

Board for Social Responsibility (NI) – Report 2004

**BOARD FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (NI)
REPORT 2004**

MEMBERSHIP

House of Bishops

Rt Rev AET Harper

Elected Members

Mrs SL Ayling

(Mothers' Union, Down & Dromore
resigned September 2003)

Captain A Barr

(Church Army elected June 2003)

Rev Canon JPO Barry

(Down Dromore & Connor Joint Social
Services Committee)

Mrs J Bunting

(Mothers' Union)

Mr A Canning

(C of I Housing Association elected June
2003)

Dr J Evans

(Men's Society) (Vice-Chairman)

Rev D Ferry

(Derry Diocese resigned December 2003)

Mr G Glenn

(Derry Diocese)

Mrs E Gould

(Mothers' Union)

Captain C Harris

(Church Army – term completed June
2003)

Very Rev TR Moore

(Clogher Diocese)

Rev J Pickering

(Armagh Diocese)

Mr R Stinson

(Down Dromore & Connor Joint Social
Services Committee)

Rev RC Thompson

(Clogher Diocese)

Mrs J Thompson

(Down Dromore & Connor Joint Social
Services Committee)

Dr J Turner

(Down Dromore & Connor Joint Social
Services Committee)

Rev ASJ Warke (Hon Secretary)

(Armagh Diocese)

Co-opted Members

Rev Canon GF Anderson

Mr GS Shaw (Hon Treasurer)

Dr JH McGaffin

Mr TN Wilson

Mr JTN McGaffin (Vice Chairman)

Staff

Mr I Slaine, BA (Hons) MSW CQSW CMHSC DSM

Chief Executive

Mrs P Gilbert, BSSc (Hons) DipSW CQSW

Senior Social Work Practitioner

Mrs G McCluskey, BSSc (Hons) MSW CQSW DSM

Social Worker

Mrs M Giff, CQSW PQA

Sessional Social Worker

Mrs L Graham BA (Hons) Social Work CQSW

Sessional Social Worker

Mrs M Walker

Administrator

The Board for Social Responsibility (N.I.) provides “A practical response to the Church’s Ministry to the Community by providing a social work service, by raising awareness of social issues and by offering help to clergy and parishes as required in dealing with their community outreach.”

The Board translates its duties in the following ways:

Social Work/Care Services

- The Church of Ireland Adoption Society;
- The Fertility Counselling Service.

Social Concern

- Involvement in training courses on social issues relevant to clergy;
- Raising awareness amongst clergy, parishes and dioceses on issues;
- Commenting on proposed relevant legislation and health and social services;
- Financial Assistance to Families and Individuals in Need;
- The Church of Ireland Ministry to the Deaf;
- Involvement in the Central Belfast Child Contact Centre.

The Board

The Board is chaired by The Rt Revd AET Harper, Bishop of Connor. Membership of the Board is through nominations from various Church of Ireland bodies. There is also a maximum of eight co-opted members.

During 2003 a number of new appointments were made to the Board. New members are, Captain A Barr, Mr A Canning and Mrs E Gould, resulting in the loss of Col CGH Filor, Captain C Harris and Mrs S Ayling.

We would like to thank these members for their valuable contribution to the work of the Board and in particular Col Filor who served since the Board’s inception.

The Board meets on a quarterly basis and in 2003 the Board used meetings to raise awareness on a range of social issues by the use of Guest Speakers. The topics discussed were:

- Homelessness – The Simon Community;
- Childcare and Punishment – Children are Unbeatable;
- Asylum – The personal experience of a Sri Lankan Asylum Seeker in Northern Ireland;
- NICEM – Northern Ireland Council on Ethnic Minorities.

In addition to attendance at Board Meetings, members also have serve on sub-committees such as the General Purpose and Finance Committee, the Legislation and Research Advisory Committee and the Development Advisory Committee.

Board for Social Responsibility (NI) – Report 2004

Members of the Board act in a voluntary capacity. Their commitment is highly commended and much valued.

Staff

In April 2003 Mrs Gerry McCluskey joined the Board as a full-time Social Worker. Mrs McCluskey brings a wealth of expertise to the Board from her background in voluntary and statutory social work agencies.

Mrs Linda Graham joined the staff on a sessional social work basis in late 2003. Mrs Graham has experience in child care, fostering and adoption.

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENTS

The Board introduced a Business Plan for 2003/2004, 2004/2005, 2005/2006 in April 2003. The Board recognizes the need to monitor and review this plan on a regular and ongoing basis. There is also a recognition that progress on this plan is dependent upon a range of factors including:

- Board Members;
- Staff;
- Resources – including funds;
- Outside factors – including changes in legislation, social work practice, willingness of Trusts to work with the Board.

