

# Impact Report 2020

Nasc, the Irish word for 'link', empowers migrants to realise and fulfil their rights.



**Nasc**

Migrant & Refugee Rights



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**TWENTY YEARS AGO...**

*Brendan Hennessy (Founder)*

# Chair of the Board of Trustees

**Dr Fiona Donson**



Nasc's s Impact Report 2020 is dominated, unsurprisingly, by the Covid-19 pandemic. The shutdown that began in March 2020 has continued in one form or another, impacting heavily on both the environment within which the organisation operates and the work of the team. However, Nasc's activities have carried on in spite of the global health crisis. Indeed, the organisation's work had to change rapidly at times during the year as new situations evolved, new services were required and the Nasc team stepped up. The strength of the organisation has always been in its teamwork, its adaptability and its overall commitment and this was clearly illustrated throughout 2020.

As this report shows, the work carried out during 2020 was dominated by both Covid and Direct Provision. Nasc were quick to identify key gaps in information and service supports in the context of the health pandemic and took action in both the Covid-19 World Service initiative and Direct Provision supports and advocacy. This work was vital in ensuring that those living in Direct Provision were not forgotten.

Most regular project activities were carried out online where possible. Thus, the legal team continued to deliver its vital service remotely, helping over 1000 clients. The Gateway programme moved its inclusion and Integration activities online expanding classes to include yoga, cookery and stress management modules. While the Connect project successfully utilised online assistance for young people including educational, therapeutic and language supports. However, other activities needed physical interventions, including providing care packages and liaising with cocooning residents of Direct Provision. For some elements of Nasc's work Covid meant that innovative actions had to be found resulting in new partnerships and activities. For example, while Community Sponsorship was put on hold groups found new ways of working to support their communities generally.

The range of projects set out in this report illustrates the depth of work carried out by Nasc. The organisation is small but dedicated and ably supplemented by Nasc's outstanding advocacy work which is rooted in bringing a strong, measured and credible voice in both Cork and at the national level. The publication of the Day Report was particularly significant in this regard. Nasc has been at the forefront of highlighting both the problems of direct provision and the need to embrace an effective alternative.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our funders without whom none of this work would have been possible. In particular our long-standing supporters, The Tomar Trust, the Cork Kerry Community Health Team, the Musgrave Trust, Tusla, the European Commission and the Department of Justice and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund 2014-2020, Cork City Council, The Ireland Funds, The Community Foundation of Ireland, the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, the ETB and finally Rethink Ireland and The Cork Chamber for supporting our Gateway Project . In addition, we need to thank all our individual donors, who help to keep our work going.

Finally, 2020 was the 20th anniversary of the founding of the organisation. Events had been planned, and we were all looking forward to celebrations together. The pandemic sadly prevented these in person gatherings. However, the commitment shown by everyone involved in Nasc during the 20th year in the face of old and new challenges underlines what makes the organisation so special. The Board of Nasc are privileged to oversee the day to day activities of such an effective and resilient organisation, but they themselves bring important skills and enthusiasm that are essential in helping the organisation achieve its ambitious goals. While in addition, the core team is supplemented by interns and volunteers who play a vital role in Nasc's overall work. Ultimately, at the end of its 20th year, Nasc is a family committed to the links that bind us all, and in turn ensuring that the work to realise the rights of migrants and refugees within Irish society continues.



## **Nasc Board of Trustees 2020**

Dr. Fiona Donson: Chairperson  
Dr. Amanullah De Sony  
Brenda Cooper  
Hamzeh Odeh  
John Dennehy  
Dr. Liam Thornton  
Ravita Joyce  
Sheila McGovern



**CEO**

**Fiona Finn**

We are extraordinary grateful to the Nasc staff and volunteers who worker tirelessly to ensure that the communities we work with had access to legal information, rights and supports throughout this most challenging of years. The pandemic impacted every aspect of Nasc's work as our offices closed in March and all our services were delivered remotely. Additionally, migrant and refugee communities, especially people living in Direct Provision were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic as they endured successive lockdowns living in unsuitable and overcrowded accommodation.

