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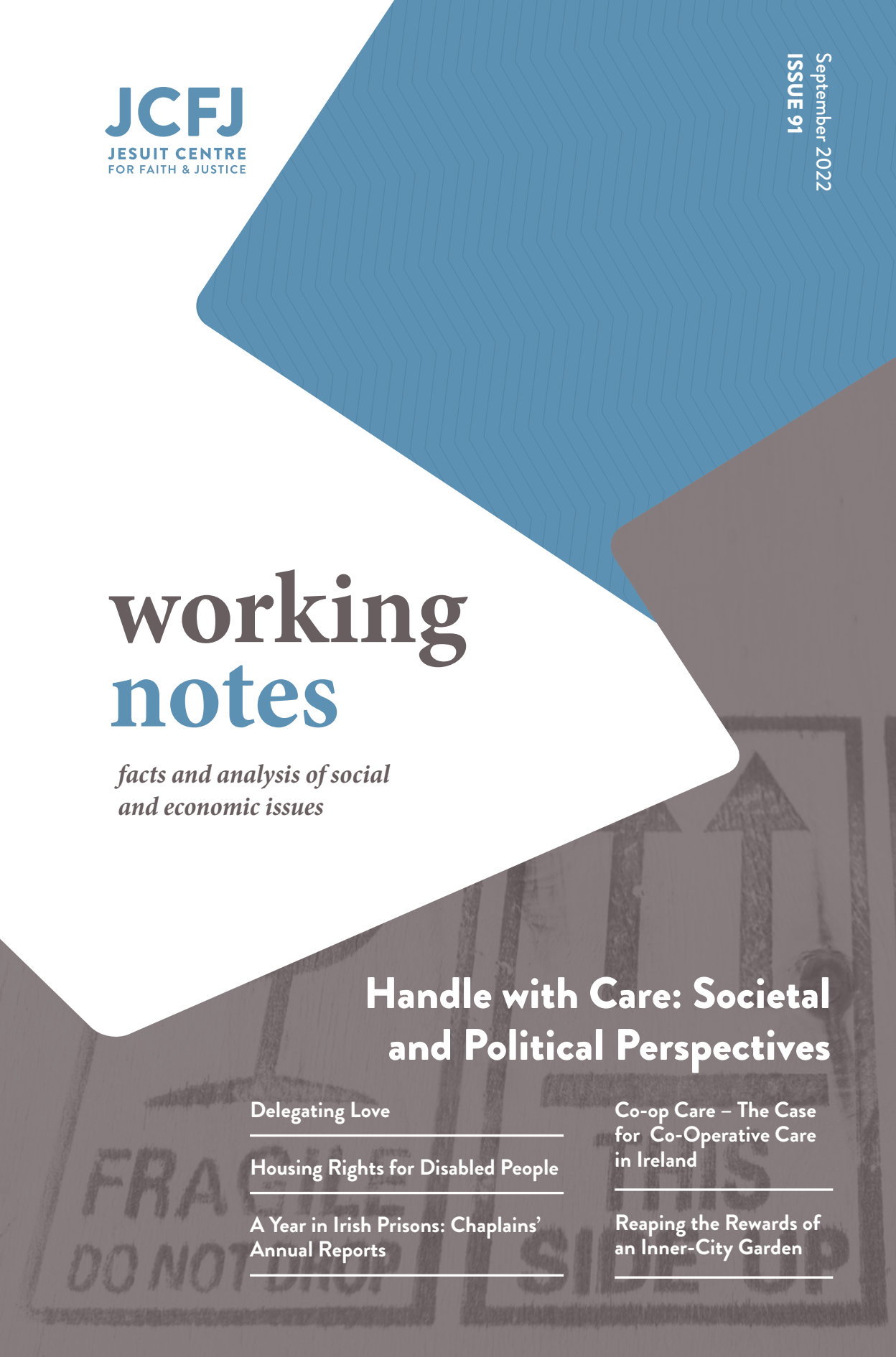

Handle with Care: Societal and Political Perspectives

Working Notes
Facts and analysis of social and economic issues
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facts and analysis of social and economic issues

Editorial

Ciara Murphy

"A year ago, thinking about a society of care was utopian; today, in times of coronavirus, it has become utterly urgent and necessary."[1]

The coronavirus is a great illuminator. Over the course of the pandemic vulnerabilities in everything from global supply lines, lack of appropriate housing, lack of public and green spaces in urban areas to under resourced health services have been highlighted. In Ireland, especially prominent in the early weeks and months of lock-down, the weakness of the systems of care in society were exposed. The closure of schools left frontline workers scrambling so they could go to work,[2] the reliance on market-based solutions for childcare proving to be factor in this vulnerability.[3] Most significantly, the devastatingly high mortality rates in our nursing homes indicated that Ireland's care system is tearing at the seams. Even where the measures taken to protect those in residential care settings worked, they resulted in high amounts of isolation in the older population.[4] In times of stress, the cracks in the system widen, destabilising the entire functionality of the system.

We cannot claim ignorance of the faults. There were a steady stream of warnings over the years. The book *Capitalism and Care*, by Kathleen Lynch,[5] while published during the pandemic, is built on decades of research and commentary on the state of care in our society. It is a devastating takedown of neoliberalism, arguing that care is fundamental to society

1. José Laguna and Joseph Owens, *Vulnerable Bodies: Caring as a Political Horizon* (Barcelona: Cristianisme i Justícia, 2020).
2. Regan, M. "Absence of Further Childcare Supports in Budget 2021" *RTÉ*, 20 October 2020, https://www.rte.ie/news/analysis-and-comment/2020/1015/1171621-budget2021-childcare-analysis/
3. Merike Darmody, Emer Smyth, and Helen Russell, *The Implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic for Policy in Relation to Children and Young People: A Research Review* (ESRI, 22 July 2020) <https://doi.org/10.26504/sustat94>.
4. 'Interim Report on Covid-19 in Nursing Homes' July 2020, https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/33/special_committee_on_covid_19_response/reports/2020/2020-07-31_interim-report-on-covid-19-in-nursing-homes_en.pdf
5. Kathleen Lynch, *Care and Capitalism* (John Wiley & Sons, 2021, 2021).

but is utterly disregarded within the present capitalist system. Similarly, the publication "Vulnerable Bodies: Caring as a Political Horizon"[6] – conceived before the vocabulary of PCR tests and social distancing were embedded within our psyche – argues that our vision of ourselves as rational, self-reliant 'men' comes apart when tested even by basic comparisons to reality. The alternative vision of our vulnerability can be unpalatable where "the paradigm of vulnerability seeks to impugn the essentialist models of modernity."[7]

How care is expressed in our society, the topic of this issue of Working Notes, is consequently an important topic of discussion. The stark limitations of our caring culture need to be fully understood and solutions – political, societal, and individual – explored. All of the essays within this issue highlight, to a greater or lesser extent, the ways in which we are not caring for people. These essays, in their different ways, also trace a path forward in terms of changes that can be made.

Hannah Malcolm's theological reflection, *Delegating Love*, on the social structures which encourage society to disengage from care opens this issue. Her piece introduces the reader to the subject by highlighting some of the major issues surrounding how we currently care by delegation within our society. This inevitably has consequences from cradle to grave, with abuse reported in crèche services, elder care homes, and at different life stages in between. Drawing on *Capitalism and Care* and the works of Thomas Aquinas alongside the contemporary theologian William Cavanaugh, Hannah suggests that "moving away from a model of delegating love requires social conditions where the possibility and responsibility of caring for each other is shared out amongst us". She not only focuses on the individual level but tackles the phenomenon of the state relieving its responsibilities for care of its citizens to private entities. Her introductory essay is a useful lens through which the subsequent essays can be read.

The scale at which the State obfuscates its responsibility is clear in *Housing Rights for Disabled People*, by James Cawley. Cawley's analysis illustrates the many barriers disabled people face in finding suitable and affordable housing. This essay draws on the first-hand experience of both disabled people and their families. While the housing crisis in Ireland is accelerating daily, there has long been a crisis impacting those on the margins, and specifically disabled people. Hearing from people about their every-day experiences facing challenges offers a level of insight that statistics alone cannot give. This essay is a critique of private solutions with a call for more public investment in housing solutions for disabled people.

Insight from the care giver, as well as those abandoned within the care giving system, is invaluable. Seán Duggan, Head of Chaplaincy Services of the Irish Prison Service, in his essay *A Year in Irish Prisons: Chaplains' Annual Reports* offers such an account. Unlike the delegation of housing to the private market, prison chaplaincy is a responsibility held within the Irish Prison Service and is consequently still within the public realm. However, similarities can be drawn with housing in terms of the massive under-resourcing which is now embedded within the system. Seán explores the conditions within our prisons and the vital role that chaplains have within these systems. Walking with the most marginalised in our communities, chaplains are often described as 'the voice of the prisoner' as well as 'the canary in the coalmine'. With a view from the inside, chaplains are often the first to raise concerns about abuses or prevailing conditions which are detrimental to the health and well-being of prisoners and staff. This advocacy role sits alongside the more recognisable one of support for a prisoners' spiritual and mental well-being and its contribution to prisoner rehabilitation. The work of chaplains within the prison system however is curtailed by consistent under-staffing and difficult working conditions, diminishing the care of the most marginalised in society.

While the work of chaplains is an integral part of our care system, it suffers from relative invisibility. This is most certainly not the case with other areas of our care networks such as elder care. Unlike chaplaincy, elder care

6. Laguna and Owens.
7. Laguna and Owens, p. 7.

has largely been privatised for profit with its failings widely publicised, particularly at the start of the pandemic. We know that the current economic model is not congruent to a caring society. Dr Gerard Doyle in *Co-op Care – The Case for Co-Operative Care in Ireland* outlines an alternative route which has far reaching benefits for elder people and communities in general. Co-operatives, Doyle argues, are an ideal organisational form for elder care. When profit is removed from the equation and care for the person is centred, it is unsurprising that not only is the level of care improved but staff welfare and health outcomes as well. This economic model also benefits from its establishment globally. In Ireland, co-operatives exist within different sectors such as the financial sector (we think easily of local Credit Unions) and agriculture. International examples of elder care co-operatives highlight the benefits of such a model. Its proliferation however is hindered by restrictive policy and relative obscurity within this particular sector in Ireland, as well as a lack of imagination for developing creative alternatives.

This task of identifying and generating economic models, and ways of working which can pave the way to better future, is vital. The work of educating our children to continue building a better society is hardly less so. While other essays focus primarily on vulnerable citizens, the last essay in our issue – *Reaping the Rewards of an Inner-City Garden* – by Dr Karin Bacon and Elizabeth Cox, explores the interface of care and education of children, and care for our common home. Using an inner-city school garden as a case study, Bacon and Cox set out the argument that Inquiry Based Learning (IBL) is an important teaching tool in fostering children's relationship with the natural environment. Over the past few years, news of the pandemic dominated the headlines. However, the climate and biodiversity crisis we are simultaneously experiencing will require a fundamental change in how our society functions. The task of guiding these young people in their understanding of how our world works, through literally planting seeds and watching them grow, is important and intrinsically linked to creating a more caring society. Like in *Housing Rights for Disabled People*, the first-hand experience of Cox is a powerful voice, illustrating the importance that access to green space and freedom to explore creation has on children.

Reading these essays, the threads that interconnect the different elements of care in our society are clear. When you lack care for one aspect of existence it is easy to imagine this seeping into all other areas. Ignoring the suffering of prisoners can go hand in hand with degradation of ecosystems vital to human flourishing. As Pope Francis argues in his encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, which extends the ideas of *Laudato Si'* into the political sphere, "to care for the world in which we live means to care for ourselves" (§ 17). Reimagining how we practically care for our own communities can not only transform our society into a more caring one but also one that cares for and protects our Common Home.

Delegating Love

Hannah Malcolm

Hannah Malcolm is an Anglican ordinand and is writing a PhD on theology, climate and ecological grief. In 2020 she edited the book "Words for a Dying World: Stories of Grief and Courage from the Global Church".

Pretty much everybody says they want to live in a caring society, at least in the abstract. Participating in one is another matter. Ireland spends just 0.2 percent of its GDP on childcare each year, investing the smallest percentage of its GDP in early years of any developed country, and with the greatest reliance on private services. The *average* spend across Europe is four times as high.[1] When it comes to old age spending, Ireland also sits at the bottom of the league table at 3.4 percent.[2] Households where more than one adult is in full-time paid work have gone from being necessary for some, to normative for everyone. Irish childcare costs are some of the highest in the world, while many of those who work in childcare barely earn the living wage, with paid maternity leave and pensions a rarity.[3] The results of this model for vulnerable people speak for themselves.

