

Citizens **Information** Board
information · advice · advocacy



Annual Report 2011

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Chairperson's report

2011 has been another challenging year. Across our services, clients are presenting with multi-faceted problems associated with very difficult personal and economic circumstances. This Annual Report lays out a range of statistics for each of our services. Everyone involved in delivering services is acutely aware of the individual story that lies behind each statistic – from a new graduate who cannot find employment, to a self-employed person who cannot maintain their business, to parents struggling with debt and worried about losing their home. While I do not wish to suggest that we can solve all the problems that are presented to us, I know that many people feel an enormous sense of relief when they first access the help and support that we provide. This is partly because our services are designed to respond to a wide range of needs – from basic information on entitlements to advocacy for the most vulnerable – so when a person first calls to a Citizens Information Service, contacts the National Advocacy Service or telephones the MABS helpline they are directed to the appropriate supports for their circumstances.

In 2011, for the first time, the Citizens Information Service handled over one million queries from over 650,000 people. The Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS) responded to 167,286 requests for information – a 16% increase on 2010. These queries cover a vast range of topics from health to employment rights. Social welfare issues continue to make up almost half of all queries. Another notable statistic is that 74% of people using a Citizens Information Service do so in person – highlighting the direct and personal nature of the service. In 2011, as in previous years, there were more queries than clients. Often one query – for example, on loss of employment – can lead to further questions, perhaps on social welfare entitlements, indebtedness or relationship breakdown. These complex queries demand time and a range of skills from information providers. I am glad to see continuing collaboration with, and referral to other agencies, particularly our delivery partner MABS.

MABS came under the remit of CIB in 2009 so 2011 marks the second full year of working together. MABS works closely with clients to resolve their debt issues (face-to-face support) but also emphasises debt prevention through money management education. Client numbers continue to rise with 22,462 new clients in 2011 and 29,629 clients using the telephone helpline. During the year MABS worked intensively on implementing the *Irish Banking Federation-MABS Operational Protocol* which outlines agreed principles and procedures to resolve individual debt cases and also provided support to services in the roll out of the Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process (MARP).

I have commented on the exceptionally difficult circumstances in which many people have found themselves during this downturn. Clearly stories of deep personal distress continue but responses to the crisis are being progressed which will make a significant



difference to many individuals struggling with debt. In 2011 the Board presented a position paper on MABS to the Minister for Social Protection which outlined various options for the future of MABS (in the context of proposals for a non-judicial debt settlement mechanism set out in various forms in the Programme for Government, the reports of the Mortgage Arrears and Personal Debt Group and the reports of the Law Reform Commission). I look forward to seeing MABS continue its work to support people with problem debt in the context of new proposals for personal insolvency.

The citizensinformation.ie website reached 5 million users for the first time in October of 2011 and had 5.6 million users by the end of the year. During the year the website was redesigned and a new mobile site was developed (which subsequently won an e-Government award in early 2012). Our microsites, losingyourjob.ie and keepingyourhome.ie, recorded over 100,000 users and keepingyourhome.ie was nominated to the UN World Summit awards as an example of best practice in e-Government from Ireland. Both sites were built to respond to emerging needs. In late 2011 we developed a new microsite, selfemployedsupports.ie and an accompanying leaflet, in response to feedback from CISs and MABS on the needs of self-employed people. The microsite went live in November 2011 and had over 2,000 users in its first month.

Later we published a social policy report on the issues facing self-employed people *Hard Times for the Self-employed: The Citizens Information and MABS Experience* which was launched by the Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton TD in 2012. This integrated response demonstrates the linkages between our services. We developed the microsite and leaflet in direct response to feedback from our services on the ground. In parallel the social policy report reported on and examined the issues facing self-employed people, and suggested policy solutions.

The new National Advocacy Service (NAS) was launched in March 2011. It has had a busy first year, recruiting staff, developing standards, policies and procedures and, most importantly, working proactively with vulnerable people with disabilities.

I would like to thank the staff of NAS for their work in 2011 and I wish them well as they continue to develop the service. I would also like to thank the staff of the Sign Language Interpreting Service and all the staff, volunteers and scheme workers who delivered the Citizens Information Service and the Citizens Information Phone Service during the year. Thank you also to the staff of MABS companies and MABSndI for their dedicated work in 2011.

Finally, as well as thanking the staff of the Citizens Information Board for their work during the year, I would also like to compliment them on their very positive and enthusiastic engagement with the substantial organisational changes that took place in



2011. These changes aim to ensure that our services are of the highest quality, that we communicate flexibly with our delivery partners so we can respond rapidly to emerging issues and that we deliver value for money for both the public and the State. The combination of the positive attitude of staff and the overarching purpose of the changes – to bring us closer to our delivery partners and to the citizen – means that we are well placed to meet the challenges ahead.

I would like to thank the Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton TD and the Secretary General of the Department of Social Protection, Niamh O'Donoghue and her staff for their support during the year. I would also like to acknowledge and thank my colleagues on the Board of CIB. Finally, I would also like to thank the Chief Executive, Tony McQuinn and his management team.

Sylva Langford

Chairperson



1 Introduction

This report to the Minister for Social Protection details the Citizens Information Board's activities for the calendar year 2011.

1.1 Background

The Citizens Information Board is the statutory body responsible for supporting the provision of information, advice (including money and budgeting advice) and advocacy services to members of the public on a wide range of public and social services.

The main functions of the Citizens Information Board, as defined in the Comhairle Act 2000, the Citizens Information Act 2007 and the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2008, are to:

- Ensure that individuals have access to accurate, comprehensive and clear information relating to social services
- Assist and support individuals, in particular those with disabilities, in identifying and understanding their needs and options
- Promote greater accessibility, co-ordination and public awareness of social services
- Support, promote and develop the provision of information on the effectiveness of current social policy and services and to highlight issues which are of concern to users of those services
- Support the provision of, or directly provide, advocacy services for people with disabilities
- Support the provision of the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)

The Citizens Information Board delivers on this remit through direct provision, by supporting a network of delivery partners and by funding targeted projects. We deliver information directly to the public via the web (citizensinformation.ie, our microsites and assistireland.ie), periodicals (for example, *Relate*, our monthly journal) and other publications. The Citizens Information Board provides direct funding and core developmental supports to its delivery partners which include:

- The network of Citizens Information Services (CISs)
- The Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS)
- The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)
- The Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS)
- The National Advocacy Service (NAS)

1.2 Mission, values and strategic priorities

The Citizens Information Board's mission is:

"To ensure that individuals have easy access to impartial and independent information, advice and advocacy and budgeting services on a confidential basis so that they can identify their needs and access their entitlements."

To achieve this mission, the Citizens Information Board is guided by the following principles and values:

- Access to information is a basic right of all individuals
- Independent, impartial information assists people to access state services
- Information, advice and advocacy services should be of a high quality and developed in consultation with customers
- Each staff member's contribution is of value to implementing the Citizens Information Board's mission
- There is a commitment to partnership with voluntary and statutory service providers in the provision of information, advice and advocacy services

Strategic priorities

The Citizens Information Board's commitment is that people will receive independent, reliable information, advice and advocacy wherever they are located in Ireland and in a way that suits their needs. To do this the Citizens Information Board's 2009-2012 Citizens Information Strategic Plan – *Pathways to Services: Putting Citizens at the Centre* sets out five citizen-centred strategic priorities:

Strategic Priority 1:

To ensure that we deliver seamless access to information, advice and advocacy services across all delivery channels to meet citizens' needs.

Strategic Priority 2:

To ensure that our service users receive consistently high quality services that meet their individual needs and requirements.

Strategic Priority 3:

To serve as a pivotal and trusted intermediary between citizens and public services.

Strategic Priority 4:

To lead the development of the MABS as a vibrant, responsive and innovative service.



Strategic Priority 5:

To ensure that we are organised to deliver quality services to our clients, with clear referral pathways between channels while demonstrating value for money.

1.3 Organisational restructure

In 2011 the Citizens Information Board made comprehensive changes to its structure and to how it carries out its work. This refocusing of the organisation was carried out specifically to meet the needs of the organisation's customers. To meet these needs we must respond rapidly to emerging issues, oversee consistent and high quality services and ensure that value for money is delivered for both the public and the State.

The restructure focused, in particular, on developing a new and more effective approach to working with our delivery partners (CISs, CIPS, MABS, NAS, SLIS) and on ensuring meaningful engagement with citizens. Before implementation of the restructuring plan Pathfinders Consultants, working closely with the Senior Management Team, carried out a consultation process with staff and key delivery partners.

Following the restructure new ways of working with delivery partners were introduced which have a strong operational focus and promote a collective response to improving the quality of service. Regional structures were replaced by five new Service Delivery Areas. The Service Delivery team works with our delivery partners to improve their capacity and capability to respond effectively to demand and to implement different models of service delivery to maximise use of their resources and expertise. A new Quality team was created to deliver on the strategic priority of assuring quality services. The Training team was expanded and central services teams, including Finance and HR were also expanded and strengthened. HR support to Citizens Information Services was outsourced to IBEC as part of the implementation of the plan. A Project Management Office (PMO) was established. Tightly-run project working will become central to how we will respond to environmental changes in the future.

Staff took up new roles and functions from 4 April 2011 following extensive preparation and training. The very positive approach of staff during this period of significant change contributed enormously to the success of the process.



2 Our delivery partners

The Citizens Information Board funds and supports a range of key delivery partners to ensure that the public have access to information, advice, advocacy and budgeting services in the form that best suits them. Supports from the Citizens Information Board for our delivery partners are outlined in detail in Chapters 9 and 11.

The nationwide network of Citizens Information Services (CISs) provides face-to-face services (see Chapter 3). The Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS) provides a national telephone service (see Chapter 4). The public can also access integrated information directly through the Citizens Information website (citizensinformation.ie). (See Chapter 8 for information on citizensinformation.ie.)

The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) offers free, confidential and independent assistance for people in debt or in danger of getting into debt, face to face and through its telephone helpline and website. (See Chapter 5.)

Over the last ten years the Citizens Information Board has worked to develop advocacy services for the public in general and for people with disabilities in particular. This process has involved building advocacy capacity and skills in Citizens Information Services (CISs) to deliver advocacy to all citizens including those with a disability who are able to access mainstream services. The National Advocacy Service (NAS) for people with disabilities was established in early 2011 to address the needs of more vulnerable people with disabilities who require a targeted service and who are unlikely to be able to access the service themselves without support. (See Chapter 6.)

The Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS) is the national agency for the provision of sign language interpreting services in Ireland. It is an independent voluntary body with its own board of management and is funded and supported by the Citizens Information Board. (See Chapter 7.)



3 Citizens Information Services (CISs)

The 42 Citizens Information Services (CISs) around the State deliver information on public and social services. All CISs offer a drop-in service where callers can meet information providers face-to-face. Outreach and mobile services also deliver information to citizens who might not otherwise be able to access it. For example, CISs provide outreach service in residential institutions, hospitals, prisons and remote locations.

Each CIS is established as a limited company with a voluntary board of management that includes CIS volunteers, representatives from local community and voluntary organisations and representatives of the statutory sector. Each CIS covers a geographical area, either countywide or part of an urban area, and delivers its services through a number of Citizens Information Centres (CICs) and outreaches. All 42 CISs are supported and funded by the Citizens Information Board (See Appendix 5 for funding information).

The Citizens Information Board's 2009-2012 Strategy, *Pathways to Services – Putting Citizens at the Centre*, provides a single framework for the development of all the services offered by CIB, CISs, CIPS, MABS and the National Advocacy Service (NAS). CISs operate within this strategic framework as they respond to a range of information needs.

In 2011, 42 CISs delivered service from 269 locations nationwide. These locations cover full time services (57), part-time services (54) and fixed outreach locations (158). In addition, CISs engaged in a range of initiatives targeted at particular groups (such as people with disabilities, unemployed people, immigrants and older people).

3.1 Staffing and funding

There are 271 paid staff (188.14 whole time equivalent posts) in CISs, of which 105 are full-time and 166 are part-time.

There are 204 employment scheme workers working in CISs (113.17 whole time equivalents). The majority of scheme workers involved in CISs are with Community Employment Schemes (CE). A major concern for many CISs is the loss of CE workers (when their term of employment ends after a year or two years) and the difficulty in recruiting new CE workers following recent changes to the scheme.

Members of CIS Boards of Management are drawn from the statutory, voluntary and community sector and from CIS volunteers.

Volunteering

Volunteers play a central role in various aspects of service delivery – information provision, reception, interpretation and administration. Thirty percent of the face-to-face service is provided by 1,164 volunteers, equivalent to 121 whole-time equivalent staff.

A national volunteer strategy is being developed to provide a framework to support Citizens Information Services to resource their volunteer cohort. The Citizens Information Board recognises that a national service cannot meet the increased demand for quantity and quality in an increasingly complex environment without substantial support for volunteer management in the service.

In 2010 a new Volunteer Recognition Programme was initiated marking the contribution of volunteers to their local CIS. In 2011 24 volunteers with over 20 years of service to their community through their local Citizens Information Service were honoured at a special volunteer recognition ceremony in the EU Commission office in Dublin. Minister of State for European Affairs, Lucinda Creighton TD presented certificates and a commemorative bowl to each of the CIS volunteers.

3.2 Service demand and statistics¹

- The total CIB grant allocation to CISs in 2011 was €12.4 million (See Appendix 5 for a breakdown of this figure).
- Number of clients: **657,653** (a decrease of 1% on 2010)
Number of queries: **1,014,699** (an increase of 2% on 2010)
Number of queries per client: **1.54** (1.49 in 2010)
- While the overall number of CIS clients decreased by 1% on the 2010 figure, the number of queries increased by 2%. This suggests that people using the service are presenting with multi-faceted issues. CISs universally noted that queries and related client needs were becoming more complex because of the impact of the recession on individuals and families.

¹ The 42 CISs make monthly reports to the Citizens Information Board through the Oyster Data Management System. Amongst other reporting features, this report provides detail of the numbers of callers and queries to a service, the age and gender profile of the CIS customer, the nature of the queries made and the type of action provided by the service.



- 60% of clients were female, 40% male (the same as 2010).
- Almost three-quarters (74%) contacted the CISs in person (72% in 2010); 25% by telephone (27% in 2010) and 1% by email.
- Almost half of the clients (49%) were dealt with in less than 10 minutes, 39% took 11-20 minutes, 10% took 21-40 minutes and 2% took over 41 minutes. These figures are broadly similar to those for 2010 where the figures were 51%, 38%, 9% and 2%.
- Information about age was provided for 71% of clients – 53% were in the 26-45 age group; 30% were aged 46-65; 9% were aged over 66 and 7% were aged under 25. The respective figures for 2010 were 55%, 29%, 9% and 7%.
- The main access difficulty identified related to language (57% of those for whom an access difficulty was noted).
- Of the total number of callers to CISs in 2011, 60% disclosed their nationality. Of those whose nationality was recorded (60% of all clients), 80% (329,621) of these were Irish, 12% (50,749) were EU nationals and 8% (31,649) were from non EU countries. These figures reflect the continued usage of mainstream information services by immigrants. The CIS with the highest number of non-Irish callers was Dublin City Centre CIS which recorded over 11,000 non-Irish callers (over 25% of their callers).
- Social welfare accounted for 47% of all queries², the same as in 2010. This is followed by employment (9%), health (7%) and housing (5%), each of which was down slightly on the 2010 figure.
- In 2011, 49,739 queries were referred by CISs to other agencies. This compares with 77, 228 referrals in 2010. The highest referral destination was FLAC (14%) followed by a local support group/service provider (7%), the National Employment Rights Authority (NERA) (5%), MABS (5%) and a solicitor (5%).

² Each query handled by CIS information providers is entered in the Oyster electronic data collection system in one of 16 main categories. These mirror the categories on the citizensinformation.ie website, for example Birth, Family and Relationships, Consumer Affairs, Employment, Social Welfare, Education and Training, Money and Tax. Each category has a number of sub-categories. For example, the main category 'Employment' includes sub-categories such as Employment Rights and Conditions, Migrant Workers, Retirement, Equality in Work and Employment and Disability.

Some CISs reported receiving an increasing number of referrals from other organisations, including local authorities and other statutory agencies as well as from NGOs.

