



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



2019
Annual Report
Tuarascáil Bhliantúil



Vision

An Ireland where everyone - particularly the most vulnerable - has access to the information and advice they need in order to realise their rights. The values that we uphold and apply to all aspects of our work are:



Available to all

We will offer independent, impartial, confidential and non-judgemental information, advice, money advice and advocacy in ways that are accessible to all.



Responsiveness

We will always listen to people's views, reflect on what we learn and review our services to ensure they are responsive to changing situations and emerging needs. We will make the best use of new technologies and other opportunities.



Customer service

We are committed to supporting a professional, impartial and timely service that responds to people's needs.



Confidentiality

We will respect and promote people's right to privacy.



Focus on quality

We will continually improve our products, services and methods of working to meet the needs of all our stakeholders.



Excellence

We will motivate our staff to deliver products and services that exceed objectives, needs and expectations.



Leadership

We will offer supportive leadership and encourage innovation in our areas of expertise in a way that benefits everyone.



Promotion of equality and human rights

We will promote equality and human rights in all we do.

"I was very relieved when I went into Citizens Information... I was treated with great kindness and sensible, clear advice. My adviser was very supportive and checked in on me regularly.

I have now been granted Disability Allowance. I believe I'd still be fighting for this if it wasn't for the CIS."

CIS customer

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From the Chairperson

This report covers the activities in the first year of an ambitious three year strategy, outlined in the Citizens Information Board's Statement of Strategy 2019-2021. With restructuring of the delivery services complete, CIB has started to actively review the quality of service we provide our citizens in order to ensure that the services we provide reach those who need them. We have put measures in place to achieve a more consistent service across our network and we gratefully acknowledge the expertise and support of the new regional managers, staff and volunteers of CIS and MABS who helped us to streamline the services. The reorganisation of MABS ND into a new company, MABS Support, was the latest part of that process.

The citizensinformation.ie website continues to be the primary source of accurate, high quality information on rights and entitlements to public and social services. The site integrates information from a range of sources to help citizens navigate what can be a confusing information landscape and provides links to other relevant sources of information. Direct access to information is now broadly available in digital form. Social media is an area where public demands for accurate factual information and need for advice is greatest. In 2019, CIB's social media channels started to provide information and signpost users to our services where they can find information and advice.

CIB's chosen research topics in 2019 arose from evidence gathered as part of our statutory social policy function as well as data analytics performed on website user numbers and needs. I fully expect that the need for almost instant information will drive further technical innovations – already the messaging apps on mabs.ie and new callback services are proving popular. Ultimately, CIB will increasingly emphasise digital

channels to extend its reach, particularly to young people, and potentially to all our citizens through assisted digital supports. CIB will ensure that we continue to offer choice for citizens in how to access our services.

An early benefit of restructuring the CIS service was the development of a staffing strategy which, among other initiatives, created a new grade of senior information officer to reflect the experience and talent that exists across the regional network. The strategy also targeted gaps by providing additional resources, such as the Dedicated Advocacy Pilot (DAP) programme. On the MABS side, the relocation of relief Dedicated Mortgage Advice personnel to the regions was also a positive outcome of restructuring. The DMA service was integrated into Abhaile, the mortgage arrears support scheme.

The National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities (NAS), had a very busy year. CIB was pleased to support its successful application for the Patient Advocacy Service. This project, funded by the Department of Health,

has been introduced as a telephone-based service, providing much needed support to patients. While NAS has proven to be a very valuable resource, we look forward to having the service put on a statutory footing in order to guarantee access to its resources for people with disabilities.

Further collaboration brought new developments for the Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS), which was provided with funding as part of the National Disability Inclusion Strategy. CIB supported its work in relation to the extension of the Irish Remote Interpreting Service and we look forward to working together to develop a register of qualified Irish Sign Language interpreters.

Last year, I was delighted to be able to participate in an event hosted by National Traveller MABS, launching a book of financial advice. I salute the work of NTMABS in furthering community education and for highlighting money advice issues on behalf of the Traveller community.

I would like to thank all CIB Board members for their sterling work on a wide variety of matters throughout the year. I would like to thank the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Regina Doherty TD and her staff for their continued support for CIB, in particular for her Department's sanctioning of additional staff during the year.



Finally, I would like to thank Angela Black, Chief Executive of CIB, and all her staff for their hard work throughout the year. Their resilience and professionalism are particularly appreciated now, as we grapple with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ita Mangan, CHAIRPERSON

2019 in numbers

A total of **564,391** people

called to Citizens Information Services with over a million queries.



CIB received **7,981** social policy returns,

highlighting administrative or operational issues around access to payments or services, policy anomalies or gaps in the provision of service.



Dedicated Mortgage Arrears (DMA) advisers helped

8,513 borrowers in late stage arrears.



The National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities provided representative advocacy to

1,022 people and supported **3,061** people

with information, advice and other advocacy supports.



Citizensinformation.ie had just over **12.5 million** users

and during the year, the website recorded just over

47 million page views.



CIB made **16** submissions

to government departments and policy forums on a range of topics.



ABHAILE

FREE MORTGAGE ARREARS SUPPORT

Abhaile, the mortgage arrears support scheme issued

over 10,000 vouchers

The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) had

16,971 new clients



The Irish Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS) handled

7,503 interpreting assignments



The Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS) dealt with

142,951 telephone enquiries and responded to over **2,300** Live Advisor enquiries.



Strategic Plan 2019-2021: Delivering **Information, Advice, Money Advice** and **Advocacy Services** for our Communities

ENHANCE
Develop Innovate
CONSOLIDATE
Deliver

The MABS Helpline had

25,075 calls



From the Chief Executive

I am pleased to introduce the 2019 Annual Report, the first one that showcases the activities of the newly restructured companies funded by the Citizens Information Board. In an age when misinformation can be the bane of our lives, we in CIB see the high demand for our services as an endorsement from the public. I am confident that accurate, independent and confidential information, advice, money advice and trusted advocacy will always be sought after and valued by citizens who need to access social and public services.

This year, our report highlights the progress made by CIB on many fronts, firstly, serving citizens with their information needs, rights and entitlements, directly via our very popular and expanded website, citizensinformation.ie. In addition, indirectly through the regional and national companies we fund, we communicate with citizens, increasingly online, through digital channels, and by personal and telephone engagement at MABS and CIS offices. Some, especially-adapted forms of information and advocacy provision are targeted at citizens who are at times in vulnerable situations, who communicate differently or who, arising from a disability, need some help in accessing the social, health, financial, employment and living supports they need. While a number of positive changes have come about which benefit citizens who use the services we fund, there is still a long way to go.

For example, Irish Sign Language was recently officially recognised as a separate language. While we fund the work of the Sign Language Interpreting Service, the continuing shortage of qualified interpreters to provide remote and face-to-face interpreting services for the Deaf community puts further development at risk.

The Traveller community has finally achieved ethnic recognition status, but conquering discrimination remains a challenge. Community education services provided by National Traveller MABS is a step in the right direction, but more needs to be done, especially in areas such as fuel poverty, Traveller-appropriate accommodation and access to affordable credit.



The evidence that there is a world of work to be done to serve the needs of low income or vulnerable citizens is brought systematically to CIB through our statutory social policy function. The submissions we have made to the Government and to other relevant stakeholders highlight citizens' experience of public services and what needs to improve.

In this regard, I very much appreciate the expertise of CIS staff and volunteers, MABS - including operators of the Abhaile mortgage arrears voucher scheme – and advocates for people with disabilities who work in the National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities (NAS).

At the time of publication, we are in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic; the business of providing accurate, up-to-date information and advice in a form that is accessible to our citizens, no matter what their status or ability, has become more important than ever and I thank CIB staff for their enormous effort in achieving it.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Angela Black". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Angela Black, CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Chapter 1: The Citizens Information Board

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

Our mandate is clearly defined through a number of Acts¹:

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

A key role of CIB is to support, promote and develop information on the effectiveness of current social policy

and services, and to highlight issues that are raised by the users of those services. We do this through research and by analysing the information in social policy returns from our services.

The services we fund

CIB and its services deliver support to the public in various ways:

- Information is available directly to the public through the Citizens Information website (citizensinformation.ie) and our periodicals and publications.
- The nationwide network of **Citizens Information Centres (CICs)** overseen by the regional Citizens Information Services allows members of the public to meet an information officer face-to-face and to get free, impartial and confidential information on a range of social and public services.
- **Citizens Information Services** also provide an **advocacy service** to people who may have difficulties in claiming or using their entitlements.
- The **Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS)** provides advice and information over the telephone and through the Live Advisor 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.
- The **MABS Support company** provides technical, training and other support to MABS.
- **Abhaile**, the mortgage arrears support scheme, helps homeowners to resolve their problems with home mortgage arrears and to stay in their homes where possible. Abhaile provides free financial and legal advice and help from experts, which is accessed through MABS.
- **National Traveller MABS (NTMABS)** advocates for the financial inclusion of Travellers and helps them to access legal and affordable savings and credit.
- The **National Advocacy Service** for people with disabilities (NAS) meets the needs of people with disabilities who are in vulnerable situations.
- The **Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS)** provides Irish Sign Language (ISL) interpreting services directly through remote interpreting, as well as by arranging referrals.

The role of CIB in supporting its funded services

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

We provide infrastructure and supports to help our services deal with citizens' enquiries and link in with local communities. We ensure high quality by setting and monitoring standards; providing ICT services, equipment and infrastructure; putting in place training, including expert advice; and offering a range of other supports such as websites and publications.

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

Service level agreements between CIB and each of our delivery services clearly set out both parties' commitments. These agreements include delivery, governance, financial controls, HR practices, data protection, reporting guidelines, evaluation and monitoring. Our internal audit process makes recommendations on updating practices and improving compliance with the governance and reporting requirements.

CIB provides support for services in a number of areas. This includes advice

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

on premises and facilities management as well as access to advice on industrial relations and human resources matters. An Employee Assistance Programme is available to all delivery services.

Staffing and finance

At the end of 2019, CIB had 69.84 whole-time equivalent staff (and 3 additional staff under the Abhaile project). Our head office is in Dublin and we have offices in Cork, Kilkenny, Limerick and Galway.

CIB's financial statements for 2019 will be audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General and will be published on citizensinformationboard.ie when the audit is complete.

Strategic Plan 2019-2021: Delivering Information, Advice, Money Advice and Advocacy Services for our Communities

CIB's new strategic plan was published in May 2019. It is an over-arching and inclusive plan for CIB and its service delivery companies, allowing us to work closely together to ensure better outcomes for people.

CIB's last strategic plan focused on revising the structures of the CISs and MABS to better serve people by improving management structures and governance. That work was successfully completed in October 2018. The new strategy was prepared in the context of:

- The need to support and consolidate the restructuring of service delivery in a way that enhances the quality of services and outcomes for citizens
- Revised legislative and regulatory requirements, including more stringent requirements for charities and data protection
- Alignment with the strategic objectives of Government and of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, our parent Department
- Opportunities presented by technology developments
- Structural changes within the network of CIB services, including the re-organisation of management structures within CIB
- A realistic view of the anticipated availability of additional resources
- Our commitment to public sector equality and human rights duty

The vision for the plan is an Ireland where everyone is adequately equipped with information and advice in order to realise their rights, delivering in particular for the most vulnerable.

The dual objective of the strategy is to build on the restructuring and rebuilding work undertaken in recent years and to harvest the benefits of these investments to deliver greater quality and more accessible services to the public.

The strategic priorities to achieve our dual objective are:

Strategic priority 1: Enhancing service quality and availability:

Enhancing service quality and availability to achieve a consistently high standard through a modern, measurable framework of information, advice, money advice and advocacy services.

