



Mercy Law Resource Centre
ANNUAL REPORT 2017

A stylized graphic of the scales of justice, rendered in a light teal color against a darker teal background. The scales are positioned at the top of the page, with the central pillar and two pans hanging from a horizontal beam.

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CHAIRPERSON'S WELCOME

With heartfelt gratitude to all involved I am very happy to introduce the Annual Report 2017 for Mercy Law Resource Centre and to welcome your generous engagement once again.

Many voices in our society continue to raise and press the very troublesome extent of homelessness in our country. The height of it (nearly 10,000 people) and the depth of it (nearly 4,000 children) seem beyond comprehension in a twenty-first century wealthy Republic, and well beyond any acceptable notion of a basic public ethic in our common endeavour as a society.

Homelessness has many facets. Most prominent the severe and chronic lack of housing. In this context, those charged with its provision (local authorities/agencies) or those with the means to provide (landlords) it, seem prone to using every kind of evasion, tactic, or subterfuge to negate or diminish a vulnerable person's access, entitlement or priority to a home. In the same context, those without adequate shelter will necessarily follow every possible avenue to acquire a place, only to be met often with disappointment, distress and sometimes discrimination.

Into this dynamic, Mercy Law Resource Centre brings the legal skill, experience and research required to uphold, advocate for and defend the rights of people who have become homeless due to an unfair application of the meagre regulations in a less than adequate system of provision.

Last year MLRC provided a free legal service of advice and legal representation to over 621 clients - families and individuals - amounting to more than 2,525 pieces of work. Engaging in this way with many people at their most

vulnerable point, happily the outcomes for most of them were positive and life changing. MLRC also gave advice to 99 organisations working in the field of homelessness, including Focus Ireland, Crosscare and Sophia Housing.

In the course of that work MLRC had to seek redress in the High Court in 9 separate cases so that families could access their fundamental basic human dignity - a roof over their heads. Sadly, there is no right to housing or shelter in Irish law. This was clearly evidenced by the three cases brought by MLRC in 2017 namely: *Middleton v Carlow County Council*, *Tee v Wicklow County Council* and *C v Galway County Council*. In these cases, the High Court refused to grant an order compelling councils to provide shelter to three single women and their young children, of whom some had special needs. The gap in legal protection is very clear and there is a fundamental failure by the State to provide a right to shelter or housing in Irish law.

These cases fuelled our policy work as seen in the publication of the Second and Third Right to Housing Reports on the need for new legislation. In recognition that a home is central to the dignity of each and every person and a foundation of every person's life, a constitutional right to housing would put in place a basic floor of protection and the State would be obliged to actualise that right. Benjamin Disraeli once said that 'the best security for a civilisation is the home'.

Mercy Law is a totally free and independent service which does not receive any State funds

or grants. Our work would not be possible without the generous support and encouragement of its donors, volunteers, interns and friends. In particular, we express our deep appreciation to Mason Hayes & Curran, A&L Goodbody, the Archdiocese and Mercy Sisters. We rely on your continued donations and generosity to sustain the service outlined in this Annual Report.

My sincere thanks to all those who have contributed in any way over the past year, especially to our many deeply committed pro bono barristers, solicitors, auditors, and befrienders. Many thanks to our Board members who have willingly given of their time and expertise in driving forward and adjusting our service in order to meet the legal need of those affected by homelessness. A special word of gratitude is due to our

excellent staff, to our Managing Solicitor and her team, who in the spirit of Mercy Law spare no effort to alleviate the pain and vindicate the entitlements of people in distress.

We are becoming dangerously close to accepting the homeless situation as a problem that we just can't solve. We must always challenge this and seek the political will of our elected TDs to make difficult budgetary, policy and legislative choices that will lead us out of the crisis of homelessness.

Thank you for taking the time to read the Annual Report 2017.



Helena O'Donoghue Rsm, *Chairperson*
Mercy Law Resource Centre, November 2018



INTRODUCTION

MLRC Managing Solicitor, Rebecca Keatinge

In 2017, Ireland saw yet another increase in individuals and families facing the crisis of homelessness. In August 2017 alone, one hundred and seven families became homeless. By year end, there were 8,587 individuals recorded as homeless. By January 2018, this figure had already risen to 9,807.

The results of the 2016 Census were released in August 2017. The results confirmed that the impact of homelessness is being borne by the youngest and most vulnerable members of our society. Children aged four and youngest were recorded as the largest single age group experiencing homelessness.

The work of Mercy Law Resource Centre (MLRC) intensified in 2017 to meet the increased need. We continued our work with vulnerable individuals and families, providing legal advice and representation to support them in accessing their basic legal entitlements, including most often, access to basic shelter. We supported

organisations and professionals in their own work with homeless individuals, by providing training and legal support. We worked determinedly, engaging with decision makers and protecting our clients' best interests. We secured many positive outcomes throughout the year that had transformative impacts on our clients' lives.

We recognised during the course of the year the need for policy change to ensure vulnerable individuals and families have access to suitable and appropriate emergency homeless accommodation. Our submission on issues in emergency accommodation highlighted critical shortcomings in the existing provision and set out a number of recommendations for legal reform to address existing gaps. We also amplified our call for Constitutional protection of the right to housing, by working in collaboration with other organisations and individuals.

Our work was made possible by the very generous support of our donors. We are deeply grateful to our funders for their support of MLRC's work. We are most grateful for their recognition that our unique services are sorely needed and hugely impactful.

I am most grateful to our Chairperson and Board of Directors of MLRC, whose steadfast commitment, wisdom and empathy grounds and guides the work that we do and provides vital direction and support to the staff of MLRC.

Our volunteer befrienders, our volunteers and our interns add immeasurably to the work of

MLRC and we are very grateful to them for giving their time and knowledge so generously.

The MLRC staff team is the bedrock of the excellent work of the organisation. Each day, the staff bring energy, enthusiasm and expertise to the work and are truly excellent. The work often brings challenges but the staff are truly committed to meeting each individual's needs and approach the work in a most compassionate and generous way. A huge thank you to the team for all their work during the course of the year.

Looking ahead, the need for the services of MLRC cannot be understated. The organisation has a well-established reputation and expertise that brings new demands on the services, demands that we are ready and able to meet. Our policy work continues to influence the wider discussion in relation to housing. In particular, our trilogy of reports on the right to housing provide a comprehensive and authoritative discussion on how such a right could operate in an Irish context.

MLRC will continue to be engaged and vocal in these extraordinary times. We recognise the dignity of each person and see that home is central to every person's dignity and potential. This core principal continues to drive out work in every respect and we look forward to meeting the coming challenges with commitment and compassion.



Rebecca Keatinge, *Managing Solicitor*
Mercy Law Resource Centre, November 2018



ABOUT MERCY LAW RESOURCE CENTRE

Mercy Law Resource Centre (MLRC) was set up in 2009 by the Sisters of Mercy. It is an independent law centre, registered charity and company limited by guarantee. MLRC provides free legal advice and representation for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. It also seeks to advocate change in laws, policies and attitudes which unduly and adversely impact people who are at the margins of our society.

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide free legal advice and representation, in an accessible way, to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in the areas of housing and related social welfare law.

Our clients are people who are homeless, people who are at risk of becoming homeless, local authority tenants and people in receipt of social housing support. In 2017, our clients included an increasing number of vulnerable families and individuals at risk of rough sleeping. They include people who are affected by a range of issues including relationship breakdown, domestic violence, addiction, mental illness, physical disabilities, and discrimination.

