Derry	1
Fermanagh	1
Galway	5
Kildare	1
Kilkenny	1
Kerry	2
Laois	1
Longford	1
Louth	2
Limerick	6
Leitrim	1
Meath	1
Monaghan	1
Mayo	4
Offaly	1
Roscommon	1
Sligo	1
Tipperary	1
Tyrone	1
Waterford	2
Westmeath	2
Wicklow	1
Wexford	1
England	11
Scotland	1
Elsewhere	2

Statistical breakdown of all reports of harassment

Category	%
Racial	11
Sexual	2
Homophobic	0
Domestic violence	11
Police	9
PTA	1
Other	16

39% of all clients reported some harassment

Client comments

- 'You are my last resort'
- 'The centre got me my flat'
- 'I haven't been in touch with my home for 28 years.'
(Now I visit my sister in the west of Ireland)
- 'I have suffered his violence for 12 years of our marriage – enough is enough'
(Through the Irish Centre I am now in Ireland and receiving help there)
- 'I want to go home. Can you get me a ticket?'

Borough of Residence of Clients availing of the services of the London Irish Centre

Borough	%
City of London	6
Camden	54
Hackney	3
Hammersmith	2
Islington	14
Kensington	1
Lambeth	1
Lewisham	1
Newham	0
Southwark	2
Tower Hamlet	0
Wandsworth	1
Westminster	3
Barking	0
Barnett	1
Bexley	0
Brent	3
Bromley	0
Croyden	0
Ealing	1
Enfield	1
Greenwich	0
Haringey	2
Harrow	0
Hounslow	0
Kingston	1
Merton	0
Richmond	1
Sutton	0
Waltham Forest	0
Birmingham 1	0
Birmingham 2	0

Statistical breakdown of advice

Advice Category	%
Education/Training	1
Discrimination	2
Family Services	4
Financial	5
Employment	5
Health	16
Housing	20
Welfare Benefits	22
Other advice	25

Clients interviewed – 4,531

Telephone Calls – 7,138



Maria Cooke

Summarised Balance sheet as at 31 March 1995

	94/95	93/94
Fixed Assets	1,791,327	1,795,491
Current Assets	72,839	77,871
Current liabilities	36,149	27,910
	36,690	49,961
Long term Creditors	254,132	265,673
Total assets less liabilities	1,573,885	1,579,779

Patrons

Cardinal Basil Hume
Archbishop
Michael Bowen
Bishop
Thomas McMahon

Trustees:

The Lord Farnham
Peter Fitzpatrick
James Commane
John Higgins

Administrative Committee

D Egan (Chair)
B Shaw (Vice-Chair)
M Fitzsimons
Mgr G Stack
A Finan
F Collins
J Coote
M Kenny
Fr P Carolan
T Reilly
M Allen
T McAssey
M Stills
Rev F Phelan

Welfare Advisory Committee

T Ganley
K Glynn
F Farrell
E Fitzpatrick
F Collins
E Sherry
D Robinson

Staff Team

Fr J Kivlehan
(Director)
C Mohan
(Co-ordinator)
D Robinson
M Lyons
J Glynn
M Cooke

Daycare Centre

W Walsh

Volunteers

B Duggan (Missing
Persons)
M Kenny
J Coote

Catering Manager

H Collis –
tel: 0171 916 7272

Job Powerhouse

D Hanway –
tel: 0171 916 9696

Bankers

Bank of Ireland
43-45 Seven
Sisters Road,
London N7
AIB Bank
629 Holloway
Road, London N19

Auditors

Allen Tully & Co
Hibernia House,
113 Station Road,
Sidcup DA15

Solicitors

Prince Evans
77 Uxbridge Road,
Ealing, London W5