

# REGAL Ireland Report No 2: Aspirations

## About the REGAL Project

REGAL (regaining life for precarious women at work) is an EU-funded project which involves organisations from five European countries. It investigates the possibilities of achieving a better work-life balance for vulnerable groups. The existing measures to achieve a better balance are based on a 'normal' life situation: families who have regular work and are not in a precarious situation. These Work-Life-Balance (WLB) measures aim to achieve a high level of employability among women and men through a good balance between the needs of the family and the requirements of work. WLB concentrates on the time shortages of families (and especially women) to reconcile work and life.

The REGAL project departs from the precarious situation of families. The precarious situation is an additional barrier for achieving employment and a balanced Work-Life Balance. A precarious situation is determined in particular by poorer working conditions (irregular work), a poor housing situation and a poor financial situation. All these elements can be an obstacle to find a good WLB.

REGAL examines how measures can be taken within the WLB to ensure a better balance for these vulnerable families and to give them an incentive to be able to work.

The project involved five partner organisations with different target groups:

- › **Belgium, Beweging:** women who are lone parents with young children
- › **France, Grdr:** women with a migration history
- › **Ireland, Focus Ireland:** women with children who have experienced homelessness or housing insecurity
- › **Portugal, European Anti-Poverty Network:** women in poverty with a migration history
- › **Romania, The Open Network:** women with children living in rural regions

The research from each organisation contributed to an EU synthesis report. For further information about the REGAL project, its partners and all reports, and also the methodology used see <https://www.regalproject.eu/>

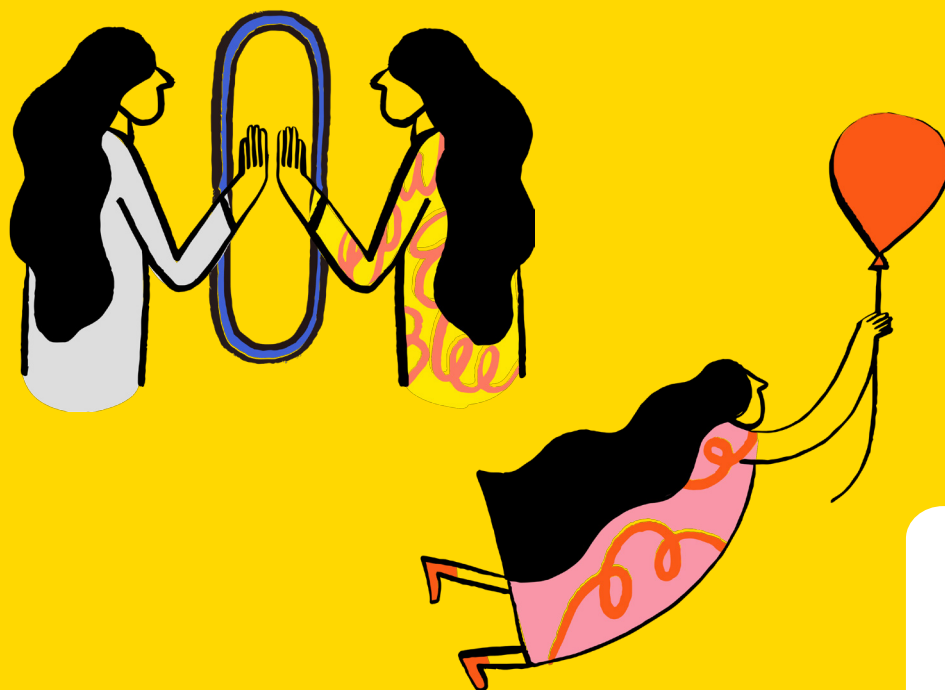
This report follows *REGAL Ireland report No 1: Analytical* and outlines the findings and experiences of the project in Ireland and the work undertaken with a group of women with children who have experienced homelessness in more depth.

## Acknowledgements

Focus Ireland are very grateful for the support of staff members in the recruitment of participants for this project. A special thank you to Alannah Canton and Caoimhe Doyle for their support with childcare. Thanks also to the various stakeholders for their time and expert input. Finally, thanks to the women who participated in the research, the co-researchers, who were so generous with their time and energy. They made this research possible.



This research is funded by  
the European Union's Rights,  
Equality and Citizenship  
Programme (2014–2020)



# REGAL Ireland

## Report No 2: Aspirations

Report co-funded by The European Union  
April 2021

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# 1

## Introduction

REGAL Ireland explored a wealth of topics within a diverse group of sixteen women who attended focus groups and took part in individual interviews. From the first research session, the women showed a willingness to share their honest feelings about the adverse experiences and hardships they had endured. All the women had experienced difficult challenges in their lives including addiction, domestic violence, migration to a new country and mental health difficulties. It was these adverse experiences that had often led to homelessness or housing insecurity, which all the women had experienced. Most of the discussions focused on the barriers to a better work-life balance and the challenges they faced.

While many of the women had different expectations of work-life balance, the views about the barriers to achieving this were shared amongst the group. Inclusive childcare was undoubtedly the biggest barrier to the women gaining employment and easing the burden of their caring responsibilities. The high cost of childcare meant that for many of the women who had worked in recent years, the majority of their earnings were being spent on childcare. Many of the women felt that this was not worth spending the time away from their children, especially when they were working in jobs that were not meaningful to them. As a result, many of the women relied on informal childcare arrangements with friends and family which was often unreliable. The women also cited the difficulty with acquiring places for their children and long waiting lists for afterschool programmes and pre-school. Lack of available transport to bring the children from school to their after-school activities meant that the women had very limited hours in the day in which they could work. This resulted in many of the women being forced into low-paid precarious jobs, such as cleaning, which were often based on zero-hour contracts with no sick pay or flexibility from employers. As a result, many of the women were trapped in unemployment due to these barriers.

The women recognised that in order to work towards a job or career that would pay them enough to cover their expenses and live comfortably, they would need to upskill and go back to training or education. Some of the women had experience of working for agencies where they were expected to do unpaid training and shadowing, while still having to pay for childcare and transport costs. Although many of the women expressed a desire to upskill, this represented instability as they relied on social welfare payments. Due to stipulations around how many hours they can be in education for, this would mean they

would lose their social welfare payments if they pursued the courses that actually interested them. Despite the inadequacy of the money they receive from the State, this represented stability and security to the women and they felt that giving this up to go back to education, as well as the “fear of the unknown”, would be giving up too much. This resulted in a fear that even if they managed to upskill, they would still be trapped in low paid jobs with few progression opportunities because they were also raising children. They knew from experience that education and training systems are not designed to accommodate those with care responsibilities, particularly where their aspirations were for skilled work with the potential to provide them with decent incomes, and some career satisfaction.

Consultation with a group of key stakeholders<sup>1</sup> echoed much of what the women said in the focus groups. Stakeholders strongly mentioned the issue of underinvestment in public services, particularly a lack of affordable childcare, and how this can impact on a woman’s ability to have equal participation in all aspects of society. Obtaining decent work, was another key issue mentioned by stakeholders. Industries where women make up the majority of the workforce, such as the childcare sector, and domestic and personal care workers, are often subject to lower wages and precarious work circumstances. Another area that Ireland falls behind in and mentioned by stakeholders is in relation to paid parental leave schemes; when the duration and value of paid leave across maternity, paternity and parental leave schemes is combined, Ireland lags behind its EU partners.