In 2019, RTÉ's investigations into the Dublin-based Hyde and Seek crèche chain revealed fire safety risks, ill-treatment of children, and breaches of appropriate ratios of carers. In the 5 years leading up to the investigation, the chain had drawn down €1.25m in state subsidies and €2.75m in profits after salaries.[4]

Last year, the organisation EPIC (Empowering People in Care) reported first-hand experiences of relational failure in privately-run care homes. Many such homes rely on agency workers who cannot be regularly present with the young people they care for. The consistency required to build trusting relationships is impossible; there is no assurance of any long-term commitment. The same is true on a macro-scale. If a private-care provider withdraws, those in its care are uprooted again.[5] Last year, Tusla's chief executive expressed concern about the growth of private care provision and a desire to reduce the state's dependency on it.[6] Thus far, no child care budget increases have followed this desire.[7]

In February it was announced that Orpea – one of Europe's largest nursing home providers and the biggest operator in Ireland – was going to be investigated for allegations of malpractice, including restricting food, adult nappies, and other basic care in a home outside Paris where residents paid fees of €6500 a month.[8] Ireland is not immune to these issues with fears of widespread abuse in nursing homes over the pandemic.[9]

Of course, Ireland is not alone in being host to those profiteering off the vulnerable. The owners of private children's homes in the UK make around £250 million in profit a year, with outcomes for children in care recently reviewed as 'unacceptably poor', in part due to replacing 'organic bonds and relationships with professionals and services'.[10] We live in an era of hyper-delegation where common good-services are habitually outsourced for profit", the neoliberal ideals of self-reliance, self-interest, and free choice driving us to constantly shift responsibility for others away from ourselves, either out of necessity or lifestyle preference. The care which families, communities, or the State might take on is increasingly parcelled out to corporations. This changes us.

In *Care and Capitalism,* Kathleen Lynch examines the dynamics of care and violence which shape our communities, and subsequently describes the self as 'co-created… for better or worse' through relationships, these affective relations providing our ordinary meaning

1. "Early Childhood Ireland's 2022 Barometer," Early Childhood Education, last modified January 2022, https://www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/about/advocacy/childcare-barometer/childcare-barometer-2022/
2. Whelan, J., "How Ireland's spending on welfare compares to the rest of Europe", *RTÉ,* August 21, 2019, https://www.rte.ie/brainstorm/2019/0415/1042763-how-irelands-spending-on-welfare-compares-to-the-rest-of-europe/
3. "Regulation and Funding Issues Facing Workers in the Early Years Sector: Discussion," at the Joint Committee on Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth debate, *Houses of Oireachtas*, Tuesday, 5 Oct 2021 https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/joint_committee_on_children_equality_disability_integration_and_youth/2021-10-05/3/
4. O'Regan, E., "RTÉ Investigates creche Hyde and Seek clears €2.75m in profits as it gets €1.25m from the State," *Independent.ie*, 25 July 2015, https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/news/rte-investigates-creche-hyde-and-seek-clears-275m-in-profits-as-it-gets-125m-from-the-state-38344940.html
5. Baker, N., "For-profit companies playing bigger role in residential care for vulnerable children" *Irish Examiner*, 27 September 2021, https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/spotlight/arid-40706681.html
6. ibid
7. "Foster Care Issues and the Loss of Positive Care Services: Engagement with Tusla,"at Joint Committee On Children, Equality, Disability, Integration And Youth, *Kildare Street*, 10 May 2022, https://www.kildarestreet.com/committees/?id=2022-05-10a.141&s=bernard+gloster+private#g144
8. Mulligan, J., "Biggest care home group in Ireland faces official investigation in France, " *Independent.ie*, 02 February 2022, https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/biggest-care-home-group-in-ireland-faces-official-investigation-in-france-41303253.html
9. Michael, N., "Social workers concerned about 'abuse and neglect' in private nursing homes," *Irish Examiner,* 23 March 2021, https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-40249271.html
10. MacAlister, J., "The independent review of children's social care – Final Report", *The independent review of children's social care,* (2022) https://childrenssocialcare.independent-review.uk/final-report/

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making.[11] Lynch identifies two kinds of caring relation which shape our sense of self: the 'love labour' of primary nurturing work in families/households, and 'secondary caring relations' of communities who care for each other, from the intimate level of friendship all the way to political solidarity with the stranger. And she finds that these caring relations are transformative:

> Because knowing how to love, care and show solidarity, and having the resources to act on this knowing, *does not happen by accident*, creating an affectively egalitarian society means creating social systems and institutions where people are resourced and enabled to receive as much love, care and solidarity as is humanly possible.[12]

Lynch sees what the neoliberal imagination has failed to grasp. The choices we make to care for or to harm each other are not the product of free, rational calculation, but the product of loving or unloving habit. These habits are more or less easily formed depending on the patterns of life made available to us. In her list of who is to blame for the collapse of these caring possibilities, Lynch offers brief and sweeping criticism of Christianity. But she finds herself sharing significant conceptual ground with the Christian understanding of virtue as habit. Thomas Aquinas describes the virtue of love – *caritas* – not as a feeling, idea, or statement of intent, but as a habit which is made of doing acts of love over and over again.[13] To be *caring* – to know how best to *love each other* – requires us to practise doing it. Over time, the result of this practice is that we'll see our relationships differently. Over time, and through the grace of God, loving each other will come more easily to us. And in the end, Aquinas suggests, we might even start to enjoy it.[14]

> We cannot simply outsource our caring relationships; the cultivation of virtue cannot be done on our behalf.

We cannot simply outsource our caring relationships; the cultivation of virtue cannot be done on our behalf. This is true at a local and national level, whether we are describing the capacity for families and communities to

11. Lynch, K., *Care and Capitalism*, (Oxford, United Kingdom, Polity Press, 2022), pp.3-4.
12. Lynch, *Care and Capitalism* p.22.
13. ST I-II.50.1
14. "From all of which it can be seen that we need the habit of virtues . . . in order that perfect activity might be pleasantly accomplished. This results from habit which, since it acts in the manner of a kind of nature, makes the activity proper to it, as it were, natural and, consequently, delightful." *Disputed questions on virtue, article 1.responsio*

look after each other or the capacity of the State to meet its responsibility towards its vulnerable citizens. Privatising caring labour destroys the relationships which teach us our responsibility to each other. The difference in the relational possibilities for the State and for a corporation is obvious: the former (at least in theory) has a primary responsibility to its citizens, and its citizens are responsible for voting on who can best carry out this responsibility-taking. The latter has primary responsibility to its shareholders, not to those receiving its care. There is no first-order relationship between the carer and the cared-for. We cannot learn what loving care looks like if we have abandoned these basic opportunities to make ourselves responsible for each other.

This transformation of our habits will require a letting go. We must give up ways of seeing ourselves and ways of living which get in the way of loving each other. We cannot be absolutely free to choose *and also* free to love. Here, I'm making a bold assumption that human limitation is both a necessity and a good. It teaches us to make commitments, and so teaches us how to live fully and well. The theologian, William Cavanaugh, puts it this way:

> We need others to tell us what we can give to the world, which is a quite different question from what will give us pleasure. We need families to make demands upon us, to limit the places that we will consider living. We need to prepare one another for suffering, for running up against limitations, for caring for a special-needs child decade after decade. We need to make commitments to one another that are not reversible.[15]

Of course, it is very easy to theorise that this might be good for us and much more difficult to do it. The intimacy of caring labour is difficult, exhausting, and frequently disgusting. This reality can be easily disguised by the language of loving care. Describing the unpaid love labour of women as awe-inspiring or miraculous regularly lets men off the hook for taking responsibility for the vulnerable members of their family. Disability

We cannot be absolutely free to choose *and also* free to love.

activists point out that 'care' rhetoric can quickly become a paternalistic justification for institutionalisation or stripping away their capacity to make decisions.[16] Romanticising caring labour as 'heroic' and a 'calling' can be an easy way to suppress the pay and working conditions of care workers. But these dangers are most apparent when we isolate participation in caring relationships to a few people in the name of efficiency. Effective care for each other is inevitably 'inefficient' when measured by the time, money, or numbers of people involved.

Moving away from a model of delegating love requires social conditions where the possibility and responsibility of caring for each other is shared out amongst us. In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis warns us that "the gap between concern for one's personal well-being and the prosperity of the larger human family seems to be stretching to the point of complete division between individuals and human community".[17] This division cannot simply be strategised away. As Francis points out, the creation of a genuinely common life needs to be "*sought out and cultivated.*" If we want to be a caring society, we need to get in the habit.

15. Cavanaugh, W., *Field Hospital*, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2016) p.93

16. Lynch, *Care and Capitalism* p.58

17. Pope Francis, Fratelli Tutti (Assisi: Vatican, 2020), §31

Housing Rights for Disabled People

James Cawley

James Cawley is the Policy Officer at Independent Living Movement Ireland. He has researched disability issues at a National and European level and facilitated on the disability studies course at Maynooth University. He is chairperson of the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN). As a proud disabled man, James is a leader of his own Personal Assistance Service (PAS) which allows him to live an independent life of choice, dignity and respect.

INTRODUCTION: INDEPENDENT LIVING MOVEMENT IRELAND

Independent Living Movement Ireland (ILMI)[1] is a campaigning, national cross-impairment Disabled Persons Organisation or DPO as defined under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Where disabled people are referred to in this essay this should be understood to include all disabled people, including those with learning difficulties, people experiencing emotional distress and physical and sensory impairments.

ILMI is led by, and for, disabled people. We promote the philosophy of independent living and seek to build an inclusive society.[2] Central to the way we work is to ensure that policy decisions that impact on the lives of disabled people must be directly influenced by them. The voices of disabled people cannot be left unheard in such important decisions.

Our philosophy can be summed up as: 'Nothing about us without us' and 'Rights Not Charity'. We are simply asking for disabled people to be consulted and engaged with as per articles 4.3 and 29 B of the UNCRPD. Ireland ratified the UNCRPD in 2018 and these specific articles place an obligation on the state to engage and consult directly with disabled people specifically through their DPOs. However, disabled people have not always been involved in discussions about their lives - for example when applying for supports for housing. Quite often many non-disabled people sit around a table "assessing" the needs of the disabled person.

We need to involve disabled people, in all conversations going forward and at all levels: local, regional, national, European, and international. ILMI has a vision for an Ireland where disabled persons have freedom, choice, and control over all aspects of their lives and where we can fully participate in an inclusive society as equals. Article 19 of the UNCRPD (Independent Living) recognises that Disabled people have the right to live in, be part of, and use services and amenities in their communities. This article of the UNCRPD outlines that disabled people should be able to choose where and with whom they live, having appropriate and adequate supports.

"It is the inaccessible policies, structures, housing and transport systems for example that "disable" us.

Independent Living[3] is about having the freedom to have the same options as the rest of society in housing,[4] transportation, education, employment, having a family, participating socially, and realising goals and dreams. Independent living is not about living on your own or doing things on your own. It is about choosing what aspects of social, economic and political life people want to participate in. It's about linking the independent living jigsaw pieces together, including assistive technology and other appropriate supports. Quite often for many disabled people, it can best be achieved by the employment of Personal Assistants[5] to provide supports where needed. For other disabled people it might be the use of assistive technology or support in making a decision – everyone's needs are different.

Traditionally in Ireland we medicalise "disability" which individualises the person's impairment. However, Independent Living Movement Ireland (ILMI) views disability from the social model of disability. ILMI believes it is the inaccessible policies, structures, housing and transport systems for example that "disable" us.

