



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



2014
Annual Report
Tuarascáil Bhliantúil



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information · advice · advocacy

2014
Annual Report
Tuarascáil Bhliantúil

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

Citizen centred

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

Flexible

Thinking ahead and moving quickly to meet changing needs of citizens

Trust and respect

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

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

Developing potential

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



“Many thanks for giving me so much time on Tuesday. I was at my wits’ end and you have really helped me get back on track with a bit of perspective”

FEEDBACK FROM MABS CUSTOMER

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Chairperson's report



There are over four and a half million people living in Ireland today. The challenge that they face in accessing high quality information on their rights and entitlements, as well as money advice, is our challenge too. Our distinctive structure – a network of independent services, deeply embedded in local communities, funded and supported by a statutory agency – gives us a unique strength.

Without the close relationship each service has with its local community, we could not deliver on our remit – providing information, advice, advocacy and budgeting services, when and where they are needed. In turn, local services benefit from being part of a nationwide service with a national reputation that provides vital central supports.

This interdependent structure allows us, to respond quickly and appropriately to peoples' needs. The statistics set out in this report give a sense of the breadth and scale of our work. In 2014, Citizens Information Services answered almost a million queries from over 600,000 people – this equates roughly to a query for every family in Ireland. The Citizens Information Phone Service answered over 150,000 telephone calls. MABS worked with over 17,000 new clients and the Citizens Information website had over 15 million visits. While client and query numbers remain steady across our services, clients are increasingly bringing more complicated and more challenging issues to our doors – often requiring advocacy support in addition to information and advice.

As the external environment changes we are, once again, seeing the needs of our clients change. Despite the welcome economic improvements, many of our clients continue to face new challenges. We saw queries on access to housing and homelessness increase in 2014 and I am glad to see responses to this pressing issue from our services, including a seminar on housing in late 2014.

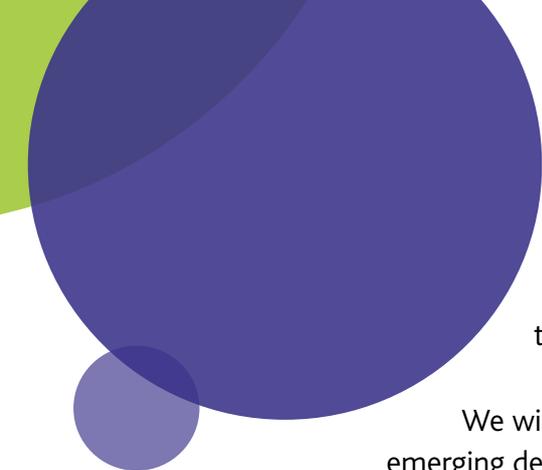


The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) is a vital component of the State's overall response to assisting people to address debt issues and to manage on a reduced income. MABS, with the support of MABSndI, has been working steadily on issues around mortgage arrears. I welcome the Dedicated Mortgage Arrears MABS, currently being developed, which will support mortgage holders in arrears, particularly people at the later stages of mortgage arrears.

2014 marks the last full year of our 2012-2015 strategic plan. This report highlights some key achievements under each of the five strands of the plan. I would like to highlight in particular the work of the National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities following its restructure in 2013 and the Advocacy Support Worker programme in CISs. Both NAS and the ASW programme promote social inclusion and look to ensure that people at the margins of society are supported to avail of our services and access their entitlements.

Another key element of the strategy was to ensure that all our services are delivered to a high and consistent standard. We have introduced a quality assurance framework and implemented agreed standards for the provision of information, advice, advocacy and budgeting. To date 97 of our services have achieved the EFQM Gold Star. The Gold Star Service Excellence Award programme focuses on our users, very much in keeping with our aim to always put the citizen at the centre. In fact, CIB is the first statutory agency in Ireland to achieve this internationally recognised quality mark. I know that this achievement took a great deal of work and offer my congratulations to all involved.

The strategy also set out a pathway for developing and implementing an integrated model for service delivery. The Feasibility Study on integrating governance structures



across the CIS and MABS networks has generated a large amount of wide-ranging and constructive discussion and debate between CIB and its delivery partners. We look forward to building on this discussion to implement a solution that will ensure a joined up response to citizens' needs.

We will continue to be creative and flexible in our response to emerging demands for information, advice, advocacy and budgeting support. The new microsite, gettingbacktowork.ie, responded to the needs of our users by bringing together information on the supports available to jobseekers and on the interaction between social welfare benefits and work, as well as providing information for self-employed people.

I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge and commend the contribution and commitment of Sylva Langford, my predecessor as Chairperson, who held office from March 2010 until March 2015. Sylva ably led the Citizens Information Board throughout a period of economic downturn and change and ensured that the Board continued to focus on the needs of the most vulnerable during difficult times.

I would like to thank all the staff involved in delivering the Citizens Information and MABS service nationwide, including MABSndI, National Traveller MABS, the boards of management, staff and volunteers as well as the board and staff of the National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities and the Sign Language Interpreting Service. In particular, I would like to recognise the contribution of the volunteers that work across the Citizens Information network. We remain committed to supporting and recognising their dedication, expertise and local knowledge, and to celebrating the difference they make to the lives of the people and communities they serve.

I would like to thank the Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton TD; the Minister of State, Kevin Humphreys TD; the Secretary General of the Department of Social Protection, Niamh O'Donoghue and the staff of the Department for their support during the year. I would also like to acknowledge and thank my colleagues on the Board of CIB¹. Finally, I would also like to thank the former Chief Executive, Tony McQuinn, the new Chief Executive, Angela Black, who took up the role towards the end of 2014, the management team and all the staff of the Citizens Information Board for their work during the year.



Ita Mangan, *Chairperson*

¹ A list of current Board members is at: http://www.citizensinformationboard.ie/en/about/board_members/

A photograph of a man and a woman standing on a beach. The man is on the right, wearing a blue denim shirt and a green scarf, with his arm around the woman. The woman is on the left, wearing a dark jacket over a white top. In the background, there is a cloudy sky and the ocean. A large purple circle is overlaid on the top left of the image, containing a testimonial in white text.

*“Great service,
have used before,
recommend it to
family members and
friends, a great asset
to the area”*

FEEDBACK FROM CIS CUSTOMER

Overview of 2014



Over **600,000**

callers contacted **114** Citizens Information Centres and **109** outreach locations with almost a **million** queries.

These concerns were dealt with by

266
staff

233
scheme
participants

1,104
volunteers



The Citizens Information Board and **97** of its delivery partners have now received the EFQM Gold Star Service Excellence Quality Award for excellence in customer service.



Over **150,000**



queries were answered by the **Citizens Information Phone Service**.



Citizensinformation.ie had over **15 million** visits and visitors viewed more than **47 million** pages.



12 issues of the Relate journal were published, and over **100,000** leaflets, factsheets and wallcharts were published and distributed.



Over
1,000

people with disabilities were supported by the **National Advocacy Service**.



The Sign Language Interpreting Service

facilitated over **1,500** bookings and referrals for sign language interpreting.



Over
40,000

people got help with problem debt from the **Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)** and the MABS Helpline.



3,723



social policy returns were made by information providers, highlighting the queries and concerns of people using public services.



33 training courses were delivered to **1,089 people** nationwide and **139 people** were awarded a **QQI Advanced Certificate** in Information, Advice and Advocacy.

22 money advisors were awarded the **Advanced Diploma in Money Advice Practice** from the University of Ulster.



assistireland.ie carried information on nearly **7,000** aids and appliances and received over **440,000** visits.



Introduction

This report to the Minister for Social Protection details the Citizens Information Board's activities for the calendar year 2014.

The Citizens Information Board (CIB) is the statutory body responsible for supporting the provision of information, advice (including money and budgeting advice) and advocacy services to citizens² on a wide range of public and social services. CIB's remit includes a focus on vulnerable groups, in particular, people with disabilities.

The Citizens Information Board was established as a statutory body under the Comhairle Act 2000³. CIB is under the remit of the Department of Social Protection.

Our mandate, as defined in the Acts, is to ensure that **individuals have access to accurate, comprehensive and clear information relating to social services.**

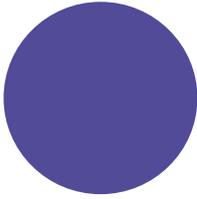
We are also tasked with **promoting greater accessibility, co-ordination and public awareness of social services.** We do this through our three-channel approach of online, telephone and face-to-face services delivered through our website, citizensinformation.ie, and through microsites, the Citizens Information Phone Service and the nationwide network of Citizens Information Services.

Many of our customers need more than information. We **assist and support individuals, in particular those with disabilities, in identifying and understanding their needs and options.** By combining our information services with advice and advocacy services we help vulnerable people to obtain information and claim their entitlements.

In addition we **support the provision of advocacy services for people with disabilities** through the National Advocacy Service.

2 When we use the term **citizen**, we are talking about citizens of Ireland and all other people who live in Ireland and who may use our services at any time.

3 This Act was amended by the Citizens Information Act 2007, the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2008 (which assigned responsibility for the Money Advice and Budgeting Service to CIB) and by the Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2011, which amended the rules relating to membership of the Citizens Information Board.



We **support, promote and develop the provision of information on the effectiveness of current social policy and services and highlight issues which are of concern to users of those services** by carrying out research and analysing social policy issues returned by our delivery partners.

We also **support the provision of advice on the management, avoidance, reduction and discharge of personal debt and money management** through the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS).

Structure of this report

- The first section of this report gives an overview of each of our services and the work carried out in 2014.
- The second section outlines the ways in which we met the commitments set out under five strategic priority headings in 2014.
- The final section gives a brief overview of the Citizens Information Board and its structure.

At the time of writing, the annual draft financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2014 report €56,717,607 (includes €9m in respect of 2015) in income and €48,350,485 in expenditure. The financial statements have been prepared in the form prescribed by section 22 of the Comhairle Act 2000 and in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. The financial statements will be audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General and will be published on citizensinformationboard.ie when this audit is complete.

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

Retirement of Tony McQuinn



Tony McQuinn retired as Chief Executive of the Citizens Information Board in August 2014. A native of Co. Carlow, Tony began working in the area of information provision with the National Social Service Board (NSSB) in 1980. He became Chief Executive of the Citizens Information Board in 2008.

During Tony's long career in the public service he led a range of innovative initiatives including the development of the Citizens Information website and the introduction of accredited training and quality assurance in Citizen Information Services. He was also involved in setting up the Sign Language Interpreting Service.

As Chief Executive, Tony was deeply involved in shaping the strategic direction of the Citizens Information Board. Tony steered the Citizens Information Board through change and reform, including the extension of its remit to include MABS in 2009. He ensured that the focus remained on the provision of excellent services to citizens, many of whom are socially excluded, or have been profoundly affected by unemployment, problem debt and mortgage arrears.

Appointment of Angela Black



Angela Black was appointed Chief Executive of the Citizens Information Board on 10 November 2014.

Angela joined the Citizens Information Board following a career spanning the public and civil service. Her most recent posting was Principal Officer in Banking Policy dealing with mortgage lending and mortgage arrears in the Department of Finance.