The negative impact of policy changes was another strong theme in dialogue with stakeholders, specifically income supports reform and the introduction of a new National Childcare Scheme (NCS). The income support reforms resulted in significant income loss for a cohort of working low-income lone parents by reducing financial incentives, without making significant changes to childcare services or subsidies, while the NCS eliminated targeted schemes for lower income lone parent families and offers very little support for school age children and tapers off support for children as they age. Finally, the largely ‘male breadwinner model’ that the Irish social welfare system has been built upon, was also noted by stakeholders as being a significant problem for women in precarious circumstances. This should be addressed by the creation of a new model of welfare that is gender sensitive, and accommodates different forms of working, particularly part-time and flexible working.

Regarding the women’s aspirations for the future, these conversations were difficult to facilitate as many of the women were not ready to answer the question about aspirations – they did not have the space in their lives or the encouragement to aspire for themselves. In thinking about their aspirations, the reality of the care work they undertook, around which the rest of their lives revolved, was the dominant frame of reference. Although the women in the group were at different stages of their journeys as mothers and with their aspirations to work, they shared feelings of anger, frustration and what it is like to be judged. The discussions facilitated in the focus groups illustrate the conditions which lead to these women being trapped in their circumstances and neglected by policymakers. They responded positively to the opportunity to voice their feelings and share their experiences but expressed fear that it would not be enough, and they would not be heard by the people who make decisions for them. This report will explore the aspirations of the women and will provide policy recommendations.

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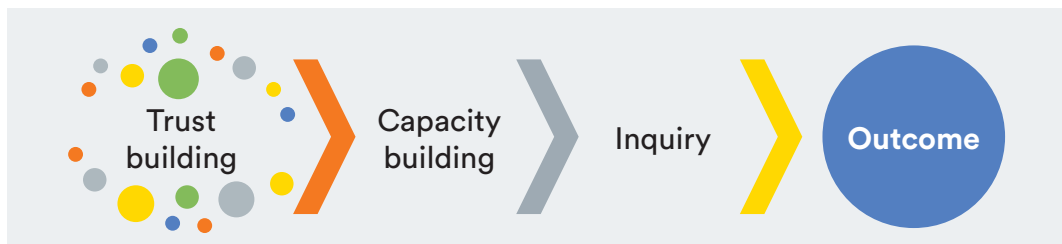
<sup>1</sup> Please refer to REGAL Ireland Report No.1: Analytical for further details on stakeholder consultation

# 2

## Methodology

The methodology undertaken for the REGAL project Ireland was the so-called PAHRCA methodology. This methodology was developed during the RE-InVEST project<sup>2</sup> which worked with vulnerable groups. The methodology consists of four steps as outlined in the Figure 1 below and is covered extensively in a separate methodology paper<sup>3</sup>.

**Figure 1: PAHRCA Methodology**



Central to this methodology is co-research, whereby both the professional researchers and the women participating in the study undertake the research collaboratively. Therefore, throughout this report the group of women who participated in this project will be referred to as co-researchers.

### 2.1 Focus Groups

Twelve focus groups (or research sessions) were convened between November 2019 and March 2020 in a city centre location with child care facilities onsite. A core group of sixteen women attending the focus groups. In the early focus groups, 'Faith' was introduced. Faith is a character with the same experiences and lived reality of co-researchers; she is someone the women can speak to and through, and ultimately represents the women in the final creative outcome of the project<sup>4</sup>. The group of co-researchers was diverse, consisting of various nationalities and, perhaps, cultures. The rationale for this particular

<sup>2</sup> Available at: <https://www.re-invest.eu/documents/books>

<sup>3</sup> Available at: [https://www.regalproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Methodological\\_toolkit.pdf](https://www.regalproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Methodological_toolkit.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> 'Testing Faith' webpage, including an interactive diary – 'a week in the life of Faith': <https://testingfaith.ie/>

approach or method was that co-researchers may not want to discuss openly their experiences to strangers and that 'Faith' would provide the possibility to speak in general rather than personal terms<sup>5</sup>.

Faith did not have a physical form. However, her presence was recognised in the form of a fashioned post box situated in the room in which co-researchers were encouraged to post notes or letters to her at any point, if for example they wanted to offer her advice from lived experience. During the course of the focus groups several letters were posted to Faith from co-researchers. These letters contained details of co-researchers' experiences and aspirations and were a significant form of data collection.

Faith's personality and aspirations were explored initially within the group with some open questions, starting with, for example: 'What is Faith's favourite song?' or 'What does Faith like to do to relax?', to deeper questions like, for example: 'What are Faith's hopes for the future?' or 'What does Faith want to be, or work as?'. Co-researchers had the option to respond aloud or to write a response on a piece of paper and stick it to a whiteboard. Getting to know 'Faith' and developing a picture of her life offered an opportunity for the women to connect as a group and importantly build a sense of solidarity around the barriers in Faith's life and her aspirations. Faith was like them and they wanted the best for her.

In later focus groups, when trust and solidarity had been established, a voting exercise was used in two instances: policy preferences and human rights preferences. In the case of policies, there was a general election in Ireland at the time of the research and this opportunity was used to examine the manifestos of each political party, specifically in respect of pertinent issues for co-researchers e.g. childcare and flexible employment. In this exercise the group was split into three smaller groups. Each group was provided with handouts containing a selection of policies. The groups were encouraged to debate amongst themselves and rank the policies from the most important to the least, visually on a wall. Once each group had completed the task, they took turns to speak to the wider group about their policy choices. The same method was used to examine and explore human rights. These exercises generated much dialogue and debate within the group in relation to policy and rights preference and how they impact on work-life balance aspirations. In addition, the co-researchers appreciated and enjoyed the new learnings these exercises provided.

## 2.2 Qualitative Interviews

At least three additional focus groups were scheduled to further explore work-life balance aspirations in a creative and participative way. However, it was at this point in the research that the global pandemic impacted significantly, meaning all remaining research sessions were cancelled for public health reasons. However, after some consultation it became possible to conduct individual in-depth semi structured qualitative interviews by phone with four co-researchers. In these interviews the specific focus was on their stories of work-life balance aspirations. The stories feature in the next section of the report.



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<sup>5</sup> Faith' was inspired by Fiona Whelan, a socially engaged artist and educator, who worked as a consultant on the research project. Fiona used a similar methodology in previous work she undertook with marginalised groups in Dublin. <http://www.fionawhelan.com/>



# 3

## Stories of Aspirations

Throughout the twelve focus groups conducted between November 2019 and March 2020 key research issues were explored with the women by asking questions to the group, group exercises, photo-diaries of daily lives and asking the women to write letters to 'Faith' to introduce themselves or offer advice. When the focus groups could not reconvene due to COVID-19 restrictions, telephone interviews were conducted with a selection of the most committed and engaged members of the group who represented distinct experiences and were at different points in their journeys towards achieving the work-life balance that they desired. This section will focus on the stories of those women.

