

CWI ANNUAL REPORT 2020



Thank you to...

- Everyone we interviewed or who participated
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 - Dr James Rees, University Wolverhampton
 - Dr Michael McGinn MU, International advice
 - Dr Dea Hallorah, University College Galway
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 - Kate O'Brien, Printers
 - Aislin Clarke, Proofing
 - Chairs and Respondents, March 19th July 09th

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Community Workers CLG t/a Community Work Ireland

Please note that the timeline for the annual report reflects the current and most up to date work and priorities of the organisation from October 2019 – July 2020.

Chairperson's Note

I am pleased to present to our members the Community Work Ireland Annual Report for the period 2019-2020. Last year the decision was taken to produce an Annual Report that runs from one AGM to the next in order to ensure that the Report reflects the most up to date and current work of the organisation. The CWI AGM 2020 is being held in July as opposed to later in the year as has been the tendency over the past number of years. Therefore, this report covers the period from October 2019 to July 2020.

Throughout this period, we have sought to respond to the challenges of the day, showing flexibility, creativity and above all a spirit of engagement, collective action and collaboration.

Rachel Doyle and Ann Irwin continue to share the position of CWI National Co-ordinator. We acknowledge the ongoing support of the Department of Rural and Community Development and Pobal through the Scheme of Support for National Organisations, which provides core funding for the work of CWI. We also acknowledge and appreciate the contribution of other funders to CWI work.

As you will see detailed in the report, we have worked on a broad range of issues over the past period including: working to highlight and address the growth of right-wing elements in Ireland and their influence on communities where direct provision centres have been proposed; continuing our work on the impact of commissioning and procurement on community work and on the communities most deeply affected by this policy direction and exploring how community work methodologies and approaches can empower and strengthen the collective voices of women experiencing violence and of those with mental health concerns.

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented many challenges for community workers, community work organisations and for Community Work Ireland itself. CWI has responded to these challenges by working to build a collective NGO voice on key issues for marginalised communities and by providing tools to assist in planning to ensure that the rights of marginalised groups are protected during this ongoing crisis.

I would like to thank the CWI staff, Central Group and members for your commitment and dedication and look forward to continuing with our work into the future.

Valerie McFarlane, CWI Chairperson

CWI Central Group 2019/2020

The CWI Central Group is the board of directors of the organisation. Members for 2019/2020 were:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Valerie McFarlane• Anastasia Crickley• Catherine Lane• Niamh Wogan• Obert Makaza• Georgina Lawlor | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Liam Mc Glynn• Ronnie Fay• Seanie Lamb• Siobhan Mc Laughlin• Marie Corcoran Tindall |
|--|---|

Introduction

Established in 1981, Community Work Ireland (CWI) is a national organisation that promotes and supports community work as a means of addressing poverty, social exclusion and inequality, promoting, protecting and advancing human rights and ultimately achieving social change that will contribute to the creation of a just, sustainable and equal society.

Community Work Ireland is a membership organisation. Our membership comprises individuals and organisations involved in community work at local and national level. There are currently approximately over 600 individual and organisational members of CWI.

CWI Values

CWI values reflect the values of community development and it is these that underpin the work of the organisation. Community Work Ireland believes in and is committed to the values outlined below and as set out in the All Ireland Standards for Community Work:

- **Collectivity** – Working in a collective way that emphasises the right of members to collectively influence the work of the organisation. A collective approach requires practitioners to focus on the potential benefits for communities rather than focusing only on benefits to individuals. CWI believes in and is committed to collaboration and partnership approaches to achieving common goals;
- **Community Empowerment** – Community empowerment involves an approach which leads people and communities to be resilient, organised, included and influential;
- **Social Justice and Sustainable Development** – Promoting a just society involves promoting policies and practices that challenge injustice, poverty, inequality, discrimination and social exclusion, and valuing diversity of identities and approaches. Promoting a sustainable society involves promoting environmentally, economically and socially sustainable policies and practices;
- **Human Rights** – In seeking a society where human rights and equality are realised and discrimination is addressed, community development is reinforced by human rights mechanisms and frameworks, processes and standards for the protection and promotion of human rights for all;
- **Equality** – Promoting equality and challenging inequality and oppression
- **Anti-discrimination** – CWI is opposed to discrimination in all its forms and is committed to working to eliminate discrimination;
- **Participation** – Participation is rooted in the self-identification of needs and interests, the formulation of responses by the community or group concerned and is central to their ability to continue to influence outcomes.



