



***CARLOW CITIZENS
INFORMATION
SERVICE***

***ANNUAL REPORT
2009***



MISSION STATEMENT

'Our mission is to increase people's awareness of their rights and entitlements and to empower them by providing a free confidential independent impartial accurate integrated and comprehensive information and advocacy service'

Our priority is meeting the client's needs in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere with ample time to devote to each individual



INTRODUCTION

Carlow Citizens Information Service celebrated its 26th birthday in May 2009, which is a fantastic achievement. The service initially opened 8 hours per week and has grown and developed over the years. Demand for the service has increased dramatically in the last number of years due to a number of factors -increased population in Carlow, (50,349 - 2006 Census) the number of EU nationals and commuters living and working in Carlow and in the latter half of 2008 the increase in numbers who lost their job due to the downturn in the economy

The service owes its success to the ongoing dedication, support and commitment of volunteers, staff and the Board of Management.

This report outlines the progress and development of the service for 2009.

Breda Bergin
Development Manager

VOLUNTEERS

Carlow CIS has 28 active volunteers

STAFF

Staff numbers remain the same as last year - 3 part-time Information Officers part-time Administrator and a full time Development Manager

See **APPENDIX 1** p.12 for list of Volunteers and Staff

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The annual general meeting took place on 30th April 2009. Maureen Walsh Kathleen Hennessy and Eileen Eagers retired from the Board. The newly elected Board is as follows:

Chairperson	Marie Rock
Vice Chairperson	Gretta Shannon
Secretary	Joe Brennan
Treasurer	Bridget Donnelly
Volunteer Liaison Officer	Heather Shirley
Mick Browne	Josephine Fitzpatrick
Eileen Eagers	Anne Kellett
Matt Mulvey	Nan Sibbald

Vincent McCarthy - Social Welfare - was co-opted onto the Board in July 2009

COMPANY AUDITORS

Fitzgerald and Power Chartered Accountants continue to act as auditors for the company

CITIZENS INFORMATION BOARD (CIB)

Susan Shanahan is CIB Regional Manager and Area Executive is Ian Coulter

QUERIES FOR 2009

There is an annual increase in queries over the years

See **Appendix 2 (page 13)** for yearly query comparisons

The service dealt with almost 15,000 queries for the year. Unfortunately queries for Tullow were not inputted for the full year so these figures do not reflect the full commitment of the Tullow volunteers in 2009. Both centres agree that queries are far more

in-depth and complex and therefore require more time and attention

See **APPENDIX 3 (pages 14)** for breakdown of query categories

SOCIAL POLICY - 2009

The service returned 215 social policy issues to Citizens Information Board (CIB) for the past year. These cover Social Welfare HSE Housing Consumer and taxation issues

ADVOCACY

Carlow CIS

Carlow CIS continues to offer 'internal advocacy' to clients - writing letters and making phone calls on behalf of clients. Due to lack of resources staff are unable to attend appeals or tribunals. Staff and volunteers advocated for numerous clients in 2009. There were also a number of successful cases where clients won appeals. Staff assisted clients to self advocate or advocated on their behalf

SEARO Project

The South East Advocacy Resource Pilot Project ended in May 2009. Since then Carlow CIS is without an Advocacy Resource Officer (ARO). CIB applied for funding for 6 Advocacy Project Workers. These will be permanent positions but to date the funding has not been sanctioned by Department Social and Family Affairs. The staff miss the ongoing support given by Billy Roche (ARO)

OUTREACH SERVICES

TULLOW

Volunteers Marian O'Reilly Angela Donohoe and Clare Cosgrove operate the service from Tullow Parish Centre, which is held each Thursday morning for 2 hours. They deal with approximately 40 queries per month

FREEPHONE SERVICE

7,275 callers used the Freephone number in 2009 at a cost of €3,062.21. The average cost of each call is 0.42c

SPECIALIST SERVICES

Carlow CIS has a number of specialist services. Volunteers with special expertise - legal employment

and taxation - operate the various services. The following is a summary of these:

Legal Advice Service

The Legal Advice service takes place the last Monday of each month. 7 solicitors - Annemarie Blake David Cleary Joe Farrell Alan Millard Matt Mulvey Simon McElwee and Fergal Browne - volunteer their time for this service

Employment Law Service

Carlow CIS operates a drop in Employment Law Service on the last Monday of each month. This service is available to employers and employees. Marie Rock's volunteers her time and expertise to deal with complex employment queries

Taxation Service

The Taxation service took place on 5th March and the 26th March compliments of Kilkenny Tax office. Daniel Walker Tax Inspector attended Carlow CIS office 2pm - 5pm on these days

TALKS TO GROUPS IN THE COMMUNITY

Due to the increase in demand for information provision in the centre, Carlow CIS Information Officers were not available to give as many talks in the community this year. Development Manager decided that staff would give one talk per month to groups in the community. The following is a list of talks given in 2009:

Venue	Group	No of Participants	Date
Bagenalstown	Carlow Voluntary Forum	100	15 th July
St Catherine's	Moving On Programme	15	21 st September
Women's Health & Well Being	7 Oaks Hotel	200	21 st October
St Patrick's College		200	22 nd October