MLRC provides five key services:

- 1 Free legal advice clinics
- 2 Legal representation in the areas of housing and social welfare law
- 3 Legal support and training to organisations working in the field of homelessness
- 4 Policy work
- 5 Befriending service



The need for the service

Legal advice and representation in housing and social welfare law are not adequately catered for by either the private sector or the State legal aid system. The legal assistance which is available is frequently limited to advice only and is often fragmented, ignoring the cluster of problems, legal and non-legal, which our client group often experience. Accessing legal help can also be extremely difficult and it is only available in very limited circumstances through the Legal Aid Board.

People who are homeless are on the extreme margins of society and have additional hurdles in accessing legal services, rights and entitlements. They are often in highly urgent, chaotic and distressing situations without the

supports and means, financial and emotional, to access legal help. We aim to try and fill the gap in State legal aid provision and the demand for our service continues to grow as the crisis in homelessness reaches an unforeseen scale.

A unique service

MLRC provides a unique *legal* service. Our service is accessible and, as far as possible, shaped to meet the individual needs of each client. We meet clients at venues which are easily accessible and comfortable, and where possible in their own environment. Our clinics are in hostels for people who are homeless, and in centres linked to organisations working in the field of housing and homelessness.

MLRC'S ETHOS

MLRC's ethos recognises the dignity of each person.

We seek to ensure that all people are treated with respect and compassion and are enabled to achieve their full potential as human beings.

We are committed to the principles of human rights, social justice and equality.

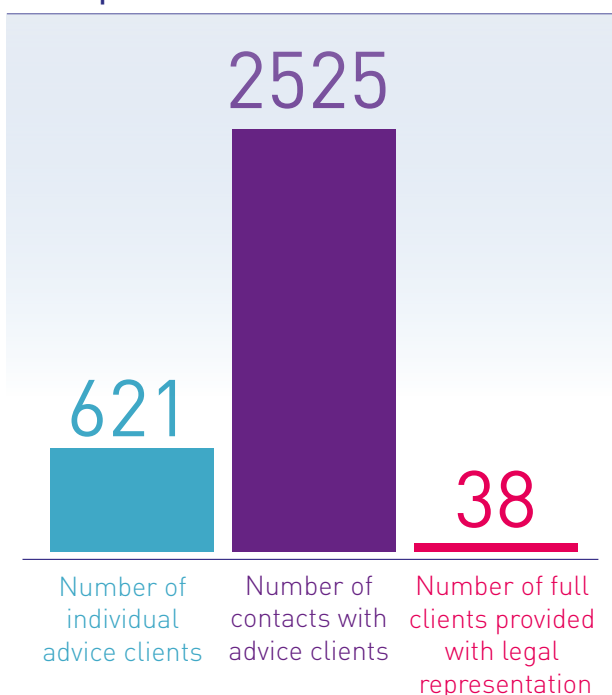




FREE LEGAL ADVICE AND REPRESENTATION

In 2017, MLRC provided 2,525 pieces of free legal advice and/or court or tribunal representation to approximately 621 clients. The advice and representation ensures clients are able to realize their rights and entitlements that they would otherwise have been denied. MLRC provides legal advice and representation in a range of instances, including: legal advice at weekly outreach clinics; legal advice on the telephone and by email to individuals and to organisations working in the housing sector; written legal submissions and oral representations to local authorities and other public bodies; attendance and advice in relation to internal appeals by local authorities and other public bodies; legal representation at the Residential Tenancy Board, the District Court and the Circuit Court; legal representation in the Superior Courts.

GRAPH 1: MLRC Legal advice and representation 2017



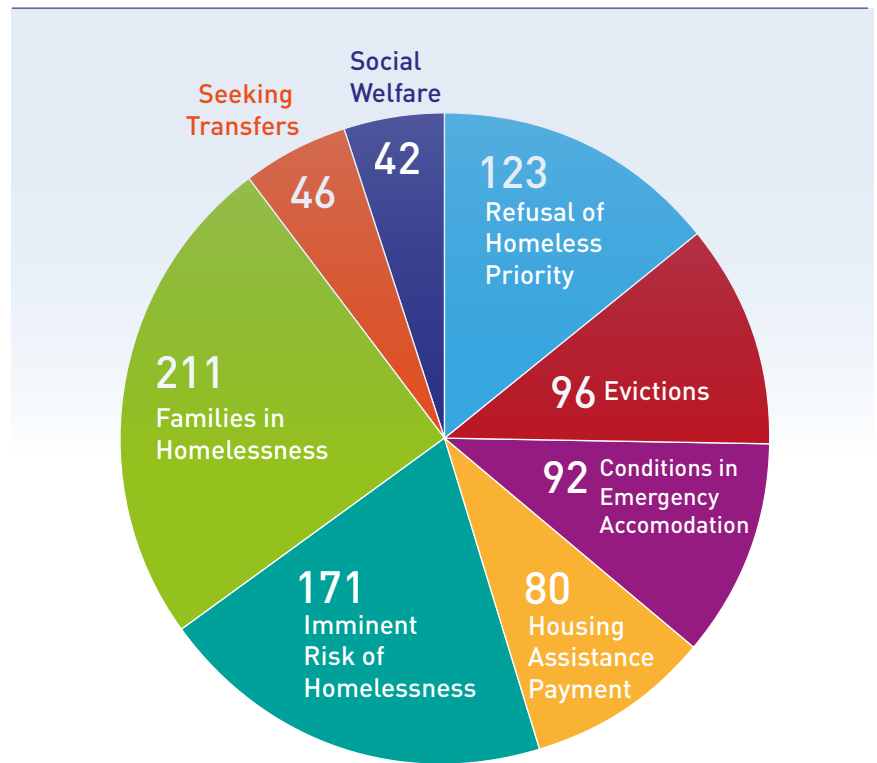
Legal Advice in our Clinics

MLRC holds free legal advice clinics in hostels for people who are homeless and in other centres that are easily accessible for people facing homelessness. Our clinics are staffed by qualified solicitors. The solicitor takes detailed instructions and determines what legal remedies are available and what legal action or advocacy is to be taken. If necessary, a full case file will be opened to legally represent the person in Court, by many of our barristers who kindly support MLRC with pro bono services.

We hold seven free legal advice clinics in Dublin:

- Crosscare, Haven House
- Crosscare, Cathedral Street
- DePaul, Back Lane
- Focus Ireland Coffee Shop
- Dublin Simon, Harcourt Street
- Liberties Citizen's Information Centre, Meath Street
- Saoirse Women's Refuge, Tallaght