CWI continues to be committed to putting these values into practice underpinned as they are by those of professional commitment, integrity, transparency in governance and team approaches to decision-making. The voice of CWI members is central to all CWI work.

CWI Funding and Staffing

The Scheme of Supports to National Organisations (SNNO) continued to provide core funding to CWI supporting the employment of staff and overhead costs.

CWI continues employ two National Co-ordinators who job share and who each work on a part-time basis. Resourcing for CWI remains a key challenge and we are grateful to our members who give of their time to

support the work of the organisation, bringing their experience, knowledge and insights to bear in our work to promote and advance community work as a key methodology and approach to addressing poverty, inequality, oppression and social exclusion and building a society which places human dignity, equality and sustainability at its core.

CWI Strategic Goals

The work of CWI is founded on two overarching goals under which there are five strategic priorities:

Goal 1

Supporting and Promoting Community Work

CWI's goal is the achievement of recognition and validation by all stakeholders of autonomous community work as a value-based professional discipline and is appropriately resourced to achieve its objectives.

- **Strategic Priority 1** To embed community work in the design, development, implementation and monitoring of relevant programmes, policies, structures and practices
- **Strategic Priority 2** To resource community work and CWI members through the collaborative development of information and analysis and representation of core issues on existing, new and emerging structures.
- **Strategic Priority 3** To provide networking and learning opportunities for community workers and other stakeholders

Goal 2

Organisational Sustainability and Development

CWI's goal is a sustainable organisation, recognised, acknowledged and resourced as the national organisation promoting and supporting community work with an active and engaged membership base.

- **Strategic Priority 4** To consolidate and develop the CWI membership
- **Strategic Priority 5** To ensure the sustainability and further development of CWI

Goal 1 Supporting and Promoting Community Work

Strategic Priority 1 To embed community work in the design, development, implementation and monitoring of relevant programmes, policies, structures and practices

Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: A five-year strategy for the community and voluntary sectors 2019 – 2024

As a key area of interest to CWI, we have continued to engage with the Department of Rural and Community Development and with our members to support the implementation of the strategy.

In order to ensure that CWI members and others were aware of the strategy and were given an opportunity to discuss and contribute to the priority areas for CWI to represent, we held a series of workshops around the country, co-hosted by member groups or other stakeholders. Events were held in:

- Tipperary, in association with Knockanrawley Resource Centre,
- Meath, in association with Meath Partnership,
- Longford, in association with Longford Community Resources.
- Carlow, in association with Carlow College, Carlow PPN and Rohingya Action Ireland,
- Dublin, in association with the National Women’s Council of Ireland and the Community Platform
- Dublin – in association with Pavee Point and the National Traveller Partnership
- Kildare Community Network hosted by the Kildare LEADER Partnership



Responses to the strategy were positive overall but it was repeatedly expressed that it is only in the implementation phase that the success or otherwise of the strategy can be measured. We communicated our work in this area and the priorities that were identified by the participants to the Department and made a submission on the 2020 plan for implementation of the strategy highlighting CWI priorities for 2020 with accompanying proposals for action.

The Cross-Sectoral Group (CSG) was reconvened in early 2020, and CWI has retained the two seats it had during the period of development of the strategy. We have continued to advocate for the recognition and resourcing of autonomous community work and to represent the priorities identified by CWI members. We have continued to promote and advocate for a focus on the objectives/actions that reference autonomous community development.

CWI is also a member of the Strategy Training and Education Working Group of the CSG which will undertake a needs analysis of training needs and a scoping exercise of existing training opportunities.

We have held a number of bi-lateral meetings with senior officials from the Department of Rural and Community Development and we will continue to engage at this level.

