



**Mercy Law**  
Resource Centre

# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



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# Chairperson's Welcome



Welcome to the 2020 Annual Report of Mercy Law Resource Centre.

As we are all only too well aware, 2020 brought an enormous shift and change in terms of human life and society. Not in 100 years have we been so confronted and so constricted globally by a tiny microbe – COVID-19. It has severely disrupted world economies, welfare arrangements, social activities, transport, freedoms and above all, health. On the macro scale, over five million people died worldwide within the space of two years which is truly dizzying; on the micro scale that tragedy translated into deeply traumatic and sad impacts for families and individuals as loved ones were taken so quickly and interred with minimal ceremony.

During this cathartic time, many public service processes and procedures slowed up or were closed down. Many critical pathways for those in distress or crisis were unavailable or very hard to access. The urgency of COVID-19 effects absorbed excess staff, deflected many others from regular services, imposed the disturbance of working from home; and many other urgencies got delayed or postponed including the services related to emergency accommodation. In Ireland we saw the figures for homelessness continue to be above 8,000 including many children and young people.

In the midst of this reality, MLRC assisted close to 750 people who, in addition to the stresses of COVID-19 outlined above, were also carrying the burden of homelessness or the risk of becoming homeless. While our referral clinics had to close due to restrictions, our staff continued to work full time, and were accessible to people in difficulty directly and indirectly. Issues such as complexity, fairness, lack of due supports, unlawfulness of some decisions, anti-social behaviour and minority disadvantage, were among the pressures which required legal expertise in order to find solutions. Our service continued to be available and our staff listened with skilled concern to the frequent phrases like... *'I have to beg... I am upset at being unkempt... I am hoping for a place to live... I have a sick child and we are moving all the time'*.

Alongside the service to clients, MLRC continued its policy work, focussing with other agencies on the

collaborative effort to put the 'right to a home' on a legal footing. This is the fundamental platform which would prevent the majority of homelessness incidents. MLRC also raised the issue of hidden official barriers which distressed people face in trying to access suitable accommodation, particularly those from minority groups. Both of these policy efforts made significant progress in the public domain and continue to develop.

In 2020 MLRC saw some internal changes too. We were very sorry to say good bye to Rebecca Keatinge, our very successful and compassionate Managing Solicitor. We express our heartfelt thanks to Rebecca and wish her the best of success and happiness in her new position. We were very fortunate and grateful to Sinead and Paul (our solicitors) and to our resourceful admin staff (Nuala, Shauna and Danielle) who generously carried the responsibilities during the transition time. At this point, in 2021, I am delighted to extend a big welcome to Aoife Kelly-Desmond, our new Managing Solicitor, and I look forward to working with her in the coming years.

My sincere thanks go to all who have continued to support us in many ways during this difficult year. We value immensely those who provided funds and those who gave us generous pro bono services, including barristers, auditors and volunteers. As an independent law centre providing a free service and relying on donations to function, I say 'please stay with us' to all of you on behalf of those who carry the heavy burden of home insecurity in our day.

On behalf of the Board of MLRC I thank our excellent staff for their dedicated work. My appreciation goes to the members of the Board for their generous and expert service to MLRC.

To all who read this Report I hope you will be informed and encouraged by its content.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Helena O'Donoghue". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Helena O'Donoghue RSM  
Chair, Mercy Law Resource Centre.



# Managing Solicitor's Introduction



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

While there was a reduction in the number of people recorded as homeless in 2020, undoubtedly due in part to measures responding to COVID-19, at the end of 2020 the number of people experiencing homelessness remained incredibly high – as of December 2020, this amounted to 8,200 people, including 2,327 children. As I write this in late 2021, the figures remain stubbornly stuck above 8,000. Behind these stark numbers are individual people and families with their own dreams, fears and hopes.

From March 2020 MLRC quickly adapted its service to maintain support for our clients despite the restrictions of COVID-19. MLRC continued to provide expert legal advice and representation to vulnerable individuals and frontline organisations by rapidly pivoting from face-to-face services to telephone and video consultations. Our service proved crucial during this tumultuous time and I am proud of the MLRC team for working hard to ensure that it continued without a gap.

COVID-19 brought the structural vulnerabilities of our social housing and social welfare system into sharp relief. While many of the issues our clients presented with in 2020 were similar to previous years, the pandemic brought new difficulties and concerns. Those with underlying health conditions, victims of domestic abuse, individuals with mental illness and

isolated individuals were most severely impacted by the closure of essential services such as refuges and respite care, and the general fracturing of social supports. MLRC solicitors worked diligently to assert our client's legal rights while being sensitive to their individual needs.

During the course of the year we built on our long-standing call for a right to housing to be recognised in the Constitution by joining with other stakeholders to launch the 'Home for Good' coalition in January 2020. A home is central to the dignity of each and every person. Without a home or a place to lay your head, you cannot meaningfully participate in society. MLRC will continue to advocate for recognition of the right for all in our society to be able to meet this fundamental human need, until the aspiration becomes a reality.

Later in this report you will read about some of the cases we worked on in 2020. You will also hear from some of the clients we helped and their experiences of homelessness during this difficult time. We hope these reflections give a sense of the reality for the people behind the stark homelessness statistics.

MLRC looks forward to continuing our work as an impassioned advocate both for our individual clients and for broader changes to policies and laws, to strive for a fairer future where everyone has a place to call home.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aoife Kelly Desmond". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Aoife Kelly Desmond  
Managing Solicitor, Mercy Law Resource Centre.



# About Mercy Law Resource Centre

Mercy Law Resource Centre (MLRC) is an independent law centre, registered charity and company limited by guarantee. MLRC provides free legal advice and representation to people who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, in the areas of social housing and related social welfare law. MLRC also advocates for changes in laws, policies and attitudes which unduly and adversely impact its client group.

MLRC provides a unique service that is accessible and, as far as possible, shaped to meet the individual needs of each client. Where possible, we meet clients in their own environment. We work with other organisations in the statutory and voluntary sectors to ensure clients have the appropriate supports they need.

## Our Vision

MLRC's vision is of a society where each individual lives in dignity and enjoys equal rights, in particular the right to a home, which is fundamental to each human being. MLRC strives for a society where every individual enjoys equal access to justice and legal recourse in order to vindicate those rights.

## Our 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.

## Our core services

- 1. Free legal advice clinics for people who are homeless or facing homelessness by phone and in centres that are easily accessible to them.**
- 2. Free legal representation**
- 3. Legal support and training for organisations working in the field of homelessness**
- 4. Policy work to advocate changes to the laws, policies and attitudes that are particularly harsh for people facing homelessness and on the margins of our society**
- 5. Befriending service for clients who present with specific vulnerabilities and are in need of support.**







## The Need for Our Service

Every person deserves the dignity of a home. Housing is a fundamental right. Safe, secure housing provides the foundation to our wellbeing as individuals and as a society.

Legal intervention should not be required for people to access safe and secure housing. Unfortunately, this is not the reality for many people facing housing distress, who find themselves unable to assert their rights without recourse to the law. When this happens, free, accessible and compassionate legal advice is utterly essential.

Legal advice and representation for social housing and related social welfare law issues is mostly not available through State-funded legal aid.

The assistance which is available tends to be limited to legal advice only, with no follow up representation. It is often delivered in a rigid manner that is inaccessible to many of our clients. Further, services can be fractured meaning that people seeking assistance need to go to multiple places to get the advice they need. Homelessness is often not an isolated issue and obtaining rounded, person-centred support and advice is essential for those experiencing a serious housing crisis.

