

2020

THE CORK FOYER & BISHOPSGROVE SUPPORTED STUDENT ACCOMMODATION 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



Cork Foyer and
Bishopsgrove are
Cork City Council
Transitional Supported
Housing Initiatives

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MISSION STATEMENT

Cork Foyer is a unique homeless service that offers quality affordable accommodation with education and training at the heart of the project. We strive to develop independent living skills through integrated training programmes and clear-cut Support Plans, empowering young adults to realise their full potential and take their rightful place in the community.



CORK FOYER - A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY

The Foyer is a well-established model of transitional housing for youth that has been growing in popularity around the world over the past three decades. The term Foyer was coined in France, where a network of “Foyers pour jeunes travailleurs” (hostels for young workers) was created to support a large number of young people who, in search of work, moved to towns and cities following World War II. In the early 1990s, the British government introduced the Foyer model in response to high youth unemployment and homelessness, and the model’s success led to replication throughout the country.

The growth and development of the Foyer model in the UK has been supported by the Foyer Federation, which has created a range of resources including guides for those developing Foyers, staff support, a quality assurance scheme and an accreditation programme. Today, Foyers

have been adapted and implemented in Europe and further afield, including Australia and the US to include not only housing and links to employment, but also access to education, training, life skills development and on-going case management support.

In the mid-1990’s, and as a measure to cut off an identified path to homelessness, the Cork Homeless Forum highlighted a need to provide supported accommodation for young homeless persons in Cork city and Kerry. The vision was to link this accommodation to meaningful programmes aimed at building up the capacity of individuals and providing the skills and training for independent living and self-fulfilling living. The need for such a facility was re-affirmed by independent research into homelessness in Cork, undertaken by University College Cork in 1998.

The provision of a Foyer was one of the key objectives identified under in the Cork Strategy and this objective was re-affirmed in the Reviewed Strategy for the period 2005-2007. Following several attempts to procure appropriate sites an opportunity arose in 2003 to acquire the Assumption Convent in Blackpool. With the strong support of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Cork City Council completed the acquisition of the convent the following year and over the following 18 months set about to mindfully renovate the convent for use as an eighteen bed Foyer with training and communal facilities. With an additional stepdown facility added since, the Foyer now has the capacity to accommodate up to 20 young people.

Electing from the outset to forge strong links with the Foyer Federation and become the first international Foyer to be quality approved outside of the UK, Cork City Council achieved its ambition within 2 years of opening. Still subscribing to the Foyer Federation's quality framework today, the Cork Foyer remains the only accredited Foyer in Ireland and has been awarded accredited status four times, the most recent being in 2020.

As a means of integrating the Foyer into the wider community, Cork City Council also fully utilised the surrounding waste land. With each age group carefully considered, Cork City Council established a toddler playpark, elderly seating area and garden project. In partnership with NGO's, these facilities were further enhanced during 2008/9 with a tranquil garden café operated by Churchfield Community Trust Clg. and a bicycle re-cycle and repair workshop operated by Cork Community Bikes Volunteer Group. The Foyer multi-purpose complex has evolved to become a hub of activity within the community whilst providing the general public with a respite in a community that has experienced heavy commercial and residential regeneration.



CHAIRS STATEMENT

The impact of the global Covid-19 pandemic has been unprecedented and far-reaching. With limited access to routine processes and infrastructure it has changed the way that we work and has compelled us to focus far more and adapt our operations to best meet the ever-changing needs of our residents and stakeholders. The effect on management was onerous and immediate, particularly around health & safety, conducting risk assessments, contingency planning and standard operating procedures, all of which had to be balanced against the risk of a Covid-19 outbreak and the mental wellbeing of residents and staff.

Our objective to improve the life chances of the young people we serve never diminished and our determination to achieve our aim was strengthened. Throughout the pandemic, and on the whole, residents and staff have demonstrated extraordinary resilience, social conscience, and the ability to adapt, allowing the scheme to function safely and to the best of its ability. However, like many other organisations the Foyer soon became to realise how poorly equipped it was to facilitate virtual online learning and work.

With rapid investment into our communication systems at both the Cork Foyer and Bishopsgrove, added to the funding received from the City Council Covid-19 Community Response Fund, the Foyer was able supply the necessary equipment and online access. This was further enhanced by a small number of successful applications submitted directly to the colleges.

Between the disquiet and through natural retirement, we lost 2 pivotal members from the Foyer Management Committee during 2020: Denis Hickey, HSE representative and Ger McCarthy, Treasurer, Cork City Council. Both members contributed significantly towards the success of

the Foyer in terms of their time, expertise, and undeterred effort. I wish to take this opportunity to wish them a long, fulfilling, and happy retirement. I would also like to thank Aileen O'Brien, Cork City Council, for supporting the Management Committee whilst a new Foyer Secretary was duly appointed.

With a refreshed Management Committee, I would like to welcome our new members; Garda Jacqui White, David Lane, HSE, Aideen O'Dwyer, Cork City Council, Joanna MacCarthy, Cork City Council and finally John Hartnett, Blackpool Community Co-operative Service Centre Ltd. I am confident their wisdom, experience and leadership will help the Foyer through this difficult period and leave the Foyer in a stronger position to continue to meet the underlying principles of national and local homeless strategies.

In our now socially challenging economic climate and the growing number of vulnerable young people who need support, we are very conscious of the need to achieve efficiencies whilst not jeopardising outcomes or the positive impact the Foyer has on the lives of its residents. It is therefore vital that we continue to show determination, focus and innovation. More than ever, I cannot express how grateful we are to our core funders, the Health Service Executive, Cork City Council, Cork City Education and Training Board and the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government who continue to put their trust and confidence in our mission, service and reputation.

I hope that this report clearly demonstrates the Foyers desire to put residents at the heart of everything that we do.

Dave Cody
Chairman

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT & ACTIVITIES

The Foyer works with its residents to establish a sense of belonging both within the Foyer and within the wider community, whilst emphasising rights and responsibilities.

Empowering residents to organise and participate in local events builds a sense of community and access to opportunities previously unavailable to residents. Maintaining a good presence within the community also helps to minimise any misconceptions about the homeless, the Foyer Project, and Young people in general.

During 2020, the Foyer teamed up with Blackpool Community Co-Operative Service Centre, Cork City Partnerships and Churchfield Community Trust to clean up the plaza seating area outside the church in Blackpool. The planter boxes were broken and in need of repair. With the help of Foyer residents, new boxes were made and filled with a selection of perennial plants.

