

Annual Report for 2018



ANNUAL REPORT

Birmingham Irish Association



45 alcester Street, Birmingham, B12 0PH
0121 604 6111
0121 604 6662

info@birminghamirish.org.uk
birminghamirish.org.uk



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BIRMINGHAM IRISH ASSOCIATION

Birmingham Irish is the Midlands' leading charity providing welfare and cultural services to the Irish community. We are based in the Heart of the Irish Quarter in Digbeth, Birmingham.

From our central HUB we reach out to all areas of the city including our newly developed spokes in Erdington, Cotteridge, Harborne, South Yardley, Sheldon, Hall Green, Brandwood, Shirley, Edgbaston, Acocks Green, Kingstanding, Handsworth, Maypole, and Kings Norton.

Our aspiration is to be the service of choice for all Irish people seeking advice, support and information. To achieve this we will continue to provide quality and responsive services that improve wellbeing and quality of life.

Social Inclusion - Providing an opportunity for clients to take part in stimulating activities, social interaction, and access to advice and personal support aimed at alleviating loneliness, social isolation and depression and dementia care.

Primary Care - Supporting older adults who may be suffering from physical and mental health problems and are having difficulty in engaging with statutory services with the aim of improving their quality of life and personal wellbeing.



Family Support - Providing support to young children and their families with issues such as bullying, selfesteem, lack of confidence, isolation, welfare, debt, housing issues and family relationships.

Bereavement Project - Volunteers trained in bereavement and helping others get back on their feet following a loss through

friendship and support.

Volunteer Project - A vital service for the organisation complementing the staff team and welcoming clients through the front reception, looking up a hot meal or teaching people how to surf the net!



CELEBRATING OVER 60 YEARS
OF HELPING THE COMMUNITY

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT



Pat Reihill joined the Board of Trustees at Birmingham Irish Association in 2008.

"I was initially interested in ensuring that the needs of those both from and with an affiliation to Ireland were not lost and that services reflected these important considerations.

I have been fortunate to be the chair since 2012 and have had the pleasure and privilege to work with an exceptionally dedicated board and a staff team who bring a passion and an indomitable spirit to everything they do."

Innovative work with individuals and families living with dementia ...

The concept of "cherry picking" has been to the fore in recent times as our media is consumed with Brexit and the complex ramifications arising from the vote to leave. Many months after the vote there remains no real clarity as to how Brexit will work for that mythical beast "the person in the street" never mind how it will pan out for Ireland the only European county with a land border with Britain. Whilst these issues remain unresolved the real work of providing services in many different forms goes on and it has been another very busy year. We do not have the luxury (nor would we want) to "cherry pick" who we work with. All attending our door are assured a personalised, empathetic response which sets out to maximise well-being for each individuals.

Our innovative work with those individuals and families living with dementia reflects the reality of this disease particularly amongst aging populations.

We, the Irish are in percentage terms the oldest ethnic group in Birmingham. It is inspiring to see faces wreathed in smiles and guffaws of laughter coming from those attending our centres.

It is an honour and a delight to report the expansion of services this past year into Yardley. It is particularly fitting that it sits literally a short distance from St Bernadette's Primary school where John McNally lead with such distinction for over 20 years and is named in his memory, The John McNally 'Emerald Heart' centre.

This year thanks to a Heritage Lottery-funded project and an as result of the culmination of painstaking work over a 12-month period we staged an exhibition recording the contribution Irish workers made to the rebuilding of Birmingham in the post-War period has attracted record numbers of visitors to the city's museum and art gallery.

FACES WREATHED IN SMILES AND GUFFAWS OF LAUGHTER



**“ IT IS AN HONOUR AND A DELIGHT TO REPORT THE
EXPANSION OF SERVICES THIS PAST YEAR**

CAPTURING THE MAGNIFICENT AND UNSUNG CONTRIBUTION THAT THE IRISH MADE



We Built This City used oral histories recorded in conversations with 35 Irish immigrants, photographs, archive footage and reconstructions to convey the experiences of the Irish immigrant population that flocked to the city to work on building sites, in road construction, on railways and buses, and in hospitals and factories. A moving video captured the magnificent and often unsung contribution that we the Irish made and continue to make in making Birmingham a great place to live.

