

# Still Leaving

Recent, vulnerable Irish emigrants to the UK:  
profile, experiences & pre-departure solutions.



EmigrantAdvice



Commissioned by Emigrant Advice  
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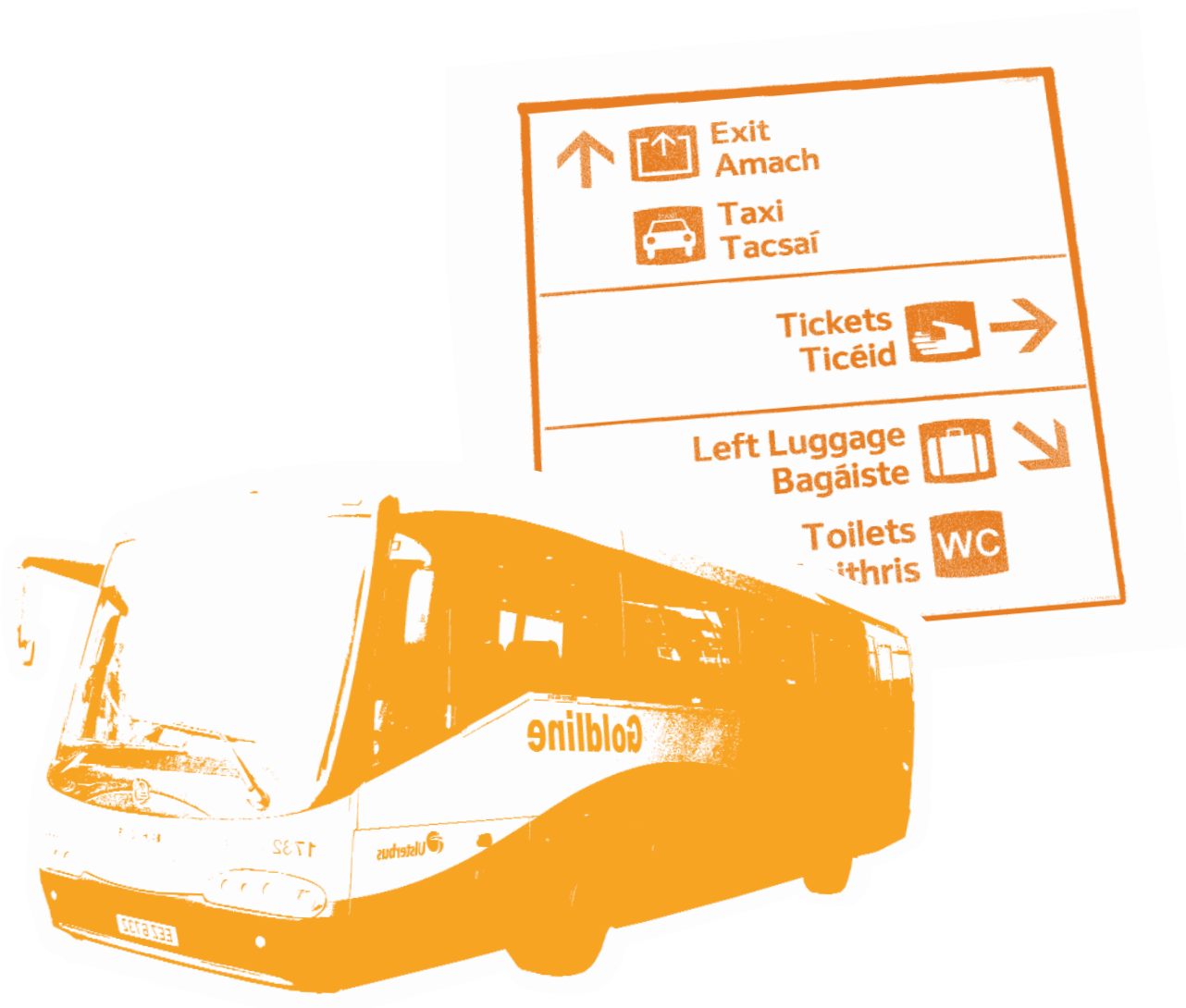
Finally, thanks are due to the Irish emigrants in England who agreed to participate in this research and to share their very personal stories. It is hoped that this research might reduce the numbers of vulnerable Irish people leaving their country, unprepared for some of the difficulties which may lie ahead.

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This research was initiated in order to aid the development of Emigrant Advice's services to vulnerable Irish people who emigrate to the UK. The aim was to gather quantitative and qualitative data on vulnerable, Irish migrants who have arrived in the UK since April 2004. The research brief focused on compiling quantitative data on the numbers of and characteristics of recent, vulnerable Irish emigrants to the UK; on the provision of qualitative data on contributing factors in decisions to emigrate to the UK; data on experiences of recent, vulnerable emigrants to the UK, including problems encountered when accessing services; and to identify how Emigrant Advice might better identify and access potential vulnerable emigrants prior to leaving Ireland and work more effectively with UK agencies to improve the lot of recent, vulnerable Irish emigrants.



In achieving the research goals of gathering quantitative and qualitative data on recent, vulnerable emigrants from Ireland to the UK<sup>1</sup>, the research followed a number of lines of enquiry. Available statistics on the extent of Irish emigration during 2004-2005 were sought: of particular interest was whether patterns to the UK might reveal a profile suggesting vulnerability. Quantitative data was also sought from key housing and welfare organisations (both Irish and non-Irish) in London, Birmingham, Manchester, and Liverpool to establish numbers of vulnerable migrant Irish accessing services during 2004/5 following emigration from Ireland. This was based on the assumption that vulnerable Irish migrants would access Irish sector organisations in the key English cities and emerge in the statistics on those facing housing disadvantage.

Walter et al. (2002) discuss the concept of vulnerability, and use it broadly, as this research aimed to do, to include not only, 'young poorly equipped migrants (but also) ...more 'invisible' groups such as people of all ages with problems relating to health, family and social circumstances, institutional and domestic abuse, drug use, sexuality and to Irish Travellers' (Walter et al., 2002:2).

Qualitative data were sought from those working in organisations dealing with Irish migrants in order to answer the questions relating to factors influencing recent emigration of vulnerable people, experiences of migration and difficulties in service access. Furthermore, many of these organisations were asked if they would be able to facilitate conducting interviews with newly arrived Irish migrants, in order to gain a greater insight into individual circumstances of emigration, experiences and support needs, both in the UK and in Ireland prior to emigration.

Throughout these contacts, a research aim was to assess, in the light of the evidence of the profile and circumstances of newly arrived migrants, how Emigrant Advice's current practice successfully/ unsuccessfully achieves contact with vulnerable migrants prior to leaving Ireland, and how Emigrant Advice's practice might be improved in this regard. This involved assessing, during contacts with agencies in the UK and with migrants, the levels of co-operation and contact between Emigrant Advice and UK agencies on which later proposals and recommendations are based.

Initial contact was made with a number of Irish organisations across Britain, either by phone, email or in person. After a number of contacts, it became apparent that a majority of Irish sector organisations in Britain do not currently deal with many recently arrived Irish migrants, an effect of an overall decrease in Irish emigration generally. Much of the work of the Irish sector is focused on the needs of Irish migrants who have lived in Britain for lengthy periods of time.

Probably because newly arrived migrants no longer comprise any or any substantial proportion of the clients of the majority of Irish organisations in the UK, responses to phone messages and emails requesting information were very slow in coming. A questionnaire (attached as Appendix 1) was sent to the majority of organisations as a prompt to encourage participation among those who had not already given any response. However, by the end of the project, the response to this questionnaire was minimal (3/11 initially non-responding organisations returned the completed questionnaire), and at the time of writing, there were still a number of organisations from which no response at all has been received, despite repeated requests for information.

<sup>1</sup> Technically UK includes Northern Ireland, but in the context of this research, Ireland includes Northern Ireland, and UK refers to England where most new emigrants from Ireland to Britain go.

**The responses from the Irish organisations can be divided into the following categories:**

- a) organisations which responded but which were unable to become more involved with the research because they have had no recent contact with newly arrived migrants
- b) organisations which responded even though they have had few recently arrived clients, but who were willing to give information on the circumstances of those they had encountered
- c) organisations which responded, which compared with other organisations, deal with greater numbers of recently arrived migrants and which were helpful in locating people for interview
- d) organisations which responded which claimed to deal with relatively greater proportions of recently arrived migrants, but were unable give further help with locating people for interview

A number of non-Irish organisations were also contacted either because they were known to be large providers of services to young, vulnerable people in cities, or had been suggested as being likely useful contacts by workers in Irish sector agencies. The organisations contacted (by means of phone calls, emails, visits) during the course of this research are listed in Appendix 2. Some of the non-Irish organisations provided some of the clearest data on the circumstances in the UK of recent Irish migrants, particularly those in London.

