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# Annual Report 2009

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## 1 Chairperson's report

2009 was a challenging year. Many people experienced financial difficulties – whether they lost their jobs, were put on reduced working hours or took pay reductions. The Citizens Information Board's response to the downturn included a website, [losingyourjob.ie](http://losingyourjob.ie); information leaflets and posters; specialised training for information providers; and support for local information initiatives. The Board's integrated response was very successful, both as a direct reaction to emerging information needs, and as a demonstration of our capacity to respond quickly and effectively to a changing environment.

The [losingyourjob.ie](http://losingyourjob.ie) microsite was key to that response. Launched in early 2009, it attracted almost 50,000 users by the end of the year. The site was awarded a Taoiseach's Award for Public Service Excellence in February 2010. The Citizens Information Board's response to the downturn now includes the [keepingyourhome.ie](http://keepingyourhome.ie) microsite for people having difficulty paying the rent or mortgage.

Over two-thirds of a million people visited a Citizens Information Service in 2009, the [citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie) website attracted almost 3.5 million users and the Citizens Information Phone Service dealt with over 150,000 queries. These figures show that the three channel approach to delivering information is reaching a significant percentage of the Irish population.

A significant and welcome development was the assignment of the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) to the Citizens Information Board. Services provided through Citizens Information and MABS are complementary in that they support people to move out of difficult personal circumstances by providing confidential, free and independent nationwide services. MABS clients are presenting with multiple and complex debts. The Minister for Social Protection approved a number of extra posts for MABS to help deal with the increasing demand for its services.

Many clients need more than information. By combining our information services with advice and advocacy services we help vulnerable people to obtain information and claim their entitlements. During 2009 the Advocacy Programme for People with Disabilities supported 46 projects to provide advocacy services for people with disabilities nationwide.

During the year the Citizens Information Board published its strategic plan – *Pathways to Services – Putting Citizens at the Centre*. The Strategy provides a single framework for the development of services provided by the Board and its delivery partners over the next three years. It positions the Citizens Information Board as a pivotal intermediary between the citizen and public services. It prioritises the delivery



of a seamless and high-quality service to citizens and focuses on leading and developing MABS. The strategy also focuses on organising the Board's resources to deliver on its strategic priorities.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS) in helping almost 2,000 individuals to access an interpreting service during the year. I would also like to welcome President Mary McAleese's decision to become Patron of SLIS in 2009.

I would like to thank the Minister, Éamon Ó'Cuív TD, for his continued support and interest in the organisation. I would also like to express appreciation for the support of Bernadette Lacey, Secretary General at the Department of Social Protection and her staff. I would also like to acknowledge and thank my colleagues on the Board of CIB and, in particular, to acknowledge and commend the commitment of my predecessor as Chairperson, Chris Glennon.

I wish to thank the Boards, staff and volunteers of all the Board's delivery partners. Finally, I would also like to thank the staff of the Citizens Information Board and its Chief Executive, Tony McQuinn.

Sylva Langford  
Chairperson



## 2 Introduction

This report to the Minister for Social Protection details the Citizens Information Board's activities for the calendar year 2009.

### 2.1 Background

The Citizens Information Board is the statutory body responsible for supporting the provision of information, advice (including money and budgeting advice) and advocacy services to members of the public on a wide range of public and social services. Since July 2009 the Board has had responsibility for the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS).

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

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

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

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



We also deliver on our remit through project funding, where services are provided by a third party or partnership of organisations. The Citizens Information Board uses this approach to deliver pilot advocacy services to people with disabilities in partnership with the community and voluntary sector.

This approach delivers general information services to a very large number of clients (3.46 million visitors to [citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie), over 650,000 callers to Citizens Information Services and over 150,000 queries to the Citizens Information Phone Service and targeted services to those in need of specialist information, advice or advocacy (including over 22,000 active cases with the Money Advice and Budgeting Service and 2,601 people with disabilities through the Advocacy Projects).

## **2.2 2009: the year in review**

### **MABS comes under remit of CIB**

On 13 July 2009 the Citizens Information Board took formal responsibility for MABS under Part 4 of the 2008 Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act. This responsibility includes the direct funding, leadership and support of 51 MABS companies around the country, and two companies with national briefs, MABSndI and National Traveller MABS.

### **CIB launches Strategic Plan 2009-2012**

The new strategic plan is called *Pathways to Services – Putting Citizens at the Centre*. It sets out the priorities for the Citizens Information Board and its delivery partners over the next three years. These include the delivery of a seamless service across all channels and delivery partners, a focus on service quality, building on the Board's current role as a pivotal intermediary between the citizen and public service and leading and developing MABS while organising to deliver on these priorities.

### **Response to the downturn**

The Citizens Information Board set up a special group to look at how to respond to the severe economic downturn. This group assessed feedback on clients' needs from the network of Citizens Information Services and the Citizens Information Phone Service and put several rapid response initiatives in place. These included [losingyourjob.ie](http://losingyourjob.ie), a new microsite that pulls together essential information for newly unemployed people; specialised training focused on unemployment and redundancy and supports for information providers under strain from the demand on services and the increased complexity of queries.

### **Citizens Information National Conference 2009**

The Citizens Information National Conference took place on 2 October 2009. The theme was *Pathways to Services - Putting Citizens at the Centre* and the conference explored the challenges in delivering a high-quality, citizen-centred service during the current economic downturn.



## 3 A statistical portrait of 2009

In 2009 Citizens Information was available through **3** information channels.

**Face-to-face:** **685,778** callers contacted **110** Citizens Information Centres and **152** outreach locations with **972,528** queries. These concerns were dealt with by **104** information officers, **170** scheme participants and **1,192** volunteers.

**Online:** Over **3.46 million** people visited [citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie) and viewed more than **30 million** pages.

**By phone:** **154,823** queries were answered by the Citizens Information Phone Service.

The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) had **over 22,000** active cases in 2009. The MABS Helpline dealt with **24,802** calls.

**13** issues of the *Relate* journal were published, including a special issue on unemployment, and over **100,000** booklets, leaflets, factsheets and wallcharts were published and distributed.

**70** training courses were delivered to **1,250** people in over **50** locations. **96** people completed the Accredited Information Provider Programme in 2009.

**2,601** people with disabilities received an advocacy service from **46** advocacy projects in the community and voluntary sector.

**3,000** social policy returns were made by information providers across the Citizens Information network, the Citizens Information Phone Service and the Disability Advocacy Projects highlighting the queries and concerns of people using public services.

The Assist Ireland website, [assistireland.ie](http://assistireland.ie), carried information on over **7,000** aids and appliances and received over **500,000** visitors.

The Sign Language Interpreting Service provided sign language interpreting services to **2,601** clients.



## 4 Pathways to Services: Strategic Plan 2009-2012

*Pathways to Services – Putting Citizens at the Centre* is the title of the Citizens Information Board's fourth strategic plan. It was developed during a severe economic downturn and a very challenging period for public finances. The Citizens Information Board (CIB) developed the strategic plan in consultation with the Board's management team and staff; key delivery partners including CISOs, CIPS, MABS and the advocacy projects; and stakeholders across the public and voluntary sector including the Department of Social Protection. The strategy was developed with the help of PA Consulting Group.

The strategy provides a single framework for the development of services provided by CIB, CISOs, CIPS and MABS over the next three years. It positions the Citizens Information Board at the interface between citizens and the State and sets out the priority actions that the Board must undertake to deliver its strategic objectives.

The strategy identifies the key trends that impinge on the delivery of our services as:

- **A growing demand for services** – especially from new customer groups that have not traditionally used Citizens Information Services.
- **A more intricate landscape for delivering information, advice, advocacy and budgeting services** – the Citizens Information Board is currently the only body that delivers integrated information services so people can be sure they are getting access to the range of services they need.
- **Life events and the life cycle approach now define how Government delivers public services** – This approach looks at the needs of people during the main stages of their lives.
- **Social inclusion and the drive for improved public services that demonstrate value for money**

The Strategy is underpinned by two key principles

- Maintaining a citizen-centred approach to keep the citizen at the centre of everything we do
- Becoming more proactive so we are constantly anticipating changes in our service environment and in citizens' needs





It consists of five strategic priorities:

**Priority 1: Delivering a seamless service to citizens**

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

**Priority 2: Assuring quality of our services**

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

**Priority 3: A pivotal intermediary between citizens and public services**

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

**Priority 4: Leading and developing MABS**

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

**Priority 5: Organising to deliver**

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



## 5 Our delivery partners

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

The nationwide network of Citizens Information Services (CISs) and the Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS) provide face-to-face services and the telephone service. The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) offers free, confidential and independent assistance for people in debt or in danger of getting into debt.

Advocacy services are delivered directly to clients through the Community and Voluntary Advocacy Programme for People with Disabilities. (Chapter 7 covers advocacy in CISs.) The Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS) is the national agency for the provision of sign language interpreting services in Ireland. It is an independent voluntary body with its own board of management and is funded and supported by the Citizens Information Board.

### 5.1 Citizens Information Phone Service

The Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS) is funded and supported by the Citizens Information Board. This national telephone helpline provides a comprehensive and confidential information service. The telephone service is provided Monday to Friday from 9am to 9pm on lo-call 1890 777 121. The service also offers access routes (web “live advisor” and text) for people with hearing and speech difficulties.

#### Finance and staffing

CIPS’ operational grant from CIB for 2009 was €1,316,970. The bulk of the 2009 grant was allocated to employee costs (€935,258), followed by administration costs (€297,088).

CIPS staff allocation comprised 21 whole time equivalents – 1 manager, 2 team supervisors, 16 information officers and 2 administration staff. A new staffing structure, designed to meet the growing demands on the service, was put in place in 2009 following an organisational review.

#### Service demand and statistics

During the year, the total overall demand for the service increased by 36% compared with 2008. The table below demonstrates the level of growth, year-on-year, since



2007. It shows a 75% increase in the number of customers contacting CIPS during this two-year period. During 2009, almost a quarter of a million telephone calls were made to CIPS.

**Figure 1: CIPS' customer numbers: 2007-2009**

CIPS' customer numbers: 2007-2009				
Year	Total customers	Telephone	E-mail	Other
2007	139,069	114,508	23,722	839
2008	179,770	158,852	20,410	508
2009	245,155	241,858	3,207	90

NB. The fall in email traffic in 2009 arose from the removal of the 'Ask a Question' facility from the citizensinformation.ie website. The fall in 'other' reflects a temporary freeze in promotion of alternative access routes during a period of technological development of these channels.

The increase in call volumes since January 2007 has been so significant that it has outstripped the capacity of CIPS to meet customer demand. While 241,858 customers dialled the 1890 777 121 lo-call number during 2009, the number of callers who stayed in the queue until they reached a CIPS Information Officer was 154,823. CIPS therefore recorded 87,035 abandoned calls (36%). While conscious that many who abandoned their initial call simply chose to phone CIPS back at a less busy time, or to access the Citizens Information website or call into their local Citizens Information Centre, CIPS management and Board continue to work to address this issue.

## Queries

Social welfare and employment queries accounted for close to two-thirds (65%) of all CIPS queries in 2009. While employment queries remained static at 18%, social welfare enquiries rose from 32% of all queries in 2008 to 47% in 2009.

An analysis of social welfare queries, conducted in the second half of 2009 once the new call management system was in place, shows that 29% were about Jobseeker's Benefit and Jobseeker's Allowance.

## Social policy

The two-fold increase in the number of social policy returns sent to CIB for 2009 (compared with 2008) reflects the proactive stance CIPS is taking towards its social policy remit. CIPS is uniquely placed, as a national service dealing with a very high volume of queries across the broad remit of Citizens Information, to make a constructive contribution to the social policy landscape. CIPS coordinates and themes its social policy work to optimise its impact.



## Technological advances

A new Interactive Intelligence ICT and telephony system was installed in CIPS in 2009. This system is designed specifically for multi-channel contact centres receiving high volumes of enquiries covering a range of areas. Its purpose is to enhance *efficiency*, to measure more effectively and precisely (and thus enable improvements in) the *quality* of service, and to provide high-level and sophisticated management information that will guide and underpin future service development.

## Customer surveys

The service completed sample customer surveys during 2009, to establish how customers heard of the Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS). Results for the 906 customers surveyed indicate that 60% had used CIPS on a previous occasion, and that approximately one-third of those contacting CIPS had first heard of the telephone service via the citizensinformation.ie website.

Thirteen percent of customers were referred by CIB or a CIS. The high proportion of returning customers - 60% - and those who heard of CIPS via word of mouth suggests a high level of satisfaction with service.

## 5.2 Citizens Information Services

Citizens Information Services (CISs) deliver information on public and social services. All CISs offer a drop-in service where callers can meet information providers face-to-face. Outreach and mobile services also deliver information to citizens who might not otherwise be able to access it. For example, CISs provide outreach service in residential institutions, hospitals, prisons and remote locations. Each CIS is established as a limited company with a voluntary board of management that includes CIS volunteers, representatives from local community and voluntary organisations and representatives of the statutory sector. Each CIS covers a geographical area, either countywide or part of an urban area, and delivers its services through a number of Citizens Information Centres (CICs) and outreaches. All 42 CISs are supported and funded by the Citizens Information Board.

## Statistics

In 2009, Citizens Information was delivered from 262 locations comprising 55 full-time Citizens Information Centres, 55 part-time centres and 152 fixed outreach locations. The number of outreach locations increased by seven in 2009.

## Funding

The Citizens Information Board provided €12,619,633 in funding to Citizens Information Services in 2009.



## Staffing

Citizens Information Service personnel include paid staff, volunteers and participants on employment schemes. In 2009 CIB funded a total of 168.5 whole-time equivalent paid posts in the network of Citizens Information Services (Development Manager; Information Officer and Administrator). Development Manager positions tend to be full-time posts. Most Administrator positions are part-time (26) with only 9 full-time Administrator posts in the network. The 104.5 whole-time equivalent Information Officer posts include both full-time and part-time positions.

In addition, there are 19 temporary Disability Advocate (15 posts) and Advocacy Resource Officer (4 posts) linked to projects which are also funded by the Citizens Information Board.

