



# The London Irish Women's Centre ANNUAL REPORT 1992



*Éarlasmh: Máire Mhic Róibín, Uachtarán na hÉireann  
Patron: Mary Robinson, President of Ireland*

59 STOKE NEWINGTON CHURCH STREET, LONDON N16 0AR  
TEL: (071) 249 7318

## **WHY DOES LONDON NEED AN IRISH WOMEN'S CENTRE?**

The need for an independent agency for women within the Irish community in London is self-evident from the variety of casework and the demand on services that the London Irish Women's Centre currently provides. The London Irish Women's Centre was established in 1983 to fulfil an unmet need in the shape of service provision for Irish women relevant and functioning to their needs. These areas of need included housing and homelessness (now accounting for some 70% of our work) advice and assistance on welfare, legal and health matters, counselling and group support, educational, information and training resources.

Another of the Centre's founding aims was to provide a non-intimidating space in which Irish women could meet together, share experiences and resources, with the ability to express themselves both individually and collectively and use this as a base upon which to build and develop vital support networks.

Although women make up the majority within the Irish community in Britain, many Irish welfare agencies did not and do not give adequate recognition to the needs of this majority and therefore have consistently failed to tackle specific problems and disadvantages encountered by Irish women.

Similarly, within non-Irish voluntary and statutory agencies, the needs of Irish women as a specific group were, and remain, all too often overlooked. This lack of awareness has serious repercussions; an entire social group is being overlooked by the policy-makers and service providers; access to vital information and services is more difficult to obtain for Irish women because catering for their needs is not given priority. This inevitably complicates existing difficulties and adds to immigrant alienation, isolation, loneliness and marginalisation.

How many Irish women are there in London? What is our profile? Where are we located within London's social and economic infrastructures? The picture is not a positive one.

Population statistics clearly indicate (IRISH WOMEN IN LONDON, London Strategic Policy Unit, 1988) that Irish

women in the capital number more than 300,000 individuals, make up approx. 53% of London's Irish community and could include 10% of London's entire female population.

Yet research also shows (Labour Force Survey, 1983) that Irish-born women are heavily concentrated in the lowest social classes as defined by occupation; 81% of Irish-born women are employed within the 'caring' professions of education, welfare and health, and in the cleaning, catering, clerical and domestic services.

The main features that characterise Irish women's experiences of London's housing supply are low numbers in owner-occupied housing; high numbers in substandard and inadequate housing; a heavy reliance on both private-rented and council housing; and intense homelessness amongst single Irish women.



IRISH WOMEN IN  
THEIR COMMUNITY CENTRE (LIWC) DUBLIN (88) FIRST FLOOR

\* The LIWC - a space for all Irish women to meet. Photo: Sass Tuffin

## WHO WE ARE

The London Irish Women's Centre serves this population of upwards of one quarter of a million people with very limited resources and with a permanent staff of only 3 full time and two part-time workers, one building in east London and two telephone lines. Our work is a mixture of on-site and outreach activities. Case work, drop-in access, advice and information sessions and training and educational courses often mean that the Centre itself is in use 7 days a week and two or three evenings as well. Outreach work covers the 33 boroughs of London, through conferences, seminars, talks, discussions and support groups.

We are a limited company and have a management committee which meets with workers once every two to three weeks, with an AGM and election of new members each December. Any Irish woman who is a member of the Centre is eligible to stand for election to the management committee. Our main current funder is the London Borough Grants Committee from which we have received standstill funds for the last few years. This takes place at a time when fundraising from the private sector has never been more difficult and the need for our services has never been greater.

Women like Claire who emigrate to London do so against a background of worsening recession. Official figures show that unemployment in Britain is now over 2.5 million and rising. As cuts in housing expenditure, increases in council house sales, and the quality of affordable rented accommodation in the private sector becomes more apparent, the options facing low-paid or unemployed Irish women are increasingly limited. There is an acute accommodation shortage in London and 25% of all residents in the capital's inner city flats are Irish. Many of the women who come to our Centre for help have been sleeping on a friend's floor or staying in squats for months or even years before making their homelessness visible.

