



Welcome to our Winter 2020 Newsletter. This issue includes: stories from residents around the country; recollections from some of you on your time spent living in the US; and some insights into your experiences of diversity. It also includes updates from Clann on our resident survey, as well as showing you how to use the Zoom app so you can join Clann's online events. We hope you enjoy this issue of Saol. If you have suggestions for our next newsletter, you can email us at clann@clannhousing.ie

Going for gold

Eddie Smyth, one of the residents in Oriel Lodge, recently took part in the 100 miles a month fundraiser for the Mater Foundation. He raised over €500 and completed the challenge in 24 days. He was very grateful to everyone who donated as it inspired him to keep going.

We caught up with him to hear a little more about how he got on. He explains: "I hadn't done the fundraiser before, but it came at the right time for me. I was going to the leisure centre last winter and going to the gym and swimming. After the lockdown came, the gym was closed and I went out running and then the fundraiser came up, and I thought it was an ideal time and way to give something back to the HSE.

"I love running and I was still fit from running in the gym. I had three courses I generally ran – you have to vary it a bit or otherwise it gets boring. I took maybe seven breaks across the 24 days. I would try and do six miles as a minimum each time, so I did six to 10 miles each day that I ran over the 24 days."

Eddie is a great advocate for running. He says: "It's ideal for your body and soul. Every time you run, you're decreasing your heart rate, so your heart doesn't need to work that hard, and I find it has a great mood-boosting effect too".



We asked for a few tips on getting motivated to exercise this winter. Eddie says: "I think it's a great opportunity for people to get out and do a bit of exercise, and there's people running at 75 and 80 years of age. If you can't run, do a good walk – you get those feel-good endorphins pumping as well from it.

"Do whatever you can do, be it two or five miles. You will come back feeling great and up for the day".

We couldn't agree more. Well done on your accomplishment, Eddie, and thanks for the motivation.

News from around the country

Creative pursuits

Mary Connolly of St Jarlath's Court kept herself busy during the recent restrictions by working on her card making hobby. It was a great way to keep in touch with friends.



Working shoulder to shoulder



Martin Mullen, also from St Jarlath's Court, is an active member of Tuam's Men's Shed. He took the initiative to make beautiful window boxes to enhance the appearance of the scheme during lockdown (see above). The picture on the left depicts St Jarlath's broken wheel and the High Cross of Tuam which were a commission by Tuam Men's Shed for the scheme a few years previously.



Bravery Blankeys in progress

Lockdown did not impact the St Joseph's Court Circle Knitting Group. The group continued to create beautiful knitted and crocheted blankets for Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin. Each stitch and each colour change is done with a sick child in mind. Locally, the group is supported by the St Vincent De Paul charity shop who donate a lot of their knitting wool to the group.

Last Christmas, the group also delivered beautifully wrapped blankets to over 20 residents in the local nursing home. Late last year the group made contact with the hospice in Galway who would like lap blankets for their residents. These are currently being made as well as the 'Bravery Blankeys' for sick children.





Earl House

Earl House became Clann's newest scheme in early 2020. It is located in Dundalk and consists of 20 two-bedroom apartments, a Scheme Manager's Office and a communal space for residents.

Residents have given many positive comments about becoming a member of Clann's community. Terrence said: "It saved my life" and Jakki said: "I just keep pinching myself to make sure it's real."

Eighteen of the twenty apartments were occupied in advance of Covid-19 and Clann is truly inspired by the community spirit this group of individuals demonstrated during these strange times. All 20 homes are now let and it will be exciting to see the future development of the scheme and its community. We would like to give a very warm welcome to all our newest residents at Earl House.

A Fond Farewell



Sue and her deceased husband, Tony, were one of our very first residents in Great Northern Haven. They enjoyed a peaceful life there and lived many happy years in Ireland. During Covid-19 Sue decided with her family it was time to return home to be close to her children.

It is with great sadness we will be saying goodbye to Susan soon. Susan was always a great neighbour and friend to many. Best of luck Susan on returning to the UK and we hope when the new norm settles, you will see us in the future. You will be missed.