1. "About ILMI," *Independent Living Movement Ireland*, https://ilmi.ie/
2. Independent Living Movement Ireland recognises that language is a powerful and evocative tool. The language and terminology we use and used in this paper has been carefully chosen to reflect the values of equality and empowerment which are at the core of ILMI. The term 'disabled people' is used throughout all our written submissions and key policy documents in accordance with the UPIAS classification of disability and impairment which has been developed by disabled people themselves (UPIAS 1976). For more see https://ilmi.ie/our-vision-mission-and-values/
3. "What is Independent Living?," *Independent Living Movement Ireland*, https://ilmi.ie/what-is-independent-living/
4. "Independent Living Movement Ireland submission to the Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government," *Independent Living Movement Ireland*, June 2019, https://ilmi.ie/ilmi-submissions/
5. "Personal Assistance Services Campaign," *Independent Living Movement Ireland*, https://ilmi.ie/key-policy-documents/

DISABILITY AND HOUSING: CONTEXT

Ireland is currently in the midst of a housing crisis. However, housing has always been a crisis for disabled people. The lack of accessible housing for disabled people, in addition to our absence in discussions on housing and homelessness and the pervasive nature of the medical/charity model of disability leads to the institutionalisation of disabled people.[6]

In April 2016, 643,131 people – 13.5 per cent of the population – declared themselves as having a disability.[7] Disabled people are more than twice as likely to report discrimination relating to housing and over 1.6 times more likely to live in poor conditions, including living in damp housing, in homes without central heating, or in neighbourhoods with social problems. Disabled people are also particularly over-represented in the homeless population: more than a quarter of homeless people are disabled.[8] There are also disabled people among the "hidden homeless" – people who live in other people's homes and are not on any housing list or where there is no expectation that they should live independent lives. Thousands of disabled people in residential and congregated settings and nursing homes are denied a right to their own home, and lack of delivery of policy in terms of housing means that their needs are not being met. Last year's publication (May, 2021) of "Wasted lives"[9] highlighted the inappropriate placing of disabled people in settings where they simply "exist" and are not given the choice, dignity and respect to make their own choices.

The inappropriate placing of disabled people in settings where they simply "exist" and are not given the choice, dignity and respect to make their own choices.

This situation exists despite more than a decade of policy in Ireland dedicated to the issue of disability and housing. The national housing strategy for people with a disability (2011 to 2016 and rolled over to 2020) was developed against a backdrop of a number of policies including the Disability Act (2005),[10] the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (2009),[11] "A Time to Move On from Congregated Settings" (HSE 2011).[12] This strategy has come to an end now and has been replaced with the National Housing strategy for disabled people 2022 to 2027.[13] In addition, Ireland ratified the UN Convention on the Rights to Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)[14] in 2018 which recognises the equal right of all disabled people to live in the community, with choices equal to others.

FOCUS GROUPS: NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US

In July 2021, ILMI and Inclusion Ireland held six focus groups on housing,[15] specifically looking at the experiences of disabled people trying to gain access to housing and the supports to live in a home of their own, both at an individual level and a systemic level. The

6. Ireland's unfortunate history with institutionalisation as a policy response is also highlighted in a ""Family Hubs": Lives on Hold", available at https://www.jcfj.ie/article/family-hubs-lives-on-hold/
7. "Census of Population 2016 – Profile 9 Health, Disability and Carers," *Central Statistics Office*, last updated 02 November 2017, https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp9hdc/p8hdc/
8. Respondents within this study were identified as disabled when they reported that they were strongly limited or limited their daily activities over at least the last six months because of a health problem. These include physical and psychological disabilities. This overrepresentation of disabled people within the homeless figures should be treated with caution as the harsh conditions of homelessness can cause deterioration of health conditions leading to physical and psychological disability as well as disability being a factor in a person becoming homeless. Grotti, R., Russell, H., Fahey, É. and Maître, B., Discrimination and Inequality in Housing in Ireland, *Economic and Social Research Institute*, 2018. https://www.ihrec.ie/discrimination-and-inequality-in-housing-in-ireland-set-out-in-new-research/
9. "Wasted Lives:Time for a better future for younger people in Nursing Homes," *The Office of the Ombudsman*, May 2021, https://www.ombudsman.ie/publications/reports/wasted-lives/
10. "DISABILITY ACT (2005)," *electronic Irish Statute Book (eISB)*: Government of Ireland, http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2005/act/14/enacted/en/html
11. "HOUSING (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT (2009)," *electronic Irish Statute Book (eISB)*: Government of Ireland, http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2009/act/22/enacted/en/html
12. "Time to Move on from Congregated Settings A Strategy for Community Inclusion," *Health Service Executive*, June 2011, https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/disability/congregatedsettings/time-to-move-on-from-congregated-settings-%E2%80%93-a-strategy-for-community-inclusion.pdf
13. "National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022 – 2027," *Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage*, January 2022, https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/60d76-national-housing-strategy-for-disabled-people-2022-2027/#:~:text=The%20National%20Housing%20Strategy%20for,Department%20of%20Health
14. "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – Articles," *United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Disability*, https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-2.html
15. This section summarises the report documenting the findings of the focus groups. The full report can be found here: Our Housing Rights: Tackling the Housing Crisis Disabled People Face, *Independent Living Movement Ireland*, 2021, https://inclusionireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Report.-Our-Housing-Rights-2021.pdf

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consultations were cross impairment; the focus groups were mainly attended by disabled people with two of the groups specifically for family members of disabled people. Several themes emerged including accessible housing, affordable housing and independent living supports. However, there is significant overlap between these themes.

ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Accessible housing is a complex issue and is intrinsically linked with affordability. Accessible housing is much more than having a house that is wheelchair friendly. It should be livable, no matter what disability a person has, with the entire house fully accessible. It is about building genuine inclusive communities where housing is linked to amenities, to the local bus stop or being able to access local shops or the post office.[16] As one participant of the focus groups put it:

> "The demographic of disability is so diverse and needs to be factored into builds. People have very individual and diverse needs."

It is essential for community living that disabled people have easy access to local services, this includes accessibility to wide safe footpaths. Many disabled people do not drive, and public transport is not always accessible, so a home needs to be centrally located for services or located close to appropriate public transport options. For rural dwellers, the accessibility of the community and services is an even greater difficulty considering the longer distance between different services, and the dominance of the private car in rural areas. In many locations the lack of any form of footpath and dangerous roads can make independent travel impossible.

Accessibility, unfortunately, can also come with a high cost. For disabled people, affordable housing does not exist as an option. Employment rates for disabled people are well below the rate for the general population and consequently poverty rates are much higher.[17] This leaves disabled people at a disadvantage in purchasing or renting a home of their own. Participants stated they often had to rely on family for assistance with deposits and rent. The lack of social housing, which is a fundamental issue in the wider housing crisis in Ireland, means that this avenue is also not available for disabled people.

> "Rent needs to go down for us to afford it. I will have to leave my current home as I can barely afford the rent. There is very little money left for shopping or other bills."

16. This type of community development can also be a more environmentally and socially sustainable model. A previous Working Notes essay argues the link between housing developments which are adaptable to all life stages, generating mixed and inclusive communities, and low carbon communities. For more details, see: Adams, K. et al, "Do We Really Feel Fine? Towards an Irish Green New Deal", Working Notes 34, no 87 (October 2020), https://www.jcfj.ie/article/towards-an-irish-green-new-deal/

17. "Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2019", *Central Statistics Office*, October 2020, https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silc/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilc2019/

The construction of the house is only one aspect of accessible housing. Many disabled people may need assistance from the Local Authority to obtain housing but the system of applying for a house and the associated supports required to live independently is inaccessible to many. Firstly, the "Cost of Disability in Ireland" research report[18] showed that disabled people incur extra costs of between €9,000 and €12,000 a year.[19] This cost is not taken into account when assessing an applicant. Disabled people earning above a certain threshold may not be eligible even though they would need the assistance to live independent lives.

A disabled person applying for housing with their Local Authority must also seek independent living supports to live separately. They are not linked. Yet, there is no clear pathway to apply for supports, and very little engagement between the Local Authority and the HSE on the provision of a house alongside the required supports. Theme Two of the new National Housing strategy, 2022 - 2027 mentions "interagency collaboration and the provision of supports" but many people spoke of a 'Catch 22' situation where you cannot get the house without a support package and in many cases that support package is almost impossible to obtain. Hopefully, the full implementation of Theme Two can eradicate this barrier. A simple solution would be to have a fully accessible central application process where a person can apply for a house and independent living supports. In essence, disabled people need cross departmental communication.

"It is impossible to plan. There is no provision and no clear pathway to move along."

"The Local Authority tell us that we cannot access housing as we need significant support to live independently. The HSE tell us that we cannot get an accessible house as we need to be on the Local Authority list. We have been left in no-man's land."

For those able to get on the housing list there are further barriers. Although most private rental accommodations are not accessible to most disabled people, many are forced to avail of the HAP scheme due to the excessively long waiting lists for accessible social housing. There is no onus on landlords to make housing accessible as the Part M building regulations are weak and outdated.[20]

For disabled people who do not require housing but whose current home is not accessible, there is a Department of Housing grant available to adapt the property to enable the disabled people to continue living at home. Again, participants noted that the means test applied to this grant excludes many people and, the amount of the grant often does not cover the cost of home adaptation leading to people living in unsuitable homes.

Accessibility is not only about being able to physically move around a house, smart technology and assistive technology are housing supports but are not factored into housing as an accessibility requirement. For example, accessible cooking equipment is not a feature in new homes, but such aids are essential for people with a visual impairment. For other people, voice activated home appliances and smart devices are essential independent living supports. Accessible housing needs to cater for disabled people beyond those with mobility issues. Everyone deserves a safe and liveable home.

Participants in the focus groups suggested that between 7 to 10 percent of all new housing stock, including social and affordable homes, should be constructed within the principles of universal design,[21] so the house can be accessed and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size or impairment. To create genuinely inclusive communities, social and affordable housing, which includes a proportion which is accessible, should be constructed in centrally located areas or areas with good, accessible public transport for ease of access to the local community.[22]

18. "The Cost of Disability in Ireland: Final Report" *Department of Social Protection* (prepared by Indecon International Research Economists), November 2021, https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/1d84e-the-cost-of-disability-in-ireland-research-report/

19. Such costs include additional heating requirements, small home adaptations, assistive technology for the home, maintenance, etc.

20. Technical Guidance Document M - Access and Use (2010), *Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage* https://assets.gov.ie/100486/12a529ae-7fda-49ab-bc3b-0521fe5be50b.pdf

21. "Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach," *Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (CEUD)*, National Disability Authority, http://universaldesign.ie/Built-Environment/Building-for-Everyone/

22. This would be in line with the Towns Centers First approach which was noted in the Programme for Government available at: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7e05d-programme-for-government-our-shared-future/

"If the Government are serious about creating accessible houses they have to be fit for purpose and tailored to the needs and requirements (of the person)."

Government departments should engage with disabled people through their representative organisations (DPOs not disability service providers) to gain their expert knowledge of the issues affecting their lives.

INDEPENDENT LIVING SUPPORTS

At present there are few options for disabled people to acquire the necessary supports to live independently. This is having a significant impact on disabled people and their families. Disabled people are aging in the family home with their aging parents. There is a denial of a right to live independently, coupled with an onus on families to provide care when they are aging. Ireland has not legalised a right to a personal assistance service, despite ratification of the UNCRPD[23]. This service gives disabled people choice and control over their lives and would reduce dependence on family and friends.

Independent living needs more than accessible and affordable housing. Participants of the focus groups highlighted that 'the system' often does not see disabled people as rights holders and that they are often spoken down to. The ability to live outside the family home and with peers is also an integral part.

"I want to live near my friends, for a social life and interaction. Flexibility to do what I want and to have people come to my house."

Securing the supports for independent living is a massive issue in the housing crisis for disabled people at present. Focus group participants spoke about not knowing how to apply for supports to live independently or who to apply to and of the different avenues they pursued. There is no formal application process for support like the application for the physical house and there is no consistency from one HSE area to another. People do not get feedback where they are on a list. An example of this is when disabled people apply for a Personal Assistance Service (PAS). There is no standardised approach. In 2019 ILMI started their PAS NOW campaign which has five 'asks' stating that a PAS needs to be defined, invested in, legislated for, standardised, and promoted.[24]

"No continuity of service of supports or who we engage with in terms of accessing supports or housing."

"People with intellectual disability are excluded from social housing because they cannot get funding for supported living."

The introduction of a model of personal budgets may be a way forward for people to secure supports to live independently. However, barriers remain for disabled people obtaining personal budgets. Notably, some of the large service providers, both private and public, are reluctant to 'unbundle' funding to individuals. Participants noted that the unbundling of funds was an issue for people moving from congregated settings and as a result very few have moved into a home of their own.

"We need personalised budgets. Adequate funding is needed to ensure we can live independently. The reality is that most large-scale service providers don't want to part with their funding."

A statutory personal assistance service (PAS) could be legislated for, as a first step towards remedying this situation. With the laws in place, it would be easier to ensure it is adequately funded as per the projections in the Disability Capacity Review to 2032. Such measures would make a dramatic difference in the lives of disabled people.

Focus group participants pointed to a limited understanding of the types of support disabled people require to live independent lives. For example, one person with a visual impairment noted that he required no personal supports

23. Article 19, 'Living independently and being included in the community', specifies that disabled people should have access supports including personal assistance to facilitate inclusion in the community.