Our services are provided through a range of access channels (online, telephone and face-to-face). The Citizens Information website is provided by CIB directly, while other online channels and all the telephone and face-to-face services are provided by our service delivery companies. How we further develop the range and quality of services must be based on the needs and expectations of the public.

Strategic priority 2: Service development and innovation

Identifying, promoting and implementing service development and innovation.

Our objective is to ensure that consistently high-quality services are delivered throughout the country, with required standards explicitly set out in the Service Level Agreements. In tandem with this, we want to ensure that individual companies have the flexibility and discretion to tailor their service delivery to the particular requirements of their region and are encouraged to be innovative and to progressively develop all aspects of their operations.

Strategic priority 3: Consolidate and deliver

Building the capacity of the network of CIB services, including leadership and support, to consolidate and deliver the benefits of restructuring.

Under the previous Strategic Plan, the structure of CIS and MABS service delivery companies was streamlined, establishing a total of 16 new regional companies to replace the previous 93 companies. The primary objective for the next three years is to consolidate and embed the change process and to deliver the benefits of these changes to the people we serve. As a consequence of that major change, the MABS ND company (provider of technical support to the MABS companies) was reorganised and its functions adapted to the newly-formed regional MABS companies. By early 2020, the new company, MABS Support CLG, was established and the MABS Helpline was integrated into North Dublin MABS.

The full text of the plan is available on citizensinformationboard.ie in both English and Irish.

Social policy and research

Staff in Citizens Information Centres (CICs) submit a report known as a social policy return (SPR) to CIB when they feel that a client is experiencing a particular difficulty or a pattern of difficulties in trying to access social or public services. Individual cases can indicate a broader difficulty or concern with a policy, practice or piece of legislation.

The data, evidence and insights these frontline services send us every day can show the impact of Government spending, policy and the administration of policy. In fulfilling our statutory role, we use this data to highlight issues of concern so that policy and the administration of public services can be continually improved.

Research reports and policy submissions in 2019

CIB carried out more in-depth analysis of clients' priority issues and concerns as well as the broader context within which information, advice and advocacy services operate in five research reports. This work is in line with CIB's Strategic Plan 2019–2021, to develop our social policy role and make more effective use of our feedback systems.

Lost in Transition is an omnibus report on social welfare payments and schemes, which explores the income supports required, as well as identifying the potential difficulties involved in the movements in and out of employment that people experience at key transition points in their lives. These include, becoming unemployed, experiencing a bereavement, acquiring an illness, or losing one's home.

Other reports commissioned in 2019 include: *Employment Rights that Work for All: A Citizens Information Perspective*, *Digital Exclusion and E-Government in Ireland*, *Meeting the Information Needs of Migrants in Vulnerable Situations* and *Fair Administration*.

The data from our services provides strong evidence to inform and influence social policy priorities.

In 2019, 16 policy submissions were presented to Governmental departments, Oireachtas committees, regulators, and EU bodies. These submissions covered a range of topics including community banking; equality issues and Travellers, costs associated with having a disability, capping the cost of licensed moneylenders and activation and employment policy.

Submissions identified challenges and made recommendations for policy change.

For example, the submission on Pathways to Work 2020–2024 drew attention to the ongoing difficulties in acquiring quality employment for people who are long-term unemployed, the issue of suitability (and choice) of activation programmes and the problems many qualified adults (spouses and partners) have in accessing employment supports and activation measures. Our policy submission on the cost of disability recommended not to treat people with disabilities as a homogenous group, and to take into account the different costs for people, depending on the type of disability a person has. The submission also drew attention to the potential range and types of costs, including hidden costs for people.

CIB prepared a comprehensive *Pre-Budget Submission 2020 – Meeting Basic Living Costs*, which drew from over one

million queries, and addressed the areas of in-work welfare; income inadequacy for people who have a disability or an illness or who are caregivers, the availability and affordability of housing and problem debt and financial inclusion.

Many of the concerns raised featured in the Government's budgetary provisions for 2020, reflecting the relevance and impact of delivery services across the country. Examples include changes to Jobseeker's Allowance (JA) rates for people aged 25 and under, an increase in qualified child payments as a targeted approach to support low income families, the increase in the earnings disregard for working lone parents; and an increase in the number of hours of work (or study) that people getting Carer's Allowance can engage in outside the home.

To keep services updated on policy matters, CIB also provided relevant training to services during 2019 and published a bi-monthly newsletter – *Social Policy Update* – with information on CIB and national social policy news and activities. See page 64 for a list of submissions in 2019.

Advocacy services

Advocacy is a means of empowering and supporting people to reach the outcome they want and, where necessary, representing and negotiating on their behalf. It generally means representing someone's view or helping them to secure their rights or entitlements.

CIB provides free advocacy services to the public through the national network of Citizens Information Services (CISs) and specialist advocacy for people with disabilities through the National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities.

CIS advocacy is a partnership between the client and the information provider. The information provider works with the client, representing or amplifying their voice, to help them to access their rights and entitlements. Advocacy can include writing letters with or on behalf of the client, negotiating with third parties on the client's behalf, supporting and representing the client in meetings with third parties, and supporting and representing the client up to and through a formal hearing.

See Chapter 3 for details of advocacy in CISs in 2019 and see the National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities in Chapter 9.

Promoting our services

Support and promotion of our services remains a key strategic aim. Our websites (citizensinformation.ie, mabs.ie and citizensinformationboard.ie) give easy access for people to get information about all our services, including Citizens Information, the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS), the National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities (NAS) and the Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS).

Citizens Information promotional campaigns in 2019

Radio



Heard by
2.07m people
June to November

Leaflets



GP surgeries and clinics network

Patient visits
4.5
annually



CIS leaflets
consistently in
top 5
selected

Audience reach
16 million

**Healthy Ireland research*

Digital



18,834
article views



862,144
impressions

Programmatic advertising



931,399
impressions

The scale of our network strengthens our brand awareness. Sixteen regional companies and their Boards oversee and manage 115 Citizens Information Centres and 60 MABS offices nationwide.

Our services have extensive partnership networks. They include initiatives with organisations such as the European Consumer Debt Network (ECDN), the HSE, St. Vincent de Paul, the Irish Prison Service, refugee and immigrant groups, Family Resource Centres and Traveller groups. Both Citizens Information Services and MABS are involved in outreach work and engage in local promotional events and activities.

Key initiatives continue to drive brand awareness of both Citizens Information and MABS. For example, the Abhaile free mortgage arrears support service had an extensive promotion campaign in 2019 including print, broadcast and cinema advertising. The key point of entry to the service is the MABS Helpline number 0761 07 2000.

The 'Returning to Ireland', online information portal for Irish emigrants seeking to move back to Ireland received significant media coverage and signposted people to citizensinformation.ie. Created by the Citizens Information Board with support from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, this new resource contains information on the practicalities involved in returning to Ireland. See page 25.

National campaigns

CIB manages all communication campaigns at a national level. National campaigns encourage members of the public experiencing difficulty to seek advice or information. In 2019, our campaign activity included radio adverts broadcast across national and local radio stations reaching over two million adults from June to November. Digital and online promotions were also effective. Themes such as Working Family Payment, Maternity Benefit, housing and employment rights provided a campaign focus. In addition, 15 themed promotional videos featuring staff of the Citizens Information network continued to prove popular and were used by the network in outreach presentations.

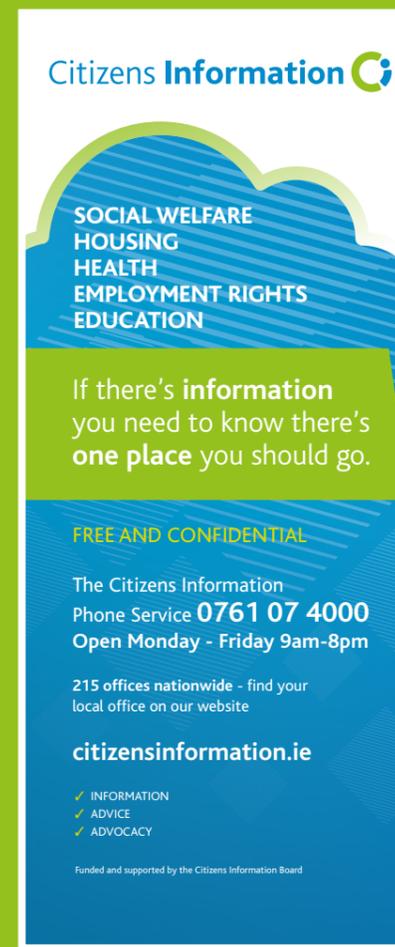
In 2019, the Citizens Information Twitter account, [@citizensinfo](https://twitter.com/citizensinfo) was reactivated and we began to post regularly, covering:

- News and developments in public and social services
- Information and news about the services we fund and support
- Details of our new and updated documents and links to our websites
- Job adverts for positions at CIB and our delivery services

Towards the end of 2019 under CIB's new social media strategy, a pilot Facebook account, [@citizensinformation.ie](https://www.facebook.com/citizensinformation.ie) began to post regularly.



Abhaile staff: from left, Bobby Barbour, Nicole Boyle-McBride and Evan O'Sullivan at the National Ploughing Championships with Adrian O'Connor, Senior Manager.



CIS and MABS branded promotional materials

Media coverage in 2019

CIB actively engages with the media to highlight the value and importance of our services. We support and encourage the network to engage with media at a regional level. In 2019 there were over 120 articles in national and regional papers and more than 3,400 broadcast interviews. This included a slot on the RTE 6.01 News by Angela Black, the Chief Executive, warning of the dangers of engaging with moneylenders. The Know Your Rights columns regularly appear in local print media and often act as the catalyst for numerous local print and radio slots.

Other reports that received coverage included the pre-budget submission, *Meeting Basic Living Costs* which highlighted concerns in such areas as income supports for people with

disabilities, those experiencing illness and carers. Affordable childcare, housing issues and problem debt and the need for financial inclusion were also raised (see Chapter 3).

Events during the year

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

In November, over 230 delegates attended the MABS National Conference in Croke Park. The conference provided an opportunity to network, learn and prepare for the future of a service that continues to respond to the needs of clients (see Chapter 5).

In the same month, over 180 Citizens Information volunteers were honoured at a national celebration event in Páirc Uí Chaoimh, Cork. Volunteer recognition has been an important feature on the CIB event calendar for the past eight years. It acknowledges the importance and value of volunteers, particularly for the Citizens Information Service.

Other websites and publications from the Citizens Information Board

Citizensinformationboard.ie

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

Publications

CIB publishes a range of information leaflets each year. Most of the leaflets produced in 2019 were printed by the Revenue Print Centre. We also publish advocacy, research and social policy reports to highlight and analyse issues identified by our services (see page 16 above).

All our publications are available across the Citizens Information network and are distributed to other service providers and information providers for display in public offices. These include Government departments and statutory agencies, MABS offices, local social welfare offices and health centres, TDs and senators, the voluntary and community sector, and other local networks.

PDF versions of all publications are available on citizensinformationboard.ie.



The *Benefits and Taxes 2019* wallchart and leaflet summarise benefits in 2019, with comprehensive tables of rates and income thresholds.



Relate

Relate is our journal which covers legislation updates and developments in the broad social services and social policy areas. Produced every two months, *Relate* covered a wide range of topics in 2019 including, Occupational and personal pensions, the European Union and its institutions, Residential tenancies legislation, Water and water quality in Ireland and Family law.

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

The *Guide to entitlements for over sixties*, the *Guide to entitlements for people with disabilities* and the *Information for those affected by bereavement* leaflets were reprinted in 2019.