## **Information systems**

Part of the difficulty in obtaining accurate numbers of newly arrived Irish migrants among both Irish and non-Irish organisations, lies in the fact that such information on arrival or length of stay in England, is not collected at all by non-Irish organisations, and is no longer routinely collected within the Irish sector. The SIS system (Standardised Information System - a joint initiative developed and managed by Action Group for Irish Youth and the Federation of Irish Societies, in use within UK-based Irish service-delivering agencies between 1995-2001 – see Morgan, 2003:1) routinely collected data within the Irish sector and did include data on how long migrants had lived in the UK, but this system is no longer running.

Although it was superceded by another system, ISIS, it seems that this latter system is no longer effectual either, and at the time of writing, formalising and enacting an adequate information system across the Irish sector in England has not been done.

Some organisations claim to continue to use old systems for their own purposes, but there is no longer any collation of these data across organisations. Some organisations reported that old systems were inadequate to their needs and developed ways to collate their own statistics, while others admitted that proper maintaining of information systems was something that still needed to be dealt with. The upshot is that there is currently no uniform system of data collection about the circumstances and support needs of clients using Irish sector services, and as a result, there is likely to be some level of error within the statistics provided here. This lack of a system may partly explain why some organisations were tardy in giving responses to requests for information or simply failed to reply.

In the absence of clear systems across the board for the recording client data which might be consulted, information about number of recent arrivals to the UK, or their circumstances, was often given by workers in Irish organisations from memory of experiences of cases, or by going back to records kept, and attempting to summarise and extrapolate from the specifics of particular cases.

### **Types of services being offered**

Low response rates and/or low numbers of recent arrivals being reported among some organisations may also be an effect of the different types of services being provided by organisations. Few recent arrivals in some Irish housing associations for example may reflect how referral procedures work: many housing organisations take referrals in ways which would only link with people who have been living in the UK for long periods of time.

### **Organisation of interviews with newly arrived migrants**

Two organisations facilitated interviews with recent migrants: seven interviews were facilitated by Irish Community Care Merseyside and three interviews facilitated by An Teach Irish Housing Association in London. Some other organisations attempted to facilitate interviews, but within the time constraints of the project, and given the mobile nature of some of their clients, further interviews were not possible to set up. Newly arrived migrants are often younger than other clients and are less likely to stay around in venues once they have received the advice or support for which they have come.

Despite agreement and attempts by workers in a number of organisations to arrange interviews between the researcher and new migrants, it was not possible to conduct further interviews. It was not made clear to the researcher whether migrants refused interviews or whether addressing participation in the research was not raised because workers either felt it inappropriate with particular newly arrived clients, or had no time to raise the issue because of dealing with more pressing concerns, or merely had forgotten. As interviews generally were difficult to organise, and in order to accommodate potential interviewees, the researcher suggested that telephone interviews would suffice, if that made it easier for people to be pinned down and to feel comfortable talking about their experiences. Two interviews were held in person, seven by telephone, and one interviewee who did not want to talk on the phone, did consent to answer questions by email. Interviewees identities are disguised in later Case Studies.

### **Interviewees**

Ten interviews, either by telephone, in person or by email were carried out. Nine of these interviews were with males, and all were aged between 18 and 37. (The ages of all the interviewees were 18, 19, 19, 20, 22, 25, 25, 26, 28 and 37 years.) Interviewees came from the north and south of Ireland and from rural as well as urban areas. Prior to interviews, it was explained what the research hoped to achieve and reassurances were given that any information imparted would be treated in the strictest confidence. Brief case studies of some of these ten interviews are given later.

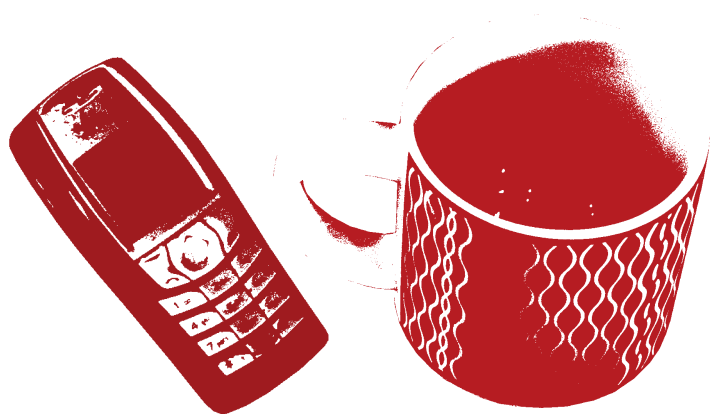
## Content of interviews

Interviews spanned personal reasons for leaving Ireland, how decisions about going to Liverpool or London emerged, what happened on first arrival, access to services in Britain, problems encountered, how/if problems were resolved, ongoing problems (if any) with housing, employment, health, drug/alcohol issues, feelings about return to Ireland, contact with friends and family in Ireland, receipt of any agency advice prior to leaving Ireland, views on how Emigrant Advice might access people prior to leaving in order to facilitate choices to emigrate, etc.

## Layout of report

The rest of this report comes in four sections. Findings outline the broad numerical and demographic profile of recent emigrants from Ireland and data derived from organisations on recently arrived migrants seeking support (Numerical and demographic profile of recent, vulnerable Irish migrants to the UK). Then, the circumstances of emigration among those who left Ireland since April 2004 are described by Irish sector workers and migrant interviewees. Data on experiences of recent, vulnerable migrants in the UK are then described, including support needs and problems encountered ('Circumstances: on departing and arriving') and the extent of contact between UK organisations and individual migrants with Emigrant Advice services is addressed, and suggestions made to enhance contact with emigrants prior to departure ('Links with Emigrant Advice'). The Final Summary and Recommendations section then focuses on key characteristics of vulnerable, recently arrived Irish emigrants and their primary support needs in the UK. It makes a number of proposals and recommendations, based on the available evidence, on how Emigrant Advice might better identify and access potential vulnerable emigrants prior to leaving Ireland and work more effectively with UK agencies to improve the lot of recent, vulnerable Irish emigrants.

Between April 2004 and April 2005 it is estimated that 4,100 persons emigrated from the Republic of Ireland to the UK, of an overall total of 16,600 persons or 25% of those who emigrated from Ireland during this time (Central Statistics Office (CSO), 2005a)[2].



### Gender and age group of emigrants

More females emigrated from Ireland to the UK than males (2,200 versus 1,800, 100:82), whereas among overall emigrants from Ireland, males outnumbered females (100:93) (CSO, 2005a). The majority (51%) of latest emigrants are aged 24 and under. In the year ending April 2005, 8,500 of emigrants were aged 24 and under, with the vast majority of these are in the 15-24 year old age group (8,300) (CSO, 2005b).

There are no statistics which break down the profile of emigrants by country of destination and age group, so it is not possible to know with any certainty whether this predominance of the youngest (24 and under) among emigrants is reflected in the profile of those who went recently to the UK.

### Numerical profile of recently arrived vulnerable Irish in the UK

Accurate figures on recently arrived, vulnerable Irish emigrants to the UK are difficult to gain, for a number of reasons discussed already in the Methods section. At best, it is only possible to give an approximate figure of 'newly arriveds' who have accessed a range of Irish and other support organisations during the past year to 18 months (from April 2004 onwards).

There were five key organisations in London, Liverpool and Manchester where staff claimed that numbers of 'newly arriveds' exceeded 20. The London Irish Centre claimed to have dealt with 189 newly arrived clients between April 2004 and March 2005; The Passage Day Centre, Westminster saw 28 newly arrived Irish clients from December 2004 until September 2005; Irish Community Care Merseyside saw 81 new emigrants from April 2004 until March 2005; Irish Community Care Manchester saw 48 newly arrived Irish emigrants from January 2004 until July 2005, and An Teach Irish Housing Association in London saw 20 newly arrived clients during the last year.

A range of other organisations including Brent Irish Advisory Service, Innisfree Housing Association, Cara Irish Housing Association, Coventry Irish Society, Haringey Irish Cultural and Community Care, Irish Welfare and Information Centre Birmingham, and Cricklewood Homeless Concern saw smaller numbers of recently arrived Irish clients, and the rest of the organisations contacted either saw no Irish clients, or failed to respond to repeated requests for information. It was suggested by some that new emigrants were not much of an issue, as Irish organisations coped with the growing needs of elderly longer term migrants.

Taken together, these figures suggest that approximately 400 newly arrived Irish emigrants presented to these various organisations during the last year to 18 months. However, there are some queries around this figure as discussed below.<sup>2</sup>

### Statistical concerns

Up until 2000, the Federation of Irish Societies and the Action Group for Irish Youth published statistics on the profile of clients using Irish agencies in England. The last SIS statistics were published for 2000, and these show that 16% of the total number of Irish clients or 382 persons, seen by eight organisations, had arrived during the previous year (Morgan, 2003). This was at a time (1999-2000) when emigration from Ireland to the UK was 75% higher than recently (2004-2005) (CSO, 2005a). Therefore it seems that

<sup>2</sup> CSO emphasises that that migration statistics for 2003-2005 are preliminary, and these statistics do not include those from Northern Ireland, only the Republic of Ireland.

roughly similar numbers presenting at Irish sector groups during 2004-2005, may represent either some gross inaccuracy in recent figures or, if accurate, suggest greater vulnerability among recent migrants (if measured by the need to seek advice and support) than five years ago. This may relate to problems with information systems within the Irish sector as discussed earlier.

