

2020Annual Report

Citizens Information Phone Service

For all of life's events

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How we helped people 2020 The Highlights







Of the 153,476 calls that were dealt with throughout 2020,

2,120 were peer support calls.



In response to Covid-19 a new call back service was developed by CIB. **CIPS Information** Officers dealt with over

4,337 call backs.



2,823 web chat queries were answered in 2020.





Client Compliments

"I've called you many times over the years and you've always been very helpful. Thank you for all that you do. You run an absolutely wonderful service." "I've been phoning Citizens
Information now for a number of
years. I've always found you to be a
wealth of knowledge on the queries I've
had. It's so reassuring to have such an
excellent service, you and your colleagues
have always been so helpful and patient.
I wish you all a happy and peaceful
Christmas, stay safe."

"Your service is the one Beacon of Light."

"Thank you so much for the excellent support your service provides, it has been vital for me in getting support for my son with special needs."

"Ye are invaluable, I'd be lost without you."

"I have used your service multiple times in the past for my clients, you are truly wonderful especially during this Covid-19 time - it's much appreciated." have been so very helpful, friendly and professional."

"Ye have a mighty service!"

"Ye're the best service in the state."

"I never used your service before the pandemic but you

Chairperson's foreword

During 2020, a difficult year for many, and an exceptionally difficult year for those affected by the Covid pandemic, the services provided by Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS), offered assistance to a significant number of people throughout the country. Over 153,000 queries were dealt with over the phone – a +7% increase over 2019. These queries covered a wide range of topics from health to employment rights.

By continually adapting and innovating we are helping more people with problems they may have never faced before. We continue to expand our channels to ensure they're accessible and relevant to everyone. Our Web chat Service, which supports those with speech or hearing impairments, has seen a 20% increase in volumes over prior year. We continue to provide support to Regional Companies within the Citizen Information Service network through our Peer Support and Call-back services. Through our engagement with the public, we continue to be a strong voice on issues that matter most and regularly report to CIB Social Policy issues and trends.

As we reflect on a challenging year, we have much to be proud of. Our strength has always been our ability to adapt and keep pace in an ever changing world and to be a trusted and stable source of support. This year we have all been affected in one way or another by this pandemic. Family, friends, and colleagues have endured isolation from family and the

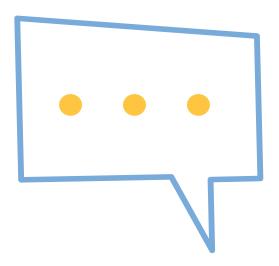
terrible loss of those close to them and we offer our sincere condolences to all who have suffered tragedies during this year.

There's a lot we can be immensely proud of. This has all been possible because of our staff whose resilience and unwavering commitment has meant we can continue to be a trusted source of support for many people, whoever they are and whatever their problem.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Citizens Information Board for their continued support of CIPS and the work we do.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to all fellow board members, both past and present, for their commitment, co-operation and support during the year.

Adrian Murphy Chairperson





The Citizens Information Phone Service

The Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS) provides a national service available to citizens via multiple channels including telephone and web chat. CIPS delivers a service that supports people throughout their lifecycle by providing information and advice and where required, by supportive referrals to other agencies delivering advocacy services.

We do this impartially, confidentially and without charge. We provide information in relation to a range of areas such as social welfare, employment rights, housing, health, immigration, consumer rights, education, bereavement, family and relationships and much more.

CIPS is fully funded and supported by the Citizens Information Board (CIB). As well as providing information over the phone, CIPS also makes key contributions to other elements of the Citizens Information Board's

remit, such as social policy input; the provision of support to the deaf community via our web chat service and the provision of support to information-givers throughout the regional Citizens Information Service companies, also funded by the Citizens Information Board.

Our Vision is to create a society where people are empowered through the provision of information.

"Thank you for calling the Citizens Information Phone Service, Eilis speaking. How can I help you today?"





CIPS Strategic Plan 2019 - 2021

We are committed to providing confidential, impartial, high quality information on civil and social rights, responsibilities and entitlements, as well as information on social services.

To achieve our vision and address the information and advice needs of our society, we identified four strategic priorities.



Service Delivery

Build on our quality framework to deliver a high standard of service, responsive to the diverse needs of our service users. Organising ourselves to meet the needs of people now and into the future.



People

Support and value our people to reach their full potential.





Priority 4

Communications

Be open and transparent in all our communications.



Priority(

Governance, Finance & Risk

Promote effective, compliant, accountable and sustainable governance.





21 years of service delivery...

In autumn 1999 the pilot for a new Citizens Information Call Centre based in Cork city was launched. Having seen the job advertisement in the local paper both Niamh and Ed decided to apply and were successful. We are so proud that both Ed and Niamh remain an integral part of our team to this day and here are their stories.

Eds Story

"At the tail end of 1999, I was fortunate enough to land an "Information Worker" role with the Pilot phase of the Citizens Information Phone Service. No one could imagine back then how the service would shape our own lives and how we would deliver information for the country.

Perhaps my strongest memory from back then is how our work ethos began and how we as Information Officers have helped shape that ethos throughout the years after it became a national service.

My greatest pride is in the people I have worked with and those I work with now. It is for me, one of the significant achievements of our service, our sense of ownership and dedication to the customer driven service we provide. Having a board and management that have supported the development of a quality service, has been paramount in seeing our company's impact grow. Indeed it was dedication to service quality and continuity that has seen CIPS as the forerunner in the nation's information delivery during the current pandemic.

I look forward to more service adaptations ahead, particularly changes in delivery that will place CIPS as one of the country's primary information service providers."

Eddie

Niamh's Story

"When I answered a job advert looking for Information Officers to pilot a new Citizens Information Call Centre based in Cork city it seemed a very exciting venture. It was initially to serve the (02) telephone area code and we were part of a small team of four Information Officers and a Manager. At that time it was a very new direction for information giving in the organisation and for clients. We had to build our client base and network in that year if CIPS was to continue and to expand. In those early days we could only dream of what CIPS could become and we felt we were part of changing client's information needs in a more accessible way. We had to be trained in areas of information that were new to the staff. In the early days advertising was very important and it was necessary

for the staff to go to major towns in Cork to put up posters and leave flyers in public places in order to grow CIPS client base. We never imagined we would grow from 45 calls a day to over 600 calls and web chats per day. There have been many milestones over the years but when CIPS became a national service it was a huge achievement for the staff involved. We were very fortunate to have wonderful colleagues over the years who have been invaluable in supporting us in our work and making it a happy environment to work in. We have seen a lot of premises moves with an expanding organisation, developments in CIPS and systems but the client's needs has always been at the heart of the service which has helped make it the success it is."