In mid 2003 the Board, operating as the Church of Ireland Adoption Society opened formal negotiations with the other locally based voluntary adoption agency in Northern Ireland, Family Care Society, to review opportunities for improved co-operation and the potential for joint working. This process has involved using an independent outside facilitator, Mrs Maire Young and a series of meetings between the Management Committees, Social Work and Administrative Personnel of both agencies. This has, to date, proved to be a valuable learning experience with a great deal of potential.

Funding

The Board is dependent upon a range of sources of funding. These include The Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety, Social Services Trusts and the Regional Fertility Centre.

Although statutory funders are significant to the Board there remains a need for Church of Ireland funding in order to maintain and allow for a development of services and social outreach. The Board receives donations – at varying levels – from Parishes and Dioceses throughout Northern Ireland. It should be noted that some Parishes provide no support. A significant Church of Ireland funder, which is most welcomed and appreciated by the Board is the Church of Ireland Priorities Fund. We are most grateful for the financial assistance provided by the Priorities Fund.

SOCIAL WORK/SOCIAL CARE SERVICES

The Church of Ireland Adoption Society

The work of the Board for Social Responsibility (NI) finds its origins in the Church of Ireland Adoption Society, and work with and for candidates for adoption and prospective adoptive parents remains a major commitment. It is from this work that other services have developed e.g. the Fertility Counselling Service. From the beginning the concern of the Adoption Society has been to promote the best interests of the vulnerable and needy children placed with the Society for adoption. The Society and the Board for Social Responsibility (NI) believes that the best interests of children are served by placement in family circumstances in which positive role models of both genders are to be found. There will be circumstances in which, as a result of damaging and negative experiences of a former carer/parent the advice may be that a single adoptive parent is more appropriate. However, the Society and the Board does not believe that the best interests of the child are served where the possibility of positive role models of both genders is specifically excluded, for example in the case of adoption by same sex couples.

The work of the Adoption Society has changed over recent years to provide an emphasis on:

- The placement of children for adoption aged 2 years+ from the care system;
- The recruitment, preparation and training of prospective adopters for older children;
- Provision of a post adoption counselling service to adult adoptees, adoptive parents, birth parents and birth relatives.

The Board receives a core grant from the Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety towards this service delivery and the Board welcomes this ongoing financial support.

In 2003 Adoption Orders were granted in respect of two children with whom the Society was involved.

The Society was involved in the placement of four children with our approved prospective adopters in 2003. One couple took on care of a sibling group of two children.

The Society continued to provide support to a placement with one of our approved families. The child had been placed with the family in late 2002 and due to a number of delaying factors, this case has yet to reach court.

In 2003 the Society received four referrals from women with an unplanned pregnancy. All four have led to a high level of social work input from the Society. Two of the women decided upon the option of adoption. One woman decided to take on care of her child and ongoing support was provided. In the case of the fourth woman her pregnancy continued into 2004 and ongoing counselling remained in place.

Board for Social Responsibility (NI) – Report 2004

The number of couples seeking to adopt remains high – one hundred and six enquiries received in 2003. All couples are offered an initial interview prior to completing an Application Form. This allows Social Work Staff an opportunity to raise awareness of the children available for adoption and of the fact that there are few babies available.

With a significant number of the couples enquiring to adopt their infertility remains a significant and painful issue. These couples are cross-referenced to the Fertility Counselling Service.

The Post Adoption Service remains a significant part of the work of the Adoption Society. In 2003 a total of one hundred and twenty-six referrals were received. Enquiries are received from adult adoptees, adoptive parents and social work agencies.

In 2003 the Adoption Society introduced an Independent Counselling Service for Birth Parents of children being placed for adoption by Social Services. This service is aimed at giving birth parents, who have had children removed from their care by Social Services and for whom the plan is adoption, independent support. In 2003 a total of thirteen enquiries were received about this service. The Adoption Society provides this service on a fee-paid basis for Social Services Trusts.

The Adoption Society has close links with a range of statutory and voluntary adoption agencies. The Chief Executive is a member of two Adoption Panels for Social Services Trusts and Mr G Glenn, Chair of the Church of Ireland Adoption Society Panel is a member of one Social Services Adoption Panel.

The Adoption Society is involved in a range of committees and projects aimed at the further development of adoption in Northern Ireland. These include the Northern Ireland Regional Adoption Forum, The Post Adoption Social Work Group and The Project Team monitoring specific developments in adoption services.

