



# 45TH ANNIVERSARY ANNUAL REPORT

**Bias**

Brent Irish Advisory Service



## Ambassador Statement

Note from the Ambassador to Brent Irish Advisory Service on its 45th Anniversary-Martin Fraser

I want to give my heartfelt congratulations to BIAS for reaching the important milestone of its 45th anniversary. Your work in providing individualised support, advocacy, and advice to the Irish community in Brent and the wider North London area has enriched the lives of so many.

For more than four decades BIAS has served the Irish community in an area which many Irish emigrants call home. Your work ensures that the phrase "forgotten Irish" becomes a thing of the past. The afternoon clubs and other projects you provide are vital in reducing isolation and cultivating a sense of community.

The Department of Foreign Affairs supports this work through the Emigrant Support Programme (ESP), which funds over 100 Irish community organisations across Britain. The ESP was established by the Irish Government to strengthen our global Irish community, and support your connection to Ireland. My team at the Embassy and our Department colleagues in Dublin are proud to work with BIAS to further this.

On behalf of the Irish Government I would like to personally thank all of the team at BIAS for your efforts to serve our Irish community in Britain. Your organisation has made an enduring impact on the Irish Community in London.

# 45TH

## Who we are

Brent Irish Advisory Service has supported the UK's largest Irish Community since 1978. helping over 50,000 people during this time. We operate Welfare Advice services and an Active Ageing Club.

In these times of hardship for many, our services are needed more than ever.

**Please support us to keep helping the most vulnerable in our community.**



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha  
Department of Foreign Affairs



## Chair and Directors Statement



Brent Irish Advisory Service continues to innovate in very difficult economic conditions. BIAS is passionate about the Irish community and in going that extra mile on behalf of our service users. BIAS has shown success this year in reaching out to the Irish community, who are often overlooked by mainstream services. It is particularly pleasing that BIAS has reached the milestone of its 45th Anniversary and continues to play a key role in the provision of advocacy, welfare and community engagement to the Irish community across London.

The number of people we support each year through all of our projects has continued to increase and our interventions have helped to reduce isolation, improve health and raise confidence within London's vulnerable Irish population.

You will see in later pages of the report both the stories and the outcomes that BIAS has achieved and the statistics are evidence of the impact that we have in helping people access and

in bringing about improvements to their lives. We are confident that our services continue to help meet needs and we aim to deliver a cohesive and effective service.

On behalf of all at BIAS-service users, staff and Board we offer our most sincere thanks to all the bodies listed in this report, as well as to individual donors, who continue to fund our charitable work. We are incredibly grateful to the Emigrant Support Programme Ireland, which continues to recognise the essential role that BIAS occupies in delivering life critical front-line services and meeting the changing needs of the Irish community. We believe that BIAS provides excellent value for money. BIAS thanks staff, volunteers, trustees for their commitment, enthusiasm, ideas which go towards making a successful sharing and caring organisation.

*Colm Moloney*

Chair of BIAS

*Mike McGing*

Director

# OPR IMPACT OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS!

## Our Welfare Advice & Information Service

BIAS supports people to access their rights and entitlements to welfare benefits, housing, homelessness and returning to Ireland. We had 2227 client engagements and BIAS is Advice Quality Standard accredited.



## Housing Assistance

BIAS achieved 32 successful housing outcomes. 20 people were re-housed and 12 households had homelessness prevented.



## Moving People Out of Poverty

BIAS supported people living in poverty to gain extra income claimed £1.4m in extra income to which they were entitled.



## Value for Money

For every £1 BIAS receives in funding, we generate £8 in return for our most vulnerable clients.



BIAS WOULD BE THE FIRST PLACE I WOULD GO TO FOR HELP

## Our Active Ageing Club

Our two weekly clubs provides an afternoon of live Irish music, dancing, bingo and refreshments for the over 55's. This lively fun afternoon helps people remain active, improves health and wellbeing and ensures people remain connected to their community. BIAS expects to have over 3,500 attendances.



## Health & Wellbeing

88% of Club Members tell us their health has been maintained or improved. They feel less isolated and more confident, helping them maintain friendships and feel physically better.



90% FEEL LESS ISOLATED  
100% WOULD RECOMMEND

PLEASE SUPPORT US AT:  
[biasbrent.co.uk/donate/](https://biasbrent.co.uk/donate/)



Brent Irish Advisory Service, 379-381 High Road, Willesden, NW10 2JR  
0208 459 6655 • [www.biasbrent.co.uk](http://www.biasbrent.co.uk) • [info@biasbrent.co.uk](mailto:info@biasbrent.co.uk)  
Charity no 1059801

## Information and Advice

### Ensuring the Irish People access services and entitlements and are not overlooked”

BIAS enables the Irish Community to make enabled choices to access both services and entitlements that they would not have otherwise gained without our support. Through listening and discussing their situation in realistic terms we always endeavour to get the best possible outcomes. It is our experience that the Irish Community benefit from a culturally specific service and the term “The Forgotten Irish “this also comes to mind.