### **Possibility of greater vulnerability among recent emigrants**

It is possible that a minority of those migrating from Ireland today are less prepared for emigration than those who migrated to the UK, even five years ago, as evidenced by the proportions of those accessing welfare organisations. However, even if this is the case, it is not clear why so many Irish organisations in the England admit that they meet so few newly arrived migrants compared to previous times, and correspondingly, why there is a preponderance of newly arrived migrants appearing to access a minority of organisations within the Irish sector, even if it is acknowledged even here that numbers have been falling in recent years. It is not clear why relatively large numbers of emigrants are accessing only a few of the Irish and other advice agencies.

### **Vulnerability and homelessness**

During the 1980s and 1990s, there was a great deal of concern about the extent to which young, newly arrived Irish migrants ended up over-represented, particularly among the homeless in London. Some organisations were contacted in London to see whether Irish 'newly arriveds' continued to show up in statistics for the homeless.

The Connection at St. Martin's provides a range of services for homeless people of all ages, including those aged 16-25 years in central London. The Director there claimed that numbers of Irish accessing their services had waned dramatically in recent years, and that in the previous year, that young Irish comprised only 10 of an overall 5000 clients, of whom the youngest was 24 years and the majority were male (7/10). Following on from this, CHAIN (Combined Homelessness and Information Network)<sup>3</sup> statistics were sought to see whether the Irish comprised any significant number among those recently assessed as homeless across London. These statistics show that from 1/4/04 until 9/9/05, (a period of approximately 17 months), the Irish were over-represented among the London homeless, that is, 6% of all street homeless during this period were Irish (see Appendix 3 for CHAIN statistics referring to homeless Irish in London). However, the statistics did not distinguish between newly arrived Irish and those who have been in London for much longer periods.

As only 5/132 new Irish clients were under 25 years, this clearly means that the very young Irish do not comprise any substantial number of the homeless in London, and if it is assumed that many vulnerable, recently arrived Irish are likely to be young, this suggests that young newly arrived migrants do not comprise any substantial proportion of the homeless population as in previous decades. However, it is possible also that those who are over 25 form a substantial proportion of 'newly arriveds'. This seems confirmed to a degree by a comparison of the statistics for different London boroughs (CHAIN statistics in Appendix 3) and services which provide for Irish people (and others) aged 25 and over, as discussed below.

<sup>3</sup> 'CHAIN is a database containing details of individuals, assessments of their needs, contacts and interventions. It is compiled by agencies in London that work with those rough sleeping or engaging in other street activities that cause concern in communities and need a welfare response' <http://www.broadwaylondon.org/chain/>

The largest number of Irish sleeping rough in London are in the borough of Westminster (48/122 or 39%). Data from The Passage Day Centre in Westminster also show that of 'newly arriveds' who have remained in London and for whom information is available, 5/18 Irish aged over 25 are sleeping rough, a further ten are in hostels and a further three are living in B and B accommodation while their applications for housing are being considered by the Homeless Persons Unit. This shows therefore that homelessness and housing disadvantage are key problems for the 'newly arriveds' in certain areas as well as for Irish living in London for longer periods.

Very few newly arrived Irish access Cricklewood Homeless Concern, which has a large established Irish clientele. This suggests not only that numbers of newly arrived homeless have dropped in recent years, but also perhaps that the 'newly arriveds' are more likely to be found in central London. Nonetheless, the absence of new arrivals in hostels such as Conway House and St Louise's, managed by Irish Centre Housing, is notable. It is possible that the high support needs of many of those Irish sleeping rough (see CHAIN statistics, Appendix 3), as well as the support needs of 'newly arriveds' aged 25+ years who have accessed support at The Passage Day Centre, may militate against them being housed within the Irish sector. Certainly, An Teach, who housed a number of newly arrived clients during the past year, are only able to provide for those with low support needs. It seems that overall those with high support needs are least likely to get their needs addressed which in turn may exacerbate problems with drugs, alcohol misuse and mental illness.

## **Gender and vulnerability**

Despite the greater numbers of females than males emigrating from Ireland to the UK, the statistics derived from different organisations reveal a preponderance of males seeking advice and support on arrival in Britain. Camden Irish Centre statistics show that males outnumbered females (100:72) and ICCM statistics reveal that males also outnumber females (100:20). Irish Community Care Manchester suggests that it is recently arrived males rather than females who seek their services. The overwhelming proportion of clients at The Passage are male, and this is reflected both in numbers of Irish generally accessing services there, as well as in the gender balance of 'newly arriveds' accessing their services. An Teach Irish Housing Association cater for young Irish males and females, but also get more referrals for males, and in the last year more new arrivals from Ireland have been young males.

Several agency workers in Liverpool and London commented upon the fact that it is newly arrived Irish males rather than females, who were more likely to avail of support services and appear to be less self sufficient than females following emigration.

It was commented upon the females overall appeared more resourceful. It may be that Irish women are less likely than Irish men to contemplate emigrating unless they perceive they have the skills, knowledge and planning needed to support themselves on arrival in the UK. It is also likely that males predominate among vulnerable Irish emigrants in the UK because males are more likely to experience factors associated with prior vulnerability in Ireland, such as addictions and problems with crime, which prompt and subsequently affect experiences in the UK, increasing vulnerability to homelessness and mental health problems.

## Age and vulnerability

As was noted earlier, there are no Central Statistics Office statistics available which give the age breakdown of recent emigrants to the UK, even though an overall majority of emigrants from Ireland are 24 and under. Although being young might be considered a risk factor for emigration, the data gathered from agencies of different kinds did not suggest that those accessing agencies were necessarily very young (if defined by being under 24). Less than a quarter (20/81) of the recent emigrant clients to Irish Community Care Merseyside were 24 years and under. Recently arrived vulnerable migrants accessing The Passage were concentrated in the 26-35 year old age group (14/28 clients), and a substantial proportion were aged 36-45 years (10/28). There were more who were 46 years and older than under 25 years. Part of this is an effect of the age group which The Passage caters for, but statistics also show that few very young Irish accessed services directed more specifically at young homeless in the same borough, such as The Connection at St. Martin's, and of the few Irish who did access this agency, the youngest was aged 24.

The majority of those accessing An Teach services were in their twenties, and those accessing the services of the London Irish Centre were 31 years or younger. Although younger age may be a factor in susceptibility to vulnerability on emigration to the UK, it seems that vulnerability is not merely a feature of being very young, but as later findings will reveal, is also a feature of the lives of older (in their twenties and thirties), recently arrived emigrants.

It seems the case, that many of those who have 'chosen' to emigrate in recent times have lived for part of their young adult lives in Ireland, and facing a range of experiences of disadvantage and limited options for improving their lives, have taken the route to Britain. Although some people left in a hurry, for others, emigration was the inevitable outcome of having few opportunities for improving their circumstances in Ireland, but with little appreciation of the circumstances they might face in the UK. The lack of support and advice which might encouraged them either to stay in Ireland, or facilitated the transition to the UK, resulted for some in protracted periods of distressing help-seeking and information gathering in the UK, while trying to cater for basic housing, employment and health needs.

## General comments

Regardless of the actual numbers involved, the majority of the organisations surveyed suggested that recent arrivals formed a lesser proportion of their client group than in the past. However, the perception of lessening numbers did not detract from the concerns raised about the problems continuing to be faced by newly arrived migrants in the UK, which were influenced by both migrants' circumstances of leaving and unforeseen difficulties experienced by being ill prepared for emigration, and hence unaware of the problems which might be encountered in the UK.

SIS statistics show that new arrivals from 1996-2000 tended to disproportionately access Irish sector organisations, and Morgan (2003) commenting on these figures, notes that new emigrants remain a vulnerable group even in years when emigration from Ireland has been low. Those under 25 years during 1996-2000 were likely to comprise many new arrivals, and as is illustrated above, represent the overall

majority of Irish emigrants today to all destinations, but it may not be the case that new arrivals to the UK today are necessarily very young (under 25 years).

In the past younger migrants tended to disproportionately access Irish sector organisations, given the representation of younger Irish in the wider population. Nonetheless, it appears that from the data gathered on new arrivals accessing services now, that new arrivals are attracted to specific types of provision in centrally located areas, and the newer data suggest that vulnerable new arrivals may be older than in previous times, predominantly male, and face a range of circumstances of disadvantage in Ireland which continue, and become compounded with other difficulties, on arrival to the UK.