PUBLICITY

2009 edition of 'What's On in Carlow for Kids' was not published this year due to budget constraints. The service is advertised throughout the year via

radio programmes, notices in newspapers and advertising in various publications. All leaflets and booklets are labelled with company's name address opening hours, telephone and FREEPHONE number to ensure maximum publicity. The following is a breakdown of publicity for 2009:

Publicity Type	January – December 2009
Information Stands	3
Advertisements Press/Radio	50
Know Your Rights	12
Other	1
Radio Slot	19
www.carlowcitizensinfo.ie	Ongoing

ATTENDANCE AT EVENTS 2009

JANUARY

- Carlow CIS Board meeting – Wednesday 14th
- Staff member attended the monthly meeting of Cumas in Kilkenny 16th
- Chairperson attended the CIB and Chairs meeting in CIB office Dublin 29th

FEBRUARY

- Aine Forde Bates attended the ARO National Steering Committee meeting in CIB office Dublin 4th
- Manager attended the Development Manager's Executive meeting in Dublin 5th
- Development Manager attended the CIB Exchange meeting with Development Managers 17th
- Company Board meeting took place Wednesday 25th

- ARO Project meeting took place in Ashtown Park Hotel Gorey 25th and was attended by Breda Bergin

MARCH

- Development Manager attended the Regional NACIS meeting in Carlow 2nd
- Aine Forde Bates attended a meeting of 'What's On in Carlow for Kids' in St Catherine's 3rd
- Staff member attended the monthly meeting of ARO National Steering Committee in Dublin 4th
- Aine Forde Bates attended the CUMAS meeting in IWA Carlow 5th
- Staff member attended the Teenage Support Parenting group committee meeting in St Catherine's 11th March and in Kilkenny 25th
- Development Manager attended the CIB Strategic Plan meeting in CIB office Dublin 23rd

APRIL

- Staff members Olivia Gahan and Aine Forde Bates attended the Social Welfare Seminar 2 day event for Information Officers 6th/7th
- Development Manager attended the SEARO meeting in CIB office Dublin 22nd at 10.30am
- Aine Forde Bates attended the CUMAS meeting in IWA Carlow 27th
- Carlow CIS AGM took place 30th in 7 Oaks Hotel

MAY

- Staff member attended the monthly meeting of ARO National Steering Committee in Dublin 12th
- Development Manager attended the Regional NACIS meeting in Carlow 25th

JUNE

- Staff member attended the Rohingya Committee meeting in St Catherine's 23rd

JULY

- Staff and volunteers enjoyed a wonderful meal out in Bia Alainn Bunclody 14th
- Board meeting was held 15th
- Chairperson Marie Rock and Development Manager attended CIB offices Kilkenny 20th to discuss Advocacy
- Development Manager attended a coffee morning in Carlow Volunteer Centre 24th

AUGUST

- Development Manager attended the Regional meeting of Development Manager's in Waterford 13th
- A meeting of the Development Manager's Executive took place in Dublin 25th and was attended by Breda Bergin

SEPTEMBER

- Chairperson Marie Rock and Development Manager met with Tony McQuinn CEO with CIB and Eileen Fitzgerald CIB senior manager to discuss the future of advocacy in Carlow CIS. The meeting took place in Naas 3rd
- Board meeting was held in St Catherine's 9th
- Aine Forde Bates attended the CUMAS meeting in IWA Carlow 28th
- Development Manager attended the AGM of Development Managers Network in Dublin 30th September/1st

OCTOBER

- Staff member attended Older Persons Network meeting in CCDP office Carlow 7th

- 7th Development Manager met with Eamonn Long Pensions Adviser to discuss staff pensions
- Staff member attended the Rohingya Resettlement meeting in St Catherine's 21st
- Board meeting was held on 28th

NOVEMBER

- Development Manager attended the CIB Conference in Dublin Castle 2nd
- Board meeting was held 25th

DECEMBER

- Monday 7th December staff and volunteers had a most enjoyable Christmas party night in Teach Dolman - for dinner - followed by a night of music in the Arts centre including Paddy Cole

TRAINING

Volunteers and staff attend relevant training to keep up with changing trends. All are encouraged to attend training both internally and externally. The following is a list of various internal and external trainings attended by Volunteers and staff for 2009:

See Appendix 4 (Pages 15/16) for break down of training for 2009

ACCESSIBILITY

Opening Hours

Carlow CIS is open to the public 27.5 hours per week. Opening hours are Monday to Friday 10am - 12.30pm and 2pm to 5pm. Tullow operates a 2-hour service each Thursday morning in Tullow Parish Centre. In total the service is available to the public 30.5 hours per week including the Legal Advice service Labour Law service and Taxation service

