

Annual

Report

2021



Placing People at the
Heart of Change

Introduction

For the year 2021, the trustees of CAN were very pleased to see the programme adapt to the challenge of the COVID 19 pandemic with almost all work undertaken remotely. Staff responded by addressing the issues they were confronted with, in the most appropriate way, and taking into consideration the specific needs of the groups they were working with. This enabled the staff team to be innovative and creative and to meet the challenge and necessity to work online. Additionally, they were required to undertake new and different approaches to the work alongside an ongoing review of how best to implement the changes within these new limitations. Despite the impact of needing to work online there was arguably increased participation for some who ordinarily in the normal course of events would have been unable to participate in person. For some areas of work the lack of in-person meetings significantly slowed the work's progression due to the reluctance of some participants to be seen on screen or inexperience and lack of confidence in the use of technology for others. The staff are very much to be commended for undertaking such a breadth of work and innovation during this difficult period. The dedication and commitment shown by staff has been exemplary.

CAN has supported other organisations to continue to carry out their day-to-day work against the backdrop of Covid-19 and to take time to think together about what has been learnt through the experience.

In 2021 CAN continued its 5 main areas of work as developed in its Strategic Direction (2019-2022)

1. Initiatives to tackle issues from a Human Rights Perspective
2. Leadership Development
3. Dialogue
4. Organisational Development
5. Sustaining, maintaining, and promoting CAN

1. INITIATIVES TO TACKLE ISSUES FROM A HUMAN RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE

1.1.1 To build effective tenant participation in the Management of Local Authority Housing in Ireland

A research project ‘Building Effective Tenant Participation in the Management of Local Authority Housing in Ireland’ began in April 2021 as a collaboration between NUI Galway Centre for Housing Law, Rights and Policy and CAN, funded by the Housing Agency. The overall objective of the research project was to promote a model of innovative management in Local Authority estates that has meaningful tenant participation in policy and decision-making processes at a national and local level at its core. This model of participation will be based on respect for human rights, social inclusion, and respect for the multi-cultural and diverse communities of Ireland today. CAN’s role was one of co-ordination and facilitation in all aspects of the project which in 2021 included

The First Strand: detailed and critical desk research on the principles, human rights, and other obligations in relation to tenant participation in social housing management, models of good practice, a Literature Review, and preparing a Framing Paper.

The Second Strand: a structured set of three online Dialogue meetings where the opportunities and challenges of implementing a rights-based, socially inclusive housing management framework within Local Authorities in Ireland were examined by key stakeholders such as tenants, Local Authority officials and members of Strategic Policy Committees for housing in three regional areas. The project is ongoing in 2022.

1.2 To advocate with and on behalf of families living in local authority housing to remedy the violation of Article 16 of the Revised Social Charter as stated in the Collective Complaint International Human Rights Federation (FIDH) v Ireland, Complaint No. 110/2014

The Government of Ireland submitted its 18th national report on the follow-up given to the decisions of the European Committee of Social Rights (‘The Committee’), relating to collective complaints (‘the Government report’) on 22 December 2020. The government report set out the Irish state’s response to the decisions relating to a number of specified

collective complaints including International Human Rights Federation (FIDH) v Ireland, Complaint No. 110/2014 (FIDH v Ireland).¹

According to Rules 21A of the Committee, trade unions, employer's organisations, NGOs, and others are allowed to submit comments and other information related to national reports to assist the committee in examining the national report concerned.²

Community Action Network (CAN) and Centre for Housing Law, Rights and Policy Research, NUI Galway (CHLRP) took this opportunity to submit comments in June 2021. These were considered by the Committee in December 2021 and informed their report in 2022.

In April 2021, CAN and the Centre for Housing Law, Rights and Policy Research (CHLRP), NUI Galway were invited to make a Submission to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage. In this submission, we briefly outlined our response to the European Committee of Social Rights' ('the Committee') Findings Report 2020.

After briefly updating the Committee on Housing, Local Government, and Heritage on the current situation, we made three specific requests and recommendations that we consider would help to bring the situation into conformity with Ireland's obligations in international human rights law.