Previous research has noted that with regard to Irish emigrants today, 'as in the past, we know very little about who is leaving now, their reasons for going, the geographic spread and their educational levels, their intentions and their relationships to Ireland of the 'Celtic Tiger'' (Walter et al., 2002:18). At a time of a clear overall decrease in numbers emigrating from Ireland, this research sought to provide an insight into the particular circumstances motivating the more vulnerable Irish of today to migrate from Ireland to the UK.

The circumstances of vulnerability of recent migrants from Ireland in this research fell into a number of categories, with many individuals falling into a number of categories. These categories are derived from interviews with agency staff and interviews with a sample of recent migrants. It should be emphasised that people often migrated for a number of reasons, so gave complex rationales for their emigrating behaviour. These categories largely encapsulate the range of circumstances in Walter et al.'s (2002) definition of vulnerability noted earlier.

### Case Study 1

Derek is an 18 year old male from Belfast who last moved from Belfast to Liverpool in December 2004. He left Belfast because loyalist paramilitaries were threatening to shoot him because of his involvement in some level of criminal activity which contravened their control of the area. He came from a family in which two other brothers had been ousted from Northern Ireland under death threats.

Derek came to Liverpool specifically because his brother lived there already. He would not consider places like Glasgow as he felt that he also might be under some paramilitary threat there also.

On arrival in Liverpool he stayed with his brother and then stayed in a hostel. He wanted to get on his own two feet. The hostel staff referred him to Irish Community Care Merseyside for support. He spoke very highly of the help he received from staff there. He managed to get himself a flat and a job and therefore come off benefits. He may move on to London if he can get a job there.

Derek has friends and enjoys his job but he is very angry about not being able to live in his own country and at having been forced out. He feels that this was partly his own fault because of his behaviour and he strongly feels that if he returned to Northern Ireland he would lose his life. He did not feel able to comment on whether he maintained contact with friends and family in Northern Ireland.

Even though he is working, housed and has friends, Derek continues to be affected by the threats made against his life. He has problems sleeping and bad dreams and says he is 'paranoid', that he has recurring dreams. However, he feels that the doctor he has seen is unhelpful, telling him, 'you'll get over it', and refusing to help him. The doctor apparently has told him that in order to receive help, he would have to be sectioned, which Derek clearly does not want to happen. He has 'bad dreams where they shoot me that many times'.

In discussing what support he might need, Derek said he wanted counselling which he has never been offered, and does not want any medication. As a young child he has taken ecstasy and cannabis, and now drinks and smokes moderately and occasionally takes cocaine.

Derek is ostensibly coping to a degree, but remains quite vulnerable and clearly needs support to deal with ongoing psychological problems which he would like counselling for. The researcher suggested that Derek ask ICCM if they might be able to refer him for counselling.

## Reasons for leaving

- **Violence and threats of violence: drug-related threats, paramilitary threats and other threats**

These reasons were given by several staff in agencies as well as migrant interviewees, particularly in Liverpool. A number of those who were interviewed from Northern Ireland claimed to have fled because of paramilitary threats (see Case Studies 1 and 5, which represent a larger number of interviewed Northern Irish males who left for similar reasons - four out of five Northerners interviewed left for these reasons). Irish Community Care Merseyside reported as far back as 2001, the high number of young men using their services who had been exiled from the North. In 2001, Suaimhneas dealt with 6 clients referred to them by Base 2, a project in Belfast providing crisis intervention for people facing paramilitary threat, as well as a further 13 clients who claimed being similarly excluded from the North (Suaimhneas Report, 2001). Several workers in London also reported that a number of clients had left Ireland in a hurry, following threats from drug dealers or gangs in the South, which again is an issue which had been reported for a number of years (see Walter et al., 2002).

Almost a third of those accessing The Passage Day Centre during the past nine months, left mainly Dublin, because of threats, which sometimes were reported to have involved the IRA. An agency worker in another organisation reported the case of one male Traveller who left Ireland because of threats from another Travelling family. Of nine people who went to The Passage Day Centre following abrupt departure from Dublin because of drug-related threats, all were heroin dependent. This addiction is discussed later because of its implications for types of services needed in London. Others suggested that some Irish in prison were young people who had carried drugs from Ireland and been arrested and imprisoned in the UK.

- **Family breakdown/marital problems/domestic abuse**

A common reason given by staff in all agencies was that a substantial number of clients left Ireland because of family problems or marriage breakdown. For these people of varying ages, emigration was a means of escape from trauma and untenable domestic situations. The young emigrant woman interviewed (Case Study 4), felt that relations in her family were strained, and emigration was a means to escape and to avoid rows and familial conflict. One agency reported that a Traveller who had become settled, had recently been one of their clients as he left Ireland following the breakdown of his relationship with his partner.

- **Wider social context of emigration**

Half of the migrant interviewees (5/10) reported leaving Ireland with friends or to follow friends or family who had already emigrated. The culture of prior family migration meant that for some young people, going to London was considered because their parents had previously migrated in a previous generation (one case), and some people had spent parts of their childhoods in the UK (one case), and were returning to a context which was partly familiar. An Teach staff noted that those who left with friends were generally considered to cope better on arrival than those who were alone, although sometimes this support was lost if friends moved on or friendships broke up.

- **Feeling the need for a change of scene, to travel, explore new horizons**

This was reported by several staff accommodating young Irish in London and apparent in interviews with young people in both London and Liverpool. Some young people merely went to the UK because it presented a change of scene and an opportunity to experiment with a new way of life. Although some of these people ended up accessing support and advice following arrival, these people tended to cope better than others unless there were other complicating factors affecting decisions to leave.

## Case Study 2

Michael is a 25 year old who moved from Cork to London in February 2004. His reasons for leaving were that he had been involved in some trouble locally, in a small community and had to move on. He chose the UK as he grew up in a culture of his father and uncles coming back and forth in the past, even though he no longer has any family in the UK. Michael had also suffered the sudden death of his father not long before he left which affected him badly and he felt he couldn't handle that. He felt that he needed to make a change and get away and to break ties with some of his friends at home. He had a serious heroin problem in the past but is clean now.

In this context Michael headed for London, where he had a week's wages in his pocket (which did not last long) and no contacts. He stayed in a backpackers hostel for a week, and then having run out of money, he became homeless as he was unable to access benefits without a national insurance number. He waited four months for a national insurance number. During this time he slept rough in central London, used day centres and met other rough sleepers. Occasionally he stayed with people he met. Finally, after four months he got a national insurance number and was therefore eligible for hostel accommodation. He stayed in a few central London hostels which cater for single homeless people.

He felt negative about his time in hostels. He did not find staff helpful and felt that 'people are being put in a trap'. He was living with other people on crack cocaine and heroin and ended up with a 'small habit'. He felt that he could see, 'how someone could easily go down that road. I met a few young Irish girls who are destroyed in the hostel situation'.

Finally Michael got a hostel directory himself and rang An Teach who asked him to come for an interview and within a couple of weeks he got a place in a shared house with other young Irish people. He achieved this after about a year of upheaval on coming to the UK.

He feels that if he was still in the hostel situation he would have a serious drug habit. Finding An Teach accommodation and support was crucial for him in regaining his health and a basis for looking for training and employment. He commented, 'I've found An Teach very supportive - since I moved (to the UK) I lost two and a half stones as a result of the hostel situation. When I moved into An Teach I got fit and healthy. He commented that it was very difficult not to develop drug problems while homeless in London and that he had met others who soon developed drug and mental health problems as a result of being in hostels:

'One or two people who come to London - there was nothing wrong with them. Six months later - they were harmless lads - people picked up on this and destroyed them. They have mental health problems now, depression and cutting themselves. This is the problem of putting people together in hostels. It only takes a month or two for people to fall into the wrong crowd - you don't want to be isolated.'

Michael seems quite resilient and is happier now being in a situation where he has benefits, secure housing and access to training and possible employment. He has gone to college to train as an electrician, and even though he has struggled with trying to buy tools on a low income, he is nevertheless optimistic that he will eventually get work and get his problems sorted. He has encountered problems getting a bank account, due to a lack of adequate documentations and this is proving difficult in getting a job.

He left school in Ireland at sixteen and had done some labouring jobs and living on an estate where drug problems were commonplace. He feels now that he is in a better position to improve his life: to work and to learn to drive. Although his family miss him, he still felt that there was nothing for him in Ireland and possibilities available in the UK.

Prior to leaving he did not try to find any advice which might have helped in moving to the UK. He said that he was ignorant of advice being available anywhere. Michael felt that even after all the he had been through, that his life was now the best that it had been for a long time.

- **Escaping homophobia, to 'be oneself'**

This was reported by staff in An Teach that a number of young gay men in their twenties left Ireland, not always because they were escaping homophobia, but rather because they wanted to experience the UK gay scene and just wanted to explore a new environment. Young gay men being attracted to the scene in Manchester was also noted by staff at Irish Community Care Manchester as a key reason for coming to Manchester. An Teach staff felt that some of these young men would have been well travelled and their families would have known they were gay. In contrast, other young gay men were reported as leaving because of having experienced some form of homophobia in Ireland and wanted

to escape from this and from their families, in order to 'be themselves'. One interviewee from Dublin, although he did not claim that his sexuality was his primary reason for moving to London, did feel that it was one factor in his decision to leave, and reported that he had previously faced rebuke and lost friends when he admitted to being bisexual at a workplace in Dublin.