- Citizensinformation.ie was the main source of information used to deal with queries (59% of queries) followed by Government agencies (10%); local information sources (7%); Department of Social Protection publications (5%) and CIB publications and the internet (each 2%).
- The type of action taken by information providers in response to queries were recorded as ‘information’ (61.4%); advice/assistance (38.4%) and advocacy (0.2%). Nationally, just over 61% of all queries (622,618) were recorded as information queries. A further 38% (389,992) were recorded as requiring advice/assistance.
- A total of 2,089 advocacy queries were recorded and 1,179 new advocacy cases were opened in 2011 using the new advocacy case management system, advocacycase.ie.
- A total of 2,245 social policy issues were recorded (see Chapter 10).

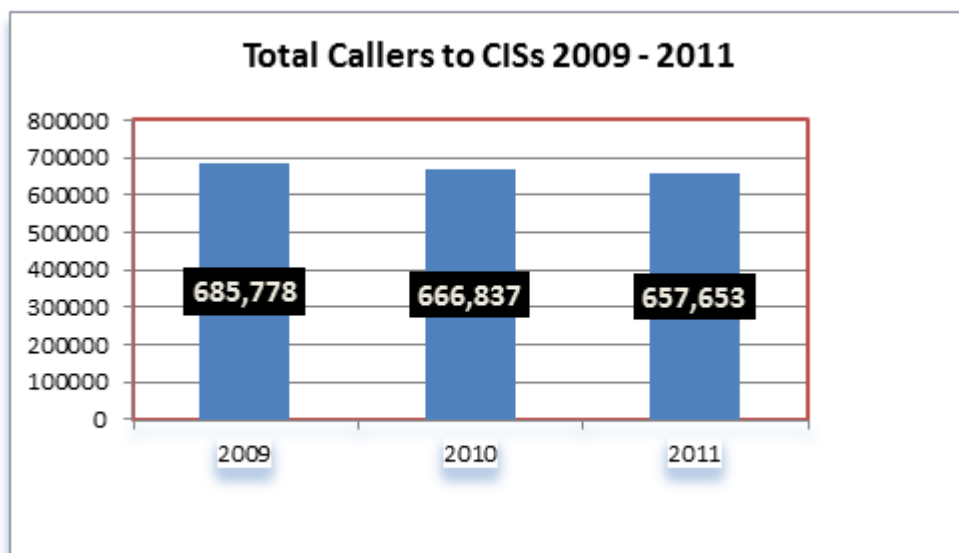


Figure 1: Total callers to CISs 2009-2012

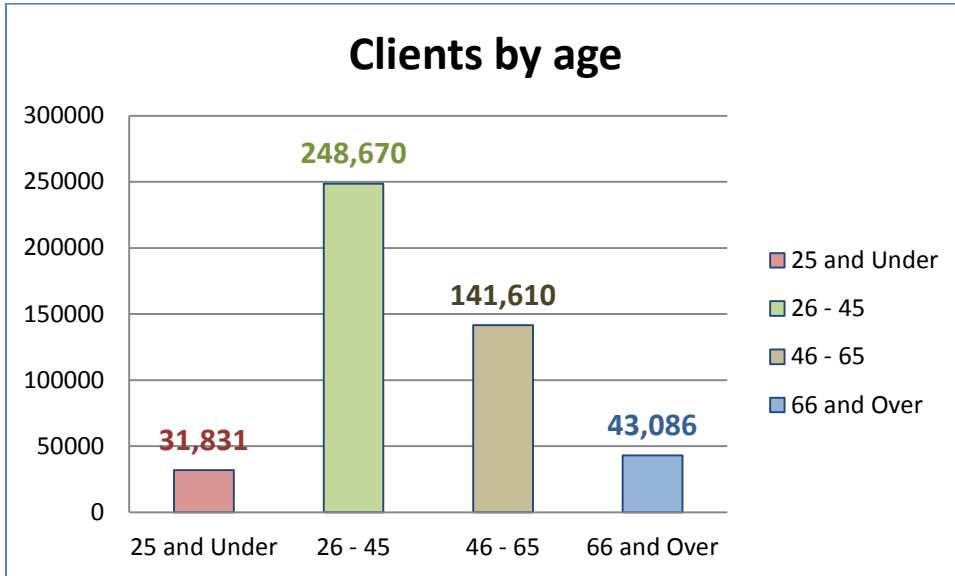


Figure 2: CIS clients by age

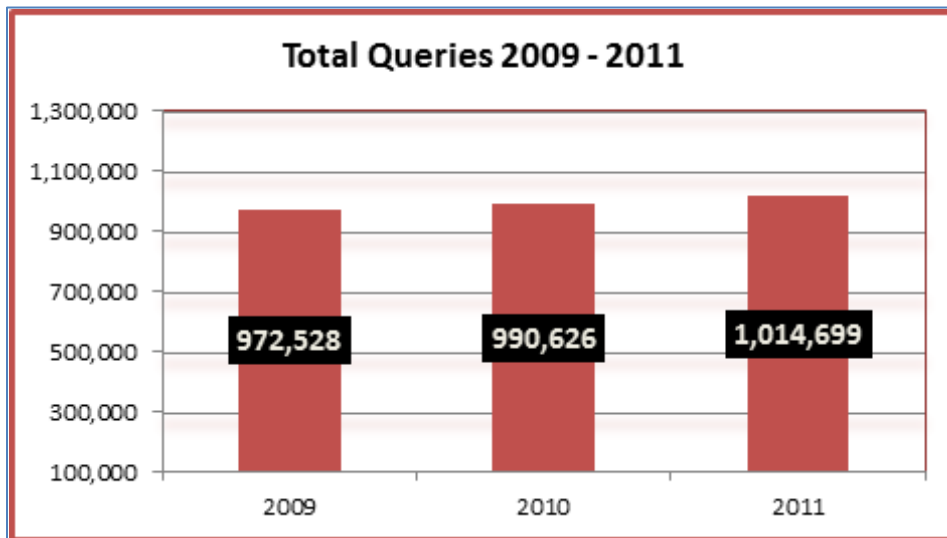


Figure 3: Total CIS queries 2009-2011

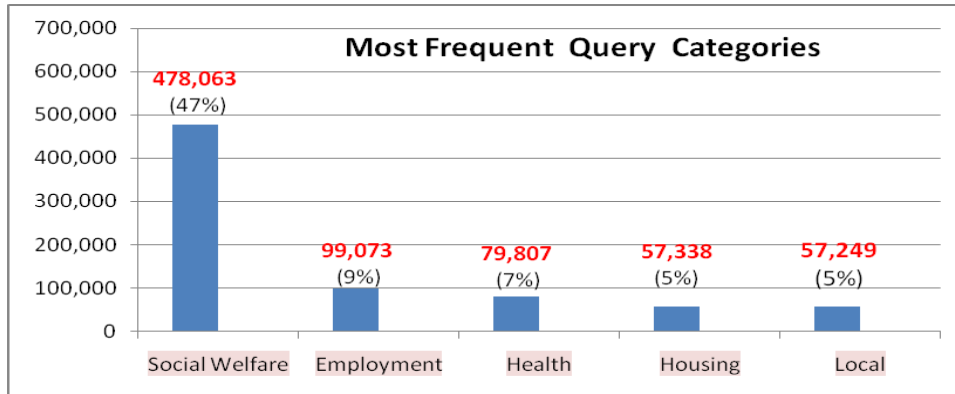


Figure 4: Most frequent query categories

3.3 Service delivery and developments

Citizens Information Services report that 2011 has been another challenging year. More clients are presenting with multi-faceted problems associated with very difficult personal and economic circumstances. Queries about loss of employment or reduced working hours, indebtedness and relationship breakdown demand more time and a range of skills from information providers.

Frequently, processing queries involves dealing with social welfare means calculations, habitual residence condition appeals, redundancy issues and back to education options. An increase in the number of people needing help with social welfare and medical card appeals has been reported by many CISs.

Staff training

Staff and volunteers in all CISs continued to enhance their skills by completing the Information Providers Programme (IPP), Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Advocacy Practice Programme (APP) as well as training from the National Calendar of Training Events, in-house training sessions and on-going mentoring. Induction programmes for new information providers are provided on a regular basis. In 2011 142 learners from CISs completed the IPP programme. See Chapter 9 for more on CIB training.

Collaboration with other agencies

Collaborative work locally and nationally is a service priority for all CISs to enhance information provision by sharing resources. This includes strengthening links with MABS, developing protocols for joint working with the National Advocacy Service



(NAS), the further development of the Chartered Accountants Voluntary Advice (CAVA) service, enhancing the working partnership with FLAC and enhancing linkages with migrant support services.

Specific collaborative initiatives during the year by individual CISs included:

- An advocacy project for migrants (Dublin City Centre)
- A local database with local contacts of services (Tipperary)
- A research initiative to identify the information needs of unemployed people (Wexford)
- Traveller Information Project (Cavan)
- A One Stop Support Service for women experiencing domestic abuse (Tipperary)
- A mortgage debt seminar (Waterford)
- A dedicated service providing support to migrants (Clare)
- Information pack for people on release from prison (Clare)
- Participation in a local services information event: *Working Together to Make the Future Happen* (Donegal)
- Networking events with the Northside Community Law Centre (Northside)
- Development of information modules for people with intellectual disabilities while also providing information sessions for families and carers on rights and entitlements (Roscommon)
- Training for people over sixty in conjunction with South Kerry Development Project and the Rural Social Scheme (Kerry)
- Work with D15 Community Interpreting and Translation Service, Fingal County Council, and the home school liaison service to provide affordable and quality interpreting services to immigrants and agencies in D15 (Blanchardstown)

New service delivery meetings

Following the organisational restructure in early 2011 new structures and processes for engaging with our delivery partners were put in place.

During 2011 each Service Delivery Region organised a series of service delivery meetings with groupings of CISs. The meetings are an important part of the new CIB approach and are designed to achieve a number of objectives including developing a common understanding of service user needs and concerns and supporting the implementation of responses to address those needs. The meetings promote cross-service support mechanisms and identify what supports are needed to deliver effective services to our clients. A co-ordinated approach to communicating with CISs and MABS has also been put in place. In addition to the benefits resulting from collaborative work on service



delivery staff identified significant benefits with regard to the development of working relationships and understanding of different perspectives.

A parallel programme of meetings took place with MABS services (see Chapter 5).

Joint work with MABS

A project group was set up in 2011 to develop guidelines on best practice on referral of clients with debt problems between CISs and MABS. It includes representatives from CIB, CISs and MABS. The group will develop protocols for referral of citizens from CISs to MABS for money advice and from MABS to CISs for information on entitlements and income maximisation. The expected outcomes are:

- Improved access to a seamless service for people who present with issues of debt to either a CIS or MABS.
- Maximising use of resources to provide efficient and effective services.
- Promoting a consistent approach to service delivery for people with debt issues across both networks nationally.

This work will improve linkages between CISs and MABS for the benefit of the public. While a small number of CISs have developed effective collaborative protocols and referral processes with MABS, there appears to be little joint working or collaboration in many areas.

Other specialist services in CISs

Many CISs offer a range of services to their clients, for example, free legal advice clinics provided by FLAC or local solicitors; financial advice provided by the Chartered Accountants Voluntary Advice (CAVA); taxation; services to immigrants and employment clinics. Some CISs are co-located with other service providers, in particular, MABS. Other CISs have clinics for Consumer Advice, the Office of the Ombudsman and Threshold.

The Citizens Information Board gives financial support to the following organisations to provide information in specialised areas:

DeafHear.ie provides an information service for people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC) provides expert legal support to CISs. It also operates a free and confidential legal advice service to the public in CISs around the country.



The Integration Centre operates a helpline for CIS staff on immigration and asylum issues. It also runs a range of clinics in the Dublin and Galway areas in conjunction with CISs.

The Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI) provides specialist support to CISs in relation to immigration.

Treoir provides specialist support to CISs on services for unmarried parents and their children.

Inclusion Ireland provides a query back-up service to CISs in the area of intellectual disability. It provides copies of Inclusion Ireland publications to CISs – in particular, accessible publications for people with learning difficulties.

Threshold's Housing Advice service provides back-up support on housing-related queries for CISs and provide supports for advocacy in more complex housing cases.



Events during the year in the network of CISs

January

Tipperary CIS launched their publication *A History of Citizens Information in County Tipperary 1974-2010*.

February

County Clare CIS and the Money Advice and Budgeting Service organised a seminar on Mortgage Debt. Minister Pat Rabbitte TD launched a new Welcome to Tallaght community directory at Tallaght Stadium with 80 guests.

April

Wexford CIS published a booklet for *People who are unemployed in Co. Wexford*.
Dublin North West CIS built up a new relationship with the local social welfare office starting with lunchtime information sessions on changes to One-Parent Family Payment.
Northside CIS held a Free Wills week.

May

Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton TD officially opened Balbriggan and Skerries Citizens Information Centres and visited the Swords centre.

September

South Kildare CIS managed the Citizens Information stand at the National Ploughing Championship at Athy, Co. Kildare. Over 190,000 people attended the event.

Co. Longford CIS celebrated its 10th anniversary and marked the occasion with a Community Celebratory Day on International Volunteering Day.

A Seminar on Mortgage Debt organised by Westmeath CIS in collaboration with Athlone MABS held in Athlone attracted over 70 participants from the public, community & voluntary groups and the financial sector.

October

Dublin City Centre CIS reached the finals of the inaugural Dublin Living Awards in the 'Outstanding Contribution to Dublin Life' category. The Dublin Living Awards recognise and celebrate Dublin's best businesses, services, venues and events. The Dublin City Centre CIS was chosen for its provision of a vital service to the people of Dublin on their rights and entitlements.

November

Sligo CIS published a handbook of services and supports for people with disabilities *Where to go Next*. Waterford CIS hosted a presentation and Q&A seminar on Wills and Inheritance for the general public.



3.4 Advocacy in Citizens Information Services

One of the main ways in which the Citizens Information Board supports advocacy services to the general public is through the network of Citizens Information Services (CISs), where information providers advocate for their clients in relation to difficulties with access to social welfare, housing, health and employment. Information providers support their clients to act on their own behalf wherever possible (self-advocacy). They also advocate on behalf of clients – for example, contacting and negotiating with a third party or attending meetings, hearings and appeals.

In late 2011, a new Advocacy Support Programme was introduced in CISs. Five regional advocacy support workers were employed by five CISs in late 2011 to build the capacity of CISs to develop their advocacy service by promoting best practice and increasing electronic recording.

An electronic case management system (advocacycase.ie) was introduced to the CIS network in 2011 following training of all information providers in its use. CISs began using the system incrementally during the year. By the end of 2011, 32 CISs had logged cases on the system.

Advocacy work includes situations where information providers supported social welfare appeals and employment rights cases, made representations to the Department of Justice on humanitarian leave to remain, negotiated around payment of gas and telephone bills in emergency situations, supported older people to access the Fair Deal scheme, took part in income maximisation negotiations, intervened on behalf of clients on family issues, including One Parent Family payments and Supplementary Welfare Allowance reviews.



4 Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS)

The Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS) is funded and supported by the Citizens Information Board. This national telephone helpline provides a comprehensive and confidential information service. The telephone service is provided Monday to Friday from 9am to 9pm on lo-call 0761 07 4000. The service is based in Cork.

In 2011 CIPS operated a lo-call number (1890 777 121)³, available to the public from 9am until 9pm on weekdays. This number changed in early 2012 as a result of the move by CIB to a Wide Area Network (WAN). The new number 0761 07 4000 means that callers to the service pay national call rates (from both landlines and mobiles). The new telephone and data infrastructure will also provide the infrastructure for a range of new developments.

4.1 Staffing and funding

CIPS is staffed by a manager, two team supervisors, 21 information officers (five of whom are part-time, one of whom is on a career break), one senior administrator and two part-time administrators. CIPS is governed by a Board of Directors appointed by CIB's Chief Executive.

CIPS receives 100% of its funding from CIB. The 2011 operational grant was €1,269,109. The bulk of this is spent on employee costs (just over €1m).

4.2 Service demand and statistics

In 2011, CIPS' information officers responded to 167,286 requests for information and advice from the public, of which 166,619 were telephone queries, 256 emails, 411 Live Advisor (web chat). This represents an increase of 16% over 2010.

The ATT (average time spent on a call) for 2010 for 2011 was 4 minutes 41 seconds. Systematic quality assurance using a sample of recorded calls is carried out by team supervisors. In general, call quality has been found to be very high.

Customer enquiries are categorised according to the standard call categorisation system used across the Citizens Information network, which reflects the way in which

³ CIPS also advertised a landline number – 021 4521600 – in view of the relatively high cost of '1890' numbers to many of those ringing from mobile phones.



information is organised on the citizensinformation.ie website. The majority of queries (65%) were in the areas of social welfare and employment, which is a small decrease from 2010 at 67%.