Housing Subsidy from City and up to one year of initial placement in the privately-rented flat before

## **SERVICES PROVIDED**

1. Housing and welfare rights for Irish women with a special provision for young women and travellers.
2. Drop-in sessions for women needing emergency advice, information or practical help.
3. A range of services to young women including an outreach group targeting young single homeless women.
4. A counselling service at the Centre which prioritises young women under 25.
5. A range of services for children including activity days and a creche for all events held at the Centre.
6. Regular information sessions and open meetings with outside speakers on issues of relevance to Irish women ie. domestic violence, racial harassment, Poll Tax.
7. Outreach work with travellers and travellers groups which includes site visits and attending meetings.
8. The Centre represents the needs of Irish women at a variety of different levels from steering groups to conferences and stalls at festivals.
9. The Centre provides a meeting place and focal point for many classes and groups (not funded by LBGU).

## **'MAKING IT VISIBLE - IRISH WOMEN'S HOMELESSNESS'**

The majority of the 6,000 enquiries to the London Irish Women's Centre in 1991 were housing/welfare related. While discrimination against our community is gradually being recognised by statutory agencies, including the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), and some local authorities, the problems of unequal access to decent affordable housing, employment and services continue to affect Irish women.

The increasing number of homeless enquiries, particularly from younger women, has meant that we have extended our provision and established specialist housing and counselling sessions for women under 30. Women of all ages are affected by the current housing crisis, but newly arrived emigrants are particularly vulnerable because they are unlikely to be familiar with the housing systems which exist in this country:

*19-year old Claire from Tyrone turned up at the Centre one morning, after spending several weeks sleeping on her brother's floor. He had just been informed that he would be evicted if the arrangement continued. Claire's nursing job did not pay enough for her to rent private accommodation. She urgently needed a place to live.*

Women like Claire who emigrate to London do so against a background of worsening recession. Official figures show that unemployment in Britain is now over 2.5 million and rising. As cuts in housing expenditure, increases in council house sales, and the paucity of affordable rented accommodation in the private sector becomes more apparent, the options facing low-paid or unemployed Irish women are increasingly limited. There is an acute accommodation shortage in London and 32% of all residents in the capital's short-stay hostels are Irish. Many of the women who come to our Centre for help have been sleeping on a friend's floor or staying in squats for months or even years before making their homelessness visible.

*" 32% of all residents in London's short-stay hostels are Irish."*

*41-year old Siobhan from Cork put up with nine years of racial harassment in her privately-rented flat before*

*leaving in utter desperation. The Local Authority would not rehouse her, classing her as "intentionally homeless" despite the fact that she had reported the harassment on numerous occasions.*

The LIWC has a difficult task in finding safe and suitable accommodation for such women. The current demand for Housing Association, short-life and other emergency accommodation far exceeds supply. Although we have strengthened our links with London-wide and localised housing associations in the past 12 months, increasing our quota of nominations and the number of referrals, it is clear that the supply and type of accommodation for Irish women is very limited.

There is an identifiable need for Housing Associations to monitor their provision for Irish single applicants and to cater for the needs of different Irish women eg. to recognise that older women are more likely to need self-contained flats, having in many cases spent years of sharing temporary and unsatisfactory housing, and that lesbians have a particular need for safe and compatible accommodation.

The plight of homeless Irish families continues to present one of the most difficult problems for the LIWC:

*Theresa was forced to move into "homeless" accommodation with her 11 children from her caravan when her son was disabled in a road accident. The Council placed the family in private-sector leased accommodation, but when the neighbours complained about rubbish being left outside their door, the family were evicted and the Council refused to take any further responsibility for their housing needs.*

Homeless families are in a vulnerable position at the best of times. If they also happen to be travellers, that vulnerability is heightened. Cuts in Local Authority spending mean that London's Local Authorities are frequently breaking their legal obligations to homeless families. The service they do provide often amounts to no more than an engaged telephone number or worse

still, a closed office. Homeless families like Theresa's are economically disadvantaged and electorally unimportant. This vulnerability is further increased by the tabloid press targeting homeless people and particularly Irish and other ethnic minority groups.

*"The need for Irish agencies to challenge injustice and to speak out on behalf of homeless Irish women is greater now than ever before."*

The need for Irish agencies to challenge this injustice and to speak out on behalf of homeless Irish women is greater now than ever before. In this respect, the LIWC has continued to support the work of the Irish Women's Housing Action Group (IWHAG) in its complaints to individual authorities and to the Press Complaints Commission. The group's leaflet **"What To Do If You Are Homeless"** has been of invaluable help in empowering homeless women, with practical tips and information.