In 2009 there were 1,175 volunteers in Citizens Information Services providing the equivalent of 107.28 whole-time equivalent posts. The current number of volunteers represents an 8% increase over 2008. Work undertaken by CIS volunteers includes information provision, administration, reception, interpreter and other tasks within Services. The majority of volunteers, 85%, are involved in information provision.

In 2009 there were 170 employment scheme participants working in Citizens Information Services providing the whole time equivalent of 97 posts. Community Employment Schemes account for the majority of scheme participants (146) with 14 on Jobs Initiative placements, 7 with Rural Social Schemes and 3 from other schemes. Scheme participants take on a number of roles including Information Provider (66%) and Receptionist (22%).

## Service delivery

### Query and caller statistics

- The number of callers to CISs in 2009 was 685,778, or an average of 16,328 per service, an increase of 2% over 2008.
- Time spent with callers ranged from less than 10 minutes with 52% to 40+ minutes with 2%; 38% of callers took between 10 and 20 minutes and 8% took between 21 and 40 minutes.
- The majority of CIS customers (71%) called to the service in person, 28% contacted the service by telephone and 0.6% by email.
- The gender breakdown of callers to Citizens Information Services is 60% female callers and 40% male callers (408,772 female callers and 277,006 male callers).
- Of those callers who disclosed their ages, the largest number of callers was in the 26-45 age group, followed by those aged 46-65.
- 48% of callers did not disclose their nationality. Of those who did, 77% were Irish; 15% were from other EU countries and 8% from non-EU countries.



- Queries are categorised in the Oyster data collection system by subject area. In 2009 social welfare accounted for 430,689 queries or 44% of all queries to CISs. The next highest categories were employment (12%) and health (9%). Money and tax, housing and local queries each accounted for 5% of total queries.

## Oyster data collection system

This is the first full year in which the information in CIS Activity Reports has been drawn from the Oyster data collection system. Initial indications suggest that the system reduces the reporting demands on Development Managers, improves the richness and accuracy of management information and provides front-line staff with an effective and intuitive recording system.

## Activities

Citizens Information Services work in collaboration with other organisations in their communities to meet identified needs and to target vulnerable or hard to reach groups, for example women's groups, youth groups, one-parent families, the Traveller community, men's groups and prisoners. In 2009 CISs worked in collaboration with the Department of Social Protection, Family Resource Centres, the HSE, County and City Development Boards, MABS, Area Partnership Companies and voluntary and community organisations. In 2009 CISs recorded their involvement in 95 such projects.

Citizens Information Services provide a range of services in response to requests from local organisations and to meet identified needs. In 2009 CISs were involved in 687 occasional outreach events targeting various groups:

- 199 events were targeted at the general community
- 98 events targeted older people
- 97 were held for people with disabilities
- 66 for those who are unemployed
- 61 targeted immigrants

Chapter 6 covers how Citizens Information Services responded to the economic downturn and Chapter 8 covers work done in partnership with other agencies and organisations.

## Specialist services

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



Citizens Information Board also gives financial support to a range of national and voluntary organisations that provide information in specialised areas.

**DeafHear.ie:** DeafHear.ie is funded annually to support the provision of an information service for people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

**Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC):** The Citizens Information Board provides funding to FLAC to operate a free and confidential legal advice service in CISs around the country.

**The Integration Centre (formerly Refugee Information Service (RIS)):** The Integration Centre operates a range of clinics in the Dublin and Galway areas, several in conjunction with CISs, and receives financial support from the Citizens Information Board.

**The Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI):** The Citizens Information Board provides funding to the ICI for specialist support to CISs in relation to immigration.

**Treoir:** The Citizens Information Board provides funding to Treoir for specialist support to CISs on services for unmarried parents and their children.

## **5.3 The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)**

The Citizens Information Board (CIB) was assigned responsibility for MABS with effect from 13 July 2009. MABS provides a free, confidential and independent service countrywide for people with debt problems or over-indebtedness. Services provided through Citizens Information and MABS are complementary in that they support people to move out of difficult personal circumstances by providing confidential, free and independent nationwide services.

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

- Providing national leadership and direction for MABS and securing its future development
- Securing and consolidating the continued involvement of the voluntary and community sector in the provision of a MABS service which is responsive to the needs of local communities
- Providing for sound corporate governance, customer service and financial accountability across the organisational structure of MABS





- Enhancing policy development and strategic planning for MABS as a key publicly funded service for people on low incomes who seek assistance in managing debt problems

There is no change in the status of the independent MABS companies with voluntary boards of management or in the employment status of MABS employees.

## Structure of MABS

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

Each MABS service is run by a company limited by guarantee. Each company is an independent legal entity with a board of directors drawn from local voluntary and statutory services and community groups. MABS National Development Limited (MABSndl) is a central technical support service to MABS companies which manages the MABS telephone helpline and website and the MABSIS client information system and also responds to media queries on money and debt management. National Traveller MABS was established in 2005 following a pilot project. It advocates for the financial inclusion of Travellers (and other marginalised groups) empowering them to access legal and affordable savings and credit.

## The MABS approach

MABS emphasises practical, budget-based measures to help people with debt difficulties. It targets families identified as having problems with debt and money lending, gives a prominent role to local voluntary and statutory agencies and provides education on budgeting and money management in the local community.

The MABS service is delivered in three ways:

- On its website ([mabs.ie](http://mabs.ie))
- Via the MABS Helpline (1890 283 438 9 am-8 pm Monday to Friday)
- Face-to-face with trained Money Advisers in offices nationwide

## Funding and statistics

In 2009 the allocation by the Department of Social Protection to MABS was €17.93 million. The funding provided to each local MABS company in 2009 ranged from €124,000 to €509,400. The budget for MABSndl for 2009 was €2.183 million. National Traveller MABS was allocated a total of €307,939 for 2009.

In common with other services, 2009 saw an increase in demand and resulting pressure on staff and services. MABS companies also report that new clients are presenting with multiple debts and more complex debts. During the year the Minister for Social Protection approved temporary extra posts for MABS to help deal with the





increasing demand for services bringing the total number of staff to approximately 270 people.

At the end of 2009 the active caseload was approximately 22,000.

**Figure 2: MABS' clients 2007-2009**

Client type*	2007	2008	2009
Special Account	2,493	2,676	2,618
Budget Negotiable	9,585	13,924	16,476
Information only	2,627	2,441	3,868
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,705</b>	<b>19,041</b>	<b>22,962</b>

\*Note: MABS clients are divided into three categories:

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

MABS saw 19,094 new clients in 2009, an increase of 15% on the number of new clients in 2008. The total amount owed to creditors by new clients at the end of December 2009, based on the debt they had when they first came to MABS, amounted to €341 million. The top debt types about which people contact MABS are personal loans, utility bills and credit card debts.

**Figure 3: MABS' new clients 2006-2009**

Year	New clients	Increase
2006	11,630	
2007	12,433	6.9%
2008	16,600	33.5%
2009	19,094	15%

The MABS National Telephone Helpline was launched in 2007. It is a very effective way of providing immediate assistance while ensuring that people who need the active support of a Money Adviser are directed to their local service.

The Helpline helps local services manage their appointment lists by providing a preliminary MABS service to clients and ongoing support while they await their appointment with their local Money Adviser.



**Figure 4: MABS' helpline callers 2008-2009**

Year	Helpline callers	Increase
2008	10,945	
2009	24,802	127%

## MABS website

The MABS website ([mabs.ie](http://mabs.ie)) provides budgeting and money management information and includes a variety of self-help information leaflets, guides and budget sheets. In 2008 the number of visits to the website was 84,042. In 2009 the number of visits increased to 250,065.

## Working together

MABS works together with other organisations to fulfil its remit. In 2009 twelve leading credit institutions subscribed to a new protocol to help personal customers to manage their debt. The Irish Banking Federation (IBF) and the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) *Operational Protocol: Working Together to Manage Debt* enables IBF creditors and MABS money advisers to work together effectively to help personal customers/clients to address and manage debt problems and, wherever possible, to formulate a mutually-acceptable, affordable and sustainable repayment plan. It sets out the agreed steps by which creditors and money advisers can work together to put a plan in place and to manage that plan.

The Protocol is broken down into two main parts:

- General Principles – which set out the partnership approach to be pursued by creditors and money advisers and the framework for addressing debt problems
- Procedures – which define the general arrangements for good engagement, the five key steps to agreeing a repayment plan and the process for managing an agreed repayment plan

MABS also made a presentation to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Social and Family Affairs on *Levels and Trends in Personal Debt in Irish Society*.

In addition MABSndI, on behalf of MABS and CIB held a wide range of meetings with various bodies in relation to commercial and personal debt management, and mortgage issues, drawing on the experience of MABS clients. These bodies included the Department of Social and Family Affairs (now the Department of Social Protection), the Financial Regulator and the Law Reform Commission.



## **CIB and MABS Representative Group**

The Terms of Reference for a newly established CIB MABS Representative Group were agreed at its inaugural meeting held on 6 November 2009.

The objectives of the Representative Group are as follows:

- The group will be the principal consultation forum between the National Management Forum (NMF) representing Management Committees, the National Executive Committee (NEC) representing the staff of the MABS companies, and the Citizens Information Board (CIB), recognising that each MABS is established as an independent company, funded and supported by CIB
- The group will focus primarily on strategic matters and issues of operational policy and practice
- The group will advise on development of policy and new initiatives, development of service capacity and promotion of quality services.
- The group will act as a champion of the citizen and service improvement and be responsive to the needs of clients
- The group will promote strong collaboration at all levels and facilitate positive communications between key stakeholders

The Group comprises four representatives each from:

- Citizens Information Board
- MABS National Management Forum
- MABS National Executive Committee

The Business Manager of MABSndI is in attendance.

Items discussed by the Group have included:

- Statistics and statistical reporting
- Financial reporting system
- Law Reform Commission Consultation Paper on Personal Debt and Debt Enforcement
- Comptroller and Auditor General 2008 report on MABS
- Policy, submissions and reports.

## **5.4 Advocacy Programme for People with Disabilities**

The Citizens Information Board has developed and funded a programme of support for community and voluntary organisations to provide advocacy services for people with disabilities. The overall focus of this programme is on representative advocacy for vulnerable people with disabilities. In representative advocacy, a trained person



represents the wishes of the person with disability and supports the person accessing entitlements, defending basic rights, making life choices or making formal complaints or appeals. The advocate has been described as the lynch-pin, drawing together the various services and supports required by people with disabilities in order for them to live as full, independent and dignified lives as possible.

Forty six projects in the programme each employ an advocate to provide advocacy services to people with disabilities. Of these, 43 are representative advocacy projects and 3 are citizen advocacy projects. A huge range of organisations, public bodies, local authorities, disability organisations, service providers and people with disabilities are involved in the steering groups of these projects.

## **Funding, support and statistics**

Funding of €2,642,790 was provided to the programme in 2009. CIB also supported the programme with resources, networking opportunities and training. All projects in the programme have a contract with the Citizens Information Board to provide a pilot service until the end of 2010.

During 2009, 2,601 clients received an advocacy service. This compares with 2,070 for 2008, and 1,322 for 2007, representing a rise of 22% over the 2008 figure. Average client numbers vary from 57 for all projects and, as expected, fewer for residential services which had an average of 37 clients during 2009.

## **Electronic case management**

An electronic case management system to manage advocacy cases in CISs and in the Advocacy Programme for People with Disabilities was developed in 2009. All advocates and line managers in the Advocacy Programme for People with Disabilities were trained in using the system and the system is now in use across the Programme. Training and rollout to CISs will take place in 2010. This system will provide a secure and safe way for advocates and information providers to log and track cases, provide ease and consistency of reporting, protect the confidentiality of client information and ensure that advocates comply with data protection legislation. CIB worked closely with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner in the development and roll out of this system.

Projects had been using a variety of paper-based and electronic case management systems prior to this and feedback from advocates and their managers on this new system has been very positive to date.

## **Evaluation of the Programme**

In order to measure the effectiveness of the Pilot Advocacy Programme and make recommendations for the long term, consultants RoundTable Mediation undertook a case work analysis and a programme structure review. An advisory committee formed



to oversee the evaluation met five times during 2009. A final evaluation report is due in 2010.

## **Providing advocacy to more vulnerable people with disabilities**

Reports from projects in 2009 refer to the increasing complexity of cases, the vulnerability of people with severe and profound disabilities and the challenges presented when working with people who do not have the capacity to consent or direct. Twenty nine of the 46 projects provided different levels of service to people with disabilities in residential institutions during 2009, some working exclusively in residential services and others providing outreach or taking referrals. Projects with a large rural catchment area sought assistance from public health nurses to reach isolated people with disabilities and make home visits where required.

### **Acceptance and awareness**

Generally reaction to advocacy services has been very positive. Trust has been built over the period of the programme to date and both advocates and services have noted that when families, professionals and staff of services see the positive outcomes for clients there has been a marked improvement in the willingness to work with advocates.

### **Outcomes achieved for people with disabilities**

In 2009, as in previous years housing and accommodation issues dominated and featured in 21% of cases while a further 5% of cases involved supporting people with disabilities who wished to gain more independence in their lives. Many of the people supported to move to independent living had been living in institutions for most of their lives. One example is a man with physical disabilities in his sixties who had spent forty years of his life in an institution. The advocate worked with him to secure rental accommodation and a suitable personal assistance package. He has chosen his own local GP, and has control over his own finances for the first time. He has, with advocacy assistance, made links with the local community and developed a social life.

Twenty eight percent of cases involved access to rights and entitlements in the social welfare and health areas and supporting people to make complaints and appeals. In one case a woman was living in the high dependency unit of a hospital for over 18 months. She had a viral infection in her brain which left her unable to walk, talk or breathe without a ventilator. She communicated by forming words with her mouth. She needed accessible accommodation and a care package so that she could be discharged. Major negotiation between services was required to acquire an accessible house and Mobility Allowance. The HSE had said they wouldn't pay Mobility Allowance as she was living in hospital but with the advocate's support the Mobility Allowance was granted and the woman can now leave the hospital to go shopping or to the cinema while negotiations proceed on the care package she needs so that she can take up the house offer.