MLRC seeks to meet this gap and need through providing a truly accessible and holistic service in this sorely underserved area of legal need.

In an ideal society, no one would need legal advice and representation to access social housing and related supports. However, we have seen demand for our service rise rather than fall as the housing crisis has worsened and become more entrenched. Each day our team works tirelessly to meet the continuing need for our service and deliver real value to our clients.





## How We Provide Our Service

Our core services are delivered by a team of six permanent staff and our dedicated and compassionate volunteers.

Every client presents with their own unique needs and circumstances. We aim to meet the needs of our clients in as accessible a manner as possible, by providing advice at outreach clinics. We meet clients where and how they need us, through on-site clinics, and work directly with other support organisations across Ireland, such as domestic violence refuges, disability support groups, and homeless hostels, to combine our expertise and deliver effective support.

In 2020, COVID-19 threatened this model by forcing our service to operate remotely. However, by rapidly pivoting to phone and video services our offices remained open throughout 2020. Our service continued uninterrupted primarily by phone, supported by email and video calls for client who found those additional outreaches beneficial.

As well as enabling us to continue to service our client base, an unexpected benefit of this change in approach is that it allowed us to expand our geographical reach to new client groups outside our

clinic areas. We hope to maintain this additional reach as we transition back to face-to-face services.

Throughout 2020 we maintained our partnerships with other organisations working on issues related to homelessness. The collaborative way in which all those in the sector came together during COVID-19 to support those in need was uplifting and encouraging.



# Our Impact

The core of MLRC's work is proving free legal advice and representation to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Since we began in 2009 MLRC's network of legal advice clinics and outreach with other organisations that work with homelessness has had a big impact. Our legal casework connects us to the real needs of those experiencing housing distress and informs everything we do, from setting organizational strategy, to the emphasis of our policy and advocacy work, and the focus of our training provision.

## Who we helped in 2020

- We received approximately 2,500 phone calls.
- We undertook over 1,660 pieces of work.
- Free legal advice was provided to 749 individuals and families.
- Advice was given to over 50 different organizations.

Our team worked hard in 2020 to keep our service open in the challenging operational environment. We were proud to continue to provide essential legal advice and representation to those experiencing or at risk of homelessness without interruption.

Since establishment MLRC has been committed to working with and supporting other organisations working with those facing homelessness and 2020 was no different. It was encouraging to see how organisations working in the area of homelessness, and other areas such as domestic violence, addiction recovery, disability and health, banded together to overcome the challenges of 2020 to protect the most vulnerable.

However, there were significant changes to our operations during 2020, in both the nature and number of queries. Overall, we directly advised a lower number of people than in previous years, but the complexity and entrenched nature of many cases increased.



Picture: Phone call trends throughout 2020

The onset of COVID-19 restrictions in late March 2020 saw a sharp decline in contacts to our service. There were a variety of reasons for this.

On the positive side, the introduction of the temporary ban on evictions and the increase in availability of emergency accommodation beds were welcome developments that reduced some immediate need.

On the negative side, the closure of face-to-face services, and cutbacks in other support services that would link clients to MLRC, had an impact. While our phone and emails service continued without interruption, those with limited literacy skills or without IT access may have struggled to access services on a remote basis. Our team worked hard to reach those who needed us and greatly value the support of other organisations working in the area of homelessness to continue to direct clients to our service.





## Legal outreach clinics

Until March 2020, we operated face-to-face clinics at a variety of accessible locations such as:

- Crosscare Advocacy Service
- Liberties Citizen Information Centre
- Exchange House Ireland National Travellers Service
- The Dochas Centre
- Focus Ireland Coffee Shop in collaboration with A&L Goodbody Solicitors.

When COVID-19 restrictions required closure of in-person services, we continued to take referrals from, and provide support to, each of these services on a remote basis. In this way we have continued to meet client needs as far as possible. As we write this in 2021, we are working hard to reopen in-person clinics as soon as possible.

## Focus Ireland and A&L Goodbody Housing Law Clinic

MLRC had an established a legal clinic with Focus Ireland since 2010. In 2018 the clinic was transformed by a new pro-bono partnership with A&L Goodbody. A&L Goodbody solicitors now staff the clinic, with support and training from MLRC. This partnership dramatically increased the capacity of the clinic to take referrals on legal issues facing those experiencing housing distress.

From March 2020, as with all other face-to-face services, the clinic moved to remote operations. Despite the challenges this posed, A&L Goodbody took 65 new referrals through the clinic in 2020. 60 A&L Goodbody staff attended MLRC housing law training in 2020, and overall around 130 A&L Goodbody solicitors, trainees and support staff worked on the clinic in 2020, making a huge positive impact.

*“ Mercy Law Resource Centre provides an invaluable service to those facing the crisis of homelessness. Access to timely and expert legal advice can be a lifeline for many people in this situation. We’re really proud of the impact we’ve had through this partnership. ”*

Eithne Lynch, Pro Bono Associate, A&L Goodbody.



# What Our Clients Say

“ We have hit our six months’ probation time and the relief of being settled is really making this feel like a secure and happy home. To be honest after three years on the non-stop unstable ground, it took a while to feel like the rug wouldn’t be pulled from under our feet but we are more relaxed now.

My partner and I spent three years being hidden homeless before being housed this year. Our situation became increasingly more desperate as time went on. Our lives were a nonstop scramble to find somewhere to stay, a blur of hopping on trains and buses, lugging that heavy suitcase around felt like a physical manifestation of the weights and hurts of being displaced. We were met with a lack of empathy from the housing departments and any attempts to get a place on HAP came back with a resounding no. Kind

hearted homeless agencies all told us as much as they could see how desperate our situation was that there was no help available for hidden homeless and that the system was broken. **One of the grassroots organisations recommended we contact Mercy Law who we had never heard of. It was one of the best things we did. Their compassion, dedication, and tireless efforts to work on our behalf were so touching and a huge relief.**

I fully believe they helped get us noticed by the council, certainly more so than all the many e-mails and phone calls I made on my own. **Mercy Law really listened to us and were instantly proactive and dedicated.** I have since recommended them to others who have had the same positive experience. I would wholeheartedly say to anyone who is looking for a worthy cause to donate to strongly consider Mercy Law who provide their clients with unending support and are committed to helping those who find them in what is the utterly hopeless situation that is being homeless.”

“ I’m a single parent with two kids who had been living in my terminally ill father’s house for the past 6 years. I had been on my local Council list 12 years as my eldest son is 12. My father passed away in May last year.

My local Council took it upon themselves to remove me from the housing list as I had a third share in my father’s home. My sister was buying my father’s house to start her own family but couldn’t do so as long as me and my two kids were living there. It was a horrible time. So much going on and now I had lost hope of ever being housed. I tried to appeal my housing case four times myself but was unsuccessful. I reached out to Mercy Law as I had no funds to fight my case as I was unemployed. **Sinead and her team were amazing from the very start, so polite and reassured me that they would do as much as they could to help me.**

My local Council were not writing back to Sinead so we made a date for the High Court. I signed affidavit forms and then all of a sudden, Sinead rang me with fantastic news that my local Council reopened my case they should have never closed it on my grounds. My father’s will was only in probate so the house was not even in my name nor would the third share stop me from being housed. They had it all wrong. No apology, but at least I was on the list. One year on, I have been housed in a beautiful big three-bedroom house in my area which me and the kids love and thanks to Sinead and all her hard work and emails, without that none of this would be possible. She won my case for me and we didn’t even have to go to court. It was a very hard year last year but this one has been brighter and happier all thanks to Sinead and team. (...)