Angela has over 30 years experience in information and financial services. Her experience includes a four-year term working in the European Commission on consumer protection in retail financial services in the wake of the financial crisis. She was involved as Ireland's representative in negotiating several EU financial services instruments and most recently chaired the European Parliament Trilogue negotiation achieving agreement on the new EU Mortgage Credit Directive during Ireland's presidency in 2013.



*“As an older person...
I am often not listened
to. It is not so here.
I was helped. My mind is
at peace thanks to
caring staff”*

FEEDBACK FROM CIS CUSTOMER

A man with short dark hair and a goatee, wearing a dark quilted jacket, is looking out of a train window. The window shows a blurred green landscape with trees and buildings in the distance. A purple circular graphic is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing a quote.

*“If you are
worried about
anything they give
you an answer or
put you on the
right road”*

FEEDBACK FROM CIS CUSTOMER

SECTION 1

Our Services

The Citizens Information Board (CIB) funds and supports key delivery partners to ensure that the public have access to information, advice, advocacy and budgeting services in the form that best suits them.

“Our clients will receive quality, relevant, independent, reliable information, advice and advocacy and budgeting services wherever they are located in Ireland and in a way that suits their needs”

The public can access integrated information directly through the **Citizens Information website (citizensinformation.ie)** and our microsites.

The nationwide network of **Citizens Information Services (CISs)** provides free, impartial and confidential information to the public on a range of social and public services. Citizens Information Services also provide an advocacy service to people who may have difficulties accessing their entitlements.

The **Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS)** provides a national telephone service.

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

National Traveller MABS advocates for the financial inclusion of Travellers to help them access legal and affordable savings and credit.

The **National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities (NAS)** addresses the needs of more vulnerable people with disabilities who require a targeted service and who are unlikely to be able to access the service themselves without support.

The **Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS)** is the national agency for the provision of sign language interpreting services in Ireland.

Supporting our services

CIB works closely with our delivery partners to support them to provide the best service possible to all of their customers. Our supports for delivery partners aim to ensure compliance with best practice in all aspects of finance, governance, human resources and premises. These include a comprehensive financial control and reporting framework for delivery partners getting an operational grant.

Service Agreements between CIB and each of our delivery partners (98 separate legal entities⁴) set out the commitments both parties make to each other, including the services that will be provided in return for funding received. The Service Agreements are three-yearly contracts agreed by the Board of CIB which cover standard items such as service delivery, governance, financial controls, HR practices, reporting guidelines, evaluation and monitoring.

In addition CIB provides governance support to the boards of delivery partner companies including employer and staff handbooks and guidelines on recruitment. Delivery partner boards can access a separate structure for industrial relations and human resource advice and support, along with a Professional Trustee service for their occupational pension schemes (all funded by CIB). An Employee Assistance Programme is available to all delivery partners.

A programme of training for the boards of management of delivery partner companies has been delivered for a number of years. To increase efficiencies and further reduce costs, we have centralised the purchase of IT, telephone, print services and insurances and worked with delivery partners on reducing their energy costs and bank charges.

⁴ 42 Citizens Information Services and the Citizens Information Phone Service, 51 MABS companies, National Traveller MABS and MABSndI, the National Advocacy Service and the Sign Language Interpreting Service.

Providing information – citizensinformation.ie

*In 2014
citizensinformation.ie
recorded more than
15.5m visits, more
than 47m pageviews
and an average of more
than 748,000 unique
visitors per month*

The **citizensinformation.ie** website provides public service information for Ireland. It provides details on rights and entitlements for the general public and also acts as the primary information source for information providers in Citizens Information Services and the Citizens Information Phone Service, as well as providing useful information for officers in the Money Advice and Budgeting Service, the National Advocacy Service and other organisations.

During 2014 more than 3,700 amendments were made to the content on citizensinformation.ie.

New documents added to citizensinformation.ie in 2014 included:

- Single Parent Child Carer Tax Credit
- Supports for families of prisoners
- Child and Family Agency
- Housing Assistance Payment
- After School Childcare Scheme
- Reactivation Employment Permit
- Updating your driving licence or learner permit
- Agencies providing services for homeless people
- Class S PRSI
- Tax for self-employed people
- Apprenticeships
- Older people and jobseeker's payments
- Back to Education Initiative
- Water charges
- Deferring payment of the Local Property Tax
- Budget 2015



In 2014 **citizensinformation.ie** recorded more than 15.5m visits, more than 47m page views and an average of more than 748,000 unique visitors per month. The mobile version of the website, **m.cinfo.ie**, recorded more than 55,408 visits, 206,411 pageviews and an average of 3,202 unique visitors monthly. However, the main **citizensinformation.ie** website was made a fully 'responsive' website in June 2014, so it now adapts to different screen sizes automatically, particularly to devices such as tablets or smartphones. We expect the use of **m.cinfo.ie** to fall significantly in 2015.

During the year all CIB websites were awarded the EFQM Gold Star Service Excellence Award. CIB continues to syndicate social welfare information from **citizensinformation.ie** to the website of the Department of Social Protection, **welfare.ie**, and continues to 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**.



Keepingyourhome.ie

Keepingyourhome.ie is a microsite aimed at people who are worried about mortgage repayments or who are in mortgage arrears.

Keepingyourhome.ie is one strand of the Mortgage Arrears Information and Advice Service – the other strands are the Mortgage Arrears Information Helpline (which transferred to the MABS Helpline in May 2014) and the availability of financial advice from more than 1,500 accountants. The panel of accountants is listed by county on **keepingyourhome.ie**. In 2014 the site recorded more than 133,233 visits, 305,476 pageviews and an average of 7,229 unique visitors per month.

Other CIB microsites

Losinyourjob.ie (aimed at people who are unemployed or being made redundant) recorded 88,520 visits and 148,571 pageviews to August 2014. In August 2014 losinyourjob.ie was incorporated into gettingbacktowork.ie.

Selfemployedsupports.ie provided information for self-employed people living on reduced incomes. The site recorded 114,827 visits and 205,144 pageviews to August 2014. In August 2014 selfemployedsupports.ie was incorporated into gettingbacktowork.ie, which went live in August 2014.

Gettingbacktowork.ie recorded 18,619 visits from September to December 2014, along with 50,574 pageviews and an average of 3,194 unique users per month. The website is based on content from citizensinformation.ie. It is a fully responsive website and provides all information in both English and Irish. See page 64.

Assist Ireland



The **assistireland.ie** website provides information on assistive technology (aids and appliances) for older people and people with disabilities in Ireland. The website has a large directory of nearly 7,000 products designed to help people to live independently, along with details of where the products can be purchased.

Assistireland.ie also provides general information on assistive technology. Examples of popular documents in this area include our documents on personal alarms, telecare and on apps for people with disabilities. Assistireland.ie is a fully responsive website that adapts to different devices (for example, tablets or smartphones). Assistireland.ie was audited for accessibility in December 2014.

In 2014 assistireland.ie recorded 443,910 visits, more than 1.5m pageviews and an average of 25,756 unique visitors per month. The website support service dealt with more than 800 queries by telephone, email and SMS.

Citizens Information Services



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

Each CIS is established as a limited company with a voluntary board of management that includes CIS volunteers, representatives from local community and voluntary organisations and representatives of the statutory sector.

Each CIS covers a geographical area, either countywide or part of an urban area, and delivers its services through a number of Citizens Information Centres (CICs) and outreaches. CISs are supported and funded by the Citizens Information Board. The 42 CISs received just over 12.5 million euro in funding from the Citizens Information Board in 2014. See Appendix 5 for full details of funding to individual services.

The EFQM Gold Star Service Excellence Award was achieved by 41 of the 42 services in 2014.

A close-up photograph of a woman with blonde, curly hair, smiling warmly. The image is partially obscured by a large purple circle containing text.

*"I was reassured
and helped beyond
my expectations.
I cannot think of
anymore that could
have been done"*

FEEDBACK FROM CIS CUSTOMER

CISs – staffing and statistics

The 42 CISs provided services from 53 full-time and 61 part-time centres in over 223 locations nationwide. There are 266 paid staff (181.5 whole-time equivalent posts) in CISs. There are 233 employment scheme workers working in CISs (129 whole-time equivalents). The majority of scheme workers involved in CISs are with the Community Employment Schemes (CE). Some services are using other schemes like Tús, Rural Social Scheme and JobBridge. There are 1,104 volunteers (123.68 whole-time equivalents) working in CISs.

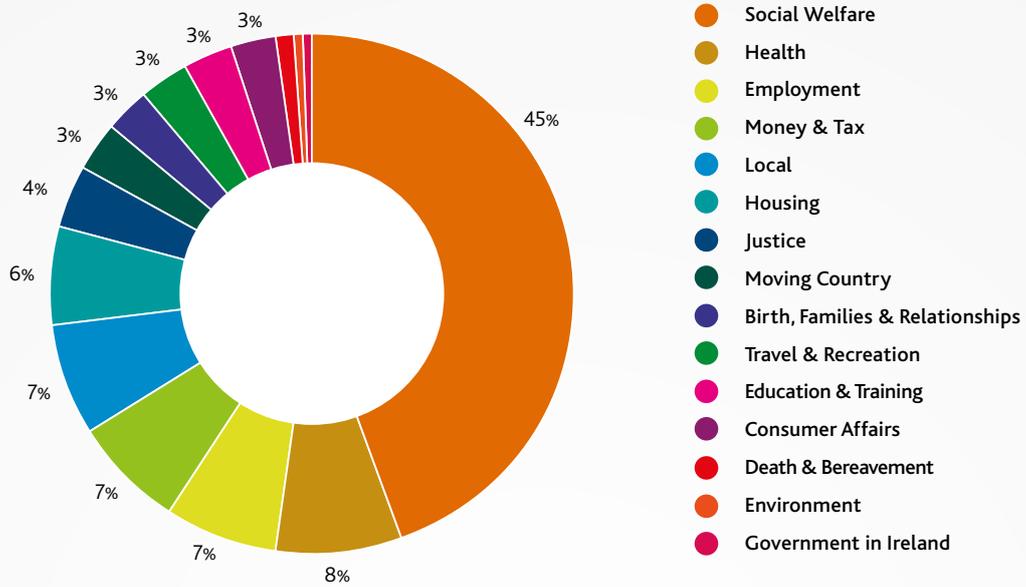
*In 2014, 619,432
people contacted
Citizens Information
Services with almost
a million queries*

During 2014, there were 619,432 callers to CISs. The total number of queries was 980,741. Just over one quarter of services recorded an increase in caller numbers. Over half of services had between 10,000 and 20,000 callers. Thirty five percent of callers nationally were dealt with by services in the Dublin area. Most reported increasingly complex queries and more time spent with callers.

