



COPE Galway



Annual Report 2020

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Empowering
People

Creating
Change

Strengthening
Communities

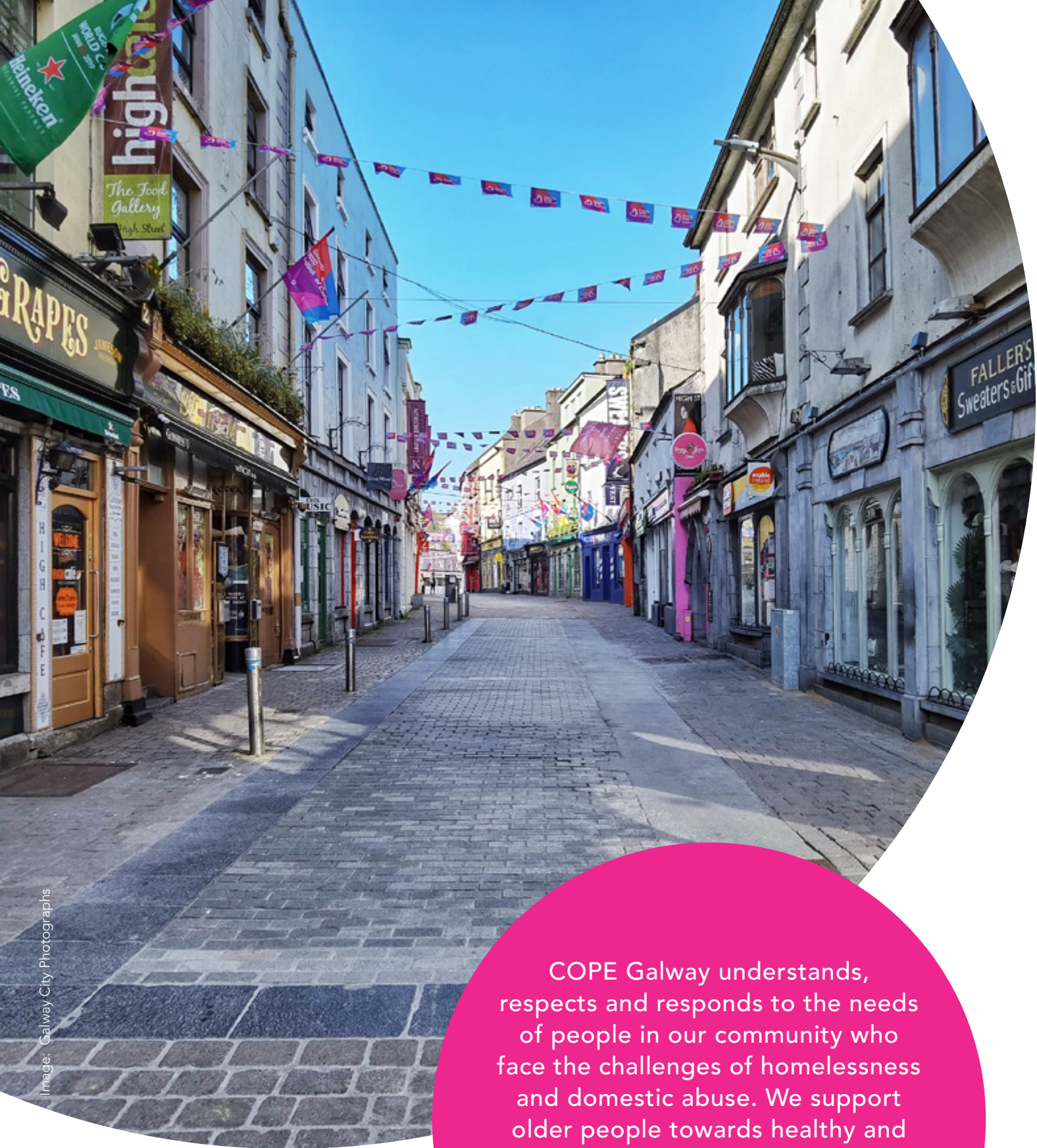


Image: Galway City Photographs

COPE Galway understands, respects and responds to the needs of people in our community who face the challenges of homelessness and domestic abuse. We support older people towards healthy and active ageing. We seek to make a difference by empowering people, creating change and strengthening communities.

Our Impact in 2020

In 2020 COPE Galway supported

2,616* people

across our services.

1,157*

HOMELESS SERVICE

Accommodates people who are homeless; helps find and keep long-term housing; prevents homelessness.



807
Adults



350
Children



138
Families



606
Single people
(433 male,
173 female)



157
Single people
Covid-19
response
accommodation

603*

DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICE

Offers safety, guidance, support; helps understand dynamics of abusive relationships, break cycle of domestic abuse; addresses structures in society which give rise to domestic abuse.



79 Women
Admitted to
refuge with 84
children



1,104
Outreach
appointments
(203 outreach clients)



116
Court
appointments
for 109 women



129
Play therapy
sessions for
8 children

856*

SENIOR SUPPORT SERVICE

Supports independent ageing at home; helps older people in our community stay in their own home for as long as they wish to do so.



68,755 Meals
produced and
delivered to 735
people



3,359
Individuals
helped via FEAD
Programme



350
Food bag
deliveries



85
Helpline calls



400
Christmas
hampers



182
Support calls
(Lockdown 1)

*total number represents unique clients



Welcome to our 2020 Annual Report

The resilience, responsiveness and adaptability of our services and our community shines through these pages in what has been a most challenging – and inspiring – year. Working together, the tireless efforts of our people, the incredible generosity of our supporters and the strength and determination of the people we work with has led us to achieve so much. In this report, you will meet many inspiring individuals whose stories highlight the strong human relationships at the heart of our organisation. We are so proud to have made a difference in 2020 by empowering people, creating change and strengthening our communities to face the challenges past and no doubt ahead. We hope you enjoy reading this account of our work.

Fáilte chuig ár dTuarascáil Bhliantúil 2020

Tá teacht aniar, freagrúlacht agus solúbthacht ár seirbhísí agus ár bpobail le feiceáil go soiléir ar na leathanaigh seo, i mbliain a bhí an-dúshlánach agus spreagúil. Agus muid ag obair le chéile, tá an oiread sin bainte amach againn mar gheall ar iarrachtaí seasta an phobail, flaitiúlacht dhochreidte ár lucht tacaíochta agus neart agus diongbháilteacht na ndaoine a mbímid ag obair leo. Sa tuarascáil seo, casfaidh tú le go leor daoine spreagúla a gcuireann a gcuid scéalta béim ar na caidrimh dhaonna láidre atá i gcroílár ár n-eagraíochta. Tá an-bhród orainn go ndearna muid difríocht in 2020 trí dhaoine a chumasú, athrú a chruthú agus tríd ár bpobal a neartú chun dul i ngleic leis na dúshláin a bhí againn go dtí seo agus a bheidh amach romhainn dár ndóigh. Tá súil againn go mbainfidh tú taitneamh as an gcuntas seo ar ár gcuid oibre a léamh.



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A Message from our Chairman

In 2020, COPE Galway never faltered in delivering its essential social services across Galway City and County, significantly responding to 2,616 people across our three service areas.

Grappling with the fast evolving Covid-19 pandemic, we got straight to the core of what matters to ensure the safety of people already facing the challenges of homelessness and domestic abuse and to support older people at increased risk of social isolation and who require excellent nutrition.

Every day, our professional teams of resilient and adaptable staff understand, respect and respond to the immediate and long-term needs of the people we work with. Client engagement and the dedication of frontline staff were key to ensuring our services stayed open during the pandemic and to protecting everyone's welfare.

We did not do this on our own. We worked more closely than ever before with our partners in the statutory and voluntary services while receiving remarkable support from corporate and business partners, philanthropic organisations, the public health department, local medical supports and of course the people of Galway. We also welcomed government supports that provided much needed financial reassurance during such uncertain times. Without the assistance of local media, we would have been unable to amplify our appeals and calls for support and we thank all sincerely.

Our organisation was steered through the pandemic by a dedicated, determined CEO, Jacquie Horan, who has successfully led COPE Galway through immense social challenges and changes over the past 24 years and faced, in her words, her greatest and most unprecedented challenge in Covid-19. We wish Jacquie the very best as she takes up her new role as COPE Galway's Head of Senior Support Service in 2021.

Covid-19 has revealed the extent to which our communities rely on services of local organisations such as COPE Galway and the essential, supportive role it plays in general society. The pandemic has also shone a light on the strength, resilience, responsiveness and adaptability of our clients, staff, volunteers and the community in general and a willingness to work together to bring about positive change.

COPE Galway's services remain in continuous demand. Homelessness has not gone away; reports of domestic abuse increased exponentially during the pandemic and recent narratives around ageing and older people indicate a need for more focus on positive and active ageing in our community. The Board of Management and I are confident that our new CEO, Michael Smyth, who holds a passionate belief in people's potential and the power of community, will successfully lead COPE Galway in delivering our vision for a community where every person is valued, cared for and supported at every stage of life.

Our Board of Management are committed to the highest standards of governance and we use our annual report as an opportunity to tell our charity's story and to demonstrate this transparency and good governance.

2020 has been a year of learning and of finding new ways to creatively collaborate, to ensure our community thrives into 2021 and beyond. The stories of the people we work with fill these pages and demonstrate the strength and resilience many of us do not know we possess.

I hope you find this report inspiring as you read about the work we are doing on your behalf to support our community, and how you are helping this organisation achieve our mission of making a difference by empowering people, creating change and strengthening communities.

Le gach dea-ghuí,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Éamon Bradshaw". The signature is written in a cursive style.

ÉAMON BRADSHAW
Chairman



A Message from our Chief Executive Officer

In 2020 Covid-19 represented the single biggest challenge to COPE Galway's work in almost 50 years of operation. We were bowled over however, by the palpable sense of community, teamwork and resilience shown by not only our staff, volunteers and supporters, but from the communities and clients we support.

While the pandemic impacted every one of us, imagine how its effect was more keenly felt by those already in isolation through homelessness, domestic abuse or because of their older age. At a time when globally, home was seen as the safest option, staying home posed significant challenges for many in our care. It was essential that COPE Galway's three service areas remained operational and responsive for the many vulnerable people in our community who were more adversely affected by the virus than others.

From March 2020, COPE Galway's work was challenged in a variety of ways. We focused our efforts on protecting our clients, staff and volunteers, finding ways to continue to offer and safely deliver services and to protect our revenue streams. As a result of the enormous efforts of everyone involved in service delivery and with the support of our funders, donors and the public, we managed to largely realise these goals and for this we are very grateful.

Our Covid-19 response included immediately activating a new helpline for older people who were told to stay at home. We launched a media campaign to publicise this, along with our existing emergency phone numbers and a campaign to let women know that our domestic abuse service was open and safely operating. We reorganised our services to facilitate self-isolation for vulnerable client groups and made sure anyone sleeping rough had a safe space to sleep. We distributed relevant and vital information and actively collaborated with the Galway City and County Covid-19 Community Response Forums to support vulnerable people in our communities. We stepped up our meal preparation and deliveries to support the nutritional needs of older people who remained at home during 2020. All the while, our community rallied with incredible and sustained support for our initiatives.

A key achievement in 2020 was the opening of Modh Eile House in May, offering an enhanced service and 50% increased accommodation capacity to women and children fleeing domestic abuse. 2020 also saw positive developments in areas for which COPE Galway had long sought change. These included new efforts to prevent homelessness with the moratorium on evictions and freezing of rent levels; specific Garda and national campaigns to address the exponential increase in domestic abuse and new initiatives to address negative narratives and attitudes around ageing. We look forward to building on these and advocating for further initiatives in 2021.

Our Strategy 2020-2025, launched virtually in September 2020, outlines COPE Galway's 6 strategic priorities as we understand, respect and respond to the challenges ahead over the next five years and beyond.

Our people are at the heart of our organisation; our values and beliefs are the cornerstone of the COPE Galway Approach. I invite you to read the detail of this on page 8 to truly understand the ethos of our organisation.

As I have the honour of assuming the role of COPE Galway's CEO during these exceptional times of uncertainty and change across the globe, there are no doubt challenges ahead in leading this organisation into the future as we remain vigilant at all levels. We are hopeful that the success of the vaccine rollout will offer the level of protection required by our citizens, so that we are able to return to a fully open and functioning community support for our most vulnerable.

It is down to the immense leadership of our outgoing CEO Jacquie Horan, without whom we would not have been able to support 2,616 people across our three services. Jacquie's unwavering stewardship of COPE Galway for the past 24 years and especially in 2020 has been remarkable and the people of Galway owe a huge debt of gratitude to her for her hard work and commitment.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge each member of the COPE Galway team - staff, volunteers and supporters. Thank you for your hard work, your resilience and your adaptability. At a time when everybody was being urged to stay at home, we asked you to go to work – at a time when our clients needed you most, you were there.

Míle buíochas

MICHAEL SMYTH
Chief Executive Officer



Homelessness | Domestic Abuse | Senior Support

Our Vision

A community where every person is valued, cared for and supported at every stage of life.

Our Mission

Making a difference by empowering people, creating change and strengthening communities.

Our Values



Our Strategic Priorities 2020-2025

-  1 Prevention and Early Engagement
-  2 Responsiveness
-  3 Our People
-  4 Advocacy
-  5 Impact
-  6 Sustainable Funding Model

COPE Galway Strategy 2020-2025

MAKING A DIFFERENCE: Empowering People, Creating Change, Strengthening Communities

COPE Galway has been providing services in Galway since the 1970s. Over the past five decades, we have grown and developed our capacity to positively impact people's lives. In doing so, we have earned the trust and the support of the Galway community.

The development of a new strategy for 2020 – 2025 has given us an opportunity to take stock, to reflect on our successes to date, to challenge ourselves as to how we can improve and to think about the kind of community and society we want to create and in which we want to participate.

A principal function of our Board of Management is to ensure that the organisation has clear direction in terms of its work and is impactful in achieving its mission. To this end, COPE Galway undertook the strategy development work throughout 2019. Its completion coincided with the emergence early in 2020 of the Covid-19 pandemic. While this brings even more uncertainty and unpredictability to our operating environment, we still must plan and manage our path forward.

In moving ahead with our new strategy we plan with two complex contexts in mind and within the new conditions created globally by the Covid-19 pandemic. We must:

1. Remain effective in providing person-centred, demand-led services in emergency and crisis situations.
2. Plan for a changed social and economic landscape over the next 5-10 years where we will need to invest more in prevention and early engagement work to increase people's capacity and resilience to cope with challenges.

As our strategy outlines, this thinking underpins our strategic focus on prevention and early engagement and on responsiveness. Our commitment to support the wellbeing and development of our people will drive the effectiveness and high quality of our work. Our advocacy agenda will help inform and shape the ways that we describe, measure and communicate our impact. This in turn will help drive the development of a more realistic and Sustainable Funding Model that supports the delivery of this strategy in 2020-2025.

While our strategic focus is clear, we continue to acknowledge the many challenges and difficulties that are around us and ahead of us. Our implementation plan for this strategy will reflect the reality and practicalities of these circumstances.

COPE Galway's Board of Management thanks everyone who contributed to the development of this new strategy, which directs our work for the coming years. During the preparation of this plan, people gave generously of their time and knowledge to help us chart a path ahead at these times of great uncertainty. They assisted us to understand and set our priorities for the coming years. Thanks also to all in COPE Galway who deliver on our strategy and who ultimately make the difference in the lives of those we reach out to in our work.

Finally, thanks to all who support us in our work – our funders, donors and the people of Galway. We look forward to delivering our new strategy on your behalf and to working towards our vision of a community where every person is valued, cared for and supported at every stage of life.

Our strategy
is available on
our [website](#).





The COPE Galway Approach

Everything we do is guided by the COPE Galway Approach to help us achieve our vision of a community where every person is valued, cared for and supported at every stage of life.

The COPE Galway Approach is built on:

Understanding

Deep listening, storytelling, learning, developing, openness, connections

Respect

Valuing the whole person, empowering, trusting, believing in the potential of others, drawing on strengths and abilities

Response

Quality, professionalism, making an impact, challenging ourselves, continuous improvement

This assets-based and person-centred approach recognises that each person has attributes and strengths that can make positive differences in their own lives. We achieve results for the people we work with because of our Approach.

Strong Human Relationships

Understand Respect Respond

Learning Organisation Without Judgement With Hope

Empowering People Self-Determining Persevering

High Standards of Quality



“In our daily work, we focus without judgement and with hope, on our clients’ strengths, needs, aspirations and ambitions.”



606

Single People
433 male, 173 female



138

Families



157

Single People
Covid-19 response
accommodation

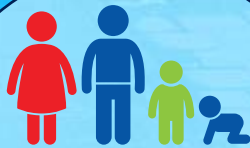


In 2020 COPE Galway supported:

1,157*

People

*total number
represents unique
clients



350

Children



807

Adults

Homeless Service

Accommodates people who are homeless;
helps find and keep long-term housing;
prevents homelessness.



Meet Trish

The future
looks bright
for Trish and
her daughter

Trish, a mother of one in her 50s, is looking forward to a new phase of her life after some traumatic years which saw her become homeless. She has now found a home that she loves, has been reunited with her daughter, and is planning a return to study.

After spending a number of months in emergency accommodation in Osterley Lodge and one year in COPE Galway Community Housing following a stint in rehab, Trish looks back at this challenging time with a sense of determination that she will never be in that situation again.

Trish found herself homeless after a long-term battle with alcohol resulted in an admission to rehab. A single parent, Trish's struggle with alcohol began in her teens, following a traumatic event. "I've always been a drinker, but it had begun to get worse in the last two years of drinking. At the time, a couple of years back, my daughter was living with me and I was drinking heavily. I had social workers knocking on the door and I couldn't cope. My parents arrived at the same time as the Guards to take my daughter, because I wouldn't answer the phone or the door to the social worker. That's when I went into rehab."

Following a successful stint in rehab, Trish found that when she had completed her treatment, she had nowhere to go. The house she had been renting was being sold, and she had not paid rent in several months. "My social worker picked me up from rehab and dropped me at Athenry train station and that was it - I had nowhere to go from there. It was just horrific."

Having spent several months at COPE Galway's Osterley Lodge, Trish moved into a B&B and following that, was placed in a house in Knocknacarra under the COPE Galway Community Housing Programme. "When I was shown the room, I just started crying; I was so relieved," she says. Following a year living in this property, Trish searched for weeks on the property-listing website Daft.ie, and managed to secure a much sought-after property. "I was sending dozens of emails on Daft. I had said in my email that I just wanted a new start for me and my daughter and because of that, my current landlord gave me this place. There had been over 200 people looking at it, but he gave it to me. I was so grateful."

Life has been continually improving for Trish in the three years since she left rehab. She has overcome her addiction, and has found a home for both her and her daughter. With some help from her COPE Galway key worker, she has been working to make life for her and her daughter as secure as possible.

"I would have kept drinking and I would be dead at this stage, were it not for rehab and COPE Galway. It would have been that simple. I would have drank myself to death. I never slept one night on the streets thanks to COPE Galway. They gave me a structure, and I developed a routine. They also gave me access to an addiction counsellor. It really helped in rehab that I was able to ask for help. When I was in Osterley Lodge, and in the B&Bs, I was able to ask for help too. Not that I ever wanted much; what I wanted at the time was to prove to everyone I could do it on my own, but I knew I couldn't. I needed the support. My key worker in COPE Galway Community Housing, her support and encouragement has just been unbelievable.

I know if I drink again, I'll never see my daughter, and I just couldn't again put her, my parents and my brother through what I put them through. When I went into rehab and was with COPE Galway, I took all the steps that were suggested. I really wanted to start a new life, and I kept myself busy - that's how I managed. And really, I could not have done it at all without my daughter's love. Things are an awful lot better now. I'll do whatever I can."

While the support was invaluable at a time when she had no one else to turn to, Trish also believes that the change wouldn't have been possible without her desire to make improvements to her own life and that of her daughter's, and the willingness and strength to take the steps to achieve that.

It's been one year since Trish used COPE Galway services and the future is looking bright. She is beginning an accountancy course in September, and she has been spending an increasing amount of time in her home with her daughter.

"My hope for the future now is that I get a job; I want a career for myself. And for my daughter, I wish that she does alright for herself, that she knows that she can trust me, and that she's happy."

COPE Galway Homeless Service: Positive Impacts

COPE Galway's Homeless Service offers a range of emergency and ongoing supports for people at risk of, or who are experiencing, homelessness in Galway. At the heart of our service is each person we work with. **Everything we do is guided by the COPE Galway Approach, which is built on strong human relationships and on how we understand, respect and respond to those we work with so that we positively impact people's lives.** Our role is to support individuals and families to use their voice and to make choices to help find the best route towards achieving this. We believe in the potential of others and we aim to empower people to find new opportunities and ways forward. Our full list of homeless support service centres during 2020 are outlined below.

