

PRESS RELEASE: **Placing Care at the heart of the Housing and Health strategy in the Liberties, Dublin 8.**

October 27, 2022. Dublin

A recent collaborative and interdisciplinary workshop ambitiously addressed:

- How developing better links between housing and health can ensure long-term strategic engagement between housing and health sectors.
- How a cohesive partnership between researchers, community development organisations, housing alliances, and neighbourhood initiatives can play a crucial role in monitoring the recommendations of human rights mechanisms about social housing tenants' rights to adequate housing.

On October 18th, a ground-breaking collaborative workshop, titled 'CARE, HEALTH, and HOUSING', was held in the Digital Hub Development Agency in Dublin 8. The event was organised by Lidia K.C Manzo, the assistant professor and recipient of the Marie Skłodowska Curie EU Individual Fellowship at the University of Milan. Manzo, who has been carrying out her research on the urban transformation of the Liberties with Maynooth University's department of geography since 2015, sought to bring people together across the academic, health, and housing sectors, in order to develop joint solutions, identify common ground, and alleviate residents' pressure within inadequate housing conditions.

The interdisciplinary collaboration included Maynooth University Social Sciences Institute, the Digital Hub, Robert Emmet Community Development Project (RECDP) and the National College of Art and Design. It sought to highlight concerns that many residents in social housing communities face, where many are living in overcrowded homes with damp, mould, cold and pests. The workshop aimed to raise awareness on the legal right to 'habitable' adequate housing, to overcome the lack of information on housing quality at the community level, to empower vulnerable communities, and identify necessary solutions across the health, community care and housing sectors.

The main event took place in the 'Learning Studio' of the Digital Hub, and was fully occupied with residents of Oliver Bond, students, state officials and community stakeholders alike. The exceptional line-up of interdisciplinary speakers included Lidia K.C. Manzo, Rory Hearne, Mary Heavey, Kevin Credit, Jeffrey Roe, Austin Campbell, and Gayle Cullen Doyle and Anthony Freeman. The collaborative event was facilitated by Margaret Dorgan, the CEO of Love Your Work & Catalyst Coaching.

The extensive variety of topics covered during the presentations provided constructive food for thought to all in attendance. The event organiser, Lidia Manzo, spoke about how housing quality can adversely influence multiple dimensions of health and exacerbate health inequalities, particularly in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Rory Hearne, Ireland's leading housing policy expert, spoke about how safe, healthy, and adequate housing is intrinsic to our basic needs as human beings. Mary Heavey of Community Law and Mediation spoke about the need to instil the right to adequate housing into the constitution and advised affected. Gayle Cullen Doyle, the Chairperson of the Oliver Bond House Residents Group, and Anthony Freeman, the Social Enterprise Manager of RECDP, provided the lived experience of inadequate housing, while demonstrating the strength of the Oliver Bond House community. Austin Campbell, the Executive Director of RECDP, spoke passionately about the social determinants of health, the breach of tenants' health related rights, and the need for a community-led approach to data. Kevin Credit and Jeffrey Roe, two data experts, spoke similarly on how open data networks and 'citizen science' projects, like DIY air quality sensors, could best be utilised to serve the needs of communities, cities, and society at large.

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Before and after each speaker, those in attendance got the opportunity to voice their opinions on the topics of housing, health, law, and open data. Many expressed the concern that poor-quality housing, both social and private, is having major physical and mental health consequences for residents and society. However, both collaborative solutions and creative innovations were discussed, in the hope that insights could be gained that would alleviate the conditions of affected residents.

Lidia K.C. Manzo, Assistant Professor of Sociology at Milan University, Department of Languages, Literatures, Cultures and Mediations, Maynooth University Social Sciences Institute (MUSSI), Geography. EU CITY-OF-CARE Marie-Curie Fellow 2020-22, said:

The evidence on the relationship between housing and health is complex but compelling. Substandard housing conditions such as water leaks, poor ventilation, pest infestation, exposure to high or low temperatures and overcrowding, have been associated with poor health outcomes, most notably those related to respiratory infections, adverse cardiovascular events, and psychological distress, which the COVID-19 pandemic has magnified.

Drawing on extended ethnographic and participatory research, CITY-OF-CARE focuses on forms of local activism, community-led interventions, and public actions to drive policy makers to remain committed to support a “fair regeneration” of Oliver Bond social housing community in Dublin 8. Claiming housing as an essential contributor to good health, now is the time for a joint public housing and public health agenda to create healthier homes by confronting the everyday impact of inadequate housing to tackle social inequalities more broadly. It is the time for DCC as a public landlord to have the “duty of care” to ensure the health, safety and well-being of social housing complexes like Oliver Bond.