The past year also see us bid farewell to Ambassador Mulhall who attended the event and has been a consistent friend to the Irish in Britain and particularly in Birmingham during his time in office.

We could not leave his departure to represent Ireland in Washington go without comment. Conscious of his love of the arts and in particular poetry we have set up an annual poetry prize which he has kindly agreed to

Judge thanks to the wonders of technology.

We look forward to welcoming his successor Ambassador Adrian O'Neill and cultivating a productive working relationship in the months and years ahead. We are deeply indebted to the Irish government whose year on year recognition of our work in the form of the Emigrant Support Programme allows us to carry on our vital work.

Other funders deserve special mention, Birmingham City Council, Birmingham and Cross City CCG, Irish Youth Foundation, and the Ireland Funds of Great Britain.

Last year I was a little nervous in using these remarks to ask that we mobilise our own fundraising efforts. I am delighted to report that we have been overwhelmed by the magnificent generosity of companies and individuals. We are mindful of following their wishes not to publicise personally these important donations which allows our vital work to continue and gives us a renewed sense of optimism and hope for the future.



CEO'S STATEMENT



**Maurice Malone became CEO of
Birmingham Irish Association
in 2012.**

At the age of 18 I worked in Adult Social Care & Health for Birmingham City Council, almost 20 years later, in 2004 I joined Birmingham Irish Association as their Service Manager and in 2012 I became CEO for the organisation.

I enjoy the constant challenge that we face on a daily basis and obviously the results we are able to provide to our service users problems. We have a great staff team who care about their service users and go that extra mile to get the job done. We work with some extremely vulnerable adults, some of whom have been using our services for decades as there is no other charity/organisation who provides for their complex needs.

**Capturing just some of the work we have
done in partnership with our members
over the last 12 months**

Every year we take time to reflect on our achievements, learn from what we have done, plan for the future and in particular set the direction for the coming year.

Each time we do this we are struck by how much is achieved and just how much we owe to the community who inspire us, our partners who support us, our funders who enable us and our community in all its vibrancy, diversity and energy.

In this report we aim to capture just some of the work we have done in partnership with our members over the last 12 months. We are proud to be celebrating over 60 years of work with and for the Irish community in Birmingham.

Understanding changes within the community and reaching those who have been here for many years as well as those who have recently arrived; providing information and guidance on opportunities and possibilities; building new projects with and amongst the community; exploring new ways of working and encouraging active engagement with those in public life.

Our focus as always remains to serve those most in need in our community and to develop and deliver services that meet the ever changing needs of our clients.



**OUR FOCUS AS ALWAYS REMAINS TO
SERVE THOSE MOST IN NEED IN OUR
COMMUNITY**



**DELIVERING SERVICES THAT
MEET THE EVER CHANGING
NEEDS OF OUR CLIENTS.**



BIRMINGHAM IRISH ASSOCIATION

Our aspiration is to be the service of choice for all Irish people seeking advice, support and information. To achieve this we will continue to provide quality and responsive services that improve wellbeing and quality of life.



SOCIAL INCLUSION

Providing an opportunity for clients to take part in stimulating activities, social interaction, and access to advice and personal support aimed at alleviating loneliness, social isolation and depression and dementia care.

HEALTHCARE

Supporting older adults who may be suffering from physical and mental health problems and are having difficulty in engaging with statutory services with the aim of improving their quality of life and personal wellbeing.

HOUSING AND BENEFITS

Support with Full entitlement claims, benefit applications and appeals, PIP, ESA, safeguarding vulnerable adults, supporting people, benefit tribunals, debt advice, providing advice for people coming over or going back to Ireland and more.