Five percent of cases related to family with advocates supporting the person to discuss their needs and desires with their family. In other cases advocates supported people whose families were actively obstructing their wishes or withholding access to their money. This year a number of cases involved child protection and issues relating to access, care and custody of children for parents with intellectual disability and mental health issues. With non-instructed advocacy support and using documents on the public record and data access legislation, the advocate gained access to a woman's pension for her. Her brother had held her pension for seven years and it had greatly affected her quality of life. The pension is now being paid directly to her.

In 5% of cases advocates supported people with disabilities to access appropriate education, training and employment, supporting them in making applications, in assessment for adaptation and assistive technology, in finding suitable employment and assisting their employers to reasonably accommodate their return to work. One woman with a learning disability who spent 16 years in a psychiatric hospital was supported by the advocate to attend college. The advocate supported her at interview, to open a bank account, to learn to use bus and DART and to find relevant support in the college.

## **Social policy and advocacy**

Policy issues arising from the work of the advocacy projects informed a number of policy submissions during the year and provided case material for the social policy report on *Travel and Access to Social Services* (see page 43). Regional meetings of advocates included presentations on social policy. Work is ongoing in relation to feedback mechanisms from projects to CIB on policy issues.

During the year, Disability Advocacy Projects highlighted problems with medical assessments for various welfare payments which affected people with an intellectual disability. The case of autistic children being refused Domiciliary Care Allowance was raised by CIB at the Disability Consultative Forum. In February 2009, the Equality Tribunal found the HSE had unlawfully discriminated against people with mental health and intellectual disabilities by failing to recognise these as being on a par with physical disabilities. In future the medical criteria for eligibility for benefits have to be compliant with equality legislation.

## **5.5 Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS)**

SLIS is the national agency supporting the provision of sign language interpreting services in Ireland. SLIS was established with the support of the Citizens Information Board in April 2007 to develop high-quality sign language interpreting services between Irish Sign Language (ISL) and spoken English.

Interpreters registered with SLIS are self-employed. They have successfully completed an accreditation process, facilitated by SLIS, to demonstrate that they can deliver sign language interpreting services to a high standard. SLIS operates an on-line referral service and signed website ([slis.ie](http://slis.ie)) which is accessible and user friendly.



Users of the referral service include members of the Deaf community, community and voluntary and private sector services, and individual members of the general public.

In 2009, SLIS facilitated approximately 2000 bookings. An out of hours/emergency pilot service has also been set up. In conjunction with DeafHear and the Irish Deaf Society, SLIS are exploring the potential for using remote interpreting services.

President Mary McAleese became Patron of SLIS in 2009 and attended the SLIS Accreditation Awards Ceremony to confer accreditation awards. She acknowledged the importance of the interpreter's role in providing a vital bridge between the deaf and hearing worlds.





## 6 Responding to the downturn

Almost 167,000 people lost their jobs during 2009. By the end of 2009 the official unemployment rate was 13.1%, compared with 8.1% at the end of 2008. Citizens Information Services (CISs) report that the economic downturn has had a marked effect on their business. Most services report on the increase in callers; on the complex queries presented and on the effect on CIS personnel of dealing with the difficult personal circumstances of clients who have been severely hit by the economic downturn.

The Citizens Information Board set up a Response to the Downturn Group early in 2009. This group represented CIS, CIPS and a range of CIB staff. Following group discussion and a survey on the impact of the downturn on CIS services and staff a number of quick response initiatives were put in place.

### 6.1 *Losinyourjob.ie*

In March 2009 a new microsite, [losinyourjob.ie](http://losinyourjob.ie), was launched. *Losinyourjob.ie* gives information on rights and entitlements for people who are working reduced hours or who are unemployed. *Losinyourjob.ie* attracted just under 50,000 users in 2009 and had more than 247,000 pages downloaded. The accompanying leaflet *Have you lost your job?* summarised the key things to be aware of for newly unemployed people and directed readers to the website for more information. Over 30,000 copies of the leaflet were distributed.

*Losinyourjob.ie* was shortlisted for a European eGovernment Award 2009 and staff members from CIB were funded by the EU to attend the awards ceremony and showcase in Malmö, Sweden in November 2009. *Losinyourjob.ie* was also shortlisted for an Irish eGovernment Award 2010 and went on to win a Taoiseach's Award for Public Service Excellence in February 2010. In late 2009 the service worked with the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) to produce a second microsite, [keepingyourhome.ie](http://keepingyourhome.ie), aimed at people in rent or mortgage arrears.

#### **Promotion of *losinyourjob.ie***

[Losinyourjob.ie](http://losinyourjob.ie) received extensive media coverage which included articles in the *Sunday Business Post*, *Sunday Tribune*, *Public Sector Times* and broadcast coverage on The Right Hook, Newstalk 106FM, RTE Radio1 Drivetime and Mooney programmes and RTE TV programme the Afternoon Show.

A media pack including poster, booklet and press release was sent to all national and key regional media. A *losinyourjob.ie* poster and booklet were distributed to relevant organisations such as trade unions, FÁS offices, Social Welfare Local Offices and





Centres for the Unemployed. Pocket sized cards were also produced with dispenser boxes and are currently being distributed via nationwide networks such as libraries, St Vincent de Paul Society and the Citizens Information Service.

## Relate

A special edition of *Relate* on unemployment covered the entitlements and supports available for people who are unemployed. It included information on jobseeker's payments and other financial supports as well as assistance with getting a job, becoming self-employed and availing of education or training options.

## 6.2 Training

A number of training initiatives were developed and delivered. Initially 5 two-day training events were organised in the five CIB regions (Dublin, Limerick/Cork, Sligo, Carlow/Kilkenny and Westmeath) on *Job Loss and Unemployment – Dealing with Current Queries*. These events were very well subscribed (145 participants) and further training events on this topic were delivered at regional and local level throughout the year.

In response to needs of staff in Citizens Information Services a support programme called *Minding Self and Serving Others* was developed. This is a training programme aimed at supporting information providers in a challenging work environment.

The programme assists information providers to develop skills in managing themselves and their workload enabling them to respond professionally and balance their energies between service to others and minding themselves.

## 6.3 Local initiatives

CISs nationwide are often best positioned to respond rapidly and appropriately to job losses and redundancies in their local communities. During the year various local initiatives included:

- Co. Cavan CIS worked with the Revenue Commissioners, the Department of Social Protection, MABS, FÁS, HSE and other local organisations to run an information day for unemployed people attended by 200 people.
- Co. Louth CIS ran an information session for unemployed people in Dundalk and Drogheda with an overall attendance of over 500.
- Waterford CIS provided an outreach service to Waterford Crystal workers who were being made redundant and was also involved in a response by local agencies to the economic downturn held in Waterford Institute of Technology in May
- Northside CIS ran an unemployment and redundancy session in April.



- In April and May, South Kildare CIS ran two seminars called *One2Three – Finding your Opportunity in a time of Crisis* to help unemployed people assess their current situation and identify opportunities.
- Co. Tipperary CIS had stands at a Recession Fair run by Clonmel Community Partnership and again at a similar seminar in Carrick-on-Suir.
- North and East Cork County CIS ran an information evening geared towards people already made unemployed and those anxious about their employment prospects.
- West Cork CIS as part of the Beara Forum organised an information evening for unemployed people in the area.
- Tallaght CIS was involved in a project to train 30 volunteers to signpost people in social welfare office queues to services they might need if they have lost their job.
- Longford CIS offered services to businesses where employees were being made redundant and presentations were given to these groups on rights and entitlements. One third of queries were from non-Irish nationals.
- Clondalkin hosted a visit by the President of Ireland, Mary McAleese in June. This was in response to a request by the President's Office for an opportunity to meet people whose lives have been adversely affected by the economic downturn.

## **6.4 Social policy response**

Social policy quarterly reports tracked downturn-related issues raised by Citizens Information Services throughout 2009, particularly in relation to redundancies, employment rights and eligibility for welfare support. *Voice*, our social policy journal, carried articles on the effects of the downturn and the Citizens Information Board's pre-budget submission presented proposals to Government on the protection of workers' rights and benefits. A submission was also made to the Mortgage Interest Review group of the Department of Social Protection.



## 7 The work of the Citizens Information Board

The Citizens Information Board provides information directly to the public through its website [citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie) and the [losingyourjob.ie](http://losingyourjob.ie) and [keepingyourhome.ie](http://keepingyourhome.ie) microsites. It also supports its delivery partners in a range of ways – through its regional services and by providing training and development services, publications aimed at information providers and the general public and a range of other services including the Assist Ireland website ([assistireland.ie](http://assistireland.ie)).

### 7.1 Regional services

The Citizens Information Board provides a range of supports to Citizens Information Services (CISs) and to the Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS) through its regional network and from central development and support services. These include corporate governance, legal and human resources (HR) support, information publications, training and customer service, advocacy and accessibility, and central support on information and communications technology (ICT). A MABS transition unit supports MABSndI and the network of MABS offices nationwide.

The development of information services throughout the country is coordinated and managed by the Citizens Information Board's five regional service teams. These teams are based in Cork, Galway, Kilkenny, Dublin and Tallaght. There are also nine local offices. In particular the Citizens Information Board offers support in relation to organisational development, company law requirements, strategic planning, budget plans, financial reporting, HR management, premises issues and monitoring and evaluation of service delivery. Citizens Information Board representatives attend CIS board meetings. The Citizens Information Board provides boards with resource materials and guidelines such as handbooks for employers and staff, and a *Volunteer Resource Pack*.

### 7.2 [citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie)

The [citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie) website provides comprehensive information on every aspect of living in Ireland, presented clearly, simply and effectively. [Citizensinformation.ie](http://Citizensinformation.ie) is widely used by the general public and acts as the primary information source for information providers in Citizens Information Centres and the Citizens Information Phone Service. It also provides useful information for staff in the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) and other organisations.

In 2009 [citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie) recorded 3.46 million users and more than 30 million page downloads – an increase of 33% on 2008. More than 1.2 terabytes of information was downloaded from [citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie) servers during the year. Users had a particular focus on social welfare and employment information in 2009.



Health information was also in demand. Information on major new schemes such as the Nursing Home Support Scheme (Fair Deal) was incorporated into the website, along with enhanced information in areas such as redundancy and self-employment. During the year we continued to syndicate social welfare information from [citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie) to [welfare.ie](http://welfare.ie). Our database of addresses now includes more than 8,000 links to Google Maps and during 2009 we developed an interface to make it easier for users to find their nearest Citizens Information Centre. In July 2009 [citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie) was audited for accessibility against the new WCAG 2.0 standard and scored very highly.

### **Responding to customers**

In 2009 the Information Production Service became involved in social networking by starting a twitter feed at [twitter.com/citizensinfo](http://twitter.com/citizensinfo) and by answering queries on some of the major Irish bulletin board websites, in particular on [boards.ie](http://boards.ie). Discussion threads with contributions from the service have been viewed more than 22,000 times.

### **7.3 Publications**

The Citizens Information Board publishes a wide range of publications and other resources to ensure that the public and information givers have access to accurate, up to date and comprehensive information on rights and entitlements. We also publish advocacy, research and social policy reports highlighting issues of concern to users of social services. Our *Publications & Resources* leaflet summarises these publications and other resources.

### **Relate and EU Supplement**

*Relate* is the Citizens Information Board's monthly journal covering legislation and developments in the broad social services and social policy areas. Twelve issues of *Relate* were published in 2009. The *EU Supplement* was published quarterly during the year. It covers significant EU developments in the broad areas of social policy, consumer policy and citizens' rights.

The *Benefits and Taxes 2009* leaflet and wallchart and the *Budget Pack 2009* were published early in the year. These publications summarise benefits and taxes following the Budget and are a useful resource for Citizens Information Services and other organisations. The *Older people* wallchart and the *Entitlements for people with disabilities* wallchart were also reissued during the year.

The new edition of the Citizens Information Board's booklet *Entitlements for over sixties* was published. New editions of the Citizens Information Board's factsheets for older people were also published. The factsheets summarise the rights and entitlements of older people and include a new factsheet on *Housing for older people*.

New editions of factsheets on entitlements for people with disabilities were published. The seven factsheets in the series provide a quick overview of public services and



supports for people with disabilities in a number of areas; including social welfare and HSE payments, health services, training and employment supports and income tax.

## Publications from the CIS network

Dublin City Centre CIS, in collaboration with Dublin City Libraries, produced a directory and map of key services in Dublin City called *Find your Way*. The publication was launched in April by the President of Ireland, Mrs Mary McAleese.

*A Guide to Community Life in Co. Tipperary* was launched by Liam Sheedy, Manager of the Tipperary Hurling team, at the Source Centre in the new library in Thurles, in November. Initially intended to help newcomers to Co. Tipperary the guide gives an overview of community organisations, cultural providers, and sport and recreational activities.

## Distribution

All Citizens Information Board publications are widely distributed to a range of organisations and individuals as well as the network of Citizens Information Services. These include government departments and statutory agencies, MABS offices, local social welfare offices and health offices, all TDs and Senators, the voluntary and community sector, local area partnerships and other local networks. PDF versions of all publications are available on [citizensinformationboard.ie](http://citizensinformationboard.ie).

## 7.4 Training services

The Citizens Information Board provides training services nationwide to Citizens Information Services (CISs), the Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS) and other voluntary and statutory bodies to enhance their information-provision capabilities. The Customer Service and Training team focuses on establishing standards in training design, delivery and content while regional training executives within the Citizens Information Board's regions are responsible for the delivery of training nationwide.

## National Training Programme

In 2009, the Citizens Information Board delivered 70 courses in over 50 locations throughout the country. More than 1,250 people attended the training events representing Citizens Information Services and other voluntary and statutory organisations.