PEOPLE SUPPORTED

362



SESSIONS WITH PEOPLE

2227



OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

330



FINANCIAL SUPPORT GAINED FOR CLIENTS

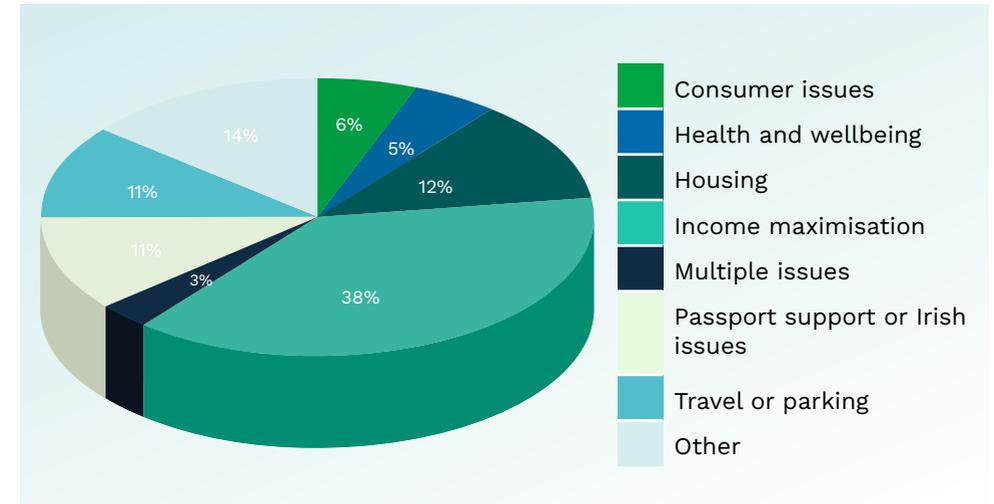
£1,4M

### Real Life Story Mick and Mary

Mick is in his 70's worked in the buildings and has lived with his wife Mary in Brent for over 48 years. Mick is now living with prostate cancer and struggles to walk and applied for Attendance Allowance but was refused. BIAS challenged the decision and his application was successful. BIAS also applied for a Blue badge which was vital for them as they have hospital appointments and for Mick to get out.

**Mick and Mary** - 'It's a fantastic what BIAS is doing for the local community they are very helpful.' 'It was so good to get down there and know that somebody was on your side,' Mary now volunteers for BIAS at the Tuesday club, which helps to help to bring people together;

## Advise/Queries



### Patrick's Story

Patrick returned to the UK after living and working as a musician in the US for the past 23 years, he started to play music at BIAS tea dances in Cricklewood. When Patrick was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. BIAS helped Patrick apply for Attendance Allowance, which is paid to older disabled people in the UK. 'I had no idea I was entitled to it,' he says. Before securing Attendance Allowance, life was difficult -having lived in America for more than twenty years, he didn't have enough social security contributions and was surviving on just his (and his wife's)

pension. 'They were very helpful, they guided me through the process and helped me to fill in the gaps. When I got a letter to say that I was approved, I was over the moon.' Patrick would highly recommend BIAS to other people in the Irish community in Brent seeking information, advice and support.

BIAS continues to help those Irish most in need by tackling poverty. In the past 12 months alone, there have been 2227 individual engagements with our welfare advice service, which has generated £1.4 million in extra income for the Irish community

BIAS continues to operate under the Advice Quality Standard (AQS) kite mark (April 2023) which provides reassurance on the level that BIAS operates, accountability and of course quality standards.

## Active Aging

### “Ensuring the Irish Community access services and entitlements and are not overlooked”

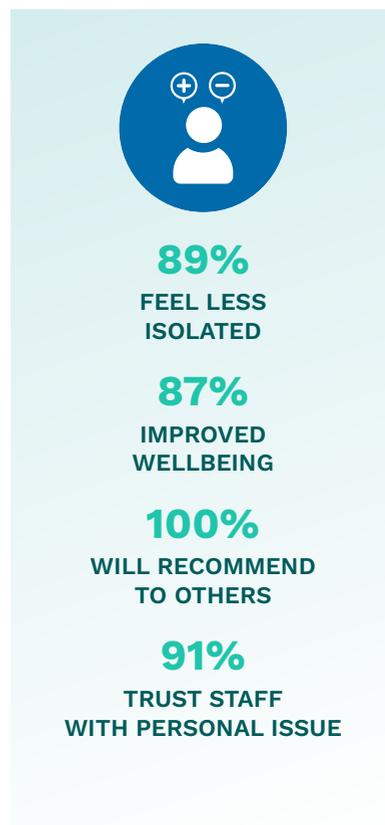
Our two weekly clubs are held on Tuesday (Brent) and Thursday (Barnet), supporting the active ageing of Irish elders. They celebrate Irish culture, improve health and social contact and reduce isolation.

