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Autumn Newsletter!

Welcome to the **MLRC Autumn Newsletter**. Over the summer, we have had many exciting developments - from new team members, updates on our casework, to upcoming training opportunities and the launch of our 2024 Annual Report.

I am delighted to be able to share this autumn update on the recent work of our dedicated team. In this edition, you'll find highlights of key legal developments and emerging trends in our casework, a client case study, details on both our upcoming trainings, and more.

Mercy Law extends our heartfelt thanks to the time, expertise and dedication of our pro bono partners A&L Goodbody LLP, Taylor Wessing LLP, Arthur Cox LLP, Mason Hayes & Curran LLP, and McCanns Fitzgerald LLP, in advancing our mission to protect the rights of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Thank you for your interest in our work. With your support, we continue to use the law to promote and protect human rights.

Sincerely Yours,

Dr Freda Grealy



Our Website



TEAMS UPDATE

We are delighted to welcome Rebecca McKinney, who joined MLRC as Legal Secretary in June. Rebecca holds a first-class honours Master's degree in International Human Rights Law from Queen's University Belfast, and an undergraduate degree in Human Rights from the Irish Centre for Human Rights, University of Galway. She previously worked as a Paralegal with a not-for-profit law organisation in Melbourne. Rebecca has already enhanced the professionalism and efficiency of our core triage process, and we are grateful to have her on the team.

While we are excited to have Rebecca on board, we were also sad to say farewell to Clara Dorman, who joined us at a critical time last year to manage the helpline. With her calm, empathetic approach, she brought reassurance both to the team and to many of our callers. We remain deeply grateful for her contribution - and we miss her greatly! She is pictured below with the team.



Rebecca McKinney

This summer we also welcomed three interns: Adam Balmer, Communications Intern from DCU; Jack Mulhall, Law Intern from Trinity College Dublin; and Jordyn Dart, Law Intern and Criminology and Criminal Justice student from Arizona State University, USA. We are very appreciative of their time, energy, and enthusiasm in supporting our work.

Here they are pictured outside the Dáil Éireann, where they attended a briefing on which MLRC contributed to.



Adam Balmer, Jordyn Dart & Jack Mulhall



Clara Dorman, Kate Heffernan, Isabelle Thorpe, Grace Kirtland, Freda Grealy, & Adam Boyle

CASE STUDIES

Our casework is the heart of Mercy Law's mission. Every day, our solicitors raise awareness of people's rights and help bring about real change in their lives. Below are some recent examples of how our team has supported clients in need.

Refusal of Emergency Accommodation (EA) in Cork:

We acted for a client who was a member of the Travelling Community, who managed to become sober after struggles with alcoholism and homelessness. Access to emergency accommodation was seen as essential to enable continued sobriety and recovery; yet, despite much advocacy from various organisations, he was being unlawfully refused access to emergency accommodation and told to go back to the county from which he was originally from and apply for homeless support there. This denial happened despite the fact that he had been in Cork since 2019, i.e., for six years, and was engaged with a medical team there.

Mercy Law intervened and wrote a letter to the Council, challenging what appeared to be an application by the Council of the County and City Managers Association (CCMA) 2023 'Local Connection Protocol for Homeless Presentations outside county of origin'. We noted that this Protocol does not form part of Irish law, and the CCMA does not have any legal authority to introduce eligibility criteria for homeless supports over and above those in the Housing Act 1988. We noted that there is no provision in the Housing Act 1988 which allows a local authority to exclude a person from emergency accommodation on the basis that they do not have a 'local connection' with a particular authority area.

The Council's Office of Legal Affairs responded to our letter on the same day of receipt, stating that the Council was willing to offer the client a fresh homelessness assessment

that week. The client attended this assessment, accompanied by his support worker from Cork Simon and was then offered an emergency accommodation placement.

Learn more about refusals of EA



ANNUAL REPORT LAUNCH

Our Annual Report captures the full breadth of the work carried out by the Mercy Law team over the past year. We are delighted to announce that our 2024 Annual Report will be launched in **late November at our offices in Cork Street**. If you would like to hear more about our work, we would be very glad to have you there – please email events@mercylaw.ie for an invitation. You can join the team, the Board, donors and friends of Mercy Law in celebrating another year of supporting individuals and families facing homelessness.

As well as showcasing our work, the Annual Report highlights areas of growing concern. In 2024, demand for **MLRC's services rose by 15.5%**, with the team assisting over **885 people and families- a 13% increase on 2023**. Particularly worrying was the continued rise in refusals of emergency accommodation: MLRC supported 178 individuals who were unlawfully refused, representing a 22% increase on the previous year. These figures reflect the persistent and deepening housing and homelessness crisis in Ireland.