24. You can find out more about the campaign at www.ilmi.ie

but needed access to assistive technology such as voice activated appliances. Other supports that people said they required included training on managing a household budget, transport to their day service or job, help with shopping, specific supports such as for autism, and help with home maintenance. The supports needed for independent living are as varied as the people who require them. Flexibility within the system to recognise, and accommodate, is necessary if people are able to live independently.

Accessible Housing is not a stand-alone issue; we need to think about building genuinely inclusive communities.

CONCLUSION

Some of the solutions to the housing crisis for disabled people mirror the solutions for the housing crisis in general, like building more social and affordable housing. However, some issues require solutions tailored towards the specific needs of disabled people.

Housing is not just about building homes. We need to recognise and reinforce in all policy development and implementation, locally and nationally, how independent living requires more than just building. For disabled people to live independent lives we need to consider how accessible the built environment is around homes. Accessible transport, which allows disabled to get to and from their homes, support services such as the Personal Assistance Service, accessible education and employment for disabled people – all these concerns must be addressed. Accessible Housing is not a stand-alone issue; we need to think about building genuinely inclusive communities.

A Year in Irish Prisons: Chaplains' Annual Reports

Seán Duggan

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INTRODUCTION

It is often remarked that prisons are a reflection of society. Upon reading the annual reports produced by Chaplains in Irish prisons, an alternative view emerges of prisons being more a reflection of certain sectors of society. Parts which are often marked by unemployment, addiction, and poverty. In the stark description of prisons by one Chaplain, they are described as a "dumping ground" for a range of societal issues and, in particular, people with severe and enduring mental ill-health. However, imprisonment, as a last resort, is the appropriate sanction for a range of serious offences and serves an important function within the criminal justice system.

In Ireland, the provision of community sanctions for less serious offences and offending related to mental ill-health and addiction can offer alternatives to imprisonment where a short prison sentence would otherwise be imposed. At an average annual cost of €80,445 in 2020 for a staffed prison place, the cost of imprisonment to the State is considerable. While statistics can demonstrate the monetary cost of imprisonment, it is difficult to overlook the wasteland of human tragedy; both for those in custody and their victims and families, which is not as easily measured. Chaplains' annual reports reflect this trauma-laden landscape and provide insights into the trauma-informed approach of chaplains in an environment which is emotionally demanding. The Irish Prison Service has an inordinate challenge in responding to this complex terrain in a manner so that recidivism is reduced and our communities are safer.

The popular narratives of prison chaplaincy as one-dimensional or as a charitable venture lack depth and misrepresent the reality of prison chaplains, who are highly skilled professionals making an impact at an individual, prison, organisational, and societal level through their expertise and practice. The diverse range of Chaplains' experiences in Irish prisons reflect the reality of the work of Prison Chaplains as they respond to, highlight, and address issues in our prison system in a thoughtful and thought-provoking manner. The skilled nature of the work of Prison Chaplains is evidenced in how they retain the confidence of both the prisoners and staff.

> "It is difficult to overlook the wasteland of human tragedy; both for those in custody and their victims and families, which is not as easily measured.

IRISH PRISON SERVICE ESTATE

There are 12 prisons in the Irish prison estate, including two open centres, nine medium-security prisons, and one high-security prison. There are approximately 4,110 people in custody and approximately 3, 455 staff[1]. Prison Chaplains are employees of the Irish Prison Service and operate as an essential function supported by the Department known as the Care and Rehabilitation Directorate. Each prison and open centre has a Chaplain or a team of Chaplains depending on the location. There are 25 Prison Chaplains employed by the Irish Prison Service, 18 of whom are full-time equivalents and seven of whom are part-time. In recent recruitment competitions, the essential criteria were a recognised professional qualification in theology or pastoral care and a minimum of one year's pastoral experience in a community, school or hospital setting or a prison or other similar secure setting. Prison chaplaincy is a key component within the Irish Prison Service and has a fundamental role in the delivery of support to those who live and work in prisons and to community stakeholders including families of those in custody.

THE PRISON RULES 2007 AND PRISON CHAPLAINCY

While a review of the history of prison chaplaincy in Ireland is beyond the scope of this essay, its origins can be traced back to the Gaol Chaplains Act 1773. Its establishment was inextricably linked to the reform measures of that time, especially those measures relating to prison conditions and regime development. The alleviation of the distress of prisoners as a primary function of prison chaplaincy set out in the 1773 Act provided a clear purpose for chaplaincy, both then and now.

1. Figures accurate as of June 2022.

The place of the Prison Chaplain has been sustained into modern times and has evolved into the prison chaplaincy of today as both the social and political reality of Ireland has developed. More than two hundred years after the 1773 Act, the Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Penal System in 1985, known as the Whitaker Report, recognised the contribution of prison chaplaincy across the different strands of prison life including the provision of comfort and support; the encouragement of human growth, development and reconciliation; and described the Prison Chaplain as an "informal ombudsman" raising the voice of the prisoner and making representations on their behalf to prison authorities.[2]

The Prison Rules 2007 provides the statutory basis for prison chaplaincy in Ireland which reflects both European and international standards. While reference to Chaplains occurs throughout the Prison Rules 2007, reflecting the wide reach of chaplaincy in prisons, the main sections relating to chaplaincy are Rule 34 concerning the "religious, spiritual and moral life of prisoners" and Rules 114-119 identifying the duties of Chaplains.[3]

It is of note that, under the Prison Rules 2007, the Prison Chaplain is provided with unique access, unaccompanied, to all parts of the prison at any time (Rule 117). In addition, a prisoner may meet with the Prison Chaplain out of the presence, view, and hearing of a prisoner officer, subject to local orders and with the agreement of both Chaplain and prisoner (Rule 34 (9)). Such a privileged position provides a unique insight into Irish prisons which is then given voice through the reporting duties of Chaplains provided for under the Prison Rules 2007.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A PRISON CHAPLAIN

Chaplains advocate for the dignity of every human being, with a particular attentiveness to the prisoner. Examples of advocacy include a Chaplain's participation in the multi-disciplinary forum, submission of annual reports, liaising with support services, and engaging with key stakeholders including families of prisoners.

Prison chaplaincy's remit is for the entire prison community and especially for prisoners and their families. The unique position of Prison Chaplains within the system is sometimes described as "neutral" or "independent" distinguishing chaplaincy from other roles, for example prison officers who need to be more concerned with discipline and security. This facilitates the role of chaplaincy in being accessible for and available to both prisoners and staff in the navigation of prison life. The distinctive role of chaplaincy also complements the roles played by other staff as chaplaincy does not operate in a vacuum but rather is part of the texture of prison life.

The Chaplain meets prisoners on their first day in prison or as soon as possible after committal and accompanies prisoners throughout their time in custody. For a prisoner who is in prison for the first time, the Chaplain provides support in the adaptation and adjustments needed for the prison environment. Though encouraging all prisoners to work towards positive life-style changes, Chaplains can help to motivate them to address offending behaviour and to engage with prison services. On a day-to-day basis, Chaplains visit prisoners in all parts of the prison or open centre and accompany prisoners throughout the custodial journey. In so doing, they often develop a rehabilitative relationship with prisoners and their families that offers encouragement and support so that reoffending is reduced and safer communities are created. Annual reports also highlight the challenges in delivering chaplaincy services with a limited number of Chaplains in post and explain the potential rehabilitative benefits which could be realised with additional provision of Chaplains. As such, Chaplains offer a unique insight into the prison at a given point in time.

Prison Chaplains spend time with people at times of bereavement and loss and liaise with families through phone calls, meetings, support

Chaplains advocate for the dignity of every human being, with a particular attentiveness to the prisoner.

2. Whitaker Report (Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Penal System), (Dublin: Government Publications, 1985), pp 100.
3. Prison Rules (SI 252/2007). Available at: https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2007/si/252/made/en/print

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> To lose a loved one is always a trauma. To lose a loved one while imprisoned is doubly so.

groups, and visits outside of the prison including to hospitals. Prison Chaplains accompany and support prisoners through many personal challenges within the prison environment, and also intervene and are present during times of crisis which include when a person dies in prison or hospital while in the custody of the Irish Prison Service. To lose a loved one is always a trauma. To lose a loved one while imprisoned is doubly so. Whenever that happens, the Chaplain is there to break the news, console the person grieving, and to stay with them as they adapt to their changed world.

Prison Chaplains work as part of the prison multi-disciplinary team reporting to the Governor. They are at the frontline of developing appropriately pluralistic responses in modern Ireland – Chaplains are respectful of and seek to meet the needs of prisoners from all belief systems and also people of all faiths and none. Chaplains play a coordinating role in relation to the provision of religious services and liaise with multi-faith and inter-religious community-based leaders. Chaplains, at the request of individual prisoners, arrange for the attendance of spiritual advisors with a range of backgrounds to attend prisons on a visiting basis subject to normal visit rules. In doing so, Chaplains establish and maintain sound working relations with local churches, religious denominations and community-based faith organisations.

The designation by the Irish Prison Service of Prison Chaplains as frontline staff required the physical attendance of Chaplains in prisons throughout the pandemic. This was during a time when the transmission of the virus was a dominant worry and concern. It is a real testament to Chaplains that in spite of the pandemic and even though very little was known about Covid-19, Chaplains continued to provide services at personal and individual risk by being physically present in prisons.

REPORTING DUTY OF THE PRISON CHAPLAIN

Prison Chaplains hold a reporting duty. This is classified in Prison Rules 2007 under both Rules 118 and 119. This two-fold reporting structure has the benefit of addressing immediate issues through Rule 118 and then addressing issues through a broader view of the year through the Annual Report under Rule 119.

Under Rule 118 the Prison Chaplain, upon forming "the opinion that the spiritual, moral, mental, emotional or physical state of any

prisoner is being significantly impaired by his or her imprisonment", is required to inform the Governor in writing. This Rule provides an authority to the Chaplain to raise serious concerns without delay to the Governor, so that prompt action may be taken to address and resolve the matters raised by the Prison Chaplain.

Under Rule 119 the Prison Chaplain is required each year to prepare and submit an annual report "to the Director General and to the Governor... on matters relevant to the provision of chaplaincy services in the prison", thus providing an overall view of the year in question. Annual reports reflect the benefits of chaplaincy to prisoners in particular, and also to staff and other stakeholders in the community and address areas of concern while also identifying structural barriers to the provision of chaplaincy.

Reflecting the interest in these reports, not only within the Irish Prison Service, but also in the public domain, the Irish Prison Service reintroduced the practice of publishing chaplaincy annual reports in 2019, making the reports freely available to the public on the website of the Irish Prison Service.[4]

PRISON CHAPLAINCY ANNUAL REPORTS

Explaining the important contribution of chaplaincy to the prison community throughout the year in question and to stakeholders in the community, the annual reports offer unique insights from the perspective of daily interactions with those who live and work in prisons and their families in the community. The determined efforts and commitment of Prison Chaplains in the difficult working environment of prisons is clearly evident. While the support of the Irish Prison Service for chaplaincy is regularly acknowledged, the annual reports also highlight shortcomings within the prison system and the wider criminal justice system.

While annual reports differ depending on issues local to that prison, recurring themes include matters pertaining to prisoner care and issues of a systemic nature. Some of these issues relate to overcrowding, life-sentence management, elderly prisoners, waiting lists for services, and sentencing and community alternatives. The support of management and prison staff towards chaplaincy services is often reported.

The description of Chaplains as "the voice of the prisoner" may well be supplemented with the description of the "the canary in the coalmine".

Chaplaincy is also a prophetic voice. The description of Chaplains as "the voice of the prisoner" may well be supplemented with the description of the "the canary in the coalmine". This is because reports have a track record of identifying issues far in advance of these issues becoming the subject of popular debate. An example from the recent past is in relation to St. Patricks Institution as Chaplains, over many years, highlighted serious concerns in their report relating to the imprisonment of children and their treatment. The pinnacle of the prophetic voice of Chaplains in this area culminated in the annual report of 2010 on foot of which a Government undertaking was made in relation to St. Patricks Institution leading to its eventual closure in 2017.

Another area highlighted consistently is the severe and enduring mental ill-health of prisoners and addiction challenges, which Prison Chaplains were raising over 30 years ago, and it continues to be an area which Chaplains must consistently advocate on. As in the community, the impact of Covid-19 through restrictions, isolation, reduced contact with family and loved ones, lack of control, bereavement, and concerns about health, has introduced an additional layer of concern in the area of mental health in prisons. It is of interest to observe current developments in addressing mental ill-health in prisons by the Department of Justice, the Irish Prison Service, the Department of Health and other actors from across the Justice and Health sectors. Through the creation of a High Level Taskforce, decision-makers and stakeholders have been brought together to consider the mental ill-health and addiction challenges of persons interacting with the criminal justice system.