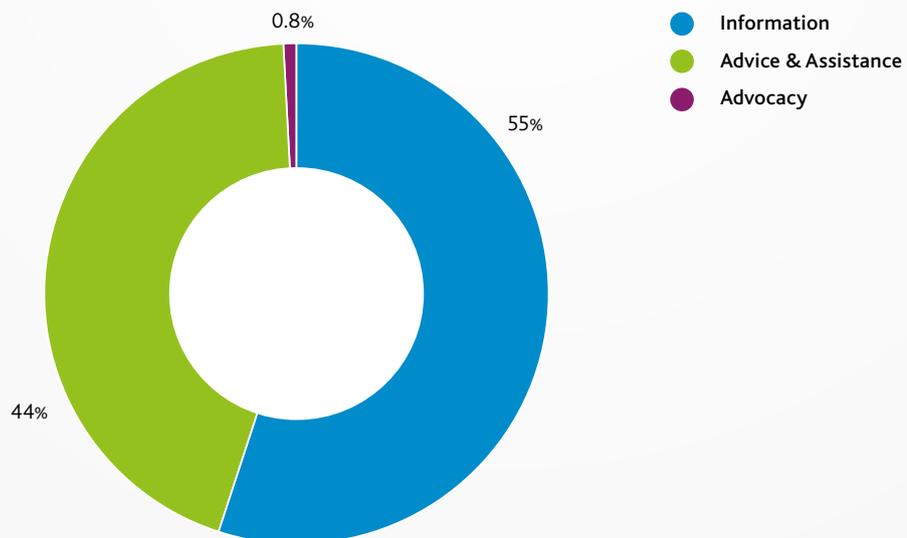
Nationality was recorded for 64% of callers (almost 400,000 people). Of these, 20% were non-Irish nationals (12% EU nationals and 8% from non-EU countries). These figures are broadly similar to the 2013 nationality profile and indicate continued usage of mainstream information services by migrants. More than three-quarters of callers (79%) contacted services in person, 19.5% by telephone and 1% by email. Overall, telephone contact has decreased 32% over the past five years.



Query topics 2014



Query types



Query topics and trends

Social welfare-related queries continue to far outnumber other categories at 45% of all queries. Many of these queries (13%) were about eligibility criteria for Jobseeker's Allowance and Jobseeker's Benefit, as people try to adjust to a reduced income and temporary and atypical working scenarios. Fifteen percent (15%) related to families and children and 13% were disability and illness related, with a further 7% related to supports for carers. Social welfare was followed by health (8%), employment (7%), money and tax (7%), local queries (7%) and housing (6%).

Medical card queries were the single biggest single issue with 56,385 queries in 2014 (68% of all health queries). CISs also responded to 8,990 queries about the new water charges (a 45% increase on 2013). Over a third (37%) of money and tax related queries were in relation to income tax and a further 15% in relation to the Local Property Tax (LPT).

While query numbers overall have decreased slightly, the data suggests that there has been a shift in activity within these main categories. Overall, services appear to be responding to more vulnerable clients either in terms of income supports or housing need. More people are presenting in crisis situations. The number of queries in relation to means-tested social welfare payments overall has increased. Over a quarter of housing queries (27%) were in relation to local authority and social housing. In addition, an increasing number of the housing queries dealt with by services in 2014 were in response to people who were in need of additional support through housing supplements, grants and schemes or who were threatened with homelessness.

Services continued to report that the increasing and continuing complexity of queries required increased levels of engagement with clients during 2014. Nearly half of all queries (44%) required advice and assistance. The majority of services report increased once-off advocacy queries and advocacy casework generally.

A further concern regularly highlighted by CISs is the challenge of balancing a quality advocacy service alongside an effective information delivery service within the current resources. In response to these issues and concerns, CIB has initiated research into the information giving process with the aim of capturing the nature, processes, patterns and complexity of the everyday work of front line workers in CISs nationwide.

Citizens Information Phone Service

The Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS) provides a comprehensive and confidential information service (based in Cork). The telephone service is provided Monday to Friday from 9am to 8pm. CIPS also provides 'Live Advisor', an instant web chat service for people with hearing and speech difficulties. This is open from 9am until 5pm weekdays. Members of the public calling the service generally pay national call rates from either a landline or a mobile. CIPS receives 100% of its funding from the Citizens Information Board and received a grant of just under €1.3 million in 2014.



CIPS – staffing and statistics

CIPS is staffed by a manager, two team supervisors, 17 information officers (whole-time equivalents), one senior administrator and two part-time administrators. CIPS is governed by a Board of Directors.

In 2014 CIPS answered 150,771 telephone calls. The abandoned call rate for 2014 was 24%, which is down from 27% in 2013. The total number of calls answered by the service was down 7.5% on 2013. However, the average talk time in 2014 was 5 minutes and 12 seconds, an increase of 17 seconds or 7.5% on the average talk time in 2013. Increased talk time has a follow on impact on the number of calls answered.



Founding members of Tipperary Citizens Information Service (from left): Tom Fitzgerald, Eddie Flaherty, volunteer for 37 years and Pat Myers at the 40th celebrations in Tipperary.

	2012	2013	2014
Calls answered (query dealt with)	157,483	162,080	150,771
Calls abandoned (customer reaches queue but subsequently 'hangs up')	42,765	61,202	47,735
Calls 'offered' (total incoming calls)	200,275	223,282	198,589

CIPS activity report

Almost half of all queries (48.7%) related to social welfare. The second highest query category in 2014 was the employment category (12.3%). The third highest category in 2014 was money and tax (7.5%). This is a drop on 2013 figures when money and tax was 13.2% of all calls (because of a surge of queries in 2013 on Local Property Tax).

CIPS participated in the EFQM Goldstar Service Excellence Award Programme and achieved validation in February 2014. CIPS has worked extensively on the Single Point of Telephone Contact (SPOTC) initiative (see page 59). The SPOTC model was tested to meet anticipated demand in relation to water charges queries. While the demand was lower than expected the project identified the required improvements in the technical infrastructure for delivery of future projects under a SPOTC model.

Systematic quality assessment (QA), using a sample of recorded calls (all information officers) is carried out by team supervisors. During 2014 the average score of 97% was the same as in 2012 and 2013.



*“You have been
a blessing”*

FEEDBACK FROM MABS CUSTOMER

The Money Advice and Budgeting Service



The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) provides a free, confidential, non-judgemental and independent service countrywide for people with debt problems or over-indebtedness. MABS emphasises practical, budget-based measures to help people with debt difficulties, in particular low income families and individuals. MABS also provides education on budgeting and money management in local communities.

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

MABS saw 17,225 new clients in 2014 and the MABS helpline had 21,349 calls

Each MABS is run by a company limited by guarantee. Each company is an independent legal entity with a board of directors drawn from local voluntary and statutory services and community groups.

MABS National Development Limited (MABSndI) is a central support service which provides technical support for casework, money management education and training to MABS companies.

National Traveller MABS was established in 2005. It advocates for the financial inclusion of Travellers (and other marginalised groups) to help them access legal and affordable savings and credit.

The 51 MABS services and National Traveller MABS received just under 16 million euro in direct funding from the Citizens Information Board in 2014. MABSndI received just under 2.5 million euro to support the MABS companies. See Appendix 5 for full details of funding to individual companies.

Forty five MABS companies achieved the EFQM Gold Star Service Excellence Award including MABSndI and MABS Helpline in 2014. All MABS companies had achieved the award by early 2015.

MABS staffing and statistics

The 51 MABS companies nationally are staffed by 46 money advice co-ordinators⁵, 97 money advisers, 60 administrators and 12 resource money advisers⁶ (215 whole-time equivalent posts).

MABS dealt with 17,225 **new clients** in 2014 – a 16% decrease on the total for 2013. A further 3,187 sought **information** about budgeting and money management (called information-only clients), a decrease of almost 17% on the previous year. The total **active client caseload** on 31 December 2014 was 20,161 – a 12% decrease from 2013. Both new client and active client numbers have decreased by 24% in the past 3 years from a peak in 2011.

Most services (27) have an active caseload of between 200 and 400 clients (this does not include information-only clients or Debt Relief Notice clients). Nine services have a caseload between 400 and 600, seven services have a caseload of 600 to 800 and four services have 800+ clients (Waterford, Kerry, Cork and Carlow).

	2012	2013	2014
New Clients	22,198	20,552	17,225
Information Only	3,965	3,825	3,187
Active Clients	24,673	22,966	20,161

Client numbers in MABS

The MABS helpline received a total of 21,349 calls for the year up to the end of December 2014, a decrease of over 7% on 2013 callers. Helpline figures for 2014 include calls to the Mortgage Arrears Information Helpline (from May 2014). Helpline calls have dropped overall by 28% from a peak of 29,629 callers in 2011.

⁵ Money advice co-ordinators provide money advice for 50% of their time.

⁶ In January 2014, CIB received sanction for the retention of these temporary posts for a further two-year period (March 2014 – March 2016).

Following the introduction of a client assessment process along with a specific focus on waiting time management, supported by resource money advisors, waiting times in MABS companies have significantly reduced. The average waiting time per service on 31 December was just over 3 weeks (15 days), a slight increase on the reported 2.53 weeks (13 days) in September.

Forty services have a waiting time of 4 weeks or less, four services have a waiting time of above 4 weeks but no more than 6 weeks, and seven have a waiting time greater than 6 weeks. Overall in 2014 numbers on waiting lists nationally decreased significantly (by 40%).

MABS client profile

The largest percentage of new clients (49%) were in the age group 41-65, with 44% aged between 26 and 40. A gender analysis shows that 55% were female. The status of new clients shows that the highest numbers were married with children (24%), single (20%) or single with children (13%). A total of 23% were separated or divorced or widowed.

Most new clients are reliant on social welfare payments (55%). Of these, 24% are claiming jobseekers payments and 10% are claiming One-Parent Family Payment. A further 29% of clients are employed and 4% are self-employed. Thirty seven percent (37%) had no second income coming into the household.

Clients mostly live in mortgaged accommodation (47%). Twenty percent live in private rented accommodation and 15% in rented local authority accommodation. Three percent of clients live with their parents.

The total amount owed by new clients to creditors on 31 December 2014, based on the debt they had when they first came to MABS, was €566 million, with:

- 76% ▶ owed to banks/financial institutions
- 7.5% ▶ owed to credit unions
- 4.6% ▶ owed to legal bills
- 3.7% ▶ owed to others
- 2.4% ▶ owed to sub-prime lenders
- 2.2% ▶ owed to debt collection agencies
- 1.6% ▶ owed to utilities
- 1.5% ▶ owed to local authorities
- 0.5% ▶ owed to money/lenders/catalogues

The average level of recorded debt for new clients is €32,900.

Resource Money Adviser Programme

Resource Money Advisors (RMAs) are a team of qualified money advisors who can be assigned to support individual MABS services where needed (for example, to reduce a service's waiting list or deal with emergencies). RMAs conduct client assessments by telephone, negotiate with utility companies on disconnections in emergency situations and refer clients to local MABS and other services for follow-up appointments.

In January, CIB received sanction to extend the Resource Money Adviser Programme for a further two years until 2016. The contracts of the 20 staff (12 whole-time equivalents) were extended. Assignments of resource support to MABS companies are now allocated three times a year on a four-monthly basis. Twenty two MABS services used the Resource Money Adviser support during 2014.

National Traveller MABS

In 2014, National Traveller MABS focused on how the business of the organisation is carried out, including a review of the key worker role in preparation for a new strategy to run from 2015 to 2017. Opportunities for increased use of social media in the work of National Traveller MABS are being explored. Many MABS companies have completed the *Way of Life* training programme delivered by National Traveller MABS.



*"It's a weight off
my mind"*

FEEDBACK FROM MABS CUSTOMER

The National Advocacy Service

The National Advocacy Service (NAS) provides an independent, confidential and free representative advocacy service for people with disabilities.



