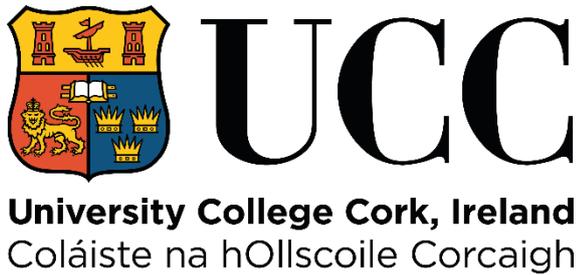


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**The Irish Sudden Infant Death Association: What  
type of interest group is it, and how did it contribute  
to the establishment of the National Sudden Infant  
Death Register?**

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for the degree of

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**2019**

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BMRB: British Medical Research Board.....	51
CDR: Central Register for Cot Deaths.....	58
CSO:Central Statistics Office.....	58
DoH: Department of Health.....	8
EEC: European Economic Community.....	68
ESDI: Enquiry into Sudden Death in Infancy.....	33
EU: European Union.....	25
FF: Fianna Fáil.....	6
FG: Fine Gael.....	47
FSID: The Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths.....	25
GP:general practitioners.....	18
HEB: Health Education Bureau.....	57
IMO: Irish Medical Organisation.....	18
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LP: Labour Party.....	62
MRC: Medical Research Council.....	49
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SAC: Scientific Advisory Committee.....	36
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TD: Teachtaí Dála.....	26
UK: United Kingdom.....	24
USA: United States of America.....	33
WHO: World Health Organisation.....	33
WP: Workers Party.....	62

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This thesis is in memory of Brendan Berry and every single child who has died suddenly and unexpectedly prior to and since the establishment of the Irish Sudden Infant Death Association (ISIDA).

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Sincere thanks to the Carmichael Centre staff, home of the ISIDA offices since 1992, who have facilitated many late nights these past 12 months, while completing the research. To my wonderful and patient supervisor Dr Theresa Reidy for her steadfast guidance these past two years, thank you sincerely.

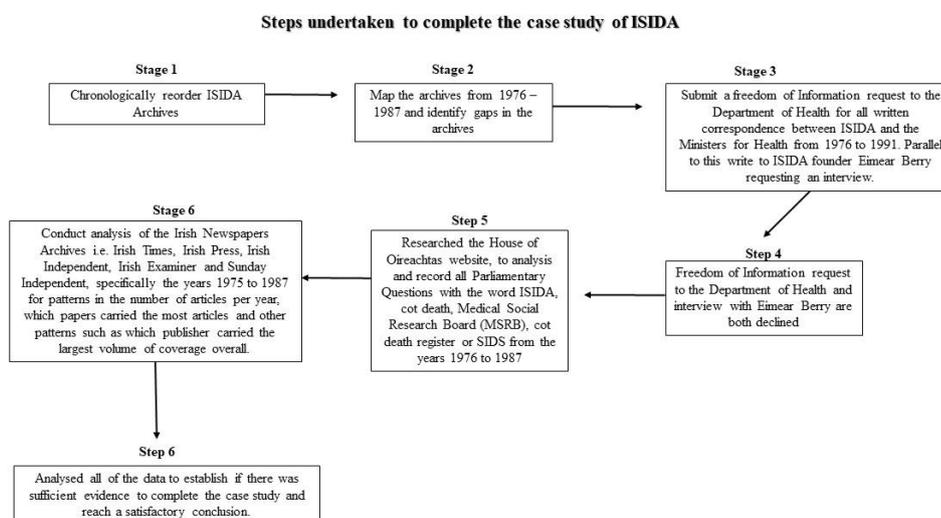
To my magnificent wife Liza, wonderful son Alex, my parents Charlie and Mary Mernagh and my in-laws John and Aileen Reilly, thank you all so much for your unwavering support. Finally, to my late grandparents Peg and Tom O' Grady, the most wonderful and influential people in my life, this is for both of you.

## Introduction

On November 27<sup>th</sup> 1975, Eimear Berry discovered her fourteen-week old son Brendan dead in his cot, the death was silent, sudden unpredictable and of unknown cause – classic Sudden Infant Death Syndrome<sup>1</sup> (SIDS). In search of answers, Berry saw a TV documentary about SIDS which referenced the Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths<sup>2</sup> (FSID) in England, whom Berry contacted in the hope of establishing a similar group in Ireland. On February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1977 the Irish Sudden Infant Death Association (ISIDA) was formally established, cited its' general aims were to increase public awareness of the problem of SIDS and bring pressure to bear on the appropriate authorities to supply the necessary funds and facilities for further research into SIDS in Ireland. On July 16<sup>th</sup> 1987, the then Minister for Health, Dr Rory O'Hanlon TD, Fianna Fáil (FF), announced the formal establishment of the National Sudden Infant Death Register (NSIDR).

## Objectives

### Case study methodology



*Table 1: A diagram of the steps undertaken to complete the case study of ISIDA and determine what type of interest group it is and how did it succeed in establishing the NSIDR*

<sup>1</sup> **Sudden Infant Death Syndrome** a technical term for crib death or cot death (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019)

<sup>2</sup> **The Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths:** established in 1971 by Nancy Hunter-Gray after the death of grandson from SIDS (The Lullaby Trust, 2019)

An in-depth case study of the ISIDA was chosen as the method deployed as it offered a unique opportunity to further advance the knowledge around how a cause-centred interest group in Ireland is established, how it operated and how it interacted with its various stakeholders when exerting influence and how in exerting that influence it contributed to in shaping a specific public policy. Furthermore, an in-depth case study of this type would also support further analysis of the interest group research of Murphy (Murphy, 1997)), Zeller (Zeller, 1938), Patten (Patten, 1894), Bentley (Bentley, 1908), Grant (Grant, 2000), Baggott (Baggott, 1995), Olson (Olson, 1971), Schattschneider (Schattschneider, 1935) and Castles (Castles, 1967)

A case study approach was chosen as this was the first-time the ISIDA had permitted access to its archives for research purposes. Therefore, any findings from a case study would be first-hand to this specific interest group which could potentially further advance the broader study of interest groups in Ireland such as Murphy (Murphy, 2010),.

An initial review of the archives which covered 1976 to 1992 found memorandums of association, articles of association, statements of accounts, minutes of meetings, letters of correspondence, newsletters, press statements, photographs, and grant research applications. The majority of the documentation was primary sourced whose authors included the ISIDA founder Eimear Berry, Dr Peter Froggatt, Vice-Chancellor Queen's University Belfast, Prof. Gerald Cussen University College Cork, Dr Victoria Coffey, Trinity College Dublin, Former TD Jim O' Keeffee Fine Gael Party, Dr Freda Gorman, Consultant Neonatologist, National Maternity Hospital and Dr Rory O' Hanlon former Minister for Health Fianna Fáil party.

Unfortunately, after decades of inattention, the ISIDA archives required significant attention including chronologically rearranging for the case study., This was a sizable task entailing over three months of Meticulous reviewing hundreds of documents from the years 1976 to 1992. On completion, it presented a chronological map of the ISIDA

from 1975 to the establishment of ISIDA in 1976 onwards to the announcement the NSIDR in 1987 (See Table 2).

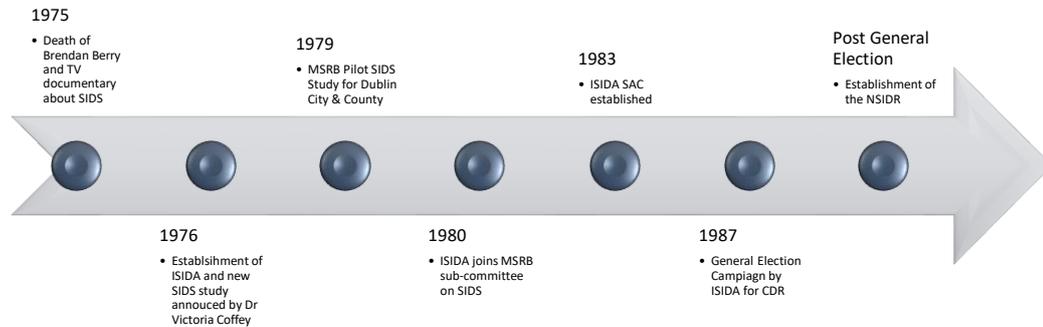


Table 2 ISIDA timetable 1975 to 1987

The next stage was to identify secondary sources that could assist in cross-referencing and verifying the accuracy of the relevant ISIDA primary sources to the case study, while also filling potential gaps in the documents. These primary information gaps were on the written correspondence between the ISIDA and Dáil Deputies on parliamentary question requests and with the former Ministers for Health. The first secondary source was a freedom of information request submitted to the Department of Health for all written correspondence between ISIDA and the Ministers for Health from 1976 to 1991. This was declined by the Department of Health (Department of Health: FOI Unit, 2019) on the basis that “FOI Requests only cover a time period from 21<sup>st</sup> April 1998 to present day, so we are unable to process this request under the Freedom of Information Act”. The next potential secondary source was an interview request to the founder of ISIDA Eimear Berry, which was also unsuccessful as Berry who left ISIDA in 1993 respectfully declined any involvement regardless of the context. The final option was the House of Oireachtas website, where analysis of Parliamentary Questions (PQs) specifically all PQs with the word ISIDA, cot death, Medical Social Research Board (MSRB), cot death register or SIDS from the years 1976 to 1987. These PQs offered an opportunity to cross-reference against the ISIDA archives while also filling gaps in the archives. To analyse the PQ data effectively, the

data first needed to be recorded in an excel spreadsheet. In doing so, you could cross-reference against the ISIDA archives while also identifying patterns in the type of questions, which political parties asked the most questions, which Dáil Deputy within these political parties asked the most PQs and which years were the most PQs asked and how did all this data relate to the case study but specifically the establishment of the NSIDR.

The next secondary source was a thorough analysis of the media coverage of ISIDA during the years 1976 to 1987. While the ISIDA newsletters were helpful in showing samples of the media coverage, it was still essential to get a broader picture of the relationship between ISIDA and the media. An analysis was undertaken of the Irish Newspapers Archives and the Irish Times Digital Archives, specifically any articles related to Eimear Berry, cot death, ISIDA or the NSIDR from 1975 to 1987. What was immediately identified was the large volume of media coverage pertaining to this sample of words both in national and regional newspapers. Therefore, due to limited resources, it was decided to filter the search to a sample of the national newspapers, i.e. Irish Times, Irish Press, Irish Independent, Irish Examiner and Sunday Independent. The sample looked at the years 1975 to 1987 for patterns in the number of articles per year, which papers carried the most articles and other patterns such as which publisher carried the most significant volume of coverage overall. The results were then analysed to ascertain again what role the media coverage had to help ISIDA achieve its' aims, specifically the establishment of the NSIDR.

Considering both the primary and secondary sources (See Table 1), i.e. ISIDA archives, House of Oireachtas website, Irish Newspapers Archives and the Irish Times Digital Archives, and the missing documentation. i.e. the correspondence between ISIDA the Dáil Deputies and Ministers for Health. It was still more than feasible to proceed with a detailed case study of the ISIDA to establish what type of interest it is and establish how it succeeded in the NSIDR. Had the Department of Health granted access to the records of the former Ministers for Health records or had Eimear Berry agreed to the interview, it would have just further reinforced the conclusion reached in this case study.

## Literature Review

### What is the history and definition of interest groups?

In some respects, the origins of interest groups paralleled those of political parties and came into being to articulate the ever-growing divisions and cleavages<sup>3</sup>. For example, Philip Norton in *Politics UK* (Pearson Education Ltd, 2010, p. 181) references how in 1787 the Clapham Sects<sup>4</sup> established the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade (SEAST). The SEAST achieved its aim in 1807, with the abolition of slavery across the United Kingdom (UK).

At the dawn of the twentieth century, patterns of political interaction were dramatically transformed with the growing prominence of organised interest groups. As Andrew Heywood explains in *Politics* (Heywood, 2013, p. 245), interest groups became the “children of a new age of representative government”. By example, in the 1930s Prof Elmer Eric Schattschneider of Wesleyan University in Middletown published several writings on political parties within which he also discussed interest groups and their role in a modern democracy. These writings included *Politics, Parties and the Tariff* (Schattschneider, 1935), *Party Government* (Schattschneider, 2004), *The Struggle for Party Government* (Schattschneider, 1948) and in September 1948, *Pressure Groups versus Political Parties* in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (Schattschneider, 1948, pp. 17-23). In this thesis, Schattschneider looked to explain the difference between the political party and interest group and how they could be both “antagonistic” and “complimentary” of each other depending on the circumstances. Schattschneider determined the interest groups as been “Children of Neglect” within the American politics who thrive on the weakness of the parties. Schattschneider resolved that unlike political parties, interest groups do not attempt to get power by winning elections; hence, they are exempted from the compulsions which determine the nature of party organisation. As a consequence of this fact, Schattschneider believed some of the most “fabulous successes” in American public life had been achieved by interest groups.

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<sup>3</sup> **Cleavage:** A social division that creates a collective identity on both sides of the divide (Heywood, 2013, p. 245)

<sup>4</sup> **Clapham Sect of Saints:** group of evangelical Christians, prominent in England from about 1790 to 1830, who campaigned for the abolition of slavery and promoted missionary work at home and abroad (Tomkins, 2010)

Schattschneider hypothesis was that “organised minorities” need not be large, prominent or wealthy to gain access to the American Congress, because their claims were almost rarely scrutinised thoroughly. What Schattschneider did believe a requirement, was familiarity with the procedures of American Congress and “contacts” with crucial congressional and administrative personnel, a talent for bluffing and a to quote Schattschneider directly “colossal amount of gal” (Schattschneider, 1948, p. 19)

Where the political parties primary concern is winning elections and expanding appeal, the interest group has a more clear-cut position towards the people it represents. The term “*interest group*” covers an immense diversity in scale, organisation, objectives and behaviour, and there is a vast number of organisations which could be recognised as interest groups. Some act as an interest group in specific environments, e.g. local businesses, schools, hospitals, voluntary organisations, and community groups. There are also significant variations within which interest groups engage with the political system at a local, national, European and even global scale. Also, there are the close relationships the groups have with ministers and civil servants, while other groups might focus on the legislature or affecting public opinion. Considering all of these factors, it is understandable why the definition of interest group has adjusted over the decades (See Table 3). These differences have resulted in various attempts being made to classify interest groups, and in a better understanding of their methods of operation, as will be seen later in the sub-heading *Types of Interest Groups*.

---

**Table 3 Variants on the definition of interest groups 1967-2000**

Francis Castles in *Pressure Groups and Political Culture* (Castles, 1967, p. 1) defined *any group to bring about political change, whether through government activity or not, and which is not a political party in the sense of being represented at that particular time in the legislative body.*

Robert Baggott in *Pressure Groups in Britain: Change and Decline?* (Baggott, 1988, p. 26) defined *an organisation which seeks to influence the details of a comparatively small range of public policies and which is not a faction of a recognised political party*

Wyn Grant in *Pressure Groups and British Politics* (Grant, 2000, p. 9) defined an interest group,

*as an organisation which seeks as one of its functions to influence the formulation and implementation of public policy, public policy representing a set of authoritative decisions taken by the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary, and by the local government and the European Community.*

In ISIDA's first newsletter (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1977, p. 2) it cites one of its aims is to bring pressure to bear on the appropriate authorities to supply funding and facilities for further research in the field of SIDS. That given the most pertinent definition concerning ISIDA is Robert Baggott's from *Pressure Groups in Britain: Change and Decline?* (Baggott, 1988, p. 26) ISIDA is "an organisation which seeks to influence the details of a comparatively small range of public policies and which is not a faction of a recognised political party".

### **What are the different types of interest groups?**

In 1908, Arthur F. Bentley published his thesis *The Process of Government* (Bentley, 1908, p. 211), in which he stated he stated: "there is no group without its interest and political scholars must start asking 'How' not 'Why' people have constructed societies". It was Bentley's opinion that political science had become barren because it had only analysed practices, when it should be dealing with "felt things, not with feelings, with intelligent life, not with ghosts" (Bentley, 1908, p. 435).