By summer they began to bloom and looked well. As there was some paint left over, we even decided to give the outdoor area at the Foyer a fresh look also. The residents were happy to paint the table and chairs while listening to music as they worked.



BEFORE



AFTER



COMMUNITY CLEAN UP



Using spare time productively, Foyer residents and staff once again decided to take ownership of the shared community environment in Blackpool and teamed up with the Council's Community Warden, Majella Gould. With all the necessary equipment provided, the mini task force targeted Assumption Road and the surrounding areas over several days. Proud of their contribution and a much cleaner looking area, we agreed clean up days should become part of our annual calendar.



ART PROJECT

With the support and expertise of artist David Dummigan, the Foyer managed to facilitate eight workshops. The theme 'family' was chosen by Foyer residents themselves, allowing each participant to make something personal, creative, and meaningful to them. Art is a great expression of self and this is what we wanted to gain from this project. There was always a safe and welcoming environment within these workshops which helped the participants to gain confidence while working in a creative atmosphere. The final work now proudly sits on the accommodation corridor of the Foyer.



TESCO'S FOOD APPEAL

Once again, the Cork Foyer was kindly invited to take part in the Tesco's Christmas Food Appeal which is held each year throughout the Tesco's stores nationwide. Generous shoppers donate an extensive range of non-perishable goods from toiletries and tea bags to biscuits, cereals, and tinned goods. In addition to this, and in partnership with Food Cloud, Tesco's delivers surplus food directly to the Foyer on a weekly basis, to which we are truly thankful.

For those residents surviving on €100 per week before they pay their rent, these donations reduce the need to skip meals. With fruit and vegetables being delivered, it also allows young people to eat more healthily and occasionally try a few different products they have not eaten before.



COME DINE WITH ME

On the topic of food, and whilst safe to do so, the Foyer facilitated a cookery competition based on the popular TV programme, Come Dine with Me. The residents had fun in the kitchen and developed their culinary skills during lockdown with this competition. They had to plan, prepare, and cook their favourite menus, all while observing social distancing. Each team consisted of two people who cooked a main course and a dessert, doing their own shopping and keeping to a budget under €30.00 to feed four people. Staff members were the lucky ones who got to sample all the different dishes and give their scores.

We had four teams participate in the competition with a prize of €50 for the winners. The well-deserved winning team cooked a main course of chicken with creamy Greek yogurt dressing and pancakes with chocolate sauce for dessert. Yum!

CHRISTMAS MARKET



In December, the Foyer was allocated a stall in the socially distanced Outdoor Christmas Market organised by Cork City Partnership. This was a great opportunity for Foyer residents to sell scones, bread and jams made in the Foyer during their cookery classes. Their marketing skills were put to the test as Foyer Residents took part in costing, selling, negotiating, and putting the stall display together.

HEALTHY TALENT BONDS

Thanks to the generous funding support from the ESB Energy for Generations Fund, we have been able to continue the Healthy Talent Bond initiative throughout the whole of 2020. This superb initiative helps young people to explore new interests, develop their existing talents and overall improve personal wellbeing. The Foyer issued a total of 15 healthy talent bonds, not only to Foyer residents, but to some residents from Cork Simon Community.

Adding structure, routine and purpose, examples of talent bonds issued during 2020 were:

- Gym membership
- Culinary tools
- Boxing memberships
- Fees for a training course
- Musical instruments
- Swimming lessons

WHAT TIMMY HAD TO SAY?

"I applied for a Talent Bond in my last semester of college, currently studying for a Degree in Popular Music. We are currently all online now. Between keys and harmony classes, there is a lot of beat making tracks being done from home. I just didn't have the equipment at home to be able to complete this or neither had I the finances to buy this equipment straight away.

That is where the Talent Bond came in. I applied for the equipment I needed, to be creative the best I can be from home. I got a Midi Keyboard for creating tracks and beats, a music microphone stand for performance and a Rode light and mic set with a tri-pod stand. This will enable me to deliver lessons online for five weeks which is part of my Community Music Project.

If I didn't have this equipment as quickly as I got it, I would have been taking part in on-line classes where I would have had no input and I would have certainly fallen behind with my college work. With the equipment and creation, I can now receive continuous assessment marks each week. I am very grateful. Having access to a Talent Bond to help people on their journey is a great option and helps people like myself achieve their goals in life.



TALENT BUDDY

Complementing the successful Healthy Talent Bond scheme, and as part of the Foyers talent spotting and talent building approach, the Foyer decided to continue the Talent Buddy initiative throughout 2020.

The initiative aims to promote peer mentoring between Foyer residents and students at Bishopsgrove, or indeed, between each other at each Project. Being a Talent Buddy allows residents and staff to share their interests, hobbies and experiences with others who may be likeminded. This is particularly useful when a young person has progressed in education or training and wants to share their newfound learning and experience.

One great example of the Talent Buddy scheme in practice is when a student from Bishopsgrove, who is training to become a chef, facilitated cooking sessions with some residents at the Foyer. All gained greatly from the experience and the food served was brilliant!



DEVELOPING POTENTIAL THROUGH SUPPORT & TRAINING

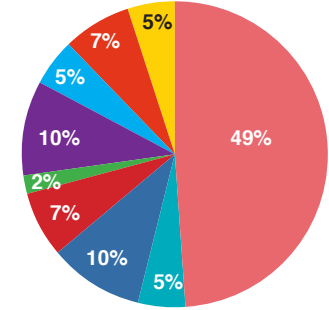
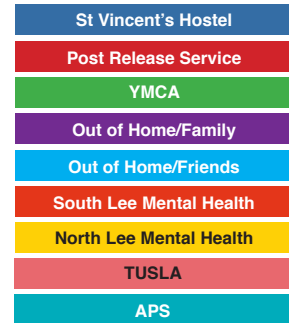
An effective response to youth homelessness should give young people choices and options based on their age, maturity, experience and need, recognising that different young people will need different solutions, and that needs may shift and change over time.

The Foyer provides a safe, supportive environment where residents can overcome trauma, begin to address the issues that led to homelessness or kept them homeless, and begin to rebuild their support network. Because the experience of adolescence is inherently transitional, the Foyer is the most appropriate accommodation for many young people who require medium-term support. The service will provide young people with the necessary time to build capacity and become economically self-sufficient and socially integrated into the community.

ABOUT APPLICANTS

In total 41 young people applied to the Cork Foyer in 2020. This was down on previous years due to the impact of COVID19, with fewer people moving during the various lockdowns and the stay on evictions. Once national restrictions are lifted, we envisage the number of referrals to increase significantly.