The report also highlights key achievements. In 2024, MLRC delivered training on housing law to NGOs and humanitarian organisations, engaged in policy and law reform advocacy in the Oireachtas, hosted panel discussions and roundtables, launched a policy report, and shared our expertise with student societies. Most importantly, through our casework and litigation, we were able to secure meaningful outcomes for people in a housing crisis.

We would also take this opportunity to thank the law firms and partner organisations in the field with whom we collaborate and provide time and expertise when needed: A&L Goodbody LLP, Arthur Cox LLP, Mason Hayes & Curran LLP, McCann FitzGerald LLP, and Taylor Wessing LLP.

We look forward to using this year's launch as an opportunity to share more details about the impact of our work and our shared goals to better assist those in need.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Our training programmes are designed for anyone working in, or interested in, public interest law, housing, social welfare, and homelessness services.

Previous attendees have included barristers and solicitors, Local Authorities, government officials, students, lecturers, NGOs, and humanitarian organisations. Staff from Crosscare, Focus Ireland, Ruhama, IHREC, and the HSE have all benefited from our courses in recent years. Participants also earn 2.5 CPD points and receive a certificate of attendance.

We are delighted to announce two upcoming opportunities this autumn – and there's still time to register!



Fundamental of Housing Training - October

Fundamentals of Housing training is back this October! MLRC solicitor Adam Boyle will deliver this online training on the 14th of October from 10am - 12.30pm.

Date: Monday, 14th October, 10am–12.30pm (online)

Trainer: Adam Boyle, MLRC Solicitor

Fee: €95 per person

Topics include:

Social Welfare Law Training with Gerry Whyte - November

In addition to Fundamentals of Housing, we are also delighted to welcome Professor and social justice barrister Gerry Whyte back to deliver his Social Welfare Law training this November.

Dates: Mondays & Wednesdays, 10am–12.30pm, starting 3rd November (3 weeks)

Trainer: Professor Gerry Whyte, barrister and social justice advocate

Fee: €245 per person

Topics include:

- Sources of social welfare law

- Background legal principles
- Fair procedures
- Access to social housing
- Emergency accommodation
- Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) & Homeless HAP
- Claims and appeals
- Social insurance and assistance
- Rates of payment and supplementary welfare allowance
- Supports for unemployment, illness, caring, family, and older people

Places are limited, so register early by emailing **events@mercylaw.ie**.

Places are in high demand – reserve your spot by contacting **events@mercylaw.ie**.

[Learn more](#)

[Learn more](#)

Training with Noel Neenan from Crosscare

We were so grateful to host Noel Neenan from Crosscare, who delivered a highly insightful and thought-provoking session on Migrant Access to Social Protection and Entitlements in Ireland.

Noel explored how the law operates in practice, the appeals structures available, and the important role of EU law in shaping these protections. His presentation sparked valuable discussion among participants and highlighted the real challenges and opportunities in this area.



We were pleased to bring together colleagues from across the sector, including Community Law Mediation, Ballymun Community Law Centre, and the A&L Goodbody LLP pro-bono team to share perspectives and learning.

A big thank you to Noel, the Crosscare team, and all those who joined us for contributing to such an engaging and collaborative event.



Law & Policy Reform Update

Proposed amendments to the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 and the Housing Act 1988.

MLRC is currently chairing a subgroup of the Irish Homelessness Policy Group (IHPG), a coalition of frontline organisations working on housing and homelessness.

Previously, this subgroup engaged on the Heads of Bill for the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2024, with MLRC and many other organisations making submissions to the

The requirement for households experiencing crisis homelessness to overcome additional administrative barriers, such as proving compliance with the HRC, at the point where they need access to emergency accommodation creates a serious risk of excluding households in crisis, pushing them into hidden homelessness or rough sleeping.

While the potential creation of an appeals system is welcome, MLRC stresses that this must be robust, centralised, and able to review all local authority housing and homelessness decisions, not only HRC assessments.

Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Following Pre-Legislative Scrutiny, the Committee accepted most of the concerns raised by MLRC and partners and published a report reflecting these recommendations, which is available [here](#).

Recent media reports suggest that the Department of Housing plans to amend the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 and the Housing Act 1988, including applying a Habitual Residence Condition ("HRC") to eligibility for both social housing and emergency homeless accommodation. Owing to the nature of the 2024 Heads of Bill, MLRC remains concerned about the compatibility of such proposed measures with EU Free Movement rights.

In addition, MLRC are deeply concerned about the potential for disproportionate interferences with individuals' basic rights should these rules be introduced to the Housing Act 1988 which governs access to homeless supports.

Any amendments to the 1988 or 2009 Acts must be both **lawful and proportionate**.