1.3 To develop Model Emergency Housing Legislation to protect the right to housing for all tenants during the COVID-19 pandemic

CAN collaborated with the Open Society Justice Initiative, The Centre for Housing Law, Rights and Policy in NUI Galway, The Shift, Feantsa, Housing Rights Watch and a coalition of global human rights advocates to develop model legislation on the right to housing

¹ The Report to the Ministers of the Council of Europe of 22 June 2017 on the Decision on the Merits of Collective Complaint *International Human Rights Federation (FIDH) v Ireland*, Complaint No. 110/2014, para 105-106.

² Council of Europe, Rules of the European Committee of Social Rights, Rules 21A: 'comments and other information relating to national reports submitted by trade unions, employers' organisations, NGOs and others in pursuance of Article 23(1) of the Charter as amended by the Turin Protocol shall be submitted to the Secretariat no later than 30 April of the year during which the Committee examines the national report concerned'.

during Covid -19. This model legislation comprised sample legal provisions that could be used to ensure the right to housing during the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis following it. It was intended to serve as a catalyst for comprehensive legislation to ensure that the right to housing is protected for all at this critical time.

CAN also facilitated the first capacity building webinar, hosted online by Feantsa which explored how this model legislation could be used within a European context.

1.4 To promote the use and implementation of social clauses in public procurement to benefit members of groups most distant from the labour market

CAN continued to chair the Community Benefits Forum, comprising 4 projects, all working to use community benefit in their practice through 2021. The group grew its membership to include the Irish Prison Service and Trinity College and worked to develop a strategy to promote the use of social clauses. It engaged with the inter-departmental Strategic Procurement Advisory Group to this end.

1.5 To contribute collaboratively with stakeholders to tackle community safety issues in local communities

1.5.1 CAN continued to coordinate the *Building Community Resilience (BCR) Project* through 2021. The BCR project is a collaborative approach to tackling community safety issues for communities in Dublin 8,10 and 12, particularly those related to Drug Trade. See www.bcrproject.ie. 80 individuals representing statutory organisations, community and voluntary organisations and residents are active participants.

During 2021, CAN, in its coordinating role led the following pieces of work

1. BCR conducted five Community Crime Impact Assessments (<https://youtu.be/glDiikQFzCw> followed by problem-solving groups to address the most acutely affected residential areas. These groups involving local Gardai, DCC staff, youth workers, residents, and others met monthly to develop responses to ASB in their areas.

2. Nine youth projects were networked to build collaboration in responding to young people caught up in ASB across their areas.
3. A specialised project (Targeted Response with Youth) assisting almost 40 young people involved in drug dealing was accepted for mainstreaming by the Department of Justice through the efforts of CAN and expanded into a second community. This project had already severely curtailed ASB and drug trading in one community.
4. A system of supporting Gardai to target organisers of criminality most impacting local areas was further developed.
5. A pilot initiative to bed down two schools, two youth projects, and a community organisation working in one local community was continued with all local projects committing to the process.
6. Four Local Policing Forums (LPFs) were assisted to hold public meetings online during COVID restrictions.
7. A forum of the four Local Policing Forums was facilitated to develop an LPF booklet explaining their work to the public.
8. The LPFS were supported to make regular submissions on their issues to the Joint Policing Committee and also to the Policing Authority on their draft LPF guidelines and Dublin City Council on the development of its latest ASB policy.
9. CAN was a member of the Government ASB Forum chaired by Minister Browne throughout the year.
10. An evaluation of the BCR project overseen by CAN was published in December 2021. [Building community resilience, how to sustain momentum. An evaluation of the building community resilience project in Dublin south-central. - Drugs and Alcohol](#)
11. The BCR project was mainstreamed within DCC in 2021 and a coordinator was employed on a four-day week beginning in early 2022.

1.5.2 CAN facilitated a problem-solving group to respond to ASB issues in a community in the South Dublin County Council area following a Community Crime Impact Assessment there. CAN represented the group in presenting the issues to the Local Authority.

