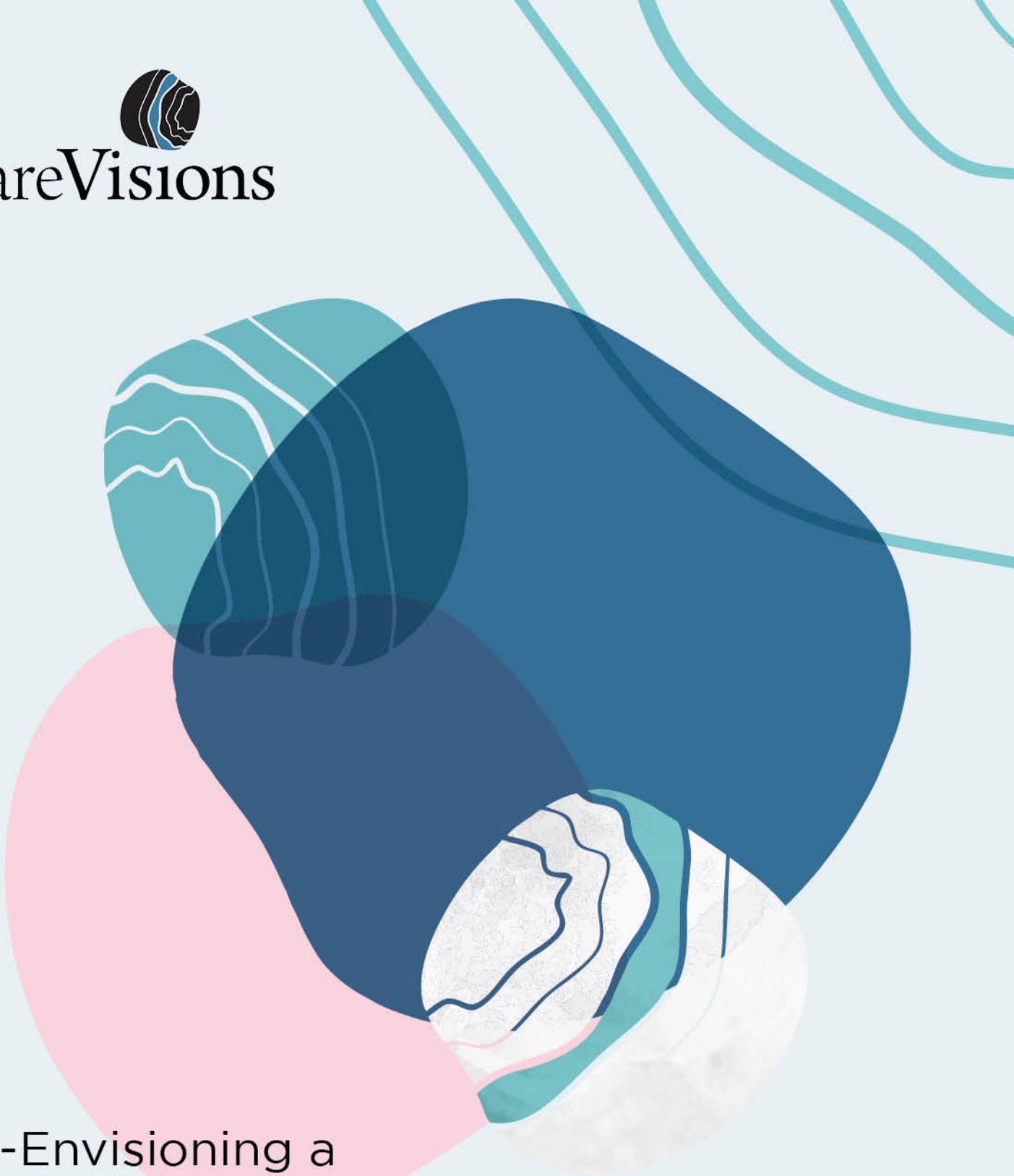
CareVisions



Re-Envisioning a **Care-Centred Society in Ireland** beyond COVID-19

SHORT
EASY READ
REPORT

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Introduction

Care is something that is very important in everyone's lives. It can mean lots of different things.