In *The Process of Government* (Bentley, 1908, p. 434) Bentley identified two types of interest groups: 'discussion groups' and 'organisation groups'. Careful not to attempt defining the two group types, he envisaged the process as a flowing stream in which a 'perpendicular cross-section' represented the discussion phase of the group and a 'horizontal cross-section' the organisation phase of the group (Bentley, 1908, p. 435). He described how occasionally passing through a narrow channel was a very deep narrow stream, where the 'perpendicular cross-section' (discussion phase) would appear to be the entire nature of what was taken place; however, as the narrow stream widens out on a broad level surface, the 'organisation phase' come into view, rendering the discussion phase irrelevant. While Bentley saw no sharp boundary line between either group, he did, however, view the 'organisation phase' as vastly more important.

Bentley perceived both groups as forms of the organisation of social life in the broader sense of the word ‘organization,’ i.e. in how they show similar functional aspects. He explained this hypothesis by way of how both groups have leadership, habitual habits, phenomena of survival, how both may be charged with ‘tyranny’ and how, when a movement of liberty is underway, that movement is a movement of underlying interests which are seeking better expression of benefits for themselves. Carl Kelsey said in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (Kelsey, 1909, p. 245), that “while Bentley’s research method was still too new, his evidence too complex to be mastered at once, there was overall a volume of literature here that will command respect and provoke thought”.

A lot has changed since the publication of *The Process of Government* (Bentley, 1908). For example, Wyn Grant in *Pressure Groups and British Politics* (Grant, 2000, p. 18) summarises how a count of primary and secondary interest groups across the British isles would almost certainly run into tens of thousands. To study each one of these groups individually would be impossible, therefore over the past forty years, there has been the attempt to create ‘typologies to classify groups’ (Grant, 2000, p. 18). This has been done both for descriptive purposes and the possibility that such classifications would result in the useful generalisation about the group’s behaviour.

However, there have been issues with classification, as Baggott explains in *Pressure Groups Today* (Baggott, 1995, p. 13). Though in many cases, the methods utilised by various authors have been parallel, the authors have tended to use different labels even when identifying the same phenomena, causing much confusion. Notwithstanding these setbacks, the critical distinction made has been that between ‘*sectional*’ and ‘*cause*’ groups (See Table 4). Though other researchers have adopted their labels for each type, the basis of ‘classifications’ across the board is the same.

In *Pressure Groups and British Politics* (Grant, 2000, p. 18), Wyn Grant explains that the *sectional* groups represent a section of the community, and their responsibility is to look after that section of the community. Membership within the sectional group is generally restricted to that section. On the other side, the *cause* group “represent some belief or principle ...” (Grant, 2000, p. 18). Their goal is to act in the interest of that cause, and their membership is unrestricted. Hence anyone can join the cause group

and in doing so is signifying their “acceptance of the belief or principle” (Grant, 2000, p. 18).

The sectional groups tend to organise as broad a section of their membership as possible. When it comes to government status, Grant explains that the sectional group’s position depends considerably on the legitimacy to speak for a particular industry, group of employers or profession. While cause groups tend to subdivide into those calling for mass membership to campaign and those who are content with restricted membership and as Grant summarises the implicit emphasis is “quality rather than quantity” (Grant, 2000, p. 18).

*Table 4 Classifying interest groups from Robert Baggott book Pressure Groups Today (Baggott, 1995, p. 13).*

<b>Types of Groups</b>	
<b>Sectional Groups</b>	<b>Cause Groups</b>
Membership <i>restricted</i> to those with a shared background or performing a standard socio-economic function.	Membership <i>open</i> to those who support the cause, or who share common values.
Primarily exists to protect members’ <i>self-interests</i> as defined by the group.	Primarily exists to further the <i>interests of others</i> (or the public interest) as defined by the group.
<i>Examples:</i> Irish Chamber of Commerce Irish Medical Organisation Irish Nurses’ and Midwives’ Organisation National Association of General Practitioners Irish Farmers’ Union	<i>Examples:</i> Irish Sudden Infant Death Association Irish Patients’ Association Irish Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
<i>Also known as</i> interest groups	<i>Also known as</i> attitude groups promotional groups

While the sectional and cause group contrast has produced useful overviews such as the groups focused on lobbying activities around ministers, civil servants and the executive compared to the cause group focused on the legislature and influencing public opinion.

It was also believed that *sectional groups* are more influential than *cause groups* due to superior tactics, organisation skills and resources. However, as Grant explains, even if the cause groups have less money, they have more enthusiastic activists willing to devote time and energy to the groups’ work.

Another classification that has been utilised in the study of interest groups and that has some durability has been the Wyn Grant's *insider group* and *outsider group* classification and its various subdivisions (Grant, 2000, p. 19). Grant summarised the insider groups as being deemed as legitimate by government and frequently conferred, adding that the outsider group either does not seek to become involved in an advice-giving relationship with officials or is unable to gain the recognition. Grant's primary point about the insider/outsider distinction was that the interest group had to be able to deploy specific political skills before being acknowledged as an insider group. Therefore, the group needed to be able to demonstrate to the civil servants that it could "talk their language: to have expertise in presenting its case, in negotiation and in accepting the outcome of that negotiating process" (Grant, 2000, p. 19). (See Table 5)

Table 5 The insider group and outsider group classification from Wyn Grant's book *Pressure Groups, Politics and Democracy in Britain* (Grant, 2000, p. 19).

"High-profile"	"Low-profile"	"Prisoner groups."	<b>Insider groups</b>
Potential insider	Outsider groups by necessity	Ideological outsider groups	<b>Outsider groups</b>

Robert Baggott in *Pressure Groups Today* (Baggott, 1995, p. 19) said of Wyn Grant's classification it is

*perhaps more useful than most other typologies because it is so flexible. Unlike the sectional and cause group typology, this classification is based on status, which could be acquired or lost depending on how the environment changes. An outsider group can become an insider group; and vice versa.*

While the classification of interest groups can at times be problematic, those issues are not insoluble, and it is, therefore, feasible to develop and test propositions about interest groups' behaviour and influence in a meaningful way.

For example, it is possible to demonstrate how ISIDA advanced from a 'discussion' to 'organisation' group. The discussion opened at the group's informal preliminary meeting at the home of Eimear Berry on February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1977. Studying ISIDA's first newsletter (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1977), specifically 'general aims', it is possible to confirm by the end of the meeting they were an organisation group (See Table 6)

Table 6 The general aims of the ISIDA as listed in its first newsletter: (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1977)

1. To support, help and counsel parents bereaved by a cot death.
  2. To increase public awareness of the problem of Sudden Infant Death.
  3. To bring pressure to bear on the appropriate authorities to supply the necessary funds and facilities for further research in this field.
  4. To raise funds for furtherance of the above mentioned aims.
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### **What are the theoretical perspectives of interest groups?**

The three most influential theoretical perspectives on the role of interest groups in the political system are pluralism, corporatism and the New Right, each of which will be explored in this subsection. To begin with, pluralism, which offers the most positive image of group politics: at its core is the theory that political power is fragmented and widely dispersed. Decisions that are made through a series of negotiations and interactions, ensuring that the views and interests of many groups are considered. (See Table7 )

Pluralists also determine that interest groups are instrumental in upholding their core principles. They are seen as a vital channel of communications. As Baggott explains in *Pressure Groups Today* (Baggott, 1988, p. 34),

*while the pluralists acknowledge that election results are a reflection of support for the broad portfolio of policies adopted by the major political parties, the interest groups can reflect a more accurate opinion concerning narrower issues*

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Table 7: The pluralist view of interest groups from Robert Baggott's *Pressure Groups Today* (Baggott, 1995, p. 33)

- 1) Interest groups are key political institutions which strongly influence policy-making in modern democracies.
- 2) Interest groups uphold the main pluralist principles by representing the whole range of views and interests in the society, by providing an important channel of communication between government and the governed, by encouraging participation and by acting as a check on the powerful.
- 3) There are checks and balances which prevent any single group from becoming too powerful.
- 4) There are no barriers to the formation of groups.

- 5) Political resources are not equally distributed among groups, but no single group has the lion's share of all political resources.
  - 6) Access to the political system is relatively open, with interest groups being able to put their case forward with little difficulty.
  - 7) Interest groups are democratic organisations. The leaders of the organisations are responsive to the demands of the rank-and-file members.
- 

The pluralists view interest groups as affording a more helpful complement to the electoral process, where they provide a clear and permanent representation of society's preferences on specific issues, in the book *Pressure Groups Today* (Baggott, 1995, p. 33). Baggott said pluralists determine that "by representing a broad range of interests and preferences in society, and by mobilising public opinion, interest groups can check the concentration of political power" In the book *Politics* Andrew Heywood (Heywood, 2013, p. 250) said, "Group politics is thus characterised by a rough balance of power".

There have been several pluralist writers over the years the most prominent being Arthur Bentley with the *Process of Government* (Bentley, 1908), who argued that "each interest would establish its interest group and the interaction of these groups was definitive of democracy". Continuing, he said, "when the groups are adequately stated everything is stated and when I say everything I mean everything".

There was also Simon Patten's *The Organic Concept of Society* (Patten, 1894) and more empirical studies by Belle Zeller in 1930s with *Lobbies and Pressure Groups: A Political Scientists Point of View* (Zeller, 1938) In 1894 Simon Patten published one of the earliest attempts to develop the theoretical perspective of 'pluralism' titled *The Organic Concept of Society* (Patten, 1894, p. 94). In his writing, Patton stated: "whenever the objective conditions and pressure of utilitarian motives are the same for a group of individuals, they project the same subjective environment, and thus form a society". Patten wrote that "each becomes part of the economic mechanism in order to increase his sum of utilities and to decrease his costs" (Patten, 1894, p. 88) Patten's theories would go on to become very influential among Progressive Movement politicians and policy. While Patten was writing from an economic perspective, his literature has still had relevance in attempting to explain why interest groups form.

In the 1930s there were several studies by Belle Zeller PhD of Brooklyn College, New York City including “Pressure Politics in New York: A Study of Group Representation. Before the Legislature” (Zeller, 2018) and *Lobbies and Pressure Groups: A Political Scientists Point of View*, which was published in *The Annals of the American Academy* in January 1938. In this writing, Zeller concluded that “pressure groups hold the key to the future of democratic governmental process in America.” (Zeller, 1938, p. 87) In expanding her theory, Zeller explains that interest groups have “modified their pressure techniques in the light of the extension of universal manhood and womanhood suffrage.” Zeller determined that lobbying excesses had to be checked through the administration and control of the “agencies of propaganda” by responsible and enlightened leaders working for the general welfare. To Zeller, the “agencies of propaganda” were the newspapers, radio schools, cinema and churches. By the 1930s in America, there was a net daily newspaper circulation of 40 million and three out of every four Americans owned a radio, i.e. 25 million radios, which by any standard was a broad audience for an interest group in that era.

The second theoretical perspective put forward has been ‘corporatism’ which has generated much misunderstanding and debate, then like pluralism, there are a series of common themes amongst those who have adopted this perspective. As Robert Baggott explains in his book *Pressure Groups Today* (Baggott, 1995, p. 42), “corporatism’ is fundamentally a social theory that highlights the privileged position that ‘particular groups’ possess with government, thus allowing these ‘particular groups’ to influence the formulation and implementation of public policy (See Table 8). Authors of ‘corporatism theory’ include Peter Williamson *Corporatism in Perspective* (Williamson, 1989), Alan Cawson, *Corporatism and Welfare* (Alan Cawson, 1982) and Philippe C. Schmitter and Gerhard Lehbruch *Trends Towards Corporatist Intermediation* (Lehbruch, 1979).

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Table 8: *The corporatist perspective from Robert Baggott’s Pressure Groups Today (Baggott, 1995, p. 42),*

- 1) The interaction of interest groups with the political system is strongly influenced by the government.
- 2) Interest groups exert influence mainly through close and stable relationships with key decision-makers in government agencies.

- 3) In return for access to decision-makers, interest groups co-operate with the government to a high degree, even to the extent of disciplining and regulating their own members.
  - 4) There is only one group representing each specific function of interest in society. Each group, therefore, has a monopoly of representation, and there is no competition between interest groups for members.
  - 5) Interest groups are dominated by their leaders. The rank-and-file influence over decision-making is indirect and limited by the need to maintain a close, stable relationship with the government.
  - 6) Interest groups may undertake government functions or be closely associated with special-purpose “*quasi-governmental agencies*” that perform these functions.
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Within the ideal corporatist scenario, there is just one interest group recognised for each specific function or interest within society - for example, the Irish Medical Organisation (IMO)<sup>5</sup> as the sole body representing general practitioners (GPs) in Ireland, the Irish Farmers’ Association (IFA) representing all farmers or ISIDA representing all bereaved parents whose child has died of SIDS.

These groups, therefore, monopolise their area of interest, and there is no competition between rival groups for membership. The corporatist view is that interest groups are not only a means of representation but additionally a regulator for their sector. For example, the IMO ensures GPs adhere to policies agreed by its leadership with the Health Service Executive and government; The IFA works with farmers to adhere to European Union regulations on farming or that families in ISIDA are adhering to research guidelines established concerning SIDS research. If the ‘corporatist’ theory is exact, the leadership within the IMO, IFA or ISIDA cannot as Baggott explains, “be automatically responsive to the opinions of its rank-and-file members” (Baggott, 1988, p. 43). Therefore, this can entail suppressing particular high demands from the rank-and-file members in order to maintain the ‘privileged position’ with the government. Internationally the ‘corporatist theory’ has been more relevant in certain regions, i.e. Austria, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden (Baggott, 1988, p. 43). As with all theories, corporatism has its criticism, particularly in the area of not explaining adequately why groups surrender their independence to become more closely aligned to government and why the corporatist model works in certain regions but not others.

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<sup>5</sup> **The Irish Medical Organisation:** formed in 1984 following the amalgamation of the Irish Medical Association and the Irish Medical Union, to act as the national representative medical organisation linking all branches of the medical profession in Ireland. (The Irish Medical Organisation, 2019)

The last ‘theoretical perspective’ the New Right, views all social groups and collective bodies with apprehension and disdain. This is reflected in advocates of ‘New Right theory’ preference for a market economy powered by self-sufficiency and entrepreneurialism, though the same advocates have trepidations concerning the links between corporatism and an escalating public spending and the associated issues of over-government. While there are certain strains among New Right advocates, overall there appears to be a reasonably consistent view concerning interest groups. (See Table 9)

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*Table 9 The new night perspective from Robert Baggott’s book Pressure groups today (Baggott, 1995, p. 47)*

- 1) Interest groups are self-interested organisations.
  - 2) Interest groups are not representative of the public interest and seek to distort the views of the public.
  - 3) Significant sections of society (e.g. consumers or taxpayers) are not adequately represented by the interest group system. Other interests (e.g. professions, industries seeking special subsidies from the State) are too well-organised and exert too much influence.
  - 4) Interest groups prevent democratically elected governments from taking a clear and unbiased view of public interest.
  - 5) The close relationships which exist between interest groups and government weaken and undermine its authority.
  - 6) Interest groups can block vital economic and political changes which are essential for the long-term future of the economy and the survival of a free society.
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New Right advocates primarily classify interest groups as economic units, delivering actual and quantifiable benefits to their members. Therefore, people who join an interest group do so for the economic motives, assessing the benefits of joining vs the fee, and is the balance in their favour. For example, IFA website (Irish Farmers Association, 2019), cites, an Irish dairy farmer joining the IFA will not only benefit in relation to his or her milk subsidies, but the IFA also negotiates with some of Ireland’s top brands to deliver genuine savings for our members, helping to reduce both farm business and home costs, including such products as IFA Telecom, a mobile offering in association with Vodafone, and a Power deal in partnership with Bord Gáis Energy directly to their members.

In adopting an economic theory to the link between individual preferences and group membership, the New Right denies the legitimacy of interest groups as representative

institutions. New Right advocates point to an unbalanced society where certain areas are under-represented and other sections over-represented. Advocates theorise this occurs not out of one section having a more robust or a more legitimate case than the other but, as Baggott explains, “because the balance of costs and benefits favours the formation of some interest groups while impeding the formation of other interest groups” (Baggott, 1988, p. 49).

The most prominent advocate of the New Right theory is Mancur Olson in his book *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups (LCA)* (Olson, 1971). In the LCA, Olson stated pluralists had failed to grasp that lobbies, like governments, produce ‘public goods,’ i.e. it is equally supplied (every person gets it) and is ‘non-excludable’. For example, Olson explained how some policies are certainly more public than others: environmental or income-tax policy affects everyone whereas a tax break or protection for a particular industry benefits only those within that industry. Olson also acknowledged that there will almost always be the temptation to “free-ride<sup>6</sup>” on public goods and that the support will be provided even when one does not contribute to lobbying for it.