Nasc responded by pivoting our work to deliver supports and services in direct response to the emerging needs. Our drop-in service quickly moved to a remote telephone advice and support service. We worked in partnership with Cork Kerry Community Healthcare and local community and voluntary organisation to ensure the protection of the health and welfare of those in Direct Provision were protected. Our legal service supported over 1000 people this year delivering 3400 interventions across a range of issues.

Our campaign to End Direct Provision was a major feature of our work in 2020. We were delighted that the Programme for Government

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*Twenty years after the introduction of direct provision, a government-commissioned independent report has called for an end to direct provision and charted a pathway for the State to provide a protection and reception system for international protection applicants with the needs of applicants at its heart. We unequivocally welcome the recommendation to end "the congregated and segregated accommodation of applicants for international protection"*

**Fiona Finn welcomes the Day Report**

contained a clear and unambiguous commitment to finally end the system, and I think the pandemic provided proof, if proof were needed that the system is not tenable and has to end.

We were proud of our work as a member of the Advisory Group on the Provision of Support including Accommodation to Persons in the International Protection Process, chaired by Dr Catherine Day. The Advisory Group published a report, (Day Report), in October which contained a number of key recommendations; including a clear and achievable alternative to Direct Provision, reform of the refugee

determination process, an enhanced right to work for asylum seekers and a process to clear the existing backlogs.

Following the publication of the Day Report, we then turned to ensure that the key recommendations in the Day Report were reflected in the government White Paper which was to set out government plans on how they would end direct provision. Our focus for 2021 and beyond will be to ensure that the Government keeps to its commitment to end direct provision and replace it with a system that is human rights compliant.

## **Nasc Programmes**

Nasc's Connect and Gateway Programmes, provide an invaluable lifeline for the participants over the pandemic. Our Connect Project supported 109 children and young people throughout the pandemic with issues ranging from assistance with their asylum application to improved access to education and wellbeing supports. The Gateway Programme also went online, and the classes created a real sense of connectiveness and community amongst the women throughout a very challenging time. We are very grateful for the support of the Cork Education and Training Board for the grant of laptops and tablets to enable the women and young people continue their learning and education.

One of the things that really shone through in Nasc over the last year was how effective and agile we are as an organisation. In a matter of days and without ever closing our service we changed our service delivery model from an in-person service to one that was delivered over the phone and remotely. We also faced head on all the challenges that the pandemic presented and worked with refugee and migrant communities to face and overcome these challenges. None of this would have been possible without the hard work, dedication, and commitment of the Nasc team who rose to the challenge magnificently.

I would also like to thank all our funders and supporters without whom Nasc would not be able to open our doors and achieve all that we have. I would also like to thank the Cork Kerry Community Health Team for all their support, the Musgrave Trust, the EU Funds Unit in the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Rethink Ireland and The Cork Chamber for supporting our Gateway Project, Tusla, the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, the ETB, Ireland Funds, The Community Foundation for Ireland Tomar Trust and everyone who has supported and funded us this year and in the past. A special thank you to all our individual donors, many of whom, ran, walked, cycled and baked to raise funds for Nasc. We cannot thank you enough.

My personal thanks go to the hugely supportive Board of Trustees and to our Chairperson Fiona Donson. they all give of their time, and expertise freely, and went well beyond the call of duty.

A final word of thanks must go to the refugee migrant communities that we work with, thank you for staying with us in these turbulent times we are astounded by your resilience and your bravery. You enrich our city and country and are a continual source of inspiration to all of us. Thank you.



## Julie O' Leary Legal Service

2020 was a tumultuous year for the Nasc legal and information service. It started calmly with business as usual. We began trialling a monthly evening clinic in February 2020 to make appointments available for those who might struggle to get time off work. As March 2020 hit, it became clear that Covid-19 would require significant changes to our operations. We initially closed our walk-in clinic to avoid having clients in close quarters in our waiting room, but the following week the Taoiseach announced from Washington DC that things were much more serious, and the legal service had to quickly figure out how to go remote!