GRAPH 2: Types of queries advised on in 2017

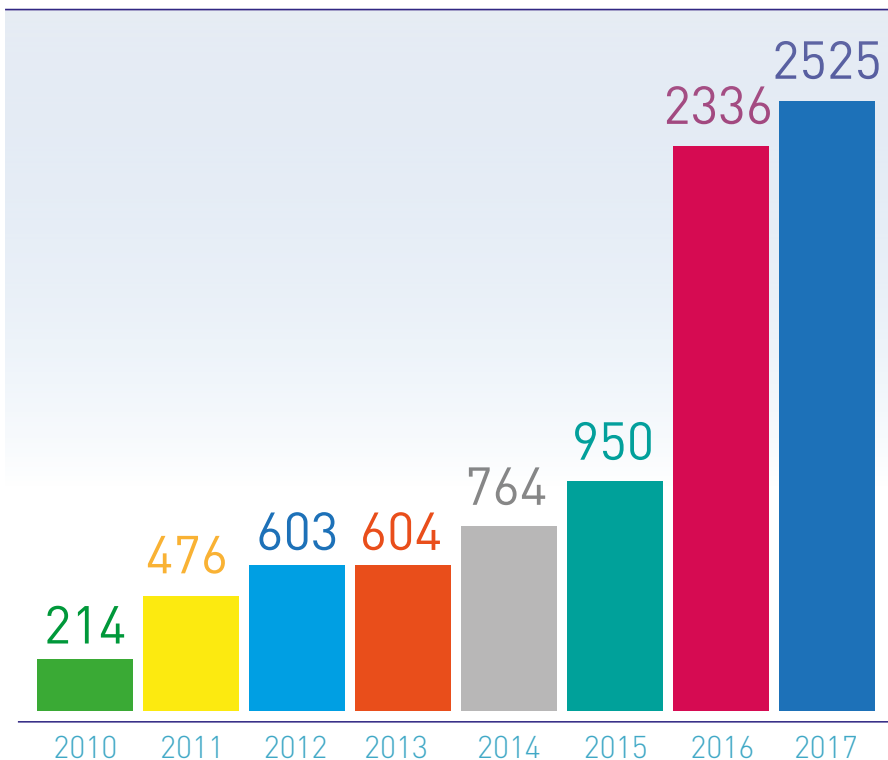


What issues did we assist with at our outreach clinics?

The people we met with at the clinics presented with a diverse range of complex legal issues including:

- Refusal of emergency accommodation by local authorities for families, putting them at risk of rough sleeping.
- Provision by local authorities of unsuitable and inappropriate emergency accommodation for prolonged periods, including to vulnerable individuals and families.
- Refusal of applications to go on the social housing list.
- Evictions from social housing by local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies.
- Evictions from private rented accommodation where the client is particularly vulnerable.
- Refusal by local authorities of succession to tenancy and/or failure to provide reasonable alternative accommodation.
- Deferrals from entry onto housing list due to previous criminal convictions.
- Gravely unsuitable conditions in local authority housing.
- Issues arising in relation to allocation of priority on the housing list.
- Unlawful refusal of social welfare payments by the Department of Social Protection and delays in the appeals process.
- Issues arising in relation to the Housing Assistance Payment and the homeless Housing Assistance Payment.

GRAPH 3: Pieces of legal advice and client contacts, 2010 to 2017



HIGH COURT LITIGATION BROUGHT BY FAMILIES SEEKING TO ACCESS EMERGENCY HOMELESS ACCOMMODATION

We provided legal advice to 621 clients in 2017 and opened 38 files which involved pre litigation letters and the preparation of briefs to our pro bono barristers for their legal opinions and legal representation at the Residential Tenancies Board, the Circuit Court, and the High Court. Nine cases were brought to the High Court on behalf our clients. Of these six cases settled favourably on behalf of our clients. Three cases went to full hearing and written decisions were handed down: each of these cases involved families who had been refused access to emergency homeless accommodation by local authorities and proceedings were issued to challenge the lawfulness of those decisions. The three cases were:

- *Middleton v Carlow County Council* [2017] IEHC 528
- *Tee v Wicklow County Council* [2017] IEHC 623
- *C v Galway County Council* [2017] IEHC 784

Despite their different facts, when considered together the cases display a very clear trend: the courts appear extremely reluctant to interfere or second guess the determinations of Councils in the discharge of their functions relating to social housing and in particular, in the provision or refusal of emergency accommodation to families who present as homeless and are at risk of rough sleeping. These three cases involved the Councils' refusals of emergency accommodation to families. The reluctance of the Court to interfere with the Councils' decisions in these cases is exemplified by the Court's consistent use of the O'Keefe

deferential standard of review and is significant as it has typically been reserved for decisions implicating "areas of special skill and knowledge, such as planning and development." This trend might make successful challenges to exercises of statutory discretion in relation to provision of homeless accommodation considerably more difficult, unless a decision is manifestly unreasonable or taken in bad faith.

A deferential approach was taken in the case of *Middleton v Carlow County Council*, which concerned a challenge to the local authority's determination that the applicant was not homeless under section 2 of the Housing Act 1988. The applicant argued that they met the definition of being "homeless" as provided for in the Act and thus were eligible for emergency accommodation pursuant to section 10 of the same Act. The Respondent in turn argued that the applicants were not homeless as they could reasonably be expected to use alternative accommodation, in this case a family members' home. Expressly citing *Mulhare v Cork County Council*, the Court emphasised the need for deference when reviewing decisions of the local authority. Noting that s.2 and s.10 of the 1988 Act provide the Council with statutory discretion, the Court stated its own role "is limited".

The Court decided that the appropriate standard of review was that set out in *O'Keefe v An Bord Pleanala* [1993] 1 IR39 and is a very deferential standard. Under this standard, decisions of a statutory body will not be quashed unless they are "fundamentally at variance with reason and common sense", "indefensible for being in the teeth of

plain reason” or “flagrantly” disregarded common sense. This standard meant that the Court’s jurisdiction was limited to reviewing “whether there was a rational basis for the decision of the respondent in the context of the provisions of the Act of 1988.” The Court held the Respondent’s determination that the applicant was not homeless and that she could rely on family and friends for accommodation was not fundamentally irrational despite the applicant’s strenuous insistence that she could not do so and was living in a tent.

The Court in *Tee v Wicklow County Council* also applied the deferential *O’Keefe* standard, holding that the discretion of the Council could only be displaced where it was “arbitrary or capricious manner or in a manner that flies in the face of fundamental reason and common sense.” The Court added that in dealing with issues such as the homeless crisis the Council “dedicates particular officers to dealing with this issue on a daily basis who clearly possess significant expertise in this area to which the court should extend considerable deference.” The Court held that the Respondent’s conclusion that the applicants were not homeless because their grandmother has a home in Malaysia was not at “variance with fundamental reason and common sense.” This case has been appealed to the Court of Appeal.

The case of *C v Galway County Council* involved a single mother and her five children, one of whom had special needs and attended a special school where he could access extensive and suitable learning supports. The Council offered the mother emergency accommodation 100 kilometres

away from the special school, making his attendance impossible. The mother refused the emergency accommodation and the Council then withdrew the provision of emergency accommodation to the family. An application was made seeking an order compelling the Council to reinstate the emergency accommodation at a suitable location. The Courts refused the application. The Court stated that it “should be slow to interfere with the decision of expert administrative tribunals”, implying that the Respondent was such a body.

In summary, these cases show a clear gap of legal protection for families with children who are homeless and establish that there is no right to emergency accommodation in Irish law. These cases have fueled our policy work and have resulted in the publication and launch of the ‘Second Right to Housing Report: The Right to Housing in Comparative Perspective’ and the ‘Third Right to Housing Report: Children & Homelessness: A Gap in Legal Protection’. These reports were published in 2018.

CONCLUSION

These cases clearly show the gap of legal protection for families who are homeless as there is no right to emergency accommodation in Irish Law. These cases have fueled our policy work and have resulted in the launch and publication of the ‘Second Right to Housing Report: The Right to Housing in Comparative Perspective’ and the ‘Third Right to Housing Report: Children & Homelessness: A Gap in Legal Protection’ which were published in 2018.

A former client with the Chairperson of the Board of Directors, Sr Helena O'Donoghue



Rebecca Keatinge, acting Managing Solicitor, MLRC and David Joyce, Solicitor, MLRC with Teresa Blake, Senior Counsel at report launch



“ I was put into contact with Mercy Law through the housing network in Carlow. Mercy Law Resource Centre was able to help me know my rights.