4.3 Service delivery and developments

CIPS responded to a high level of customer calls during the year and reported an increase in complex queries – mirroring feedback from CISs query statistics.

Live Advisor service

CIPS re-launched ‘Live Advisor’, an instant web chat service for people with hearing and speech difficulties open from 9am until 5pm weekdays. Live Advisor is accessed via ciboard.ie/liveadvisor.

A targeted promotional campaign took place in conjunction with the official launch of Live Advisor (on 30 September 2011). The number of Live Advisor interactions has increased from the very low level of 11 interactions during 2010 when this facility was effectively dormant, awaiting redevelopment to 603 during 2011. The average ‘talk’ time for an interaction is 8 minutes 39 seconds, almost twice as long as the average talk time for a phone call.

Call centre infrastructure

Since July 2009, CIPS has been operating a new integrated telephony/ICT/Management Information system. The system allows sophisticated call queuing and answering systems and provides detailed and reliable information to management (on, for example, data on caller waiting times, call abandonment rates, and the performance of individual information officers). All incoming calls are recorded.



5 The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)

The Citizens Information Board was assigned responsibility for the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) with effect from 13 July 2009. MABS provides a free, confidential, non-judgemental and independent service countrywide for people with debt problems or over-indebtedness. MABS emphasises practical, budget-based measures to help people with debt difficulties. Its target group is low income families and individuals identified as having problems with debt and money lending. MABS also provides education on budgeting and money management in the local community. Relevant statutory and voluntary agencies play a prominent role in the voluntary management of MABS companies locally.

The Citizens Information Board and MABS

Under Part 4 of the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2008, the Citizens Information Board is responsible for:

- Providing national leadership and direction for MABS and securing its future development
- Securing and consolidating the continued involvement of the voluntary and community sector in the provision of a MABS service which is responsive to the needs of local communities
- Providing for sound corporate governance, customer service and financial accountability across the organisational structure of MABS
- Enhancing policy development and strategic planning for MABS as a key publicly funded service for people on low incomes who seek assistance in managing debt problems
- Ensuring that services are provided, in particular, for people on low incomes who are, or who are at risk of becoming, over indebted and socially excluded
- Promoting and developing education in respect of money management

Structure of MABS

The MABS service is delivered in three ways:

- On its website (mabs.ie)
- Via the MABS Helpline (1890 283 438)
- Face-to-face with trained money advisers in offices nationwide



The Money Advice and Budgeting Service is made up of a network of 53 companies (which include 51 local companies and 2 national companies, MABSndI and National Traveller MABS). Many of the local companies also offer outreach services to clients who cannot access the main offices easily.

Each MABS service is run by a company limited by guarantee. Each company is an independent legal entity with a board of directors drawn from local voluntary and statutory services and community groups. MABS National Development Limited (MABSndI) is a central technical support service which provides support with technical casework, money management education, and training to MABS companies. It also works on social policy issues arising from the work in MABS companies with the Citizens Information Board. MABSndI also manages the MABS national telephone helpline, website and the MABSIS client information system and responds to media queries on money and debt management. National Traveller MABS was established in 2005. It advocates for the financial inclusion of Travellers (and other marginalised groups) to help them access legal and affordable savings and credit.

5.1 Staffing and funding

Direct grant funding allocated to MABS in 2011 was €15,234,267. Funding of €1,964,652 was allocated to MABSndI. A further €26,512 of indirect expenditure under the MABS budget line and a further €231,020 under ICT was incurred supporting the MABS network in 2011. Total expenditure on MABS by CIB in 2011 was, therefore, €17,556,451. See Appendix 5 for a breakdown of this figure.

In 2011 277 people were employed across the MABS network (235 whole time equivalent posts). Staff roles include Money Advice co-ordinator, money advisers and administrators. In December 2011 12 temporary money adviser posts were sanctioned for a further 2 years (the figure for total staff includes these posts).

5.2 Service demand and statistics

MABS statistics are provided under four main headings:

- Active clients – on the last day of the month/quarter
There were **26,093 active clients** on 31 Dec 2011, a 5.4% increase on 2010.
- New clients – cumulative to date for the year
There were **22,462 new clients** in 2011, which represents an increase of just under 4% on 2010.

- Information only⁴ clients – cumulative to date for the year
There were **4,419 information only** clients in 2011. This is an increase of 22% on the 2010 figure of 3621. Only some MABS offices have information only clients and several services record no information clients.
- Telephone Helpline clients – cumulative to date for the year
There were **29,629 Helpline clients** in 2011 (an increase of 3.37% on the 2010 figure). The Helpline continued to encourage greater use and referral by services and to provide support to specific services with heavy workloads. During the year, the Helpline supported specific MABS services at particularly busy periods by accepting referrals of first-time callers. The Helpline also managed Bord Gais and ESB issues for five services, dealing with disconnection issues on a priority basis. A formalised call recording and review system was introduced for training and quality purposes.

	Number	Increase/Decrease
New clients	22,462	+4%
Active clients (on 31 December 2011)	26,093	+5.4%
Helpline	29,629	+3.37%

Figure 5: MABS client numbers

Total amount owed

The total amount owed by new clients to creditors at the end of 2011 based on the debt they had when they first came to the MABS, was €498m, a 16% increase on the 2010 debt figure. The debt of new clients was distributed as follows:

- 72.2% to banks/financial institutions
- 11.7% to credit unions
- 4.3% to legal bills
- 2.2 % to sub-prime lenders
- 2.3% to utilities bills
- 1.6 % to debt collection agencies
- 1.3 % to local authorities

⁴ MABS clients are divided into three categories:

- Special Account - a bill paying/saving facility operated through MABS in partnership with credit unions.
- Budget Negotiable - MABS cases that require negotiation, but not the use of Special Account.
- Information only - MABS cases that do not require negotiation or the use of Special Account.

- 0.6 % to money/lenders/catalogues
- 3.8% others

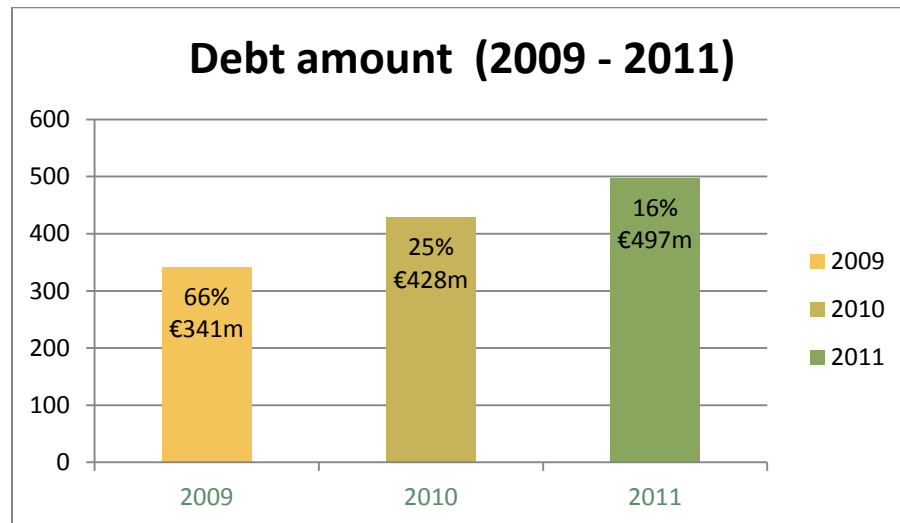


Figure 6: Debt amount (2009-2011) for MABS clients

5.3 Service delivery and developments

Mortgage arrears and debt resolution

MABSndI and the Citizens Information Board engaged actively with the work of the Expert Group on Mortgage Arrears, and the Law Reform Commission report on Personal Debt Management and Debt Enforcement. MABSndI continued its work with the Irish Banking Federation (IBF) to implement the IBF/MABS protocol and worked with other bodies, including credit unions and utilities to develop further protocol arrangements. All the major utility providers have now signed up to the Energy Utility/ MABS Operational Protocol.

MABSndI provided intensive engagement and support to services in the roll-out of the Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process (MARP) with subsequent benefits to MABS clients as well as the wider public through links with the Central Bank.

Managing client demand and assessment procedures

Early in 2011, CIB commissioned an independent review of the management of service demand in MABS. The backdrop to this research was the significant increase in the number and complexity of MABS cases and in some locations, quite lengthy waiting lists. The independent research was carried out by Eustace Patterson Ltd. and completed

in September 2011. Eustace Patterson's research approach gave an in-depth insight into the challenges of client demand management and the practices that had developed in response to these challenges.

The main findings included:

- A marked increase in demand for MABS
- Increased complexity of MABS cases
- Variation in practice across MABS and in how waiting times were managed and recorded
- Staff believed that MABS needed strong leadership, national standards, quality assurance and systematic caseload management
- Fifty percent of MABS companies believed time was right for standards

The researchers recommended standardised systems and procedures across all MABS Services. The majority of the recommended changes came from existing practices in MABS and, in general, were managerial and administrative tasks. In addition, the researchers recommended the integration and implementation of the standardised approach to client assessment which had evolved from previous pilots organised by MABSndI and tested in a number of services.

In September, the CIB Board endorsed the recommendations of the Eustace Patterson report and subsequently MABS companies were advised to prepare for the implementation of the recommendations following consultation and discussion. Towards the end of 2011, MABSndI and CIB prepared practical guidelines and a recording mechanism to support MABS co-ordinators in the implementation of standardised client access procedures. Two national training events were held in December for co-ordinators and comprehensive training on assessment of clients was scheduled by MABSndI for staff in January 2012.

New service delivery meetings

Following the organisational restructure in early 2011 new structures and processes for engaging with the Citizens Information Board's delivery partners were put in place.

As part of the new service delivery approach each Service Delivery Region organised a series of service delivery meetings with MABS companies. The meetings are an important part of our approach and are designed to achieve a number of objectives including developing a common understanding of service user needs and concerns and supporting the implementation of a range of responses to address those needs. A co-ordinated approach to communicating with MABS has also been put in place.

Position paper on MABS

In June 2011 the Board of CIB presented a position paper on MABS to the Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton TD. The position paper was produced in the context of proposals for the establishment of a non-judicial debt settlement mechanism set out in the Programme for Government, the reports of the Mortgage Arrears and Personal Debt Group and reports of the Law Reform Commission. MABS was referred to in each of these documents but they were not all in agreement on to the role of MABS in relation to non-judicial debt settlement. The position paper set out the Board's view. It was noted in the position paper that following the assignment of MABS to CIB there was a statutory obligation to ensure that services are targeted at people on low incomes and people who are in danger of being socially excluded. It was also noted that while the group of people who have low incomes is expanding in the current economic conditions that not all these people could be considered socially excluded and some are in a position to negotiate their own debt settlement arrangements.

Four options for the future approach of MABS were considered:

- **Option 1:** MABS to continue providing services to its current client group
- **Option 2 (a):** Continue present service but also take on role in relation to debt relief orders as outlined by the Law Reform Commission
- **Option 2 (b):** As 2(a) but also possible involvement as Personal Insolvency Trustees
- **Option 3:** MABS would be the non-judicial debt settlement agency for debts up to a limit
- **Option 4:** MABS would be the non-judicial debt settlement agency for all personal debt

The Board's view was that Option 2 (either (a) or (b)) was the preferred option. It was also of the view that that a clear definition was required in relation to entitlement to MABS face-to-face services and that voluntary settlement should be tried before accessing the non-judicial arrangements.

Community and money management education

MABSndI continued to work on the development of community and money management education, working with MABS companies and external organisations to develop initiatives. Strategically, resources are tailored to meet the needs of specific learner groups. Work which progressed in 2011, by either developing or updating of resources, included:

- **Money Counts:** an online tool to facilitate learning of money management skills, designed in conjunction with St John of God's, Carmona Services.

- A Way of Life: an education resource for Travellers, developed by North Galway MABS.
- YOYO's: a resource aimed at young people delivered by Youthreach centres

While pressure exists on services to focus on service to active and new clients, they continue to support debt-prevention measures through community-based initiatives.

5.4 National Traveller MABS

National Traveller MABS works to ensure the financial inclusion of Travellers in Irish society, focusing on issues of over indebtedness and exclusion from financial institutions. In 2011 National Traveller MABS completed a major 3-year report on issues facing Travellers in accessing financial services. The report makes a number of recommendations to ensure access to MABS and other relevant services, to promote financial capacity amongst Travellers and to promote financial inclusion initiatives. The report will be launched by the Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton TD in 2012. Research on *Debt and Dying within the Traveller Community* was completed in 2011. In addition, a DVD on illegal moneylending was launched by the service.

National Traveller MABS also explored the suitability and application to Travellers of *Lending4Change*, a micro-finance model designed to engage groups or communities traditionally prone to financial exclusion.

6 The National Advocacy Service (NAS)

The National Advocacy Service (NAS) for people with disabilities was established in January 2011 as a nationwide service and was launched by the Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton TD on 31 March 2011. The NAS provides a representative advocacy service where a trained and independent person represents the wishes of the person with a disability and deals with specific problems, working with the person and supporting them until the issue is resolved or can be taken no further.

The service is open to all disability groups including people with physical or sensory disabilities, people with intellectual disabilities, people on the autism spectrum and people with mental health difficulties. NAS aims to ensure that the voices of people with disabilities are heard and their rights safeguarded. NAS's remit is to work with people with disabilities who are isolated from their community and services, have communication differences, are inappropriately accommodated, live in residential services, attend day services and have limited informal or natural supports.

6.1 Staffing and funding

The service is managed by five Citizens Information Services in Dublin (Clondalkin), Westmeath, Offaly, Waterford and Leitrim and staffed by five managers, 35 advocates (whole-time equivalent) and five administrators. See Appendix 5 for a breakdown of NAS funding. A full list of advocates and the counties which they cover is available on citizensinformationboard.ie.

6.2 Service demand and statistics

In the early months of 2011, the changeover from the Community and Voluntary (C&V) Advocacy projects, the transfer and redeployment of advocates, recruitment of staff and building regional teams were the main focus for NAS. However, over two hundred cases transferred from the C&V projects to NAS and numbers have continued to increase, with cases becoming increasingly complex. Promotion of the service has been targeted at disability groups and service providers.

Type of case	Numbers 2011
Cases transferred from pilot projects	206
New clients	650
Total client numbers	856
Initial interviews with clients	748
Number on waiting list	34
Closed cases	291

Figure 7: National Advocacy Service statistics in 2011

6.3 Service delivery and developments

NAS's remit is to focus support for the most vulnerable and isolated people with disabilities. Access and eligibility criteria have been developed to help NAS staff to deploy resources in a targeted way, and to prioritise cases. NAS has actively worked to ensure that the advocacy service is available both to people in residential services, and those who are isolated in the community and cannot easily refer themselves to the service.

People with disabilities who are able to advocate for themselves are encouraged, where possible, to use mainstream services such as the Citizens Information Service. Meetings took place in each of the five regions during 2011 to discuss and agree referral guidelines between NAS and CISs.

Advocates are supported and supervised to ensure that they provide a high standard of service through a range of processes including line management, team meetings, peer support, coaching, case review, training and external supervision. Senior advocates coach and co-work complex cases with advocates as needed. All cases are securely recorded on an electronic case management system and specific training has been provided on its use.

To ensure a consistent national approach to the development of the Service, the CIB Advocacy team met regularly with the five managers of NAS during 2011. These meetings involve discussion and agreement on a national approach to the service, policies and procedures, training needs, national planning and reporting. NAS has also contributed to CIB social policy submissions and reports (see Chapter 10).



7 Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS)

The Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS) seeks to ensure that quality interpretation services are available to Deaf people in Ireland so they can access public and social services.

During 2011 SLIS concentrated its activities on its strategic objectives. These include

- Promoting and advocating for the right to high-quality interpreting services – particularly in relation to the interaction of Deaf people with State agencies and services
- Promoting best practice in the field of sign language interpreting
- Advocating quality standards among interpreters and their client organisations
- Meeting social interpreting needs – which might otherwise remain unmet
- Actively working towards the introduction of new technologies with the potential to improve the quality of interaction for Deaf people
- Facilitating the delivery of a national emergency sign language interpreting service

7.1 Service delivery and developments

During 2011 SLIS hosted a working group in partnership with the HSE and other key stakeholders to develop a policy for universal access for people who are deaf to all HSE services. This policy will act as a template for similar policies with other Government departments.