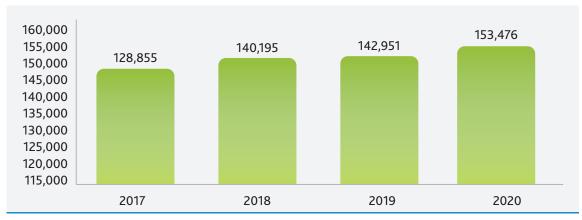
Niamh



Delivering our services in 2020

In 2020, demand increased considerably for our service with **249,509** calls and web chats being offered. This represents a 36% increase in demand for the service year on year. CIPS Information Officers answered a total of 153,476 phone calls. 151,356 of which were from members of the public, and 2,120 calls from colleagues through our Peer Support service offering. This is an increase of over 7% with an additional **10,525** calls being answered year on year.

2020 Answered Call Volumes



Annual Call Volumes 2017 - 2020

The CIPS team answered 153,476 calls, representing a 63% answer rate. The average talk time for calls was 6 minutes and 9 seconds. CIPS call quality remained consistently high with an overall average quality score of 96%.



2020 Phone Statistics

There was a 7% increase in calls answered in 2020 compared to 2019. This increase in calls answered, was facilitated by the Business Continuity Plan (BCP) put in place by CIPS from April to June in light of Covid-19. The BCP was instigated by CIPS and operated in co-operation with the CIS regional companies and our funder CIB.

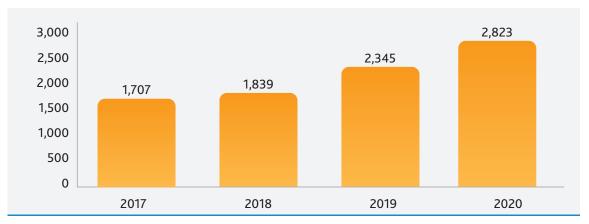
Web Chat

Live Adviser is CIPS web chat facility. It was originally set up specifically to enable access to the service for people with difficulty communicating by telephone, primarily those with hearing and/or speech impairment. The web chat service is available from Monday to Friday between the hours of 9am and 5pm.

With the advancement in technology and the growing demand for digital service delivery channels, it is envisaged that this web chat service will evolve over the coming years.

The total volume of chats answered in 2020 was 2,823 with an average handle time of just over 12 minutes.

2020 Web Chats Answered



2020 Annual Web Chat Volumes 2017- 2020

Social Media Queries

CIPS worked with our funder CIB throughout Quarter 2 to provide assistance with answering social media queries. During this time CIPS assisted with over 100 social media queries.

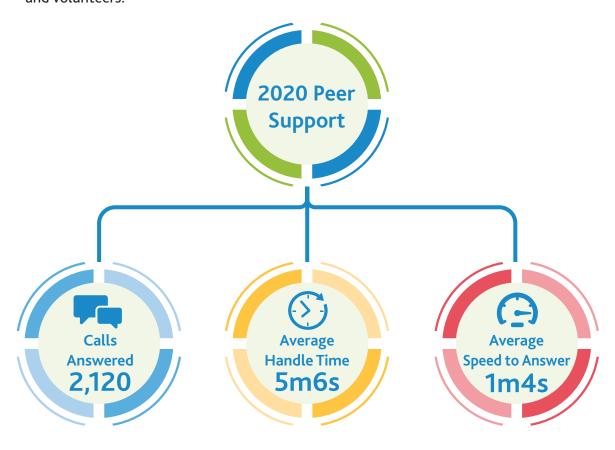
Call Back QMS Service

CIPS Information Officers also supported the national call back service from its inception in April 2020. This channel was developed by CIB in partnership with both CIPS and the regional CIS companies to further address the needs of citizens throughout the pandemic.

Throughout this time the CIPS team dealt with 4,337 call backs.

Peer Support

The CIPS Peer Support Service is a resource for the entire Citizen Information Services Network. This service is a direct link between CIPS and the Citizens Information Centres nationwide. It is aimed at offering local centres access to a team of CIPS Information Officers who are available to provide query support and consultation to both CIS staff and volunteers.



2020 Peer Support Statistics





Moving Country

Volume: 2,600 2% of total calls



Community

Volume: 3,216 2% of total calls

> Money and Tax





Social Welfare

Volume: 33,243 22% of total calls



Covid-19

Volume: 16,621 11% of total calls



The top 8 reasons people used our service in 2020



Employment

Volume: 13,518 9% of total calls



Housing

Volume: 6,575 4% of total calls



Health Volume: 11,586 8% of total

calls





Social Welfare Queries

There were 33,243 calls in relation to social welfare - of these the highest proportion related to claiming social welfare payments (5,243 calls). Queries relating to Disability and Illness were the second highest query within the social welfare category (5,004 calls) and followed by calls relating to Families and Children (3,549 calls).

2020 Social Welfare Queries



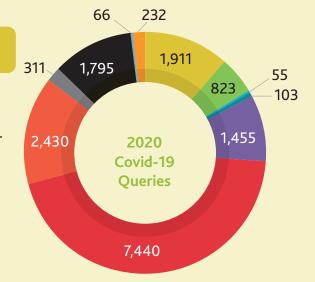


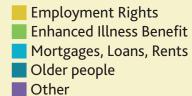
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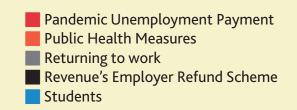
Covid -19 Queries

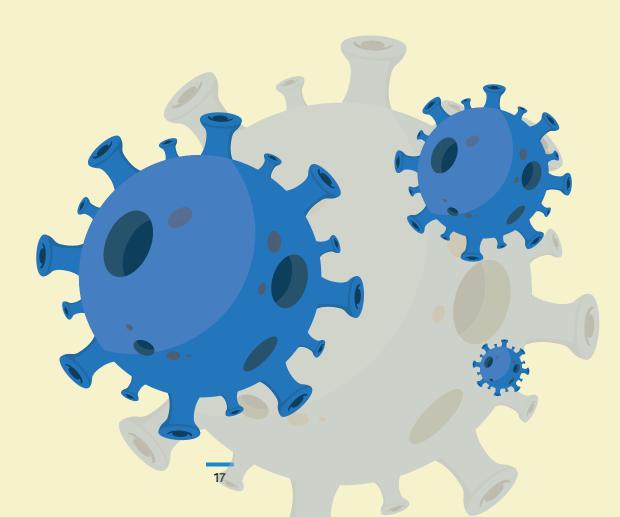
There were 16,621 queries in relation to Covid-19 from May to December 2020. Of these, the top four sub categories related to:

- 1. Pandemic Unemployment Payment (7,440 calls)
- 2. Public Health Measures (2,430 calls)
- 3. Employment Rights (1,911 calls)
- 4. Revenues Employer Refund Scheme (1,795 calls)







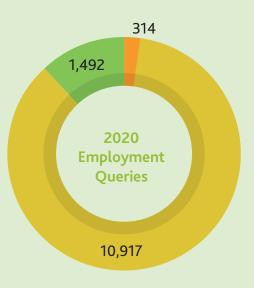




Employment Queries

There were 13,518 queries in relation to Employment with the top three queries relating to employment rights and conditions, unemployment and redundancy and self-employment.

- Employment Rights and Conditions
- Unemployment and Redundancy
- Self Employment







Health Queries

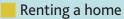
Health accounted for 11,586 calls. The top 5 queries

under Health were: Covid-19 Medical Card Health Services for Older People **Entitlement to Health Services** GP Services 281 199 386 1,249 2020 Health Queries 8,299 The 8,299 calls relating to Covid -19 occurred between March and May 2020. A new Covid -19 category was created in May 2020.

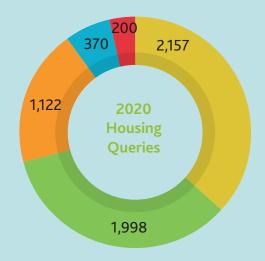


Housing

There were 6,575 calls relating to Housing queries. The key drivers for these calls were renting a home (2,157), local authority & social housing queries (1,998) and housing grants & schemes (1,122).



- Local Authority & Social Housing
- Housing Grants & Schemes
- Buying a Home
- Planning Permission



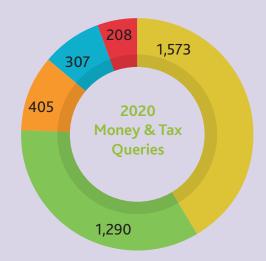


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Money & Tax

5,053 of the calls dealt with in 2020 were related to Money & Tax. The top 5 reasons for these calls include:

- 1. Income Tax (1,573 calls)
- 2. Income Tax Credits & Relief (1,290 calls)
- 3. Capital Taxes (405 calls)
- 4. Housing Taxes & Relief (307 calls)
- 5. Property Tax (208 calls)





CASE STUDY

Joan's Story

Joan had applied for a medical card but her application was denied. When she phoned CIPS she was quite upset. She has high medical needs which was causing her financial strain. I probed a little into her background and I discovered that since her initial application for the medical card her husband had turned 70. I explained that she could now be considered under a different income test for over 70s that did not apply to her original application. This income test has higher limits and after going through the figures with Joan, we were able to see that she should now qualify for a medical card. I posted an application form for her to complete. Joan was so grateful for my help and said that without this information she would never have known that she could reapply.

PatCIPS Information Officer

CIPS and Social Policy

As a national service dealing daily with high volumes of queries, CIPS is well placed to observe emerging social policy trends and issues. As part of CIPS' remit this information is reported to CIB through social policy returns.

The CIPS social policy team comprise of two social policy co-ordinators and nine social policy team members. The coordinators take responsibility for training in relation to our social policy remit, reporting social policy returns as well as working with the Team Supervisors on social policy reports and engaging in working groups with our funder CIB.

CIPS recorded 982 social policy returns in 2020. This is an increase on the volume of social policy returns in 2019, which saw 814 returns being reported.

Social Policy Returns - Categories	Total per category
Social Welfare	567
Money and Tax	131
Employment	96
Moving Country	60
Travel and Recreation	49
Housing	45
Health	15
Education and Training	8
Justice	4
Local	3
Government In Ireland	3
Birth, Family and Relationships	1
Total	982

2020 Social Policy Returns

CIPS social policy returns to CIB indicate emerging and recurring issues noted during interactions with callers, highlighting access and administrative barriers and also gaps and inconsistencies in service provision.

Quality Assurance

Throughout the year quality assurance continued to be one of our main objectives in CIPS. In order to ensure that our quality is consistent, Team Supervisors evaluate both calls and chats on a monthly basis. Three calls and one web chat are evaluated per Information Officer per month.

The overall quality is consistently high. Team Supervisors also undertake bi-monthly coaching sessions so that effective feedback is given to the Information Officers closing the training and quality loop.

2020 Monthly Call Quality Score:

There were 608 calls monitored in 2020, with the average score of 96%.

Quality 2020	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Calls Monitored	60	60	47	0	42	45	57	54	57	60	60	66
Quality Score %	96.5	97.2	96.3	N/A	96.2	96.1	96.8	96.3	96.4	96.4	96.1	95.5

Average monthly quality

Trends identified through our quality assurance process are fed into the monthly, annual and new hire training plans.

2020 Monthly Web Chat Quality Score:

There were 76 chats monitored in 2020 with an average score of 96%

Quality 2020	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Chats evaluated	0	8	4	0	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
Average Score	N/A	98%	97%	N/A	95%	97%	95%	95%	96%	96%	98%	95%

Quality evaluations did not take place in April due to the additional workload of the Team Supervisors in supporting the reconfiguration of the service to facilitate social distancing and also in supporting the set up of our colleagues in the Regional companies as part of our business continuity plan.