KCLR Radio

The radio slot with KCLR is a joint effort with Kilkenny CIC and Carlow CIS. Kilkenny volunteers were responsible for the 10-minute radio programme and Carlow Development Manager managed the quarterly 1-hour radio show. Last year the programmes were

changed. Carlow CIS does a 10 - 20 minute slot once a fortnight and will continue to do this for another 6 months when Kilkenny CIC will take it over again. The programmes are an invaluable part of the overall service as so many listeners phone or text in live to the show. Also the notes are sent to Kilkenny CIC and given to the staff and volunteers in the centre

Freephone Number

FREEPHONE number -1800 747 748 - was introduced in November 2002 to enable people who for various reasons would not otherwise be free to access the service. The number of calls to the FREEPHONE number has increased steadily since its inception. In 2009, 7,275 callers used the Freephone number at a cost of €3,062.21. The average cost per call was €0.42c

NETWORKING

Staff and volunteers continue to network with voluntary agencies throughout Carlow town and county. The following groups network with Carlow CIS on an ongoing basis:

- Department Social Family Affairs
- HSE - Community Welfare Officers
- MABS
- Other CIS/CICS
- Teenage Parent Support Group - St Catherine's
- Moving On Programme for Young Mothers - St Catherine's
- Irish Wheelchair Association
- Carlow County Childcare Committee
- Carlow Area Partnership Network (Formerly CANDO)
- Public Health nurses
- Carlow Equality for Women Network

APPENDIX 1 VOLUNTEERS/STAFF

OFFICERS OF THE BOARD

Chairperson	Marie Rock
Vice Chairperson	Gretta Shannon
Secretary	Joe Brennan
Treasurer	Bridget Donnelly
Volunteer Liaison Officer	<i>vacant</i>

BOARD MEMBERS

Mick Browne	Josephine Fitzpatrick
Anne Kellett	Matt Mulvey
Vincent McCarthy	Nan Sibbald
Heather Shirley	

VOLUNTEERS

Natasha Akerele	Mary Comerford
Clare Cosgrove	Mike Cummins
Anne Dempsey	Mary Delaney
Angela Dermody	Angela Donohoe
Jim Doran	Annette Dooley
Eileen Eagers	Laura Healy
Brigie Kelly	Phil Lyttleton
Karolyn McDonnell	Alice McGlinchey
Una O'Gorman	Lucy McGrath
Marian O'Reilly	Maeve O'Reilly
Celia O'Rourke	Eleanor Townsend

STAFF

Administrator	Aine Forde-Bates
Information Officers	Olivia Gahan Carmel Murphy Aine Forde-Bates
Development Manager	Breda Bergin

STAFF SUB COMMITTEE

Bridget Donnelly
Gretta Shannon

APPENDIX 2

CARLOW CIS QUERIES 2001 - 2009

Year	Queries
2001	9,139
2002	9,016
2003	10,459
2004	11,670
2005	12,156
2006	14,300
2007	13,913
2008	14,913
2009	14,774 (+ Tullow figures not included)

APPENDIX 3 - QUERY CATEGORIES

Category	No	%	+/- %	National %
Social Welfare	7,947	53.79	-	44.29
Employment	1,668	11.29	-	12.20
Health	1,607	10.88	-	8.59
Money and Tax	721	4.88	-	5.33
Justice	565	3.82	-	4.18
Housing	509	3.45	-	5.30
Birth, Family and Relationships	456	3.09	-	3.12
Local	421	2.85	-	5.45
Education and Training	401	2.71	-	3.33
Moving Country	157	1.06	-	2.13
Consumer Affairs	141	0.95	-	2.27
Travel and Recreation	77	0.52	-	2.08
Death & Bereavement	67	0.45	-	0.70
Government in Ireland	19	0.13	-	0.44
Environment	18	0.12	-	0.58
Total	14,774	100.00	-	100.00

APPENDIX 4 - TRAINING

CIS TRAINING			
COURSE NAME	Internal / External / CIB	Number Attended	Total Training Days
Advocacy Practice Programme DIT accredited regions 1,3 and 4	CIB	1	8
An Introduction to Work Permits and Workplace Rights (Nov 09) - 19 Nov 2009	CIB	3	3
Bullying & Harassment - Employer's Responsibilities - 04 Nov 2009	CIB	1	1
Certificate in First Line Management NCI	External	1	15
CIB - Health & Safety Training Dublin	External	1	1
CIB Dublin - Nursing Home Support Scheme	External	1	1
Family Law & Separation Newbridge	External	6	6
Family Law - Separation & Divorce - 27 May 2009	CIB	5	5
Family Law and Relationships - Legal Issues Nov 09 - 12 Nov 2009	CIB	1	1
Job Loss & Unemployment: A Case Study Approach - 30 Sep 2009	CIB	1	1
Job Loss & Unemployment:	CIB	10	10

Redundancy & Social Welfare - 24 Mar 2009			
Job Loss and Unemployment - A Case Study Approach - 28 October 2009	CIB	2	2
Job Loss and Unemployment: Community Welfare Payments, Tax, Retraining and other supports - 02 Apr 2009	CIB	5	5
Training New Volunteers	External	7	49
Practical Advocacy Programme	External	1	2
Private and State Pensions 7th May 2009	CIB	1	1
Training for Board Members	External	5	5
Minding Self Serving Others	CIB	7	7