



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



Annual Report **2017**
Tuarascáil Bhliantúil





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Information

Advice

Advocacy

The principles that underpin the ongoing development of all our services include:

Community

The service offering is continually adapted in response to the needs of communities

Citizens first

The focus is on organising ourselves and delivering services to get the best outcome for citizens

Flexible

Thinking ahead and moving quickly to meet the changing needs of citizens

Trust and respect

For citizens, each other and our community, and for voluntary sector/public service stakeholders

Developing potential


To ensure that the work of the staff and volunteers who work in CIB, and the delivery services, is satisfying and meaningful and makes the best use of their commitment to our service

Available to all

Independent, impartial, confidential and non-judgemental information, advice, advocacy and budgeting services

Delivering value and positive outcomes

For citizens and other stakeholders

A photograph of a man with tattoos and a watch holding a baby upside down. The man is wearing a blue and white plaid shirt and has a watch on his left wrist. The baby is also wearing a blue and white plaid shirt and is smiling. The background is a blurred outdoor setting.

“Thank you so much
for your invaluable
assistance with my case,
I really appreciate it!”

Feedback from CIS customer

Note on images:

The quotes highlighted in this report are from users of our services. All images displayed with these quotes are stock images and do not depict any actual users of our services.

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From the Chairperson

In 2017, the Citizens Information Board continued to extend and enhance its services as well as reorganising the delivery of those services. In October 2016, the Board of CIB had decided to proceed with reorganising Citizens Information Services (CIS) and Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) delivery services. In February 2017, the Board adopted the recommendation that the structure of 93 individual local companies would be changed to a 16 regional company model, comprising eight CIS and eight MABS companies. These governance changes provide the foundation for more responsive, more flexible services that can adapt to local and regional trends.

The focus of our activities in 2017 was on implementing this decision. Since the reorganisation is at the level of local boards only, there are no job losses and no changes to the terms and conditions of employment of current staff. At the same time CIB underwent an internal restructure to ensure that we are positioned to deliver services efficiently and flexibly. CIB is now structured under four pillars that reflect our future direction and which will enable us to work effectively for the citizens and the services we fund and support. I am confident that the restructuring of our services and our internal organisation will result in a more modern, more robust service delivery model.

The Board recognises that the ongoing restructuring has involved very significant extra work for staff across services and CIB but was carried out without any diminution of normal service. The full benefits of restructuring will become clear once restructuring is complete at the end of 2018, when we will be able to fully focus our energies on delivering services in the most effective way possible and provide new services where required. Responding flexibly to need is key to the successful delivery of Citizens Information and MABS and we are particularly interested in identifying gaps which indicate where new services might be required – especially for people in mortgage difficulties. To do this we need robust data and an increased focus on our statutory social policy remit will allow us to identify emerging issues and needs. In 2017, 4,884 social policy returns were submitted to CIB, highlighting issues around access to payments or services, policy anomalies or gaps in the provision of service.

CIB has worked hard to become a modern responsive organisation. We will continue to develop and modernise the services we fund and support. The purpose of any changes we make are to benefit the citizen – by ensuring that we are able to focus our resources flexibly and appropriately to meet their changing and emerging needs. The statistics from 2017 demonstrate that we continued to meet the information and budgeting needs of hundreds of thousands of people. CIB's website, citizensinformation.ie, received almost

20 million visits in the course of the year. Just under 600,000 callers visited Citizens Information Centres, representing more than 1 million queries. MABS dealt with more than 16,700 new clients in 2017, and the MABS Helpline responded to almost 25,000 calls. The National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities (NAS) provided advocacy to 850 people, while the Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS) provided 4,036 interpreting assignments to members of the Deaf community and the Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS) answered over 128,000 telephone enquiries.

2017 also saw the launch of the communications campaign for the Abhaile – Mortgage Arrears Support Scheme. Abhaile provides help from experts and vouchers for free legal and financial advice for home owners in mortgage arrears. MABS, the Insolvency Service of Ireland, the Legal Aid Board and CIB work together to implement the Abhaile scheme. Abhaile has proven to be a very effective way to help people who are in mortgage arrears and at risk of losing their home with over 12,000 vouchers issued to date.

Volunteer recognition is an important feature of the CIB event calendar and acknowledges the importance and value of volunteers. In 2017, 180 Citizens Information volunteers were honoured at a national celebration event in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, Dublin. I'd like to thank all the staff and volunteers involved in delivering Citizens Information services

across the country, as well as the staff providing the MABS service nationwide, including through MABSnd and National Traveller MABS. I would also like to thank the CIS and MABS Boards of Management for their work during 2017, as well as the Board and staff of the National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities and of the Sign Language Interpreting Service.

I would like to thank the former Minister for Social Protection and now Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar TD for his support during his term of office. I would like to thank the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Regina Doherty TD, and the Ministers of State, Finian McGrath TD and Pat Breen TD; the former Secretary General of the Department of Social Protection, Niamh O'Donoghue; the new Secretary General, John McKeon and all the staff of the Department for their ongoing assistance and support.

Finally, I would like to thank the Chief Executive, Angela Black, her management team and all the staff of the Citizens Information Board for their dedicated work during the year.



A green banner containing a white handwritten signature that reads "Ita Mangan".

Ita Mangan, Chairperson

2017 | The year in numbers



599,016
people called in

to Citizens Information Services during 2017 with over **1 million queries**.



4,884
social policy returns

were submitted to CIB, highlighting administrative or operational issues in the provision of service.



17
submissions

were made by CIB to government departments and policy fora on a range of topics.



128,000
telephone enquiries

were dealt with by the Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS) and CIPS responded to over **1,700 Live Advisor enquiries**.



4,036
interpreting assignments

were provided by the Irish Sign Language Interpreting Service.



NATIONAL ADVOCACY SERVICE
FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

worked with 850 people in 2017 and provided tailored information, advice and advocacy to 2,426 people.



16,740
new clients

were dealt with by the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) in 2017. MABS helpline had 24,659 calls.



10,227
vouchers

were issued by Abhaile, the Mortgage Arrears Resolution Service.



19.8m
website visits

were made to citizensinformation.ie in 2017 and an average of **872,042 unique visitors per month**.



12
issues of the
Relate journal

were published, and over **100,000 publications** were distributed.



109
credit unions

offered "It Makes Sense" loans under the Personal Microcredit scheme by the end of 2017.



94
days

were spent on the road in 2017 by the Citizens Information Mobile Information Unit.

From the Chief Executive

In 2017, the Citizens Information Board (CIB) continued its work of internal and external reorganisation. We also launched significant initiatives to assist vulnerable groups as well as people with disabilities.

CIB is now an organisation of four pillars that reflect our future direction and enable us to work directly with policy makers for the benefit of citizens and the services we fund.

CIB's new internal organisation has allowed us to proceed with the restructuring of the 93 CIS and MABS services into 16 regional companies, a process which is still underway. Throughout the year, CIB engaged in comprehensive consultations with all our stakeholders on the impact and benefits of the revised regional structure.

On the MABS front, 2017 saw the launch of the communications campaign for Abhaile, the free national mortgage arrears support scheme. At the time of writing (June 2018), over 12,000 vouchers have been issued to help citizens avail of legal, financial and insolvency advice.

CIS companies were active in responding to queries on many aspects of social services, including support schemes for housing such as the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP). CIB recognised the value of volunteers working in CIS companies at a function attended by 180 people in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, Dublin.

CIB continues to support the Traveller community through its national money advice services and has participated with other agencies and government departments in many other money-related projects such as the Mortgage to Rent Scheme and the Personal Microcredit 'It makes Sense' Loan Scheme, operated by credit unions.

As funder of the Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS), CIB welcomes the additional funding provided to realise the objectives of the National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2020. We look forward to working with the Deaf community to bring about improvements across several areas, notably the expansion of the Irish Remote Interpreting Service (IRIS).

While CIB continues to offer services through three channels – we provide citizensinformation.ie directly, and the companies we fund provide a face-to-face and telephone service – we are acutely aware of the need to use technology as a means to engage directly with citizens who choose digital channels. Almost 20 million visits to the citizensinformation.ie website in 2017 testify to its increasing popularity.

I am proud of the achievements of CIB in 2017, in particular, in relation to social policy research. Our focus in 2017 was on Brexit impacts, housing supports and financial supports for indebted consumers and borrowers who are vulnerable as a result of high interest loans.

I would like to thank the CIB Board for their active support throughout the year. In particular, I would like to thank the staff of CIB who recognise the value of our work for the citizens we serve. They have performed in an exemplary way to support the significant changes being undertaken; their flexibility and ability has made it all possible.



Angela Black
Angela Black, Chief Executive

The Citizens Information Board

The Citizens Information Board (CIB) supports the provision of information, advice, advocacy as well as money advice and budgeting services on a wide range of public and social services. These services are delivered in three different ways – online, phone and in person.

Our mandate is clearly defined through a number of Acts¹:

- ▶ To ensure that individuals have access to accurate, comprehensive and clear information relating to social services
 - ▶ To assist and support individuals, in particular those with disabilities, in identifying and understanding their needs and options
 - ▶ To promote greater accessibility, coordination and public awareness of social services
 - ▶ To support, promote and develop the provision of information on the effectiveness of current social policy and services, and to highlight issues that are of concern to users of those services
 - ▶ To support the provision of, or directly provide, advocacy services for people with a disability
 - ▶ To support the provision of advice on personal debt and money management through the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)
- A key role of CIB is to support, promote and develop information on the effectiveness of current social policy and services, and to highlight issues that are raised by the users of those services. We do this through research and by analysing social policy returns from our services.

¹ The Comhairle Act 2000, as amended by the Citizens Information Act 2007 and the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2008.

Our services

CIB delivers support in a number of different ways:

- ▶ Information is available directly to the public through the Citizens Information website – **citizensinformation.ie** and our microsites and publications.
- ▶ The nationwide network of **Citizens Information Services (CIS)** allows the public to meet with someone face to face and to get free, impartial and confidential information on a range of social and public services. CIS also provide an **advocacy service** to people who may have difficulties accessing their entitlements.
- ▶ The public can also seek advice and information through the **Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS)**.
- ▶ The **Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)** offers free, confidential and independent assistance for people in debt or in danger of getting into debt. The MABS services are supported by MABS National Development. In addition, **National Traveller MABS (NTMABS)** advocates for the financial inclusion of Travellers and helps them access legal and affordable savings and credit.
- ▶ **Abhaile, the Mortgage Arrears Support Scheme** helps homeowners find a resolution to their home mortgage arrears and stay in their homes, where possible. Abhaile provides free financial and legal advice and help from experts, accessed through MABS.
- ▶ The **National Advocacy Service** for people with disabilities (NAS) meets the needs of people with disabilities who are in vulnerable situations.
- ▶ The **Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS)** provides Irish Sign Language (ISL) interpreting services directly through remote interpreting, as well as arranging referrals.

Providing support

CIB works very closely with every one of these delivery services to ensure the public gets the very best service possible. We also work to ensure our services comply with best practice in all aspects of finance, governance, human resources and premises management.

CIB provides infrastructure and supports to help the services in dealing with citizens' enquiries and linking in with local

communities. We ensure a quality service by setting and monitoring quality standards, providing ICT services, equipment and infrastructure, putting in place training and expert advice, and offering a range of other supports such as websites and publications.

Governance

CIB has set out a comprehensive financial control and reporting framework for delivery services that receive an operational grant to ensure that appropriate services are provided in return for funding.

Service agreements between CIB and each of our delivery services² clearly set out both parties' commitments. These agreements include delivery, governance, financial controls, HR practices, reporting guidelines, evaluation and monitoring. Our internal audit process makes recommendations that are used to update and improve compliance with the governance and reporting requirements.

We also provide support for the governance of the delivery services. These supports include employer and staff handbooks and guidelines on recruitment, including the drafting of employment contracts. Delivery services can also access a separate structure for industrial relations and human resource advice and support and a Professional Trustee service for their occupational pension schemes (funded by CIB). An Employee Assistance Programme is available to all delivery services. We also provide training for the boards of management of delivery services.

Staff

At the end of 2017, CIB had 71 whole-time equivalent staff. CIB's head office is in Dublin and we have offices in Dublin, Cork, Kilkenny, Limerick and Galway.

Financial statements


At the time of writing, the annual draft financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2017 report €54,278,637 in income and €55,050,135 in expenditure. The financial statements have been prepared in the form prescribed by section 22 of the Comhairle Act 2000 and in accordance with FRS 102, the financial reporting standard applicable in the UK and Ireland. The financial statements will be audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General and will be published on citizensinformationboard.ie when this audit is complete.

² In 2017, these included 42 Citizens Information Services and the Citizens Information Phone Service, 51 MABS companies, National Traveller MABS and MABSnd, the National Advocacy Service and the Sign Language Interpreting Service. The CIS and MABS services are being restructured in 2018.



“I got more information
in this single session than
all previous attempts in
other agencies!”

Feedback from CIS customer



“Citizens Information were really helpful. While other tenants are still having issues I have now received the Housing Assistance Payment and all is going well...”