In addition to taking up individual cases, the Centre has identified specific trends within the Irish women's community and organised information sessions and workshops which address these problems. In 1991 we organised sessions with SHAC Homeless Advice Service for women leaving violent relationships and for private tenants. A public meeting was organised with the CRE for women facing racial harassment. A workshop concerning Irish women and the Poll Tax was held with the support of a local solicitor.



\* Spelling out the need - the relaunch of the Irish Women's Housing Action Group leaflet 'What to do if you are homeless'. L to R: Anna Bowman Chair of Equal Opportunities sub-cttee. National Federation of Housing Associations; Melanie Pine Labour Attaché at the Irish Embassy Chair of the DION cttee; Celine Barry secretary of the LIWC management cttee and Angie Birtill Housing & Welfare rights worker. Photo Sass Tuffin

## **WELFARE: BEARING THE BRUNT OF POVERTY**

Welfare work at the London Irish Women's Centre is extremely varied - domestic violence, employment and legal problems, discrimination, welfare benefits and pensions, child care and health, including abortion, contraception, HIV and AIDS - have all featured in the Centre's casework. There has been a marked increase in the number of debt-related problems in the past year and the extreme poverty facing many of our clients is very distressing.

Cuts in social security, housing benefits and the implementation of the Poll Tax have created economic hardship for many thousands of people, but Irish women already have a higher share of unemployment and low income work. The current recession in Britain is also hitting those areas of the economy upon which women have traditionally and continue to rely on the caring services, nursing, domestic, office and catering work. Over 44% of Irish women are concentrated in the lowest manual grades compared with 28% of white British-born women.

The implementation of the Poll Tax has exacerbated this hardship particularly for large families. 18.3% of Irish-headed households consist of five or more people, compared with 7.8% of white British-born households. As it is women who are more likely to have responsibility for buying food and paying the bills, it is women who have borne the brunt of the poverty created by this tax.

*The O'Donoghues faced a crisis last year when debts forced the family to the brink of despair. Mrs. O'Donoghue came to the Centre for help in a distraught condition after she had pawned her wedding ring.*

The LIWC has continued to press the Department of Social Security and other statutory bodies for benefits to which women are legally entitled, but we have also been forced to rely increasingly upon charities to provide immediate help for our clients. Without the help of

**these charities, the suffering of many would not have been relieved in the past year.**

It is clear that while debt-related problems are on the increase, certain sections of our community are particularly vulnerable. The current benefits system is not providing for unemployed people, single parents, under-25's, the elderly and people with disabilities. Elderly Irish women find the experience of debt especially hard to bear, not only because of pride and tradition, but because their disadvantaged position within British society makes it very difficult for them to get out of debt.

There are also those women who face discrimination from the authorities, who require legal help and moral support from the LIWC:

*The O'Connors were interrogated and abused by their local DSS office when Ms. O'Connor's husband enquired about his sickness benefit claim. It took the Centre several weeks to sort out their claim, during which time the couple lived alongside other Travellers on a "tolerated site" without water, electricity, or adequate toilet facilities.*

Ongoing outreach work with local travellers has led to an increased use of the Centre's services by travelling families. The need for more welfare agencies to commit specific resources to this section of London's community could not be more pressing.

In the past year the London Irish Women's Centre has extended its contact with solicitors, health workers and other individuals within the statutory and voluntary sector who have an understanding of the specific needs of Irish women. These individuals and groups are also familiar with the discrimination faced by travellers, lesbians and women with disabilities. They can provide practical support for women who have been harassed under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and who are too frightened in many cases to speak out about their ordeal.

We will continue to extend our support networks this year. As 1992 progresses, it is clear that the housing and welfare needs of Irish women are increasing, which will subsequently increase the workload of the Centre.

will no longer be  
seen as a problem  
of male violence.  
Women's groups  
and self-defence  
organisations have  
been instrumental in  
developing policies and  
guidelines to help tackle  
domestic violence.

notices from the local authority



\* Uniting with other women's groups against domestic violence - the LIWC supported the campaign to free Kiranjit Ahluwalia. Pictured outside the Court of Appeal behind the LIWC banner are Mary Crowe Administrator & Fundraiser and Angie Birtill Housing and Welfare Worker. Photo: Terry Smith

## **COUNSELLING**

The counselling service offered by the centre is short-term, and is available on an individual basis, to women who are under the age of 30. Women who are over 30 and who are in need of counselling, will not be turned away on the grounds of age if we have a vacancy in the counselling sessions.