### 3.1 'Lorraine'



One of the most engaged women in our group was a lone parent of four children and had lost her fifth child in infancy many years ago. Lorraine is now in her “forever home” with her children and is a tenant of Focus Ireland<sup>6</sup> but became homeless a few years ago due to domestic violence and lived in a supported refuge for women and children before coming into contact with Focus Ireland. For Lorraine, she says that she is 100% focused on her children. In addition to being a lone parent, her children have disabilities and she spoke in


<sup>6</sup> Focus Ireland works with local government, communities and other agencies to provide supported housing for those most in need

the focus groups about how challenging that can be. As a result, Lorraine spoke about the future being a worry and source of fear for her. It is important to her to always focus on planning ahead and being prepared for what could go wrong in the future. In contrast to many of the women who were almost solely focused on the present and living in survival mode, aspirations for the future were integral to Lorraine’s mind-set. Although she said she did not have a solid plan for the next few years, she was focused on ensuring security and stability for her family in the future.

She stressed the importance of being organised in order to stay on top of her current responsibilities. This was rooted in fear of what could happen to her children if something happened to her, especially as her oldest child has a disability<sup>7</sup> and although he is an adult now, he does not have the mental age of an adult. Many of Lorraine’s fears for the future are based on her own experiences as a child. Lorraine was fostered herself and was forced to leave her foster home when she became pregnant at 16, so her focus on the future is rooted in fear of her children going into foster care if something were to happen to her.

### Aspirations as a Parent

Many of Lorraine’s aspirations for herself were also closely tied to aspirations for her children. She spoke frequently about the aspiration to be a good role model to her children by pursuing things that interested her including further education.

 they see me working away...they see me interested. They see me shout and scream when I pass my assignments

Lorraine viewed her achievements in pursuing education as not only self-development, but also opportunities for being a better parent and teaching her children that they can achieve whatever they put their minds to as long as you put the hard work in.

Lorraine spoke about her kids being her reason for getting up every day and at the lowest parts in her life it was her children that kept her going. However, she also acknowledged that this was challenging and acknowledged the restrictions in her life as a result of focusing 100% of her time on her children. Speaking about relationships, Lorraine said she would not have the time and effort to put into a romantic relationship until her kids were grown up. At the same time though, her children will always need her due to their disabilities, so it is a further strain. When the group was asked what their proudest creation was, Lorraine spoke about being a role model for her children and specifically teaching them that it is okay to ask for help.


### Aspirations for her Career

Lorraine’s aspirations for her future are currently focused on how her financial situation will change once her youngest child turns seven in three years. At this point, she will no longer qualify for the One Parent Family Payment and will then be transferred to the Jobseeker’s Transitional Payment, which is a payment that aims to support lone parents to get back to work. Lorraine recognised the necessity to upskill in order to go back to work in a job that will bring in sufficient income to support herself and her children. She


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<sup>7</sup> Lorraine’s oldest child has severe ADHD

spoke about her fears of being faced with the barriers that will make it difficult for her to get back to work without support when that happens:

 So, it's only another three years, what am I going to do and that kind of scared me because I'm like I can't go out to work you know, in the sense of it's not like I can just walk out the door and go to work

Despite this, Lorraine is constrained in her circumstances right now due to her caring responsibilities and has limited options to upskill:

 If I could walk out tomorrow and you know, go into college I would but I just, I can't. I physically can't.

For Lorraine, the ability to upskill at home in a flexible way was a key pathway to gaining the skills necessary for her to pursue her passion. In terms of education, Lorraine had recently started an online course in psychology and counselling. The positives of this course are that it is low cost, she can do it at home and she can do it in her own time, which is crucial to allowing her to be flexible around her caring responsibilities:

 So, if one of my kids is sick tomorrow, I don't have to you know, do it tomorrow, I can pick it up the following day or the next week.


Lorraine recognised that despite this positive step, she is starting “*at the bottom of the ladder*” and that it will take a few years to achieve her goal of working in the field she wants to. In the meantime, Lorraine recognised that she would need to get a job that she will be able to do while her children are at school. At the moment, she plans to get a cleaning job as it is flexible and accessible to do within her schedule and given her caring responsibilities. She spoke about this not being a job she really wanted to do and that would fulfil her, but said that it is important for her to think practically in this regard as she needs to be realistic about what jobs are available to her currently.

Despite this, Lorraine has a positive attitude and spoke about feeling like she still could aim high and had options available to her, although it was a fear that she was not sure exactly what she wanted to do and felt like she was lacking guidance in this regard. She spoke about how it would be beneficial to have someone to sit down with her and map out the steps that it would take to get to where she wanted to be, and to figure out what different pathways there were and what her options are.


There was a recognition of the impact of being out of work for a long time. Lorraine spoke about her fear that when her children are grown up and she has the time to go back to work again, she won't have the skills that would be suitable for the type of job that would be meaningful and challenging to her.

## Aspirations for Self


Lorraine was one of the few women in the group who spoke about her aspirations for herself and her personal interests. She was aware of how her identity was linked to being a mother and a carer and spoke about wanting to do something for herself.

 obviously my kids are my reason for getting up every day but you have to have something for yourself

She spoke about it being a privilege to be a mother and a carer but also said that she is beginning to work on what she would like to be. Lorraine spoke about her hopes, ambitions, and dreams with a very positive outlook on the future. However, she did acknowledge that she was not always like this and had struggled with her mental health in the past. She spoke about losing her identity while being consumed with being a mother and a carer. She empathised with others in similar situations:

 I think there's a lot of people that you know, have lost hopes and dreams and have lost what they want to do and they've just become so accustomed to "this is my life": I'm a carer, I'm a mam and yeah - same thing every day

Although she spoke about having to "rebuild herself up from scratch" after reaching rock bottom, Lorraine spoke very positively about the relationship she had with support services which have helped her. She described the staff in support services as being like a family to her and she receives a lot of support from going to counselling and her housing support worker with Focus Ireland. Although Lorraine is to be credited with working on her mental health and herself, it is clear that when there are appropriate long-term supports for people who have experienced homelessness, domestic violence and foster care, that there can be a positive impact on their lives and their ability to plan for the future. Key to this change for Lorraine was the belief in herself:

 When we believe in ourselves, we can make anything happen

In terms of aspirations for personal skills and personal development, Lorraine had a broad set of things she wanted to achieve in the future; from working on being a make-up artist, to photography. Previously Lorraine had an opportunity to pursue her interest in makeup and beauty by enrolling in a part-time course, and she had planned to be able to work from home when her children were at school when she completed this course. She was accepted into the course but was unable to accept it as she would have lost her social welfare payment. Under the half-rate carers payment, she can only be in education for up to 18.5 hours a week and the course was 20 hours. She felt that this was unfair as her son (for whom she receives the payment) is in school for 30 hours a week, during which she would have been able to do the course.

She spoke about her passion for theatre and how she previously did a course in drama in a centre where there was onsite childcare for her sons which she described as a “fantastic solution” as she could learn and do something she was passionate about while being confident that her children were being looked after and if there were any problems she was in the same building as them. She spoke about picturing herself on stage when the children are older, and she has more time for herself.