We provide music, dance, chair-based exercise and conversation over bingo/ coffee. Many of our members live alone and experience physical and mental decline but our clubs help to offset this. We have many members in their 90s. We involve members in planning and delivery which contributes to sustainability and is a gateway to other BIAS and social prescribing services



We provide music, dance and conversation over bingo/coffee. Many of our members live alone and as they get older they experience physical and mental decline. “88% of our members have advised that their health has been maintained or improved by attending the club”. BIAS provides two weekly clubs and expects to have over 3500 attendances yearly. “100% of our members would recommend our club to friends and family”. Our members want to be supported by their own community and value the Irish culture.

- Irish music and dancing
- Weekly social contact which encourages friendships
- Our services help alleviate social isolation and loneliness
- Improving mental and physical well-being.
- Improving self-esteem, happiness, and confidence
- Supporting memory through activities



**ACTIVE AGEING THURSDAY CLUB**  
EVERY THURSDAY FROM 12-3PM

CHICKENWOOD TRADES HALL CLUB, 124 CHICKENWOOD LANE, LONDON, NW12 9EP

**Come and socialise, make new friends and catch up with old ones**  
Dancing, music, bingo and much more!

THE COST IS £5 INCLUDING TEA AND LIGHT REFRESHMENT

Further details contact BIAS on 0208 458 6666 or [Magie@biasuk.org](mailto:Magie@biasuk.org)

**Bias**  
Brent Irish Advisory Service  
www.biasuk.org.uk

**STAYING ACTIVE CLUB IN DOLLIS HILL**  
EVERY TUESDAY FROM 12-3PM

ST MARYS & ST ANDREWS, 210 DOLLIS HILL LANE, W12 8BE

**Come and socialise, make new friends and catch up with old ones**  
Dancing, music, bingo and much more!

THE COST IS £5 INCLUDING TEA AND LIGHT REFRESHMENT

Further details contact BIAS on 0208 458 6666 or [Magie@biasuk.org](mailto:Magie@biasuk.org)

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## Our Trustees

BIAS Celebrates 45 Years at The Embassy of Ireland I recruited a small group of trained volunteers to start BIAS. We were the first publicly funded community welfare agency run by Irish migrants, for Irish migrants. We launched BIAS information centre, a telephone helpline and a twice weekly drop-in advice service. Information gathered through these services showed clear evidence of housing and care needs among local Irish people.

**Message from Donal MacCraith (founder member).**



**Trustees Colum Moloney:** Eddie O'kane, Mike McGing (Director), Colum Moloney, Kay Boland, Donal MacCraith, Jarlath O'Hara, Tom Traynor

## Our Volunteers



All BIAS projects are supported by a team of wonderful volunteers. Their dedication and support ensures the continued successful delivery of our services and keeps our projects financially viable.

Our volunteer team brings with them a wealth of experience, understanding and good humour. Their combined contribution is invaluable in supporting the most vulnerable members of our local community. BIAS considers our organisation very lucky to have so many long standing volunteers, many of whom have been with us for over five years.

We wish to extend our sincere gratitude to all our volunteers both past and present and we acknowledge their outstanding contribution to the services we work with to deliver.



BIAS was delighted to have secured funding for our new volunteer project from the National Lottery Community Fund.

## Past History

STILL HERE ... THANKS TO BIAS

### "7.30 ARRIVED AT EUSTON"

That's what an old diary, I found lately, says. I was looking for it for some time as I was wondering when exactly I came to live in London.

### The date was 30th October 1980

Then I was off on the whirlwind of living in the big city. This involved living both North and South of the Thames ... Hither Green, Herne Hill, Sydenham, ..... then to Finsbury Park, Highbury, Haringey, Wood Green Alexandra Park.

"Sometimes life was good – other times more difficult"

I had worked on the building in Kilburn in the late 70s as a student, so coming to Queen's Park from a stay at Sydenham allowed me to revisit the old haunts on the High Road and compare notes. The area was fine but a little bit older (and hopefully wiser) – *I have not the same energy for flat land.*

Contacting BIAS – they proved helpful, letting me know the housing options that might be available. I joined a Co-op for a short while - moving to Wembley. BIAS then assisted me with getting more permanent accommodation. With the Neasden Temple on one side, and the Harlesden area the other side and some Irish people still around – I feel a lot more settled than I have been for some time. Strolling down Harlesden High Street is a lot more pleasant than many people realise.



Library Centre are there to provide help and support to Irish people in the area.