Emergency / Supported Temporary Accommodation

- **Fairgreen Hostel** – emergency accommodation for men
- **Osterley Lodge** – emergency accommodation for women
- **Cold Weather Response** – emergency accommodation for people sleeping rough (winter months)
- **Teach Corrib Day Centre** – private emergency accommodation placement and support
- **Family Support Service** – emergency and transitional accommodation
- **Corrib Haven** – Family Hub
- **Additional emergency accommodation beds in response to the Covid-19 pandemic** – up to 39 additional beds for men and women

Independent Living and Transitional Accommodation

- Transitional and community accommodation for singles
- COPE Galway and Galway Simon Community Housing First Tenancy Support Project

Prevention, Resettlement and Tenancy Support

- **Teach Corrib Day Centre** – drop in; information and advice; advocacy and connecting with supports; addressing basic needs
- Family Support Services
- Resettlement and Tenancy Support Services

Responding to Homelessness in Galway in 2020

Demand for COPE Galway's Homeless Service during 2020 continued unabated as Galway's homeless and housing crisis remained a significant issue in our community with the onset of the pandemic. Despite the challenges and restrictions posed by Covid-19, our homeless service worked with and supported 1,157 people in Galway. This included 606 single people and 138 families with 350 children.

One of the silver linings to the dark cloud of Covid-19 is that, despite the restrictions, a number of families moved out of homelessness. The moratorium on evictions contributed to slowing down the numbers of families entering homelessness. However, rent levels continued to increase during 2020 in Galway.

A reliance on the private rental sector, combined with a shortage of supply of HAP properties and affordable accommodation suitable for single people and a chronic shortage of new builds makes access to suitable, affordable accommodation for families and especially for single people a persistent challenge. One-bedroom accommodation is the only suitable and sustainable long-term housing solution for many single homeless who are dealing with challenges in their lives associated with past traumas, mental health and addictions. The acute shortage of affordable one-bedroom units in Galway continues to represent the greatest challenge to supporting single person households to exit homelessness.

We work in close collaboration with a range of other agencies and services to achieve these positive results. We work with Galway City and County Councils and a range of approved housing bodies in supporting people into long-term homes for life; the HSE in addressing and improving outcomes in respect of physical and mental health and addictions and with Galway Simon Community in delivering the tenancy support aspect of the Housing First Programme in the West region.

With many learnings acquired from our experiences throughout 2020, our work focus continues to evolve and adapt, while clients' needs emerge in different ways. **At all times, we aim to ensure the people we work with are treated with dignity and respect and that the impact of our work has a positive effect on their lives during times of crisis.**

Over the following pages, we aim to give you a flavour of this impact through stories and testimonials from staff and people we worked with throughout 2020. We also take this opportunity to give thanks to the volunteers and staff of the organisations and other partners who support and supplement our efforts.

“One thing we’ve seen over the years is that people can lose hope in themselves; they lose hope for their future; they lose hope that they’re going to end their homeless cycle, that they’re ever going to live a secure, ordinary, normal, boring life ... but we make sure as staff that we never lose hope in people.”

Donna,
Manager, Fairgreen Hostel.

Family Homelessness

Over the course of 2020 the numbers of families newly presenting as homeless dropped compared to the previous five years, in large part due to the moratorium on evictions during Covid-19 lockdown restrictions over much of the year. This, combined with a steady movement of families into homes of their own, resulted in a more than 30% reduction in the number of families COPE Galway provided emergency accommodation for at any time, down to 60 families by the year end. In collaboration with Galway City Council we brought a number of own-door housing units into use as part of the Covid-19 response at a local level in Galway City.

We found new ways of working with families living in our Family Hub and private emergency accommodation setting such as B&B/hotel accommodation, to help them continue to access the supports they needed and reduce isolation, loneliness and stress. We continue to work on ways to support families who are homeless to access and adopt the use of technology during these times when opportunities for in-person and face-to-face contact with supports are limited.

See Homework Club Interview [page 66](#).

Housing Outcomes

During 2020 a total of 91 households – 48 families and 43 singles - moved onto permanent long-term housing from COPE Galway's Homeless Service; 39 into social housing and 52 into private rented. A further 29 single person households moved from emergency accommodation into community-based transitional and supported accommodation thanks in no small part to an additional 11 spaces provided by COPE Galway over the course of the year. Resettlement and tenancy support were provided to these households, much of this in the form of telephone support in light of the public health restrictions in force for much of the year.

Our People

We must acknowledge the dedication and sacrifice of our frontline staff across our homeless and housing services, who meticulously and immediately introduced Covid-19 prevention and containment measures. Putting their personal worries to one side, our staff were flexible in response and mobilised to make sure services stayed open.

Ensuring the safety of our clients during a pandemic meant changing how we worked, with greater flexibility and, as in the case of the Family Hub, adapting to an entirely new model of care as a self isolation facility in a very short timeframe. Throughout 2020, all our homeless services continued to operate fully, with strict Covid-19 protocols in place to protect all. Significant support and guidance was available to us in this regard by the multi-disciplinary team in place locally for homeless services, the HSE and the public health department, resulting in safe environments and work practices for all involved.

The pandemic has exposed an extreme vulnerability of many in our society. It has also revealed a collective responsibility and responsiveness to ensure everyone's safety and security. The response to the pandemic crisis has clearly demonstrated that where there is community and political will, together we can do great things for the common good.

Read staff perspectives on working during a pandemic on [page 60](#).





SNAPSHOT

Responsiveness, Adaptability and Resilience during Covid-19

The winter of 2019 into 2020 felt no different to previous winters as COPE Galway's Homeless Service focused on ensuring that no one had to sleep rough in Galway City. The seasonal Cold Weather Response had come into operation in November 2019 for the fourteenth consecutive winter and was busier than ever with near full occupancy each night of the 23 additional beds put in place for the winter period. We were focused on planning beyond April 2020 when the Cold Weather Response was due to end.

Then, everything changed.

When 'coronavirus' struck, it was evident from the outset that some in the population were more vulnerable than others as the virus took hold in our community. People who were homeless were quickly identified as being particularly at risk. Living in close quarters to others in homeless hostel settings with many having serious underlying health conditions were among the risk factors obvious to all.

It was time to act. We sat down with our partners and other agencies to plan our next steps.

Working in close cooperation with Galway City Council and the HSE, we mobilised a response to the immediate challenge by repurposing the Family Hub homeless service as a self-isolation provision. The Cold Weather Response service relocated to a city centre commercial hostel premises with single bedroom accommodation and extended to being a 24/7 service and operated throughout the year.

COPE Galway's street outreach work, which supports people to get out of rough sleeping, engaged with those who remained sleeping rough to help identify and progress immediate response to their situations, including absorbing some into the new additional emergency accommodation beds.

We responded to the need of "hidden homeless" who found themselves without a roof over their heads as precarious employment and living arrangements fell apart.

COPE Galway and Galway Simon Community worked in conjunction with Galway City Council and the Health Multi-Disciplinary Team for homeless to facilitate and support the fast-tracking of people, identified as particularly vulnerable, into their own tenancies as part of the Housing First Programme. Own-door self-contained provision for families was also put in place between Galway City Council and COPE Galway to facilitate self-isolation when required and to address the needs of some families living in overcrowded situations.

All of this happened in a short time frame and during a period of high anxiety when Covid-19 prevention and safety measures were developed and implemented across all COPE Galway projects and areas of work. Client engagement and the dedication of frontline staff were key to safeguarding the welfare of all.





Staying Safe during a Pandemic (When You Don't Have a Home)

Some Reflections

"Saturday, March 14th 2020 is a day I look back to as the most important date for efforts at a local level in Galway to safeguard the welfare of people who were homeless and particularly vulnerable to Covid-19 as it began to take hold and spread across the population. An interagency group with representatives of Galway Council, the GP and Nurse of Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) for homeless in Galway City and senior staff of Galway Simon Community and COPE Galway convened in a COPE Galway meeting room early that morning. By the end of that day we had set in motion a range of actions that would make all the difference. Some of the most health-compromised and vulnerable people living in shared hostel settings were accommodated in self-contained accommodation units. We relocated the Cold Weather Response to a city centre tourist accommodation setting, with ensuite bedrooms and additional bed capacity. Some families were relocated to self-contained own-door temporary accommodation provision."

Martin, Assistant CEO

"During the pandemic I found myself in need of emergency accommodation. Through the support and encouragement of the staff I met in COPE Galway Day Centre I made the decision to ask for accommodation support in Glen Oaks. This has been a very positive experience for me and being able to access the Medical Team in the Day Centre also means that I am now in better mental health and moving forward with my life."

Day Centre Client.

"People are with us because life has been tough. The sudden threat to wellbeing and new rules to follow has made life even more difficult. We immediately recognised that we would have to work together with residents to keep the virus out of the building. It meant making big changes in our personal and working lives, from social distancing and wearing masks to assessing ourselves and the residents throughout the day for symptoms".

Donna, Fairgreen Hostel Manager.



With the Fairgreen Hostel sitting room looking a bit faded during lockdown, some of the men residing there asked for paint and brushes to brighten it up. The renovation project was a great way for the men to develop relationships and friendships with each other and a sense of ownership in their communal space.

"During lockdown, I found things very difficult with everything shut and no place to go during the day. I've also been worried about when this pandemic will ever end, if at all, and what life will be like "after-Covid". Through the support of the staff I have met, I am better able to focus on the positive things and I have even started to attend viewings for longer-term accommodation, which I hope to move to in 2021."

Day Centre Client.

An Post donated three refurbished bicycles in 2020 for our outreach team to link in more easily, quickly and directly with people who move around when sleeping rough on the streets of Galway.



“As keyworkers and caring professionals we assist our clients in areas like managing stress and developing and maintaining good personal hygiene. We remind our clients daily of the importance of mask wearing and hand sanitisation; encourage limiting contacts outside of the building and adhering to the 5km rule to keep us all safe. As Level 5 continues, constant reminders about hygiene and safety protocol can be frustrating for both key workers and clients. However, everyone feels we are doing the best we can”.

Heather, Residential Hostel Worker, Fairgreen Hostel.

Being homeless is tough at any time but during this pandemic, it can be very daunting, but the protocols, all the staff and structure that is in place here have ensured a very positive experience for this service user.”

Fairgreen Hostel Client.

“We encourage and facilitate online supports for clients with addiction and/or mental health issues. If clients feel overwhelmed or low about the changes in their normal daily patterns, we encourage them to seek out staff support. As keyworkers, we have had to adapt our work practice and assure our clients that although our one-to-one sessions have become less frequent and shorter in duration, they are still meaningful – supports are still available as before”.

Heather, Residential Hostel Worker, Fairgreen Hostel.

Claire reflects on how the pandemic affected life at COPE Galway Day Centre.

“By 11pm on the night of Friday March 27th 2020, we knew at Teach Corrib Day Centre that the weeks ahead were going to be different for us – we just didn’t realise how different and for how long. The Taoiseach had just announced that the whole country was going into the first full lockdown. We were needed to support the 24/7 operation of the Cold Weather Response which had only that week relocated to a city centre tourist hostel. By 8am the next morning we were on duty, working to implement the range of public health measures now necessary to safeguard everyone.

It must be said that without the huge levels of co-operation from those we were accommodating and supporting, who no doubt had their own fears and worries as to what lay ahead, this would have been even more challenging.

We reached out to others who continued to sleep rough and who were reliant on the Day Centre to meet their basic needs and we worked to identify options and solutions for them. We had to be innovative and creative. With the help of our colleagues across COPE Galway, especially our Resettlement team, we continued to work with those we were supporting in private emergency accommodation in B&Bs and other tourist accommodation.

As weeks turned into months we started to plan to reopen the Day Centre. “Business as usual” was no longer possible; our ‘drop in’ service was replaced by an appointments only system and the numbers attending the centre at any one time were significantly reduced to safeguard everyone against contracting Covid-19.

In September 2020 we re-opened our doors. Our Outreach Service recommenced at the same time and was enhanced with the participation of the GP and Nurse for the Multi-Disciplinary Team in this service.

All things said – it has been quite the year. While most of us would rather forget 2020, it has revealed our huge stores of strength and resilience and an ability to adapt and change to a degree we never thought would be asked of us. Above all else, we’re still here.”



A circular portrait of a man with a shaved head and a goatee, wearing a white collared shirt and a grey sweater. The portrait is set against a dark green background. To the left of the portrait, there are several colorful, abstract shapes: a large magenta arc, a green oval, and a yellow oval.

**Meet
Gavin**

“I had the drive, but accommodation – and my mental health – was always my challenge.”

Life is good for Gavin Hosford, a young professional with ambitions of becoming an entrepreneur. With a good social network, a positive outlook and a determination to succeed, Gavin's life is full of hope.

Just a few years ago, however, Gavin was jobless, suicidal and living in a tent by the River Corrib at Dangan. "I was just after losing my job, and I wasn't doing well in any aspect of my life, really. I was struggling to cope. I had moved to London for a job, but left after a couple of days - it wasn't what I had expected - and I had come back to Ireland."

On his return, he couch-surfed, stayed with a friend for a month, and with nowhere else to go, pitched a tent on the river bank.

"I just went through my money; I wasn't able to take care of myself properly. I was depressed, feeling hopeless, I couldn't see any light at the end of the tunnel. I was suicidal and was walking around with a month's worth of medication crushed up in a bag, trying to pick up the guts to take them, but I was too afraid to swallow - that was a turning point for me really."

Gavin discovered the COPE Galway Day Centre on Seamus Quirke Road, where he found warmth, food, access to cleaning facilities, and the support that he needed to help him at that crisis point of his life.

"The first thing they did was bring me in and let me have a shower. They offered to wash my clothes for me. They gave me lunch, and initially just having someone to talk to was the most important thing." From there, Gavin stayed in emergency accommodation for a week, before being given a room at the Fairgreen Hostel, where he spent the next six months.

"I had already applied for college. That helped me when I went in; the staff were so supportive, really fantastic. I can't say enough good things about them."

Gavin was staying at Fairgreen Hostel when he started studying Business Management at GTI (Galway Technical Institute). "In my first year in college, the staff gave me a laptop, stationary, and anything I needed." From there, Gavin moved to a transitional house in the west-side of the city, where he stayed for two years. "It was great. I continued on with college while living there. I moved onto GMIT for another two years, then had the opportunity in third year to go on Erasmus student exchange in the Czech Republic."

Following his six months on Erasmus, and with no accommodation to return to, Gavin contacted COPE Galway who were able to offer him a room in Bridge House, where he stayed for almost a year while finishing his degree. "The whole time I was doing my degree, I was under the COPE Galway umbrella and they were great."

Following one more stint in supported accommodation in the city centre, Gavin found his own accommodation to rent, and has been living in the east side of the city since.

Now 31 years old and working as an office administrator for a small business, Gavin dreams of owning his own business. Looking back on his experiences, how does he feel about it all now?

"Honestly, I'm eternally grateful to COPE Galway and all the staff who were so good to me. I don't think I would have gotten my degree if I didn't have their support. I was under the COPE Galway umbrella for my entire degree. I had the drive, but accommodation, and my mental health, was always my challenge."

"Since reaching out to COPE Galway, everything has been getting better. I accessed therapy through their services and was on medication for a while, which really helped as well. It had a major impact on my state of mind. My life is totally different now. There's a lot more stability these days. I have money in my pocket, I have a nice place to live and really good people in my life."



Meet Julie*

Finding yourself homeless at any stage of your life is one of the most stressful things a person will ever have to face, but becoming homeless during a pandemic adds extra challenges.

Osterley Lodge, one of COPE Galway's emergency accommodation centres, has provided shelter for many women in the past year, at a time in their lives when they are at their most vulnerable. Having somewhere to stay, with access to showers, washing facilities, food and support can be a lifesaver.

"I'd probably be dead if it wasn't for Osterley," says Julie*, who is in her mid-thirties. She arrived in Osterley three months ago having spent some time in unsuitable accommodation - no heating, no hot water.

"I was trying to take care of my brother - he was in a very bad accident and had had mental health issues; it left my family very shaken. Where I was living wasn't very healthy for me to begin with, but throughout the days and the months, I just started to get emotionally and physically exhausted. There seemed to be something constantly blocking me from getting out of the situation. It was like the universe was just working against me, until I just decided I wouldn't get up anymore. I suppose I let go of who I was and then, just lost my goals. I lost everything really, and went into a complete depression. I never understood what depression was before that. It felt like everyone gave up on us."

At her lowest point, Julie found herself standing at the edge of the water by Nimmos Pier, and had to be talked down by Claddagh Watch Patrol, a group of volunteers who patrol the waterways of Galway City, with the aim of preventing suicide.

While the pandemic has made being homeless more of a challenge, she feels it has, in some ways, been the catalyst she needed to face her issues head-on.

"I usually run from my problems, so maybe it's a good thing that I'm forced to look at myself now because I'm going to have to think about every single decision I make as they can cost you dearly."

Thinking too far into the future isn't something she feels able to do right now, but COPE Galway is giving her the space, the support in the form of advice and counselling services, and the time needed to take the steps she needs to get her life back on track. "I'm just trying to get through every day as it is. I'm not asking for a forever house, but I just want somewhere where I can put my feet down, finish my education and move on from all this drama."

*Names have been changed to protect the identity of interviewees





Domestic Abuse Service



79

Women admitted to refuge with 84 children

Offers safety, guidance, support; helps understand dynamics of abusive relationships, break cycle of domestic abuse; addresses structures in society which give rise to domestic abuse.

**total number represents unique clients*



In 2020 COPE Galway supported:

603*

Women and their children



116

Court Appointments for 109 women

The move to Modh Eile House in May increased refuge space and capacity.

2020 lockdowns and restricted movement saw a drop in admissions, calls and court accompaniments.

Contacts and admissions increased in Q4, with outreach appointments increasing by 89% in Galway City and County.



Meet Kate*

"Domestic Abuse is not always physical ... it can be a lot more subtle than that."

Kate* was in her early 20s when she met and married her husband, Jason* in her native New Zealand over a decade ago. They were deeply in love, had much in common, with similar outlooks on life. When the opportunity arose for her to move with him to his native Ireland and start a new life together, she jumped at the chance.

However, very early in their relationship, there were signs that all wasn't as it should be. While Kate thought of herself as very happy and in love, she says looking back, there were indications of coercive control and emotional abuse.

Not wanting to believe that she had made a mistake in marrying Jason, Kate says that she made excuses, told herself that maybe he just had a fiery personality, maybe it was a cultural difference. Having both experienced abuse in their respective families of origin, she felt that part of their marriage was about learning to be healthier together. "But the power dynamic was never equal - it was always him being angry at me, shouting at me, calling me names, me crying and then he wouldn't speak to me for a few days."

When Kate became pregnant and had their child, things began to get worse. "I think the idea of being a father really scared him and he became more controlling. He never hit me, but there were a few incidents where he pushed me away from what I was doing at the time, saying he could do it better. I think we both knew that if he ever hit me I'd leave."

Kate says that one of the aspects of her experience that she feels is important to highlight is the fact that domestic abuse is not always physical. That you don't have to be 'punched in the face' to suffer domestic abuse - it can be a lot more subtle than that.

I know my ex still doesn't think of himself as an abuser because our situation did not conform to the image that you get from the media. At the same time, identifying as a feminist, I found it difficult to admit that I'd gotten into an abusive relationship; I thought I should know better. I really thought I understood what abuse looked like and that I'd never get into that situation."

When Kate's baby was just a few months old, Jason reluctantly joined Kate at a marriage counselling session, where the counsellor suggested that severe emotional abuse was at the core of the relationship issues. "She turned to my husband and said 'you need to be in a programme for abusive men'. That was really shocking for both of us and painful for me, especially. I had this whole narrative in my mind that I had escaped an abusive parent and we were building something together. I had been a counsellor when I was younger and my husband had also studied in this area so we were both literate in these ideas about abuse."

Jason agreed to attend a perpetrator programme called MOVE Ireland. Kate, in line with many partners of the men on this programme, was offered support from COPE Galway. **“My key-worker was incredibly kind, supportive, and down to earth and she never pressured me to leave my relationship. She helped me feel like I could trust myself to say, ‘No, this behaviour is not OK’.**

As time went on, Jason stopped attending the programme, and the abuse became more intense and more threatening. He had moved out of their home at this stage, but he would arrive at the house, shouting through the door. Shortly after her daughter turned one, he threatened to take her child away, so that she would never see her again. “That was when the penny dropped for me and I realised that this wasn’t a relationship I could salvage. It really was the scariest thing he ever said to me, that he would separate me from our baby.”

Feeling frightened, alone and with no family to turn to, Kate called to COPE Galway’s Domestic Abuse Refuge at their former location in Waterside House, where they listened to her story and offered her support as she didn’t feel safe going home.

“After that, we didn’t go home. We stayed in a hotel and then we stayed in a friend’s guest room until I could find a house to rent. It turned out I was right not to feel safe going home that night because my ex broke into the house. When I came back a few days later to get my things, when he was at work, I found that the back door had been broken in so God knows what would have happened if we had been home.”

Through COPE Galway, Kate joined a support group, where she has met many new friends and supports. “The women I’ve met there are some of the most admirable people I’ve ever met in my life and they made me feel proud of my identity as a single mother. I know for sure my kid is happier and healthier being in a home that doesn’t have any abuse in it.”

At one of the most vulnerable times of her life, Kate feels the first and most crucial way in which COPE Galway helped was to encourage her to trust herself.

