



10TH ANNIVERSARY REPORT
FEBRUARY 1996

59 STOKE NEWINGTON CHURCH STREET, LONDON N16 0AR.
TEL: 0171 249 7318 / FAX: 0171 923 9599 / MINICOM: 0171 241 5140

ACCESS & TRANSPORT

Buses: 73 outside door
67 76 106 243
to Stoke Newington Church Street

British Rail: Stoke Newington

Nearest Tube: Finsbury Park - then 106 bus
Angel Tube - then 73 bus

Parking: Single Yellow Line outside entrance

Entrance: Level - main door to reception is 33 inches long
and 7 inches from floor

Toilet: Disabled toilet - door 31 inches wide,
2 horizontal hand rails,
39 inches long and 3 feet
from the door

Stairs: 18 steps to first floor. NO LIFT

OPEN TIMES: Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays
10am to 1pm and 2 to 5pm



MEMBERSHIP

You can become a member of the LIWC and we will put you on our mailing list. Fill in your name and address and return this form with your membership fee. Cheques and Postal Orders made payable to London Irish Women's Centre.

Individual Membership: £10 high waged, £7 low waged and £4 unwaged.
Group Membership £15 funded and £7 unfunded.

Name

Address

.....

..... Fee

(PRINT BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE)

Donations and gifts towards the work of the Centre are gratefully appreciated. You can give a gift without becoming a member.
Thank you for your support.

REPORT 1995 LONDON IRISH WOMEN'S CENTRE



At the Launch of the Centre -
Festivities and Celebration
PHOTO BY: JOANNE O'BRIEN

INTRODUCTION

The London Irish Women's Centre was established in 1982 to identify and meet the needs of Irish women in Greater London. In February 1986 we opened our premises at 59 Stoke Newington Church Street and we now celebrate 10 years of being open as a 'Centre'.

This report comes to you as a celebration of our achievements since the Centre's inception. We look at why there is a need for such an organisation, what has contributed to the Centre's success in achieving its goals and what its contribution to London has been - and is.

The Centre is a feminist collective. Its existence has grown out of the unaddressed needs of Irish women immigrants living in London. This omission was identified by a number of individual Irish feminist women who came together to work towards establishing a centre.

The specific problems identified were manifold. They were also double-edged because Irish women face exposure to the deeply-bedded layers of anti-Irish prejudice in British society in addition to the sexism and misogyny of a patriarchal culture. This gave rise to problems

ranging from domestic violence, reproductive rights, low pay, lack of childcare, sexual harassment, anti-Irish jokes, infringement of civil liberties, clustering in non-skilled and low paid employment, poor housing conditions, benefit problems, homelessness etc.

However it was identified that the major undercurrent to all of this was a lack of recognition of Irish women, a level of invisibility which was pervasive, and a stultifying lack of voice which created an atmosphere in which endemic discrimination could take place.

Even at a casual glance, it was clear that there was no representation of Irish women either within or outside their own community - no information, no profile no collected data no recorded history within their own nation, no images in photography, video, film or within the written mediums of expression and no social or employment networks in London.

What followed is that the Irish female identity was subsumed under her male counterpart. She had no real identity of her own except that given to her by others. Therefore she didn't really exist. And the work that she performed - like the daily caring for

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UACHTARÁN NA hÉIREANN
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT ROBINSON

For the past 10 years the London Irish Women's Centre has provided a vital range of advisory services and practical assistance for the estimated 300,000 Irish women in the Greater London area. Be it advice about housing or welfare, counselling or any of a host of helpful services, the Centre continues to be "there" for women in need.

The Anniversary Report shows in great detail the extent of the assistance provided by the Centre, the dedication of its experienced staff and management, the value of its links with statutory and voluntary agencies. The Centre has become a powerful voice for the disadvantaged and marginalised and continues to expand its influence and effectiveness.

As Patron I am pleased to be associated with the Centre and welcome this opportunity to value the outstanding contribution that it has made to the welfare of Irish women in London. I congratulate all concerned on your wonderful achievements during the past 10 years and wish you continuing success in the future.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Robinson".

MARY ROBINSON
PRESIDENT

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children and relatives, cooking, cleaning, nursing—none of this was validated. Her status as an immigrant was taken for granted in her home country but as an Irish person in Britain she was subject and vulnerable to stereo-typing and scapegoating.

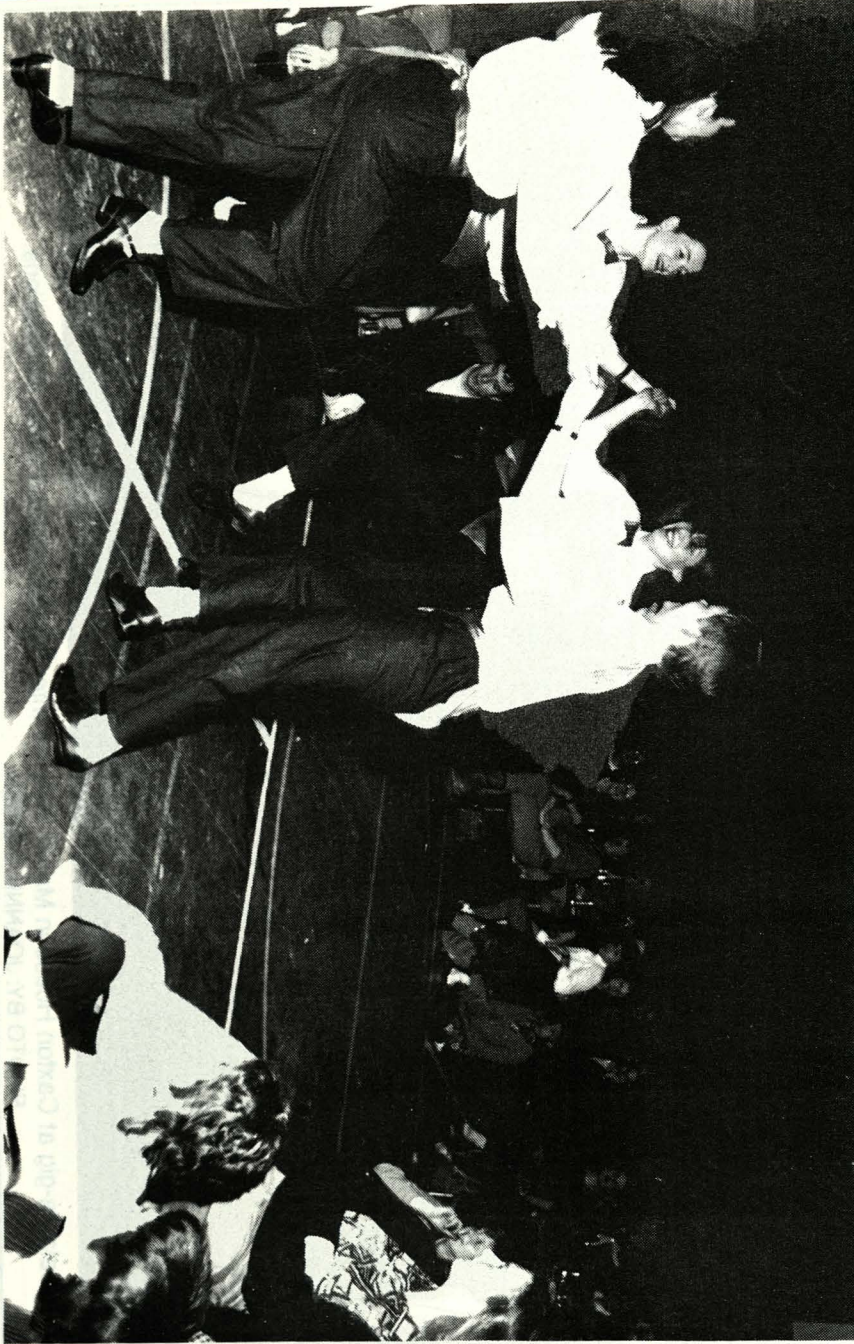
These conditions of her life often operated at a subliminal level but would rise to confront her at various times i.e. during a family crisis she could find herself being a carer for people living in Ireland and isolated from extended family support. She was also likely to feel particularly vulnerable during periods of intense anti-Irish racism. These problems have been compounded by prejudiced and distorted reporting on events relating to Northern Ireland and have given rise to intense alienation and isolation.