Taobh Linn

Here are Christine and Maggie receiving their bag of books from Kenmare Library. Before Covid-19, the library used to call once a month to deliver books. That had to stop during lockdown. Since restrictions have lifted, we have put a new plan into play where the library will drop individual bags of books to residents at their apartments. We're delighted to have this work-around and thank Kenmare Library for their support.



Postcards from America



Ireland has a close relationship with the USA – over the centuries, we have travelled back and forth, as emigrants and migrants, and the ties remain strong, with millions of Americans claiming Irish ancestry. Here are three of our residents' recollections of their years spent in the States.

A heart with two homes

Kathleen: Growing up in Waltham, Massachusetts, I always knew we were Irish. My dad's grandfather came from Co Wexford. My mother used to talk about how her grandmother walked over the bridge in Leighland Bridge in Co Carlow to go to school each day. Ireland was a place I always wanted to visit but never had been.

Fast forward to November 2009 and I was getting on a plane to Dublin. I had bought a one-way ticket to join my future husband and start a new life with him in Ireland.

The scenery was as pretty as the postcards I had seen. Gerry had set up an apartment for us in Oriel Lodge. I can see the River Erne and Slieve Rushen mountains from our living room window. It's the perfect view and I never tire of it.

Of course, I was in culture shock for a while! Where were all the drive-through coffee shops? No Dunkin Donuts, Starbucks or frozen yoghurt shops. Even a simple conversation was a challenge for me. I remember walking around and someone would offer a friendly "Are you well?". It was weeks before I realised what they were saying because to my American ears I was hearing "oil well".

Weeks turned into months and as I adapted to the countryside, I started to understand the lingo. It's coming up to 11 years living in Oriel Lodge and I love the quiet pace and peace. In my heart, I have two homes now, Boston and Ireland.

From Renvyle to Massachusetts

Eileen: I grew up in Renvyle, leaving school at 14 to start housekeeping work. My father thought I should go to the United States, where we had relatives, so off I went to Boston in 1964. At the start, I was sponsored by relatives and stayed in Dorchester for about seven years.

There was one year when we had what was called a “nor’easter” when the north eastern states had a serious snow storm. It paralysed most of New England. There was no electricity and we had to move in with neighbours who had stoves and heating. The cars were buried for months. There was nowhere to put the snow and they had to wait for the thaw.

I worked in the Church of St Theresa of Avila in West Roxbury for four years. I loved it there. It was a large parish with at least six priests and a bishop, so we were kept busy and I did a bit of everything – cooking, waitressing and even office work.

I got married in St Theresa’s and we honeymooned at Niagara Falls. We took a trip on that famous boat, the Maid of the Mist, where everyone has to wear a rain mac and the boat goes right under the falls. We moved to Pembroke and stayed there for 20 years. I loved Pembroke; it was pretty and interesting.

I moved to Halifax for a couple of years and returned to Ireland in 2009. I still have a grandchild and great grandchild back in Pembroke but my daughter, two other grandchildren, as well as my sister, nieces and nephews are here in Ireland, so I have family in both countries.



The Garden State

Maura: I was born in Stillorgan, South County Dublin. There were five of us.

We had a band, the Ard Lorcaín Céilí Band. We lived seven miles from the city centre and, although we cycled everywhere, Dad drove us to the céilís, all crowding into the car. Dad ran camogie teams and we went to all the matches, cycling to Croke Park. Dad, a sister and I all refereed camogie games. We'd cycle home and then go out to a céilí in the evening.

Before I went to the USA, I worked in a foundry in Pearse Street for seven or eight years, doing bookkeeping. I've always loved that kind of work. Before I got married, I trained in contometer and sensomatic bookkeeping machines. This was before the age of computers. In the States I worked for 30 years, mostly for law firms, installing the machines and training the staff.