Applicants by Main Referrer



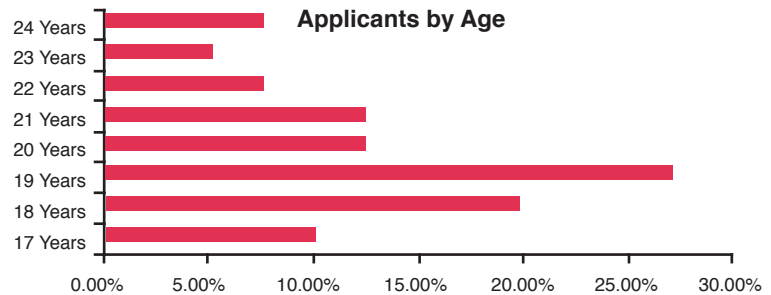
Applicants by Gender

Female: 13 Male: 28

Applicants by Ethnicity

White: 40 Mixed Race: 1

Applicants by Age



The Foyer's congregate living environment with intensive supports are important for young people, who will benefit from the companionship, and a higher level of day-to-day support. This is where the Foyer best fits. The Foyer adopts a "positive youth development" orientation – a strengths-based approach that focuses on building assets, confidence, and resilience, while addressing risks and vulnerabilities that young people may face. This support includes skills to problem-solve and work through conflict, set goals, improve communication, regulate emotions, find healthy coping habits, and provide information and advice around addiction, mental illness, learning disabilities, employability and parenting etc.

ABOUT RESIDENTS

The total number of residents supported in 2020 was 44.

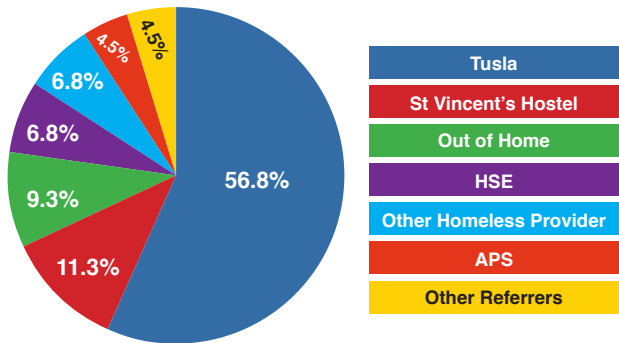
Residents by Gender

Female: 17 Male: 27

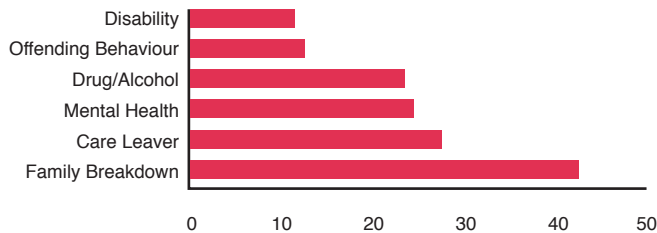
Applicants by Ethnicity

White Irish: 35 Mixed Race: 3 White Other: 3
Black: 2 Eastern European: 1

Residents by Referrer



Residents Main Support Needs



	Family Breakdown	Care Leaver	Mental Health	Drug/Alcohol	Offending Behaviour	Disability
Series 1	42	27	24	23	12	11

Note: Residents may be counted in more than one Support Category



Multi Agency Approach

Using a multi-agency approach ensures that young people get access to the services and systems they need in a timely and appropriate way. At a local level, this means effective and seamless partnerships between youth serving organisations and mainstream institutions and services.

Although much of the support is carried out by the Foyer staff team, there is a need for this multi-agency cooperative approach to increase each resident's ability to achieve their

goals. This can take two forms, firstly where the resident and Foyer staff team work with an external agency that the resident has an ongoing relationship with, or secondly, the resident and staff team identify an external agency whose support would be of benefit to the young person.

Some external agencies, groups and support providers include:

HOUSING & RESETTLEMENT

- Cork City Council
- Cork County Council
- Sophia Housing
- Focus Ireland
- Access Housing
- Peter McVerry Trust
- Aftercare Steering Committee
- Homeless Action Team
- CYPSC Homeless Sub-Group

EDUCATION & TRAINING

- ABLES
- YMCA
- CSN
- St John's College
- College of Commerce
- Academy of Music
- CIT
- Youthreach
- Blackpool Training Centre

HEALTH NEEDS

- Local GP's & Dentists
- HSE Mental Health Services
- YMCA Counselling Service
- YHS (Youth Health Service)
- DBT Program
- Art Therapist
- Cork Alliance
- Teen Parenting

For resident's not attending college or an external training course, and to enhance the Foyer support service further, the Foyer offers up to **16 hours** internal training per week. The training aims to improve a resident's educational and employment prospects and develop an essential set of skills needed for independent living.

Even though the training programme was significantly impacted by the pandemic, the Foyer, in partnership with Cork Simon Community and Focus Ireland, was able to offer a variety of employability courses safely and the outcomes include:

Fire Warden Training **1**

Safepass **17**

Basic First Aid Training **3**

Manual Handling Training **14**

CV Prep Classes **6**

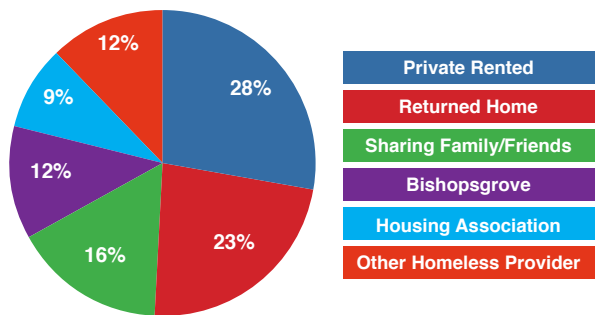
Fork Lift Truck Driving **1**

Mobile Elevated Platform **9**

In addition to the above, the Support staff successfully delivered an amazing **66** individual Independent Living Skills modules and **55** individual Wellbeing modules to Foyer residents.

Once Foyer residents have identified their goals, have been supported to achieve them through internal and external training and support services, we move to their final step in their journey to independence and resettlement. During 2020, **26** residents were resettled in the community, the types of move on were:

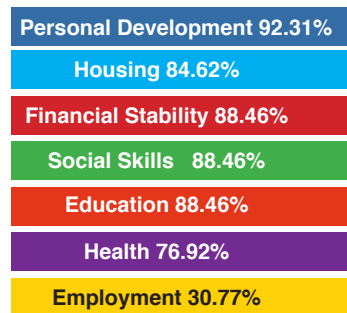
Resident Resettlement 2020



The average length of stay for residents leaving during 2020 was **10.8 Months**.