The Adoption Society remains an active member of the Diocesan Adoption Agencies Group. Mr I Slaine remains the Chair of this group. The Diocesan Adoption Agencies Group is hoping to promote increased co-operation between voluntary Anglican-based Adoption Agencies on a United Kingdom-wide basis.

Mrs Gerry McCluskey has commenced a Post Qualifying Social Work course provided by the British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering. The course is funded by the Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety and is entitled, “Good Practice in Family Placement.”

THE FERTILITY COUNSELLING SERVICE

This service developed out of the work of the Adoption Society and of a recognition that one in six couples have a problem conceiving a child.

The work expanded in 2003 through additional funding of the Fertility Counselling Service by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. This funding

has allowed the Fertility Counselling Service to develop beyond meeting the needs of users attending the Regional Fertility Centre. The Board sees this additional funding as a recognition by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety of the service provided to date.

To acknowledge the regionalization of the Fertility Counselling Service and to show the Board operates outside Belfast, an office is rented in Cookstown.

The Fertility Counselling Service remains linked primarily to the Regional Fertility Centre. In late 2003 the Regional Fertility Centre signed a one-year contract allowing for the continuation of the Fertility Counselling Service. Negotiations opened in December 2003 regarding a contract for 2004/2005.

The number of referrals received by the Fertility Counselling Service in 2003 was two-hundred and thirty-three. This was a one hundred per cent increase on the numbers in 2002.

The Fertility Counselling Service remains a demanding and challenging service for the Board. Ethical and moral issues are a common feature of the Fertility Counselling Service. The Board recognizes a need to be aware of these issues while recognizing we are dealing with couples at a time of significant emotional need and/or distress.

In 2003 Mrs Patricia Gilbert, Senior Social Work Practitioner, commenced further training on Counselling through a University of Ulster accredited course.

The Board has provided training to the Northern Health Board Adoption Panel on issues regarding infertility and fertility counselling.

SOCIAL CONCERN

Financial Assistance to Families and Individuals in Need

This service is provided on a Northern Ireland-wide basis with an emphasis on assisting people referred by clergy. The financial assistance is available primarily to families with children. In addition financial assistance is available to the elderly, people with a physical disability and people with a learning disability.

In the financial year 2002/2003 a total of £16,168 (based on 2002/03 Annual Accounts) was paid out in charitable disbursements. Of this £12,668 was paid to cases involving children.

Parishes are encouraged to make referrals to this service. Referrals are accepted on a Province-wide basis.

The charitable disbursements made by the Board are funded from donations from Parishes, Dioceses, BBC Children in Need and the Protestant Orphan Society (Counties Antrim and Down.)

Board for Social Responsibility (NI) – Report 2004

Through the generosity of a number of parishes throughout Northern Ireland the Board is able to operate a Christmas Toy Appeal. In 2003 the most successful Christmas Toy Appeal to date occurred. Over three hundred families received toys. Toys were distributed to families in need, known to the Board, to parishes and through Social Services and Women's Aid.

CHURCH OF IRELAND MINISTRY TO DEAF PEOPLE

The Board provides management support and supervision to the Revd Will Murphy who carries out his pastoral duties with people who are deaf.

The Board encourages parishes throughout Northern Ireland to make use of the specialist skills and knowledge of Mr Murphy e.g. interpreting, signing, and advice/guidance on the needs of deaf parishioners including using loop systems.

CENTRAL BELFAST CHILD CONTACT CENTRE

The Board maintains an active involvement in this Centre through its Chief Executive. Mr Slaine is on the Centre's Management Committee as a representative of the Board. In addition Mr Slaine provides professional social work supervision to the Centre Co-ordinator.

The Central Belfast Contact Centre is open on a Saturday from 10.00am to 3.00pm. Volunteers, including members of the Mothers' Union and the Church of Ireland Men's Society, provide support and guidance to the parents and children in attendance. The average number of users on a Saturday is up to twenty-five children and seventeen parents.

The Board through the Chief Executive continues to promote the development of Child Contact Centres in Londonderry and Armagh. Enquiries from Churches in other parts of Northern Ireland would be most welcome. Seed funding by the Board may be available if deemed appropriate.

TRAINING ON SOCIAL ISSUES

Marriage

In conjunction with the Church of Ireland Marriage Council the Board has assisted in providing training courses on Marriage in a number of the Northern Dioceses including Connor, Derry & Raphoe, Armagh and Clogher. When the course is held in Northern Ireland, as in the case of the Diocese of Connor, the Board has funded the course. When the course is held in the Republic of Ireland, funding has been received from the relevant government department.