“They didn’t tell me to leave my relationship, which I think is really important because when someone is being controlled by a partner, they don’t need to be more controlled by other sources. I didn’t need someone else telling me that they knew what was best for me, that would have felt like more control. What someone who is being abused needs is to have the courage to trust themselves and so that was very important.”

Life has been really good for Kate in the four years since she left the house she shared with her ex-husband. “It’s hard sometimes of course; I work really hard, I have multiple jobs. When you’re a single parent of a baby, of a young child, there’s a lot of broken sleep. But I genuinely feel better off than a lot of my friends who are partnered parents, even in relationships that aren’t even abusive. I feel so much better off – I have a lot of freedom, I don’t have to compromise about where I want to live or how I spend my time or how I want to raise my child. And I feel a lot of really fierce pride about my identity as a single mother.”

So having been through the experience and come out the other side a confident, and happy person, what advice would Kate give to those going through something similar?

“Talk to a service like COPE Galway or talk to a marriage counsellor, even if your partner won’t come with you to the sessions. **Just to be able to talk to a voice of reason that’s not close to the situation can really help. Try to not minimise it to yourself; if you have a weird feeling that maybe something isn’t OK, don’t worry about reaching out to a third party.** It’s important to say it doesn’t have to be black and white - you don’t have to wait until your relationship is physically abusive, or is absolutely terrible, to reach out for support. You can talk to someone when your relationship is in a grey area and they will help you and believe you.”

*Name and some details have been changed to protect identities



COPE Galway Domestic Abuse Service in 2020

A New Home

2020 was a year of incredible change – aside from the challenge of the pandemic, it was also the year which saw us leave Waterside House, our home for 39 years, and take up residence at [Modh Eile House](#). The move was something that could never have happened without the support of our community - our statutory funders, Galway City Council and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage; our philanthropic funders including The Lifes2Good Foundation and many private donors; and the support of so many community partners - individuals, families, workplaces and small and large businesses - all helped in ways great and small. You may remember COPE Galway speaking about the need for a new building for this vital service as far back as 2010 – the effort to get here has been monumental – but what a change!

Modh Eile House (the name meaning ‘another way’ and chosen by women who have used the Service) is without doubt a national leader in domestic abuse support. Our refuge facilities provide women and children with nine self-contained apartments, fully furnished, comfortable and warm and most of all, welcoming and safe.

“Thanks for a lovely tour today. Everyone really enjoyed it. It’s a really lovely building and I hope it brings release, safety and new beginnings to many”.

Inspector Georgina Lohan,
An Garda Síochána

Caring for our Children

[Solais Óg](#), our Children’s Service, has a large, bright playroom, (where making a mess is expected!) with outdoor play space and lots of toys. We can now offer a teen-space for older children, who find themselves in refuge with their Mum, and for whom refuge can be particularly challenging. Domestic abuse can have a specific impact on this group at a stage of life when they are also trying to figure out who they are; a time when they naturally become more critical of the adults in their lives; where they may have had to take on a semi-parenting role to their younger brothers and sisters and often feel the need to protect their mother. Here, we give them space to free themselves, even briefly, from the stress and strain. Teenagers in Modh Eile House are at last able to be just that – teenagers – and leave the adult stuff to the grown-ups.



February 2020 visit to Modh Eile House by some of the team of An Garda Síochána working to support victims of domestic abuse.



SNAPSHOT

Responsiveness, Adaptability and Collaboration during Covid-19

At the onset of the pandemic, we adapted quickly and effectively. We reviewed and revised all our processes, holding two goals in mind – that the service would continue to operate, come what may, and that we would do everything in our power to ensure no infection entered the service. It is great to say we achieved both – the service did not falter and no infection was reported among our staff or those using our service.

Media headlines narrated soaring incidences of domestic abuse during the pandemic, yet it is important to acknowledge that Covid-19 doesn't cause abuse – it is happening anyway. While being cooped up at home will make tempers fray in the best of relationships, this is not always abuse. Domestic abuse is a pattern of abuse and control over a period of time – the restrictions make it easier for an abuser to control and terrorise his victim and make it harder for her to get help. With the chance to use the phone now so rare, we are finding women are making contact with us however they can. Thankfully, the Gardaí have a proactive approach to domestic abuse, one we hope to continue to experience going forward.

A domestic abuse service – particularly one with a refuge – is an essential element in the life of a community. Government and Tusla, who are the main funders of this service, identified domestic abuse supports as one of their national priorities – we were

given all the support we needed to make our premises safe, and to keep our doors open. This is a recognition of the particular vulnerabilities faced by women trying to leave an abusive relationship, and we hope that support will continue and grow.

Our people add the value to everything we do. Our staff showed commitment above and beyond what could be asked – taking on roles and tasks not normally part of their work. They adapted to working in a strange and distant manner, and continued to come to work every day throughout various degrees of lockdown, even while struggling with their own anxieties and fears of infection.

Like many services, Covid-19 forced us to create new contingency plans – Tusla locally supported us so that we always had back-up teams ready if needed. Covid-19 certainly brought out the best in all of us, as we found new ways to be creative, new ways to collaborate, new ways to care.

2020 has been a year of learning for all – 2021 will see us begin to grow our service once more, in our long-awaited new home.

“Covid-19 limited the opportunity for the usual spontaneity, merry-making and mingling among the staff and our women. Our women guests usually meet in groups, supporting each other through difficult times, exchanging advice on coping skills, tips on useful services and resources or recipes and stories. Coming together promotes mutual healing and assists in moving forward with their lives. Many friendships are forged that continue to flourish after leaving the refuge. We are eager to create a happy atmosphere to counter-balance the seriousness and sense of loneliness which usually accompanies a woman's admission to refuge. During restrictions, while we conducted the nuts and bolts of key working, court preparation, and support for the women, we all keenly felt the loss of the joy inherent to physical interactions.”

Key Worker at Modh Eile House.



Community Outreach and Engagement during Covid-19

A vital part of our work is our Outreach Service, which we offer throughout the city and county. Our people – our staff, together with our community partners – helped us ensure this service continued during challenging 2020 restrictions. Here, one of our outreach workers gives her perspective on engaging with women enduring domestic abuse during the Covid-19 restrictions.

“The coronavirus fundamentally changed the world in which we live and life as we know it. Practically overnight the way we worked changed and very little of it was immune to the inevitable challenges. However, we mobilised quickly and adapted as best we could to ‘our new normal’. While apart, we came together to discuss how we would navigate the foreseeable unknown. **Our main concern was our clients and the impact it was having on them. While we worked from home we thought about them possibly having to do the same. Trapped and suffocated, we were acutely aware that these women’s worlds and windows of freedom had unfortunately gotten much smaller.**

Along with a media campaign, we distributed posters to shops, pharmacies, post offices etc. – places we thought might reach women in need so that they knew we were still here, still open and still working to help protect them. We reached out to other services and professionals to advise all of our availability, that we had measures in place to ensure safety, and if they could to please be mindful of us in their everyday, important work.

While we moved from face-to-face appointments to predominantly phone calls we had to learn new ways to support women. We gained a new awareness of body language as an integral part of how we support our clients, how we comfort and help them. Losing this, we have had to rely on reading women’s verbal cues over the phone. We missed meeting our clients and working with them in the warm way we are used to – sitting close to them, reading their facial expressions, them reading ours.

With the easing of restrictions, we welcomed getting to see our clients again albeit in more structured way. Social distancing, hand hygiene and the wearing of masks have become second nature and a small price to pay for getting to support women when they need us most.

Our new way of working also resulted in us missing our colleagues. Our team meetings which were once a welcome get together are now remarkably different. 'Zoom', something we had never heard of, became a central instrument in our work, bringing us together in a way we could never have imagined just a year ago.

However, for every challenge, an opportunity presented itself. The shared experience of Covid-19 and its impacts has highlighted how resilient, adaptable and collaborative we are in our profession, one in which we are also being taken more seriously. A greater interest from other professionals in the work that we do has helped to foster stronger links between services which in turn will help us to support more women.

Covid-19 has shown us that with the right tools, people can be productive from anywhere. Phone support is now something we have become good at, something that some of our service users prefer. We have had more opportunities to attend trainings, workshops, and discussions than ever before because technology can now reach wider audiences.

The positive measures taken by the Government in relation to domestic abuse, for example, the additional funding given to organisations, the Still Here awareness campaign, Operation Faoiseamh established by the Gardaí and the court services prioritising domestic violence and childcare cases, has all helped in our everyday work as has the new rent supplement available to women experiencing domestic abuse.

This pandemic has demonstrated the fragility of our society in its response to domestic abuse and laid bare gaps in our systems which have been ignored for decades. Recovery from Covid-19 must go hand in hand with continued actions by the government and organisations like ourselves so we can bring about greater change.

ARE YOU EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC ABUSE?

COPE Galway

AT HOME SHOULDN'T MEAN AT RISK

Our Domestic Abuse Service & Refuge remains open during the COVID-19 crisis.

24-HOUR CONFIDENTIAL HELPLINE

091 565 985

We have COVID-19 prevention and distancing measures in place, to ensure your safety while accessing the service.

www.copegalway.ie

"I am extremely proud of how our service faced the challenge of Covid-19 and how we adapted so that we could continue to provide an important and essential service to extremely resilient, courageous and strong women".

Outreach Worker, COPE Galway Domestic Abuse Service.



Working with Women and Children during a Pandemic.

From the beginning, we were very much aware that women and children experiencing domestic abuse would need our service more than ever during this pandemic. These women and children already live in a permanent state of lockdown conditions, with many restrictions placed on their daily lives as a result of abuse perpetrated by their partners.

As an essential service for the women and children of Galway and surrounding areas, we faced a new challenge of continuing service under restrictions. As a team, we had to find new ways of working while keeping those we support – and ourselves – safe.

The refuge continued to operate to provide emergency accommodation for women and children fleeing domestic violence whilst observing recommended guidelines.

Our Solas Óg children's service was temporarily forced to close in line with school closures in March 2020, thus limiting our contact with children for this period. This suspension of vital support was extremely frustrating for children and staff. Once the service moved to the new premises at Modh Eile House, our refuge children's service resumed in September 2020. Our healthy relationships programmes for secondary school students and our domestic abuse group programme for children also halted temporarily.

Our outreach children's service began in the summer of 2020, providing us with the opportunity to give much needed support to children and young people in the wider community.

It is vital to establish a trusting and supportive relationship with each child and young person that avails of our service. We base most of our work here around play techniques and therapeutic activities that can only be facilitated in person. Physical face to face contact between a child or young person and staff member is important for providing reassurances, being a good listener and showing empathy and understanding. The lockdowns prevented us from interacting in this way. Instead, we have had to heavily rely on phone contact to provide support, with the added challenge of neither party being able to visually interact or pick up on important body language with one another. **Many young people have indicated that they find it difficult to speak on the phone.**



“During Covid-19 restrictions, while the staff settled in to our new home at Modh Eile House, we soon missed the dynamics of a refuge full of diverse women and children, all rubbing shoulders together, and bringing their own brand of healing to the table”.

Key worker, Modh Eile House



We have found that children and young people are more isolated than ever before, with all supports, including school, abruptly taken from them. We have encountered children and young people trying to deal with a range of issues as well as domestic abuse in their homes: parents separating, access problems, removal of vital supports, social and sport activities stopped and restrictions placed on meeting and socialising with their peers. There is no doubt that this complex range of issues is having a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing in the midst of dealing with an abusive parent.

Mothers of these children and young people have also had to deal with complex difficulties including domestic abuse, delayed court hearings, access problems, loss of childcare supports, working from home, home schooling, financial difficulties and accommodation issues. Mothers are struggling to navigate through these challenges while trying to support their children with their emotions and the fallout from domestic abuse.

Teen Room at Modh Eile House

As a service, while we have endured intense frustration around restrictions and their continuing impact on our work, we continue to focus on finding ways to maintain our vital work to support women, children and young people in the safest possible way for all.

Forty Years Supporting Women

“The story of Waterside House is the story of women in Galway”.

1981 saw the opening of Waterside House, our former home in Courthouse Square. Everything about that building reflected so much of how we understood the world at the time.

The building itself was modest, and while some independent living was possible, sharing of facilities was still necessary, with walls so thin that privacy was a challenge. It made no specific provision to support children – that came later. Early records show women admitted with any number of children to very small spaces – there was no playroom in those early years, nor a private outdoor space. While the surrounds in that part of the city are pretty and peaceful, a woman uses refuge because of dangers she faces – going outside was never an easy option for many residents. A playroom was in time provided for, that grew over the years to a fully-fledged Children’s Service – something we had never imagined as necessary in 1981. At that time, we did not fully appreciate the impact of an abusive home life on children, or recognise that each child would also need support.

In 1981, our building was known as the Battered Wives Hostel – a name some people in Galway will still recall. This was how society saw women and interpreted domestic abuse – it only happened to a ‘wife’ and it involved physical violence – usually, there was an expectation that the assailant was a wayward drunk. After a couple of nights with his wife away in the refuge, he would learn his lesson and behave. Until the next time.

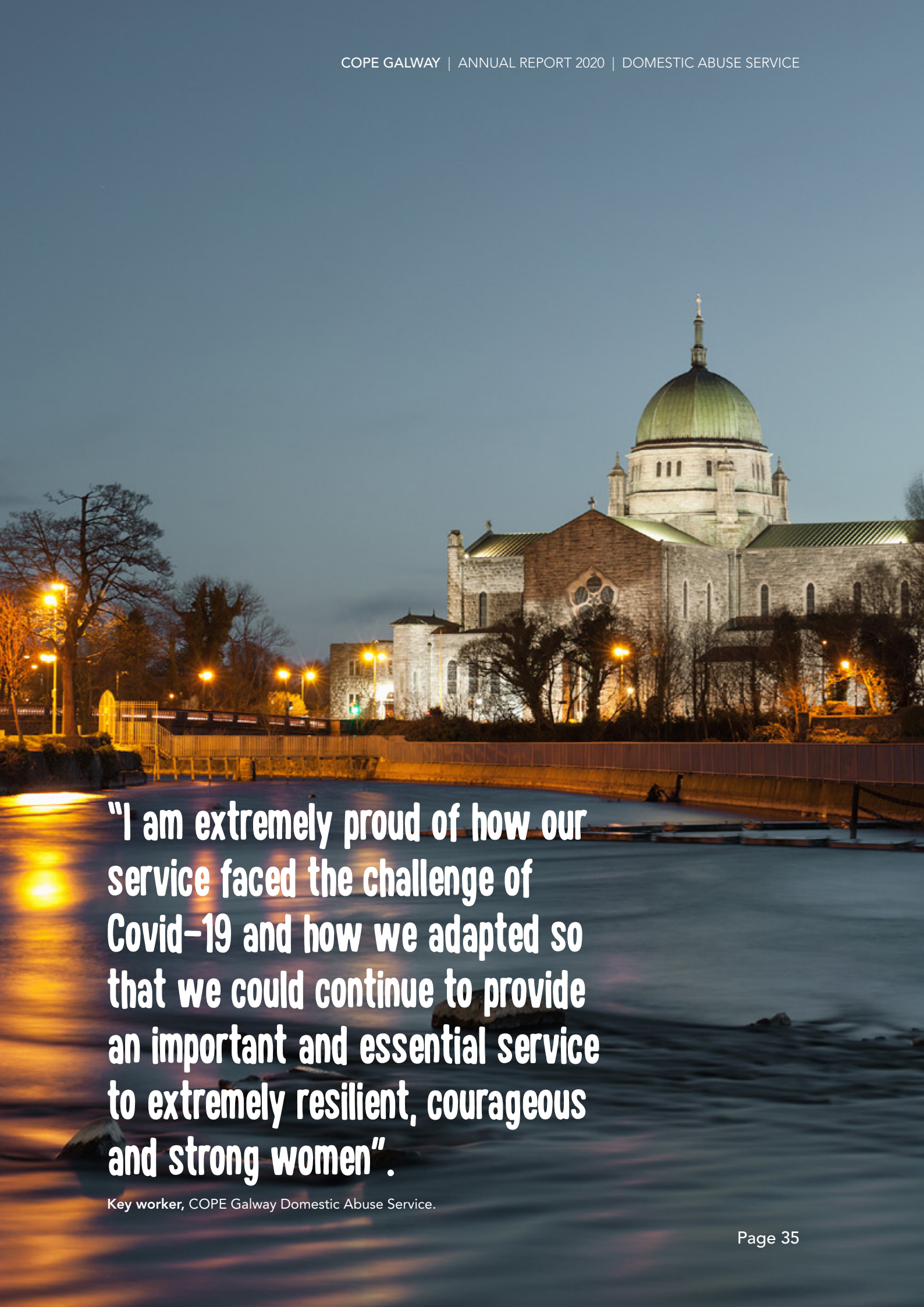
And that is what early records also show – repeated admissions – the same woman, over and over again, her children’s ages changing, new babies being born, older ones moving on. Abuse which haunted and marked a family – and the best we could offer was a couple of nights in a place for “battered wives”.

The fact that this was the best on offer was reflective of wider issues in society and the oppression of women – struggles persisted for access to contraception, the recognition of marital rape, the right to equal pay for equal work. Some of these struggles remain unresolved.

The story of Waterside House is the story of women in Galway. Over forty years, thousands of women have come through those doors. Each woman has taught us something. We have listened humbly and respectfully to her story – tales of abuse, neglect, violence, humiliation, depravity, torture – thinking there is nowhere to go for help, no way to make it stop.

In 2021 the world has changed in so many ways – but not for every woman.

We will soon mark this 40 years of growing, of learning, of evolving - and we hope you to will share this milestone with us.



"I am extremely proud of how our service faced the challenge of Covid-19 and how we adapted so that we could continue to provide an important and essential service to extremely resilient, courageous and strong women".

Key worker, COPE Galway Domestic Abuse Service.

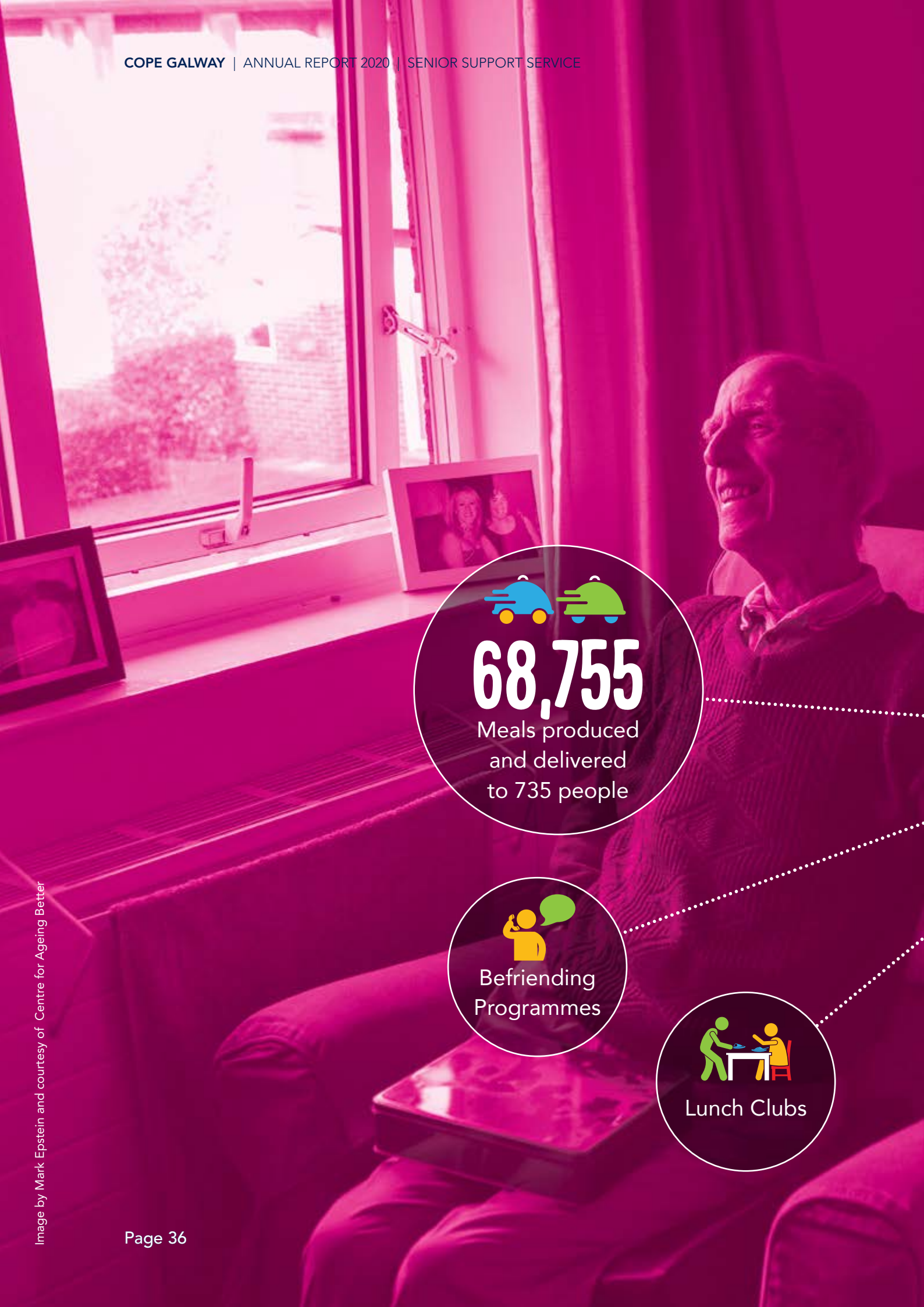


Image by Mark Epstein and courtesy of Centre for Ageing Better

Senior Support Service

Working to support independent ageing at home; helping older people in our community to stay in their own home for as long as they wish to do so.