Framework for a Programme for Government

CWI submitted a list of priorities to the Programme for Government to those negotiating the Programme for Government, to TDs in all parties and Independents. We held discussions with a number of parties, most notably the Green Party, who acknowledged our input into their negotiating positions and consequent inclusion in *Our Shared Future*, the programme for Government.



Strategic Priority 2 To resource community work and CWI members through the collaborative development of information and analysis and representation of core issues on existing, new and emerging structures.

Responding to Protests against Direct Provision and the Rise of the Far Right

Like many, CWI has been deeply concerned at protests against the opening of direct provision centres in a number of areas. We responded in a number of ways, including engaging with local residents that were supportive of asylum seekers in Oughterard and Tullamore and observing the protests held in both towns.

We developed a briefing paper for our members *Welcoming Asylum Seekers to Ireland, a Community Work Response*, following which we held a CWI members' meeting on the issue in November. It was agreed to establish a CWI task group and a follow up meeting was held in December. We held a well-attended joint meeting with the Irish Refugee Council on Covid-19 and Direct Provision. Those present expressed an interest in a follow up meeting and a number of actions have been planned in this regard.

We communicated with DRCD on the role of SICAP and Local Development Companies in welcoming asylum seekers and creating a narrative of welcome and support and subsequently attended a meeting with the Department of Justice and Equality and the Department of Rural and Community Development in the Temple Spa Accommodation Centre in Moate. The meeting focused on the Department's need to find ways to address and avoid major backlashes against direct provision centres. CWI highlighted the need for a strong community development infrastructure if this is to happen. A follow-up meeting was held with the Department of Justice to discuss the Department's handling of the direct provision system during the Covid crisis and in relation to the commitment in the Programme for Government (in the context of the overall commitment to end the system of direct provision) to develop new models of community engagement, to ensure that the establishment of new accommodation is done in an inclusive and welcoming fashion.

We facilitated a workshop on the issue with the staff and board of the National Women's Council of Ireland to support their response.

We continued to link with the Far-Right Observatory (FRO) and liaised with the St. Stephen's Green Trust on behalf of the Observatory to secure a small grant for the FRO to update and continue its mapping activity. We attended a one day workshop organised by UPLIFT on mapping the far right.



Community Work Approaches to Mental Health

Work continued on the issue of mental health and a number of meetings were held with the mental health planning group to plan for and hold a meeting of those interested in community work and transformative approaches to mental health. The meeting was held under the CWI banner, on January 16th in IHREC and attended by 35 people. At the workshop it was decided to establish a new mental health network the first meeting of which was held on held in May.

Transformative Approaches to Mental Health

- Are you interested in community development and radical alternatives as tools for social change and the delivery of emancipatory human rights-based approaches to mental health?
- Are you interested in transformative adult education as tools for healing, inclusion and social change?
- Are you interested in collaborating with others to explore the potential of developing new integrative and empowering approaches to mental health?

If you have answered yes, you are invited to meet up with like-minded people involved in community development, mental health and adult education, to explore a transformative approach to mental health, engage in dialogue and take action together on the (working) shared vision

Working Vision

"A society where people are free from coercion, where mental health and well-being, and the recognition of both distress and madness, are all valued as central to the interests of the communities in which we live, and where healing, empowerment, inclusion, and equality are all celebrated."

When? January 16th 10am - 12:00pm
Where? Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, 16-17 Green St, Rotunda, Dublin D00 R26
RSVP to: info@communityworkireland.ie

Please share this invitation with others who you think would align with our working vision and the values that we share.

Community Work Approaches to Violence against Women

CWI has continued support the initiative that is now known as SISI (Survivors Informing State Institutions). The group comprises NWCI, CWI, Uplift, TVG Cork and Don Hennessy (formerly of the Domestic

Violence Intervention Agency). The work to support SISI has included supporting applications for funding and supporting the group's progress towards becoming a legal entity.