Parenting Today

The Board, in conjunction with the Church of Ireland Youth Department has commissioned "Love for Life" a locally based charitable trust, to provide a training course for parents. Negotiations opened in mid-2003 and it is anticipated a pilot course will be provided in early 2004. It is anticipated that the pilot course will be used as a basis for a rolling out of courses across all the Dioceses in Northern Ireland.

Raising Awareness

Disability Access

In 2003 the questionnaires returned to the Board by clergy on disability access were collated and presented in a report by Dr Judith McGaffin, Board member. This report was subsequently shared with Diocesan Secretaries and Diocesan Boards for Social Responsibility and the Joint Social Services Committee for Down & Dromore & Connor.

The Board intends to use this report as a basis for further exploration of the needs of Parishioners with a disability.

Homelessness

The Board, at the request of the Simon Community, was involved in the production of an Information Pack on Homelessness for the benefit of churches. The Revd David Ferry represented the Board on this working party. The Homelessness Pack is due for launch in 2004.

Comment on Legislation/Health/Social Issues

The committee has not made official comment on any documents this year, but has informally discussed a number of documents.

Consideration is being given to finding a better way of commenting on the various documents and papers issues by the Government in Northern Ireland.

Board for Social Responsibility (NI) – Report 2004

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

THE CHURCH OF IRELAND ADOPTION SOCIETY

	2003	2002
Unplanned Pregnancy Enquires	4	4
Adoption Enquiries:	106	83
Post Adoption Enquiries:	126	119
The enquiries came in a variety of Categories:		
Adoption Orders Granted:	2	3
Children in Foster Care – placement provided with Social work support:	5	2
Fertility Counselling Service:		
Referrals Received:	233	117
Financial Assistance to Families and Individuals in Need:		
Family Cases:	£12,168	£11,498
Non-Family Cases:	£3,500	£4,395

**FINANCIAL SUMMARY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2003
(BEING AN EXTRACT FROM THE LATEST AUDITED ACCOUNTS)**

Revenue Statement	2003		2002	
	£	%	£	%
INCOME				
Donations & Subscriptions				
Dioceses				
Armagh	2,935		2,690	
Clogher	1,665		1,200	
Connor	4,597		4,574	
Derry and Raphoe	1,685		2,350	
Down and Dromore	4,139		5,473	
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	15,021		16,287	
Church of Ireland Priorities Fund	12,500		17,000	
Dean of Belfast's Christmas Sit Out (for Fertility Counselling Work)	1,500		1,000	
Enkalon Foundation	-		500	
Other Income Anonymous	<u>1,329</u>		<u>359</u>	
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	30,350	(20.2%)	35,146	(24.4%)
For Services Provided				
Social Work Services	47,864		39,258	
Church of Ireland Mission to the Deaf	8,578		9,374	
Income from Courses for clergy	-		40	
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	56,442	(37.6%)	48,672	(33.7%)
From Investments and Funds on Deposit	9,815	(6.5%)	9,717	(6.7%)
Grants From				
Department of Health, Social Services And Public Safety:				
Core	40,324		33,477	
Specific	-		8,439	
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	40,324	(26.9%)	41,916	(29.1%)

Board for Social Responsibility (NI) – Report 2004

	2003		2002	
	£	%	£	%
INCOME CONTINUED				
For Charitable Disbursement				
Protestant Orphan Society for The Counties of Antrim and Down	3,000		4,000	
Lord Mayor of Belfast's Welfare Fund	-		2,800	
Dean of Belfast's Christmas Sit Out (for persons in need)	1,500		2,000	
BBC Children in Need	8,000		-	
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	13,300	(8.8%)	8,800	(6.1%)
Total Income	£150,231	(100%)	£144,251	(100%)
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	2003		2002	
	£	%	£	%
EXPENDITURE				
Operating				
Staff Costs	107,633	(71.6%)	88,680	(61.5%)
Other Expenses	25,335	(16.9%)	27,837	(19.3%)
Accommodation and such costs	11,761	(7.8%)	6,199	(4.3%)
Services Outlay	1,095	(0.7%)	2,273	(1.6%)
Total	<hr/>		<hr/>	
	145,824	(97.0%)	124,989	(86.7%)
Charitable Disbursements	16,168	(10.8%)	15,893	(11.0%)
Total Expenditure	£161,992	(107.8%)	£140,882	(97.7%)
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(DEFICIT)/SURPLUS for year ended 31 March 2003	(£11,761)	(7.8%)	£3,369	(2.3%)

Copies of the statutory accounts along with supporting schedules are available on request at the Board's office.