In 2020
COPE Galway supported:

856*

Older People

**total number represents unique clients*

Additional Supports:

3,359 individuals via FEAD Programme

350 food bag deliveries

85 Helpline calls

400 Christmas hampers

182 support calls



Community Support
Projects



Meet Alice

Alice Waring is a shining example of the positivity and resilience demonstrated by older people throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. At a time when social distancing and restrictions might leave people feeling lonely or isolated, Alice has kept herself busy by going for walks, keeping in touch with friends and extended family, checking in on neighbours, listening to religious services on the radio, and treating herself to good food and fresh flowers.

"Alice is a wonderful active older person who found the restrictions really difficult but did all she could to maintain her mental and physical health," said Community Support Worker Noelle Jennings. Alice credits COPE Galway with supporting her through the difficult past year. "They're one of the greats," she said.

A Renmore resident, originally from Dublin, she has always liked helping out and raising money for causes she supports.

"I suppose I'm good for going out with a jar and putting it under people's noses," Alice joked about her own fundraising efforts. "I don't take no for an answer! But it's all for a good cause."

She also joked that she's 'a little bit nosey, for want of a better word' and always makes sure to check in on her neighbours. She's found it hard since restrictions have also put a temporary halt to social events for the tight-knit community she lives in. Like many others, Alice found the third Level 5 lockdown the most challenging, as it even put a stop to her rare shopping trips to town. "I'm a bit of a goer, I'd attempt anything," she said, but she went on to say that she understood the health and safety concerns as someone who is in her seventies. "But I am quite active and thank goodness for that."

"Two years ago, my niece took me on the trip of a lifetime to California. It was absolutely gorgeous," she said, adding how grateful she was to have taken the trip before the onset of Covid-19 travel restrictions. "I think it actually kept me together [through the past year]."

"But it can be hard, not being able to get to town, and coffee shops, there's a thing I miss! There's nothing like a nice, proper cup of coffee. When I used to go to town all the lads knew me and my cappuccinos!"

Nonetheless, Alice makes an effort to get out and about. "You have to watch when you go for walks that there aren't too many people around. There's a park near where I live and I go around that two or three times per day if the weather is fine. And I've just taken on an exercise classes on Zoom. I was aching from head to toe!"

"I'm trying to learn Zoom as well, now that's something we didn't grow up with at all ... It's amazing the amount of people you try and keep in touch with."

She has found the Acorn tablet provided by COPE Galway through Galway City Partnership very helpful for navigating the Internet and uses it to watch religious services, which she has missed attending.

Senior Support Service in 2020

Throughout 2020 COPE Galway's Senior Support Services worked to support independent ageing at home thereby helping older people in our community to stay in their own home for as long as they wish to do so. Reacting quickly to the coronavirus pandemic in March, you will read below how we moved swiftly to ensure we could continue to offer the services and supports needed to ensure ongoing nutritious meals, regular social contact and responsiveness to emerging issues. We appreciate all the goodwill and support we received from across our community and we extend a sincere thanks to all on behalf of those who very much appreciate your generosity and commitment.

Here's how we reached out.



SNAPSHOT

Responsiveness, Adaptability and Resilience during Covid-19

Our team of staff and volunteers have been working together to support older people throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our social enterprise, Meals4Health, experienced a significant increase in demand for home delivered, fresh ready meals and we extended our delivery area to all of the west of Ireland, including offshore islands.

We made an initial phone call to engage with over 182 older people known to us through our meals service, drop-in centre and community projects to offer help and practical supports we had put in place for those who needed it – shopping, prescription and pension collection.

We quickly reached out to older people who became increasingly isolated and lonely as the pandemic continued. We set up an information and practical support helpline for older people and we produced and distributed an information [leaflet](#) – outlining advice and information on staying safe.

We offered a weekly check-in call to older people living alone, providing security and peace of mind for those who needed it and we provided a regular call to 35-40 older people per week.

Over time, the focus of our support shifted from the practical towards identifying ways to support individuals' mental and physical health – we distributed knitting kits, library books, exercise sheets and DVDs to our client base and cocooning volunteers.

We worked with ALONE who referred nine Galway-based older people who had made contact with their national helpline and were experiencing mental health difficulties and feeling isolated. We continue to provide phone support to these individuals

We have started working with a number of more vulnerable individuals who became known to us through concerned members of the public and the Community Gardaí.

We set up a new phone befriending project called **TIME to Care** whereby volunteers are matched with an older person, offering companionship through weekly phone calls that can support the person to maintain mental and physical health and wellbeing.

We are deeply grateful for the support which enabled us to continue to provide and adapt our services for older people in Galway throughout the Covid-19 crisis. We received additional support from the HSE, Galway City and County Councils, Medtronic, The Ireland Funds, The Community Foundation Ireland, Comic Relief and many more.

Read about our advocacy work and campaigns around positive ageing and ageing well from [page 52](#).





Nutritional Support during a Pandemic

COPE Galway's [Community Catering](#) service was in a position to immediately respond to the enormous increase in demand for meals as a result of Covid-19 restrictions.

In our determination to secure the continuity of our services, to rapidly scale up, ensure contingency and compliance with Covid-19 guidelines, we added two additional production shifts and divided our core team across these shifts. For their safety, some of our long-standing older volunteers had to step down. We also benefited from the expertise of new volunteers from the hospitality industry and other sectors whose companies closed temporarily. The new system remains in place and thankfully, meals were delivered on schedule every day.

We responded to every single referral from the Gardaí, HSE and local councils within 24 hours and used donations to pay for meals where customers were unable to do so, ensuring that no older person that we were made aware of went without a meal.

Geraldine Ryan, COPE Galway Community Catering Executive Chef and Manager talks about the first weeks after the arrival of the pandemic. "I can only describe it as a tidal wave ... We operate a professional service. It's really important for our clients to have continuity and consistency – we were worried about the bonds with volunteers that had

to step aside. It was emotional. But then we had such huge enthusiasm from new people offering their services, from all sectors, who suddenly found themselves out of their own work, with some time on their hands and eager to jump on board and help out. As a positive-thinking, solution focused organisation, not only could we continue our service, we have responded to a huge increase in demand and that's something we're really proud of."



[Listen to the podcast \(spotify\)](#)

Listen to Community Catering's Executive Chef, Geraldine Ryan's interview with Galway Volunteer Centre in May 2020 on how the meals service adapted and remained fully responsive when the pandemic hit.

At the start of lockdown, we received a call from London - Ronan was calling about his mother Julia, aged 93, who is living alone in Galway City. Julia had been living independently but just weeks before Covid-19 Julia had been discharged from hospital following a fall and was now unable to shop and cook for herself.

Ronan was very concerned that his mother would not be able to get the food she needed. The same day we set up an account for Julia and delivered a supply of soups and main meals to ensure she had enough for the weekend. Julia has been receiving meal deliveries twice a week ever since. Each week Ronan orders and pays online on behalf of his mother and he phones us regularly to express his appreciation for the care his mother receives. "It's not just the meals," he says, "Mum really likes having a chat with the volunteer who delivers the meals to the door twice a week". Julia has been receiving meal deliveries twice a week ever since.

Meals4Health: Award-Winning Social Enterprise

2020 concluded on a high note with [Meals4Health](#) winning the Charity Impact Social Enterprise Award. This gave great recognition to our work; reassurance that we are on the right path; acknowledging the hard work of our staff and our volunteers and the importance of supporting the nutritional needs of older people, so that they can live well and age well at home.

The award enhances the credibility and awareness of the Meals4Health brand, enabling us to connect with more people, support those who need us and make a bigger contribution to achieving positive social change.



Watch the [video](#) (Youtube)



“Can I just say a big thank you to the team at COPE Galway? Keeping the meals service running throughout the current Covid19 crisis is no mean feat and as someone who relies on the service to ensure my father has nutritious meals throughout the week, the efforts are greatly appreciated.”

“Just wanted to say thank you all so much for all ye are doing during lockdown and keeping it going...but I also want to give ye great gratitude for the lovely chocolates and cookies ye delivered with Dad’s dinner on Friday, that cheered him up so much, he was delighted to get them and it really made his day... We do appreciate all ye do but these gestures are so kind and thoughtful and really does help to lift their spirits.”

“Thank you for the wonderful home delivered meals service that you have provided my Dad since last September. Your service is fantastic and as a family caring remotely for our Dad it has assisted us greatly. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your assistance and reliability with the meals service and also to please pass on our gratitude to the wonderful, friendly volunteers - including Jean and Colette whom we have met regularly over lockdown.”



**Thanks
so Much!**

“Thanks so much for the surprise Easter Egg with the Easter weekend meals delivery. It was so thoughtful and as you can see in the pic above, Dad was thrilled - it brightened up his day “cocooning”. Really appreciate your wonderful service especially during these challenging times, it is a real godsend.”

The Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived (FEAD) Programme

In 2020, we continued to collect and distribute monthly food boxes to 3,359 individuals across Galway City and County who are at risk of food poverty and homelessness – individuals, families and older people who require essential food support. We did this through the EU-wide FEAD programme, which helps people take their first steps out of poverty and social exclusion. To identify and extend support to families most at risk in our community, we collaborate with TUSLA; No 4 Youth Service (formerly Galway Diocesan Youth Services); Gort Family Resource Centre; Ability West; Loughrea Family Resource Centre; Ballinasloe Family Resource Centre; Society of St Vincent de Paul. The Department of Social Protection manages the fund through FEAD Ireland.



**Meet
DONAL**

"The people I meet and the service provided is enough motivation to keep volunteering!"

Community Catering volunteer Donal Ryan devotes twenty hours every week to making deliveries five days a week. His expertise and commitment have been hugely supportive to expanding the geographical reach of COPE Galway's Meals4Health, allowing accessibility of a home delivered meals service to a larger cohort of older people in County Galway.

Donal began volunteering with COPE Galway in October 2019 following a hip replacement, which forced him to retire. After a career spent working twelve-hour days, six days a week, Donal knew he would benefit more if he kept busy after retirement and was attracted to COPE Galway because of its broad spectrum of services and volunteering opportunities. "When I picked COPE Galway as the charity I would volunteer with, I needed something to keep me busy and active. The people I meet every time and the interaction and services we provide is enough motivation in itself to keep me volunteering."

Donal delivers meals on his Corofin-Claregalway route, which spans a 40km area. His work with COPE Galway also incorporates the FEAD distribution programme.

"I'm happy to do it, it gets me out of the house," Donal said, shrugging off the significant time commitment he dedicates to his deliveries. Fortunately, deliveries continued without interruption throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

At the outset of the pandemic, COPE Galway Community Catering very quickly put enhanced sanitising and meal collection procedures in place and provided PPE and training for all volunteers to safely deliver meals, safeguarding clients and volunteers, allowing for the continuation of the service.

Donal praises COPE Galway staff's professionalism and dedication. "Anyone I've met within the COPE Galway organisation, they're all committed to what they're doing and there's a good, friendly atmosphere throughout everything we do and a good working relationship with other agencies and charity partners," he said.

Describing his food delivery runs, Donal said, "A lot of the people you're delivering to wouldn't have any other interaction with people during the day at all. Quite often, you're the only person they see."

Though the calls might be as brief as a few minutes, the clients look forward to meeting and having a chat. Donal said the deliveries are a meaningful way to check in on people and maintain connections, especially for his housebound clients who live in rural settings. "That's where you feel like you're making a slight difference and adding something to their life. Now, they add something to your life too."

Sometimes the daily calls are a matter of safety as much as connection. "I had one instance when an older man collapsed inside the house, and he couldn't get up off the floor," Donal said. "I was knocking at the front door and then I went around to the back of the house and gained access, and I found him on the floor, unable to help himself up." Donal remained with the man, contacting a family member who rang the ambulance. After receiving hospital care the man was very happy to return back home again.

"You get comments back that [clients] are really appreciative of what COPE Galway is doing," Donal said. For example, he said, all the women received small gifts on Mother's Day. "One of the women said, 'But I'm not a mother, Donal' and I said, what's wrong with that? You had a mother, hadn't you? And she was very thrilled to get it."

Whether it's a small token to brighten their day or something as essential as a nutritious meal, Donal doesn't underestimate the importance of COPE Galway's food services. "It's the satisfaction of knowing you're doing something good and giving something back. My own parents, when they aged and needed help, we were lucky that there were seven of us in the family, and we used to take the responsibility one day a week. But a lot of families don't have that. Without Community Catering and Meals4Health, some clients wouldn't have a way of getting the sustenance on a daily basis."

Responding and Reaching Out

Social Supports for Older People

We offer a wide range of one-to-one and group social supports. Much of our work revolves around three housing clusters in Mervue, Renmore and in the city centre. We are also responsive to individuals living in the east side of the city.

2020 restrictions were hard on so many older people who missed their usual activities, lunch clubs and general social life. Every opportunity to continue to support people across all three housing complexes in whatever way they needed became paramount. The residents have shown extraordinary resilience and ability to adapt and learn new skills. Some residents upskilled by availing of Acorn tablets we provided through collaboration with Galway City Partnership and Age Action, to keep in touch digitally. [More on this in Alice Waring's story at the [beginning of this section](#)]

During restrictions, our [Sonas Day Centre](#) in Mervue continued to be a point of contact for people who would normally use the service. Staff remained on site each day to reach out and respond to people, offering information and help with any emerging issues. We kept in contact through regular phone calls, offering shopping, prescription, pension collections and meal deliveries.

When restrictions eased during the summer, we held a socially-distanced barbeque and started a weekly walking group, boosting the morale and spirits of Mervue residents after a long period of isolation.

We also planted flowers and vegetables in the community garden and greenhouse, with opportunities for members of the community to take part safely. We delivered food packages to clients throughout the year. At Christmas, clients received a food hamper and present, including a beautiful art set for those who were missing their regular art classes.



“It has never been more important to reclaim our outdoor public spaces and use them to engage with each other and our surroundings in new, creative and safe ways”.

Aoife Barrett, artist.



Artist in the Community Project

Artist Aoife Barrett facilitated an 'Artist in the community' art project for residents at the Mervue housing cluster throughout 2020, building on previous art class interactions while safely engaging with the community during restrictions. The project focused on using traditional communication tools for distance engagement, setting up systems for ongoing community dialogue and promoting value in everyday skills.



The group explored different platforms for storytelling and skills sharing. The resulting 'Mail to Mervue' project used print, post and audio to engage and share creative experiences while distancing. They also revived the community garden as a safe outdoor space to bring people together and were able to embrace the joy of working together and the power of hands-on activities to engage and share.

They plan to develop the community garden into a more active, social space created by residents, for residents. The hope also is to create an alternative outdoor cinema, featuring audio recordings and nuggets of information from the residents and surrounding community.



Aoife Barrett says, "I was lucky enough to have met local resident Dennis Connolly during this time. We have become great friends and he has kindly and generously shared his talents, skills and stories with me. Working together, we documented these through audio, video and a range of printed materials from postcards to posters. We're looking forward to sharing these recordings and prints of Dennis's stories with the wider community and encourage further sharing in the hopes of developing a much bigger community project"

TIME to Care

Phone Befriending Programme

Our Helping Hands at Home programme, which has provided valuable volunteer befriending services and practical supports in the home for older people since 2019, was regrettably put on hold during the Covid-19 crisis. As ongoing restrictions enforced isolation for many, we felt it especially vital that we reach out in other ways to ensure those who are self-isolating still have ways to connect with others.

We developed **TIME to Care** – a phone befriending programme delivered by a team of volunteers who are trained and supported to become one-to-one befrienders via telephone, reaching out to older people who feel isolated or lonely. Community Support Worker, Noelle Jennings explains, “We match the volunteer to an older person with similar interests to encourage easy and interesting conversation. The volunteer also gently connects with the older person around maintaining a healthy routine and minding their physical and mental health. TIME to Care focuses on four areas (see graphic), which can make a real difference in keeping well and healthy, especially during these challenging times.



A weekly phone call with a friend can do wonders to lift spirits, especially during a pandemic under months of Level 5 restrictions. COPE Galway’s TIME to Care phone befriending programme was an answer to the loneliness experienced by many older clients who had to isolate in their homes.



Matched based on similar interests, volunteer Arielle Locke had an immediate connection with Ann Kirwan because of a shared link to Canada. Arielle is a Vancouver native studying medicine in Galway, and Ann’s late son David had emigrated to Alberta before he passed away. “I have a friend now I call every week,” Arielle said. “[Ann] is the most lovely, caring woman who has gone through so much in her life but has the best possible outlook. I keep on learning things, and she has a really sharp memory for what we talked about last week.”

Arielle began volunteering with COPE Galway through the Helping Hands at Home programme, but after the Covid-19 pandemic set in, she was contacted to take part in TIME to Care. COPE Galway staff matched Arielle with Ann, who had connected with the programme. “I’ve always volunteered growing up, mostly with children, so I hadn’t really had much experience volunteering with the older population, and that’s something I wanted to explore because it’s a different generation and a different stage of life,” Arielle said.

The pair's phone calls usually take place on Fridays, and both women look forward to the calls every week. Arielle said she's learned so much from Ann's stories and advice, and the two women enjoyed swapping cultural differences between Canada and Ireland. Their connection has also brought the realities of Covid-19 for older people into sharp perspective, Arielle said.

"You're hearing on the news how older people are very isolated, and you feel for them, but it's different when you're actually talking to someone [in that position]," Arielle said. "It's very isolating and I really felt for her in that way."

Before beginning TIME to Care, Arielle said she was picturing short telephone calls and small talk, but she described her calls as just as open as talking to any other friend. "I'm very lucky to have been paired with Ann. [The conversations] are very open, she shares and we talk about anything," Arielle said. "She always asks how my week was, and how my college work is going. It's really like a friend."

Ann echoed this sentiment, saying there's 'nothing off-limits' when talking to Arielle, and she too found their conversations very open.

Ann, who has suffered the loss of her son, her husband and has her own health difficulties, remains remarkably positive. A mother of eight, she says she is blessed with a great family and her children are 'always ringing and checking up on me,' but it's nice to have someone outside her immediate circle to discuss things with. She said the family gathers every year for her son's anniversary mass. "It did turn into something very special and nice because my husband and I started to do gardening. There was a little patch at the back of the house and we said we'd do a remembrance garden for David and that's what brought us out of this slumber. It got us moving and motivated so when the family came home they could go into David's garden and sit there and think about him."

Ann and her husband also planted an oak tree in front of their house, something David had asked them to do. "Something came over me that I wanted to extend the garden, so that's me kept busy and going," she said. She continued gardening after her husband passed away and said visiting garden centres was a great comfort to her – something she's missed most throughout the Covid-19 lockdowns.

Arielle emphasised that her friendship with Ann is reciprocal – she benefits quite as much as Ann does. "For me, it's rewarding to be a point of contact for her, and it's nice for her to have someone checking in. She's doing the same thing for me, so it's a mutual relationship," she said.

TIME to Care is an amazing way to build a new connection or relationship with someone you might never have met otherwise, Arielle said, "For me, I'm on my own so it's nice to actually call somebody."



"An old-school phone call can go a long way."

Advocacy & Awareness

Advocacy

Compassion and Advocacy

COPE Galway works to address inequality and disadvantage and to challenge the wider systems that perpetuate these issues. We work to bring about change in policy and practices and to strike out against injustice.

We act with compassion and empathy every time we work to improve outcomes for those with whom we work. We implement a compassionate culture by listening, respecting and by understanding the barriers those we work with have experienced through marginalisation, poverty, social exclusion and so on. Working with compassion leads us to challenge these barriers.

We advocate for change to challenge the systems that perpetuate cycles of disadvantage, social exclusion and marginalisation. We do this to ensure the voices of those we work with are heard and their experiences are valued, understood, respected and considered when policies and practices that affect them are formulated. It empowers those we work for to vindicate their rights, making sure they determine the decisions that affect them.

Compassion and advocacy work together: advocacy is the tool that can help relieve suffering and work towards building a community where every person is valued, cared for and supported at every stage of life.

Client Voice and Participation

COPE Galway works to ensure the people we work with are meaningfully involved by fully participating in decisions that affect them. Throughout 2020 we continued our work on 'Amplifying Voices', a collaborative project with Galway Simon Community which began in 2019. Coordinated by UK experts Practical Governance and supported through funding from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, the project aims to ensure the voice of the people we work with is central to our service delivery.

In conjunction with a number of workshops and talks with UK organisations Mayday Trust and Platform on their learnings from change processes, Practical Governance facilitated conversations and consultations that led to the creation of our Client Voice and Participation Team and the formulation of COPE Galway's strategic intent on client participation for homeless services.