Olson discussed how it was only in the situation where the recipients are few, and the subsidy per recipient high is it all likely that their individual determination to play a part or not will make any difference to the chances of the interest group's success. Therefore, Olson suggested, it was the responsibility of each interest group to overcome their issue of ‘free-riders’. Plausibly, Olson determined that the fewer the number of potential members of the group and desired policy, the less often the issue of ‘free-riders’ will arise.

In further developing his theory, Olson referred to how normally there were fewer producers than consumers within an industry, and among those producers, fewer capitalists than labourers. Consequently, one can determine that the trade associations will always be the most robust groups and trade unions<sup>7</sup> the weaker groups, and the consumers the weakest of all groups. Sequentially then, you can expect the policy to

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<sup>6</sup> **Free rider:** One who benefits from a collective activity without participating in it. (Olson, 1971)

<sup>7</sup> **Trade Union:** an organized association of workers in a trade, group of trades, or profession, formed to protect and further their rights and interests (Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics, 2003)

be biased in favour of the producers' interests such as industrial protection and against consumer interests, e.g. in the matter of free trade.

There has been much criticism of Olson's methodology: firstly, there is evidence that interest groups establish themselves despite economic restrictions. Additionally, there is the doubt around the role of biased incentives as a motivation to join an interest group.

In his book *Pressure groups today* (Baggott, 1995), Robert Baggott discusses Olson's failing for not considering that someone might join a group because they see it as a viable and effective vehicle for representing interests they share with other people. Furthermore, how the contribution of individuals within groups may generate significant benefits in addition to the material advantages resulting from successful lobbying.

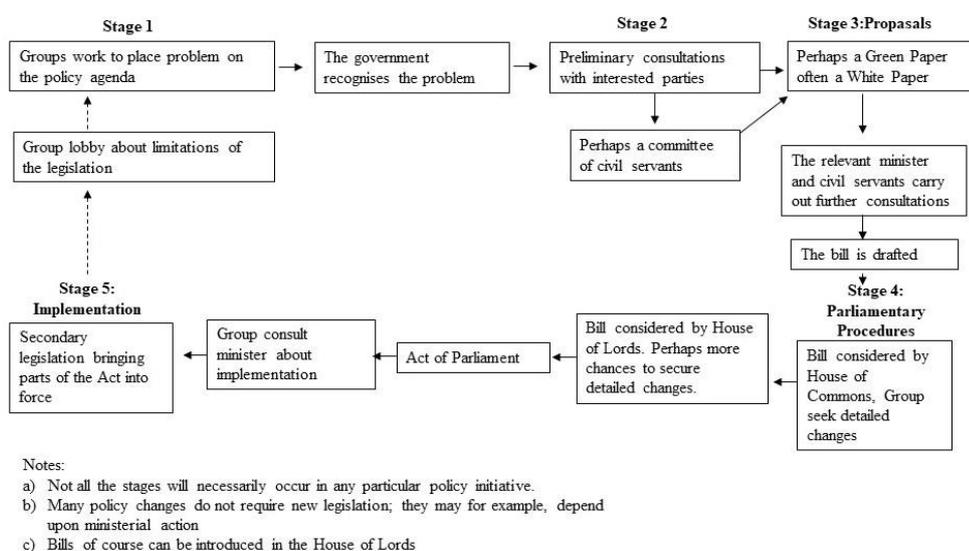
Considering all three theories Pluralism, Corporatist and New Right, each provides support for those that participate in the debate around interest groups, whether opponents or supporters of the interest groups. Additionally, all three theories have an impact on the governing process and are drawn upon by political actors when justifying or denying the role of interest groups. The three theories individually or combined may be used to justify changes to political structures as, for example when Seán Lemass chose the route of Social Partnerships for Ireland in the 1960s, a phenomenon which will be further analysed under the sub-heading the *Role of Interest Groups in Irish Politics*.

### **How do interest groups exert influence?**

Interest groups do not have the power to make authoritative decisions themselves, nor do they constitute governments, control the legislatures or even staff the courts. They do, however, have at their disposal an array of tactics and political strategies. As Wyn Grant explains in *Pressure Groups and British Politics* (Grant, 2000, p. 60) the majority of interest group activity and how they exert influence is very much 'undramatic and routine', and is invisible to the public eye. Grant explains that in the norm interest group activity predominantly entails a series of high-level discussions with civil servants, Members of Parliament (MPs,) or peers around the content and

implementation of legislation. Grant attempts to summarise the overall process involved in how interest groups can or do exert influence, a simplified flow diagram (see Table 10). Though not every stage of Grant's flow diagram is relevant to each interest group, for example, *cause-centred* groups tend to be more focused on influencing government than Dáil Éireann<sup>8</sup>, (the Dáil). Where insider groups' issues will usually be pursued first through discussions with ministers and civil servants.

Table 10: Wyn Grants 'flow diagram' of the policy process in the United Kingdom (Grant, 2000, p. 61)



As Andrew Heywood explains in his academic book *Politics* (Heywood, 2013, p. 256), the other consideration with any interest group's political strategy is the resources at their disposal, i.e.:

- 1) Public sympathy for the group and its goals
- 2) The size of the group's membership or activist base
- 3) Its financial strength and organisational capabilities
- 4) Its ability to use sanctions that in some way inconvenience or disrupt government
- 5) Personal or institutional links it may have to political parties or government

<sup>8</sup> **The Dáil** is the Lower House of the Oireachtas. A Dáil Member's official Irish title is "Teachta Dála" which in English means "Deputy to the Dáil". Members are generally called "TDs" or "Deputies" (The House of Oireachas, 2019)

- 6) Lobbying commonly utilised by business groups for example in Ireland Chambers Ireland<sup>9</sup>, or Ibec<sup>10</sup>

The first engagement is mainly between the ‘bureaucracy’<sup>11</sup> (core executive) and the interest groups. As Roderick Arthur William Rhodes explains in *Prime Minister, Cabinet and Core Executive* (Rhodes, 1995, p. 12)

*the “core executive” is the heart of the machine covering the complex web of institutions, networks, and practices surrounding the Prime Minister, cabinet, cabinet committees and their official counterparts, less formalised ministerial “clubs” or meetings, bilateral negotiations and interdepartmental committees. It also includes coordinating departments, chiefly the Cabinet Office, the Treasury, the Foreign Office, the law officers, and the security and intelligence services.*

As Grant explains, it is only a minimal number of ‘core insider groups’ that would have access to the ‘core executive’. The insider groups will try to influence policy when it is at the formative stages by talking informally with the core executive and ministers, i.e. government.

The policy communities have a tendency of establishing themselves around government departments, and core insider groups are often concerned when these departments are reorganised. While most core insider groups will have contacts with the core executive across several government departments, they tend to have particularly close contacts with one department. The core insider groups can encounter difficulties if attempting to establish relations with an unfamiliar department as each department is anxious to defend their clients. As Paul Whiteley and Stephen Winyard noted in *Pressure for the Poor: The Poverty Lobby and Policy Making* (Winyard,

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<sup>9</sup> **Chambers Ireland** is Ireland’s largest business organisation with a network of Chambers of Commerce in every major town and region in the country (Chambers Ireland, 2019)

<sup>10</sup> **Ibec** employ 70% of the private sector workforce in Ireland. With 36 trade associations covering a range of industry sectors (Ibec: For Irish business, 2019).

<sup>11</sup> **Bureaucracy**: Government by permanent office-holders. The term was coined in eighteenth-century France, and first appeared in English in 1818, in both cases with projective overtones built in from the beginning. (Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics, 2003, p. 55)

1987, p. 94) there are different “house-styles” and bureaucratic cultures from department to department.

Concerning the courts, Andrew Heywood in *Politics* (Heywood, 2013, p. 256), explains the court system is unable to challenge legislation and rarely able to check executive actions, the interest group’s activity focused on the judiciary is of only limited significance.

This is relevant in states like the United Kingdom (UK) and New Zealand, despite a general tendency since the 1990s towards judicial activism, which has encouraged civil liberties and environmentalist groups, in particular, to fight their campaigns through the courts.

In the area of exerting influence on the ‘political parties’, Heywood explains, the parties and the interest groups could be intertwined via historical, ideological, and even institutional links to the point where they are seen as two strands of the same social movement, e.g. the Irish and UK Labour parties. The principal route by which interest groups influence the political parties is via campaign finance - as Heywood says “he who pays the piper plays the tune”. (Heywood, 2013, p. 259). For example, the conservative or right-wing political parties are funded by business contributions, while the socialist or left-wing parties are mainly funded from organised labour.

When it comes to the mass media<sup>12</sup> and public opinion<sup>13</sup> campaigns, interest groups employ very different methods to influence government. Heywood explains that their tactics can include but are not limited to petitions, protests, demonstrations, civil disobedience and even the tactical use of violence. Their rationale in using these tactics can reflect the groups’ ‘outsider status’ and their failure to gain direct access to policy-makers. Equally, it can stem from the group’s activist base or the character of their ideological goals.

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<sup>12</sup> **Mass media:** The various agents of mass communication and entertainment: print, broadcast, online, etc.. (Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics, 2003, p. 340)

<sup>13</sup> **Public opinion:** The term was first used in its obvious, literal sense in the eighteenth-century political thought and began to acquire a more precise meaning with the advent of scientific opinion polling in the 1930s. (Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics, 2003, p. 448)

While these tactics were traditionally used by the trade unions, with the dramatic rise in cause-centred groups from the 1960s, there has been a new wave of activist politics practised by environmentalists, peace campaigners, animal rights campaigners and, in Ireland recently, the Irish Water protests concerning the proposed introduction of water charges. The primary aim of these cause-centred groups is to attract media attention, which in turn accelerates public awareness and sympathy.

The final tactic has emerged from the direct impact of globalisation, resulting in a growth of international organisations among interest groups. The groups best capable of taking advantage of this change have been the charities and environmental campaigners who were already members of an international organisation. For example, as previously referenced ISIDA affiliated itself to The Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths (FSID) which was in turn members of the International Society for the Study and Prevention of Perinatal and Infant Death (ISPID)<sup>14</sup>. There is a similar example of the sectional groups moving with the trend, where European Union (EU) members accept that specific policy is decided by the EU institutions rather than by the national ones, e.g. the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)<sup>15</sup> of which Chambers Ireland are members and COPA: European Agricultural Union<sup>16</sup> of which the IFA are members.

### **What has been the role of interest groups in Irish politics?**

Summarising the role of the interest groups within the Irish political system commences with the drafting of the Irish Constitution as John Cooney writes in his book *John Charles McQuaid: Ruler of Catholic Ireland* (Cooney, 2006, pp. 94-106), in the aptly titled chapter ‘Co-maker of the Constitution’. In 1937, as the then Taoiseach Éamon de Valera TD, was drafting the Irish constitution he was bombarded daily – at times twice daily - with letters from the Roman Catholic Archbishop of

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<sup>14</sup> **ISPID** mission is to advance research and increase knowledge in areas of perinatal and infant health and mortality.. (Death, 2019)

<sup>15</sup> **ICC** is the world’s largest business organization, representing more than 45 million companies in over 100 countries.. (International Chamber of Commerce, 2019)

<sup>16</sup> **COPA** is made up of 60 organisations from the countries of the European Union and 36 partner organisations from other European countries such as Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey.. (Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations, 2019)

Dublin, John Charles McQuaid<sup>17</sup>. The letters were, as Cooney describes, teeming with suggestions, viewpoints, documents and academic references on “nearly every aspect of what was to become the Constitution of Ireland” (Cooney, 2006, p. 75). As Cooney describes, McQuaid was “one of the great architects of the Constitution, albeit in the shadows” (Cooney, 2006, p. 75). Fortunately, as Whelan states in *Fianna Fáil a Biography of the Party* (Whelan, 2011, p. 60), although the hierarchy of Fianna Fáil gave constitutional recognition to the ‘special position’ of the Catholic Church as the guardian of the faith of Ireland, there was an earlier draft which recognised the Catholic faith as the “the true religion”, but this version caused consternation in the anti-clerical wing of Fianna Fáil, who lobbied successfully to have it altered.

At the height of their notoriety in the 1950s and 1960s, it was widely stressed that business interests, trade unions and farm lobbies had replaced assemblies and the principal political parties. Then, from the 1960s onwards, there was the emergence of the single-issue protest groups focused on causes such as ISIDA and the issue of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) in 1976.

These groups were often associated with broader social movements and were characterised by new styles of activism and campaigning, sometimes termed “*new politics*” (Heywood, 2013, p. 245). For example, in ISIDA’s first newsletter (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1977, p. 1) it states ISIDA will be affiliated with the Foundation for Study of Infant Deaths (FSID) in the United Kingdom.

Today, interest groups, as Gary Murphy states in *Influencing Political Decision-Making: Interest Groups and Elections in Independent Ireland* (Murphy, 2010, p. 564), cross many strands and manage to be associated in the public mind with two levels of social partnership, i.e. ‘sectional’ and cause-centred’ groups. Additionally, and as is also the case with their international counterparts, there has been an explosion of professional lobbying in Ireland in recent decades alongside the utilising of mass media. However, Dáil Éireann and its members remain the primary focus for interest groups attempting to influence public policy. As Murphy explains, the Teachtaí Dála

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<sup>17</sup> **John Charles McQuaid** was Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, who for more than three decades, from 1940 to 1972, dominated political, social and religious development in Ireland. (Cooney, 2006)

(TD) has access to insider information, can generate publicity and is in a position to put pressure on governments and individual ministers by tabling parliamentary questions (PSAI Press, 2010, p. 345).

Concerning sectional groups, John Gallagher writes in *Politics in the Republic of Ireland* (PSAI Press, 2010, pp. 333,334), systematic analysis of the numbers operating in Ireland at present shows:

*17 agricultural organisations, 24 educational groups, 23 professional health organisations, 6 civil service associations, 4 Garda (police) representative bodies, 3 defence forces representative bodies, 11 local government organisations, 55 trades unions affiliated to Congress, 4 unions not affiliated to Congress, and another 265 trades and professional bodies organised to represent the interest of their members.*

For example, Congress (Congress: Irish Congress of Trade Unions, 2019), claims to be “the largest civil society organisation in Ireland, representing and campaigning on behalf of some 800,000 working people”. In commerce, Ibec (Ibec: For Irish business, 2019) describes itself as “Ireland's largest and most influential business membership organisation and as the third-largest lobbying group in Europe”.

Perhaps the most prominent role for interest groups within the Irish political system has been in social partnerships. As Gary Murphy explains in *Government, Interest Groups and the Irish Move to Europe: 1957-1967* (Murphy, 1997), a change in economic policy was underway after the appointment of T.K Whitaker as a secretary in 1956, who was part of a new generation of senior civil servants emerging who believed their job was not just to advise but also to think independently. This new generation of independent thinkers included T.K Whitaker, Charles Murray of the Department of Finance, J.C Nagle of the Department of Agriculture who interested themselves in the economic workings of other states and began to take more comprehensive tasks than those traditionally associated with the Irish civil service (Murphy, 1997, p. 58). This resulted in the publication of Whitaker’s *Economic development* in 1958 parallel to a gradual maturation of relations between the Irish government and interest groups in the policy realm. At the core of this strategy was the question of Europe. Then Taoiseach, Seán Lemass TD, Fianna Fáil ultimate goal

was the entry of Ireland to the European Economic Community (EEC), As John Horgan explains in *Seán Lemass: the Enigmatic Patriot* (Horgan, 1997, pp. 228,49), Lemass invited a wide variety of economic interests (e.g. farmers, trade unions and business associations) to contribute to several national bodies that were “concerned with formulating a new approach to economic management.” As Murphy explains the message was now clear, the cosy, insular world that Irish industries and businesses had inhabited for the better part of three decades was gone. In its place would be a leaner more competitive world in which Irish industry would have to compete with Europe (Murphy, 1997, p. 68). When Lemass achieved the goal of Ireland’s membership of the European trading bloc in 1971 alongside Denmark and the United Kingdom, he did so while incorporating the views of the interest groups. However, it was Lemass who was in charge of economic development and Ireland’s move into Europe.