- **Looking for work**

All of migrants interviewed had looked for work with varying degrees of success. It may also be assumed that the thousands of emigrants to the UK who do not seek advice and support, leave often for employment reasons and fare well. However, it was the view among agency staff in Liverpool, London and Manchester, that for some young people, looking for work was not a priority as other reasons for leaving took pre-eminence and some had never worked in Ireland. It was suggested that many of these (mainly) young men felt socially excluded in Irish society where they lacked skills, education and employment. Clearly, many of those involved in drug-related issues were not looking for work but merely trying to escape from threatening situations.

- **Family abuse/domestic abuse**

Several staff in agencies claimed that some female clients had left because of domestic violence and sexual abuse and one male reported to an agency worker that he left because of domestic abuse. A few agencies had experience of middleaged women arriving with no contacts, having left Ireland because of domestic violence and abuse.

- **Making fresh start after leaving prison, getting into trouble with the law, within neighbourhoods**

This was a reason suggested by a substantial minority of agency staff. Apart from those who were threatened by paramilitaries from the north, one young man left Cork in order to get away from drug involvement and trouble with the law (Case Study 2). None of those actually interviewed mentioned experience of prison.

### **Case Study 3**

Vincent is a 22 year old male from a town in Co. Antrim who moved to Liverpool with three friends in October 2004. He had a friend who was already in Liverpool. He was doing painting and decorating jobs, but when work ran out, he decided, along with other friends to come to Liverpool and look for work. He moved into the YMCA in Liverpool and did various jobs in bars until he found a decorating job. He still lives at the YMCA and is saving up money in order to move on into better accommodation.

Vincent was relatively well prepared for leaving and did not have any social problems prior to leaving which might have made life in the UK more difficult. He was with friends and they all had enough money to tide them over while they investigated finding accommodation. The YMCA told them about

the existence of ICCM in Liverpool and ICCM helped one of his friends who needed ID. Vincent himself has no problems accessing benefits and came to the UK with ID.

Prior to leaving Vincent and his friends planned what they would do on arrival in Liverpool. They found out about the YMCA on the internet as well as how to look for work and where to find employment agencies in Liverpool.

Vincent returns home often and his family are happy that he is in Liverpool. He claims to be earning two or three times the amount he would earn back home. Although he researched on the internet what to do in relation to housing and work prior to leaving Northern Ireland, Vincent had not heard of Emigrant Advice in Dublin.

- **No reason to stay in Ireland**

A common thread within accounts was that few people who accessed advice and support from agencies, felt they had reasons to stay in Ireland any longer. Among the majority of migrant interviewees, options seemed limited in terms of stable relationships, employment prospects and overall quality of life in Ireland.

A common view was that many newly arrived emigrants feel socially excluded from an affluent Ireland which has little to offer them and of which they do not feel part. Some reported that there was a perception among vulnerable emigrants that low-skilled jobs in Ireland were now being taken by newer immigrants to Ireland, and thus they were not able to get jobs they once might have got. However, this view was not voiced by any of the emigrants interviewed. Accounts of agency staff emphasised that those who were accessing services were not only ill prepared in numerous ways for leaving, and had unrealistic ideas of how easily housing, health and employment services might be accessed in the UK, but that a majority of their clients had long term problems in Ireland with unemployment, drug and alcohol issues and family problems, which were merely transferred to a new country.

## Case Study 4

Marianne is a 19 year old female from Tipperary who left Ireland with her best female friend to come to the UK. She got the ferry and then a train to London. She felt that she wasn't doing anything in Ireland and wanted a change and to see if she 'could do something'. She hadn't prepared much for leaving, she had a hundred pounds when she left, and on arrival in London they met up with a stranger who put them up for a couple of weeks, and then she got a job with her friend working in a bar. She and her friend rented a room at the premises where they worked. Some kind of incident occurred involving a boyfriend of hers and she had to leave. She then ended up sleeping on the streets for three months and had no money as she had only had a temporary national insurance number at the time.

She suffered being hungry and penniless and occasionally finding people who helped her. She claimed that she was turned away from various housing projects as she was told that not being English, she was not a priority. Eventually in a pub a man told her to go the Irish Centre and that someone might help. She felt that they really did help her. She was housed by An Teach and now she is hoping to go to college.

There were problems in her family when she was growing up and at one stage she was expelled from school and was sent to a home for a year. She managed to get her leaving cert. During her teenage years she experimented with drugs. Her experiences initially in London were distressing. Apart from being homeless, she was aware of people on the streets trying to encourage young people to take crack and she said she was afraid of crackheads, but on the whole they left her alone. She also said that she was hassled by middle-aged men for sex which she found degrading. She managed to look after herself and felt she was quite streetwise. She doesn't feel that she is ready to go home as things are not the way they used to be. She seemed eager to try to succeed in gaining training for work in London. She did not tell her family about the circumstances she faced initially in London. Her friend left London, but aims to return again soon and Marianne hopes that her friend will also be housed on arrival by An Teach.

As other young migrants noted, drugs are very prevalent on London streets and pressures to become involved in that scene. Marianne felt that this was similar to where she grew up, except it is on a much larger scale.

Marianne is now happy about how things have turned out, even if it did take quite a number of months of hardship to find out about the help available within the Irish sector. She said 'things are a little better now, I don't have to worry about the next shower, about where to sleep'. She loves sharing with other young Irish.

Marianne had never heard of Emigrant Advice, or received any advice on how to manage in London prior to leaving Ireland. She only found out about An Teach through a chance encounter in a pub and any knowledge she had of London was through her friend's family. However, this did not help her to avoid serious difficulties following her arrival in London.

- **Belief in better services for health issues in London**

While some people had accessed mental health services in Ireland, it was commonplace that people were not linked into other relevant services in Ireland, but rather came to Britain with beliefs that services were better. It was suggested that people with drug problems particularly felt that they might receive better services in the UK. In London there are established drug services in every borough whereas it was claimed that drug service provision in Ireland was restricted to three main centres, which often were not convenient for many addicts. Also, it was suggested by a few agency workers that Irish people wishing to seek drug rehabilitation services may prefer the anonymity of London rather than staying in Ireland, where it is perceived that everyone knows everyone else and problems are not

private. It was suggested for example, that someone from Kerry seeking help with drug problems would have to go to Dublin for help, and that it might appear more exciting, and seem not much further away, to go to London.

- **Disadvantaged families**

It was suggested by one worker in a non-Irish agency that individuals they see tend to come from Irish families who have received some level of attention from social services during their childhoods and often have been victims of domestic violence in Ireland. This worker suggested that deficits in services in Ireland provided during childhood resulted in disadvantaged adults migrating to the UK and seeking support for unresolved problems. More generally it was clear that many of those interviewed came from relatively socially and economically disadvantaged families, had drug problems in their youth and felt they had little guidance and support from their families. Among some migrant interviewees, there was a sense that their families were better off without them, and families were not contacted in times of distress. These circumstances were general to people from both rural and urban areas.

## **Problems encountered and services accessed in the UK among vulnerable migrants**

Problems encountered by recent, vulnerable Irish migrants and services accessed were obviously influenced by prior situations in Ireland as well as affected by circumstances faced in the UK. One of the main reasons for accessing agency support was for help in gaining access to housing, benefits and employment. Sometimes these requirements were compounded by greater difficulties surrounding drug and alcohol addictions, and mental health problems.

### **Case Study 5**

Anthony is a 20 year old male from Co. Antrim who arrived in Liverpool seven weeks ago. He had been to Liverpool before during the previous year. His reasons for leaving were to do with feeling that he would be punished by republican paramilitaries for being involved in trouble connected to hanging around with drug dealers. He described a culture of youth disaffection in his area where drugs are rife and young people are confronted with paramilitaries controlling areas where the police never go. He fears he cannot return to his family, although he may return briefly at Christmas. He has a child in Northern Ireland.

On coming to Liverpool the first time he spent a night on the streets and through someone he met found out about hostels and got a bed and found work through a recruitment agency. He is now living in temporary accommodation and trying to get into a hostel again. He did have trouble getting benefits without a proper address and wants to find work.

He claims to have no serious drug problems and just wants the chance to work. He knows many others in Liverpool who have left Northern Ireland for similar reasons. He did not get any advice or support before leaving.