Anita Nolan, South Leinster CIS helps with a Citizens Information query.

eLearning and training

In 2019, a range of new online courses were released covering issues such as *Cybersecurity*, *Child Protection*, *Quality Reviews*, *Social Policy*, *Employment Law*, *Family Law*, *Social Welfare: Jobseekers & Family Payments*, *HSE Entitlements & Benefits*, *Consumer Rights* and *Education & Vocational Training*. These training courses are available to all staff and volunteers in CISs and staff in MABS, NAS and SLIS. In 2019 the eLearning Team also released its first course specifically for CIS managers on *Incremental Credit and Starting Salary* to support the introduction of new policies on assessing incremental credits when recruiting staff. In 2019, 2,120 certificates of successful completion were awarded to learners.

All new CIS staff and volunteers complete the comprehensive and

mandatory *Essential Training for Information Providers (ETIP)* programme. In 2019, this course was revised and updated and a total of 121 learners completed the programme - the highest number of ETIP graduates ever.

In addition to addressing the specialist, CIB service-specific training needs of staff, there is also a demand for online training in more general work productivity, for example, business and information technology skills. These requirements can be best addressed through external providers of high-quality training such as LinkedIn Learning. In 2019, CIB expanded access to LinkedIn Learning to include all MABS employees and CIS managers to support on-going skills development.



Interior of the Citizens Information marquee before it opened for visitors at the National Ploughing Championships 2019.

Chapter 2: Citizensinformation.ie website

Our key information website, citizensinformation.ie, provides public service information for Ireland. The public can use the website to find out about their rights and entitlements. It is the primary information source for information providers in CISs and CIPS and also provides useful information for officers in MABS and other organisations.

Google Analytics statistics for citizensinformation.ie in 2019 showed **12,565,217 users and 47,023,182 page views**. This represents a small decrease in users (-1.9%) and a slight increase in page views (+0.7%) on the statistics for 2018.

The most visited categories on the site are social welfare with 25% of page views, followed by employment with 16%, travel and recreation and moving country with 9% each, and money and tax with 8% of page views.

Category	Users who visited the category	Page views	% total page views	Number of documents	
1	Social Welfare	2,801,257	10,037,493	25%	136
2	Employment	2,638,075	6,266,211	16%	118
3	Travel and Recreation	2,011,840	3,642,738	9%	91
4	Moving Country	1,609,738	3,409,911	9%	67
5	Housing	1,237,484	3,242,709	8%	81
6	Money and Tax	1,474,949	3,015,752	8%	93
7	Birth, Family and Relationships	902,726	2,050,483	5%	88
8	Health	841,157	1,948,615	5%	98
9	Education	849,947	1,706,522	4%	101
10	Justice	901,077	1,685,941	4%	162
11	Government	446,569	834,296	2%	121
12	Death and Bereavement	295,482	570,681	1%	22
13	Consumer Affairs	291,238	510,976	1%	59
14	Environment	270,219	419,725	1%	37
15	Returning to Ireland	25,032	74,279	0.2%	19

The most visited documents in 2019 were:

Page	Page views	% of total page views	
1	Irish citizenship through birth or descent	590,782	1.26%
2	How to apply for your first Irish passport as an adult	562,227	1.20%
2	Working Family Payment	482,502	1.03%
4	State Pension (Contributory)	464,855	0.99%
5	Carer's Allowance	387,323	0.82%
6	Illness Benefit	360,194	0.77%
7	Minimum rates of pay	342,201	0.73%
8	How your income tax is calculated	321,703	0.68%
9	Medical card	306,741	0.65%
10	Disability Allowance	305,435	0.65%

At the end of 2019, there were **1,363 content pages** on the site, published in English and Irish.

Returning to Ireland

In 2019, CIB developed a new online resource for returning Irish emigrants, supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFA). Providing integrated information for returning Irish citizens was a key recommendation of the *Indecon Economic Report on Addressing Challenges Faced by Returning Irish Emigrants*, a study commissioned by DFA and published in February 2018.

'Returning to Ireland' provides practical information on Irish public services aimed specifically at people returning to live in Ireland such as how the Irish taxation system works, how to get an Irish driving licence or get a passport for a child born abroad. Returning to Ireland content is available online at citizensinformation.ie/en/returning_to_ireland/.

Speaking at the launch of the new resource in August 2019, Minister Cannon said:

“The Citizens Information Board has already consolidated its position as the go-to resource for information about public services in Ireland. This new content, specially catered for returning emigrants, is exceptionally detailed and will no doubt be an invaluable resource for Irish emigrants moving back home.”



CIB reported on the progress of the project to the Interdepartmental Committee on the Irish Abroad during the year.

Brexit

Uncertainty about Brexit was a feature of 2019. During the year, over 2 million users from the UK (including Northern Ireland) visited citizensinformation.ie – almost 17% of total users. Website visitors searched for information on how Brexit might affect their pensions, travel rights

and how to get Irish citizenship, with pages on Irish citizenship among the most visited pages on citizensinformation.ie over the year.

During the year, the citizensinformation.ie team monitored Brexit developments and added relevant information on what Brexit means for citizens including:

- [What is Brexit?](#)
- [Brexit and you](#)
- [Brexit information and supports](#)



Katie Godwin, Digital Content Officer and Cathy Gerrard, Information Resources Manager pictured at Government Buildings during the announcement of Innovation Week.

Expanded information on the Common Travel Area between Ireland and the UK and the Good Friday Agreement was also added. CIB also worked with Border People to research the information needs of those living and working on the Border after Brexit.

Public Service Innovation Fund

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DPER) launched a new Public Service Innovation Fund in May 2019 and 136 applications were received from organisations across the public service. Nineteen projects were funded in 2019. CIB's application which addressed the growing trend of voice-based search was successful and was awarded €30,000.

Voice search is becoming increasingly popular and public bodies need to ensure that their information

reaches their audiences by adapting to the changing ways they search for information. Unlike text-based search, voice search provides only one answer to a question. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the top result comes from a trusted and reliable source of public service information like citizensinformation.ie. Users with disabilities and people with literacy difficulties also benefit from being able to search for information via voice.

The funding was used to examine what types of public service information are most likely to be asked for using voice and to optimise selected information on the citizensinformation.ie website for voice search. Following the conclusion of the project in early 2020, the knowledge gained will be used to optimise other sections of the site and findings can be shared with other public bodies.

Chapter 3: Citizens Information Services (CISs)

A national network of Citizens Information Centres (CICs) overseen by regional Citizens Information Service (CIS) companies provide free, impartial and confidential information, advice and advocacy services to the public.

Operational grants of €14,414,645 were paid to the eight CIS companies in 2019. This was an increase of €1,122,955 on the 2018 budget allocation (see Appendix 9).

New regional companies

2019 was the first full year of CIS activity since the restructuring of the 42 CIS companies in 2018, when the number of regional companies was reduced from 42 to eight. The regional managers of the CISs are responsible for overseeing delivery of a regional work plan, maximising resources, and driving a consistent approach to service delivery within their region. Regional boards of management help steer and manage the companies and CIB provides a range of oversight and support services. The eight new regional companies are:

Region	Regional manager location
Dublin South CIS	Tallaght
South Munster CIS	Cork
North Leinster CIS	Navan
North Dublin CIS	Balbriggan
North Connacht & Ulster CIS	Monaghan
North Munster CIS	Limerick
South Connacht CIS	Galway
South Leinster CIS	Tullamore

Callers

CISs assisted **564,391** people in 2019 and answered over a **million queries**. Over the past number of years, callers and queries have remained consistently at this high level.

There were more female callers to CISs in 2019 than male, 57% women, and 37% men, showing a similar pattern to previous years. Over 5% were recorded as couples, listed as one caller in the CIS database.

The national ratio of callers to queries was 1.82, which continues the rising trend of previous years.

Number of callers, queries, and queries per caller, 2019

CIS	Queries	Callers	Queries per caller
South Leinster CIS	176,833	75,361	2.35
North Leinster CIS	162,662	87,009	1.87
North Connacht and Ulster CIS	136,119	66,355	2.05
North Munster CIS	134,571	66,033	2.04
North Dublin CIS	124,217	82,534	1.51
South Munster CIS	120,748	73,628	1.64
Dublin South CIS	98,754	71,224	1.39
South Connacht CIS	70,899	42,247	1.68

Where age was recorded, the majority were in the 26–45 category (45.5%), followed by people aged 46–65 (40%). 16% of callers were aged 66 and over.

Where nationality was recorded, 75% were Irish and 25% were non-Irish, up from 24% in 2018. Of these non-Irish nationals, 14% were from an EU country and 11% were from outside the EU. The largest non-Irish nationality was Polish, followed by British, Nigerian and Romanian.

Over three quarters of callers (78%) contacted the centre in person, 21% by telephone and 1% by email or letter. The amount of time spent with callers continued to increase, with a 10% increase in the number of consultations taking 41–90 minutes, and a 9% increase in callers taking over 90 minutes. This continues an upward trend of recent years, which demonstrates the increasing complexity of queries.

Queries

The types of queries dealt with by services was similar to previous years, with social welfare, health, housing, employment, local issues and money and tax remaining the most common query types.

Social welfare was the largest query category in 2019, accounting for 459,255 (45%) of all queries. This is a small increase (0.7%) on 2018. Disability and illness related payments (47%) were the most queried payment types, with pensions, carers' payments and extra payments among the next most recorded social welfare queries. Only 10% of social welfare queries were about jobseekers' payments, a testament to the improvement in the jobs' market in 2019.

The next highest query categories were health (100,819), housing (87,262 – up 47% since 2015), employment (69,959), local (60,224, a 7% increase on 2018) and money and tax (59,894). A twofold increase in the number of queries on workplace disputes and redress were

recorded in 2019 compared to the previous year.

Medical cards were the highest single query area, as in previous years, rising from 64,931 in 2018 to 69,881 in 2019.

Top 10 payments/schemes	No. of queries 2019	No. of queries 2018	% change in 2019
Medical cards	69,881	64,931	7.6% ▲
State Pension (Contributory)	38,795	35,304	9.8% ▲
Disability Allowance	33,459	31,275	6.9% ▲
Carer's Allowance	33,433	32,155	3.9% ▲
Household Benefit Package	27,225	27,259	0.1% ▼
Jobseeker's Allowance	26,048	27,443	5.0% ▼
Legal aid and advice	23,260	22,217	4.6% ▲
Illness Benefit	22,628	20,629	9.6% ▲
Working Family Payment	21,869	24,236	9.7% ▼
Applying for local authority housing/social housing	21,177	22,175	4.7% ▼

Actions

The total number of queries recorded was **1,024,803**, a 0.7% increase on 2018.

35% of these were recorded as **simple**, down from 36% in 2018 and 39% in 2017. The number categorised as

complex rose again to 65% of all queries in 2019.

Queries were recorded as requiring **information** (46% or 473,888), advice and assistance (53% or 543,133) or **advocacy** (almost 1% or 7,782).

How Citizens Information Services help

In 2019, advice/assistance included:

- Exploring people's options (67%)
- Help with filling in forms (11.4%)
- Calculating amount of tax/benefit entitlement callers have (6.6%)
- Making phone calls to Government departments on behalf of clients (5.4%)
- Checking benefits (5%)

Advocacy generally involves working with a client over many months to progress a complex issue or appeal. See page 34 below.

"I really can't express my gratitude. The work you did was unbelievable and the confidence within myself that has been restored is definitely a huge deal owed to you guys. I feel a little lighter already."