It was the interest groups who were again called upon in the 1980s as Gary Murphy explains in *Politics in the Republic of Ireland* (PSAI Press, 2010). The country had entered a deep depression and, in order to overcome it, the social partners (*sectional groups*), acting in the tripartite National Economic and Social Council (NESC), agreed to a strategy on how Ireland could overcome its economic difficulties (PSAI Press, 2010, p. 336). The result was *A Strategy for Development*, which formed the basis upon which the Fianna Fáil government and social partners negotiated the Programme for National Recovery which has been succeeded by six since 1987 (See Table 11)

Table 11: Social Partnership agreements in Ireland since 1987 (PSAI Press, 2010, p. 337)

<p>There have been several broadly tripartite agreements between the government and the main economic interest groups since the mid-1980s, under the auspices of NESC.</p> <p>The main agreements have been:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme for National Recovery (PNR) 1987-90</li> <li>• Programme for Economic and Social Progress (PESP) 1990-93</li> <li>• Programme for Competitiveness and Work (PCW) 1994-96</li> <li>• Partnership 2000 for Inclusion, Employment and Competitiveness 1997-2000</li> <li>• Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF) 2000-03</li> <li>• Sustaining Progress 2003-05</li> <li>• Towards 2016 (this was agreed in June 2006; in September 2008 a review and transitional agreement covering pay was agreed)</li> </ul>
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The negotiation of each agreement was preceded by an NESC strategy report, which set out the shared perspective of the social partners on the achievement and limits of the previous programme, and the parameters within which a new programme would be negotiated.

What is evident thus far is that since Ireland's independence in 1922, there has theoretically been a history of open government that has encouraged participative debate with its citizens. As Gary Murphy writes in *Lobbying regulation in Ireland Fool's errand or finest hour?* (Murphy, 2017, p. 132) the reality has been somewhat different, with a dark underbelly of lobbying which has been laid bare in recent decades with the various tribunals of inquiry investigating payments to politicians. The tribunals, unfortunately, revealed a system where the Irish policymaking process was neither open nor transparent but was instead open to corruption. As Murphy explains, it was from this evidence of non-transparency and open corruption that the Fine Gael/Labour-led government attempted to address these issues with its 2015 Lobbying Act. The Registration of Lobbying Bill, 2014 was published by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Brendan Howlin TD on June 20<sup>th</sup> 2014. In its publication, Minister Howlin declared that the act was to establish a web-based register of transparency on "who is contacting whom about what" and that lobbying had a significant role to play in helping to ensure all perspectives, assessments and opinions are presented and available to inform decision-making in critical areas of public policy and legislative proposals (Murphy, 2017, p. 128). Minister Howlin stated that the bill would also "rebuild public trust in the political system by throwing light on its interaction with those who seek to shape and influence policy across all sections of society" (Murphy, 2017, p. 128)

Appraising the cause-centred interest groups that seek to shape public policy in Ireland, a study by Goran Therborn, *European Modernity and Beyond* (Therborn, 1995, p. 307), lists the

*75 different arts organisations, 79 health support organisations, 22 Irish language organisations, 22 women's interest groups, 38 youth organisations, and an additional 300 other organisations advocating numerous social, political, and cultural causes.*

Therborn divides Ireland's *cause-centred* groups into two classifications: 'impromptu' and 'established'. The impromptu group primarily establish to press for a single issue, for example in the 2016 general election there were several cause-centred groups putting candidates forward for the Dáil. For example, in Clare the "No Doctor, No Village" campaign was fighting to save GP services within their community and put forward Dr Michael Harty<sup>18</sup> as an Independent candidate for election. This resulted in Dr Harty been elected as a TD for the Clare constituency.

Considering why there has been a shift towards cause centred groups putting candidates forward for Dáil Éireann, Gary Murphy in *Government, Interest Groups and the Irish Move to Europe: 1957-1963* (Murphy, 1997, p. 579), surmised that

*cause-centred groups have concluded that they are unable to influence the political process from the outside. The sectional groups have far superior access to the levers of power; even after the end of social partnership, they still feel a limited necessity to contest elections. Hence for the cause-centred groups, they view Dáil Éireann as manna from heaven and the election of their representatives to the Dáil as a symbol of their maturity as an influential group with a strong cause. In an ever-increasingly clogged political market, putting their members forward to an electorate, who are potentially already disaffected on any number of issues, is perhaps a better gamble on influencing policy than attempting to influence the political parties from outside the charmed circle of the potential power that is having a seat in Dáil Éireann.*

Concerning the 'established' cause-centred group, they tend to have a permanent mission such as the Peter McVerry Trust and the Simon Community on the issue of the homelessness problem. What has been consistent with both the *impromptu* and *established* classifications, in recent decades is the shift towards making their activities far more public via the media or Dáil Éireann. However, while each of the above referenced sectional and cause-centred groups is well-known in their own right, what was interesting as noted by Gary Murphy in *Politics in the Republic of Ireland* (PSAI

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<sup>18</sup>**Dr Michael Harty, TD, Independent:** has a practice in Kilmihil in Co Clare, was put forward by the "No Doctor, No Village" campaign to fight to restore GP income that was cut during the austerity years. (Irish Times, 2016)

Press, 2010, p. 333), is how in a “recent 600-page study assessing democracy in Ireland, the study only references interest groups in its index on two occasions”.

### **Literature review conclusion**

The primary objective the literature review was to study the role of interest groups in shaping public policy and apply the findings to the case study of the ISIDA, to establish what type of interest is it and how did it succeed in the establishment of the National Sudden Infant Death Register (NSIDR) on July 16<sup>th</sup> 1987. The literature review achieved this objective by studying:

- The history and definition of interest groups
- The different types of interest groups
- The theoretical perspectives of interest groups
- How interest groups exert influence
- The role of interest groups in Irish politics

The findings of the literature review illustrate how the late nineteenth and twentieth-century gave rise to the growth of organised interest groups, resulting in more focused research from such persons such as Belle Zeller, Simon Patten, Arthur Bentley, Wyn Grant, Robert Baggott, Mancur Olson, Elmer Schattschneider and Francis Castles. It was the findings from this concentrated research emerged a variance of *definitions, classifications, theories* and a more proficient understanding of *how interest groups exert influence*. For example, Robert Baggott’s definition in *Pressure Groups in Britain: Change and Decline?* (Baggott, 1988, p. 26) of an organisation which seeks to influence a comparatively small range of public policies while not been a faction of a recognised political part best defines ISIDA. When looking at the strategies of interest groups identified that while they may not have the power to make authoritative decisions, constitute governments, control the legislatures or even staff the courts. What they have instead is an array of tactics and political strategies. It is through these strategies that the majority of how they exert influence or contribute to policy is achieved via a series of high-level discussions with civil servants, Members of Parliament (MPs,) or peers around the content and implementation of legislation.

The ISIDA case study will now apply these findings from Wyn Grants interest group classification to understand what type of interest group is ISIDA, and how did it contribute to the establishment of the NSDIR and in doing so test the social theory of ‘corporatism’ against the findings.

### **Case Study**

#### **The Irish Sudden Infant Death Association: What type of interest group is it, and how did it contribute to the establishment of the National Sudden Infant Death Register?**

As referenced in the introduction sub-heading of this thesis, on November 27<sup>th</sup> 1975, Eimear Berry found her fourteen-week old son Brendan dead in his cot, the cause of death was Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). As Berry went in search of answers, she came across a TV documentary about SIDS that cited the Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths (FSID) in England. Contacting the FSID, Berry explained how she wanted to establish a similar group in Ireland. The contact with FSID resulted in the establishment of the ISIDA on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1977. Recorded within its’ general aims were to increase public awareness of the problem of SIDS and bring pressure to bear on the appropriate authorities to supply the necessary funds and facilities for further research into SIDS in Ireland. Ten years later on July 16<sup>th</sup> 1987, the then Minister for Health, Dr Rory O’Hanlon TD, Fianna Fáil (FF), announced the formal establishment of the National Sudden Infant Death Register (NSIDR).

The objective of the ISIDA case study is to employ the findings of Wyn Grants interest group classification to determine what type of interest group is ISIDA, and how did it succeed in the establishment of the NSIDR? The ISIDA case study will achieve this objective by studying several specific themes:

- 1) What is the history of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome?
- 2) What is the history of the Irish Sudden Infant Death Association (ISIDA)?
- 3) What type of interest group is ISIDA?
  - a) Cause-centred or Sectional Group
  - b) Insider or Outsider Group
- 4) How has ISIDA exerted influence and are they an insider or outsider group?
  - a) Increasing public awareness of the problem of SIDS via the media

- b) Bringing pressure to bear on the appropriate authorities to supply the necessary funds and facilities for further research into SIDS

The case study will also test the social theory of ‘corporatism’ to determine if ISIDA was the sole interest group recognised by the government concerning SIDS research and if that privileged position gave it sufficient influence when attempting to establish the NSIDR established.

As referenced in the methodology sub-heading, the ISIDA archives researched covered the years 1976 to 1992, and included memorandums of association, articles of association, statements of accounts, minutes of meetings, written correspondence, newsletters, photographs, and SIDS grant research applications and were transcribed by Eimear Berry, ISIDA secretaries & chairpersons, Dáil Deputies, Department of Health Officials, Ministers for Health, medical and legal professionals. In order to accommodate disparities within the archives, a study was done of the House of Oireachtas website, of Parliamentary Questions (PQs) precisely where the words ISIDA, cot death, Medical Social Research Board (MSRB), cot death register or SIDS were included from the years 1976 to 1987. Finally, a study was undertaken of Irish Newspapers Archives and the Irish Times Digital Archives, specifically any articles related to Eimear Berry, cot death, ISIDA or the NSIDR from 1975 to 1987, in a sample of national newspapers. This combination of archives and primary online resources assisted in attempting to answer each of the questions lists above.

### **What is the history of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)?**

In *A Fresh Look at the History of SIDS*, James Wright (James R Wright, 2017, p. 147) writes how numerous histories reference the first recorded instance of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) from the Old Testament of the Bible: “And this woman’s child died in the night: because she overlaid it” (1 Kings 3:19, King James Version). Wright shows these same histories referencing secondary examples of ‘overlying<sup>19</sup>’ and accidental smothering in ancient Greece, Rome, Renaissance Europe, late modern period Europe, colonial America and America’s ‘old South’ where they reference overlying in the context of separating it from “infanticide and then note that

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<sup>19</sup> **Overlying:** The accidental rolling of a person on top of an infant or child sleeping in a parent's bed, which may cause death by suffocation (McGraw-Hill Concise Dictionary of Modern Medicine, 2018)

infanticide, including accidental smothering, was a church problem throughout the medieval period and much of the Renaissance”.

(James R Wright, 2017, p. 147).

Though, by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, infanticide had transitioned from the church to lay court of law, by an example in England compulsory registration of deaths was required after the passage of the Births and Deaths Registration Act of 1836/37. In 1887 there was the introduction of the Coroners Act requiring coroners to differentiate between natural and unnatural deaths. In 1892 Charles Templeman published *Two Hundred and Fifty-Eight Cases of Suffocation of Infants* (Templeman, 1892, p. 210), one of the first detailed studies related to overlaying. His paper was a case study of the town of Dundee Scotland was between 1882 to 1891, there were 399 infant deaths reported to the police where the infant had been found dead while in bed with their parents. Templeman concluded that the deaths were attributed to parental drunkenness, ignorance, careless mothers and advised that it become mandatory for infants to sleep separately from their parents.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century, lead to social changes, including parents placing their infants in cribs to sleep; however, this did not result in a notable decrease in the number of deaths by overlaying. What did transcribe was a name change from overlaying to ‘crib death’, with the cause of death now being recorded as accidental smothering by bedclothes.

In 1963 the United States of America (USA) hosted the first conference into the cause of crib deaths followed in 1965 with the United Kingdom (UK) publishing the report *Enquiry into Sudden Death in Infancy (ESDI)* (Ministry of Health , 1969). The *ESDI* report offered three theories on the cause of crib deaths (a) infection, (b) hypersensitivity, and (c) suffocation. The *ESDI* report disclosed the immense lack of knowledge surrounding crib deaths and proposed future research priorities were detailed. Subsequently, in 1969 the USA hosted a second international conference (Beckwith, 1970, pp. 14-22), where Dr John Beckwith of the University of Washington formally proposed a definition of SIDS:

*The sudden death of an infant or young child, which is unexpected by history, and in which a thorough post mortem examination fails to demonstrate an adequate cause of death.*

What is apparent here from this concise ‘history of SIDS’, is that from the 1960s onwards a more dedicated approach to SIDS research was emerging globally specifically within the USA and UK. This was further strengthened when in 1979, the World Health Organisation<sup>20</sup> (WHO) created a new category in the International Classifications of Diseases-‘Sudden infant death’.

### **What is the history of the Irish Sudden Infant Death Association (ISIDA)?**

On November 27<sup>th</sup> 1975, Eimear Berry put her fourteen-week old son Brendan into his cot for a nap, examining him one hour later she found him dead. This is a synopsis of an open letter Berry wrote entitled “More Research into Cot Deaths Sought”(MRCDS) (Irish Independent, 1976, p. 4), which was published in several national newspapers on July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1976.

In an interview with the Evening Herald on June 30<sup>th</sup> 1976 (Evening Herald, 1976, p. 4), Berry refers to Brendan’s death as “silent, sudden unpredictable and of unknown cause – classic cot death”. In the same interview, Berry cites seeing a documentary on television about cot death which referenced the Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths (FSID) in London, England. Hoping to establish a similar group in Ireland Berry wrote to FSID for guidance. Following the Evening Herald interview, her open letter was published in the Irish Independent, Irish Times and Irish Press simultaneously on July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1976 (See Table 12). In the open letter Berry detailed wanting to establish a group for the following reasons (Irish Independent, 1976, p. 4):

- 1) To support, help and counsel parents bereaved by cot death
- 2) To increase public awareness of the problem of Sudden Infant Death.
- 3) To bring pressure to bear on the appropriate authorities to supply the necessary funds and facilities for further research in this field.

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<sup>20</sup> **WHO:** Established on April 7<sup>th</sup> 1948, the WHO is a specialised agency of the United Nations that is concerned with international public health. It has over 7,000 staff from more than 150 countries working across 150 country offices, in 6 regional offices and at a headquarters in Geneva (World Health Organisation, 2019)

## More research into 'cot deaths' sought

Sir—One evening last November I put my apparently healthy and happy fourteen-week-old son into his cot for a nap. One hour later I went to wake him and found him dead. His death was silent, sudden, unpredictable and of unknown cause—a classic “cot death.” Regrettably, our tragedy is not uncommon. One in every five hundred babies born in Ireland die in this mysterious way, giving us one of the highest infant mortality rates in the developed world.

Our experience, and that of other cot-death-parents whom we have met, has shown us that the natural grief and anguish of bereaved parents is increased considerably by the lack of awareness of and misunderstandings relating to the phenomenon of Sudden Infant Death. We would be grateful, therefore, to hear from any persons, from those who have lost babies through cot deaths or from anyone sympathetic to our aims, who would be interested in forming a group for the following purposes:

1. To support, help and counsel parents bereaved by cot death.
2. To increase public awareness of the problem of Sudden Infant Death.
3. To bring pressure to bear on the appropriate authorities to supply the necessary funds for further research in this field and so help to eliminate the unknown killer that, in one year, claims the lives of more children than do all road accidents involving children under 15 years in the same period.

EIMEAR BERRY (Mrs.)  
34 Sycamore Road,  
Meadowbrook,  
Dundrum,  
Dublin 14.

*Table 12 Berry's open letter "More Research into Cot Deaths Sought" which appeared in the Irish Times, Irish Independent and Irish Press newspapers on July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1976.*

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On February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1977 the inaugural meeting of ISIDA took place at Berry's home in Dundrum Dublin. In ISIDA's first newsletter circulated on February 14<sup>th</sup> 1977 (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1977), Berry cites fifteen parents in attendance, who had read the open letter on July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1976. The meeting leads to the formal establishment of the ISIDA which would be formally affiliated to the FSID in London.

The first newsletter (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1977, p. 2), also listed the general aims and now included one additional namely “to raise funds for the furtherance of the above mentioned aims”.