Within a few days we moved the service to operating remotely via phone and email from our kitchens, bedrooms and make-shift home offices. There were numerous changes to immigration practise and policy over the course of the year and we worked hard to keep our clients up to date on the impact of all of these changes. These included:

- the closure of GNIB registration offices in March 2020
- The suspension of IPO interviews and IPAT hearings
- The suspension of new visa applications except for emergencies

- The extension of all residency permissions
- The Immigration Service accepting correspondence via email

Life in Direct Provision was very difficult over Covid-19, and we assisted residents who wanted to move centre to allow them to “cocoon” due to medical vulnerabilities, healthcare workers who needed to move out of direct provision while working, and people who left to stay elsewhere while cases were very high and then returned later in the year. The legal team assisted the HSE in providing supports and information to direct provision residents who tested positive for Covid-19 and were required to complete a period of self-isolation in a designated hotel.

The legal team statistics show that because of the dedication of our team we worked harder than ever to deliver information and support to our clients. We delivered 3,400 interventions to over 1000 clients. Our clients came from over 100 different countries and roughly half of these were new clients.

“

*Thank you so much for the support, professionalism and wonderful advice you gave me through this difficult time. Without all your help and advice, I would undoubtedly have been in a much more precarious situation.*

**Legal Service Client**

Despite the difficulties experienced throughout the year we had some great positive outcomes. We helped to reunite families from Sudan, Syria, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Iran, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Cameroon and Congo. This was despite travel restrictions that made getting to Ireland very difficult. We worked closely with the IOM and Red Cross to help these individuals get to Ireland to join their families. The youngest family member we helped to bring to Ireland was a client's two year old daughter from Sudan, the oldest was another client's 70 year old mother from DRC.

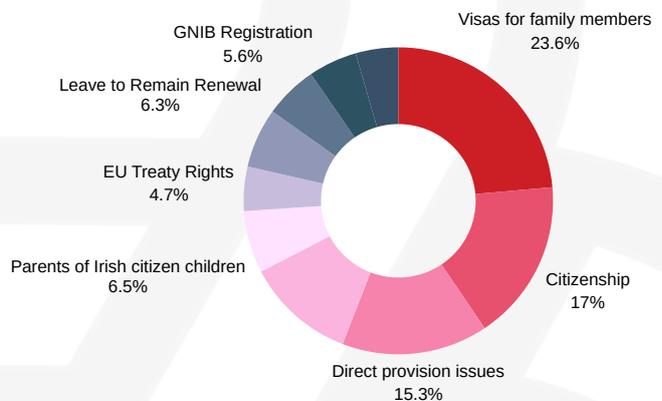
Thank you much to the team, Legal Information Officers Natalia McDonald and Mark Durning, for all the hard work and flexibility during the year. Final thanks to our intern Sam Browne.



**1046 unique clients**

**3,400 interventions**

### Top 10 Visit Reasons



*My children arrived safely yesterday with you[r] support and the help of the International Organisation for Migration. I am enjoying them right now and you cannot imagine my joy. I really wanted to say millions thanks to you for all your committe[d] support.*

**Legal Service Client**

### Top 10 countries of nationality

1. Nigeria
2. Syria
3. Ireland
4. Democratic Republic of Congo
5. Zimbabwe
6. Sudan
7. South Africa
8. Afghanistan
9. Brazil
10. Somalia

We would like to acknowledge the funding provided by the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund 2019 – 2022 (AMIF), for our 'Connecting Communities' project which is co-financed by the European Commission under the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund 2019 – 2022 and is supported by the Department of Justice, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth and Cork City Council.

The second Legal Service project 'Building Communities Together' is funded through the National Integration Funding Programme and is supported by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth through the Migrant Integration Policy and Inclusion Unit. Support was also provided by private philanthropy through the Ireland Funds.



**Nasc  
2020**





## Fiona Hurley

### Policy & Communications

Nasc's Policy & Communications work in 2020 was dominated by the issues of direct provision and international protection. Delays in the international protection process combined with increased public scrutiny of conditions in direct provision centres placed unprecedented pressure on the government to act. The inclusion then in the Programme for Government of a commitment to end direct provision and replace it with an alternative reception system within the lifetime of the government was a momentous and welcome first step. The publication of the Day Report was a further watershed moment - setting out for the first time a comprehensive alternative to direct provision.

The Covid-19 restrictions also saw the closure of registration office around the country and the extension of immigration permissions. Nasc advocated vigorously for longer-term extensions and repeatedly raised the issue both on behalf of individual clients and with the Department of Justice.