CULTURE, HERITAGE AND SPORT

Promoting Irish culture and heritage events in Birmingham and developing activities that enhance Irish identity and a vibrant active community.

FAMILY SUPPORT

Providing support to young children and their families with issues such as bullying, selfesteem, lack of confidence, isolation, welfare, debt, housing issues and family relationships.

VOLUNTEERS

A vital service for the organisation complementing the staff team and welcoming clients through the front reception, assisting with passport renewals, and managing the phone lines.

HEALTHCARE TEAM

We support older adults experiencing issues with their health via an outreach service. The project targets elders who may be suffering from physical and mental health problems and are having difficulty in engaging with statutory services.

"This is not a ghost story but an example of how we continue to provide 'help' to clients and their families long after they are gone."

I worked with a gentleman, Tom, for about a year and a half.

Tom was the neighbour of a couple that I was working with, and he spent most of his time with them. It was a chaotic situation as all three had alcohol issues so there was always a practical issue or a health issue to provide support to resolve.

It was clear that Tom was an intelligent, quiet gentleman and it transpired that he had run his own business and employed a team of people. He had also travelled extensively.

Due to his increasing alcohol addiction, he eventually lost all that he had, and came to find himself living as he was when I met him;

his flat was without electricity, lacked cooking facilities and had little furniture.

His health was not great and despite managing to persuade him to attend a few GP/hospital appointments, he had really given up on himself. He had tried a residential detox but succumbed once he was back in the community.

His death was very sudden, coming a month after his neighbour died from terminal lung cancer. Strangely both men were buried on the same day two months later, Tom in the morning and his friend that afternoon.

**WE SUPPORT OLDER ADULTS
EXPERIENCING ISSUES WITH THEIR
PHYSICAL OR MENTAL HEALTH**

FAMILY SUPPORT

We provide a family support and learning mentor service to children and families within a local secondary school setting. Referrals are received from members of the school pastoral team which includes Heads of House, Pupil Support, attendance officer, school nurse and school social worker.

Preventive support is given to families, addressing issues at an early stage before they escalate. Parents are supported to access housing, welfare benefits, healthcare, debt advice, education/ training and to improve parenting skills. In addition to the school, we work alongside agencies from the statutory and voluntary sector to achieve positive outcomes.

We work individually with children and young people in school providing support with attendance, behaviour, emotional issues, anxiety, transition from primary to secondary school and bereavement. Working closely with the school, our aim is to remove barriers to learning and enable children to achieve their full potential.



“OUR MISSION IS TO KEEP THE CHILDREN WE WORK WITH IN SCHOOL AND ON TRACK TO COMPLETE EDUCATION. WE WANT TO REMOVE THE BARRIERS TO LEARNING.”

Case Study:

"Mark was referred for mentoring because of extreme anxiety around his fear of being late for lessons. As he is an excellent student his form tutor was concerned about the impact this may have on his achievement.

As structure and routine are really important to him it was decided I would meet with him on the same day and at the same time each week. As I was unsure how comfortable he would be in meeting with me we started off by completing a few written exercises to relax him and to provide the opportunity for him to speak about his family and other things of interest.

The sessions went incredibly well were lively and full of discussion as the student has a number of varied interests. We looked at strategies he could use to help reduce

his anxiety in school one of these being understanding the amount of time taken to move between lessons.

He spoke about his family background by way of helping me understand his anxieties. He told me his anxiety had

significantly reduced and now copes better with situations if he plans ahead. His form tutor also noticed these improvements and that he appears less isolated and engages more with his peers.

He enjoyed the sessions and looked forward to them. The feeling was mutual as I found them to be uplifting and endlessly interesting. Now this barrier to his learning has been removed, I believe Mark has the potential to achieve in school and accomplish his career aspirations."

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”

HOUSING AND BENEFITS

We provide welfare and support advice on an appointment basis. We also operate a Housing & Benefits surgery every Thursday in Balsal Heath.