The National Training Programme consists of five regional training programmes and one central programme delivering training on information, interpersonal skills, legal, and management and organisational skills. The majority of courses in 2009 addressed the issue of job loss and unemployment. New titles delivered in 2009 included: *Job Loss and Unemployment – Redundancy and Social Welfare*; *Self Employment – Focus on Welfare*; *Start up, Cessation and Main Taxation Matters*; *Rights and Entitlements*



*of the Unemployed; Enhancing Reception and Administration Skills in an Information Centre; Providing Information, Advice and Advocacy to People with an Intellectual Disability; and Social Policy in Practice – Seminar on Social Policy and Migrants.*

Training organised by Citizens Information Services, either internally or by outsourcing trainers, for their staff during 2009 included: *HR Essentials for Community Sector; Occupational First Aid; Manual and Computerised Payroll; Recent Developments in Immigration; Mental Capacity Legislation; Dealing with Challenging Behaviour; and Carers' Issues and Policy.*

## **Information Providers' Programme (Accredited)**

The Citizens Information Board delivers an accredited Information Providers' Programme (IPP) validated by FETAC (Further Education and Training Awards Council). It is designated at level 6 on the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland framework. Accreditation serves two important functions:

- To provide quality assurance for information, advice and advocacy services both for CIS customers and for those seeking information from other relevant organisations
- To establish certified standards of competency for information providers

The IPP is available through three formats: a taught programme, distance learning and recognition of prior learning<sup>1</sup>. It consists of two modules that cover Information, Advice and Advocacy Practice and Social and Civil Information.

The Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Mary Hanafin TD presented 96 FETAC Certificates to adult learners from throughout the country in the National College of Ireland in April 2009.

## **FETAC Common Award System Standards Development Group**

CIB became involved in the new FETAC Common Awards System to review and develop the existing FETAC Component Certificate award which Information Providers Programme learners receive on successful completion of the programme.

## **Social policy training**

A number of courses on social policy were run in 2009. Training in social policy is included in the Information Providers Programme (IPP) accreditation courses run by CIB. Courses are also run as part of CIB's National Calendar of Training Events. Approximately 100 people participated in social policy training in 2009. The IPP

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<sup>1</sup> Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL): is accredited recognition of prior learning as a way for experienced information providers to gain accreditation via FETAC certification. The learner must present a portfolio of evidence which includes written assignments reflecting on experience in the information setting and discussing case studies; a demonstration of required skills in information provision and IT; plus a computer-based theory examination.





training manual was also updated and a meeting held with FETAC for quality assessment.

## **7.5 Training resources**

### **Induction Training Programme for CISs**

The Training service in co-operation with Development Managers developed an Induction Training Programme for new staff and volunteers in CISs. This training pack has been developed for use by Development Managers to support a structured and consistent induction to the work of the Service.

This pack covers:

- Introduction to the Service and the work of a volunteer
- CIB and its relationship with the CIS
- Information sources: websites and publications
- Communicating effectively as an Information Provider
- Introduction to social welfare and other relevant topics.

### **Managing Volunteers: A Good Practice Guide**

The new edition of this Guide was launched in January 2009 and is available on the CIB website in both HTML and PDF format. It gives information on good practice for the wide range of voluntary and statutory organizations that involve volunteers in their work. The materials included in the guide can be adapted by individual organisations to help them develop volunteer policies suited to their needs. The content includes guidelines on recruitment, training and on-going support of volunteers.

### **Rights and Entitlements for Young People – Resource Pack**

This resource pack is aimed mainly at Transition Year students but can be used flexibly across the second level curriculum. It aims to make students aware of their rights and show them how relevant information can be sourced using the internet and applied to situations they face in their everyday lives.

It piloted in a range of schools throughout the country in 2009. The Pack will be finalised in 2010 following feedback from teachers and will be made available to all second level schools throughout the country and also to organisations working with young people.

### **Customer Service**

The Customer Service Working Group continued to meet throughout 2009 to identify and work towards meeting customer needs. The group revised the Customer Service Charter and Customer Service Action Plan based on the guidelines produced by the Department of the Taoiseach and CIB's new strategy. The Customer Communications and Complaints procedures document was also updated. Five public customer consultation surveys were carried out. Services surveyed included ICT Helpdesk,



[citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie), the National Calendar of Training Events, *Relate*, and [assistireland.ie](http://assistireland.ie). The feedback will be used to inform further developments and improvements to services.

## **The group insurance scheme**

This Citizens Information Board scheme for voluntary social service organisations continues to provide insurance. It was established in 1981 and is underwritten by Allianz Ireland plc. Support for the scheme comes from over 300 voluntary social service organisations which help to keep the premium competitive. During the year additional benefits were added under the property section of the policy, free of charge.

## **7.6 Assist Ireland**

One of the Citizens Information Board's strategic priorities is to enhance the accessibility of information, advice and advocacy services with particular reference to vulnerable groups and those most in need.

Assist Ireland is a database of approximately 7,000 assistive technology products and over 200 Irish suppliers. Users can also access information on how assistive technology can be used in daily living situations. In 2009 the site had 540,000 unique users. During 2009 Assist Ireland was upgraded to improve the website's usability and efficiency. The upgraded site went live in July 2009. It now has a number of new features. A Google Custom Search allows people to search efficiently. A new suppliers section has also been created. Suppliers are now listed by county and product type. Each product has been given a unique number or code which helps users and suppliers to identify products. Thumbnail images have been added in product lists to help with product identification. Users can now email suppliers directly from the site and can print out all products in each section with a single click.

## **7.7 Organisation review**

An organisation review began in December 2009. The purpose of the review was to look at staff structures in the context of the new strategy and the assignment of responsibility for MABS to the Citizens Information Board. The review is necessary to ensure that the CIB can deliver effectively on its strategic priorities. The approach was based on the supposition that a whole-organisation view is required looking, for instance, beyond the central/regional services divide, and that a strong commitment to flexibility on the part of all staff is key to success. The emphasis is on developing a new and more effective approach to working with our delivery partners and ensuring more meaningful engagement with citizens so that the Board can respond to emerging needs. An extensive consultation process with staff and key delivery partners was undertaken by Pathfinders Consultants, working closely with the Senior Management Team.





## 8 Working as a pivotal intermediary

The third priority of our Strategic Plan 2009-2012 is that the Citizens Information Board will serve as a pivotal intermediary between citizens and public services. Our services aim to enable the public to access their rights and entitlements. To do this we need to work effectively with providers of public services to make sure that we can direct and guide citizens to their entitlements. In addition the Government's public sector reform agenda aims to improve and streamline access to public services and the work of the Citizens Information Board can facilitate this.

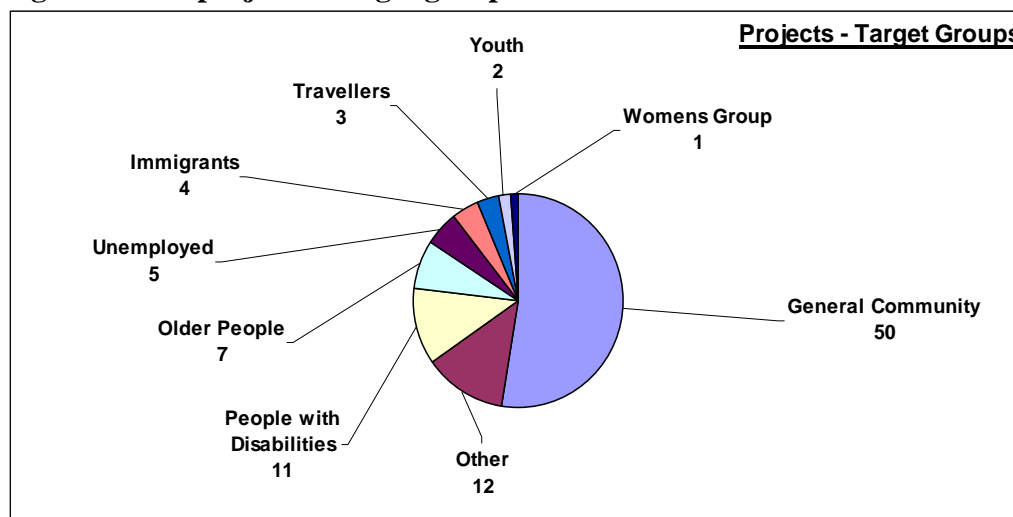
Currently the Citizens Information Board works closely with a large number of other organisations to deliver services including a number of central Government Departments and agencies such as the Department of Social Protection, the Department of Health and Children, the HSE, the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation. This chapter outlines some of these working relationships – both between CIB and other organisations and between CISs and other service providers.

### 8.1 Working in partnership

Working in partnership with other service providers is a key feature of work in Citizens Information Services. This work builds positive working relationships with other organisations, targets vulnerable or hard to reach groups and reaches a significant number of people who may not use Citizens Information Services directly.

The majority of CISs reported on their involvement in collaborative projects.

**Figure 5: CIS projects - target groups**





Some examples of work undertaken in collaboration with others include:

- Co. Cavan and Co. Louth CISs both worked with the Department of Social Protection, the HSE, MABS, FÁS, their Local Authorities and Partnership companies to run information days for people who are unemployed. Two hundred people attended the Cavan CIS event and 200 and 300 attended the two events run by Co. Louth CIS.
- Tallaght CIS was involved in a joint project to train 30 volunteers to signpost people in social welfare office queues to services they might need if they lost their job. The project which ran five days a week for six weeks over May and June 2009 was very successful. It continued on a one-day-a-week basis following the project.
- Dublin City Centre CIS, in collaboration with Dublin City Libraries, produced and launched a directory and map of key services in Dublin City, entitled *Find Your Way*, targeting immigrants.
- Co. Laois CIS continues its outreach to Portlaoise prison and provide advocacy service to prisoners who are unable to access relevant agencies for assistance. The CISs link with the Ards Citizens Advice Bureau in Northern Ireland through Cross Border Exchange has proved very useful in accessing information regarding services and social welfare entitlements for ex-prisoners who are returning to Northern Ireland from prison.
- Dublin 246 CIS have a partnership arrangement with Focus Ireland through which the CIS supports Focus Ireland's staff through training and the provision of literature.
- Waterford CIS co-hosted the Waterford Information Fair with local statutory and voluntary agencies.
- Citizens Information Services made 2,561 referrals to Money Advice and Budgeting Services in 2009. During this period, 13 Citizens Information Services were working on joint projects with Money Advice and Budgeting Services (MABS) and 16 members of MABS services were members of CIS Boards of Directors.

## **Citizens Information National Conference 2009**

The Citizens Information National Conference took place in Dublin Castle on 2 October 2009. The conference is held every two years and is an opportunity for CIB staff and information providers to network and discuss current issues. The theme of the conference was *Pathways to Services - Putting Citizens at the Centre* reflecting the title of the recently published Citizens Information Board Strategic Plan 2009-2012. The conference explored the challenges in delivering a high-quality, citizen-centred, service during the current economic downturn.

Dermot McCarthy, Secretary General, Department of the Taoiseach was the keynote speaker and he highlighted the importance of information provision. "Citizens



measure the performance of the public service by how quickly and easily they can access a service and the quality of that service when it is received. The Citizens Information Service plays a crucial role in connecting the citizen with public and social services and helping them understand and access their rights and entitlements.”

Tony McQuinn, Chief Executive emphasised the importance of the Citizens Information Board working together with its key delivery partners - CISs, CIPS, MABS and the Disability Advocacy Projects to support people in ever more difficult circumstances by providing them with reliable information, advice and advocacy wherever they are located in Ireland and in a way that suits their needs.

Patrick Stagg, Chairman of NACIS (National Association of CISs) discussed the challenges facing the service and outlined the range of approaches in various CISs where the balance of paid staff and volunteers varies. “We need to prioritise quality of service over query numbers and keep doors open and we need to value the independence of CISs and the emphasis they place on the voice of the citizen”.

## **Working with the National Association of Citizens Information Services**

The National Association of Citizens Information Services (NACIS) was established in 2003 and is the national representative body of Citizens Information Services. The Association is funded by the Citizens Information Board (CIB). The main purpose of NACIS is to represent the collective views of Citizens Information Centres (CICs) and Citizens Information Services (CISs) nationally. The National Executive of NACIS is representative of CIS management, paid staff and volunteers and comprises 15 regional representatives (five members of the boards of management, five paid staff and five volunteers) one of each category from each of the five regions. NACIS is committed to supporting the development of an independent, professional, non-judgmental information and advocacy service.

CIB works closely with NACIS on the delivery of Citizens Information. NACIS assists CIB in seeking nominees from the network of CISs to work jointly with CIB on mutually relevant pieces of work and to participate in consultation fora. CIB and NACIS representatives meet on a quarterly basis to exchange information and discuss any concerns raised within the network.

## **Joint working groups**

The Citizens Information Board’s partnership with the network of Citizens Information Services (CISs) is key to delivering information, advice and advocacy services nationwide. In 2009 joint working groups with representatives from the Citizens Information Board and CISs co-operated on specific issues related to the development of the network and service delivery. The groups included:



## **Results Approval Panel** (formerly National Assessment Panel)

The National Assessment Panel was set up in 2005 to implement the FETAC assessment processes and procedures. As CIB has formally agreed its quality assurance procedures with FETAC, the name of the group was changed to the Results Approval Panel. This group is now applying the new FETAC guidelines.

## **Working group to develop an Information Resource for Students in Second-Level Schools**

The group developed an information resource for teachers and transition year students in second-level schools focusing on information, rights and entitlements.

## **Joint Working Group on the Performance Management Development System for CISs**

This group was set up to assist the Citizens Information Service (CIS) network in introducing the Performance Management Development System (PMDS), a commitment in CIS Modernisation Action Plans.

## **PR Steering Group**

This group was set up to develop an integrated and consistent approach to public relations (PR) that focuses on the customer and ensures a co-ordinated approach to marketing activities for all three information channels. It also focuses on long-term strategic PR planning.

## **CIC Internet Standards Working Group**

The group was set up to identify those elements which should be included in every website; to develop a set of standards and guidelines for services considering developing or updating their sites; to identify further working which might be undertaken, for example, development of a template for services.

## **Citizens Information Online Consultative Group**

The objective of this group is to ensure that there is ongoing feedback between users of [citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie) and the Citizens Information Board. The group may make suggestions as to new areas of content and/or functionality, and will feed into the ongoing development strategy for the site.

## **Social Policy Toolkit / Resource Pack**

The project aims to produce practical materials and guidance that will help generate social policy casework and strengthen the links between information provision and social policy.