**I would more than recommend Mercy Law they are amazing.**”





Picture: Thank you cards in the MLRC office

“ Having been released from prison for an economic crime, I found myself homeless. My partner passed away whilst I was in prison, my daughter was 12 years old at this time and was staying with relatives.

My local Council informed me that as I had not been married to my partner that they could not consider my daughter on my housing application, despite providing all paperwork requested including my daughter’s birth cert clearly naming me as her father. I was not aware of Mercy Law until a worker in the homeless services made contact on my behalf. Having submitted a sworn declaration which was prepared by Mercy Law to my local Council my case was reviewed and I was able to access housing supports in the form of HAP. I currently live in a rented property with my daughter.

**Had it not been for the help of Mercy Law, I doubt I could have navigated my way through the local Council process.** Throughout my time in homeless services, I met many people both young and old whose problems seemed to have been made worse from the lack of housing and I believe that

this feeds into the high level of substance abuse evident on the streets of Dublin. Without a safe place to sleep I think a lot of people lose hope and give up.

Despite being reasonably well educated and having attempted to jump over hurdles placed in front of me by my local Council I was unable to access the housing services I needed without the help of Mercy Law, I shudder to think of how it is expected that someone perhaps with less education and other issues is expected to navigate their way through this system. I used to be of the view that the system was broken, however I now believe it is purposefully designed this way with the hope and expectation that failure of applicants will negate my local Council from their obligations.

Many thanks again for all your help.

“ **Mercy Law have helped me where there was no hope or chance for a different outcome,** (...) I will forever be grateful to Mercy Law a brilliant service, with amazing people that do their very best to help others that are in a vulnerable position. ”





# Our Casework in 2020



Picture: MLRC Office bookshelves

Our casework in 2020 saw a combination of entrenched issues that our service has encountered for many years and new challenges from the added weight of the pandemic on the already complex reality of Ireland’s housing crisis.

COVID-19 laid bare the structural fragility of housing provision in Ireland, with stark results for those struggling at the margins of society. Reduced services and social supports directly impacted the most vulnerable to make already difficult circumstances even more challenging.

The stark reality of the isolation of lockdowns combined with reduced capacity in domestic violence refuges and related support services was a notable level of referrals to our service from those experiencing domestic abuse. We encountered women and children being forced into homelessness and rough sleeping at an incredibly vulnerable time.

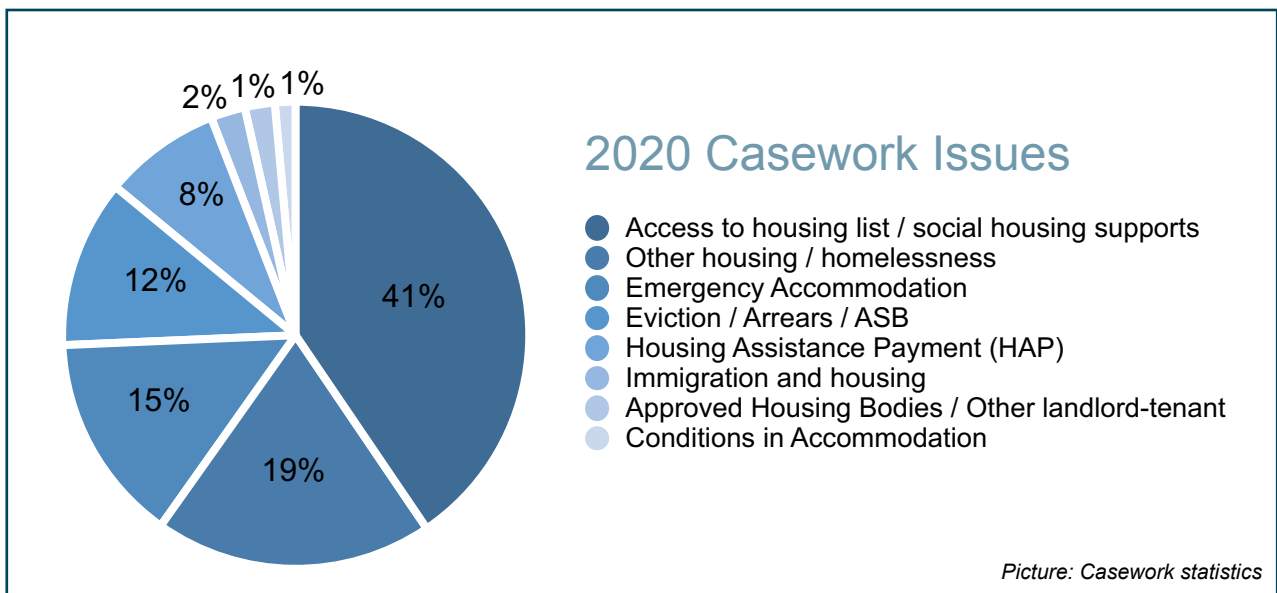
MLRC supported a number of vulnerable families,

some including children with underlying health conditions which put them at particular risk from COVID-19, who were living in overcrowded and highly unsuitable B&B accommodation. We advocated for these families to move into self-contained houses or apartments where they could reduce the risk of contracting COVID-19, provide home schooling to their children during lockdowns, and live in security and dignity.

Lastly, we continued to tackle recurring issues from previous years such as refusals of access to emergency accommodation and unlawful refusals or deferrals from the housing lists.

Some examples of the issues we encountered in 2020 are explored in more detail below. We hope this gives a colour of the nature and impact of our casework.

*“Covid made being homeless immensely worse”*  
2020 MLRC client



Picture: Casework statistics



## Refusal of access to emergency accommodation

Legal issues concerning access to emergency accommodation are a most fundamental aspect of our work. Immediate access to emergency accommodation is essential to avoid those in a housing crisis facing the chronic instability of couch surfing or the risks of rough sleeping.

It is a common phenomenon that State services can be slow to provide emergency accommodation to a person if they are sheltering in place with a friend or relative. This is a particular area of concern, not just because of the infringement on a person's autonomy but also because of the serious risk of forcing a person to remain in a living situation where they are at risk of abuse or harm.

Despite the increased bed allocations in 2020 we continued to receive queries relating to the refusal of emergency accommodation. Many of these refusals affected ethnic minority clients who were forced to sleep rough with their families, including young children. The reasons given for refusal of accommodation often related to a lack of availability of suitable emergency accommodation, both generally and specifically due to COVID-19 reduction in capacity. In other cases, no reasons were given because the local authorities didn't complete the homeless assessment for the client.

*"People who normally would have been happy to help were now reluctant, especially with us moving from different households coupled with us relying on public transport"*

**CASE STUDY:** MLRC assisted a number of EU citizen families from the Roma community who had either recently arrived in Ireland or recently returned with family members. In most cases the clients had come to Ireland to take up an offer of employment. Having quarantined for 14 days in a HSE self-isolation facility, these clients then sought access to emergency accommodation, which requires a homeless assessment to be completed by the local authority before it can be granted. The clients were then either refused emergency accommodation outright or were not given any decision on their homeless assessment despite the urgency of their situation.

