

2019



# ANNUAL REPORT



45 Alcester Street, Birmingham, B12 0PH  
0121 604 6111

[info@birminghamirish.org.uk](mailto:info@birminghamirish.org.uk)  
[birminghamirish.org.uk](http://birminghamirish.org.uk)





## CONTENTS

Birmingham Irish Association	3
Projects	5
Healthcare	6
Family Support	8
Housing and Benefits	10
Bereavement and Befriending	11
Social Inclusion	12
Culture and Heritage	14
Achievement & Performance	17
Funding and Finances	18
Plans for the Future	20

# BIRMINGHAM IRISH ASSOCIATION

For over 60 years, the Birmingham Irish Association have been providing welfare and cultural services to their Irish communities. Located in the heart of the Irish Quarter in Digbeth, Birmingham, they are the Midlands' leading charity offering services of this nature.

During 2019, we have continued to reach out to every area of our city to those who need our help through various services, which are bespoke to our unique Birmingham Irish Community.

In time, we hope to elevate our services to become the first choice for all Irish people seeking guidance, support and information. In order to make this happen, we strive for excellence in our day to day work, and ensure that all services provide personalised solutions and information that are as unique as the individual themselves.

**Social inclusion** - For many members of our community, the reality of living with mental and physical health problems can bring intense loneliness, social isolation and often depression. Through delivering our services to the city, our dedicated staff provide a lifeline to clients by enabling them to take part in stimulating activities, social interaction and access to personal advice/support.

**Primary care** - Those living with mental and physical health problems in our community, also face more difficulties in their day to day lives due to challenges in accessing and applying for statutory services that improve quality of life and personal wellbeing. Through connecting individuals with crucial aids, our staff increase confidence, independence and ultimately enable clients to live a more full and vibrant life.



**Family Support** - Countless families across our city face debilitating circumstances surrounding bullying, lack of self esteem, isolation, debt/housing issues and family relationships every day, which often impact all family members in various ways. Our wonderful family support team assist by listening, carefully untangling problems, offering bespoke solutions and bringing peace to homes in all areas of Birmingham.

**Bereavement Project** - Processing bereavement can differ greatly from one individual to another and helping those experiencing this emotionally painful time requires a kind voice and an empathetic ear. To ensure our clients are guided through these extraordinarily tough times by friendship and support, we train our volunteers in bereavement to help them back on their feet.

**Volunteer Project** - Through our volunteer projects, we are able to mentor individuals kind enough to give their time to help us and weave their unique strength, warmth and kindness into all aspects of our services. In turn, we also offer a wealth of educational and social opportunities.

60  
years

celebrating over 60 years  
of helping the community





# BIRMINGHAM IRISH ASSOCIATION

We provide a bespoke service that's as unique as the diaspora themselves, our staff teams collaborate together on a client-by-client basis, to ensure the needs of every member of the Birmingham Irish community are looked after, as if they were our own family.

To show our work in more detail, we will introduce our teams and the specific ways in which they have been making a difference over the past 12 months.



## SOCIAL INCLUSION

Providing an opportunity for clients to take part in stimulating activities, social interaction, and access to advice and personal support aimed at alleviating loneliness, social isolation and depression and dementia care.

## HEALTHCARE

Supporting older adults who may be suffering from physical and mental health problems and are having difficulty in engaging with statutory services with the aim of improving their quality of life and personal wellbeing.

## HOUSING AND BENEFITS

Support with Full entitlement claims, benefit applications and appeals, PIP, ESA, safeguarding vulnerable adults, supporting people, benefit tribunals, debt advice, providing advice for people coming over or going back to Ireland and more.

## CULTURE, HERITAGE AND SPORT

Promoting Irish culture and heritage events in Birmingham and developing activities that enhance Irish identity and a vibrant active community.

## FAMILY SUPPORT

Providing support to young children and their families with issues such as bullying, selfesteem, lack of confidence, isolation, welfare, debt, housing issues and family relationships.

## VOLUNTEERS

A vital service for the organisation complementing the staff team and welcoming clients through the front reception, assisting with passport renewals, and managing the phone lines.



# HEALTHCARE TEAM

**Through both an outreach service, and referrals from neighbouring teams, our health care team enable our more elderly clients experiencing mental and physical health challenges to live a more independent and joyful life.**

"As a team, we enhance the happiness and comfort in the daily lives of our elders, those who have collectively made our city what it is today."

For over 9 months, I have been helping a lovely man named Gerald. Initially, Gerald didn't warm to the idea of care, as the experiences had by his friends were not positive surrounding the care system.