**I still have like ambitions. I've never lost them... I have dreams and I still have ambitions and they're still there you know. I haven't closed them down. They're still a part of me. It's just about you know, finding the right key to open the right door or you know, finding the right pathway. That's the way I view it**

Like many women in the group, Lorraine sometimes felt very alone and she did not want to burden people with her problems or hardships. In this sense, she found the focus groups to be a very positive experience in which she could voice her experiences and opinions in a safe place without judgment, amongst people she could identify with:

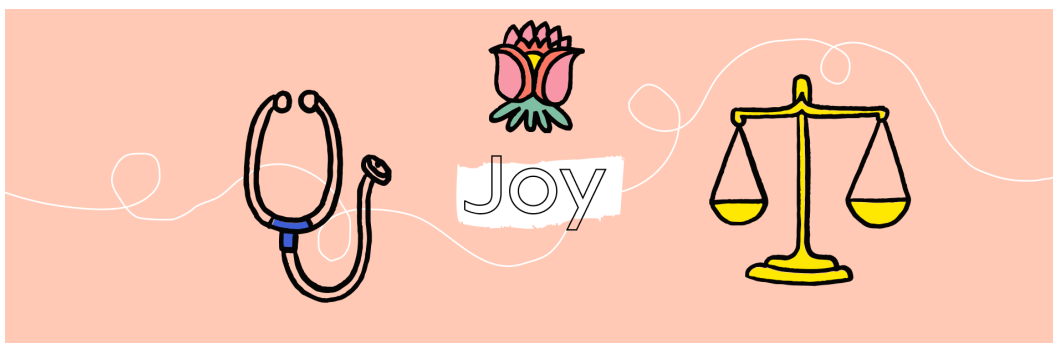
**It was so empowering being able to go and you know, to be able to feel like we were making a difference, are making and our voices really were heard.**

In this sense, one of Lorraine's aspirations for her life was to inspire other people. One of the ways she does this is through a Facebook group in which she shares positive quotes or affirmations in order to help lift other people up. Despite all of the challenges and difficult times in her life, Lorraine wants to use her experience of persevering through all of this and becoming a stronger and more resilient person to help others who have are going through hard times.

It is important to note that Lorraine is one of the few members of the group who has a secure, long-term home after experiencing homelessness both as a single person when she was pregnant and with her children. Lorraine describes her home as her sanctuary and a crucial component to Lorraine's journey back to education is that she has a safe and secure home in which she can do her classes and assignments. Lorraine's experience is an example of how having a secure, safe and stable home serves as the foundation to pursue education and a career path that can provide not only financial security, but self-development as well.



## 3.2 'Joy'



Joy was a very engaged and active member of the group throughout the research. Originally from Nigeria, she has three children and a partner who is currently working. She has been in emergency accommodation<sup>8</sup> with her family for three years since coming to Ireland, and during the pandemic was moved from hotel accommodation to “own door” emergency accommodation, meaning it is a self-contained unit but still emergency accommodation. Joy spoke a lot about feeling judged for being in emergency accommodation and she felt people looked down on her as if she was not intelligent because she is homeless. She felt that it was also a barrier when applying for jobs because she would have to put the address of the emergency accommodation when applying for a job. She said she does not hear back from employers a lot, even though she has a lot of experience and qualifications. Joy has recently started a course in Healthcare. The course she is doing is broken down to short courses which are done over 3 months, meaning she gains qualifications along the way. It will take 3 years for her to gain the full qualification in healthcare. She spoke about her desire to work in the healthcare sector stemming from her experience caring for her grandmother before she died.

**I think once in a while we need someone to care for us and then you know, when they are old like that, sometimes they need that company. Someone to look after them, someone to talk to, to communicate**

Joy had spoken about the costs of caring in a letter she wrote to ‘Faith’.

**Caring for someone can be likened to going on a roller coaster ride. You don’t need to apply for the position especially when it involves family because it is thrust upon you and it comes with no manual or job description, so you have to work with your instinct**

She understood one of the costs of caring being that it can have negative impacts in the future –


**never try to be a superhero if not you will blow up some day.**

<sup>8</sup> Emergency accommodation for families who are homeless in Ireland is typically provided in hotels, B&Bs, or family hubs (supervised, congregate facilities)


Although this is something that she cares about and feels connected to, this is not Joy's true passion or career aspiration. She has always wanted to study law or be in the army. When questioned about whether she will pursue this, she said that when the children are teenagers, she will go to pursue her "dream of being a lawyer".

### **Aspirations as a Mother**


Joy said that right now she is focused on taking care of her children and "seeing the children grow up and be responsible". She spoke about the importance of teaching her children how to make the best of the opportunities they have, but she felt that she had a responsibility to lead by example in this respect. Similarly to Lorraine, she spoke about the importance of her children seeing her studying and working hard.

 Take their studies seriously, focus on being a better person, get a better job and be better people.


This was partly rooted in her own experience of being discouraged by family in relation to pursuing her dreams. She spoke about her aunt discouraging her from pursuing her dream of being a lawyer and she did not want to do the same thing to her children.

 she used to discourage me which is what I don't want to do to my own kids. At least, if that's what they want...I leave them to pursue their dreams. Not interfere because that's the problem I had which is where I am today

As a result of her aunt disapproving of what Joy wanted to do, her aunt encouraged her to pursue linguistics and filled out a form for her to study this. She said that she never liked it and she ended up stopping halfway through the course because it was not what she wanted. A similar situation ensued when her mother encouraged her to do accounting.

 I went into accounting and I did, I finished certified accounting technician course and then went for ACCA but I didn't complete it. Because it still wasn't what I wanted.

Joy recognised the cultural factors which influenced this, as in her culture she said there is a high level of respect for your elder so she felt she must obey what she was being told to do or she would be seen as being disobedient. As she has realised how this has held her back in pursuing her career aspirations, this is not something she wants for her own children. She spoke about the desire to focus on her studies and who she wants to be so that she does not have any regrets in the future.

 I don't want to live a life where down the line I will have to think that I can regret oh I wish I did this when I had the time.

## Aspirations for Career

With regards to pursuing her dream of becoming a lawyer when her children are older and after she has been working in the healthcare sector, Joy indicated that she still has to research it and find out what the requirements will be. She knows that she will have to go to University but is not daunted by this:



**It's never too late to learn**

For this reason, Joy is pursuing the more manageable healthcare qualification right now so that she does not neglect her caring responsibilities. She worries about how the children would cope without her if she is not around as much. Even though Joy has a partner, she spoke about the problem not being that he was working, but that when he has free time he does not try to help with looking after the children or the housework. In this way, gender conditioning has meant that despite having a partner, Joy is doing the majority of the parenting because it is expected of her as a woman.

Joy also spoke about being constrained in her circumstances which is limiting how much she can work or study right now. Due to the current emergency accommodation they are staying in being further from the children's afterschool club than the previous emergency accommodation, it takes them longer to get home in the evenings meaning it is a very long day for them all. As a result, the children are not going to the afterschool club which limits the amount of time that Joy has without the children in which she could work.