In 1956 I spent seven months in Philadelphia and then returned to Bexley Heath, London for four years. I had loved the States, so I returned in 1962, settling into New Jersey and staying for 44 years. From there I used to holiday over the years in Connemara, staying in the Alcock and Brown. I never realised that, one day, I'd live here.

I loved New Jersey: 120 miles of beach ran along by Atlantic City which is all highly developed now with casinos. New Jersey is very pretty. It's called the Garden State; there are a lot of vegetables grown there. I've lived all over New Jersey.

I lived in a retirement apartment in mid New Jersey for the last 20 years. Across the years I fell in love with Connemara and decided to move back, at first living in Roundstone and then in Clifden. I am very happy here.



Life During Lockdown

By Barbara O'Flaherty, Great Northern Haven, Dundalk

It is widely acknowledged that for those of us of a certain age who have been cocooning, it was a much harder and longer summer than for others.

Not only did it mean remaining indoors for long periods of time in what ironically had been the best weather of the year, but the lack of visits from friends or family, which we took so much for granted, proved to be the bitterest pill of all. Telephones and texts just aren't the same, are they?

The regular phone calls, texts, zoom chats etc. were a lifeline for many. And the emergency repair service continued, even if at a scaled down pace. Everything Clann could do under the circumstances they tried to do.

There is no doubt that for most of us the worst thing that happened was the withdrawal of the on-site managers. Understandable, it may have been but that didn't make it any less sorrowful for most of us.

Many people I spoke to spoke as if a member of their family or a good friend had been suddenly taken from them. Of course, the virus hasn't gone away and we still have to be careful but it is true to say that for me, personally, speaking face-to-face with our Scheme Manager, and seeing that ready smile was as much a tonic as anything I could have bought in a shop.

Human beings are social animals and we need personal contact so I am looking forward to having our Scheme Manager back on the scheme and our lives return to some normality. In the meantime, it is clear we all need to stay vigilant, keep to the rules and not put ourselves or others in jeopardy



Diversity

Diversity is about the inclusion, and celebration, of people of different races, genders, religions, sexualities and backgrounds. We asked some of you to share with us your insights into diversity, through your own lived experiences.

