

London Irish women's Centre

ANNUAL REPORT 2003

CHAIR'S REPORT

Much has changed at the London Irish Women's Centre over the last couple of years and the credit must lie with our energetic and committed staff team. The Management Committee of the Centre would like to thank all those who have worked and volunteered at the Centre and have played a part in extending the reach of our services and maintaining our strong reputation for excellence.

The most recent and obvious development is the work we have just completed to ensure that our building is more usable and accessible. We now have more effective office space, better meeting room and interview facilities and a more professional and user-friendly reception area. All of this gives us the physical capacity to continue to expand our services and to offer new facilities for Irish women in London.

Our plans for the future involve a significant expansion in the group work events and activities we are able to offer. Jennifer Trainor has made huge strides in developing the service with committed volunteers. We are now able to begin offering more social activities, providing space to reduce isolation and to enable women to explore and celebrate aspects of their Irish identity. LIWC has a strong track record of challenging myths and stereotypes and we want to continue in that rich tradition.

We will also be working to continue to consolidate our advice services. It hasn't been easy to recruit to a full strength staff team and we are particularly grateful to Arlene Boreland for all her work to ensure that the service is maintained to the highest standards. There is no doubt that there continues to be strong demand for the excellent quality, holistic service we can offer to meet the specific needs of Irish women. We are now working on new recruitment initiatives to ensure that we can bring the service back up to full capacity.

We also want to develop more of our second-tier policy and research work. Through our services we see at first hand the reality of the experiences of Irish women. Issues of housing, of benefits and employment difficulties, the issues facing Traveller women and the problems facing older Irish women as well as the gaps in the mental health system are all issues which continue to demand a wider hearing. We are also very conscious of the exclusion of Irish identity from mainstream social policy developments and of the exclusion of Irish women from much of what is portrayed as the Irish cultural 'norm'.

I would like to thank all those who have served on the Management Committee in recent years. They do so without pay and give up their time and energy just for the reward of seeing the Centre grow and develop. Thanks are due also to Maire Gaffney whose consultancy services we continue to value and to our accountant, Alison Ward, who is unfailingly patient and helpful.

Our Co-ordinator, Eithne Rynne, has been instrumental in steering us through the transition in our structures, and is off to pastures new at the Federation of Irish Societies. We are proud that Eithne has been appointed to such a significant job at an important time for the Irish community as a whole. She will be a hard act to follow, but we firmly believe that leading LIWC through the next exciting developments will be a rewarding and satisfying job and we are confident we will be able to find a worthy successor.

Kate Foley
Jan 2004

VISION & MISSION

**The London Irish Women's Centre
was set up in 1983 and our vision is:**

*'to empower, inspire, mobilise
and celebrate women of Irish birth
and descent in London.'*

- LIWC believes in promoting equality of opportunity for women of Irish birth and descent, regardless of their social and economic status, colour, religious, political or sexual orientation
- LIWC believes in enabling women to recognise their own power and their ability to change their own lives
- LIWC believes that Irish women have a distinct identity and culture and seeks to achieve a positive identity and status for Irish women in the Irish, and the wider, community
- LIWC works to combat isolation and provide access to a safe and supportive community
- LIWC believes in taking a holistic approach to the needs of Irish women

STRATEGIC AIMS

- To provide and develop accessible, culturally competent services for marginalized Irish women in London, tailored to their individual needs
- To target specifically disadvantaged groups of Irish women – Travellers, older women, women with mental and physical health problems, women in abusive situations and homeless women
- To increase access to appropriate services by providing advice, information, advocacy and support
- To develop cultural and social events for Irish women to enable them to form and access a welcoming and supportive community
- To bring together Irish women from across London to formulate and address their own needs
- To inform, influence and lead policy debates on gender, cultural identity, service provision and] discrimination in all forms.

CO-ORDINATORS REPORT

I am delighted to be able to report on another extremely successful year for the London Irish Women's Centre. We have been able to increase our service provision with support from the Association of London Government to whom we are extremely grateful. They have not only extended their funding to a three year contract but have also afforded us the opportunity to employ a further Advice and Outreach worker in response to the high demand for this service. As you will see from the individual service reports, this year has seen an increase in the demand for both our Advice and our Mental Health service, indicating the continuing need for these important culturally sensitive services.

Following our successful re-launch last year I believe the London Irish Women's Centre is now in a prime position to increase its lobbying and representation on behalf of Irish women living in London. The staff and management committee have recently completed a mapping exercise to identify the areas where we can increase our presence and we will use this to ensure that Irish women continue to have a voice and that their needs are recognised and appropriate policies implemented. We have also reviewed our three-year business plan and have prioritised the areas which we feel are currently under-resourced, and where there is a need for the Irish women's centre to take a lead on. We will also be strengthening and developing our partnership working with other women's organisations and agencies with similar aims to our own.