#### **Direct Provision & Covid-19**

As Nasc together with much of the rest of the country prepared to close our doors in line with public health advice in March 2020, we partnered with Sanctuary Runners Cork to host a socially-distanced collection of hand sanitiser, soap, tissues, gloves, paracetamol and toiletries for people in direct provision centres.

We were overwhelmed by the response with donations pouring in throughout the morning. The donations were delivered to centre residents across the city and county.

#### **Move the Vulnerable Out**

At the end of March and start of April as our understanding of Covid-19 grew, we became increasingly aware of the danger of living in overcrowded direct provision centres. The #MoveTheVulnerableOut social media campaign called on the government to move vulnerable categories of people out of direct provision centres. The campaign received considerable attention and the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS) reduced the numbers of non-related persons sharing rooms to 3 per room. Nasc continues to be an outspoken advocate on conditions in direct provision centres throughout the pandemic.

#### **Covid-19 World Service**

Covid 19 World Service was a joint initiative of Nasc and Together Ireland to provide a range of COVID-19 public health videos in multiple languages. We had been frustrated by the initial lack of high quality public health information available in commonly spoken languages in Ireland. Over the course of 2020, the C19WS produced health information videos in over 40 languages and helped bring awareness to the need for multi-lingual and accessible information for migrant and ethnic minority communities in Ireland.

We were delighted that RTE choose to support the C19WS, launching a promotional campaign in June 2020 which ran on RTE throughout the summer. In December the C19WS won an award from the Irish Healthcare Awards for the best response to Covid-19. We're extremely proud to have played a role in delivering this incredible service.

### **Family Reunification: Invisible People**

In 2018 Nasc secured funding from IHREC's Equality Fund to commission research on the integration supports available for refugees and their families post-family reunification in Ireland. We commissioned Dr. Karen Smith, Muireann Ni Raghallaigh, Derina Johnson and peer researcher Azad Izzeddin to conduct quantitative and qualitative research to identify gaps and barriers to integration for families arriving to Ireland through family reunification. The research was carried out throughout 2019 and 2020 via semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The report made 36 comprehensive recommendations covering access to family reunification to post-arrival supports. The research was launched via webinar in July 2020.

### **Employment**

On the 4th March, prior to the introduction of public health restrictions, Nasc hosted an event *Start-Up* for migrant entrepreneurs and aspiring migrant entrepreneurs. The evening event including tables from Citizens Information Centre and Cork City Partnership with information on becoming self-employed and details of supports available in Cork City for new businesses. We were also delighted to have refugee entrepreneurs share their experiences of setting up businesses in Cork.

### **Webinars: Exploring the Day Report**

Between November and December, Nasc partnered with Dr Liam Thornton and UCD Sutherland School of Law to deliver a 4-part

series of webinars *Exploring the Day Report*. The webinars series included reflections from those who issued the report, academic analysis of particular issues, thoughts from activists and civil society on implementing the Day Report recommendations, along with political perspectives on advancing the implementation of the Day Report.

The webinars remain available to watch back on Nasc website.

### **Thank you**

A huge thank you is owed to the wonderful volunteers, Marwa Wahhoud and Róisín Ní Chinnéide, who assisted with Nasc's Policy and Communications work in 2020.

### **Numbers at a glance**



**9000 followers**



**975 followers**



**4671 followers**



**60,382 website users**



**4 policy submissions**



**82 media features**



# Cecilia Amabo

## Integration

In 2019, Nasc applied and obtained funding through the EU Asylum Migration and Integration Fund 2014-2020 supported by the Department of Justice to develop an integration strategy for Cork City. With the expansion of the city borders and the growing migrant population in recent years, we felt this was an ideal opportunity to create an innovate new strategy that would respond to the needs of all Cork City's migrant and asylum-seeking communities. We were delighted to begin working with Cork City Council on the development and work was underway in earnest on establishing an integration working group and identifying stakeholders to be consulted throughout the process by the beginning of 2020.

Unfortunately our early progress on the Integration Strategy was halted in March by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. These unforeseen circumstances impacted the strategy greatly as the City Council and other organisations needed to focus on delivering emergency supports. It was with great sadness but with a sense of the immensely challenging immediate needs of the communities around us in Cork, that we were obliged to place the project on a hold pending resumption of lesser government restrictions. We couldn't have anticipated that work on the strategy would be limited to desk research for most of 2020.