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

In late 2013, following a restructuring, a National Advocacy Service Board was established and a National Manager was appointed in February 2014. The National Advocacy Service is now provided through four regions and a national office (based in Dublin). NAS received just over 3 million euro in direct funding from the Citizens Information Board in 2014 (see Appendix 5 for full details).

NAS – staffing and statistics

NAS is staffed by a national manager, four regional managers, seven senior advocates, 28 advocates and five administrators (all whole-time equivalents).

NAS client statistics⁷	2012	2013	2014
Clients at start of year	573	667	671
Total client numbers	1068	1063	1013
New cases	495	397	342
Closed cases	411	399	423
Initial enquiries	872	861	768*

*516 of the 768 initial enquiries did not progress to being a new case.
National Advocacy Service statistics in 2012, 2013 and 2014.

⁷ The 2014 service activity and caseload statistics are collated from advocacycase.ie. This is the electronic case management system developed to support casework in the NAS and in CISs. It provides a tool for case management, which supports consistency of approach, case review and safe storage and retention of files.

A young man with Down syndrome is smiling warmly at the camera. He has short, dark hair and is wearing a dark grey, textured sweater over a light-colored collared shirt. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with a tree in full bloom, its white blossoms creating a bokeh effect. The overall mood is positive and natural.

*“I found the
advocate really
good because she’s
independent from every
other service. She’s just
there for you”*

FEEDBACK FROM NAS CUSTOMER

Fifty six per cent (56%) of people seeking advocacy support in 2014 had between two and seven issues to be dealt with, illustrating the complexities in the lives of some people with disability. Seven percent of people had more than eight issues while 36% reported a single issue.

NAS has a particular remit for people with disabilities who are isolated from their community and services, have communication differences, are inappropriately accommodated, live in residential services, attend day services and have limited informal supports. Most of the people who accessed NAS in 2014 lived in residential services – traditional institutions, 'group homes', mental health wards and supported accommodation. Many people were living in nursing homes and with family. People who lived with their family often reported receiving inadequate supports from day/support services, particularly people with a diagnosis of autism. Some people experienced cutbacks to service hours or disputes between the family and the service provider about the suitability of the service provided. Changes to schedules/plans without appropriate consultation with the person with a disability was a recurring issue.

People with:	Cases
Intellectual disability	30%
Physical disability	24%
Mental health difficulties	21%
Learning disability	13%
Autistic spectrum	6%
Sensory disability	6%

Client profiles for National Advocacy Service

NAS receives a high level of queries, some of which fall outside the NAS Access and Eligibility Criteria. Where possible, callers were directed to a service suited to their needs.

The Sign Language Interpreting Service



The Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS) seeks to ensure that quality interpretation services are available to Deaf people in Ireland so they can access public and social services. SLIS provides a referral service by putting booking clients (mainly public service providers) in touch with suitably qualified interpreters. SLIS received €275,000 in direct funding from the Citizens Information Board in 2014.

The SLIS Board continues to implement its strategic objectives to promote, represent, advocate and ensure the availability of quality interpretation services to Deaf people in Ireland. These objectives include:

- Promoting and advocating for the right to high-quality sign language interpreting services
- Development of quality standards for professional sign language interpreters
- Meeting social interpreting needs
- Developing new technologies to respond to the needs of the Deaf community
- Working with stakeholders to provide an emergency response service

In 2014 the Board commissioned the development of a new strategy for 2015-2020. Work has started on developing the SLIS website into a more dynamic and interactive service for booking clients, interpreters and the Deaf Community.

The Irish Remote Interpreting Service (IRIS)

The Irish Remote Interpreting Service (IRIS) offers a video-link service to a live Irish Sign Language interpreter. In 2014 IRIS operated three days per week and expanded to provide a full-time service in 2015. In the course of 2014 IRIS had 1,090 bookings, of which 948 were completed.

Referral service

SLIS continues to provide a referral service by putting booking clients (mainly public service providers) in touch with suitably qualified interpreters. There was a slight decrease in the number of referrals over the past year (a total of 1,090, of which 686 were completed). However, the nature of these referrals is more complex and often requires the team to advocate for the need to provide an interpreter and inform public services of their duties to do so. Referrals from the medical sector increased in 2014.



*“I am very grateful.
It’s what a service
should be. The staff
were welcoming and
non-judgemental”*

FEEDBACK FROM CIS ADVOCACY CUSTOMER

SECTION 2

Our Strategy

The Citizens Information Board's commitment is that people will receive quality, relevant, independent, reliable information, advice and advocacy and money advice and budgeting services wherever they are located in Ireland and in a way that suits their needs. We identified five priorities in our 2012-2015 Strategic Plan to achieve this:

- A. Meet the changing information, advice, advocacy and budgeting needs of citizens, particularly of marginalised and vulnerable groups and individuals** – by connecting and responding
- B. Implement consistent, high quality services by CIB and our delivery partners** – by providing services to a high standard
- C. Work to develop and implement an integrated service delivery model that puts the citizen at the centre** – by organising to deliver
- D. Lead the design and implementation of creative and flexible responses to meet emerging demands for information, advice, advocacy and budgeting support** – by creating and adding value
- E. Measure the efficiency and effectiveness of our service delivery approach** – by demonstrating outcomes through feedback from users

This section outlines how we met each of these priorities in 2014.



*“These are people
who care and always
guide you in the
right way”*

FEEDBACK FROM CIS CUSTOMER

Priority A: Meet the changing information, advice, advocacy and budgeting needs of citizens, particularly of marginalised and vulnerable groups and individuals – by connecting and responding

The Citizens Information Board and its delivery partners aim to respond proactively, promptly and appropriately to citizens' changing needs. A key element of this priority is to ensure that our services are available to all citizens, especially marginalised and vulnerable groups. In 2014, the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) worked intensively to respond to the shifting mortgage arrears and debt management landscape and promoted money and debt management education at a local level. Across the Citizens Information network there was a particular focus on preventing homelessness and supporting migrants. We continue to publish booklets and leaflets to complement our websites and in response to customer needs and preferences.

Responsive design for citizensinformation.ie



More and more people access **citizensinformation.ie** using mobile devices. To respond to this development, citizensinformation.ie was re-designed in June 2014 to be a fully 'responsive' website. This means that the website adapts automatically to different screen sizes on different devices, for example, laptops, tablets or smartphones. Use of smartphones to access citizensinformation.ie continued to grow in 2014 – by December 2014, devices running Android made up 15% of the website's traffic.

Citizensinformation.ie – a fully responsive website

Targeted initiatives

Citizens Information Services (CISs) nationwide engage with their local communities through outreach initiatives and clinics, collaborations with other agencies and once-off information projects. Collaborative initiatives include engagement with a wide range of organisations – Traveller organisations, disability agencies and carers' groups, clinics and hospitals, immigrant support organisations, educational institutions, housing support agencies, active retirement groups, prisons and women's groups.

In 2014, 700 outreach activities were reported by CISs. These target more vulnerable groups in the community such as older people, people with disabilities and unemployed people. The Mobile Information Unit was used by 11 CISs (Dublin Northwest, Ballyfermot, West Cork, Northside, Co. Mayo, Co. Clare, Dublin 246, Co. Wicklow and Laois CIS) for a total of 107 days in the year and was used by 7,404 callers with 12,700 queries during this period.



Specialised supports

Many CISs offer a range of specialised services to their clients, for example, free legal advice clinics (provided by Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC) or by local solicitors), taxation clinics and employment clinics. Some CISs are co-located with other service providers, in particular, with Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) offices. Other CISs have clinics for Consumer Advice, the Office of the Ombudsman and Threshold.

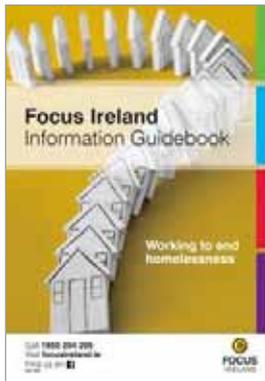
Twenty three Chartered Accountants Voluntary Advice (CAVA) clinics are in operation through the country and a total of 781 appointments were offered in 2014 – an 8% increase on the previous year.

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

- **Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC)** provides expert legal support to CISs. It also operates a free and confidential legal advice service to the public from CISs around the country.
- **The Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI)** provides specialist support to CISs in relation to immigration.
- **Treoir** provides specialist support to CISs on services for unmarried parents and their children.
- **Threshold's** Housing Advice Service provides back-up support on housing-related queries for CISs and provides supports for advocacy in more complex housing cases.
- **DeafHear.ie** provides an information service for people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Responding to homelessness

Cases related to access to the housing list and local authority property standards are regularly seen in CISs. Rent increases, particularly in urban areas, increasingly move the cost of housing stock above the Rent Supplement limits. CISs dealt with over 54,000 housing queries from members of the public in 2014, accounting for 6% of total queries. Local authority housing accounted for 27% of housing queries and private rented accommodation made up 23%.



CIB and Dublin-based CISs were involved in a Dublin-wide Homeless Prevention Awareness Campaign in late 2014 (in conjunction with Dublin Simon Community, Focus Ireland Tenancy Sustainment Services and Dublin City Council Central Placement Service). The campaign aimed to reduce the level of families at risk of losing their rental accommodation and presenting to homeless services. It included practical information and a freephone number for families.

During the year a new Focus Ireland information booklet was distributed to CISs – *A Guide to Information Givers on Preventing Homelessness*. The booklet was backed up by a web-based 'Prevention Hub'.



Pictured at the Advocacy Support Worker Social Housing Seminar.

Front row, from left: Dr. Padraic Kenna, Lecturer NUI Galway; Eileen Fitzgerald (CIB); Peter Tyndall, Ombudsman and Ann Marie O'Connor (CIB). Back row, from left: Sean Coughlan, Limerick City & County Council; Jim Baneham, Senior Executive Housing Agency and Tom Walsh, Chairperson County Offaly CIS.

ASW Social Housing seminar

The Advocacy Support Worker (ASW) Programme identifies national trends in CIS advocacy issues and associated social policy issues. In 2014 a special ASW seminar on social housing took place. This aimed to help CIS staff and partner organisations to identify social policy issues relating to social housing and to provide them with effective housing advocacy strategies. Over 120 delegates attended. Speakers from the State, academic, public, legal and community sectors – including the Ombudsman, Peter Tyndall – covered topics such as housing policy in Ireland, the new Housing Assistance Payment (HAP), housing advocacy work and access to the housing list for migrants.

Advocacy in CISs

Information providers in Citizens Information Services (CISs) advocate for clients who have difficulty accessing social welfare, housing, health services and employment. Information providers support their clients to act on their own behalf wherever possible (self-advocacy). They also advocate on behalf of clients – for example, contacting and negotiating with a third party or attending meetings, hearings and appeals.

The Advocacy Support Worker (ASW) Programme provides five Advocacy Support Workers (ASWs) who work directly with CISs. ASWs coach and mentor CIS personnel in the processes and skills involved in advocacy case work including interview skills, case recording, negotiation and representation. They also work directly with services, bringing information providers together for joint training sessions and facilitating case reviews with information providers and Development Managers.