I always just took it one day at a time, I trusted the solicitors and kind of just believed that it was going to work out. I'd say things actually worked out because I had the support of Mercy Law and the solicitors.

The help and support I had from the solicitors was a relief at the time, and it was the pressure off, knowing that I had the solicitors there to ring. They were always there if I ever rang. They just went beyond to help.

”

Other Legal Representation and Litigation in 2017

MLRC had an exceptionally busy year in 2017. During the year we saw a very large increase in the number of people contacting MLRC for advice and legal representation. We increasingly were contacted by families who had been refused emergency accommodation or who were being provided with emergency accommodation on a night to night basis. This has been a very worrying trend and one that led to a rise in the number of cases litigated during the year. In 2017, MLRC brought nine cases on behalf of our clients before the High Court of which six cases settled favourably.

As well as bringing litigation on behalf of families refused emergency accommodation, we also worked on the following matters:

Appeals against determinations of the Residential Tenancies Board Tribunal

MLRC acted in two High Court appeals on points of law in relation to two Residential Tenancies Board determinations. These related to tenants of Approved Housing Bodies having their tenancies terminated for no reason under new legislation.

On the 7 April 2016, new legislation brought Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs), often known as voluntary housing associations, under the remit of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 as amended. This change in the law means that:

- Approved Housing Bodies must now register their tenancies with the RTB.
- Approved Housing Bodies now have the same rights and obligations as private landlords, with some exceptions.

- In a tenancy for a private rented dwelling agreed with a landlord, the tenancy starts from the date of occupation. However for Approved Housing Bodies' tenants, the date of occupation from which rights will automatically build up after six months, starts from the commencement of the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2015 which is the 7 April 2016. This negatively affects their security of tenure.

The notice of terminations in these two cases were served on families who had lived in their home for several decades. The basis of our challenge was that termination of long-term voluntary housing tenancy constituted an interference of their right to home and violated their rights under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) (the right to privacy and family life). Both cases settled on favourable terms and our clients were able to remain in their family home.

Cases on inadequate and inappropriate emergency accommodation

MLRC dealt with several cases involving completely inadequate and highly inappropriate emergency accommodation and also cases involving placements of families in unsuitable emergency accommodation for a very long period. MLRC prepared detailed submissions in these cases, and obtained medical reports and other supporting evidence, to argue that families should be moved to more suitable emergency accommodation or to long term stable accommodation. We made representations to the local authority, brought internal complaints and if unresolved then followed up with complaints to the Ombudsman for Children. In some cases pre-litigation correspondence was sent and proceedings were issued.

Examples of these cases include:

- MLRC acted for a Traveller family, with seven children, who were initially refused emergency accommodation by the local authority. After MLRC representations, the family were put on the 'self-accommodation option' of homeless provision. This obliged the family to source their own accommodation, which they were unable to do, principally due to family size and ethnicity. The family spent several nights sleeping in their car and separating the children to be cared for by family members. MLRC made further representations to the local authority insisting that the family be placed in suitable and stable emergency accommodation, but no action was taken by the local authority. MLRC were subsequently granted leave to bring judicial review proceedings in March 2017 in order to challenge the manner in which the emergency accommodation was being provided. The case settled a week before the hearing in June 2017 and the family were given stable emergency accommodation in the form of two bedrooms in a hotel.
- MLRC was granted leave to bring judicial review proceedings to challenge a decision to refuse two Traveller families emergency accommodation in circumstances where they were living in caravans at the side of the road in extremely bad conditions, including no running water. The families had no lawful permission to have the caravans on the land but stated they had no alternative accommodation available to them. This litigation was ultimately withdrawn due to developments in caselaw that weakened their position and put them at risk of a costs award against them. Internal complaints were subsequently sent to the local authorities and if unresolved, complaints may be issued to the Ombudsman for Children.
- MLRC acted for a family with eight children who were facing homelessness: the RTB issued an order to them to vacate their property by March 2017. The Council had refused to give them emergency accommodation. The Council contended that it was helping the family to find private rented accommodation and on that basis was not obliged to provide emergency accommodation. MLRC engaged in extensive correspondence with the Council including pre-litigation correspondence and the Council finally agreed to provide emergency accommodation to the family.
- MLRC acted for a family of four, including a new born baby, who recently had a RAS tenancy terminated and sought to go on the housing list in another Council area but were refused. MLRC advised that the termination notice was invalid and pursued an out of time appeal with the RTB which was successful. MLRC engaged in correspondence with the Council in relation to the social housing application refusal and the issues were resolved through correspondence.

**MLRC IS WITHOUT EXCEPTION
IN AWE OF THE RESILIENCE OF
OUR CLIENTS AND WANT TO
ESPECIALLY THANK THEM FOR
WORKING WITH THE CENTRE.**

Cases on unlawful barriers to accessing the housing list

A recurring theme in the casework of MLRC is barriers to accessing the housing list and through 2017, MLRC assisted many clients overcoming these barriers. Several non Irish national clients presented to our clinics as they had been refused access to the housing list on the basis that they did not fulfill the criteria set out in a policy document, Circular 41/2012, which restricts a non Irish national's access to the housing list.

In one of these cases, our client was an EU citizen and a single mother of two children – one child was in school and the other child was in college. The family had lived in Ireland for many years and the mother was in receipt of One Parent Family social welfare payment. The family were refused access to the housing list as they did not fulfill the criteria set out in Circular 41/2012. We brought litigation to challenge the decision and put it to the Court that the Council had failed to properly apply the eligibility criteria for social housing as set out in the Housing Acts 1966 – 2009 in considering our client's application for social housing support. We further said that the Council unlawfully applied a criterion in respect of our client's application for social housing support. We argued that Circular 41/2012 had no lawful basis within either primary or secondary legislation and was ultra vires the powers of the Council. We sought a declaration that Circular 41/2012 amounts to unlawful law making in breach of Article 15.2.1 of the Constitution. This case finally settled on confidential terms.

Access to an elevated Housing Assistance Payment for separated fathers

MLRC acted for a separated father of four with three or four nights per week overnight access to his children and much engagement in their lives. The client had been refused an elevated Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) rate to allow him access to suitably sized accommodation enabling him to avail of his access. MLRC engaged in extensive correspondence with the Council including pre-litigation correspondence, and after some consideration, the Council agreed to grant the client an elevated HAP rate, therefore resolving the issue. We have several similar cases where counsel has been briefed and pre litigation letters have been issued.

Cases on succession to tenancy

MLRC acted in several succession cases, arguing successfully that occupants or tenants of a Council property enjoy a right to home that is protected by Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and any decision to evict may only be lawful and proportionate if due regard is had to that right and in some circumstances, an offer of alternative accommodation is made.

Conclusion

This is a snapshot of the legal cases that MLRC was involved in, in the course of 2017. We note that the queries MLRC are encountering are becoming increasingly varied and complex. Of grave concern is the number of distressed families presenting homeless with young children who have been refused emergency accommodation and at the other end of the spectrum that we are now meeting families who are two and a half years living in a B&B room. The damage to children is catastrophic and the long term effect on children is internationally evidenced and of grave concern.

Legal Advice to Organisations

In 2017 MLRC advised over 100 organisations and/or their clients, including Crosscare, Liberties CIC, Dublin Simon, Focus Ireland, FLAC, and Merchants Quay Ireland on housing and welfare law. The urgent demand

for our legal services continues to grow and it remains = a great challenge to meet the unmet legal need of people who are homeless or about to be homeless.