However on a more positive note we're pleased to report that 2021 has been much more successful and we're working closely with Cork City Council and stakeholders city-wide to ensure that an inclusive and comprehensive strategy is delivered on time. The spirit of collaboration from representatives of all interagency groups has reignited a progressive pace for the strategy and work is now continuing apace!

### **Direct Provision**

While work on the Integration Strategy was unfortunately placed on hold, our integration work shifted to supporting residents of Direct Provision centres in Cork. The pandemic brought about a shift in policy in the Direct Provision system with emergency centres being created to reduce overcrowding as mostly single adults living in multi-occupancy rooms were moved out of crowded rooms to create space for social distancing.

Cork Airport Travelodge was designated as a temporary centre with up to 68 asylum seekers transferred there from centres across the country. While some residents had been transferred from centres in Cork and were familiar with the city and the supports available, others had never been to Cork and were extremely anxious about moving centre during the pandemic. Naturally, this was a very challenging and anxious time for residents.

As Nasc's Integration Officer, I was pleased to

to be seconded to the HSE Cork Kerry Community Health Team to work with and provide support for Cork's newest residents.

Some of the supports we provided new centre residents with included:

- Regular check-in with new residents to ensure that their needs were being met and they weren't feeling isolated;
- Registering with local GP practices and making medical appointments with doctors;
- Providing support with food supplies and other essential items while residents underwent periods of self-isolation;
- Coordinate with psychologist and medical team on stress-related and other medical issues such as the collection of prescriptions;
- Support for residents transferring direct provision allowances to Cork from their previous centre and support to collect allowance while self-isolating or in circumstances where residents were unable to attend the Post Office in person;
- Coordinating transport including buses from the Travelodge centre to the city;
- Coordinating and arranging for English classes and other courses needed by residents within the centre;
- Coordinating communication via Zoom between centre residents and the HSE and the Department of Justice;
- Linking in with the Nasc Legal Team for any information or advice needed in relation to their protection or immigration applications;
- Assisting with the renewal of Temporary Residence Cards;
- Coordinating the many excellent volunteers from across Cork's voluntary and community sector who wanted to donate their time or services to help the new residents;
- Assisting with applications for labour market access permissions for those eligible to work and assistance with looking for work;

- Assisting with sourcing accommodation for those moving out of direct provision;

Through some very generous donations of pre-loved phones and laptops via Nasc's social media, we were also able to provide some of the residents of the centre with phones or laptops in order to continue with their studies with some phones coming as far as from Scotland! We'd like to express our warmest thanks to everyone who donated to this call.

The community response to the call to support residents demonstrated a great sense of community integration in Cork as a friendly city. While some residents had been reluctant to move initially, as time went on, most residents became fond of Cork and repeatedly expressed their interest in remaining in Cork after the end of the pandemic.

Over the three months of working with the Travelodge, we provided support to over 60 people.

### **IHREC Student Bursary Scheme**

Finally on a personal note, I was delighted to be the recipient of a bursary from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission for their Professional Diploma in Human Rights and Equality. This is a one-year, part-time programme that has been developed in conjunction with the Institute of Public Administration and is open to staff working in civil society organisations with the aim of advancing implementation of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty by public bodies.

I'm very grateful to both IHREC and to Nasc for the support and I was pleased to graduate in 2020 and I'm looking forward to bringing that knowledge to my work as Integration Officer.



## Claire Mackey Gateway

The Gateway Women's Programme works with migrant and refugee women to promote inclusion and integration. Our aim on Gateways is to tackle disadvantage, poverty and social exclusion by providing English language provision and a range of supports such as access to education, employment and entitlements. We work with each participant to provide a holistic programme and personal development plan that caters to strengths and needs, so that each woman has the best opportunity to succeed. We also offer social work supports for women who are undergoing problems of a personal nature. Our one-to-one support is provided through listening, discussing options, making action plans and linking women with support services where necessary.



*Thank you very much for your encouragement, your efforts and your kindness, Thank you also to all the teachers for all the effort and patience they did for us.*

The programme empowers participants to grow in confidence and creates a pathway for future learning, training and employment. Successful outcomes for our participants include increased ability to speak and write English, improved self-

confidence participation in the community and achieving a sense of belonging and inclusion.