Many women were experiencing multiple discrimination. Traveller women and lesbians were suffering severe degrees of exclusion. Single mothers were marginalised. Reference to the lives of disabled women was completely non-existent.



The debut performance of Sheela-na-gig at Caxton House in March 1986 for International Women's Day celebrations.
PHOTO BY: JOANNE O'BRIEN

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The Hairy Mary's at a Ceili in Caxton House in 1986
PHOTO BY: JOANNE O'BRIEN

In addition Irish women born outside of Ireland had other aspects of experience which needed to be addressed.

It was clear that the scope of these problems was immense but that all of these dimensions needed to be taken into account if the Centre was to truly set of experiences which needed to be addressed.

Although the Centre 'opened' its doors in 1986 the story began before that. Here are some of the features during the years of growth since the Centre's inception.

In 1983...

The Centre:

Obtained funding from the Greater London Council which permitted the employment of one full-time coordinator to develop the 'embryonic' centre. This post was taken up as a job-share.

(June 1983)

Established the first classes for Irish women in Irish traditional music and dance and language. (through Islington Adult Education).

In 1984...

We called together 28 women delegates who presented 4 papers on the needs of Irish women, to a Greater London Conference on the Irish community (Feb). This was the first formal declaration of the general and specific needs of Irish women.

We hosted 'Irish Women; our experience of emigration' the first Irish women's conference held in London. Over 200 in attendance. Four papers were presented including one by researcher Mary Lennon which documented for the first time the scale of Irish women's emigration. A report and transcript was published.

We purchased the dis-used factory at 59 Church Street with funds from the Greater London Council The work of inviting tenders and converting this into a usable centre began. (Dec)

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In 1985...

We set up the Irish Community Radio Group which lobbied in

We hosted 'Turning The Tide', the second Irish women's conference in London with speakers workshops, entertainment and published a report. (Sept)

DID YOU KNOW THAT POPULATION...

- There are more than 300,000 Irish born women in Greater London, with 136,887 being born in Ireland.
- Irish women make up of 53.4% of the Irish community in London.
- Irish women comprise approximately 10% of London's female population.
- Since 1981 the population of young Irish women (20-24 age group) has increased by 81.5% and older women by 22.1%.
- Since 1981 the 0-14 age group increased by 105.6%.

In 1986...

The Centre was officially opened on 1st February with major celebrations - Nell McCafferty, journalist, writer and activist from Ireland, opened the champagne. The event attracted much media coverage both here and in Ireland. More than 200 women celebrated the day in the Centre's newly refurbished building.

conjunction with other groups to establish an opening for community radio for London's Irish community. This work was later continued by Irish Women in Islington Group.

In conjunction with Irish Women in Islington the Centre sponsored the promotion of 'Macalla' - the all-female 23 piece band from Ireland playing traditional Irish music. Macalla played in several London venues for International Womens' Day celebrations. (Mar)

We facilitated the setting up of Sheela-na-gig, a 15 member all female band playing traditional Irish music - who performed in several London venues for mark celebrations for International Women's day. Sheela-na-gig later disbanded and was replaced by The Sheelas.



Picket at Irish Centre in Camden, 17th march 1983, during Gemma Hussy Minister for Education, Ireland visit - support of the Right To Choose Campaign.
PHOTO BY: JOANNE O'BRIEN

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Conference Workshop 1989

We established an arts/cultural aspect to the work with the installation of a dark room, video and radio production facilities and a public address system.

We hosted the Irish Womens' Arts Festival '*Carraige agus an Fharraige*'; this featured the films '*Plain Tales*' by Nuala O Faoileain and Prism 1 & Prism 11 an exhibition of art. The festival also included literary and social/ceile events, drama, music, video, photography and sports.

In 1987...

We hosted '*Irish Women our lives - our identity*' the 3rd Conference of Irish women in London. This brought together more than 20 groups working for Irish women. A report was published.

In 1988...

We hosted '*Irish Women Today*' the 4th Irish womens' conference. A report was published. The Irish Women's Housing Action group emerged from this conference. This campaign group was established to draw attention to the growing problems of homelessness amongst Irish women. IWHAG has continued to meet since 1988 and has effectively lobbied politicians on a whole range of housing issues in addition to producing information for Irish women. The group has been co-ordinated by the Centre.

In 1989...

We hosted the '*5th Conference for Irish Women*' and published a report from this.

In 1990...

In conjunction with The Irish Womens' Housing Action Group (IWHAG), we produced '*What to do if You are Homeless*' an 8 page booklet outlining rights for homeless families under the 1985 Housing Act. '*What to do if You are Homeless*' came in response to an alarming increase in the number of reported incidences of discrimination at Homeless Persons Sections. The booklet provided practical advice and information for women in this situation.

In 1991...

The Centre jointly produced an information leaflet with IWHAG, for women who could not afford to pay the poll tax and did not know their rights. This was launched at a public information session with a solicitor present. We also updated '*What to do if You are Homeless*' in response to demand.

In 1992...

In conjunction with IWHAG we produced a 16 page booklet called '*Information for Private Tenants and Single Homeless*'. This time the needs of newly arrived immigrants and those dependent upon the private rented sector for housing were addressed.

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The booklet was described by SHELTER as 'quite the best publication of its kind that we have encountered'.

In 1993...

We published 'ROOTS & REALITIES; a profile of Irish women in London'. Taking data from the 1991 census, Labour Force surveys, mental health research and other data this report documents the demographic, employment, housing and mental health statistics of Irish women in Greater London. The publication includes discussion articles on culture/history, anti-Irish racism and civil liberties and updated research on minority groups in the Irish women's community. The report has provided essential material for individuals and organisations who are promoting the needs of Irish women in London eg Irish housing associations, women's groups, educational institutions, colleges etc.

In 1994...

we reproduced and updated 'Information for the Single Homeless and Private Tenants' in response to increased demand from the single homeless and those attempting to negotiate their way through the housing market.

In 1995...

We published 'Rights for Travellers' (Cearta na dTaistealaithe), a comparative research document on the provisions for Travellers in local authority sites in Greater London. The report contains original research and this combined with other data on Travellers renders this document an important weapon for those working for Travellers rights.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

SUPPORT...

Over the years the Centre has lent its voice of support to individuals and group of women experiencing discrimination in many different ways. This has included discriminatory practices by statutory authorities, employers, and the media. Examples include; Joanna Hayes ('Kerry babies case'(1985); Dunnes Stores Strikers in Dublin(1985); Right to Choose (1983); Maire O Shea campaign (1985); the discriminatory practice of stripsearching women prisoners (started in 1982); the practice by some local authorities to issue travel warrants to Irish families to return to Ireland (1988); pressurising the Irish Post newspaper to print the word 'lesbian' (1986). The work of the Centre is full of such examples. The conferences provided an opportunity for women to come together and share issues of common concern. The sharing of common concerns in a safe environment gave strength and inspiration to many. Several support and lobbying groups were born from these beginnings.



