



Welcome to this spring issue of the Irish SPIN.

As locally, nationally and internationally we begin to emerge from the Covid 19 pandemic, we must have hope for the future whilst reflecting on everything that has happened in our world in the past year. As individuals we will look back with sadness for those we have lost, for the celebrations and occasions missed, but also with gratitude and appreciation for the time spent with our families, time to slow down and enjoy the beauty of the world on our doorstep.

Mothers' Union has also had a very different and, in some ways, a difficult year, but whilst having to adapt to doing things differently, a huge amount has still been achieved.

As we tentatively move forward into a post pandemic world, so the Mothers' Union will continue campaigning for gender justice (fighting for a safer, fairer world for women and girls) and social change, helping the disadvantaged and speaking for those who have no voice. As we start new campaigns and keep pushing for more change on issues we have already highlighted, it is a good time to look at what has already been achieved when Mothers' Union (collectively as an organisation and as individuals) join with others to influence and bring about positive change. We must use these successes to encourage and invigorate us to continue our work.

One letter or one conversation may seem ineffective when trying to change the world for the better, but when that one becomes many, like a pebble dropped in a pond, the effect is amazing.





### **Domestic Abuse Legislation – Northern Ireland**

(including Coercive Control) received Royal Assent and became law on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021

“Do not be afraid to speak out and to reach out for help.

“Help is there. You will be heard, you will be believed, you will be supported.

“There is a better and a safer future for you,” “Justice can, and justice will be done.”-

***Naomi Long, Justice Minister NI***

### **March 26<sup>th</sup> 2021 - Northern Ireland Executive commit to the development of a Violence Against Women & Girls strategy.**

“We are delighted that the NI Executive has committed to the development of a Violence Against Women & Girls Strategy here in Northern Ireland. This is such good news. We would like to thank everyone who signed and shared our petition in favour of this development. Your signature helped to bring change to lives of women & girls. We were the only part of the UK that did not recognise the gendered nature of violence against women & girls, and now we do. Women’s Aid looks forward to meeting with Executive Ministers to develop this core strategy, and discuss the key issues including resources and commitment to funding such a strategy.” ***Women’s Aid Federation of Northern Ireland***

### **House of Lords – Domestic Abuse Bill**

In July 2020 MU made a formal submission to the House of Commons Scrutiny Committee of the Domestic Abuse Bill in July; one of the key “asks” which MU made was to remove the “no recourse to public funding” restriction for victims where their immigration status is unclear, which means that they are faced with the choice of returning to the perpetrator or becoming destitute.

In early March an amendment to the Domestic Abuse Bill, proposed by the Bishop of Gloucester, the Rt Revd Rachel Treweek, to allow a migrant victim of domestic abuse to apply for temporary leave to remain in the UK, has been passed by the Lords. Bishop Treweek explained that it would “provide migrant victims of abuse with temporary leave to remain and access to public funds for a period of no less than six months, so that they can access support services while they flee abuse and apply to resolve their immigration status.

***“Excellent to see that concerted action through multiple channels can make a real difference!” Bev Jullien, Chief Executive Officer, Mothers’ Union***



Thursdays in Black is an ecumenical campaign that originated with the [World Council of Churches \(WCC\)](#) during their Solidarity with Women awareness campaign (1988-1998), in which stories of rape as a weapon of war, gender injustice, abuse, and violence became increasingly visible.

Mothers' Union is an official partner of the campaign.

We all have a responsibility to speak out against violence, to ensure that everyone is safe from rape and violence in homes, schools, workplaces, and in all places of our society.

Together with people around the world, plan to wear black every Thursday as a symbol of strength and courage, representing your solidarity with victims and survivors of violence, and calling for a world without rape and violence.

### **PAUSE**

Pause for a moment of silence on Thursdays at noon your local time to remember and honor those who have died at the hand of sexualized or gender-based violence.

### **PRAY**

Pray with us:

We stand with invisible victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

We see you. We hear you. You are not forgotten.

### **POST**

*Post your prayers, photos, or inspirations on social media using the hashtag #ThursdaysinBlack*

### **PLEDGE**

I commit to:

Thursdays in Black.