As part of our strategic aims we are currently developing our group work and training for women and we aim to begin a programme early in 2004. We are aware of the lack of culturally sensitive groups for Irish women and with the support of the Community Fund are able to develop this area in collaboration with the women who use this centre and other services.

The London Irish Women's Centre remains committed to empowering women. We have proven this in many ways not only through the commitment to our service users but also through our staff training and development programme, affording our staff the opportunity to retrain and expand their skills and knowledge base. This has ultimately enabled them to move into other positions within the organisation or supported them in securing alternative positions elsewhere. We will continue to develop our recruitment initiatives to ensure our staff vacancies are filled.

I would like to thank all our funders for their continuing support to us, enabling us to continue to provide a high quality service to Irish women living in London and I look forward to developing additional sources of funding to broaden the work we currently undertake.

The London Irish Women's Centre would not be able to continue to develop as it is were it not for a staff team who are committed and competent and I would like to thank them for their hard work and dedication throughout the year. I would particularly like to thank Lucia Gillespie, Advice & Outreach Worker who worked tirelessly in building up and maintaining the advice service before leaving us in July 2002. A warm welcome is extended to Rowena O' Malley who joined the team in December as Information & Administrator.

As ever, I offer my thanks to the Management committee for their continued support and advice. Finally I would like to extend a big thank you to the women who use our service, for their trust and faith in the London Irish Women's Centre, and I sincerely hope that we can continue to support and help those who require our service in the future.

Eithne Rynne
Co-ordinator

ADVICE & OUTREACH SERVICES

Our Advice and Outreach project delivers culturally sensitive and gender specific advice and advocacy services to vulnerable and excluded Irish women resident in boroughs across London. We deal with women who are in poverty, heavily dependent on benefits and multiply disadvantaged by a variety of problems such as domestic violence, homelessness and disability. We alleviate poverty and isolation by providing information, telephone advice, appointments, case work and home visits to ensure that Irish women have access to the services, benefits and support that they are entitled to.

The last year has seen a steady growth and consolidation of the Advice and Outreach service. We have continued to see an increase in referrals to the service and these come from a variety of sources. These include word of mouth, other Irish agencies, social services departments, and other statutory agencies.

The Centre identified the need to extend its outreach service and following a successful bid for additional funding from the Association of London Government is now in a position to develop this side of our service. Unfortunately due to recruitment difficulties we have been unable to fill this vacancy as yet, however we hope to rectify this early in 2004. As you will see from our figures this has had an effect on the level of drop-in that we are able to provide and this is an area we hope to develop and expand in the new year.

The London Irish Women's Centre remains committed to working in partnership and believes that by pooling resources we can work much better for and on behalf of our service users. To facilitate this we sit on a number of groups and forums within our local borough and London wide. We consult with other women's organisations, Irish voluntary sector organisations and other organisations and networks relevant to our work. This has helped us to identify gaps in services, prevent overlaps and work in a more strategic and complementary way.

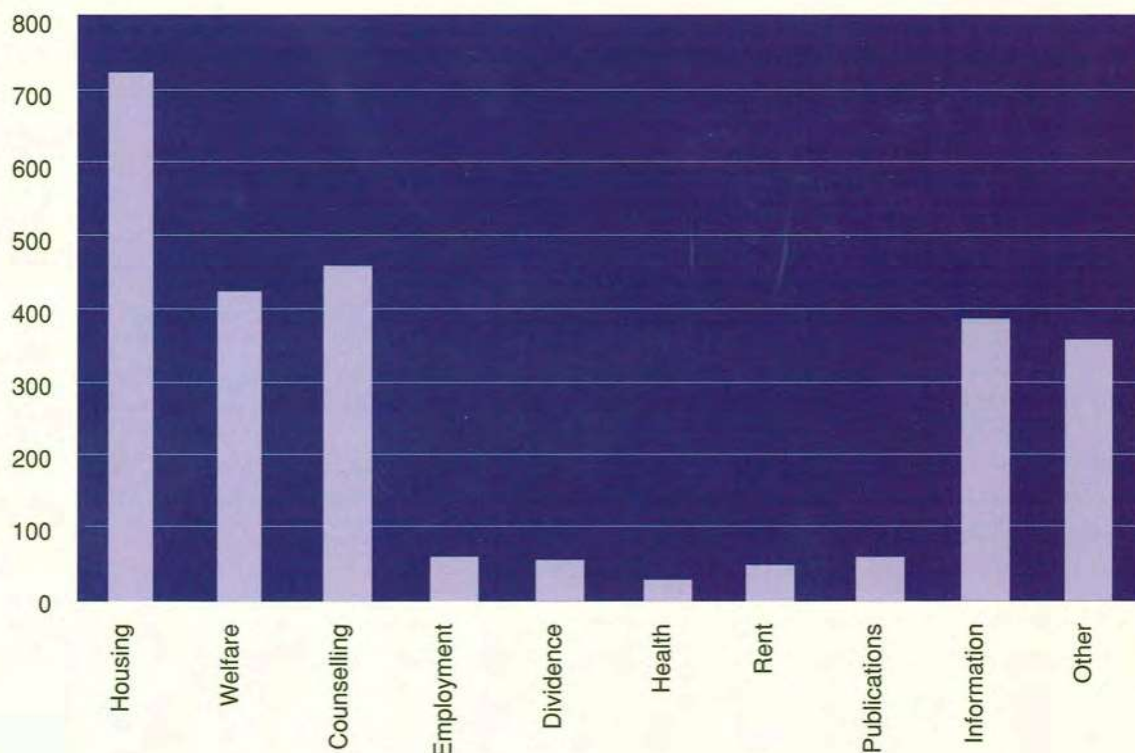
LIWC now has a quality mark in General Case Work and Housing and Welfare Benefits which has been awarded by the Community Legal Services Commission