Quote from North Dublin CIS advocacy client

National Ploughing Championships

In 2019 the National Ploughing Championships event took place in September in Fenagh, Co. Carlow. It was the first time the event was held at this location. The service was staffed by South Leinster CIS as well as MABS, CIPS and CIB. Issues dealt with during the event ranged from social welfare, health and the environment, to concerns over debt. The majority of queries were social welfare and health. The tent had over 4,400 visitors across the 3 days.

Celebrating Volunteers Event

Over 140 Citizens Information volunteers with representation from all eight regions were honoured in November 2019 at a national celebration event in Páirc Uí Chaoimh, Cork. Volunteer recognition has been an important feature on the CIB event calendar for the past eight years as it acknowledges the importance and value of volunteers, particularly for the Citizens Information Service. See pages 32-33 overleaf.



Angela Black, Chief Executive presents Teresa Butler, volunteer with North Munster CIS with her Calendar 2020 prize.



Lorraine O'Donovan, Regional Manager, South Munster CIS compered the event.



Attendees from North Leinster CIS.



Eileen Sherlock, South Munster CIS and Aidan Clarke, South Leinster CIS.



Vincent Farr, Irish Coast Guard speaking about his experience as a volunteer.



Pictured are some of the speakers who helped celebrate the CIS Volunteer Day in Cork from left: Bibi Baskin, Motivational Speaker, Angela Black, Chief Executive, Cllr. John Maher, Deputy Mayor of Cork and Tracey Kennedy, Cork GAA Chairperson.



Michael Owens, CIB and Mary Watters, North Dublin CIS.



Attending the Volunteer Event were from left: Paddy Wallace South Munster CIS, Sharon Dillon North Connacht and Ulster CIS and Richard Regan South Connacht CIS.



CIB event organisers pictured from left: Michelle Melia, Claire Ruddy, Eileen Lee, Mary Kelliher, Sara McSweeney, Angela Black, Chief Executive, Sharon Conroy, Michael Owens, Cathy O'Donoghue and Grainne Griffin.



Volunteers at the celebration lunch.



A harpist provided music at the event.

Advocacy in Citizens Information Services

CISs offer an advocacy service in a wide range of areas, including social welfare, employment, housing, consumer issues, health and immigration.

Citizens Information Services provided advocacy to 8,808 clients in 2019. This work included 6,125 short-term advocacy cases. Short-term work generally involves one or two engagements, such as writing a letter of complaint or negotiating a product refund.

However, the majority of the time spent on advocacy involves working with a client over many months to progress a complex issue or appeal. CIS worked with 2,683 long-term advocacy clients on complex issues such as employment appeals, social welfare appeals and housing cases. The majority (65%) of advocacy cases in 2019 related to social welfare, an increase of 57% on 2018. Employment and housing cases both decreased by 2% from 2018.

Social policy returns

CISs provide vital data on gaps and inconsistencies in service provision. These issues are identified in social policy returns on CIB's Oyster database. In 2019, CISs submitted 7,185 social policy returns, a 46% increase on 2018.

75% of social policy returns highlighted administrative or operational issues that clients had when accessing payments or services. A large number of the increased returns related to difficulties accessing online services or provisions.

Delays in processing social welfare applications, particularly for disability and carer payments, accounted for most of these returns. In housing, social housing applications, the length of time clients were spending on local authority housing lists and difficulty in accessing information were most prevalent. Many clients experienced difficulties and delays in the processing of medical card applications and renewals. See also Chapter 1.

Staffing in the CIS network

At the end of 2019, there were 206.35 whole-time equivalent (WTE) employees in the CIS network. There were also 196 employment scheme workers and 903 volunteers, a slight reduction on the 2018 figures.

While the total number of employees remained the same as 2018, there were a number of changes within the national staffing allocation.

The two-year Dedicated Advocacy Pilot (DAP) programme concluded at the end of 2018, reducing WTE numbers by 4.5. The pilot was reviewed in 2019 and CIB made an application to the DEASP to develop a new version of the scheme.

Three new permanent Advocacy Support Worker (ASW) posts were allocated to the CIS network bringing the total number of ASWs to eight. This increase in staffing allowed for the restructuring of the ASW Programme with an ASW assigned to support each regional CIS company.

During the restructuring process a number of irregular posts were identified and as part of the drive to achieve staffing consistency, these roles were regularised leading to a slight increase of 1.5 WTEs in the staffing allocations.

CIS staffing strategy

CIS staffing allocations were reviewed in 2019 to enhance the service offer to members of the public and improve the terms and conditions for CIS staff. The process began with an online survey consultation with staff in January 2019 followed by a consultation event in Croke Park in February 2019 (attended by 239 CIS staff and board members).

Following the consultation, a full review and redevelopment of the CIS staff handbook was completed through the CIS Employer Union Forum. A new handbook, including provisions on study leave, career break and critical illness, was endorsed by union ballot in December 2019.

CIB made a successful application to the DEASP to extend CIS pay scales through the addition of long-service increments (LSIs). LSIs were introduced in October 2019 and this resulted in 166 long-serving CIS employees moving to LSI 1 or LSI 2 with the salary increase back-paid to January 2019.

As part of the staffing strategy, the staffing structure of the CIS was reviewed by the CIS Employer Union

Forum. A number of changes were agreed, to come into effect from 1 January 2020, including the introduction of two new full-time grades of staff, a senior information officer and a regional administrator.

Advocacy support workers and the Advocacy Development Group

Eight advocacy support workers (ASWs) are employed across the Citizens Information network to coach and mentor staff in the processes and skills of advocacy casework to build their capacity. ASWs also provide on-call advice on casework. ASWs are supported by an external expert support service.

June 2019 saw the first meeting of the new CIS Advocacy Development Group (ADG). The ADG replaced the ASW Programme Development and Management Groups with one cross regional and cross role group. The ADG is responsible for maintaining a strategic and high-level national focus on the development of advocacy services and for identifying gaps in CIS advocacy standards, policies and resources. The ADG will oversee and authorise advocacy-related policies and procedures.

The group's membership includes two representatives from each of the eight regional CIS companies across a range of roles (information providers, development managers, regional managers and ASWs) and CIB's Advocacy and Service Delivery teams.

Chapter 4: Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS)

The Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS) is a national service based in Cork. CIPS is a company limited by guarantee and is fully funded by the Citizens Information Board. CIPS operates in many respects as a conventional call centre. CIPS also makes a key contribution to other elements of CIB's remit, such as social policy input and support to the Deaf community via a web chat service. CIPS also supports information providers throughout the eight regional Citizens Information Service companies through a Peer Support service.

CIPS operates under the strategic direction of a voluntary board. Appointments to the CIPS board are made by CIB's Chief Executive.

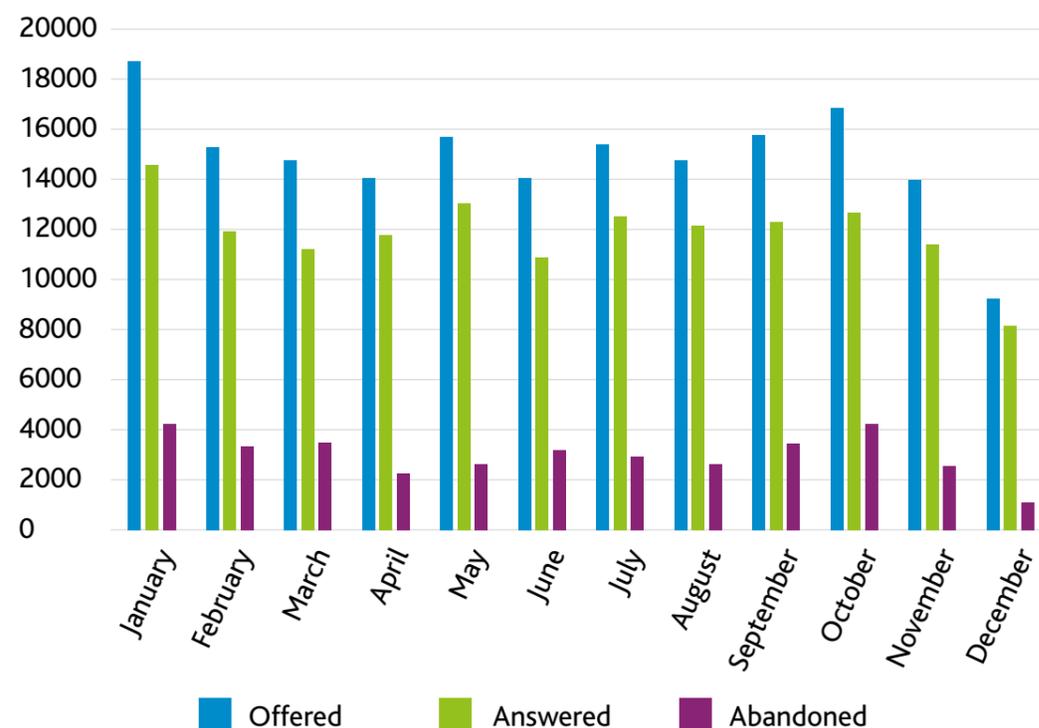
In 2019, CIPS operational grant from CIB was €1,267,500.

Statistics

The volume of calls offered in 2019 was 178,793 and **142,951 calls were answered**, an 80% answer rate.

138,608 of the total calls answered were from the public line, and 4,343 calls from colleagues through the Peer Support line (see below).

CIPS monthly call volumes in 2019 (all lines)



Another key success in 2019 was the continued reduction in abandoned calls (calls where the caller hangs up and does not continue the call). The abandoned call rate has reduced by over 10% since 2017 with a 5% reduction from 2017 to 2018 and a further 6% reduction in 2019.

The average speed to answer was two minutes and twenty-eight seconds in 2019. This represents an improvement of one minute and seven seconds from 2018 and two minutes and 5 seconds when compared to 2017. The average talk time for calls is under six minutes, at five minutes fifty-three seconds. CIPS call quality remains consistently high with an overall average quality score of ninety-five percent.

Quality assurance

CIPS management ensures the quality of all its interactions with the public and with Citizens Information peers in various ways. These include:

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

Peer support to the CIS network

CIPS launched a pilot program called the Peer Support service in 2016. The service operates from 10am to 5pm and is

intended primarily to support volunteers working in Citizens Information Centres (or outreach clinics). CIPS information officers answered 4,343 peer support calls in 2019. This is a 55% increase on 2018.

Web chat service

Live Advisor is a web chat service for people with hearing or speech impediments or who experience other barriers to communication by telephone. Over 2,300 web chat queries were answered in 2019, a 28% increase on chats in 2018.

Social policy

The CIPS social policy team includes two social policy coordinators and six social policy team members. The coordinators take responsibility for training in relation to social policy, reporting social policy returns as well as working with CIB on social policy reports, and working groups.

CIPS policy returns to CIB, indicate emerging and recurrent issues noted during interactions with callers, highlighting access and administrative barriers and also gaps and inconsistencies in service provision.

Staffing and finances

CIPS is staffed by a manager, two team supervisors, 17 whole-time equivalent information officers, a senior administrator and two part-time administrators.

In addition, one temporary information officer supported the Peer Support service throughout 2019. Two information officers were seconded to South Munster CIS throughout the year.

Chapter 5: Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)

The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) provides a free, confidential, non-judgemental and independent service throughout the country for people with debt issues.

MABS aims to provide people, particularly those on low incomes, with practical advice on dealing with their finances. MABS also provides local communities with education on budgeting and money management.

Much of the work of MABS in 2019 focused on consolidating the new service delivery model (following the restructuring of the 51 MABS companies in 2018 into 8 regional companies), ensuring that regional companies have a good representation of skills on their board of management and introducing a new system of collective bargaining for MABS staff through the formation of an Employer Union Forum.