Coimisiún na hÉireann
um Chearta an Duine
agus Comhionannas
Irish Human Rights and
Equality Commission

This project is supported
under the Irish Human
Rights and Equality
Commission Grant Scheme

Our vision for client participation is “Enhancing client voice and fostering an assets-based and person-centred approach across all our work”, which will guide us as we continue the journey of implementing our strategic goal of an asset- and strengths-based approach.

Advocacy in a time of Covid-19

Like most other aspects of COPE Galway's activities over the course of 2020, our work in the area of advocacy was similarly dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The proverb 'necessity is the mother of invention' never rang truer than during this time when we saw positive changes occur in areas we at COPE Galway had long sought. The moratorium on evictions and the freezing of rent levels contributed towards the prevention of homelessness. The rollout of the 'Still Here' awareness campaign and the Garda Operation Faoiseamh in response to domestic abuse were among measures we would have considered extremely difficult to achieve at the start of 2020 but which came to pass over the course of the year. The pandemic also generated new initiatives to address negative narratives and attitudes around ageing, which were compounded during this time - more on this in the spotlight section on page 52.

Advocating for Change

Throughout 2020 COPE Galway continued to advocate for change at local and national levels. We collaborated with many agencies and services to advance our advocacy objectives, improve outcomes for those we work with and to challenge systemic issues that lead to people needing our services. Our advocacy work includes our day-to-day work and stretches across our services. It also involves making regular submissions to Government agencies and contributing to local and national dialogue on various issues that affect those we work with.



In 2020 we made submissions on a range of issues including:

- Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection - Public Consultation on the development of the Department's Statement of Strategy 2020-2023
- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage Call for Submissions: Statement of Strategy 2021 – 2025
- Budget 2021 – Submission highlighting opportunities to build on positive and encouraging initiatives that emerged during the pandemic to support the most vulnerable
- Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028, Issues Paper
- Review of the Child Care Act 1991
- Strategy for the Criminal Justice System
- Submission on the National Minimum Wage

General Election 2020

February 8 2020 saw a General Election take place followed by a Seanad Election in March.

We communicated key policy [recommendations](#) to political parties and all Galway constituency candidates to support our vision for a future Irish society without inequalities. These included measures such as a constitutional referendum to enshrine the right to housing; the construction of new social housing and measures to protect those who are living in private rented housing. In parallel with this we conducted a public information campaign to encourage voters to inform themselves and to seek commitment from their local candidates to address issues around housing, homelessness, domestic abuse and to support older people.

While the new Government was forming, we submitted details of what we were seeking to be included in the [Programme for Government](#), to address the inequalities which left so many behind over recent years of recovery and increasing economic prosperity.

Awareness & Information

Communications Campaigns during a Pandemic

When the pandemic restrictions activated in March and as we adjusted to a new way of living and working, our main focus was to keep all stakeholders informed of important updates to service operations. We immediately developed new marketing resources and executed extended media campaigns to publicise our emergency numbers and to inform the community that our domestic abuse, senior support and homeless services remained open and operational within strict safety protocols.

As the Covid-19 situation evolved, our regular outreach training and information sessions were curtailed, with visits to community halls, schools, colleges and organisations cut entirely.

We learned and quickly implemented new technical skills, making full use of available digital meeting and broadcast tools as we creatively adapted and successfully executed a new series of planned, targeted campaigns to communicate the impact of the work we do.

In March, we launched a new helpline for older people, accompanied by an extensive local information campaign. We were concerned about older people experiencing extreme isolation during the restrictions and spoke regularly on local radio to encourage engagement with us and to inform older people and their families of our extended Meals4Health service.

We worried about the impact the restrictions were having on women who lived with an abuser while the pandemic presented a unique opportunity for intimate abuse and control. We distributed posters to public outlets to let women know that our domestic abuse service was a safe place, open and available to help protect them. Using our digital, print and social media platforms and channels, we issued regular appeals for women experiencing domestic abuse to get in touch.

We contributed to local and national media updates, with regular social media posts in relation to how our homeless service continued to operate with new safety measures in place, especially during the cold weather.



UN Special Rapporteur on the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights, Professor Fionnuala Ní Aoláin launched the 2019 annual report from Minnesota. The focus of this event was on our work with older people, many of whom experience loneliness and isolation that was compounded by restrictions related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Professor Ní Aoláin warned of the dangers of diminishing the autonomy and dignity of people as we age and emphasised how our human rights do not diminish with age.

A key element of COPE Galway's work is to inform the public and various stakeholders of the impact of our work, the issues we face and the changes we seek, while focusing on giving voice to the people with whom we work. In June, we held one of the first online annual report launches in Ireland, with keynote speaker, Professor Fionnuala Ní Aoláin launching our 2019 report live from Minnesota.

[Watch TG4 news item \(Grabyo\)](#)

During 2020, we relied hugely on, and are immensely grateful for, the support of local print, digital and broadcast media. Without the Galway media – and their social media platforms, we could not have widely communicated urgent updates and information relating to the social effects of the pandemic. Go raibh míle maith agaibh go léir.





Advocating for Positive Ageing

Advocating for Positive Ageing is a central part of our work at COPE Galway. Population trends project that 22% of our population will be over 65 years in 20 years' time.¹

However, while many people live longer and healthier lives into old age, this is not universal. In the Republic of Ireland, for example, the number of years a man can expect to live in poor health rose from 9.5 in 1999 to 14.7 in 2007. The average woman's likely time in bad health increased from 11.3 years to 16.8 years over the same period. A 2020 Tilda report outlines that almost three-quarters of Irish adults aged 58 and over have two or more medical conditions, with only 8% of the same age group having no medical condition².



'Riverwalk' by Joe O'Donnell at the Galway Art Club exhibition

Furthermore, there tends to be a negative narrative in Ireland about ageing, which was compounded during the pandemic. The Irish Gerontological Association refer to this as "euphemising", which often categorizes the entire demographic as frail, ill, or dependent. This is both incorrect and inappropriate, because we all know many fit, active and vibrant older people, and they are not a homogenous group.³

Another Tilda report points out that adults over 70 are the fabric of their community.⁴ Professor Rose Anne Kenny said, "These data highlight the enormous contribution that older persons make to society in Ireland and to the economic fabric of Ireland, including enabling others to take part in the work force through their volunteering and caring. The Irish people and policy makers should have a huge appreciation and greatly value this role which assists the Irish people and the Irish economy."

COPE Galway very much supports this view.



Students from Scoil Ide posting their letters to their Grandparents.



A letter from Ewan (2nd Class) to his Grandparents

1 Data from *Illustrating Ageing in Ireland North & South Key Facts and Figures*.
 2 Trinity College Dublin's Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing report "*The Older Population of Ireland on the Eve of the Covid-19 Pandemic*", Editors: Rose Anne Kenny, Siobhan Scarlett and Paul O'Mahoney.

3 Media Release Wednesday 22nd April 2020, *Mind your Language! "Words Matter"*. Some advice for us all, including, print and broadcast media from IGS President, Dr. Diarmuid O'Shea.
 4 The Contributions of the over-70s to Irish Society: Results From Wave 5 of *The Irish Longitudinal Study On Ageing*, by Christine McGarrigle, Mark Ward, Siobhan Scarlett, Rose Anne Kenny

Positive Ageing Week 2020

[Positive Ageing Week 2020](#) was a high point of our advocacy work in this area, allowing us an opportunity to draw attention to the valuable work older people contribute to our communities across Galway. We worked together with Age Action and other local agencies to identify and share stories of some of the many older people in our communities who epitomise healthy and active ageing. Their stories featured in local media as well as some letters written by children to their grandparents and other older people who inspired them.

Other activities included a Galway Art Club exhibition of art inspired by positive ageing; extra tours on the Galway Tourist Train for older people and a "Festival in a Van" with pop-up musical performances brought to older people's residential areas by Galway 2020. Mayor Cubbard and local musician, Matt Keane joined our meal delivery volunteers to bring special deliveries of flowers and goodie bags to our clients.

See all stories in [Facebook album](#). Or visit [Positive Ageing Galway - COPE Galway](#)



Performer Niceol Blue entertained at the Positive Ageing Week 2020 Festival in a Van event.

Mayor Mike Cubbard accompanied our volunteer Mary Cahalan on her deliveries during Positive Ageing Week. He said, "Thank you so much for inviting me, It was one of the most enjoyable experiences of my time as Mayor".



Age Well in Galway Community Support and Advocacy Project

This project was developed during 2019 to increase awareness of and understanding about advocacy, give a voice to older people, and share information with the potential to impact on their quality of life. The first of eight sessions started on March 8, 2020 and once the pandemic became apparent, the remaining sessions were adapted to be delivered online. An unexpected benefit of needing to use a virtual platform was an opportunity to learn new skills which undoubtedly opened up communication channels throughout lockdown. **One participant said, "I'm now confident to use Zoom to keep in touch with family and friends" and another said "It was great to find out about so many services and supports for older people in Galway, I've already shared this with my neighbours"**. Another very positive outcome of the project is the new range of resources and factsheets we have added to our [website](#) to help people to access information about services and supports such as the Fair Deal Scheme, home improvement grants, personal alarms, and much more. We are grateful to Eleanor Hough, who designed and delivered this valuable programme.

WHO Decade of Healthy Ageing

On December 14, 2020 the United Nations General Assembly declared 2021-2030 the Decade of Healthy Ageing. The UN Resolution expresses concern that, despite the predictability of population ageing and its accelerating pace, the world is not sufficiently prepared to respond to the rights and needs of older people.

Adopting this UN-wide approach will galvanise international action to improve the lives of older people, their families and communities. Initiatives will seek to change how we think, feel and act towards age and ageing; facilitate the ability of older people to participate in and contribute to their communities and society; deliver integrated care and primary health services that are responsive to the needs of the individual; and provide access to long-term care for older people who need it. The Resolution also calls for collaboration with governments, international and regional organisations, civil society, the private sector, academia and the media. COPE Galway are fully supportive of this initiative.

Galway Positive Ageing Week

Celebrating the contribution of older people across Galway



Alice Waring

Alice has lived in Renmore for over 19 years. As a carer for many people down through the years, her friends still call on her for advice and help, which she gives willingly. Alice has friends around the country and makes sure to keep in touch. In her local community, she never forgets a birthday and often surprises someone with a card and cake. Her kindness, especially to those living alone, means so much. Every year she goes around the community with an empty jam jar and collects money for the Galway Hospice and other charities - you don't say no to Alice! She enjoys nature and the outdoors, helps look after the flowers and shrubs in the community, and feeds the hedgehog family. In 2019 Alice fulfilled a lifelong dream of going on a cruise to the US, visiting the Grand Canyon and San Francisco. Las Vegas was her favourite place. Her zest for life is infectious. Alice is 76 years old.



John Cunningham

John, married to Kathleen for 41 years, has three children and three grandchildren. His education brought him to Washington D.C. earning degrees in Philosophy, Psychology, Electrical Engineering, and a career in the Computer Industry. John was an Engineering lecturer at NUI Galway for 11 years. In 1998, he started his own company in Management Consulting and finally retired last year at the age of 73. Along the way John found time to give 19 years of voluntary service to SVP Society, Galway, plus 8 years with the Galway Contact Organisation for Older People, including 3 years as Chairperson. He has been involved in various sports, singing in several choirs in Ireland and the U.S. He walks 30 minutes each day, does gardening and Sudoku, and still finds time for his Bible studies. He says he has always been motivated to help other people and hopes to continue doing that for a long time yet.



Sean Cleary

Sean is a native of Mayo but living in Galway for forty-five years. He retired nine years ago but that certainly didn't slow him down! He wanted to give back to his community and so he now volunteers with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. He says he find home visitation difficult sometimes, but very fulfilling and a privilege. Sean also drives for COPE Galway's Meals on Wheels two/three days a week, delivering lunches to mainly older people usually living alone. He enjoys having a chat as some have very little contact with the outside world. It gives him a great boost to know that he could bring a smile to the faces of the people he meets. And as if Sean is not busy enough, he also finds time to help as steward in the Cathedral for the annual novena and special occasions. He is also a member of the Residents Association and enjoys tending to the flower beds open spaces in his area.



Harry Wall

Harry was born on 1939, the youngest of seven children. He started school in September 1945 the month World War 2 ended, walking the two miles every day, and serving mass in the nearby church each morning for about five years before school. Harry began work delivering telegrams on a bicycle, in the GPO Galway in 1954. He was transferred to the delivery of post in 1956. He worked for An Post until his retirement in August 2000. In August 1965 he settled down in Renmore with his new wife Tess. They had a family of five boys all of whom have now flown the nest. In 2004 at age 65, Harry began volunteering with COPE Galway Community Catering delivering meals to various destinations in Galway City. Then in November 2007 the Claregalway route became vacant and he delivered the meals in that area 5 days per week until Friday 13th March 2020 when he retired again at age 81.



Mattie Harte

Mattie is a retired army veteran. He is the caretaker of St James GAA hall in Mervue and does a lot for the community. He helps out with fundraising for the GAA and volunteers his time helping with various activities in Mervue. He can often be seen out picking up rubbish after the weekend on the pitches and the park, keeping them clean and tidy. Mattie is a great support to the Sonas Day Centre in the Walter Macken flats. Over the years he would have the hall set up and ready every week for the lunch club and stay around to help during and after with the clearing up. Born and raised in Mervue, he has a great connection with people there. He loves to be out walking and you will see him early mornings making sure he is getting plenty of exercise. Mattie is 68 years of age.



Mary O'Donnell

Mary is 70(ish) years old and from Galway. Mary is very active and involved with older people in the Mervue community. She volunteered with St Vincent de Paul for 30 years visiting older people. She has also volunteered as a befriender with Galway Contact for a number of years. Mary is the secretary in the Holy Family church in Mervue and her role operating the phone has certainly increased since Covid19. With so many people confined to their homes she spends a lot of time now keeping people up to date with everything that is going on in the parish and is a familiar voice at the end of the phone. The conversations can be as varied as the fine weather. Before Covid Mary would also visit parishioners that were in hospital and help people any way she could by doing shopping for anyone that were unable to do it themselves. She is a vital link for many people in the parish.

Galway Positive Ageing Week

Celebrating the contribution of older people across Galway



Celia Donnelly

The people of Athenry know Celia well, as she helps out here, there and everywhere! Her main role for the last few years is the Chairperson of the Athenry Christmas lights committee. In November she'll be on the streets at the crack of dawn helping to put up the lights, but before that she will have raised the funds from the local business community, ran car boot and cake sales, and arranged for the Christmas trees in the town. The light show in Athenry is becoming famous as a result of all her efforts. Celia is also involved with Tidy Towns, the Agricultural show, and she regularly weeds beds, sows new plants and trees and helps to make Athenry look beautiful. And as the youth officer with Athenry schools she gets lots of help from the children! She walks the town every morning with her wee doggy. There are so many people in the area who have benefited from Celia's thoughtfulness, kindness and generosity. Celia is 81 years of age.



Nancy Maloney

At 74 years old and married for 54 years, Nancy is on the go in her community! After raising six children, she re-entered the workplace and for over 20 years, supports people in the intellectual disability sector. Based in Tuam she provides weekly community outreach and respite care to families. Motivating and encouraging people is at her core and she also fosters this among her 10 grandchildren. Nancy recently returned to further education, developing IT and patchwork skills, and meeting new people at cookery classes. Nancy is also a breast cancer survivor. Grateful for her continued good health, she continues to be engaged in full-time farming, looks forward to continuing her work and professional development (including a venture in sport-horse breeding!), as well as her work within the community. Nancy's zest for life, work and offering something back is what keeps her fulfilled and looking forward to the many new life experiences and adventures that await.



Padraic Mannion

Padraic and his wife, Evelyn, have three daughters and five grandchildren who they collect from school and take to athletics and Gaelic football. Padraic is passionate about GAA. His pride and joy is his home team, Turloughmore Hurling Club which has been part of his life since the 1970's. Padraic is Assistant Treasurer and has been there to witness their many prestigious achievements. He is also Treasurer of CRH Athletics Club for over 30 years. Padraic is a member of a Quiz team and is involved with SCOR Galway. He was on the team that won the Championships twice! In 1990 he appeared on the RTE1 Quiz show "Where in the World" and was on the team that won. Following retirement, Padraic wanted to remain active and joined COPE Galway Meals on Wheels service delivering meals in County Galway, giving him great satisfaction. Customers look forward to the social contact and chats. Padraic is 78 years old.



Sr Agnes Curley

Sr Agnes has enriched many lives, particularly those who are vulnerable, by her immense contribution to the redevelopment of Gilmartin Road in Tuam. She has always been very inclusive and empathetic and does so with great gusto and enthusiasm. Sr Agnes is a passionate advocate for swift conservation and local initiatives by Tuam Tidy Towns. Her skill and persuasive approach has included organising litter picking campaigns, tree planting and restoring an over-grown Holy Well. She is a driven, honest, compassionate person and is always keen to lead on projects. Sr Agnes participates in the annual Tuamóg Children's Nature and Bee-Friendly Festival creating her own stories about Irish folklore and conveying them through word and song; encouraging the children to respect and nurture nature. She is a role model to all through her ongoing dedication to the upkeep of the environment and ecosystems. And she still finds time to play the odd round of golf.



Ann Brehony

Ann has three children and five grandchildren who are very close to her. Ann worked in the parish office for 6 years. In 2011 she returned to education and completed a Diploma in Community Development in NUIG. A sense of community is very important to her. She was instrumental in setting up the Corrandulla Tidy Village group and has a great sense of pride in the area looking well. Ann also set up the active retirement group in the local community with 30 to 35 people meeting regularly. As she said herself "we were having a ball". There were many outings, country and western music nights, storytelling and lots of tea and home baking. Her local community have benefited greatly from her energy, and ability to bring people together. Ann is looking forward to when the group can meet again. She describes herself as "always being on the go", loves to swim and is a keen dancer. There is no slowing her down! Anne is 70 years old.

Thank you
to all those in our families
and communities who make a
positive contribution!

Galway Positive Ageing Week

Celebrating the contribution of older people across Galway

Letters to their Grandparents

Read a selection below of wonderful letters sent by schoolchildren to their grandparents in celebration of Positive Ageing Galway.

Odhrán, 2nd Class

Dear Granny Kate, I love you because of your dog Milo and trips in your camper van, when we found a donkey together and kept feeding him/her. When I go to your house, chocolate magically appears. If you hadn't made my Mum, I wouldn't be here writing about you. You are great. From, Odhrán

Laura, 6th Class

Dear Granddad, in school, we're writing about someone we admire and I chose you. Thanks for everything you do, like bringing me to the shops whenever I ask and making breakfast for me nearly every morning. And when we watch TV together, when you bring me to the GAA matches, if I was to write all the things I love about you, it would be about 20 pages long. So let me just say thank you. You're my best, best friend. And if I could pick one person to give a hug to it would be you. Love, Laura

Sophie, 6th Class

Dear Mick the Main Man, I have no words to describe how grateful I am for you. With all the advice and stories, love and care you give me. I love seeing all pictures you send to me of the crows all having a meeting in your garden and all the pictures of the horses when you go on your two hour walk. I love to see your big smile at the school gate waiting for me. I just don't know what I would do without you. I really don't. Lots of love, Sophie

Kim, 6th Class

Dear Nana, in school we are each writing a letter to someone who we appreciate and I decided to write to you. Every day, without fail, you cook amazing meals, bake delicious bread and treats, knit wonderfully warm scarves for charity and do so many other various household jobs. You truly are a wonderful person. You are always so generous Nana, and I have several countless memories of you telling me stories when I was little and I will cherish every single one. The ravishingly delicious and tasty meals you make are second to none and as amazing as a five star restaurant, if not better! I absolutely adore your delectable apple tart and your brown bread and Christmas cakes are one of a kind. You are constantly thinking of our likes and dislikes and always have treats on the go in your secret stash. The way that you lovingly hand-knit all of the wonderfully snug scarves for disadvantaged children in poor and underdeveloped countries is so generous. Those children must be so appreciative of such beautiful scarves and will probably treasure them. You are the best Nana in the entire history of the world and I am so privileged to have you in my life. Infinite love, from Kim

Lucy, 6th Class

Dear Dandy, we decided to write a letter to someone we admire and I chose you. One amazing thing about you is that you choose to work when you can just sit around all day. You're always so kind. And I love going to visit you. It was so nice of you to take in McBeth when her owner died. And I'd love to do that kind of thing when I'm older. You're so nice to Ginger too, and I'm sure you'll be a great Granny to Aoibhin just like you are to me. You always make the loveliest cakes for my birthday and your brownies are the best. You are so good at sugar paste and it makes the cakes look amazing. You also make amazing dinners like lasagne. You also have such a lovely garden and it must take a lot of effort to keep it so pretty. Mine will never be that nice. You're so lovely and I couldn't possibly wish for a better granny. Love Lucy.