The problem of childcare in Ireland has also caused Joy to miss out on getting more experience and qualifications. She spoke about having the opportunity to do Safe Pass training, which is health and safety training. This would have given her more opportunities for work, however due to not being able to get childcare for her youngest child, she was not able to attend. This was one of the opportunities she received with the support of the Focus Ireland PETE (Preparation for Education, Training and Employment) Programme. The current course she is doing in healthcare was suggested to her by the PETE staff, as well as previous training programmes she did in manual handling, mental health awareness training and infection control training. For Joy, the support service from the expert staff to help her get back to education and work has been vital to enabling her to plan for the future. This shows the impact that specialised support services can have for women who are struggling to get back to education or work and have experienced challenges such as homelessness. However, in Joy's view this cannot happen unless you are prepared to ask for support:




**it all boils down to you willing to accept help**

Joy stressed that her ability to go to work with the current course she is doing was dependent on flexible childcare that she could rely on. She is currently applying for jobs like cleaning as this is something she has done before and would have time to do



as the hours are flexible. She plans to look for work in the healthcare sector when she has completed her first module, as jobs in the sector require at least one certificate to be considered.


One of the barriers Joy is currently facing with being able to work more is extending her youngest child's hours in his crèche. She said there had been delays in the processing of the CHICK number (as part of the National Childcare Scheme to subsidise the costs of childcare), which would give her more flexibility to work.

 Now look at for example, I have three hours (free time). So, I have to find a way around that three hours most time and there is no work... If you drop him by nine and the job says you have to start by nine, there is no way you can link up


An additional factor out of her control which has led to delays has been ineffective communication from childcare facilities regarding waiting lists. She spoke about not hearing back from childcare facilities where she had hoped she would get a place for her youngest child, but she did not hear back which delayed her in applying for places elsewhere. Currently, she has found a childcare facility with spaces close to her where they live, but because she does not have the CHICK number, they will not accept him until they have the number.

### **Aspirations for Herself**

Despite all of the challenging situations Joy has been in, she has maintained a positive attitude. She spoke about looking for the bright side and making something good out of bad situations. She goes through her life feeling that choices she makes now affect her future and can impact on plans for the future, so she spoke about the need to make good choices to avoid being in bad situations in the future.

 when it feels like the weight of the world is on your shoulders, think of it as a phase. It will pass.

The judgement she has felt from people with regards to being in emergency accommodation has affected the way she sees herself and her self-esteem. She spoke about not feeling good enough because of the way people saw her:

 You allow other people's opinions, you look at yourself from other people's opinion which you know deep down you have something to offer, you're good enough. But because of the treatment you receive from people you not let that put you down

Motivation was something that drove a lot of Joy's determination to work on herself and continue to pursue her dreams:

So, those things they motivate me because one thing in life is if you don't have motivation then you can't do anything. So, you need to motivate yourself and then you need to fill your mind with affirmation; something to lift you. Everything depends on you.

She spoke about how she does not want to dwell on what could go wrong because "it is always when you least expect it that everything starts crumbling". Her mind-set is focused on getting through challenges and looking towards the future in order to learn lessons and move on.

Something that she spoke about doing for herself was practicing mindfulness and watching webinars on how to do this at home. Similarly to Lorraine, looking after her mental health seemed to be the foundation for being able to cope with the demands of her work-life balance.

Joy spoke about the positive factors in learning from other people's experiences in the focus groups and to express how she feels and what is on her mind:

As they say it's who wears the shoe that knows where it hurts

Although Joy is positive about the future and has made many efforts to pursue her aspirations for her children, her career and herself personally, it is clear that many structural barriers are making it difficult for her to progress with these aspirations at the moment due to living in emergency accommodation, unaffordable and inflexible childcare and stigma. Due to factors out of her control, Joy is currently locked out of the labour market and pursuing a career that she is passionate about.



### 3.3 'Maria'



Maria was the youngest member of the group, is originally from Romania and was 18 at the time of the focus groups. She has one child, a daughter who was born in November 2019. At the time her daughter was born, she was living in emergency accommodation after a relationship breakdown and she could not return to her parents' home. Despite this, she still does have the support of her family for herself and her daughter. Prior to this, she had left school and not obtained her Leaving Certificate<sup>9</sup>. At the time of the focus groups, she was in the same emergency accommodation for nearly six months with her new-born daughter. She spoke about the difficulties of living in emergency accommodation with a baby and not being able to cook or wash clothes. When the individual interview was conducted with her in October 2020, she had been living in the private rented sector with her daughter under the HAP scheme<sup>10</sup> for several months.

Financially, Maria has struggled since having her daughter. As a result, she spoke about her aspiration to get a part-time job to get some experience and increase her earnings. She cannot work full-time as she can only work three days to maintain her social welfare payment. She was worried she would not be able to find childcare for her daughter, and the cost of childcare was a big barrier for her. Due to Maria not having a Leaving Certificate or any work experience, she spoke about being concerned that when she gets a job it will not pay well and therefore whatever she earns will be spent on childcare. She expressed that she sometimes did not see the point in working in an unstable job for poor pay, especially when this is balanced with the costs of childcare. In addition, being a lone parent and being alone together in emergency accommodation with little support has possibly made Maria distrustful of leaving her daughter with someone else and she has expressed anxiety around leaving her daughter with a stranger:



I wouldn't rely on someone else to take as better care as me

She felt that she can only do jobs like cleaning at the moment, as she hopes this is a job she will be able to do without qualifications or references. However, she worries about whether this will be sufficient income to pay all of her expenses. She felt that there should be more job opportunities for people who do not have experience. In order to increase

<sup>9</sup> Final exams of the Irish secondary school system

<sup>10</sup> The Housing Assistance Payment is a form of social housing support provided by local authorities

her chances of getting a better job, Maria's current goals are to get her driving licence so that she can apply for jobs which are further away which she would not be able to get transport to without a car, and therefore increase her options. Although getting a car would be an additional expense, she felt that it was best to at least have her licence and it was best to do it now while she is young. She spoke about wanting to use whatever income she has left over when she gets a job to save up so that she can invest more into her career and use the money to do courses so that she can get a better job. In terms of areas of work that she is interested in, Maria spoke about wanting to work in the beauty sector or as an accountant, because she was good at maths in school. For now, she knows that she has to look at what resources she has that will get her to the next step in pursuing one of these as a career:

**I was thinking after I get my driving licence to do a course or something in the beauty or nails, and after that like with that course to get a better job**


Maria spoke frequently of the stress of not having enough money and how she worries for her future. Many of her current aspirations are based on having enough money to be comfortable in order to ease her stress:

**But I think if I had a better financial situation and didn't have that much stress with...keeping a shelter above your head and...taking care of children and just, if I had just the stress of feeding myself and that's it, then it probably would be much, much easier**

As such, with Maria experiencing being a lone parent and having experienced homelessness at such a young age, her current struggles are so rooted in worrying about having her basic needs met that it is difficult for her to focus on her mental health and self-fulfilment needs.

With the current income she has, after she pays the rent, she spoke of something else unexpected always coming up that she has to pay for as well. Currently living in the private rental sector, she receives a housing support payment, however she is aware renting is not stable and she could possibly become homeless again. She spoke about her fears of returning to emergency accommodation and fears of not having enough food for the week. Her fears show the trauma that can arise as a result of being homeless, particularly for lone parents. Due to the negative experiences she has had at such a young age, when questioned about whether she focuses more on the present or the future, Maria said she always thinks about the now and the day-to-day things she has to worry about. She said she focuses on her expenditures, paying her bills and taking care of her daughter. She spoke about this being more difficult due to being a lone parent and it is difficult to get what she wants. As a result, she spoke about forgetting to take care of herself and putting all of her work into caring for others. She spoke about the importance


of having opportunities for women like her to do something to take care of themselves as well, such as going back to school:

 And to have like something for women, you know, so they can take a bit of care of themselves as well, to have like free time or something, to have like a back to school programme or after school programme


Maria expressed a desire to go back to school and get a diploma and qualification once her daughter is older and is in school.