In solidarity

In protest

In mourning

For awareness

and In hope

By supporting Thursdays in Black I stand

- In solidarity with 1 in 3 women worldwide who face violence in their lives
- In protest against systems and societies that encourage violence in any form
- In mourning for men, women and children who are harmed and killed in sexual violence
- For awareness and knowledge about the challenges of sexual and gender-based violence.
- In the hope that a different reality is possible

[Thursdays in Black | Ecumenical Women at the UN \(ecumenicalwomenun.org\)](#)

<https://www.globalministries.org>

[www.mothersunion.org](http://www.mothersunion.org)



**WOMEN'S AID**  
Making Women and Children Safe

**Mothers' UNION**  
Christian care for families  
Province of All Ireland

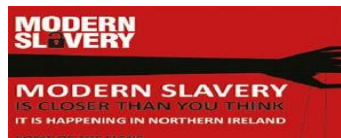
## **Safe and Secure homes for those who leave domestic abusive situations' REFUGES AS HOMELESS PROVIDERS**

Mothers' Union is united in their support for refuges throughout Ireland. In the Republic of Ireland refuges are not regarded as "HOMELESS PROVIDERS", yet, when a person leaves a domestic abuse situation, often, they are in fact homeless.

Between March and December 2020 there were 2159 request for refuge that could not be met. This is unacceptable as one-in-four homeless women cite partner violence as the major contributor to their homelessness. Many do not leave home but continue to live in fear in unsafe homes with abusive partners due to the extremely limited availability of suitable refuge accommodation in Ireland.

It is important that refuges, as in Northern Ireland, are regarded and funded as **homeless providers**. Mothers' Union are supporting Women's Aid in their campaign to achieve this and are encouraging you to directly lobby your TDs, Senators and Ministers.

Visit [www.mothersunion.ie](http://www.mothersunion.ie) to find out more and download a pro forma letter that you can use to take part in the campaign.



The Modern Slavery Helpline, run by the charity Unseen ([www.unseen.org](http://www.unseen.org)), reports that in 2020, their helpline had almost 8,000 contacts from victims and professionals working in services such as the NHS throughout the UK. As a result, a potential 3,481 victims of modern slavery were identified, 10% of them children, up from 7% in 2019. Although lockdown made visibility of exploitation, such as people being forced to work in car washes and nail bars, less obvious, the data suggested that modern slavery was still thriving.

Modern slavery is happening in Northern Ireland and the Department of Justice (DoJ) is calling on everyone across society to be aware of the possible signs that someone may need help and to report suspicions quickly and confidentially.

Some of the signs to look out for: -

- Someone who is distrustful of authorities
- Someone who appears to be under the control of others
- An over-crowded house or flat
- Someone who is unsure of their home address or the local area
- Someone who may not have cash because they can't keep the money they earn

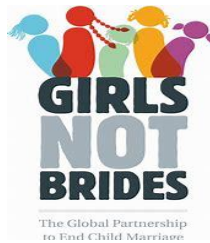
More information can be found at: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/human-trafficking>

If you suspect that someone is a victim – don't delay, ring:

999 in case of an emergency

101 about a general situation

or 0800 0121 700 for the modern slavery helpline



On an annual basis -

- 12 million girls are married before the age of 18
- That is 23 girls every minute
- Nearly 1 every 3 seconds

Child marriage is rooted in gender inequality and the belief that girls and women are inferior to boys and men. It is made worse by poverty, lack of education, harmful social norms and practices, and insecurity. Its drivers vary between communities and it looks different across the world.

Child marriage is a truly global problem. It happens across countries, cultures, religions and ethnicities.

There is no single solution, actor or sector to end it; we must all work together. Solutions must be local, contextual and integrated.

More than 650 million women alive today already suffer the direct consequences of child marriage.

Globally, the rates of child marriage are slowly declining but progress isn't happening fast enough.

If pre-pandemic trends continue, 150 million more girls will be married by 2030; because of the COVID-19 pandemic, this may increase by a further 13 million girls.

Child marriage violates girls' rights to health, education and opportunity.

Child marriage directly hinders the achievement of at least six of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Ending child marriage and guaranteeing girls' rights means a fairer, more secure and prosperous future for us all.

For the latest developments, resources and events visit [www.girlsnotbrides.org](http://www.girlsnotbrides.org)



**WOMEN'S AID**  
Making Women and Children Safe

**National Freephone Helpline**  
**1800 341 900**

women's aid

Federation Northern Ireland





## Food Poverty in Ireland 2021

**St Vincent De Paul, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2021** - A quarter of people living in Ireland are cutting back on food and utilities due to the financial strain of the pandemic, a new study has found. ...24% are cutting back on food, heat or electricity.