Understandably, he was very cautious and protective over his independence. We wanted to make him feel as comfortable as possible, and not that were intruding on his space, whilst also giving peace of mind to his children that he was safe and well. Therefore, we checked up on him from time to time, allowing him to open the door for us, and become comfortable with our staff team.

Over the last few months, our team have been able to chat to him about his concerns, and a way in which we can help to make him feel better. One of those ways has been assisting with buying a scooter, and since it arrived there hasn't been a week where he hasn't visited our office team across the road from him, shared a giggle and picked up his favourite Irish foods from our shop.



**WE SUPPORT OLDER ADULTS  
EXPERIENCING ISSUES WITH THEIR  
PHYSICAL OR MENTAL HEALTH**



# FAMILY SUPPORT

Within a local secondary school setting, we support our younger generations and their families through a family support and learning mentor service. Through referrals from members of the school pastoral team, our team are able to carefully tackle problems unique to families, most commonly surrounding finance, relationships and housing, which ultimately brings peace to all involved.

Over the past six months, I have been working with a lovely family with three girls in the school, the McCalls. After a decline in grades and attendance of one of the girls' records, the family were referred to me as an underlying issue is very often a major cause of these kinds of circumstances.

After an initial meeting with myself and her mother, we began to unravel how she was feeling about school and how it was ultimately affecting her mental health. Mum knew that something was wrong, but she was very unsure on how to talk about it, as she had no experience of mental health problems and what services in the community could assist.

Since our discussion, both attendance and grades have improved significantly, as she now has regular counselling appointments, and myself in the school setting.



“OUR MISSION IS TO KEEP THE CHILDREN WE WORK WITH IN SCHOOL AND ON TRACK TO COMPLETE EDUCATION. **WE WANT TO REMOVE THE BARRIERS TO LEARNING.**”





# HOUSING AND BENEFITS

In our main office, we provide a safe space for clients to discuss the challenges they are facing with our friendly team and work collaboratively to solve them. We offer both appointments in our main office and a weekly walk-in surgery for our clients, every Thursday, in Balsall Heath.

Our benefits and welfare advice includes:

- Full entitlement claims
- Benefit applications
- Benefit appeals
- PIP, ESA,
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults
- Supporting people
- Sitting in on benefit tribunals
- Service Reports
- Debt Advice
- Organising food parcels
- Working with social workers
- Providing information to people coming over or going back to Ireland
- Opening or accessing bank accounts in Ireland
- Land disputes, wills and family arguments



## Case Study:

Over the last six months, I have been working with a wonderful chap named Gerry. He was referred to us from the lovely people upstairs at Tabor House, who provide overnight shelter to those who have no bed for the night as they knew our services would make a great difference to his life.

A year prior to his referral, Gerry was diagnosed with a chronic respiratory illness, which impacted drastically upon daily tasks in his working life. After a period of sick leave, his employer sadly let him go, and with no family to help or money to pay rent and bills, he had no option but to begin to living on the streets.

Since my initial meeting with Gerry, I have been able to assist him with a successful application for temporary housing, applied for the benefits he is rightly entitled to and referred him to our brilliant friends at iCap, to aid poor mental health repercussions of his ordeal. We have also re-enrolled him at his local GP.

I can safely say that Gerry is on the right track to a much healthier and happier life.

# BEREAVEMENT AND BEFRIENDING

I losing a loved one can be the most emotionally excruciating moments of a person's life, which brings feelings of loneliness quite like no other. This is exactly why we feel our befriending and bereavement project is an incredibly important service for our Birmingham Irish diaspora. By training our volunteers in bereavement, we are able to offer a friendly and impartial advice to help others get back on their feet following a loss through friendship and support.

We provide:

- One to one Support
- Free and confidential service from bereavement support counsellors
- Advice and guidance on funeral arrangements, finances and benefits
- Repatriation advice
- Support to everyone over the age of 18



# SOCIAL INCLUSION

"At our St Anne's Parish Hall, St Dunstan's Parish Hall and Maryvale Community Centre locations, our team offers Irish clients living with dementia an opportunity to socialise and take part in engaging and fun activities and to enjoy a fresh, homemade hot lunch. With a dedicated pick up and drop off service, their families are also able to take a break from their caring duties, in the knowledge that staff will care for them as if they were their own relatives.

"When the Maryvale centre opened in January 2020, I was so happy that we had so much interest by the community. I am especially pleased that we were able to work with Dawn and Jeremy, two truly wholesome clients who bring joy wherever they go."