In its' eight newsletter in November 1979, (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1979), ISIDA cites having received £5,000 in donations. The primary purpose of the funds was to enable the association to play a more active role in the field of SIDS research, and they were, therefore, establishing a Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC), similar to FSID's SAC in the UK. Rationalising the establishment of a SAC, ISIDA stated it needed the advice of a panel of experienced medical persons who will, as part of a medical and scientific committee, advise on how and where ISIDA funds may most usefully and appropriately be applied towards SIDS research.

As cited in written correspondence between ISIDA and Dr Froggatt Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University Belfast & former Chairman of FSID's SAC (Froggatt, 1980); on November 20 1979, Berry wrote to Dr Foggratt inviting him to join ISIDA's SAC. On December 10<sup>th</sup> Dr Froggatt responded stating he would "be perfectly prepared to help in any way he could" and invited an ISIDA to visit him in Belfast in January 1980 (See Table 13).

Agreeing to help establish the ISIDA Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) Dr Froggatt reported on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 1981 (ISIDA: Scientific Advisory Committee, 1981), there had been "favourable replies from nearly all doctors to whom he wrote concerning joining the SAC". On Tuesday, April 28<sup>th</sup>, an ISIDA delegation travelled to Belfast to meet Dr Froggatt. Reporting on the meeting ISIDA Chairman Shaun Lynch writes DR Froggatt "very kindly agreed to become its first Chairman, of the SAC despite his heavy workload as Vice-Chancellor of Queens University Belfast" (ISIDA: Scientific Advisory Committee, 1981).



**The Queen's University of Belfast**

Belfast BT7 1NN Northern Ireland

Telex 74487

From: The Vice-Chancellor  
Dr Peter Froggatt

Tel. 45133 Ext. 3130/3131

Our ref. PF/GH Your ref.

10 December 1979

Mrs Eimear Berry,  
Hon. Secretary,  
Irish Sudden Infant Death Association,  
34 Sycamore Road,  
Meadowbrook,  
Dundrum,  
Dublin, 14.

Dear Mrs Berry,

Thank you indeed for your letter of 20 November. It was good of you to write and let me know of the plans you have for developing the scientific and personal side of your work.

I would be perfectly prepared to help in any way I could, but it would be far better if this could be at a brief meeting rather than by correspondence. There are a large number of matters gleaned from my medical and scientific experience as a researcher in this field and also from my several years as Chairman of the Scientific Advisory Committee of the FSID in Britain which would merit discussion and debate. If anyone representing your Association cared to come to Belfast for an hour or two one day, say in January, I would be very pleased to meet them and entertain them to lunch. The Enterprise trains are quite convenient for a short visit of this type. I come to Dublin a number of times myself but I have nothing scheduled for the next couple of months.

Many thanks for writing.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

*Peter Froggatt*

Subsequently, an inaugural meeting of the SAC was provisionally agreed for late September early October 1981, yet by November the inaugural SAC meeting had not happened due to Dr Froggatt been unable to “find a day or two as alternatives to put to the members of the SAC” (ISIDA: Scientific Advisory Committee, 1981).

On November 5<sup>th</sup> 1983, the inaugural meeting of the SAC took place at the Children’s University Hospital, Temple Street Dublin. Remarking on the delay in launching the SAC, ISIDA said in Newsletter No. 17 (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1984),

*the meetings and discussions that preceded the establishment of the SAC took longer than we had anticipated, but we are satisfied that the time spent was indeed worthwhile and that we have a SAC of an eminent and dedicated group of doctors and scientists who are deeply committed to aims and objectives of that Committee.*

As reported by the SAC Establishment of ISIDA SAC (ISIDA: Scientific Advisory Committee, 1983), Professor Gerald Cussen Consultant Paediatrician, University College Cork was elected the new Chairman of the SAC. In a press statement announcing the formal establishment of the SAC, ISIDA said it had been “established to initiate and encourage research and to review and assess grant applications for scientific research” into SIDS. In the minutes of the May 26<sup>th</sup> 1984 SAC meeting (ISIDA: Scientific Advisory Committee), Professor Cussen said the SAC “should try to establish a Central Register for Cot Deaths with the help of consultant pathologists”. It was determined that all babies dying at less than one year of age have an autopsy, and that standard autopsy protocol, such as the one designed and used by SAC committee member Dr Seamus Cahalane of Temple Street, Children’s Hospital would be ideal.

A significant detail in the history of ISIDA was its’ decision from the outset to affiliate itself to the FSID in the UK, and in-turn instantly joining the global approach to SIDS research. This tactic gave ISIDA authority within the area of SIDS research and choosing Dr Victoria Coffey as its’ honorary president further reinforced that authority in Ireland. This was fortified with the establishment of the SAC in 1983, positioning ISIDA as the inside authority on SIDS research in Ireland.

### What type of interest group is ISIDA?

In its' first newsletter (The Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1977, p. 1 & 2) ISIDA lists its' general aims and the immediate tasks they would undertake to achieve the aims (See Tables 14). Quantifying ISIDAs' general aims alongside Robert Baggott *Pressure Groups Today* (Baggott, 1995, p. 14), interest group classifications verifies ISIDA as a 'cause' group (See Tables 15).

General Aims Agreed February 3 <sup>rd</sup> 1977	Immediate Tasks Agreed February 3 <sup>rd</sup> 1977
To support, help and counsel parents bereaved by cot death To increase public awareness of the problem of Sudden Infant Death.	A letter to be sent to the "Medical Times" and the "Garda Review" informing their readers of the work of ISIDA and asking them to let bereaved parents with whom they have professional contact, know of our existence
To bring pressure to bear on the appropriate authorities to supply the necessary funds and facilities for further research in this field.	To establish contact with the Department of Health
To raise funds for the furtherance of the above mentioned aims.	Open a Bank Account in the Association's name – remember that even at this early stage, to exist and be effective as an association, funds are needed to operate and disseminate information – so, voluntary subscriptions welcome!

Table 14: The general aims and the immediate tasks ISIDA agreed at its' inaugural meeting on February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1977 (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1977)

Cause group classification	ISIDA general aims
Membership is <i>open</i> to those who support the cause, or who share common values	To support, help and counsel parents bereaved by cot death
Primarily exists to further the <i>interests of others (or the public interest)</i> as defined by the group	To increase <i>public</i> awareness of the problem of Sudden Infant Death. To bring pressure to bear on the appropriate authorities to supply the necessary funds and facilities for further research in this field.
	To raise funds for the furtherance of the above mentioned aims.

Table 15: Quantifying ISIDA's general aims alongside Robert Baggott *Pressure Groups Today* (Baggott, 1995, p. 14) interest group classifications of a 'cause' group

### **How has ISIDA exerted influence and are they an insider or outsider group?**

While classified as a cause-centred group, when exerting influence is ISIDA an ‘insider’ or ‘outsider’ group on Wynn Grant’s *Pressure Groups, Politics and Democracy in Britain* (Grant, 2000, p. 19) classification table. This is resolved by studying how ISIDA exert influence to understand if they are they able to as Grant says (Grant, 2000, p. 19).

*“talk the language of civil servants and government; do they have expertise in presenting their case, negotiating and importantly are they able to accept the outcome of the negotiating process?”*

Endeavouring to answer these questions the data analysis of primary sourced ISIDA records from 1976 to 1987, concentrated definitely on two of their general aims. The first was increasing public awareness of the problem of SIDS via the media. The second was bringing pressure to bear on the appropriate authorities to supply the necessary funds and facilities for further research in this field via parliamentary questions, direct interactions with the various Ministers for Health, and the Medical Social Research Board.

However, the crucial question throughout the research was how ISIDA succeeded in the establishment of the National Sudden Infant Death Register (NSIDR)?

#### **Increasing public awareness of the problem of SIDS via the media**

Before the establishment of ISIDA, its evident Berry saw the significance of how the media could help ISIDA achieve their aims. As referenced Berry’s open letter previously MRCDS appeared in several newspapers on July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1976. On June 30<sup>th</sup> 1976, the Evening Herald interviewed Berry, where she discussed her personal story and how she wanted to establish a similar group to the FSID in Ireland. This was followed on July 1<sup>st</sup> 1976 by a photograph of Berry and her husband Tom holding a picture of their son Brendan in the Irish Press (See Table 16). Studying the Irish Newspapers Archives and the Irish Times Digital Archives for 1976, Berry appears in nine separate national newspaper articles between June and July discussing the issue of SIDS and her determination to establish ISIDA.



The Dublin woman, Mrs. Eimear Berry, who is forming an organisation to help reduce the incidence of cot deaths, pictured with her husband, Tom, at their home in Sycamore Rd., Dundrum. They are holding a photograph of their three children, Bairbre (7), Brian (4), and baby Brendan, a cot death victim weeks after the picture was taken.

Table 16 Photograph of Eimear and Tom Berry in the Irish Press July 1<sup>st</sup> 1976.

When ISIDA was established in 1977 a consistent section within its' newsletters was 'What it says in the papers', where they would summarise the media coverage received for the previous months. In its' fourth newsletter November 1977 (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1977), Berry recorded the importance publicity to ISIDA because it is how other bereaved parents of SIDS learn about ISIDA and make contact. It helps educate the public and medical professionals about SIDS and debunk the "old wives' tales about SIDS and mistaken ideas people have about cot death". This importance was utilised often for example in the first newsletter in 1977 (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1977) when referencing the appointment of an honorary president, ISIDA cites deciding it should be "some person from the field of medicine or its associated disciplines, with a particular interest in SIDS".

The preferred for ISIDA was Dr Victoria Coffey of Trinity College Dublin who was one of Ireland's first female paediatricians and had conducted the first Irish research into SIDS between 1968 and 1970 entitled "Cot Deaths in Dublin". Agreeing to become ISIDA's first honorary president Dr Coffey informed ISIDA she was about to undertake a new study into SIDS. Exploiting the significance of this new SIDS study, ISIDA set about securing media coverage, by example, it was the front-page story of the Evening Herald on February 26<sup>th</sup> 1977 (Evening Herald, 1977) (See Table 17).

Studying the Irish Newspaper Archives (Irish Newspaper Archives, 2019) and the Irish Times Digital Archives (Irish Times, 2019) from June 30<sup>th</sup> 1976 to July 16<sup>th</sup> 1987, and sampling national newspapers, i.e. Irish Times, Irish Independent, Irish Press, Irish Examiner, Sunday Independent and Evening Herald reveals one hundred and twenty-nine editorials (ed.) with a direct reference to either Eimear Berry, cot death, SIDS or ISIDA (See Table 18). Analysing this one hundred and twenty-nine national newspaper articles further reveal the largest concentration in the Evening Herald (thirty-five), Irish Press (thirty) and Irish Independent (twenty-seven). (See Table 19). However, the Evening Herald, Irish Independent and Sunday Independent (eight) are all owned by the Independent News & Media Group<sup>21</sup> (INM). Therefore, INM carried seventy of the one hundred and twenty-nine editorials (See Table 20), equating to fifty-four per cent of all national newspaper editorials during this period.

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<sup>21</sup> **Independent News & Media** is the publisher in Ireland of the Irish Independent, Sunday Independent, The Herald, Sunday World, Belfast Telegraph, Sunday Life and The Star, and thirteen weekly regional newspapers. (Independent News and Media Group, 2019)

WEATHER OUTLOOK — Out looks of rain in the south. Mainly dry and cold in northern areas.  
DUBLIN HIGH TIDE—5.25 p.m.  
LIGHTING-UP TIME—8.27 p.m.

# COD WAR SUPREMO FLIES IN

THE ICELANDIC coastguard skipper at the centre of last year's Cod War with Britain flew into Dublin today to have talks with Commander Patrick Kavanagh, commanding officer of the Navy, about the best way of patrolling our new fishing barrier.

The new enhanced enforcement of a 30-mile fishing limit, announced by Minister of Fisheries Mr. Patrick Donaghy, is scheduled to come into operation in three days.

The fishing problem being looked at behind an

## Dublin talks on fishing 'clamp'

—although our new 30-mile coastal waters national fishery zone is not yet in force.

At a press conference, Cpt. Kavanagh said he fully backed Donaghy's stand on the fishing clamp issue. "I am willing to help if asked," he declared. "I am sympathetic to the Irish fisherman."

He refused to discuss what kind of advice he might offer. His role was primarily advisory, he said.

Commander Kavanagh is a member of the Tye Sea fishing community and is the senior skipper to the historic coastguard vessel.

## Cyclists' driving tests call

By JOHN McNEIL  
THE GOVERNMENT has been asked to introduce driving tests for cyclists.

The idea was first put forward by the Cyclists' Club in 1968. It was then dropped because of the cost of the tests and the difficulty of setting them up.

But Mr. Donaghy said that the Government is now looking at the idea again. "It is a matter of cost and of setting up the tests," he said.

Mr. Donaghy said that the Government is now looking at the idea again. "It is a matter of cost and of setting up the tests," he said.

## More deadly chocolates

A PACKET of chocolate found to be more deadly than a box of chocolates.

The chocolate was found to be more deadly than a box of chocolates.

The chocolate was found to be more deadly than a box of chocolates.

The chocolate was found to be more deadly than a box of chocolates.

## U.S. BAN ON IRISH PLANE SPOTTER CREEGAN ON CARDS



SPOTTER CREEGAN ON CARDS

U.S. BAN ON IRISH PLANE SPOTTER CREEGAN ON CARDS

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U.S. BAN ON IRISH PLANE SPOTTER CREEGAN ON CARDS

U.S. BAN ON IRISH PLANE SPOTTER CREEGAN ON CARDS

## Cot deaths probe by Irish team

By MICHAEL BROPHY

A DUBLIN team of research medical is to undertake a new investigation into the mystery child killer — cot deaths, now believed to be an increase in Dublin.

And they may be to have the full backing of a new government health minister to help people whose children have died from cot deaths.

The cot death research continues into the early months of the year. It is a new initiative by the health minister, Mr. James Haughey, to help people whose children have died from cot deaths.

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## 'Angelus' at Council meeting poses a dilemma!

'Angelus' at Council meeting poses a dilemma!