In 2014 the CIS network achieved advocacy outcomes in the areas of social welfare (58%) and employment (20%). Some services are beginning to report on the financial benefit to clients from advocacy work.

Supporting migrants

In 2014, country of origin was recorded for 64% of CIS clients (416,000). Of these, 12% were EEA nationals and 8% were from non-EEA countries (approximately 80,000). During 2014, queries came from people from 198 different countries of origin. This illustrates the diversity of the migrant population and the related challenge of meeting their complex information, advice and advocacy needs.

CISs provide a range of responses to migrant information needs nationwide, including the provision of targeted outreach services for migrants, the support provided by the Immigrant Council of Ireland's Information and Referral Service, and the citizenship query support service provided by the New Communities Partnership and Dublin-based CISs.

Dublin City Centre CIS (DCCCIS), which has a very high number of migrants using its services, made a joint presentation with CIB on some of the issues facing migrants to the Cross Departmental Group on Migrant Integration. DCCCIS highlighted issues that affect migrants using their service such as breaches of employment rights, inconsistent application of social protection regulations, lengthy processing delays for Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) card renewals, and the costs and practical difficulties of moving from direct provision. Education issues around the closure of private colleges and access to student grants were also highlighted.

Mortgage Arrears Information Helpline

During 2012 the Government developed a range of measures in response to the mortgage crisis. As part of this response, the Citizens Information Board set up a Mortgage Arrears Information Helpline to provide information and signposting in relation to the Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears and the supports available for those in mortgage arrears or pre-arrears. The target group for this initiative was people who had not yet taken any action to address their mortgage difficulties, for example, approaching their lender.

In May 2014 the Mortgage Arrears Information Helpline became part of the service provided by the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) Helpline. The Mortgage Arrears Information Helpline number (0761 07 4050) now connects to the MABS Helpline number (0761 07 2000). Prior to its transfer, the helpline received 2,634 calls in 2014.

Banking & Payments Federation of Ireland/MABS protocol

In 2014 the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) and the Banking & Payments Federation of Ireland (BPF) agreed a new protocol to help people to manage their debt repayments in a way they can afford. This builds on a protocol originally agreed in 2009. The protocol sets out the agreed steps by which creditors and money advisers can work together to formulate a mutually acceptable, affordable and sustainable repayment plan for clients and to successfully manage that plan on an ongoing basis. Early indications are that the new BPF/MABS protocol is achieving debt settlements, including write downs for clients with unsecured debt. The new protocol underlines and continues the good working relationship between MABS and the BPF.

Money management education and promotion

Money Advice and Budgeting Service National Development Ltd (MABSnd) provides MABS services with resources and guidance for local debt prevention initiatives in the areas of debt awareness, information and education. Each month a campaign is linked to a particular money management theme (for example, managing bills, handling debts, communion costs, back to school costs and Christmas) and MABS services promote that theme at local level. Under this initiative:

- **Cavan MABS** delivered money management workshops to disability, youth and migrant organisations. The service also participated in information events throughout the county called *Progression from the Recession*.
- **Dundrum/Rathfarnham MABS** was involved in a Practical Learning Project with Whitechurch Addiction Support Project and produced a booklet called *Breaking out of the Welfare Trap* with Dún Laoghaire MABS and others.
- **Waterford MABS** delivered an eight-week money management programme, based on the Yo-Yos model, to Transition Year students from Mount Sion CBS.

- **Carlow MABS** provided advice to 600 Kerry Foods workers during a redundancy/ pay cut situation. Carlow and Wicklow Citizens Information services also supported this initiative. The service presented talks in 12 secondary schools and 10 community organisations over 2014.
- **Laois MABS** delivered pre-release talks in Portlaoise and Midlands Prisons and was also requested by the Assistant Governor to provide budgeting talks for long-term prisoners.

Meeting changing needs – publications

In 2014 the Citizens Information Board published a wide range of booklets and other resources to ensure that the public and information providers have access to accurate, comprehensive information on rights and entitlements in a variety of formats. CIB also publishes advocacy, research and social policy reports highlighting issues of concern to users of social services.

Benefits and Taxes 2014: This wallchart and leaflet summarise benefits in 2014 with comprehensive tables of rates and income thresholds.

Information for school leavers 2014/Faisnéis d’Fhágóirí Scoile: This booklet covers a wide range of topics of interest to school leavers, including education and training, social welfare, tax and employment law.





**Guide to entitlements for over sixties 2014/
Treoir maidir le teidlíochtaí do dhaoine os cionn
seasca bliain d'aois:** This booklet gives an overview
of entitlements for older people, including in the areas
of social welfare payments, carers, residential care,
pensions, retirement, travel and tax.

**Guide to entitlements for people with disabilities
2014/Treoir maidir le teidlíochtaí do dhaoine atá
faoi mhíchumas:** This booklet provides an overview
of entitlements for people with disabilities, including
in the areas of education and training, health services,
employment, housing, travel and tax.

Getting back to work 2014 / Filleadh ar an obair: Written to complement the
gettingbacktowork.ie microsite, *Getting back to work* provides information for
jobseekers and for people who want to start a business. The booklet covers a wide
range of topics including education and training, employment schemes, benefits and
work and setting up a business.



Relate and EU Supplement: Relate is the Citizens
Information Board's monthly journal covering legislation
and developments in social services and social policy.
During the year Relate covered a range of topics
including medical cards, homelessness, local government,
charities, water charges and the courts system. The EU
Supplement is published quarterly. It covers significant
EU developments (particularly social policy, consumer
policy and citizens' rights).

Citizens Information Board publications are widely distributed to public and
voluntary organisations. PDF versions of all publications are available on
citizensinformationboard.ie, while most publications are also available
as eBooks. Many booklets are published in conjunction with an online
guide (see citizensinformation.ie/guides).



Priority B: Implement consistent, high quality service by CIB and our delivery partners – by providing services to a high standard

It is essential that all our services are delivered to a consistently high standard. To ensure this goal is reached, we have introduced a quality assurance framework that sets out agreed standards for the delivery of all our services. In addition, we have developed a range of accredited training courses. One of our key priorities in 2014 was to implement the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) customer service quality system across all CIB's services and delivery partners.

Our quality assurance framework

The quality assurance framework for CIB and our delivery partner services includes the following four elements:

- **Quality Service Standards for CISs and MABS** which have been developed in collaborative working groups. These standards cover service delivery and customer satisfaction, leadership and governance, operational management and human resources. During 2014, working groups continued to develop a range of supporting policies and standardised procedures for use in CISs and MABS.
- The external quality system called the **EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) Gold Star Service Excellence programme** which focuses on customer service.
- The development of a range of **governance and reporting requirements**.
- Our **internal audit process** includes sample audits of delivery partner services by the internal auditors with recommendations which are used to update and improve compliance with the governance and reporting requirements.

A dedicated team develops and implements CIB's quality strategy, while all CIB service teams assist our delivery partners with high quality resources and supports – these include websites, publications, training courses, ICT systems and the social policy and research, governance and service delivery supports (See also Section 3).

EFQM Gold Star Service Excellence programme



We aim to ensure that our services are provided to the highest standards. The Gold Star process is part of our ongoing programme to improve and standardise our services. The Gold Star programme focuses on customers, customer consultation and customer satisfaction. It particularly encourages shared learning, both formal and informal. CIB is the first statutory agency in Ireland to achieve this internationally recognised quality mark.

Throughout 2014, the roll-out of the EFQM Gold Star Service Excellence programme to the 42 CISs, CIPS, 51 MABS, MABSndI, National Traveller MABS, NAS, SLIS and CIB continued, supported by a Quality Assurance programme board. The assessments were conducted by the Centre for Competitiveness, which is the national partner for EFQM in Ireland. The requirements were benchmarked against a framework of European Best Practice.

In the project planning stage, the CIS and MABS Quality Standards were 'mapped' to the EFQM model and to the Gold Star criteria. Each service then progresses through a four stage process to achieve validation. Steps include self-assessment, an action plan and a defined set of improvements to be made prior to a site visit.

By the end of 2014, 96 services had achieved validation and received the EFQM Gold Star Service Excellence Award, including the CIB websites. In addition the first CIS had reached the optional Gold Star Role Model Level Award (followed by a further three CISs in early 2015). By early 2015 CIB and all delivery partner services (except for the National Advocacy Service) had received the award.



At the presentation of the EFQM Gold Star Award to Clare MABS. From left: Susan Doherty, Una Tobin, Dennis Corbett, Rosemary Enright Hodgkins, EFQM and Josette Cuthbert, CIB.

Volunteers in CIS and the National Volunteer Strategy

Volunteers have played an invaluable role in Citizens Information Services since the inception of the first community information centres in the late 1960s. In 2014, over 1,100 people worked voluntarily for the 42 CISs in a range of roles, bringing with them a diverse depth and breadth of experience.

In addition to their core day-to-day work – principally as information givers, but also as receptionists and as board or committee members – volunteers bring skills and professional experience to specialist roles. Specialisms include representative advocacy, complex query support in particular areas of expertise, social policy work, PR and marketing work, administration, production of newsletters and the organisation of local events. Many experienced volunteers also act as volunteer and local centre co-ordinators, which involves recruiting, mentoring, training, supporting and rostering voluntary staff.

The *National Strategy on Volunteers in Citizens Information Services 2012-2015* acknowledges the critical role of volunteers in the delivery of services and in linking the CIS to the community. The Strategy seeks to further recognise volunteers and to strengthen the volunteer role. It focuses on supporting volunteers through training, quality measures, individual annual reviews and other processes designed to enable services and their voluntary staff to deliver consistently high standards in a demanding and complex work environment.

An implementation plan was and a training course was delivered to support CISs in implementing the strategy at local level.



Pictured at a Volunteer Award ceremony celebrating the contribution of CIS volunteers are Philip McCabe, Chair, National Association of Citizens Information Services (NACIS) and Yvonne McKenna, CEO Volunteer Ireland.

Accredited training for information providers

We have developed a range of range of accredited training programmes to ensure that information providers are supported to deliver high-quality services to citizens.

The Information, Advice and Advocacy Programme (IAAP) was launched in April 2013. It is aimed primarily at information providers in CISs and leads to the QQI Advanced Certificate in Information, Advice and Advocacy (level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications) after two years of study. The IAAP ensures consistency of service provision and equips information providers with the knowledge, skills and competencies required to provide impartial and confidential information, advice and advocacy to the public. In addition, it gives information providers the opportunity to develop professionally and gain a recognised qualification.

In July 2014, 139 learners received their QQI Certificates. These learners included graduates of the earlier Information Providers Programme who needed to complete additional components to receive the QQI Advanced Certificate. Over 100 learners commenced Year 2 of the programme in 2014.

The IAAP was the subject of an interim review in 2014 that made recommendations on the delivery of the programme. Following consideration of this review, it was decided that the programme should be contracted out for delivery by an outside organisation. A tender for the delivery of the IAAP was run in 2014 and the Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown (ITB) was successful. The IAAP delivered by ITB commenced in September 2014 with 163 learners.

National Calendar of Training Events

The National Training Calendar delivers a wide range of training courses covering core information, advice and advocacy topics alongside broader interpersonal and management skills. In 2014, CIB delivered 33 courses (55 training events) on the National Calendar of Training Events. 1,089 people attended these training events. Most participants came from CISs, although other voluntary and statutory organisations also took part.