*It was unclear what criteria housing authorities were applying in these assessments. MLRC raised concerns with the relevant housing authorities that they may have applied elements of the social housing assessment criteria to the homeless assessment, in spite of these tests being separate and distinct. After strong advocacy on behalf of these clients, they were placed in emergency accommodation, although in many cases this was not until after legal proceedings were threatened.*

*While MLRC welcomed the positive outcomes for these clients, MLRC remains concerned about the lawfulness and transparency of some homeless assessments and notes the particular impacts this may have on minority groups.*

**CASE STUDY:** As with many organisations, the onset of COVID-19 was sadly followed by a raft of referrals concerning domestic abuse. People fleeing domestic abuse, or struggling in the aftermath, need immediate access to safe, secure accommodation. In one egregious case, MLRC issued legal proceedings challenging a local authority's decision to refuse emergency accommodation to a woman and child fleeing serious domestic abuse. Various reasons were given by the local authority for the refusal, including that no accommodation was available or alternatively that the accommodation which was on offer wasn't suitable because of the danger posed by the abuser the family were fleeing from. Refuge accommodation was not available to the family, with the result that they were forced to sleep in their car outside a Garda station until the local authority reversed its decision.





## Unlawful Barriers to Accessing the Housing List – the ‘local connection’

As in previous years, MLRC assisted many clients who were refused access to the housing list on various grounds. One particular issue in 2020 were a number of cases where housing supports were refused due to a lack of connection to the local area. Rigid application of the ‘local connection’ requirement can cause serious hardship for families who have relocated to a new area, those in sporadic or contract employment, and recent arrivals to Ireland.

**CASE STUDY:** *MLRC challenged a refusal of access to the housing list due to no ‘local connection’ on factual and legal grounds, including that the father of the family worked as a contract worker consistently within the functional area of the local authority. We argued that the local authority’s decision amounted to an error of law and fact, and a breach of the family’s right to fair procedures. It was further argued that even if there was no local connection, the local authority could exercise its discretion to conduct a social housing assessment under Article 5(c) of the Social Housing Regulations 2011 given the difficult living conditions of the family, who were in emergency accommodation. Following these representations, the local authority reversed its refusals and the family were deemed eligible for the local authority’s social housing list with their time on the list backdated.*

## Unlawful Barriers to Accessing the Housing List - other residence rights

Access to housing supports may be denied where a person has a right to reside in, or owns, another property. However, we had a number of cases in 2020 where clients were improperly denied housing supports due to a right of ownership or residence that was not in fact suitable, adequate or accessible by them.

**CASE STUDY:** *A client was refused access to housing supports on many occasions on the ground that they previously had a right to reside in a relative’s house, despite that right having been revoked. After the relationship with the relative broke down, our client was forced to move into unsuitable shared private rented accommodation without any housing supports. With our assistance and intervention, the local authority finally accepted our client’s housing application, which provided the ability to secure appropriate accommodation.*

**CASE STUDY:** *We successfully intervened for a client to be reinstated onto the housing list when they had been removed on the basis of a potential future inheritance right. Our client was not expected to receive the inheritance for a number of years and in the meantime their family, including young children, had no suitable alternative accommodation and could not afford to rent privately. Importantly, a grant of probate had yet to issue and therefore their rights under the will had yet to be established. Following robust submissions by MLRC, the local authority reversed its decision and reinstated our client on the housing list. You have heard from this client about her own lived experience in the testimonials section above.*

*“I felt a sadness and loss of autonomy”*



## Refusal of housing supports due to property ownership abroad

MLRC has seen a number of clients who were refused access to housing supports due to ownership of property in another country. While foreign property ownership is a relevant consideration when making an assessment for housing supports, the housing authority must assess each case on its own merits. The housing authority must determine whether the land or property abroad constitutes “alternative reasonable accommodation” within the relevant regulation. In this assessment, the housing authority must assess firstly if sale of the property would be possible, and secondly if the proceeds of sale would enable the applicant to meet their accommodation needs in Ireland.

Even for those who do not own property outside Ireland, rigid applications of these requirements by local authorities can disproportionately impact people from outside Ireland, who may be forced to obtain onerous ‘proof’ that they do not own property in their country of origin.

**CASE STUDY:** *Our client was refused access to housing supports on the grounds that they owned a property in another country. They were well settled in Ireland with their children, having lived and worked here for over fifteen years. They owned an apartment in the EU State in which they were born and a relative in that country had a legal right to reside in the property. We successfully appealed the decision of the local authority arguing that (i) the accommodation abroad was not a reasonable alternative for the family; (ii) the decision interfered with the client’s right to free movement under EU law; and (iii) the local authority had not complied with fair procedures.*

## Unlawful Deferrals or Withdrawals of Allocations

As in previous years, we encountered a number of clients whose housing allocations were deferred or withdrawn on dubious grounds. Housing authorities are entitled to defer an allocation or withdraw an offer of accommodation, under section 14 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1997 (as amended), where a member of the household has engaged in anti-social behaviour or fails to provide information requested by the housing authority.

However, we dealt with a number of cases where this section appeared to have been unlawfully applied to defer or withdraw an offer of housing for reasons such as pending charges on minor offences, or an alleged failure to provide information which was not actually requested by the local authority or not within the applicant’s knowledge.

**CASE STUDY:** *We acted for a client whose housing application was deferred when they reached the top of the housing list and were due to be allocated social housing. The deferral appeared to be based on historic criminal convictions of the client’s partner. The partner was not on the housing application with the client and did not intend to live with the client in the immediate future. MLRC made strong submissions and the local authority ultimately reversed its decision.*

*“I called the housing department weekly but the resounding answer was nothing was happening because of Covid”*



# Legal training for organisations working in the field of homelessness

Social housing and related social welfare law can be complex and nuanced.

Training on the relevant law can ensure legal issues are identified and appropriately referred for legal advice.

For that reason, one of MLRC's strategic objectives is to provide legal support & training to stakeholder organisations and professionals working in the field of homelessness.

This training helps recipients to advocate more effectively, to identify legal issues and to recognise when it may be appropriate to refer a person for legal advice. The training is designed to be interactive and responsive to the issues seen by the attendees.

## 2020 Housing law training

Our first training session was held in-person in January, attended by 7 organisations.

As part of our strategy to develop a national understanding of housing law, in February 2020 our then Managing Solicitor, Rebecca Keatinge, travelled to Donegal to deliver training on housing law to 5 organisations.

We had a number of further in-person training sessions lined up for the year, but with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic these had to be cancelled. In response, we worked to evolve our training to be delivered online via Zoom from summer 2020.

Our first online training was held in June 2020 on the critical topic of COVID-19 emergency legislation. 40 people attended this session and in turn shared it with their colleagues, with the recording sent to 120 others. We held further online training sessions in July, September, October and November, including open online workshops on COVID-19 emergency legislation and tailored training to organisations.

Overall, our 2020 training sessions were attended by 295 interested individuals and representatives from 66 organisations, including the following:

### Attendees:

- A&L Goodbody
- Balbriggan CIS
- Binchy Law Firm
- Birr CIS
- Bulgarian-Irish Centre
- Clare PPN, Ennis
- Clondalkin & Lucan CIS
- Cork City North CIS
- Crosscare
- DePaul
- Dublin 8 & Bluebell CIS
- Dublin City Centre CIS
- North Dublin CIS
- Dublin Simon
- Dublin South CIS
- Dundalk CIS
- Donegal CIS
- Exchange House
- Finglas CIS
- FLAC
- Focus Ireland
- Citizens Information
- HSE Housing Co-ordinators
- HSE Mental Health Social Workers
- Ireland Funds
- Irish Council for Social Housing
- Red Cross
- Hail Housing
- The Housing Agency
- Threshold
- Galway Traveller Movement
- Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
- STEER Housing
- Apex Housing Association
- Donegal Traveller Movement

### Feedback on 2020 Housing Law training:

**"I found the topics very interesting. I had very little knowledge prior to this and I found the session provided an excellent overview of housing law."**