Gateways went from strength to strength in 2020. Although we stopped meeting in a classroom setting in February due to Covid-19, we established online classes within two weeks of lockdown. Since our classes went virtual, our participants have engaged in online yoga, cookery and stress management modules, in addition to our core English language classes. Going online has meant that we were able to increase the number of classes we deliver, upping our English classes to 8 per week at 4 levels.

In November, we added virtual Conversation Cafés to our programme which has been an informal and fun way to practice and improve conversation skills in English. In October 2020, Gateways was one of three winners of the Sustainable Cork Fund. Being an awardee was a great boost to Gateways which helped to sustain the project financially and has raised the profile of the project through announcements on the media. The Cork Education and Training Board has continued to provide us with experienced and qualified teachers so that we can offer free English classes, and our Conversation Cafés were supported by the Community Integration Fund.

Gateways currently offers online English language classes, conversation classes, a parenting group, a befriending programme, and well-being and creative classes. Some of the women's crochet work is displayed in this report.

On the project we provide a safe space for learning and acknowledge the specific challenges that migrant and refugee women face. All our students have successfully increased their English level and reported that the online classes helped them to maintain a focus throughout the pandemic. The Gateways Project has continued to provide a support network, and a safe space for women to learn and receive the help they require. The project has gained a positive reputation among migrant women, with many participants recommending our classes to their friends. Women have reported increased confidence and ability to communicate and feel empowered and supported to pursue their goals for their life in Ireland.



*Really I don't find words to say thanks for your efforts and every thing you do for us, you know I want to say many things to explain my feelings but unfortunately my English is still not enough. Thank you so much for you and your staff. You are really helpful and amazing.*

#### **Gateway participant**

Finally, I want to extend a huge thank you to the Gateways team including Kiren Khalid, Mary-Anne Oke, Nadia Rashdan and Mary O' Mahony for their contribution to making Gateway an incredibly successful project in 2020. I would also like to welcome Valentina Aniagolu our phonetics teacher who taught remotely from London. Finally, on behalf of all of the team I would like to extend a very special thanks to our amazing volunteers Claire Noonan and Aine O'Mahony and to Louise George of Douglas Yoga Centre for the yoga classes and Marwa Wahhoud for delivering a stress management module.



*Thank you a lot for all the beautiful things and happiness you give to me ad to my friends... The best organisation - Nasc! And especially Claire and Mary-Anne, Kiren, Valentina and Mary... It was so lovely to meet all of you. Thank you so much.*

#### **Gateway participant**

### **In Numbers**



35 women participated in the Gateway programme.



The participants came from 10 countries across the world.



5 women found employment.



7 women engaged in career mentoring supports.



4 women transitioned to further education.



10 women enrolled in short general interest courses



16 women participated in our befriending programme.



**Crochet  
Gateway  
Women's Project**





## Susan Mackey Connect

2020 was another busy year for the Connect project. We assisted 109 vulnerable refugee and migrant children (aged 14-23) and their families with their immigration needs, access to education, mental health and integration needs. Again, we saw an increase in referrals from friends and family of those already accessing the service and a rise in referrals from guardian ad litem, social work, community, education and health workers. We work together with other support workers to ensure they have the specialist advice they need to understand and support asylum seeker, refugee and migrant children.

The Connect Project provides specialised social work responses to children, young people and families in Direct Provision and vulnerable migrant and refugee youth in the community. These include children in foster care and homeless teenagers. We also support refugee children and young people newly reunited with their families in Ireland, who have often suffered years of separation and loss and can struggle to adjust to their new life in Ireland.

### **Supporting young people and their families during the pandemic**

2020 proved to be an unprecedented year in terms of the needs presenting due to the Covid pandemic. Asylum seeking and refugee young

young people struggled to get their basic provisions met due to successive lockdowns. With transport links severely curtailed or cut-off, many of those in rural locations and remote Direct Provision centres did not have access to shops and services. Due to the lack of IT supports, many were also excluded from education and online learning.