A particular feature of the 2014 training calendar was offering training on the impact of new legislation on CIS clients. These courses included *Personal Insolvency Legislation* and *Unfair Treatment in the Workplace – Protected Disclosures Act 2014*.

In 2014 CIB offered targeted training at various staff and volunteer roles within CISs, including:

- *Preparing for the role of Volunteer Co-ordinator in CISs*
- *Practical Management Skills for Managers*
- *Supporting the Information Giving Process:
A course for new Receptionists/Administrators*
- *Effective Governance for Board members of CIB-Funded Services*
- *Performance Management and
Development System (PMDS)*

The Training Services team has developed a further training resource in the *How Can We Help You?* video series. The new short film for training information providers in Citizens Information Services is called *How Can We Help You? – Dealing with a Challenging Situation*.⁸

Accredited advocacy training

We developed the accredited Certificate in Management Skills for Managers of Advocacy Services programme in collaboration with the School of Business Studies and Humanities at the Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown. The course is funded by CIB. The course includes content on the management of representative advocacy services and on human resource management. In March 2014, eight development managers and one information provider from CISs across Ireland were presented with the Special Purpose Certificate in Management Skills for Managers of Advocacy Services (Level 7, National Framework of Qualifications).

⁸ The video can be accessed at <https://vimeo.com/116057810>

In September 2014, 77 learners graduated from the Advocacy Practice Programme, a Continuous Professional Development Certificate at Level 7 on the National Qualifications Framework. The course is accredited through the Dublin Institute of Technology and focused on practical advocacy skills.

MABS training programme

The major training need identified in 2014 for MABS was on the issue of mortgages and mortgage debt. Two training courses were designed specifically for MABS money advisors – *Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears (CCMA)/ Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process (MARP) Appeals* (attended by 134 money advisors) and *Repossessions under the CCMA* (attended by 147 money advisors).

The Advanced Diploma in Money Advice Practice from the University of Ulster is the first fully dedicated qualification on money advice in Ireland. The first 22 students graduated in December 2014. A further 40 money advisers are enrolled on the course, which takes 18 months to complete.

The MABSndI Training Unit also ran certified courses for administrators and co-ordinators – in *Communication skills, Personal Effectiveness in the Workplace and Business Management*.



Graduates celebrate receiving the Advanced Diploma in Money Advice Practice from the University of Ulster.

Priority C: Work to develop and implement an integrated service delivery model that puts the citizen at the centre – by organising to deliver

This priority focuses on changing our structures and processes to make sure that we use our resources to meet the needs of citizens in the most effective way. One of the key contributions to this priority during 2014 was to review our service delivery structures to assess how better, more efficient and more cost-effective services could be delivered to our customers.



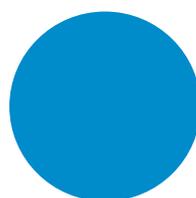
Mayor Andrew McGuinness presents Elaine Bolger and Tom Gunning, Kilkenny CIS, with their Kilkenny County Council/Rehab People of the Year Award 2014.

Pathfinder Feasibility Study

There are over 600 permanent staff, approximately 200 scheme workers and 1,104 volunteers working for the 93 independent companies in the network (51 Money Advice and Budgeting Services (MABS) and 42 Citizens Information Services (CISs)). Each of these companies has a separate voluntary Board of Management, comprising an average of nine members per Board, resulting in a governance structure of over 800 people. The maintenance of this company and Board structure is no longer sustainable from an organisational or governance perspective and the resource effort required could otherwise be directed towards improved service delivery to citizens. In terms of increased demands for funding and accountability it is also untenable.

In 2014, CIB commissioned a feasibility study to identify options for organisational integration of our delivery partners. The aim was to develop clearer and more effective pathways to information, advice and advocacy services and thereby achieve better outcomes for citizens, while making optimum use of resources. The work was carried out by a company called Pathfinder and was overseen by a steering group, made up of CIS staff and Board members, MABS staff and Board members and staff from the Citizens Information Board.

The Pathfinder Feasibility Study identified a number of options for greater organisational consolidation and/or integration of its delivery partners. The Board of CIB considered the study in September 2014 and tasked a Design Group with outlining and recommending new structural models, using the study as the key resource document to inform the process. The work of the Design Group was guided in its deliberations by specific Terms of Reference and Design Principles to identify possible new structural models for presentation to the Board of CIB for its consideration.



Design principles for a new structural model

- 1.** Across the sector the public must benefit indirectly from improved processes, resources allocation and quality assurance, evidenced in a better service provided by the staff. Service provision must continue at the local level.
- 2.** CIB provides the strategic leadership of the services, sets policy and national standards and is the legitimate competent authority and must be recognised as such.
- 3.** MABS /CISs are national services delivered locally. There must be a unified approach to service provision and a consistent customer experience.
- 4.** The new structures must facilitate the flexible use of resources and optimisation of the capacity and resources of the network of services.
- 5.** The model must provide a structure to ensure local advice and input, and for networking to maintain the local connections.
- 6.** The model will provide a significantly improved consistent governance system to optimise service delivery to the client.
- 7.** The model must provide for improved and measurable efficiencies and quality through scale and standardisation.
- 8.** The structure must establish delegation of responsibility, accountability and decision making to the most appropriate level.
- 9.** Quality assurance of information, advice and advocacy must be embedded, measurable and resourced.
- 10.** The structure must allow for a flexible response to develop initiatives to meet and respond both nationally and to local community need.
- 11.** Volunteer support structures must be strengthened.
- 12.** The model must create a “learning environment” where staff will benefit from the support and opportunities of being part of a larger organisation.

Single Point of initial Telephone Contact (SPOTC) pilot

SPOTC aims to provide a single point of initial telephone contact for the citizen, so that, instead of having to work out themselves how best to interact with the broad range of services on offer, customers are guided to the most appropriate pathway for their individual needs.

The initial pilot project was completed at the end of June 2014. The pilot project developed and tested a service delivery model that channels the initial telephone calls within each service delivery partner network to a single point. It also identified how existing resources within each network can be mobilised to work together more effectively and efficiently to meet demand.

The project concluded that the concept works but that the utilisation and integration of a SPOTC across CIPS, CISOs, NAS and MABS varies due to each network's capacity and readiness. The technical infrastructure requires additional work and the SPOTC model is dependent on resources. The progression of a SPOTC was endorsed by the CIB Board in July 2014.



Priority D: Lead the design and implementation of creative and flexible responses to meet emerging demands for information, advice, advocacy and budgeting support – by creating and adding value

We aim to continue to ensure that Citizens Information Board-funded services are the leading source of information, advice, budgeting support and advocacy for citizens. To do this we need to identify opportunities to develop new and better services – in collaboration with other organisations where relevant and appropriate. We must also organise ourselves so we have the flexibility to respond rapidly to changing needs. In 2014 we continued to develop and use new technologies and new means of communicating with communities, citizens and staff.

The Approved Intermediary Service was set up in 2013 and during 2014 worked intensively to support clients seeking Debt Relief Notices. We also developed a new website – gettingbacktowork.ie – and continued to develop our data strategy.

Approved Intermediary Service

The Citizens Information Board, in conjunction with MABSndI, has developed an Approved Intermediary Service through MABS. Approved Intermediaries are authorised by the Insolvency Service of Ireland (ISI) to submit applications for Debt Relief Notices on behalf of eligible debtors. A Debt Relief Notice (DRN) is one of the three debt solutions introduced under the Personal Insolvency Act 2012. It allows up to €20,000 of qualifying debt to be written off for certain people who are insolvent. Debtors can only apply for a DRN through an Approved Intermediary⁹. No fee is payable.

The first Debt Relief Notice was granted by the Circuit Court on 21 January 2014 and by December 2014 251 DRNs had been granted by the Courts. During 2014, over 900 appointments were held with eligible and potentially eligible debtors. The DRN process is constantly under review to ensure its efficiency and relevance and during the year the process for 'screening' clients has been replaced by a more user-friendly 'eligibility check'. All MABS offices have received training on initial screening of enquiries and an appointment system has been developed specifically for the Approved Intermediary Service.

⁹ An Approved Intermediary can be an individual or an organisation. In the case of MABS, following legal advice, it was decided to apply for corporate authorisation as an Approved Intermediary, and this was endorsed by the Insolvency Service (ISI).

In conjunction with the University of Ulster, MABSndI developed an accredited training module for Approved Intermediaries and during 2014, 124 money advisers and money advice coordinators successfully qualified as accredited Approved Intermediaries¹⁰. Forty-two companies were authorised as Approved Intermediaries by December 2014, with more in the process of seeking authorisation.

Data strategy

CIB reports on a wide spectrum of client information across our delivery partners. This client data needs to be standardised across the various electronic systems we use in order to improve information and knowledge management within the organisation. Our data strategy is a roadmap and implementation plan for standardised data gathering, analysis and reporting within CIB and our delivery partners.

The CIB data strategy sets out short and medium term aims. The short-term enhancements to the existing system currently being implemented will increase user interaction with the system, improve data quality, standardise data categories and capture new and relevant data for the service delivery areas.

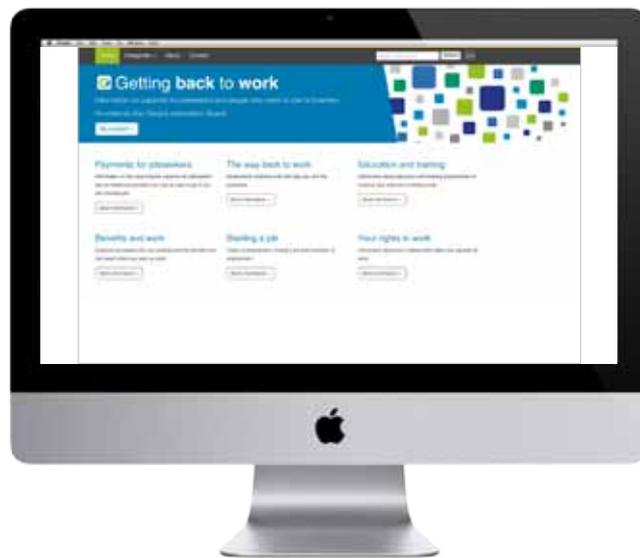
Increased confidence in the data being captured, coupled with existing information already contained within the systems, underpin the medium term strategy. This strategy is to develop an over-arching Business Intelligence solution that can store enterprise data from all service delivery partners centrally and provide reporting and analysis capabilities to visualise and interpret data.

¹⁰ As noted above, MABS is the corporate Approved Intermediary but the qualification is given to individuals.

MABS Case Management System (CMS)

Robust data collection, analysis and case management systems are key to carrying out and reporting on MABS activity.

CIB's data strategy identified the requirement for a new Case Management System (CMS) for MABS as a priority for 2014. A dedicated project team was established to manage the development and implementation of the new system. Throughout the year the team worked to define the business requirements for the system and to prepare the tendering process for an external project partner to design, develop and implement the new CMS. On completion the new CMS will consolidate and replace the current electronic systems in use by MABS.