### **Aspirations for Self**

With regards to personal aspirations, Maria spoke about wanting to learn the violin. She said it was something she was looking into as a career and she wanted to pursue it as a hobby as it is something she has always wanted to do. She spoke about wanting to do it as a child but because of her family's financial situation she did not want to put pressure on her mother by asking for this:

 You know I wasn't that open to my family to tell my Mum 'I want that and I want that' because I would feel her financial situation, you know, and I didn't want to stress her out or something.

Like many of the women in the group, Maria expressed in the focus groups that she is proud of getting through hardship. She also expressed fear in the focus groups about being judged for her parenting:

 we hear so many cases of Tusla<sup>11</sup> taking children; we are afraid we are being watched and scared that children will be taken away

This feeling of being judged as a parent is a sentiment that came up very strongly in the focus groups from the women. Many of the women were afraid that their children would be taken into foster care. For Maria, she felt that the children were able to pick up on their mothers' anxieties and used this as an opportunity to misbehave.

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<sup>11</sup> State Agency responsible for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children.

### 3.4 'Josephine'



Josephine is a lone parent of a baby son and is originally from Guinea and has been living in Ireland for six years. Josephine was in emergency accommodation for single people up to the point of giving birth and once her son was born, they were moved to a hotel. Josephine spoke about the negative experience she had when she was homeless, such as not having any space for the baby to play. She spoke about how her baby's development was negatively affected because he could not play or walk in the room because it was too small. She felt lonely when she was in emergency accommodation because she was not allowed to have visitors. She also spoke about having her autonomy stripped when she was in emergency accommodation and would have to say where she was going and when she was coming back. Since the focus groups ended, Josephine has moved into a local authority house<sup>12</sup> with a garden for herself and her son. When the interview was conducted with her in October 2020, she spoke about the freedom she feels now that she has her own home:



**Here I am just free, I can do whatever I want**

Now that she has a stable home and knows that her son has the space and safety he needs to grow and develop, Josephine has felt like she can restart her life. When she was in emergency accommodation, she could not focus on her aspirations and goals because she was so focused on how to cope:



**Because when you are homeless you are not planning your life. Your life just stops**

This echoes the experiences of the other women, who are either constrained by their housing situation or have more opportunities due to having a secure home. However, the future is still something that Josephine worries about, and is aware that she cannot anticipate what will happen in the future, especially regarding factors out of her control:



**you know about today, but you don't know about tomorrow**

<sup>12</sup> Local authorities (or housing authorities) are the main providers of social housing for people who cannot afford their own accommodation. Local authority housing is allocated according to eligibility and need. Rents are based on the household's ability to pay.

## Aspirations for Child

Josephine's son is not currently in childcare and she is currently parenting full time and not working or in education. She has the support of her brother and sister who both live close by and spoke about the difference it made being able to invite them into her home and have visitors. Josephine is trying to get her son into crèche so that she can go back to education. Josephine spoke about her fears about letting someone she does not know into the house to take care of her son. Her preference for her son would be for him to go to crèche and then she would be happy that he is being taken care of and is safe. She spoke about the challenges of being a parent for the first time and how she is still learning what her baby needs and how to be a parent. Her main focus is on herself and her son:



**If I focus on myself and my child first, I am free of mind**

However, she acknowledged that when the baby is so young it is a challenge, and it is a balance all the time between her needs with the needs of her son. Similarly to other members of the group, Josephine often felt judged by society. She felt that other people try to dictate what is out of reach for her as a mother and as a woman. She spoke about the importance of being her own guide and realising that it is important to respect her right to live her life the way she wants to live:



**Yeah, but everybody has their own things to do in their life, you can't even teach somebody what to do, they have their own life, you have your own life**

Regarding social welfare payments to support her financially, Josephine also spoke of slow processing times for receiving the Child Benefit<sup>13</sup> and she felt it was a lot of paperwork.

Particularly around the issue of housing, when she was still in emergency accommodation she expressed a concern around the cost of housing, as it is increasing all the time. She felt it was difficult as a lone parent to earn sufficient income from working while still getting support from the State:



**If you are not working it's okay because they will help you, but if you are working they don't help you**


She gave the example of when she was working previously and was not earning a lot of money, but because she was working her Medical Card<sup>14</sup> was taken off her.

<sup>13</sup> This is a monthly fixed rate payment for all parents and guardians until the child turns 18

<sup>14</sup> A medical card gives access to medical services, prescription medicines and hospital care for free


## Aspirations for Career

Since she came to Ireland Josephine has had experience of both working and studying before she had her son. She has previously worked as a carer in a hospital and nursing home and spoke of her dream to be a nurse


 Yeah, yeah I always had an interest in working in as a carer. I also have an interest in working as nursing. That was my dream when I came here but it didn't come true but I will go forward and try again

She was halfway through a two-year diploma in social care when she had her son and hopes to finish the last year when she gets childcare for her son. She said this has been a struggle and she has put her son's name on waiting lists in a few crèches but will likely be waiting until next year. The course is full time and would require work placement as well as classes, therefore she cannot start it until she has adequate childcare for her son. Before she got pregnant, she was studying nursing full-time and working part-time in a nursing home and has not been able to return to this since having her son. She expressed a passion for education and learning and throughout the focus groups was very engaged in the exercises in which the women were learning, particularly the rights-based exercises. As such, she expressed her desire to both study and work, but this is all dependent on getting the place in crèche for her son.


Although she is a lone parent, she felt that she still had the agency to help herself and be proactive about getting back to work:

 Even if you are alone you should help yourself sometimes, just not even to sit and you are waiting for something but you can do part-time jobs, three hours, two hours whatever

For Josephine, she did not have an interest in doing online courses and valued the social aspect of education:

 I prefer to go to school. I don't like online things, yeah, I like to go to school and meet people, I don't like online stuff

Given the career path she has chosen, she recognised that there may be challenges in the future regarding organising childcare to cover shift work, especially as some nursing jobs would require availability for night shifts:

 you know some shifts you have the night shift...but if there is only that option you can't do the job, you have to mind your child

This shows the importance of childcare being flexible for working mothers in order to allow them to pursue jobs that they are passionate about.



Her current plan for when she gets the crèche space for her son is to return to education and then when her son is in school to pursue part-time work in nursing or social care.

### **Aspirations for Herself**

Now that she is settled in her home, Josephine said she was looking forward to driving. She cannot afford her own car because she is not working but for the time being her brother is going to add her as a second driver to his car. She hopes to be able to buy a car when she is working and is earning enough money.

She spoke about the hobbies that she enjoys and that she can do now that she has her own home. She spoke about her love for reading, watching movies, cooking and running. Now that she has her own space, she is grateful to be able to cook and watch movies. She stopped running when she had her son, but she said this is something she would like to return to and intends to run with her son in his buggy.