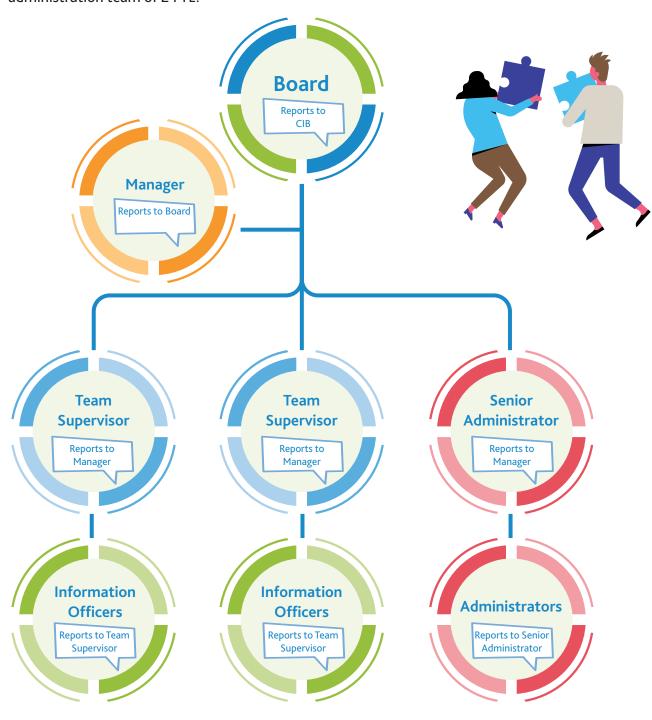


People & Communications



CIPS and our People

In 2020, CIPS was staffed by a full-time Manager, two full-time Team Supervisors, and two teams of Information Officers equivalent to 18 full time equivalents and an administration team of 2 FTE.



CIPS Organisation Structure

Our stories

"Our Information Officers are the public face of CIPS, however working quietly in the background is a small but dedicated administration team. We support the various functions of the organisation, as well as CIPS staff and our voluntary Board of Directors. So, while our Information Officers are busy looking after our customers, we are in the back office taking care of areas as diverse as finance, procurement, HR, health & safety, and facility management (sometimes all in one afternoon).

I like that my role is so varied, and I especially enjoy that I get to interact with almost everyone associated with the company, from our staff and directors, to our funder and suppliers. The last year brought about sudden changes, such as the necessity for remote working and the introduction of

virtual board meetings. These changes have undoubtedly affected our team dynamic, but at our core CIPS is about helping people, and that is what

we continued to do throughout the worst of the pandemic.

I am very proud to be part of the CIPS team, brighter days are coming, and I look forward to not having to talk to "gallery images" on a screen, and getting to meet everyone in person again"

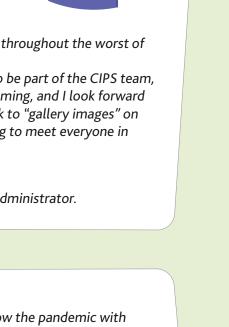
Katrina, Senior Administrator.

"I've worked in CIPS for over 15 years. I started out as an Information Officer then progressed to my current role as Team Supervisor – I even had a brief stint as acting manager! As someone who is naturally curious and likes to learn new things - these roles have afforded me ample opportunity for personal and professional development. The work itself is very rewarding because you get to help members of the public in accessing their rights and entitlements. The societal backdrop changes all the time from

boom to bust and now the pandemic with corresponding changes to the needs of the public. I think this changing nature of the role keeps it professionally interesting and also highlights the importance of the service we offer to the public - to keep them well

informed as we face new challenges."

Anthony, Team Supervisor.



At CIPS, our people are the engine that drives our success, from the Information Officers who are our brand ambassadors to the board, management and back office teams.

It is often quoted that people are an organisation's best resource, and that the best organisations retain their people. At CIPS the high retention of our people is a matter of pride. CIPS began as a small pilot in 1999 and from then has grown and developed both in strength and numbers. This growth has been facilitated by the knowledge, expertise, and experience of our people, some of whom have remained with the company since that initial pilot in 1999.

2020 was undoubtedly a challenging year, the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent increase in demand for the service had an impact on both our people and our service. To ensure the safety of our people while maintaining a much-needed service to the public, some staff moved to working remotely while others remained on site. This blended workforce brought with it challenges of its own and therefore a number of initiatives were introduced to promote engagement. These included wellness seminars, instant messaging, staff surveys and video calls.

Other investments in our people include our annual training plan. Throughout 2020, training continued albeit remotely from March onwards. Information Officers were also allocated individual research time on a weekly basis throughout the year in order to ensure that the service offering remained current and relevant to the needs of the citizen.

Information exchange sessions also took place. The frequency of these sessions increased in 2020 from monthly to bi-weekly due to the sheer volume of changes in relation to public health measures and social welfare.



The table below is a snapshot of Training undertaken in 2020:

Training Course	Internal/External	No. of attendees
Information Provision and Advocacy Practice (level 6, accredited)	External	3
Essential Training for Information Providers	Internal/CIB	2
GDPR & Cybersecurity (online)	Internal/CIB	2
Dignity at Work	External	26
Child Protection	External/Online	2
Social welfare	Internal/CIPS	2
HSE Entitlements & Service	Internal/CIPS	2
Medical card	Internal/CIPS	2
Procurement training	Internal/CIB	1
Residential Tenancy Board	External	22
Financial Software	External	3
Covid-19 Compliance lead worker (online)	External	4
CIPS Covid-19 Induction	Internal/CIPS	32
Wellness Training - Mindfulness	External	22
Soft skills Training	External	24
H Dip In Human Resource Management (Level 8, CIPD accredited)	External	1
Wellness Part 2 – Nutrition	External	26
New Hire Training	Internal/CIPS	4

Communications

In March 2020 CIPS Information Officers attended the Over 50's exhibition in Cork City Hall and also published an article in Senior Times magazine.

Due to the global pandemic our priority shifted to internal communications to ensure that our new blended working environment offered enough support to all employees. Throughout the year there were a number of initiatives to increase communication and engagement across the blended teams, such as virtual town hall meetings, quarterly staff communication sessions, employee surveys. An instant chat channel was also set up to allow for better engagement across teams both on and off site - this 'Watercooler Chat channel was developed to bridge the communication gap due to the new blended working environment.



Governance & Finance



Governance Board Recruitment & Appointment

CIPS operates under the strategic direction of a voluntary board. Appointments to the CIPS Board are nominated by the Nominations Committee and ratified by the Citizens Information Board Chief Executive.

On appointment all Directors receive an induction pack which includes the CIPS Governance Framework and associated documents. In addition they receive an overview of the work of the charity and a site tour. They also undertake Governance training with an external consultant. CIPS is very fortunate that its Directors bring a wide range of experience and expertise, from across the private, public and voluntary sectors, the board has established three permanent sub-committees, Human Resources Committee, Finance, Audit & Risk Committee and the Nominations Committee and from time to time establishes such temporary sub-committees or working groups as may be necessary.