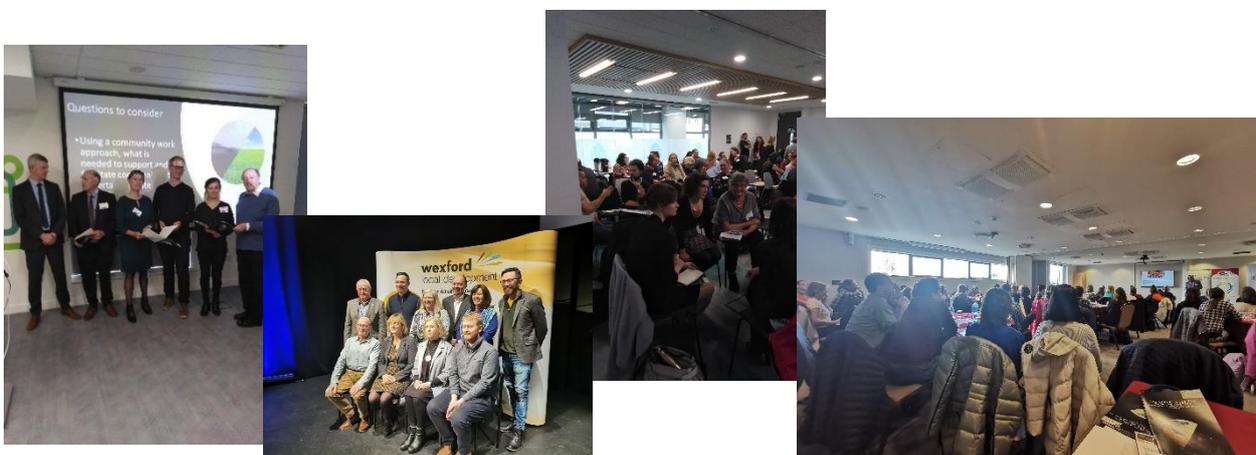
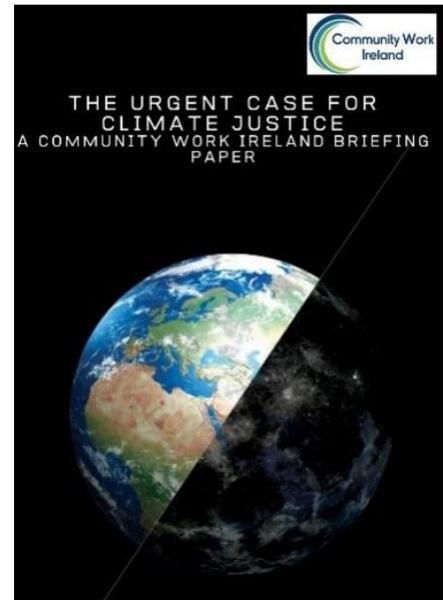
Climate Justice

The very successful CWI seminar on 'Community Work and Human Rights Approaches to Climate Action' was held in October as part of the CWI AGM 2019. Keynote speakers were John Sweeney, Maynooth University, Oisín Coughlan, Friends of the Earth, Niamh Garvey, Trócaire, Sadhbh O'Neill, UCD, Eddie Mitchell, Love Leitrim Anti Fracking Campaign, Paul Geraghty, Department of Rural and Community Development. In advance of the seminar CWI produced the briefing paper *The Urgent Case for Climate Justice Climate Justice*¹.

The new CWI Climate Justice Working Group was officially launched at the event and the Working Group has continued to meet. A set of actions were agreed with the members, including a climate justice seminar in County Galway and a survey to members to explore what actions they are taking in relation to climate justice. The survey was delayed as a result of the COVID-related work but will be circulated in the near future.

CWI held a conference on Climate Justice in Ballinasloe in February, in association with Galway Environmental Network and supported by funding from Galway County Council and Galway Rural Development. The seminar was attended by over 70 community workers and others with an interest in environmental justice. Speakers included Professor John Sweeney, Anastasia Crickley and representatives of the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

We made a contribution to a seminar on climate justice organised by Wexford Local Development Company at the end of January.