Our benefits and welfare advice includes:

- Full entitlement claims
- Benefit applications
- Benefit appeals
- PIP, ESA,
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults
- Supporting people
- Sitting in on benefit tribunals
- Service Reports
- Debt Advice
- Organising food parcels
- Working with social workers
- Providing information to people coming over or going back to Ireland
- Opening or accessing bank accounts in Ireland
- Land disputes, wills and family arguments

Case Study:

I have been supporting a family from the Irish Travelling community comprising of two parents and six children aged between 13 and 6 months. They had to come to England without any prior planning as they had received death threats.

The father had been assaulted whilst on remand and subsequently cleared of any charges. He is also has long term depression and anxiety. I have supported them with applications for permanent housing, food voucher, tax credits, child benefit and Personal Independence Payments, Primary Care and finding school places.

It was enlightening to find that an agent of Capita, who is from Ireland, state that she also found their accents very hard to understand.

BEREAVEMENT AND BEFRIENDING

Bereavement Project

We offer a friendly and impartial service, offering support to clients in their time of loss. We have volunteers trained in bereavement to help others get back on their feet following a loss through friendship and support.

We can provide:

- One to one Support
- Free and confidential service from bereavement support counsellors
- Advice and guidance on funeral arrangements, finances and benefits
- Repatriation advice
- Support to everyone over the age of 18

SOCIAL INCLUSION

Our dementia centre is based at St Anne's and provides care for elderly Irish clients suffering from dementia. We have a dedicated van to pick up and drop off clients from their homes and we take them to the centre for 4 ½ hours a day. This gives the client's family or carers a much needed break.

Our team of fully trained staff and volunteers provide a home cooked meal and everyone is encouraged to take part in a range of activities from

We hold a number of activities at the dementia centre to improve physical and mental wellbeing and stimulation. This includes Irish film club, dancing, sing-alongs, the parachute game, the price is right. We have bands and dancers that will come in and perform, and people bring their pets in. We often cook bread with our clients.

We run preventative activities such as fall prevention, hand eye coordination, reflexes and home skills projects for cooking, cleaning and washing.

We also run 12 placements across the city which are open to clients of all backgrounds, who are 55 and over. We provide activities

and support similar to the dementia centre, including seated exercise, cardio, parachute games.

We engage clients who may have a number of physical and mental health issues including osteoporosis, osteoarthritis, arthritis, dementia, autism, schizophrenia, and Alzheimer's.

The project encourages our service users to improve their quality of life and personal wellbeing.

Our John McNally centre in Yardley has an ongoing partnership with nearby St Bernadette's school. The centre is named after Irish man and former headteacher of St Bernadette's School. School pupils regularly visit our centres, and we also take clients on visits to the school.



“THE PROJECT ENCOURAGES OUR SERVICE USERS TO IMPROVE THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE AND PERSONAL WELLBEING”

“Over the past year there have been a lot of good times” this is a direct quote from a long-standing service user. Hearing things like this is a real boost and continues to drive me in delivering a wide range of mental and physically stimulating activities.

There are currently thirty-two activities in place which get chosen by the service users themselves and put onto monthly activity planners which are then sent out to the clubs they attend.

Seated exercise, supported exercise, free standing cardio exercise, tai chi, massage

therapy, exercise games, fall prevention, hand eye coordination exercise, relaxation exercise, exercise bingo, gardening projects, creative writing projects, comic book creations, TV game shows include, ‘Play your Cards right’, ‘Family Fortunes’ and ‘The Price is Right’. Other activities included, ten pin bowling, darts, Target practice, quits, giant snakes and ladders, memory lane, the beetle game, bingo, card bingo, quizzes, arts and crafts like creating memory boxes, team scrabble and the newest edition - barn dancing!

Each activity is designed to for a wide range of service users with mixed physical and mental abilities to ensure that not one is marginalised.

"I have enjoyed working in the dementia centre over the last year, and I have made strong, positive relationships with the attendees and I continue to build on the centre's reputation with groups getting bigger every week.