Gracy's Story

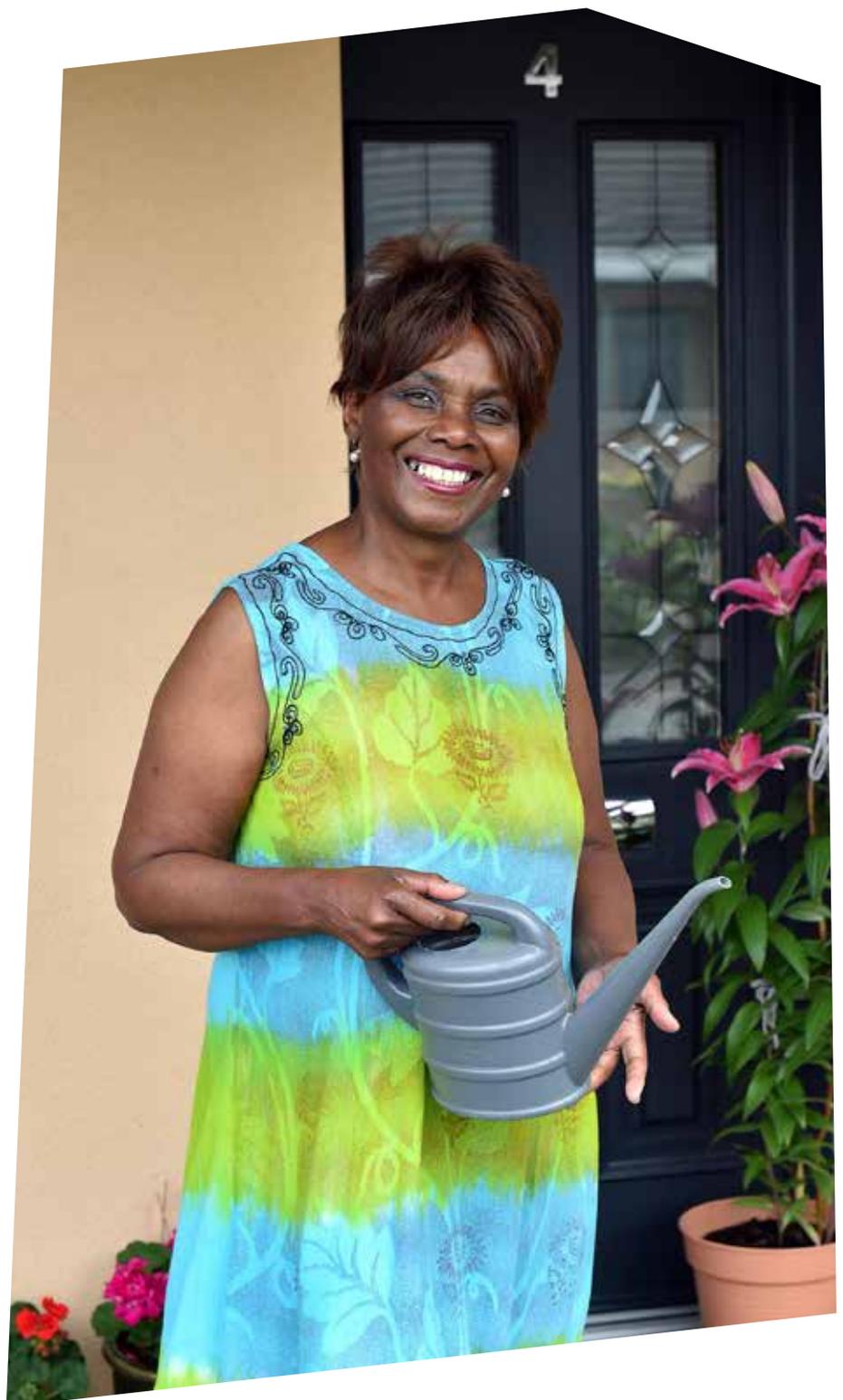
I was born in Rhodesia to a very loving family. I was the 6th of 10 children. Mum and Dad were very hard working.

After finishing my schooling, I went to work in a nursing home as a carer. In 1980, segregation ended when we gained independence from Britain and lots of things changed for the better for non-white nationals. Zimbabwe was born and hope was on the horizon, yet alas things turned out not to be so. It was in 2002 that my husband and I decided to leave the country and reside in Ireland.

Life in Ireland has been different in that there is freedom of speech which we did not have in Zimbabwe, so the difference is I have a better life as I am free of fear.

Irish people are very kind and friendly with the exception of a few minor incidences of racism. My life has changed for the better as I have a safe environment and live without fear of danger.

Living in a Clann scheme is a blessing and I thank God for my beautiful home.



Diversity

by Joe Boske

In Clifden there is much to cherish
claims this here scribe, not from the parish.
Despite a fairy trail and occasional elf
the town does not placard itself

unduly as a cultural hub,
'though there are galleries and the odd pub,
a theatre space that's purpose built,
full during Arts Week to the hilt.

Here on the Wild Atlantic Way
there's things to see, places to stay
and should you live here, then by God,
you truly are a lucky sod.

You see diversity will be revealed
when you keep lugs and oglers peeled
and profess an interest in
not just natives and their kin.

We all sing from the same hymn sheet
but chances are we'd rarely meet
those who lilt a different tune
to which we should not be immune.

The beauty of all that is clear:
we're not the only buggers here
so, meet your neighbours from a different land,
(I'm one of those, you understand)

We all contribute in our myriad ways
to enhance this glorious place
I've said my bit and rest my pen.

The wise words of John Hume

Suzanne Ryder

When John Hume died, I was particularly touched by hearing more about his political vision. To develop the ideal of "An agreed Ireland" rather than the time-old one of "A United Ireland" showed a new way of thinking. His views on diversity were also thought-provoking, as he saw acceptance of difference as key to living peaceably with one's neighbour.