She also spoke about how she feels about Ireland. She said she had learned a lot since she came to Ireland and that it is home now. She expressed positive feelings towards Irish people and said that she has not experienced discrimination and felt that people in Ireland were honest and genuine. She said that as this is home she intends to stay for the rest of her life.



# 4

## Conclusion

### 4.1 Overall aspirations of the women

Conducting telephone interviews with four of the women in the group provided the research team with an opportunity to explore their aspirations mentioned in the focus groups in more depth and to hear how things had changed for them in the months following the premature ending of the focus groups.

The most striking thing to emerge from the aspiration stories of the women was the contrast between how the women who were housed spoke about their aspirations versus the women in emergency accommodation. For Lorraine and Josephine, having a stable and secure home provided them with the security they needed to go beyond worrying about having their basic needs met and therefore think about aspirations for themselves. Not having to worry about where they were going to live in the future was a significant weight off for them and their aspirations for their careers and for themselves personally went beyond just making it through the day. Having a permanent address and home meant that they could factor this into their decisions around upskilling, such as the ability to do an online course from home or being able to factor in logistical factors such as how to get to work or college. In contrast, for the women who were in emergency accommodation or had just exited emergency accommodation into the private rental market, their mental space was so occupied by the burden of not having a secure home of their own that their mind-sets were generally focused on coping strategies and present challenges. Even for Maria, the trauma of living in emergency accommodation as a lone parent with a newborn baby coupled with the lack of security living in the private rental market provides meant that her mind was occupied by the fear of returning to homelessness. As Josephine discussed, living in emergency accommodation denies the women from having aspirations as they feel that their lives are on hold. In addition to this was the time and emotional demands of care work, resulting in the women having little time to themselves – there was no space to ‘decompress’, to be able to think about their own needs, and not to have to worry about others, if even for a short time.

It was their experience as mothers which was the most dominant feature in their lives; it was this more than anything that framed their aspirations. Being the best mother they could be for their children, providing their children with the opportunities they needed to develop – opportunities that had often been denied to the mothers – this, more than

anything, is what drove their aspirations in life. A key finding from the research is that the care work they undertook effectively denied them the space to have aspirations outside of that role. Their aspirations were primarily focused on their children.

When discussing aspirations for themselves, the women think in terms of responsibilities, rather than aspirations. Aspirations are for other people. Acutely aware of the constraints they faced as a consequence of their care responsibilities, they often struggled to articulate aspirations for themselves.

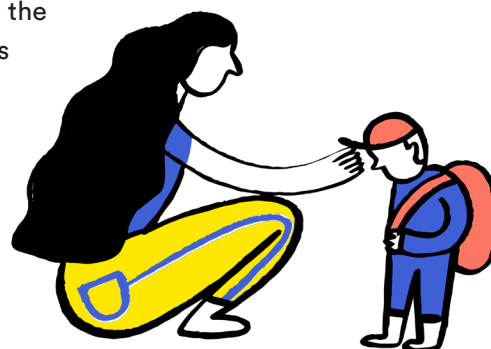
When the women thought about aspirations for themselves, they framed these in terms of things that might allow them to fit in all their responsibilities, about how they could work around their care role. Lots of ‘aspirations’ were simply women trying to figure out how they could make it all work. They think about things they could do, not things they want to do. For the women who did talk about aspirations for themselves in relation to hobbies or passions, these were seen as things they could only pursue when the children were grown up and their care burden was eased.

Focusing on achieving better for their children was an important driver in finding the resilience to overcome the challenges they experienced in life, and part of that ‘better’ was wanting their children to be able to achieve a better work-life balance. A key aspiration for the women was to have some relief from their care and domestic roles, to have some support in this regard so they had time to devote to self-development e.g. returning to education, upskilling for a better job etc. They could not reconcile the burden of their care work with earning a living.

The feedback from the women in the group was that they were stressed, exhausted, felt judged and lacked support. For the women who were living in emergency accommodation, the topic of aspirations was difficult for them to engage with and they were stuck in a mind-set of just trying to survive within their circumstances. Their aspirations related to having their basic needs met, such as finding adequate and secure housing and being financially secure. Beyond that, they did not express that they had the mental space to explore what it was that they really wanted in life beyond their caring responsibilities. This shows the trauma that homelessness inflicts on families, particularly on lone parents. Homelessness deprives families from exploring their hopes and dreams and until they have a stable home it is impossible for them to explore their aspirations.

The women strongly expressed a sense of pride and resilience in terms of the challenges they had overcome and they valued instilling the lessons learned from their experiences in their parenting. The one shared aspiration by all of the women, despite their circumstances, was to be the best mother they could be and give their children a good life.

The remainder of this section will outline the recommendations arising from the focus groups with co-researchers. These recommendations fed into an EU Synthesis Report<sup>15</sup>.



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<sup>15</sup> Available at:  
<https://www.regalproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/EU-Synthesispaper.pdf>

## 4.2 Basis for Recommendations

To frame their policy aspirations, the concept of Human Rights was discussed and explored with the women in the focus groups. Following this exercise, the women identified a set of overarching principles (see Figure 2 below), based on Human Rights, which should guide all policy formulation.

Figure 2. Overarching principles to guide policy formation



The Roma and African members of the group felt strongly that policies should ensure equality and reduce discrimination. Again, they often expressed this in terms of the life they wanted for their children, where they were not judged based on their ethnicity. They aspired for their children to be recognised as Irish citizens as they were born here.

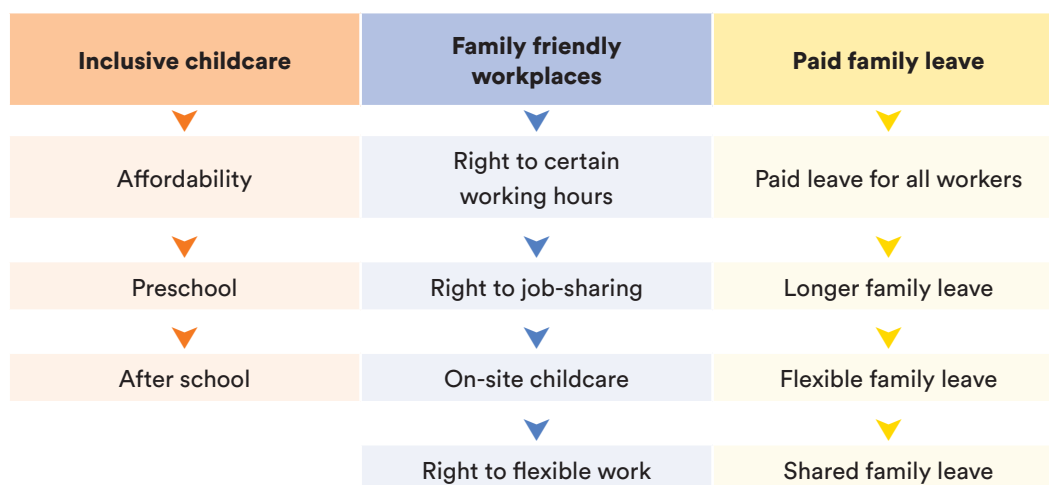
The women who were part of the REGAL research represented a diverse range of experiences and backgrounds. All of the women had experienced homelessness, some had now exited homelessness and were trying to rebuild their lives, others were struggling with the constraints of emergency homeless accommodation. Just over half were parenting alone, and just under half were parenting with a partner. However, it was clear that being partnered or not made little difference to their burden of unpaid care and domestic work. Shared parenting was a principle that most members of the group felt strongly about. Many spoke to past or current experiences with male partners that was lacking parental and domestic involvement, and thus the burden of unpaid work was falling on them. This was unequal and unfair.