New microsite: Gettingbacktowork.ie

From 2009 onwards the Citizens Information Board produced a number of 'microsites' (small websites) aimed at particular audiences. Losingyourjob.ie was for jobseekers, selfemployedsupports.ie was aimed at self-employed people, while keepingyourhome.ie provides information for people worried about mortgage payments or already in mortgage arrears. During 2013, unemployment levels in Ireland began to fall, from 13.9% in January 2013 to 12.3% in January 2014. Over the period a wide range of employment and training schemes were put in place, reflecting an emphasis on activation, upskilling and retraining.



Staff of Rathmines Citizens Information Service at the launch of gettingbacktowork.ie
Front row: Rebecca Daly, Ellen McCafferty, Liz Carroll (Development Manager), Maria Brophy. Back Row: Oxana Bolodurina, Aurelia Bodrug, Minister of State Kevin Humphreys T.D., Leo Costello.

In August 2014 the new microsite, **gettingbacktowork.ie**, went live. It replaced losingyourjob.ie and selfemployedsupports.ie, keeping the core information for jobseekers and people interested in starting a business, but also providing more detailed information on the range of employment schemes and funding available. The Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection, Kevin Humphreys, T.D., officially launched gettingbacktowork.ie in Rathmines Citizens Information Centre on 3 October 2014.

Gettingbacktowork.ie recorded 18,619 visits from September to December 2014, along with 50,574 pageviews and an average of 3,194 unique users per month. The website is based on content from citizensinformation.ie. It is a fully responsive website and provides all information in both English and Irish.

Priority E: Measure the efficiency and effectiveness of our service delivery approach – by demonstrating outcomes through feedback from users

This priority is about demonstrating outcomes by systematically gathering quantitative and qualitative feedback from users of our services. We have a statutory obligation to provide information on the effectiveness of social policy and services. Over 1 million citizens contacted our services for support in 2014. Aspects of each query are recorded. We use this data in two ways: to assess the effectiveness of our approach and to analyse the concerns and issues of citizens. The rapid changes in the social and financial policy landscape over recent years have demonstrated the importance of having a strong evidence base when formulating and influencing policy.

Social policy feedback

When someone contacts a Citizens Information Service or the Citizens Information Phone Service seeking information, advice or assistance about a particular public service or benefit, their individual problem may indicate an underlying difficulty with a policy, practice or piece of legislation. Feedback on each of these cases is recorded as a 'social policy return'. The Citizens Information Board compiles and considers this feedback and uses the data when drafting social policy reports, submissions and research papers. During 2014, 3,723 social policy returns were submitted to CIB (2,991 from CISs and 732 from CIPS) – most were concerned with social welfare (54%), followed by money and tax (10%), health (10%) and housing (6%).

Social welfare feedback concentrated on four main areas:

- Issues with supplementary welfare schemes, particularly the caps for Rent Supplement.
- Disability and illness – issues with accessing Disability Allowance and Illness Benefit and the high rates of decisions overturned on appeal.
- Unemployed people – Jobseeker's Allowance and Jobseeker's Benefit, particularly the 3-day rule where people working more than 3 days a week do not qualify for a jobseeker's payment, even where the employment is low paid and part-time.
- Families and children – administrative issues with Family Income Supplement and changes to the age limits for One-Parent Family payment.

Issues around Local Property Tax, medical cards and housing, particularly homelessness, also featured. Social policy returns continue to indicate that administrative or operational matters are a key concern for individuals who are trying to access benefits or payments through the Department of Social Protection (DSP). A new working arrangement for channelling social policy feedback was set up in late 2014. CIB's *Social Policy Quarterly Reports* (SPQRs) cover case studies that illustrate the most frequently highlighted social policy issues and a statistical analysis of the returns. The SPQRs are published online quarterly.

Policy submissions

CIB fed into policy-making processes in 2014 by making a range of submissions¹¹ to government consultations and interdepartmental working groups. These included:

- Submission to the HSE on Draft Interim Standards for New Directions, Services and Supports for People with Disabilities
- Data-sharing between Public Service Bodies
- Pre-Budget Submission 2015
- Medical card eligibility and medical need – Submission to Expert Panel
- Social Housing Strategy

Following a competitive tendering process, CIB commissioned TASC (Think-tank for Action on Social Change) to compile three social policy reports, based on an analysis of issues identified by CIB delivery partner services. These reports were completed at the end of 2014 and presented to the Board of CIB.

Feedback from customers

As part of the EFQM process, services focused on customer feedback, and in particular on mechanisms for collecting client feedback. During the year updated customer comment cards and complaint forms were provided to CISs and new standardised procedures for assessing customer satisfaction were developed. As part of the same process, MABS revised its client feedback questionnaire, client feedback procedures and its comment card. CISs reported that 7,627 customer comment cards were returned in 2014 (more than double the number in 2013).

It is well established that postcard and leaflet drops by local services increase brand awareness substantially. In one case a postcard drop of 26,800 by a service resulted in a 25% increase in caller numbers to the service.

¹¹ See <http://www.citizensinformationboard.ie/en/publications/submissions/> for details of all submissions made by the Citizens Information Board.

A man with short dark hair, wearing a red, white, and blue plaid shirt, is leaning over a table. He is looking down at a large sheet of paper on the table, which appears to be architectural plans or a site map. The paper has some faint drawings and text on it. In the foreground, the back of another person's head and shoulder is visible, suggesting a collaborative meeting. The background is slightly blurred, showing what might be a window or a wall.

“We are over the moon with the outcome and we really appreciate all that you have done for us”

FEEDBACK FROM MABS CUSTOMER

SECTION 3

The Citizens Information Board

The Citizens Information Board (CIB) provides direct funding and core developmental supports to its delivery partners, who in turn provide services to the public. The Citizens Information Board has 87 (74.64 whole-time equivalents) staff.

Service teams and structure

To carry out its functions, the Citizens Information Board has the following service teams:

- Advocacy
- Finance and Administration
- HR and Governance
- ICT and Project Management Office
- Information Resources
- Quality
- Service Delivery
- Social Policy and Research
- Training

The **Advocacy** team leads the development of best practice in CIS advocacy by developing advocacy resources and by promoting the use of those resources through the training, mentoring and support of the five regionally-based Advocacy Support Workers.

In 2014, following national user testing, the team finalised and provided training to the national network in the use of standardised procedures for once-off advocacy and CIS advocacy, including the Advocacy Service Guide, Authority to Act and Advocacy Service Agreement, Once-off Advocacy Authorisation and Client Feedback on CIS Advocacy.

The **Finance and Administration team** is responsible for finance matters and procedures for service delivery partners. In 2014, €34m was disbursed in grants. CIB ensures that proper financial controls and reporting procedures are followed by delivery partners – which ensures that value for money is delivered to the tax payer.

Under the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, CIB has an internal audit function, which is currently outsourced. An annual internal audit plan is prepared for the Audit and Risk Committee of the Board by the internal auditors, who report to the Committee at least six times per annum on progress in implementing the plan. The internal audit plan includes provision for the internal audit of CIB's delivery partners on a sample basis. Feedback from these audits helps improve the financial control environment. Substantial assurance was received by CIB for its grant accountability in the 2014 auditor's report.

The **HR and Governance team** supports the staff of the Citizens Information Board and is responsible for governance within CIB, including support of the Board, data protection, Freedom of Information and customer complaints.

The team is also responsible for supporting delivery partner companies on HR and Governance matters including advice on company law and on good practice for Boards of Management. In 2014 a generic Safety Statement was drawn up for delivery partner companies.

The team achieved satisfactory outcomes in internal audits carried out on Governance and Estates. The Office of the Data Protection Commissioner reviewed CIB databases (used for recording queries and advocacy cases) and was satisfied that the databases are in compliance with data protection legislation.

The CIB Safety Statement was revised and updated in 2014. The HR & Governance team monitors CIB's commitments under its Irish Language Scheme. An updated Irish Language Scheme was submitted to An Coimisinéir Teanga in July 2014.

The **Information and Communications Technology (ICT) team** manages and supports the day-to-day operational needs of the Citizens Information Board (CIB) and the network of CIB's Delivery Partners. The team also manages the Project Management Office (PMO) which supports project working within CIB.

A key project for 2014 was the tendering and implementation of an ICT managed service solution for the Citizens Information Board. The new solution provides a number of benefits which includes improvements in continuity of service, security, monitoring and compliance of our systems.

The ICT Service continued to develop our delivery partner extranet, 'Infonet', in 2014, and implemented a call management solution to support the MABS helpline. During 2014 the ICT Service continued to support our network of users, with the ICT helpdesk managing 8,988 support calls from January to December.

The Information Resources team is responsible for CIB publications and for the websites, citizensinformation.ie, assistireland.ie, keepingyourhome.ie and gettingbacktowork.ie.

The Quality team has an important role in ensuring that our service users receive consistently high quality services that meet their individual needs and requirements.

The Quality team develops and implements CIB's quality strategy and oversaw the EFQM Gold Star process.

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 service delivery partners, 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.

The **Service Delivery team** supports all our locally-based delivery partners – CISs and MABSs – as well as our national delivery partners, CIPS, NAS and SLIS. The primary role and aim of the Service Delivery team is to support and monitor delivery partners' capacity development so that the range and quality of services offered to the public is continually improving.

The **Training team** organises and facilitates the delivery of a wide range of accredited and non-accredited training for staff, board members and volunteers of delivery partners. It has an important role in ensuring that high quality services are delivered, via our delivery partners, to the general public.

The team also works closely with MABSndI to co-ordinate the delivery of courses of joint interest to Board members and managers. The Training team develops resources and materials for use by delivery partners in organising and planning their own training locally, for example, induction materials for new information providers.



A PR and Promotion Executive supports the Citizens Information and MABS brands. In 2014 promotion of the Citizens Information and MABS brands continued with a re-run of the 0761 radio ads and print advertisements. The joint premises initiative continues with Citizens Information and MABS services co-locating in Mullingar and Athlone.

Promotion continued with attendance at key events such as the National Ploughing Championships, The Over 50s Show, and the Which Course Exhibition. Some key partnership initiatives driving brand awareness of both Citizens Information and MABS included: The Green Ribbon Mental Health Campaign in May 2014, the HSE whatsupmum.ie Information Campaign and the Insolvency Service of Ireland Information Campaign.

Significant media coverage was received for citizensinformation.ie web statistics press release and launch of the gettingbacktowork.ie website. Extensive use is made of the Know Your Rights columns. These appear in local print media and act as the catalyst for numerous local radio slots. Many Development Managers have slots on local/regional radio stations, dealing with queries, topical issues, and publicising the CIS brand in general.

Staff changes in 2014

John Long, a former regional manager and much-loved colleague, died in 2014 (RIP).

In 2014 there were six retirements from CIB. Four managers retired in July 2014 including CIB's Chief Executive, Tony McQuinn (see Introduction); Geraldine Cullen, Training Manager; Helen Lahert, Advocacy Manager; Sean Mistéil, Regional Manager and two Information Resources Executives, Kate Boyle and Heather Sheane.

One Manager position (in the Training Service) was filled through redeployment in 2014. Sanction to fill the remaining Manager positions through internal competition was received in December 2014.

A new Chief Executive, Ms Angela Black, took up the Chief Executive position in November 2014 (see Introduction).