1.6 To support the physical and social regeneration of local authority housing

1.6.1 Dolphin House Regeneration Project

CAN facilitated a process between resident representatives and Dublin City Council in late 2020 through which a revised Regeneration Master Plan for Dolphin House was agreed for presentation to their Regeneration Board for consideration in January 2021.

Further to their consideration, CAN then led a whole community consultation process on the proposed Master Plan through online questionnaires, online meetings with residents and other stakeholders, and door-to-door interviews. The consultation process took place from January to May 2021 and a 73% response rate from residents was achieved demonstrating a significant engagement in the future of Dolphin House. A report of findings was presented to the Regeneration Board including Dublin City Council.

1.6.2 Oliver Bond Residents

CAN worked with a group of eight residents in the Oliver Bond complex to establish a residents' group to represent the community during the newly proposed regeneration of the estate. The work involved training in human rights and in regeneration processes. CAN supported the locally based community project which has a leadership role in community participation in the regeneration project.

1.6.3 St Michaels Regeneration Team

CAN facilitated a series of meetings with the STG Regeneration team consisting of 10 residents, community youth and drug workers, and academics supporting them to prepare their input into the development plan for the area.

1.7 To support the progressive realisation of the human rights of drug service users in their treatment and care

The Service Users Rights in Action (SURIA) is an independent group of drug service users, former service users, medical professionals, service providers and community activists, facilitated by CAN. The group has carried out research that highlights the difficulties

encountered by the Irish drug service user for almost a decade, since 2012. CAN facilitated the group in two major actions during 2021 as follows:

In May 2021, it launched a fourth round of peer-led research “Nothing About Us Without Us”. This damning report was informed by 121 interviews with service users. The analysis of this data through the lens of human rights, evidence-based practice and the international evidence base presented the Irish system as one in need of serious reform. It highlighted a decade of relative inaction despite a concerted effort to voice human rights and equality issues. At the event, participant stakeholders were invited to engage with the recommendations and work together to make change happen for us as a group of very vulnerable rights holders.

CAN, with the support of FLAC / PILA (Free Legal advice Centres / Public Interest Law Alliance), secured pro bono support from A&L Goodbody LLP to assist SURIA to incorporate as a Company Limited by Guarantee in 2021.

1.8 To support the introduction of a 10th ground in Irish equality legislation through participation in the #Add the 10th Campaign

The Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth announced his intention to review the Equal Status Act 2000-2018 and the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 to examine their effectiveness in combatting discrimination and promoting equality and with the intention of introducing a socio-economic ground for discrimination. CAN worked as part of an alliance, called #Add the 10th, advocating for the addition of this 10th ground. As part of this alliance, we made a submission to the ministerial review in December 2021.

1.9 To collaborate with community, voluntary and statutory stakeholders to develop sustainable intercultural and anti-racist communities

Following CAN’s Welcome on the Mat Project (2018-20), we continue to work in promoting interculturalism and anti-racist work. Our particular contribution is in the area of building sustainable intercultural communities. We are committed to initiating and supporting processes that contribute to this and engaged in the following in 2021

1.9.1 NEIC Intercultural Ambassadors Learning Programme

CAN engaged with the North Inner City Minority Ethnic Forum to support the development of a network of people from diverse ethnic groups to serve as Intercultural Ambassadors within the NEIC. CAN collaborated in the first step of building the network, delivering an Intercultural Learning programme that built the ambassadors' capacity to grow interculturalism in the NEIC through their actions with others. Sixteen people from thirteen different nationalities took part in a fourteen-week programme. All participants stayed involved and have gone on to form a very active network of ambassadors.

1.9.2 Approved Housing Bodies Intercultural Diversity Project

CAN facilitated a number of Approved Housing Bodies through the Housing Alliance to develop a Quality Mark in managing culturally diverse housing estates. During the year, three AHBs committed to funding the project, employing a coordinator to oversee the roll-out of the project. CAN continues to chair the management group for the project.