## 4.3 Translation into Policy Recommendations

A general election took place in Ireland during the course of the research. Using the policy proposals contained in party manifestos to stimulate discussion, the women considered a range of policy aspirations, adjusting and adding to published proposals, and drawing in principles from their exploration of human rights and overarching principles.

In terms of nationality, there were three broad sub groups within the larger group: women who had grown up in Ireland, women from Romania, and women from African nations, predominantly Nigeria. Despite the diversity of the group, the exploration and discussion of policy preferences in the focus groups (as discussed in section 2) resulted in many of the women sharing the same recommendations for policy changes which would significantly improve their work-life balance. Figure 3 below illustrates the three core policy preferences and the main elements of each, as identified by the women.

**Figure 3. Policy recommendations identified by the co-researchers**



### Inclusive Childcare

Despite the attempts to introduce affordable childcare through the National Childcare Scheme, the high cost of childcare in Ireland remains the most significant barrier to labour market access for those with a care responsibility. As highlighted by stakeholders, the National Childcare Scheme leaves lone parents working full-time or in education worse off than they were before. Affordable childcare would ensure that the care burden is reduced for the women and they can pursue jobs that they actually want to do, rather than what is practical for them. Particularly as many of the women have worked in healthcare settings which requires long shifts and sometimes night shifts, affordable childcare would allow them to pursue the jobs they are qualified for and passionate about.

The policy changes implemented through the National Childcare Scheme focuses on early years' childcare until children are 3 years old. However, many of the women cited the lack of afterschool clubs or activities as a huge barrier to giving them additional hours in which they could work. The group recommended that afterschool activities be held within the school or where this is not possible, transport is provided. The women often had to collect their children from school in order to bring them to their afterschool club, meaning that they remained constrained and reduced availability for work or education.

### Recommendations:

- › A review and restructuring of the National Childcare Scheme with specific consideration given to affordability and related targeted provisions for low income parents, particularly those with school-age children.
- › Significant investment in the provision of a programme of pre and after school activities including transport that would afford low income parents the opportunity to consider realistic and meaningful employment and/or training opportunities.

## Family-friendly workplaces

Many of the women had experienced precarious work in which they were not guaranteed a certain number of hours per week, where they were required to be fully flexible and where their employers did not provide them with the flexibility to look after their care responsibilities. For example, some employers would not allow the women to have their phones with them during work, which was not feasible for lone parents who need to be able to be contacted in the event of an emergency.

As Lorraine stated through her experience doing a course, on-site childcare ensured peace of mind for her while she was doing her course. Particularly as many of the women cannot afford to own a car and rely on public transport, dropping off their children at childcare is an additional burden which could be eased by increased availability of on-site childcare.

Stakeholders identified the availability of good jobs, or decent work, as a key issue in the lives of marginalised women. Women in Ireland are more likely to be in low paid, poorly regulated jobs in sectors such as care or retail. Ensuring the right to certain working hours and eliminating zero-hour contracts<sup>16</sup> would provide women with the stability and security of a guaranteed wage every week. Additionally, an increased commitment to job-sharing schemes would allow the women to balance their caring responsibilities with work more effectively. However, any such endeavours are hampered by the Irish State's reluctance to regulate the labour market in relation to exploitation of vulnerable workers, low pay and precarious work. Ireland is one of only two of the EU 27 countries where Collective Bargaining is not yet mandatory.

### Recommendations:

- › The adoption of an EU Directive to 'harmonise the laws of EU Member States on collective bargaining and thereby establish the right to bargain in Irish law'
- › Robust regulation of the labour market with specific consideration given to guaranteeing a significant level of security and flexibility of employment that benefits working parents.
- › Significant investment in the provision of a programme of on-site childcare in places of employment and education.

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<sup>16</sup> Employees on zero-hours contracts are protected by the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997. However, this does not apply to casual or precarious work.

## **Paid Family Leave**

Although there has been a welcome expansion of social insurance benefits for parents in recent years, due to insufficient social insurance contributions from being out of work, many of the women are not covered by parental leave. There is still a limited recognition of the impacts of unpaid care work that needs to be addressed within the social insurance system to give these women access to paid parental leave. The women felt that parental leave should be longer and for the women in couples that there should be more flexibility for shared leave with fathers.

Input from stakeholders articulated that parental leave is a key support mechanism that can assist parents balance work and family life and maintain their connection to the labour market. However, provision of paid statutory leave for parents in Ireland is lower than the EU average.

### **Recommendations:**

- Reform of policy to ensure that:
  - 1 all parents are supported to take leave regardless of their level of social insurance contributions
  - 2 leave can be shared (based on family choice) to encourage a more equal sharing of parental leave between men and women
  - 3 leave is flexible, built around personal needs, career ambitions and the life stage, and employers are encouraged to support this.

## Recommendations for Social Welfare

The women expressed the stress and anxiety caused by the constant financial struggle they faced. As a result of the factors previously discussed, many of these women are trapped in their circumstances and are locked out of the labour market, leaving them to rely solely on social welfare payments. As illustrated through a budgetary exercise, these women are living on the minimum. An example provided by one of the members of the group who could not work due to the cost of childcare, showed that as a lone parent with three children under 12 years of age, she was surviving on €311 per week. After she has paid expenses such as rent, electricity, transport, phone, TV, she is left with €95 for the week to cover food, baby supplies and any unexpected costs. The minimum disposable income required to avoid poverty for a household with one adult and three children is €566.07<sup>17</sup> per week.

Income supports were a key issue identified by stakeholders, and specifically how amendments to the eligibility criteria for the One-parent Family Payment (OFP) in 2012 which were designed to incentivise welfare recipients away from passive income support to seek employment actually discouraged lone parents to work and drove some low income families deeper into poverty.

It is also clear that many of the stipulations around how many hours the women can work or be in education and keep their social welfare payments are not fit for purpose and an additional barrier to the women fulfilling their aspirations. The example provided by Lorraine illustrates that even for flexible courses that can be done from home and would provide the skills necessary to pursue flexible and meaningful work, they are unattainable if they want to maintain the stability their social welfare payments provide them. In Lorraine's case with the half-rate carers payment, she expressed frustration that this only allows her to be in education for up to 18.5 hours a week even though her son is in school for 30 hours a week. The group recommended a review of social welfare eligibility criteria and payment rates.

### Recommendations:

- The introduction of an independent poverty-proofed benchmarking of social welfare rates, directly indexed to the Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL).
- The introduction of a programme of income supports for lone parents who have been financially penalised as a result of reforms to OFP.
- A review of social welfare payments with specific consideration given to eligibility criteria that disincentives recipients to pursue employment and/or education.

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<sup>17</sup> According to Social Justice Ireland 'Poverty Focus 2020' Report. Available at: <https://www.socialjustice.ie/sites/default/files/attach/publication/6310/2020-05-18-sjipovertyfocusmay2020final.pdf?cs=true>













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