MABS support services

MABS National Development CLG (MABS ND) was a central support service that provided technical support for case work, money management, education and training to MABS companies. MABS ND was responsible for the national MABS Helpline. National Traveller MABS (NTMABS) advocates for the financial inclusion of Travellers (and other marginalised groups) to help them to access legal and affordable credit and manage money. In 2019, work started on aligning the structure of MABS ND to support the work of the eight regional companies and progress was made on establishing a new company called MABS Support and transferring the MABS Helpline to North Dublin MABS CLG to create better service delivery synergies. The final transfers took place in early 2020. See page 44.

What MABS advisers do

The money advisers (including dedicated Mortgage Advisers, or DMAs) at MABS help clients with a wide range of personal debts and budgeting issues. As many clients have more than one sort of debt, MABS advisers take each person's case as a whole and try to find the right solution for their situation. Common issues dealt with by MABS advisers include:

- Mortgage arrears
- Personal loan arrears
- Utilities arrears
- Credit card debt
- Hire purchase arrears
- Rent arrears
- Court fines
- Catalogue debts
- Sub-prime loans
- Moneylender debt
- Personal Microcredit
- Personal insolvency (Abhaile) vouchers

Client statistics in 2019

16,971 new clients came to MABS in 2019 - representing a 10% increase on the new client figure for the previous year. A further 2,114 Information clients were advised about budgeting and money management in 2019. The Active Client caseload on 31 December 2019 was 13,587 – down 5.8% on 2018. The active caseload figure includes 1,027 special account cases which represents 7.5% of the overall active client caseload.

The largest percentage of new clients (62%) were in the 41-65 age group with 28% aged between 26-40 years - 55% of all new clients were female.

46% of new clients received a social welfare payment and 33% of clients' primary income came from employment or self-employment.

Most MABS clients live in mortgaged accommodation (48%) with 6% owning their own homes with no mortgage. 15% of clients live in private rented accommodation and 13% in rented local authority accommodation.

Debts

The total amount owed by new MABS clients to creditors on 31 December 2019, based on the debt they had when they first came to MABS, was €1.3 billion. The average level of recorded debt for new clients at the end of 2019 was €81,400 (includes total to clear debts) as compared to €70,300 for 2018. Personal loans (31.4%) were the highest debt type with mortgage debt a close second (30.7%). Credit card debt at 11% in 2019 was lower than 2018. Utility debt is 11% of recorded debts.



MABS staff pictured at the National Ploughing Championships with Adrian O'Connor, Senior Manager.

Waiting times

The average waiting time reported per service at the end of December 2019 was 2.25 weeks.

MABS Helpline

The MABS National Helpline received **25,075 calls in 2019** and 2,050 emails from clients. During the year, 7,116 referrals were made to MABS local services, 557 of these referrals were classified as emergency clients. 545 callers to the MABS Helpline were referred to Dedicated Mortgage Advisers (DMAs) and of these 168 were categorised as urgent cases. The MABS Helpline issued 70 PIP vouchers during 2019. (A PIP voucher entitles the client to a free consultation with a Personal Insolvency Practitioner.)

Events and community education

MABS National Conference 2019

Over 230 delegates attended the Money Advice and Budgeting Conference in Croke Park on 2 November 2019.

A number of high-profile keynote speakers gave presentations including Michael McNaughton, Chief Executive, Insolvency Service of Ireland, Brian Hayes, Chief Executive, Banking & Payments Federation of Ireland, Ed Sibley, Deputy Governor, Central Bank of Ireland and Sandy Madar, President, European Consumer Debt Network.

The Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Regina Doherty TD addressed delegates and thanked all those present for their hard work and commitment. She singled out the empathy coupled with professionalism that MABS staff offer all their clients.

A series of eight workshops on themes ranging from 'Financial Inclusion and Education' to 'Illegal Moneylending' and 'Debt and Addictions' took place in the afternoon. A video on the impact MABS makes, featuring staff from North Dublin MABS, gave a powerful video message on the importance of MABS for so many people. See pages 42-43.

Angela Black, Chief Executive closed the conference by summing up the contribution of both the speakers and the organising committee:

"Because of you and your work, thousands of families are better off financially, socially and emotionally. Together we will future-proof the network and solidify the reputation of MABS as a pillar of information, support and money advice in the community in the 21st century".

MABS and second level students

One important aim of MABS is to provide access to money management education for young people to build future financial resilience. MABS provides interactive and age-appropriate learning to young people and children in schools around the country. In 2019, MABS featured on the Leaving Certificate Home Economics paper for the first time. In a section that covered effective management of a family budget, students were asked to outline the role of the Money Advice and Budgeting Service in helping families who are experiencing financial difficulties.

Global Money Week

Global Money Week (GMW), a Child and Youth Finance International (CYFI) initiative, is an annual financial awareness campaign designed to inspire children and young people to learn about money matters, livelihoods and entrepreneurship. It is a worldwide initiative with organisations from 169 countries participating. The theme in 2019 was "Learn, Save, Earn" which taught children about money management, saving skills and how to maximise your income.

During Global Money Week 2019, MABS offices around Ireland engaged with 500 students from 15 schools in their local areas primarily students in transition year or in the senior cycle. These young

people took part in activities that helped them to understand the difference between spending needs and wants and how to make responsible spending choices.

Advanced Diploma in Money Advice Practice (ADMAPP)

The graduation ceremony for the final 27 graduates of the Advanced Diploma in Money Advice Practice took place in Belfast in July. 136 MABS staff have completed the Diploma over the lifetime of the Programme.

Staffing and finances

The number of whole-time equivalent (WTE) posts in MABS at the end of 2019 was 271, made up of eight regional managers, 44.8 money advice coordinators, 63.39 administrators and 155 money advisers (including DMA advisers).

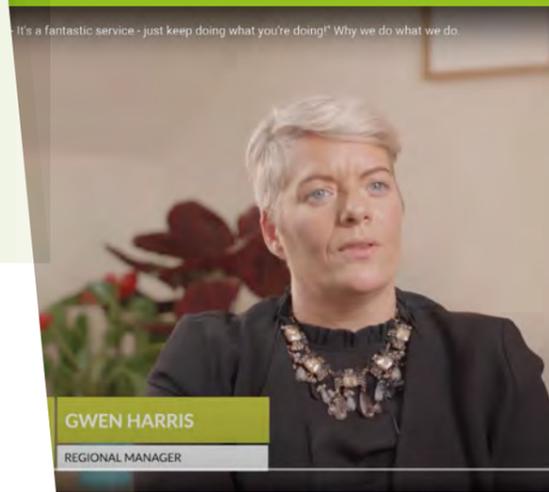
CIB funding allocated to MABS in 2019 was €24.72 million, 41% of all CIB funds (see Appendix 9). Operational grants for the 8 MABS companies were €15.9 million (an increase of €460k on 2018) with an additional €2.5 million for the Dedicated Mortgage Arrears programme and €3.5 million for the Abhaile Programme. €2.81 million was allocated for centralised support to MABS including MABS National Development, National Traveller MABS, promotion, insurance and other contingencies.



Debt and Addictions workshop presenter Emma Kavanagh, Clinical Services Manager, Rutland Centre

Conference MC Adrian O'Connor, Senior Manager

From left, Karl Cronin, Regional Manager, North Connacht & Ulster MABS, Gwen Harris, Regional Manager, North Dublin MABS, Michael Naughton, CEO, ISI, Sandy Madar, President, ECDN, Ed Sibley, Deputy Governor, CBol, Michelle O'Hara, Regional Manager, South Leinster MABS and Paul Tucker, Chair South Leinster MABS and the MABS Employer Group Executive.



GWEN HARRIS
REGIONAL MANAGER

A short video highlighting why the staff of MABS do what they do was also premiered on the day.

Conference Organising Committee from left: Evelyn Lee, PR and Promotions, CIB, Karl Cronin, Regional Manager, North Connacht & Ulster MABS, Noel O'Meara, Committee Chair, CIB, Bobby Barbour, Manager, Abhaile and Mary Lyne, MABS National Manager

Illegal Moneylending workshop presenter Dr. Stuart Stamp, Maynooth University

Welcoming Minister Regina Doherty TD (centre) to the conference were from left: Noel O'Meara, Committee Chair, Angela Black, Chief Executive, Gwen Harris, Regional Manager, North Dublin MABS and Sean Sheridan, CIB Board member.



Angela Black, Chief Executive opens the conference.

Keynote speakers at MABS conference from left: Sandy Madar, President, ECDN, Michael Naughton, CEO, ISI, Ed Sibley, Deputy Governor, CBol and Angela Black, Chief Executive

Financial Abuse workshop presenter Siobhan Nunn, Principal Social Worker, HSE & National Safeguarding Committee

Chapter 6: MABS Support CLG

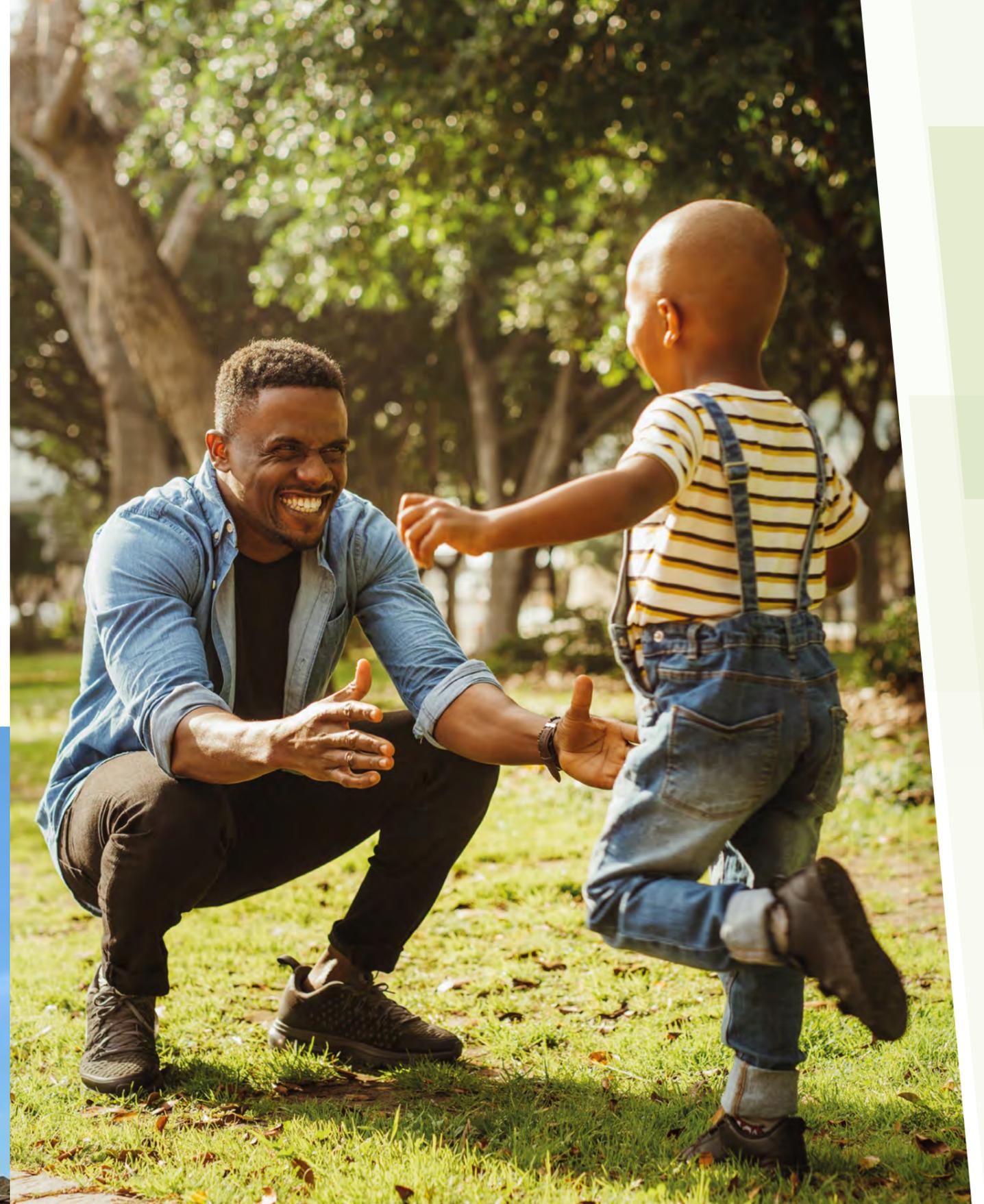
Following the successful restructuring of the CIS and MABS companies in 2018, the Board of CIB reviewed the role and function of MABS National Development (MABS ND) in the context of the establishment of the new MABS regional model. In early 2019, the Board decided to undertake a reorganisation of MABS ND which resulted in the transfer of the MABS Helpline function and its current staff to North Dublin MABS and the transfer of the remaining functions and staff of MABS ND to a newly established support services company.