4. Chaplains Reports, *Irish Prison Service*, https://www.irishprisons.ie/information-centre/publications/chaplains-reports/

The impact of Covid-19 is reflected throughout recent annual reports which refer to the effects that Covid-19 has had on the prison community; acknowledging what has worked well and also noting the human cost associated with Covid-19 restrictions. Significant and continued efforts were made by the Irish Prison Service to ensure the safety of prisoners and staff, including the management and mitigation by the Irish Prison Service against the risk of transmission of Covid-19 since the start of the pandemic. The swift adaptation of chaplaincy and the prioritisation of the safety of everyone, ensured that chaplaincy continued to be provided in a safe manner. One noteworthy chaplaincy innovation has been the development of TeleChaplaincy which is a telephone service providing remote pastoral care to prisoners confined due to COVID-19 whether in isolation, in quarantine, or cocooning.[5] This innovative service overcomes the restrictions of physical distancing and supports the safety and well-being of prisoners confined due to Covid facilitating a confidential phone call between prisoner and Chaplain thus ensuring that pastoral care for prisoners confined due to Covid has continued to be available during the pandemic.

Throughout the pandemic, the Irish Prison Service continued to manage the risks and challenges posed by Covid-19 in line with public health guidelines and in accordance with the Government *Framework for Living with Covid-19*. A wide range of measures were introduced during the pandemic. The introduction of necessary infection control measures resulted in restrictions in the operation of the normal prison regime. This impacted service provisions in a number of areas. While other sectors and services were paused or suspended, Chaplains continued to provide pastoral support to the prison community throughout the pandemic by continuing to be physically present across the prison estate. The increase in demand for chaplaincy was sustained throughout the pandemic with the role of chaplaincy key to many areas of prison life. In addition to this, chaplaincy was also called on to assist in areas which ordinarily would be provided for by other sectors and services which were paused or suspended.

CONCLUSION: A SERVICE IN NEED OF STRENGTHENING

The pandemic made it necessary for chaplaincy to innovate quickly, which was positive and achieved in such extraordinary circumstances. The Irish Prison Service was proactive in contingency planning for chaplaincy and the approval of resources in response to the pandemic. However, the pandemic has highlighted general risks for persons in prison and also risks specific to chaplaincy provision in Irish prisons. One of the risks includes, but is not limited to, the provision of adequate numbers of Chaplains for each prison location. A seven-day chaplaincy provision is the expectation and need of stakeholders. Chaplains are required for after-hours emergencies, primarily deaths in custody. This is a sizeable task with the current modest allocation of Prison Chaplains. At present, it functions because of their commitment to their work, but it is a situation which is not sustainable into the future.

Prior to the pandemic, chaplaincy was already facing significant challenges in the area of the provision of adequate numbers of Chaplains. The pandemic has intensified this and Covid-19 has resulted in this risk becoming critical. The approval by the Irish Prison Service for an independent external review of chaplaincy in Irish prisons—to address and support the provision of chaplaincy across the prison estate—is a welcomed development, and one which will shape the future development of prison chaplaincy in Ireland and enhance the rehabilitative contribution of prison chaplaincy. The long-term effect of the impact of Covid-19 on prisons will likely be subject to careful analysis in the future and the perspective of chaplaincy as detailed in the annual reports for this period will be an important record and source of information.

5. Kevin Hargaden, "Prison Chaplaincy in the Age of Covid-19," *Theology* 123, no. 5 (September 1, 2020): 337–45, https://doi.org/10.1177/0040571X20944578

Co-op Care – The Case for Co-Operative Care in Ireland

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INTRODUCTION

Ireland's population is forecasted to get older over the coming decades which will have implications for the care responsibilities of families and the State. While there is variance between nations, it is estimated that 30 percent of older persons across Europe lack access to quality care.[1] The situation in Ireland is particularly acute with only 1.8 formal long-term care workers per 100 persons over 65 years of age. To put that in context, in Norway, the figure is 17.1 per 100 persons.[2] Moreover, data derived from high income EU countries, including Ireland, highlight that between 56.6 percent and 90.4 percent of the population cannot access quality long term care (LTC) services due to the absence of formal LTC workers.[3]

This essay will reveal how co-operatives have the potential to make a significant contribution to addressing the above difficulties that the majority of the population encounter in securing quality long term care in Ireland. Co-ops can provide an environment for workers to gain far superior conditions than their counterparts employed in investor-owned enterprises (also referred to as capitalist enterprises). In addition, co-operatives can facilitate older people to have a greater level of control over their care, particularly in a residential setting.

Initially, the key characteristics and benefits of co-operatives will be outlined. The second section provides an overview of how co-operatives can provide a range of different services to older people to meet their needs. The third section will cover the comparative advantages of elder care co-operatives. The fourth section will examine the institutions and policy context necessary to enable co-operatives in the elder care area to be in a position to flourish. Examples from Ireland, Europe, and Japan will highlight the contribution that co-operatives can perform in the provision of quality care as well as highlight the types of supports that would need to be in place.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS AND BENEFITS OF CO-OPERATIVES

A co-operative is defined as 'an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise'.[4] There are different types of co-operatives which are controlled by different types of patrons (e.g. producers, workers, consumers) or by a mix of them (multi-stakeholder co-operatives).[5]

Figure 1 Seven principles which co-operatives adhere to are founded on those of the Rochdale Pioneers[6]

1. Scheil-Adlung, X (2015) Extension of social security Long-term care protection for older persons: A review of coverage deficits in 46 countries, International Labour Organisation ESS- Working Paper No.50.
2. ILO (2015) World Employment and Social Outlook 2015: The Changing Nature of Jobs. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/weso/2015-changing-nature-of-jobs/WCMS_368626/lang--en/index.htm
3. ibid
4. ILO (2002) R193: Promotion of Co-operatives, Recommendation.
5. Borzaga C., Depedri S. and Tortia E. (2009) The role of co-operative and social enterprises: a multifaceted approach for an economic pluralism, Euricse Working Papers, N. 000 | 09
6. Cooperative identity, values & principles, *International Cooperative Alliance*, https://www.ica.coop/en/cooperatives/cooperative-identity. The historical association of co-operatives to the Rochdale Pioneers can be found at: Our History, *International Cooperative Alliance*, https://www.ica.coop/en/cooperatives/history-cooperative-movement

In essence, co-operatives focus on the needs of their members, which in this context can include care givers, care receivers, and their families, as opposed to investor-owned enterprises whose primary aim is to maximise shareholder return.[7] Accordingly, co-operatives tend to provide a more responsive service than their investor-owned counterparts.[8]

Furthermore, co-operatives generate a number of benefits arising from the aim of meeting the needs of their members. Staff conditions tend to be better, worker co-operatives tend to pay their staff (co-owners) a higher wage than employees of investor-owned enterprises in the same sector. A study of co-operatives found that worker co-operatives in Italy were more prepared to hire workers who had been long term-unemployed. They were also found to have had lower quit rates compared to conventional companies.[9] They are more resilient[10] and tend to be more efficient than investor owned companies as the level of compensation tends to provide greater incentive allied to their participatory nature.[11]

The aim and principles of co-operatives share similarities with the UN Principles for Older Persons, 1991[12] – independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity.

Co-operatives focus on the needs of their members, which in this context can include care givers, care receivers, and their families, as opposed to investor-owned enterprises whose primary aim is to maximise shareholder return.

Although, they are not binding, governments are encouraged to ensure that the above principles inform legislation and policies relating to older people. Indeed, co-operatives are an ideal organisational form to implement the actions contained in the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. In particular, their mission makes them ideal organisations for contributing to older people having equal access to health care services,[13] training of care providers, and maintaining the maximum functional capacity throughout life while promoting the full participation of older persons with disabilities.[14]

> *'The power of the co-op model stems from the willingness of people of good will to work together to solve common problems. It has always done best when the beneficiaries of co-ops have been willing to use their success to help others to further their own aspirations and meet the challenges of the times through the creation of new co-ops suited to new purposes'.*[15]

SERVICES PROVIDED TO OLDER PEOPLE

Co-operatives focusing on the care needs of older people can be categorised into those providing care within the home, those providing accommodation, and those engaging in member-to-member care provision.

Care within the home

Worker co-operatives and multi-stakeholder co-operatives are formed to provide care within the home. A worker co-operative is a co-operative owned and self-managed by its worker/co-owners while a multi-stakeholder co-operatives comprise stakeholders involved in the provision of elder care services.[16] Stakeholders may include beneficiaries and their families, care workers, other community members, and government representatives, among others. For a number of reasons outlined below, and in addition to the benefits

7. Birchall, J. (2010) People Centred Businesses – Co-operatives, Mutuals and the Idea of Membership. London: Palgrave MacMillan.
8. Zamagni S., and Zamagni, V. (2010) Co-operative Enterprise: Facing the Challenge of Globalisation. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.
9. Bartlett, W., Cable, j., Estrin, S., Jones, D., and Smith. S. (1992) 'Labor-Managed Co-operatives and Private Firms in North Central Italy: An Empirical Comparison', Industrial and Labor Relations Review , 46(1):103-118.
10. Birchall, J and Ketilson, L. (2009) Resilience of the Cooperative Business Model in Times of Crisis. Geneva: ILO.
11. Craig, B. and Pencavel, J. (1995) 'Participation and productivity: a comparison of worker cooperatives and conventional firms in the plywood industry, Brookings Papers on Economic Activity. Microeconomics, pp. 121-174.
12. United Nations (General Assembly). 1991. Principles for Older Persons. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/united-nations-principles-older-persons
13. Ibid, policy direction 11, issue 2
14. Ibid, policy 11, issue 6
15. Restakis, J. (2008) Co-op Elder Care in Canada: A call to action: National: A national task on Co-op elder care. British Columbia Co-operative Association, Vancouver
16. Conaty, P. (2014) Social co-operatives: A democratic co-production agenda for care services in the UK. Manchester: Co-operatives UK.

highlighted above, they are effective at providing care within old peoples' homes.[17]

Although both investor- owned care companies and worker owned care co-operatives are both concerned with the quality of the care provided, worker co-operatives are more concerned with the work conditions of the workers than their investor-owned counterparts.[18] These conditions include stable hours and schedules, medical benefits for the worker and dependents, training beyond mandatory minimums, and as worker-owners, the opportunity to participate in decision-making and in receiving a share of profits generated by the organization. Research findings from the US suggest that the worker co-operative organisational form was the key differentiator in alleviating some aspects of precarious work.[19]

Going back to the standard of care provided, research has indicated that because carers in worker co-operatives have greater control over their work environment arising from co-ownership, this leads them to being more satisfied and accordingly a superior standard of care is provided than that provided by investor-owned care providers.[20]

Case Study: GCC

The Great Care Co-op (GCC) is Ireland's first worker's care co-operative. A group of migrant women govern it. With the support of the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland, the co-operative was established as a response to the exploitation migrant women were encountering in providing care to older people living in their homes. Trading since July 2020, the carers gain superior working conditions than compared to employees of investor-owned care providers. For example, carers are paid €14.50 an hour and an increased rate for working weekends.

In addition, GCC provides a pension contribution to carers. GCC specialises in delivering non-clinical personal care which meets the needs of the older person and their family. The co-operative is currently providing home care in the South Dublin area and has secured a HSE service level agreement to provide home care for older people living in the Dún Laoghaire area. The plan is to replicate the model throughout Dublin and other parts of the country. By the end of 2022, GCC plans to have a team of 30 carers in place.

Accommodation

Research conducted in the UK highlights that many older people are interested in living in forms of housing which are designed and controlled by older people themselves.

Resident controlled housing for older people can take a variety of forms; it can offer a range of tenures and it can be developed in different ways. In some schemes, this involves the future residents being involved in the design and development of the housing, in others, it is about managing the housing once the residents move in. Here, however, will focus mainly on two specific types of housing, housing co-operatives and co-housing.

Housing co-operatives are housing developments that are owned and/or managed collectively by their residents. They remain a rare tenure in Ireland; unlike in Europe where it comprises around 10 percent of all housing.

They can be described as 'tenant-ownership co-operatives' that provide social rented housing for their members. Such co-operatives collectively own the housing and their tenants/ members pay a social rent to the co-operative to cover costs. The members collectively control how the co-operative is governed. Most of them provide a combination of accommodation for families, couples and single people. Housing co-operatives can also function as care environments for older people.