Care can be love and support that we give and receive in close relationships – with family, friends, neighbours and other people in our communities.

Care also means services that we might receive to support us in everyday life, for example, healthcare or disability services.

Care can also be a type of work.
For example, some people work as care workers, looking after and supporting children, or older people.

Care can be a hard word because while it should be good, care can be associated with bad experiences.

For example, disabled and older people have sometimes experienced violence and abuse from people who were supposed to be caring for them.

About the CareVisions research project

During COVID-19, there were lots of problems with care. Older people and disabled people were more likely to get sick with and die from COVID-19.

Many people did not get good care. People working in care also had to work in hard conditions.

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The CareVisions research project wanted to see what lessons we could learn about care from COVID-19.

We wanted to know about people's experiences of care and to imagine what good care could look like in the future.

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The research was carried out by researchers at University College Cork. We did different things as part of our research:

• We looked at government documents to see what they say about care.

• We asked disabled people their views about what good care should look like in the future.

•We spoke to asylum seekers about what they think about care and what care was like during COVID-19.

• We asked asylum seekers their views about what good care should look like in the future.

• Asylum seekers are people who have had to leave their country and ask to live in a new country. They come to Ireland looking for a safe place to stay.

• Asylum seekers have often been in great danger in their own country and during their journey to Ireland.

• In Ireland, many asylum seekers have to live together in hotels and centres provided by the government. This is called Direct Provision.

• In Direct Provision, asylum seekers have to share rooms and do not have much space. They do not have choice over meals and are not given much money.

Research Findings

What did we find from looking at government documents?

We found that care is only mentioned in terms of certain spaces or groups of people.

For example, we found that a report on COVID-19 talked about hospitals, nursing homes and residential centres.

This is a problem, as care takes place in lots of different places, including people's homes.

It is provided by lots of people, including friends, family, neighbours and not just those who are paid to work in care.

However, often the government does not see this care work because it is not paid. This is called hidden care work.

The documents also show that only certain groups in society are seen as in need of care.

Disabled people, older people and children are often mentioned as receivers of care.

However, there are other groups that also need care. Everyone needs care at different times in their lives.

What did disabled people tell us?

Meanings of care

Disabled people understand care in different ways. Some people said it was a good part of relationships – it meant kindness, trust and respect.

Other disabled people did not like the term care. They said it takes power away from disabled people. They prefer to talk about rights, support, and assistance.

Care relationships and services

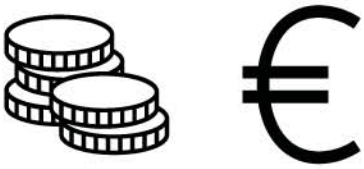
Disabled people told us about all the different relationships that support them in their everyday lives – with families, friends, neighbours as well as with Personal Assistants and care workers.

Disabled people told us these relationships are 'two-way'. They receive care from people, but they also give care.

For example, disabled people talked about supporting friends and family members going through hard times.

Many disabled people need personal assistance and supports to enable them to live independently.

They told us they sometimes find it hard to get supports and services. There are not enough services and not enough information about how to access them.



They also said services are more concerned with making money out of disabled people rather than supporting their well-being.

Disabled people said COVID-19 made it even harder to get care and support.

During COVID-19, many disabled people's services stopped, and they had to isolate or move back in with families.

They felt there were bad attitudes from members of the public towards disabled people. For many, it was a very hard time.

Disabled people did say there were some good aspects to COVID-19. Disabled people met online.

Through Zoom, they did workshops and built friendships. They talked about ways to try and change things.

Meanings of good care

Disabled people said good care means a number of things:

• That disabled people should have a choice about the support they want.