1.9.3 CityWide and New Communities Partnership (NCP) project on Drug Use and Drug-related Issues in Migrant Communities

This research project aimed

1. To support the development of a voice for Migrant Communities in relation to the drugs issue by partnering with NCP
2. To increase awareness of drug-related issues as experienced by Migrant Communities among services and policymakers
3. To support the capacity of community leaders to engage with services and policymakers

CAN, commissioned to work on the first phase of a project, captured the lived experience and voice of people from migrant communities through a series of focus groups and individual interviews with community leaders. As researchers, we explored and gathered people's experience of problem drug and alcohol use in their communities, the reasons for this as they see it, the impact it is having and their view on how the resultant issues should be addressed. The research report to be launched in 2022 will be followed up by the formation of a group to work on the other aims.

1.10 To share CAN learning and models of good practice in Human Rights work with a wide audience of stakeholders through contributions to conferences and media

CAN has developed a high level of expertise in areas such as human rights, community safety, housing and community participation and is frequently asked to contribute that expertise and participate in consultations and other learning events. During 2021 examples included Presentations at conferences on the Right to a Home in NUI Maynooth, at the international working group organized by the Access to Justice and Network for Justice, UK, Central Bank and Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission consultations and conferences as well as contributing articles and interviews to mainstream radio and print media.

2. LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

CAN aims to develop leadership capacity for real change among all those with a role to play in social justice, those who live with inequalities, those who wish to support them and those working within systems that need to change.

Organisational Leadership

2.1 To strengthen and develop the capacity of community and voluntary sector leaders who are working towards social justice in Ireland

The Transformative Leadership Programme is a leadership programme designed for senior managers and others in leadership roles within voluntary organisations across Ireland. It is accredited at Level 8 by NUI Maynooth and is run in partnership with the Wheel. It comprises four core modules, delivered over three days each, which are.

- Personal Leadership Model Building
- Understanding and Leading Change
- Working creatively with Diversity
- Building successful Collaborations.

The eighth national programme was launched in Autumn 2021. There was a particularly high level of interest and far more people applied than there were places. 18 participants from the following organisations Spirassi, NYCI, National Women's Council of Ireland, National Women's Network, Candle Community Trust, Orione Housing, Gheel Autism Services, Enable Ireland, Spraoi agus Sport, TRY Youth Project, Reach Deaf Services, Clay Youth Project, The Wheel, Childhood Development Initiative, Finglas Youth Resource Centre and Crosscare. The programme will be completed in 2022 with 17 participants graduating.

2.2 To offer senior leaders in the community and voluntary sector an advanced model of leadership development with focus on application to practice that addresses the complex challenges for self, organisation and wider society

There are now over 100 graduates of the Transformative Leadership (TL) Programme. Our experience of moving the TL programme online inspired us to develop an advanced leadership programme for senior leaders in the community and voluntary sector. We launched our new online programme Transformative Leadership Applied Practice in February 2021 for graduates of TL. 15 leaders participated in this programme which consisted of 4 modules and individual coaching sessions for each participant. The purpose of the programme was to deepen participants' learning from the Transformative Leadership Programme with a particular focus on the application of Structural Dynamics and the practice of coaching skills within their leadership roles.

Grassroots community leadership

2.3 To support the participation of the Traveller community in the Midlands in third level education in community development

This work began in 2020 and was severely impacted by Covid 19 as a Diploma programme in Community Development Practice was intended to commence in September of that year. CAN worked as part of a consortium of four Traveller projects in the Midlands from Offaly, Laois, Longford and Westmeath, Exchange House Ireland, the ETB, HSE and NUI Galway. Meetings of the consortium continued thereafter but were difficult to sustain during the year as the restrictions continued in place. In 2021 NUI Galway were able to commit to outreach programmes commencing again in Autumn 2022. The group resumed meeting and prepared for a preparatory programme in the spring of 2022 to support people for the Diploma and to sustain their interest. In 2021 the consortium worked on developing the programme content and recruiting participants. There was a lot of interest, and twenty-six men and women were ready to begin the preparatory programme in 2022.

