**Press Release**

**Mercy Law Resource Centre launches its 2020 Annual Report at 3pm on November 30th**

Noeline Blackwell, CEO of the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, will launch Mercy Law Resource Centre’s 2020 Annual Report at 3pm on November 30th via zoom.

Aoife Kelly-Desmond, Managing Solicitor at Mercy Law Resource Centre, commented ahead of the launch,

“*2020 was a challenging year for everyone, but it was particularly difficult for people experiencing housing distress.* ***The weight of the pandemic fell heavily on those without the security of a home.***

*As we launch our 2020 Annual Report we reflect on the lived experiences of the clients we supported in 2020. Over the year we provided free legal support to* ***749 individuals and families*** *facing legal barriers to accessing safe, securing housing.*

*While many of the legal issues our clients faced in 2020 were similar to previous years, the pandemic brought new difficulties and concerns.* ***COVID-19 brought the structural vulnerabilities of our social housing and social welfare system into sharp relief.***

*The experiences of our clients in 2020 highlighted how the pandemic impacted those grappling with other challenges alongside homelessness, such as underlying heath issues, mental illness, disability, addiction and domestic abuse. In addition to direct client work, we provided legal support in relation to social housing and related social welfare law to* ***over 50 organisations*** *during 2020. We also provided housing and social welfare law training to* ***66 organisations****.*

*It is well known that Ireland remains in the grip of a housing crisis. Behind the stark statistics of homelessness are individual people and families with their own dreams, fears and hopes. The Government’s Housing for All strategy pledged to eradicate homelessness by 2030 – in our view,* ***recognising the individual humanity of every person grappling with homelessness is crucial*** *if this goal is to be met. The Report aims to highlight some of these lived experiences.*

*MLRC will continue to be an impassioned advocate for our clients and for broader changes to policies and laws, to strive for a fairer future where everyone has a place to call home.”*

**ENDS**

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**Notes to editors**

1. The 2020 Annual Report is attached with this release and will be available here from 3pm on 30 November: [Annual Reports and Audited Accounts - Mercy Law Resource Centre](https://mercylaw.ie/annual-reports-and-accounts/)
2. The launch will be held via Zoom, link here: [Webinar Registration - Zoom](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/3016376762467/WN_Yywft8esRUSSQY3562_mFw) and a recording will be available thereafter on [www.mercylaw.ie](http://www.mercylaw.ie)
3. Mercy Law Resource Centre (MLRC) 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 for change in laws, policies and attitudes which unduly and adversely impact people who are at the margins of our society.  MLRC provides five key services: free legal advice clinics; legal representation in the areas of housing and social welfare law; legal support and training to organisations working in the field of homelessness; policy work; and a befriending service.  For more about our work, see [www.mercylaw.ie](http://www.mercylaw.ie)
4. In 2020, MLRC published a series of ‘Know Your Rights’ guides, available: [Publications - Mercy Law Resource Centre](https://mercylaw.ie/publications/)
5. In 2021, MLRC published a report entitled ‘Minority Groups and Housing Services: Barriers to Access’ with support from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC). It is available [here.](https://mercylaw.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/ML_2020_Minority-Groups-and-Housing-Services_Report_D6.pdf)