We are also involved with the Tuesday club alongside volunteers that assist in the front office and in the dementia centre."



12

12 Placements Across the City

CULTURE, HERITAGE & SPORT

Meeting the cultural and heritage needs of the first, second and subsequent generations of Irish in Birmingham.

We have promoted Irish culture and heritage in Birmingham through developing our own activities and events, or by cross promoting activities organised by associate groups. Over the last year we have worked on a number of projects with a number of partners across the community, and also with schools.

We have worked with the Birmingham Trad Fest, Heritage Group, West Midlands Irish Business Group, local venues and organisers, promoting Irish events throughout the West Midlands.

The one recurring issue we have heard from partner organisations, is promoting and sharing their events. There are plenty of Irish cultural events happening, but getting the word out there has always been a problem.

Often organisers lack the experience, time, or reach on social media, to effectively promote their events.

To combat this - we have developed our own website and app, called The Craic, which will act as a central hub listing all Irish venues, businesses and events across the West Midlands, and ultimately - across the UK!

We have worked closely with the St Patrick's Festival, providing practical support to enable them to continue their good work. We have improved the content of the St Patrick's Parade itself, with Birmingham Irish staff taking part in a tribute to Women's right to vote.

We have also improved the content of the St Pat Rock's stage, securing headline act Sharon Shannon for 2018, and Finbar Furey for 2019.

Our aim is to increase the profile, content and reputation of the St Patrick's Festival as one of the biggest St Patrick's Festivals in the world, and use this as a catalyst to increase the demand for Irish cultural events in the West Midlands.

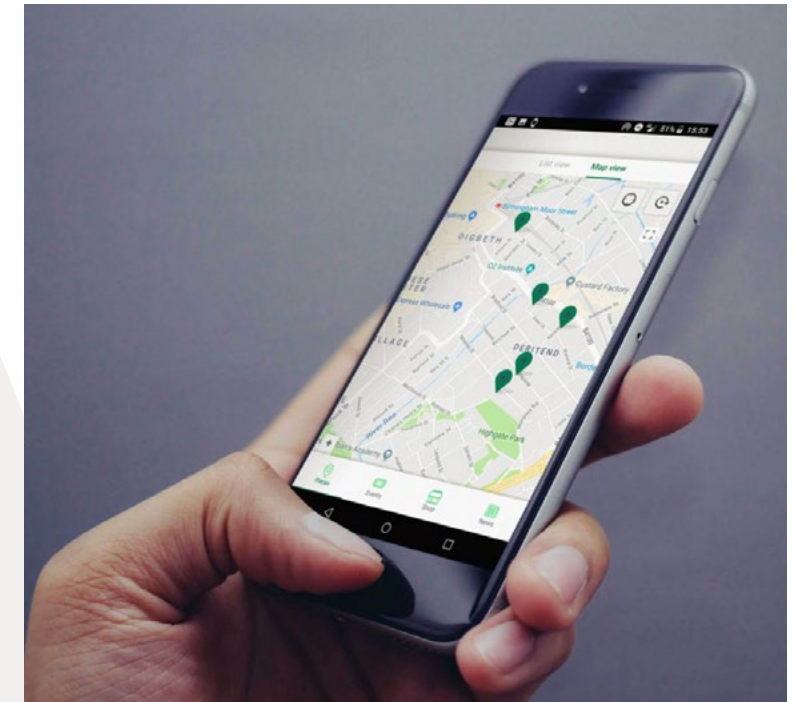
“ WE HAVE DEVELOPED A **WEBSITE AND APP THE CRAIC**, WHICH WILL ACT AS A CENTRAL HUB, **LISTING ALL IRISH VENUES, BUSINESSES AND EVENTS ACROSS THE UK!** ”



DELIVERING SERVICES THAT
MEET THE EVER CHANGING
NEEDS OF OUR CLIENTS.