In 2011 SLIS initiated research into the design and implementation of a National Register for Irish sign language interpreters. It also worked with stakeholders to explore social interpreting needs with the aim of broadening the scope of the small social interpreting fund operated by SLIS to meet those needs within the Deaf community. In addition SLIS explored responses to emergency situations involving members of the Deaf community so that the SLIS emergency response continues to match need.

SLIS also developed a tender proposal for a new SLIS website which will provide a more dynamic and interactive service for booking clients, interpreters and the Deaf community. It also began the process of translating all important information into Irish Sign Language.

Remote interpreting

To fully access services, most Deaf people require provision of an Irish Sign Language interpreter to facilitate communication. At present, the interpreter must be present at the same location as the Deaf person to undertake an interpreting role. Since there is only a limited pool of interpreters, this severely restricts the extent to which interpreting is available to make public services accessible to the Deaf community since, at present, the cost of booking an interpreter for short, routine appointments (like seeking information on entitlements) is prohibitive for both the individual and the service provider.

During 2011 SLIS began piloting a model for remote Irish Sign Language Interpreting. It will be called IRIS, the Irish Remote Interpreting Service. This uses webcam and internet technology to deliver an interpreting service to Deaf people. The interpreter is based in the SLIS office and can be called (at the moment at selected times) to interpret via Skype. The pilot will be extended incrementally, initially to a selected number of Citizens Information Services, with the long-term aim of rolling it out nationally to cover essential services for deaf people.

SLIS provides a referral service by putting booking clients (mainly public service providers) in touch with suitably qualified interpreters.

2011	%	Total
<i>Education & training</i>	14%	224
<i>Legal</i>	11%	168
<i>Medical</i>	24%	381
<i>Private Sector</i>	7%	106
<i>Public Sector</i>	23%	371
<i>Social Interpreting/ Public Events</i>	5%	77
<i>Voluntary Sector (Deaf Remit)</i>	16%	248
<i>Voluntary Sector (Other)</i>	1%	19
Total		1594

Figure 8: Annual requests received by SLIS in 2011



8 Providing information

The Citizens Information Board supports the delivery of information through three channels: online, telephone and face-to-face. These three channels work together to ensure that the public have access to information, advice and advocacy services in the way that suits them best. The Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS) provides a telephone service and the nationwide network of Citizens Information Services (CISs) provides the face-to-face service.

The public can access information directly through the citizensinformation.ie website, microsites and assistireland.ie. [Citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie) is also a key information source for the network of Citizens Information Services and the Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS). In 2011 citizensinformation.ie was the main source of information for 59% of queries to CISs. We also produce a range of printed publications – ranging from wallcharts and leaflets to full-length books that cover a topic in depth – which are an effective and popular way to distribute information.

8.1 citizensinformation.ie

The citizensinformation.ie website is designed to provide public service information for Ireland. It provides details on rights and entitlements for the general public and also acts as the primary information source for information providers in Citizens Information Services (CISs) and the Citizens Information Phone Service, (CIPS) as well as providing useful information for officers in the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS), the National Advocacy Service (NAS) for people with disabilities and other organisations. In 2011 citizensinformation.ie recorded more than 5.6m users and more than 33m page views.

A redesign of the website was completed in September 2011 and includes a number of new navigation features including the ‘My Situation’ section, ‘Most Read’ listings and ‘Related Documents’ on each webpage. Also in September 2011 a new version of the website – optimised for mobile phones and small screen devices – was launched at the address m.cinfo.ie. The mobile website is cross-linked from the main website: citizensinformation.ie.

[Citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie) users had a particular focus on social welfare and employment information in 2011 (in line with queries to Citizens Information Services and the Citizens Information Phone Service). Content development during the year was spread right across the website, and included new information on activation schemes, civil

partnership, the Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears and on debt generally. During the year CIB continued to syndicate social welfare information from citizensinformation.ie to the website of the Department of Social Protection, welfare.ie.

CIB microsites

Since 2009 the Citizens Information Board has developed three microsites. These are small websites, based on information from citizensinformation.ie, aimed at a specific target audience. Each microsite brings together all the information on a topic allowing users to navigate the site quickly and easily to find the information they need. Microsites can be built quickly and inexpensively in response to user needs. Each microsite has accompanying leaflets which summarise the information available to the target group and act as promotional tools for the microsite.

Losingyourjob.ie (aimed at people who are unemployed or being made redundant) recorded 70,290 users in 2011 and more than 245,000 page views.

Keepingyourhome.ie (aimed at people in mortgage arrears or tenants having difficulty paying rent) recorded 41,291 users in 2011 and more than 170,000 page views. In March 2011 keepingyourhome.ie was nominated to the UN World Summit Awards as an example of best practice in e-Government from Ireland.

During 2011 the Citizens Information Board updated the three leaflets associated with the Board's microsites. *Have you lost your job?* is aimed at people who are newly unemployed or being made redundant; *Keeping your home: homeowners* is aimed at people who are in mortgage arrears, while *Keeping your home: tenants* is aimed at tenants who are having difficulty paying rent. As well as being distributed in print, these leaflets can be downloaded from losingyourjob.ie and keepingyourhome.ie.

New microsite: selfemployedsupports.ie

During the economic downturn many self-employed people have visited Citizens Information Services and MABS offices with questions about their entitlements following a fall-off in business and a reduction in their income. A new microsite, selfemployedsupports.ie, was launched in November 2011. It aims to provide information for self-employed people who are living on reduced incomes. The site recorded more than 2,000 users in its first full month in operation. A leaflet *Supports and information for the self-employed* complements the microsite and a pdf of the leaflet is one of the most popular documents on the site.

Healthcomplaints.ie

The Citizens Information Board was part of the cross-organisational Health Complaints initiative chaired by the Office of the Ombudsman. The HSE, CORU, the Medical Council, the Irish Patients Association and a number of other organisations in the health and social services sector were involved in the initiative. A website (healthcomplaints.ie),



a suite of publications and a training programme were launched by the group in September 2011.

Social networking

During 2011 the CIB twitter feed (twitter.com/citizensinfo) continued to grow and passed 2,000 'followers' in March 2012.

8.2 Publications

The Citizens Information Board publishes a wide range of publications and other resources to ensure that the public and information givers have access to accurate, up to date and comprehensive information on rights and entitlements. We also publish advocacy, research and social policy reports highlighting issues of concern to users of social services (see Chapter 10 for research and social policy reports).

Wallcharts and leaflets

Three information wallcharts were published early in 2011. The *Benefits and Taxes 2011* wallchart and leaflet summarise benefits in 2011 with comprehensive tables of rates and income thresholds. *Entitlements for People with Disabilities 2011* brings together benefits and services for people with disabilities. *Entitlements for Older People 2011* covers pensions and the full range of entitlements for older people. The Benefits and Taxes leaflet and the three wallcharts are available in Citizens Information Services. The leaflet and wallcharts are widely distributed to other service providers and information providers for display in public offices.

Information for those affected by Bereavement

In 2011 a new edition of the guide, *Information for those affected by Bereavement*, was produced and distributed. The booklet provides information on dealing with the practical and material matters that arise following a death and it is intended as a guide for people who have been recently bereaved, for those supporting people who have been bereaved, and for information providers generally.

Supports for farmers

This leaflet, new in 2011, summarises the social welfare supports available for farmers and their families and covers how farm income is assessed. It also covers tax and PRSI for farmers, pensions and pensions for farmers' spouses. It looks at how farm income is regarded in means tests for the Fair Deal Scheme (for nursing home care) and student maintenance grants.

Information for school leavers

The *Information for school leavers* leaflet was published in May and distributed to schools around the country. It covers a wide range of topics that may be of interest to



people leaving school, including options for education and training, social welfare entitlements, tax and employment law.

Relate and EU Supplement

Relate is the Citizens Information Board's monthly journal covering legislation and developments in the broad social services and social policy areas. During the year Relate covered areas such as the Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process (MARP), atypical work, pensions, appeals systems, taxation of civil partners, the Better Energy Programme and the Jobs Initiative. The EU Supplement was published quarterly during the year. It covers significant EU developments in the broad areas of social policy, consumer policy and citizens' rights.

Distribution

Citizens Information Board publications are widely distributed to a range of organisations and individuals as well as the network of Citizens Information Services. These include government departments and statutory agencies, MABS offices, local social welfare offices and health offices, TDs and senators, the voluntary and community sector and other local networks. PDF versions of all publications are available on citizensinformationboard.ie.

8.3 Assist Ireland

The assistireland.ie website provides information on assistive technology (aids and appliances) for older people and people with disabilities in Ireland. The website has a large 'Products Directory', containing details of over 7,000 products designed to help people live independently and listing suppliers for each product.

In 2011, assistireland.ie, in conjunction with suppliers listed on the website, performed a review of the product content on the website. Each company was asked to review their products on assistireland.ie and respond with details of any discontinued or new products. This update process allowed CIB to add over 600 new disability products to assistireland.ie in 2011, as well as ensuring that assistireland.ie is kept accurate and up-to-date.

[Assistireland.ie](http://assistireland.ie) also has an extensive 'Information Section' that provides general information on assistive technology. This section details the type of assistive technology that is most relevant in a particular context, for example, Assistive Technology in Communication, Education and Employment. The Information Section of the website contains more than 30 information sheets to help people understand the many different types of equipment available and what to consider when choosing equipment, such as 'Choosing a Shower and Accessories' or 'Choosing Equipment to Get Up and Down Stairs'. In 2011 assistireland.ie recorded 352,000 users and the assistireland.ie support service dealt with more than 1,800 queries.



9 Supporting quality services

Assuring the quality of our services and the services delivered by our partners is an important strategic priority. The Citizens Information Board provides training services nationwide to ensure that information providers deliver high-quality services to their customers. To reflect this increasing emphasis on quality service to the customer, a new Quality team was set up in 2011. The Advocacy team supports mainstream advocacy in CISs and supports the new National Advocacy Service (NAS).

9.1 Training services

The Citizens Information Board provides training services nationwide to Citizens Information Services (CISs), the Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS) and other voluntary and statutory bodies to enhance their information-provision capabilities through the Training team. In 2011 the team was restructured and expanded during the organisational restructure.

National Training Calendar

In 2011, the Citizens Information Board delivered 74 courses in over 26 locations throughout the country. More than 1,098 people attended training events representing 42 Citizens Information Services, MABS, CIPS and other voluntary and statutory organisations. The two National Calendars of Training Events - March to June and September to December delivered training on information, interpersonal skills, legal, and management and organisational skills.

New courses on the National Training Calendar for 2011 included *Education and Training options for people on welfare payments, Maximising Income for PAYE workers and payments/work options for jobseekers, Safe TALK - suicide alertness for everyone, Minding Self: Managing a Quality Service, Family Law - with particular emphasis on Civil Partners and Cohabitees, Implementing the Habitual Residency Condition, Introduction to Mediation, Employment Law and Redundancy payments, HSE appeals and complaints, Dealing with welfare queries from the self-employed or those formerly self employed*

Training on advocacy case management

Ongoing training and support was provided for CISs on advocacy case management. The training covered the advocacy component of the Oyster system and advocacycase.ie (the

new advocacy case management system). This included two workshops for development managers in March 2011 and a Training for Trainers' session.

Effective Governance Training for Boards

This programme was developed jointly by CIB and MABSndI and was delivered to CIS and MABS board members in Dublin, Athlone, Kilkenny, Cork, Dundalk and Carrick on Shannon. It targeted members of boards of management in both MABS and CISs and was designed to give participants and increased understanding and awareness of their roles and responsibilities. It was specifically directed at those new to their Board or those newly appointed as officers of the Board.

129 people attended the joint training events from 66 different services – 33 CISs and 33 MABS. Participants found it helpful to see that both organisations were facing similar challenges and appreciated the opportunity for an exchange of views and perspectives in the context of organisational changes.

Information Providers Programme (IPP)

The Information Providers Programme (IPP) equips information providers with the knowledge, skill and attitudes required to provide free, impartial, confidential and non-judgemental information, advice and advocacy on public and social service services to the public. CIB offers accreditation for the IPP delivered in taught, distance learning and recognition of prior learning formats.

The IPP is designated at level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The IPP is delivered over a 9 month period involving the completion of assessments in two FETAC locally devised modules; Information Advice and Advocacy Practice (L32072) and Social and Civil Information (L32073). To date 35 programmes have been delivered with 875 people receiving component awards.

In October 2011, the Chair of the Citizens Information Board, Sylva Langford presented FETA certificates to 169 adult learners in the National College of Ireland who had completed the IPP by taught, distance learning and recognition of prior learning formats. Of the 169 award recipients 142 work in Citizens Information Services (CIS); 2 in the Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS), 4 in the Money Advice and Budgeting Services (MABS) with the remaining 21 working in the community, voluntary and statutory sector.

Speaking at the ceremony Sylva Langford said: *"I congratulate all of you who have given your time and commitment as adult learners on receiving this accredited certificate. It is important that you receive official recognition for your achievement as Information Providers in CISs, CIPS, MABS and the various community, voluntary and statutory organisations. This important accreditation also promotes quality assurance for the*



delivery of information, advice and advocacy services to the public". Ms Langford pointed out that a FETAC Standards Development Group, with Citizens Information Board acting as the lead organisation, has been working to develop a full award at Level 6 in the new FETAC Common Awards System.

Due to its popularity another six courses of the IPP are currently in place catering for learners in Regions 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5. Close to 150 learners are expected to graduate in the August 2012 FETAC assessment period.

9.2 Quality services

The quality of our services largely depends on the people who deliver them and the supports at their disposal. Each of the Citizens Information Board's internal teams works to produce and provide a range of high-quality supports for those delivering services to the customer – these include websites, publications, training, ICT systems, social policy and research, governance and service delivery supports. CIB also works closely with MABSndI to provide a coordinated approach to the support of MABS companies.

CIB's Strategic Plan 2009 – 2012 *Pathways to Services – Putting Citizens at the Centre* places a strong emphasis on ensuring that service users receive consistently high-quality services, as set out in Priority 2: Assuring Quality of our Services. To achieve this it is important that quality standards are in place to clarify expectations and underpin service delivery.

A new Quality team was set up in 2011. This team is responsible for ensuring that service users receive consistently high-quality services that meet their individual needs. In 2011 the team engaged systemically with internal CIB teams and with CISs, CIPS, MABS and NAS to integrate existing quality processes and to develop a quality assurance system that will support and oversee services.

Over the last number of years, CIB has been working with each of the delivery partners to draft quality standards for their respective service areas. A range of representatives from the relevant services (including money advisors, information providers and advocates) participated in these working groups. The draft quality standards drawn up by the working groups will be used in the planned quality assurance system.

During 2011 the Quality Assurance Steering Group was set up to co-ordinate the development and implementation of a Quality Assurance system across all our delivery partners. In conjunction with the Steering Group, CIB developed a Request for Tender to purchase a suitable quality assurance system. The Tender was published on eTenders.gov.ie in March 2012. The new system should lead to a continuous and



measurable improvement in service standards and recognised quality accreditation for the services provided by our delivery partners.

9.3 Advocacy services

In the context of its legislation, the Citizens Information Board defines advocacy as “a means of empowering people by supporting them to assert their views and claim their entitlements and where necessary representing and negotiating on their behalf.”

Advocacy is delivered through the Citizens Information Service (CIS) network and the National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities (NAS) (which is based in five CISs, one in each region).

The Advocacy team provides support and oversight to both mainstream and disability advocacy. It works closely with CIB Senior Management to develop and implement the CIB strategic plan with regard to advocacy, devise advocacy policies, deploy resources and oversee the development of advocacy services. The team manages and resources the case management system, advocacycase.ie which provides data on all advocacy cases. The team prepares policies and procedures in partnership with CIS and NAS services. It liaises with the Training team in arranging advocacy training for both CIS and NAS staff and with the Finance team in overseeing service budgets.

Speaking up for Advocacy

Speaking up for Advocacy is an occasional newsletter published by the Citizens Information Board. The newsletter discusses advocacy issues and details projects and research relating to advocacy.



10 Influencing social policy

The Citizens Information Board has a statutory function to provide feedback to policymakers about people's experiences of social welfare, health, education, housing and other services and supports so policy and services can become more responsive to the needs of the citizen.

To capture and analyse people's experiences, we rely on reports sent in to us by our service delivery partners. These include Citizens Information Services (CISs), the Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS), the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS), and the National Advocacy Service (NAS). In turn, CIB communicates the issues raised and proposals for change to relevant policy-making bodies (including Government departments). We do this through formal policy reports and submissions; membership of advisory and consultative groups; and ongoing interaction with key personnel with a policy brief.