The new support service company is called MABS Support CLG, and it will develop and enhance the functions of the MABS network relating to training and quality and work closely with the regional MABS companies to establish new services in the future. The transfer of staff to the relevant companies

took place in February 2020. The reorganisation did not affect the current location, staff or services offered by MABS ND. The priority for 2020 is to ensure that the new MABS structures are consolidated for the benefit of the users of the services at local level and callers to the MABS Helpline.



External view of Citizens First marquee at National Ploughing Championships 2019



"We were up to our eyes in debt when we came. We were very nervous to make that first call... but now we are starting to see light at the end of the tunnel."

MABS client, Wexford

Chapter 7: Abhaile – Mortgage Arrears Support Scheme

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

Abhaile is an umbrella brand providing a one-stop-shop to a range of financial advice and legal supports. Financial advice is provided by a MABS dedicated mortgage arrears (DMA) adviser or Personal Insolvency Practitioner (PIP). Legal support is available from duty solicitors and MABS court mentors at circuit court possession hearings. Legal advice is available from a consultation solicitor service and through Personal Insolvency Arrangement (PIA) reviews, also known as Section 115A review under the Personal Insolvency (Amendment) Act 2015.

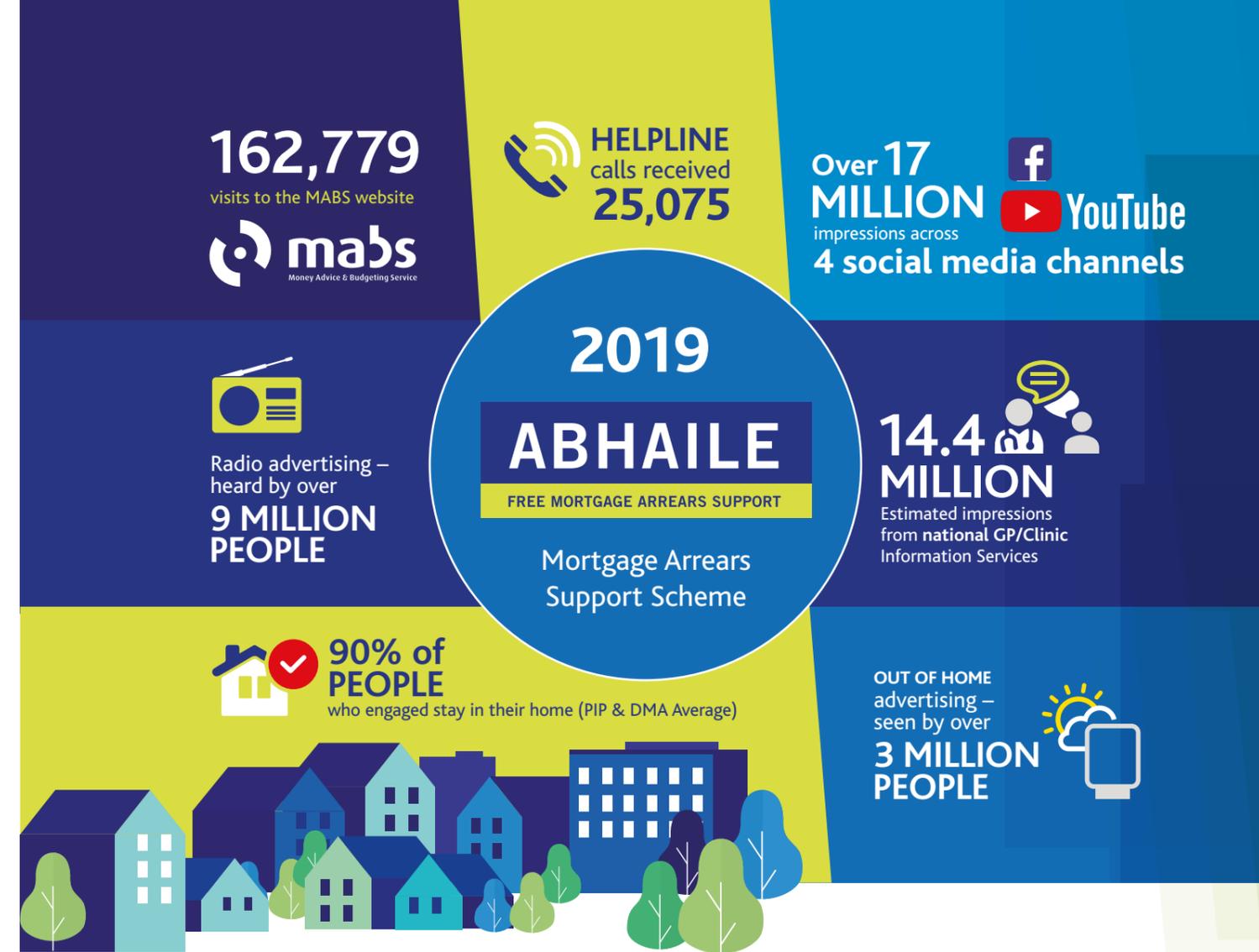
Abhaile is jointly coordinated and funded by the Department of Justice and Equality and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP). Funding from the DEASP is administered through CIB, which holds the governance and communications remit for the scheme. MABS, the Insolvency Service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

Dedicated Mortgage Arrears (DMA) adviser service

The DMA adviser service was set up in 2015. It aims to help borrowers cope with mortgage arrears by providing free, independent, expert advice and support tailored to meet individual circumstances. The DMA service is now incorporated as part of Abhaile. By the end of 2019, DMA advisers had provided advice and assistance to 8,513 borrowers in late-stage mortgage arrears - a 34% increase on 2018 despite a decrease in the number of (Principal Private Residence) PPR accounts in mortgage arrears nationally. With the advisers' help, almost a quarter of these borrowers succeeded in resolving their housing problems. Solutions negotiated included alternative repayment arrangements, interest-rate reductions, mortgage-to-rent schemes and lump-sum settlement.

"Since we've entered the Abhaile programme we can only say positive things about the way that we have been dealt with and we would strongly recommend the service to anyone who might find themselves in mortgage arrears. We know we are not alone thanks to the support from Home for Life, MABS and the Abhaile programme."

Abhaile client, Letterkenny



Court mentoring service

There are 31 County Registrar courts across Ireland. CIB is grateful for the collaboration and co-operation of the Courts Service and its county registrars, which has allowed MABS staff to attend County Registrar courts under the Abhaile scheme, to support borrowers at possession hearings. Typically, two MABS staff attend: one outside to meet and discuss with clients, and one in attendance at the court to observe proceedings, take note of referrals by the registrar, support clients and answer any questions if directed by the registrar. The court mentors take note of all possession

orders listed and their outcomes. The service has been very positively received. At the end of 2019, court mentors nationwide had supported over 15,000 borrowers at court dates.

Debt Relief Notices (DRNs)

MABS has provided an Approved Intermediary (AI) Service for the processing of Debt Relief Notices under the personal insolvency legislation since 2013. Debt Relief Notices provide for total debt write off of qualifying debts of up to €35,000 for eligible people on low income with few or no assets. A total of 285 DRNs were issued in 2019.

Getting the message to the people that need it

The aim of Abhaile communications in 2019 was to build on the awareness achieved since the launch of Abhaile, and to increase trust in the scheme and the supports available. This was achieved by gaining a deeper understanding of the target audience and targeting them through a variety of online and offline communication mediums.

As the cohort of borrowers in arrears continues to decline and becomes harder to reach, the Abhaile message must be agile and reflect the sentiment of its target audience. This was the basis for the new creative suite and the new brand advert, which premiered in cinemas in October.

Abhaile also engaged in a radio partnership during the year with the Urban Media Radio Group. The partnership was with six regional radio stations. These stations include, WLR FM, C103, Galway Bay FM, LMFM, Q102 and Live95.

The *Ask the Expert* partnership involved a fortnightly slot on a mid-morning talk show with a local MABS expert or Personal Insolvency Practitioner (PIP). The expert discussed topics on mortgage arrears such as court date appearances, types of solutions and the Mortgage to Rent scheme, as well as questions submitted by listeners.

Key Abhaile statistics for 2019

- Up to the end of 2019, almost 15,000 households (17,442) have been supported by the Abhaile scheme.
- There were 25,075 calls to the MABS Helpline in 2019 and the Abhaile queue represented 10.3% (2,586), of those calls, an increase of 6.2% over 2018. The Abhaile queue indicates the number of callers who requested to speak with an Abhaile representative.
- Abhaile also encourages people to visit the MABS website for further information. The website had 162,779 users in 2019.



IF YOU
ARE IN SERIOUS
MORTGAGE ARREARS,
ABHAILE CAN HELP YOU
TO KEEP YOUR HOME.

CALL 0761 07 2000

mabs.ie/abhaile

Call between 9am and
8pm Monday to Friday



Chapter 8: National Traveller MABS

National Traveller MABS (NTMABS) highlights issues of over-indebtedness and exclusion from financial institutions among Irish Travellers and responds through its research and policy work.

NTMABS establishes ways for the Traveller community to access legal and affordable credit, and money management advice, and builds capacity within the community through education. NTMABS supports both MABS and the Traveller community to ensure Travellers can easily access the service.

In 2019 National Traveller MABS continued its work of improving budgeting and money management for the Traveller community.

Factsheets were produced on:

- Energy poverty
- Personal finance issues
- Traveller accommodation



Pictured at the launch of the report into *Energy Poverty of Travellers Living in Mobile Homes* - from left Bridget Collins, Pavee Point, Angela Black, Chief Executive and Nancy Collins, Pavee Point.



Pictured at the launch of the *Guide for Families of Travellers in Prison* are: from top left Tanya Lawlor, Michelle Kearns, Sian Crowley, Gwen Harris, Marie Clarke, Temi Animashaun, Cathy White, Dermot Sreenan. Bottom, from left Jules McDonagh, Angela Black, Chief Executive, Ita Mangan, Chair, Nancy Power, Margaret Collins.

As members of the Travellers in Prison Initiative, NTMABS were partners in the development of a financial advice guide for families with a member in prison launched in November 2019.