• That everyone should be able to access care equally.

• That care or support workers should be paid well.

• They also said that society should recognise that disabled people give care to other people.

What did asylum seekers tell us?

Living in Direct Provision during COVID-19

Asylum seekers living in Direct Provision centres said COVID-19 was very hard for them. There were a lot of cases of COVID-19 in the centres.

They could not isolate to stop themselves getting sick.

The experience of COVID-19 left them feeling very worried, anxious and scared.

Even though it was difficult, asylum seekers living in Direct Provision helped each other out where they could.

Asylum seekers working as care workers during COVID-19

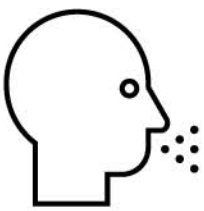
Some asylum seekers living in Direct Provision were also working as care workers in nursing homes during COVID-19.

They wanted to do this work to help and be part of the community.

The work was very hard, as a lot of older people in nursing homes were sick and could not see their families.

They said that sometimes they suffered from racism when doing this work.

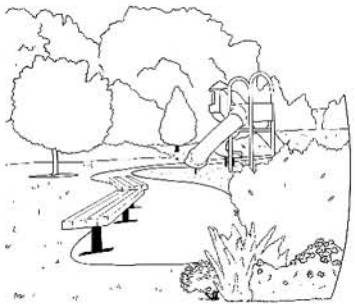
Racism is unfair or nasty treatment of someone because they belong to a particular race or ethnic group.



Some other asylum seekers living in Direct Provision weren't very happy about them doing this work.

They thought they would bring COVID into the centre from the nursing home.

Finding spaces of care



Asylum seekers wanted to find spaces where they could spend time with friends, family and the community outside of the Direct Provision centre.

We looked at two places where asylum seekers had built community gardens.

In these gardens, they spent time outside in the fresh air with other asylum seekers and the local community.

They grew different plants and their children could play outside.

Asylum seekers said these gardens were very good for their well-being.

It helped them to care for the environment and feel part of the community.

Meanings of good care and changes for the future

Asylum seekers said that good care means being treated with respect and dignity.

They said there should be more supports in Direct Provision for their mental health and staff should be better trained to support them.

Overall, our research found that Direct Provision does not make people feel safe or cared for.

It would be better if Direct Provision centres closed and asylum seekers could live in the community.

Asylum seekers need to be supported to become part of the community.

Conclusions

What should we do to make care better in the future?

We learnt lots of things about what it is like to give and receive care in Ireland. We heard about how things should change.

We came up with a list of things that should happen to make things better.

We need to talk more about care and how it is understood.

We know that talking about care can be hard as some people have had bad experiences of care.

Organisations representing those who give and receive care should meet to discuss the future of care.

We need to think about care as something that is a very important part of society and of being human.

Everyone should be supported to give and receive care at different times in their lives.

We need to change attitudes towards care in Irish society.

Care work is often not seen as important and is not well paid.

People who receive care are often seen in a negative light because they need care.

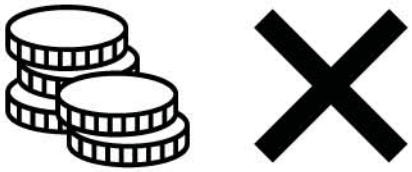
We need to change this.

Good care can only happen when:
The person needing care has been able to make decisions and choices about the care they want.

The person giving care has good support, such as fair pay and good working conditions.

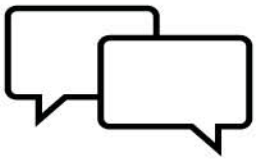
The Government needs to make sure people's care needs are met.

They also need to make sure care workers are valued and paid fairly.



We need to stop companies making money out of providing care to people.

Care should not be about making money.



The voices of people affected by care - including disabled people and asylum seekers - should be at the centre of any government and policy discussions about care.

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