10.1 Social policy evidence

CISs and CIPS send in a short report to the Citizens Information Board, known as a social policy return, when, in the course of providing information, advice and/or advocacy support, they are made aware of a social policy issue. This might be a problem with the policy itself (for example, an anomaly, gap or inconsistency that leaves people without a service or support that they need) or with the way in which policy is administered on the ground (e.g. processing delays, information deficits, communication breakdowns or failures to treat people respectfully or courteously).

Each social policy return includes non-identifying detail about the caller's situation. This provides us with useful material that 'gets behind' the statistics and demonstrates how policy impacts on people's lives. Social policy reports with illustrative, non-identifying case study material also come in to CIB from the National Advocacy Service (NAS); this material is particularly useful with regard to the impact of social policy on people with disabilities.

10.2 Statistical overview of 2011

CIB received 2,245 social policy returns from Citizens information Services via the electronic Oyster database during 2011. Additionally, 344 returns were received from CIPS.



The categorisation of social policy returns was broadly consistent with the breakdown of queries that CISs dealt with, in that the majority of 2011 social policy returns (close to 60%) concerned **social welfare**. This was followed by **health, employment and housing**.

Within the social welfare category, the largest number of returns concerned the Supplementary Welfare Allowance Scheme.⁵ This was followed by concerns in relation to those receiving or trying to access disability and illness benefits.

The policy issue most frequently raised was that of perceived **policy anomalies or inconsistencies** (24% of all returns) followed closely by **lengthy delays in processing applications and appeals** (23%). **Information deficits** (incomplete, inaccurate or no information given to members of the public about their entitlements) accounted for 20% of total returns and **gaps in coverage** was the issue identified in 11%. The remaining 22% ranged across issues such as differences between schemes as described and as delivered, discourteous treatment of members of the public, problems with enforcement of rights and entitlements and difficulties accessing public services.

The number of social policy returns regarding processing and appeals delays rose steadily throughout the year, accounting for nearly twice as many returns in the final quarter as in the first quarter of 2011.

CIB's Social Policy Quarterly Reports (SPQRs) provides more detail and case study material in relation to issues and trends. The SPQR is published online and distributed to relevant agencies, departments and personnel:

http://www.citizensinformationboard.ie/publications/social/social_update.html

Capacity building

CIB must ensure that its social policy work is firmly evidence-based. To this end, the CIB Social Policy and Research team offers training, guidance and support to our service delivery partners. This is designed to ensure that information and advocacy workers can identify and capture social policy issues, and provide statistical and case study evidence to clarify and illuminate the issues reported. Training is offered through the Information Providers Programme (IPP), the National Training Calendar, and on a tailored basis to individual services, as appropriate. Additionally, a monthly social policy newsletter is distributed to service delivery partners to draw their attention to critical issues and developments and to offer feedback on the issues that they have brought to our attention.

⁵ Payments made under this Supplementary Welfare Allowance scheme include [Rent Supplement](#), [Mortgage Interest Supplement](#), [Diet and Heating Supplements](#), the [Back to School Clothing and Footwear Scheme](#) and exceptional needs payments for items such as buggies, clothing, etc.



10.3 Policy submissions in 2011

The Citizens Information Board made various submissions during 2011 including:

Self-employed and social insurance (Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare)

A submission on the issue of social insurance cover for the self-employed. The lack of PRSI cover for self-employed people whose businesses have failed completely or where income from self-employment had reduced significantly has been a regular and recurring issue for CIB delivery partner clients during the past three years.

Submission on the future of Disability Policy in Ireland (Department of Health)

In this submission CIB agreed with proposals for a very significant reframing of disability services towards a model of individualised supports, underpinned by mainstreaming of all public services. A policy of individualised supports is a natural progression to the mainstreaming of services for people with disabilities

Pre-Budget Submission

This submission drew on the experiences of Citizens Information Services and MABS in dealing with the complex difficulties and challenges faced by families struggling to meet the costs of daily living and coping with, amongst other things, rising utility and school costs as well as mortgage repayments and rent. During the past two years, services have experienced a substantial increase in the number of queries relating to over-indebtedness. A number of services report the cumulative negative impact on many low income households of various cutbacks in social welfare and increased tax charges together with the range of increased costs.

Review of Mental Health Legislation (Department of Health)

The Programme for Government included a commitment to review the Mental Health Act 2001. This submission to the Department of Health's review draws on the experiences of the Board's National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities, which includes people with mental health problems. (During the first nine months of 2011, almost 19% of cases referred to the new National Advocacy Service (NAS) were people with mental health problems.)



'Your Health is Your Wealth' – A Public Health Policy Framework for a Healthier Ireland 2012-2020 (Department of Health)

Over seven percent of all queries (almost 80,000 queries) to Citizens Information Services refer to health-related matters; difficulties around medical card eligibility and applications account for about 60% of such queries. The Submission focused on access to health services, equality of provision, access to entitlements, factors that impact on health and drew attention to the impact of indebtedness on people's mental and physical health.

Reform of the State's Employment Rights and Industrial Relations Structures and Procedures (Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation)

Ten per cent of queries to Citizens Information Services nationally are employment rights related. In recent years, assistance and advocacy work has developed as a growing component of the work of CISs. An important part of this support is advising, supporting and sometimes representing clients in taking cases to the Rights Commissioner Service and to the Employment Appeals Tribunal and/or negotiating with an employer on a client's behalf. Queries on employment rights suggest that people who seek information and advice in relation to employment protection matters are generally non-unionised employees, people in low-paid jobs, part-time workers and people working for smaller employers.

Additional submissions included:

- Child and family income supports (Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare September 2011)
- Development of Department of Social Protection Statement of Strategy 2011-2014 (September 2011)
- Proposed Changes to Mental Capacity Law (April 2011)
- Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality (August 2011)
- Consumer Protection Code Review (January 2011)

10.4 Membership of consultative committees and networks

As part of its social policy remit the Social Policy and Research team participates in a range of policy fora and networks to highlight feedback from frontline information services on the impact of policies on service users.

In 2011, CIB participated in the Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare established by the Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton TD. The Group has been asked to



examine a number of specific issues and make recommendations on them, including child and family income supports, working age income supports, the appropriate unit of assessment in both the tax and social welfare codes, the interaction of the tax and social welfare codes, issues concerning social insurance for self-employed people and any other issues that may be referred to the Group including the Budget 2012 proposals concerning Disability Allowance and Domiciliary Care Allowance. Child and family income supports were prioritised by the group in 2011 and a report was submitted to the Minister. The Group sought submissions throughout the year on the topics under consideration.

CIB is also a member of the Disability Consultative Forum set up by the Department of Social Protection and within this context a range of issues around disability income support and services were raised with the Department in 2011 including delays in payments and issues relating to appeals.

Other networks with which we engaged during the year include the Social Policy Network which brings together voluntary and statutory agencies involved in policy work.

10.5 Social policy reports

Help for people with mortgage arrears

The Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton TD, launched a research report called *Lifting the Load – Help for people with mortgage arrears* in Dublin in September 2011. The report was commissioned by Waterford MABS, CIB and MABSndI, and focused on the experience of MABS clients who were having difficulties repaying their mortgages. Simon Brooke and Michelle Norris, the researchers, explored the impact of the current supports on MABS clients. Current arrangements including forbearance and mortgage interest supplement were found to address the issues of those in short term difficulty. However the research found that existing arrangements do not meet the needs of people who need medium-term support or have non-viable mortgages. In the case of the latter forbearance can worsen the situation by increasing the debts they owed on dwellings which are likely to be repossessed ultimately. The research identified a number of potential solutions to the problems of these households including extending Mortgage Interest Supplement and Mortgage to Rent Schemes.

Self-employed people and social welfare supports

Work began in 2011 on a social policy report on the welfare needs of self-employed people on low income. CISs had seen a substantial increase in the number of self-employed people using their services. MABS also reported growing problems of indebtedness, difficulties in accessing credit and subsequent inability to meet loan and mortgage payments amongst self-employed people. A social policy alert was issued to services seeking feedback on their clients' experiences and case studies to inform the



report. The main issues highlighted in the feedback were the difficulties that can arise for self-employed people in securing means-tested welfare supports and the absence of insurance-based social welfare provision to cater for situations of unemployment or sickness/disability as well as administrative difficulties experienced arising out of the interactions of self-employed people with the social welfare system.

The subsequent report *Hard Times for the Self Employed: Citizens Information and MABS Experience* (launched in 2012) sets out factors relevant to social insurance provision for self-employed people arising out of the experience of CISs, CIPS and MABS. It contains a number of proposals which would enable the Irish social welfare system to better accommodate the difficulties faced by self-employed people and the emerging scenario where many more people will at some point in their working lives be self-employed either as sole traders or as small family businesses with employees. The proposals are based on the premise that all people should have broadly similar levels of protection under the social insurance system and should be able to avail of relevant income supports and employment activation supports.

10.6 Research

Funding for specialist agencies

The Citizens Information Board funds a number of specialist organisations to provide support in specialised areas of expertise to the delivery partner network. This is in recognition of the complexity of certain case scenarios presented to services and the need for frontline staff to be able to access relevant supports if required. This mechanism is a core element of integrated service provision to ensure that the needs of information providers for technical, legal and specialist subject matter expertise are met and that a diverse range of expertise is available when needed. (See also Chapter 3, section 3.3 for a list of the organisations funded.)

CIB undertook a review in 2011 of the arrangements for funding these agencies which captured the extent of this specialist second tier support, the current levels of usage of the support services by CISs and CIPS and the overall demand for the supports provided. The review also looked at perceived gaps in the broad area of technical and expert support generally. Housing issues were identified as one of the areas in which services required specialist support.

Subsequently funding was approved for Threshold's Housing Advice service to enable them to develop back-up support on housing related queries for CISs and provide supports for advocacy in relation to more complex housing cases.



11 Organisational supports

The Citizens Information Board fulfils important aspects of its mandate through its delivery partners: the network of Citizen Information Services, the Citizens Information Phone Service and the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS). The CIB provides a range of supports and services to these organisations. These supports include finance, ICT, corporate governance, legal and human resources (HR) support.

11.1 Finance and Administration

The Finance and Administration team provides support to CIB in the areas of Finance, Risk Management, Procurement, value for money and general administration. The team ensures appropriate systems and procedures are in place to protect resources, demonstrate value for money (VFM) and comply with public financial procedures.

The team also provides supports to CIB's delivery partners in the preparation and monitoring of budgetary and accounting returns to CIB.

The Board has an internal audit function, established under the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. This function is currently outsourced under contract to Capita plc, which provides internal audit services to the Board under the direction of the Audit and Risk Committee of the Board. The work of the internal auditor is based on an annual internal audit plan prepared for the Committee by the internal auditor, who reports to the Committee at least six times per annum on progress in implementing the plan. The internal audit plan also includes provision for the internal audit of CIB's delivery partners.

11.2 Information and Communications Technology

The Citizens Information Board's ICT strategy is implemented by the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) team. This team also manages and supports the day-to-day operational needs of the Citizens Information Board, the Money Advice and Budgeting Service, Citizens Information Services, the Citizens Information Phone Service and the Sign Language Interpreting Service.

In 2011 the Project Management Office (PMO) was established as part of the organisation restructuring process and assigned to the ICT service. The PMO will have responsibility for managing the programme of projects for the organisation. This includes



defining and maintaining the standards and processes related to project management and overseeing individual projects as they arise within the organisation.

The main focus in 2011 was the consolidation of the ICT infrastructure across our delivery partner networks. Following a successful proof of concept pilot, the new solution was implemented in each local office. The new centralised network provides a number of benefits including the ability to route calls across the network which enables seamless service delivery.

In 2011 the Department of Finance provided CIB with a new block of landline numbers. These new numbers were provided to help reduce telephony costs. The new number range is 0761 and has replaced the old geographic landline numbers used by local delivery partner offices.

In the area of procurement, CIB continued to avail of a number of ICT Framework agreements brokered through the Department of Finance, which maximise volume discounts for non-commercial public sector bodies. In 2011 we made significant savings in the area of fixed line and mobile costs through centralising all delivery partner telephony costs.

11.3 Human Resources and Governance

The Human Resource and Governance team support both CIB and its delivery partners in the areas of Human Resource Management, Industrial Relations, Governance and Premises. The team work both directly, and through outsourced supports, to deliver on a broad range of areas.

Organisation review

The Organisation review took effect on 4 April 2011. The restructuring was required to enable CIB to fully engage with our strategic objectives which included our new responsibilities in relation to MABS. Very significant changes to roles and responsibilities were agreed by management and staff. The emphasis was on developing a new and more effective approach to working with our service delivery partners and on ensuring meaningful engagement with citizens so that the Board can respond effectively to emerging needs. The very positive approach of staff during this period of significant change contributed enormously to the success of the process. There was also on-going engagement with delivery partners throughout the process. See also Chapter 1.

Pension Trustee Services

A tender process for the selection of Professional Trustees for the Occupational Pension Schemes applying in our service delivery partners has been completed. This process

assisted delivery partners to put arrangements in place that comply with the requirements of the Pensions Acts.

Employee Assistance Programme

An Employee Assistance Programme was tendered for and rolled out to all CIB delivery partners and staff. The service provides confidential support and counselling to assist staff who may be experiencing difficulties at work or at home.

Service Agreements

A new generic Service Agreement was developed to combine the strengths of both approaches and to provide a framework for the development of services in line with CIB strategy. The Service Agreement will span a three-year period (running concurrently with the CIB Strategic Plan) for the development of CIB, CIS and MABS. Annual work plans customised to match the capacity of each delivery partner will be drawn up by delivery partners under the Service Agreement and jointly reviewed with CIB. Previously CIB operated a Memorandum of Understanding with CISs in which the respective commitments of both parties were set out and systematically reviewed. MABS companies had three-year contracts with the Department of Social Protection which subsequently transferred to CIB.

Service Agreements were put in place with the network of Citizens Information Services nationwide. A similar exercise with regards to MABS companies was initiated towards the end of the year and will be fully rolled out in 2012.

Training for CIB staff

Nine staff members were approved for the refund of fees scheme in 2011. Thirty three short courses were organised and delivered to CIB staff. This amounted to 40 training days which was an average of 3.2 training days per person trained.

Partnership

The Citizens Information Board's Partnership process brings together management, unions and staff to consult and work together on issues that affect the working of the organisation. Partnership aims to foster joint ownership of the Citizens Information Board's objectives and commits all partners to improving the quality and efficiency of services.

The Partnership Steering Group dealt with a number of important issues during the year. Ms Brid Ingoldsby assumed the role of Chair of Partnership following the expiry of Mr Ian Coulter's very successful term as Chair. Partnership continues to allow for a formalised consultation between staff, unions and management and to work on the basis of consensus decision making.



Official Languages Act

Information on the CIB Irish language scheme is available on both the internet and in the staff resource pack. All content on citizensinformation.ie and losingyourhome.ie is in Irish. The CIB's microsites (losingyourjob.ie, keepingyourhome.ie and selfemployedsupports.ie) are also fully bilingual.

An email address, eolas@ciboard.ie, is in place for Irish language queries. Irish language awareness is included in the staff induction checklist. A three-page reference document of useful phrases for CIB staff was produced and made available over the intranet. A reception manual incorporating instructions on responding to Irish language calls has been compiled. The number of calls and queries received through Irish remains very low.

A review of the existing scheme was carried out in 2011 with very positive feedback on the citizensinformation.ie website in particular. A new three year draft scheme was submitted for approval following a consultation process.

Premises

On-going support to delivery partners with regard to sourcing, fit out, refurbishment and leasing arrangements was provided during the year. There was a particular focus on accessibility issues and moving towards co-location of services wherever possible. Maintenance and repair work to CIB's own premises portfolio was also provided.

11.4 PR and promotion

In 2011 promotion of the Citizens Information and MABS brands continued. Stationery templates were updated for Citizens Information while new templates were developed and uploaded for MABS with easy download access from the CIB website. A new logo, identity guidelines, stationery templates and promotional materials were developed for the National Advocacy Service (NAS) prior to its launch. The roll out of high street signage for both MABS and Citizens Information continues. Brand awareness continued with attendance at key events such as the National Ploughing Championships, The Over 50s Show, Which Course Exhibition and the EU Year of the Volunteer Event.