## **Consultation and Pilot Deployment of ICT Systems**

The Consultation and Pilot Deployment working group was established to provide an early adopters programme for the CIS Network Infrastructure Upgrade, Microsoft Outlook 2007 and the Customer Management Suite (Oyster).



## **Economic Downturn – CIB Response**

This group was set up to discuss, plan and agree action points on the Board's response to the economic downturn. The group was led by CIB's Senior Manager, Development and Support, Gerry Hegarty, and drew its membership from across CIB, CISs and CIPS (see Chapter 6).

## **Volunteering in CISs – Steering Group**

The group was set up to act as a consultative committee to advise on research into on the role and contribution of volunteers in Citizens Information Services.

## **Electronic Case Management Consultation Group**

The group was set up in February 2009 to inform the development of the new Electronic Case Management system which will be used in the future by advocates, advocacy support workers and information providers in managing advocacy cases.

## **Service Delivery Working Group**

This group was set up to look at how services across the CIS service are delivered and how those services respond to demand.

## **8.2 Developing advocacy services**

Advocacy is a response to the difficulties some people experience when seeking information, claiming their entitlements or seeking the services that they need. Advocacy can empower people by supporting them to assert their views and claim their entitlements and, where necessary, by representing and negotiating on their behalf. The work of the Advocacy Programme for People with Disabilities is covered in Chapter 5.

### **Advocacy in Citizens Information Services**

One of the main ways in which the Citizens information Board supports advocacy services to the general public is through the network of Citizens Information Services, where information providers advocate at different levels in relation to difficulties with access to social welfare, housing, health and employment. CIB provides a number of supports to build the capacity of information providers in CISs to advocate on behalf of clients, from negotiating complex information to helping people through the appeals process.

Information providers in the network of Citizens Information Services (CISs) support their clients to act on their own behalf wherever possible (self-advocacy). They also advocate on behalf of clients – for example, contacting and negotiating with a third party or attending meetings, hearings and appeals. Six of the nine Advocacy Resource Officer (ARO) Pilot Projects have now concluded with the remaining three scheduled to finish in 2010. Many CISs report on the increasing level of confidence of their personnel in advocating on behalf of clients.



In 2009, the total number of queries in CISs to which advocacy was the response was 55,522 or 6% of all queries. The actions defined as advocacy are:

- Making a number of telephone calls
- Supporting self-advocacy
- Preparing forms as part of the advocacy process
- Writing a number of letters on behalf of a client
- Negotiating or mediating to change a decision
- Going to a meeting with or on behalf of a client
- Providing representational advocacy at a hearing/appeal or tribunal

## **Speaking up for Advocacy**

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

## **Advocacy Practice Programme**

The Advocacy Practice Programme, certified by the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), involves learners attending eight training days on different advocacy-related topic areas including employment law, equality, social welfare, health and disability, immigration, housing. There is a particular focus on skill development in advocating, negotiating, case work and report writing.

Twenty three learners completed the Advocacy Practice Programme and received their Continuous Professional Development Certificates in September 2009 at an awards ceremony in the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), Mountjoy Square. Dr. Fergus Ryan, Head of the Department of Law at the DIT in Aungier St. who performed the external authenticating function for the award said that he enjoyed learning about the work of the advocates and was genuinely moved by some of the outcomes achieved by the learners on behalf of their clients.

As part of the preparations to develop the Degree in Advocacy with Sligo IT a Problem Based Learning trial day was held in Townsend Street. Fergus Timmons, responsible for the new course in Custodial Care using the problem based learning model made a presentation. The Steering Group is looking into problem based learning as a possible method of providing a skills-based approach to the degree.





A training day on Non Instructed Advocacy was held in Cork in May, attended by 12 advocates and staff of services. A training day for advocates on Disability Legislation was held in April. Thirty advocates attended. Mairide Woods gave an overview of the legislation and Christina Burke (Barrister at Law, ex Centre for Disabilities Studies NUIG) gave a presentation and facilitated a workshop. Suzy Byrne, advocate made a presentation on advocacy at tribunals.

### **8.3 Social policy**

The Citizens Information Board's social policy work aims to highlight the concerns of users to those who provide services and in turn encourage improvements and developments in service provision and service delivery.

Policy submissions draw largely on information in cases with social policy implications highlighted by the Citizens Information Services (CISs), the Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS) and the Disability Advocacy Projects. By drawing attention to customer service issues, trends and emerging issues, as well as anomalies and gaps in service provision they highlight the extent to which current social policies and services are meeting users' needs.

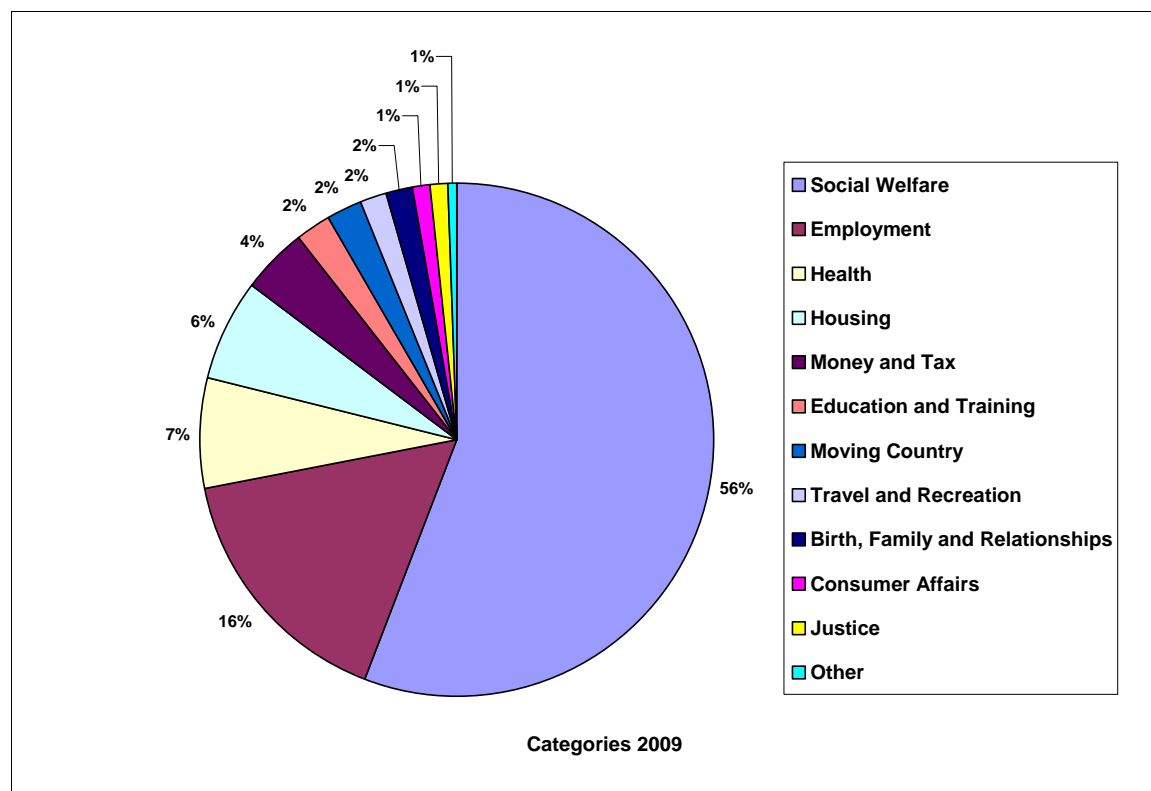
#### **Social policy quarterly reports**

The social policy quarterly reports for 2009 numbered more than 3,000, a significant increase on 2008, when returns were less than 2,000. The increase is largely due to the introduction of electronic data collection with Oyster. As in previous years, social welfare queries account for just over half of all returns, with employment rights issues, health and housing the other main categories of queries. The reports captured the growing number of people facing redundancies and the difficulties they experienced coping with job loss, claiming benefits and managing debt.

A social policy e-bulletin is distributed electronically to Development Managers, Regional Managers and Area Executives bi-monthly to provide feedback on policy issues raised by centres in their returns.



**Figure 6: Social policy records by type of query 2009**



Employment rights issues were to the fore in returns during 2009. Returns showed that many employees, particularly those on work permits, were vulnerable. A number of clients had had their hours or pay cut and others had difficulties receiving their proper pay, holiday entitlements or redundancy pay. Even when the services of the Rights Commissioners or Employment Appeals Tribunal (EAT) were engaged, some still had to go to court to have decisions in their favour enforced. Those who were laid off and sought redundancy voluntarily lost their right to pay *in lieu* of notice and some workers were kept on lay-off for long periods of time.

Partly as a result of the downturn, which saw a sharp rise in applications for Jobseeker’s Allowance and Benefit, large number of clients experienced delays in processing applications for social welfare.

The criteria for eligibility for Mortgage Interest Supplement resulted in many people having to struggle with mortgages repayments without help from the state. The welfare system also failed to deal adequately with the situation of the self-employed; many who approached CISs had little or no income in 2009.

Rent Supplement restrictions were evident in reports from centres with the new condition of being in rented accommodation for six months causing problems.





Other matters reported by CISs include issues in relation to difficulties accessing home helps and housing adaptations grants – largely due to lack of funding. The costs of GP services have also come in for criticism.

## **Social policy initiatives at national level**

It is difficult to be precise about the outcome of our social policy work as policy makers and service deliverers are exposed to a range of influences. However, we have noted the following developments in policy at national level that reflect concerns raised by Citizens Information Services. The DSFA allocated extra staff to speed up the processing of claims, including redundancy payments, jobseeker's payments, Child Benefit and Family Income Supplement (FIS). Reviews were carried out on Disability Allowance, Mortgage Interest Supplement, Invalidity Pension and Disability Benefit schemes. Job activation measures were given additional resources. Agreement was reached with CIB to allow advocates to attend medical reviews. Greater flexibility was introduced regarding the length of time one has to be in receipt of a welfare payment before being eligible for the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance and Back to Education Allowance.

## **8.4 Submissions**

CIB responded to a number of calls for submissions during the year and incorporated in its submissions the issues raised in social policy returns.

### **Pre-Budget Submission 2010**

Apart from the need to protect the most vulnerable, the Citizens Information Board in its 2009 Pre-Budget Submission also drew attention to the need for measures to support employment. The submission covered issues in relation to job loss and redundancies, welfare payments, income supports and activation measures to help people make the transition back to work.

### **Other submissions**

#### **Department of Health and Children on a Strategy for Rehabilitation Services**

CIB's submission drew on the experience of Citizens Information Services and community and voluntary sector advocacy projects. Some of the key issues identified were the lack of a common definition of rehabilitation and a tendency to view rehabilitation in isolation from other services and supports required for independent living.

#### **NESF Review of Implementation of Home Care Packages**

Issues identified by CIB in respect of the Home Care Packages included: difficulties in getting a package, the package provided being inadequate to meet needs, difficulty in getting information about home care options and eligibility; waiting lists for home



help services, general shortages of community based services and people being inappropriately placed in nursing homes.

### **Forum on End of Life**

In its submission to the Forum, CIB drew attention to the need people have for clear and transparent information and for access to supports, including advocacy services.

### **Review of the Recommendations of Protecting Our Future: The Report of the Working Group on Elder Abuse.**

Key areas for further attention identified by CIB include: the need to strengthen independent advocacy services, the need to look at additional ways of identifying and dealing with abuse where the issue is not reported by either the victim, other family member or professional and the need for comprehensive data sets.

### **Evaluation of Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes for Older People and People with a Disability**

The experiences of users of CISs and CIPS and of the voluntary/community disability advocacy projects highlighted difficulties with the inadequate level of the grants to cover adaptation costs, delays in processing applications and the eligibility being based on means and not on need. It was also reported that without the assistance of an advocate, some people would have found it very difficult to navigate their way around the schemes.

### **Evaluation of the School Transport Scheme**

CIB proposed that the allocated funding for special needs children should go to the person and not the service and that a subsidy be made available to cover transport costs for those who have to travel outside of their catchment area because places in their local schools were not available.

### **Draft Quality Standards for End of Life Care in Hospitals**

CIB pointed out the need to set out comprehensively what role independent advocates can play in helping people deal with the end of life process in hospital settings.

### **National Positive Ageing Strategy**

CIB advocated a two-pronged approach: identifying factors that would contribute to a more positive view of ageing generally and a better understanding of the ageing process and secondly, targeting groups of older people who need additional supports because they are frail, ill or vulnerable or because of social or environmental factors.

### **Mortgage Interest Supplement**

A number of issues raised by CISs were submitted to the Mortgage Interest Supplement review group (DSFA), in particular the anomaly that exist in the eligibility criteria not being related to actual income but restricted in the first instance to those who work less than 30 hours a week.



## **Review of Disability Services**

In its submission, CIB focused on the implementation of the high level objectives set out for disability services. Shortcomings were noted in terms of inequality of access to services, lack of choice and gaps in the delivery of community supports, evidenced by difficulties experienced by people with a disability in accessing transport, accommodation and assisted living services relevant to their needs.

## **Voice: influencing social policy**

*Voice* is the Citizens Information Board's policy newsletter that documents initiatives taken by CIB in response to issues raised by CISs and provides feedback on policy developments at local and national level. Two editions were produced during 2009 and the distribution list was updated.

## **8.5 Research**

### **Research into volunteers in Citizens Information Services**

Volunteers play a key role within Citizens Information Services (CISs) both as information providers and at board level. In 2009 there were 1,175 volunteers in CISs providing the equivalent of 107.28 whole-time equivalent posts. In early 2009 the Citizens Information Board commissioned research on the role and contribution of volunteers in CISs, focusing primarily on volunteers in day-to-day service delivery. The research was conducted during 2009 by the Centre for Non-Profit Management at Trinity College Dublin. A steering group liaised with the research team and included representatives from the Citizens Information Board, CISs and volunteers.

The research surveyed volunteers in the Citizens Information Service using an online survey. Four hundred and thirty seven volunteers completed the survey. The research also carried out focus group discussions with CIS Development Managers, paid staff and volunteers to explore the role and contribution of volunteers from all perspectives and to investigate topic areas addressed in the online survey in more depth. Use of volunteers across CISs differs widely with some CISs delivering services with a large volunteer component (over 60 in some cases) and other delivering services using paid staff and scheme workers with no volunteers.