## British Army call off stake-out

British Army call off stake-out

## Noted Gaelic speaker dies

Noted Gaelic speaker dies

KEEP FIT WITH THE MIAMI BEAT FOR DANCING FEET

CO-JACKS CLUBBING OWING TO FIRE

SPECTACLE FRAMES DUBLIN PHARMACY

Policeman is shot dead in ambush

FREE! £1,000 TOP PRIZE

Profit-sharing

GOB to lose jobs

SPECIAL SUNDAY OPENING 2pm to 6pm at JACELECTRIC ALL STOCKS TO CLEAR FIRST COME - FIRST SERVED

Table 17 The front page of the Evening Herald on February 27<sup>th</sup> 1977, under the heading "Cot deaths probe by Irish team" by the journalist Michael Brophy

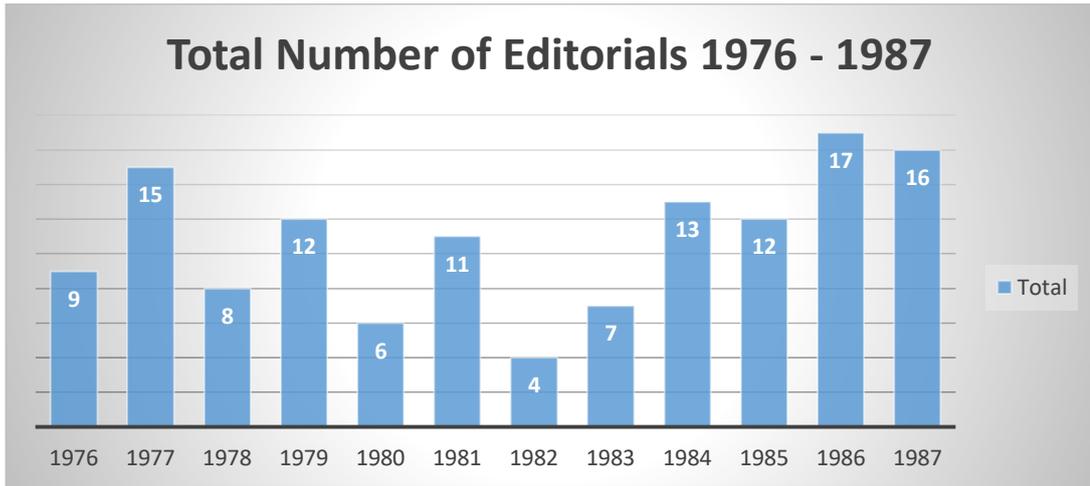


Table 18 The one hundred and twenty-nine editorials with a direct reference to Eimear Berry, cot death, SIDS or ISIDA divided years from 1976 to 1987. The sample includes the Irish Independent, Irish Times, Irish Press, Evening Herald and Sunday Independent

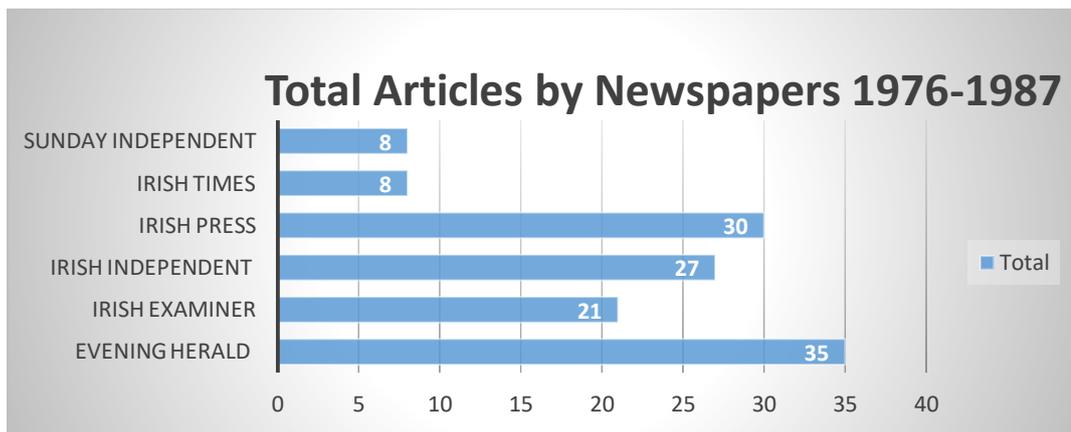


Table 19 The 129 editorials separated by newspaper with a direct reference to Eimear Berry, cot death, SIDS or ISIDA from 1976 to 1987. Includes the Irish Independent, Irish Times, Irish Press, Evening Herald and Sunday Independent

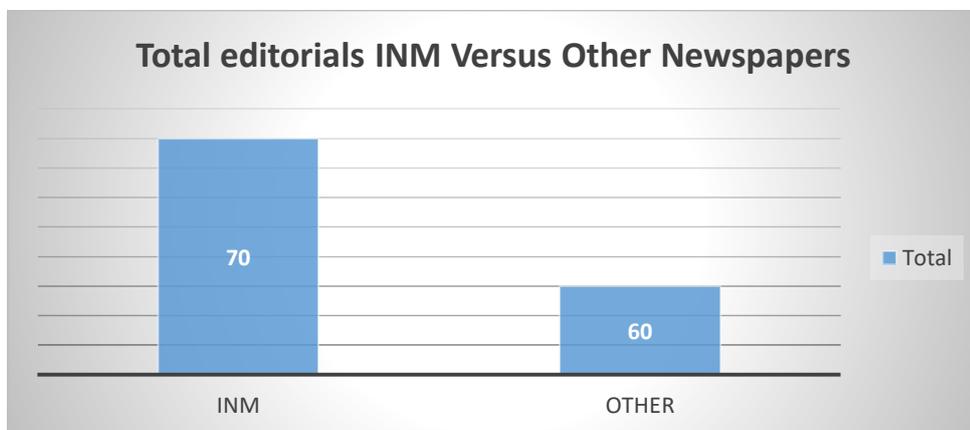


Table 20 The 129 editorials separated between Independent News and Media publications, (Irish Independent, Evening Herald & Sunday Independent) and Others (Irish Press, Irish Examiner and Irish Times)

The other media utilised by ISIDA when increasing public awareness of the problem of SIDS was the broadcast media, specifically RTÉ<sup>22</sup>. For example, in the minutes of an ISIDA committee meeting from May 1977 (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1977), there is a reference to a letter from Lady Limerick, Vice-Chairperson of the FSID and her intended visit to Dublin that year. The minutes note the ISIDA board was agreeing that maximum use should be made of the intended visit in terms of publicity and fundraising. Subsequently in ISIDA's fourth newsletter (1977), it records Lady Limerick's visit in November 1977 and the media coverage on "Rodney Rice on RTÉ's Here and Now programme where Eimear Berry and Lady Limerick were interviewed in addition to Lady Limerick been interviewed for the RTÉ evening news bulletin" (1977, p. 2). Further illustrations of RTÉ'S coverage about SIDS and ISIDA are detailed below (See Table 21).

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What it says in the papers: 1978 (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1978)

*Pat Kenny in his Day by Day series devoted an entire hour-long programme to the subject of SIDS. Several ISIDA members were interviewed, and there was a studio panel consisting of Dr Coffey, Eimear Berry, with a direct link to Lady Limerick in London*

What it says in the papers: 1979 (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1979, p. 4)

*In March 1979 RTE broadcast a programme on Newsround entirely devoted to SIDS which included interviews with Dr Victoria Coffey, Eimear Berry and two bereaved parents from Waterford. In June, Berry was interviewed about the work of ISIDA on Switch On RTE 2*

What it says in the papers: 1982 (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1982, p. 6)

*In October 1981 RTE Woman's Today devoted two full programmes to SIDS and its effect on families, and in 1982 John Bowman carried two segments on SIDS on his show "Day by Day".*

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*Table 21 RTÉ's coverage from the ISIDA's What it says in the papers 1976 to 1987.*

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<sup>22</sup> **RTE:** Raidió Teilifís Éireann is a semi-state company and the national public service media of Ireland (Raidió Teilifís Éireann, 2018)

What is evident from these findings is how essential the media was in helping ISIDA, raise the public awareness of SIDS, across the print and broadcast media. The gratitude ISIDA had for the media is in abundance in its' newsletter archives where the media are repeatedly thanked for the continued support. There is the question though of had Independent News and Media (Irish Independent, Evening Herald and Sunday Independent) not provided over 50% of the national newspaper coverage would it still have achieved its aim of raising the public awareness of SIDS. This will require further analysis within the conclusion.

### **Bringing pressure to bear on the appropriate authorities to supply the necessary funds and facilities for further research into SIDS**

Examining primary sourced records from ISIDA's archives shows a comprehensive range of tactics used to bring pressure to bear on the appropriate authorities to supply the necessary funds and facilities for further research into SIDS. The tactics included Parliamentary Questions (PQs); written correspondence and meetings with Ministers for Health; meetings with Department of Health officials; securing representation on a sub-committee of the Medical Social Research Board (MSRB); establishing the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) and directly recruiting the support of ISIDA members in the 1987 General Election.

Plotting out the content of the ISIDA archive records and House of Oireachtas PQs shows a clear timeline of how ISIDA exerted influence on the appropriate authorities to supply the necessary funds and facilities for further research into SIDS. The timeline started in 1977 when Dr Victoria Coffey announced a new SIDS study; to 1979 when the MSRB announced a Pilot SIDS study for Dublin city and county; to 1980 when ISIDA joined the MSRB sub-committee on SIDS, to the establishment of the SAC in 1983; the 1987 General Election campaign by ISIDA; to the Minister for Health announcing the establishment of the NSIDR in July 1987 (See Table 22).

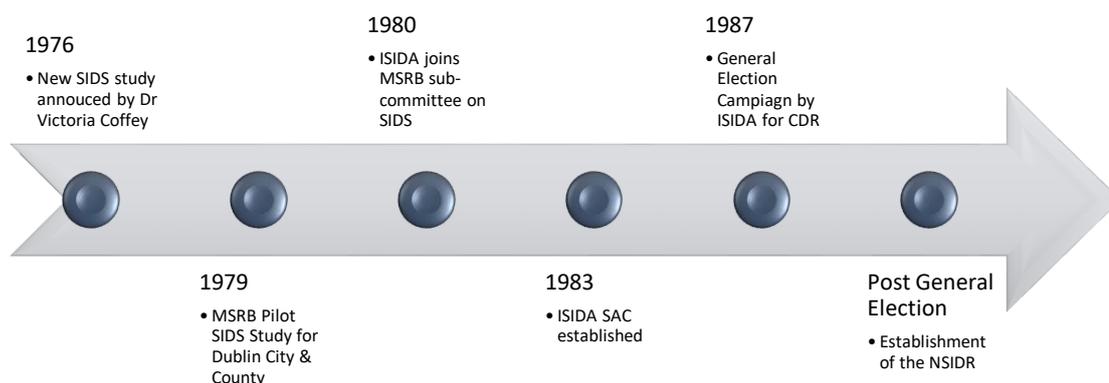
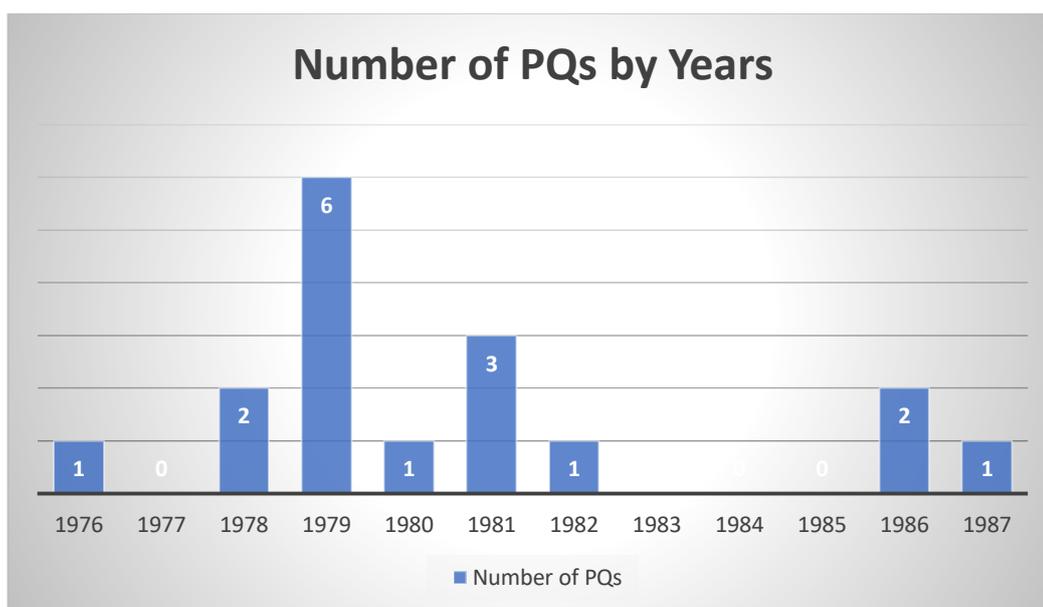


Table 22 Timeline of how ISIDA exerted influence from 1976 to 1987

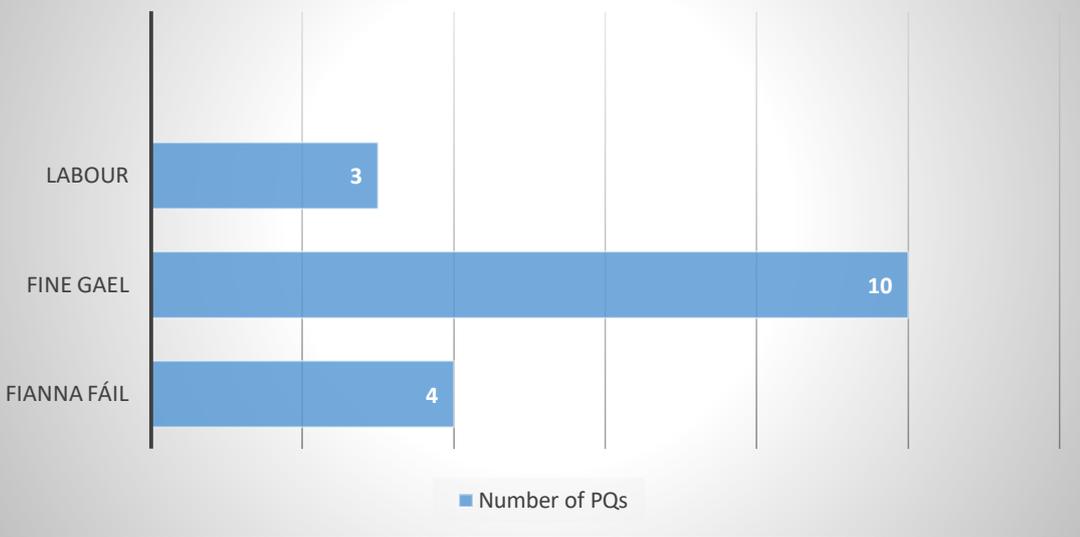
Commencing with PQs by analysing the House of Oireachtas (Oireachtas, 1976) website from June 1976 to July 1987, specifically looking for PQs that reference SIDS, ISIDA, MSRB, cot death, cot death register or the National Sudden Infant Death Register (NSIDR). The results show seventeen PQ's were asked during this period of which members asked ten of those PQs of the Fine Gael (FG) parliamentary party of which five were asked by FG Jim O' Keeffe TD<sup>23</sup> (See Table 23). The very first Dáil recorded PQ to reference SIDS was also asked by a member of FG, Luke Belton TD on October 28<sup>th</sup> 1976 (Oireachtas, 1976)

Table 23 Parliamentary Questions (PQs) divided by Years, Political Parties and TDs from October 28<sup>th</sup> 1976 to March 31<sup>st</sup> 1987

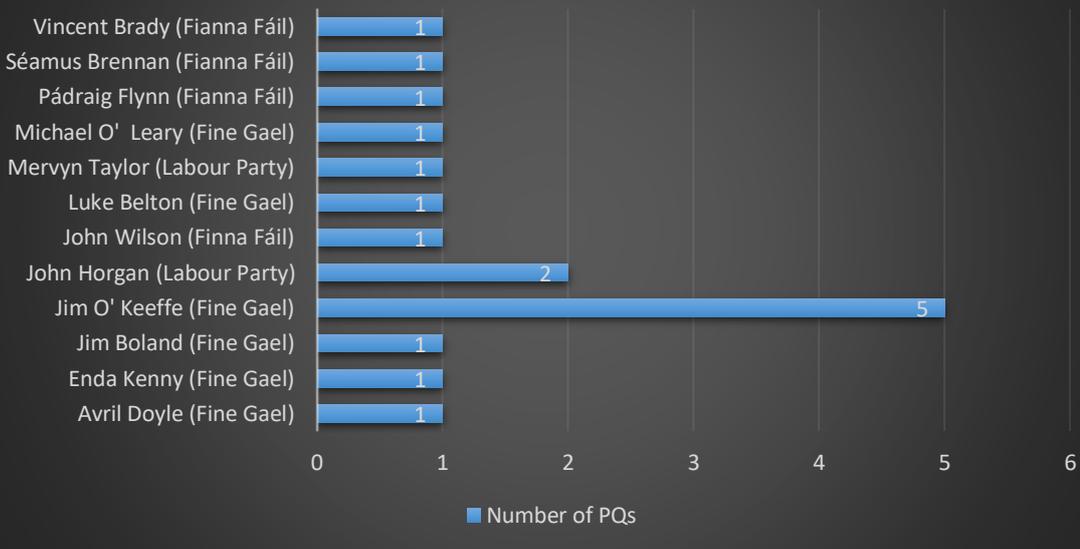


<sup>23</sup> **Teachta Dála:** a member of the Dáil or lower house of Parliament (Lexico powered by Oxford, 2018)

### Number of PQs by Political Parties



### Number of PQs by TD



### **1979: The Medical Social Research Board SIDS Pilot Study**

As recorded in its next newsletter (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1977) in February 1977, Dr Victoria Coffey announced a new study into SIDS which would be undertaken by a “specialised medical team at Trinity College Dublin and would be first of its kind in more than five years that Irish doctors have tackled the mystery of cot-death on this scale”.

The study would be conducted with the co-operation of ISIDA members and would take at least a year to complete, with Dr Coffey donating her services free of charge. Dr Coffey and her team would also apply to the Medical Research Council (MRC) for funding to cover the nurse’s salary and travelling expenses, and the study would operate out of facilities at Trinity College Dublin.