Aoife, 6th Class

Dear Peggy, in school we are asked to write a letter to an older person we admire and I chose you. I admire you very much. You're a great Granny to have. I wouldn't ask for anyone else. You make the whole world smile. I love you. I love you very much. I admire the way you get up really early, earlier than me, and walk Rusty every morning and the way you make your garden beautiful and filled with gorgeous flowers and vegetables. You are definitely someone to admire. I admire how active you are. So many people retire way younger than you. I love when you come down to our house, so we come to visit you. I missed you very much over the last year and I would have given anything to see you then. Thank goodness we can see each other now though. You do so many nice things. You are kind and gentle to everyone you meet no matter who they are or what they did. I never seen you angry or grumpy in my life. You are lovely to be around. That's why so many people like you. These are just some of the reasons why I love you so, so much. Aoife

Michelle, 4th Class

Dear Grandad, How are you? Thank you for being so kind and letting me use your accordion. I love when I visit because you sing songs and you are very important to me. Thank you for collecting me from school when I feel sick and you take care of me. You are the best Grandad in the world. I love you soooooo much. Today I am in school and we are writing letters to our Grandad and Granny. Love from Michelle

Ryan, 3rd Class

Dear Granny and Grandad, thank you for always giving me ice lollies. I love seeing you because Koby is always waiting for me to come. You are always so happy to see me. I love to pick blackberries and I love your blackberry crumble. Love, Ryan



Our People

Working at COPE Galway

Resilience at Work during a Pandemic

Covid-19 shone a light on the strength of our people at COPE Galway. Our professional, passionate and dedicated staff of over 150 in 2020 showed commitment above and beyond what could be asked. Across our services, staff had to quickly adapt to what soon became our 'new normal'. They took on new roles and duties, adapted to new models of care and responded to having to work in a peculiarly remote way.

Throughout the various degrees of lockdown, they came to work every day, while no doubt grappling with their own anxieties and fears of the effects of the coronavirus. Our people focused their energy and motivation on ensuring COPE Galway was a safe place for clients and staff during a pandemic and showed diligence, strength, flexibility and resilience throughout 2020.

While the pandemic changed the world in which we live and work almost overnight, our staff have remained the essence of the COPE Galway Approach – one of understanding, respect and response that positively impacts people's lives.

We take this opportunity to extend a sincere thanks to you all for your dedication and resilience throughout 2020.

Employee Wellbeing

It was never so important to mind ourselves during this time. We prioritised staff and volunteer wellbeing and development by ensuring all had access to the supports and training they needed to face this stressful and challenging period. This included our Employee Assistance Programme as well as various programmes like Psychological First Aid Training, Mindfulness, Stress Control and a workshop from Pat Divilly.

Recruitment in 2020

We are very proud of the passion, professionalism and skill of our staff, something we seek to develop and nurture with new staff and student placements. A busy year for services, 2020 saw us recruit and on-board 54 new staff to support our work, focusing particularly on our Cold Weather Response and self-isolation accommodation.

Celebrating Years of Service

We celebrated a number of long-service awards during 2020. It is always a real pleasure to be able to have an opportunity to recognise the service and commitment of our staff. To all who celebrated long service in 2020 – congratulations and thank you for your commitment.

To our four retirees we extend a sincere and heart-felt congratulations. "We had so much fun working with you and will miss you from the team". Thank you for your contribution to the organisation over your many years of service.

Celebrating Retirement

Harry Wall
Community Catering
Driver

Padraic Mannion
Community Catering
Driver

Thomas McDonagh
Housekeeping
Fairgreen Hostel

Eleanor Hough
Community Support
Worker, Senior
Support Service

Celebrating Length of Service

5 Years

Carol Burke

Colette Coughlan

Adelle Grealish

Irina Komarov

Paul Madden

10 Years

Sylvia Colsh

Amy Donohoe

Regina Fitzpatrick

Noelle Jennings

Lucky Ugochi

15 years

Niamh Graham

Ena Mullen

Thankyou



Harry Wall



Padraic Mannion



Irina Komorov



Ena Mullen



Colette Coughlan



Niamh Graham



Noelle Jennings



Sylvia Colsh

SNAPSHOT



Working during a Pandemic

Homeless Service Essential Staff

Throughout this annual report, you will read short accounts from staff across our services about how their work changed throughout the pandemic. Here, we focus on a selection of staff perspectives from across our Homeless Service.

To see people succeeding in the most challenging of times is amazing and makes it all worth it.

Stephanie, Resettlement and Tenancy Support

"I vividly remember the heightened state we were all in during 2020. The pandemic induced a collective traumatic experience that affected staff and clients alike and in various ways, united us. I was taking calls from clients who were looking for more information about Covid-19, testing and restrictions. I admitted many times that I didn't have a lot of new information but assured them that I was only a phone call away if they just needed to vent their anxiety, frustration and fear.

During this time, I also stepped into a new role and I had never met many of the clients beforehand. Introducing myself and attempting to build rapport while working remotely was challenging. However, over time as phone support became the norm and isolation set in, I noted that many people started to communicate with me more candidly and frequently. Gradually I was able to adapt my approach to support clients and connect them to additional resources.

I have a renewed and deeper appreciation for my staff team. While we still collaborate and problem solve together, we long for the days of a busy office and all of us working together side by side again. They have been an incredible support to me and each other this year, while facing so many obstacles and uncertainty.

Although this lockdown has been particularly strenuous, especially to those who already experience loneliness and isolation, as vaccination rates increase there is now a renewed sense of hope."



Claire, Day Centre and Covid-19 Response Emergency Accommodation

"On March 27th 2020, the Day Centre and Cold Weather Response staff at COPE Galway Homeless Service combined to relocate to a more suitable and safer location in response to the escalating Covid-19 pandemic situation. During this year, my colleagues and I have had to adapt and change the service like we never imagined. Relocating the Day Centre service from Teach Corrib and re-deploying to the location of the Cold Weather and Covid-19 Response emergency accommodation provision in Galway City Centre was extremely challenging, not least because we knew there would be clients who would continue to need a day service but no longer had access to one.

Adapting, at times daily, to the regularly updated requirements laid out in public health guidelines was difficult. Doing so whilst still providing a service to some of the most vulnerable members of our community has shown me that my colleagues and I have a strength and resilience which perhaps we never knew we had.

Returning and reopening the Day Centre in September 2020 was both challenging and rewarding. We had to change the way we provide our support but our commitment never wavered. The service has responded to the challenges of this new world and I am hopeful that as we progress through 2021, we will see a return to "normal life" and stand closely together again."

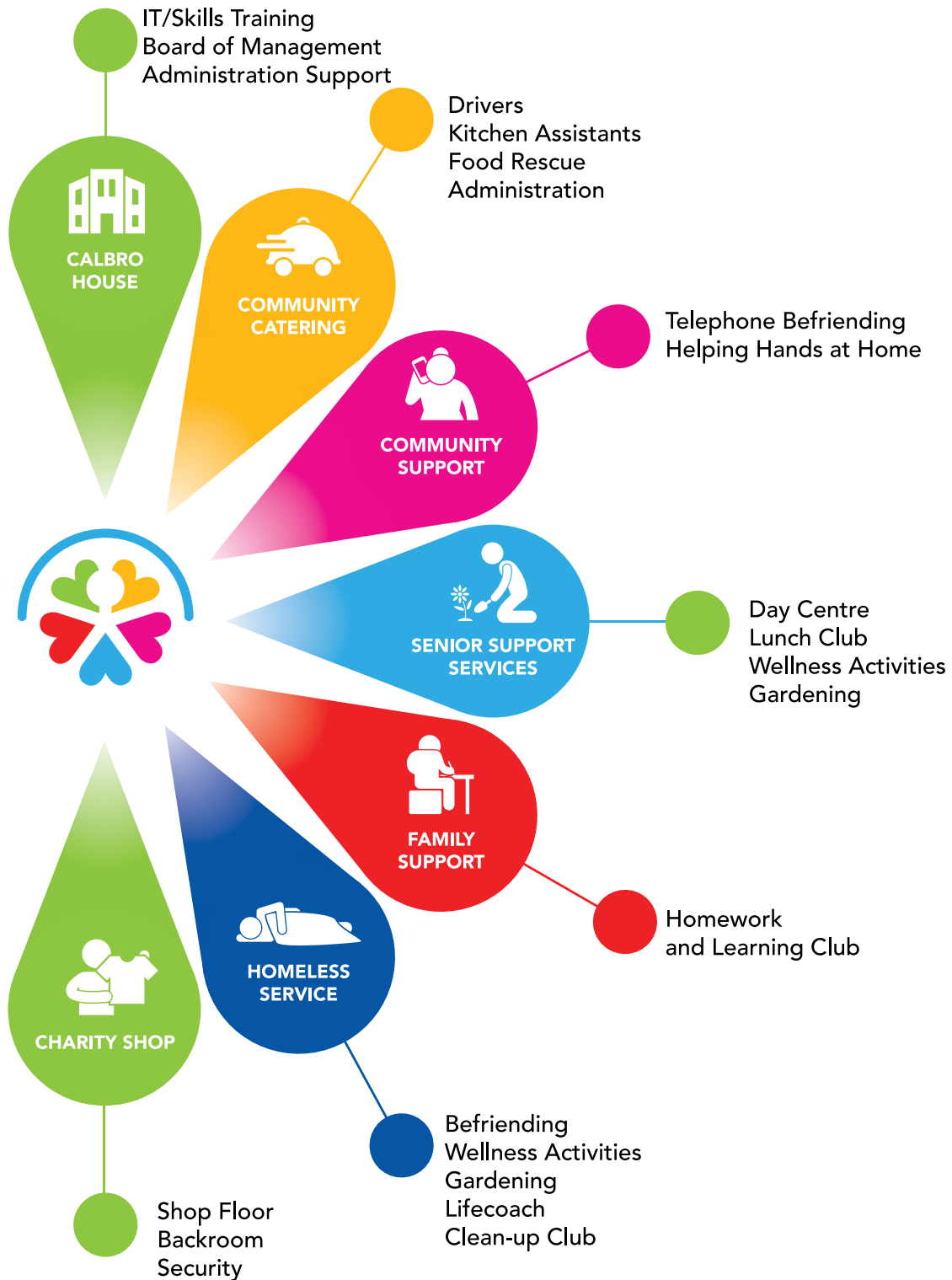
Heather and Aisling, Fairgreen Hostel

"During the pandemic, we were called on as key workers to adapt and adopt new skills to ensure the safety and protection of our clients and ourselves. We were not used to working under such stringent conditions, in what became almost clinical roles. While finding it challenging and frustrating at times, all of us as key workers have shown an eagerness and willingness to adapt and change approach to providing best practice. We have had to revise and limit time and proximity in engaging on a one-to-one basis, all the while assuring our clients that although our sessions have become less frequent and shorter in duration, they are still meaningful and supports are still available as before.

There is no denying that Covid-19 has been very difficult for all services. As a staff member, it has been frustrating to see normality taken away from people who need it most. At Fairgreen Hostel, we meet people who may have hit rock bottom. With Covid-19, pre-existing issues have now been heightened. There is a pressure to try and keep everyone as safe as possible while living in close quarters with one another, with little to occupy a client's day anymore. It has been an adjustment period!

In saying this, there have also been many great moments over the last year. The sense of community has definitely been strengthened. In many ways, while we cannot see our own families, the team at Fairgreen Hostel have become the replacement! While people come to us for guidance and support, there is also so much inspiration and learning that can come from those we work with. Hope can be found in the strangest of places and times."

Volunteering at COPE Galway





Meet Michael

Volunteer Michael O'Regan delivered meals for COPE Galway's Community Catering service for over twenty years.

His spirit and good humour meant clients could always look forward to a smile and friendly chat as well as a nutritious meal when he made his Monday deliveries.

He began volunteering in 1999, when COPE Galway was based in Galway City Centre 'and it was a lot harder to find parking.' He continued his work when the service moved to Ballybane, and says he enjoyed 'every minute' of his work with the organisation.

Michael would always make his rounds on Mondays and he had one or two clients to whom he would always bring the newspaper every week. "You would drop in the paper, and you had to discuss the hurling and football at the door, and you'd have to go through every part of the match!" Michael said. "And this went on and on for years. There was always somebody on your route you knew from your past life, and I'd usually keep them for the last delivery because you knew you'd have time to discuss all sorts of matters with them."

He emphasised that the service provides regular contact for people every day, and that different delivery people every day meant a different person to see and get to know. "It was great because you knew you were bringing them a nice, tasty meal and you had a little chat, Michael said. "And it was always fun, really."

"I'd always set off at a quarter past ten every Monday morning, and I didn't think 'oh God, I have to do this or I have to do that. Not at all. You'd meet the staff team inside and there was always a laugh or someone would give you a tip for a horse."

Michael said he was very sorry to have to give up his meal delivery work at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, when his daughters wanted him to stay home for his own well-being. He is a very active man, full of energy, fun and, at over 80 years old, he is a great example of ageing well. His life changed dramatically when Covid-19 struck and he had to give up his visits to his beloved wife, Rita, who resided in a nursing home before she sadly passed away in 2021. He couldn't continue with volunteering, golfing, and his regular socialising. The people at Community Catering have kept in touch with Michael and have remarked on his ability to keep up his spirits and great humour, while throughout 2020 he kept up his daily walks and zoom chats with Rita.

He has nothing but praise for the COPE Galway staff he has interacted with over the years. **"The staff at all times were absolutely fabulous. I never had an unpleasant day. It was never a chore. You'd start off and you'd see the drivers and have a chat, and then you'd meet the staff for a bit of banter, and then off we went and that was grand," Michael said. "I can confidently say that I enjoyed every minute of it. There was always something new, and I had great fun."**

Michael added that he always enjoyed volunteer meetings over the years, as well as annual volunteer recognition luncheons. The first time he went to a luncheon, he said he was surprised to see a number of people he knew well but had not previously known they also volunteered with COPE Galway. "I did Mondays," he said. "But I never knew who did Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. We were down in the Salthill Hotel for one luncheon and I don't think we were home until eight o'clock!"

Michael's story reflects the stories of more than 60 older volunteer drivers and volunteer kitchen assistants who had to step aside in 2020 due to Covid-19. The positive impact of their volunteer work and friendship will be felt for years to come.

COPE Galway wishes to express our huge gratitude and appreciation for our volunteers' work and friendship over many years ...they form such a large part of the community that makes community catering so special!

Responsiveness, Adaptability and Resilience during Covid-19



Volunteerism is extensive and intrinsic to the social fabric of our daily lives. Volunteering assists people of all ages, social backgrounds and abilities to have a healthier, happier and more inclusive life. At the beginning of 2020 we had 240 volunteers in over 30 different roles – a number that dropped dramatically once the virus hit. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown us how the national response was supported and driven by volunteers – when large sections of society shut down.

Nothing prepared us for how our lives would change across the country because of this virus. In equal measure, in COPE Galway, we were astounded by the outpouring of community support and solidarity for our organisation.

As Government guidelines evolved, many of our loyal volunteers had to take time out to look after their own health and their families. Some had to fully restrict their movements and step back from volunteering and the great sense of purpose, enjoyment, companionship and fulfilment they loved about it.

We acted quickly so that we could continue to provide our services during this crisis. Very soon, we recruited a team of Covid-19 response volunteers.

New volunteers emerged to offer their skills and join the team as many local businesses had to temporarily close their doors. We received help in many ways – preparing and delivering meals to our older clients, our homeless and domestic abuse services; collecting and delivering shopping and prescriptions; delivering hampers to our clients and Easter Eggs to children in our services.

With large numbers of people offering their services, we were unable to recruit all, but are so deeply grateful to each person who reached out to help us. This support certainly gave us the strength to continue on, knowing that our community was backing us all the way.

It is with deep gratitude we say a big heartfelt thank you to our incredible volunteers who have continued to provide extraordinary support across COPE Galway services and to all who offered to help us.

The Impact of Volunteering

COPE Galway understands and values the unique contribution that volunteers bring to our organisation. From year to year we have an average of 180 people from many backgrounds and ages who volunteer with us across a wide range of roles. We just would not be able to deliver the full range of supports we offer across our services without our volunteers.

To ensure a positive volunteer experience, we are mindful of the two-way process of the volunteering relationship and a necessity to meet expectations on both sides.

Connecting People

Volunteering is not only about civic participation. It helps people to connect with their community. Volunteers help to build social networks, and community resilience. COPE Galway is strongly committed to fostering a wider sense of belonging among those who wish to volunteer with us.

Building Community

Volunteering has an important contribution to make to the health and well-being of our communities, and in our services addressing loneliness and reducing social isolation amongst our clients.

Health and Well-being

Volunteering is very personal and the positive impact of the experience can create an increased sense of health and wellbeing, whether from leading and driving initiatives, giving back to the community by sharing knowledge and experiences or by simply lending a hand for the greater good. In essence - volunteering makes you happy.

Homework and Learning Club for Children in Emergency Accommodation



COPE Galway's Homework and Learning Club Project supports school-going children based in Private Emergency Accommodation for homeless families in Galway. A team of volunteers supervise homework and provide a safe and supportive learning environment where children living in Emergency Accommodation can access resources, materials and support. We recently availed of 8 Laptops donated under the collaborative Tech2Students programme, coordinated by NUI Galway's Access Centre and supported by local partners which wipes data from donated laptops and tablets and installs the necessary software. Availing of these has allowed families in the Homework and Learning Club to access an essential device for their children, download online educational courses and teaching materials and avail of the club's support.

For children living in emergency accommodation for homeless families, COPE Galway's Homework and Learning Club service provided a place to spend their after school hours, get help with their homework, and make friends. Coordinated by COPE Galway's Project Workers in Family Support Services, the team of Homework and Learning volunteers ran the club until schools closed in March 2020 due to Covid-19.

On the next page, Dolores Deegan, Michael Hartnett and Eliosha Lydon, tell us of their experience as Homework and Learning Club volunteers.

Tech2Students Programme donate laptops to COPE Galway's Homework and Learning Club – pictured l-r: Michael Hartnett, Homework & Learning Club Volunteer; Imelda Byrne, Head of NUI Galway's Access Centre; Lucia Canavan, COPE Galway Volunteer Coordinator





**Meet
Dolores, Michael
& Elisha**



When his own two children were fully grown, Michael found himself with time to volunteer. "My wife was already involved with the Food Rescue Programme, so we were very aware of COPE Galway and the work that they do around the city," he said.

Dolores moved to Galway eight years ago, and has been volunteering with COPE Galway on and off ever since. It was her background in childcare that drew Dolores to the club.

Galway native Elisha was also drawn to the club by past experience volunteering with young people.

"I always meant to get back into volunteering and when I found out about the Homework and Learning Club I was delighted, because I love maths and teaching and the age group of the kids," Elisha said.

The Homework and Learning Club was organised to have pairs of volunteers develop a rapport with the kids together. The group of 8 to 10 children ranging in ages from 5 to 10 were divided into an older and a younger group for two hours of homework and activities.

She praised the way her COPE Galway supervisor ran the programme and said she sincerely hopes the club is able to continue in the future. "I just want to be back making a difference, and just to get up and make faces and have fun with them," she said.

“It was really good craic. We got to play games and then be serious for half an hour and then get up and dance,” Eliosha said. “The time flew and the kids were great once you got to know one another. You get used to balancing the class. It’s a range of ages so you’re jumping from one thing to another.”

“You could see the kids looking forward to coming down,” said Dolores. “At first you could see they were a bit nervous. But then you could see they looked forward to the change.”

Living in emergency accommodation, most of the children lived with their families in a B&B room. The Homework and Learning Club gave them another place to study and spend time after school, and afforded their parents a brief break too. The children also got to know each other and make new friends through the club.

“I think one of the things we were kind of worried about was would they keep turning up? But they did,” said Michael. “And as they got to know you, they’d come up to you if they had a math problem or something like that. Barriers broke down really quickly.”

Dolores described seeing them come out of their shells and enthusiastically taking part in songs and games. One child even suggested everyone go around the room and share the “best and worst” part of their day.

“One day one of them actually said the best part of their day was coming to the club, which was lovely to hear,” Dolores said.

“The two sides of what we were doing, the homework side and then the activity side, they engage with both of those equally,” Michael said.

“You could see them progressing and as the weeks were going on, you could see them getting more settled in the class. It took [the children] a little while to get used to all these people coming in,” said Eliosha. “But then you saw the change in the ease with which you were getting through the class. You could see how the kids were settled and more open with us and asking questions and having fun, and coming out of their selves a bit. It felt like we really were making a difference.”

Asked what kept her volunteering, Eliosha said, “You’d have such a good feeling coming out of the class, like you’ve really achieved something every time. Instant gratification and good feeling. That’s my selfish part!”

“You’re hearing on the news all the time about homelessness and children in different facilities. I don’t think you can have an opinion on something unless you’re in some way involved,” she continued. “So by getting involved with the club and the kids it was a way to make a difference.”

“You were growing, your relationship with the kids was growing, they were advancing that little bit more, and they were able to talk to you more,” Eliosha said, mentioning the diversity in the class. “It was nice to be able to step back, you were constantly creating and connecting with them in fun ways. It’s very different from the way things were when I was in school... They loved the active songs where they’re moving and laughing.”

“It’s nice to see even in their circumstances kids are so resilient and they can come out and be in the moment and laugh, and it’s really nice to be part of that in a tiny little way.”