In Support of Joanne Hayes, 1985,
(outside the Irish Embassy, London).
PHOTO BY: JOANNE O'BRIEN



At the Launch of *Roots & Realities* in 1993; from left Jean Cross, (LIWC) Brid Boland, (LIWC) Mary Lennon (co-editor of 'Across the Water') and Bronwen Walters (researcher)

CONSULTATION...

The conferences also served as a large scale consultation programme for the Centre. From the mandates given at these events the Centre developed work procedures and goals which corresponded with the needs of the community. It was clear from this that providing a frontline welfare and housing advice service was vital. In addition, the Centre was also required to be a body which will represent the community interests at a wider level, 'creating a voice for the voiceless'.

Our work has had important repercussions throughout the Irish community. Many organisations have developed their own initiatives now taking account of womens' needs in a way that didn't happen before.

REPRESENTATION...

We have spoken at hundreds of conferences and seminars over the years in the interests of Irish women. We have participated in numerous research and policy panels ie. *'Irish Women in London'* report (LSPU 1988) *'Limited Opportunities'* (CARA 1994). Until the abolition of the Greater London Council (GLC) in 1986, the Centre had a representative on the GLC Women's Committee.

FRONTLINE...

Nevertheless, the main focus of the Centre's service has been frontline - housing and welfare advice, practical information, drop-in, counselling and support. This means meeting the need directly. In some cases users need information which will enable them to deal with their difficulty by themselves. In many cases the Centre has to pressurise the statutory and voluntary organisations on behalf of our users ie. DSS, Homeless Persons Units, etc. In other cases the Centre provides, for instance the counselling or emotional support that is required. In all these processes we are committed to working alongside other agencies.

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Some case examples might illustrate the different levels at which some problems need to be addressed.

*'Mary, a single parent from Belfast contacted the Centre for help when she became homeless. In the early hours of the morning following the IRA ceasefire announcement (1/9/1994) she was awoken to the sound of men kicking in her door and shouting 'we'll get you, f**** IRA queer bitch'.*

emotional pain. A stranger found her crying in a park near the Centre and brought her here for help. We got her rehoused and she took up the counselling service at the Centre to help her deal with her emotional distress'.

'Margaret came to this country with her 6 children after suffering repeated physical violence from her husband. The Centre assisted her

DID YOU KNOW THAT.

WE OFFER...

- Housing and welfare advice on the telephone and by appointment.
 - Counselling and support by a qualified counsellor.
 - A telephone information line.
 - A young women's advice group in Central London.
 - A creche for all events.
 - Classes for children.
 - A room for hire.
- Special Information sessions on a range of issues.
 - Publications and research on Irish women.
 - Special outreach visits ie, to Traveller sites.
 - A meeting place for women's groups.
 - Speakers at seminars and conferences.

The Centre assisted Mary in persuading the Council to rehouse her on racial harassment grounds'.

'Breda aged 75, needed the Centre help when the local authority refused to provide her with a telephone under the Chronically Sick and Disabled persons Act 1970. The Centre worked with her GP in persuading the Council to review its decision and managed to secure Breda a place on the 'Aisling' holiday trip to Donegal at the same time. Breda is a regular visitor to the Centre'.

'Siobhan from Dublin aged 21 came to London when her parents separated at home. She knew nobody and was isolated and in great

in obtaining emergency rehousing and to make contact with the 'Travellers and Education Project' to settle her children. We also made a successful application for Disability Living Allowance and continue to provide emotional and practical support to her and her family'.

Many Irish women feel safer to come to the Centre than to go to another advice agency. Staff at the Centre, apart from being well qualified in their own right, also have a specialised understanding and knowledge of certain situations which are particular to being Irish, to being an immigrant and to being a woman.



Members of the Irish Women's Housing Action Group at the launch of 'Information for Private Tenants and Single Homeless'.

COPING WITH CHANGE

The Centre has weathered many changes over the years the major ones being threatened and actual cuts in funding. The arts/cultural

project suffered a complete cutback in 1987 and other areas of welfare provision have suffered depletion due to a lack of resources.



Older Women's Workshop at the 1985 conference
PHOTO BY: JOANNE O'BRIEN

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Nell McCafferty
opens the Centre,
Feb. 1986
PHOTO BY:
JOANNE O'BRIEN

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of our regular funders - the London Boroughs Grants Scheme - and to our other regular funders - the DION Committee, Ireland Fund of Great Britain, the Irish Youth Foundation and the EC.

We believe we deliver a good service and this has been verified by many satisfied users. Day in day out the workers at the Centre are meeting with clients who need our specialised help and advice. To meet these needs in the continuing climate of public service cutbacks, benefit cuts, housing shortages and general increased poverty, is an immense challenge. It requires the pulling together of every single resource available.

ACHIEVEMENT...

The Centre manages to continue to address these frontline needs. We are proud of our track record on this. We are doubly proud that alongside this we have also been able to produce some significant publications over the years which we believe have long standing value and are there for everyone to use - enabling others to act on their situations. These reports and publications have described with personal testimony and statistical evidence, the

conditions of Irish women in London, and put their needs '*on the map*'. Something substantial and tangible exists now where nothing was before. It is no longer possible to deny the fact that this group have particular needs.

EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT...

Good employment practices exist at the Centre because successive management and staff teams have worked together over the years to achieve this. Effective support and supervision structures are part of this. This includes team building, time management training, work planning, equal opportunities and interview skills. There is a commitment to decent working conditions in the Centre's employment contracts which are regularly reviewed and updated with both management and union input. We have maintained this commitment in a time when workers and trade unionists have been under attack. The result is that the Centre has benefited from a small staff turnover. Individual staff members can give themselves time to build up expertise, experience and knowledge which is inputted to the work of the Centre. Staff remain committed and everyone benefits - most of all the people who need the Centre.

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At the Centre's AGM - Oct. 1995, Users, Staff and Management
PHOTO BY: JOANNE O'BRIEN

Working as a collective has boosted the culture of stability and support which the Centre has capitalised upon in its work. The building of trust and good communication in a working team means that individual strengths are valued, there is place for learning and development and room for individual and collective initiatives. It means that the organisation can respond more flexibly to changes in community need. Collective working adds to the Centre's sense of purpose working within the framework of feminist principles. We believe that our survival and achievements are a credit to both feminists and to collective working.

DID YOU KNOW THAT

HOUSING...

- Irish women are well below the white/UK-born population in owner occupation figures (44% compared to 59%).
- Irish-born women are over-represented in local authority housing (29% compared to 23% of the overall population).
- Irish women are over-represented in privately rented housing (17% compared to 12% in the overall population).
- Research shows a distinct disadvantage for Irish women in 'quality of housing' indices.
- Irish women are over-represented in figures on homelessness.

FUTURE PLANS...

The priority for the Centre is to maintain the existing frontline welfare and housing advice, counselling and information service for Irish women.

Our priority is also to continue to represent the interests of our community to statutory and voluntary agencies and to respond flexibly and appropriately to changing needs over time.

In 1996/7, we plan to build on the extension of the outreach advice surgeries began as pilot programmes in 1995/6 - the welfare surgery at Solais Anois premises in South London, for victims of domestic violence and the weekly surgery at West Hampstead Women's Centre for residents in North West London.

We have identified a demand to establish a group for older women - hopefully running a series of these annually.

In 1996/7 we aim to republish and expand '*Roots and Realities - a profile of Irish women*' and to relaunch this document at a welfare conference for Irish women.