Our counsellor can offer regular sessions for a limited time period, in line with the restrictions on our resources and the needs of the client. We operate a waiting list due to high demand. Emergency sessions are available too; many women need instant support in a crisis and for some, one or two sessions is enough to get through a particularly rough patch. Referring women on to more suitable or more specialised sources of help is another part of the service.

The counselling is free but donations from 50p to £6 per session are accepted; again women are not turned away because they can't afford to give donations.

The basis of the counselling service at the centre is to offer women who are in emotional or mental distress, a safe and supportive environment in which to explore and clarify difficulties in their lives - in the here and now. It is based on the premise that to be silenced is to be kept isolated. In the counselling relationship, telling the story and reflecting on that reality becomes a central act. Telling and hearing the stories restores value. This grounding forms a springboard from which wounds can begin to heal and women can choose to act from a position of empowerment...thus it marks the beginning of all forms of systemic change.

*".. problems include loneliness and isolation as immigrants."*

Women come to the counselling service with multifarious needs. Some need assistance and support with practical problem solving skills, eg development of communication or assertiveness. Other problems include loneliness and isolation as immigrants, the effects of harassment or assault, child sexual abuse, bereavement, leaving violent relationships, making new relationships, developing confidence, identity counselling and coming to terms with physical disability.

This service was developed in 1989 as a way of responding to the immediate need for a cultural and

gender sensitive counselling provision for Irish women from all backgrounds. It goes some way towards meeting a crucial need in the community and works well within the framework of the centre as a frontline advice agency and community centre. Many individuals are seen whilst in a state of crisis but counselling can also serve as a preventative health measure by assisting with support and problem management BEFORE things get to a state of emergency.

This is the only LONDON-WIDE service of it's kind specifically for Irish women.



\* Brid Boland Research, Outreach and Counselling Worker

Photo: Terry Smith

## **YOUTHFUL PROSPECTS: HOPES, HOMES, JOBS ...**

So far the group has proved quite popular amongst young people who have approached the Centre for advice which highlights the great need and also the lack of information available to them in this area.

The majority of Irish emigrants to Britain are under 30 (90% AGIY). As housing conditions have worsened over the years and benefits to young people have been chopped, the Centre has seen a steady increase in the number of young Irish women using the service. It was for this reason that the LIWC decided to run welfare rights sessions aimed particularly at women under-25. There has been a high demand for this service with the majority of enquiries being housing related.

*".. the true extent of homelessness amongst Irish women is not often fully realised."*

A startling amount of the young women coming in will also be homeless. The true extent of homelessness amongst Irish women is not often fully realised. We find that an Irish woman experiencing homelessness is more likely to sleep on someone's floor than be on the streets. Although Irish people in general continue to be disproportionately affected by housing problems (AGIY), women will bear the brunt of this in many ways. For instance there are far more male as opposed to female-only hostels in existence, and although some mixed hostels do exist these are often perceived as intimidating to women. In proportion to other groups, Irish women also tend to be over-represented in private accommodation.

With the changes the 1988 Housing Act brought, this kind of accommodation has become very insecure indeed. The new tenancies created under this Act afford the tenant little rights and landlords can evict their tenants after as little as three months. From our experience this insecurity of tenure is a constant problem amongst Irish women. Some of the women we see will have moved many times since first arriving in London and will be completely disillusioned with ever finding secure accommodation. One young woman we saw had been forced to move six times in the last two years. She had approached the LIWC for help as her present landlord was in the process of evicting her. He wanted his present tenants out to enable him to install new ones at a higher rent. The 1988 Housing Act has made it much easier for landlords to remove a tenant, so evicting a tenant to get a higher rent is not that uncommon.

Young women with children also approach the centre for advice. A substantial number, especially if they are newly

arrived, will be living in Bed and Breakfast establishments and may need advice about move-on accommodation. With the acute shortages in housing that exist at present the outlook for this group can be extremely grim. In some boroughs in London families are waiting up to two years for move-on accommodation. This is extremely distressing for those involved.