2.4 To develop a bespoke, culturally appropriate programme 'Young leaders for Active Citizenship in NEIC' and build a network of young people aged 17-24 years to play an

active part in supporting and building strong vibrant safe communities within the NIC.

The ‘Young Leaders for Active Citizenship’ programme aimed to grow a network of young active citizens who work together to represent the voice of young people on issues that matter to them. This programme is a response to the identified priority in the NEIC: ‘Leadership and Structured Engagement: Providers will come together to provide a single youth leadership development programme for the community to work with other structures set out in this plan and to represent youth voice and interests locally’ (Mulvey Report, 2016; Pg 39).

CAN developed an Action Learning Unit to begin work in 2021 with a group of youth workers as mentors who would prepare together to support their young people, when possible, to meet in the room together again.

The programme began in 2021 with eleven young people from 5 youth services engaged with the programme. Due to Covid and public health restrictions we had to modify the delivery to an online format. CAN worked with youth workers to act as ‘mentors’ to the young leaders and to devise alternative methods to deliver the first module on personal leadership. When restrictions began to lift, CAN was able to deliver the programme in person covering a module on social analysis in the NEIC. The programme will continue in 2022.

3. DIALOGUE AND DIALOGIC LEADERSHIP

3.1 To reflect on and learn from the experience of living through the Covid-19 global pandemic and implications for social justice and systemic change in Ireland

In January 2021, CAN commenced an online programme for social activists and people who experience inequality on the Island of Ireland. We offered participants a safe online space for personal reflection and dialogue. The programme was informed by Theory U - a framework for learning, leading, innovating and profound systemic change. This is located in the context of social justice and is in line with the ongoing global movement for social change championed by Otto Scharmer and his team from the Presencing Institute in MIT, Boston. tools that are being used in this global movement for change. The programme took place over 7 two-hour sessions between January and April and was attended by 40 people.

3.2 To develop relationships between young people and Gardaí in North East Inner City Dublin, and to enhance effective collaboration between youth services and Gardaí through dialogue as a method of cultural change

Following the success of the Policing Dialogue programme in 2019 a second policing dialogue programme began in 2020 and was completed in 2021.

The work consisted of a number of online sessions for youth workers to design a programme for engaging young people in the Dialogue process during lockdown restrictions. The shared online space was very valuable and contributed to the ongoing building of better collaboration between Youth Projects. 11 youth workers from 6 projects took part in the programme.

During the summer months, Gardaí visited projects and participated in joint sporting activities and provided relevant help and information. A dialogue session took place in Store Street Garda station. The purpose of this was to bring youth workers and Gardaí together to revisit the Dialogue process and agree logistics for the planned weekend Dialogue event. 8 Gardai and 7 youth workers participated.

A residential weekend took place in November 2021 in the Cavan Centre. 13 Young People, 4 Youth workers, 7 members of An Garda Síochána took part. This was a very successful event and has created an opportunity to develop the initiative into 2022.

3.3 To facilitate the North Inner City Dublin Community Youth Justice Team (CYJT) interagency collaboration in addressing youth offending through innovation

CYJT is a youth justice model that addresses the needs of the child / young person who is offending or who is at risk of offending. CAN's role is to facilitate this collaborative approach in the North Inner-City Dublin provided and supported by the community, youth justice, and other relevant services in the NIC area. It is envisaged that this multi-agency approach rooted in the NIC community will develop a peer-led model to support vulnerable young people at pre-court, in-court, and post-court stages.

3.4 To build effective interagency learning, collaboration, and service delivery through dialogic practices

3.4.1 Local Drug and Alcohol Task Forces Chair and Coordinators Network

CAN facilitated two sessions with coordinators and chairs of 13 local drug task forces in Dublin, Fingal, Dunlaoghaire-Rathdown and Cork City to explore their effectiveness in raising addiction-related issues nationally. Following this, CAN facilitated the Chairs of the 13 DATFs to develop a position document based on their experience and linked the group to a PR company with experience in community advocacy.