We believe that these are realistic targets to aim for in the short-term future. Longer term plans will be consolidating the work of the Centre and respond to changing needs as we approach the Millennium. We look forward to remaining an effective force for change in addressing the effects of poverty and disadvantage. We believe that this can be achieved by building on the assets and resources we already have. We will continue to enlist the support and commitment of individual women within the community.

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Launch of the booklet 'What to do if you are homeless' with speakers Anna Bowman (Women's representative) from the Federation of Housing Associations, Melanie Pine from the Irish Embassy, Celine Barry and Angie Birtill from the centre.
PHOTO BY: SASS TUFFIN



DID YOU KNOW THAT

MENTAL HEALTH...

- Psychiatric admissions for women born in the Irish Republic are almost double that of English-born women.
- Irish women have an exceedingly high rate of admission for the diagnosis of depression - more than twice that for Irish men and 2.5 times the rate of English born women.
- Irish men and Irish women have a comparable rate of overall psychiatric admission.
- Irish women have the highest rate of admission of all groups for every diagnosis except schizophrenia (in this they are exceeded by Afro-Caribbean people) and alcohol abuse (in this they are exceeded by Irish men).

COMMENTS FROM USERS

'When I came to London I was totally overwhelmed with everything. My world was falling apart. I was over the edge. The Centre was a life line for me'.

Sarah

'When I first came to the LIWC I was desperate and I think if it hadn't been for their support I would have had a nervous breakdown. Knowing that they are there for me keeps me safe'.

Janet

'My husband and I could never have managed to sort out all the poll tax and disability problems without the centre; thank God for the centre on Church Street'.

Iris

'Coming to the Centre gave me a sense of pride in being Irish I didn't know I lacked that until then. Now it feels really good to be Irish'.

Alison

'I didn't know where I was last year. I was devastated by what was happening to me and now I feel safe again'.

Kay

(victim of domestic violence)

'When I went to the Centre I felt so bad I thought I would never be better. I've got my life back and can still can hardly believe it'.

Sally

'Dear Geraldine, I am very happy now that I have a beautiful place of my own. I can not thank you enough for your help and support'.

Susan

'I am getting my rent sorted out. Many thanks to you and the charity. I pray for your good and hard work'.

Phoebe

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Conference Workshop 1984



At the Launch of
'Rights for Travellers'
Dec. 1995, Angie Birtill, Mary
Moloney, Josie Lee and Nellie
Power

PHOTOS BY: SASS TUFFIN

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Above:

Maggie O Keeffe, Shelagh O Connor and Angie Birtill at the Centre's stall in Finsbury Park at The Fleadh

Below:

At the Launch of 'Roots & Realities - in discussion with Fr. Jim Keily of the Irish Chaplaincy in Britain, Sean Hutton of the Federation of Irish Societies, is Brid Boland and Mary Crowe of the Centre



PRESS CUTTINGS

Moving advice for single, homeless women: Living in Britain is not a bed of roses

LONDON LETTER FRANK MILLAR

HERE is invaluable, important advice for many single, homeless Irish women thinking of coming over to the great metropolitan...

points are widespread throughout London. Starting housing this out are necessary to help...

enough for her to just accept accommodation. But her brother was threatened with eviction if the sharing arrangement continued...

lonies women only and gay and lesbian accommodation providers, and a simple guide through the maze of local housing responsibilities...

have agreed to put you up before you get off. Check that they haven't moved or gone on holiday...

doesn't mean, before you go, to be too hard a claimant. Most people have friends here, many may have spent a few days here during the...

get that sort of money, they are unlikely to want to leave Ireland. On arriving here, says Malachy, they get an awful shock when they see the cheapest beds in £20 a week...

THE IRISH TIMES Thursday May 20, 1993

WOMEN PROTEST AT ANTHOLOGY'S

Irish women are incensed and they're speechless. They have been insulted, denied and alienated...

SNUB

IRISH in Britain NEWS Dec. 20th 1991

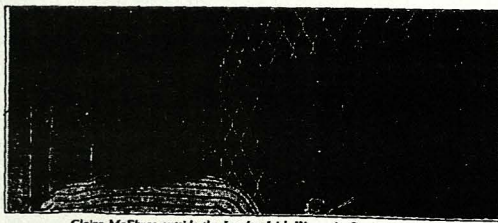
Commons after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, places of journalism and criticism, and other, historically significant writings.

Attitudes To Rape

society blames women when they are raped by men. Women are blamed by "being in the wrong place at the wrong time", "asking for it," saying "no" when they mean "yes" and like "kirts" and "nis attitude"

THE BLEAK SIDE OF LIFE FOR SO MANY OF LONDON'S IRISH

For every Irish success story in London, there are many more luckless tales of unemployment, homelessness and discrimination, according to the London Irish Women's Centre.



Claire McElwee outside the London Irish Women's Centre in Islington.

relation's house. When they can no longer do this, they often have nowhere else to go and end up sleeping in shelters or on the streets. 32% of the residents of London's short-stay hostels at any given time are Irish - a chilling indication of the degree of this enormous problem.

Many older women who have spent the most-part of their lives in London and have lived and worked there since the '40s are also living in substandard private rented and council housing. "The Irish network which existed in those days where you were put up in digs on arrival certainly doesn't exist now - if it ever did" Claire claims.

The London Irish Women's Centre

reports a number of cases of discrimination against Irish people - which in many cases, they put down to sheer racism. "Racism against the Irish does exist - this theory that we have integrated into the British system is disproven by the statistics. We speak the same language, but the majority are still second-class citizens". There are 33 boroughs in London, each of which has a different council - there is a huge variance between boroughs on their policies to demand more from their local council. There are a lot of examples where a woman who has moved out of her home because of violence or threats, who doesn't explain this fully to her council will be categorised as

"intentionally homeless" and won't qualify for further housing. The council's are often totally unsympathetic - their homeless sections will often be an engaged telephone and for someone who isn't familiar with the system, they won't know who else to contact" the housing officer comments. Likewise, the Centre claims that many councils treat Irish people "with contempt" and still treat them as outsiders. The racism issue is one which is deeply rooted in colonial and historic relations, according to Angie Birtell, also of the Centre.

The short-term solution to homelessness is often to put the person or family into bed and breakfast or private rented accommodation, which can vary enormously in quality. This arrangement can last as long as five years before a permanent home is found. During this time, the homeless person might have no contact with their council. Another problem which came to light about five years ago was the policy whereby councils issue homeless Irish people with a "travel warrant" which effectively means that a homeless person is given a ticket home. Although this situation has been tackled to some extent, it still does exist happen occasionally. "Because there are no State statistics being kept on the Irish community, we have a problem establishing exactly how deep many of the problems run. We do know that we get about 6,000 housing/welfare related enquiries to the centre each year and that is only the tip of the iceberg" Mary concludes.

The pain of a literary whitewash. The Irish Times, which reported the findings of the Centre's report, has been accused of whitewashing the findings of the Centre's report. The Centre claims that the report was a "literary whitewash" and that the Centre's findings were "whitewashed" by the Irish Times. The Centre also claims that the report was a "literary whitewash" and that the Centre's findings were "whitewashed" by the Irish Times.

IRISH WORLD 29/10/1993

Calling all Irish women in London

The London Irish Women's Centre (LIWC), 59 Stoke Newington Church Street, N16, holds its AGM on Wednesday of next week, January 19, at 6.30 p.m. The LIWC provides a wide range of services for all Irish women in London, including housing and welfare rights advice, counselling, children's nursery and outreach work with young women and travellers. The AGM provides the opportunity for Irish women to hear more about this work.