The survey found that volunteers in CISs are more likely to be Irish women who are married, are aged 45 years or older and have achieved a high level of education. They have been living in their locality for more than four years and tend to be either retired or working full-time in the home.

Among other findings the qualitative element of the research identified:

- A deep commitment on the part of the volunteers and staff of the CISs/CICs, and of the staff of CIB, to the provision of a quality information and advice service.



- A clear commitment by CIB to volunteer contribution in the local delivery of a citizens' information and advice service and widespread agreement on the value and effectiveness of a mixed volunteer and paid staff model.
- A shared concern across the Citizens Information Service with the quality and consistency of service provision.
- A good relationship between volunteers and paid staff within CISs.
- A broad recognition that information and advice provision is becoming increasingly complex and varied, that the demand for services is increasing, and that the present approach to volunteer recruitment, development, and role performance is not enough.
- A growing recognition that increased unemployment levels in Ireland has potentially generated a large new pool of possible volunteers for the service.

The researchers suggest that that maintaining volunteering as a key element of Citizens Information Services in the context of increased demand and service quality requirements requires actions aimed at:

- Articulating an organisational identity for the Citizens Information Service as a national service which encompasses CISs and CIB, volunteers, paid staff and clients.
- Generating a shared meaning across the service delivery partners that clarifies the operational steps needed to deliver on their mission and goals.
- Improved communication throughout the service.
- Developing and instituting a national volunteer strategy.

### ***Getting There: Travel and Transport and Access to Social Services***

The report deals with a range of issues experienced by the public in relation to travel and transport and access to social services, drawing on feedback from Citizens Information Services (CISs) and the Community and Voluntary Disability Advocacy Projects funded by CIB. It suggests that the Department of Transport should take a lead role in bringing together the different government departments and statutory agencies to provide an integrated planning and implementation approach to accessible public transport, including the Rural Transport Programme.

### **Current research**

The Citizens Information Board is currently compiling a social policy report on the topic of *People with Disabilities Living in Residential Settings: Personal Finances and Charges for Services*.



## **Research proposals: Pathways to Services**

As part of the development of the CIB's Strategic Plan 'Pathways to Services – Putting Citizens at the Centre' CIB is committed to developing an approach to learning from client experience in order to produce objective fact-based evidence on the experience of users of public services. Research is being commissioned on pathways to services which will track the progression of selected clients to see how they navigate through public services and what the ultimate outcome is for individual clients. This study is being undertaken in the context of the increasing number of people experiencing difficulties who are using Citizens Information Services nationally and require additional income supports and assistance from the social service system. The main focus of the research will be on in-depth interviews with a sample of clients of services to document their specific needs and how public services are responding, what income supports and interventions are available, their experience of accessing services and navigating their way round and the role of intermediaries in assisting them.



## 9 Organisational supports

### 9.1 Information and Communications Technology

The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) service is responsible for implementing the Citizens Information Board's ICT strategy together with managing and supporting the day-to-day operational needs of the Citizens Information Board, Citizens Information Services, the Citizens Information Phone Service and the Sign Language Interpreting Service.

In 2009 the service developed a three-year strategy. The focus for year one was consolidating infrastructure to reduce capital costs and improve IT efficiency and flexibility for the organisation. Server hardware was reduced by over 50% and there were noted improvements in utilisation of infrastructure, business continuity and disaster recovery.

Website hosting costs were reduced in 2009 with both the Citizens Information Board ([citizensinformationboard.ie](http://citizensinformationboard.ie)) and Assist Ireland ([assistireland.ie](http://assistireland.ie)) websites transferred from third party environments to Central Services. In the area of procurement, CIB availed of a number of ICT Framework agreements brokered through the Department of Finance, maximising volume discounts for non-commercial public sector bodies. Through these, significant savings have been made in the procurement of PCs, notebook computers and printers and in the delivery of mobile and data services.

The Oyster data collection project continued in 2009. In 2009 the key development was the introduction of the Activity Reports module which provides automated reporting mechanisms for Citizens Information Services (see also page 14).

The ICT service continued to provide technical advice and guidance on a number of key projects, such as the Advocacy Case Management System and the Citizens Phone Service Contact Solution. The service help desk supported CIB and its delivery partners in 2009 with over 4,800 IT queries logged.

### 9.2 Partnership

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



The Partnership Steering Group met seven times in 2009. Its Annual Plan included the following:

- Assisting in the development of and provide support for the CIB Strategic Plan 2009-2012.
- Support the rollout of the Regional Organisational Restructuring review
- Ongoing development of HR policies and monitoring of staff issues
- Ongoing communication to staff

The HR Working Group, which is directed by and reports to Partnership, dealt with a range of projects during 2009. These included

- Rolling out an expanded flexitime facility to staff within CIB
- Development of a Stress at Work Policy
- A dedicated PMDS Review group was established to report on PMDS in CIB. The group completed its work and reported back to Partnership with a range of recommendations to update the process
- The Staff Resource Pack was maintained and developed

## **Efficiencies**

A number of efficiencies were achieved in 2009 in the areas of storage distribution and stationery. Distribution was rationalised with a single storage and parcel delivery service engaged for all nationwide distribution. A significant reduction in postal costs was also achieved. CIB has availed of significant savings for the supply of paper, printer cartridges, general stationary and envelopes on contracts brokered through the National Public Procurement Operations Unit of the Office of Public Works. Further reductions in the cost of heat and light were achieved through sourcing an alternative energy supplier.

## **Training**

Seven staff members were approved for the refund of fees scheme in 2009. In 2009 44 members of staff completed a short course.

## **Official Languages Act**

We completed an audit/review form (an fhoirm faireacháin) regarding the commitments made under the CIB's Official Languages Act Scheme. The form was submitted to Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga and outlined the actions taken under that scheme. Since 2008 two staff have been supported to attend a one week residential Irish course in the gaeltacht with a further three attending evening courses. A training course with Gaelchultúr has been completed by the Townsend St receptionist and a reception manual incorporating instructions on handling Irish Language calls is being compiled. Whilst the number of calls received through Irish remains very low the number of staff with an advanced level of proficiency has risen to five. An email address, [eolas@ciboard.ie](mailto:eolas@ciboard.ie), has been established to which generic Irish language





queries can be sent. The new microsite, [losingyourjob.ie](http://losingyourjob.ie), is also fully bilingual. Irish Language awareness is included in the staff induction checklist. Information on the CIB scheme is available on both the internet and in the staff resource pack. A three-page reference document of useful phrases for CIB staff was produced and made available over the intranet.



## Appendix 1 Customer Service Charter

The Citizens Information Board provides independent information, advice and advocacy on public and social services through [citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie), the Citizens Information Phone Service (1890 777 121) and the network of Citizens Information Services. We are responsible for the Money Advice and Budgeting Service and provide advocacy services for people with disabilities. We put the citizen at the centre of everything we do and this Charter sets out the principles that underpin our services.

We are committed to...

### 1. Clear, comprehensive and accurate information

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

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

### 2. Prompt, courteous and efficient responses

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

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

### 3. Equality and diversity

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



In 2009, the Citizens Information Board worked with other agencies to ensure that information reached a range of customer groups including older people, people with disabilities, lone parents, migrants and migrant workers.

## 4. Choice

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

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

- On its website ([mabs.ie](http://mabs.ie))
- Via the MABS Helpline (1890 283 438 9 am-8 pm Monday to Friday)
- Face-to-face with trained Money Advisers in offices nationwide.

The Citizens Information Board also published a range of printed materials in 2009 (see page 28).

## 5. Access

We will ensure that all our services and offices are fully accessible. Contact our Access officer, Helen LaHert at the address below or [accessofficer@ciboard.ie](mailto:accessofficer@ciboard.ie).

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

## 6. Official languages

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

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

The Citizens Information Board has an Irish Language Scheme in accordance with Section 11 of the Official Languages Act 2003. The Act aims to ensure better



availability and a higher standard of public services through Irish. See also Official Languages Act on page 47 above.

## 7. Consultation and evaluation

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

Joint working groups consisting of representatives from the Citizens Information Board and Citizens Information Services worked together in 2009 on a range of issues related to the development of the network and the delivery of services on the ground. A User Consultation Group provides ongoing input and feedback between users of [citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie) and the Citizens Information Board.

## 8. Internal customers

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

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

## 9. Co-ordination

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

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

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

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



## 10. Appeals

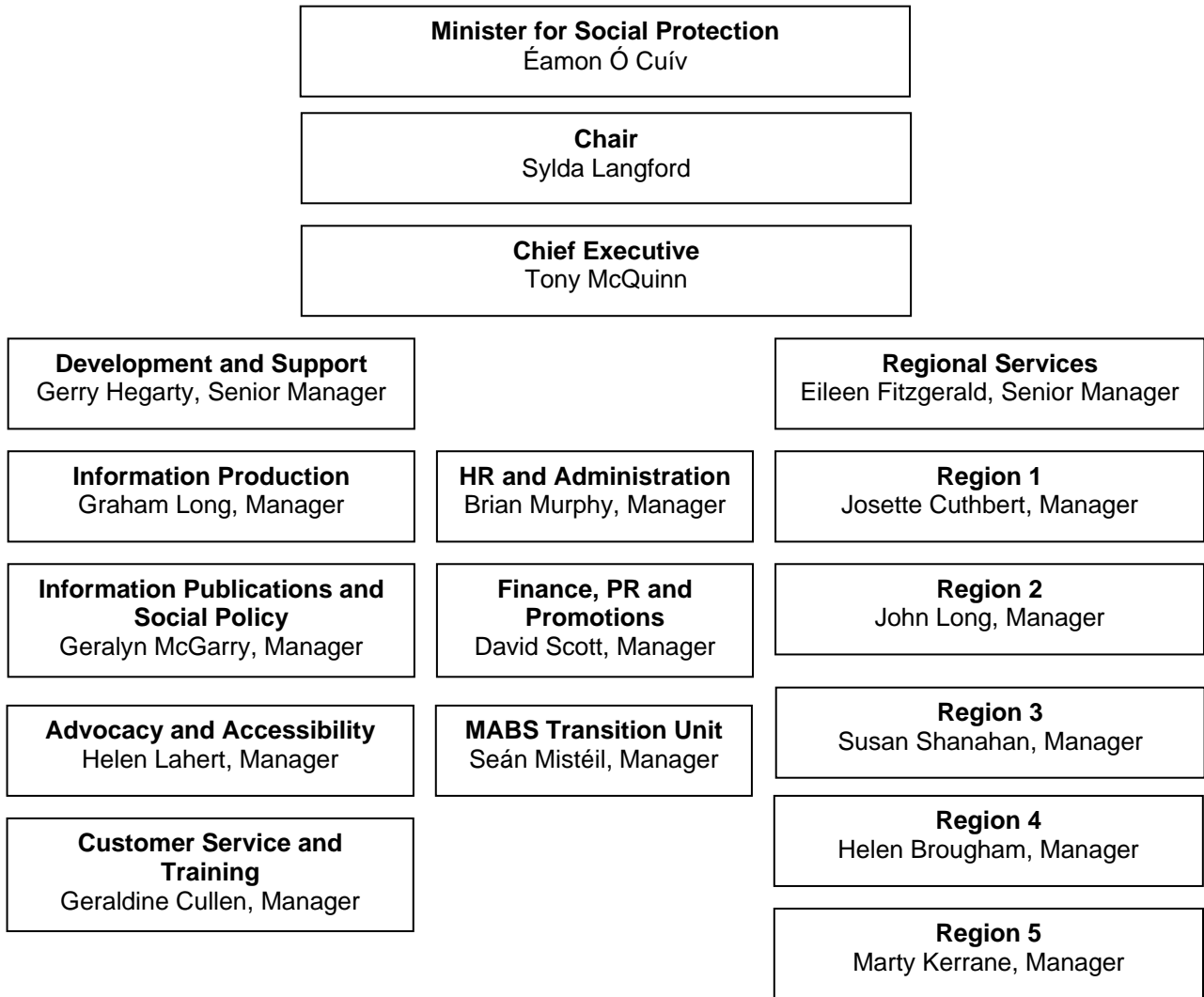
**We will maintain an accessible and transparent appeal and review system where appropriate.**

A Customer Service Officer is in place. No complaints were received in 2009.

## 11. Comments and complaints

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

## Appendix 2 Organisational chart



## Appendix 3 Citizens Information Board Offices

### CENTRAL SERVICES

George's Quay House  
43 Townsend Street  
Dublin 2  
Tel: (01) 605 9000

### REGIONAL OFFICES

#### **Region 1 – Dublin North and the North East**

Park House  
191-193 North  
Circular Road  
Dublin 7  
Tel: (01) 824 5200

Elm House  
Elm Bank  
Cootehill Road  
Cavan  
Tel: (049) 436 2533

4 Adelphi Court  
Long Walk  
Dundalk  
Co. Louth  
Tel: (042) 933 2913

#### **Region 2 – Dublin West and the Midlands**

Hainault House  
The Square  
Tallaght  
Dublin 24  
Tel: (01) 462 0444

The Manse  
Castle Street  
Mullingar  
Co. Westmeath  
Tel: (044) 934 0219

c/o Co. Offaly CIS  
Level One  
Bridge Centre  
Tullamore  
Co. Offaly  
Tel: (057) 934 1262

#### **Region 3 – Dublin South and the South East**

4 The Parade  
Kilkenny  
Tel: (056) 776 5176

14 Gladstone Street  
Waterford  
Tel: (051) 850 998 /872 431

#### **Region 4 – The South and Mid West**

101 North Main Street  
Cork  
Tel: (021) 422 2280

6th Floor, River Court  
Business Centre  
Cornmarket Square  
Limerick  
Tel: (061) 440 199

#### **Region 5 – The West and North West**

4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Dockgate  
Merchant's Road  
Galway City  
Tel: (091) 560 370

Mill Lane  
Castlebar  
Co. Mayo  
Tel: (094) 902 2169

1st Floor  
Harbour View House  
16 Holborn Street  
Sligo  
Tel: (071) 914 5920

Port Road  
Letterkenny  
Co. Donegal  
Tel: (074) 912 110





## FINANCIAL STATEMENTS YEAR ENDED 31/12/09

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## Board Members and other information

Board Members: Michael Butler (term ended October 2009)  
Máirín Byrne (term ended January 2009)  
Laurie Cearr  
Detta Fanning (term ended January 2009)  
Chris Glennon (term ended January 2009)  
Hilary Haydon (term ended January 2009)  
Michael Healy-Rae (appointed April 2009)  
John Hogan (term ended September 2009)  
Maria Mangan (term ended October 2009)  
Joe Meagher (term ended September 2009)  
Martin Naughton (term ended September 2009)  
Daragh O'Connor  
David Ormonde (term ended September 2009)  
James Smyth (term ended January 2009)  
Patricia Walsh  
Margaret Zheng

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

Secretary: Brian Murphy

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

Kilcullen and Associates  
183 Lower Rathmines Road  
Dublin 6

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

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

## Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General for presentation to the Houses of the Oireachtas

I have audited the financial statements of the Citizens Information Board for the year ended 31 December 2009 under the Comhairle Act 2000.