PROFILE OF SERVICE

1. Quarterly breakdown of Service Users January – December 2003

Category	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sept	Oct-Dec	Total
First Contact	49	101	145	111	406
Repeat Visit	199	344	331	305	1179
Repeat new issue	22	42	73	60	197
Total	270	487	549	476	1782

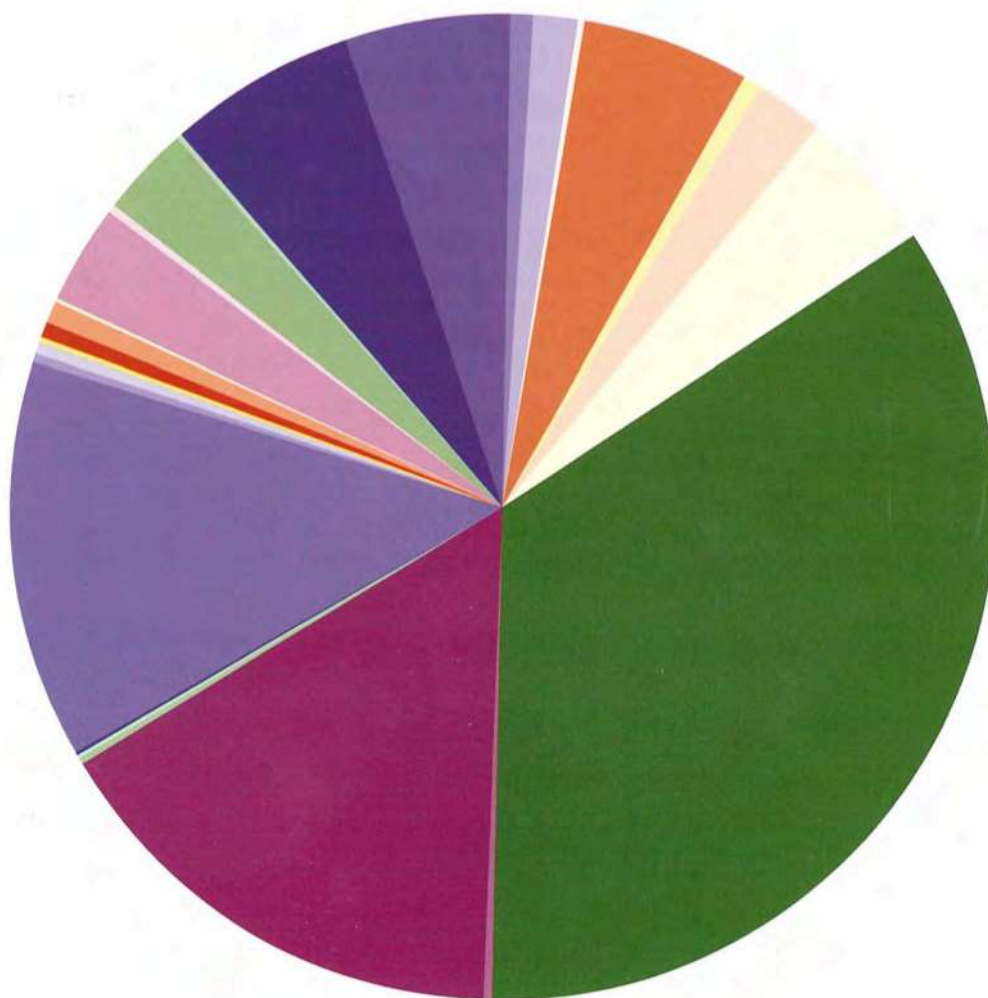
2. Presenting Needs January – December 2003