Whilst there is very limited single social housing and appropriate affordable private rented accommodation available, it is vitally important to find new and innovative solutions such as our sister project, Bishopsgrrove. It is also vitally important that we continue to maximise opportunities and maintain strong partnerships with other social housing providers and support services. Finally, we need to ensure that young people who enter the Foyer service are encouraged to work hard on achieving their goal of independence and be rewarded accordingly with stable accommodation at the end of their journey.

Residents Progress On Leaving



WHAT MAIREAD QUARRY - YOUTH ADVOCATE HAD TO SAY?

“Working as the Advocate in the Blackpool and Mayfield Community Youth Training Centres, I have had many opportunities to work with the staff of Cork Foyer and Bishopsgrrove Student Accommodation. I have found the process of both services to be professional and warm. Being able to pick up the phone and talk to a staff member in relation to applicants or support of existing residents is invaluable. The staff work in a person-centred holistic approach and this is the service the young people need.”

The feedback from the young people who access their services is overwhelmingly positive. They get to live in a space that is safe and warm – that allows them to develop their social and life skills which will enable them to independently move on with their lives. They are encouraged to develop life plans, to set and achieve realistic goals and supported by their key workers and resource staff as needed. The services that Cork Foyer and Bishopsgrrove offer to the youth of Cork is unrivalled and my only criticism is that there should be more of these services”.

IMPROVING STANDARDS & MAINTAINING QUALITY SERVICES

The Cork Foyer takes quality assurance very seriously and views it as vital to the running and development of the service. Through ongoing assessment of our service we can clearly identify the areas that are working well for our residents, whilst also identifying new legislation that needs to be reflected in policies and new ideas that can be implemented to improve the service offered to our residents. The comprehensive monitoring of data collated can be used to identify trends so we can proactively tackle new or increasing challenges.



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

HSE SERVICE ARRANGEMENT

Each year the Cork Foyer signs a Service Level Agreement with the HSE. This agreement holds the Cork Foyer to strict conditions around policies & procedures, support provision, financial controls, governance, health & safety, and is linked to the annual grant we receive. The HSE Agreement provides helpful guidance each year on new legislation and how this needs to be incorporated into our policies and procedures; it also sets key performance indicators which need to be reported back on a regular basis. A recent example of this would be the HSE needing statistics on the number of residents seeking support from addiction, mental health, and disability services.



FOYER FEDERATION ACCREDITATION

Deservedly, Cork Foyer was fully endorsed by the Foyer Federation with an assessment result of Strategically Strong and Operationally Strong. This is the highest grade possible under the quality framework. This was especially pleasing considering the intensive process and the considerable time dedicated to the process by staff and residents. Following a comprehensive self-assessment of our service, a Quality Development Plan was put in place with ambitious targets. Progress on this plan was closely monitored and reviewed over the last 2 years before we received endorsement. The Cork Foyer is currently in the process of compiling a new plan to carry into the next years ahead.



NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL HEALTH PROMOTION QUALITY MARK

The National Youth Council of Ireland developed the Health Quality Mark as a health promotion initiative, with a view to enhancing best practise and a high standard of quality in all aspects of health promotion in youth organisations. The HQ Mark is a set of quality standards in youth health promotion.

Cork Foyer has been involved with the HQ Mark since 2014 and has three members of staff who have completed the Specialist Certificate in Youth Health Promotion. This course aims to encourage support and facilitate youth organisations to become effective settings for health.

As a leading organisation working with young people, we believe it is essential to promote health and wellbeing. In meeting the HQ Mark, we have benefited greatly through the creation of new initiatives and incentives. Some examples of what we have done include:

- The establishment of a Health & Social Committee who meet once a month to discuss the health needs of the young people in the service and what the service can do to meet these needs
- Provided health related topic boards in the corridors
- Updated leaflet stands
- Invited guest speakers in from outside agencies to speak to Foyer residents about different health topics i.e. Sexual Health Centre, YMCA, Youth Health Service & MABS
- Organised activities and trips
- Implemented a 'Healthy Talent Bond' initiative
- Implemented a Talent Buddy Scheme



Comhairle Cathrach Chorcaí
Cork City Council

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARDS FRAMEWORK FOR HOMELESS SERVICES IN IRELAND

The National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) was due to be introduced in 2020 but due to COVID19 has been postponed. The framework outlines the standards that all homeless services should be trying to achieve when offering support and accommodation to their service users, and as such, can only be of benefit to the service users. This involves a comprehensive self-assessment, improvement action plan, site visits by the Local Authority and quarterly reporting of statistics. During 2020, the Cork Foyer submitted its first quarterly reports, completed the required self-assessment, and compiled a draft improvement action plan. I believe due to our constant focus on quality assurance and ongoing development, the Cork Foyer will be in a very strong position for when the NQSF is fully introduced.



ANNUAL SERVICE REVIEW

Each year the Cork Foyer undertakes an Annual Service Review, this review involves residents, stakeholders, referrers, and staff. The aim of these service reviews is to review all aspects of the service, see what is working well and see where changes can be made that have a positive impact on the service provided to residents. This year's review was obviously a little different. Due to COVID19, we were unable to hold our daylong meeting so we relied upon a one to one interview with residents and questionnaires circulated to referring agencies.

14 one to one interview's were conducted with residents covering 8 topics to gage resident satisfaction levels, with another 4 topics seeking suggestions around changes or new improvements that could be made. I am pleased to report that the results were very positive with **100%** of residents satisfied with the service in 7 of the 8 areas and **93%** satisfied in the remaining area.

Annual Service Review 2021 Satisfaction



Overall	Support
Trust	Accommodation
Health	Application Process
Foyer Rules	The Foyer Deal

In other areas we were seeking feedback on training courses, partner agencies, social activities and handling the current pandemic. While the feedback on our current service provision in these areas is very positive, we will consider the suggested changes, see what is achievable and realistic and try incorporating them into our service provision.

Some examples of the feedback from the last Annual Service Reviews that were followed through on include:

- Complete refurbishment of the residents kitchen
- New semi-industrial laundry machines and upgrade of laundry room
- Repainting of the common room, hallways, and training room
- Wi-Fi throughout the public areas of the building
- Hiring of a female Night Premises Supervisor
- Introduction of woodwork classes



RESIDENT'S KITCHEN REFURBISHMENT

Improving the resident's kitchen was a popular suggestion from Foyer residents and staff in our previous Annual Service Review. The old kitchen had been in place since we opened in 2006 and due to constant use by nearly 400 residents had become tired and dated. After consulting with residents, it was decided to pursue a modern, bright design at considerable investment.