LIST OF ORGANISATIONS FOR 2017

Citizens Information Centre's

Clondalkin CIC
 Athlone CIC
 Ballyowen CIC
 Bray CIC
 Buckingham St CIC
 Carlow CIC
 Clondalkin CIC
 Cork CIC
 Crumlin/Dublin 12 CIC
 Donegal CIC
 Dublin City North West CIC
 Dundalk CIC
 Edenderry CIC
 Green Street CIC
 Kildare CIC
 Laois CIC
 Leitrim CIC
 Liberties CIC
 Longford CIC
 Lucan CIC
 Meath CIC
 Navan CIC
 O'Connell Street CIC
 Offaly CIC
 Rathfarnham CIC
 Wexford CIC
 West Cork City CIC
 Wicklow CIC

Organisations

Aoibhneas refuge
 Barnardos
 Bray Travellers Group
 Bray Women's refuge
 Bru Thomas St
 Cairde
 Carlow Housing Network
 Cherry Orchard Adolescent Service
 Cluid Housing
 CLT
 Clondalkin Travellers Support
 Cluid Housing
 Community Law & Mediation
 Crosscare Marlboro St,
 Crosscare Amiens St
 Crosscare Clinic
 Crosscare Key workers
 Cuan Mhuire
 Daisy House
 De Paul Backlane
 De Paul Ballymun
 Department of Children & Youth
 Dublin Bay Housing Network
 Exchange House
 Family Hub Clonliffe
 Focus Ireland Family Homeless Action Team
 Focus Ireland Clinic

Focus Ireland Tallaght
 Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
 Irish Refugee Council
 Laois Travellers Action Group
 Limerick, Travellers Support Group
 Merchants Quay MQI
 Mary Thompson Clinic
 Mecpaths
 Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland
 National Disability Advocacy
 National Drug Treatment Centre
 North Dublin Bay Housing
 Peter McVerry Trust
 Probation Service
 Roma Integration Service
 Rendu Project worker
 Ruhama
 Saoirse Women's Refuge
 Simon Community, Dublin
 Simon Community, Midlands
 Simon Community, Naas
 Sonas Women's Refuge
 Sophia
 Tallaght Travellers Support Group

Teach Mhuire
 Threshold, Dublin
 Threshold, Galway
 Traveller Visibility Group
 Cork
 Tuath
 Tusla
 Tus Nua
 Womens Outreach Centre, Inchicore
 Wexford Action Group
 Wicklow Family Resource Centre
 Womens Aid

Individuals

Addiction services
 TDs and local councillors
 Community Workers
 Chaplain, Dublin
 Institute of Technology
 Medical Social Workers, The Coombe Women and Infants University Hospital
 Medical Social Workers, Mater Hospital
 Medical Social Workers, St. James Hospital
 Medical Social Workers, Rotunda Hospital
 Primary Health Care Workers
 Family Support Workers

An illustration of a balance scale with two pans, one yellow and one orange, set against a green background. The scale is tilted, with the orange pan lower than the yellow one.

LEGAL SUPPORT AND TRAINING TO ORGANISATIONS WORKING IN THE FIELD OF HOUSING

MLRC has established a reputation and expertise in the area of housing and homeless law. MLRC provides legal support and training to organisations and individuals working in the field of housing and homelessness. MLRC offers bespoke training for organisations to ensure the training meets the relevant need. MLRC also holds regular focus groups with organisations that we partner with on outreach clinics, in order to identify current issues on which MLRC can advise and provide support.

What organisations have said about working with MLRC

FOCUS IRELAND

“ It has been a pleasure to work with Mercy Law over the last number of years. Mercy Law have provided invaluable legal support to our clients, and have provided support and training to our staff, both of which are so evidently needed during the current housing crisis as cases become more complex and crisis driven. The team at Mercy Law continue to advocate and pursue cases through the courts when needed to ensure our clients’ rights are being upheld.

Mercy Law have supported the families we work with who need access to emergency accommodation, and without their great work and dedication, many of these families would not have achieved this basic need. We thank you for your great work and wish you the best for the year ahead.

”

Legal training for organisations working in the field of homelessness

It can be very difficult to access clear, comprehensive and accurate information on the law regarding entitlements in relation to homelessness, housing and social welfare. Housing and related social welfare law can be complex.

MLRC provides training in the law for those working in the field of homelessness to support their clients, to help them identify legal issues and when it may be appropriate to refer a person for legal advice. MLRC solicitors deliver the training. The training is designed to be interactive and responsive to the issues seen by the attendees who are asked for anonymous case studies before training. We use a combination of presentation on the law and discussion of case studies so that attendees can enjoy interactive, lively and practical training sessions.

In 2017 MLRC held training workshops on housing and related social welfare law for organisations and those working in the field of homelessness including:

- o Crosscare
- o Office of the Ombudsman for Children
- o Dundalk Citizens Information Centre
- o Offaly Citizens Information Centre
- o Open training for elected representatives and their staff.
- o Training to local authority staff on housing issues relating to non Irish nationals as part of overall training by OSCE, facilitated by Immigrant Council of Ireland.
- o A&L Goodbody Solicitors

“

Trainer is very knowledgeable and open to questions. Good use of case studies

It was excellent, inclusive and interesting - excellent use of materials

It was excellent and very useful

”

“

The training was absolutely excellent and I will use as a key reference point. Thank you

Excellent content

Excellent training for all those working with the general public dealing with housing and homelessness.

Excellent training and facilitator

Extremely useful training, very effective preparation for court appearances

Really enjoyed it, very good facilitator. Very appreciable and non-invasive, made it all the more enjoyable

”





- MLRC also provided open training to over 60 individuals working in the field of homelessness. Individuals from organisations such as Focus Ireland, Irish Refugee Council, Threshold, the Legal Aid Board and Galway Traveller Movement attended our open training sessions which were held in November 2017.

In July 2017, MLRC held a series of six comprehensive training workshops on Social Welfare Law, delivered by Professor Gerry Whyte, Associate Professor, School of Law, Trinity College Dublin. The course provided a detailed, up to date overview of social welfare law and was attended by over 30 individuals. Individuals such as staff from Focus Ireland, Crosscare, solicitors and barristers attended the workshops. MLRC also provided Courtroom Skills training to Sophia Housing staff which was facilitated by Nóra Ní Lionsigh BL. We are extremely grateful to both Gerry and Nora for their kind and generous assistance with these additional trainings.

- **In total in 2017, MLRC trained in excess of 300 individuals working in the area of housing.**



CROSSCARE

Mercy Law Resource Centre's expertise, combined with their focus on working with those most affected by the housing crisis makes them a unique and essential service. Their staff are approachable, knowledgeable and always work with clients in a respectful and sensitive manner, taking up cases where our efforts to advocate have reached a dead end. MLRC is an excellent resource to those who would otherwise struggle to access legal advice or representation. MLRC gives people hope where there was no hope before.





POLICY WORK

The focus of MLRC's policy work in 2017 was informed by the legal issues our client presented to us at our outreach clinics. The Centre recognises that case work goes hand in hand with policy work to achieve practice and policy change that helps those at the margins of society.

Submission on urgent issues arising in emergency accommodation

In June 2017, MLRC sent a submission to the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government that raised very urgent issues relating to the provision of emergency accommodation by local authorities to families and vulnerable people who are homeless. The submission presented a set of recommendations and considerations to improve the provision to these families. The submission coincided with the deadline set by the then Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government by which time homeless families would have been moved out of hotels and B&Bs. The target was not reached and homeless families continue to stay for prolonged periods in unsuitable hotel and B&B accommodation.