There are three standing sub-committees:

Finance Audit & Risk

The FAR Committee review all financial aspects of the charity, budgeting, quarterly returns, annual accounts, risk and health and safety.

Human Resources

The HR Committee provides support to the Manager in relation to the management of Human Resources where required.

Nominations

The Nominations Committee are responsible for succession planning and agree the skills profile of the directors for approval by the wider board. They also conduct recruitment campaigns for directors with the support of the management team.

There are a minimum of 7 directors on the board at any given time as per our constitution. A governance calendar is produced annually which includes all key reporting dates and dates for all board meetings, FAR meetings and HR meetings for the year.



The CIPS Board is committed to strong and effective governance and this is reflected in all aspects of the Boards work.

The Board met 8 times in 2020. Director attendance was as follows:

Adrian Murphy	8/8
Julia Hull	4/8
Derval McDonagh	6/8
Yvonne Rayner	7/8
Michelle O' Hara	8/8
Gwendoline O' Sullivan	8/8
Peter Ainscough	7/8
Anthony William Lane	6/8
Jenny Ruston	5/6



Current Directors Biography

Adrian Murphy has been Chairman of CIPS since 2019. He is a Chartered Accountant and holds a Masters from Manchester Business School. He currently works as Global Head of Internal Controls for a US Multinational having previously worked in a number of senior finance roles in the UK and Ireland. Adrian has spent a number of years volunteering in the Not-for-Profit sector and has worked with a number of charities including Multiple Sclerosis and Children's Services.

Angela Canny studied Hotel Business Management in Birmingham, UK and subsequently trained with Marriott Hotels in Miami, Florida. On relocating to the UK, Angela worked for a number of global hotel brands including Le Meridien and Radisson, moving on to tourist attractions including Granada Studios, Manchester, eventually returning to Ireland to work at the Guinness Storehouse, Dublin. In 2010, she started working in the area of asset management and led several commercial teams for companies such as Windward Management and BDL Ireland restructuring hotel & venue assets across UK, Germany & Belgium. With a number of post grads, most recently from MIT in the area of Artificial Intelligence in Business Strategy, Angela has spent the last number of years working in the tech/start up space, focusing on the commercial aspect. Angela also volunteers for Cork City Partnership and sits on the board of Co-operation Ireland charity.

Angela McDonald joined the Board of CIPS in 2021. She has recently retired from the Revenue Commissioners where she was a Principal Officer in the Medium Enterprises Division. Angela is a graduate of UCD and has previously volunteered in the not for profit sector with homeless charities and in the Arts sector.

Julia Hull has been a director of CIPS since May 2018. She is a solicitor and practises in the areas of Family Law and International Protection. She qualified in the UK in 1999 and worked for a commercial law firm in Leeds, acting for charitable/ not for profit organisations and other social enterprises. She moved to Ireland in 2001, and since then has worked for the Legal Aid Board in Cork. She has been involved in the charitable/ not for profit sector for many years in a voluntary capacity, and in addition to CIPS has served on the boards of a Housing Association and various Community Development groups, most recently a Community Playgroup and a Community Orchestra.

Derval McDonagh is a senior leader in the not-for-profit sector in one of the largest service providers in Ireland. Having trained at TCD as a speech and language therapist she worked in a variety of health and social care settings before moving into leadership roles within the disability sector. She has a passion for social justice and the development of a human rights based approach in service delivery. Derval completed a masters with the IMI focusing on leadership and organisation development with a particular emphasis on transformational change and courage. She loves her kids, her partner, getting out into nature, reading and cooking (too much!) food. The values of CIPS align with her own values around citizen empowerment.

Peter Ainscough has been a director since late 2019 and is currently Company Secretary. Cork by birth and now living in Dublin he worked for large IT multinationals and with many Government Departments, Agencies as well as Commercial organisations. He is now retired and keen to share applicable business experience with CIPS.

Jenny Ruston has been a Director of CIPS since March 2020. She is a Chartered member of the CIPD and holds a Masters in Human Resource Leadership. She currently works as a Director of Programme and Change Management for a pharmaceutical company, driving the implementation of a global digital transformation. Jenny has had numerous roles across business strategy and HR, including HR Business Partner at site and Senior Leader level, compensation and benefits across Ireland and Europe, industrial relations, change management and Lean Six Sigma.

Tony Lane - has been a member of the CIPS Board since 2019. He is a Chartered Management Accountant and graduated from University College Cork. He currently works as a Senior Contracts and Commercial Manager with UnitedLex supporting DXC Technology in Ireland. He previously work with Capita as well as Deloitte and KPMG in various roles including audit, risk and compliance, IT management consulting and commercial pricing.

Dr Shane McCarthy is a practising solicitor with Fitzgerald Legal & Advisory in Cork City. He has served as Chairperson and Board Member of a number of organisations with significant experience in consumer protection, regulation, governance and change management in various sectors.



Conclusion from the Citizens Information Phone Service Manager

2020 was a challenging, yet successful year for CIPS. Service delivery demands increased dramatically from March as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Covid-19 has forced all companies across the globe to review how they operate and CIPS has been no different. In 2020 we had 249,509 calls and webchats offered to our service with 156,299 of these being answered.

In an ever-changing landscape we rapidly adapted to ensure we kept the needs of the citizen central to our business, in line with CIPS mission. Through innovative solutions, the dedication of CIPS staff and partnering with other CIB funded companies, we not only maintained our service to the citizen, but increased our capacity. We included our peers in some CIS regional companies on our telephone platform, to assist with the increased demand for the CIPS service throughout the initial months of the crisis.

The successes we achieved throughout 2020 in terms of our service delivery, our ability to increase our answering capacity and ensuring the safety of our team are due to the support of our Board of Directors, our funder, CIB and of our sister companies in the CIS network. Most importantly of all, I want to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts made by the CIPS team. The adaptability, determination, strong work ethic and sheer goodwill of all CIPS employees have led to our successes. Each and every staff member has played their part, making positive contributions throughout the year and in many cases going above and beyond to ensure that our service continued.