Following the design and procurement process, work began on the kitchen in August 2020. The new design and layout created more room, better integration of appliances and a dedicated seating area. The feedback from residents has been very positive towards the new kitchen, and it has been noticeable that more residents are cooking and using the kitchen on a regular basis.



LAUNDRY ROOM

The laundry room and more specifically the laundry machines were an area that it was acknowledged could be vastly improved. Based on feedback from residents the decision was taken to invest in 3 semi-industrial sized washing machines and 3 dryers, as the domestic machines previously in place were not able to cope with the level of use by 18 residents. The new machines are working well, and in this year's Annual Service Review there was not one mention of laundry machines or the laundry as an area of complaint.



REPAINTING OF COMMON ROOM, HALLWAY AND TRAINING ROOM

It was suggested by residents that the public areas of the Foyer could do with some freshening up, with an emphasis on removing the orange and purple from the Common room and Training room. Staff did not need too much convincing that this was a good idea. The hallway has been completed and the sitting room is progressing well, with all traces of orange removed and the room looking much brighter and welcoming. Last up will be tackling the purple in the training room!!

WI-FI

This suggestion came up numerous times during our previous Annual Service Reviews, both from residents and training facilitators. Residents felt that any modern accommodation should have Wi-Fi and the facilitators said that it would benefit the residents when engaging in internal training. We invested in our residents and the public areas of the Foyer now have free Wi-Fi until Midnight.

NEW FEMALE NIGHT PREMISES SUPERVISOR

Our long-standing Night Premises Supervisor, Richard Meagher, happily retired on 31 December 2020. While it is always sad when a colleague leaves, the prospect of new face on the staff team is always exciting. Following the recruitment process, Julia Seitz was hired to replace Richard. The appointment of Julia met a long-standing request from residents to have female members of night staff, in addition to female members of day staff.

WOODWORK CLASSES

Through the support of the Cork ETB the Foyer offers a range of internal training classes for those who are not in external training, education or employment. The Cork ETB is very supportive in trying new classes and taking on board the suggestions of residents. Following their feedback, the Foyer applied to hold woodwork classes twice weekly. This application has been successful, and we are now just waiting to see when these classes can start after COVID19 restrictions. The introduction of woodwork classes may also allow us to make better use of our small workshop, which was developed under the Working Assets programme with the Foyer Federation.

BISHOPSGROVE SUPPORTED STUDENT ACCOMMODATION



Like all mainstream student accommodation, life for students at Bishopsgrove has been profoundly destabilised by the pandemic. Gaps in learning and uncertainty has not only affected many students academically, it has affected them mentally and emotionally. For some, it has also affected them financially through the loss of part time employment. However, for others, the pandemic has brought the opportunity to gain part time employment though the increased demand on takeaway food.

There is no doubt that students miss being in person with their classmates, with their colleagues, with their faculty members, and having those spontaneous, organic conversations and relationships. Physically going along to college or a training centre makes learning far more enjoyable and real, whilst adding a layer of accountability.

The most effective tool in keeping student retention and maintaining access to learning throughout the pandemic has been online courses, and it goes without saying, this presented a massive challenge not only for students but for their tutors too. Through a rapid upgrade of the Bishopsgrove Wi-Fi system and ensuring that all students had access to the necessary IT hardware quickly, we have been able to facilitate access to online learning and reduce the possibility of our students being on the wrong side of a digital divide.

WHAT MATTHEW HAD TO SAY?

“Bishopsgrove, like all social housing projects, was faced with the mammoth challenge presented by a relentless pandemic, and the burden of the new responsibilities brought by the necessity to impact the behaviour of its residents to contain infections and protect lives. I have been beyond impressed with the response of the staff here, keeping students at Bishopsgrove safe and protected. This isn’t a coincidence; however, it is the result of being proactive instead of reactive as an organisation, always going beyond the duty of care to ensure the student experience remained ordinary in extraordinary times.

For me, the pandemic offered me unique opportunities. As a journalist, and final year Arts student, I had extra time on my hands. Having the extra time, and the stable accommodation at Bishopsgrove allowed me to get my first paid journalistic jobs, firstly as the fourteenth Editor-in-Chief of Motley Magazine, University College Cork’s flagship publication. As a result, I gained meaningful employment, and in the interim won the Radio Journalist of the Year 2020 in the Irish SMEDIA awards and wrote a series about homelessness’ intersection the COVID-19 pandemic. The final piece was particularly humbling, as in my past I lived in homeless shelters.

I am ever so grateful to Bishopsgrove, a space that has allowed me to flourish, to progress, to believe, a space that I hope at once I’ve had some part in contributing positively too, just as it has contributed positively to me, my life and my livelihood”.

Specifically targeting young people who are at imminent risk of becoming homeless and those that have previously progressed really well whilst living in a homeless service, Bishopsgrove has had to adopt a more lenient approach to those who have dropped out of education or training during the pandemic, ensuring their regression is minimised as much as possible and they are given every opportunity to get back on track.

WHAT O.K. HAD TO SAY?

“When I moved to Cork from Donegal to continue treatment for my drug and alcohol abuse, I always knew at some point that I was going to have to find a place to live once I finished in the treatment centre. I had just turned 19 and hadn’t a clue how to live on my own or even look for a place to live. While I was still in treatment, I had linked in with a Drugs and Alcohol Abuse Task Force Worker named Conor who got me in touch with Focus Ireland and my keyworker to be, Vinnie.

I had heard about Bishopsgrove through my Drugs Worker and when I started working with Vinnie, I mentioned it to him because my plan was to go on to 3rd level education and almost instantly Vinnie started the application process with me. Every week I turned up to my appointments with Vinnie and eventually I had my interview with Ruth and when I got to look around the complex, I knew this is where I wanted to be. After a successful interview, I was granted a place in Bishopsgrove and I moved in May 2020.

I have been in 3rd level education since September 2020 and even though we have been living and studying through a global pandemic, I have found this time has added a priceless value to my recovery as I have been able to slow down so much and sit with myself a lot more. I will be forever grateful to Focus Ireland and Bishopsgrove for being able to provide me with such an incredible service that always places my needs miles ahead of their own”.