**BBC 7<sup>th</sup> November 2020** - People in parts of Northern Ireland are using food banks more than ever during the coronavirus pandemic.

Demand at one food bank in Magherafelt, County Londonderry, has more than quadrupled since this time last year.

**Save the Children** - A new report from Save the Children has revealed that twice as many children living in poverty are growing up in working families than 10 years ago (35% vs 17%), suggesting that employment has not been a route out of hardship for many. ...the cost of living had skyrocketed during the pandemic, putting increased pressure on family finances.

...many turned to food banks or charities to get by, with the pandemic inflicting the heaviest toll on people who were already struggling to make ends meet.

**Irish Times, September 2020** - The level of food poverty and hunger a leading single parents' organisation has seen in the last six months has been "tragic", its chief executive has warned. *Karen Kiernan, One Family*

...had "never dealt with the amount of food and hunger issues"

...Everywhere people with children were talking about families being hungry. They have had bigger food bills because the children were at home.

Find ways to support your local food banks.

A list of foodbanks in NI can be downloaded from [www.consumercouncil.org.uk](http://www.consumercouncil.org.uk).

Just put 'food banks' into any internet search engine and you will find one in your local area.

Most of the larger supermarkets have food bank donation points – make a point of adding something each time you shop.



This is the thirteenth Report Card and the first analysis under the Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Green Party's joint Programme for Government: Our Shared Future. We have carefully selected 16 promises to children and have rated the Government on its efforts since their formation from June to December 2020.

It is through a pandemic lens that this year's report should be viewed. There have been immense challenges for sure, which has stymied some government action. This plays out in the grades with the new government securing a report card with 8 Ds, 7 Cs and just 1 B. The lowest grades were awarded to 'Reduced Timetables' and 'Child Safety Online', which both received 'D-' grades.

Despite the challenging circumstances of Covid-10 some important new commitments were made, including pathways for undocumented children and on the long-awaited reform of the family law system. The highest individual grade in Report Card 2020 is a 'B' which was awarded for enacting the 'Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Bill'.

[www.childrensrights.ie](http://www.childrensrights.ie)



## The Five Ways to Wellbeing



Connect;



Be Active;



Take Notice;



Keep Learning;



Give

[www.mentalhealthireland.ie](http://www.mentalhealthireland.ie)

Mental Health UK

## Kindness Challenge

Take on our challenge today by expressing kindness to yourself & those around you!

\*Visit [mentalhealth-uk.org/kindness](http://mentalhealth-uk.org/kindness) for resources and for more information

Mental Health UK

### Kindness Challenge

Take on our challenge today by expressing kindness to yourself and those around you!

Tell a silly joke and make someone laugh

Call someone who you haven't spoken to in a while, and check how they're doing

Share your favourite wellbeing tip

Tell someone your favourite thing about them

Donate £5 to Mental Health UK

Start your morning with 5 minutes of meditation

Write down 5 things you're proud of - share yourself some love and celebrate your wins

Watch our "taking your thoughts to court" video\* and challenge negative thoughts about yourself

Use our "sleep tracker" tool\*\* and focus on getting a good night's sleep

\*Visit [mentalhealth-uk.org/kindness](http://mentalhealth-uk.org/kindness) to access our resources and for more information

Mental Health UK, London, 020 7599 9499 Registered Charity Number: 1137481

## Useful Dates for your Diary



**Mental Health Awareness Week May 10th**

**International Day of Families May 15<sup>th</sup>**

**Dementia Action Week May 17th**

**World Hunger Day May 28<sup>th</sup>**

**International Children's Day June 1<sup>st</sup>**

**Child Safety Week June 1st**

**Diabetes Awareness Week June 7th**

**Men's Health Week June 14th**

**World Refugee Week June 17<sup>th</sup>**

**Father's Day June 20<sup>th</sup>**

**Day for International Justice July 17<sup>th</sup>**

**World Day Against Trafficking July 30<sup>th</sup>**

**International Friendship Day August 1st**

**Mary Sumner Day August 9<sup>th</sup>**

### **Useful Contact Details:**

Faith & Policy Unit Co-ordinator: Beth Wortley Tel:02838841126 email:[mufaitandpolicy@gmail.com](mailto:mufaitandpolicy@gmail.com)

Southern Dioceses Social Policy contact: Vacant - Contact Beth Wortley

Northern Dioceses Social Policy contact: Jean Thompson Tel:02877765141

Mobile: 07731635627 email:[jeanius65@aol.com](mailto:jeanius65@aol.com)