I hope this report gives you a flavor of the work done by the CIPS team and the importance of our service. This report shows the many ways we have supported people throughout the year and the positive impact we have had on their lives. People like Joan with her medical card query and Conor with his query regarding adapting his parents' house to meet his needs are just some of the people who have used our service in 2020, and even as I write demand is still growing into 2021, as more and more people require our service in these unsettled times.

faura McCarthy Manager

CASE STUDY

Conors story

Conor is 19 and is receiving Disability
Allowance for a long-term condition which
causes mobility issues. He lives with his
parents, but due to his disability the house
is no longer suitable for him and he queried
if there was any assistance available.
I explained to Conor that his parents,
as owners, could apply for a housing
adaptation grant from the Local Authority.
It would be based on household income
but if they qualified, they would receive a
maximum grant of €30,000 towards the
cost of any adaptations required.

Conor also mentioned that in trying to become more independent he was considering buying an adapted vehicle and wanted to know if there were any grants available for this purpose.

I pointed Conor towards the Tax Relief Scheme for a Driver or Passenger with a Disability. I outlined the details of the scheme and explained that if Conor purchased a specially adapted vehicle, he could claim back a range of tax reliefs along with availing of benefits such as free road tax and a fuel grant. In finishing the call, I summarized all the information and pointed Conor to the relevant pages on the Citizen's Information website and signposted him to his Local Authority for the housing grant and to Revenue for the tax relief scheme.

DAMIENCIPS Information Officer



Appendix Directors Report & Financial Statements

for the year ended 31 December 2020 (extract)



Directors / Trustees report

The Directors / Trustees present their annual report and the audited financial statements of the Company for the financial year ended 31 December 2020.

Reference and Administrative details

Citizens Information Phone Service ("CIPS") is a Company incorporated under the Companies Act 2014 and is limited by guarantee registered under Company number 313213. The Company is a registered charity, number 20041625.

The Company has been granted charitable tax status under Sections 207 and 208 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997, Charity number CHY13400 and is registered with the Charities Regulatory Authority. The Company has a total of 9 trustees.

General Manager – Laura McCarthy

Details of external advisors engaged by the company are as follows:

Bankers Bank of Ireland, Patrick

Street, Cork

Auditors Gordon, Lane & Co.,

Hanover House, 85-89

South Main Street,

Cork

Solicitors Babbington, Clarke &

Mooney, 48 South Mall,

Cork

Directors / Trustees

The names of the persons who at any time during the financial year were Directors/ Trustees of the Company are as follows:

Peter Ainscough
Julia Madeline Hull
William Anthony Lane
Derval McDonagh
Adrian Murphy
Michelle O'Hara
Gwendoline O'Sullivan
Yvonne Rayner
Jenny Ruston

Name of Grant

Citizens Information Board Operational Grant.

Name of Grantor

Citizens Information Board is the Grantor, sponsored by the Department of Social Protection.

Principal activities and Objectives

Our mission is to provide all people with confidential, impartial, high quality information on their civil and social rights, responsibilities and entitlements, as well as information on the social services that exist to support them.

CIPS provides a national service available to citizens via multiple channels including, but not limited to, telephone and web chat. CIPS provides a service that

supports people through the provision of information and advice and where required by supportive referrals to other agencies delivering advocacy services.

CIPS provides information, advice and referral services impartially, confidentially and without charge in relation to a range of areas in line with Citizens Information website, including but not limited to social welfare, employment rights, housing, health, immigration, consumer rights, education, bereavement and family and relationships.

CIPS also makes a key contribution to other elements of the Citizens Information Board's remit, such as social policy input; the provision of support to the deaf community via our web chat service and the provision of support to information-givers throughout the eight regional Citizens Information Service companies, also funded by the Citizens Information Board

Objective

The main objectives of the Company are:

- the advancement of education and to benefit the community through the provision of a free and confidential information and advice service to the community
- to inform, educate and empower all individuals without discrimination on the grounds of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race or membership of the traveller community,
- to support citizens by ensuring that they are aware of all their civil and social rights and entitlements and their civic duties and of the social services that exist to support them.

Long Term / Future aim

To achieve our vision and address the information and advice needs of our society, CIPS strategic plan identified four strategic priorities.

1. Service Delivery

Continue to build on our quality framework to deliver a high standard of service, responsive to the diverse needs of our service users. Organising ourselves to meet the needs of people now and into the future, preparing the business so that we can expand or diversify as the needs of the funder or the population change.

2. People

Support and value our people to reach their full potential.

3. Communications

Be open, transparent and impartial in all communications

4. Governance, Finance & Risk

Promote effective, compliant, accountable and sustainable governance

A number of key strategic objectives underpin each of these strategic priorities and CIPS have also identified the key measures of success for these.

Volunteer's policy

CIPS do not operate with volunteers and therefore do not have a volunteer policy.

Reserves Policy

The Company maintains an operational reserve equivalent to at least one month's gross salary costs – this reserve is to be

held to meet cash flow requirements that may arise pending the receipt of grants.

Investment Policy

The Trustees do not have the freedom of the Grantor to make significant investments in property, tangible assets, software or IT systems without the prior approval of the Grantor, the Citizens Information Board.

Achievements and Performance Main achievements during the year

CIPS provided expert information and advice to over 153,000 telephone callers. In addition to this, CIPS dealt with over 2,800 web chats and in excess of 4,000 call backs throughout 2020. CIPS, as a national service with a broad Citizens Information brief and dealing daily with such a high volume of queries, is uniquely placed to observe social policy trends and issues. 982 social policy returns were reported to CIB in 2020, identifying a number of recurring policy issues and barriers to entitlements.

The key statistics are as follows:	2020	2019
Number of telephone callers	153,000	142,951
Number of Webchats	2,000	2,345
Number of call back	4,000	0

2020 was a challenging yet successful year for CIPS. Service delivery demands increased dramatically from March as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Covid-19 has required many businesses to review their operations and CIPS has taken appropriate steps to meet these challenges. In a short space of time and in response to the increased demand and ever-changing landscape we adapted ourselves to ensure that we kept the needs of the citizen central to our business in line with CIPS mission.

The successes achieved throughout 2020 in terms of our service delivery, our ability to increase our answering capacity and ensuring the safety of our team are due to the support and co-operation of CIB and of our sister companies in the CIS network and most importantly of all, to the adaptability, determination, strong work ethic and sheer good will of all CIPS employees.

Structure, Governance and Management

Structure

CIPS is a Company incorporated under the Companies Act 2014 and is limited by guarantee. The Company is a registered charity. CIPS is governed by a voluntary board comprised of people from various backgrounds and skills. The overall function of the Board is to oversee the delivery of Citizen Information Phone Service in accordance with a Service Level Agreement with the funder, the Citizens Information Board (CIB). Its function is to provide leadership, develop strategy and ensure good governance and financial controls. Board members are appointed to the board by the CEO

of the Citizens Information Board. The specific responsibilities and duties of the Company Directors are outlined in the CIPS Governance Framework.