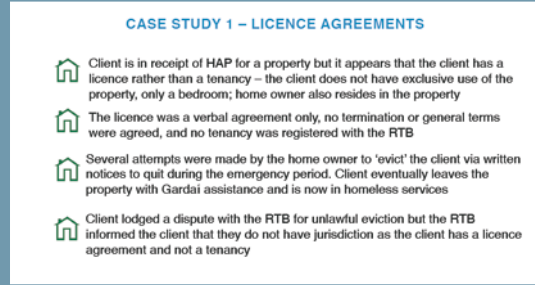
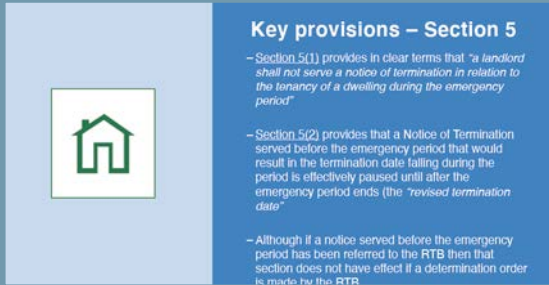
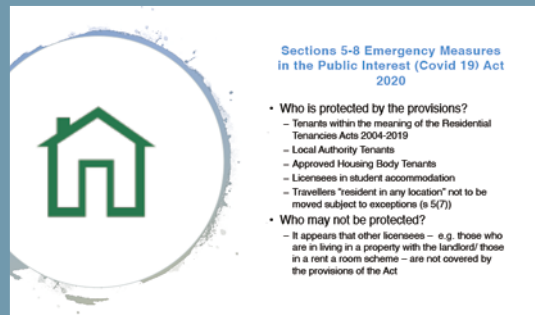
**"Excellent training covering vital information."**

**"Very useful, well presented."**

**"Brilliant session - hugely useful and accessible - thank you! Very interesting to hear re case examples in course of training."**

**"The training was excellent and very informative."**

**"Very well facilitated."**



## Training in Social Welfare law

In July 2020 Professor Gerry Whyte, TCD School of Law and MLRC Board Director gave his first online training on social welfare law. This was followed with 7 further online workshops on social welfare law in September 2021. MLRC are indebted to Professor Whyte for his continuing support.

Topics covered include:

Claims and appeals

Social Insurance

Overpayments

Unemployment and Low Income Workers

Sources of Social Welfare Law

Rates of Welfare

Social Assistance

Family Payments Direct Provision Allowance

Supplementary Welfare Allowance

Illness, Disability & Care

Payments for the Elderly and Survivors

## Attendees:

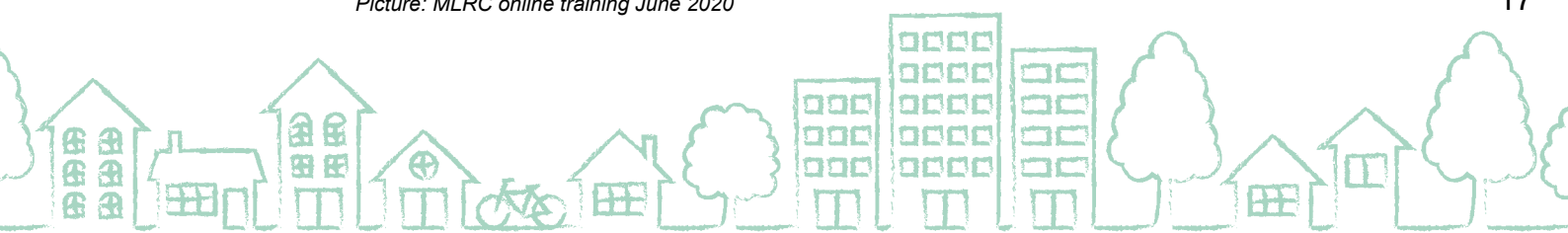
There were 78 attendees for these online workshops, including interested individuals and representatives from the following 18 organisations:

- ✎ Ballyfermot, Clondalkin and Lucan CIS
- ✎ Leitrim CIS
- ✎ Bantry CIS
- ✎ Monaghan CIC
- ✎ Bulgarian-Irish Centre
- ✎ North & East Cork County CIS
- ✎ Cork City North CIS
- ✎ North Connaught & Ulster CIS
- ✎ Crosscare
- ✎ DePaul
- ✎ Donegal CIS
- ✎ NOVAS
- ✎ Dublin South CIS
- ✎ Roma Employment Support, Co Kildare
- ✎ FLAC
- ✎ LEADER Partnership
- ✎ Irish Human Rights & Equality Commission
- ✎ Youghal CIS
- ✎ Kerry | South Munster CIS

## Feedback on 2020 Social Welfare Law training:



Picture: MLRC online training June 2020





# Policy Work



Picture: Attending the ERSI Adequate Housing consultation

MLRC's policy work is always informed by our casework. While the issues faced by our clients are varied and complex, it can all be distilled down to one fundamental need – the need for a safe and secure home. Because of this, for many years MLRC has advocated for a right to housing to be added to the Constitution and in 2020 this formed the core of our policy work. In tandem with this we continued to advocate for general housing law issues impacting our client group, with a focus on families and young people.

## “It’s not good enough in 21st century Ireland”

In January 2020, MLRC joined a number of other stakeholders, such as Focus Ireland, Barnardos, Threshold and the Simon Community, in launching ‘Home for Good’, a broad coalition of organisations and individuals who believe that Constitutional change is an essential underpinning for any successful programme to tackle our housing and homelessness crisis.

Throughout 2020 we met with politicians and other stakeholders to discuss the right to housing. This included meetings with Eoin Ó Broin TD, Richard Boyd Barrett TD, Thomas Gould TD and Cian O’Callaghan TD.

A highlight of MLRC’s work with Home for Good in 2020 was our then Managing Solicitor, Rebecca Keatinge, presenting the coalition’s proposed wording for a constitutional amendment recognising a right to housing to the Joint Oireachtas Housing Committee in November 2020.

Other policy work we undertook in 2020 included participating in a consultation on the development of a measurement framework on adequate housing with the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI).

In May 2020, we wrote to and met with Minister for Housing Darragh O’Brien TD regarding potential legislative changes for children and families. In October, we were delighted to have Minister O’Brien launch our 2019 annual report with a simulating discussion on housing policy.

Closing out the year, in November we made a submission on the statement of strategy of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth regarding key housing law matters.



Picture: Home for Good launch






# Publications - The 'Know Your Rights' series

In 2020 we published four practical 'Know Your Rights' guides on relevant areas of housing law. The topics covered were COVID-19 emergency legislation; Traveller accommodation issues; payment of rent in social housing; and accessing emergency accommodation.

It is critical for people to have accurate and timely information about their legal entitlements, particularly when laws are changing rapidly as was the case during 2020 with COVID-19 emergency legislation.

These publications were aimed at assisting the public to understand and know their rights in these key areas.

 KNOW YOUR RIGHTS – Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (COVID-19) Act 2020

 KNOW YOUR RIGHTS – Social Housing: Paying your rent

 KNOW YOUR RIGHTS – Accessing Homeless Accommodation

 KNOW YOUR RIGHTS – Traveller Accommodation Services During COVID-19



# Our Team

As we look back on 2020, we'd like to pass on our sincere thanks to all MLRC staff, volunteers and interns for their tremendous dedication and hard work throughout a challenging year.

## Our staff



Picture: MLRC Staff in 2020

MLRC legal and admin staff continue to work expeditiously on a remote basis to respond to new and urgent queries. It was wonderful to have a full team catch up at our virtual staff meeting today!