Promotional materials

All promotional materials and signage are being updated on a phased basis (following the changes to telephone numbers). In addition, a new suite of posters were produced aimed at highlighting supports for people in difficulty due to the economic downturn. The Annual Review was produced in partnership with the Information Resources team providing a corporate overview of the work of the organisation. An Information



Awareness campaign continued with a new joint MABS/Citizens Information leaflet displayed in over 2,000 health outlets nationwide.

Media coverage

The launch of NAS received significant print and radio coverage. The MABS Mortgage Research Report *Lifting the Load – Help for People with Mortgage Arrears* was launched by Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton TD in the EU Commission Offices in Dublin. It received coverage including the front page of the Public Sector Times. Broadcast coverage continued with regular appearance of Teresa McCourt, Manager of Westmeath CIS on the RTE TV Afternoon Show and Philip McCabe, Manager of Monaghan CIS on RTE Radio 1. Media training was organised for the Citizens Information media representatives.

11.5 Energy usage in 2011

Under S.I. 542 of 2009, public sector organisations are required to report annually on their energy usage and actions they propose to take to reduce consumption.

Throughout 2011 CIB improved energy usage efficiency by putting the following initiatives in place:

- Fitting insulation on ground floor of head office in Townsend Street
- Carrying out energy awareness sessions across the organisation

In addition one of our regional offices closed mid-year. As heating accounts for a significant proportion of energy usage in CIB, we also benefited from the mild winter in 2011.

In 2011, throughout its 14 premises, CIB consumed

- 324 MWh of Electricity
- 7714 M³ of Gas

This represents a decrease of 10% electricity and 17% gas usage from 2010 rates.

Actions Planned for 2012

In 2012 we intend to further improve our energy performance by undertaking the following initiatives:



- Continue to raise energy awareness in CIB by regularly sending reminders to staff to switch PCs to power-save mode after a shorter time of non-use, shut down of PCs at night and weekends etc.
- Continue to purchase energy efficient office equipment as far as possible.
- Continue to support the Bike To Work and Commuter Ticket Saver programmes.

Appendix 1 Customer Service Charter

The Citizens Information Board provides independent information, advice and advocacy on public and social services through citizensinformation.ie, the Citizens Information Phone Service and the network of Citizens Information Services. We are responsible for the Money Advice and Budgeting Service and provide advocacy services for people with disabilities. We put the citizen at the centre of everything we do and this Charter sets out the principles that underpin our services.

We are committed to...

1. Clear, comprehensive and accurate information

We will provide clear and detailed information about public and social services to help you identify your needs and access your entitlements.

The public can obtain information face-to-face in Citizens Information Services, on the telephone from the Citizens Information Phone Service and online from the citizensinformation.ie website and associated microsites. In addition, the Citizens Information Board provides FETAC-accredited training programmes. Accredited training for information providers helps to ensure quality in information provision. The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) provides money advice and budgeting services to people with problem debt.

2. Prompt, courteous and efficient responses

We will be responsive to your needs and we will deliver our services sensitively and efficiently.

The Customer Service Action Plan and the Customer Communications and Customer Complaints Procedures set out principles of good communications practice that staff are reminded to adhere to in their dealings with customers – including timeliness of response to written, telephone and other communications. The Citizens Information Board's switchboard remains open from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. The Citizens Information Phone Service provides service from 9am to 9pm.

3. Equality and diversity

We will respect diversity and ensure your right to equal treatment.



In 2011, the Citizens Information Board worked with other agencies to ensure that information reached a range of customer groups including older people, people with disabilities, lone parents, migrants and migrant workers.

4. Choice

We will plan and deliver our services so you can access them in the way that suits you best.

Customers can access Citizens Information services in a variety of ways – online, by telephone and face-to-face. The MABS service is delivered in three ways:

- On its website (mabs.ie)
- Via the MABS Helpline (0761 07 2000 9 am-8 pm Monday to Friday)
- Face-to-face with trained Money Advisers in offices nationwide.

The Citizens Information Board also published a range of printed materials in 2011 (see Chapter 8 above).

5. Access

We will ensure that all our services and offices are fully accessible.

Contact our Access officer, Helen LaHert at the address below or accessofficer@ciboard.ie.

The Citizens Information Board occupies fully accessible offices in George's Quay House, Townsend Street, Dublin 2. All regional offices and Citizens Information Centres meet service delivery accessibility standards. The Citizens Information website has been designed to be accessible to all users, including those with disabilities using assistive technology software such as screen readers. The mobile site m.citinfo.ie allows people using mobile devices to access content. The citizensinformation.ie website complies with the WAI (Web Accessibility Initiative) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, as developed by the World Wide Web Consortium. The corporate website (citizensinformationboard.ie) also meets the guidelines.

6. Official languages

We will provide our services through Irish and/or bilingually where required.



Information on citizensinformation.ie, losingyourjob.ie, keepingyourhome.ie and selfemployedsupports.ie is available in English and Irish with some documents also available in other languages (French, Polish, and Romanian).

The Citizens Information Board has an Irish Language Scheme in accordance with Section 11 of the Official Languages Act 2003. The Act aims to ensure better availability and a higher standard of public services through Irish. See also Official Languages Act above.

7. Consultation and evaluation

We will consult with you to establish your needs when developing, delivering and evaluating our services.

Project groups consisting of representatives from the Citizens Information Board and Citizens Information Services worked together in 2011 on a range of issues related to the development of the network and the delivery of services on the ground.

8. Internal customers

We will support our staff to ensure that they provide an excellent service to one another and to you.

The Partnership approach is used within the Citizens Information Board as a forum for consultation and discussion in relation to the Citizens Information Board's business and how it is carried out.

9. Co-ordination

We will work closely with other organisations to deliver citizen-focused public services.

The Citizens Information Board works closely with its key delivery partners (CISs, CIPS and MABS) and stakeholders across the public and voluntary sector including the Department of Social Protection to deliver citizen-focused public services.

The Citizens Information Board adds value to the provision of information on civil and social services through its integrated approach. This approach involves sourcing and integrating relevant information from a wide range of providers and sources, and making the information available in an independent and impartial manner.



The Citizens Information website, the three-channel strategy of information provision, and the development of the Assist Ireland website and associated telephone helpline are all examples of the integration of information and the publication of this information in accessible forms.

10. Appeals

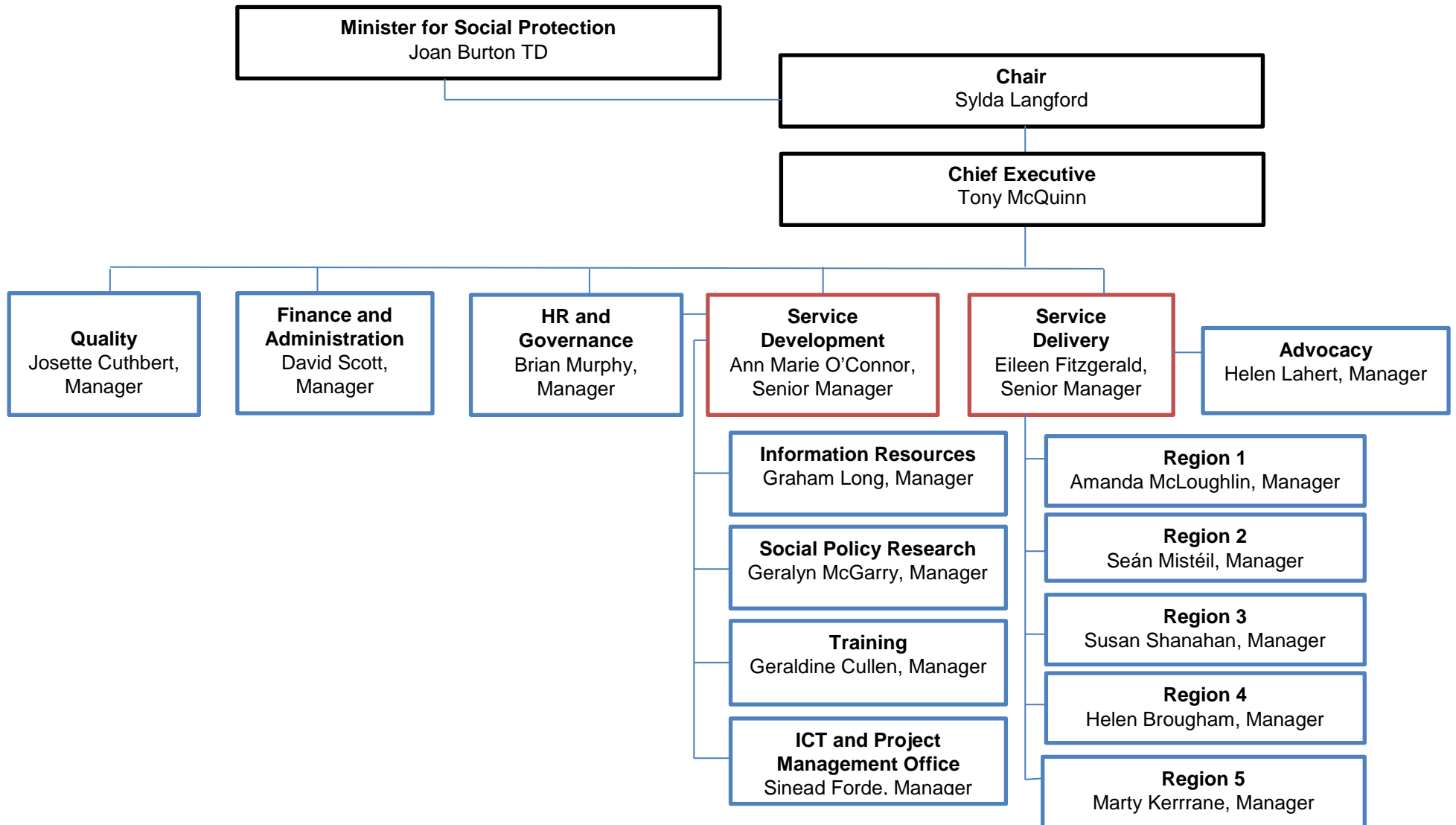
We will maintain an accessible and transparent appeal and review system where appropriate.

A Customer Service Officer is in place. One complaint was received in 2011.

11. Comments and complaints

We want to provide the best service possible to you and welcome all comments on our services. Contact our Customer Services Officer, Shona Bannon at the address below or commentsandcomplaints@ciboard.ie

Appendix 2 Organisational chart





Appendix 3 Citizens Information Board Offices

Head Office

George's Quay House
43 Townsend Street
Dublin 2
Telephone: +353 761 079 000

Dublin 7

Park House,
191-193 North Circular Road
Dublin 7
Telephone: +353 761 079 580

Cavan

Elm House, Elm Bank
Cootehill Road
Cavan
Telephone: +353 761 079 540

Dundalk

4 Adelphi Court, Long Walk
Dundalk
Co. Louth
Telephone: +353 761 075 958

Tallaght

Hainault House, The Square
Tallaght
Dublin 24
Telephone: +353 761 079 600

Tullamore

c/o Offaly Citizens Information Service
Bridge Centre
Tullamore
Co. Offaly
Telephone: +353 761 076 295

Kilkenny

4 The Parade
Kilkenny
Telephone: +353 761 079 620

Waterford

14 Gladstone Street, Waterford
Telephone: +353 761 079 570

Limerick

6th Floor, River Court Business Centre
Cornmarket Square
Limerick
Telephone: +353 761 079 530

Cork

101 North Main Street, Cork
Telephone: +353 761 079 640

Castlebar

Mill Lane, Castlebar, Co. Mayo
Telephone: +353 761 079 500

Letterkenny

Port Road, Letterkenny
Co. Donegal
Telephone: +353 761 079 520

Galway

4th Floor Dockgate, Merchants Road
Galway
Telephone: +353 761 079 660

Sligo

1st Floor, Harbour View House
16 Holborn Street
Sligo
Telephone: +353 761 079 550



Appendix 4 Board members

- Margaret Zheng (appointed September 2007)
- Laurie Cerr (appointed March 2007)
- Patricia Walsh (appointed March 2007)
- Sylva Langford (appointed March 2010)
- Michael Butler (appointed March 2010)
- Martin Naughton (appointed March 2010)
- Josephine Henry (appointed March 2010)
- Noeline Blackwell (appointed March 2010)
- Pat Fitzpatrick (appointed March 2010)
- Michael McGuane (appointed March 2010)
- John Sheehy (appointed March 2010)
- Sandra Ronayne (appointed March 2010)
- Sean Sweeney (appointed December 2010)
- Eugene McErlean (appointed September 2011)
- Fiona Ward (appointed November 2011)

Audit and Risk Committee

- Sylva Langford
- Martin Naughton
- Michael Butler
- Noeline Blackwell
- Josephine Henry
- Pat Fitzpatrick
- Eugene McErlean (Chair)
- Fiona Ward

Finance Committee

- Sylva Langford
- Martin Naughton
- Michael Butler (Chair)
- Noeline Blackwell
- Michael McGuane
- John Sheehy
- Fiona Ward

Appendix 5 Grants in 2011

Grants to Citizens Information Services (CISs)	€
Ballyfermot CIS	261,742
Blanchardstown CIS	250,009
Carlow CIS	194,243
Cavan CIS	187,336
CIC for the Deaf	74,500
Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS)	1,291,754
Clare CIS	315,025
Clondalkin CIS	342,410
Cork City North CIS	177,025
Cork City South CIS	349,076
Crumlin CIS	242,938
Donegal CIS	682,772
Dublin 2,4,6 CIS	227,412
Dublin 8 & Bluebell CIS	286,394
Dublin City Centre CIS	577,108
Dublin City North Bay (KARE) CIS	126,338
Dublin North West (Finglas) CIS	255,122
Dublin Northside CIS	267,485
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown CIS	247,732
Fingal (North County) CIS	313,507
Galway CIS	401,265
Kerry CIS	363,764
Kilkenny CIS	197,825
Laois CIS	220,948
Leitrim CIS	246,603
Limerick CIS	371,908
Longford CIS	266,493
Louth CIS	249,489
Mayo CIS	375,936
Meath CIS	352,649
Monaghan CIS	250,514
North & East Cork County CIS	220,306
North Kildare CIS	222,022
Offaly CIS	300,122
Roscommon CIS	246,970

Sligo CIS	246,047
South Kildare CIS	204,201
St. Vincent's CIC for the Deaf	1,400
Tallaght CIS	385,343
Tipperary CIS	465,614
Waterford CIS	280,770
West Cork County CIS	251,483
Westmeath CIS	303,034
Wexford CIS	354,337
Wicklow CIS	301,978
Total	13,750,949
Grant Support to the Advocacy Support Worker Programme (ASW)	
Clondalkin CIS	56,420
Longford CIS	58,154
Offaly CIS	58,154
West Cork County CIS	58,154
Clare CIS	58,154
Total	289,036
Grants to the National Advocacy Service (NAS)	
Clondalkin CIS	608,090
Westmeath CIS	464,465
Offaly CIS	451,795
Waterford CIS	528,553
Leitrim CIS	608,170
Total	2,661,073
Grants to the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)	
Arklow	233,440
Athlone	153,330
Ballymun	384,767
Blanchardstown	363,984
Bray	367,285
Carlow	353,993
Cavan	272,486
Charleville	210,464

Clare	235,979
Clondalkin	369,600
Cork	517,321
Drogheda	143,985
Dublin 10 & 20	371,232
Dublin 12 Area	300,409
Dublin North City	289,318
Dublin North East	254,426
Dublin South East	286,101
Dun Laoghaire	314,377
Dundalk/Oriel	243,348
Dundrum/Rathfarnham	296,854
Fingal (North County)	305,137
Finglas/Cabra	338,147
Kerry	479,990
Kildare	485,091
Kilkenny	264,853
Laois	191,286
Leitrim	213,084
Liffey South West	344,649
Limerick	398,188
Longford	176,936
MABS National Development Limited (NDL)	1,964,652
Meath	300,672
Monaghan	264,045
Mullingar	219,795
National Traveller MABS	255,671
North Cork	309,991
North Donegal	376,027
North Galway	203,918
North Mayo	217,033
North Tipperary	244,452
Offaly	244,981
Roscommon	200,384
Sligo	230,681
South Donegal	153,698
South Galway	558,737
South Mayo	260,977

Annual Report 2011



South Tipperary	347,656
Tallaght	364,425
Waterford	470,418
West Cork	283,655
West Donegal	111,301
West Waterford	159,064
Wexford	302,326
Total	17,204,619



Appendix 6 Financial Statements: Year ended 31/12/11



Board members and other information

Board members:	Daragh O'Connor	(appointed September 2007, term ended October 2011)
	Margaret Zheng	(appointed September 2007)
	Laurie Cearr	(appointed March 2007)
	Patricia Walsh	(appointed March 2007)
	Sylda Langford	(appointed March 2010)
	Michael Butler	(appointed March 2010)
	Martin Naughton	(appointed March 2010)
	Josephine Henry	(appointed March 2010)
	Noeline Blackwell	(appointed March 2010)
	Pat Fitzpatrick	(appointed March 2010)
	Michael McGuane	(appointed March 2010)
	John Sheehy	(appointed March 2010)
	Sandra Ronayne	(appointed March 2010)
	Sean Sweeney	(appointed December 2010)
	Eugene McErlean	(appointed September 2011)
	Fiona Ward	(appointed September 2011)

Address: Georges's Quay House
43 Townsend Street
Dublin 2

Secretary: Brian Murphy

Solicitors: Mason Hayes and Curran
South Bank House
Barrow Street, Dublin 4

Kilcullen and Associates
183 Lower Rathmines Road
Dublin 6

Bankers: AIB
Bankcentre Branch
P.O. Box 1121
Ballsbridge, Dublin 4

Auditors: Comptroller and Auditor General
Treasury Block
Dublin Castle, Dublin 2



Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General



Comptroller and Auditor General

Report for presentation to the Houses of the Oireachtas

Citizens Information Board

I have audited the financial statements of the Citizens Information Board for the year ended 31 December 2011 under the Comhairle Act 2000. The financial statements, which have been prepared under the accounting policies set out therein, comprise the Statement of Accounting Policies, the Income and Expenditure Account, the Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses, the Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow Statement and the related notes. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland.