PETERBOROUGH
The weekly Irish Peterborough Soup Kitchen, which provides hot meals for the homeless, many of whom are Irish, is in desperate need of funds. It holds a fund-raising Irish evening at the St. John Fisher School Assembly Hall, Park Lane, on Saturday, February 2, with live

Details from Debra Walsh, on 081-981 7466.
LONDON LEITRIM ASSOCIATION
The association holds its 38th AGM at London Irish Centre, Murray Street, Camden, NW1, on Sunday, January 30, at 3.00 p.m.



WITH PETER KENNEDY

IRISH POST
15/01/94

Irish women who are interested in serving on the management committee should write to LIWC before January 19 saying why they wish to stand and what commitment they can make.
A public meeting entitled 'Provision for Irish Women in the 1990s' will take place on Thursday of next week, January 20, at 7.00 p.m., at the London Women's Centre, 4 Wilde Court, Highborn, WC1. This meeting provides the opportunity for Irish women to have an in-depth discussion on issues arising from the LIWC report, Roots and Realities, launched last summer. This document brings together up-to-date information on Irish women's population, housing and employment conditions in London, as well as addressing unmet needs in areas such as culture, anti-racism, mental health and civil liberties, as well as addressing unmet needs in areas such as travellers, lesbians and the disabled. There will be a singer, craic, parking and disabled access.
The LIWC is the venue on Monday, February 7, at 6.30 p.m., for a public meeting entitled 'Housing Options for Irish Women in London'. It is planned as an informative session for Irish women who are planning to rent or buy property in Ireland.
These events are for Irish women only. Access for disabled people and a crèche are provided. For details, ring 01-249 7314.

Irish Women Picket Field Day

Members and supporters of the Irish Women's Centre in London picketed outside the South Bank Centre on Monday night in protest that female writers had been "omitted" from the new Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing.

The Anthology covers the period from 600 AD to the present, is 5,000 pages long and costs £150.

THE IRISH WORLD
Friday Dec 13th 1991

IRISH POST
August 24, 1991

Irish Women's Centre angry at Telegraph jibe

A complaint is being made to the Press Council by the London Irish Women's Centre after Sunday newspaper criticisms of its "superstition".
The Sunday Telegraph's Maudsley column made its comment last weekend in an overall critique of the London Borough Grants Scheme (LBGS), complaining that London paid tax payers were asked to hand over £27.5 million last year to "this beautiful body".
The article bemoaned the fact that with "the institution of Conservatives, Labour, boroughs have managed to fund many of their hermit pet causes".
The London Irish Women's Centre received £28,376 in grant aid from the LBGS, and members have taken exception to the Telegraph piece in its entirety, as well as specific criticisms of them.
The Maudsley column states: "Superstition, which I have railed against before, rears its hydra head, in

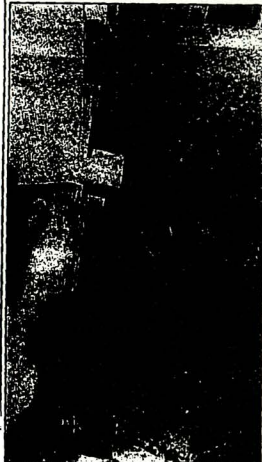
form, ethnic form with the London Irish Women's Centre", and went on to ask why "superstitious" groups such as the Federation of Black Housing organisations also receive grant aid. It stated: "Is this not a form of discrimination? Perhaps we are all equal in the eyes of the grant-givers but none of us are more equal than others."
A spokeswoman for the London Irish Women's Centre told The Irish Post this week that the Sunday Telegraph article was "racist, sexist and homophobic reporting", adding that it unjustly attacks minority groups.
The spokeswoman added: "The least this newspaper could have done was research the needs of Irish women in London. We will be making a complaint to the Press Council as soon as possible."
Overall, there are five Irish groups requesting aid from the LBGS. As well as the women's centre, are

Corra, An Teach, the Action Group for Irish Youth, and the Great Irish Adventure Service. The total budget allocated to these five groups is £250,000.
All five conveyed largely unenthusiastic feedback from the last round of grant reviews earlier this year, despite some Conservative objections. The only casualty was Corra, which had £18,000 cut and is to receive £100,000 in the current financial year.
The LBGS was set up in 1986, taking over many responsibilities from the disbanded GLC. Last weekend's Sunday Telegraph piece said of this: "When the Greater London Council ceased to exist over five years ago, several tensels of of that huge octopus continued to enjoy a plentiful life of their own. One such is the London Borough Grants Scheme. (The whole affair would make a wonderful subject for a play by Mr Ken Livingstone)".

THE IRISH POST
March 21, 1992

An Irish nurse suffered the indignity of being asked to include "an Irish day" in her diary, writes PAUL O'BRIEN.
Her case was highlighted last week in a national conference on women and housing staged near noon on Monday, March 18, at the National Federation of Housing Associations, in London. Irish Women's Centre, 59 Stoke Newington Church Street, N16, was represented by its president, Mary Robinson, and Dr. Liz Kelly, of the National Federation of Housing Associations, in London. The conference was held from April 9 to 11 at the Olympia, near Liverpool.

Irish women 'living in fear'



SPITTING OUT THE WORDS... Mary Robinson, President of the London Irish Women's Centre, in a speech at the National Federation of Housing Associations, in London, last week. She is flanked by Dr. Liz Kelly, of the National Federation of Housing Associations, in London, who is speaking.

Demand for a better deal for Travellers

Pubs, laundrettes and other businesses with "No Travellers" signs in their windows should be closed down if they fail to remove them, a new report insists.

It complains that Travellers pay rent and council tax but get little in return and calls for a London-wide body to ensure this particular community gets fair treatment.

The report, launched this week by the London Irish Women's Centre (LIWC), claims: "Discriminatory legislation, combined with the failure of local authorities to provide properly serviced sites, has created a climate in which it is acceptable for Travellers to be barred from pubs, laundrettes and other facilities". In many cases, these businesses are Irish.

Angie Birtill, the author of the report, wants to make it mandatory for local councils to provide temporary and permanent sites for Travellers so that housing associations should be helping to build them.

She wants...

permanent sites pay weekly rent, the highest of which - £55.00 - is in Hackney, the lowest being £8.00 in Lambeth. Lambeth charged the highest council tax - £12.11 a week - and Bromley, at £6.03, was the cheapest.
For that, they received a variable quality of service in the likes of running water, electricity, flush toilets and refuse collections, but just

10 of the 22 councils provided laundry facilities and just six offered play areas for the under-fives.

Best Council is the only London local authority to survey charge rent and council tax temporary sites.

Angie Birtill is...

IRISH POST
16/12/95

Irish women keeping a high profile

There's plenty happening these days at the London Irish Women's Centre, 59 Church Street, Stoke Newington, N16 (Telephone 071-249 7314). Activities or visits vary widely in being staged there between 7.00 and 8.30 p.m. on Thursdays from April 16 onwards (£28.00 (£28.00 normally) and later Mary McLaughlin will encourage women who feel they are not being heard to have their own say. She will have career really had the handicrafts before, handbags and cards. Facilities can be had on 071-249 7314.
Creative writing about any getting under way on Thursday from 7.00 to 8.30 p.m. and 12.30 p.m. to 2.00 p.m. Also on this day, there are only £1.00 each, and there are open house of beginners' and advanced level.
Irish language classes are starting at the centre for a new term, from Friday of next week, 7.00 to 8.30 p.m. The £1.00 (£1.00 normally) fee includes a book and a copy of the course material. The above course starts on 071-249 7314.