On February 2<sup>nd</sup> 1978, Jim Boland TD, Fine Gael (FG) asked the Minister for Health, Charles Haughey TD, Fianna Fáil (FF) via a PQ (House of Oireachtas, 2019) “if he will make any sums of money available for research into the causes of sudden deaths in infants”. Responding Minister Haughey TD cited Dr Victoria Coffey’s new study and said he intended asking “the Medico-Social Research Board<sup>24</sup> (MSRB) to assess the feasibility and need for carrying out further research into the incidence and causes of such deaths”. Boland then asked the Minister would he make funds available to the medical bodies which are researching the causes of SIDS, to which the Minister replied “he would as the need arises” (House of Oireachtas, 2019)

On April 5<sup>th</sup> 1978, Jim O’ Keeffe TD (FG) and Luke Belton TD (FG) asked the Minister for Health Charles Haughey TD (FF) (2019), a series of PQs three of which were explicitly connected to the MSRB and SIDS

- 1) the research that is being undertaken into the causes of cot deaths
- 2) the Government support and assistance that is available for SIDS research
- 3) an up-to-date position concerning research into the cause of cot deaths

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<sup>24</sup> **The Medico-Social Research Board**, was formally established by the Minister for Health in 1965, to (a) to organise and administer such surveys and statistical research in relation to the incidence of human diseases, injuries, deformities and defects and in relation to the provision and operation of health services as the Minister may direct or as may be approved by him. (b) to advise the Minister on such matters as he may refer to them relating to the incidence of human diseases, injuries, deformities and defects and the compilation and use of health and vital statistics (Irish Statute Book, 2019)

The Minister again cited Dr Coffey's ongoing research and how he had requested the MSRB assess the feasibility and need for research in this area and that further research would be decided when MSRB had completed their assessment.

In response O' Keffe asked when the MSRB report was expected, to which Minister said (2019)

*The matter was discussed by the Medico-Social Research Board about a month ago, and that board decided it would have to go into a bit more detail before deciding whether or not such research was feasible or justified and the board has set up a sub-committee to consider the question. I am afraid I cannot say when I will hear from them, but I do not expect it will be too long*

This led to continued debate including O' Keffe accusing the Minister of Health of not doing his but job merely kicking the problem to touch a bit. In addition to the following transcript (House of Oireachtas, 2019)

O'Keffe:

*would the Minister assure the House he will try to obtain this report as to whether he should institute research at the earliest possible date?*

Minister:

*the MSRB is a very high-level and important expert body and the members of that board afforded this matter immediate attention when asked by me."*

O' Keffe:

*When were they asked?*

Minister:

*In February*

Jim Boland TD (FG)

*After my last question*

Minister:

*after Dr Coffey and, Trinity College said funds should be voted for this research, and I immediately asked the MSRB to look into this matter*

In its eight newsletter (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1979) ISIDA recorded the complete transcripts of the April PQs, and that in July the MSRB directly contacted ISIDA requesting a meeting.

On November 21<sup>st</sup> 1978, ISIDA met Dr Geoffrey Dean of the MSRB who briefed them about the sub-committee that had been established and would be “submitting recommendations to the Minister as to how best research into causes and prevention of SIDS could be conducted in Ireland” (1978). Dr Dean then informed them that following a series of meetings and research they had now drawn up a recommendation “which has already been submitted to the Minister for Health and hoped there would be further development in 1979” (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1978).

On January 31<sup>st</sup> 1979 Jim O’ Keeffe TD (FG) asked the Minister for Health through a PQ (House of Oireachtas Website, 2019), could he “furnish details of the plans approved by his Department for financing and carrying on research into cot deaths in this country”. The Minister replied that the report from the MSRB was “at present the subject of discussions between the Department of Health and MSRB”. O’ Keeffe asked if the report had been with the Minister’s Department since October 1978. The Minister confirmed that it had been because “following his Department's review of the report his officials had gone back to the MSRB and discussed several aspects resulting in the MSRB having done some further research and consideration” (House of Oireachtas Website, 2019).

O’ Keeffe then noted the high probability that based on previous statistics “130 children will die as a result of cot deaths” in 1979, a probability which “should encourage a large degree of priority of making finance available for research into the causes of cot deaths” (House of Oireachtas Website, 2019). Contribution debate ensued including the interjection of Dr John O’ Connell TD (FF) who asked the Minister if the MSRB and British Medical Research Board (BMRB) had been in communication. The issue of cot death was “an international problem, and as a result, co-ordinated research would be more advantageous” The Minister confirmed that there was the “fullest possible co-operation between” MSRB and the BMRB.

On February 6<sup>th</sup> 1979, John Horgan TD (FG) asked the Minister for Health (House of Oireachtas, 2019), through PQ the Department of Health received a revised MSRB sub-committee's recommendation "set up to examine the problem of SIDS; the nature of the recommendation; and the action it is proposed to take"

The Minister replied he had received the report which recommended that a "study of SIDS, should be set up" and that the form which the study might take was now the subject of discussions between his Department and the MSRB sub-committee. He confirmed that both parties would be meeting again shortly to review the recommendations in the light of these discussions.

On June 12<sup>th</sup> 1979, John Horgan TD (FG) via another PQ (2019) asked the Minister for Health Charles Haughey TD (FF)

*if the study had commenced on the recommendations of the MSRB in relation to SIDS; the amount of money allocated to the study; the terms of reference; when the study would be completed; and if the results will be published; and the personnel involved*

The Minister replied

*the MSRB had undertaken a pilot study to test the feasibility and methodology of a more comprehensive study of infant deaths, which would pay particular attention to SIDS. The pilot study had begun on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1979 and was expected to last for up to six months, and the expense of the study was being absorbed by the MSRB.*

On July 6<sup>th</sup> 1979, Jim O' Keeffe TD (FG) asked the Minister for Health via PQ (2019) would the MSRB study include rural and urban areas. The Minister confirmed the pilot study would cover "all of Dublin city and county, both urban and rural". O' Keeffe replied "Would it be fair to suggest that this pilot study is a delaying tactic and that the full study recommended last year by the MSRB is being put on the long finger" (House of Oireachtas, 2019)

In written correspondence to Berry on July 16<sup>th</sup> (Keeffe, 1979) O' Keeffe states his disappointment at the limits of the new MSRB studying writing " "I feel rather unhappy about the situation, what is happening now after a very long delay seems to be a very modest move indeed" (Keeffe, 1979, p. 2) (See Table 24).

Table 24 Letter from Jim O'Keefe TD (FG) to Eimear Berry July 16<sup>th</sup> 1979 regarding a PQ he put to the Minister for Health Charles Haughey TD (FF) on July 4<sup>th</sup>



DAIL ÉIREANN  
BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH. 2.  
(Dublin. 2)

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16th. July, 1979

Mrs. Eimear Berry,  
Hon. Sec. I.C.K.D.A.,  
34, Sycamore Rd.,  
MEADOWBROOK,  
DUNELM,  
DUBLIN 14.

Dear Mrs. Berry,

Regrets for delay in replying to yours of 21st. May.

I put down a Question to the Minister covering the various items mentioned by you. I discovered that John Horgan had put down a Question along the same lines and accordingly I was unable to get in the full Question for discussion with the Minister.

I send you copy of the Question put down by John Horgan and the Reply given together with letter to me which shows that the Question which I put down was confined - there is a rule that a Question cannot be repeated within six months.

I send you then the copy of the Dail Report dealing with the Question which ultimately got through from myself.

I feel rather unhappy about the situation. That is

happening now after a very long delay seems to be a very modest move indeed.

Needless to say, if you feel like contacting me in the matter & not hesitate to do so.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

JIM O'KEEFE, T.D.,

In its seventh newsletter in July (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1979), ISIDA wrote an open letter to the Minister for Health requesting an immediate meeting to address their concerns. The letter was titled “Justice for our babies in 1979, the Year of the Child” in which they stated

*how disappointed and frustrated we are at the lack of official action on SIDS, despite all the hullabaloo about the Year of the Child<sup>25</sup> in official places, babies are not thought of as real people. If babies die, if we have an appallingly high infant mortality rate, it is not a matter of great concern to the Department of Health – their attitude is, after all, there are plenty more babies were the dead ones come from*

Concluding the letter ISIDA stated that this was “not a personal attack on the Minister”, however, Mr Haughey was then Minister for Health and, as such, they wrote, held an onerous responsibility in the matter of SIDS.” Therefore, they demanded action on behalf of “our dead children, and on behalf of those 150+ children” who would die in 1979 and every other year until SIDS was tackled.” (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1979)

In response to the letter, the Minister for Health offered ISIDA a meeting with a delegation of senior officials from both the Department of Health and the MSRB sub-committee on SIDS. This meeting took place on October 11<sup>th</sup> (1979, p. 6), where ISIDA was informed that the pilot study had commenced in April and would only cover the Dublin County Borough and Dublin City and the MSRB sub-committee on SIDS would meet again at the end of October 1979 to review the data gathered and determine whether a more extensive study was warranted. However, it was the opinion of the MSRB that there was every likelihood a decision would be made recommending a more extensive study (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1978, p. 6) .

The MSRB expected the more extensive study would commence in early 1980, firstly in Dublin but gradually expanding out to other counties. In the eight ISIDA newsletter in September 1980, it reported receiving a written update from Dr Geoffrey Dean of

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<sup>25</sup> UNESCO proclaimed 1979 as the International Year of the Child. The proclamation was signed on January 1, 1979 by United Nations Secretary General Kurt Waldheim.

the MSRB on the pilot study and responding to Dr Dean's letter had invited Dr Alicia Radic of the MSRB sub-committee on SIDS, as a guest speaker to a special meeting of ISIDA on November 8<sup>th</sup> 1980 which she kindly accepted.

On November 19<sup>th</sup> 1980, Enda Kenny TD (FG), John O' Keefe TD (FG), John Horgan TD (Labour Party), Jim Boland TD (FG) submitted several PQs to the Minister for State at the Department of Health Thomas Nolan TD (FF) (House of Oireachtas, 2019) related to ISIDA and the MSRB study. The first PQ from Kenny enquired if the Minister for Health would make finance available to ISIDA for further research and investigation into such cot deaths. Responding Nolan said ISIDA had not requested funds from the Department of Health to finance research into the causes of SIDS and such research was already underway at the MSRB.

In another PQ from Horgan, the Minister of State was asked if he was aware of the considerable concern within ISIDA, that when the MSRB research had been completed, there would be no further funds made available for a national SIDS study under the auspices of the Department of Health or any other department. In a follow-up, PQ Kenny invited Nolan to "reconfirm the former Minister for Health's assurance of January 1979 that funds would be available for a national study when the pilot SIDS study is completed" (2019). Replying to Kenny's PQ, Nolan said: "if the research is not completed with the amount of money now available, Deputy Kenny can rest assured that the Department will make more money available for further research" (House of Oireachtas, 2019).

Responding to Nolan's answer, Horgan said (House of Oireachtas, 2019)

*this wasn't about existing research but about the commitment given by the Taoiseach Charles Haughey TD (FF), when he was Minister for Health, to further SIDS research after the conclusion of the pilot study and if the Taoiseach's previous concerns about SIDS would be matched by the provision of additional resources after the completion of the current pilot study into SIDS*

Boland also asked

*would the Minister of State give an undertaking that money will be made available next year for further research?*

Nolan replied

*The Deputy (Boland) could rest assured that money will be made available for research into this particular problem because of the concern of this House and the concern of the public*

Boland responded

*take it that the undertaking has been given now?*

Kenny exclaimed

*It has indeed*

### **1980: ISIDA joins the MSRB sub-committee on SIDS**

As recorded in its' tenth newsletter (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1981, p. 5), on December 3<sup>rd</sup> 1980, ISIDA wrote to the new Minister for Health Dr Michael Woods TD (FF) requesting a meeting. In the letter, the ISIDA listed several issues it wished to discuss with the Minister for Health (See Table 25 a summation of the issues). The Minister agreed to the meeting which took place on December 15<sup>th</sup> 1980, where all issues raised in advance were discussed. Subsequently, on December 30<sup>th</sup>, Woods wrote back to ISIDA to formally respond to each of the issues raised and discussed at the meeting (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1981).

He opened the letter by informing ISIDA he was “making available a grant of £1,000 to ISIDA as a contribution towards the financing of the Association’s activities this year” (p. 5) and continued by addressing each other point (See Table 26).

- 1) The Minister’s plans for extended research into SIDS in Ireland, the scope of this research, the date of its commencement, and the amount of money to be made available.
- 2) The necessity for post-mortems on all infant deaths under one year in Ireland, these post mortems to be carried out by paediatric pathologists in accordance with defined standards, in designated centres.
- 3) The results of these post mortems to be routed to a central-agency
- 4) Ensuring that corners are aware of and comply with the International Classification of Diseases, which since 1<sup>st</sup> January 1979 has identified SIDS as a certifiable cause of death and that SIDS deaths are certified.
- 5) As the rate of SIDS deaths is higher in Ireland than in countries where more intensive infant care programmes are the norm, ISIDA consider it essential that the infant care services available here are improved
- 6) Direct financial assistance towards ISIDA for the production and distribution of educational material in relation to SIDS.
- 7) ISIDA representation on the MSRB sub-committee on SIDS

*Table 25 A summation of the issues ISIDA included its' letter to the Dr Woods on December 3<sup>rd</sup> 1980*

#### Plans for extended research into SIDS in Ireland

*I have asked the MSRB to furnish their proposals for future research into SIDS as soon as possible. I will keep you informed of developments.*

The necessity for post-mortems on all infant deaths under one year in Ireland, these post-mortems to be carried out by paediatric pathologists in accordance with defined standards, in designated centres.

*I understand and appreciate the views of ISIDA in this particular matter. However, it is a very complex area involving many interests and one on which I am not in a position to make any commitment at this stage.*

Ensuring that coroners are aware of and comply with the International Classification of Diseases

*I have instructed officers of my Department to write to the coroners drawing their attention to the code for SIDS*

Improved infant care services to be made available

*A study is at present being carried out jointly by the Department of Health and the MSRB on the maternity and infant care scheme.*

Financial assistance towards ISIDA for the production and distribution of educational material in relation to SIDS.

*As I mentioned at our meeting, this is something which may be appropriate to the Health Education Bureau (HEB). I will contact the HEB and see if they can help in anyway*

ISIDA representation on the MSRB sub-committee on SIDS

*I suggested at our meeting that ISIDA should contact the MSRB directly about representation on the sub-committee on SIDS. I have since been in contact with the MSRB and asked them to consider favourably any such request.*

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As documented in the tenth ISIDA newsletter on January 7<sup>th</sup> 1981, it wrote back to Woods thanking him most sincerely for the grant of £1,000 towards financing the activities of the Association. While disappointed he was unable to give specific details on future SIDS research they would like to hear from him on this issue in the future (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1981, p. 7). The ISIDA also requested in the same letter that Woods agree to “explore more fully, with all interested parties how such post mortems would become the norm in Ireland” (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1981). Concluding the letter, ISIDA thanked Woods for the recommended contact with the HEB and the MSRB regarding representation on the SIDS sub-committee (p. 7).

### **1983: Establishment of the Scientific Advisory Committee**

As documented in the minutes of a May 1984 ISIDA SAC meeting (ISIDA: Scientific Advisory Committee, 1984, p. 1), Professor Gerard Cussen proposed the establishment of a Central Register for Cot Deaths (hereafter CDR). After that from 1984 to 1986, there was continual reference to CDR within the minutes of SAC meetings (See Table 27), but it was not until May 1986 that a more strategic approach commenced.