Young Irish women in this situation often need a lot of support. Separated from their traditional support networks it is very easy for them to become isolated. In response to this the LIWC hopes to set up a young Irish mother's group in the near future. In addition to housing, young Irish women come to the centre for advice on a variety of different problems.

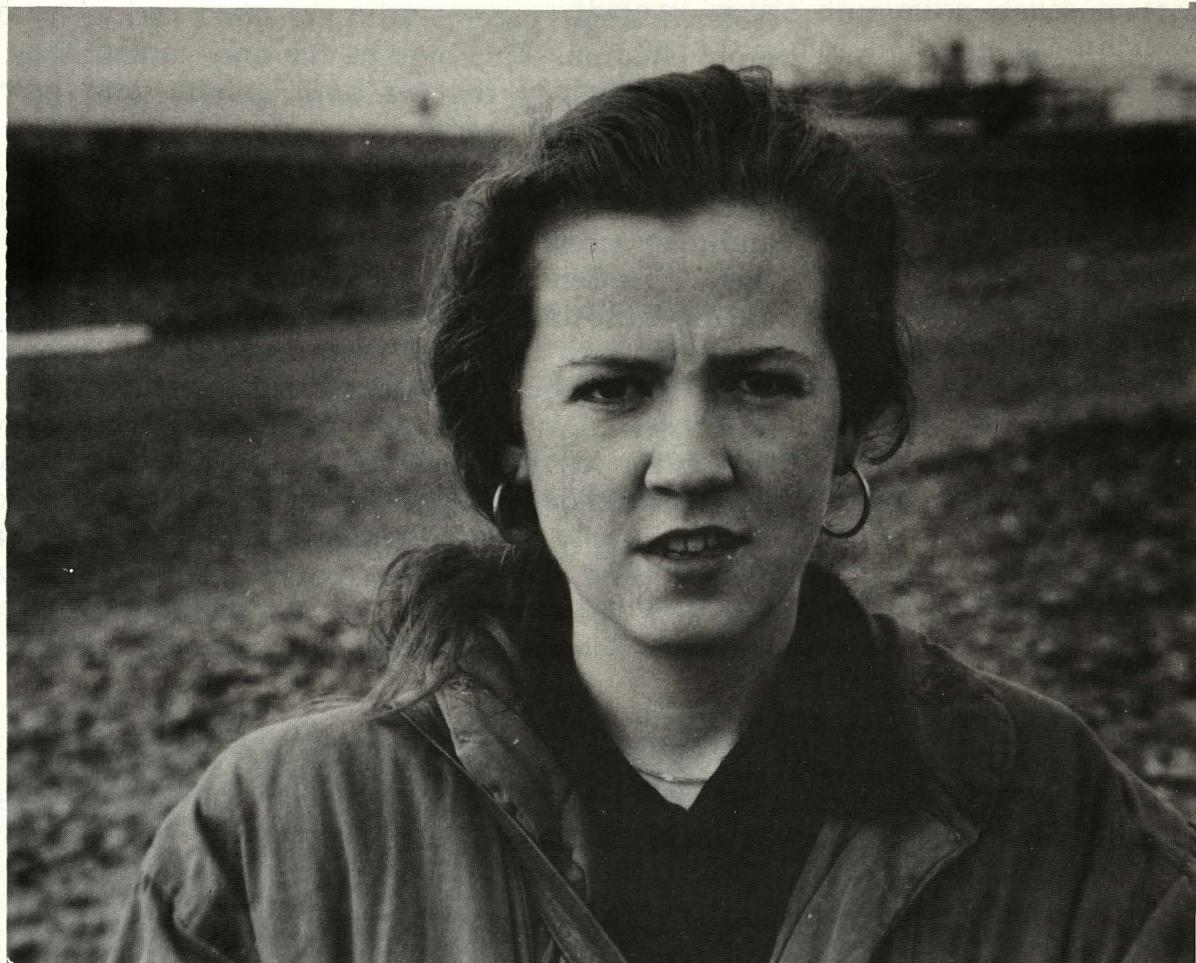
*".. for a newly-arrived young Irish woman, London can seem a very daunting place indeed.."*

For a newly-arrived young Irish woman, London can seem a very daunting place indeed. They often do not understand the benefit system in this country and need practical advice about signing on and getting housing benefits. For women under 18 the situation is not as straightforward. Under the new social security rules the majority of this group is no longer entitled to any benefits. They have the added problem of finding a training scheme that will accept them and as there aren't always enough places available on these schemes they can well find themselves in a situation where they have no money and little prospect of getting any in the near future.