Feedback from CIS customer

Strategic Plan 2015-2018: Citizens First

Our three-year strategic plan for the period 2015-2018 takes a ‘Citizens First’ approach to our work, and aims to ensure that CIB and our delivery services meet the needs of citizens in the most effective way possible. We want to better understand the needs of Irish citizens and to respond as effectively as possible to those needs.

Over the period of the plan we aim to:

“Enhance citizens’ access to consistent and high-quality information, advice, money advice, and advocacy to meet their needs, now and in the future.”



Our priorities are:

- ▶ To provide high quality consistent services to citizens, supported by robust quality assurance mechanisms
- ▶ To revise the structures of CIS and MABS to better serve the citizen by improving management structures and governance, maximising effective use of resources and ensuring consistent quality of services
- ▶ To provide targeted interventions to support the needs of our citizens in very vulnerable situations through specialist services
- ▶ To improve awareness of the range of services provided by CIB and our delivery services, particularly with regard to accessibility of services to citizens
- ▶ To highlight issues of concern so that policy and administration of public services is continually enhanced
- ▶ To continue to develop our staff, volunteers and board members through appropriate supports, with a particular emphasis on the key role of volunteering

Developments in 2017

Once again, 2017 was a busy year for CIB and its delivery services fulfilling the aims of our 2015-2018 Strategic Plan. During the year the main focus was on planning for the restructuring of delivery services and extensive consultations took place across Ireland (**see page 20, 'Restructuring our services'**).

During the year a full review of our organisational structure was carried out to enable CIB to carry out its functions to the highest standard. This resulted in a recommendation to move from a two-pillar structure to a four-pillar structure, including the establishment of a new Operations team to provide even stronger dedicated support in critical areas of HR, finance, premises and governance to the service

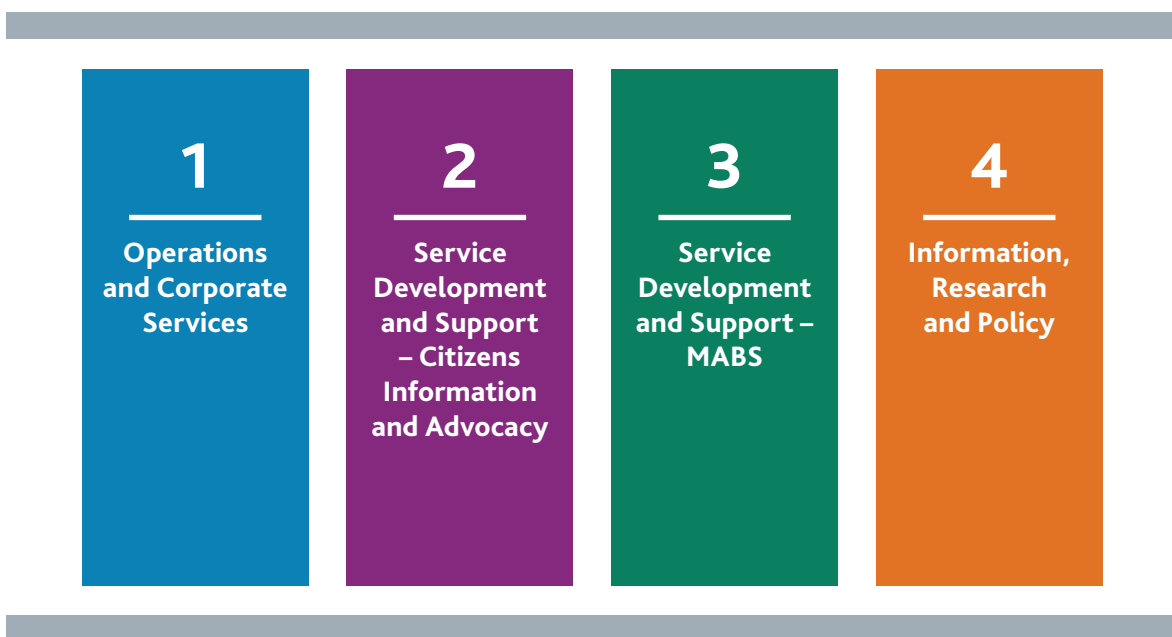
delivery companies we fund. The internal change process commenced in January 2017 and we expect the new four-pillar structure to be fully operational from 2019 (see Appendix 3 for full details of CIB's current internal teams and its current structure).

Abhaile campaign

As part of its Programme for a Partnership Government commitments, in February 2017 CIB launched a communications campaign for Abhaile, the free Mortgage Arrears Support Scheme (**see page 50**).

The national campaign aims to raise awareness of supports for people in mortgage arrears following the finding that two thirds of people were unaware of the free support available.

CIB four-pillar structure



Making an Impact

A research report *Making an Impact - The Public Value of Citizens Information Services* was launched in July 2017. The report was commissioned by the CIS network, undertaken by Dr. Nat O'Connor, University of Ulster and funded by a CIB social policy research grant. It looks at the overall public value generated by CISs in Ireland, with 600,000 people using the service annually. The research models similar studies in the UK on the value of Citizens Advice. Services were benchmarked against concepts of public trust, their redress role, the financial

gain to the individual welfare recipients, to their families and to the community and in relation to connecting people with public services through their intermediary role and their social inclusion contribution. The report contains case studies which illustrate the value of face-to-face interaction and showed that one-in-six adults living in Ireland contacted a Citizens Information Service (CIS) in 2016. Sr. Stanislaus Kennedy and CIB's Chief Executive, Angela Black spoke at the launch in Dublin City Hall.



Pictured at the launch of *Making an Impact* were Roshan Khan Shinwari and his family.



Sr. Stanislaus Kennedy, keynote speaker at the launch of the *Making an Impact* report.

National Ploughing Championships

The Citizens Information Service and MABS attended the National Ploughing Championships in September 2017. They were joined for the first time by Abhaile, the free Mortgage Arrears Support Scheme. The other stands in the Citizens First marquee were occupied by the Insolvency Service of Ireland (ISI) and the Personal Microcredit Scheme (PMC). The PMC is a

pilot scheme set up to provide credit to low-income families to help reduce their dependence on moneylenders.

Over 2,000 people visited the Citizens Information tent during the three-day event.



Pictured outside the Citizens First marquee are from left: Mike Cummins, CIS, Claire Kellegher, Abhaile, Susan Ryan, CIS, Angela Black, Chief Executive, Nicola Walshe CIB, Bernie Keenaghan, MABS, Mary Errity, MABS, Kathleen O'Boyle, CIS, Michelle O'Hara, CIS and Bobby Barbour, Abhaile.

PR and promotion

A key aim of our strategy is to promote our services to the public. Our websites (citizensinformation.ie, mabs.ie and citizensinformationboard.ie) provide easy access for people to get information about all our services, including Citizens Information Services, MABS, the National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities (NAS) and the Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS), and National Traveller MABS (NTMABS).

The scale of our network strengthens our brand awareness. There are 115 Citizens Information Centres, a further 150 outreach centres and 60 Money Advice and Budgeting Service offices nationwide. CIB provides high street signage for both MABS and Citizens Information Services. Our services have extensive partnership networks at local level. CIS and MABS are both involved in outreach work and engage in local promotional events and activities such as leaflet drops.

Know Your Rights columns appear regularly in local print media and act as the catalyst for numerous local radio slots.

National campaigns

CIB also manages communications campaigns at national level. National campaigns encourage members of the public experiencing difficulty to seek advice or information. In 2017 campaign activity included radio advertisements broadcast across national and local radio stations, local area marketing materials and digital partnerships with key websites.

The themes for the Citizens Information campaign included Circle of Life, Disability Benefits and Entitlements, Employment Rights and Benefits and Older People, among others. Posters and leaflets linked to campaign themes were distributed to all local offices.

There are 115 Citizens Information Centres, a further 150 outreach centres and 60 Money Advice and Budgeting Service offices nationwide.

Our services are also promoted annually at national events including the National Ploughing Championships, the Over 50s Show in the RDS, and the Which Course Exhibition in Croke Park.

Other key partnership initiatives continue to drive brand awareness of both Citizens Information and MABS. For example, the Abhaile free mortgage arrears support scheme worked with the Department of Justice and Equality, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, the Insolvency Service of Ireland and the Legal Aid Board. The key point of entry to access the service is the MABS Helpline number 0761 07 2000.

Media coverage

CIB actively engage with the media to highlight the value and importance of our services. For example, with the restructure of CIS and MABS media opportunities were sought to deliver clear messaging around the reasons behind this move and increased awareness of the activities of both services.

Restructuring our services

In November 2014 the Board of the Citizens Information Board made a decision to restructure the governance arrangements of local CIS and MABS services. CIB has taken this operational decision following years of analysis of options and a detailed consultation period with all stakeholders. It stems from the need for a more streamlined governance model and enhanced service delivery.

The aim of the change is to improve the effectiveness of the control environment, financial management and governance of the CIS and MABS networks, which are fully State funded. The change is also about consolidating managerial and administrative efforts, focusing on front line service delivery to citizens, improving the consistency and quality of service delivery and, where possible, extending services for those who rely on them.

In October 2016, the Board further decided that the new structure should be regionally based and, in February 2017, the Board of CIB adopted a recommendation that the current structure of 93 individual local companies would be replaced by 16 new regional companies, comprising eight CIS and eight MABS Boards. A welcome enhancement to the services was to be the creation of 16 new Regional Manager positions (eight MABS and eight CIS).

KPMG was appointed as external project managers of the restructuring of services and the project had access to various professional supports where required. Representatives from CIB's Board and Executive attended a meeting of the Joint Oireachtas Committee (JOC) on Employment Affairs and Social Protection in February 2017. Following the Committee meeting CIB's Executive commissioned a Cost Benefit Analysis on the new regional, 16-company board model. The report (published on CIB's website), was provided to the JOC in September 2017 and indicates strong levels of benefits over costs, in relation to the decision of the Board to proceed to implement the new governance arrangements.

Consultation

In May 2017, the Citizens Information Board (CIB) engaged in comprehensive consultations about the implementation of the revised structure of the Citizens Information Service (CIS) and the Money Advice and Budgeting Services (MABS). CIB hosted 14 separate consultation sessions, covering the eight proposed regions throughout the country and met with staff and Board members of MABS, and staff, volunteers and Board members of CIS from each region. Services were well represented (CIS: 78% attendance from staff/volunteer representatives; and 77% attendance from Board representatives. MABS: 100% attendance from staff representatives, and 81% attendance from Board representatives).

The CEO, senior management and members of the executive were present at all sessions to listen to representatives of the networks and provide updates.



Arising from these consultations CIB facilitated nine specific-themed focus group sessions for staff and Boards, attended by 260 representatives.

Further consultation sessions were held in August, addressing staffing, volunteers, as well as administration roles. This brought the total numbers consulted to 800.

CIB provided regular updates on the restructuring programme directly to all CIS and MABS chairpersons and staff for the remainder of 2017. Information sessions were organised for chairpersons at the end of 2017 providing an opportunity to seek clarifications on the process of transfer to the new regional companies and the wind-up of the existing companies.

Implementation

Planning for the first phase of implementation for the areas of South Dublin, North Leinster (Kildare, Longford, Louth, Meath and Westmeath) and South Munster (Cork and Kerry) took place in late 2017 and the first phase was completed in April 2018. The changes are being made at local company board level only. The valuable work carried out by employees and volunteers working in CIS services and employees of MABS services will continue as before. The staff and boards throughout the CIS and MABS networks have been assured by CIB that there will be no change to the terms and conditions for staff, no diminution of service and no closure of service delivery offices. CIB will continue to provide information and support throughout the transitional period.

Social policy and research

The questions people ask when they visit a CIS looking for information, advice or advocacy, give a flavour of the problems that some people experience when they are trying to access social and public services. Many queries indicate an underlying difficulty or concern with a policy, practice or piece of legislation. Citizens Information Services report on these concerns to CIB, in the form of social policy returns. This data provides anonymised case-study material that can provide evidence in relation to the issues the public face. We use this evidence to make recommendations to government, to consultative processes, to regulators and other organisations on how to improve policy – and the administration of policy. This aspect of our work has a legislative basis and is one of the key elements of CIB's strategic plan 'Citizens First' – to highlight issues of concern so that policy and the administration of public services is continually enhanced.

In 2017, 4,884 social policy returns were submitted to CIB from CISs and Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS). This is a 13% increase on the 2016 figure. Of these, 64% of highlighted administrative or operational issues around access to payments or services, indicating that operational matters remain a key concern for people accessing benefits. The remaining returns were focused on policy anomalies or gaps in the provision of services. Much of the evidence submitted by services in relation to policy concerns to social welfare. Other categories with a significant number of social policy returns included housing, health and money and tax.

See page 38 for details of social policy returns to CIs in 2017.

During 2017, CIB made 17 submissions on different areas of social and public policy. Most of these were in response to invitations by government departments and covered topics such as personalised budgets for people with disabilities, the Citizens Assembly consultation on the challenges and opportunities of an ageing population, and the Working Family Payment.