Responsibilities of the Members of the Board

The Board is responsible for the preparation of the financial statements, for ensuring that they give a true and fair view of the state of the Board's affairs and of its income and expenditure, and for ensuring the regularity of transactions.

Responsibilities of the Comptroller and Auditor General

My responsibility is to audit the financial statements and report on them in accordance with applicable law.

My audit is conducted by reference to the special considerations which attach to State bodies in relation to their management and operation.

My audit is carried out in accordance with the International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) and in compliance with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards for Auditors.

Scope of Audit of the Financial Statements

An audit involves obtaining evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements, sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. This includes an assessment of

- whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the Board's circumstances, and have been consistently applied and adequately disclosed
- the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made in the preparation of the financial statements, and
- the overall presentation of the financial statements.

I also seek to obtain evidence about the regularity of financial transactions in the course of audit.

In addition, I read all the financial and non-financial information in the Annual Report to identify material inconsistencies with the audited financial statements. If I become aware of any apparent material misstatements or inconsistencies I consider the implications for my report.

Opinion on the Financial Statements

In my opinion, the financial statements, which have been properly prepared in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland, give a true and fair view of the state of the Board's affairs at 31 December 2011 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended.

In my opinion, proper books of account have been kept by the Citizens Information Board. The financial statements are in agreement with the books of account.

Matters on which I report by exception

I report by exception if

- I have not received all the information and explanations I required for my audit, or
- my audit noted any material instance where moneys have not been applied for the purposes intended or where the transactions did not conform to the authorities governing them, or
- the information given in the Board's Annual Report for the year for which the financial statements are prepared is not consistent with the financial statements, or
- the Statement on Internal Financial Control does not reflect the Board's compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, or
- I find there are other material matters relating to the manner in which public business has been conducted.

I have nothing to report in regard to those matters upon which reporting is by exception.


Seamus McCarthy

Comptroller and Auditor General

10 August 2012



Statement on Internal Financial Control

Responsibility for System of Internal Financial Control

On behalf of the members of the Board of the Citizens Information Board I acknowledge our responsibility for ensuring that an effective system of internal financial control is maintained and operated.

The system can only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance that assets are safeguarded, transactions authorised and properly recorded, and that material errors or irregularities are either prevented or would be detected in a timely period.

Key Control Procedures

The Board has taken steps to ensure an appropriate control environment by

- Clearly defining management responsibilities;
- Establishing formal procedures for reporting significant control failures and ensuring appropriate corrective action.

The Board has established processes to identify and evaluate business risks by:

- Identifying the nature, extent and financial implications of risks facing the Board including the extent and categories which it regards as acceptable;
- Assessing the likelihood of identified risks occurring;
- Assessing the Board's ability to manage and mitigate the risks that do occur; and
- Assessing the costs of particular controls relative to the benefit obtained.

The system of internal financial control is based on a framework of regular management information, administrative procedures including segregation of duties, and a system of delegation and accountability. In particular it includes:

- A comprehensive budgeting system with an annual budget which is reviewed and agreed by the Board;
- Regular reviews by the Board with periodic and annual financial reports which indicate financial performance against forecasts;
- Setting targets to measure financial and other performance.

The Citizens Information Board has an internal audit function as defined in the Board's Charter for Internal Audit, which operates in accordance with the Framework Code of Best Practice set out in the Code of Practice on the Governance of State Bodies. The work of the internal audit function is informed by analysis of the risk to which the body is exposed, and annual internal audit plans are



based on this analysis. The analysis of risk and the internal audit plans have been endorsed by the Audit Committee and approved by the Board. At least quarterly the Internal Auditor provides the Board with reports of internal audit activity. The Internal Auditor's annual report to the Board includes the Internal Auditor's opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the system of internal financial control.

The Board's monitoring of the effectiveness of the system of internal financial control is informed by the Audit Committee which oversees the work of the internal auditor, the executive managers within the Citizens Information Board who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the financial control framework, and comments made by the Comptroller and Auditor General in his management letter or other reports.

Annual Review of Controls

I confirm that for the year ended 31 December 2011 the Board conducted a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal financial controls.

Signed on behalf of the Board,

Chairperson
Board of the Citizens Information Board

Date: 11.07.2012

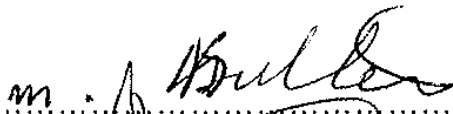



Statement of Board's Responsibilities

The Comhairle Act 2000, Section 22 (4a), requires the Board of the Citizens Information Board to prepare financial statements in such form as may be approved by the Minister for Social Protection with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. In preparing those financial statements, the Board is required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Citizens Information Board will continue in operation; and
- State whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.

The Board confirm that they have complied with the above requirements in preparing the financial statements, which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Board and which enable it to ensure that the financial statements comply with Section 22 of the Act. The Board is also responsible for safeguarding its assets and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.


..... Board Member


..... Board Member

Statement of Accounting Policies

1. Basis of Accounting

The financial statements have been prepared on an accruals basis, except as stated below, under the historical cost convention, and in accordance with generally accepted accounting practice. Financial reporting standards recommended by the recognised accounting bodies have been adopted as they become applicable. The unit of currency in which the financial statements are denominated is the Euro.

Part 4 of the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2008, amended the Comhairle Act 2000 (as amended by the Citizens Information Act 2007) to extend the functions of the Citizens Information Board to include the provision of the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) and related responsibilities. These include promoting and developing the MABS, providing information about the service and providing public education about money management. Provision was also made for the Citizens Information Board to compile data, undertake research and provide advice and information to the Minister for Social Protection in relation to the MABS. The assignment of these responsibilities took effect from 13 July 2009.

The Money Advice and Budgeting Service is delivered through independent companies who operate under an agreement with the Citizens Information Board and the relationship of principal and agent does not apply. Consequently, the assets and liabilities of these companies are not included in the financial statements. The use and disposal of assets funded by the Citizens Information Board are subject to restrictions set out in the agreement. The financial statements include expenditure incurred in funding the companies during the year.

2. Accounting Period

The Financial Statements cover the period 1 January to 31 December 2011.

3. Income Recognition

State grants are accounted for on a cash receipts basis.

4. Fixed Assets and Depreciation

(i) Fixed assets are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation, except where a revaluation has taken place. Assets that have been revalued are stated at valuation less accumulated depreciation.

(ii) Fixed assets are depreciated at annual rates estimated to write off the assets over their useful lives. Depreciation is charged at half the annual rate in year of purchase. Depreciation is at the following rates:



Computer Equipment	Straight-line	33⅓%
Office Equipment	Straight-line	20%
Office Furniture	Straight-line	12½%
Vehicles	Straight-line	25%
Premises	Depreciated according to the Economic life of each property	

(iii) The Board has the policy of revaluing its owned Premises Assets every five years. A valuation on the basis of Economic Use Value at 1st November 2008 was carried out by an independent firm of property consultants.

(iv) Where an asset has been revalued the depreciation charge is based on the revalued amount and the remaining useful economic life of the asset.

(v) The gain or loss arising on the disposal or retirement of a fixed asset is determined as the difference between the sales proceeds and the carrying amount of the asset and is recognised in the income statement.

5. Pensions

A superannuation scheme under Section 15 of the Comhairle Act 2000 is in the course of preparation. At present staff of the Citizens Information Board who were formerly staff of the National Rehabilitation Board (NRB) who retire receive superannuation benefits under the terms of the Local Government Superannuation Scheme; staff who were formerly staff of the National Social Service Board (NSSB) receive benefits under the terms of the Nominated Health Agencies Superannuation Scheme; and staff who have been employed by the Citizens Information Board subsequent to its establishment and who retire receive benefits in line with the terms of the Nominated Health Agencies Superannuation Scheme.

These schemes are defined benefit pension schemes which are funded annually on a pay as you go basis from monies available to the Board, including monies provided by the Department of Social Protection and from contributions from staff salaries

Pension costs reflect pension benefits earned by employees in the period and are shown net of staff pension contributions which are retained by the Citizens Information Board. An amount corresponding to the pension charge is recognised as income to the extent that it is recoverable, and offset by grants received in the year to discharge pension payments.

Actuarial gains or losses arising on scheme liabilities are reflected in the Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses and a corresponding adjustment is recognised in the amount recoverable from the Department of Social Protection.



Pension liabilities represent the present value of future pension payments earned by staff to date. Deferred pension funding represents the corresponding asset to be recovered in future periods from the Department of Social Protection.

6. Capital Account

The Capital Account represents:

- (i) the unamortised value of income used to finance fixed assets; and
- (ii) the unamortised surplus arising on the revaluation of fixed assets.

7. Leased Assets

- (a) Finance Leases

Where an asset was acquired under a finance lease, the capital element of the asset has been included in fixed assets and depreciated over the life of the asset and the outstanding capital element of the leasing obligations was included in creditors. The interest element is written off over the primary period of the lease.

- (b) Operating Leases

Rental payments under operating leases have been dealt with in the income and expenditure account as incurred.

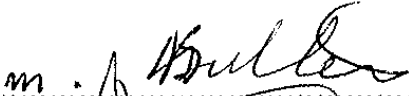


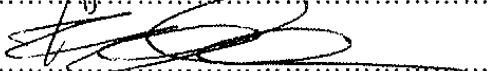
Income and Expenditure Account For the Year Ended 31 December 2010

	Note	2011 €	2010 €
Income			
State Grants	1	45,113,622	44,985,924
Other Income	2	397,187	338,973
Net Deferred Funding for Pensions	21 (c)	1,440,000	1,794,000
		-----	-----
Transfer from Capital Account	19	46,950,809	47,118,897
		271,869	336,489
		-----	-----
		47,222,678	47,455,386
		-----	-----
Expenditure			
Salaries	3	5,415,739	5,645,981
Board Members' Fees and Expenses	4	87,891	76,853
Pension Costs	21 (a)	1,226,000	1,767,000
Administration Costs	5	2,384,731	2,394,990
Regional Services	7	14,442,043	14,767,872
Money Advice and Budgeting Services (MABS)	8	17,288,446	18,223,724
Quality	9	6,515	-
Information Resources	10	196,754	331,225
Social Policy and Research	11	167,500	155,911
Information and Communications Technology	12	1,932,945	917,908
Advocacy	13	3,340,658	3,034,799
Training	14	150,395	252,343
		-----	-----
		46,639,617	47,568,606
		=====	=====
(Deficit) / Surplus for the Year		583,061	(113,220)
Surplus at 1 January		800,627	913,847
		-----	-----
Surplus at 31 December		1,383,688	800,627
		=====	=====

The results for the period relate to continuing operations.

The Statement of Accounting Policies and Notes 1 to 24 form part of these financial statements.

.....  Board Member

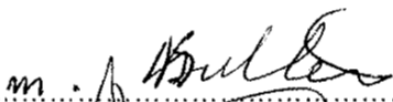
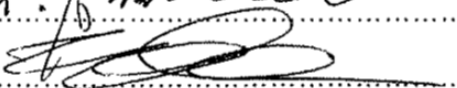
.....  Board Member



Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses for the Year Ended 31 December 2011

	Note	€	2011 €	€	2010 €
(Deficit) / Surplus for the Year			583,061		(113,220)
Unrealised Surplus on Revaluation of Land and Buildings			-		
Actuarial Gain on Pension Liabilities	21 (b), (e)				
i. Experience (Loss) / Gain on Pension Liability		(1,099,000)		2,092,000	
ii. Changes in Assumptions underlying Present Value		(1,784,000)		3,348,000	
iii. Actuarial (Loss) / Gain on Pension Liabilities		-----	(2,883,000)	-----	5,440,000
Adjustment to Deferred Pension Funding	21 (b), (e)		2,883,000		(5,440,000)
Total Recognised Gains / (Losses) for the Year			583,061		(113,220)
			=====		=====

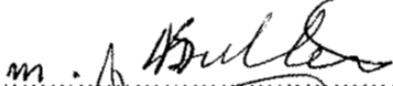
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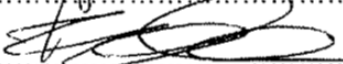

 Board Member

 Board Member

Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2011

	Note	2011 €	2010 €
Fixed Assets	15	8,751,616 =====	9,023,485 =====
Current Assets			
Debtors and Prepayments	17	580,396	571,227
Bank and Cash on Hand		1,019,792	496,564
		-----	-----
		1,600,188	1,067,791
		-----	-----
Current Liabilities			
Creditors: Amounts Falling Due within One Year	18	(216,500)	(267,164)
		-----	-----
Net Current Assets		1,383,688	800,627
Total Assets Less Current Liabilities Before Pensions		10,135,304	9,824,112
Deferred Pension Funding	21 (c)	24,162,000	19,839,000
Pension Liabilities	21 (d)	(24,162,000)	(19,839,000)
		-----	-----
Total Assets Less Current Liabilities		10,135,304	9,824,112
		=====	=====
Represented by			
Capital Account	19	8,751,616	9,023,485
Income and Expenditure Account		1,383,688	800,627
		-----	-----
		10,135,304	9,824,112
		=====	=====

The Statement of Accounting Policies and Notes 1 to 24 form part of these financial statements.

.....  Board Member

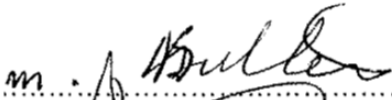
.....  Board Member

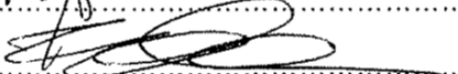


Cash Flow Statement for the Year Ended 31 December 2011

Note	2011 €	2010 €
Reconciliation of Surplus for the Period to Net Cash from Operating Activities		
Surplus / (Deficit) for the year	583,061	(113,220)
Transfer (from) / to Capital Account	(271,869)	(336,489)
Depreciation	337,932	352,248
(Increase) / Decrease in Debtors	(9,169)	(109,156)
(Decrease) / Increase in Creditors	(50,664)	(55,980)
	-----	-----
Net Cash Inflow / (Outflow) from Operating Activities	589,291	(262,597)
	=====	=====
Cash Flow Statement		
Net Cash Inflow from Operating Activities	589,291	(262,597)
Capital Expenditure:		
Acquisitions	(66,063)	(15,759)
	-----	-----
Increase / (Decrease) in Cash for the Year	523,228	(278,356)
	=====	=====
Reconciliation of Net Cash Flow to Movement in Net Funds		
Movement in Net Funds for the Year	523,228	(278,356)
Net Funds at 1 January	496,564	774,920
	-----	-----
Net Funds at 31 December	1,019,792	496,564
	=====	=====

The Statement of Accounting Policies and Notes 1 to 24 form part of these financial statements.