Loneliness and isolation are some of the other problems that young Irish women often experience. To combat this, the LIWC, in conjunction with the Kilburn Irish Youth Project, set up a group aimed particularly at single Irish women under 30. This group is primarily a social one where women can receive advice and support in an informal setting. It also provides women with the opportunity of making friends thus alleviating some of the isolation they may be feeling.

The group organises many trips out ie. to the pictures, theatre, swimming and ice-skating as well as providing the women with the opportunity to learn new skills. We have recently run an assertiveness training course with

the women and are planning a HIV and AIDS awareness evening in the near future. So far the group has proved very successful, a success which highlights the great need for this and other such projects in this area.



\* Geraldine Hickey Youth & Childcare Worker at the Centre

## **CHILD CARE**

The London Irish Women's Centre is committed to providing equal access to women with children to all our services. We do this by ensuring that a creche is provided for all events and classes that take place here at the centre. Many of the Irish women using this service are young isolated single parents who are often caring for one or more children. This may be the only contact they have with an agency that is both gender and culturally sensitive to their needs.

The LIWC also has a firm commitment to Irish children and their access to Irish culture and heritage in their own right. The Centre runs Irish language classes for children during term times, where Irish is taught through various mediums such as drama, song and dance. These classes are extremely popular, usually culminating in a special St. Patrick's Day event each March. 38 children attended this event in 1992 and the classes themselves have a regular attendance figure of 25-30 children. There is a regular supply of Irish language books and materials for children and their mothers to use in the creche during ordinary opening times. At the moment the toys and books are being updated and new materials added.



\* Children enjoying a cultural day at the LIWC. PHOTO Angie Smith

## **TRAINING & EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME**

The Centre's training programme is community based - in other words it has developed over the years through responding to needs and demands within the Irish women's community. During the past eight years the Centre has run courses in video, radio, photography, literature, mythology, music, drumming, dance, massage, healing, creative writing, voice and singing, drama and both adult and children's Irish language classes.

In establishing and developing this programme, the Centre has aimed to fulfil certain objectives;

- to respond to the needs of Irish women for a safe, non-intimidating avenue for creative expression of their cultural heritage and to give due recognition to their experience as appropriate content for that expression.
- to encourage women who use the resources to set up independent user groups and become self-financing.
- to promote a positive image of Irish culture in wider society and encourage Irish women to reclaim their full participation within that culture.
- to enable Irish women to counteract the devaluation of Irish culture in mainstream society, including the media and educational establishments.
- to give recognition to the central role played by Irish mothers in the transmission of culture to their children.
- to provide facilities whereby Irish women can demystify the processes involved in the transmission of information in the media by developing skills in video, radio, or photography.

Some courses have a technical emphasis - the video, radio and photography courses are in this category. New employment and training opportunities are opened up in non-traditional settings through this.

Other courses concentrate on looking at the images of women, past and present, that have become part of the Irish cultural heritage, and what this means for women.

Both of these approaches in different ways open up the cultural boundaries for women. The Irish cultural

experience is deepened and enriched, becoming more integrated as a result. We feel that this is crucially important in a society where Irish culture is not valued and where within Irish culture itself women are marginalised and alienated.

The pioneering and innovative nature of the Centre's educational and training programme enables this to happen and promotes the full participation of Irish women as equal participants in this process. *The programme is funded entirely by sources independent to our core funding and in the past has come from Adult Education Institutes, Women's Units, Birkbeck College and Greater London Arts.*



\* Making contact at one of the public events attended during the year - at the Kilburn Irish Youth Festival are Geraldine Hickey Youth & Childcare Worker and Shelagh O'Connor Finance Worker.  
Photo: Mary Crowe

## **FINANCE AND FUNDING NEEDS**

The Centre receives most of its funds from the London Borough Grants Unit, the funding body which took over from the Greater London Council in 1986. However our funding has remained standstill since that time, which has stretched our resources to the limit. In 1987 the post of Media Worker was axed, a cut of 20%.