THE IRISH POST
April 13, 1991

PRESIDENT SUPPORTS WOMEN'S GROUP

President Mary Robinson showed her support for the London-based Irish Women's Housing Action Group last week when she sent a personal letter endorsing the relaunch of their pamphlet on Irish women and homelessness.

The President's message of support was read out by DION chairperson, Melanie Pine, at a meeting in the London Irish Women's Centre last Wednesday night. The pamphlet, What To Do If You Are Homeless, advises Irish women

on their housing rights and is to be funded by DION. The packed meeting was attended by women's groups who have seen the trauma of homelessness themselves. Melanie Pine spoke of the need for

Irish women to speak out about homelessness. "Too many," she said, "were prepared to put up with unsatisfactory conditions rather than bring attention to their plight."

"Although women make up over half of Irish immigrants in Britain, only one-quarter use the various agencies available to them for advice."

The pamphlet is available from the Irish Women's Housing Action Group based at 59 Stoke Newington Church

IRISH NEWS
March 20th, 1992

PUBLICATIONS

REVIEW

ROOTS AND REALITIES - A PROFILE OF IRISH WOMEN IN LONDON

Roots and Realities is a profile of Irish Women's lives in London. This report is one of the most comprehensive produced on the subject, it builds on previous research; for example *The Irish Women in London* report completed by Browne Walters in 1988. *Roots and Realities* contains valuable information on housing, employment and mental health. It also provides information about the different women that make up the Irish Community (Older Women, Disabled Women, Travellers, Lesbian Women and Second Generation Irish Women). What is important about it is that it places these issues in the context of life in an immigrant community in London. This is vital to the understanding of why Irish Women face particular difficulties concerning housing, employment, civil liberties, etc..

The first two sections of the report deal with Anti-Irish Racism and Irish Women's Culture. This background gives an insight into the social context which underlies Irish Women's experience.

Anti-Irish Racism: This section looks at anti-Irish racism in great detail. Firstly by providing us with some useful definitions, and then by giving an historical background to the emergence of anti-Irish racism. It then goes on to look at how Anti-Irish racism is perpetuated through institutional practices and secondly, through attitudes that are prevalent in society, such as the use of stereotypes in the media, Anti-Irish jokes, etc.. It shows that Anti-Irish racism is embedded in British society, and looks at the effects of it on the lives of Irish people.

Irish Women's Culture: This section firstly looks at how Irish culture has flourished in

London since the 1940's. It states that cultural expression is particularly important to a community that is not properly acknowledged within the mainstream culture in Britain. In the 80's Irish Groups also began to develop a strong political voice challenging the prejudice in that mainstream culture.

It goes on to look at the position of Irish women and how they are excluded and oppressed in mainstream Irish culture. How Irish Women have found their own voice and recognition in a wide range of forums, from cultural groups to groups campaigning on a whole range of issues affecting women's lives.

This section is important because it examines the cultural position of Irish people in British society, then focuses on women. It looks back to what we have lost through the devastating affects of patriarchal culture and colonialism. It concentrates on how Irish people are affected by the loss of the Irish language. How this leaves you without a basic confidence in yourself and your roots, the themes of loss and exclusion presented here can be seen as a pattern throughout the report. They are shown here to be part of the processes that operate within Anti-Irish racism and patriarchal culture.

The sections in the report that deal with particular groups of Irish women will be useful to advisers. For instance, the section on older women looks at the areas in London these women live, the work they do and the accommodation they live in. Many moved into tied accommodation because of their work, and have had particular difficulties in moving into the housing market.

Housing: The section most relevant for advisers is the section on housing. It presents the most up to date research. Taking data from the 1991 census, it shows that the proportion of Irish people in owner occupation is still lower than the white population as a whole. Irish

LONDON IRISH WOMEN'S CENTRE PUBLICATIONS

Roots and Realities; a profile of Irish women in London 1993

Roots and Realities brings together up to date information on Irish Women's population, housing and employment conditions in London, making comparisons between 1981 and 1991 census data, and various Labour Force Surveys. Using a wide range of research sources, the document contains challenging discussions on aspects of Irish women's culture, anti-Irish racism, mental health and civil liberties that will be relevant to all Irish women in this country, and the advice, welfare and women's centres who have users who are Irish women. *Roots and Realities* also covers the perspectives of more marginalised groups within the Irish women's community including Travellers, lesbians, disabled and second-generation. It is a detailed, thought-provoking and uncompromising look at our community and a valuable aide in Equal Opportunities training. **Cost £3.00 Published July 1993, A4 size. ISBN No: 0-9521522-0-7.**

What to do if you are Homeless

What to do if you are Homeless covers the basic information needed by Irish women who emigrate to London and are entitled to help from Local Authorities under Part 3 of the Housing Act 1985. It covers the legal definition of homelessness and local authority duty to you once you fulfil these conditions. Lists Irish advice agencies, law centres and organisations who support Irish people in temporary accommodation. **Cost 50p, Updated 1991, A5 size, 11 pages.**

Information for the Single Homeless and Private Tenants

Irish People depend upon the private rented sector for housing more than many other ethnic minority groups in this country. The problems that confronted them in the 1940's and 1950's (No Irish, No Blacks) are as prevalent today as ever. This booklet is intended for those not eligible for Local Authority housing, it covers preparation for emigration, options once in London, where to look for accommodation and explains different types of tenancies, paying rent, repairs, dealing with harassment and unlawful evictions, other housing options and advice on squatting and sleeping rough. Lists Housing advice agencies, Irish advice agencies, day centres, law centres, local authorities and specialist groups dealing with women, children, domestic violence and rape, disabilities, ex-offenders, HIV/AIDS, lesbians, mental health, older women, parents/carers, students, travellers and young women. **Cost 50p Published May 1993, updated June 1995, A5 size, 24 pages.**

Rights for Travellers

This report provides detailed and updated information on existing provision for Travellers in London. The report draws upon evidence from 22 councils, amounting to two thirds of London's local authorities and contains the views of Travellers and organisations working with them. It places the current position of Travellers in an historical and political context and examines the impact of discriminatory legislation upon Travellers' lives. The report highlights the lack of adequate and appropriate provision for Travellers in London and puts forward over 30 recommendations calling for drastic action and culturally sensitive policies. **Cost £2 Published December 1995, A4 size ISBN no: 0-9521522-1-5.**

SHAC INFORMATION BULLETIN

SHAC INFORMATION BULLETIN
Nov. 1993

WOMEN COMBAT

Young Irish Women coming to London can find it lonely, intimidating and dangerous, according to Geraldine Hickey of the London Irish Women's Centre.

In an effort to help these women,

her organisation has collaborated with the Kilburn Irish Youth Project to establish the young Irish Women's Group.