Board / Trustees minimum requirements

The number of members with which the Company operates is 7 but the Directors may from time to time register an increase of members in accordance with the constitution. Membership of the Company will consist of and be limited to serving Directors, as appointed by the CEO of the Citizens Information Board. Membership of the Company will cease upon completion of term of office as a Director of the Board.

Members must serve the interests of service users, the taxpayer, pursue value for money in their endeavors (including managing risk appropriately), and act transparently. In line with the obligations of entities in receipt of public funding the Board must adhere to the principles of:

- Clarity
- Governance
- Value for Money
- Fairness

Board members should act on a fully informed basis, in good faith, with due diligence and care, and in the best interest of the organisation, subject to the objectives of the company.

Board / Trustee meetings requirements / quorum

The quorum necessary for the transaction of the business of the directors is 50% of the Board for the time being plus one, present in person at the time when the meeting proceeds to business.

There were eight (8) meetings of the Board during 2020. The attendance was as follows:

Name	
Adrian Murphy	8/8
Julia Madeline Hull	4/8
Derval McDonagh	6/8
Yvonne Rayner	7/8
Michelle O' Hara	8/8
Gwendoline O' Sullivan	8/8
Peter Ainscough	7/8
William Anthony Lane	6/8
Jenny Ruston*	5/6*

^{*}appointed 28/02/2020

Recruitment of Board / Trustees policy & Procedure for appointing Board / Trustees

Succession planning and board recruitment is primarily undertaken by the nominations committee, a subcommittee of the board. A skills matrix is maintained and referred to as part of the succession planning process.

The Nominations Committee conduct shortlisting and interviews for all candidates and following approval of the Nominations Committee the candidates are put forward to the CIPS Board for approval. Once approved the nomination is then put forward to the CEO of the Citizens information Board for appointment.

Procedure for appointing Board / Trustees

As above

Board / Trustee training and induction

On appointment all CIPS Board members receive an up-to-date induction pack comprising of CIPS governance framework, including the constitution, company information, annual reports, operation reports and financial reports. They also receive formal governance training.

Remuneration policy for Board / Trustees

As per the Company constitution Directors are not entitled to receive remuneration for services provided, however expenses which have been properly incurred by Directors in connection with the business of the Company are paid in accordance with CIPS Financial Controls & Guidelines as prescribed by the funder, the Citizens Information Board.

Likely future developments

In CIPS Strategy statement for 2019 to 2021, the company committed to building on our quality framework to deliver a high standard of service responsive to the diverse needs of its service users. CIPS is committed to organising themselves to meet the needs of people now and into the future. They are also committed to preparing the business so that they can expand or diversify as the needs of the funder or the population change. CIPS will work with their funder in 2021 and beyond to identify those needs and develop the services to meet them.

Principal Risks and Uncertainties

CIPS endeavours to manage all risks which could prevent the attainment of its stated objectives as set out in its Strategic Plan whilst at the same time not limiting its ability to attain those same objectives by taking on an acceptable level of risks which may lead to positive outcomes.

Operational / Internal Risk

These include employees being unavailable for work or employees that are only trained for one role and are unable to cover for another employee in the event of an absence. A lack of planning in the event of CIPS premises being damaged and unusable for a period of time is also an operational risk.

Reputational Risk

CIPS rely heavily on their reputation.
The Company considers the actual and perceived impact of the decisions it takes, ensuring that all decisions are taken in line with the best interests and charitable purpose of the Company.

Events after the Balance Sheet date

There were no significant changes or events between the Balance Sheet date and the date of signing this report.

Accounting records

The measures taken by the Directors to secure compliance with the requirements of sections 281 to 285 of the Companies Act 2014 with regard to the keeping of accounting records are the implementation of necessary policies and procedures for recording transactions, the employment of competent accounting personnel with appropriate expertise and the provision of adequate resources to the financial function. The accounting records of the company are located at Units 7-8 Nessan House, Riverview Business Park, Bessboro Rd. Blackrock.

During the financial year the Company accounting records migrated to an accruals based accounting system called Thrive. Thrive Financial Software went live on 1st July 2020, with the first six months records being input retrospectively.

Relevant audit information

In the case of each of the persons who are Directors at the time this report is approved in accordance with section 332 of Companies Act 2014:

- so far as each Director is aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the Company's statutory auditors are unaware, and
- each Director has taken all the steps that he or she ought to have taken as a Director in order to make himself or herself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the Company's statutory auditors are aware of that information.

Auditors

In accordance with Section 383 (2) of the Companies Act 2014, the auditors, Gordon, Lane & Co. Statutory Audit Firm, Hanover House, 85-89 South Main Street, Cork have indicated their willingness to continue in office.

This report was approved by the Board of Directors / Trustees on 20th May 2021 and signed on behalf of the board by:

Adrian Murphy Director

William Anthony Lane Director

Independent auditor's report

to the members of Citizens Information Phone Service CLG

Report on the audit of the financial statements

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Citizens Information Phone Service CLG (the 'company') for the financial year ended 31 December 2020 which comprise the profit and loss account, statement of income and retained earnings, balance sheet, statement of cash flows and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies set out in note 3. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is Irish law and FRS 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland.

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the Company as at 31 December 2020 and of its profit for the financial year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with FRS 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2014.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (Ireland) (ISAs (Ireland)) and applicable

law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the Company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Ireland, including the Ethical Standard issued by the Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority (IAASA), and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which ISAs (Ireland) require us to report to you where:

- the Directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the Directors have not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the Company's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Other Information

The Directors are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2014

Based solely on the work undertaken in the course of the audit, we report that:

- in our opinion, the information given in the Directors' report is consistent with the financial statements; and
- in our opinion, the Directors' report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

We have obtained all the information and explanations which we consider necessary for the purposes of our audit.

In our opinion the accounting records of the Company were sufficient to permit the financial statements to be readily and properly audited, and financial statements are in agreement with the accounting records.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

Based on the knowledge and understanding of the Company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Directors' report.