The Pre-Budget submission provides a useful insight into the broad range of issues that CIB delivery services are engaged in and are active on. Each of these submissions was drafted using different elements of the data provided by our delivery services and this broad base of evidence is crucial in helping us to identify emerging issues that people are facing, to highlight the difficulties caused by the specific policies, legislation and guidelines that underpin the provision of benefits or services, and to understand how the administration of policy is affecting people's individual circumstances.



In 2017, CIB also published a research report on the experience of CIs in their dealings with the roll-out of the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP), as part of its ongoing

series of thematic social policy reports. This new scheme is considered to be a key element in the Government's response to meeting the needs of households seeking long-term housing support and CIs were well-placed to facilitate an exploration of the challenges and learning from the implementation of the scheme.

CIB continues to keep services informed and updated on policy matters through the provision of training and also the distribution of a bi-monthly newsletter - *Social Policy Update* - which provides information on CIB and national social policy news, activities and resources.

In 2017, 4,884 social policy returns were submitted to CIB from CIs and Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS).

Advocacy

Advocacy is a means of empowering people by supporting them to claim their entitlements and, where necessary, representing and negotiating on their behalf.

See page 39 for details of advocacy in CISs in 2017 and see the National Advocacy Service on page 56.

CIB provides advocacy services to the public through the national network of Citizens Information Services and the National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities. In CIS advocacy, the information provider moves beyond providing information and advice to a client, to supporting with more difficult and complex issues.



Staff of NAS pictured at the Roundtable event held in Dublin to highlight issues with long-term supported accommodation for people with intellectual disabilities and autism.



“During the long period of time that I have been working with my advocate, I have gained more confidence and I can make sure that I have my say.”

Feedback from NAS customer

Providing information – websites and publications

Citizensinformation.ie

Our key information website, citizensinformation.ie, provides public service information for Ireland. The public can use the site to find out about their rights and entitlements. The site is also the primary information source for information providers in CISOs and CIPs, as well as providing useful information for MABS and other organisations. Citizensinformation.ie currently carries more than 1,300 documents in English and Irish.

Some of the busiest pages on citizensinformation.ie in 2017 included:

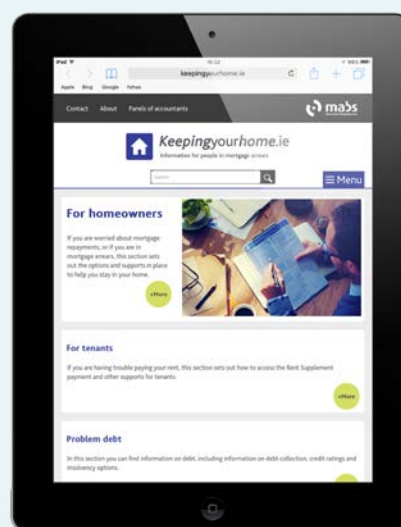
- ▶ Irish citizenship through birth or descent
- ▶ Applying for an Irish passport
- ▶ Visa requirements for entering Ireland
- ▶ Renewing an Irish passport
- ▶ State Pension (Contributory)

We work with the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on the technical side of citizensinformation.ie. We also syndicate social welfare information from citizensinformation.ie to the website of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, welfare.ie.

Keepingyourhome.ie

Keepingyourhome.ie is a microsite with information for people who are worried about mortgage repayments or who are in mortgage arrears. Keepingyourhome.ie also hosts the details of more than 1,300 accountants who can provide advice on mortgage resolution proposals.

In 2017, the site recorded 80,072 visits, 314,288 pageviews and an average of 3,733 unique visitors per month.



In 2017, citizensinformation.ie recorded more than 19.8 million visits, an increase of 420,000 visits (2.2%) on 2016. It also recorded more than 58 million pageviews and an average of 872,042 unique visitors per month.

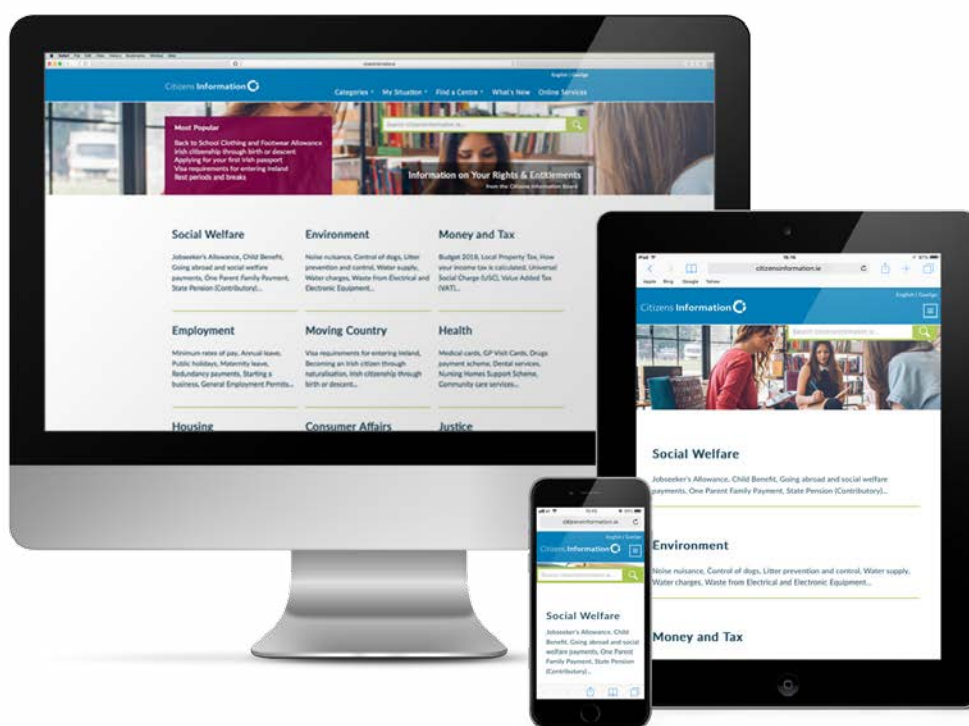
Redesign of citizensinformation.ie

In mid-2017, the citizensinformation.ie website was redesigned. The project aimed to maintain the aspects of the citizensinformation.ie website that have seen traffic grow consistently over the last decade – clear language, integrated information and a wide range of citizen-centred content. The redesign has resulted in a consistent, modernised look and feel.

The new iteration of the website is fully responsive and highly accessible using HTML5 and CSS3. This means that the website can be accessed consistently

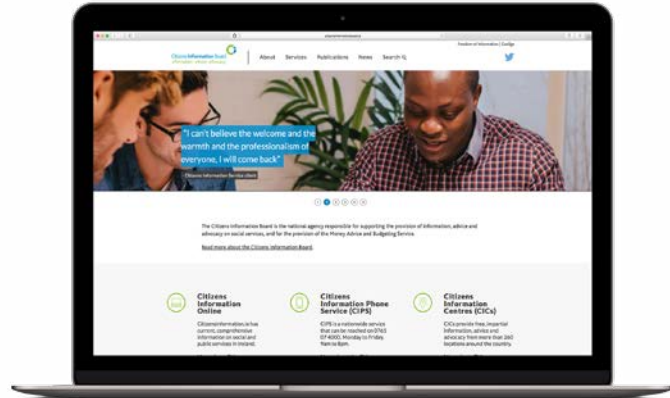
through multiple browsers and on mobile devices. The website has been designed to meet WCAG 2.0 AA and to be accessible to the widest possible audience – including older people and people with disabilities who may be using assistive technology.

The website now carries prominent links to e-Government Digital First projects (including online services from Revenue, the Passport Office and other stakeholders). Google Analytics have been added to the website, which will allow CIB to analyse website traffic and user needs in more detail.



Citizensinformationboard.ie

Citizensinformationboard.ie is CIB's corporate website. It sets out the work of CIB and its delivery services, and serves as a base for CIB to publish documents under a Freedom of Information publication scheme.



Assistireland.ie

Assistireland.ie provides information on assistive technology (aids and appliances) for older people and people with disabilities in Ireland.



In 2017, assistireland.ie recorded 517,316 visits, more than 1,892,942 pageviews and an average of 29,855 unique visitors per month. The assistireland.ie support service dealt with more than 1,200 queries by telephone, email and SMS.

Publications

CIB publishes a range of information booklets each year. We also publish advocacy, research and social policy reports to highlight and analyse issues identified by our services.

We aim for high levels of accessibility in our publications, including in the use of language, colour contrast, font size, paper coating and alternative formats. Most of the leaflets we produced in 2017 were printed by the Revenue Print Centre.

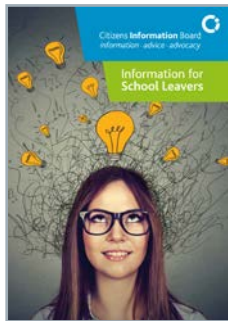
All our publications are available across the Citizens Information network. They are

widely distributed to other service providers and information providers for display in public offices. 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. The booklets themselves are linked to regularly updated information on the citizensinformation.ie website (see citizensinformation.ie/guides).



The *Benefits and Taxes 2017* wallchart and leaflet summarise benefits in 2017 with comprehensive tables of rates and income thresholds.



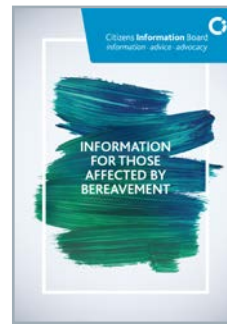
The *Information for School Leavers* booklet is distributed to schools around the country. It covers a range of topics that are relevant to school leavers, including options for education and training, social welfare entitlements, tax and employment law.



The *Guide to Entitlements for Over Sixties* booklet provides an overview of entitlements for older people.



The *Guide to Entitlements for People with Disabilities* booklet provides an overview of entitlements for people with disabilities.



The *Information for Those Affected by Bereavement* booklet provides a guide to practical and legal matters following a bereavement and includes information on the financial supports available for those who have recently been bereaved.

Know Your Rights columns

Each month we produce four question-and-answer *Know Your Rights* columns. These columns are published widely in local newspapers across the country.



Relate

Relate is our monthly journal covering legislation and developments in the broad social services and social policy areas. During the year, *Relate*

covered a wide range of topics including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), childcare, the Citizens Assembly and starting a business in Ireland.

Citizens Information Services

Citizens Information Services (CIS) allows callers to access face-to-face information on public and social services on a drop-in basis. There are Citizens Information Centres all across Ireland, supported by outreach locations and a mobile service.

In 2017, each CIS operated as a limited company with a voluntary board of management. The local boards were made up of representatives from local community and voluntary organisations, representatives of the statutory sector and, in many cases, volunteer information providers. These local boards will be replaced by regional boards in 2018 (see page 20).

Restructuring of CIS and MABS companies

In October 2016 the Board of Citizens Information Board (CIB) decided to proceed with the restructuring of CIS and the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) services on a regional basis. Following this, CIB established a Restructuring Committee to design a regional structure for the CIS and MABS networks and prepare implementation and communications plans. The composition of this new structure – which will see 42 CISs restructured into eight regional companies – was approved by the Board of CIB in February 2017.

Throughout May 2017, CIB engaged in comprehensive consultations about the implementation of the new regional structure, hosting 14 separate consultation sessions covering the eight proposed regions throughout the country (see page 21). A further 13 sessions took place in August 2017.

The first phase of restructuring has been completed (at the time of writing), with 18 CISs being restructured into three companies.

Staffing, locations and finance

In 2017, CIB funded and supported 42 CISs to provide information, advice and advocacy services throughout Ireland. Operational grants of €13.14 million were paid to the CIS (see Appendix 9).

Citizens' information is delivered to the public from 219 locations nationwide. Fifty of these locations operate on a full-time basis, and 169 are part-time (including 'fixed' outreaches).

The total number of employees in CISs in 2017 was 284 (192 whole-time equivalents). In 2017 there were 197 scheme workers



“You provide a great service, it’s really a vocation helping people the way you do.”

Feedback from CIS customer

(equivalent to 109 full-time posts), down from 225 scheme workers (124.5 whole-time equivalents) in 2016. During 2017 there was also a slight decrease in numbers of volunteers in the CIS network, with 1,027 volunteers, down from 1,079 volunteers in 2016.

Callers and queries

The total number of queries dealt with by services in 2017 was 1.039 million – an increase of over 2.5% on the previous year. Almost 600,000 people called to CISs during 2017, representing a very slight decrease on caller numbers for 2016 (607,913). Callers to CISs are mainly female (57%), with males making up 37% of callers, while 5% were couples.

Nationality was recorded for 70% of callers (416,595) during 2017. Where nationality was recorded, 76% (317,829) of callers were Irish and 24% were non-Irish nationals (98,766), up from 22% in 2016. In total 13% (55,494) of callers were from the EU and

10% (43,272) were from non-EU countries. Callers came from a total of 215 countries, as in the previous year. The usage data indicates the continued importance of CISs as an information service for migrants.

Information on age was recorded for 74% (445,743) of callers in 2017. Where age was recorded, 47% were in the 26 to 45 age group; 34% in the 46 to 65 age group; 14% were 66 years or over and 5% were 25 years or under. The age profile of callers is similar to previous years.