¹ Thanks to Jamie Gorman for his work on the Briefing Paper

Strategic Priority 3 To provide networking and learning opportunities for community workers and other stakeholders

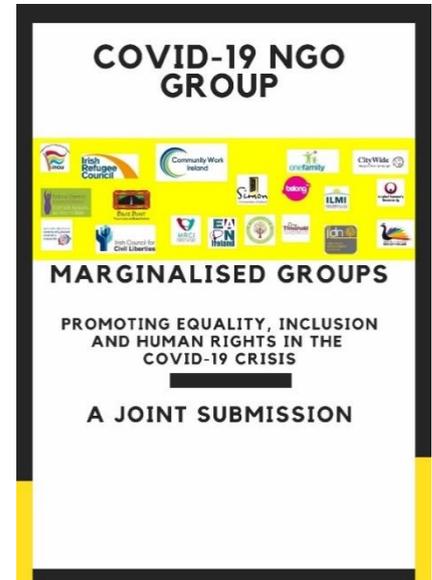
Responses to COVID-19

Like many organisations, CWI has been challenged to provide and support responses to COVID-19. Our work focused on the following:

Covid-19 NGO Group

Early on in the pandemic, CWI established a network of 21² national and local NGOs that worked collaboratively to share experiences, analysis and suggested responses in relation to the crisis and its impact on marginalised communities.

The group met weekly, convened by CWI and produced a joint document outlining cross cutting issues, concerns and a broad set of recommendations to mitigate the potentially significant and dangerous impact of Covid-19 on marginalised groups. The document was disseminated to all politicians, Secretary Generals of key Government departments and the NPHET sub-committee on Vulnerable Groups. We issued a press release highlighting the key issues raised and a letter to Sebastian Barnes Chair of the Fiscal Advisory Council outlining priority concerns and recommendations from the group.



Other joint actions undertaken by the Covid-19 NGO Group included: A Letter to the Taoiseach and the Minister for Foreign Affairs regarding continued support for Overseas Development Aid during the crisis; A Letter to Minister for Employment and Social Protection on retention of school lunches over the summer period (this was been agreed); A Letter to the Taoiseach, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence, the Minister of State for Community Development and Charities and the Irish Ambassador to the UN in relation to supporting and advancing civil society spaces now and post COVID.

The group is continuing to meet and is seen by members as an important and useful space for information sharing and developing collective responses to cross cutting issues. The group is open to any organisation working with disadvantaged communities at local and national levels and working to address the impact of Covid-19 on them.

² Covid-19 NGO Group Members : Belong To, City Wide Drugs Crisis Campaign, Community Work Ireland (Group Convenor), Dublin Inner City Community Co-op, Dublin North North East Recovery College, European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland, Independent Living Movement Ireland, Irish Council for Civil Liberties, Irish Local Development Network, Irish National Organisation for the Unemployed, Irish Refugee Council, Longford Community Resource Ltd., Migrant Rights Centre Ireland, National Collective of Community Based Women's Networks, National Women's Council of Ireland, National Youth Council of Ireland, One family, Pavee Point, Simon Communities, Threshold, West Clare Family Resource Centre. (Pobal attends the meetings for information purposes).

Marginalised Groups: Planning for Resilience

We produced and disseminated a template for planning for marginalised groups. The planning template This planning framework, is designed to assist community development organisations, state agencies, local development organisations, voluntary groups and Local Authority Community Response Forums in planning to protect the health and wellbeing and ensure the resilience of those who experience the highest degree of socio-economic marginalization and social exclusion during the Covid-19 pandemic.



COVID-19 Information Briefs

We produced and disseminated 10 specific Covid-19 information briefs for members containing information from Govt Departments, the HSE and NGOs.

COVID-19 Challenges and Community Work Responses

The CWI Policy and Practice Working Group met in April and there was an interesting discussion and broad agreement for the plan to explore community work in the new normal. Follow-up work to develop this was subsequently carried out. Based on a survey to CWI members and others, CWI produced the report, [Collective Action in an Era of Social Distancing: Community Responses to COVID-19](#) highlighting some of the responses to COVID-19 at local and national level.