A FEW KEY FACTS

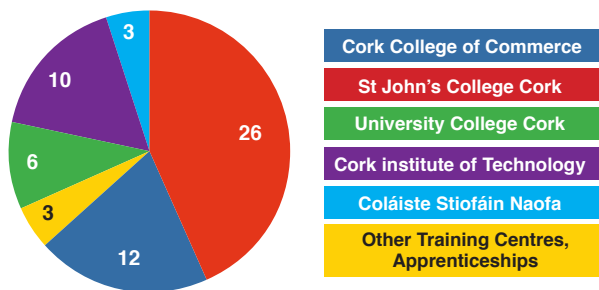
14 new lettings were offered during 2020:

Cork Foyer 3	Focus Ireland 1
Liberty Street House for Young People out of Home 2	
TUSLA Aftercare Services 4	Other 4

Female: 5 Male: 9

Throughout 2020 a total of **51** young people were housed and supported by Bishopsgrrove and its multi-agency teams. Students are at varying levels of development and attended a wide range of colleges and centres.

Students by Colleges Attended



Note: Several students attended more than one college or centre.



Despite the pandemic and by September 2020, **14** students completed their course or degree, including a student who completed their master's degree. The remaining **11** students advanced onto the next level of their course and **15** students moved on successfully by securing private rented accommodation.



The smooth operations at Bishopsgrrove would not be possible without the close working partnerships with TUSLA, Liberty Street House for Young People out of Home and Focus Ireland. Their like-minded ethos and professionalism underpin the continued success of the service. And of course, we must not forget the hard work of each student concerned.

ABOUT OUR PARTNERS?

VINNIE MULHERN - FOCUS IRELAND YOUTH HOUSING

“Focus Ireland, Youth Housing, Cork provides short term accommodation for 18-25yr old referrals from the Homeless Action Team, (HAT). These are generally young people who may be at risk of homelessness, ageing out of state care or are experiencing combined social issues. Our model is diversionary and preventative in structure and is aligned with a person centred and partnership approach.

Our aim is to create positive relationships with young people and to promote, advocate and support action plans which enable the creation of independent living skills, coping skills and positive community engagement. In addition, education, either within an academic, skills-based, or non-formal structure is seen as paramount in relation to a personal development plan which aims to achieve a quotient outcome. Young people are also supported and prepared for a positive exit from youth housing through the acquisition of social housing, private rented or an Approved Housing Body.

Bishopsgrove Supported Student Accommodation has proven to be an invaluable inclusion to the overall Youth Housing Project. Through positive communication and pro-active engagement with Bishopsgrove staff on-site and management, young people have been provided with a safe, supportive, and constructive environment. While Bishopsgrove is based within the provision of educational support, it should also be recognised that young people profit greatly from the acquisition of social and personal development skills through their engagement in and with Bishopsgrove.

Furthermore, and while providing low to medium support, young people can be engaged within a safe structured environment in which future planning can be achieved particularly in relation to additional educational advancement, employment, positive move on and historical or upcoming issues of concern for the young person”.

LIBERTY STREET HOUSE TEAM

Liberty Street House is a Tusla Child and Family Agency based at 18 Liberty Street, Cork. The main service provision is for young people age 15 years and over who are out of home or at risk of being out of home.

The service also offers supports to

- Women who have/are experiencing domestic violence
- Parents/Carers who experience Child to Adult Violence (NVR)
- Teenagers requiring pregnancy support and advice regarding sexual health

The service works in partnership with area social work teams, Gardai, mental health services, drug and alcohol services, schools as well as non-government agencies e.g. Wellsprings, Good Shepherd Services Cork.

LSH has an accommodation team with a number of providers in the community who accommodate young people. This team has been involved with the Bishopsgrrove project since its inception. It has access to 8 placements there which is managed in partnership with Bishopsgrrove Supported Student accommodation Project Workers.

This innovative project has provided us with appropriate accommodation options for young people in further education. The support offered to young people in Bishopsgrrove is considerable and they have been exceptional during the pandemic.

To date we have found that there has been great understanding of the level of need of our young people and the issues they struggle with. The onsite support has been invaluable and communication with our team is regular and ongoing. It is our hope to maintain and continue our relationship with all agencies in the best interest of service users.

OLIVIA RING - AFTERCARE MANAGER

“Cork Aftercare service has a team of dedicated Aftercare workers who aim to meet the needs of young people leaving care as they transition to adulthood. As part of a co-operative initiative with Cork City Council, Cork Foyer and other agencies, Cork Aftercare service has access to student accommodation called Bishopsgrrove based on the outskirts of Cork City. For many care leavers continuing their journey in education is a fundamental part of this process and having Bishopsgrrove student accommodation as an option is an integral part of this service provision.

This supported student accommodation provides a multi-agency approach to supporting the students living there. Through this service in 2020, 16 care leavers were accommodated as they attended their education programmes in various settings. We are grateful for our partnership with Bishopsgrrove Support Staff and Management and would like to acknowledge their openness to being flexible and creative in supporting these students on their journey in education and adulthood”.

KELLY HORGAN – TUSLA AFTERCARE WORKER

“Every student’s pathway is different and Bishopsgrrove recognises this. Working collaboratively and in partnership with Bishopsgrrove has been hugely successful in supporting young adults I work with.; helping them build their independent living skills and achieve their goals. It offers the young adults I work with an opportunity to live in an environment where they can access support while they continue to grow and develop as young adults”.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Cork Foyer & Bishopsgrove: Income and Expenditure Summary as of 31st December 2020

FOYER GENERAL ACCOUNT:

INCOME:	TOTAL	FOYER	B' GROVE
Rent	€244,926	€74,271	€170,655
Health Service Executive	€291,745	€291,745	
Health Service Executive			
Once Off Grant	€20,000	€20,000	
Health Service Executive			
COVID 19 Transport			
Reimbursement	€18,510	€18,510	
Department of Environment,			
Community & Local Govt	€246,029	€246,029	
Miscellaneous Income	€3,065	€3,065	
Total Income	€824,275	€653,620	€170,655

EXPENDITURE:

Payroll	€521,107	€488,695	€32,412
Transfer to Capital Budget			
Provision	€83,369	€59,587	€23,782
Cleaning & Waste	€30,543	€16,785	€13,758
Heating & Lighting	€36,583	€18,326	€18,257
Maintenance Repair, Materials	€50,933	€29,688	€21,245
Non Capital Equipment			
Purchases	€9,997	€7,565	€2,432
Miscellaneous	€1,609	€1,090	€519
Other Operational Expenses	€3,105	€3,105	
Professional Fees	€6,327	€6,327	
Telephone, Internet & Postage	€18,608	€6,960	€11,648
Printing, Stationery, TV Postage	€5,821	€3,848	€1,973
Travel, Training & Subsistence	€2,290	€1,616	€674
Night Security/Security Property	€49,194	€5,271	€43,923
Minibus Costs/ Other Vehicle &			
Machinery Expenses	€4,789	€4,757	€32
Total Expenditure	€824,275	€653,620	€170,655