The financial statements, which have been prepared under the accounting policies set out therein, comprise the Statement of Accounting Policies, the Income and Expenditure Account, the Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses, the Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow Statement and the related notes.

### Respective Responsibilities of the Board and the Comptroller and Auditor General

The Board is responsible for preparing the financial statements in accordance with the Comhairle Act 2000 and for ensuring the regularity of transactions. The Board prepares the financial statements in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland. The accounting responsibilities of the Members of the Board are set out in the Statement of Board's Responsibilities.

My responsibility is to audit the financial statements in accordance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland).

I report my opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair' view, in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland. I also report whether in my opinion proper books of account have been kept. In addition, I state whether the financial statements are in agreement with the books or account.

I report any material instance where moneys have not been applied for the purposes intended or where the transactions do not conform to the authorities governing them.

I also report if I have not obtained all the information and explanations necessary for the purposes of my audit.

I review whether the Statement on Internal Financial Control reflects the Board's compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies and report any material instance where it does not do so, or if the statement is misleading or inconsistent with other information of which I am aware from my audit of the financial statements.

I am not required to consider whether the Statement on Internal Financial Control covers all financial risks and controls, or to form an opinion on the effectiveness of the risk and control procedures.

I read other information contained in the Annual Report, and consider whether it is consistent with the audited financial statements. I consider the implications for my report if I become aware of any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies with the financial statements.

### Basis of Audit Opinion

In the exercise of my function as Comptroller and Auditor General, I conducted my audit of the financial statements in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) issued by the Auditing Practices Board and by reference to the special considerations which attach to State bodies in relation to their management and operation. An audit includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures and regularity of the financial transactions included in the financial statements. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgments made in the preparation of the financial statements, and of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the Board's circumstances, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

I planned and performed my audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations that I considered necessary in order to provide me with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or other irregularity or error. In forming my opinion I also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the financial statements.



## **Opinion**

In my opinion, the financial statements give a true and fair view, in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland, of the state of the Board's affairs at 31 December 2009 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended.

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

## **Other Matter**

Without qualifying my opinion on the financial statements I draw attention to the Statement on Internal Financial Control which discloses that the Board did not carry out the annual review or the effectiveness of internal financial controls for the year in the manner required by the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

**John Buckley**  
**Comptroller and Auditor General**  
**19 November 2010**

## Statement on Internal Financial Control

### Responsibility for System of Internal Financial Control

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

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

### Key Control Procedures

- The Board has taken steps to ensure an appropriate control environment by
- Clearly defining management responsibilities;
- Establishing formal procedures for reporting significant control failures and ensuring appropriate corrective action.

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

Identifying the nature, extent and financial implications of risks facing the Board including the extent and categories which it regards as acceptable;

- Assessing the likelihood of identified risks occurring;
- Assessing the Board's ability to manage and mitigate the risks that do occur; and
- Assessing the costs of particular controls relative to the benefit obtained.

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

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

The Citizens Information Board has an internal audit function as defined in the Board's Charter for Internal Audit, which operates in accordance with the Framework Code of Best Practice set out in the Code of Practice on the Governance of State Bodies. The work of the internal audit function is informed by analysis of the risk to which the body is exposed, and annual internal audit plans are based on this analysis. Due to the absence of a quorum of both the Board and the Audit Committee an evaluation of risks and review of the risk register were not carried out in 2009. A new Board and Audit Committee were appointed in April 2010. The Board's internal audit function is outsourced, and due to delays with the tendering process the Board's internal audit function did not operate in 2009. New internal auditors were appointed in October 2009, but due to the absence of a quorum of both the Board and the Audit Committee an Audit Plan was not approved until May 2010.

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

### Annual Review of Controls

The Board did not carry out a review of the effectiveness of internal financial controls for 2009. The Board intends to carry out a review in 2010.

Signed on behalf of the Board



Chairperson  
Board of the Citizens Information Board, 10 November 2010

## Statement of Board's Responsibilities

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

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

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

*Sylla Faybairn*  
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*m. Whittles*  
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Chairperson

Board Member

## Statement of Accounting Policies

### 1. Basis of Accounting

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

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

The Money Advice and Budgeting Service is delivered through independent companies who operate under an agreement with the Citizens Information Board and the relationship of principal and agent does not apply. Consequently, the assets and liabilities of these companies are not included in the financial statements. The use and disposal of assets funded by the Citizens Information Board are subject to restrictions set out in the agreement. The financial statements include expenditure incurred in funding the companies during the year. As indicated in note 8, the bulk of their 2009 resources was provided directly by the Department of Social Protection.

### 2. Accounting Period

The Financial Statements cover the period 1 January to 31 December 2009.

### 3. Income Recognition

State grants are accounted for on a cash receipts basis.

### 4. Fixed Assets and Depreciation

- (i) Fixed assets are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation, except where a revaluation has taken place. Assets that have been revalued are stated at valuation less accumulated depreciation.
- (ii) Fixed assets are depreciated at annual rates estimated to write off the assets over their useful lives. Depreciation is charged at half the annual rate in year of purchase. Depreciation is at the following rates:

Computer Equipment	Straight-line	33⅓%
Office Equipment	Straight-line	20%
Office Furniture	Straight-line	12½%
Vehicles	Straight-line	25%
Premises	Depreciated according to the economic life of each property	
- (iii) The Board has a policy of revaluing its owned Premises Assets every five years. A revaluation on the basis of Economic Use Value at 1st November 2008 was carried out by an independent firm of property consultants.
- (iv) Where an asset has been revalued the depreciation charge is based on the revalued amount and the remaining useful economic life of the asset.
- (v) The gain or loss arising on the disposal or retirement of a fixed asset is determined as the difference between the sales proceeds and the carrying amount of the asset and is recognised in the income statement.





## Statement of Accounting Policies (cont)

### 5. Pensions

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

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

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

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

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

### 6. Capital Account

The Capital Account represents:

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

### 7. Leased Assets

#### (a) Finance Leases

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

#### (b) Operating Leases

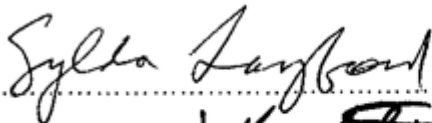

Rental payments under operating leases have been dealt with in the income and expenditure account as incurred.

## Income and Expenditure Account For the Year Ended 31 December 2009

	Note	2009 €	2008 €
<b>Income</b>			
State Grants	1	28,005,211	29,467,847
Other Income	2	334,211	356,575
Net Deferred Funding for Pensions		1,332,000	1,588,000
		-----	-----
		29,671,422	31,412,422
Transfer from / (to) Capital Account		551,529	(1,249,754)
		-----	-----
		<b>30,222,951</b>	<b>30,162,668</b>
		-----	-----
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Salaries	3	5,786,266	5,316,012
Board Members' Fees and Expenses	4	59,422	124,374
Pension Costs	18	1,043,000	1,674,000
Administration Costs	5	2,803,602	3,034,959
Regional Services	7	14,668,056	14,588,267
Money Advice and Budgeting Services (MABS)	8	599,014	-
Information Production	9	61,162	143,198
Information Publications and Social Policy	10	391,087	543,768
Information and Communications Technology	11	789,485	1,089,746
Advocacy and Support Services (Disability)	12	3,217,963	3,467,549
Customer Service and Training	13	120,648	168,055
		-----	-----
		<b>29,539,705</b>	<b>30,149,928</b>
		=====	=====
Surplus for the Year		683,246	12,740
Surplus at 1 January 2009		230,601	217,861
		-----	-----
Surplus at 31 December 2009		<b>913,847</b>	<b>230,601</b>
		=====	=====

The results for the period relate to continuing operations.

The Statement of Accounting Policies and Notes 1 to 20 form part of these financial statements.

  
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Chairperson

Board Member



## Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses

	Note	€	2009 €	€	2008 €
Surplus for the Year			683,246		12,740
Unrealised Surplus on Revaluation of Land and Buildings			-		1,989,948
Actuarial Gain on Pension Liabilities	<b>18 (b), (e)</b>				
i. Experience Loss on Pension Liability		(186,000)		(213,000)	
ii. Changes in Assumptions underlying Present Value		267,000		2,981,000	
iii. Actuarial Gain on Pension Liabilities			81,000		2,768,000
Adjustment to Deferred Pension Funding	<b>18 (b), (e)</b>		(81,000)		(2,768,000)
<b>Total Recognised Gains for the Year</b>			<b>683,246</b>		<b>2,002,688</b>

The Statement of Accounting Policies and Notes 1 to 20 form part of these financial statements.

*Sylvia Laybourn*  
*in* *Printed*

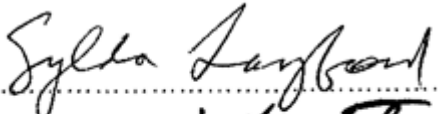
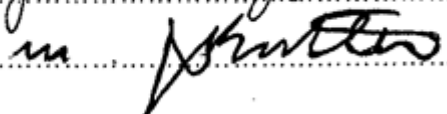
Chairperson

Board Member

## Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2009

	Note	2009 €	2008 €
Fixed Assets	14	9,359,974	9,911,503
<b>Current Assets</b>			
Debtors and Prepayments	15	462,071	425,362
Bank and Cash on Hand		774,920	219,173
		-----	-----
		1,236,991	644,535
		-----	-----
<b>Current Liabilities</b>			
Creditors: Amounts Falling Due within One Year	16	(323,144)	(413,934)
		-----	-----
		(323,144)	(413,934)
		-----	-----
<b>Net Current Assets</b>		913,847	230,601
<b>Total Assets Less Current Liabilities Before Pensions</b>		<b>10,273,821</b>	<b>10,142,104</b>
Deferred Pension Funding	18	23,485,000	22,234,000
Pension Liabilities	18	(23,485,000)	(22,234,000)
		-----	-----
<b>Total Assets Less Current Liabilities</b>		<b>10,273,821</b>	<b>10,142,104</b>
		-----	-----
<b>Represented by</b>			
Capital Account	17	9,359,974	9,911,503
Income and Expenditure Account		913,847	230,601
		-----	-----
		<b>10,273,821</b>	<b>10,142,104</b>
		-----	-----

The Statement of Accounting Policies and Notes 1 to 20 form part of these financial statements.

  
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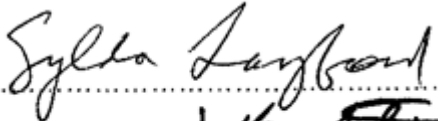
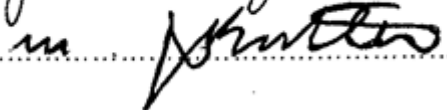
Chairperson

Board Member

## Cash Flow Statement for the Year Ended 31 December 2009

	Note	2009 €	2008 €
<b>Reconciliation of Surplus for the Period to Net Cash from Operating Activities</b>			
Surplus for the year		683,246	12,740
Transfer from / (to) Capital Account		(551,529)	1,249,754
Depreciation		588,435	461,526
Loss on Disposal of Fixed Asset		-	26,141
(Increase) / Decrease in Debtors		(36,709)	132,683
(Decrease) / Increase in Creditors		(90,790)	130,886
		-----	-----
Net Cash Inflow from Operating Activities		592,653	2,013,730
		=====	=====
<b>Cash Flow Statement</b>			
Net Cash Inflow from Operating Activities		592,653	2,013,730
<b>Capital Expenditure:</b>			
Acquisitions		(36,906)	(1,737,421)
		-----	-----
<b>Increase in Cash for the Year</b>		<b>555,747</b>	<b>276,309</b>
		=====	=====
<b>Reconciliation of Net Cash Flow to Movement in Net Funds</b>			
Movement in Net Funds for the Year		555,747	276,309
Net Funds at 1 January		219,173	(57,136)
		-----	-----
<b>Net Funds at 31 December</b>		<b>774,920</b>	<b>219,173</b>
		=====	=====

The Statement of Accounting Policies and Notes 1 to 20 form part of these financial statements.

  
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Chairperson

Board Member

## Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2009

	Note	2009 €	2008 €
<b>1. State Grants</b>			
Grant to Citizens Information Board		28,005,211	29,467,847
		<b>28,005,211</b>	<b>29,467,847</b>
<b>2. Other Income</b>			
The Health Service Executive – Contribution to Integrated Information Services		126,554	107,228
Sales of Information Material		12,185	9,313
Training Fees		21,290	6,425
Premises Rental and Services		2,540	10,040
Citizens Advice – Contribution to Borderwise Project		-	1,387
Reimbursement of Staff Secondments		121,166	76,294
Contribution to Relocation Costs Received		-	75,000
Other Income		50,476	70,888
		<b>334,211</b>	<b>356,575</b>
<b>3. Salaries †</b>			
Management Services		1,165,311	1,292,724
Information and Communication Technology		359,352	331,023
Information Production		399,501	356,147
Information Publications and Social Policy		552,149	396,599
Advocacy and Accessibility		253,634	299,962
Customer Service and Training		418,999	356,793
Regional Services		2,529,101	2,282,764
Money Advice and Budgeting Services (MABS) - Transition Unit		108,219	-
		<b>5,786,266</b>	<b>5,316,012</b>

† The average number of staff employed by the Citizens Information Board in the period was 88 (2008, 88). In addition 4 staff were seconded to the Board from the Department of Social Protection in 2009. €244,046 was deducted from staff by way of pension levy and was paid over to the Department of Social Protection.

## Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2009 (cont)

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

	Number of meetings attended*	2009	
		Fees €	Expenses €
Michael Butler	3/4	5,216	-
Mairin Byrne	-/-	268	-
Laurie Cearr	3/4	6,511	-
Detta Fanning	-/-	268	-
Chris Glennon	-/-	489	-
Hilary Haydon	-/-	268	-
Michael Healy-Rae	2/3	4,304	2,015
John Hogan	4/4	4,612	-
Maria Mangan	3/4	5,216	-
Joe Meagher	4/4	4,612	2,389
Martin Naughton	4/4	4,612	-
Daragh O'Connor	4/4	-	-
David Ormonde	4/4	4,612	-
Patricia Walsh	2/4	6,528	-
James Smyth	-/-	268	-
Margaret Zheng	3/4	7,234	-
		<b>55,018</b>	<b>4,404</b>

\* The first meeting of the year was held in March 2009.

The Chief Executive received salary payments of €123,445. No bonus payments were made in the year. The Chief Executive also received an amount of €1,271 in respect of travel and subsistence. The Chief Executive is a member of an unfunded defined benefit public sector scheme and his pension entitlements do not extend beyond the standard entitlements in the public sector defined benefit superannuation scheme.



## Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2009 (cont)

	Note	2009 €	2008 €
<b>5. Administration Costs</b>			
Accommodation and Establishment	6	1,422,264	1,508,727
Travel and Subsistence		145,800	215,417
Stationery and Office Supplies		83,368	97,410
Postage and Telephone		210,764	214,651
Consultancy and Reports		126,654	170,246
Public Relations		23,342	30,764
Recruitment		-	55,793
Seminars and Meetings		22,026	20,318
Insurance		83,107	114,125
Board Publications		26,731	35,418
Affiliation Fees		18,043	13,772
External Audit Fees		13,630	14,500
Internal Audit Fees		15,449	19,409
Bad Debts		5,763	6,571
Depreciation		588,435	461,526
Loss on Disposal of Fixed Asset		-	26,141
Interest and Charges		609	855
Other		17,617	29,316
		<b>2,803,602</b>	<b>3,034,959</b>
<b>6. Accommodation and Establishment</b>			
Rent and Rates		1,216,069	1,277,302
Light and Heat		82,624	69,269
Offsite Storage		3,607	12,815
Maintenance and Security		119,964	149,341
		<b>1,422,264</b>	<b>1,508,727</b>

## Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2009 (cont)

7.	Regional Services	Note	2009 €	2008 €
	(i) Citizens Information Grants			
	Dublin North and North East Region		3,177,761	3,067,349
	Dublin West and Midlands Region		3,235,231	3,273,062
	Dublin South and South Eastern Region		2,045,702	1,828,916
	Southern and Mid Western Region		2,010,937	1,832,115
	West and North Western Region		2,150,002	2,205,611
	(ii) Central Support to CICs			
	Conferences, Seminars and Meetings		26,618	34,607
	Materials, Support and Evaluation		2,977	3,319
	Advertising and Promotion		139,859	153,388
	Citizens Information Rebranding		115	79,469
	Service Delivery Strategy		-	27,727
	Network Support		28,353	77,644
	(iii) Citizens Information Phone Service		1,316,970	1,189,563
	(iv) Mobile Units		32,359	48,580
	(v) Social Mentor Project		-	4,026
	(vi) Advocacy Development		264,430	455,092
	(vii) Information Development		97,826	159,844
	(viii) Integrated Information Services Development		46,554	27,228
	(ix) Regional Training and Development		89,477	102,727
	(x) Cross Border Projects		2,885	18,000
			<b>14,668,056</b>	<b>14,588,267</b>
<b>8.</b>	<b>Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) ††</b>			
	(i) MABS Grants			
	Dublin North and North East Region		74,287	-
	Dublin West and Midlands Region		99,267	-
	Dublin South and South Eastern Region		107,774	-
	Southern and Mid Western Region		77,056	-
	West and North Western Region		138,226	-
	(ii) Central Support to MABS			
	Advertising and Promotion		99,752	-
	MABS NEC		1,200	-
	Establishment costs		1,452	-
			<b>599,014</b>	<b>-</b>

†† Responsibility for the Money Advice & Budgeting Service (MABS) was assigned to the Citizens Information Board on 13 July 2009. MABS is a network of 53 limited companies and the transfer of functions to the Board did not include the transfer of any assets. The MABS budget for 2009 was €17.934m and the Department of Social Protection (DSP) were responsible for administering the bulk of this funding prior to assignment to CIB. Expenditure of €17.041m was incurred by the Department of Social Protection (DSP) in 2009 prior to this date. The Board's budget will increase in 2010 to cater for MABS.

## Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2009 (cont)

	Note	2009 €	2008 €
<b>9.</b>	<b>Information Production</b>		
	Online Information Content	5,848	39,238
	Online Information - Translations	39,195	43,319
	CIB Website Development	11,465	43,891
	Public Relations, Promotion and Advertising	654	8,750
	Database Development	4,000	8,000
		<b>61,162</b>	<b>143,198</b>
<b>10.</b>	<b>Information Publications and Social Policy</b>		
	Publication Grants	19,999	29,632
	Publications	195,559	246,742
	Information Initiatives	47,295	-
	Foreign Nationals Initiative	-	50,000
	Miscellaneous	8,953	12,404
	Disability and Information Research	29,273	60,220
	Research Support	62,116	79,522
	Social Policy Grants and Reports	27,892	65,248
		<b>391,087</b>	<b>543,768</b>
<b>11.</b>	<b>Information and Communication Technology</b>		
	Citizens Information Website	55,928	225,186
	Citizens Information Services	50,178	190,881
	Support and Management Services	683,379	673,679
		<b>789,485</b>	<b>1,089,746</b>
<b>12.</b>	<b>Advocacy and Support Services (Disability)</b>		
	Grant Support for Community & Voluntary Sector Advocacy	2,642,790	2,866,621
	Sign Language Interpreting Service	288,355	305,786
	Personal Advocacy Service	-	-
	Consultancy, Research and Development	188,404	147,485
	Access Service Development & Research	98,414	147,657
		<b>3,217,963</b>	<b>3,467,549</b>
<b>13.</b>	<b>Customer Service and Training</b>		
	Training Resources	52,391	38,448
	Training Services	38,633	79,473
	Staff Training	29,624	50,134
		<b>120,648</b>	<b>168,055</b>

## Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2009 (cont)

14. Fixed Assets	Premises		Motor Vehicles	Computer Equipment	Office Equipment	Office Furniture	Total
	Owned	Leasehold					
<b>Cost / Revaluation</b>	€	€	€	€	€	€	€
Balance at 1 January 2009	6,265,000	3,523,465	161,299	2,038,942	701,932	937,482	13,628,120
Additions	-	-	10,106	18,833	7,967	-	36,906
Disposals	-	-	-	(12,603)	(14,602)	-	(27,205)
<b>Balance at 31 December 2009</b>	<u>6,265,000</u>	<u>3,523,465</u>	<u>171,405</u>	<u>2,045,172</u>	<u>695,297</u>	<u>937,482</u>	<u>13,637,821</u>
<b>Accumulated Depreciation</b>							
Balance at 1 January 2009	-	355,362	158,433	1,946,750	683,706	572,366	3,716,617
Charge for the year	292,183	116,860	4,129	95,331	18,602	61,330	588,435
Disposals during the year	-	-	-	(12,603)	(14,602)	-	(27,205)
<b>Balance at 31 December 2009</b>	<u>292,183</u>	<u>472,222</u>	<u>162,562</u>	<u>2,029,478</u>	<u>687,706</u>	<u>633,696</u>	<u>4,277,847</u>
<b>Net Book Value</b>							
Balance at 31 December 2009	<u>5,972,817</u>	<u>3,051,243</u>	<u>8,843</u>	<u>15,694</u>	<u>7,591</u>	<u>303,786</u>	<u>9,359,974</u>
Balance at 31 December 2008	<u>6,265,000</u>	<u>3,168,103</u>	<u>2,866</u>	<u>92,192</u>	<u>18,226</u>	<u>365,116</u>	<u>9,911,503</u>

i. The Board has a policy of revaluing its owned Premises Assets every five years. A revaluation on the basis of Economic Use Value at 1st November 2008 was carried out by Lisney, an independent firm of property consultants.

ii. The Board are not aware of any material change in value and therefore the valuations have not been updated.

## Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2009 (cont)

	Note	2009 €	2008 €
<b>15. Debtors and Prepayments</b>			
Debtors			
Trade Debtors		43,992	96,309
Other Debtors		34,221	25,116
		-----	-----
		78,213	121,425
Prepayments		383,858	303,937
		-----	-----
		<b>462,071</b>	<b>425,362</b>
		=====	=====
<b>16. Creditors and Accruals</b>			
PAYE and PRSI Creditors		120,784	122,235
Trade Creditors		202,360	271,347
Other Creditors		-	20,352
		-----	-----
		<b>323,144</b>	<b>413,934</b>
		=====	=====
<b>17. Capital Account</b>			
Balance at 1 January		9,911,503	6,671,801
Transfer to Income and Expenditure Account:			
Capital Expenditure in the year	14	36,906	1,737,421
Released on Disposal of Fixed Assets	14	-	(26,141)
Amortisation in line with Asset depreciation	14	(588,435)	(461,526)
		-----	-----
		-	-
Unrealised Revaluation Surplus	14	-	1,989,948
		-----	-----
<b>Balance at 31 December</b>		<b>9,359,974</b>	<b>9,911,503</b>
		=====	=====

## Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2009 (cont)

### 18. Pension Costs

#### (a) Analysis of Total Pension Costs Charged to Expenditure

	2009	2008
	€	€
Current Service Cost	345,000	712,000
Interest on Pension Scheme Liabilities	1,313,000	1,336,000
Employee Contributions	(615,000)	(374,000)
	-----	-----
	<b>1,043,000</b>	<b>1,674,000</b>
	=====	=====

#### (b) Movement in Net Pension Liability during the financial year

	2009	2008
	€	€
Net Pension Liability at 1 January	22,234,000	23,414,000
Current Service Cost	345,000	712,000
Other Finance Income (Interest Costs)	1,313,000	1,336,000
Actuarial (Gain) / Loss	(81,000)	(2,768,000)
Liabilities Settled During the Year	(326,000)	(460,000)
	-----	-----
<b>Net Pension Liability at 31 December</b>	<b>23,485,000</b>	<b>22,234,000</b>
	=====	=====

#### (c) Deferred Funding Asset for Pensions

The Board recognises these amounts as an asset corresponding to the unfunded deferred liability for pensions on the basis of the set of assumptions described above and a number of past events. These events include the statutory basis for the establishment of the superannuation schemes, and the policy and practice currently in place in relation to funding public service pensions including contributions by employees and the annual estimates process. The Board has no evidence that this funding policy will not continue to meet such sums in accordance with current practice. The deferred funding asset for pensions as at 31 December 2009 amounted to €23.485m (2008: €22.234m).

#### Net Deferred Funding for Pensions in year

	2009	2008
	€	€
Funding Recoverable in Respect of Current Year Pension Costs	1,658,000	2,048,000
State Grant Applied to Pay Pensioners	(326,000)	(460,000)
	-----	-----
	<b>1,332,000</b>	<b>1,588,000</b>
	=====	=====

## Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2009 (cont)

### 18. Pension Costs (cont.)

- (d) The Citizens Information Board operates a defined benefit superannuation scheme for staff. The results set out below are based on an actuarial valuation of the liabilities in respect of the Citizens Information Board staff as at 31 December 2009. This valuation was carried out by an independent actuary using the projected unit method.

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

Assumption	2009	2008
Discount rate	6.00%	5.70%
Salary increase assumption	3.50%	3.50%
Pension increase assumption	3.50%	3.50%
Price inflation	2.00%	2.00%
Member age 65 (male current life expectancy)*	21.6 years	20.7 years
Member age 65 (female current life expectancy)*	24.7 years	23.7 years
Member age 40 (male life expectancy at age 65)*	22.7 years	21.8 years
Member age 40 (female life expectancy at age 65)*	25.8 years	24.8 years

\*Life expectancy from age 65 for members retiring in either 2029 or 2049 are as for 2009.

On the basis of these assumptions, and using the projected unit method prescribed in FRS 17, the value of the accrued liabilities in respect of Citizens Information Board staff at 31 December 2009 was estimated at €23.485m (compared with **€22.234m** as at 31 December 2008).

### (e) History of experience gains and losses

	2009	2008
Experience Gains / Losses on Scheme Liabilities		
Amount	(€186,000)	(€213,000)
Percentage of the Present Value of Scheme Liabilities	0.79%	0.88%
Total Amount Recognised in Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses		
Amount	€81,000	€2,768,000
Percentage of the Present Value of Scheme Liabilities	0.3%	12.4%
Cumulative Actuarial Gain / Loss	(€2,722,000)	(€2,536,000)



## Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2009 (cont)

### 19. Commitments

#### (a) Operating Lease

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

	<b>2009</b>	<b>2008</b>
	€	€
Lease of Office Accommodation		
Expiring after one year and before five years	39,325	26,977
Expiring after 5 years	1,000,188	1,012,536
	<b>1,039,513</b>	<b>1,039,513</b>
	<b>1,039,513</b>	<b>1,039,513</b>

#### (b) Grant Funding

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

	<b>2009</b>	<b>2008</b>
	€	€
Grant Support for Community & Voluntary Sector Advocacy	2,283,250	210,000
	<b>2,283,250</b>	<b>210,000</b>
	<b>2,283,250</b>	<b>210,000</b>

### 20. Approval of Financial Statements

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

10th November 2010