The submission highlighted in particular the practice of providing only night to night emergency accommodation to families, and also the very serious shortcomings of the 'self-accommodation option' of homeless provision, such that families are obliged to source their own accommodation. It also noted the absence of any procedure that assesses the needs of families as they present, to ensure they are linked in with appropriate supports going forward. MLRC highlighted that families and vulnerable individuals were being placed in unsuitable hotel and B&B accommodation for very prolonged periods with no upper time limit, causing severe damage to children.



Former MLRC client comments on changes needed in homeless provision

MLRC urged the Minister to consider introducing a legislative amendment that placed a time limit of six weeks on the time homeless families and vulnerable people can be placed in hotel and B&B accommodation. MLRC also called for an examination of the application of Circular 41/2012 that restricts non Irish national applicants' access to the housing list, and in practice, affects their access to suitable homeless accommodation. MLRC recommended training of front-line staff and the issuing of guidance to ensure local authorities conduct assessments of homelessness in a fair and transparent manner.

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Initiative

MLRC is a member of the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Initiative. The ESC Rights Initiative is a network of organisations and individuals with a shared belief that strengthening the protection of ESC rights would play a fundamental role in the creation of a more just, inclusive and socially sustainable society. The aim of the Initiative is to ensure that ESC rights contained in the International Covenant of Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) are made legally enforceable in the Constitution. Through this group, MLRC works to advocate for the right to housing to be provided for under Irish law. MLRC was over the secretariat of the ESC Rights Initiative for the period November 2016 to April 2017 and we were on the organising committee of an event for a conference "Making Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Meaningful" which brought together a range of stakeholders to discuss how enforceable ESC Rights such as housing and health would impact on individuals and groups in Ireland, drawing on experiences from other States where ESC Rights have been given legal protection. This was held in the Mansion House in Dublin on the 29 March 2017. The conference was a very lively and engaged event. The event was in fact oversubscribed. One of the panels focused on the right to housing.

Collaboration on policy-informing and strengthening policy and advocacy



MLRC identifies serious and recurring legal issues to inform our policy work through collaboration with organisations working in the field of homelessness and human rights. MLRC does this through:

MLRC holds regular focus groups and roundtables with organisations working in the field of homelessness such as Focus Ireland, Crosscare and Liberties Citizens Information Centre.

MLRC is an active member of the Right to Housing steering group, which is a collaboration with the Simon Community, Senator Colette Kelleher, and others. We are collaborating on our advocacy in relation to a Constitutional right to housing. On 13 June 2017, MLRC presented at a jointly hosted seminar titled “A Right to Housing”, held at Trinity College Dublin alongside national and international housing and homeless experts, academics, civil society organisations, employers, unions, constitutional and legal experts. The contributors outlined the importance of enshrining a right to housing in the Irish Constitution and consideration was given as to the next steps to achieve this.

MLRC is a member of a housing group, the Housing Advocacy Network, which is a forum to share information and identify and consider policy issues. Other members of the group include Dr Padraic Kenna (NUI Galway), Community Action Network (CAN), Focus Ireland, the Public Interest Law Alliance (PILA), Community Law and Mediation Northside and Limerick, and Ballymun Community Law Centre.

MLRC meets regularly with the housing lawyers of the independent law centres. This informal network discusses case work and policy work to identify current issues and areas of useful policy collaboration.



Ombudsman for children, Dr Niall Muldoon



BEFRIENDING SERVICE

MLRC recognises that the legal system can be bewildering and daunting for many people. Our aim is to provide our clients with a service that is friendly and easy to access. To make this possible we provide a service to befriend clients who particularly need support in order to be able to assert their rights. The role of a Volunteer Befriender is to support and accompany the client by, for example, helping to fill in forms, accompaniment to appointments or court and providing an additional listening ear. Training and ongoing support is provided to all volunteers. MLRC is very grateful for the committed work of our volunteer Befrienders.

Befriender's Stories

"I would consider it a very valuable operation in the line of work that it does. It covers areas that other organisations don't cover, it also brings the personal side to it. Everyone was supportive, anytime I had queries, everyone was very helpful. There were a lot of times to come together. I was invited to meetings. At the very beginning I appreciated the induction course and meeting the other volunteers. I feel and felt very privileged to have been involved. I was working with the same person most of the time and it was good to see something through from the beginning to hopefully a very positive ending. Because the housing situation was so bad, it was very reassuring to see there were people out there and it was possible for [a positive ending]." Adele Lawlor

"It was very positive, and it provided me with a volunteering opportunity. My experience as a befriender was 10/10. I do know that if I came across any problems as a befriender, there would be someone there to help me at the end of the phone." Orla O'Connell



ORGANISATION

MLRC's Offices

Apart from the clinic outreach work, MLRC works primarily from its offices on 25 Cork Street, Dublin 8. These offices are open Monday to Friday from 9.30am to 5.30pm.

Staff

In 2017, MLRC had six staff members: Maeve Regan, Managing Solicitor, Rebecca Keatinge, Solicitor, Sinead Kerin, Solicitor, David Joyce, Locum Solicitor, Danielle Curtis, Administrator and Nuala Monaghan, Legal Secretary.

2017 was a very exciting year as our Managing Solicitor, Maeve Regan went on maternity leave and welcomed baby Conor into the world and Rebecca Keatinge, Solicitor went on maternity leave and welcomed baby Isla. Congratulations from all at MLRC.



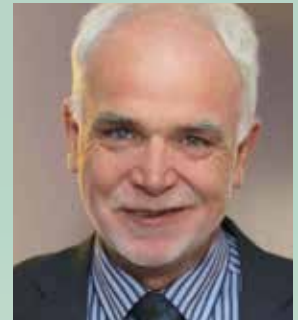
Maeve Regan
Managing Solicitor



Rebecca Keatinge,
Solicitor



Sinead Kerin,
Solicitor



David Joyce,
Locum Solicitor



Danielle Curtis,
Administrator



Nuala Monaghan,
Legal Secretary

New Staff in 2017

In 2017 we were delighted that David Joyce, Locum Solicitor joined the MLRC team.



David Joyce,
Locum Solicitor

David brings with him a wealth of housing law expertise. David previously worked as Legal Policy Officer with the Irish Traveller Movement Law Centre and as a Legal Officer for Threshold. David was called to the Bar in 2005 and practiced as a Barrister for eight years

before converting to the solicitor profession and becoming enrolled as a Solicitor in 2017. Prior to entering the legal profession he worked in community development and advocacy with a number of local and national NGO's. He has served as a member of expert bodies such as the European Roma Rights Centre Budapest, National Consultative Committee on Racism and Inter-culturalism, Bar Council of Ireland, Executive of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties and the National Economic and Social Forum. David is currently a member of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. He is also a Management Board member of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency. David is a great addition to the legal team at MLRC and in 2018 joined the team as a fulltime solicitor, no longer in a locum role.

In 2017, MLRC warmly welcomed Conor Casey to our team as Policy Officer for 2017-2018.