[#housing](#) [#homelessness](#) [#Zoom](#)  
[#remoteworking](#) [#Covid\\_19](#)  
[pic.twitter.com/L312eRjQVU](https://pic.twitter.com/L312eRjQVU)



Picture: MLRC staff getting used to remote working!

## A farewell from Managing Solicitor Rebecca Keatinge

Managing Solicitor Rebecca Keatinge left MLRC at the end of 2020 after over 5 years with MLRC. We were sorry to see her go after her distinguished years of service. Rebecca shared her reflections on her time with MLRC:

"In late 2020, I was sad to say farewell to MLRC after a wonderful five years. MLRC is really unique and special place to work. What stood out for me was the relationships built up with those experiencing or facing homelessness, who were in touch with the service at such a challenging time in their lives. MLRC really puts



Picture: Rebecca Keatinge

into practice its ethos which is to treat everyone with dignity and respect; this ethos is the bedrock of those strong client relationships and responses to support people in need. MLRC staff were consistently kind, empathetic and quick to respond, and for many clients, this was a great antidote to the administrative and legal barriers many of them were experiencing in accessing adequate housing. MLRC continues to be engaged in really important policy work and brings the very valuable lived experience of the many clients to this arena. It also fills a huge gap in access to justice. I am sure the work will continue with great energy and commitment. I wish Aoife and all the team all the very best with the work going forward!"

**Rebecca Keatinge,**  
former Managing Solicitor



## Reflections on a year of remote working

“It was Thursday 12th March when the staff at MLRC were told that the office was to close with immediate effect and that we would be working remotely in the short-term. Even though we all had a sense of the seriousness of events it still came as something of a bolt from the blue.

Once the shock had worn off the transition to remote working was relatively straightforward. Most of the staff already had access to a laptop and these were quickly configured so that we could get access to all the information stored on our officer server. We were also provided with mobile phones. This meant that we could continue to deal with urgent queries as they arose. This was particularly significant at the onset of the pandemic as we worked to ensure that vulnerable clients had access to suitable forms of emergency accommodation.

One of the biggest changes was that our in-person legal clinics had to be suspended. While it has been a blow not to be able to meet clients in person, the telephone triage system worked well throughout the year and all the solicitors have agreed that they did not notice any significant drop-off in the volume of client work, although the profile and nature of client issues did change over the year.

Similarly, I think that the whole office quickly got used to conducting meetings and court appearances through video-conferencing. We have even tried to replicate our Friday coffee and cake mornings over Zoom (with varying degrees of success!).

While it hasn't been without its challenges (between home-schooling, shielding and new babies) MLRC has coped well working remotely but it will be great when we can meet clients in person again and all the staff can gather in the office to share some of Trevor's legendary scones!”

**Paul Dornan,**  
**MLRC solicitor**



*Picture: Paul Dornan working at home*



# Volunteers & Interns

Volunteering is a critical part of the ethos of MLRC's impact and work. We have a number of administrative, legal and befriending volunteers who greatly complement and enhance our work.

Unfortunately, as a result of the pandemic restrictions we had to curtail our volunteer programme from March 2020 as in-person volunteering was no longer possible. We look forward to reuniting with our wider team of volunteers when our offices fully reopen.

We were delighted to restart our internship programme, and some legal volunteering, on a remote basis later in 2020. Overall, we welcomed six interns and work experience participants in 2020, Gemma Harrington, Carmen\*, Larisa\*, Laura Dunne, Chloe Dalton and Gabhan O'Tighearnaigh.

We thank all our interns and volunteers for their dedicated service.

## A reflection from Carmen, Legal Secretarial Intern

"I was undertaking a Legal Secretary Course in Rathmines College of Further Education. My course required me to have at least 2 weeks of work experience in an office. I always wanted to do my work experience with a law firm as that's the path I would like to take. Last year I did my work experience with FLAC but I really wanted to do my work experience with MLRC as they worked with my family before and did a great job and helped us out a lot. I had also heard plenty of great things from my tutor about MLRC. I was lucky enough to get a placement with MLRC and I could not be happier or more grateful for this experience. MLRC deals with homelessness and people at risk of being homeless. They put so much work in every case; it is truly inspiring to see them work.

I started my first day of work experience on the 17th of

February 2020. I was anxious because I did not know what to expect even though I have previously worked in a law firm before; every office is different. When I walked in I was greeted by Nuala the lovely secretary who knows the ins and outs of the office, Danielle who is one of the administrators, Shauna who is in charge of the accounts and payroll. After introducing myself and chatting to everyone for a bit I felt more comfortable and did not feel anxious anymore. After getting settled in and having scones with the team, Nuala showed me how the database works and the filing and administrative systems. Nuala let me know what was going to happen throughout the week and the tasks that were given to me.

On Wednesday MLRC attend an outreach legal clinic at Liberties CIC on Meath Street which I was fortunate enough to attend with Paul, one of the MLRC solicitors. All three clients that were on the triage list came in for their appointments. The whole experience was eye-opening. It was a bit surreal to hear the serious struggles families and individuals have to deal with on a day to day basis. Every appointment had different issues but they were all shocking and heart-breaking. It made me realise that I should be more grateful of all the things in my life and not to take things for granted; it was probably the most humbling experience I took part in.

Later in the placement, I attended the MLRC clinic at Crosscare Advocacy Service. Sinead, one of the practising solicitors at MLRC, looked after me at the clinic and took me to sit in on the sessions.

One of the clients spoke Romanian and the translator was running late so I was able to translate until the translator arrived. I really enjoyed it and I was more than happy to help. After that clinic, I joined Rebecca, MLRC Managing Solicitor at a meeting with MLRC pro bono partners A&L Goodbody Solicitors.

A lot of queries were discussed in relation to some of the policies referring to homelessness or risk of becoming homeless. It was a very interesting experience and I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Overall my experience with MLRC was fantastic and I would like to thank everyone in the MLRC for having me. I am so grateful for all the knowledge I gained thanks to you all at MLRC and your great work."



## A reflection from Gemma, Legal Intern

“My name is Gemma Harrington and I recently finished my MA in Laws from University College Dublin. I held the position of communications and fundraising intern at MLRC from February to May 2020. I was interested in doing this internship because I had heard of MLRC and the amazing legal work they do in the area of homelessness and housing law and I was keen to learn more.

I began my internship on February 23rd after participating in a training day. I was warmly welcomed by the MLRC staff who were very friendly and helpful to me through-out my whole experience. Whenever I needed any assistance or guidance the whole team were ready and willing to help. I had a wide range of tasks and responsibilities. A large part of my work comprised of finding and applying for grants and fundraising opportunities and ensuring that the deadlines for such applications were met.

I was responsible for keeping MLRC social media platforms up to date. A large part of this work was ensuring that we had blogs posted regularly on the MLRC website to provide up to date and regular updates on the work of the organisation. I thoroughly enjoyed this aspect of my duties as I was given the opportunity to post some blogs myself on interesting topics.

The best part about interning with MLRC was learning about the work they do. I had the opportunity to attend one of the legal advice clinics which was an eye-opening experience. Hearing the serious struggles that families and individuals are going through on a daily basis showed me why organisations like MLRC are so important and how crucial the support of MLRC is to their clients. I also had the opportunity to attend MLRC initial befriending session. It was great to learn more about this service that they provide and meet the befrienders and learn about what inspired them to volunteer. Due to COVID-19 I spent a portion of the internship working remotely, however, the MLRC staff were very supportive and kept in touch with me via email and included me in conference calls so that I was kept up to date on what was going on.

Interning at MLRC was a very rewarding and valuable experience. It was so great to get to work in such a positive environment with such a wonderful team. I would like to extend my thanks to whole MLRC team for being so welcoming and for being so helpful throughout the whole experience.”