This is the kind of vision that I hope we are learning to embrace in St Jarlath's Court. This pandemic has placed huge pressure on our lives. So much we had taken for granted, like meeting together, going away at will or having a range of visitors, have been suspended. Thankfully, those who came to our aid regarding shopping and other care services continue the vital service of taking care of our practical needs.

But there is something deeper going on... Covid-19 offers an invitation to us that we might open our hearts even more to each other. As we are beginning to realise that restrictions on our movements are here for some time to come, may we turn tolerance with each other into a real celebration of our differences.

During the lockdown earlier this year, St Joseph's Court secured funding from Galway Rural Development to provide a hot meal to residents for 12 weeks. Joe Boske (pictured left) was on hand every Saturday without fail to help with the deliveries.



Zoomtastic!



Clann is running social events on Zoom and had our first event in July with 37 people taking part. To take part in these events you need a smart device like a smart phone, tablet or laptop and to have the Zoom app downloaded and a Zoom account set-up.

Each time there is an upcoming Zoom event, we will send out a link via text message. All you do to join the event then is click on the link. It's as easy as that.

Some of the Zoom events coming to you soon include: exercise classes, meditation classes, art classes, and music sessions.

So download the Zoom app and keep an eye out for the Clann text message and make sure you join in. See the instructions on this page for how to set up a Zoom account.

10 simple steps to set up zoom...

1. Download Zoom from the app store and tap to open it on your phone.
2. Tap on the 'sign up' option. It is free to sign up.
3. Enter the email address that you'd like to use for this account and type in your first and last name. Tick the box next to 'I agree to the Terms of Service' and click 'Sign Up'.
4. A pop-up will appear informing you that a confirmation email was sent to the email address you chose. Tap "OK" to close the pop-up and check for the confirmation email in your email inbox.
5. Open the confirmation message from Zoom, which will include an "Activate Account" option in it. When you tap on it, it will open a browser on your phone or tablet.
6. To complete the process, fill in your first and last name and choose a password that matches Zoom's requirements (it must include at least eight characters and at least one letter and number and upper and lower case characters). Click 'Continue'.
7. The next step will prompt you to invite people to a meeting now, but as you are only setting up your account, you can press 'skip' instead.
8. The third step encourages you to start a meeting now. Again, you can skip this step by tapping 'Go to my Account'.
9. Enter your email address and password, and tap the blue "Sign In" option to complete the process. See also the option to stay signed into your account.

10. You have now set up your own Zoom account.



Stepping Stones

The Stepping Stones Award is an annual grant scheme supporting Clúid and Clann residents to access education and training. Since it began in 2013, 187 people have benefitted from the award. We have just completed another successful year of Stepping Stones as the scheme continues to provide support to people in their chosen studies/courses.

Here is what some previous awardees had to say about their experience of Stepping Stones. Thanks to them for taking these photos during lockdown and final exams!



“Thank you for this opportunity to learn, I really appreciate it.”

Grainne O’Rourke, Co. Dublin; Clúid resident
Grainne completed a REIKI Level 2 course.



“Thank you so much for the great news! I’m so happy. I sacrificed so much to be in college, this will change my life completely.”

Andreia Pina Obidipe, Co. Meath; Clúid resident
Andreia completed a BA Hons. Accounting & Finance.



“Thank you so much, this bursary brings me closer to opening my own creative arts centre.”

Michael Keane, Co. Meath; Clúid resident Michael completed glass and jewellery making workshops.

Interested in availing of Stepping Stones?

Applications are closed for 2020, but now is a good time to start thinking of what you might like to do next year. Have you a personal development course you might like to do? A certificate, diploma or degree course?

Who can apply?

Stepping Stones is open to all Clann and Clúid residents who do not have access to other sources of funding, for example SUSI.

How do I apply?

Applications will be open again next year from late summer. Watch out for details on our website and in our newsletter.

Embracing the outdoors

Residents from Ard Na Solais turned its small back garden into the most colourful wild flower garden. This is a lovely area to sit, relax and enjoy a coffee. Resident Rosaleen, in particular, has a very keen interest in gardening and a great eye for colours. This can be seen clearly with the display of flowers and shrubs in this area. She hopes to expand this area to encourage bees and other wild life to the area.