17. Berry, D. and Bell, M. (2018) 'Worker co-operatives: Alternative governance for caring and precarious work', Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal, 37, (4): 376-391
18. Austin, J. (2014) Worker Cooperatives for New York City: A vision for addressing income inequality, available at: http://institute.usworker.coop/sites/default/files/resources/432-Worker-Cooperatives-for-New-York-City-A-Vision-for-Addressing-Income-Inequality-FPWF-January2013.pdf (accessed 1 January 2017).
19. Berry and Bell, 2018
20. Ibid

Case Study: The Chamarel Association

The Chamarel Association, also known as the Residents' Co-operative Housing Residence of East Lyonnais, was the first co-operative for older people in France. Located outside Lyon and established in 2010, this housing co-operative is operated for and by retirees. The facilities accommodate retirees without the personal financial means to secure housing. The co- operative was founded by two retirees who wanted to provide a safe, community-oriented space for themselves and their peers.

The co-operative values of democratic inclusion and participatory decision-making have guided the organisation since its establishment. For example, members collectively opted to serve as their own general contractors, and chose to employ eco-friendly practices and materials in the construction of the facility. Start-up funding to support the programme was secured through a 50-year bank loan paid to the co-operative founders.[21]

Co-housing is an approach to developing housing that originated in Denmark. Such housing schemes are predominately based on a purpose-built cluster of houses or apartments arranged to maximise social interaction between neighbours. Communal facilities are an integral part of co-housing schemes where residents can have a meal together or hold social events.

Co-housing emphasises resident self-management including the design phase of the scheme. When the development is completed residents manage it in a similar way to other co-operative housing schemes with a strong emphasis on collective responsibility and a commitment to participating in social activities.

These schemes can be for outright ownership, for mutual home ownership, for rent, or for a combination of these. Research highlights that co-housing is popular with older people.[22]

21. Matthew, L. (2017) Providing care through co-operatives: Literature review and case studies. ILO, Geneva.

22. Quinio, V. and Burgess, G., "Is co-living a housing solution for vulnerable older people?", *Cambridge Centre for Housing & Planning Research*, 2018, https://nationwidefoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Literature-Review-_web-version-300119.pdf

Case Study: OWCH

The Older Women's Co-housing (OWCH) was formed, in a suburban town north of London, in 2003 as an alternative to living alone. As OWCH wished to include women who lack equity and therefore need a rent they can afford, the group looked at partnering with housing associations. The selected housing association bought the site and provided capital to construct the scheme.

Although the Housing Association financed site acquisition and construction, the prospective buyers paid 10 percent deposits. This helped reduce the risk associated with the project for the housing association. In addition, all units were sold or let before construction started. Prospective tenants were also required to make a non-refundable 'commitment payment' to OWCH. On completion, the housing association sold 17 homes to OWCH buyers and 8 to *Housing for Women*, a small housing association, for the socially rented units. *Housing for Women* financed this with private charitable grants, giving them greater flexibility to allocate to OWCH members.

The 2-3 bed flats are clustered around a walled garden and all have their own patio or balcony. There is a communal meeting room with kitchen with dining areas and residents share a laundry, allotment and guest room.[23]

Member-to-member health care

There are 117 health co-operatives in Japan which involve 81 hospitals, 351 medical clinics, 55 dental clinics, 227 nursing stations that provide home care, 375 home-care support centres, and 297 facilities that provide day-care services to adults. These co-operatives have total sales of 280 billion Yen[24] and employ more than 28,000 individuals. These Japanese co-operatives emphasize health promotion.[25]

23. https://www.communityledhousing.london/project/older-womens-co-housing/

24. About €2 billion.

25. The Nagano Health Co-operative is one such example, it was established in 1966 with six hundred members, it now has more than forty-nine thousand members. Its facilities include a central hospital, two medical clinics, one nursing home with a hundred beds, one nursing station focused on home care, a group home, an adult day-care centre, and two home-care support centres.

In Japan, while health/nursing care services are provided through the national insurance system, preventive health care has not been adequately provided. In order to improve this situation, members of health co-operatives have engaged in voluntary preventive health practice since the 1960s. Han-groups deliver voluntary preventive health practice primarily to its members. There are 26,217 Han groups within Japan's health co-operatives. Each Han group consists of three or more members. The members learn about diseases (cancer, diabetes, stroke, heart attack, Alzheimer' s disease, etc.) and risk factors (stress, diet, drinking, smoking, etc.). Some Han-groups also engage in activities such as physical exercise.

At each Han-group, resident members check their blood pressure, urine and body fat with the co-operation of health care professionals allowing them to learn these skills. These trained members then provide health checks for local residents at super markets, public places, as well as health festivals organized by municipalities. As well as that health co-operatives undertake health promotional work in relation to key goals to achieve a healthy lifestyle.[26]

Comparative strengths of elder care co-operatives

Research from Canada indicates that the co-operative model of care is a source of a number of advantages in addition to the benefits which are associated with co-operatives in general:

- Democratic control provides higher levels of involvement and personal empowerment;
- The co-operative model provides a safer environment;
- Pride of ownership;
- Smaller size can mean more personal levels of care;
- The model fosters inter-generational interaction.[27]

[26] http://www.hew.coop/english/

[27] Restakis, J. (2009) Co-op Eldercare in Canada. Vancouver, British Colombia Co-operative Association, Vancouver.

It ensures that services are delivered that most benefit older people.

For the purpose of this essay control and quality of care will be discussed as these are commonly cited as amongst the most important considerations when choosing care services.[28]

Control

The most prevalent benefit cited in research is that members of elder care co-operatives enjoy control over their co-operative.[29] These control rights lead to co-operative members being able to participate in the governance of the elder care service. Indeed, this is considered the most appealing feature for those involved in the different types of elder care co-operatives available, as it ensures that services are delivered that most benefit older people.[30] In some cases, it facilitates the ability of older people to remain living in their community.

For older people considering a move from a single-family dwelling to a co-operative housing development, the desire to maintain a maximum degree of control over one's environment is a paramount issue. In fact, the capacity to exercise control over housing was deemed as a key factor contributing to the high levels of satisfaction of members in a study conducted by Kansas University.[31] In addition, control rights mean that the governance structure facilitates older people having greater opportunity for social interaction with their peers, an enhanced level of personal empowerment, and a mechanism to ensure both a quality and affordable service is provided. In particular, co-operative housing enables older people to set the strategy, including long-term goals and the development of operational policies. The research undertaken by Kansas University

[28] Matthew, L., Providing Care through Cooperatives 2: Literature Review and Case Studies, *International Labour Office*, - Geneva: ILO, 2017.

[29] Restakis, J. 2009

[30] Restakis, 2008

[31] Altus, D. and Mathews, M., A Look at the Satisfaction of Rural Seniors with Cooperative Housing, *Cooperative Housing Journal*, 1997

(iStock-1047536650)

highlighted the high levels of participation in governance. Sixty-one percent of respondents said that they were either somewhat or extremely active in the governance of their co-operative while only nine percent were not at all active. Eighty-five percent of the respondents said that the co-operatives gave them a voice in how their housing was run, while 84 percent said that co-operatives provided opportunities to work with others on common goals. This contributes to residents' well-being.[32]

Quality of care

Elder care co-operatives provide a high quality of care as the members have the autonomy to design and deliver services without profits being transferred to investors. Moreover, the service also meets the needs of the staff (who can be worker/co-owners in the case of worker co-operatives). This assertion is also supported by a study of worker satisfaction levels within the social co-operatives of Italy.[33] In this study, the satisfaction levels of co-operative workers were higher than workers either in the public service or in investor-owned care businesses. The higher levels of satisfaction were attributable to a combination of factors including a higher degree of worker control over their work.

The health care costs associated with older people living in co-operative housing is also lower than those living in institutional settings such as nursing homes. Research attributes this to higher levels of interaction and a sense of belonging increasing their overall wellbeing.[34]

These interacting advantages of co-operatives, of control and quality of care, result in care services and facilities which are far superior for both the user and the worker. The increased level of independence and control within these services preserves the dignity of those who use them while simultaneously creating better health outcomes. Workers within these co-operatives do not have to bow to efficiencies of care to generate increased profit per unit time, allowing relationships to be generated and sustained between care workers and users.

32. Dopico, L. G., and Rogers, B. (2015) Co-operative among co-operatives: Qualifying the business case for credit unions and other co-operatives. Madison, Wisconsin: Feline. Available from: http://www.uwcc.wisc.edu/pdf/Cooperationamongcoops.pdf [1 June 2016]

33. Depedri, S., Tortia, E. and Carpita, M. (2010) Incentives' Job Satisfaction and Performance: Empirical Evidence in Italian Social Enterprises, Euricse Working Papers, N.012 | 10

34. Restakis, J. (2009); Matthew, 2017

Institutional supports

Co-operatives in the care industry are currently not the norm in Ireland and suffer from their niche position. For the potential of elder care co-operatives to be fulfilled a number of supports and initiatives would need to be implemented.[35] These include support from other co-operatives, increased awareness of co-operatives among care beneficiaries and care sector providers and greater support from the State.

Support from other co-operatives

Collaboration across the co-operative movement is required to enable and sustain co-operatives in the care sector.[36] Such collaboration takes the form of knowledge and resource sharing between co-operatives, and inclusion in consortia and other co-operative-supportive entities at the local, provincial, and national levels. Secondary-level organisations (i.e. consortia and federations) were cited as being important for new co-operatives to become financially sustainable.

Case Study: SIS

Sistema Imprese Sociali (SIS) of Milan, Italy is a consortium of 29 social co-operatives in Italy. Established in 1995, SIS aims to promote equality through a co-operative model across social sectors and among vulnerable populations in need. Of the 29 members, 15 are Type A social co-operatives, which aim to provide some sort of social service. Among the main objectives of SIS consortium are to:

- Serve as an incubator and network hub for social co-operatives;
- Provide consulting services;
- Provide vocational education and training programmes for social entrepreneurs.[37]

Increased collaboration and support from co-operatives would have a myriad of benefits including easier access to financial resources from Credit Unions, increased marketing capacity when co-operatives cross-promote to each other's membership and reducing capital expenditure if sharing resources such as physical locations.

Awareness of co-operatives among care beneficiaries and care sector providers

There are large disparities regarding public awareness of care co-operatives between and within different countries.[38] In countries and regions with a long tradition of co-operatives providing care, care beneficiaries are more familiar than countries with less of a tradition of co-operatives. Developing awareness among stakeholders is one essential means of promoting care co-operatives. Stakeholders include nurses, social workers, and medical providers but also extends to medical colleges and schools of nursing who deliver educational programmes at undergraduate and post-graduate level.[39] The inclusion of the co-operative model in syllabi would increase awareness of the advantages of care co-operatives among medical professionals who are often in a position to procure care services.

The role of the state

Access to appropriate finance is a challenge facing co-operatives.[40] The State can play a critical role in creating a benign environment for care co-operatives to flourish.

Case Study: HSEE

Since 1997, the Quebec government has provided state support to the development of homecare co-operatives by allocating funding for these services. A grant of up to $40,000 is provided for the creation of a Homecare Social Economy Enterprise (HSEE). Another source of funding for care co-operatives and is the *Programme d'exonération financière en services à domicile* (PEFSAD). This is available to all Quebec residents aged over 18 which serves an incentive to citizens to use the services of care co-operatives. A basic financial contribution of $4 per hour of service is provided.

35. Matthew, 2017
36. Conaty, 2014; Dopico & Rogers, 2015
37. Matthew, 2017
38. Ibid
39. Ibid
40. Birchall (2010)

As well as access to finance, co-operatives face a number of barriers which limit their development in Ireland. Worker co-operatives are not recognised as a distinct legal entity, a minimum of seven members are currently required to create a co-operative. There are also barriers limiting the ability of businesses to transitioning to employee ownership.[41] The "Worker Co-Operatives and Right To Buy Bill 2021" brought forward in 2021 could potentially ameliorate some of these issues however it has not progressed to the Dáil as of yet. [42]

These benefits of co-operatives in the care system are clear but without widespread support from the state and, as well as the Irish society in general, co-operatives will remain a niche option for those who need it.