Rory Hearne, Assistant Professor in Social Policy at Maynooth University, Department of Applied Social Studies and Author, said:

The impacts of housing on health are well recognised internationally. However, in Ireland in recent decades that link has been under applied in policy. In particular substandard housing, such as affects some social housing in Dublin's inner city like Oliver Bond, Dolphin House and elsewhere has major physical and mental health impacts on residents. It also affects the fabric of the community. These are valuable communities. We must care for them, nurture them and invest in them.

Gayle Cullen Doyle, Chairperson of Oliver Bond House Residents Group, said:

We are a proud, strong, and united community. We have put generations of work into this estate. We want it to be a place where people can live safely and healthily for many more generations to come. Oliver Bond complex is 86 years old this year. It was built in 1936 and designed by the renowned city architect Herbert Simms. It has 397 flats spread across 16 blocks. About 1,200 people live here. That's like a small town.

The vast majority of people in the Oliver Bond complex are living with damp, mould, and cold. About a third don't have cold or hot running water. A third have problems with pests, including rats, and two-thirds don't have adequate vermin free refuse storage. These are not just side-line or minor complaints. These are very basic issues that go to the very heart of what decent, healthy, and safe accommodation should be. They highlight the very heart of what the right to adequate accommodation means. Nothing fancy, just basic, decent accommodation. Just basic rights.

Austin Campbell, Executive Director of the Robert Emmet Community Development Project, said:

Whoever commissions the development of data is the real game maker as funding, policy and development decisions are based on the data available to decision makers.

Working class communities are inevitably fighting a losing fight if they are not directly involved in this process and it's vital that community organisations step up to act as a conduit between community members and academics to develop data on housing conditions (and community facilities) and the relationship between housing and health outcomes in particular.

Well done to Lidia Manzo for organising a very positive workshop that brought together stakeholders with capacity for the development and appropriate publication of data on health and housing in the area. I'm looking forward to Robert Emmet CDP being part of driving this conversation into the future- given the scale of development in Dublin 8 it's never been more important that community needs are accurately represented.

Mary Heavey, Housing Solicitor at Community Law & Mediation, said:

Housing should protect, rather than undermine, a community's health. Substandard and inadequate housing not only undermines a community's health, but negatively impacts all aspects of a person's being, including their dignity, their well-being, their employment and educational opportunities, and their ability to fully participate in society.

The substandard living conditions many people, including a number of Community Law & Mediation's clients, are currently experiencing is one aspect of the ongoing housing crisis which the State urgently needs to tackle. We are therefore calling for the insertion of a standalone right to adequate housing to be inserted into the Irish Constitution. The inclusion of a robust constitutional right, which would include a right to a habitable home, represents a crucial step in ensuring that minimum standards of housing are met.

Kevin Credit, Assistant Professor at Maynooth University, Maynooth University Social Sciences Institute (MUSSI), Geography, said:

Collecting and providing open data on environmental factors - like air quality, green space, and building characteristics - and health outcomes has the potential to help citizens, researchers, and governments advocate for change and make better decisions about where to deploy resources. More needs to be done to create a fully open data ecosystem in Ireland to identify areas in need, in order to better understand structural relationships between building neighbourhood characteristics and the health and wellbeing of the people living there.

Community Action Network – Dublin, said:

The fact that inadequate housing impacts negatively on the health, education and employment outcomes of people who live in substandard, overcrowded homes has long been established to be true. We in CAN believe that those who are directly affected not only have a right to be meaningfully engaged in designing, delivering, implementing, and monitoring initiatives to address their housing and health issues, but any measures that do not involve them are most likely to be ineffective.

In 2014, a coalition involving local tenants, CAN, the Centre for Housing Law, Rights and Policy and Research, and NUIG made a Collective Complaint under the Revised European Social Charter of the Council of Europe. In it we claimed that Ireland was in breach of Article 16, which relates to the right of the family to social, legal and economic protection. In 2017, 2020 and 2021, The European Committee of Social Rights in the Council of Europe concluded that Ireland continues to violate article 16.

The Care, Health and Housing collaborative workshop was organised, funded, and facilitated with the framework of the EU Marie-Curie CITY-OF-CARE research (G.A.890603) in partnership with Maynooth University Social Sciences Institute and the support of The Digital Hub, Robert Emmet Community Development Project and the National College of Art and Design

For more information, visit: www.cityofcare.org

For any questions do not hesitate to contact Lidia K.C. Manzo, project Principal Investigator: lidia.manzo@unimi.it

Photographs and videos can be downloaded here:

[Inadequate housing conditions in Oliver Bond House.mp4](#)

[Mould in Oliver Bond House.mp4](#)

[Mould in Oliver Bond](#)

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Lidia KC Manzo CITY-OF-CARE Principal Investigator - credit: Pierluigi Cattani Faggion

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Oliver Bond House - Credit: Pierluigi Cattani.jpg

Gayle Cullen Doylet - Credit: Pierluigi Cattani Faggion.jpg

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Care Health Housing Dublin 8 workshop at The Digital Hub

Download the full workshop program here

This press release was edited by **Shane Brock**.

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