We await sight of the full proposed changes but remain concerned that they could disproportionately harm vulnerable households, including members of the Traveller community, migrants, and returning Irish emigrants. MLRC will continue to engage with the Department of Housing and the Oireachtas Committee to ensure rights-compliant reforms.

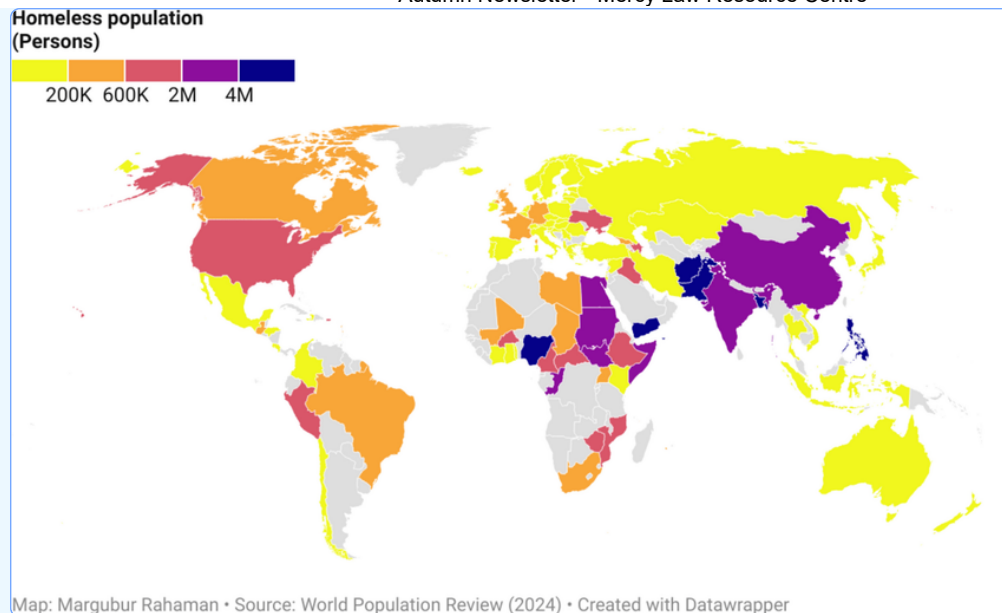
See the full blog post on this issue on our website here:

[Read the Full Blog Post on this Issue here:](#)

Beyond this, MLRC continues to work on various policy and law reform priorities, including on domestic violence and homelessness.

[Learn more about all of our Policy Work](#)

World Homelessness Day - October 10th



This upcoming Friday, 10 October, is **World Homelessness Day**, and we pause to reflect on the devastating rise in homelessness both globally and here in Ireland.

As of **May 2025**, the United Nations reported that **2.8 billion people worldwide** are experiencing homelessness. In Ireland, the crisis continues to deepen: by **June 2025**, there were **10,957 adults and 4,958 children** in homelessness – the latter representing a **23% increase since January 2024**. To put this in perspective, the number of children without a home is now greater than the entire population of many Irish towns.

World Homelessness Day is a stark reminder of the urgency of this issue and of our shared responsibility to act. At MLRC, it reinforces our commitment to those we serve – through our legal casework, policy advocacy, and reform efforts. Our mission remains clear: to stand alongside people and families facing homelessness, ensuring their rights are protected, and working toward a more just and compassionate society.

DONATE TODAY

As a not-for-profit organisation, the execution of our work is dependent on donations and external funding. We are grateful for any and all contributions. We now have a newly updated section of our website where you can donate directly whatever amount you would prefer.

Donate

Donate Online

As a not-for-profit organisation, the execution of our work is dependent on external funding. We are extremely grateful for any and all contributions. You can be assured that your donation will directly support our work of supporting those who are homeless or facing homelessness.

To donate online, you can click on any of the amounts below.



We use Stripe to ensure safe and secure online financial donations.

Donate by Post

You can post cheques, bank drafts or postal orders made payable to "Mercy Law Resource Centre" to our offices at Mercy Law Resource Centre, 25 Cork St, Dublin 8. Please phone us on 01 4537459 and let us know you have made a donation by bank transfer or post as we would like to acknowledge and thank you.

Donate Directly

You can help us by sending money directly to our bank account, please contact us to make the arrangements.

MLRC is a company limited by guarantee (CO. NO. 471072) and has Charitable Status (CHY 18698). Annual Donations of 250 euros (or 21 euros per month) and upwards allow us to benefit from tax relief, which increases the value of the donation hugely!

All financial donation transactions are secured through Stripe.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST AND SUPPORT FOR
OUR WORK! PLEASE SHARE OUR NEWSLETTER WITH
COLLEAGUES.**

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