- **The importance of ID**

A commonly reported problem among agency staff as well as those interviewed, was the imperative to have proper ID in order to access any benefits. Vulnerable migrants often had no valid form of identification which caused problems getting national insurance numbers in order to get benefits. It was reported that trying to access benefits is becoming more and more difficult for Irish migrants and people can wait for up to six months before getting benefits because of waiting to get national insurance numbers. One of the main problems encountered related to Irish people coming to Britain without needed birth certificates or passports. Problems were encountered not only in accessing benefits and therefore often housing, but also in not being able to open bank accounts. It was also reported that Irish sector organisations dealt with some people who purposely had no ID as they had left Ireland because of threats and feared being traced in some way.

- **Support needed in getting housing and welfare benefits**

Without ID, access to benefits is not possible, and there were a number of reports of young people not having access to any money whatsoever for extended periods of time, and having to depend on friends, benevolent funds accessed by agencies, and sometimes on strangers. One case study illustrates this happening to the female migrant interviewed (Case Study 4), and another migrant interviewee also recounted that one young woman in the same shared house as himself was without benefit for months and had to depend on the other residents to give her food.

- **Support for repatriation**

A key complaint from Irish Community Care Manchester was that often newly arrived young males accessed their services seeking financial support to return to Ireland, and that this was putting a drain on their resources. In some settings, agency workers arranged for Irish people to return to Ireland, by making contacts with family and services in Ireland who would provide support for their particular needs on their return. Although agency staff usually did not want to force people to return to Ireland, in some cases clients acknowledged that their needs might be better catered for by returning to Ireland, and in these cases staff helped clients to return.

- **Support for drug and alcohol issues and accessing services**

It was reported that a large proportion of those accessing The Passage Day Centre had alcohol and drug problems. Of 28 newly arrived clients, 12 had drug dependency issues and nine had alcohol dependency issues. Getting access to drug and alcohol services was not straightforward. As the Irish Persons' Co-ordinator at The Passage explained, 'Eight of these clients with drug dependency issues, had heroin addictions, and required assistance to access medical services to get methadone scripts.'

In some cases this took two weeks to complete, and resulted in clients using high amounts of heroin in the interim. Many of these clients resorted to crime to fund their habits.

'For newly arrived clients, who do not have a national insurance number, it can take six weeks from the date of the initial claim to get a benefit payment. Those clients seeking assistance in the form of detoxification and rehabilitation faced difficulties, as many local authorities will only consider funding for people with a local connection. A person needs to have lived within the borough for a minimum of six consecutive months out of the previous twelve.' Clearly problems in accessing benefits and services were exacerbated for those with drug and alcohol dependency problems. However, as some interviews with recent migrants illustrated, for some of those who finally managed to get hostel places, there were pressures to become involved in drug-taking in hostels, which were sometimes difficult to resist.

It was mentioned by a number of workers in different organisations that as well as the risk of becoming involved in crime to fund drug habits, or to take drugs which were perceived as commonly available in central London hostels, young people without money and in vulnerable circumstances were at risk of becoming involved in prostitution. The only young female migrant interviewed (Case Study 4) recounted that she had been harassed by older men for sex while living rough on the streets.

- **Support in accessing services for mental health problems**

Sixteen out of 28 clients at The Passage had mental health problems and needed support in accessing needed services, which were often exacerbated by new problems of lack of housing and problems in accessing benefits. Among some interviewed migrants, mental health problems emerged as a response to facing problems of homelessness in London and failures in finding adequate work and training. Cricklewood Homeless Concern had encountered 'newly arriveds' with mental health problems who were subsequently repatriated and linked into local services in Ireland. Some of those who were interviewed in Liverpool reported mental health issues as a result of their experiences of having to leave Northern Ireland, and apart from receiving practical and other support from Irish agency staff in Liverpool, were unable to get adequate support from their GPs (see Case Study 1).

- **Problems of social isolation and powerlessness**

The problems of social isolation felt by vulnerable recent arrivals to the UK were evident in a number of interview accounts. Some people described being very much alone until they managed to access supportive networks and adequate housing. Organisations such as An Teach were important in providing not only decent and affordable accommodation for vulnerable, young Irish, but also in providing contact with other young Irish people, and staff who understand their circumstances and culture and are eager to provide any necessary support.

## Case Study 6

Conor is a 19 year old male from Dublin who came to Liverpool six months ago. He decided to leave Ireland because some friends had been in Liverpool before and felt that he wanted a change, that there was, 'nothing going for me in Dublin'. He sees his departure as a choice, that wasn't motivated by any particular problems, that he just wanted a chance to do something different.

Conor was quite well organised. He had enough money to stay in a hotel on arrival and then was put in touch with the YMCA, where he stayed for four months until he got a privately rented flat. ICCM helped him to get a flat.

He has managed to get a range of jobs since coming to Liverpool including bar work and labouring. He intends to return to Ireland at Christmas to see his family. He felt he could have got work in Dublin but wanted a change. He knows other Irish in Liverpool who have been years on the street and knows people from Northern Ireland who had to get away because of the Troubles.

Although a Dubliner, Conor had not heard of Emigrant Advice. He feels he would have gone to them if he had known about their existence. He feels that they need to advertise their services in ways that young people would hear about.

It was clear that a number of young people lacked information about what options might be available to them in order to improve their situations, leading to a situation of powerlessness, and evident in some migrant accounts, that the time it took to get relevant information about available sources of support in terms of housing, training, etc., added to feelings of powerlessness and vulnerability.

- **Homelessness problems**

Housing and homelessness problems persist among Irish people living in UK cities, particularly in London (see Appendix 3 for recent data on street homelessness in London). Much of the work in the past of the Action Group for Irish Youth, as well as other organisations, has highlighted the problems faced by the Irish generally, including the vulnerability of newly arrived Irish migrants to becoming homeless. While earlier statistics do not suggest that newly arrived migrants are particularly numerous among the homeless or those living in hostels, etc., compared with Irish migrants who have lived in the UK for longer periods, the accounts of agency staff, as well as those migrants who were interviewed, do reveal problems of accessing adequate housing as a key problem among newly arrived clients, many of whom, particularly in London, have spent periods of time sleeping rough or living in hostels.

Although the numbers of 'newly arriveds' facing homelessness have clearly dropped dramatically in recent years, it continues to be the case that housing and homelessness are key issues being faced by vulnerable, recent migrants from Ireland, even though it is not clear why they have not been showing up in the statistics of many of the Irish housing associations in London.

- **Poor employment prospects, often poorly educated**

**Many of the migrants interviewed did not have good employment prospects:** evidently those thousands of migrants who easily accessed reasonable employment and/or who had a high level of qualifications would have managed to cope largely without the support of Irish and other agencies. On the other hand, those who sought support tended to be looking for manual employment and basic training skills. Although some had trades and some educational qualifications, and managed to get jobs without any assistance, some migrants who were interviewed faced obstacles in gaining employment and training and were unaware of sources of available help. Agencies in London such as the Safestart Foundation who have provided training, a job club and housing advice for Irish migrants since the late 1989, commented that they would prioritise Irish clients, but that in the recent past had received very few Irish referrals. This is likely to be partly an effect of a drop in numbers of new arrivals but it also raises the possibility that broadbased Irish organisations which are dealing with new migrants in need of training opportunities are not linking effectively with organisations providing specific training services which some new migrants may need.

A member of staff from the Safestart Foundation also commented that the dearth of new arrivals accessing their training and housing services may be due to younger Irish recent arrivals having more networks and places to stay than previous generations, which may be due to coming to family already in the UK. However, although there was evidence that some young people have networks, the majority of those interviewed, and the majority of those accessing advice agencies were not able to depend upon those networks to get work and reasonable housing.



## Organisational contacts

Most of the Irish organisations in the UK had heard of Emigrant Advice and would welcome greater contact regarding clients moving to the UK. This was particularly the view of An Teach Irish Housing Association staff who felt that enhanced communication between An Teach and Emigrant Advice might lead to the more favourable outcome of vulnerable young people bypassing involvement in experiences in central London which often exacerbated problems and increased vulnerability.

Other organisations claimed that they had contact with Emigrant Advice over the years, and welcomed this contact. Organisations welcomed the visits made by Emigrant Advice's Outreach Worker to their projects. Organisations such as the Action Group for Irish Youth felt that there was a lack of cohesion between their work and that of Emigrant Advice, as both organisations produce guides on emigrating to the UK. Although most organisations felt that links with Emigrant Advice were important, it was clear that for Irish and other agencies in the UK, that once emigrants have reached the UK and had become involved in the process of seeking advice and support, that the role of Emigrant Advice was seen as then redundant.

Within the Irish sector in the UK, it was clear that workers felt that they were dealing with emigrants who generally had not sought advice on emigration prior to leaving Ireland. Much of the explanation for this was that Emigrant Advice's services would not have been accessible by those who left in situations which by their very nature would have militated against a planned approach to emigration, for example those who left under threat and in other situations of distress. Other views were that Emigrant Advice's location in Dublin was unlikely to influence advice-seeking from those outside Dublin. It was also felt that the majority of those who are vulnerable and leaving Ireland in recent times would not have had access to any knowledge about the existence of Emigrant Advice. There were some suggestions, discussed later, about how Emigrant Advice might advertise its services more widely in order to reach emigrants prior to leaving.