The risks of contracting Covid were amplified for those in Direct provision centres or in overcrowded accommodation. Due to fears of contracting the virus, many of the families we worked with tried to avoid any shared living spaces, such as canteen and laundry, and as a result missed some meals and clean clothes. Some of the young people and their parents were also working in the healthcare sector throughout the year and we provided additional supports to those who had to self-isolate. We received frequent reports throughout the year about the anxiety and stress young people were going through due to the increase in restrictions and social isolation.

In response to this need, we

- Provided online and telephone support to young people and their families
- Linked to online sessions for therapeutic and English language supports
- Delivered emergency parcels of groceries and household items, toys and activity packs
- Provided essential baby items, nappies, formula and children's clothes
- Delivered care packages to support mental

health and wellbeing

- Provided IT and educational resources to facilitate remote learning.

I'd like to say a heartfelt thank you to all those who donated to our emergency fundraising last year to enable us to provide the material supports that were desperately needed.

Normal services also continued in tandem with these Covid supports and in total we delivered 404 interventions. Recurring issues this year included the challenges of getting basic needs and services for young people; this was particularly pronounced for those at risk of homelessness and for young people with disabilities. We continued to work on barriers to accessing SUSI and 3rd level education for young people from migrant backgrounds. We also supported 22 children and young people to transition out of Direct provision accommodation and get settled in their new community.

We are very proud of the children and young people's achievements this year, despite its challenges:

- 7 young people successfully accessed courses at UCC, CIT, UCD and Trinity college, 13 young people completed QQI Level 5 courses in PLC colleges.
- 15 of the children and young people on the project were granted refugee status or leave to remain.

“

*[I]n this planet with this big pandemic where everyone is affected you continue to put smiles on our faces with your hard work and empathy. I know how ye worked tirelessly for this to happen... you have your work at heart.*

**Connect participant**

## 404 Interventions



75 interventions made on immigration and asylum matters including support with direct provision accommodation and transition to the community



74 Covid-19 supports including supports with IT, care packages and therapeutic and education interventions.



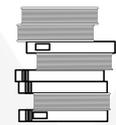
57 Integration and social inclusion activities



56 Access to work, schools, further education and academic English language lessons



36 Access to healthcare, mental Health and wellbeing support



37 Prevention of poverty and neglect



33 Access to housing, accommodation and homelessness supports



23 Support with citizenship, obtaining passports, travel and visas



13 Other including access to banking, support for victims of trafficking, prevention of racism and bullying, disability support.



# Maria Bateson

## Community Sponsorship



***Community Sponsorship invites communities across Ireland to welcome and support resettled refugees arriving in Ireland for the first time.***

.....

It scarcely needs repeating that 2020 was an extraordinary and challenging year. It was no different for Community Sponsorship, which was affected at a local, national and international level. The COVID-19 pandemic took its toll on international travel, which severely limited refugee resettlement pathways to Ireland and elsewhere. This has been difficult for everyone involved but has posed the greatest challenge for those families and individuals in countries including Lebanon and Jordan, who face further uncertainty as they wait to be granted safe passage to a country like Ireland. The pandemic also severely hampered Community Sponsorship Groups' abilities to meet and organise.

Nevertheless, we have witnessed extraordinary creativity and determination in the face of trying times. Many of the groups involved turned their attention to assisting vulnerable and elderly members of their communities as they waited for resettlement to recommence. Nasc used the time to collaborate with our peers to redevelop structural elements of the programme including supporting materials and training content. Not

only that, but we took advantage of the increased use of video technology to connect groups who previously hadn't had the opportunity to communicate with one another. Indeed, while the pandemic may have absorbed a large part of our collective attention, communities across Ireland continued to look beyond themselves and remained committed to supporting and advocating for the welfare of refugees. Perhaps surprisingly - we recruited more new communities this year than we had in years previous.

### **Welcome to Nael Saoud, new Community Sponsorship project worker**

In another example of positive news, we were delighted to welcome Nael Saoud to the Community Sponsorship team in autumn 2020. Nael has stepped into the role of Community Sponsorship Project Worker on Community Sponsorship and is a wonderful addition to the team.

### **Groups, new and old**

Throughout the year, we continued to support groups who had formed and welcomed families previously. We were particularly pleased to see the immense support and warm welcome that greeted a newcomer family who had arrived in late December as they arrived to a community in Cork.

Despite increased uncertainty around resettlement and travel capabilities, we continued to walk groups through the preparation process and to offer training online. We were also delighted that one group completed their application and was approved to welcome a family at the end of the year.