CONCLUSION

As detailed above, care co-operatives generate a number of additional benefits compared to their investor-owned counterparts. This is attributed to their aim being to meet the needs of their members as opposed to generating shareholder return. However, co-operatives encounter a number of challenges in Ireland, including lack of awareness among the public, a culture of individualism which is not disposed to co-operative enterprise, and a paucity of state supports.[43]

Therefore, social economy enterprise leaders need to, firstly, campaign for a more benign set of state policies towards co-operatives and the wider social economy enterprise sector. Secondly, they need to collaborate with the credit union movement, other co-operatives, and the trade union movement for additional resources and supports to strengthen the various sectors of social economy enterprise activity in Ireland. In particular, the establishment of a support organisation is required which would be dedicated to supporting the development of co-operatives in a number of the sectors of the Irish economy including care.

With regard to addressing the poor working conditions and sense of economic powerlessness that increasing numbers of workers in Ireland are experiencing, worker co-operatives could facilitate a proportion of the workforce to have a greater sense of control over their work environments. For this to become a reality requires that the Irish Government introduces a set of policies which would place in Ireland in line with other EU countries. Gavan and Quinlivan (2017) recommend that worker co-operatives be recognised as a distinct legal entity.[44]

Research needs to be undertaken aimed at changing policy and supporting practice towards care co-operatives.[45] Regarding the former, research should focus on the social and economic benefits of care co-operatives in addressing issues facing Irish society, and on the constraints in developing care co-operatives in Ireland. With respect to the latter, research could look at the factors that lead to their successful implementation.

The potential of care co-operatives to make a real difference in Irish society cannot be understated. This economic model is collaborative, non-exploitative and, at its core, designed to benefit the community most, would contribute to human flourishing.

41. Doyle, G. (2019) 'Socialising economic development in Ireland: Social enterprise an untapped resource' in Maher, C. (Ed.) Value Creation for Small and Micro Social Enterprises. Hershey, PA: IGI Global.
42. Worker Co-Operatives and Right To Buy Bill 2021, House of the Oireachtas, last updated June 2021, https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/bills/bill/2021/94/?tab=bill-text
43. Doyle, G. (2019)
44. Gavan, P and Quinlivan, M. (2018) Worker co-operatives—Developing Ireland's indigenous economy. Sinn Fein policy paper.
45. Doyle, 2019

Reaping the Rewards of an Inner-City Garden

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INTRODUCTION

Given the sharp reduction in children's engagement with the natural world, schools can support and foster an interest in the environment in young children. This essay reports on a project that explores this possibility. It also examines how schools with a Christian ethos, and a Jesuit ethos in particular, can cultivate an attitude of 'Caring for our Common Home'[1] in students. This theme and educational goal has been championed in recent years by Pope Francis since the publication of his encyclical *Laudato Si'* and the challenge has been taken up all over the world in Catholic schools. The latter part of the essay considers how schools with a Christian ethos can identify and use resources to facilitate and address the conversation of youth climate and environmental activism.

PROMOTING WONDER IN THE ENVIRONMENT

Over the last twenty years, there has been a remarkable and well-documented collapse of children's engagement with nature – nearly as fast as the collapse of habitats and environmental resources in the natural world itself. This is described poignantly in Richard Louv's book *Last Child in the Woods*[2], in which he defines the term Nature Deficit Disorder as describing the "human costs of alienation from nature, among them: diminished uses of the senses, attention difficulties and higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses".[3] Children, and particularly urban children, spend less and less time in nature and indeed the area in which they live their lives has diminished significantly in the last generation.[4]

However, this disturbing trend in isolation from nature has not gone unnoticed by educators and a number of initiatives in Ireland in the last decade have been particularly successful. The 'SEED' and 'Living Classroom' projects, for example, have promoted the establishment of organic school gardens that draw children out of the indoor classroom, and introduce them to ideas of natural seasonal growth and change. Such projects also help children to understand the responsibility and effort required to produce safe and healthy food. Later on, we will discuss a project in a Dublin inner city school that engaged children and teachers in growing plants and food, which was made possible with the support of the Jesuit community next door to the school.

There are several possible reasons for the collapse in children's engagement with nature: parents' fear of strangers and the dangers of increased traffic; the destruction of common areas where previous generations played; the quality of indoor entertainment; and the increased structuring of children's 'free' time. As this decrease in children's engagement with nature has occurred, there has been a rise in childhood obesity and asthma and a decline in cardio-respiratory fitness. These circumstances and conditions may not be unrelated. Louv also links the increase in indoor life to an increase in attention deficit hyperactivity disorder [ADHD] and other mental ill health[5]. So, together with the moral imperative to care for the environment that supports all life on earth, there is good evidence for the immediate value and need in having children connect with the natural world for the sake of their health and well-being.

An educational response to this need to bring children closer to nature again requires both a pedagogical logic and a well-informed pedagogical approach. The pedagogical logic takes its starting point from the observation made by Sir David Attenborough that 'no one will protect what they don't care about, and no one will care about what they have never experienced'.[6] The pedagogical development goes from experience to care and then to the responsibility to protect. As educators, we add to Attenborough's scheme the dimension that 'experience' should always be one that provokes curiosity, inquiry and critical thought.

1. Caring for our Common Home is one of four Jesuit Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs), alongside 'Showing the way to God, 'Walking with the Excluded' and 'Journeying with the Youth'. UAPs are areas which the global Jesuit community has committed to pay special attention to. For more information, see: https://www.jesuits.global/uap/
2. Louv, R., *Last child in the woods: Saving our children from nature-deficit disorder.* (New York, NY: Algonquin Books, 2008)
3. Ibid, page 34
4. George Monbiot, "If children lose contact with nature they won't fight for it," *The Guardian*, November 19, 2012, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/nov/19/children-lose-contact-with-nature
5. Louv, R., *Last child in the woods: Saving our children from nature-deficit disorder.*
6. As cited in Williams, M., A. "Securing Nature's Future", The Ecologist, 4th April 2013, https://theecologist.org/2013/apr/04/securing-natures-future.

> No one will protect what they don't care about, and no one will care about what they have never experienced.

This brings us neatly to the pedagogical approach that seems most appropriate to support learning to care for our common world in nature.

INQUIRY BASED LEARNING AND APPRECIATION OF THE WORLD AROUND US

Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) is an ideal pedagogy for developing children's understanding and appreciation of the world around them. It can be used to promote children's understanding of sustainability, and to develop their connection to, and care of, the environment.

Indeed, even to begin to identify and address the critical issues of our time, such as sustainability, climate change, and global interdependence, both children and adults need to be able to think conceptually, combining creativity and analysis. A stance of inquiry encourages us to wonder and to question. IBL is a conceptually-based approach to teaching and learning, where knowledge and information are tools to explore conceptual understanding rather than ends in themselves.

Over the last 20 years there has been a widespread and growing interest in IBL at all levels of education, from Early Childhood to Higher Education. While this growing interest may be evident, no agreed definition of IBL exists. Therefore, it was important for us to outline our understanding, or working definition, for the purpose of this essay, which we define as follows:

> A stance of inquiry encourages us to wonder and to question.

> Inquiry is understood as the ways in which curious learners actively and seriously engage with the social and physical environment in an effort to make sense of the world, and the consequent reflection on the connections between the experiences encountered and the information gathered, leading to thoughtful action. Such engagement is rigorous but also captures the elements of excitement and wonderment as articulated in the questions of the learners which are addressed through hands-on investigation leading to sometimes tentative answers.[7]

IBL encourages — in fact demands – deep, critical thinking; the deconstruction of currently held assumptions and preconceptions; the gathering and analysis of information/data; and the formulation of new understanding, which, we argue, moves us to action. Through inquiry, students are motivated to question, explore, and formulate new ideas about issues that they find personally relevant. Indeed, children's engagement with issues like climate change or biodiversity loss may be first kindled by finding wonder in their own local places, in the natural world that surrounds them.[8] It is this connection that will lead to transformative action and new ways of being in the world. This is perhaps best done by developing a deeper understanding of place.

ATTENTION TO PLACE

Places provide the context in which we learn about ourselves and make sense of and connect to our natural and cultural surroundings; they shape our identities, our relationships with others, and our worldviews.[9] Kingsnorth suggests that, rather than teaching abstract concepts, effective environmental education embraces the messiness and complexity of the immediate locality, fostering

7. Pedaste, M. et al., "Phases of inquiry-based learning definitions and the inquiry cycle", *Educational Research Review*, no 14 (2015): 47-61; Murdoch, K., *The Power of Inquiry* (Seastar Education, 2015); Short, K., "Inquiry as a stance on curriculum", in *Taking the PYP Forward*, ed. Davidson, S, and Carber, S. (Woodbridge: John Catt., 2009), 27-42
8. Boxley S., Clarke H., Witt S. and Dewey V., "Talking with trolls: A creative and critical engagement with nature-naivety", in *Critical literacies and young learners: Connecting classroom practice to the common core*, ed. Winograd, K. (Routledge, Oxford, 2015), 70–85.
9. Gruenewald, D., "The best of both worlds: A critical pedagogy of place." *Environmental Education Research*, 14 no. 3(2008): 308–324.

connections between children and the natural world they encounter every day.[10] This kind of education has also been termed "vernacular learning" which Selby describes as "place-based learning rooted in close intimacy and connection with the natural world, with nature perceived as being intrinsically valuable."[11]

Within the pedagogy of Place Attention, we begin to know the world around us by 'being present' in that world through looking closely and wondering. Slow Pedagogies, as outlined by Payne and Watchow, allow us "to pause or dwell in spaces for more than a fleeting moment and, therefore, encourage us to attach and receive meaning from that place."[12]

Local geographical inquiries connect us not only with place, but also, and importantly, with each other. The phrase "community of inquiry" which is thought to have been coined by C. S. Peirce[13], was originally restricted to practitioners of scientific inquiry but has since been broadened to include any type of inquiry. Peirce realised that for a community of inquiry to be a *community*, certain conditions were required.[14] There needed to be some continuity of experience among inquirers that allowed the possibility of something to build upon. Often such a community of learners is characterised by expressions of wonder, exclamation and shared ideas.

Time, and our experiences of it, warrants attention of "place" pedagogies in outdoor education. Place typically involves the experience of a geographical location, a locale for interacting socially and/or with nature, and the subjective meanings we attach over time to the experience. Place, however, cannot be severed from the concept and practice of time, as seems to be occurring in the discourse of outdoor education. The way outdoor educators carefully conceive of, plan for, manage and pedagogically practice time may positively facilitate an introductory "sense" of place.

Amid the cornucopia of education reforms that emphasise innovation and new methods in environmental studies, school gardens stand out as low-tech and manageable projects.

Amid the cornucopia of education reforms that emphasise innovation and new methods in environmental studies, school gardens stand out as low-tech and manageable projects. These gardens support and encourage an engagement with simple natural growth processes and healthy eating as a key component of children's physical wellbeing; considerable knowledge and resources have been developed over the last ten years in Ireland in this area. Before examining one school garden in particular, we will first consider the benefits of establishing a school garden more generally and identify what it may have to offer the school community.

THE SCHOOL GARDEN

A school garden has the potential to be a powerful environmental education tool. The benefits of a school garden have been well documented by a number of authors, for example, Blair argues that:

- school gardens broaden children's experience of ecosystem complexity;
- vegetable gardening teaches food systems ecology;
- exposure to nature and gardening in childhood shapes adult attitudes and environmental values.[15]

Cobb added that children's experience of nature is connected to and strongly influences later psychological well-being.[16] She also proposed that contact with nature stimulates

10. Kingsnorth, P., "Confessions of a recovering environmentalist". *Orion Magazine*, January/February 2012, https://orionmagazine.org/article/confessions-of-a-recovering-environmentalist/.
11. Selby, D., "Education for sustainable development, nature and vernacular learning", *CEPS Journal*, 7, no 1(2017): 9-27.
12. Payne, P., and Wattchow, B., "Slow pedagogy and placing education in post-traditional outdoor education", *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education*, 12, no1(2008): 25-38
13. C.S. Peirce was an American pragmatist philosopher and can be considered as one of the most important philosophers of the later nineteenth and early twentieth century.
14. Peirce, C.S. [1992]. "Evolutionary Love", in *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings* ed. Houser, H. and Kloesel, C., vol 1, 353-371 (Bloomington, Indiana University Press) [Original work published 1893].
15. Blair, D., "The Child in the Garden: An Evaluative Review of the Benefits of School Gardening", *The Journal of Environmental Education*, 40 no. 2 (2009): 15-38.
16. Cobb, E., *The ecology of imagination in childhood*, (Spring Publications, 1977)

Photo taken by Elizabeth Cox. Gardiner Street students planting seeds in upcycled food tins, seedlings are then planted in raised beds in the polytunnel.

creativity. She found that such creativity was evident in children's games which are seen to be more imaginative in green places rather than in concrete playgrounds. Natural spaces were seen to encourage fantasy and role-play, reasoning and observation. The social standing of children there depends less on physical dominance, more on inventiveness and language skills.