# Befriending Service

At MLRC, we recognise that navigating a legal process and dealing with housing distress or homelessness can be extremely challenging. As a complement to our legal work, we also offer a befriending service for clients who would benefit from extra support.

Our befriending service matches clients with trained befrienders who can provide them with emotional and practical support as they stand up for their rights. The role may entail assisting a client complete application forms, helping him/her attend appointments, attending court or being a listening ear. Training and ongoing support is provided to all of our befrienders and careful consideration is given to matching so that they both flourish.

COVID-19 restrictions heavily impacted our befriending service in 2020. We are sincerely thankful to all our befrienders and are most grateful for those who were able to continue their valuable work despite the restrictions of this challenging year.

Writing now in 2021, we are working to refresh and reinvigorate our befriending service as society reopens. If you are interested in becoming involved, see [www.mercylaw.ie/what-we-do/befriending/](http://www.mercylaw.ie/what-we-do/befriending/) for more detail.



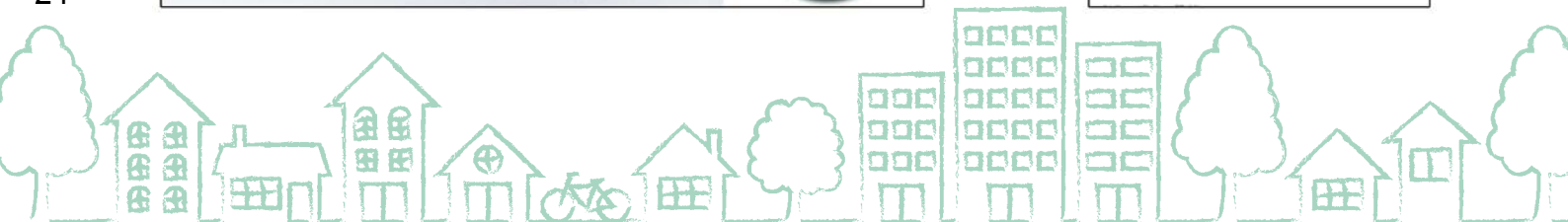
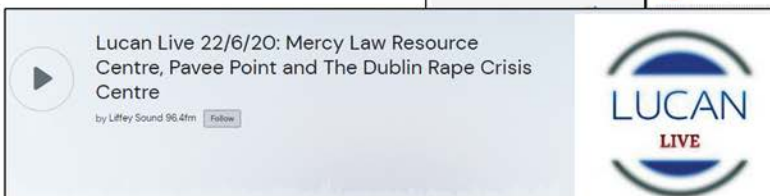


# Communications

In 2020, the scope of MLRC's communications continued to grow and venture into new areas. MLRC was featured in 10 media pieces, including high profile interviews and online we amassed over 294,000 impressions on our Twitter page and 4,800 reached through our Facebook page.

We published three ezines each distributed to nearly 1,000 people. Our key message during this year was how the underlying restriction of housing supply created further health risks during the pandemic and the continued demand for our services as a result of the ongoing housing crisis.

To stay in touch with our latest news and updates, please follow us on our LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter pages along with our website.



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

## Board and sub-committees

MLRC is governed by a voluntary Board of Directors. The Board meets with the Managing Solicitor every six to eight weeks. In 2020 MLRC held 6 Board meetings. The Managing Solicitor presents a detailed report to the Board on all matters concerning governance of the organisation, including finance, compliance, case work, policy work, befriending, employment matters and strategic considerations on the future development of MLRC. The Chairperson of the Board liaises frequently with the Managing Solicitor between Board meetings.

MLRC has two Board sub-committees that sit between Board meetings. The Finance & Risk Committee includes Board members with particular financial and risk management expertise, and the Managing Solicitor and Administrators attend by invitation. In 2020, the Finance & Risk Committee held 7 meetings.

The MLRC Policy Committee includes Board members with particular experience relevant to MLRC's policy work and is attended by the MLRC Managing Solicitor and solicitor team. In 2020, the Policy Committee held 5 meetings.

## Strategic Plan

MLRC's work is governed ultimately by the direction set out in its Strategic Plan 2019-2024. The Strategic Plan was created after extensive consultation with staff, Board and other stakeholders. The Board is regularly appraised of the progress towards achieving the goals as set out in the plan at each meeting and a mid-term review will be conducted to ensure the Strategic Plan remains current in light of developments since it was introduced.



Picture: MLRC Strategic Plan 2019-2024



# Charities Governance Code

The Charities Governance Code is the standard that a community, voluntary or charitable organisation is expected to maintain in order to effectively manage and control its affairs.

Having learned and prepared for the new Governance Code during 2019, MLRC now operates in full compliance with the Governance Code. MLRC is committed to continued development and improvement of all aspects of its governance on an ongoing basis.

MLRC strives to achieve its charitable objectives with integrity and is managed in an effective, efficient, accountable and transparent way.

MLRC is registered with the Charities Regulator and is listed on the Public Register of Charities under 'Mercy Law Resource Centre'.

## Directors

The Directors of the MLRC Board in 2020 were:

- Helena O'Donoghue RSM - Chairperson since 2009
- Anne Doyle RSM - Retired - Director from 2009 to 2020
- Niall Farrell - Director since 2011; Managing Partner, Solicitor, PJF Solicitors

- Ciara McGrath - Director since 2009; Project Leader, Crosscare Information and Advocacy Service
- Deirdre Quigley - Director since 2011; Senior Programme Manager, Central Bank of Ireland
- Patrick Stagg - Company Secretary 2009-2021; Manager, Bluebell and Dublin 8 Citizens Information Service
- Liam Twohig - Director since 2011; Retired Chartered Accountant & Business Partner RSM Ireland
- Gerry Whyte - Director since 2009; Professor, Law School, Trinity College
- Catherine Dooley RSM - Director since 2019
- Eamonn Casey - Director since 2019; Project Officer, Advocacy and Human rights, Misean Cara
- Cara Nagle - Director since 2020; Religious of Christian Education.

On behalf of the MLRC Board of Directors, staff & volunteers, we would like to thank Sr. Anne Doyle for her service on the Board of MLRC. Sr Anne was a Director since MLRC's inception in 2009 and resigned in August 2020 due to other commitments. We thank Sr. Anne for her dedication to MLRC.

In October 2020, MLRC was delighted to welcome Sr. Cara Nagle to the Board of MLRC. We look forward to working with Sr Cara into the future as her experience, compassion and commitment will be of great help in advancing the Centre.



Picture: MLRC virtual Board meeting





# Finance

MLRC's financial year originally ran from 1 May to 30 April. In 2020 MLRC changed its financial year to the calendar year. This annual report incorporates the audited accounts for the following periods:

↳ 1 May 2019 to 30 April 2020

↳ 1 May 2020 to 31 December 2020

MLRC considers stewardship of its resources to be of the utmost importance. As part of our commitment to best practice in financial reporting and accountability, in 2019 MLRC began transitioning to FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" and "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice" (the Charities SORP). The most recent audited accounts are prepared under this standard.

MLRC is committed to the highest standards in fundraising and adheres to the Charities Regulator's Guidelines for Charitable Organisations on Fundraising from the Public. We at all times focus on best fundraising practice, promoting high levels of accountability and transparency, and providing clarity and assurances to donors and prospective donors.