COLLECTIVE ACTION IN AN ERA OF SOCIAL DISTANCING: COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO COVID-19

CWI also held a well-attended and interesting Roundtable on Community Work in the new reality. Discussion focused on the issues, concerns and opportunities for community work now, and practices and structures that needs to be maintained locally and nationally and changes that are needed.

International Work and Collaboration

During the past year CWI maintained and strengthened our international collaboration and exchange, over the past few months through the use of Zoom which facilitated previously challenging global connections.



We continued as Country Correspondent for the International Association for Community Development (IACD). Anastasia Crickley CWI is European Director, chair of IACD's International Relations Committee and co-led the organisation and facilitation of a recent well attended exchange between practitioners from Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England. Following on the 2018 Ireland World Conference on Community Development, CWI contributed to the organisation of, participated in and contributed to the Dundee WCDC in 2019 and to planning for the Nairobi 2020 WCDC now postponed until 2021.

CWI also led and coordinated recent COVID NGO Group initiatives - a letter in solidarity with communities in the global south and seeking reinforced Irishaid COVID support for them, and a letter requesting the state to reinforce the support for civil society expressed in the UN Human Rights Council resolution co-sponsored by Ireland and reflect it in support of civil society in Ireland.

All Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work Education and Training

CWI continues to act as convenor the All Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work Education and Training and developed and submitted a detailed workplan to accompany the proposal for support to resource the work of AIEB to the Department of Rural and Community Development.

A meeting of the Educators Forum was held on 17th June bringing together over 20 community work educators North and South to share discuss and address the many challenges for teaching in the current context. All shared a concern to promote the profession of community work recognising it's necessity now

more than ever. There was particular concern about fieldwork placements in the new academic year - an essential aspect of community work education and professional 3rd level endorsement and qualification.

Joint Webinar on Community Participation and Engagement

CWI co-hosted a webinar with UPLIFT on the theme of *Community Participation and Engagement*, attended by over 60 practitioners which sought to share online tools and resources for community group training, facilitation and working together as people work from home.

Uplift Think In

We made a presentation to an UPLIFT Think/In on the theme *Are we losing the space for advocacy and participation?*

TASC

CWI participated in the TASC Roundtable in June: Marginalised Communities in Ireland post-COVID-19.

Goal 2 Organisational Sustainability and Development

Strategic Priority 4 To consolidate and develop the CWI membership

Membership

Following a review of the membership database in accordance with GDPR requirements, CWI membership initially decreased but since, membership continues to grow steadily and there are currently 608 members from all around the country. The membership fee continues to be waived as proposed by the Central Group and ratified at the last AGM.

Communication

Communication remains a key strategy to engage members and keep them up to date with policy and other developments. Since October 2019, CWI sent 33 newsletters or updates to members, including the COVID-19 specific updates.

Strategic Priority 5 To ensure the sustainability and further development of CWI

Accounts

Accounts are maintained to the highest standard and the annual accounts for 2019 were submitted to the CRO and to the Charities Regulator. CWI accountants, CANDOR, were reappointed as CWI auditors following their approval at the AGM in 2019.

Throughout the year accounts were presented and approved at each Central Group meeting.

Governance

Returns to the Lobbying Regulator and the Charities Regulator were submitted as required throughout the past year. We have been working to implement the Charities Regulator Governance Code and update policies where relevant.

CWI Central Group Planning

The CWI Central Group have held seven meetings since October 2019, including a Reflection and Planning Day on 24th February. We conducted a survey of members on their priorities to feed into the discussions to discuss core priorities and a process for developing a new strategic plan. The COVID crisis placed new and unexpected demands on CWI which had to be responded to while continuing with existing work and commitments.



Pending Funding applications

We were shortlisted for the application made to the Social Innovation Fund for resources to support capacity building for community workers to support community work practice in the new COVID-reality.

We applied to IHREC for funding to develop training, tools and resources in relation to community work and human rights – focusing on community workers supporting Rights Holders using existing legislation, including the Public Sector Duty.

We await confirmation of decisions on both of the above.

Notes



CWI work is supported by the Scheme to Support National Organisations funded by the government of Ireland through the Department of Rural and Community Development