Services recorded that they dealt with 261,446 (44%) of callers in 10 minutes or under. Of the calls, 228,303 (38%) took 11 to 20 minutes, 92,811 (15%) took 21 to 40 minutes, 14,911 (2%) took 41 to 90 minutes and 1,545 took 90 minutes or more. This was a significant increase from 386 in 2016. This demonstrates the complex nature of some of the work – and also the complex needs of callers presenting to services.

Dublin City Centre had the highest number of callers, followed by Donegal, Limerick, Tipperary and Galway. Some services saw substantial increases in callers, with Offaly recording an increase of 19%, and Mayo an increase of 14%.

Query categories

All queries to CISs are recorded on the Oyster database. The types of queries dealt with by services have remained broadly similar year on year, with the top categories of social welfare, health, housing, employment, and money and tax representing most of the queries from the public, as well as a range of local issues.

The table shows the top six category numbers over the past three years:

Category	2015	2016	2017
Social Welfare	457,887	462,738	467,694
Health	79,945	82,290	90,147
Housing	59,205	75,435	86,782
Employment	70,233	71,463	72,508
Local	65,159	69,326	69,477
Money and Tax	65,823	56,802	59,632

Social welfare related queries consistently form the largest category of queries (497,694 or 45% of all queries) and the number of queries in this bracket increased in 2017. The next highest query categories were health (90,147, or 9% of queries), housing (86,782, or 8% of queries), employment (72,508, or 7% of queries), local (69,477, or 7% of queries), and money and tax (59,632 queries, or 6%).

Other categories, which made up 18% of the total, in order of query numbers were: justice; moving country; travel and recreation; birth, family and relationships; education and training; consumer affairs; death and bereavement; environment; government in Ireland.

Medical cards continue to be the highest single query area in 2017. The ten top single payments/schemes are outlined below:

Single issue or payment	Queries
Medical cards	59,826
State Contributory Pension	34,590
Jobseeker's Allowance	31,581
Disability Allowance	31,556
Carer's Allowance	31,042
Household Benefits Package	27,362
Family Income Supplement	26,530
Fuel Allowance	24,917
Legal aid and advice	22,081
Applying for local authority/social housing	19,957

Housing queries from migrants continue to increase. Local Authority housing queries increased by 17% since 2016, continuing a steep rise in queries in this area.

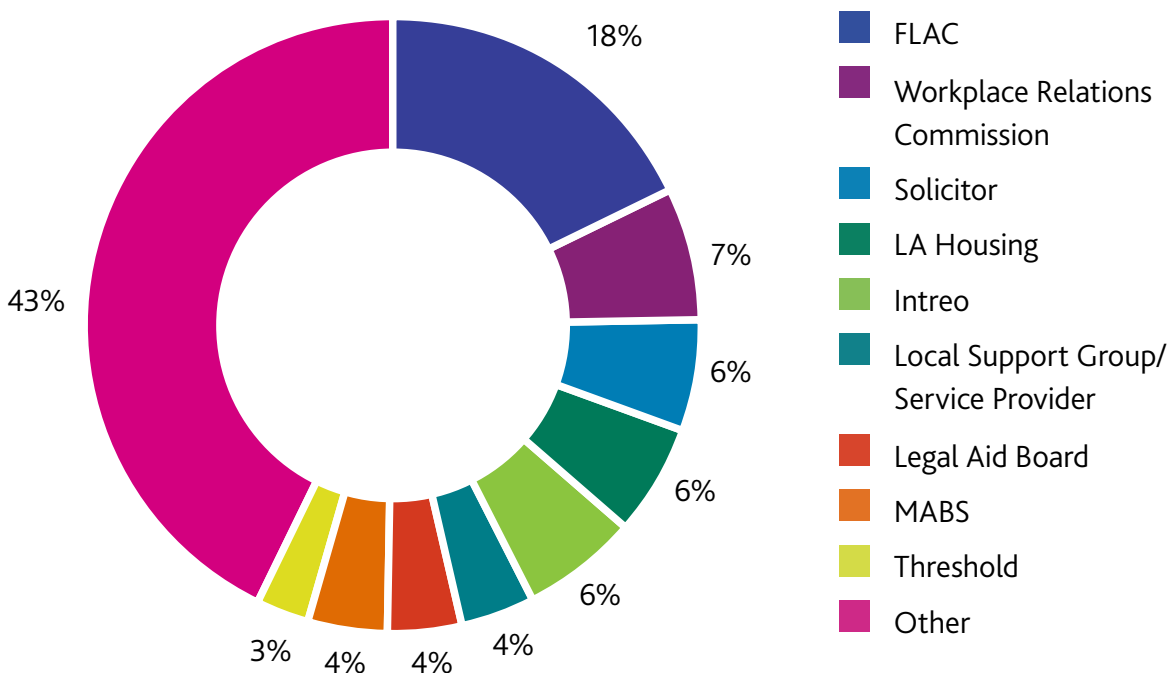
Referrals to other services

Referrals were made by CISs to a wide range of agencies, which represents just over 6% of clients (37,660), up from 5% (32,969 clients) the previous year. The largest numbers of referrals made, were to Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC) 18% (6,919), to a solicitor 6% (2,356), to Intreo 6% (2,198), to local authority housing 6% (2,132, up from 870 in 2016), and to a local support group/service provider 4% (1,495).

There was a significant increase in referrals to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) – from 1,427 in 2016 to 2,451 in 2017. Other referrals included the Legal Aid Board (1,347), MABS (1,337) and Threshold (1,131).

Over half the referrals were made to other national and local organisations, showing the extent to which CISs are involved in networking and in supporting callers with specific needs. Other agencies include the Residential Tenancies Board (708), CAVA (542), Local Employment Service (322), Immigrant Council of Ireland (392) and Treoir (353).

Referrals from CISs



CISs facilitate specialist clinics to take place in their offices to provide specialist support when needed. These specialist services include Free Legal Advice Clinics (FLAC), Chartered Accountants Voluntary Advice (CAVA), Threshold, immigration advice, Women's Aid, the Ombudsman and addiction services.

Training

E-Learning is now a key training delivery method for the Citizens Information Service. E-Learning is more accessible, available on demand, reduces travel time and causes less disruption to work.

In 2017 the new e-Learning team redeveloped the online programme *Essential Training for Information Providers (ETIP)*. ETIP provides the fundamental training needed by information providers in CISs and covers all the main areas of information provision including social welfare, family and employment law, HSE entitlements and consumer rights. The course is delivered mainly through online interactive lessons. In 2017, 107 successful staff and volunteers from 46 different Citizens Information Centres completed the ETIP programme.

The e-Learning team are also planning a suite of online courses which will give information providers opportunities for continuous professional development.

Classroom-based learning is also available. In 2017, 40 training events were delivered to 670 learners around the country covering social welfare, employment rights, immigration and taxation. The two-year Higher Certificate in Arts in Information Provision and Advocacy Practice (delivered by the Institute of Technology in Blanchardstown) saw 67 learners start Year 1 and 58 learners start Year 2. Year 1 focuses on developing the capacity to provide information and advice/assistance, while Year 2 focuses on developing capacity to provide advocacy.

Quality assurance

Citizens Information Services are committed to ensuring that information and advice provided to clients is clear, accurate, comprehensive, reliable and timely. A suite of resources have been designed to drive and ensure national quality standards. These resources outline 16 standardised procedures relating to the delivery of information and advice, including a procedure for carrying out structured Quality of Information Reviews (QIRs). Each QIR involves an observation of a 'real' interaction with a CIS client, and an assessment of the service offered.

Services continue to conduct customer satisfaction surveys and monitor customer feedback. Analysing this feedback and developing appropriate responses is a key part of the work of CIS development managers.

'In-reach' services

CISs have always provided outreach services whereby they provide an information and advice/assistance service at a location accessible to the mainstream public outside the main CIC office. These outreaches often take place in more isolated areas where people may have difficulty travelling to the main CIC office. A new development in recent years has seen CISs go into specific establishments where people with specific information and support needs live.

In-reach services include Irish prisons and direct provision centres. Limerick, Roscommon, Laois, Cavan, Cork City South, Clondalkin and Dublin North West currently provide in-reach services in prisons to people in custody and/or their families. These services are working with CIB and the Irish Prisons Service to explore in-reach services that currently exist in prisons and consider the development of a national service agreement with flexibility around local situations. Roscommon, Clondalkin, Meath, Monaghan, Westmeath, Limerick, Kildare, Mayo, Wicklow and Cork provide an information and advice/assistance service to residents of direct provision centres who have been granted leave to remain status.

Other notable projects in 2017 included a pilot libraries project to look at cooperation between the services. Pilot projects with the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) and Revenue are underway. An RTB clinic in Dublin City Centre CIS provided information and advice on tenancy-related queries and dispute resolution and Revenue. The first stage of this pilot took place in December, with plans to hold further clinics in other locations around the country.

Revenue holds a tax clinic in Dundalk CIC where Revenue staff attend the office and deal directly with queries from members of the public. The first clinic was held in December 2017.

Blanchardstown and Clondalkin CIS secured the services of volunteer immigration lawyers to provide a weekly service in their CICs providing advice on citizenship, visas, family reunification and marriage. Roscommon CIS developed a bespoke information programme for 209 Syrian refugees who were temporarily placed in the Emergency Reception and Orientation Centre (ERO) in Ballaghadreen in 2017.

Volunteering in CISs

Volunteers play a vital role in many CISs. As well as filling roles as information providers, receptionists and Board or committee members, many volunteers bring professional experience including representative advocacy, complex query support in particular areas of expertise, social policy work, PR and marketing, administration, production of newsletters, and the organisation of local events. Many experienced volunteers act as local centre co-ordinators, and recruit, train, support, and roster voluntary workers.

In recognition of the enormous contribution of volunteers, a special celebration event was held on 24 November 2017 in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham. Regina Doherty, T.D., Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, delivered the opening address.



Pictured at the volunteer celebration event were from left: Ita Mangan, Chair, Moira Byrne Wicklow CIS volunteer, Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Regina Doherty T.D., Angela Black, CEO, Helen Eustace, Kildare CIS volunteer and Zeph Ngalima, Immigration Advocate, Clondalkin and Lucan CIS.



Ian Coulter, CIB chats with volunteers, Zeph Ngalima, Clondalkin and Lucan CIS, Brenda Doyle, Go for Life volunteer and Moira Byrne, Wicklow CIS about their experiences during the volunteer celebration event at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, Dublin.

We also support CISs to recognise the contribution of their volunteers at local events. Volunteers are presented with certificates for five years' service and crystal bowls for 10 years' service. In 2017, 16 volunteers with over 20 years' service were honoured at a national event in Dublin.

Mobile Citizens Information unit

In 2017 the mobile unit spent 94 days on the road providing a Citizens Information service in Galway, Mayo, Kerry, Carlow, West Cork, Wicklow, Wexford and Ballyfermot. The mobile unit provides an essential service in rural and remote areas. It dealt with 2,415 callers and 10,038 queries in 2017.

Social policy data and feedback

There were 4,579 social policy returns (SPRs)³ from CISs for January to December 2017, which is an increase of 23% on the SPRs received by CIB in 2016 (3,729).

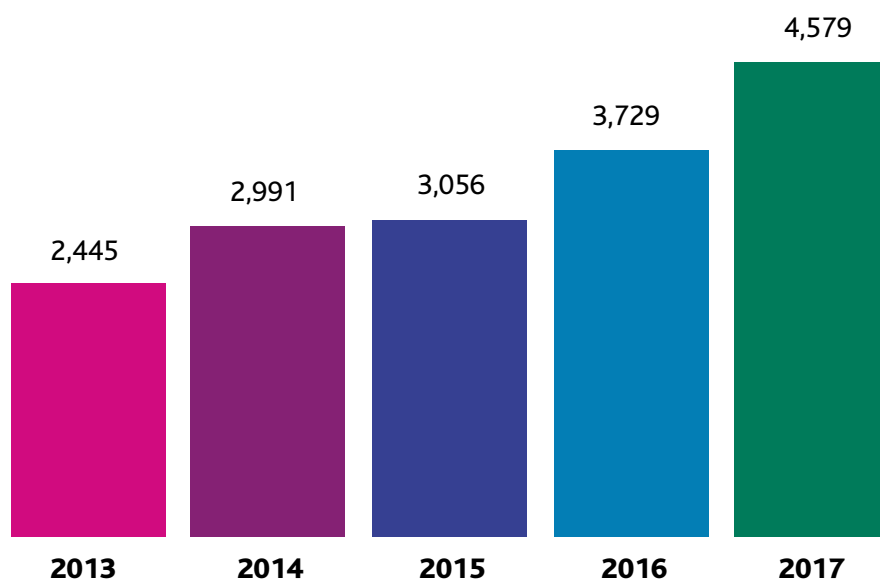
These indicative cases help CIB to get a clear picture of the problems that people are facing when trying to access social and public services. The social policy data submitted by CISs plays a key part in supporting CIB to make submissions and recommendations to Government, to consultative processes, to regulators and other organisations on how to improve policy and administration of services. The cases highlighted by services can point CIB towards topics to be researched, and they

provide evidence on administrative and policy-related concerns on a wide range of issues.