The Companies Act 2014 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion, the disclosures of directors' remuneration and transactions required by sections 305 to 312 of the Act are not made. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Respective responsibilities Responsibilities of directors for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Directors' responsibilities statement, the Directors are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Directors determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Directors are responsible for assessing the Dompany's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters

related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the management either intends to liquidate the Company or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (Ireland) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (Ireland), we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to

- design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the internal control
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Directors.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the Directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Company's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Company to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

The purpose of our audit work and to whom we owe our responsibilities

Our report is made solely to the company's members, as a body, in accordance with section 391 of the Companies Act 2014. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Company and the Company's members, as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Gary Buchan (Senior Statutory Auditor)

For and on behalf of Gordon, Lane & Co. Certified Public Accountants and Statutory Auditors Hanover House 85-89 South Main Street Cork

20 May 2021

Extract from Auditor Report

on the financial statements year ended 31st December 2020 Dated this day the 20th May 2021

Gordon, Lane & Co. have audited the financial statements for the year ended 31st December 2020 which comprise of the Statement of Financial Activities, Statement of Income and Retained Reserves, the Balance Sheet, and the related Notes.

The relevant financial reporting framework has been applied in the preparation of the Financial Statements, being the Companies Act 2014 and FRS 102 Financial Reporting Standards. The Charity has applied the Charities SORP on a voluntary basis as its application is not a requirement of the current regulations for charities registered in ROI, however it is considered best practice.

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the company as at 31/12/20 and of the Financial Activities for the year
- the financial statements have been properly prepared in accordance with the relevant reporting framework and the requirements of the Companies Act 2014

Matters on which we are required to report by the Companies Act 2014

We, as auditors, have obtained all the information and explanations, which we consider necessary for the purposes of our audit.

In our opinion the accounting records of the company are sufficient to permit the financial statements to be readily and properly audited.

In our opinion the financial statements are in agreement with the accounting records.

In our opinion the information given in the director's and trustees report is consistent with the financial statements.

We have nothing to report, to you as Members, in respect of our obligation under the Companies Act 2014 as specified by Sections 305 to 312 in relation to Directors remuneration and their interests.

Gary Buchan (Senior Statutory Auditor)

For and on behalf of Gordon, Lane & Co. Certified Public Accountants and Statutory Auditors Hanover House 85-89 South Main Street Cork

20 May 2021

Statement of Financial Activities

(including the Income and Expenditure Account) For the Year ended 31 December 2020

	Restricted Funds	Unrestricted Funds	2020 €	2019 €
Income from				
CIB Operational Grant	1,237,087	-	1,237,087	1,250,000
Illness & Maternity benefit refunds	3,842	-	3,842	2,772
CIPS Other Income / Seconded Emp costs	14,688	-	14,688	98,224
Total Income	1,255,617	-	1,255,617	1,350,996
Expenditure on				
Operational costs	1,232,187	-	1,232,187	1,318,684
Depreciation	619	-	619	507
	4 222 226		4 222 226	4 242 424
Total Expenditure	1,232,806	-	1,232,806	1,319,191
Net Income	22,811		22,811	31,805
Net income	22,611	-	22,611	31,803
Other recognised gains / losses:	-	-	-	-
Net movement in funds	22,811	-	22,811	31,805
Reconciliation of funds:				
Total funds brought forward	239,240	-	239,240	207,435
Transfer between funds	-	-	-	-
Total funds carried forward	262,051	-	262,051	239,240

Balance sheet

as at 31 December 2020

	2020		20	19
	€	€	€	€
Fixed assets				
Tangible assets	2,964		2,697	
		2,964		2,697
Current assets				
Debtors	9,367		9,372	
Cash at bank and in hand	302,262		296,754	
	311,629		306,126	
Creditors: amounts falling due				
within one year	(52,542)		(69,583)	
Net current assets		259,087		236,543
Total assets less current liabilities		262,051		239,240
Net assets		262,051		239,240
Total funds of the charity				
Unrestricted reserves		-		-
Restricted reserves		262,051		239,240
Total charity funds		262,051		239,240

These financial statements were approved by the board of Directors on 20 May 2021 and signed on behalf of the board by:

Adrian Murphy Director William Anthony Lane Director

Detailed Income and expenditure account Financial year ended 31 December 2020

The following does not form part of the statutory accounts.

The following does not form part of the statu	Restricted	Unrestricted	2020 €	2019 €
Turnover				
Citizens Information Board Grant	1,237,087		1,237,087	1,250,000
Illness & Maternity Benefit Refunds	3,842		3,842	2,772
CIPS Other Income / Seconded Emp costs	14,688		14,688	98,224
	1,255,617		1,255,617	1,350,996
Gross surplus	1,255,617		1,255,617	1,350,996
Overheads				
Administrative expenses				
Wages and salaries	(911,721)		(911,721)	(955,682)
Employer's PRSI contributions	(96,887)		(96,887)	(102,574)
Staff pension costs - defined contribution	(62,453)		(62,453)	(59,017)
Staff training, support & supervision	(7,074)		(7,074)	(9,045)
Rent & service charges	(63,889)		(63,889)	(63,687)
Insurance	(1,107)		(1,107)	-
Light and heat	(11,178)		(11,178)	(7,197)
Cleaning, refuse & recycling	(15,889)		(15,889)	(14,656)
Repairs and maintenance	(5,561)		(5,561)	(4,256)
Printing, postage and stationery	(13,471)		(13,471)	(10,595)
Service promotion & advertising	-		-	(1,455)
Telephone	(408)		(408)	(447)
IT & systems development costs	(1,244)		(1,244)	(22,448)
Hire of equipment	(1,112)		(1,112)	(1,115)
Travelling and subsistence – staff	(1,070)		(1,070)	(6,108)
Board of Management expenses	(3,270)		(3,270)	(11,929)
Legal and professional	(6,411)		(6,411)	(26,354)
Staff recruitment costs	(7,451)		(7,451)	(11,017)
Auditors remuneration	(2,177)		(2,177)	(2,177)

Continued

Detailed Income and expenditure account Financial year ended 31 December 2020

Bank charges	(303)		(303)	(250)
Hospitality	(48)		(48)	-
Health & Safety and staff costs	(7,959)		(7,959)	(8,539)
Quality assurance	(11,504)		(11,504)	-
General expenses	-		-	(136)
Depreciation of tangible assets	(619)		(619)	(507)
	(1,232,806)			(1,319,191)
Operating surplus	22,811	-	22,811	31,805
Surplus for the year	22,811	-	22,811	31,805



Citizens Information Phone Service

Funded and Supported by the Citizens Information Board