Over the course of the year, we also worked with five new groups. While timing was not on their side and some groups were understandably forced to pause their progress, three of these new groups are now at advanced stages of their sponsorship preparation and are on the verge of welcoming families.

Through the year, a large part of our work was keeping groups motivated and connected with one another. We hosted several online meet ups between groups so they could share their experiences; as well as offering information sessions to newcomer groups who were interested in getting involved. Indeed, the increased use of online technology opened up more ways for groups to connect who previously hadn't met before, and allowed our groups to exchange ideas and stories around sponsorship. This is a rare example of a silver lining from this year, and we hope to continue to take advantage of the panoply of platforms available to us so that we can continue to boost connectivity.

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*It's like a miracle... and we're part of it.*

**Community Sponsor after the arrival of a family to their community**

## **Programme Development**

Alongside our programme partners, we have taken the opportunity this year to help develop some of the Community Sponsorship materials so that they work better for groups and can scale up to enable more communities to welcome more resettled families and individuals over time. Over the course of the year, we, alongside colleagues, established a dedicated roundtable to develop the programme's framework documentation so that it was more coherent and reflected our learnings from the past two years.

In Autumn 2020, we were also delighted to be awarded the tender, alongside partners Quality Matters, to develop the national training programme for Community Sponsorship on behalf of The Open Community, the programme's national support organisation.

It has been all steam ahead with our own Nasc Community Sponsorship webpage as well. Towards the end of the year, our team worked concertedly to develop website materials to create a new package of information resources available to interested parties, groups and families. This included a series of introductory Arabic videos.

Finally, and significantly, we were delighted to see the Government's renewed commitment to Community Sponsorship, which featured in the new Programme for Government. At the end of 2020, Nasc was named as one of the four new regional support organisations to carry the programme over the next two years. We look forward to continuing our work with groups and families on the programme, and, hopefully, to better times ahead.



# Twenty Years Ago...

## Brendan Hennessy *Founder, Nasc*

*On the 20th anniversary of Nasc's foundation we're delighted to share the words of one of Nasc's founders, Brendan Hennessy on the very first days of the organisation.*

The engine of my classic VW van sputtered into life on May 1st, 2000. While it was a solid bus, with some beautiful touches, it had been giving a bit of trouble starting, requiring outside assistance more than once. I needed the van to work that Monday, and it did.

It was my first day as co-ordinator of Nasc, marking the culmination of the work of many people. Their work began many months previously following a public meeting of Immigrant Solidarity, a Cork collective advocating for the rights of migrants and against some of the wrongs of Government. The public meeting was well attended, with speakers issuing both advice and information about anti-racism projects and possible deportations. As the meeting concluded a new voice spoke from the back of the room, a voice new to Cork and new to the crowd. "My wife can't speak English and I don't know where we can live. These are my needs."

That voice, the voice of the person in need, no matter how quiet, how meek, how angry or how strong, was the one that guided the group whose work culminated in the opening of Nasc that day. Amongst those leaders were Fr. Fachtna O'Driscoll (SMA), Piaras MacEinrí (UCC) and Sr. Maria McGuinness (RSM) as well as a host of other academics, religious, activists, teachers, homemakers, lawyers and other committed volunteers. All gave their time freely to help source more help, more funds, to give advice, to give service, to gather allies, to share ideas, share recipes (yes, there was a Nasc cookbook), but most importantly to share ownership of Nasc with the people who needed it most.

At a time when all things were new, the service, the people, the problems, many questions had to be answered with a negative ('no you do not have the right to work'; 'no family reunification will not be quick'; 'no the newest rumour is not true'). When there was little hope, we had a simple ambition to be positive, to make each person smile, even if just once. That was the door I drove in to open that day.

Like Nasc, the old VW van and I parted company many years ago, but I remember them both affectionately. Yes, they were both a little rough around the edges, but they had an inherent beauty. Nasc's door opened for the first time, 20 years ago on the first of May, 2000 (a bank holiday Monday, oh the exuberance!) and just like the classic VW van, Nasc's value has multiplied many times over since.



20 Years  
of Nasc





**20 YEARS  
of Nasc**





**20 YEARS  
of Nasc**