The majority of the SPRs submitted during 2017 related to social welfare (55%, or 2,529 SPRs). The remaining SPRs related to housing (14%), health (9%), money and tax (6%), employment (3%), and other categories (13%).

One of the key topics to emerge from CIS feedback during 2017 was the difficulties caused by the ongoing shift to online access amongst key public service agencies – in particular by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP), Revenue and the National Medical Card Unit.

Social policy returns 2013-2017



³ When a CIS identifies a policy issue that it is coming across repeatedly and/or that it considers particularly serious in its impact, it sends in a short indicative policy report focused on brief case study evidence to CIB. This is known (and referred to in this report) as a social policy return (SPR).

The main issues highlighted in feedback from services during 2017 were:

1. Medical card
2. PRSI records
3. Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)
4. Jobseeker's Allowance
5. State Pension (Contributory)
6. Disability Allowance
7. Carer's Allowance
8. Family Income Supplement
9. Illness Benefit
10. Rent Supplement

Social policy grants

During 2017, CIB (through the Social Policy Grants Scheme) funded three separate projects amongst delivery services, each with a focus on a particular concern at a local level. These grants were awarded to:

- ▶ Ballyfermot CIS - as part of a locally-based initiative (with Ballyfermot/ Chapelizod Homeless Forum) to develop a strategy for an integrated local response to homelessness. The grant assisted with the production of a leaflet highlighting local options and pathways for people wanting housing information, advice and advocacy supports.

- ▶ Co Wicklow CIS – to assist with the provision a comprehensive, collaborative support service (with interagency co-operation) to ensure that the Somalian Community in Arklow town is accessing the full range of social rights and entitlements to enable them to engage fully in civil society.
- ▶ NAS – to host a workshop event to examine the experience of homelessness by people with intellectual disabilities/autism, with voluntary and statutory service providers in attendance.

This funding is available to services who wish to engage in a small-scale policy initiative at local level – whether it is a research piece, policy network or seminar with a policy focus.

Advocacy in Citizens Information Services

Citizens Information Services provided an advocacy service to over 11,361 clients last year. CIS worked on 8,669 short-term or once off advocacy cases last year. Short-term advocacy work with clients generally involves one or two engagements, for example, writing a letter of complaint or negotiating a product refund.

The majority of the time spent on advocacy work in a CIS is spent working with a client over many months to progress a complex issue or appeal. CIS worked with 2,692 long-term advocacy clients on complex issues such as employment appeals, social welfare appeals and housing cases.

Advocacy interventions are recorded at case closure and capture the type of work the advocate engaged in with the client. Multiple interventions can be recorded per case. Every case in 2017 involved negotiation/advocacy through letters, emails, or phone calls, and 32% of cases involved preparation for and drafting of an appeal submission.

Intervention type	No.	%
Negotiation/Advocacy through letter/email/phone	1,549	100%
Preparation for and drafting of appeal submission	496	32%
Attending hearing/formal meeting with client	199	13%
Other	165	11%
Supporting client to attend hearing/formal meeting without advocate present	126	8%

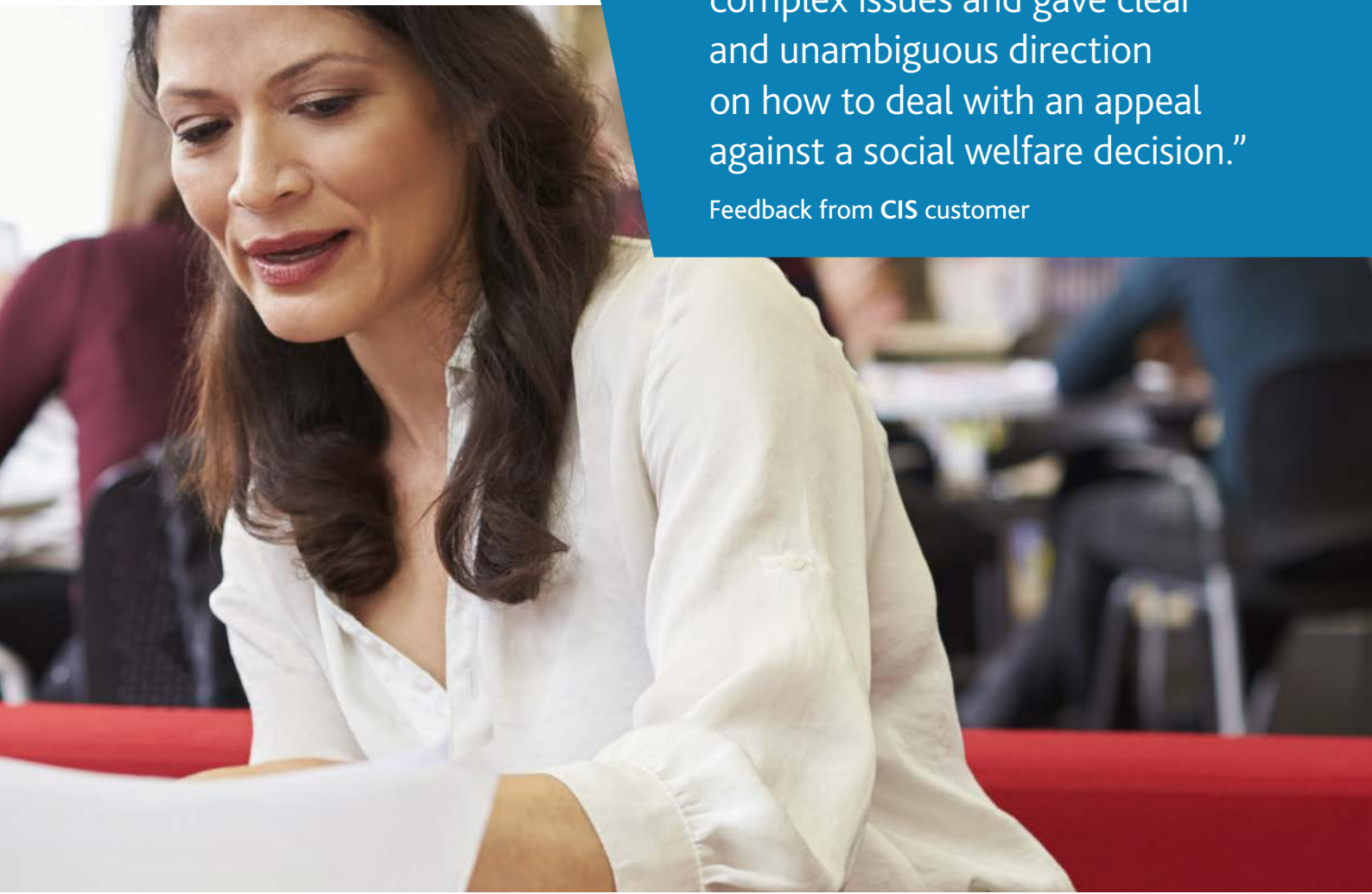
The vast majority (59%) of cases in 2017 were social welfare-related, representing a slight decrease compared to last year (61%). Employment cases remained the same as last year, while housing cases increased by 2% from 2016.



ASW Programme and Dedicated Advocate pilot

Five Advocacy Support Workers (ASWs) are assigned to support development managers to manage advocacy, build the capacity of information providers and to provide on-call advice on casework. The ASWs are supported by a national programme group and an external expert support service.

A pilot Dedicated Advocacy project is currently trialling new Dedicated Advocacy Officers within the CIS structure. The pilot will evaluate the effectiveness of a dedicated advocate working with scheduled clients referred to them from drop-in information and advice clinics. The project evaluation will assess whether and how this delivery model enhances the provision of advocacy services to those who need additional support to access their rights and entitlements.



“Our advocate clarified many complex issues and gave clear and unambiguous direction on how to deal with an appeal against a social welfare decision.”

Feedback from CIS customer

Citizens Information Phone Service

The Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS) is the national Citizens Information helpline, and provides a comprehensive and confidential information service to the general public. Based in Cork, the service operates Monday to Friday from 9am to 8pm. CIPS also offers Live Advisor, an instant web chat service open from 9am to 5pm on weekdays, aimed at people with hearing and speech difficulties.

CIPS is funded by CIB. It received a grant of €1.2 million in 2017.

Statistics

In 2017, CIPS information officers dealt with over 128,000 telephone enquiries and responded to over 1,700 Live Advisor enquiries. This compared with 139,426 telephone enquiries and 1,164 Live Advisor enquiries in 2016.

Overall, the average call wait time during 2017 was just over four minutes and 30 seconds, with a dropped call rate of 30.9%.

Social welfare continues to be the main query category, accounting for 40% of total calls answered (compared with 48% in 2016). The second highest query category during 2017 was employment (16.9%), followed by housing (12%), and money and tax (9.6%).

The dedicated Peer Support Line (which supports information providers in CIPs) received 1,900 calls, with over 1,500 (81%) answered.

Staffing

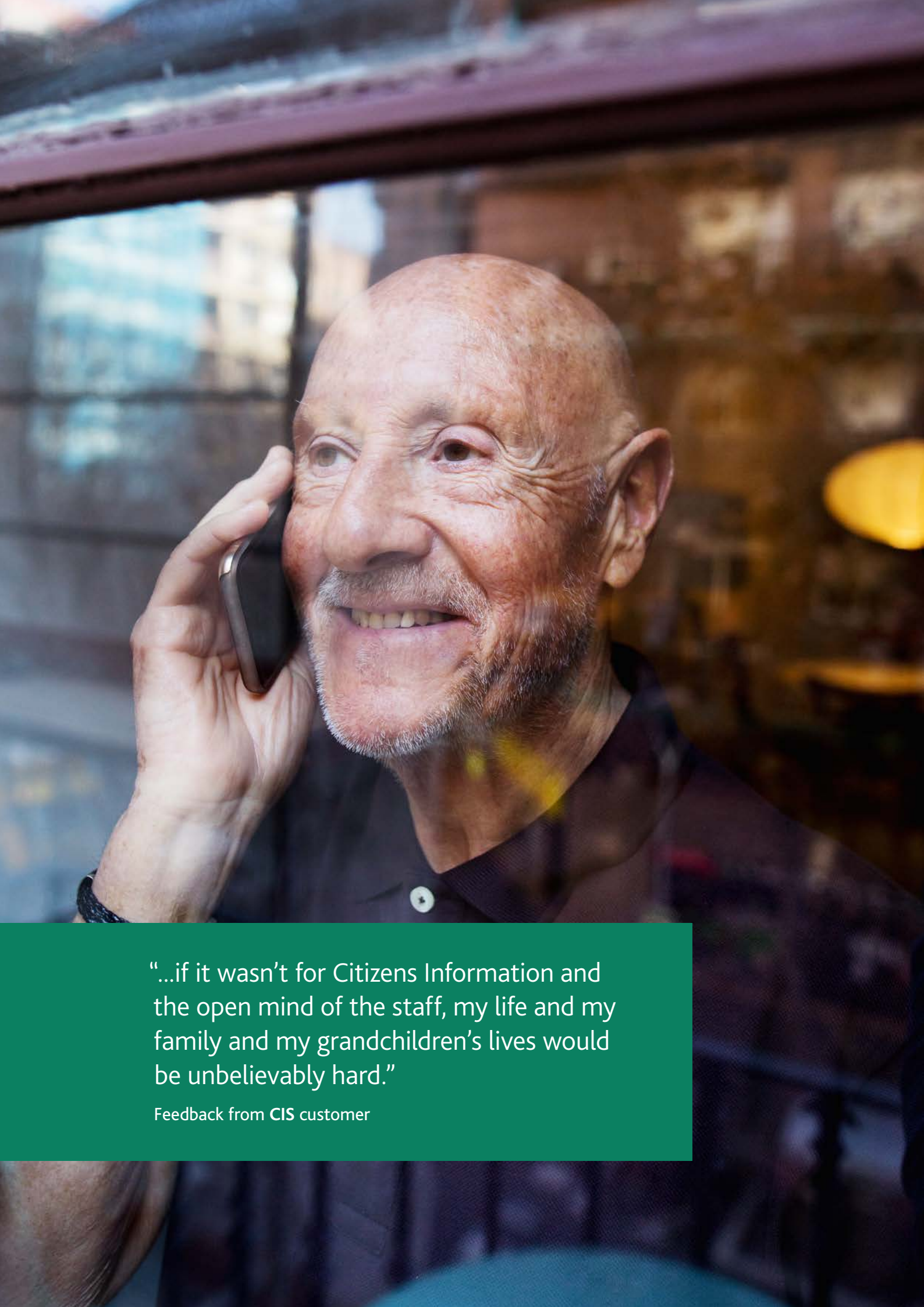
CIPS is staffed by a manager, two team supervisors, 17 whole-time equivalent information officers, a senior administrator and two part-time administrators. CIPS will be reviewing its staffing structure, roles and staffing levels, as part of a strategic and operational capacity analysis in 2018.