Research

In June 2019, NTMABS launched a research report, *Accommodating Ethnicity Addressing Energy Poverty Among Travellers Living in Mobile Homes and Trailers*, written by Dr. Stuart Stamp. The report makes recommendations both for the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and for the Department of Housing Planning and Local Government.

Community Education

MABS developed a new flyer promoting MABS to the Traveller community in conjunction with two Traveller Primary Health Care Projects and launched it as part of the Traveller Pride celebrations. It is designed to be easy to read and to resonate with a Traveller audience. The generic flyer can be customised with the contact information of the local MABS using an address label.

A short film promoting budgeting and saving among young Travellers called 'My Money', was produced to assist with the delivery of community education.

Community education training sessions with MABS in Carlow and Offaly were held to support the delivery of money management sessions with the local Traveller groups in their areas.

Chapter 9: National Advocacy Service (NAS)

The National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities (NAS) provides an independent, confidential and free representative advocacy service that works exclusively for each person using the service, adhering to the highest professional standards. NAS ensures that when life decisions are made, due consideration is given to the will and preference of people with disabilities, enabling them to protect their rights.

NAS has a particular remit to work with those who may be isolated from their community of choice or mainstream society, they may communicate differently and have limited informal supports.

NAS has a national office and operates across four regions: Greater Dublin, North-East and Midlands, Southern, and Western.

Service statistics

In 2019, the total number of initial enquiries to NAS was 4,083. NAS provided full representative advocacy

casework to 1,022 people, this included 569 new cases in addition to 453 cases that were open at the start of 2019.

A further 3,061 people received other forms of advocacy support or information, including support with self-advocacy and advice on getting additional services.

NAS advocates spent 14,102 hours working with clients on advocacy cases in 2019 and 4,646 hours on initial enquiries.

Category	# cases	%
Capacity building	605	59%
Housing	467	46%
Family and relationships	220	22%
Health	218	21%
Residential and healthcare settings	211	21%
Decision making	192	19%
Social care	150	15%
Financial issues/matters	133	13%
Access to justice	124	12%
Parenting with a disability	105	10%
Complaints	64	6%
Issues for CIB-funded services	49	5%
Safeguarding	48	5%

Disability type	# cases	%
Intellectual	497	49%
Physical	324	32%
Mental Health	247	24%
Learning	147	14%
Acquired Brain Injury	121	12%
Autism spectrum	111	11%
Sensory	86	8%

Citizens Information Services (CISs) and NAS work in collaboration across the country to provide information and advocacy support to people with disabilities. CISs refer individuals to NAS when they meet its specific remit

to provide representative advocacy to people with disabilities who are in particularly vulnerable situations. NAS also directs enquiries to Citizens Information Services, particularly for social welfare information and support.



NAS Annual Report 2018 launch, from left: Nuala Doherty, NAS Chairperson, Louise Loughlin, NAS National Manager, Kavita Sharma, NAS Advocate, Liz Halton, NAS client, Angela Black, Chief Executive and Sarah O'Callaghan, Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

Funding and staffing

The CIB budget allocation for NAS in 2019 was €3.2 million. NAS staff in 2019 consisted of one national manager, one corporate services manager, one human resources executive, one policy and communications officer, one national office and four regional administrators, four regional managers, eight (whole-time equivalent) senior advocates and 28 (whole time equivalent) advocates. Two temporary advocacy project officer positions worked on data projects for the service.

Social policy and submissions

NAS contributed to the CIB pre-budget submission (see Chapter 1) and made other submissions including:

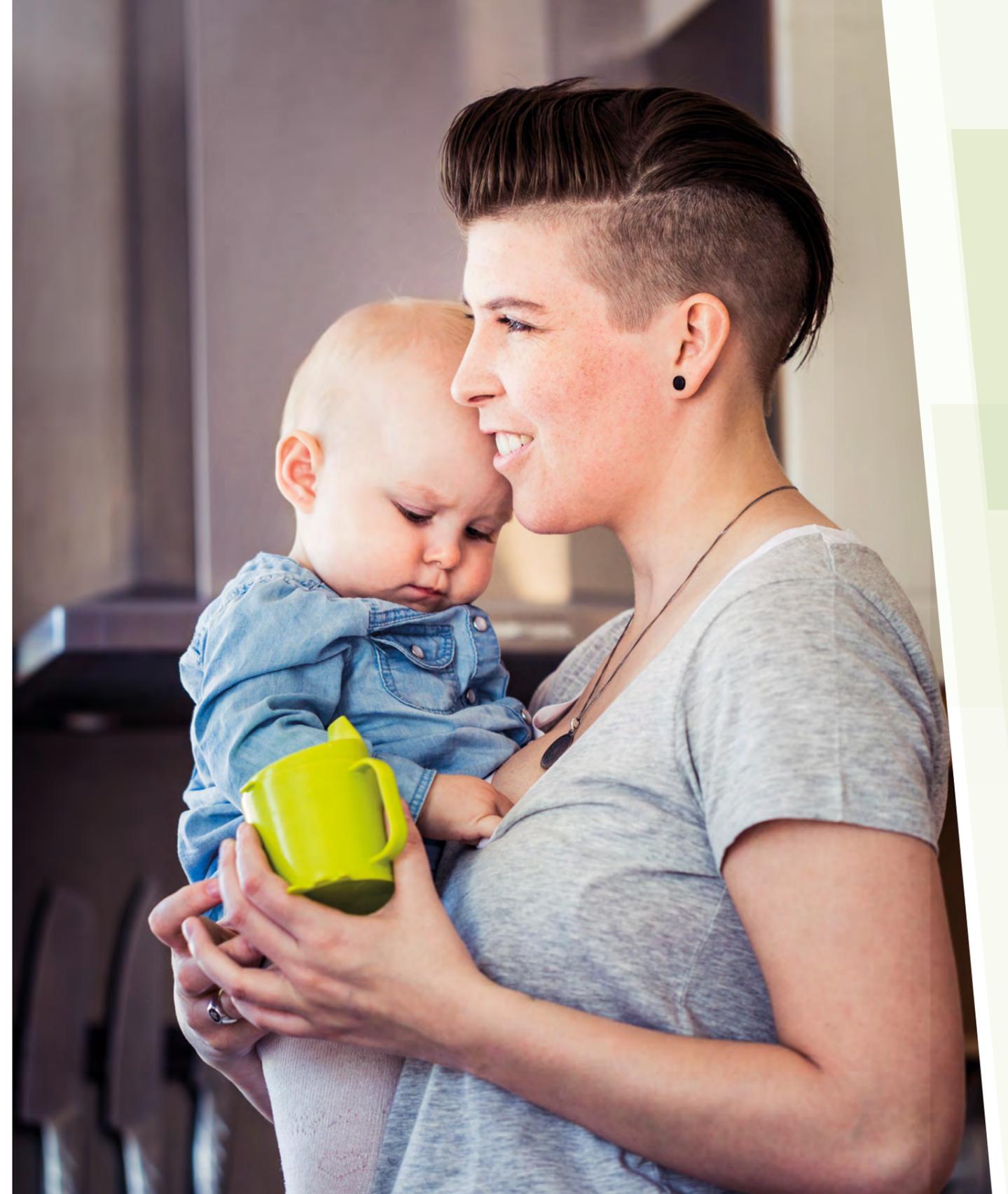
- Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, 2016-2021
- Garda Inspectorate Consultation on Custody Practice
- HIQA Scoping Consultation on a Human Rights based approach to Care and Support in Health and Social Care Settings
- Role of Advocacy in Supporting the European Disability Strategy

NAS also undertook training and promotional activity and held membership on a number of different stakeholder groups throughout the year.

The Patient Advocacy Service (PAS)

PAS went live in October 2019 and was launched by the Minister for Health, Simon Harris, at the Department of Health's Patient Safety Conference. The service is an independent, free and confidential service that provides information and support to people who want to make a complaint about an experience they have had in a HSE-funded public acute hospital. To provide this service in 2019, NAS received an income of €562,348 directly from the Department of Health for its development and implementation.

PAS recruited nine staff in 2019 comprising a service manager, two team leads and six advocacy officers. PAS provided advocacy support to 77 people for the months of November and December in 2019.



"Today I am back in my own home with friends, neighbours and close family, thanks to my advocate. I am very happy in my new life of freedom from fear and sadness and no longer cry myself to sleep at night."

NAS client

Chapter 10: Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS)

The Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS) supports high quality interpretation services to ensure Deaf people can access public and social services and participate in Irish society as full and equal citizens.

SLIS provides the Irish Remote Interpreting Service (IRIS) and facilitates and refers requests for Irish Sign Language (ISL) interpreters. IRIS improves access to information, entitlements and rights by providing remote access to an ISL interpreter via video link from the SLIS office.

SLIS is a limited company with charitable status and is managed by a board of directors comprising representatives of key national stakeholders.

SLIS operated the following services in 2019:

- A 24/7 emergency service to arrange for sign language interpreters in crisis situations. Emergency Mobile: 087 672 5179.
- A referral service linking service providers and Deaf people to interpreters, such as for GP appointments, public information events or services.
- A support and access service reducing barriers and supporting service providers to be more accessible to Deaf people.
- A Social Interpreting Fund – to cover interpreting costs for funerals and hardship cases.

- The Irish Remote Interpreting Service (IRIS), which supported the social inclusion of Deaf Irish Sign Language (ISL) users by providing a live video link to a sign language interpreter to facilitate access to public and other services.
- Supports to enhance quality standards for professional sign language interpreters and their customers.

During the year, SLIS continued to increase IRIS staffing and operating hours. IRIS services were available Monday to Friday 8am-8pm, Saturday 10am-2pm, and Sunday 10am-12 noon.

SLIS has been allocated multi-annual funding (administered by CIB) under the National Disability Inclusion Strategy (NDIS), published in July 2017. The NDIS 2017-2021 sets out what the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and the Department of Justice and Equality can do to develop and implement key ISL objectives including:

1. Develop the Irish Remote Interpreting Service (IRIS) by extending services to evenings and weekends and engaging public services to set up IRIS.

2. Develop a strategy to increase the number of trained Sign Language and Deaf interpreters, in consultation with key stakeholders.
3. Develop a national register of sign language interpreters and a quality-assurance and registration scheme for interpreters in consultation with key stakeholders, with a transparent registration scheme process.
4. Provide a continuous professional training and development programme for interpreters, to include a model of accredited and non-accredited training and delivery of supports.

Sign Language Interpreting and Access Support

In 2019, IRIS provided 7,503 interpreting assignments to 316 unique users in Ireland, an approximate increase of 15% on 2018. The areas for interpreting included medical, public service and education. SLIS provided 1,073 referral requests for face-to-face interpreting services.

SLIS provided support to 373 Deaf people who needed assistance to access services. In addition to this SLIS referred 682 interpreters for GP/Primary Care Access scheme appointments provided by the HSE.

Achievements and developments in 2019

In 2019, SLIS:

- Published an evaluation of IRIS services and worked to implement recommendations to enhance access and delivery of IRIS services.
- Launched a strategic framework to increase access and quality of interpreters in Ireland and worked to implement recommendations made in the report.
- Commissioned and published a Framework for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for Irish Sign Language Interpreters in Ireland.
- Facilitated the delivery of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) training for interpreters in Ireland.
- Piloted successful projects to provide remote interpreting services to Deaf people accessing Revenue services, An Garda Síochána public offices in Cabra, Dublin and Tralee, Co. Kerry and supported ISL users in Northern Ireland to access the Department for Communities.

Irish Sign Language Act 2017

The Irish Sign Language Act 2017 was signed into law in December 2017. The Act recognises Irish Sign Language (ISL) as a native and independent language and aims to improve access to public services, legal proceedings, education, interpretation services and television programming. Under the Act, public bodies will be required to prepare and implement ISL action plans and provide free ISL interpretation to people using or seeking access to statutory entitlements and services. The Act must come into operation no later than three years after it was passed and will have significant implications for SLIS.