.....  Board Member

.....  Board Member

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2011

	Note	2011 €	2010 €
1. State Grants			
Grant to Citizens Information Board – Department of Social Protection		45,113,622	44,985,924
		-----	-----
		45,113,622	44,985,924
		-----	-----
2. Other Income			
The Health Service Executive – Contribution to Integrated Information Services		103,766	128,258
Sales of Information Material		1,574	9,281
Training Fees		15,350	4,600
Premises Rental and Services		3,040	2,540
Reimbursement of Staff Secondments		36,784	92,548
Grants Returned – Community & Voluntary Sector Advocacy		176,464	-
Other Income		60,209	101,746
		-----	-----
		397,187	338,973
		-----	-----
3. Salaries⁶			
Regional Services		1,100,335	2,360,939
Money Advice and Budgeting Services (MABS) - Transition Unit		-	262,594
Quality		484,250	-
Information Resources		734,150	422,611
Social Policy and Research		232,857	376,382
Information and Communication Technology		482,602	348,083
Advocacy		241,849	371,785
Training		727,610	383,013
Management Services		1,412,086	1,120,574
		-----	-----
		5,415,739	5,645,981
		-----	-----

⁶ The average number of staff employed by the Citizens Information Board in the period was 81.5 (2010, 85.6). In addition 3 staff were seconded to the Board from the Department of Social Protection in 2011. €279,511 (2010, €288,270) was deducted from staff by way of pension levy and was paid over to the Department of Social Protection.



4. Board Members' Fees and Chief Executive's Remuneration

	Number of meetings attended ⁷	2011	
		Fees €	Expenses €
Noelene Blackwell	9/9	-	-
Michael Butler	9/9	5,985	-
Laurie Cearr	6/9	5,985	-
Pat Fitzpatrick	5/9	5,985	1,004
Michael Healy-Rae (term ended July 2011)	3/5	2,951	1,512
Josephine Henry	7/9	5,985	-
Sylda Langford (Chair)	9/9	8,978	-
Eugene McErlean (appointed September 2011)	3/3	1,902	-
Michael McGaune	9/9	5,985	-
Martin Naughton	8/9	5,985	-
Daragh O'Connor	8/8	-	-
Sandra Ronayne	7/9	5,985	-
John Sheehy	9/9	5,985	2,998
Sean Sweeney	8/9	5,985	1,163
Fiona Ward (appointed November 2011)	2/2	-	-
Patricia Walsh	7/9	5,985	2,548
Margaret Zheng	8/9	4,985	-
		78,666	9,225

The Chief Executive received salary payments of €117,570. No bonus payments were made in the year. The Chief Executive received no payments in respect of travel and subsistence. The Chief Executive is a member of an unfunded defined benefit public sector scheme and his pension entitlements do not extend beyond the standard entitlements in the public sector defined benefit superannuation scheme.

⁷

The first meeting of the year was held in January 2011.

	Note	2011 €	2010 €
5. Administration Costs			
Accommodation and Establishment	6	1,429,642	1,450,364
Travel and Subsistence		159,890	154,360
Stationery and Office Supplies		58,096	47,187
Postage		97,801	108,166
Consultancy and Reports		46,812	77,113
Public Relations		1,077	27,500
Seminars and Meetings		19,893	22,821
Insurance		129,512	75,902
Board Publications and Miscellaneous		10,564	10,457
Affiliation Fees		35,708	18,882
External Audit Fees		13,630	13,630
Internal Audit Fees		27,336	11,320
Bad Debts		724	8,285
Depreciation		337,932	352,248
Interest and Charges		867	868
Other		15,247	15,887
		2,384,731	2,394,990
6. Accommodation and Establishment			
Rent and Rates		1,198,840	1,237,731
Light and Heat		63,237	76,528
Maintenance and Security		167,565	131,514
Archiving		-	4,591
		1,429,642	1,450,364
7. Regional Services			
(i) Citizens Information Grants			
Region 1 - Dublin		2,905,457	2,910,482
Region 2 - Mid West and North East		3,263,060	3,248,267
Region 3 - South East		2,042,500	2,108,315
Region 4 - South and South West		2,048,587	2,034,056
Region 5 - West and North West		2,199,591	2,250,056

Regional Services (cont)	Note	2011 €	2010 €
(ii) Central Support to CICs			
Conferences, Seminars and Meetings		18,635	17,725
Materials, Support and Evaluation		3,669	1,520
Advertising and Promotion		90,697	147,136
Network Support		50,484	63,310
(iii) Citizens Information Phone Service		1,291,754	1,389,627
(iv) Mobile Units		22,679	26,850
(v) Advocacy Development		-	37,949
(vi) Information Supports		381,500	381,500
(vii) Integrated Information Services Development		29,851	53,218
(viii) Regional Training and Development		93,579	97,861
		14,442,043	14,767,872
8. Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)			
(i) MABS Grants			
Region 1 - Dublin		5,380,638	2,679,079
Region 2 - Mid West and North East		3,507,835	3,212,950
Region 3 - South East		3,354,718	3,257,748
Region 4 - South and South West		2,435,588	4,845,476
Region 5 - West and North West		2,525,840	4,099,130
(ii) Central Support to MABS			
Advertising and Promotion		50,527	80,585
MABS NEC/NMF		14,246	12,429
MABS National Conference		-	15,184
Network Support		19,054	21,143
		17,288,446	18,223,724

In 2011 the Citizens Information Board made comprehensive changes to its structure and to how it carries out its work. Following the restructure the regional structures were replaced by five new Service Delivery Areas based on revised geographic areas.

The Citizens Information Board (CIB) expended a total amount of €110,000 in 2010 settling a claim brought by a former employee against one of the bodies funded and supported by the CIB. The precise terms of this settlement are subject to a confidential settlement agreement.

	Note	2011 €	2010 €
9. Quality			
Quality Standards Accreditation Programme		3,515	-
Customer Consultation/Service Development		3,000	-
		6,515	-
<p>To reflect an emphasis on quality service to the customer, a new Quality team was established in 2011. The team is responsible for ensuring that service users receive consistently high quality services that meet their individual needs and requirements.</p>			
10. Information Resources			
Online Information Content		-	7,260
Online Information - Translations		12,658	20,884
CIB Website Development		5,735	7,311
Public Relations, Promotion and Advertising		9,169	854
Database Development		125	4,000
Publication Grants		3,850	26,235
Publications		138,232	226,870
Information Initiatives		26,985	29,983
Miscellaneous		-	7,828
		196,754	331,225
11. Social Policy and Research			
Research Support		61,731	53,955
Disability and Information Research		59,276	52,102
Social Policy Reports		28,436	25,123
Social Policy Grants		13,450	15,980
Miscellaneous		4,607	8,751
		167,500	155,911

	Note	2011 €	2010 €
12. Information and Communication Technology			
Telecommunications		514,036	308,957
Software and Licensing		82,694	49,829
Hardware provided to CISs and MABS		328,962	213,152
Support		212,845	280,476
ICT Projects		794,408	65,494
		1,932,945	917,908
13. Advocacy			
Grant Support for Community & Voluntary Sector Advocacy		27,309	2,087,938
National Advocacy Service – Establishment Costs		104,490	83,657
Grant Support to National Advocacy Service			
Region 1 - Dublin		608,090	100,150
Region 2 - Mid West and North East		464,465	90,840
Region 3 - South East		451,795	66,350
Region 4 - South and South West		528,553	81,250
Region 5 - West and North West		608,170	82,100
Grant Support to Advocacy Support Worker Programme		294,404	-
Grant Support to Sign Language Interpreting Service		104,000	283,197
Advocacy Support, Research and Development		126,161	82,994
Access Service Development & Research		23,221	76,323
		3,340,658	3,034,799

Under the Disability Strategy and Citizens Information Act 2007 the Citizens Information Board was given a remit to provide advocacy for people with disabilities. An independent evaluation of the pilot programme of 46 advocacy projects for people with disabilities in the Community and Voluntary sector acknowledged the effective work of the projects but recommended restructuring the service to deliver better value with the same resources.

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	Note	2011 €	2010 €
14. Training			
Training Resources		34,079	36,378
Training Services		40,270	36,706
Staff Training		46,710	29,312
Advocacy Training		16,713	113,706
Supporting Volunteers		12,623	36,241
		150,395	252,343

15. Fixed Assets	Premises		Motor Vehicles	Computer Equipment	Office Equipment	Office Furniture	Total
	Owned	Leasehold					
Cost / Revaluation	€	€	€	€	€	€	€
Balance at 1 January 2011	6,265,000	3,523,465	171,405	2,036,919	695,297	950,054	13,642,140
Additions	-	-	-	60,578	-	5,485	66,063
Disposals	-	-	-	(1,690,371)	-	(251,598)	(1,941,969)
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Balance at 31 December 2011	6,265,000	3,523,465	171,405	407,126	695,297	703,941	11,766,234
	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====
Accumulated Depreciation							
Balance at 1 January 2011	441,504	584,654	165,088	2,034,264	694,795	698,350	4,618,655
Charge for the year	145,586	108,175	6,317	12,751	502	64,601	337,932
Disposals during the year	-	-	-	(1,690,371)	-	(251,598)	(1,941,969)
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Balance at 31 December 2011	587,090	692,829	171,405	356,644	695,297	511,353	3,014,618
	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====
Net Book Value							
Balance at 31 December 2010	5,677,910	2,830,636	-	50,482	-	192,588	8,751,616
	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====
Balance at 31 December 2010	5,823,496	2,938,811	6,317	2,655	502	251,704	9,023,485
	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====

- i. The Board has a policy of revaluing its owned Premises Assets every five years. A valuation was carried out by Lisney, an independent firm of property consultants, at 1st November 2008 and this resulted in the property being revalued in the books of the Board from €4.461m to €6.265m. The property was valued on an open market basis. The historical cost of the property is €6.779m. The Board are aware of the current developments in the property market and are keeping the matter under review.
- ii. The Board are not aware of any material change in value and therefore the valuations have not been updated.
- iii. The disposal of Computer Equipment assets in 2011 includes an amount of €1,614,706 relating to legacy and obsolete equipment following a review of fixed assets in 2011.

16. Property

a) Freehold Land and Buildings

The Citizens Information Board owns Land and Buildings at the following locations:

Location	Net Book Value as at 31.12.11
	€
Cork	1,091,152
Dublin	4,074,107
Letterkenny	190,558
Sligo	93,578
Tralee	228,516

	5,677,911
	=====

b) Leasehold Property

The Citizens Information Board leases office space at the following locations:

Location	Expiry Date	Break Clause	Annual Rent
			€
Head Office – Dublin			
43 Townsend Street, Dublin 2	2032	2013	681,197
Regional Offices			
Castlebar	2012	-	12,348
Cavan – Elm House	2015	-	11,773
Cavan – Magnet House	2028	2013	22,855
Dundalk – Anne Street	2018	-	10,794
Dundalk – Long Walk	2012	-	3,380
Dundalk – Long Walk	2029	2014	50,400
Galway	2025	2015	39,400
Kilkenny	2050	-	40
Limerick	2012	-	14,201
Sligo	2011	-	12,500
Tallaght	2019	-	89,495
Waterford	2028	2013	62,500

			1,010,883
			=====

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	Notes	2011 €		2010 €	
17. Debtors and Prepayments					
Debtors					
Trade Debtors		80,865		1,596	
Other Debtors		15,664		59,749	
		-----		-----	
		96,529		61,345	
Prepayments		483,867		509,882	
		-----		-----	
		580,396		571,227	
		=====		=====	
18. Creditors and Accruals					
PAYE and PRSI Creditors		129,071		126,333	
Trade Creditors		87,429		133,950	
Other Creditors		-		6,881	
		-----		-----	
		216,500		267,164	
		=====		=====	
19 Capital Account					
		€	2011 €	€	2010 €
Balance at 1 January			9,023,485		9,359,974
Transfer to Income and Expenditure Account: Capital Expenditure in the year	15	66,063		15,759	
Released on Disposal of Fixed Assets	15	-		-	
Amortisation in line with Asset depreciation	15	(337,932)	(271,869)	(352,248)	(336,489)
		-----	-----	-----	-----
Balance at 31 December			8,751,616		9,023,485
			=====		=====



20. Comparative Figures

Changes to the layout of the notes to the financial statements have been made to reflect the new organisational structure referred to under Note 8. Certain comparative figures have been regrouped or restated on the same basis as the current year under Notes 3, 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 accordingly.

21. Pension Costs

(a) Analysis of Total Pension Costs Charged to Expenditure

	2011	2010
	€	€
Current Service Cost	698,000	948,000
Interest on Pension Scheme Liabilities	1,119,000	1,448,000
Employee Contributions	(591,000)	(629,000)
	-----	-----
	1,226,000	1,767,000
	=====	=====

(b) Movement in Pension Liability during the financial year

	2011	2010
	€	€
Pension Liability at 1 January	19,839,000	23,485,000
Current Service Cost	698,000	948,000
Other Finance Income (Interest Costs)	1,119,000	1,448,000
Actuarial (Gain) / Loss	2,883,000	(5,440,000)
Pensions Paid in the Year	(377,000)	(602,000)
	-----	-----
Pension Liability at 31 December	24,162,000	19,839,000
	=====	=====

(c) Deferred Funding Asset for Pensions

The Board recognises these amounts as an asset corresponding to the unfunded deferred liability for pensions on the basis of the set of assumptions described above and a number of past events. These events include the statutory basis for the establishment of the superannuation schemes, and the policy and practice currently in place in relation to funding public service pensions including contributions by employees and the annual estimates process. The Board has no evidence that this funding policy will not continue to meet such sums in accordance with current practice. The deferred funding asset for pensions as at 31 December 2011 amounted to €24.162m (2010: €19.839m).



Net Deferred Funding for Pensions in year

	2011	2010
	€	€
Funding Recoverable in Respect of Current Year Pension Costs	1,817,000	2,396,000
State Grant Applied to Pay Pensioners	(377,000)	(602,000)
	-----	-----
	1,440,000	1,794,000
	=====	=====

(d) The Citizens Information Board operates a defined benefit superannuation scheme for staff. The results set out below are based on an actuarial valuation of the liabilities in respect of the Citizens Information Board staff as at 31 December 2011. This valuation was carried out by an independent actuary using the projected unit method.

The financial assumptions used to calculate scheme liabilities for the purpose of FRS 17 were as follows:

Assumption	2011	2010
Discount rate	5.00%	5.50%
Salary increase assumption	Nil	Nil
Pension increase assumption	Nil	Nil
Price inflation	2.00%	2.00%
Member age 65 (male current life expectancy)*	23.2	22.8 years
Member age 65 (female current life expectancy)*	24.6	24.5 years
Member age 40 (male life expectancy at age 65)*	26.3	25.1 years
Member age 40 (female life expectancy at age 65)*	27.3	27.0 years

*Life expectancy from age 65 for members retiring in either 2031 or 2051 are as for 2011.

On the basis of these assumptions, and using the projected unit method prescribed in FRS 17, the value of the accrued liabilities in respect of Citizens Information Board staff at 31 December 2011 was estimated at €24.162m (compared with €19.839m as at 31 December 2010).

(e) History of Defined Benefit Obligations

	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
	€000	€000	€000	€000	€000
Defined Benefit Obligations	24,162	19,839	23,485	22,234	23,414
Experience (Gains) / Losses on Scheme Liabilities	1,099	(2,092)	(186)	(213)	204
Percentage of Scheme Liabilities	4.54%	(10.50%)	(0.79%)	(0.96%)	0.87%

The cumulative actuarial gain recognised in the Statements of Total Recognised Gains and Losses amounts to €1.058m.

22. Commitments

a) Operating Leases

The Board had leasing commitments payable in the next twelve months and under the leasehold interest of premises as follows:

	2011	2010
	€	€
Lease of Office Accommodation		
Expiring after one year and before five years	54,202	54,202
Expiring after 5 years	956,681	956,681
	<u>1,010,883</u>	<u>1,010,883</u>
	=====	=====

(b) Grant Funding

The Board had funding commitments under its grant funding schemes as follows:

	2011	2010
	€	€
Grant Support for Community & Voluntary Sector Advocacy	-	42,309
	<u>-</u>	<u>42,309</u>
	=====	=====



23. Board Members – Disclosures of Transactions

In the normal course of business the Citizens Information Board may enter into contractual arrangements with undertakings in which the Citizens Information Board Members are employed or otherwise interested. The Citizens Information Board adopted procedures in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Department of Finance in relation to the disclosure of interests by Board Members and these procedures have been adhered to by the Citizens Information Board during the year. There were no such disclosures of interests in the year.

24. Approval of Financial Statements

The Board of the Citizens Information Board approved these Financial Statements on

Date: 11.07.2012