We have always secured small amounts of funding from various sources such as local boroughs, women's units, Thames Telethon, Children in Need, Greater London Arts and the Irish government's funding body in Britain DION. This money has gone mostly towards special projects and not towards the overall maintenance of existing services. It is always on a once off basis and some groups may only give us support once every two or three years, with no obligation to continue this funding. In the current climate of cutbacks in local and central government and a recession in the private sector, there are no longer any funders who can be relied on indefinitely. This includes our core funder, LBGU.

Many funders who do aid projects such as ours are experiencing an unprecedented flood of appeals from large numbers of voluntary agencies, who are all deserving of help. This places the funder in an impossible position, and there are inevitable casualties.

From the London Irish Women's Centre's point of view, this has an inevitable and detrimental effect on planning long-term strategy. It also means that special projects cannot contribute in any practical way towards easing the overall financial position of the LIWC.

Ongoing training of workers is essential to any frontline service to keep informed on changing laws and procedures. At the moment our budget for training is restricted, and many of our affiliations and subscriptions to organisations in our field have been placed under review.

Things such as building repairs and maintenance cannot be prioritised from these special projects grants, so our building is in urgent need of repair. The creche which we regularly provide for housing and welfare advice sessions, open meetings and training and classes, at present needs attention. Our toy supply has also been severely diminished over the years.

The classes and cultural events held at the Centre are an essential part of our overall services. They create a positive and uplifting atmosphere and image of achievement for Irish women to witness or participate in when they visit the Centre. The bulk of this funding comes from miscellaneous sources and most of it has now sadly disappeared. This reduces the Centre to problem-solving and crisis intervention alone. Clients come with specific requests for help and the role of the Centre as a safe cultural and gender-sensitive space becomes marginalised as a result. Training in radio, photography, and video skills enhances both technical skills and job suitability as well as personal confidence and self-belief. Writing and drama classes facilitate self-expression and cultural pride. We will continue to fundraise for these events and commit ourselves to providing them wherever possible for our community. Ours is the only place in all of London that they consistently take place.

Our long term aims to aid our fundraising drive and secure the future of the Centre include securing charity status and hence accessing the major charitable trusts and formulating a three-year plan with clear objectives and priorities to lead us into the next millennium.



## **STATISTICS - MAPPING THE SCALE OF NEED**

The Irish community in London is severely disadvantaged by the lack of research undertaken in this area. Even the most rudimentary forms of documentation are problematic - the 1991 Census provided a perfect opportunity to redress a glaring imbalance in recording the Irish community, yet despite intense lobbying it did not have a separate category for Irish people.

Statistics are crucial in the work of every organisation. They provide not just a record of demand but are also a blueprint for future planning. The AIDS crisis and the escalation of young single homelessness are major challenges to relief agencies. Cutbacks in local government services have put an increasing strain on the voluntary sector to cater for these needs.

Our own statistics enable us to monitor increasing demands and changing developments amongst our client group. The clients who use the London Irish Women's Centre, by their very numbers show a large and diverse Irish women's community out there needing support and demanding recognition. Often the help given will be of direct benefit to a larger family group, pockets of the Irish community, and by extension to the community as a whole.

## LIWC GENERAL STATISTICS

January	503
February	596
March	636
April	589
May	496
June	685
July	599
August	475
September	569

These figures show an average of 572 women using LIWC services monthly. This would indicate a figure of 6,800 annually.

## LIWC HOUSING AND WELFARE RIGHTS REFERRAL STATISTICS 1991

Total number of referrals January to September inclusive = 619. Total number of queries presented (some referrals had multiple queries) = 703

Homelessness	160
Housing	204
Welfare	157
Grants	33
Legal/Social Services	84
Employment	62
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	703
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In 1990 the bulk of our casework was housing and welfare related (70%). In 1991 this demand has increased to 74% as illustrated by the following statistics:-

Homelessness	23%
Housing	29%
Welfare	22%
Grants	5%
Legal/Social Services	12%
Employment	9%

There is clearly an acute need among the Irish women's community for help in gaining access to suitable housing and living conditions. Unemployment and the Poll Tax have reduced the living standards of Irish families and as a consequence the London Irish Women's Centre has had to tackle an increasing number of debt-related problems. Applying for grants enables these families to make their living conditions habitable.

Legal & Social Services issues include domestic violence, racial and sexual harassment and child custody, while employment advice aids Irish women to take their places as fully functioning members of the society that is now their home.