“ FIND OUT **WHAT'S ON AND WHAT'S IRISH** IN SECONDS WITH OUR NEW APP! **AVAILABLE ON ITUNES AND GOOGLE APP STORE** ”



WHAT'S IRISH

Find nearby Irish businesses, venues, shops, restaurants and community centres.

WHAT'S ON

Find out what's on near you, from trad sessions to GAA games, fundraisers to committee meetings.

LOCATION BASED

Both the app and website use GPS to display information relevant to users' location, and provide directions.

BUY TICKETS

In-built app ticket platform allows registered businesses to sell tickets for their events.

NEWS

Stay up to date with local and UK wide Irish news. Updated by registered businesses and community.

EASY ADMIN

Easy to understand admin controls means anyone can register and update their own business and events.

ACHIEVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

17,000



Almost 17,000 phone calls received

16,000



Over 16,000 attendances at our drop in centre and activity clubs

15,000



15,000 clients attended the Elders Clubs

300



Almost 300 families and young children supported through Family Support Programme

1100



Nearly 1100 people addressed their health needs through Primary Support Programme

6,000



Over 6,000 clients accessed advice and support services through front office team

1,500



1,500 clients received support with Debt and Welfare Benefit Support

5,000



Over 5,000 visitors to the office looking for help with passport applications

10,000



10,000 meals provided through the drop in centre and social clubs

This year, as intended we continued to run all the projects and activities that we ran in previous years as well as expanding into new areas. These projects are up and running for public benefit and delivering our mission statement.

With the continued support from our funders and community we plan to carry on delivering the vital services to the clients we have served for many years.

Upon reviewing the year and the strides we have made, it gives me great pride to be associated with such a dedicated staff team and a board of Trustees who have demonstrated willingness and unerring support to the cause during a testing period.

I am confident that with the strategic direction in place and the continued support of those we serve, we will continue to have a productive 12 months.



FUNDING AND FINANCES

The year to 31 March 2018 saw the result of our careful approach to dealing with the challenges put to us in the present funding climate. We hare pleased to report that we have been able to make a surplus which brings our reserves back to the level they were at two years ago.