## Contacts between Emigrant Advice and new Irish emigrants in the UK

The views of workers within Irish sector organisations were borne out in interviews with a sample of recent migrants. Only one of the migrant interviewees said that he had received advice from Emigrant Advice prior to leaving Ireland. None of the other migrant interviewees had ever heard of the services of Emigrant Advice and many said they would have welcomed receiving information and advice prior to leaving Ireland as it would have helped to have knowledge of services they could contact immediately on arrival in the UK, and saved delays in accessing information about services and gaining practical knowledge, the lack of which caused additional problems and stresses.

The migrant interviewee who did contact Emigrant Advice was aged 37 years, and he left Dublin for Liverpool for work reasons. He claimed that Emigrant Advice had informed him of the services of Irish Community Care Merseyside which he then contacted on arrival. He was given general support on getting housing and employment from the agency in Liverpool and faced no other difficulties. He has no problems with drugs or health issues and left Ireland voluntarily. This person was perhaps most likely to contact Emigrant Advice because he was older, lived in Dublin, left voluntarily and was leaving solely for

work-related reasons. For some other people, the abrupt nature of their departures (particularly those fleeing threats of violence) and those with drug issues, accessing the services of Emigrant Advice would just not have been a possibility given their circumstances. This point was raised by Walter et al. (2002), 'Agencies dedicated to emigrant advice are not able to access the most vulnerable group i.e. those young people around the country who for multiple reasons are socially excluded in Ireland and for whom emigration is triggered by unpredictable events in their lives' (Walter et al., 2002:23), and they note that an Emigrant Advice Network pilot database development project showed that skilled and professional people were most likely to use emigrant advice agencies in Ireland, rather than vulnerable people most in need.

For most of those migrants interviewed however, they just did not have any prior knowledge of the existence of Emigrant Advice in Dublin. For Northerners, it would not have seemed relevant for them to contact an organisation in Dublin for advice, and again a substantial proportion of Northerners interviewed left under paramilitary threats, with no opportunity to plan anything at all about their trips to the UK.

## **Promoting Wider knowledge of the existence and services of Emigrant Advice**

Workers within the Irish sector organisations, and interviewed recent vulnerable emigrants, made various suggestions about how Emigrant Advice might advertise its services more broadly in Ireland in order to inform potential emigrants of how to prepare adequately for emigration to the UK and to avoid the pitfalls experienced by their newly arrived clients.

## **Solutions**

An Teach Irish Housing Association staff suggested that better links with Emigrant Advice might result in those young emigrants who do go to Emigrant Advice in Dublin for advice being referred directly to them, and thus avert the creation of vulnerability witnessed among those who come to London with little idea of how to get benefits and reasonable affordable, supportive housing. An Teach cater for tenants with low support needs, but it is arguable that some of the problems described in case studies and in accounts of agency workers might be circumvented if there was closer liaison between these two organisations.



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## Disseminating information about Emigrant Advice's services in Ireland

There were a number of suggestions given about how Emigrant Advice might raise its profile in Ireland among vulnerable individuals and groups who might consider emigration to the UK.

- **Information Centres**

Some of these suggestions mirrored Walter et al.'s (2002) proposals of disseminating information at Youth Information Centres and Citizens Information Centres (CICs) in Ireland, as these are an 'easily accessible front line and referral service' (Walter et al., 2002:102). Walter et al. note that in 2002, about a third of Youth Information Centres were members of the Emigrant Advice Network, and although queries on migration tend to have been focused on return migration at CICs, Walter et al. suggest, as did some of those contacted during this research, that there was scope for using Citizens Information Centres for disseminating information more directly on emigration to the UK. It was also suggested that FÁS should give advice to young people on issues around emigration.

- **Social/leisure venues**

Some emigrants and agency workers in the UK suggested that information in the form of posters or pamphlets could be targeted at locations where young people might go, for example in pubs, at sports centres, drop in centres, men's toilets, etc.

- **Working proactively within socially deprived communities/ making links with probation officers and social workers**

This was suggested by the Co-ordinator of the London Irish Centre where it is claimed the largest number of newly arrived emigrants seek assistance. It was also suggested that giving information in prisons might better inform those who might leave after their sentences to make a fresh start.

- **Using technology**

This was suggested by migrant interviewees as well as others as a means to give advice on emigration. Walter et al. (2002) also reported that in the Emigrant Advice Network pilot study, that email enquiries were common and that the Comhairle website which advertises the work of Citizens Information Centres, could provide information on emigration. A recent search of the Comhairle website did not give any easily accessible information to intending emigrants to the UK about the practical and other difficulties they might face on arrival in the UK, nor any clear advice on contacting agencies in Ireland prior to departure. A summary – The Task Force on Policy Regarding Emigrants is online, but not any information which might aid emigrants moving to the UK who are vulnerable, or in need of being effectively supported to emigrate.

From the case studies noted earlier, it is evident that some interviewed migrants did use the internet to find out about housing and employment in areas of the UK to which they were heading. Although this option may not be available to all intending emigrants, it was clear that in the case of the young man quoted (Case Study 3) that he did not find any information pertaining to Emigrant Advice.

- **Last minute approaches**

It was suggested that perhaps the only way to find vulnerable emigrants prior to leaving was to have a presence at quaysides or on ferries. This approach may not be the best use of organisational resources, but certainly having literature available at points of departure in Ireland might be one way to impart information about organisations which might give advice and support prior to departure and on arrival in the UK, and particularly to emphasise the importance of ID in accessing most UK services.

- **Use of the media**

Many people suggested that in order for Emigrant Advice to work most effectively with vulnerable and other emigrants, that it needed to have its existence and services advertised more broadly in the media. Different media were suggested: it was proposed that TV adverts and radio could be used, particularly radio programmes which young people might listen in to.



This research has provided new data on the profile of recently arrived Irish emigrants to England. It has drawn on a number of sources of data, both qualitative and quantitative, in order to highlight the current experiences of recent vulnerable Irish emigrants to the UK. Gaining pre-departure advice and information is clearly not usual among Irish emigrants, and has traditionally been low among those going to Britain, where arguably the most vulnerable are destined (Walter et al., 2002). Emigrant Advice recognises it has a key role in supporting emigrants prior to departure, and has been carrying out this remit for decades. In the new climate of immigration to Ireland being higher than emigration from the country, and amidst concerns that vulnerable Irish continue to emigrate to the UK, and are least liable to seek pre-departure support and advice, Emigrant Advice aptly considers how best to assess its role and practices in relation to recent, vulnerable emigrants.

**The data discussed in this report may be summarised as follows:**

- 1 Numbers of Irish emigrants have been falling in recent years, to all destinations including the UK.
- 2 Emigrants perceived as 'vulnerable' (defined broadly) continue to emigrate to the UK with little or no preparation for going.
- 3 While the very young are likely to be a continuing concern, this research raises the important point that it is those in their twenties and thirties, and sometimes even older, who migrate to Britain, and greater age does not necessarily equate with lesser vulnerability.
- 4 Most vulnerable migrants continue to need advice and support with gaining housing, benefits, training, health care and employment.
- 5 Those migrants with greatest needs (drug and alcohol dependency problems) may be least likely to be able to access Irish and non-Irish organisational support, and therefore most likely to face greatest disadvantages in the UK.
- 6 Even without specific addiction and health problems, the difficulties generally facing those on low incomes and with few skills, of securing housing and employment, and those without ID securing even basic benefits, place vulnerable Irish migrants in a potential spiral of ever-increasing vulnerability.
- 7 Recent, vulnerable emigrants seem most likely to be in their twenties and thirties, rather than in their teens, and to have faced an array of familial, economic and social disadvantage in Ireland which prompted them to leave, including being forced to leave under threat of serious violence.
- 8 Single males seem most likely to need and access support in the UK, even though higher number of females migrate there. This may be because vulnerable males are more likely to migrate than females, or that males may be less likely to have the resources which females have. Nonetheless, some females were also described as vulnerable, and females may be particularly vulnerable to harassment and the predatory behaviour of strangers.
- 9 Due to their circumstances and how decisions to emigrate were made, vulnerable migrants were least equipped to know that advice and information might help them to emigrate and to be prepared for and informed about any potential difficulties.

- 10 An effect of being ill prepared for emigration is that vulnerable emigrants quickly face new circumstances which enhance their vulnerability, including homelessness, prostitution and access to drugs on the street.
- 11 Fewer Irish organisations than in the past regularly deal with new arrivals: dealing with new arrivals is concentrated in a few organisations catering for homeless youth and a minority of general frontline organisations, while even here numbers of new arrivals are falling.
- 12 Some non-Irish organisations are more likely to deal with new arrivals, possibly an effect of their location and particular services which are accessible to all, even those with high support needs.
- 13 The lack of an effective information system operating across Irish sector organisations at present makes it difficult to feel entirely confident about the accuracy of some of the figures given here relating to new arrivals in the UK.
- 14 Irish and other organisations would generally welcome liaison with Emigrant Advice with regard to new emigrants, and emigrants and organisational staff offered a number of views on how vulnerable Irish people might be located and supported by Emigrant Advice prior to departure to the UK.