Quality assurance

CIPS management ensures the quality of all its interactions with the public and with Citizens Information peers through a number of mechanisms. These include:

- ▶ A strong induction programme, and ongoing and refresher training
- ▶ In-house complex query support
- ▶ Bi-monthly one-to-one coaching
- ▶ Call recording with assessment by team supervisors
- ▶ Dedicated 'non-contact' time for information officers for the purpose of research and learning

In 2017, quality assessments (conducted by team supervisors, sampling calls handled by each information officer) produced average scores of 93%.



“...if it wasn’t for Citizens Information and the open mind of the staff, my life and my family and my grandchildren’s lives would be unbelievably hard.”

Feedback from CIS customer



The Money Advice and Budgeting Service

The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) provides a free, confidential, non-judgemental and independent service throughout the country for people with debt issues. MABS's aim is to provide people, particularly those on low incomes, with practical advice on dealing with budgetary and debt issues. MABS also provides local communities with education on budgeting and money management.

In addition to 51 local companies, MABS includes two national companies:

- ▶ MABS National Development CLG (MABSnd) is a central support service that provides technical support for case work, money management, education and training to MABS companies. MABSnd is responsible for the national MABS Helpline.
- ▶ National Traveller MABS (NTMABS) was established in 2005. It advocates for the financial inclusion of Travellers (and other marginalised groups) to help them access legal and affordable credit, and to manage money.

How MABS helps:

The money advisers at MABS help clients with a wide range of personal debts and budgeting issues. Many clients have more than one sort of debt; MABS advisers take each client's case as a whole and try to find the right solution for his or her particular situation. Common issues dealt with by MABS advisers include:

- ▶ Mortgage arrears
- ▶ Personal loan arrears
- ▶ Utilities arrears
- ▶ Credit card debt
- ▶ Hire purchase arrears
- ▶ Rent arrears
- ▶ Court fines
- ▶ Catalogue debts
- ▶ Sub-prime loans
- ▶ Moneylender debt

MABS saw 16,740 new clients and 2,552 people looked for advice about budgeting and money management from local services.

2017 in brief

The year 2017 was a busy and active one for MABS. Mortgage arrears continues to be an entrenched problem for MABS clients, with the most difficult of the unsustainable cases coming to MABS. The number of principal dwelling houses in mortgage arrears nationally continues to decline, but stubbornly remains at 10% of the entire mortgage market.

The promotion of the national Mortgage Arrears Support Scheme, funded by CIB had a significant impact on the work for services. As part of the service, the Abhaile Aid and Advice voucher scheme issued over 10,000 vouchers in 2017, compared to 3,500 when the scheme started in 2016. The European Commission cited the scheme as positively contributing to a 20.6% reduction in non-performing loans (NPL) in Ireland over the year. The MABS Helpline received just under 25,000 calls to the end of December 2017. This is an increase of over 18% and followed a national promotional campaign.

Staffing and finance

At the end of 2017 MABS was staffed by 254 whole-time equivalents (WTE) made up of 45 money advice coordinators, 61 administrators, 104 money advisers and 7 money advisers (reliefs), all permanent posts. Under the Dedicated Mortgage Arrears Adviser service there are an additional 26 dedicated mortgage advisers as well as a further 7.5 money advisers, in temporary positions.

MABSnd increased its staffing with two additional temporary senior management positions allocated. There were six permanent and three temporary WTE staff working in the MABS Helpline and seven in the Dedicated Mortgage Arrears Adviser service.

The total CIB funding allocated to MABS in 2017 was €24.05 million. Operational grants for the 51 MABS companies were €17.4 million (an increase of €600,000 on 2016) with an additional €2.44 million for the Dedicated Mortgage Arrears Adviser service (see also Abhaile below). Meanwhile, €5.89 million was allocated for centralised support to MABS companies, including MABSnd, the Aid and Advice Scheme, promotion, insurance and other contingencies.

Statistics

In 2017 MABS saw 16,740 new clients – this is a decrease of 3.6% on last year's figure of 17,366. A further 2,552 sought information about budgeting and money management from the local services – an increase of 2% on the previous year.

The total Active Client caseload on 31 December 2017 was 16,949, down 6% on the previous year. Recorded individual debt levels have increased year on year. The average level of recorded debt for new clients is now €71,700 – the figure this time last year was €65,900.

The total amount owed by new clients to creditors on 31 December 2017 based on the debt they had when they first came to MABS was €1.20 billion, with over 80% owed to banks and financial institutions. Of the debt types recorded for new clients, mortgage debt is now the one most often recorded – at just over 30% of all debt types presented by new clients (this was 26% in 2016), personal loans are 26%, with utilities and credit cards at just over 13% respectively. These combined represent 84% of the debt problems that clients present to MABS. Moneylending debts represent 4.7% of all debt types.

A project is underway to develop and deliver a new client case management system for MABS services and MABSnd.

Waiting times

The average waiting time in 2017 was 2.17 weeks (11 days) compared to an average waiting time per service at the end of 2016 of 2.35 weeks (12 days). A total of 2,753 emergency clients were seen by services throughout the year. These clients were seen without an appointment.

The MABS Helpline – 0761 07 2000

The helpline received 24,659 calls, representing an increase of over 18% on the previous year (20,832 calls in 2016). This was reflected in a significant monthly increase in helpline calls, which averaged over 2,000 calls per month, compared to an average of 1,700 a month for 2016. Demand for the helpline peaked during the Abhaile media campaign in March, May and November 2017.

The MABS helpline
received a total of
24,659 calls - an
increase of over 18%

MABS policy and research

During 2017, MABS continued its policy work to highlight the issues affecting its clients and to seek to bring about positive change for them. This work involved participation in consultative groups, steering committees and partnership projects and also the preparation of formal submissions. Submissions and research

- ▶ Submission on *Digitalisation and the Consumer Protection Code*
- ▶ Submission on *Personal Insolvency and Debt Relief*
- ▶ Submission on the Irish mortgage market review
- ▶ EU Insolvency Directive proposal
- ▶ CIB Pre-Budget Submission 2018
- ▶ Research report on *Mortgage Arrears among South Mayo MABS Clients*

Personal Microcredit Project – It Makes Sense Loan

In late 2013, CIB submitted a proposal to the Minister for Social Protection on the need to develop a scheme to help people on low incomes who are unable to access low cost credit and who, increasingly, are availing of money lenders. A pilot scheme was subsequently launched in November 2015.

The affordable Personal Microcredit Project – It Makes Sense Loan scheme has now been mainstreamed and is available in 109 credit unions and 152 sub offices (261 locations in total) nationwide. A website and Facebook page has been set up by the Irish League of Credit Unions to promote the scheme, itmakesenseloan.ie

“We were at the stage of hopelessness when we were given your name. We are following the budget you made for us and it is working out great.”

Feedback from MABS customer



Abhaile – Mortgage Arrears Support Scheme

Launched in 2016, Abhaile is a State-funded service to help homeowners find a resolution to their home mortgage arrears. It provides free financial and legal advice and help from experts, accessed through MABS. Abhaile aims to help mortgage holders in arrears to find the best solutions and keep them, wherever possible, in their own homes.

Abhaile is the umbrella brand, which provides a range of services to help those in long-term mortgage arrears deal with their situation, including financial advice from a MABS Dedicated Mortgage Arrears Adviser (DMA) (see below), or Personal Insolvency Practitioner (PIP). Legal advice and support from a duty solicitor and MABS court mentors (present at possession court sittings), a Consultation Solicitor service and a Personal Insolvency Arrangement (PIA) Review service, also known as a Section 115A review.

Abhaile is jointly coordinated and funded by the Department of Justice and Equality and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP). Funding from the DEASP is administered through CIB, which has the governance and communications remit for the scheme. MABS, the Insolvency Service of Ireland, the Legal Aid Board and CIB work together to implement the Abhaile scheme.

Dedicated Mortgage Arrears Adviser service

The MABS DMA service was incorporated into the Abhaile Scheme in November 2016. It is a confidential, free, and independent mortgage arrears advice service, established by MABS in 2015. The service continued to develop during 2017. There is now a full complement of Dedicated Mortgage Arrears advisers (DMAs) in place; 26 whole-time equivalents in 28 locations throughout the country, supported by a programme manager, four relief DMAs and two administrators in MABSnd. Also, 7.5 money adviser posts have been allocated to the service.

A total of 2,019 new DMA clients were added to the service by the end of December 2017. A total of 4,665 clients have been helped by DMA advisers since the start of the programme in 2015.

Court Mentoring Service

There are 31 County Registrar courts across Ireland. MABS staff attend County Registrar courts as part of the Abhaile scheme to provide support to borrowers at possession hearings. Typically two MABS staff attend, one outside to meet and discuss with clients, and one in attendance at the court to observe proceedings, take note of referrals by the Registrar, support clients and answer any questions if directed by the Registrar. The court mentors take note of all possession orders listed and outcomes. The service has been very positively received.

Abhaile communications campaign

An Abhaile communications campaign was launched by the then Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality, Frances Fitzgerald TD, and the then Minister for Social Protection, Leo Varadkar TD at a media event in February 2017, and continued throughout 2017.

In Phase One (February to July), Abhaile used a combination of national and local radio, digital and social media, outdoor posters and PR to communicate the Free Mortgage Arrears Support message. Awareness of the services provided went from zero to 40% nationally.



Pictured at the Abhaile campaign launch were from right: Angela Black, CEO, Former Minister for Social Protection, Leo Varadkar T.D., former Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality, Frances Fitzgerald T.D, and Ita Mangan, Chair

Phase Two (August to December) focused on the various stakeholder supports such as PIPs, duty solicitors, consultation solicitors and court mentors. Abhaile achieved this by producing a series of videos explaining each of the service elements and long-form digital articles, which were shared by a number of popular online media outlets. 'Call MABS' is the primary call to action of the awareness campaign, and over the year the MABS Helpline recorded an increase in call volumes of 18% over the previous year.

Approved Intermediary Service (AIS)

There has been a reduction in activity in the Approved Intermediary Service (AIS) compared to 2016. All 51 MABS services are registered as Approved Intermediaries for the purposes of processing Debt Relief Notices (DRNs) under the Personal Insolvency Act 2012. AIS appointments are down by as much as 38% in the services compared to 2016 while the number of

DRNs issued by the courts at the end of 2017 was 222 compared to 358 in 2016. Debt Settlement Arrangements (DSAs) had also reduced by 45% to 114 by the end of September 2017.

In contrast applications for Personal Insolvency Arrangements (secured and unsecured debt up to €3 million) by Personal Insolvency Practitioners have increased by a significant 37% in the same period, 3,188 applications, although conversion to arrangements approved amounted to 532 in the same period. The ISI attributes the high level of new applications to the Abhaile scheme.

“Thanks to all MAB’s amazing work, the building society restructured my mortgage and offered me monthly payments that I could afford. I am now sleeping the complete night and even have money in my pocket.”

Feedback from **MABS** customer



National Traveller MABS

National Traveller MABS (NTMABS) highlights issues of over-indebtedness and exclusion from financial institutions among Irish Travellers and makes appropriate responses through its research and policy work. NTMABS establishes ways for the Traveller community to access legal and affordable credit and money management advice, and builds capacity within the community through education. NTMABS acts as a support to both MABS and the Traveller community to ensure ease of access for Travellers to the service.