3. Method of Contact January – December 2003

Drop-in	56
Appointment	697
Telephone	971
Post	76
Total	1782

4. Borough of Origin January – December 2003



- Barnet
- Brent
- Bromley
- Camden
- City of London
- Ealing
- Enfield
- Greenwich
- Hackney
- Hammersmith
- Haringay
- Harrow
- Havering
- Hillingdon
- Hounslow
- Islington
- Kensington
- Lambeth
- Lewisham
- Merton
- Newham
- Redbridge
- Southwark
- Tower Hamlets
- Waltham Forest
- Wandsworth
- Westminster
- Others

COUNSELLING SERVICE

The London Irish Women's Centre supports disadvantaged and isolated Irish women by offering long term counselling services in a women only space. We also seek to develop therapeutic and social support groups that will empower women and increase their ability to take part in public life and society.

We have a steady and increasing demand for our counselling service and we know from health surveys and research that there are high levels of depression and anxiety in Irish women. As a result of this available research concerning the Irish female community in Britain, the Counselling service has been able to expand it's services to meet the needs identified.

In the first instance this has involved, recording information to enable data collection in accordance with objectives, targeted outcomes and activity and evaluation requirements of the Centre. Furthermore, we have been involved in the promotion of the counselling service, raising awareness throughout the catchment area, to facilitate the target number of appropriate referrals being made.

Secondly, the counselling co-ordinator has overseen the recruitment and supervision of volunteer counsellors. This means we now have 4 counsellors currently seeing upwards of 14 women a week.

Also as part of the counselling service we have now recruited a group worker whose remit will include the development of both therapeutic groups for women and self-development training. She will be setting up a database of facilitators who will provide expertise in a range of areas including art, drama, creative writing, and photography. These groups will commence early in the New Year.

The counselling Service also hopes to promote positive working relationship with other women's organisations. To this end we are currently working with the West Hampstead Women's Centre to set up and run a group from their centre for Irish Women and Women of Irish descent, again this group will start early in the new year. Having more counsellors, a group worker, and late night opening we hope ensures a culturally sensitive service for all Irish women and of Irish descent no matter how diverse their needs.



THE LONDON IRISH WOMEN'S CENTRE BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST MARCH 2003

	2003 £	£	2002 £
FIXED ASSETS			
Tangible assets		19,941	26,736
CURRENT ASSETS			
Debtors	4,902		17,897
Cash at bank and in hand	91,846		72,153
CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year	96,748		90,050
	28,656		65,352
NET CURRENT ASSETS		68,092	24,698
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		88,033	51,434
CREDITORS:		10,606	15,174
Amounts falling due after more than one year			
NET ASSETS		77,427	36,260
FINANCED BY:			
Restricted funds		44,693	10,543
Unrestricted funds		14,562	7,545
Designated funds		18,172	18,172
		77,427	36,260

These summarised accounts are taken from the full financial statements. The audit report on these financial statements was unqualified. They were approved at the Annual General Meeting on 28th January 2004 and were filed with Charity Commission and Companies House.

A copy of the full financial statements and auditor's report can be obtained from The London Irish Women's Centre, 59 Stoke Newington Church Street, London N16 0AR

The summarised statements below are consistent with the full financial statements.

Alison Ward FCCA
Registered Auditor

Management Committee Members 2002 – 2003

Kate Foley	Chair
Nuala Conlan	
Zoe Pye	
Jean Rafferty	
Caroline O' Neill	

London Irish Women's Centre Staff 2002 – 2003

Eithne Rynne	Co-ordinator	Appointed Jan 2002
Jennifer Trainor	Counselling Co-ordinator	Appointed July 2001
Arlene Boreland	Advice & Outreach worker	Appointed July 2003
Lucia Gillespie	Advice & Outreach worker	Resigned July 2003
Rowena O' Malley	Information & Administrator	Appointed Dec 2003
Tracy Keating	Group worker/Volunteer Counsellor	
Trish McEntee	Volunteer Counsellor	
Kay Monaghan	Volunteer Counsellor	

Thanks

The London Irish Women's Centre would like to say a big thank you to all those who have provided funding and donations over the past year.

Association of London Government
London Borough of Hackney
Dion
Community Fund
City Parochial
Irish Youth Foundation
Ireland Fund of Great Britain
Reed in Partnership
Mary Tilki

If you are interested in joining our Management Committee or volunteering in any way at the Centre, we would be delighted to hear from you. Please contact the Administrator for more details on 020 7249 7318

NOTES



59 Stoke Newington Church Street

London N16 0AR

Tel: 020 7249 7318

Fax: 020 7923 9599

Email: info@liwc.co.uk