Based on our experiences, we will highlight three specific benefits of the school garden. Firstly, the school garden can connect children to nature; secondly, it allows for the planning and teaching of the curriculum to be done in a meaningful and integrated way, and thirdly, it can provide children with opportunities to make choices about how they engage with the world around them.

Considering the first of these, the school garden can offer the opportunity for children to engage with nature in a very real and meaningful way. For many children, a garden offers the only chance to get close to nature. Some lack access to gardening spaces because of their living situations while others have limited exploratory free time in the outdoors due to the focus on indoor activities and participation in organised outdoor activities. School garden educators in urban environments frequently find that engagement in the garden provides students with an opportunity to dig into the soil and watch a plant grow for the first time.

Establishing a connection with nature at an early age is extremely important. Research has highlighted how childhood experiences with nature are strongly linked to adult attitudes later in life.[17] Participation in active gardening during childhood was shown to be the most important influence in explaining adult environmental attitudes and actions. Even in urban areas, where green spaces are sparse and limited, gardening activities for children can provide a strong enough connection to instil appreciation and respect for nature in adulthood.

17. Wells, N., and Lekies, K., "Nature and the Life Course: Pathways from Childhood Nature Experiences to Adult Environmentalism", *Children, Youth and Environments* 16, no1 (2006)

Such connection was highlighted by Sandra Austin[18], who conducted an in-depth study into the use of school gardens in Ireland.[19] The primary aim of her study was to build a picture of the many ways school gardens are used and valued in Irish primary schools. In an interview in the Irish Times she made the observation:

> "I see school gardens as connective spaces that allow you to see a bigger picture. You can experience the beauty as a whole and then find interesting things like how plants smell or look, and you can open up pieces of fruit and see the seeds. Learning outdoors like that offers really important direct experience of nature rather than just reading about it in class." [20]

Her work also highlighted the second benefit mentioned above, that of using school gardens as a foundation for integrated learning and a resource for children's wellbeing and health. The school garden can support an integrated approach to teaching and learning and give the learning a meaningful context. The subject areas of Science and Geography are the most obvious to be addressed.[21] However, the school garden also provides opportunities to address aspects of other curricular areas such as Mathematics (measuring and drawing the garden to scale), Visual Arts (sketching some of the produce) or Language (writing about and describing the garden).

Our third recognised benefit is how, through gardening, children can become responsible caretakers. At its best a school garden can help transform learning spaces and can transfer ownership of learning to the children themselves. They have an opportunity to engage in agricultural or growing practices on a small scale, learning about the responsibilities and impacts of cultivating the land. They explore the web of interactions among living and non-living things that sustain life. By doing so, they develop a greater understanding of the natural world. Without stating the obvious, a school garden can teach children "how a plant goes from seed to plate."[22] Such gardens introduce young gardeners to local sustainable food systems, as children eat their own produce.[23] The act of growing food from seeds is exciting, even miraculous; the product is something special to be taken home to share. This sentiment is well expressed by Thorp and Townsend:

> "[G]ardening changes the status of food for all involved. When one gardens, food can no longer be viewed as a mere commodity for consumption; we are brought into the ritual of communal goodness that is found at the intersection of people and plants. Food that we grow with our own hands becomes a portal for personal transformation."[24]

Given these documented benefits, it was deemed that a school garden could address many of the concerns of educationalists, health experts and the concerns of the Pope and the Catholic Church with regard to our relationship with nature. In the final part of this essay, we provide an account of a school garden project undertaken in the course of 2022.

DEVELOPMENT OF ONE SCHOOL GARDEN

Our example of a living and breathing school garden is part of a school in the North East inner-city of Dublin. It is the most recent school to join the Jesuit network of schools in Ireland, joining officially in November 2019. Based on the 2016 Census, the parish is located within the most ethnically-diverse constituency in Ireland as a result of migration. Notwithstanding developmental progress and urban regeneration in recent years, parts of

18. Sandra Austin works in Marino Institute of Education and is a colleague of Karin Bacon, one if the authors of this essay.
19. Austin, S., "The school garden in the primary school: meeting the challenges and reaping the benefits", *Education*, 3 no. 13 (2021) DOI: 10.1080/03004279.2021.1905017
20. Claire O'Connell, "Science Lives: Using nature to grow an understanding of Science," *Irish Times*, July 18 2017, https://www.irishtimes.com/news/science/science-lives-using-nature-to-grow-an-understanding-of-science-1.3159063
21. For example, the strands 'Environmental Awareness and Care' from the Science and Geography Primary curriculum and 'Living Things' from the Science curriculum
22. Rahm, J., "Emergent learning opportunities in an inner-city youth gardening program", *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 39 (2002): 164-184.
23. Moore, A., et al., "School gardens as sites for forging progressive socioecological futures", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 105 no.2 (2015): 407–415; Passy, R., et al., "Impact of school gardening on learning: Final report submitted to the Royal Horticultural Society", *London, United Kingdom: National Foundation for Educational Research*, (2010).
24. Thorp, L and Townsend, C., "Agricultural Education in an Elementary School: An Ethnographic Study of a School Garden", *28th Annual National Agricultural Education Research Conference*, December 12, 2001. p. 357

the parish continue to experience social and economic deprivation.

The school is situated next to the St. Francis Xavier's Church and the Gardiner Street Jesuit Community. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the school was faced with a real challenge of maintaining social distancing for the children during play time. In response, the Jesuit community gave access to their garden which proved to be a real haven. As the pandemic receded, the experienced benefits of the garden did not. A polytunnel was installed in the garden providing new opportunities and possibilities.

The garden also provides the opportunity to explore Ignatian ethos and pedagogy. At an address at the conclusion of the year of Consecrated Life, Pope Francis spoke of wonder saying:

> "We are custodians of wonder. A wonder that asks to be constantly renewed is; woe betide routine in spiritual life…..Our founders were moved by the Spirit and they were not afraid to get their hands dirty with every day life.."[25]

The teacher and children at the centre of this story were not afraid to get their hands dirty and learned a lot along the way.

Here the teacher picks up their story

With access to the garden this year, we have been watching it change as the months pass. Learning about how the seasons, time, the calendar and festivals could all be placed in context by the changes in the garden. I found that so many learning experiences across the whole curriculum could be enriched through engagement with life in the garden. The children noticed the roses turn into rosehips as summer ended and declared the cherry tree to be on fire as it blazed yellow, orange and gold in the autumn. The children come in from playtime with grass stains instead of scratches and scrapes from the tarmacadam.

The polytunnel presented a set of new learning opportunities for the class. The three basic elements of Ignatian Pedagogy are: Experience, Reflection and Action. The polytunnel provided a setting for the children to engage in learning experiences that supported them to ask the big questions about how plants grow and about biodiversity, and then to act and reflect upon this learning in a meaningful authentic way.

For example, in Geography, under the theme of study 'People at Work', the children were learning about the processes of making tomato soup and the many people involved in its production. The children, under my guidance, were inspired to grow their own tomatoes. Through the sowing of seeds and caring for their tomato plants, the children are beginning to appreciate the labour and effort that goes into each can of tomato soup they pull off the shelf in the supermarket. With a desire to foster an ethic of care for creation, I was able to use this learning experience to guide the children to reflect on problems of food waste and respect for the food we have been provided with.

Keen to use the polytunnel as a site to develop the children's appreciation for the diversity of creation, we began with taste testing different varieties of popular vegetables. The children tasted a wide variety of tomatoes and voted as to which ones were their favourites. The children explored a variety of potatoes. Even the names seemed wonderful. As each one was taken out of the bag, they would "ooh" and "aah" and attempt to match the potato to its name based on its colour, shape, size and texture. Was it Pink Fir Apple, Mayan Gold, Sweet Potato or Red Emmalie? In the autumn we had done apple tasting. The children are developing a meaningful appreciation for the diversity of creation.

These experiences influenced the children in their decisions about what to grow in the polytunnel. They were very invested in deciding what to grow and this led to important discussion around when seeds

25. "Pope calls on consecrated persons to be a sign of God's closeness and sharing of humanity's wounds today," *Vatican City (AsiaNews)*, February 2, 2016, https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Pope-calls-on-consecrated-persons-to-be-a-sign-of-God%E2%80%99s-closeness-and-sharing-of-humanity%E2%80%99s-wounds-today-36572.html

should be sown and what they need to grow, how long they take to grow and what would taste best. The children asked questions like "Can we grow bananas? What about broccoli?" They discovered they would be in 1st class by the time the broccoli was ready for eating. They asked 'How do raspberries grow?' and then wondered would they have enough space for raspberry canes in a polytunnel. Together we drew up a seed sowing list and plan for the coming months. Every morning during playtime the children sow seeds, labelling each pot with the name, date and variety. The polytunnel continues to present so many meaningful and authentic opportunities for literacy development.

Seed sowing and work in the polytunnel are rooted in the science curriculum. The Global Identifiers of Global Jesuit Schools resolve that Jesuit schools develop a model of living based on respect for creation and sustainable development and that this commitment should manifest itself in 'scientifically rigorous curricula'. Good early science instruction is inquiry-based and recognises the hallmarks of literacy practices of expert scientists. The driving inquiry question throughout the work in the polytunnel has been, how do plants grow? To keep track and to understand what was happening with our seeds, we read multiple information texts to better understand what was happening in the polytunnel. In this way the children were guided to engage in scientific talk about what was happening. I taught the children to make scientific drawings with detail and labels. The children keep garden notebooks to track growth.

Our seed box is an important fixture in our classroom. The children love to open it up each morning to choose seeds to sow. I ask them, 'What seeds are you sowing today?' They reply, 'I think I will sow some Tommy Toe Tomato seeds,' 'I will grow some Nasturtiums', or 'I will sow a blue pumpkin!' For the children, the potential of each small seed seems like a miracle in itself and that alone has caused the children and I to wonder and marvel at creation. The natural world has propelled these children into inquiry based-learning. It is impossible for the children to look at a seed and not wonder how it got there and what it might grow into. Every day the children visit their tomato plants and wonder when they will be ripe for eating and consider all the ways to help them grow well. One day, just before home time we dropped over to check on the plants to find Suzanne from the parish playing classical music to the plants. The next experiment shall be does classical music make plants grow faster?

Reflection is an important phase of a learning experience according to the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm. Reading books such as *The Curious Garden* and *Flower Garden* showed children the aesthetic and affective qualities of working in the garden and producing vegetables, fruit and flowers. These texts guided children to take ownership of their learning and to respond personally to their learning experiences. One of the children declared, "I am a gardener now. I wanted to be vet when I grew up. Now I think I will be a gardener and a vet."

These learning experiences would not be possible without both the provision of the polytunnel and the support of the local Jesuit community[26]. The polytunnel is a shared venture and the children and I are so relieved that we can rely on Father Niall Leahy SJ to take care of our seedlings during school breaks. The children are also always excited to see what other people have been growing.

[26] The Parish Priest Fr Richard O'Dwyer and Fr Niall Leahy, both of whom are resident in Gardiner Street Jesuit Community, were particularly involved in the set up and maintenance of the polytunnel.

CONCLUSION

Andreas Schleicher, head of OECD's education division, in an interview with the Irish Times, highlighted the need to equip students to 'think outside the box'. He identified the key challenge for Irish schools as getting students to think for themselves, to be able to distinguish fact from opinion. He asks '… what value is literacy, if you can't navigate ambiguity? If we can't manage complexity?'[27]

To Care for our Common Home is to understand and appreciate complexity while accepting that some of the solutions aimed at protecting our natural environment are sometimes shrouded in ambiguity. IBL, which nurtures children's natural curiosity of the world surrounding them, is an ideal tool to help children navigate this ambiguity. Integrating this pedagogy with a school garden allows the connection children have with nature to flourish, providing opportunities for them to make choices about how they engage with the world around them.

The students in Gardiner Street primary school illustrate the myriad of benefits that evolve when children are able to experience growth from seed to plate. By developing this respect and curiosity of nature, school gardens have incredible potential to cultivate an attitude of 'Caring for our Common Home'.

27. Carl O'Brien, 'Irish schools need to modernise '20th century' approach to learning, warns OECD', *Irish Times*, 22 March 2021, https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/irish-schools-need-to-modernise-20th-century-approach-to-learning-warns-oecd-1.4516222


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