Other residents helped with the main area during the Covid-19 restrictions, and Trevor and John are always willing to help. Geraldine has a lovely small flower bed created at the back door to this scheme which also displays great colour to the area.



Autumn walk

We are commuters shopping for air,
The path the window from which we breathe
As we declare what we inspect.
But there's no need for credit here
In this our open plan shop.

The sheep crowd along the bargain rails
Of grass, hedges and moss.
Watch! A horse or two might stare
If you choose that frock.
The dogs are on skateboards
Racing and diving
After birds who laugh and chuckle.
How arrogant they are - the prey.

At last! I've walked five arduous miles
And Belturbet is my prize.
The Seven Horseshoes cast their spell
And enchant me to an age now gone,
An old Malt House for a travellers respite.
Beware! A Highwayman may be hidden here
As I drift through time unconsciously.

I sit inside the heat filled, oak beamed inn
And caress my own reflected face, mirrored,
On a shiny porcelain mug, full of a steamy brew.
For it's a leaf soaked day when I pass this way,
Through the orange ocean of Autumn
On my road to tranquillity.

Rita Carter

Gardeners' Corner



Here are some tips for growing plants in small spaces:

- + **Sunlight** Most plants need 6/8 hours of sunlight a day. If you're gardening on a windowsill, you can either choose plants that require less sunlight, such as certain salad greens and herbs, or add a grow light to mimic the sun's rays.

- + **Soil** Because your indoor garden will likely involve containers, a well-draining potting mix is necessary. It is light and fluffy, efficiently circulating air and water to keep roots healthy.

- + **Water** Plants in containers need a lot of water, so choose a spot for them that is easy to reach with a water supply close by.

- + **Weight** Containers full of soil are heavy, and once they are saturated with water their weight can triple. If your plants are on a shelf, make sure that it's safely able to take the weight of your plants when watered.

Here are some suggestions for plants to try out:

- + **Herbs** Some good choices for indoor apartment gardening include mint, chives, parsley, lavender, basil, and thyme.

- + **Salad greens** Salad favourites, such as lettuce, spinach, and arugula, are fast-growing, shallow-rooted plants.

- + **Tomatoes** Tomato plants grow well in pots. They will do best in a container that is at least 30 inches in diameter.

- + **Strawberries** A window box or hanging basket of strawberries is as beautiful as it is delicious. Strawberry plants generally need at least six hours of sun per day and moist soil to produce their best fruit.

Did you know...

Clann provides 643 homes to 699 residents on 20 housing schemes. 16% of residents are under 60 years of age, 38% are under 70 years, 32% are under 80 years, with 14% over the age of 80.

Great Place to Live 2020



Our Great Place to Live competition celebrates the efforts of individuals and communities to make their neighbourhood a great place to live.

Each year, there are three categories:

- 1. Best Community Project**
- 2. Best Neighbourhood Award**
- 3. Community Neighbour Award**





Not only are great neighbours and neighbourhoods recognised but there are vouchers to be won. Winners of the Best Neighbourhood and Best Community Project awards receive an €800 voucher with runners-up receiving a €400 voucher. And each Community Neighbour awardee receives a €100 voucher.



Covid-19 has affected us all this year, we haven't been able to spend time with each other in the same ways as before. Unfortunately, many community events had to be cancelled. But looking at this year's entries, many people have stepped up to support their neighbours in small but important ways – doing some shopping, collecting prescriptions and delivering dinners. Other people have taught neighbours how to stay in touch using WhatsApp and how to partake in Zoom calls. The appreciation of neighbours towards those who have helped them can be seen in the big increase in the number of nominations for Community Neighbour Award.



We are delighted to announce the winners of the following categories:

Best Community Project

Winner: **Sleaty Park View**

Runners Up: **Oriel Lodge and Killarney Court**

Best Neighbourhood Award

Winner: **St Jarlath's Court**

Runners Up: **Droimnin and Earl House**

Community Neighbour Award

Our individual winners have been contacted to notify them of their awards.