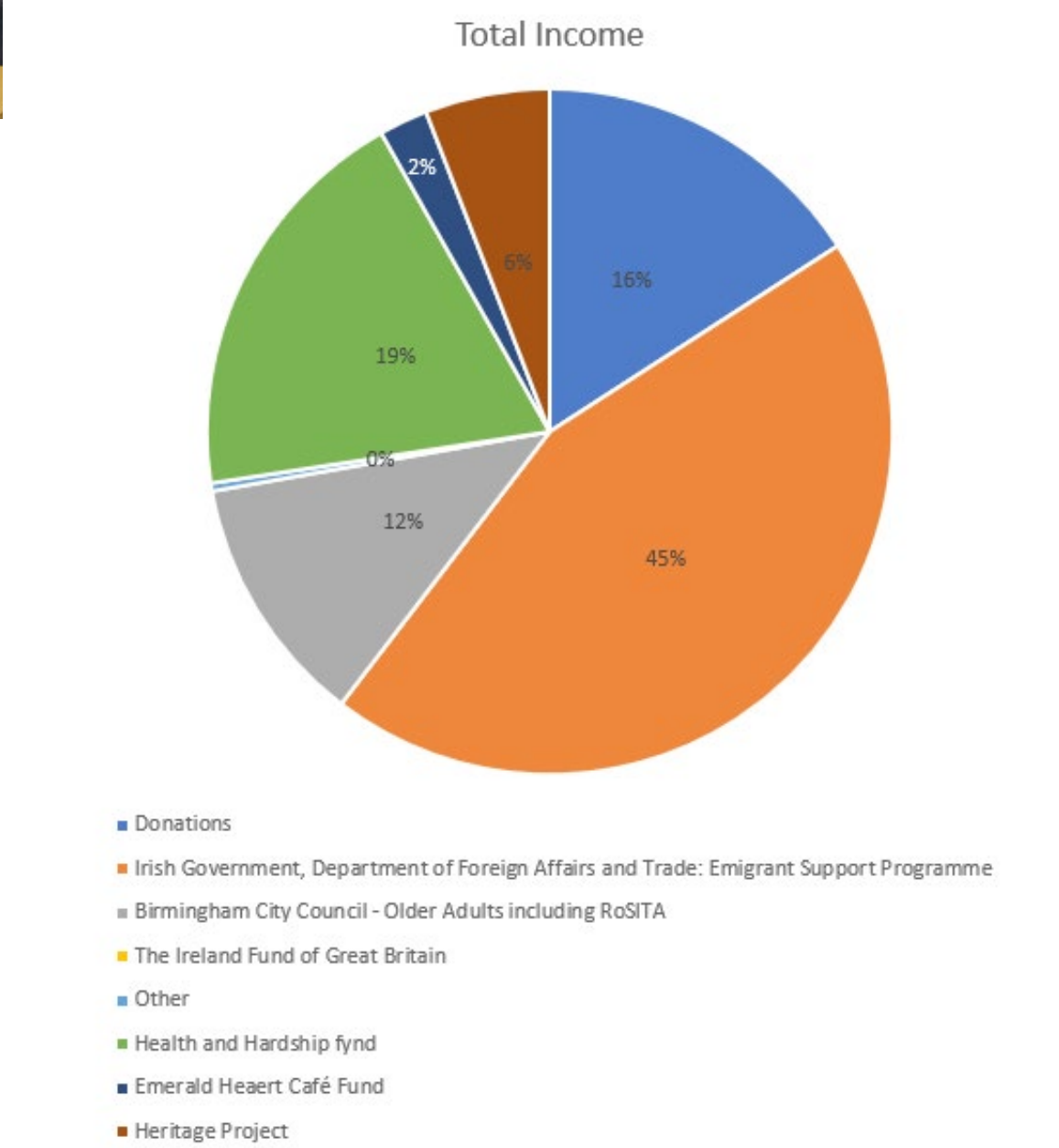
During the year under review, the Charity's total incoming resources amounted to £462,798, with £67,746 (2017: £26,384) of that from voluntary income from our generous donors and £372,990 from grants and contracts from our funders.

Irish in Birmingham’s principal funding sources for the year are as follows:

- Irish Government Department of Foreign Affairs Trade Emigrant Support Programme
- Birmingham City Council (Adults and Communities)
- Birmingham CrossCity CCG
- Birmingham South Central CCG
- Sandwell and West Birmingham CCG
- Ireland Fund of Great Britain
- Birmingham Secondary Schools Family Support Project
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- The Irish Youth Foundation

We are also grateful to the following organisations for their kind donations this year:

- Kiely Bros
- Lambe Construction
- Birmingham Irish Cycle Appeal
- Friel Homes
- Number 7 Partners
- The Kelly Family
- The O'Brien Family



PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

- To provide service user centred support services
- Develop Partnerships or collaborative working to respond to the changing landscape of health and social care.
- To ensure the charity has sufficient funding in place for those we serve.
- To provide a wide range of cultural, community, sport and heritage projects, which foster a vibrant sense of Irish community and identity.
- To work collaboratively with others to meet the needs of those we serve
- Raise the profile of Irish Culture, Sport and Heritage in Birmingham and the wider area.
- Continue to raise awareness of BIA and the needs of the Irish Community in Birmingham
- Further enhance the memory awareness service and created dementia services for the traveller community.
- Continue to provide quality services in a tough financial environment
- Develop partnership working with other like-minded organisations in the West Midlands.
- Launch the new Birmingham Pub Bombings Memorial.
- Re vamp the direct giving scheme with a new look and high profile launch.
- Engage with local Irish sports clubs including GAA.



CONTINUE TO RAISE
AWARENESS OF
BIRMINGHAM IRISH
ASSOCIATION