## Cost of Our Service

The cost of running MLRC in 2020 amounted to approximately €272,247. MLRC is completely dependent on fundraising. Except for exceptional COVID-19 funding obtained through the POBAL Stability Fund and the Temporary Wages Subsidy Scheme (TWSS), MLRC does not receive State funding. In 2020 we received €424,096, out of which €157,000 was received by way of donations, €178,202.30 from recovery of legal costs, and €83,000 through successful grants applications.

The remainder of our income comprised income from delivery of training on housing and social welfare law and ad hoc funding.

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

- ↳ Reduced rent and utilities
- ↳ Free conference and reception facilities
- ↳ Pro bono legal services by barristers
- ↳ Pro bono expert reports from doctors/engineers etc.
- ↳ Pro bono auditing and accounting service
- ↳ Volunteers and Interns.

## Our main costs include:

- ↳ Office expenses including: rent, light, heat; telephone/ & broadband; zoom; postage & courier; server & IT services; stationery & office supplies; photocopying & printing; equipment & furniture; cleaning & maintenance
- ↳ Core salaries and employer costs of administration staff and solicitors
- ↳ Project costs, including:
  - ↳ Outreach clinics
  - ↳ Client outlay
  - ↳ Befriender programme
  - ↳ Internships
  - ↳ Volunteer expenses
  - ↳ Training
  - ↳ Casework research
  - ↳ Policy research
  - ↳ Publication and launch of Reports and Information materials
  - ↳ Advertising/explanatory booklets/leaflets
  - ↳ Training materials
  - ↳ Travel.



## Funders

MLRC's funders are a combination of corporate and philanthropic organisations and individuals acting in a private capacity. MLRC would like to thank all our funders for their generous support in 2020.

In particular, we would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the Sisters of Mercy who have substantially supported our service from inception. We are most grateful to our other major donors, the Archdiocese of Dublin, Mason Hayes & Curran, and A&L Goodbody, for their most generous support.

### Our 2020 funders included:

- The Sisters of Mercy
- Archdiocese of Dublin
- Mason Hayes & Curran
- A&L Goodbody
- BAM
- CLT Solidarity Fund
- Community Foundation of Ireland
- Cork Street Fund
- Dublin Bus
- Electric Ireland
- Hilton Fund
- IHREC
- Loreto Foundation Fund
- Pobal Stability Fund
- St Patrick's Cathedral
- The Ireland Funds



Dublin Bus  
Community Spirit  
Initiative





# Finance Report

## Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2020

	1 May to December 2020* €	1 May 2019 to 30 April 2020† €	1 May 2018 to 30 April 2019 €
<b>Fixed Assets</b>			
Intangible assets	1,325	2,611	3,897
Tangible assets	9,236	14,282	17,092
	—————	—————	—————
	10,561	16,893	20,989
<b>Current Assets</b>			
Debtors	13,297	14,462	8,989
Cash at bank and in hand	506,486	328,900	311,996
	—————	—————	—————
	519,783	343,362	320,985
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	- 41097	- 22857	- 4062
<b>Net Current Assets</b>	478,686	320,505	316,923
<b>Total Assets less Current Liabilities</b>	489,247	337,398	337,912
<b>Funds</b>			
Restricted trust funds	54,448	13,543	
General funds (unrestricted)	434,799	323,855	337,912
	—————	—————	—————
<b>Total funds</b>	489,247	337,398	337,912

Signed on the Board's behalf by:  
Helena O'Donoghue  
Director



Patrick Stagg  
Director




† The May 2019-April 2020 financial statements were approved by the Board on 9 December 2019. These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime and in accordance with FRS 102 *"The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland"*, applying Section 1A of that Standard.

\* The May-December 2020 financial statements were approved by the Board on 30 March 2021. These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 2014, FRS 102 *"The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland"* and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their financial statements in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).



# Acknowledgements

The value of our service far exceeds the cost as a result of the large number of in-kind donations and pro bono support that we receive. MLRC would like to acknowledge and thank all those who provide services to us.

## Sophia Housing

We are particularly grateful to Sophia Housing, who support our service in a number of ways, including provision of conference and reception facilities and assisting with office maintenance.

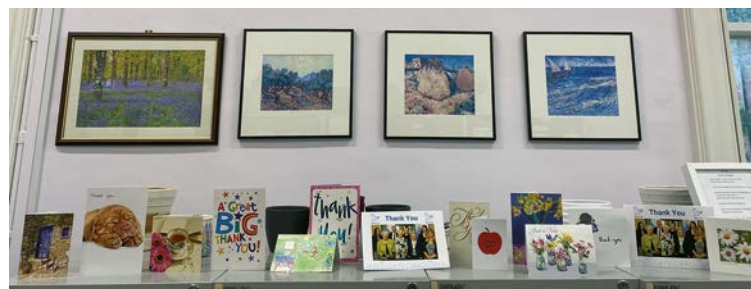
## Barristers

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the following barristers who provided us with pro bono support including opinions, drafting, and advocacy before courts and in tribunals:

🏠 Cormac O'Dúlacháin SC	🏠 Eoin Coffey BL
🏠 Derek Shortall SC	🏠 James Rooney BL
🏠 Michael Collins SC	🏠 Lewis Mooney BL
🏠 Michael Lynn SC	🏠 Marie Flynn BL
🏠 Rosario Boyle SC	🏠 Michael Kinsley BL
🏠 Siobhan Phelan SC	🏠 Nóra Ní Loinsigh BL
🏠 Teresa Blake SC	🏠 Tricia Sheehy-Skeffington BL
🏠 Conor Dignam SC	🏠 Aideen Collard BL
🏠 Alan DP Brady BL	🏠 Neil Maddox BL
🏠 Colin Smith BL	
🏠 David Leonard BL	
🏠 David Fennelly BL	

## Auditor

We are hugely grateful to our auditors Crowleys DFK, in particular to Anne Brady, Natalie Kelly, Lisa Millett, Ciara Long and Nicola Foster for their ongoing support.



## Volunteers

Volunteer Administrators: Sr Caitriona O'Hara & Sr Kathleen Byrne

Volunteer Solicitors: Geraldine Hynes and Aoife Gillespie

Befrienders: Aoife O'Brien, Eve Henry, Gordan Walsh, Hannah Leem, Kristina Jaku

Interns and work experience participants: Carmen\*, Larisa\*, Gemma Harrington, Laura Dunne, Chloe Dalton, Gabhan O'Tighearnaigh

## Others:

- 🏠 John Gaynor & Co Solicitors
- 🏠 Paul D'Alton, clinical psychologist
- 🏠 Monica Hynds, Barnardos
- 🏠 Noel Guiden, Behan and Associates Legal Cost Accountants
- 🏠 Staff of Liberties Citizens Information Centre
- 🏠 Staff of Focus Ireland Coffee Shop
- 🏠 Staff of Crosscare Cathedral Street
- 🏠 Staff of Exchange House Ireland National Traveller Service
- 🏠 Staff of IASIO
- 🏠 Staff of Crosscare Haven House hostel
- 🏠 Staff of Dochas Prison
- 🏠 Pol O'Murchu, Solicitor
- 🏠 The PILA team
- 🏠 Liam Thornton
- 🏠 Annual Report Designer: Peter Rusk





## Mercy Law Resource Centre

Providing free legal advice and representation  
to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

25 Cork Street, Dublin 8, D08 YD91, Ireland

T: 01 453 7459 F: 01 453 7455

Email: [info@mercylaw.ie](mailto:info@mercylaw.ie)

Facebook: [@MercyLawResourceCentre](https://www.facebook.com/MercyLawResourceCentre)

Twitter: [@MLRClaw](https://twitter.com/MLRClaw)

Linkedin: [@mercy-law-resource-centre/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/mercy-law-resource-centre/)