CAPITAL ACCOUNTS: RESIDENT HARDSHIP / PARTICIPATION FUND:

Balance as at 1st January 2020 €27,433

INCOME:

Big Issue Magazine Street	€2,600
League Tournament	€451
Miscellaneous Income	€3,051
Total Income	€3,051

EXPENDITURE:

Participation, Activities,	€14,381
Equipment & Hardship	€14,381
Total Expenditure	€14,381

Balance at 31st December 2020 €16,104

CAPITAL REPLACEMENT / DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT:

Balance as of 1st January 2020 €203,086

INCOME:

Transfer Capital Budget	€83,369
Provision	€83,369
Total Income	€83,369

EXPENDITURE:

Refurbishment & Safety Work €81,922

Total Expenditure €81,922

Balance as of 31st December 2020 €204,533

CERTIFIED BY:

Barry O'Hare

Barry O'Hare, Management Accountant,
Cork City Council

STAFF TEAM

Barry Waddingham
Foyer Manager

Ruairi O'Farrell
Senior Project Worker

Jessie Feehan
Project Worker

Ruth McGuane
Project Worker

Kevin O'Sullivan
Administrator

Carol Gardezi
PT Administrator

Marie Scully
PT Life Skills Worker & Talents Coach

Conor McManus
PT Maintenance Caretaker

Julia Seitz
Night Premises Supervisor - Job Share

Patrick Fitzsimmons
Night Premises Supervisor - Job Share

Jeremiah Slattery
Night Premises Supervisor - Job Share

Paul Carroll
Night Premises Supervisor - Job Share

The core staff team are supported by a dedicated Bank of Relief Support Workers:

- Trish Jones
- Eric O'Neill
- Patrick Fitzsimmons
- Paul Carroll
- Stewart Hartery
- James Graham
- Danny Bullman
- Jamie Jones



STAFF FEATURE, MARIE SCULLY

My life to here has had many twists and turns from working as a secretary to a personal Assistant to the Managing Director in a London firm to self-employment. Returning from the UK and going back to college at age 40 was probably one of the best things I have done. After completing my degree in Community Education and

Development in CIT, I worked with youths 16-22 years of age with the main aim of reducing offending behaviour for 10 years.

I started in the Cork Foyer in September 2019 as a Life skills & Talent Coach; we went into lockdown in March 2020 making it a bit more difficult, but the support of the other staff members made my job easier. I don't feel I am alone in my role and I enjoy the atmosphere in the Foyer. The Foyer supports residents with their mental health and wellbeing and around skills to live on their own in the future. No one chooses to be homeless, and it is usually a set of complicated circumstances and life experiences that leads a young person to the Cork Foyer.

All the residents want the same as everyone else, to be safe, to be seen, to be heard, to have their own home and to reach their full potential in life whatever that is to them. I am currently in 4th year training in psychotherapy with Flatstone Institute and I feel this compliments my role in the Cork Foyer.

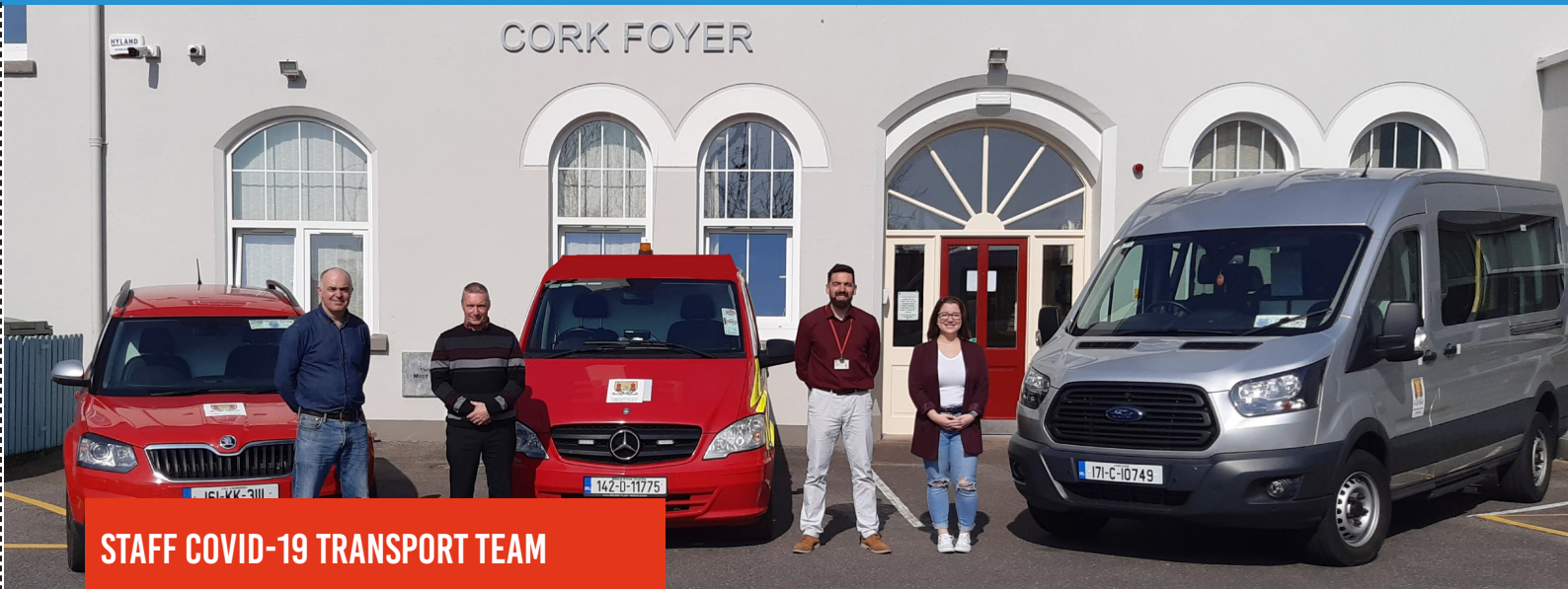


STAFF FEATURE, JULIA SEITZ

In 2019, I was working as a Relief Support Assistant for Cork Simon Community, when I saw a relief position advertised in the Cork Foyer and decided to apply. It was in 2018 that I decided to change my path and started a Diploma in Youth and Community work in UCC. These studies gave me a good insight and built a basis as to how to work with young people.