3.4.2 Youth at Risk Network

Facilitation of the Youth at Risk Network in Dun Laoghaire Rathdown continued in 2021. The purpose of the Network is to create a reflective space for those who work with young people to explore common issues of interest and concern. Meetings were held in April and November 2021 and staff from twenty-seven organisations participated. The themes explored were 1) Resilience and the effect of Adverse Childhood Experiences and 2) Collaboration through a case study presented by three local projects. Meetings continued

online due to restrictions of Covid 19 with an average attendance of twenty-seven people on each occasion.

This is an initiative of Southside Partnership and the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Drug and Alcohol Task Force. CAN is engaged to work with a planning group and to facilitate and design each workshop.

3.4.3 Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Local Drugs and Alcohol Taskforce

CAN facilitated a learning and collaborative process with DLRDATF, Tusla and HSE CHO6 to integrate the national Hidden Harm Policy and guidelines into the practice of DLR and Bray frontline drugs and alcohol, child, youth and family organisations through their implementation of a locally devised protocol, leading to greater interagency collaboration.

In 2021, 15 voluntary and statutory agencies from Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, Bray and Wicklow engaged in a series of 6 learning events resulting in improved interagency understanding of and cooperation in responding to the hidden harms caused to children through adult alcohol and drug use in the home.

3.4.4 SAVE - Southside Addressing Violence Effectively

SAVE is an interagency forum established in 1995 with the main aim of developing a comprehensive response to domestic violence in the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown area. Resourced and supported by Southside Partnership, part of its work is to engage with all groups and agencies concerned with domestic violence for reflection, learning and acting together. CAN works with a sub-group of SAVE to design and deliver the events. There was one event in 2021 that addressed the theme of 'Recognising and Responding to Domestic Violence in the Community'. The event was conducted online and thirty people participated.

3.4.5 National Women's Council of Ireland locally based women's groups

During the Covid 19 pandemic locally based women's groups were unable to meet. CAN worked with their Development Officer to facilitate reflective two workshops at which the

women could meet together online to share experiences of how they were working with their members in changed circumstances and continue to develop their leadership. Women nationally participated.

4. ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.1 To support strong, effective organisations, working in the service of social justice and equality that are essential to progressive social change through facilitation of strategic review, thinking and planning, team development, mediation, coaching, and mentoring.

CAN accompanies organisations on their journey as they build their capacity to redress social injustice and effect positive and sustainable change. Our practice is informed by whole systems thinking, an understanding of the value of leadership, a willingness to engage with change, and reflective learning and dialogue.

In 2021 we worked with

- Ballymun FRC –Team development day and recruitment process
- Independent Living Movement Ireland
- Partners – Training for Transformation
- St. John Bosco Youth Centre
- Common Ground
- Circle Housing
- Rialto Development Association
- Disability Action Collective – Ballyfermot – Chapelizod
- Limerick Travellers Network
- Exchange House Ireland
- Dublin South City Partnership
- F2 Centre, Rialto
- Canal Communities Against Racism
- Tusla - Dublin North and South Dublin Child & Family Support Networks

5. SUSTAINING, MAINTAINING, AND PROMOTING CAN

CAN governance is in line with the Charities Governance Code, which consists of six principles; behaving with integrity; leading people; exercising control; working effectively; being accountable and transparent.

An integral part of our governance is monthly management meetings with a regular review of work undertaken and review of financial reports. In addition, we convene working groups on specific themes and meet bi-annually for strategic review meetings.

We have reviewed and updated a number of policies in 2021 to ensure they are in line with the Charities Regulator. We will complete the compliance record forms in line with the requirements of the Charities Regulator Governance Code.

Funding for our work comes from a variety of sources and securing ongoing funding is a core part of our work. In 2021 funding came from the Department of Rural and Community Development through Pobal and the Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNO), fees generated by the work we do and philanthropic donations. CAN is deeply appreciative of our funding and the trust placed in us to do all our work. However, it is an ongoing challenge to meet the consistent demand for our work within the limited funding available to promote the growth of the organisation. This is particularly so in the context of having only a small staff team of 3.5 full-time post equivalence and the breadth and depth of the work undertaken.