"In the weeks leading up to the opening, a lady named June got in touch, to ask if it would be something suitable for Jeremy, her father to attend, as he had been living with dementia for several years, and caring was taking it's toll on her mother Dawn, who was turning 83 in the March. After an initial meeting with the family, a beginning date was discussed for Jeremy, with Dawn attending too as she was excited to share the experience with him too."



**"THE PROJECT ENCOURAGES OUR SERVICE USERS TO IMPROVE THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE AND PERSONAL WELLBEING"**

"Since then, the family haven't looked back and have joined in every weekly session since it's beginning. When we see June, she always tells us how the pair enjoy themselves each week and how it has brought them closer together in the tough times they are facing."



# CULTURE, HERITAGE & SPORT

**Meeting the cultural and heritage needs of the first, second and subsequent generations of Irish in Birmingham.**

We feel that a connection to home is crucial, no matter where in the world you are. The work of our Culture and Heritage team, we bring together all generations of Irish in our city, to the events that educate, spark joy and reconnect with their past. Connecting in these ways, both to our own activities and events, plus those associate groups organised by others in the city, allows our vibrant, unique and eclectic Irish heritage to flourish and grow, and always in original ways we never expect.

Over the last year, we have worked with the Birmingham Trad Fest, Heritage Group, West Midlands Irish Business Group, local venues, individual artists and schools, to bring a range of projects to the community and fulfil in many different ways. One of the most popular events being the St Patrick's Day Festival, held in the city centre.

Over time, many of our Associate Groups mention that, due to have a smaller audience on social media, they find getting the word of their event out to the community very challenging indeed. Through sharing to our extensive reach online, we have been helping local event organisers in this way, so that all members of the community have the opportunity to enjoy all the city has on offer.



**DELIVERING SERVICES THAT  
MEET THE EVER CHANGING  
NEEDS OF OUR CLIENTS.**



# ACHIEVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

10,716

Almost 11,000 phone calls received

940



940 individual attendees at our drop in centre and all activity clubs

900



900 individual clients attended the Elders Clubs

143



Almost 150 people addressed their health needs through the Primary Support Programme

524



Over 500 clients accessed advice and support services through front office team

151



Over 150 clients received regular, ongoing support with Debt and Welfare Benefit Support

456



Over 450 visitors to the office looking for help with passport applications

41,620



41,620 meals provided through the drop in centre and social clubs

Over the last twelve months, we have both delivered all projects that were intended, as well as exploring new avenues that we are delivering both presently, and in the future. Without the unwavering support from our funders and community, it would be truly impossible to reach numbers such as these and serve our community as we have done for many years, therefore we thank you so much and are so grateful for your support and generosity.

These figures would also cease to exist without the commitment and collaboration of our dedicated teams and volunteers, as without their warmth, kindness and strength, our clients would not receive services that tackle important issues in our community, as efficiently as they currently do. Our team are a credit to our Association and our city, and we are truly thankful for your hard work.





# FUNDING AND FINANCES

Due to the help of our wonderful supporters, funders, friends and donators, we have been able to build upon the growth we made last year, and once again made a surplus on our finances, enabling us to maintain the health of our reserves.

During the year under review, our total incoming resources amounted to £618,993, with £87,605 (2019: £66,183) of that from voluntary income from our generous donators and £514,231 from grants and contracts from our funders.

Those who have kindly funded our work are as follows:

- Archbishop Illesley
- Birmingham City Council
- National Lottery
- The Big Lottery Community Fund
- Charities Aid Foundation
- Birinus
- BBC Children In Need
- Irish Embassy
- Ireland Funds Grant
- Irish Youth Foundation
- Lloyds Bank Foundation
- National Lottery Community Fund
- NHS Solihull
- TLC Lottery
- Veolia





# PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

- To ensure that funding secured meets the needs of those who depend on our services in the community.
- To continue to personally support our youngest generation and their families in the in the personal challenges they are facing.
- To continue to break the cycle of homelessness for this growing community in our city.
- To continue enabling vital access to benefits and support, as the wellbeing and lives of so many depend on it.
- To continue to bring together and educate our community through the integration and promotion of Irish cultural projects and events.
- To continue to be a centre of socialising and support for those experiencing mental and physical health problems, in every way possible.
- To continue to collaborate with like-minded organisations in the West Midlands to support, engage and offer unique opportunities.
- To continue to be flexible and centre all services around the ever-changing needs of our Birmingham Irish Community.

## CONTINUE TO RAISE AWARENESS OF BIRMINGHAM IRISH ASSOCIATION