Volunteer Programmes and Projects

National Volunteer Strategy 2021-2025

The National Volunteer Strategy recognises the unique value and contribution of volunteers to communities throughout Ireland. COPE Galway sat on the National Advisory Committee that developed the Strategy in 2019 and we look forward to participating in its implementation over the next 5 years.

Partnership and collaboration form the cornerstone of this strategy. Its vision is for “a society where volunteering is promoted, valued, facilitated and supported so that people can contribute to developing and maintaining vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities.” The strategy will help strengthen and foster volunteering in Ireland and build a support structure that will develop volunteering locally.



Read the [Strategy](#)



Robert Canavan (pictured) returned to Galway in the middle of the pandemic after two years in Canada. He began volunteering with COPE Galway as a Covid-19 response driver soon after coming home. “I was left unemployed when I moved home ... volunteering has made me a much happier person, it's been great to get involved and help out as much as I possibly can.”

Read more of Robert's story in the [National Volunteering Strategy](#).

“Volunteering is any time willingly given, either formally or informally, for the common good and without financial gain”

Definition of Volunteering from the National Volunteering Strategy 2021-2025

Ageing Well in Galway: Community Support and Advocacy Programme

While we had to cancel our planned 2020 Ageing Well in Galway: Community Support and Advocacy Programme due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Programme very quickly embraced new communication and meeting technology. We recruited a team of volunteers from Thermo King to support participants to 'get on line with ZOOM', a movement that was also happening on a national level. The sessions were successfully delivered to all the participants.

Corporate Engagement Programme (Helping Hands Projects)

The health, economic and social impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for many sectors in our society, including COPE Galway's activity with our corporate partners in the community, who have participated regularly in our Helping Hands engagement projects over the years.

In the spring of 2020, all our community engagement projects were cancelled, as workplaces adapted to remote working and COPE Galway adopted new safety practices. However, towards the end of the year, we successfully collaborated with Fidelity in a virtual IT Skills Project, and Medtronic and CISCO in our Christmas donations project. We are incredibly grateful to all these employees for volunteering in such challenging times and donating their time and skills with such enthusiasm.

Medtronic Spotlight Volunteer Programme

Connecting People. Building Community. Improving Health and Wellbeing.

This programme commenced in December 2020 with in-person volunteering for the Christmas Donations Project. 89 Medtronic volunteers donated 267 hours to sorting food, toys and gifts for 400 Christmas hampers and 1,000 gifts for men, women and children in Galway at Christmas.

However, the impact of the pandemic forced a rethink for the 2021 plan. The commitment and dedication of the Medtronic Philanthropy Team to the Spotlight Programme and to COPE Galway, led to an innovative collaborative approach, designing and developing an inspiring virtual volunteering programme. Between December 2020 and April 2021, 590 Medtronic Galway employees donated 1,976 hours to 9 projects, supporting 1,913 beneficiaries.



COPE Galway

Christmas Depot



December 2020 to April 2021

9 Projects

590 Employees

1,976 Volunteer Hours

1,913 Beneficiaries



Through years of volunteering with COPE Galway, Mary Cahalan has contributed to the catering service both 'behind the scenes' in the kitchen and in a client-facing delivery role.

Mary's background running her own catering company stood her in good stead when she started out with COPE Galway. "My intention was that I would become a driver but because I'd spent all my life in a kitchen, I thought I might be more useful there," said Mary. She 'absolutely loved' her work preparing meals in the kitchen, but eventually she had to stop due to back problems. Now she delivers meals to the eight houses on her route in Salthill.

"It's different now in that I have the interaction with the client, which really has been marvellous for me. It's very fulfilling."

Mary began looking for ways to volunteer with older people after her mother passed away and she wanted to use the day per week she used to spend with her mother to volunteer.

"The marvellous thing is all through this pandemic they're all still at home and well," Mary said of the older people to whom she delivers meals. "Of the eight people on my route, four or five of them would live alone and their resilience is remarkable, they've remained so upbeat," Mary said, describing how challenging 2020 has been without visits from family, neighbours and grandchildren.

Mary continued, "You meet family members and their appreciation for the service is absolutely huge. A lot of them say 'you know, we don't know what we would have done without the service.'

During the first lockdown in 2020, Mary briefly paused her volunteer work, heeding her family's request to stay home. "I was miserable not going out and I was phoning to check in [on the clients] and all that. Then when things opened up again in the summer I went back and returned to my volunteer role, the service is running really well and I feel quite safe."

"I believe the service is essential and I'd be a real advocate for [older] people being able to stay in their own homes at all costs. So this is one part of keeping people at home," Mary said when asked what keeps her volunteering.

"I'm hugely impressed with COPE Galway anyway, I think they are a fantastic organisation and I am very committed to them," Mary added, saying she was especially impressed with Geraldine Ryan, Executive Chef at COPE Galway's Community Catering, who has 'put everything into the past year' ensuring conditions are safe and the quality of the food is as good as ever. "Another thing they do really well is they mark every occasion. Valentine's Day, there'll be chocolate, Shrove Tuesday there'll be pancakes, Easter they'll put in little treats. They also do really helpful things throughout the pandemic, adding little bags of staples like teabags and porridge and sweets, lovely little touches like that."

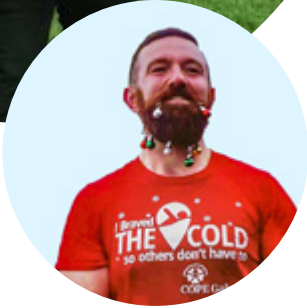
Joking that she'll be 'very prepared for my own old age,' Mary said she's learned a great amount from the COPE Galway clients, some of whom she'd consider great friends. "You realise time is actually very precious," she said.

A standout day for Mary last year, she says, was when the Mayor of Galway accompanied COPE Galway on meal delivery runs and presented the clients with flowers. "They were thrilled, a couple of the women had put on the nice cardigan and had the lipstick on. They were full of chat with him and that's when I realised they are really missing seeing people."

That day, Mary sent one 96-year-old client's son a photograph of his mother with the mayor. The client's son said the photograph of his mother smiling and looking well made his day. Before the pandemic, Mary said she would schedule her deliveries so if she thought a client could do with some extra support, they would be her last stop and she could spend ten or fifteen minutes visiting with them and chatting. "I really enjoy the people I talk to and meet. The sadness this past year for me has been not being able to come into the houses and visit with them. I will keep doing this as long as I'm able."

Fundraising & Retail





Meet Diarmuid

"The city and the people who grew up in it need to be taken care of, so it was about giving back in that little way."

Some might say a freezing cold dip into Galway Bay is enough of a physical challenge for Christmas morning, but Roscam-native Diarmuid Lynch took the annual COPE Galway Christmas Swim and made it his own by starting off with a half-marathon from Rinville to Salthill. When he reached Salthill 21.1km later, it was straight in for a swim from Blackrock Tower. As an added incentive for his online fundraisers, Diarmuid even shaved off his trademark beard after completing the challenge.

"It has definitely been a tough year for us all, but I'm hoping to raise money and awareness for the people who need it," Diarmuid said of his Christmas 2020 fundraiser, which raised a total of €1,800. The half-marathon, swim, and fundraiser were a celebration of sorts of the more than five stone he lost since doing the Christmas swim in 2019.

Diarmuid spent much of his twenties living in Canada, but Christmas visits home to Galway always included a Christmas Day visit to Blackrock.

"Coming back after six years, I wasn't in the best place mentally," Diarmuid said. For a period of 2019, he said, "I had a sense of rock bottom, a really empty feeling. And it was from being so down on myself I decided there's no time like the present to just change everything about my life."

Those changes included attending University College Cork to study to become a secondary school teacher, working out more, and promising himself to ask for help when he needed it. When he participated in the Christmas swim in 2019, he said, "There really is a sense of that Blackrock swim and how it stirs the home hearth fires seeing everyone chatting and meeting, back when we could do that obviously."

The following year, of course, brought Covid-19, Diarmuid said he was determined to set his life straight. "I wasn't going to let even a pandemic get in the way of that. I'm still firing on all cylinders," he said, and in fact when Diarmuid sat down for this virtual interview in March 2021, he was fresh from a half-marathon-length run. Diarmuid also emphasised that while he was able to make the most of the circumstances, he wouldn't want to put too positive a spin on a year that was full of so much suffering and hardship.

Raising the remarkable sum of €1,800 on social media, Diarmuid drew support from friends and family near and far. "It felt a bit strange asking people for money during the pandemic but because everyone had been watching my journey the past year, I was hearing from friends and family in Vancouver, my family here, people all over the world. Every tiny bit people gave all helped and added to it, and it was fantastic the way people reached out, even people I wouldn't have talked to in years."

He kept people involved on social media with frequent updates and even a "tribute video" to his beard set to a Sarah McLachlan song. "Shaving the beard came as kind of an incentive to raise more money towards the end of the fundraiser for COPE Galway.

"Shaving the beard was a last final push to try and get over the mark, and also a symbolic kind of rebirth just for myself."

Diarmuid said it was especially important to him to raise money for COPE Galway during what was for many the most challenging year on record. "I had realised how important my hometown was to me, and how it's always been there for me. The city and the people who grew up in it need to be taken care of, so it was about giving back in that little way," he said, adding that witnessing the homelessness problem in Vancouver made him want to do what he could upon returning home.

Running the half-marathon on Christmas Day from Rinville to Salthill, Diarmuid's route was filled with memories and loved ones. His father cycled alongside him on a bicycle strung with green tinsel and a big Irish flag, and even Diarmuid's beard was decked out in baubles. "He was my own little parade and the whole way in people were waving and beeping," Diarmuid said. He ran through Oranmore where he went to school, past his home house in Roscam, into Corrib Park where his grandmother lives.

"It was my mum's week looking after my grandmother and the highlight of the whole run was going past her window and giving them a wave," Diarmuid said, adding that when his grandmother recently received her first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine it was the 'happiest day of his life.'

After that it was a straight shot into Salthill, where he kicked the wall at the end of the Prom. "Then I did my big dip, came home, and then shaved the beard," he said, adding that the last bit of money was raised that day when people saw the video of him shaving his beard.

Diarmuid said that even the quieter, socially distanced swim in 2020 was a reminder of community spirit and Christmases past.

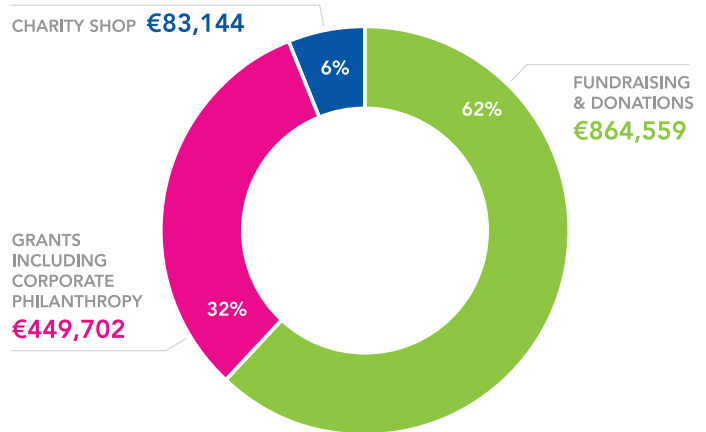
"People [at COPE Galway] work tirelessly for people coming from domestic abuse, and people who experience homelessness in Galway," he said when asked why he fundraises for COPE Galway. "If there's a small silver lining to take from Covid-19 it's that people are more aware of needing to check on people, and take care of each other now more than ever. People are checking on neighbours, people are walking within their 5K. It's that sense of community and that's one thing Galway has always had going for it, that closeness and charm. It's a city but it's still held on to its love for everyone in the city, the Galwegians themselves."

Fundraising, Grant and Retail Income in 2020

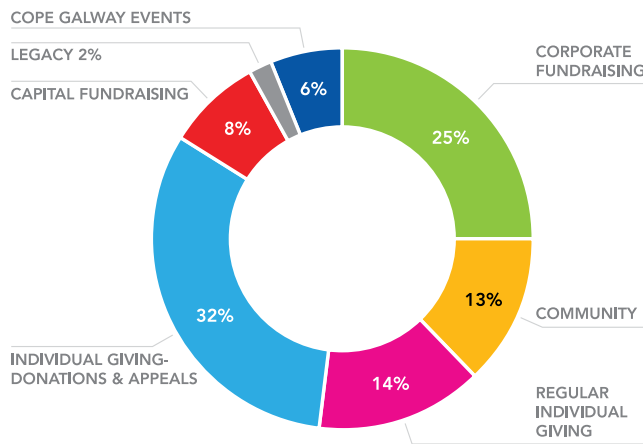
Total Revenue: €1.4m

At the start of the pandemic, we revised our fundraising and earned income budget for the year, anticipating a fall in fundraising revenue of 25%. Thanks to Stability grant funding from the State and corporate and public support however, the financial impact of the pandemic in 2020 was not as severe as expected.

In 2020, revenue generated from fundraising, grants and retail income was €1.4m

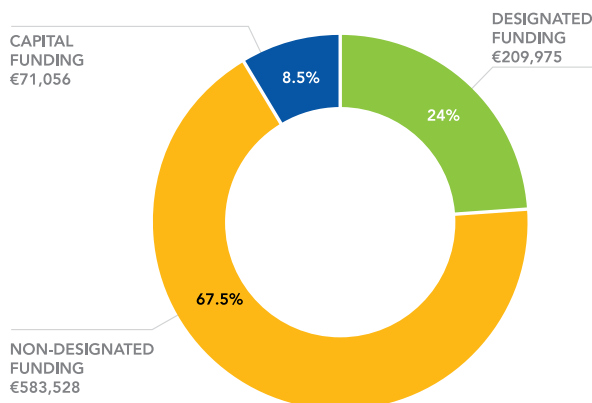


Fundraising Activities in 2020



Thank You!

Through your generosity and support, COPE Galway was able to raise in excess of €864,000 towards the delivery of our services. As well as contributing to the running cost of the organisation, fundraising income finances initiatives and projects designed to make a difference in the lives of our clients. Thank you for the trust you placed in COPE Galway and for the impact you make possible.



Best Practice in Transparency and Accountability

COPE Galway is a member of Charities Institute Ireland and is compliant with *The Guidelines for Charitable Organisations Fundraising from the Public*.

We welcome your feedback on our performance and can be contacted about this via phone (091 778750) or email (fundraising@copegalway.ie).

Community Events and Activities

The Galway Community continued to show their commitment to COPE Galway, as we adjusted to the impact of Covid-19 on fundraising activities and campaigns. We launched our Covid-19 public appeal on 26th March 2020 as it quickly became evident that additional resources to fund projects and programmes to help keep our clients safe and well during the pandemic would be needed. The response from the Galway community, at home and overseas, was wonderful and every single donation made a difference.



Through a myriad of community fundraising initiatives, a total of €210,405 was raised and donated to COPE Galway.



Christmas Hampers

Every year COPE Galway delivers hampers to families and individuals in Galway and in a 'normal' year these hampers are filled with food and gifts generously donated from the public. With Covid-19 restrictions this wasn't possible and so we appealed to local businesses for financial support. With these donations we were able to resource and deliver over 400 hampers to older people and individuals and families living in emergency accommodation at Christmas time.

Christmas Day Swim

We adapted our annual Christmas Day Swim event to a 10-day 'Swim where you are' campaign, which resulted in increased swim fundraising income and participation from Galway people based all over the world.

Regular Individual Giving

The COPE Galway tribe of regular and committed donors continued to show their support throughout 2020, providing an important source of regular, steady income which allows us to plan for the future. Individual and regular donations accounted for €175,029 of funds raised in 2020.

Corporate Giving

Galway's corporate community experienced unprecedented hardships of its own in 2020 and yet the support to COPE Galway was steadfast. We are incredibly grateful for this support and we look forward to innovating and forging deeper partnerships as we build back better in 2021.





Anthony Griffin first became involved with COPE Galway when he volunteered as a driver for Meals on Wheels and Food Rescue.

For the past few years Anthony's business, Pale Blue Dot® Recruitment Limited has been a charity partner for COPE Galway – as well as donating €50 for every full-time professional placement they make, Pale Blue Dot® Recruitment also organise a range of fundraisers and activities like running and fitness challenges. They have also undertaken volunteering activities in the past. Their latest fundraising initiative, '[Challenge 360](#)' involved fitness challenges based on the number 360, such as walking 300 km in 60 days.

Reflecting on 2020, Anthony said that while they "managed to raise over €3,000 in 2020 it was nowhere near the over €6,000 raised by Pale Blue Dot® Recruitment in 2019. The pandemic has hit everyone's pocket. We're hoping to do more events this year to align things a bit more with where we were two years ago as far as our contribution to COPE Galway goes."

Anthony's staff value the partnership with COPE Galway, "They recognise the importance of contributing and I think it's rewarding for them as individuals," he said, adding that in the past they have visited COPE Galway in person and seen the impact of their fundraising efforts. Recruitment Consultant Olivia Kennedy echoed

this sentiment, saying working together 'to be involved in something bigger' has contributed to a positive team environment throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. "Partnering and continually working with COPE Galway is an excellent initiative which benefits the charity as well as each member of staff in Pale Blue Dot® Recruitment," said Recruitment Consultant Associate Hannah Cahill. "I'm grateful to be able to give back to the community through various fundraising activities and initiatives, such as the 300 and 60 challenge."

According to Anthony, the enriching experience of volunteering with COPE Galway's Meals on Wheels inspired him to partner with the charity when he established Pale Blue Dot® Recruitment. "When you go out and talk to older people, you might be their only contact in the day". It is a purposeful experience. "And then with the Food Rescue, dropping food off to the different establishments you'd get a sense of what COPE Galway are doing to make things better and easier for people who have it tough."

Anthony leads by example and has taken part in the annual Business Sleep Out fundraiser for COPE Galway's Homeless Service since 2019. In light of Covid-19 social distancing restrictions, the Business Sleep Out Experience was very different in 2020 than in 2019.

"In 2019, we all went out on Shop Street, the weather was fantastic at Christmas time, and we raised a significant amount of money on the night. It wasn't too tough either, but "Last Christmas I did it at home in the back garden. It was a tough gig, to be totally honest, really cold and windy weather. It really brought home how lucky I am, how lucky anybody with a roof over their head is." Anthony added that overall "it was a great experience, and I will continue to do it for as long as I can".

Anthony says that supporting COPE Galway is something his business clients appreciate. "Pale Blue Dot® Recruitment has quickly become a leader in MedTech recruitment across Ireland. I firmly believe that our client base appreciates our values and what the company represents through our charity work. We get involved and clients definitely see what we do as a positive, and a reason to develop a partnership with us." Anthony said.

Anthony and Pale Blue Dot® Recruitment look forward to continuing their partnership with COPE Galway for years to come. "Over the years you can see how COPE Galway is progressing and more and more people are contributing to the various causes and initiatives that COPE Galway is involved in. And personally it's been enormously positive."

COPE Galway Business Sleep Out

The Business Leader's Sleep Out is COPE Galway's flagship fundraising event, and each year since the event began in 2012, Galway business and community leaders have slept out to raise awareness and funds for COPE Galway's homeless services.

On 4th December the 9th annual COPE Galway sleep out took place with Covid-19 safety measures in place and 28 business leaders slept out either on Shop Street, or in the grounds of their own premises. €131,000 was raised from the 2020 event, bringing the total raised over the past 9 years to a remarkable €1 million. These funds are helping COPE Galway to continue supporting families and individuals in Galway who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

We are most appreciative of the commitment of each participant to the Business Sleep Out event, and for their continued support for COPE Galway throughout the year.



Grant Income and Philanthropy

We received significant private and corporate philanthropic support via The Medtronic Foundation, The Ireland Funds and The Community Foundation Ireland in 2020. This funding supported us in responding to increased demand for our services, allowing us to scale up existing services and add additional services as needed. Philanthropic support through an Ireland Funds donor advised fund allowed us to continue to develop our child-centred domestic abuse service at Modh Eile House.

Charity Shop

As a non-essential retail outlet, our charity shop was closed for four months in 2020, but still generated an income of €83,144. In 2020 we continued to offer quality fashion, accessories, jewellery and books to the public from our St Augustine Street shop. With the Galway community once again proving extremely generous in their giving, thousands of items of clothes, accessories, jewellery and more were able to find new homes and in turn help deliver vital funds, which go directly towards supporting our frontline services.

As well as being our face on the high street, our shop acts as an intermediary for enquiries and sharing the work of COPE Galway whilst also servicing our clients who may at times require clothes or other supports.

Thank you to everyone that has supported the COPE Galway shop throughout 2020 – our donors, our customers and our volunteers. Thank you to our dedicated team of volunteers – a vibrant mix of older people who bring great experience and commitment, and younger people who give their time and get an opportunity to gain work experience or to learn English.



Meet Marco

“People were in need of talking after that first lockdown so it was fun”

Marco Patrocino began volunteering with COPE Galway when he found himself in the very challenging position of looking for a job in a new country during a pandemic. Marco moved to Galway from Brazil at the end of 2019, after his wife moved here to study English. Marco says that finding a volunteer role was a way for him to keep busy in the meantime and become involved in the community.