Conor's work with MLRC was facilitated by a Robert L Bernstein International Human Rights



Conor Casey
Policy Officer

Fellowship awarded by the Orville H. Schell Jr. Center at Yale Law School. Conor was an intern for MLRC in the summer of 2015 and we were honoured that Conor chose to return to our Centre to work with us and we are very grateful. Conor is a Ph.D. candidate in Trinity

College Dublin School of Law. Conor graduated from Trinity College, Dublin in 2015 with a first class honours LL.B. degree. During his time in Trinity he was elected a non-foundation scholar. After graduating from Trinity, Conor spent a year working as a legal researcher to a Senior Counsel of the Bar of Ireland. During this time, his work focused on the field of constitutional law, European Union law, international environmental law, refugee and asylum law, and European human rights law. In 2017 Conor graduated with an LL.M degree from Yale Law School, where he was awarded a Walter W. Oberreit Memorial Fund Scholarship. Conor has had work published on constitutional law and theory in the *Irish Jurist*, *Dublin University Law Journal* and *International Journal of Constitutional Law*. His work has been cited by the Irish Supreme Court and Irish Court of Appeal.

Volunteers

Volunteerism is at the heart of the good work that MLRC does. We have a number of administrative, legal and befriending volunteers working with MLRC, who greatly enhance the work of the Centre. We are grateful to Clinical Psychologist, Dr. Paul D'Alton and his team for supporting our work. Without their support our work would not be possible and we are very grateful for their assistance.

Administration

Sr Caitriona O'Hara, Volunteer Administrator and Befriending Service Coordinator

Sr Kathleen Byrne, Volunteer Administrator



Sr Caitriona O'Hara
*Volunteer Administrator
& Befriending Service
Coordinator*

Legal

Geraldine Hynes, Volunteer Solicitor



Geraldine Hynes
Volunteer Solicitor



Interns attending our annual report launch

Internship Programme

MLRC is always delighted to welcome interns to work with us as they bring such vitality and freshness to our work. Their legal research and assistance adds greatly to our capacity to take on cases and to develop our policy work. During the summer of 2017, we warmly welcomed:

- Aoibheann Durkin, LLB, Trinity College Dublin
- Mary Hastings, LLB, Trinity College Dublin
- Danielle Curtis, LLM, University College Dublin
- Kate Weedy, LLM, University College Dublin
- Fionn Ryan, LLB, Trinity College Dublin
- Diarmuid Hickey, LLB, Trinity College Dublin
- Amy Eustace, Law Society Street Law Programme

We are very grateful to all of our interns for their great and practical contribution to MLRC's work.

We are also very grateful to Street Law which is an initiative which places trainee solicitors studying at the Law Society of Ireland in local schools, prisons and community settings to teach about law. Through this initiative we are very grateful for Amy Eustace, a trainee from A&L Goodbody who worked for MLRC for a number of afternoons in January and February, updating and editing our lengthy training manual.

“

I will always be grateful for the time I have spent interning at the Mercy Law Resource Centre. Every Mercy intern will tell you how the staff always made them feel like a valued member of the team and how much they learned from the important and interesting work they were given. I feel particularly lucky because I had the opportunity to complete a second internship a year after my first. Returning to Mercy it felt like no time had passed. The staff were just as warm and welcoming as I remembered.



Mary Hastings

Unfortunately, I soon realised that the realities of the homelessness crisis had gotten worse, not better, since I had left. Clients I had met a year previously were

still struggling to secure suitable accommodation for their needs, despite the best efforts of Mercy. However, although they face heartbreaking cases every day, the Mercy team never fail to act with incredible skill, compassion and good humour. They are truly a pleasure and an inspiration to work with.

Mary Hastings,
Trinity College Dublin.

”

“

Interning at Mercy Law was one of the best experiences throughout my four years of studying law. First and foremost, the group of solicitors and staff were incredibly welcoming. I really felt like part of the team from the moment I came into the office (I really really did)! The staff at Mercy Law were hugely professional and genuinely inspirational in how they were fighting Ireland's homelessness crises. I learned so much more about what it takes to be a lawyer in those short weeks than I had done in the years beforehand.



Fionn Ryan

I didn't know that empathy was so important until I went to the clinics, nor was I aware that confident assertion was equally important until I drafted a letter to the council. Not everything can be

found in a book. I think back on my time at Mercy law often and fondly. I learned a wealth of information and developed invaluable skills in a mere number of weeks, for which I'm so grateful. I've started my masters since the internship and have taken on courses in Juvenile homelessness; all inspired by the staff at Mercy Law and the work they did. I'm really grateful for my time spent on Cork Street, for whatever work I put in, I got back ten times more!

Fionn Ryan, Clinical Legal Education
Student, Trinity College Dublin.

”

Communications

In 2017, MLRC issued four e-zines. MLRC's e-zine gives information to subscribers on MLRC's work and developments relevant to homelessness, housing law and related social welfare law. The website was updated regularly with blogs of relevance to MLRC's work. MLRC maintains an active social media presence on Twitter (@MLRCLaw) and Facebook (Mercy Law Resource Centre).

MLRC is active with these very useful tools in spreading the awareness of MLRC's service and developments in the law that are of interest to those we work with. To subscribe to our quarterly e-zine, please visit www.mercylaw.ie.

In 2017, work commenced on an upgrade to our website. We look forward to going live with our new website in 2018.





GOVERNANCE

Mercy Law Resource Centre CLG is registered as:

- An Independent Law Centre with the Law Society of Ireland.
- A Charity with the Revenue Commissioners (Chy No: 18698) and with the Charities Registration Authority (Charity Registration No: 20072254).
- A Company Limited by Guarantee and not having share capital with the Company.

Registration Office (Co. Reg. No: 471072).

The Centre is governed by a Board of Directors who meets with Managing Solicitor and the Volunteer Administrator every six weeks or so. The Managing Solicitor presents a report to the Board on case work, policy work, compliance matters, employment matters and future development of the Centre. The Administrator presents the accounts and a report on the Befriending Service. The Chair of the Board meets frequently with the Managing Solicitor during the interval between Board meetings.

The Directors of the MLRC Board are:

- Helena O'Donoghue - Chairperson since 2009; Mercy Sister and Director, Sophia Housing; Ceist Ltd; Mater and Campus Hospital Development Limited; NRH Ltd; ECPL Ltd.
- Anne Doyle - Director since 2009; Mercy Sister; Director of St Paul's Child and Family Centre Ltd; Rachamim Company Ltd.
- Niall Farrell - Director since 2011; Managing Partner, Solicitor, PJF Solicitors; Newbridge, Co. Kildare; Director of Sound Legal Productions Ltd; Incorporated Council of Law Reporting for Ireland.
- Jo Kennedy - Director since 2009; Mercy Sister.
- Ciara McGrath - Director since 2009; Project Leader, Crosscare Information and Advocacy Service.
- Deirdre Quigley - Director since 2011; Project Management, Director DQCQ Ltd.



Helena O'Donoghue



Anne Doyle



Niall Farrell



Jo Kennedy



Ciara McGrath



Deirdre Quigley



Patrick Stagg



Liam Twohig



Gerry Whyte



Margaret Roche

- Patrick Stagg - Company Secretary; since 2009; Manager, Bluebell & Dublin 8 Citizens Information Service.
- Liam Twohig - Director since 2011; Chartered Accountant & Business Partner RSM Ireland.
- Gerry Whyte - Director since 2009; Professor, Law School, Trinity College.
- Margaret Roche - Director since 2014; Administrator.

MLRC is registered with the Charities Registration Authority

MLRC is on the “adoption journey” of the Governance Code. This Code is a voluntary code of practice for good governance of community, voluntary and charitable organisations.

Since 2013, MLRC has been signed up to the ICTR’s Guidelines of Principles of Fundraising. MLRC is fully committed to maintaining the standards contained within the Statement of Guiding Principles of Fundraising, to improve fundraising practice, promote high levels of accountability and transparency and to provide clarity and assurances to donors and prospective donors.