The SLIS Board of Directors began the process of developing a new strategic plan due to be completed in 2020.

Governance, finance and staffing

CIB is the main funder of SLIS. Total budget allocation for SLIS in 2019 was approximately €706,370. The SLIS funding allocation from CIB in 2019 was €373,000 for core activities and €327,000 for National Disability Inclusion Strategy (NDIS) projects. SLIS also received a very small income from the provision of interpreting services to the private sector (€2,001).

In 2019, SLIS operated with one manager, 0.6 whole-time equivalent (WTE) finance officer, 2.5 WTE administrators, 3.5 WTE IRIS remote interpreters and one quality development officer.

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Appendix 1: Customer Service Charter

The Citizens Information Board provides independent information, advice and advocacy on public and social services through citizensinformation.ie, the Citizens Information Phone Service (0761 07 4000) and the network of Citizens Information Services. We are responsible for the Money Advice and

Budgeting Service and provide the National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities. We put the citizen at the centre of everything we do and this Charter sets out the principles that underpin our services. You can find our Customer Service Action Plan on our website, citizensinformationboard.ie.

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

Appendix 2: Board members 2019

The following people served on the Board of CIB in 2019:

- Ita Mangan (Chairperson)
- Eilis Barry
- James Clarke
- Mary Doyle
- Tim Duggan
- Josephine Henry
- Mary Higgins
- Tina Leonard
- Joanne McCarthy
- Niall Mulligan
- Cearbhall Ó Meadhra
- Ian Power
- John Saunders
- Seán Sheridan
- Nicola Walshe

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

Appendix 3:

Service teams and structure

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

1. Service Development and Support – Citizens Information and Advocacy
2. Service Development and Support – MABS and Abhaile
3. Information, Policy and Research
4. Corporate Services

Citizens Information and Advocacy

Citizens Information (Service Delivery)

The Citizens Information (Service Delivery) team promotes and supports continuous improvement in the quality and reach of essential frontline Citizens Information services. It provides a range of critical supports (including management, quality, training and organisational development supports) and substantial policy/procedural advice to the nationwide network of Citizens Information offices and the national Citizens Information Phone Service. The team also continuously monitors and reports on service development and delivery, and allocates and monitors funding (operational grants) to the frontline services.

Advocacy

The Advocacy team in CIB is responsible for supporting, funding, monitoring, reporting on and championing the provision of frontline advocacy services to individuals, in particular those with a disability. These frontline advocacy services are delivered through the National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities (NAS) and the network of Citizens Information Services (CISs). The frontline advocacy provided assists people in identifying and understanding their needs and options and in securing their entitlements to social services.

The Advocacy team works in close collaboration with other teams in CIB – in particular Service Delivery, Operations, Finance and Social Policy. The team also develops advocacy

standards, policies and resources, in collaboration with CIS personnel. Additionally, the Advocacy Team supports, funds, monitors and reports on the work and development of the Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS); this currently involves the progression of a range of critical projects under the National Disability Inclusion Strategy, intended to enhance service access for, and tackle the marginalisation of the Deaf community.

MABS and Abhaile (in 2019 Information Resources was under this pillar)

MABS Service Delivery

The MABS Service Delivery team is responsible for coordinating and supporting the eight Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) regional companies. The Service Delivery team resource and support MABS to ensure it can deliver high quality services to the public and to ensure that those services are constantly developing and improving to respond to public need. We work to develop and support new services and projects with MABS such as the Dedicated Mortgage Arrears service, Approved Intermediary service and the Chartered Accountant Voluntary Advice clinics (CAVA). The MABS Service Delivery team is also the key point for communication to and from MABS companies and addresses obstacles to service delivery including issues relating to ICT, staffing, finance and premises in cooperation with the Operations and ICT Teams.

Abhaile

The Abhaile communications team is responsible for delivering sustained communications and information campaigns aimed at long-term mortgage arrears borrowers. The goal is to encourage engagement with the State's mortgage arrears supports and ultimately contribute to positive solutions for those homeowners in the longest mortgage arrears. Abhaile is jointly coordinated and funded by the Department of Justice and Equality and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. MABS, the Insolvency Service of Ireland, the Legal Aid Board and the Citizens Information Board work together to provide the Abhaile services.

Information Resources

The Information Resources team is responsible for the Citizens Information website – citizensinformation.ie along with CIB's information publications. The Information Resources team is also responsible for CIB's corporate website – citizensinformationboard.ie.

Information, Policy and Research

Social Policy and Research

The Social Policy and Research team is responsible for developing CIB's social policy feedback role and undertaking research on models of information, advice and advocacy provision and on the information needs of service users. The team collects and analyses information and data on social policy

matters and the administration of social services from delivery services, develops information on the effectiveness of current social policy and services, highlights issues that are of concern to users of those services to policy makers, prepares evidence-based reports and contributes to public policy formulation by responding to policy consultations and preparing submissions.

Submissions in 2019

- Submission on Pathways to Work Strategy 2020 - 2024 (DEASP, September 2019)
- Pre-Budget Submission 2020 (DEASP, September 2019)
- Cost of Disability Research (DEASP, August 2019)
- Capping the cost of licensed moneylenders (Department of Finance, July 2019)
- A more equitable Ireland for Travellers (Seanad Public Consultation in June 2019)
- Review of Direct Provision and the International Protection Application Process (Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice and Equality, May 2019)
- Draft National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022 (Department of Rural and Community Development, May 2019)
- Evaluation of Community Banking and Local Provision of Banking and

Financial Services (Department of Finance, April 2019)

- Primary Care Reimbursement Service Strategic Plan 2019-2021 (HSE, April 2019)
- National Volunteering Strategy (Department of Rural and Community Development, February 2019)
- Draft Guidance on a Human Rights-Based Approach to Care and Support in Health and Social Care Settings (HIQA)
- Debt collection practices in European countries (Finance Watch)
- Draft Electricity and Gas Suppliers Handbook (Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU)
- EU Disability Strategy (European Commission)
- Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination)
- Briefing Paper on online access issues for Revenue clients (Revenue)

eLearning

The CIB eLearning Team is responsible for developing online courses and resources to support the training needs of staff and volunteers, particularly in the Citizens Information Services. The team works with key stakeholders to identify priority learning needs. These are then developed into online courses containing interactive lessons, videos,

case studies and assessments. Courses are available online through CIB's dedicated learning management system and can be accessed on any device with Internet access.

Corporate Services

HR

The HR team supports the staff of CIB, including in areas such as recruitment, induction and training. The team also assists in certain governance areas such as Freedom of Information. The HR team works closely with the Operations team, which is responsible for supporting the delivery services on HR and governance matters.

Finance and Administration

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

ICT

The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) team is responsible for the delivery of modern ICT supports to CIB and the delivery services. This involves the development and maintenance of networks and infrastructure as well as the provision of hardware and applications to more than 1,800 staff at 200 locations.

PR and Promotions

A PR and Promotions Executive promotes awareness of the Citizens Information Board and its main service brands of Citizens Information and MABS. In 2019, the PR Executive also provided PR support to the Abhaile project team and the Restructuring team.

Operations

The Operations team is responsible for supporting and monitoring the delivery services in relation to HR, finance, governance and premises. This is achieved through the provision of policies, guidelines, procedures and resources to maintain best practice and ensure legislative compliance. The team is also responsible for a number of areas in CIB, including data protection, Health and Safety, and property development and management.

Projects

The Projects team provides support to a number of CIB teams on various projects. The main project for the team in 2019 was the reorganisation of the national MABS support company, MABS National Development to become a new technical support company, MABS Support CLG. It is also responsible for the transferring of the MABS helpline to North Dublin MABS with remaining staff transferred to MABS Support CLG.

Appendix 4: Organisation chart



Appendix 5: Energy usage in 2019

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, lighting and ICT account for the main energy usage in CIB. In 2019, CIB consumed 357,008 kWh of electricity and 158,793 kWh of gas. CO₂ emissions were 153,262 kgCO₂, representing an 8.2% decrease on 2018.

2019 performance

- Energy savings are 6.9% better than 2018 and 30.9% down on baseline
- 13,404 Kwh less than 2018

CIB's energy performance was impacted in 2019 by increased leasehold floor area. CIB plans to improve energy performance in 2020 have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic but it is planned to recover our programme by

- Signing up to an SEAI Partnership programme
- Establishing an energy awareness programme
- Investing in limited energy saving initiatives and projects

Appendix 6: Protected Disclosures Act

CIB is committed to fostering an appropriate environment for addressing concerns relating to potential irregularities and/or wrongdoing, with respect to financial reporting and other matters in the workplace. CIB is also committed to providing the necessary support and assurances for staff that raise genuine concerns.

The Act requires public bodies to establish and maintain procedures for dealing with protected disclosures. CIB has a robust procedure in place in line with the provisions of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014.

No submissions were made to CIB under the Protected Disclosures Act during 2019.

Appendix 7: Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

All public bodies in Ireland have responsibility to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of their employees, customers, service users and everyone affected by their policies and plans.

Under Section 42(1) of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014, CIB, in common with all public bodies, is obliged, in the performance of its functions, to have regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the people to whom it provides services
- Protect, promote and fulfil the human rights of its members, staff and the people to whom it provides services

Equality of access to information, advice and advocacy is core to the services the Citizens Information Board (CIB) provides and funds. We aim to ensure equality

of access through services provided in person, by phone and online, as well as through the Live Advisor and the Irish Remote Interpreting Service (IRIS). The website citizensinformation.ie has been designed to achieve a high level of accessibility.

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

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

Appendix 8: Citizens Information Board main offices

George's Quay House
43 Townsend Street
[Dublin 2](#)
D02 VK65
Telephone: 0761 07 9000

6th Floor
River Court
Business Centre
Cornmarket Square
[Limerick](#)
V94 FVH4

101 North Main Street
[Cork](#)
T12 AKA6

4th Floor
Dockgate
Merchants Road
[Galway](#)
H91 EY10

4 The Parade
[Kilkenny](#)
R95 VO52

Appendix 9: Grants in 2019

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.

Services	Total €
Citizens Information Services	2019
Dublin South	€ 2,085,741
Dublin North	€ 2,133,052
South Leinster	€ 1,994,847
North Leinster	€ 2,161,778
North Connacht & Ulster	€ 1,812,033
South Connacht	€ 1,248,928
North Munster	€ 1,699,333
South Munster	€ 2,058,288
Total	€ 15,194,000

Services	Total €
MABS	2019
MABS ND	€ 1,683,641
National Traveller MABS	€ 250,000
Dublin North	€ 2,169,256
Dublin South	€ 2,748,689
South Leinster	€ 2,423,048
North Leinster	€ 2,041,187
North Connacht & Ulster	€ 1,980,244
South Connacht	€ 1,654,150
North Munster	€ 2,565,923
South Munster	€ 2,101,000
Total	€ 19,617,139

Services	Total €
National	2019
CIPS	€ 1,267,500
SLIS	€ 528,835
NAS	€ 3,252,308

Supports	2019
Threshold	€ 47,000
Free Legal Advice (FLAC)	€ 140,400
Treoir	€ 34,400
Immigrant Council of Ireland	€ 68,000
Total	€ 289,800



"I appreciate all your hard work and dedication... you put in endless Trojan work on my behalf. Only for MABS ongoing work, has this deal been achieved. I would have given up long ago, only for you."

MABS client, Cork

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 the National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities.

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