Both jobs couldn't be more different. While I was confronted by homelessness, addiction, and violence most days working in the Shelter, starting in the

Foyer felt like a fresh breath of air. Here, young people are offered a safe place to live and are given the chance to find their way in life with the help of a strong, highly qualified staff team. I had been given the opportunity to pass on my knowledge and care, as an acting Project Worker, while my colleague was on maternity leave, before moving on to night work. This position gave me the opportunity to develop my skills and gain more knowledge about the work with young people as well as what services are out there to help with certain matters. Working for the Cork Foyer is extremely rewarding, and I am looking forward to many more young people walking out of here into their new life!



STAFF COVID-19 TRANSPORT TEAM

Since March 2020, 5 volunteers from the Foyer staff team have assisted the HSE Social Inclusion Department by transporting numerous service users for COVID-19 testing, hospital appointments and self-isolation etc, in and around their present roles. Their 9am until 9pm, 7 days per week commitment has

required a great deal of dedication and is a true testament to all those involved. Without doubt, this essential transport service has allowed the HSE to act quickly and address concerns within state funded services.

FOYER MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dave Cody

*Chairman
CEO (Retired)
Cork City Enterprise Board
Union Quay
Cork*

David Lane

*Drug and Alcohol Services
Co-ordinator
Cork Kerry Community
Healthcare Health Service
Executive
Kinvara House
Dublin Hill
Cork*

Teresa O'Sullivan

*Further Education & Training
Area Co-ordinator
21 Lavitt's Quay
Cork*

Barry Waddingham

*Cork Foyer Manager
Assumption Road
Blackpool
Cork*

**Invited Resident
Representatives**

*Cork Foyer
Assumption Road
Blackpool
Cork*

Joanna MacCarthy

*Admin Officer
Housing Department
Cork City Council
Cork*

Aideen O'Dwyer

*Admin Officer
Homeless Officer
Housing Department
Cork City Council
Cork*

Denis Manning

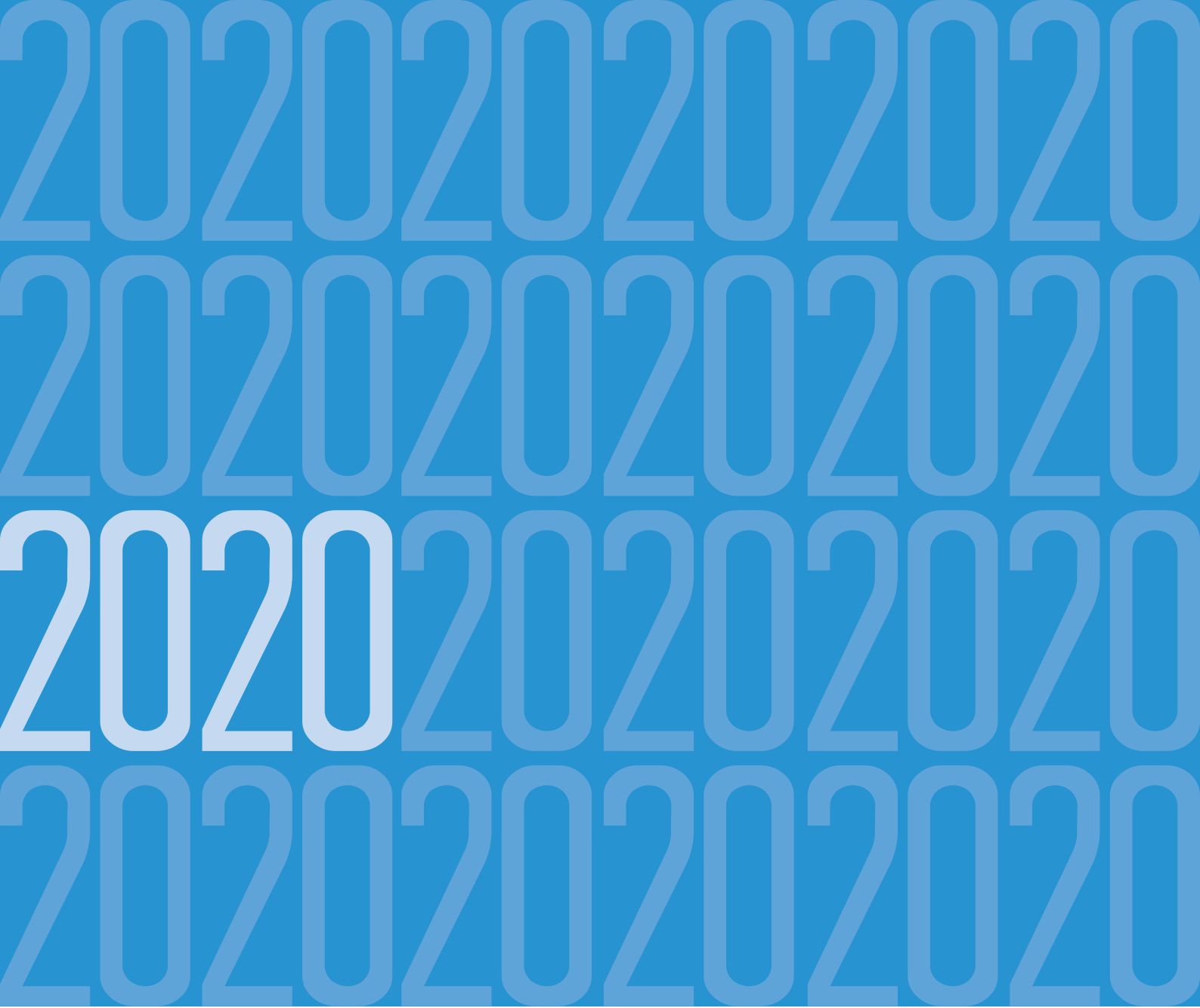
*Admin Officer
Housing Department
Cork County Council
County Hall
Cork*

John Hartnett

*Member of Blackpool Community
Co-operative Service Centre Ltd
90 Great William O'Brien Street
Blackpool
Cork*

Garda Jacqui White

*An Garda Síochána
Community Policing
Watercourse Road
Blackpool
Cork*



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive



cetb

Bord Oideachais agus
Oiliúna Chorcaí
Cork Education and
Training Board



Cork
County Council
Comhairle Contae Chorcaí