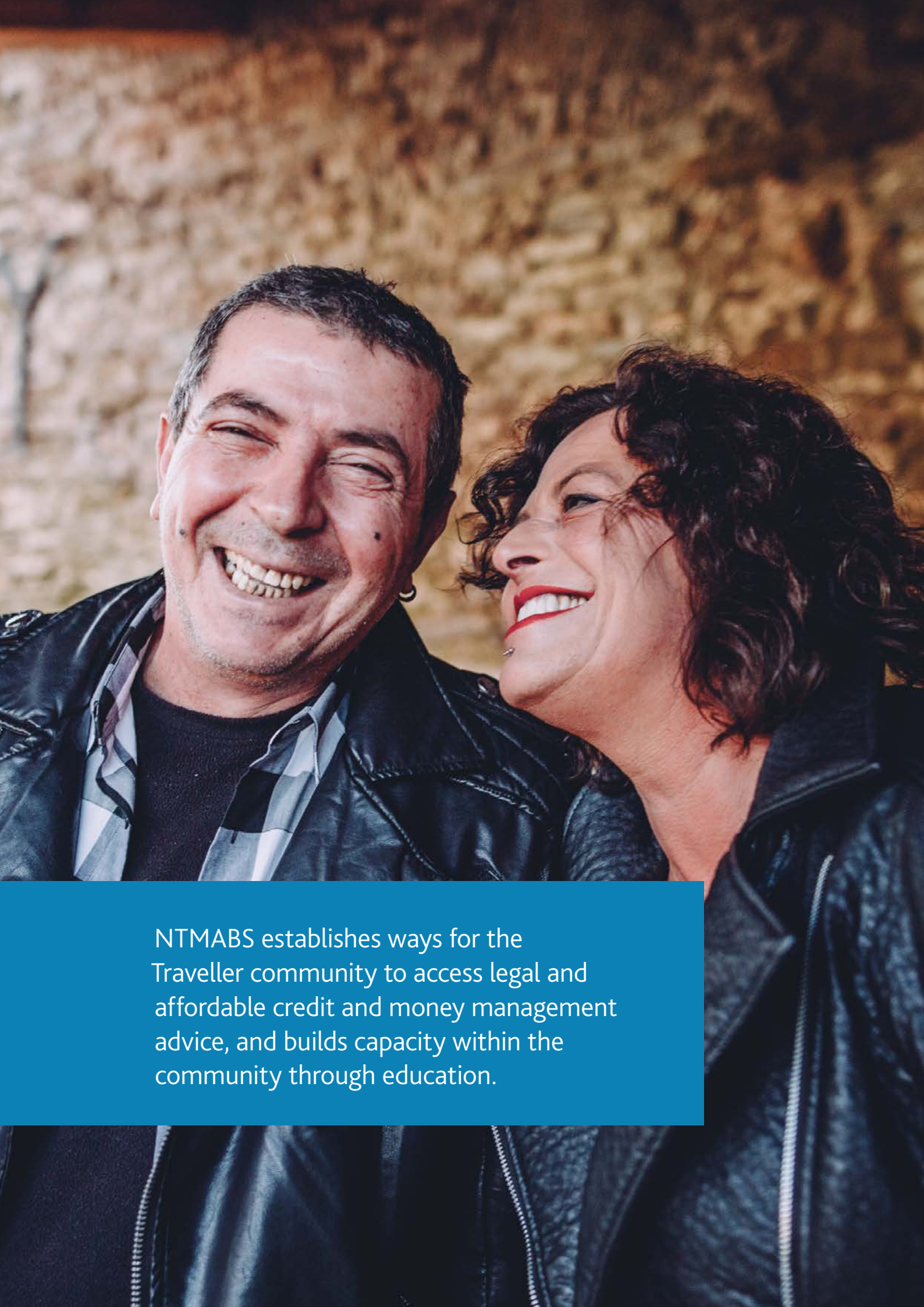
2017 in brief

A number of community education initiatives got underway in 2017, including a certified Money Management Course, which was provided for the Meath Travellers Primary Health Care Group in conjunction with Meath MABS. Eight women completed the course. A similar training programme was run during the year by Dublin North East MABS for the Northside Travellers Action Group (TRAVACT).

Research aimed at addressing the financial exclusion of Travellers is a key strategic priority for NTMABS. In 2017 NTMABS carried out a survey of Traveller networks (the Consultative Fora) to assess how much is known about the Personal Microcredit scheme ('It Makes Sense' credit union loans). This work will inform a promotion campaign on these loans planned for the coming year.

Traveller Community National Survey

The second Traveller Community National Survey was launched in the Morrison Hotel in Dublin in October 2017. As members of the steering group that commissioned this report NTMABS ensured that the survey looked at the experiences Travellers have of financial services and of debt-prevention supports such as MABS. The study highlights a range of areas of Traveller life and experiences, and how this has changed since the first study was carried out 17 years ago.



NTMABS establishes ways for the Traveller community to access legal and affordable credit and money management advice, and builds capacity within the community through education.

The National Advocacy Service

The National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities (NAS) provides an independent, confidential and free representative advocacy service that works exclusively for the person using the service, and adheres to the highest professional standards.

NAS works to ensure that when life decisions are made, due consideration is given to the will and preference of people with disabilities and enables them to protect their rights.

Funding and staffing

Budget allocation for NAS in 2017 was €3,103,045.

The NAS operation in 2017 consisted of one national manager, one corporate services manager, one investor relations executive, five administrators, four regional managers, seven (whole-time equivalent) senior advocates, and 28 (whole-time equivalent) advocates.

Statistics

In 2017, 2,744 people contacted the National Advocacy Service. NAS provided full representative advocacy casework to 318 of these initial enquiries. Added to ongoing casework of 532, this meant that 850 people availed of a full representative advocacy service in 2017. The remaining 2,426 people were given other advocacy support or information provision including self-advocacy support and signposting for additional services.



In 2017, 2,744 people contacted the National Advocacy Service. NAS provided full representative advocacy casework to 318 of these initial enquiries.

The people accessing NAS services in 2017 can be broken down as follows:

People with	2017
Intellectual disability	43%
Physical disability	30%
Mental health	24%
Learning disability	18%
Autistic spectrum	12%
Sensory disability	8%
Acquired Brain Injury	3%

The areas where people required assistance can be divided into the following categories:

Case categories	2017
Housing	49%
Health	20%
Justice	13%
Childcare-related court case	12%
Birth, Family and Relationships	8%
Money and Tax	7%
Social Welfare	7%

NAS plans to develop a comprehensive case management system in 2018 that will support and enhance reporting and development of services.



Sinead Keirns, Solicitor Mercy Law Resource, Dr. Michael Byrne, National Disability Children and Families Team HSE, Paula Mayock, Assistant Professor School of Social Work and Social Policy TCD, Mark O' Connor Community Engagement Lead Inclusive Ireland and Cormac O' Donnell, Administrative Officer, Dublin Region Homeless Executive pictured at the National Advocacy Service event.

Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS)

The Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS) supports quality interpretation services to ensure Deaf people can access public and social services and participate in Irish society as full and equal citizens. SLIS achieves this by developing and advocating for quality interpretation services for deaf people and service providers.

SLIS provides the Irish Remote Interpreting Service (IRIS) and facilitates requests for Irish Sign Language (ISL) interpreters.

SLIS is a limited company with charitable status, and is managed by a Board of Directors comprising representatives of key national stakeholders such as the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and the Deaf community. CIB is the main funder of SLIS, with some funding coming from public and private sector organisations to pay for interpreting services including IRIS.

During 2017, the Board of SLIS continued to implement its key objectives:

- ▶ Promoting and advocating for the right to quality sign language interpreting services
- ▶ Development of quality standards for interpreters
- ▶ Meeting social interpreting needs
- ▶ Developing IRIS to cater for the needs of the Deaf Community
- ▶ Working with stakeholders to develop an emergency response service

Outcomes for clients

In 2017 IRIS provided 4,036 interpreting assignments, an increase of approximately 30% on the previous year. The largest increase was in the use of interpreters for GP appointments.

SLIS funding allocation in 2017 was €342,896 with additional income from Interpreting Services of €15,000 totalling an income of €357,896.

SLIS operated in 2017 with one manager, one finance officer, 1.5 whole-time equivalent administrators, and 1.5 whole-time equivalent IRIS remote interpreters.

The Irish Remote Interpreting Service (IRIS)

SLIS developed IRIS as a service to improve access to information, entitlements and rights by providing remote access to an interpreter via video link from the SLIS office.

Irish Sign Language Act 2017

The Irish Sign Language Act 2017 was signed into law in December 2017. The Irish Sign Language Act 2017 recognises Irish Sign Language (ISL) as a native and independent language and will improve access to public services, legal proceedings, education, interpretation services and television programming. Under the Act, public bodies will be required to prepare and implement ISL action plans and provide free ISL interpretation to people using or seeking access to statutory entitlements and services. The Act is not fully commenced.

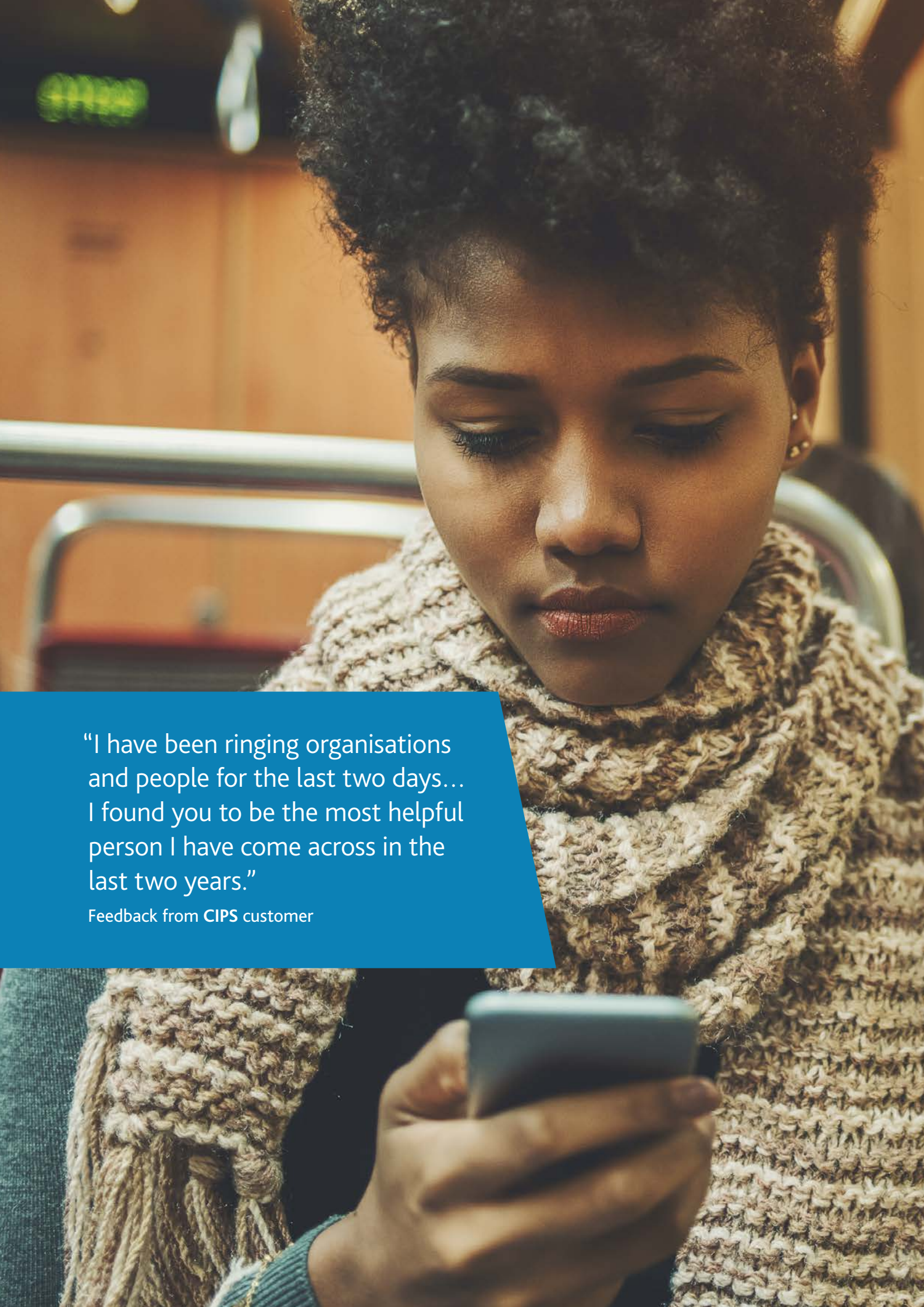
National Disability Inclusion Strategy

The National Disability Inclusion Strategy was published in July 2017 and sets out the following actions for the Department of Employment Services and Social Protection, which will be met through CIB and the Sign Language Interpreting Service:

- ▶ Extend the hours of IRIS, the Irish Sign Language (ISL) remote interpretation service to evenings and weekends
- ▶ Develop a strategy to increase the number of trained Sign Language and Deaf Interpreters
- ▶ Develop a quality assurance and registration scheme for interpreters
- ▶ Provide a continuous professional training and development programme for interpreters

Additional funding will be allocated to SLIS in 2018 to progress and implement these targets.

In 2017 IRIS provided 4,036 interpreting assignments, an increase of approximately 30% on the previous year.



“I have been ringing organisations and people for the last two days... I found you to be the most helpful person I have come across in the last two years.”

Feedback from CIPS customer

Appendices

Appendix 1: Customer Service Charter

Appendix 2: Board Members 2017

Appendix 3: Service teams and structure

Appendix 4: Organisation chart

Appendix 5: Energy usage in 2017

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Appendix 8: Citizens Information Board main offices

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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 (0761 07 4000) and the network of Citizens Information Services. We are responsible for the Money Advice and Budgeting Service and provide the National Advocacy Service 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. You can find our Customer Service Action Plan on our website, citizensinformationboard.ie.

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.
2. Prompt, courteous and efficient responses	We will be responsive to your needs and we will deliver our services sensitively and efficiently.
3. Equality and diversity	We will respect diversity and ensure your right to equal treatment.
4. Choice	We will plan and deliver our services so you can access them in the way that suits you best.
5. Access	We will ensure that all our services and offices are fully accessible. Contact our Access Officer at accessofficer@ciboard.ie .
6. Official languages	We will provide our services through English, Irish and bilingually where required.
7. Consultation and evaluation	We will consult with you to establish your needs when developing, delivering and evaluating our services.
8. Internal customers	We will support our staff to ensure that they provide an excellent service to one another and to you.
9. Co-ordination	We will work closely with other organisations to deliver citizen-focused public services.
10. Appeals	We will maintain an accessible and transparent appeal and review system where appropriate.
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 on commentsandcomplaints@ciboard.ie .