By Kenneth Kelleher

ISOLATION

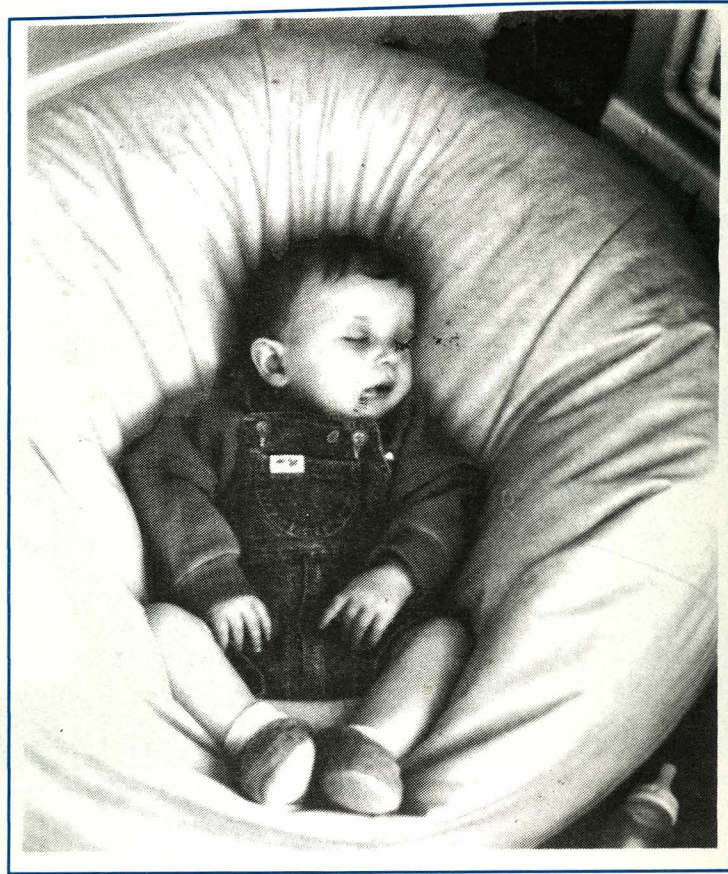
IRISH in Britain NEWS

REPORT 1995 LONDON IRISH WOMEN'S CENTRE



CRECHE FACILITIES

**CRECHE
FACILITIES**
cont'd...



REPORT 1995 LONDON IRISH WOMEN'S CENTRE

The Centre has survived and developed because many individual women have given their time, support and commitment at different times of the Centre's existence. The support has ranged from small words or letters of encouragement and appreciation to involvement and input on the management committee or as a volunteer. All of these gestures - whether they have been gathering names for petitions to save the Centre or writing letters of support - have made a real difference.

The women have come from a variety of backgrounds, protestant and catholic and other religious backgrounds, lesbian and heterosexual, women born in Britain of Irish parents, Traveller women and disabled women. Current staff and management members acknowledge the input of these women whose names are too numerous to mention.

The Dunnes Stores Strikers in London 1985



REPORT 1995 LONDON IRISH WOMEN'S CENTRE



Angie Birtill
giving advice
to a client in
her office
PHOTO BY:
SASS TUFFIN

REPORT 1995 LONDON IRISH WOMEN'S CENTRE

A commitment to implementing our Equal Opportunities policy has made the Centre a welcoming place for all marginalised groups. We aim to extend the involvement of disabled

women and older women in the management and development of the Centre in the coming years.

Present at the Irish Embassy protest regarding the Case of X - a 14 year old girl in Ireland who had become pregnant from being raped and was prevented from travelling to England for an abortion

PHOTO BY: CONNOR KELLY



REPORT 1995 LONDON IRISH WOMEN'S CENTRE

LONDON IRISH WOMEN'S CENTRE STATISTICS JAN-DEC 1995 TOTAL CASEWORK IN 1995 Visits between 1/1/95 and 31/12/95

Percentages: all cases reported

Advice Category	Females		Males		Total	
Housing	474	36%	0		474	36%
Employment	21	2%	0		21	2%
Education/Training	7	1%	0		7	1%
Financial	18	1%	0		18	1%
Health	179	14%	0		179	14%
Welfare Benefits	211	16%	0		211	16%
Family Services	50	4%	0		50	4%
Discrimination	266	20%	0		266	20%
Other Advice	75	6%	0		75	6%
Total Cases	1301	100%	0	0%	1301	100%

The highest increase in our advice and information service have been in housing, welfare rights, and counselling.

This year's housing casework figure of 1595 is an increase of 21.5% on 1994's casework.

This year's welfare casework figure of 1402 is an increase of 58% on 1994's figures.

This year's counselling casework figure of 499 is an increase of 32% on 1994's figures.

In 1995 a total of 6488 clients and agencies contacted the centre in person, by telephone and by post, an overall increase of 8% on 1994's figures.

Housing	1595
Welfare	1402
Counselling	499
Youth	197
Travellers	300
General	1533
TOTAL	5526
Drop-In	1048
Telephone	3760
Post	1680
TOTAL	6488

REPORT 1995 LONDON IRISH WOMEN'S CENTRE

Irish-born women in London boroughs

Irish-born women are clustered on the west side of Inner London and adjoining boroughs, notably in Brent (9.0%). However, growth in numbers between 1981 and 1991 was greatest in Outer London boroughs, notably Harrow (+33.3%), Waltham Forest (+32.9%), Enfield (+27.9%) and Hounslow (+27.5%).

Inner London boroughs still have high proportions of Irish-born women. If we multiply by 2.5 we can get an approximation to 1st and 2nd generation Irish, therefore for instance the total number of Irish women (including figures for second generation) in London Borough of Brent is 22.5% of the female population.

	% all F	Number	% change 81-91
Brent	9.0	11237	+10.8
Islington	7.1	6152	+3.7
Hamm & Fulham	6.9	5424	-4.3
Camden	6.4	5766	-3.0
Ealing	6.1	8676	+16.1
Westminster	5.6	5167	-14.2
Haringey	5.1	5388	+8.1
Harrow	5.0	5232	+33.3
Lambeth	4.8	6107	+5.5
Southwark	4.4	5056	+11.5
Wandsworth	4.4	5787	+1.2
Ken & Chelsea	4.2	3080	-13.2
Barnet	4.1	6379	+10.7
Hounslow	4.0	4192	+27.5
Hackney	3.9	3691	+3.1
Merton	3.6	3152	+20.4
Hillingdon	3.3	3939	+17.3
Lewisham	3.3	4008	+9.2
City of L.	3.3	66	+18.2
Enfield	3.2	4285	+27.9
Richmond	3.1	2653	+17.9
Redbridge	3.0	3573	+24.9
W. Forest	3.0	3337	+32.9
Kingston	3.0	2072	+6.0
Croydon	2.8	4603	+9.0
Greenwich	2.8	3053	+9.1
Sutton	2.5	2215	+18.6
T. Hamlets	2.4	1931	-0.3
Bromley	2.0	3093	+14.0
Newham	2.0	2189	+3.0
Bark & Dag	1.9	1417	+10.7
Havering	1.8	2139	-4.5
Bexley	1.6	1828	+6.9
Average	3.9	136.887	+8.6

Produced and published by Action Group for Irish Youth (AGIY) 1995

REPORT 1995 LONDON IRISH WOMEN'S CENTRE

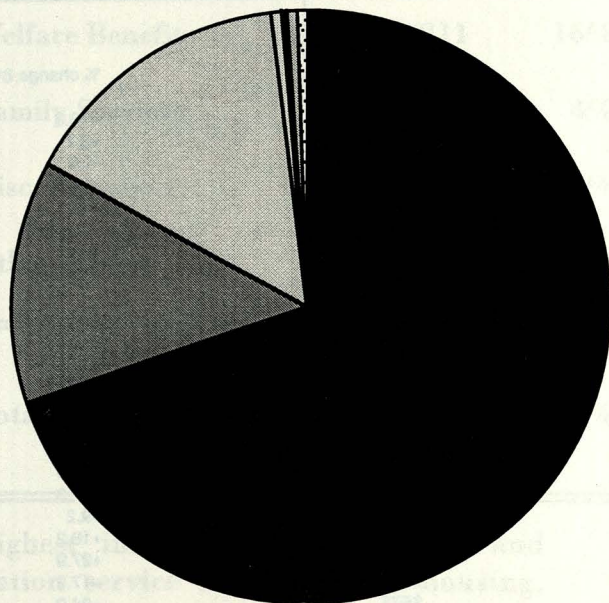
The Centre gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the London Boroughs Grants Committee, The Ireland Fund of Great Britain, Irish Youth Foundation, European Commission and Charity Projects, for our work in 1995/6.