*"My diary might say when I got here but thanks to BIAS am still in the race with lots of Career options"*

*by Liam Hogan*

I am 49 years of age and first made contact with BIAS in 1993 when my marriage broke down. I was in an awful state and did not know what to do. Having 6 children at that time, BIAS Social Worker got me re-housed in a Bed & Breakfast. I spend almost 7 years in B&B's, hostels and other temporary housing in Brent and Harrow. I finally got permanent housing last year in Harrow. It has been a long and hard road but BIAS helped me get my life back together again. BIAS is like my extended family. I have 7 children and 11 grandchildren. One of children did a placement in BIAS and thoroughly enjoyed it. I don't know where I would be today if BIAS did not exist.

*"I was vulnerable but am now stronger .... thanks to BIAS"* *by Monica McLeod*



**BENEFIT DANCE**  
**AT THE GALTYMORE**  
**ON FRIDAY 1ST MARCH**

**DANCING 9.30pm - 1.30am**

**IN AID OF LOCAL HOMELESS & DEPRIVED PEOPLE**

**MUSIC BY BLUE DIAMONDS "THE DANCERS BAND"**

**PLUS GUEST ARTISTES**

**TICKETS IN ADVANCE £1 AT DDO £2.00**  
**from BRENT IRISH ADVISORY SERVICE 04-624 9991**

**Thank You**



**McGovern** Tony and Bernadette have supported the annual BIAS McGovern Christmas Party over a number of decades ensuring the elderly Irish have an opportunity to share Christmas and are not isolated in this festive time of coming together. Without their support and generosity this event would not happen. BIAS is aware they are actively involved in many good causes including McGovern Park, London Irish Vintage and ensuring the wider community benefit from their generosity and desire to help.



**Trustees** BIAS would like to thank founding members, Donal MacCraith and Colum Moloney for their contribution to BIAS and the wider Irish community. Their leadership and inspiration have been crucial in enabling BIAS to meet the changing needs.

**BIAS Staff** Without the key support of the wonderful BIAS staff team BIAS would not be able to achieve the many wonderful outcomes helping to change people lives for the better and going the extra mile.



## Our Supporters

Thank you to all of our wonderful supporters this past year including:



### Dermot's Story

Dermot O'Grady has been involved in helping the Irish community and the wider community, often as the driving force. He operated from the heart of the Irish community in Cricklewood for a number of years.

Dermot has been the owner of award-winning Ardent Tide Ltd for more than 13 years and has worked in the Construction Industry Services sector since the late 1980s. He is vice-president of BITA (British & Irish Trade Alliance) and is involved with a construction charity called the Lighthouse Club.

Dermot has a passion for networking and introducing people for mutual benefit. He first became aware of the work of BIAS 7 or 8 years ago after a visit to The Crown in Cricklewood for Christmas Lunch.

With the help of supporters like Dermot, BIAS works tirelessly to improve the quality of life of the Irish community primarily in Brent. It provides a service that informs clients of their rights and welfare entitlements to ensure the best quality of life possible as well as groups which promote the process of active ageing in order to extend the quality of life for people as they age.

Dermot believes that BIAS makes a vital contribution to the local Irish community. 'It's an invaluable service,' he says. 'A lot of older people don't have a reason to meet people, it allows people to get out and meet up.'

Even before the pandemic, it was difficult for older people to get out and meet up with others. 'It's even more of a lifeline now,' he says.



## Accounts Year End 31 March 2023

BIAS's primary funding source continues to be the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Emigrant support programme. Other significant grants funders include City Bridge Trust, LB Brent, the Ireland Fund of Great Britain, the National Lottery Community Fund, the Caritas Westminster - St John Southworth Fund and the Cardinals Lenten Appeal.

### INCOME



Grants £221,195  
Pensioners Clubs & Events £25,185  
Donations £11,108  
Other £4,214

**Total Income £261,702**

### SPEND



Staff Costs £181,104  
Community Engagement Costs £27,393  
Other costs £32,272  
Governance Costs £5,465

**Total Spend £246,234**

### FUND BALANCES



Restricted Funds £1,570 (2022 - £1,138)  
Designated Funds £60,000 (2022 - £60,000)  
Unrestricted Funds £69,714 (2022 - £54,678)

**Total Funds £131,284  
(2023- £115,816)**

**This summary financial information has been extracted from the full audited financial statements which can be obtained from the charity office. Company number 2269918. Registered Charity 1059801.**



# BE A FRIEND

**A FRIENDLY FACE AND  
A LISTENING EAR!**

**PLEASE SUPPORT US TO DELIVER THIS  
ESSENTIAL SERVICE TO OUR COMMUNITY**

This can be via donations [biasbrent.co.uk/donate](https://biasbrent.co.uk/donate)  
or if you are interested in volunteering

📞 0208 459 6655

📍 379-381 High Road, Willesden, NW10 2JR

🌐 [www.biasbrent.co.uk](https://www.biasbrent.co.uk)

Charity no 1059801