Congratulations to all our winners and thanks to everyone for entering this year.

Your Feedback on Clann

Earlier this year, we carried out a survey to see how happy residents were with different parts of our services. Over 600 residents were contacted, and 245 of you responded. A big thank you to you all.

The feedback was very positive. A total of 97% of people said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the overall service they receive from Clann. A total of 92% said they were satisfied or very satisfied that Clann treated residents fairly, and 93% believe that Clann provides an effective and efficient service.

We know that not everything is perfect. For example, you told us that sometimes we do not solve your queries quickly enough. The survey gave us a lot of useful information on what is going well and what can be improved.

Below are some of the results and feedback you provided and what Clann is hoping to do about it. In addition to these large surveys, we're also using other information to understand and respond to your needs. This includes:

- + Ongoing satisfaction surveys about repairs
- + Calls and emails into Clann's Contact Centre
- + Complaints made to Clann
- + Feedback from the National Residents Advisory Group (NRAG).

Thank you

A huge thanks to our residents in Killarney Court who took part in our recent Adrian Norridge research with the Housing Finance Agency. The research is looking at financial exclusion and the feedback will help us build a picture of any of the challenges that people might be facing with access to banking or loans.

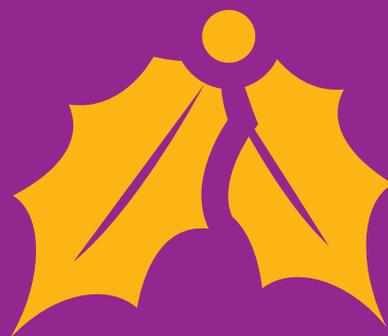
Nearly 200 people took part overall, some of them in focus groups, which gave us a great insight into this issue and the ways that we might be able to help.

We really appreciate your participation and look forward to sharing the results with you when we publish the report next Spring.

Overall service	97% of people were either satisfied or very satisfied with the service they receive.	Clann will run customer satisfaction surveys on a regular basis. This will help us to know sooner if there are any issues with the service we provide, so we can act quicker to solve them.
Repairs and Maintenance	92% of residents were satisfied or very satisfied with Clann's repairs service.	Clann is looking to improve the appointment making process. We are also researching the option of sending automated texts to our customers. This should improve the repairs service and communication you receive from us.
Listens and Acts	77% of residents feel that Clann listens to their views and responds to them. Only 10% of people surveyed were dissatisfied with how Clann dealt with them.	Clann will be organising additional training for both the planning and operational teams, to provide our team with the tools to improve the service we provide to you.
Neighbourhood	94% of residents are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live.	A lot of comments had to do with litter and landscaping. Clann strives to improve this through better management of our estates.
Clann Services	93% of residents were satisfied with the facilities provided and 95% were satisfied with their Scheme Manager.	Clann has recently established a National Residents Advisory Group (NRAG). This group, which is made up of residents, will work with Clann to shape our service offering and ensure that it is meeting your needs.
Lifestyle	Residents were asked if they had any ambitions in life they wanted to fulfil. 68% answered the question, out of which 43% said they would like to visit a new country; 37% would like to take up a new sport; 20% attend an educational course; and 16% would like to write a book.	Clann will be working with residents to link in with existing community services and develop partnerships which will allow for more engagement in the community and in areas that are of interest to you.

**Thank you for reading
this edition of Saol.
We hope you enjoyed it.
We wish you and yours the
very best this Christmas, and
a Very Happy New Year.**

From all at Clann



Important contact information this Christmas

Our Customer Contact Centre will be open from 9am to 5pm on the 21st to 23rd December, and also the 30th to 31st December. We will be open as normal from 4th January.

In an emergency call 01 707 2244 anytime.

If you would like to comment on any of the featured items in this edition of Saol, please email us at: clann@clannhousing.ie

We would love to hear from you.



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