In addition we acknowledge smaller donations from Allied Irish Bank and Camden Voluntary Sector Unit and to those individuals who have supported the Centre through donations and membership subscriptions.

THE FINANCIAL YEAR

LONDON IRISH WOMEN'S CENTRE - INCOME 1994/5

TOTAL INCOME: £130,174



■	London Borough Grants Unit	69.6%
■	EEC Funding	13.5%
■	Other Funding & Grants	14.8%
■	Bank Interest	0.6%
■	Counselling/Donations	0.2%
■	Membership	0.2%
■	Sales	0.5%
■	Miscellaneous	0.6%

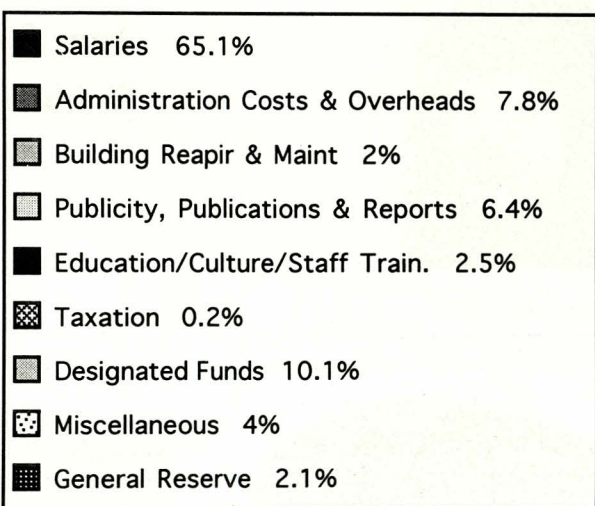
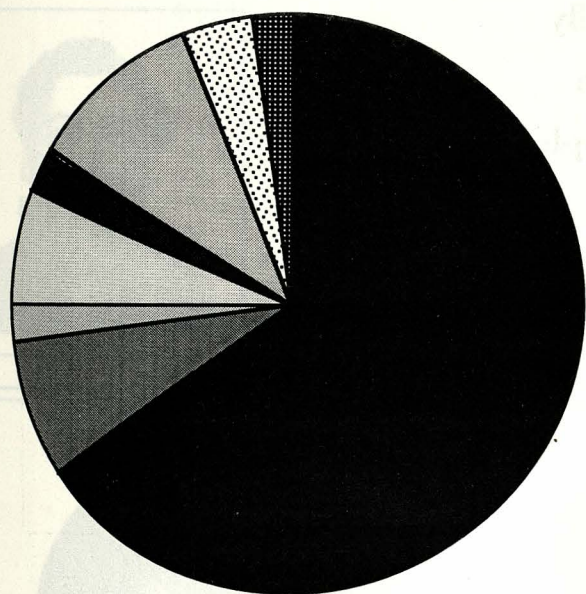
The Centre's fund-raising strategy was particularly successful during 1994/95 and 1995/96 and included a significant grant from EEC sources for both years. This financial position has enabled us to develop and expand our frontline services. From a one-off grant from 'Crisis', we were able to purchase a new telephone network with additional lines, which has provided increased capacity for telephone advice. The AIB also contributed to the purchase of an updated computer. Towards the end of 1994/95 the centre was able to establish a small number of designated funds to consolidate our services in the near future.

REPORT 1995 LONDON IRISH WOMEN'S CENTRE

We would like to thank all those organisations - women's groups, Irish organisations, housing associations and co-ops, umbrella organisations, youth groups, Travellers

organisations, counselling organisations, support groups and all other groups that we have liaised and worked with over the years in representing the needs of Irish women.

LONDON IRISH WOMEN'S CENTRE - HOW OUR INCOME WAS DISTRIBUTED



For 1995/96, these funds have enabled us to provide an increased service. We have established pilot evening advice surgeries in Kilburn; additional counselling provision with the appointment of a volunteer counsellor and an extra room for clients; and "contingency" / locum cover in the centre to prevent restriction of services due to staff illness or leave.

Our overall funding for 1996/97 has not yet been secured and the centre is exploring new possibilities for revenue, including the lotteries commission. The climate of public revenue has become increasingly competitive in recent years, but with a firm financial footing, increased demand for our services, and stability in workforce and organisation, these aspects of LIWC management will be at the forefront of our appeals for continued funding.

REPORT 1995 LONDON IRISH WOMEN'S CENTRE



Jean Cross
PHOTO BY: JOANNE O'BRIEN

CURRENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS...

Angela Garrigan

Jean Cross

Shelagh O Connor

Maria Cross

Mairead Crowley

Collette Harnett

Nora Connolly

Anne Barron

Siobhan Peoples



Nora Connolly



Shelagh O Connor
PHOTO BY: JOANNE O'BRIEN



Angela Garrigan
PHOTO BY: JOANNE O'BRIEN

REPORT 1995 LONDON IRISH WOMEN'S CENTRE



Angie Birtill

CURRENT STAFF...

Angie Birtill

(Housing and welfare rights)

Geraldine Hickey

(Youth and childcare)

Brid Boland

(Fundraising/administration and counselling)

Maggie O Keeffe

(Information and Reception)

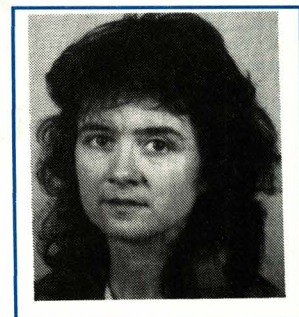
Kathy Walton

(Finance)

Angie Smith (Cleaner)



Geraldine Hickey

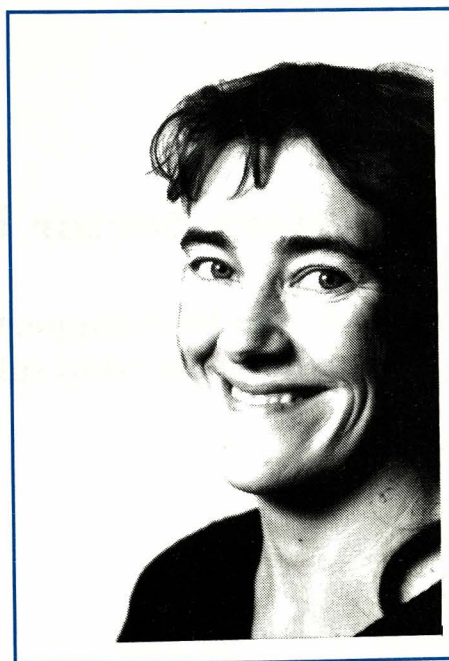


Brid Boland



Kathy Walton

PHOTO BY: JOANNE O'BRIEN



Angie Smith

PHOTO BY: JOANNE O'BRIEN

Maggie O'Keeffe
PHOTO BY: JOANNE O'BRIEN

Once again the Centre would like to thank our main funders:

- **London Borough Grants Committee**
- **The Ireland Fund of Great Britain**
- **Irish Youth Foundation**
- **European Commission and Charity Projects**
- **London Borough of Hackney**

We would also like to acknowledge smaller donations from:

- **Allied Irish Bank**
- **Camden Voluntary Sector Unit**

and to those individuals who have supported the Centre through donations and membership subscriptions.



FUNDED BY



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