Appendix 2: Board Members 2017

The following people served on the Board in 2017:

- ▶ Noeline Blackwell
- ▶ James Clarke
- ▶ Tim Duggan
- ▶ Josephine Henry
- ▶ Mary Higgins
- ▶ Tina Leonard
- ▶ Ita Mangan (Chair)
- ▶ Joanne McCarthy
- ▶ Eugene McErlean
- ▶ Niall Mulligan
- ▶ Cearbhall O Meadhra
- ▶ Ian Power
- ▶ John Saunders
- ▶ Sean Sheridan
- ▶ Nicola Walshe

A list of current Board members can be found on the CIB website, citizensinformationboard.ie.

Appendix 3: Service teams and structure

To carry out its functions, the Citizens Information Board (CIB) organises its work under the following four pillars:

1. Operations and Corporate Services
2. Service Development and Support – Citizens Information and Advocacy
3. Service Development and Support – MABS
4. Information, Research and Policy
Information, Research and Policy is currently split across the two Service Development and Support areas while restructuring is taking place.

This structure will become fully operational in 2019.

Citizens Information, Advocacy and Social Policy

Citizens Information service delivery

The Citizens Information (Service Delivery) Team promotes and supports continuous improvement in the quality and reach of essential frontline Citizens Information services. It provides a range of critical supports (including management, quality, training and organisational development supports) and substantial policy/procedural

advice to the nationwide network of Citizens Information offices and the national Citizens Information Phone Service. The team also continuously monitors and reports on service development and delivery, and allocates and monitors funding (operational grants) to the frontline services.

Advocacy

The Advocacy team in CIB is responsible for the provision of an advocacy service to individuals, in particular those with a disability, which assists people in identifying and understanding their needs and options and in securing their entitlements to social services (**see page 56**).

The Advocacy team works in close collaboration with other teams in CIB – in particular Operations, Finance and Social Policy to oversee the strategic development of advocacy in CISs. It develops advocacy standards, policies and resources, in collaboration with CIS development managers, information providers, advocacy support workers and dedicated advocates.

The Advocacy Team also supports the development of the Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS) and the National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities (NAS).

Social Policy and Research

The Social Policy and Research team is responsible for developing CIB's social policy feedback role and undertaking research on models of information, advice and advocacy provision. The team collects and analyses information and data on social policy matters from delivery services, develops information on the effectiveness of current social policy and services, highlights issues that are of concern to users of those services to policy makers, develops social policy feedback and prepares evidence-based reports and submissions in this area (**see pages 22 and 38**).

MABS, Information Resources and e-Learning

MABS Service Delivery

The MABS Service Delivery team is responsible for co-ordinating and supporting the national network of Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) in line with CIB's strategic priorities. Our aim is to resource and support MABS to ensure it can deliver high quality services to the public and to ensure that those services are constantly developing and improving to respond to public need. We work to develop and support new services and projects with MABS such as the Dedicated Mortgage Arrears service, Approved Intermediary service and the Chartered Accountant Voluntary Advice clinics (CAVA). The MABS Service Delivery team is also the key point for communication to and from MABS companies and addresses obstacles to service delivery including issues relating to ICT, staffing, finance and premises in co-operation with Operations and ICT Teams.

Information Resources

The Information Resources team is responsible for the Citizens Information websites – citizensinformation.ie and keepingyourhome.ie along with CIB's information publications and library **(see page 26)**.

The Information Resources team is also responsible for CIB's corporate website – citizensinformationboard.ie and the assistireland.ie website.

E-Learning

A new dedicated CIB e-Learning team was created in 2017 to develop online training courses and resources for staff and volunteers. This involves developing a learning management system and populating it with interactive training courses and resources that will allow quality assured and consistent training to be available on-demand in a flexible manner. Moving training online is also more cost effective for the organisation than traditional classroom-based training approaches.

A project to integrate MABS staff training onto CIB's e-learning platform was also successfully completed.

Corporate Services

HR and Governance

The HR and Governance team supports the staff of CIB including recruitment and staff training. The team is also responsible for all governance matters within CIB, including support to the Board, freedom of information, data protection and customer complaints. The HR and Governance team works closely with the Operations team, which is now responsible for supporting the delivery services on HR and Governance matters.

Finance and Administration

The Finance and Administration team is responsible for finance matters and procedures for delivery services. CIB ensures that proper financial controls and reporting procedures are followed by delivery services – which ensures that value for money is delivered to the taxpayer.

ICT

The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) team manages and supports the day-to-day operational needs of CIB and the network of CIB's delivery services. The ICT Service manages the complete ICT infrastructure on behalf of the Board and the delivery services. This is a large enterprise of over 200 locations, 1,800 staff, and 1,300 workstations

with a computer network spanning the country, hardware procurement, software development, data centre server resources and applications, disaster recovery, backups and a dedicated helpdesk. The helpdesk resolved over 4,000 issues submitted in 2017 by delivery services.

The ICT team worked on improving the infrastructure available to the Sign Language Interpretative Service so it can deliver better Remote Interpreting Services to the Deaf Community. ICT also introduced video conferencing facilities that helped reduce the need for staff to travel unnecessarily. ICT continued its work in strengthening its network facilities and updating equipment to deliver a stable IT environment so that services can reliably assist the public.

PR and Promotions

A PR and Promotions Executive promotes awareness of the Citizens Information Board and its main service brands of Citizens Information and MABS. In 2017 the PR Executive also provided PR support to the Abhaile project team and the Restructuring team (**see page 19**).

Abhaile

The Abhaile communications team is responsible for delivering sustained communications and information campaigns aimed at long-term mortgage arrears borrowers. The goal is to encourage engagement with the State's mortgage arrears supports and ultimately contribute to positive solutions for those homeowners in the longest mortgage arrears.

Abhaile is jointly coordinated and funded by the Department of Justice and Equality and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. MABS, the Insolvency Service of Ireland, the Legal Aid Board and the Citizens Information Board work together to provide the Abhaile services.

Operations

The Operations team are responsible for supporting delivery services to develop, establish and maintain best practice and legislative compliance in areas such as HR, governance, financial and property management. The team ensures that the network of delivery service are supported with relevant guidelines, procedures and resources to achieve this. The team monitors delivery services' compliance in HR, governance, financial and property development and management.

Restructuring

The Restructuring team is working on the restructuring of CIS and MABS services from 93 companies to 16 regional companies in 2018 and will be wound down during 2019 (**see page 20**).

Appendix 4: Organisation chart



**Restructuring
Senior Manager**
Fiona Coyne

**Restructuring
Project Manager**
Caroline Mitchell

**MABS & Information
Resources Senior Manager**
Adrian O'Connor

Abhaile Manager
Bobby Barbour

**MABS
National Manager**
Mary Lyne

E-Learning Manager
Enda Connolly

**Information
Resources Manager**
Cathy Gerrard

Appendix 5: Energy usage in 2017

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. Heating and lighting account for the main energy usage in CIB. In 2017, CIB consumed 266,402 kWh of electricity and 155,103 kWh of gas. CO₂ emissions were 145,223 kgCO₂. The CO₂ emissions were 14.3% less than in 2016.

Overall, CIB's energy savings are 9.1% less than 2016 and 42% less than its baseline of 2009.

CIB improved its energy performance in 2017 by:

- ▶ Improving its energy management practices
- ▶ Implementing energy awareness programme(s)

Appendix 6: Protected Disclosures Act

CIB is committed to fostering an appropriate environment for addressing concerns relating to potential irregularities and or wrongdoing with respect to financial reporting and other matters in the workplace. CIB is also committed to providing the necessary support and assurances for staff that raise genuine concerns. The Act requires public bodies to establish and maintain procedures for dealing with protected disclosures. CIB has a robust procedure in place in line with the provisions of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014.

No submissions were made to CIB under the Protected Disclosures Act during 2017.

Appendix 7: Public Equality and Human Rights Duty

All public bodies in Ireland have responsibility to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of their employees, customers, service users and everyone affected by their policies and plans. This is a legal obligation, called the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty (under Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014). Section 42 states that:

“A public body shall, in the performance of its functions, have regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate discrimination,
2. Promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons to whom it provides services, and
3. Protect the human rights of its members, staff and the persons to whom it provides services.”

Equality of access to information, advice and advocacy is core to the services the Citizens Information Board (CIB) provides and funds. We aim to ensure equality of access through services provided in person, by phone and online, as well as through the Live Advisor and the Irish Remote Interpreting Service (IRIS). In 2017 we launched a redesigned citizensinformation.ie, which was audited to a high level of accessibility.

CIB also has a number of robust policies and procedures in place to promote equality and human rights and to support our staff. CIB's Staff Resource Pack contains detailed policies and procedures on employee relations including policies relating to dignity and respect in the workplace, learning and development, bullying and harassment, performance, as well as safety, health and welfare.

We support staff to maintain good physical and mental health by providing our dedicated Employee Assistance programme. This provides support for employees who may be suffering from illness, as well as professional support for staff wishing to progress in their career.

In 2017 a refresher training programme on bullying and harassment was organised for all staff in CIB. Upskilling sessions on interview preparation were also held in March 2017.

Of the 20 roles filled during 2017, 12 of the successful candidates were women and 8 of the successful candidates were men. We are fully committed to ensuring that our organisation continues to recruit and promote staff on the basis of their ability to perform their role and remains an employer who embraces equal opportunities for all. CIB has an overall gender split of 67% female and 33% male. CIB exceeds the Government's directive of promoting an environment of a minimum of 3% of employees with a disability.

Appendix 8: Citizens Information Board main offices

Head Office

George's Quay House
43 Townsend Street
Dublin 2
D02 VK65
Telephone: 0761 07 9000

Limerick

6th Floor
River Court Business Centre
Cornmarket Square
Limerick
V94 FVH4

Cork

101 North Main Street
Cork
T12 AKA6

Galway

4th Floor
Dockgate
Merchants Road
Galway
H91 EY10

Kilkenny

4 The Parade
Kilkenny
R95 VO52

Appendix 9: Grants in 2017

Services	Total €
Citizens Information Services	
Ballyfermot	248,600
Blanchardstown	230,720
Carlow	199,600
Cavan	290,231
Clare	393,345
Clondalkin	427,446
Cork City North	205,000
Cork City South	415,231
Donegal	681,500
Dublin City Centre	630,500
Dublin City North Bay (KARE)	142,300
Dublin 12 & 6W (Crumlin)	252,000
Dublin 8 & Bluebell	273,000
Dublin North West (Finglas)	379,400
Dublin Northside	262,500
Dublin 2,4,6	258,400
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown	264,200
Fingal (North County)	312,632
Galway	437,600
Kerry	416,454
Kilkenny	187,500
Laois	237,900
Leitrim	242,400

Services	Total €
Limerick	380,000
Citizens Information Services	
Longford	337,243
Louth	361,800
Mayo	386,600
Meath	371,000
Monaghan	250,000
North & East Cork County	321,000
North Kildare	216,000
Offaly	369,613
Roscommon	265,000
Sligo	276,100
South Kildare	233,200
Tallaght	305,000
Tipperary	503,000
Waterford	312,400
West Cork County	373,648
Westmeath	352,132
Wexford	342,200
Wicklow	371,196
TOTAL	13,715,591
NATIONAL	
CIPS	1,244,748
NACIS	74,450
SLIS	342,896
NAS	2,903,048

Services	Total €
MABS	
MABS ND	2,577,952
Arklow	298,587
Athlone	165,000
Ballymun	367,000
Blanchardstown	350,300
Bray	400,018
Carlow	391,052
Cavan	323,223
Charleville	200,000
Clare	344,605
Clondalkin	389,500
Cork	606,784
Drogheda	235,531
Dublin 10 & 20	380,000
Dublin 12 Area	282,000
Dublin North City	286,800
Dublin North East	273,000
Dublin South East	305,000
Dun Laoghaire	288,000
Dundalk/Oriel	244,000
Dundrum/Rathfarnham	391,580
Fingal (North County)	378,760
Finglas/Cabra	394,168
Kerry	627,904
Kildare	497,791
Kilkenny	282,400
Laois	261,113

Services	Total €
Leitrim	265,218
MABS	
Liffey South West	392,000
Limerick	401,419
Longford	242,912
Meath	397,193
Monaghan	264,551
Mullingar	227,153
National Traveller MABS	309,600
North Cork	307,300
North Donegal	469,740
North Galway	278,935
North Mayo	215,500
North Tipperary	330,889
Offaly	220,455
Roscommon	216,327
Sligo	386,556
South Donegal	150,800
South Galway	564,176
South Mayo	354,352
South Tipperary	458,423
Tallaght	471,434
Waterford	632,005
West Cork	295,000
West Donegal	131,200
West Waterford	170,200
Wexford	310,000

Services	Total €
TOTAL	20,005,405
SUPPORTS	
Threshold	47,000
Free Legal Advice (FLAC)	140,000
Treoir	34,400
Immigrant Council of Ireland	68,000
TOTAL	289,400



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. It is responsible for the Money Advice and Budgeting Service and provides advocacy services for people with disabilities.

Head Office

Ground Floor
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Dublin 2, D02 VK65

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