FINANCE

Cost of our service

The cost of running MLRC in 2017 amounted to approximately €244,199. MLRC is totally dependent on fundraising and to date has not received any main public grants or State monies. In 2017 we received some €300,237 in grants, donations, court costs and from fundraising. Out of the total of €300,237 received, €168,390 was received by way of donations and €23,000 was secured through successful grant applications.

The value of our service far exceeds the cost as a result of a large number of in kind donations we receive, including:

- Reduced rent and utilities
- Free conference and reception facilities
- Pro bono legal services by barristers
- Pro bono expert reports from doctors/ engineers
- Pro bono auditing and accounting service
- Volunteer befrienders
- Volunteer administrators
- Volunteer part-time solicitor

We estimate the value of these donations to be approximately €150,000 for which we are very grateful.

Our main costs include:

- Office expenses including: telephone, postage, stationery, printing, equipment and maintenance
- Core salaries and employer costs of administration staff and solicitors
- Travel
- Publication and launch of reports
- Promotional material including booklets and leaflets
- Specific project costs of running our outreach legal advice clinics, befriender programme, internship programme and volunteer support, training, casework and policy research.

MLRC continues to work towards becoming self-financing. We aim to do this by developing a training programme, continuing to apply for appropriate grants, and expanding our fundraising programme, including our donor programme and internal fundraising events.



FRIENDS OF MLRC

To support and become a friend of MLRC, there are three ways in which you can do so. Your support would be most gratefully received:

- **Online:** To donate online just click on the “Donate” button on our website at www.mercylaw.ie and enter your details. Donations are made through Pay Pal.
- **Post:** You can post cheques, bank drafts or postal orders, made payable to the “Mercy Law Resource Centre”, to our office at 25 Cork Street, Dublin 8.
- **Bank transfer:** Donations can be made by sending money directly to our bank account by either bank transfer or standing order, please contact MLRC for details.

As a friend of MLRC, you help us to continue our work of helping those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, through free legal advice and representation, policy work, our befriending service, education and training for those working in the field of homelessness. You will receive our quarterly e-zine and annual report and invitations to MLRC events.

For more information on becoming a Friend of MLRC please contact info@mercylaw.ie, or call the MLRC office on 01 4537459, or visit www.mercylaw.ie.

FUNDERS

MLRC would like to say a heartfelt thank you to our funders for their extremely generous support. We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the Sisters of Mercy who support the core costs of our services. We would like to thank the Archdiocese of Dublin, Mason Hayes and Curran, St Stephen’s Green Trust and FLAC/PILA Legal Interest Support Trust Fund, for their very generous support and we are deeply indebted to Sophia Housing for their generous in-kind support.



Archdiocese of Dublin
Ard Deoise Átha Cliath



Comhairle Cathrach
Bhaile Átha Cliath



Energy for
generations

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The value of our service far exceeds the cost because of the very generous in-kind donations we receive. MLRC would like to acknowledge and thank those who provide services to us, and in particular note the very kind support of Sophia Housing, who provide us with free conference, meeting and reception facilities.

Barristers

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the following barristers who provided us with pro bono opinions, drafting, and advocacy:

Aideen Collard BL
Alan DP Brady BL
Andrea Mulligan BL
Aoife Gillespie BL
Colin Smith BL
Columb Fortune BL
Conor Dignam SC
Cormac O'Dúlacháin SC
David Leonard BL
Derek Shortall BL
Eoin Coffey BL
Kevin Baneham BL
Lewis Mooney BL
Michael Kinsley BL
Michael Lynn SC
Nóra Ní Lionsigh BL

Olwyn Bennett BL
Rosario Boyle SC
Rory Kenndy BL
Siobhan Phelan SC
Sunniva McDonagh SC
Teresa Blake SC

Auditor

Natalie Kelly, Anne Brady McQuillans DFK
Luke Gannon, Anne Brady McQuillans DFK

Volunteers:

Volunteer Administrator and Befriending Service Coordinator: Sr Caitriona O'Hara
Volunteer Administrator: Sr Kathleen Byrne
Volunteer Solicitor: Geraldine Hynes
To our many Volunteer Befrienders
Volunteer Interns: Aoibheann Durkin, Mary Hastings, Danielle Curtis, Kate Weedy, Fionn Ryan, Amy Eustace and Diarmuid Hickey
Photographer: Derek Speirs
Annual Report Designer: Gráinne Murray

APPENDIX: FINANCE REPORT UPDATE WITH 2017 FIGURES

MLRC's financial year runs from 1 May to 30 April. The following extracts are from the audited accounts for MLRC's financial year 1 May 2016 to 30 April 2017.

Extracted from Audited Accounts for the
financial year 1 May 2016 to 30 April 2017

| Income and Expenditure Account for the financial year 1 May 2016 to 30 April 2017 | 2017 | 2016 |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Income (Donations) | 300,237 | 264,348 |
| Expenditure (Salaries/admin) | (244,199) | (232,152) |
| Surplus for the year | 56,038 | 32,195 |

The company has no recognised gains or losses other than the results for the year. The results for the year have been calculated on the historical cost basis. The company's income and expenses all relate to continuing operations.

Approved by the Board on 23rd November 2017 and signed on its behalf by



Helena O'Donoghue
Director



Patrick Stagg
Director

| Balance Sheet as at 30 April 2017 | 2017 € | 2016 € |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| Fixed Assets | | |
| Tangible assets | 4,949 | 1,338 |
| Current Assets | | |
| Debtors | 11,026 | 4,373 |
| Cash at bank and in hand | 224,653 | 178,562 |
| Equivalents | 235,679 | 182,935 |
| Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year | (5,318) | (5001) |
| Net Current Assets | 230,361 | 177,934 |
| Total Assets less Current Liabilities | 235,310 | 179,272 |
| Reserves | | |
| Income and expenditure account | 235,310 | 179,272 |

Approved by the Board on 23rd November 2017 and signed on its behalf by

Helena O'Donoghue
Director

Patrick Stagg
Director

HOME SWEET HOME

HOMELESS THEY SAY,
A CLASS OF ITS OWN,
NOT FOR ME
OR SO I WAS SHOWN.

COATS, HATS AND SCARVES
EACH, ONE PAIR OF SHOES,
NO ROOM FOR MORE
TOO MUCH TO MOVE.

THREE BAGS IN ALL,
TWO LARGE, ONE SMALL,
HOLDING INSIDE THEM,
NOT MUCH, BUT FULL.

EACH OF US HAS,
WHAT'S PRECIOUS TO US,
A BOOK, A FILM, A PLASTIC DOG,
IT'S PLACE IN THE BAG, IT'S PLACE
IN OUR HEART.

I BRING A PAD, A PEN TO WRITE,
SHE BRINGS HER MUSIC AND A BLANKET
FOR COMFORT,
HE BRINGS HIS GAMES, HIS LITTLE TOY CARS,
AND FOR US ALL, A CANDLE TO LIGHT.

I BRING MY LOVE, WHEREVER WE GO,
WHERE AND WHEN WE DON'T KNOW,
DEEP IN MY HEART I STAND STRONG,
FOR HOME IS KNOWING WHERE I BELONG.

HOMELESS WE'RE NOT,
THAT I KNOW.
I AM HOME,
OR SO I WAS SHOWN.

*Anonymous
Former client*

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 Mercy Law Resource Centre

 Mercy Law MLRC