The Board of CIB

There were nine meetings of the Board of CIB in 2014. In the same period there were four meetings of the Finance Committee and eight meetings of the Audit & Risk Committee, which also met by conference call on three occasions. The Remuneration Committee met on two occasions to facilitate the appointment of the new Chief Executive.

The Code of Practice for Chairperson, Chief Executive, Board Members and Secretary was updated in 2014, including amending the Confidential Disclosures policy to bring it in line with the Protected Disclosures legislation enacted in July 2014.

Energy usage in 2014

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 2014, CIB consumed 342,987 kWh, of electricity and 140,592 kWh of gas. Its energy costs reduced by 0.9% compared to 2013 and its CO₂ emissions are down by 6.3% to 204,120 kgCO₂.

CIB intends to improve its energy performance in 2015 by:

- Continuing to raise energy awareness among staff.
- Reducing energy consumption as far as possible, for example, by using cloud computing, more e-publications, tele-conferencing and less travel.

A middle-aged man with grey hair, wearing a blue and red work shirt and green gloves, is working in a workshop. He is holding a metal part with calipers. The background shows a workshop with various tools and equipment.

*“I got my dignity back
and could plan for
the future”*

FEEDBACK FROM MABS CUSTOMER

Appendices

Appendix 1: Customer Service Charter

Appendix 2: Board members 2014

Appendix 3: Organisational chart

Appendix 4: Citizens Information Board offices

Appendix 5: Grants in 2014

Customer Service Charter

The Citizens Information Board provides independent information, advice and advocacy on public and social services through citizensinformation.ie, the Citizens Information Phone Service and the network of Citizens Information Services. We are responsible for the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) 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.

We are committed to...

1. Clear, comprehensive and accurate information

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

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

2. Prompt, courteous and efficient responses

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

The *Customer Service Action Plan* and the *Customer Communications and Customer Complaints Procedures* set out principles of good communications practice. The Citizens Information Board's switchboard remains open from 9am to 5.30pm Monday to Thursday and to 5pm on Friday. The Citizens Information Phone Service operates from 9am to 8pm on Monday to Friday.

3. Equality and diversity

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

In 2014 the Citizens Information Board worked with other agencies to ensure that information reached a range of customer groups including older people, people with disabilities, lone parents, migrants and migrant workers.

4. Choice

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

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

5. Access

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

The Citizens Information Board occupies fully accessible offices in George's Quay House, Townsend Street, Dublin 2. All regional offices and Citizens Information Centres meet service delivery accessibility standards. The Citizens Information website has been designed to be accessible to all users, including those with disabilities using assistive technology software such as screen readers and is now fully responsive to various devices. The citizensinformation.ie website complies with the WAI (Web Accessibility Initiative) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, as developed by the World Wide Web Consortium. The corporate website (citizensinformationboard.ie) also meets the guidelines. Contact our Access officer, Helen Brougham at accessofficer@ciboard.ie.

6. Official languages

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

Information on citizensinformation.ie, keepingyourhome.ie and gettingbacktowork.ie is available in English and Irish with some documents also available in other languages (French, Polish, and Romanian). The Citizens Information Board has an Irish Language Scheme in accordance with Section 11 of the Official Languages Act 2003. The Act aims to ensure better availability and a higher standard of public services through Irish.

7. Consultation and evaluation

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

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

8. Internal customers

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

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

9. Co-ordination

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

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

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

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

10. Appeals

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

A Customer Service Officer is in place.

11. Comments and complaints

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

APPENDIX 2

Board members 2014

The following served on the Board in 2014:

- **Noeline Blackwell**
- **Michael Butler**
- **Pat Fitzpatrick**
- **Josephine Henry**
- **Sylda Langford** Chair
- **Eugene McErlean**
- **Michael McGuane**
- **Martin Naughton**
- **Sandra Ronayne**
- **Simonetta Ryan**
- **John Sheehy**
- **David Stratton**
- **Sean Sweeney**
- **Fiona Ward**

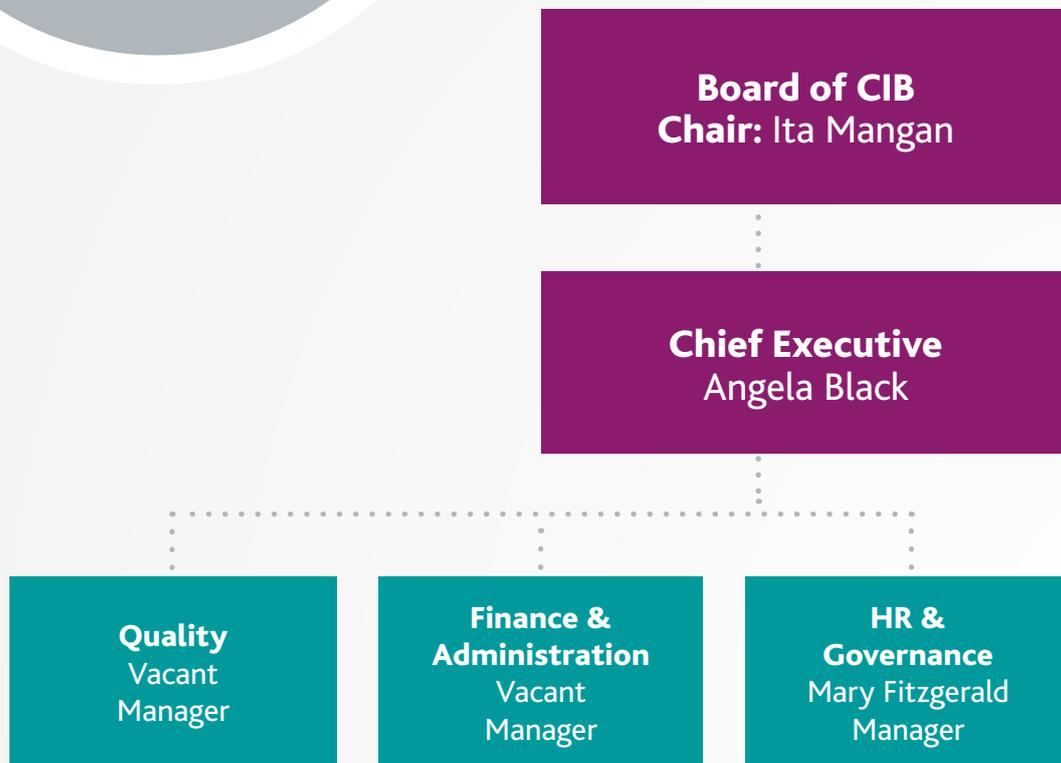
Finance Committee members in 2014

- **Noeline Blackwell**
- **Michael Butler** Chair
- **Josephine Henry**
- **Sylda Langford**
- **Michael McGuane**
- **Martin Naughton**
- **Simonetta Ryan**
- **John Sheehy**

Audit and Risk Committee members in 2014

- **Noeline Blackwell**
- **Michael Butler**
- **Pat Fitzpatrick**
- **Josephine Henry** Chair
- **Sylda Langford**
- **Martin Naughton**
- **Simonetta Ryan**

APPENDIX 3



Organisational chart



December 2015.

APPENDIX 4

Citizens Information Board offices

Head Office

George's Quay House
43 Townsend Street
Dublin 2
D02 VK65
Telephone: +353 761 079 000

Limerick

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

Dublin 7

Park House
191-193 North Circular Road
Dublin 7
D07 EWW4

Waterford

14 Gladstone Street
Waterford
X91 YNH1

Cavan

Elm House
Elm Bank
Cootehill Road
Cavan
H12 A8H7

Cork

101 North Main Street
Cork
T12 AKA6

Dundalk

4 Adelphi Court
Long Walk
Dundalk
Co. Louth
A91 YT02

Castlebar

Garvey House
Castle Street
Castlebar
Co. Mayo
F23 PE80

Tallaght

Hainault House
The Square
Tallaght
Dublin 24
D24 RFVO

Letterkenny

Port Road
Letterkenny
Co. Donegal
F92 CP7E

Tullamore

Level One
Bridge Centre
Tullamore
Co. Offaly
R35 Y6Y7

Galway

4th Floor Dockgate
Merchants Road
Galway
H91 EY10

Kilkenny

4 The Parade
Kilkenny
R95 VO52

Sligo

1st Floor
Harbour View House
16 Holborn Street
Sligo
F91 Y42P

APPENDIX 5

Grants in 2014

Grants to Citizens Information Services (CIS)	€
Ballyfermot	254,300
Blanchardstown	224,800
Carlow	210,800
Cavan	222,300
Citizens Information Phone Service	1,288,215
Clare	276,200
Clondalkin	314,000
Cork City North	171,100
Cork City South	335,100
Crumlin	257,300
Donegal	653,544
Dublin 2, 4 & 6	231,363
Dublin 8 & Bluebell	288,200
Dublin City Centre	653,900
Dublin North Bay (KARE)	124,751

Dublin Northside	333,200
Dublin Northwest	258,100
Dún Laoghaire/Rathdown	234,500
Fingal (North County)	302,500
Galway	411,600
Kerry	355,700
Kilkenny	200,700
Laois	208,600
Leitrim	239,900
Limerick	330,500
Longford	251,200
Louth	354,700
Mayo	376,739
Meath	379,260
Monaghan	265,800
North & East Cork County	256,777
North Kildare	233,100
Offaly	263,954
Roscommon	265,000
Sligo	267,300
South Kildare	216,800
Tallaght	293,800
Tipperary	475,300
Waterford	283,046

West Cork County	234,900
Westmeath	352,819
Wexford	321,500
Wicklow	297,800
Total	13,770,968

Grants to Money Advice and Budgeting Services (MABS) €

Arklow	230,200
Athlone	159,300
Ballymun	379,700
Blanchardstown	354,300
Bray	348,000
Carlow	386,963
Cavan	278,300
Charleville	199,800
Clare	281,200
Clondalkin	371,600
Cork	480,365
Drogheda	176,654
Dublin 10 & 20	371,287
Dublin 12 Area	292,200
Dublin North City	290,279
Dublin North East	280,095

Dublin South East	299,300
Dún Laoghaire	228,000
Dundalk/Oriel	250,660
Dundrum/Rathfarnham	337,686
Fingal (North County)	310,900
Finglas/Cabra	342,100
Kerry	520,592
Kildare	475,800
Kilkenny	282,400
Laois	216,500
Leitrim	206,990
Liffey South West	373,800
Limerick	429,743
Longford	173,817
MABS National Development Limited	2,306,018
Meath	347,047
Monaghan	302,498
Mullingar	192,090
National Traveller MABS	315,887
North Cork	305,000
North Donegal	421,987
North Galway	287,892
North Mayo	212,400
North Tipperary	259,900

Offaly	238,979
Roscommon	241,061
Sligo	300,385
South Donegal	150,800
South Galway	516,900
South Mayo	287,600
South Tipperary	376,700
Tallaght	316,829
Waterford	607,351
West Cork	287,400
West Donegal	126,800
West Waterford	215,879
Wexford	324,900
Total	18,270,834

Grants to Advocacy Support Worker Programme (ASW)	€
Clondakin	61,613
Longford CIS	63,613
Offaly CIS	63,613
West Cork County CIS	63,613
Clare CIS	63,613
Total	316,065

Grants to the National Advocacy Service (NAS) 3,077,266

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.

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