“I thought it would help me with networking, being part of an organisation and getting some experience, because it would be my first role here in Ireland,” Marco said. He started volunteering in the backroom at COPE Galway’s charity shop, steaming and sorting out clothes and later moved to a sales assistant volunteer role at the tills.

When retail businesses like the COPE Galway Charity Shop reopened during the summer of 2020, Marco enjoyed the bustling atmosphere after months of isolation. “People were in need of talking after that first lockdown so it was fun... At the beginning, customers were desperate to buy something and they’d spend a lot of time [in the shop] and buy everything! They were really happy because they could finally go out. We had some really good days selling,” Marco said.

“My motivation for volunteering was to help people. It’s a charity shop, so it’s fundraising for a good purpose. I have experience working as a salesperson and [COPE Galway] needed help,” Marco said. He was also drawn to the opportunity to meet people in his new home and build his CV.

Shop Manager, Allison Currah agrees, “Marco has been a great asset to our team of volunteers. He is very positive and capable, willing to lend a hand with anything and get stuck into hard work. Experience is something that many younger people need and volunteering can help with their confidence and their CVs. All of our volunteers and staff benefit from our work by feeling and being a part of something larger than ourselves and contributing to society”.

Marco’s duties at the shop included enforcing social distancing and other Covid-19 safety measures in the shop. Clothing donations even had to be ‘quarantined’ in a warehouse for a few days before being sorted. “People are usually very kind and responsible everyone keeping distance and using masks,” Marco said.

While the shop was open last year, Marco also helped out with painting and signage at the shop. With retail businesses closed again, the COPE Galway Charity Shop now sells clothes online via Thriftify, which Marco helps with by photographing products, sorting the clothes, and shipping orders.

Marco’s introduction to COPE Galway — and indeed his introduction to life in Ireland — took place under very unusual circumstances, but he has nonetheless made the best of it and flourished in his role.

Finance & Governance



COPE Galway Financial Statement

Income & Expenditure Account for year ended 31st December 2020

Income

	2020	2019
HSE	1,979,412	1,654,780
Galway City Council	3,437,097	1,495,183
Tusla	1,218,981	955,189
Galway County Council	51,662	-
Fundraising (to include Grants) and Retail	1,400,905	1,506,020
Service charges	735,676	608,826
Other Income	84,864	100,268
	8,908,597	6,320,266
CAS Funds for Modh Eile House	314,431	1,746,018
	9,223,028	8,066,284

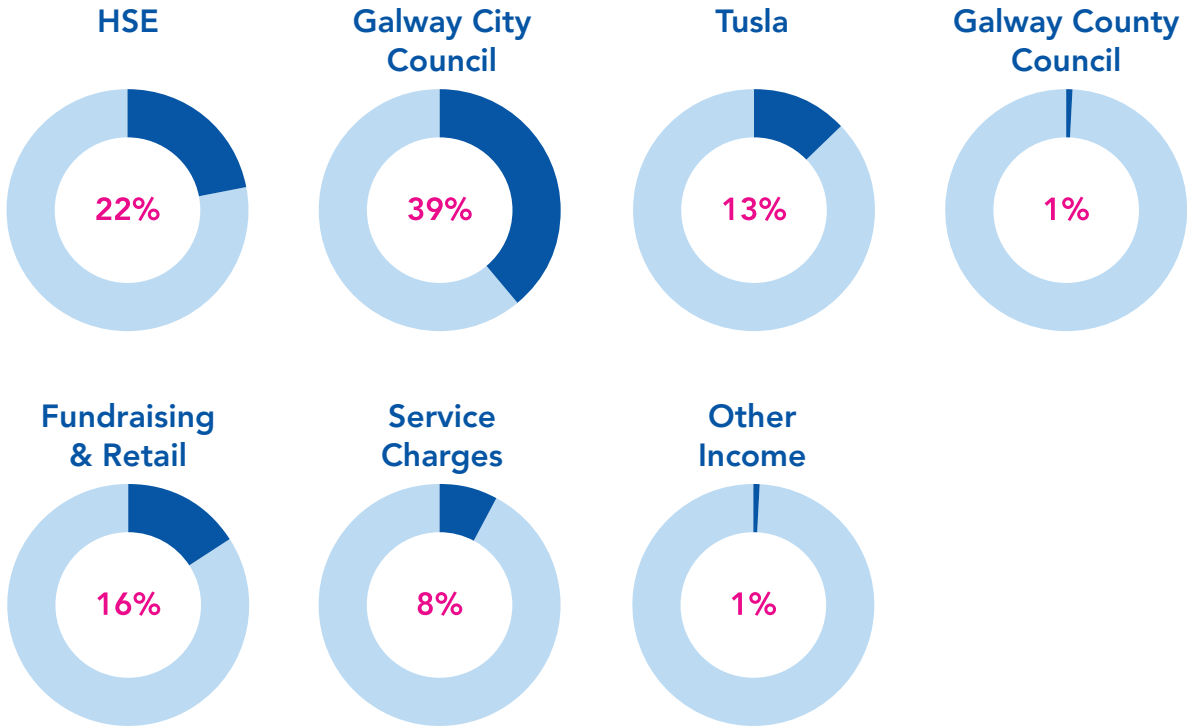
Expenditure

	2020	2019
Homeless Services	4,145,583	2,966,211
Domestic Abuse Services	1,356,174	1,008,729
Older People Services	760,978	650,564
Fundraising	257,500	458,309
Administration	723,485	805,768
	7,243,720	5,889,581
Depreciation	173,751	77,335
	7,417,471	5,966,916

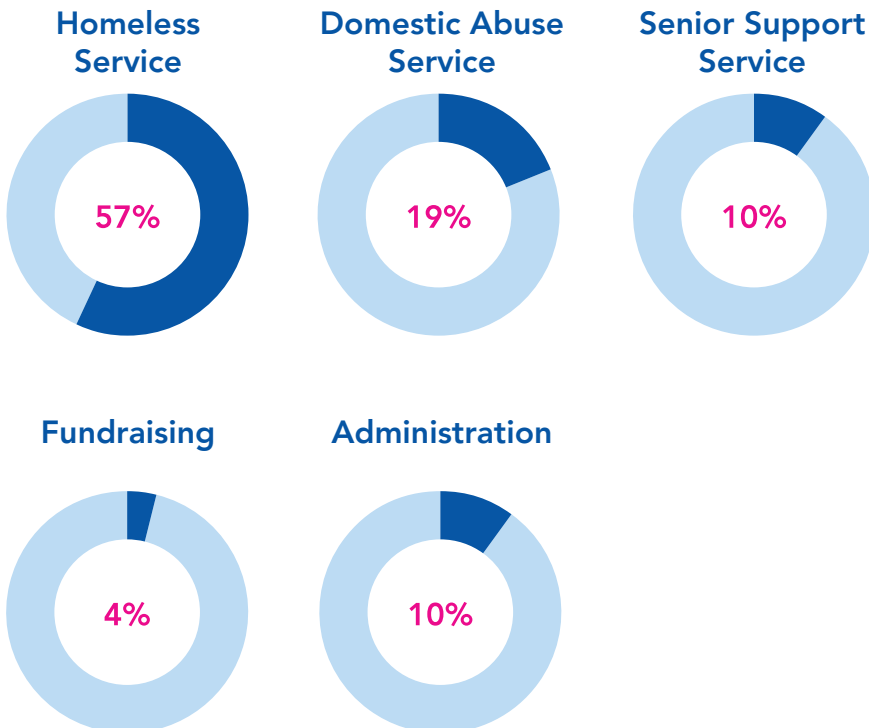
In 2020 COPE Galway received €4,163,671 (2019: €4,908,383) from both Galway City and Galway County Council to cover the costs of Private Emergency Accommodation. This is reflected in our Income and Expenditure in our Audited Accounts, but not included above.

The information above is a summary overview.
Full details in our [Audited Accounts and Directors Report for 2020](#).

Where our money comes from*



How our money is spent*



* Original decimals have been rounded up for these percentages

Governance

Organisational Structure

COPE Galway is a private company limited by guarantee. A Board of Directors manages the organisation, with operational responsibility delegated to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the organisation, who is not a member of the board. Our Board of Directors is responsible for the overall governance and strategic direction of the organisation. The report below gives overview details of our governance, with further details in our [Audited Accounts and Directors Report for 2020](#).

During 2020, COPE Galway's Board of Directors held six Board meetings, with 89% attendance overall. The table below indicates various seat allocations, meeting attendance and years of service.



COPE Galway
[Board of Management 2020](#)

(Top Row L-R): Éamon Bradshaw (Chairman), Fr Joseph Roche, Hannah Kiely, Paudie Cunningham, Paul Dilger, Sean Silke
(Middle Row L-R): Deirdre Squires, Adrian Callanan, Dr Seamus Lennon, Padraic Timon, Ashling Heaney, Suzanne Moloney
(Bottom Row L-R): Caroline Healy, Máire Treasa Ni Dhubhghaill, Enda McGuane, Colm Feeney

Board Member	Role/Representative	Term in Years (as of 2020)	Board Meeting Attendance
Éamon Bradshaw (Chairman)	Business	3	6/6
Fr Joseph Roche	Diocesan	3	4/6
Hannah Kiely	Governance	8	6/6
Paudie Cunningham	Staff	4	4/5
Paul Dilger	Marketing & Communications	7	6/6
Sean Silke	Human Resources	7	3/5
Deirdre Squires	Older Persons	3	4/5
Adrian Callanan	Business	3	5/5
Dr Seamus Lennon	Quality	2	6/6
Padraic Timon	Business	1	5/6
Ashling Heaney	Customer Services	1	3/3
Suzanne Moloney	Enterprise/Business	1	3/3
Caroline Healy	Human Resources	1	3/3
Máire Treasa Ni Dhubhghaill	Media	1	2/2
Enda McGuane	Property	1	2/2
Colm Feeney	Business	1	2/2

Subcommittees

A new subcommittee structure was established in October 2020 to support the delivery of our Strategy 2020-2025. Four new sub committees were established (Prevention & Advocacy, Responsiveness & Impact, Our People, Revenue Generation). The Property subcommittee became a committee in its own right and a separate Finance & Funding committee was established. (Note: Three funding-related meetings, all attended by Padraic Timon, took place in 2020 but the formal committee convened in January 2021). The Audit & Risk Committee continued as previously.

In 2020, members of the board sat on six subcommittees as follows:

Sub-committee	No. Meetings 2020	Board Member	
Prevention & Advocacy	1	Maire Treasa Ni Dhubhghaill	0/1
Responsiveness & Impact	1	Ashling Heaney	1/1
Our People	4	Caroline Healy	4/4
Revenue Generation	2	Colm Feeney	2/2
		Suzanne Moloney	2/2
Property	3	Adrian Callanan	2/2
		Fr Joseph Roche	0/3
		Enda McGuane	2/2
		Martin Corless*	3/3
Audit & Risk	4	Seamus Lennon	4/4
		Bernadette Costello*	4/4

* External representatives

Governance, Compliance and Managing Risk

The Audit and Risk Committee reviews the effectiveness of the organisation's internal financial controls and procedures; oversees the external audit process from planning to completion and recommends the financial statements to the Board for approval. The committee also oversees our risk management process (further details in our [Audited Accounts and Directors Report for 2020](#)) and compliance with various legal and governance requirements including the Charities Act, Health & Safety, Company Law, GDPR, Children First legislation, and governance relating to service level agreements with our various funders.

During 2020, COPE Galway self-evaluated our compliance with the Charities Governance Code in preparation for compliance required as of 2020 and deemed ourselves to be in compliance. We engaged an external expert to independently assess compliance against the code. This review takes place early in 2021.



We complied with the Housing Agency Regulation office, and filed an annual report with the Charities Regulator.



COPE Galway commissioned Mazars to conduct an independent review of our compliance with fundraising best practice standards. The audit results indicate that Reasonable Assurance (the highest level) can be placed on the adequacy of COPE Galway's fundraising and cash handling processes.

COPE Galway recruits board members based on skills and expertise required to deliver on our mission and strategy. A governance handbook sets out roles and responsibilities, terms of office, how we manage conflicts of interest and code of conduct and resources available to support the board in their roles. Ongoing training is also available. Full details of all board members are available on our [website](#).

Board Members who Resigned in 2020

Hannah Kiely

Hannah's contribution to the board over the past nine years has been extraordinary. She established the Business Sleep Out, now COPE Galway's single biggest fundraising event supporting homelessness. She has also been the driving force behind the development of the Modh Eile House building project. Hannah brought her strong business acumen into the charity, along with her sense of what is good for COPE Galway, her clarity of thought, questioning nature, sense of humour and total involvement. We extend sincere thanks to Hannah for her commitment to COPE Galway.

Sean Silke

Sean steps down from the board after seven years of service. Sean's HR expertise, his kindness and unwavering support of COPE Galway's work at every level has been very much appreciated. His focus never wavered from how best to support our people with his motto, "How can we help you to do your job better?" and he was always generous with his time, knowledge and good humour.

Paul Dilger

Paul has also served on our board for seven years. Paul's expertise in marketing and communications has been very helpful in promoting our work and impact and in advocating for systemic change. Paul also took a lead role on behalf of the board in developing our recent Strategy 2020-2025. He has been a strong advocate for our work in many ways, challenging us to "think big and impactful" with our advocacy and communications ambitions.

Adrian Callanan

Adrian steps down as a board member after three years of service. However, he remains a regular volunteer in many other ways, including as an external representative on our property subcommittee. Adrian's expertise has supported us with many important property-related decisions and he continues to be actively involved and continually supportive of our work.

Paudie Cunningham

Paudie has been the staff representative on our board for four years. His contributions have been valuable and insightful, given his years of experience and knowledge of the organisation. His voice at board level was welcomed and respected.

New Board Members in 2020

Máire Treasa Ni Dhubhghaill brings a wealth of media experience as a TV presenter, conducting live broadcasts and high profile MC events. She also represents COPE Galway "as gaeilge".

Ashling Heaney is an experienced customer services associate director at European Multinational level.

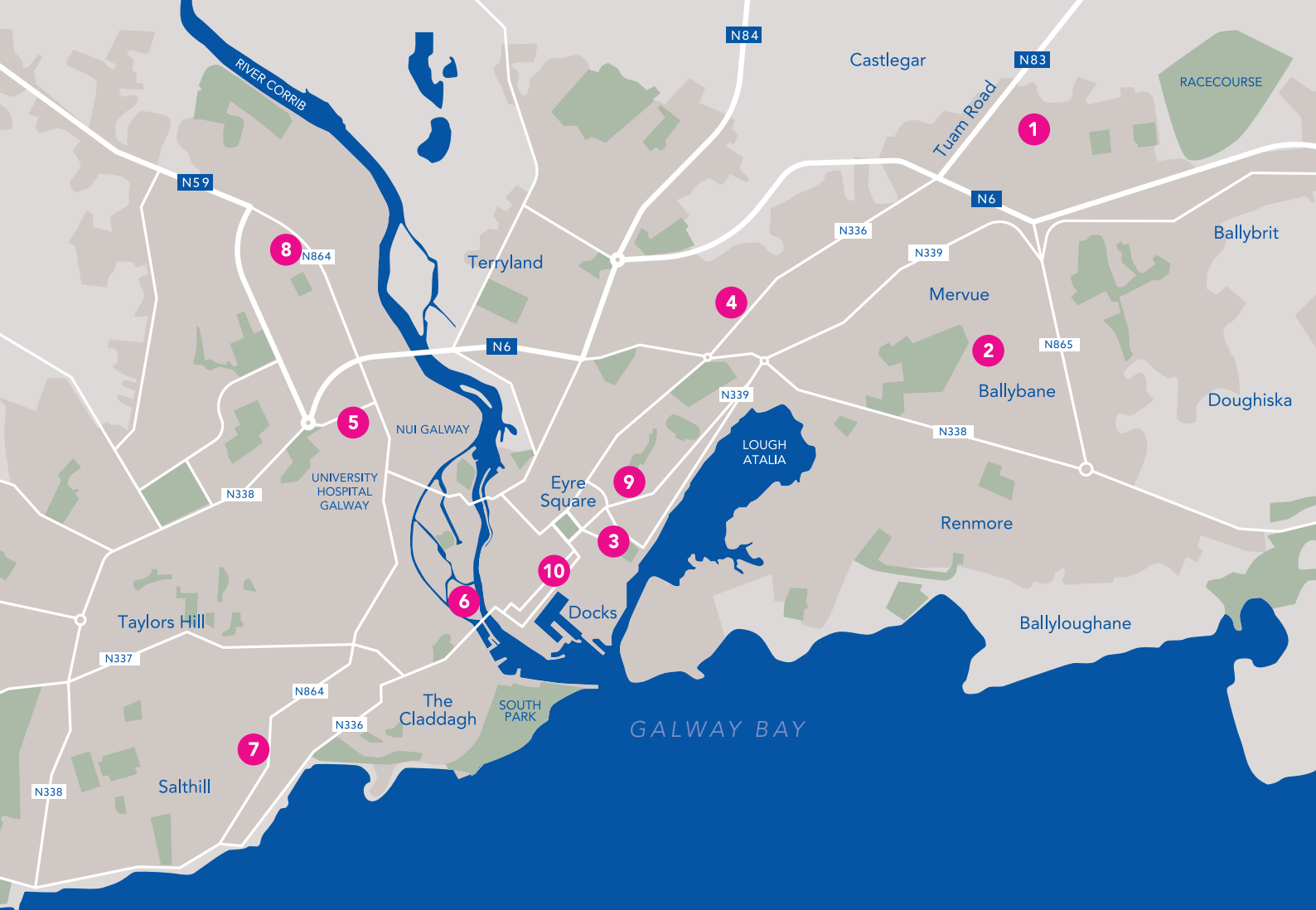
Caroline Healy is Senior HR Manager at Medtronic. She has broad experience in learning, development, operations and quality and key competencies in coaching, change management, talent management and succession planning.

Suzanne Moloney is the Founder and CEO of HidraMed Solutions and brings a wealth of experience in enterprise and business development.

Colm Feeney has worked both in industry and self-employment over the past 30 years. Before setting up SSL Logistics in 2000, he worked as Senior Manager at Nortel Networks for 20 years in areas such as Customer Service, Marketing and Supply Chain Management.

Enda McGuane is Managing Director of Winters Property and has over 20 years' experience as a property professional in both private and public sectors. He is also a member of Galway County Council's Housing Strategic Policy Committee and Chambers Ireland Housing Taskforce.

Our Board is composed of volunteers who give freely of their time and expertise to help COPE Galway set out and achieve our mission. We would like to thank all members of the Board of Management who progressed the interests of COPE Galway during 2020.



COPE Galway Services

- 1** **Community Catering**

 - 📍 Unit 5 Ballybane Industrial Estate, H91 Y7R9
 - 📧 communitycatering@copegalway.ie
 - ☎ 091 700 800
- 1** **Meals4Health Social Enterprise**

 - 📍 Unit 5 Ballybane Industrial Estate, H91 Y7R9
 - 📧 info@meals4health.ie
 - ☎ 091 354 000
- 1** **Community Support Services**

 - 📍 Unit 5 Ballybane Industrial Estate, H91 Y7R9
 - 📧 seniorsupport@copegalway.ie
 - ☎ 091 700 800
- 2** **Sonas Day Centre**

 - 📍 1-3 Walter Macken Flats, Mervue, H91 X5P6
 - 📧 sonas@copegalway.ie
 - ☎ 091 753 402
- 3** **Fairgreen Hostel**

 - 📍 Fairgreen, H91 D6F2
 - 📧 fairgreen@copegalway.ie
 - ☎ 091 568 818
- 4** **Family Support Service**

 - 📍 Lower Ground Floor, Calbro House, Tuam Road, H91 XR97
 - 📧 familiesupport@copegalway.ie
 - ☎ 091 527 571
- 4** **Head Office**

 - 📍 Calbro House, Tuam Road, H91 XR97
 - 📧 info@copegalway.ie
 - ☎ 091 778 750
- 5** **Teach Corrib Day Centre**

 - 📍 Seamus Quirke Road, Newcastle, H91 W243
 - 📧 daycentre@copegalway.ie
 - ☎ 091 525 259
- 6** **Resettlement, Tenancy Support and Community Housing**

 - 📍 12A Ruxton Court, Dominick Street Lower, H91 C662
 - 📧 tenancysupport@copegalway.ie
 - ☎ 091 533 959
- 7** **Osterley Lodge**

 - 📍 140 Lower Salthill, H91 DR44
 - 📧 osterley@copegalway.ie
 - ☎ 091 521 301
- 8** **Family Hub**

 - 📍 Corrib Haven, 107 Upper Newcastle, H91 HX51
 - 📧 familyhub@copegalway.ie
 - ☎ 091 353 500
- 9** **Domestic Abuse Service**

 - 📍 Modh Eile House
 - 📧 modheile@copegalway.ie
 - ☎ 091 565 985 (24h)
- 10** **COPE Galway Charity Shop**

 - 📍 Saint Augustine Street, H91 FP4F
 - 📧 shop@copegalway.ie
 - ☎ 091 569715



Calbro House, Tuam Road, Galway H91 XR97

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