## LONDON IRISH WOMEN'S CENTRE LIMITED (By Guarantee)

## DETAILED INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 1992

For Directors's Use

		<u>1991</u>
<b>INCOME</b>		
Grants:	London Boroughs' Grant Unit	93,335
	London Borough of Waltham Forest	200
	London Borough of Hackney (Education)	945
	London Borough of Hackney (Womens Unit)	1,200
	Assheton Smith Charitable Trust	-
		1,000
		50
Donations		20
Other Income		536
Conference Grants and Donations		159
Holding Grant		2,707
Interest		312
DION Committee		<u>2,060</u>
		<u>100,074</u>
		<u>102,381</u>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Salaries and Related Costs		75,430
Staff Training		646
Rent, Rates and Services		3,520
Repairs and Maintenance		6,653
Stationery and Office Supplies		1,319
Telephone and Postage		3,033
Library and Creche		404
Travel and Motor Expenses		25
Audit and Accountancy		1,057
Insurances		3,777
Miscellaneous		1,105
Tutors Fees and Training Course Consumables		834
Equipment Hire		695
Publicity		1,060
Bank Charges		502
Depreciation		4,953
Release from Deferred Capital Income		( 4,894 )
Conferences		-
Advertising		-
Holding Grant		2,557
Events and Reports		<u>( 13 )</u>
		<u>102,663</u>
		<u>97,000</u>
<b>(DEFICIT)/SURPLUS FOR YEAR</b>		<b>( 2,589 )</b>
		5,381
Taxation		<u>70</u>
		-
Surplus Brought Forward		<u>£ 2,659 )</u>
		5,381
		<u>5,713</u>
<b>SURPLUS CARRIED FORWARD</b>		<b><u>3,054</u></b>
		<b><u>5,713</u></b>

## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY**

The London Irish Women's Centre recognises the multiple oppression faced by Irish women in Britain, as Irish people and as women. We also recognise that some Irish women are doubly/triply discriminated against and are particularly vulnerable eg. lesbians, elderly, single mothers, lesbian mothers, disabled women and travelling women.

Our Equal Opportunities Policy attempts to redress some of the inequalities that exist in our community. Issues such as direct and indirect discrimination, racial and sexual discrimination, discrimination on the grounds of sexuality, disability, age and religion are addressed.

In selection, recruitment and training of workers the Equal Opportunities Policy is adhered to. On all aspects of policy, employees are expected to comply with the EOP. The Management Committee is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the EOP and the monitoring of its effectiveness.

A full copy of the Equal Opportunities Policy is available on application.

**LIWC workers are:- HOUSING & WELFARE Angie Birtill, YOUTH & CHILD CARE Geraldine Hickey, OUTREACH & RESEARCH Brid Boland, ADMINISTRATION & FUNDRAISING Mary Crowe, FINANCE Shelagh O'Connor.**

*Management committee members are:- Celine Barry, Barbara O'Toole, Mary Crampsie, Angie Smith, Claire McElwee, Elizabeth O'Sullivan.*

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\* FRONT COVER: Housing and welfare rights issues are a constant demand at the LIWC. Photo: Mary Crowe

# DO YOU GET A FAIR DEAL AT WORK?

If the answer is **NO**, and you are a woman there are often particular reasons for it..

Many women work in low status jobs often part-time and it is these jobs where pay is low and terms and conditions are at their worst.

Because there is very little legal protection for women in these jobs, being in a trade union is vital.

Being a member of a trade union means getting support and advice on problems at work:

## **PAY AND CONDITIONS**

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

## **CHILDCARE PROVISION**

## MATERNITY RIGHTS AND BENEFITS

# MATERNITY RIGHTS AND BENEFITS

# EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

# EQUAL PAY

# **SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

...& more.

It means that you can take advantage of the services that the union offers:

**FREE LEGAL ADVICE      DISCOUNT INSURANCE &  
MORTGAGES      CHEAP HOLIDAYS & CAR HIRE  
FREE CONVALESCENT FACILITIES**

and it also gives you access to trade union training and education...  
and even a new social life!

**SO, IF YOU'RE NOT IN A UNION, JOIN THE GMB TODAY**

For more information contact **Bev Gosling** at:

**GMB,  
Thorne House,  
152 Brent Street, Hendon, NW4 2DP  
Tel: 081 202 8272.**

**YOU CAN'T AFFORD NOT TO BE IN THE GMB**

# London Irish women's centre



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