**In the light of these findings, it is recommended that Emigrant Advice try to pursue the following proposals and recommendations as a means of promoting their services to emigrants to the UK, and particularly to vulnerable, potential emigrants:**

- 1 Develop a strategy of disseminating information about Emigrant Advice and its services, and in particular to provide a range of ways for getting in touch with the organisation, which is likely to reach vulnerable, disadvantaged groups. Information might be targeted at general audiences and at specific groups and places (young people, prisoners, drug drop-in centres, unemployed males, young people coming out of care, probationers, Travellers groups, projects dealing with domestic violence, etc).
- 2 Use a range of media (internet, radio, newspapers, TV programmes) to raise awareness of services, contact details and highlighting serious difficulties facing those who do not prepare adequately for emigration.
- 3 Ensure that information on Emigrant Advice, and how to contact the organisation easily, is available in social services departments, probation offices, Citizens Information Centres and Youth Information Centres, on the Comhairle website, FÁS premises, drug and alcohol treatment centres, ports, bus and ferry terminals, etc.
- 4 Comhairle recognises that more could be done in Ireland to prepare emigrants for departure abroad, and highlights the particular vulnerabilities of emigrants to the UK. It stresses the need for a more proactive role in information-giving among statutory providers and independent information providers, and the need for greater collaboration between agencies in Ireland, agencies working in the UK with vulnerable Irish, and the Department of Foreign Affairs, to alleviate problems. It calls for the need for 'creative responses' (see [www.comhairle.ie](http://www.comhairle.ie)). Emigrant Advice might work more closely with Comhairle as a means of ensuring better dissemination of information on its services, with user-friendly means to contact Emigrant Advice.

- 5 Evaluate any new dissemination strategies used for their efficacy in reaching more vulnerable clients.
- 6 Focus on building links with particular groups (Irish and non-Irish) in London and Liverpool, where vulnerable migrants are most likely to access services, and evaluate the effects of link-building and greater co-operation on improving the lot of vulnerable emigrants over a fixed time-scale.
- 7 At a wider policy level, the organisation might emphasise in the media that social disadvantage in Ireland permits the continuance of the longstanding pattern in Irish society of the most deprived regarding emigration as their only option. Emigrant Advice might highlight the links between myriad disadvantages and emigration and argue for measures to decrease the gap in ever-widening social inequalities.

In conclusion, it is important that any strategies pursued meet with the overall aims of Emigrant Advice and that strategies followed are systematic and open to evaluation in order to assess not only whether strategies are effective in reaching vulnerable emigrants, but also whether they are practicable within given organisational resources. The Irish Abroad Unit, Dept. of Foreign Affairs, may provide support to Emigrant Advice in pursuing these recommendations. A failure to address the needs of the most recent, vulnerable Irish emigrants now, will merely result in today's vulnerable Irish emigrants to the UK, repeating the history of previous generations of vulnerable, Irish emigrants, and becoming dependent in the longer term on an already stretched Irish sector in the UK.

## 07 References

Central Statistics Office (2005a) Table 6: Estimated Migration classified by Sex and country of Destination/Origin, 2000-2005 in *Population and Migration Estimates* 14 September 2005 page 6, Central Statistics Office, Ireland

Central Statistics Office (2005b) Table 7: Estimated Migration classified by Sex and Age Group, 2000-2005 in *Population and Migration Estimates* 14 September 2005 page 7, Central Statistics Office, Ireland

Morgan, S (2003) *Irish Community Services: Standardised Information Services 5 Year Review*, Action Group for Irish Youth and Federation of Irish Societies, London

*Suaimhneas Report* (2001) Irish Community Care Merseyside, Liverpool

Walter, B; Gray, B; Dowling, L A; Morgan, S (2002) *A study of the existing sources of information and analysis about Irish emigrants and Irish communities abroad*, Task Force, Dublin

### Profiling Irish Emigrants to the UK from April 2004 onwards

I am currently conducting a research project on the profile of recently arrived (since April 2004) Irish emigrants to the UK. This work is being done on behalf of Emigrant Advice in Dublin and is funded by the Irish Abroad Unit, Dept. of Foreign Affairs of the Irish government. It aims to assess the recent personal circumstances of leaving Ireland and access to services in the UK. A particular focus is on migrants who might be deemed as vulnerable.

Any help in gaining a numerical profile of newly arrived migrants and their circumstances of leaving and support needs in the UK would be extremely helpful.

If you or anyone in your organisation can help with this project in any way, this would be acknowledged in the final report. Answers to any of the following questions would provide useful data.

- 1 Have any newly arrived Irish migrants accessed your services from April '04 to end March '05? If so can you give actual numbers, and some indication of what proportion the newly arrived make up of the numbers of Irish generally? And what proportion of your overall client group?
- 2 What services are newly arrived migrants mainly accessing?
- 3 What do you consider their primary support needs?
- 4 Are you aware of any particular difficulties newly arrived migrants have in accessing services in the UK?
- 5 Can you give an overview of what you understand to be the main reasons the Irish migrants you have had contact with have chosen to leave Ireland?
- 6 What is their predominant profile in terms of gender, age group, marital status, etc.
- 7 Do you have any views on how Emigrant Advice, an organisation which has traditionally supported Irish people who wish to migrate, might have accessed those who have left Ireland recently, prior to emigration?
- 8 Do you know whether any of the migrants you have seen have actually accessed support to emigrate via organisations such as Emigrant Advice? Or any other organisations or services?
- 9 Does your organisation have any contact with Emigrant Advice in Dublin?
- 10 Do you feel you have adequate resources to cope with the support needs of newly arrived migrants? If not, how might this be improved?
- 11 Do you know of any newly arrived migrants who might consent to a short, confidential interview, either by phone or in person about their reasons for leaving Ireland and their experiences since arriving in the UK?
- 12 Would you be willing to facilitate such interviews?

The project is running on an extremely short timetable, so any responses would be appreciated as soon as possible.

Please contact me on (contact details provided)

Many thanks.

**Dr. Patricia Walls**

Research Consultant

### List of organisations contacted during the research

*(Contact does not infer that a response was forthcoming)*

Action Group for Irish Youth  
An Teach Irish Housing Association  
BIAS (Brent Irish Advisory Service)  
Broadway  
Cara Irish Housing Association  
Central Statistics Office  
Centrepont  
Coventry Irish Society  
Cricklewood Homeless Concern  
Federation of Irish Societies  
Haringey Irish Cultural and Community Centre  
Homeless Link  
Irish Commission for Prisoners Overseas  
Immigrant Counselling and Psychotherapy  
Innisfree Housing Association  
Irish Centre Housing Ltd  
Irish Chaplaincy in Britain  
Irish Community Care Manchester  
Irish Community Care Merseyside  
Irish Welfare and Information Centre Birmingham  
Hammersmith and Fulham Irish Centre (Irish Support and Advice Service)  
Lewisham Irish Community Centre  
London Irish Centre  
London Irish Women's Centre  
Safestart Foundation  
Solas Anois Irish Women's Domestic Violence Project  
South London Irish Welfare Society  
Thamesreach Bondway  
The Connection at St. Martins  
The Passage Day Centre, London  
YMCA Liverpool

Statistics from CHAIN (Combined Homelessness and Information Network) statistics on Irish homeless street contacts from 1/4/04 to 9/9/05

New Irish clients on CHAIN	
Total new Irish clients	132
Total new clients	2050
% of new clients who are Irish	6%

Gender of Irish clients	
Female	12
Male	120
Total	132

Age breakdown of Irish clients

Age	Number
18 to 25 years	5
26 to 35 years	38
36 to 49 years	53
50 to 59 years	19
60 & over	17
Total	132

Number of Irish clients with bedded-down street contacts by borough

Borough	Number
Westminster	48
Brent	8
City of London	4
Camden	13
Ealing	6
Hammersmith & Fulham	7
Haringey	2
Islington	4
Kensington & Chelsea	6
Lambeth	6
Richmond	1
Southwark	6
Other boroughs	11
Total	132

Support needs of Irish clients

Support needs	Number
Alcohol only	33
Drugs only	10
Mental health only	10
Alcohol & drugs	6
Alcohol & mental health	7
Drugs & mental health	2
Drugs, alcohol & mental health	5
None	7
Combination of no. or not known	52
Total	132

*Note: Some clients may have been contacted in more than one borough*

No. of Irish clients arriving at hostels or rolling shelters	91
No. of Irish clients with only street contacts and no other actions	9

# EmigrantAdvice

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Email: [info@emigrantadvice.ie](mailto:info@emigrantadvice.ie)

Website: [www.emigrantadvice.ie](http://www.emigrantadvice.ie)