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#### **SAC minutes September 3<sup>rd</sup> 1984** (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1984)

*it was agreed to further pursue the establishment of a CDR although difficulties were anticipated. Dr Cahalane agreed to informally discuss it with the Dean of the College of Pathologists and would ask that it be brought up at their next meeting in October. It was also agreed that Dr Cahalane would contact Professor Paddy Bofin of the Dublin City Coroner. Eimear Berry agreed to approach Inspector Phyllis Nolan of An Garda Síochána as it was suggested, they had excellent and accurate records regarding deaths and causes of deaths and their assistance in setting up the register would be sought.*

#### **SAC Minutes February 14<sup>th</sup> 1986** (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1986)

*The CDR was again revisited where following preliminary discussions in 1985 when it had been universally agreed establishing such a register was desirable, though the mechanism for achieving this was not at present clear. It was agreed that consultation with Dr Alicia Radic of MSRB should be sought and that a letter should be written to the Minister for Health Barry Desmond TD, Labour Party (LP) outlining the need for a CDR.*

#### **Letter from the SAC to the Central Statistics Office (CSO) May 21<sup>st</sup>** (Gorman, 1986),

*In order to do this, one would need a copy of all infant death certificates, where the cause of death is one following, SIDS, Sudden Death – Cause Unknown. The SAC concluded by enquiring as to whether it was possible to attain this information from the CSO*

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*Table 27 Abstract of references to the CDR within the minutes of SAC meetings from 1984 to 1986*

At May 23<sup>rd</sup> 1986 SAC meeting (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1986) the committee was informed that it would be possible to retrieve the necessary information from the CSO. It was therefore decided to re-approach Dr Radic of the MSRB to ask if she might consider coordinating the project. It was also agreed at this meeting that if Dr Radic required staffing support with the project, this would in the short term be funded by the ISIDA, “but in the long term, they agreed they would attempt to have this funded by the Department of Health (DoH) and as a first step the DoH will be approached regarding this” (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1986).

On June 4<sup>th</sup> 1986, the SAC wrote to the Minister for Health explaining the rationale for establishing a register for SIDS cases (See Table 28) (Gorman, 1986) , *in Ireland and requesting permission to pull information on all infant deaths of 1985 where the death certificate gives one of the following diagnosis: cot death, crib death, SIDS, bronchiolitis, pneumonia, cause unknown and heart failure.*

4th June 1986

Office of the Minister of Health,  
Joyce House,  
8-11 Lombard Street East,  
Dublin 2.

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Re: Register of Babies Dying from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

Dear Mr. Desmond,

The Scientific Advisory Committee of the Irish Sudden Infant Death Association wishes to outline the need for a register of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome cases in Ireland. This is important for a number of reasons.

Firstly, we do not at present know the incidence of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome throughout the country. Secondly, we do not know the specific risk factors in this country. Thirdly, we do not know the risk of recurrence in families, in Ireland, and there is no clear information about this point in the literature worldwide. Fourthly, we do not know the incidence in low birthweight infants in Ireland.

For these reasons we believe that it is important that a register be established. As a start we would like to ask your permission to pull information on all infant deaths of 1985 where the death certificate gives one of the following diagnosis ; cot death, crib death, sudden infant death syndrome, bronchiolitis, pneumonia, cause unknown and heart failure.

Yours sincerely,

---

W.A. GORMAN, B.Sc., F.R.C.P.I., F.A.A.P.  
HON SECRETARY, SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
I.S.I.D.A.

Table 28: Copy of the letter from Dr Freda Gorman Honorary Secretary of the SAC to Minister for Health Barry Desmond TD (LP) June 4<sup>th</sup> 1986, explaining the rationale for establishing a register for SIDS cases in Ireland

### **1987: ISIDA General Election Campaign**

As documented in the minutes of November 3<sup>rd</sup> 1986 SAC meeting (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1986, p. 1) ,Desmond replied to the SAC letter of June 4<sup>th</sup> saying he was “unwilling to obtain information from death certificates of infants less than one year of age”. Dr Radic of the MSRB stated that the most efficient way of obtaining such data was via the CSO and that “that political pressure should be put upon the Minister of Health to set up a SIDS (CDR) register” (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1986). As recorded in the minutes of the next SAC meeting on January 9<sup>th</sup> 1987 (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1987) a draft response letter to Desmond was debated however it was agreed “no further letters or moves should be made regarding the register until after the next general election occurred”.

On January 20<sup>th</sup> 1987 the Labour Party withdrew from the Fine Gael-led government, and the headline for ISIDA’s twenty-third newsletter was “Let’s make this election work FOR ISIDA and AGAINST Cot Death!” (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1987). In the same newsletter, ISIDA explained how the forthcoming general election allowed ISIDA members to demand that candidates and the future government take the problem of SIDS seriously. They asked ISIDA members to ask all local candidates if they would support three objectives one been the establishment of a “national Cot Death Register (CDR) in order to identify the incidence of and the facts about Cot Deaths in Ireland” (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1987).

In order to facilitate their members with the campaign, ISIDA included a sample letter on the back page of the newsletter (See Table 29). This sample letter was for members to use as a template when writing to each candidate within their constituency. They also requested that their members “raise the issues with every canvasser who crosses their path or doorstep during the campaign” (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1987).

Also, ISIDA wrote to each candidate standing across the five main political parties, i.e. Fianna Fáil (FF), Fine Gael (FG), Labour Party (LP), Progressive Democrats (PDs) and Workers Party (WP), asking if they would support the three objectives of ISIDA including the establishment of a CDR.

In its twenty-fourth newsletter (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1987), ISIDA documents receiving a “30% reply ranging from non-comittal to the positively supportive including a letter dated February 17<sup>th</sup> from the Fianna Fáil spokesperson for health Dr Rory O’ Hanlon TD who said he

*fully recognised the excellent work carried out by ISIDA and fully agreed with the principles outlined in their letter and would be glad to discuss them with ISIDA when returned to Government.*

On February 17<sup>th</sup> 1987, FF formed a minority government with Dr Rory O’ Hanlon TD was appointed the new Minister for Health. On March 12<sup>th</sup> the ISIDA wrote to the Minister for Health (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1987) to accept his February 17<sup>th</sup> invitation “to meet on been returned to government and were happy to do so at his earliest convenience” (See Table 30)

As recorded in newsletter twenty-four, Dr O’ Hanlon private secretary replied to ISIDA’s letter informing them that (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1987)

*The Minister regrets that due to many competing demands for his time at present he is unable to meet you at the moment and would request ISIDA contact the Minister again in a months’ time when “he may be able to make arrangements to meet representatives of your association*

## ELECTION 1987

You may wish to write to the candidates in your constituency along these lines.

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Candidates Name & Address	Your own home address Tel. No. (if any). Date
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Dear

The Irish Sudden Infant Death Association was founded in 1976 to offer support and comfort to families bereaved by Cot Death and to promote and support research into the causes and means of prevention of Cot Death, which, each week, claims the lives of 3 to 4 Irish children.

I/We are asking you as a candidate in this constituency if you are willing to support our following three objectives.

1. Establish a national Cot Death Register in order to clearly identify the incidence of and the facts about Cot Death in Ireland.
2. Establish national research projects to ensure that Ireland contributes effectively to the international efforts to arrive at the causes and prevention of Cot Death and, in particular, to re-establish and extend to the entire country the epidemiological and pathological study which was carried out in the Eastern Health Board area (Medico-Social Research Board 1979-1982).
3. Through finance and other co-operation, support the voluntary efforts of ISIDA.

I/We am/are most anxious to know your response to the above three objectives. Please let me/us know by writing to me/us at the above address (or phoning me/us at the above number).

Yours sincerely,

(We'd be delighted to hear what response you get from your local candidates. You could let us know by phoning 01- 983112, 985179, 934757)

Table 29 Copy of the ISIDA sample letter included on the back page of its' twenty-third during the 1987 general election in Ireland.

12th March 1987

Dr. Rory O'Hanlon T.D.  
Minister for Health  
Dept. of Health  
Customs House  
DUBLIN 1

Dear Minister

We refer to your letter of February 1987 and to a letter from Mr. Paddy Lawlor, MEP, Director of Elections dated 9th February 1987 in reply to our letter of 30th January outlining our objectives in regards to ISIDA, its community support programme and AIDS research in Ireland.

We are very pleased to note that you agree with the principals outlined in our letter and would be delighted to accept your invitation to meet with you at the earliest date for further discussions on the matter.

We look forward to hearing from you regarding the date and time of this meeting and would like to take the opportunity, on behalf of ISIDA, to congratulate you on your appointment as Minister for Health and to wish you every success.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

Paddy Craven  
Chairman  
ISIDA

Eimear Berry  
Hon. Secretary  
ISIDA

## **Post 1987 general election: The National Sudden Infant Death Register (NSIDR)**

On March 31<sup>st</sup> 1987, Avril Doyle TD (FG) asked the Minister for Health Dr Rory O' Hanlon TD (FF) two PQ's (House of Oireachtas, 2019)

1. *If he will re-establish an MSRB-type study and research project to ensure Ireland contributes to international efforts to establish the causes of cot deaths; and if he will extend this research to the entire country*
2. *If he will establish a national cot death register to clearly identify the incidence of, and all facts relating to cot deaths in Ireland*

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Replying to Doyle's PQs, Dr O' Hanlon said

*I intend raising with the Health Research Board<sup>26</sup> (HRB), the question of research into the causes of sudden infant death and the establishment of a national register for the monitoring of sudden infant death syndrome". The HRB had come into operation on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1987 and was at present reviewing the activities transferred to it from the MSRB and the Medical Research Council to determine its priorities in the light of its resource availability*

In the minutes of the April 25<sup>th</sup> 1987, SAC meeting (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1987, p. 1 & 2), Dr Radic of the now HRB said she would "be willing to undertake the setting up of a register, and she would like to informally discuss it with the Secretary of the HRB if this were in order" with the councils of both ISIDA and SAC. Dr Radic proposed to initially collect autopsy materials from children with SIDS, cot death, or Acute Bronchiolitis<sup>27</sup>. In the interim representatives of the ISIDA council would continue to put pressure on the Minister for Health towards setting up a CDR (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1987).

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<sup>26</sup> **Health Research Board:** In 1986 the HRB was formed by the amalgamation of MSRB and the Medical Research Council of Ireland (Health Research Board, 2018)

<sup>27</sup> **Bronchiolitis** is an acute inflammatory injury of the bronchioles that is usually caused by a viral infection. This condition may occur in persons of any age, but severe symptoms are usually evident only in young infants (Medscape, 2019)

In the minutes of the of July 10<sup>th</sup> 1987 (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1987) the SAC meeting it documents, Dr Radic informing the SAC that the HRB was “unwilling to fund the CDR at present, though a draft protocol was being prepared, which would be sent to the Minister for Health and discussed with him at a future meeting so that it may be possible ultimately to have the CDR funded by the Department of Health.” (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1987)

As recorded in ISIDA’s twenty-fifth newsletter (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1987), on July 16<sup>th</sup> 1987, an ISIDA delegation met the Minister for Health where he informed them that he “favoured the establishment of a national cot death register and gave a commitment that the register would be operational by 1988”. At the next SAC meeting on November 29<sup>th</sup> (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1987), Dr Radic informed the committee that since ISIDA met with the Minister, his department “had written to the HRB requesting they become involved a national cot death register (National Sudden Infant Death Register).”

However as recorded in ISIDA’s twenty-fifth newsletter (Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1987)

*the scope of the register, in terms of information recorded, would be very limited it would only record the data from death notifications and would not include data from birth notifications which if used would yield a wealth of information such as birth weight, maternal weight, pace in family etc. both ISIDA and the Department of Health were unable to reach a general agreement that ideally information from both documents should be included. The compromise was that the register would be kept for one year initially, and then a review would take place. while disappointed at the scope of the register, we welcome its establishment as a positive and enlightened step along the path towards the ultimate elimination of SIDS, and we will be pressing for its expansion at the end of the year*

## Conclusion

The objective the case study was to identify what type of interest group is the ISIDA and how did it contribute to the establishment of the NSIDR. The literature review assisted in how best to structure the ISIDA case study by identifying previous interest group research on the *definitions, classifications, theories* and understanding of *how interest groups exert influence*. It was Grants 2000 (Grant, 2000) classification that assisted in identifying the ISIDA as a cause-centred interest group which sought to influence a comparatively small range of public policies while not being a faction of a recognised Irish political party system. When looking at the role of the interest groups within the Irish political system, Cooney aptly titled chapter-“Co-maker of the Constitution’ in *John Charles McQuaid: Ruler of Catholic Ireland* (Cooney, 2006, pp. 94-106), how Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid was “one of the great architects of the Constitution, albeit in the shadows” (Cooney, 2006, p. 75). At the height of their notoriety in the 1950s and 1960s, it was widely stressed that business interests, trade unions and farm lobbies had replaced assemblies and the principal political parties. This led to the introduction of Social Partnerships by the then Taoiseach Seán Lemass. The ultimate goal of this ‘corporatism’ approach was the proposed entry of Ireland to the European Economic Community (EEC) which was realised in 1971, alongside the entry of the UK and Denmark. It was within this setting that the ‘impromptu’ cause-centred group ISIDA, which was not part of any political party or social partnership, was formed in 1977, and set about seeking to influence a comparatively small range of public policies.

As this was the first time the ISIDA had permitted access to its archives, the findings build on the previous work of Murphy (Murphy, 1997), Zeller (Zeller, 1938), Patten (Patten, 1894), Bentley (Bentley, 1908), Grant (Grant, 2000), Baggott (Baggott, 1995), Olson (Olson, 1971), Schattschneider (Schattschneider, 1935) and Castles (Castles, 1967). Specifically, how interest groups function, exert influence and contribute to the establishment of public policy.

It was this vital previous research that assisted in how best to structure the ISIDA case study i.e.

1. The history of SIDS
2. The history of the ISIDA
3. The classification of an interest group to which the ISIDA corresponded
4. The tactics ISIDA utilised to achieve its' aims of:
  - a) Increasing public awareness of the problem of SIDS via the media
  - b) Bringing pressure to bear on the appropriate authorities to supply the necessary funds and facilities for further research into SIDS
  - c) In attempting to achieve these aims, did it do so as an insider or outsider group

Parallel to these case study questions was the testing of the social theory of 'corporatism' to determine if ISIDA was the sole interest group recognised by the government concerning Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) research and if that privileged position gave it sufficient influence to contribute to the establishment of the NSIDR.

The first significant finding was that SIDS is not, and never has been, unique to Ireland; in fact, its history can be traced to the Bible, in which it was known as 'overlaying'. What is equally significant is that from the 1960s onwards, there was a more considered, global approach to SIDS research. This global approach included the UK and the USA, which had hosted several international SIDS conferences from the 1960s onwards, alongside publishing strategy papers on how it needed to approach SIDS research. Also, the World Health Organisation had created a new category in the International Classifications of Diseases -'Sudden Infant Death' – which would be introduced in 1979. Consequently, before the establishment of the ISIDA, there had already been significant changes happening in the approach to SIDS research.

On November 27<sup>th</sup> 1975, Eimear Berry found her fourteen-week old son Brendan dead in his cot, the cause of death was Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). As Berry went in search of answers, she came across a TV documentary about SIDS that cited the Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths (FSID) in England. Contacting the FSID, Berry explained how she wanted to establish a similar group in Ireland. The contact with FSID resulted in the establishment of the ISIDA on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1977. Recorded

within its' general aims were to increase public awareness of the problem of SIDS and bring pressure to bear on the appropriate authorities to supply the necessary funds and facilities for further research into SIDS in Ireland.

On the question of what type of interest group is the ISIDA, it was immediately evident from its general aims that ISIDA was a cause-centred interest group, this was further verified by comparing its general aims to Grant's cause-group classification. What was not verifiable, from its general aims or early records concerning its establishment, was its grouping according to Grant's *insider* or *outsider* classification in *Pressure Groups, Politics and Democracy in Britain* (Grant, 2000) .

While the establishment of the SAC in 1983 would have, in theory, given ISIDA credibility as an expert in the field of SIDS, it was insufficient to confirm them as an 'insider' group. This required examining of how ISIDA exerted influence via two of its general aims, that of increasing public awareness of the problem of SIDS through the media and that of bringing pressure to bear on the appropriate authorities to supply the necessary funds and facilities for further research into SIDS.

The media has been crucial to the success of ISIDA, starting with the 1976 television documentary about SIDS which referenced the FSID in the UK. It was this same documentary that encouraged Eimear Berry to contact the FSID to establish a similar group in Ireland. The next pivotal moment was Berry's interview in the Evening Herald and the subsequent publication of her open letter in several national newspapers. It was primarily this support from the media that resulted in the formal establishment of ISIDA in 1977.

As ISIDA continued its campaign to raise public awareness about SIDS over the next ten years, central to achieving that aim was the continuing support of the print and broadcast media. This is abundantly evident in ISIDA's newsletter archives where the Association repeatedly gives thanks to the media for its continued support. The media coverage extended from both RTÉ television and radio to the large volume of newspaper articles discovered when researching the Irish Newspapers Archives and the Irish Times Digital Archives. It is interesting to consider that, had Independent News and Media (Irish Independent, Evening Herald and Sunday Independent) not

provided over 50% of the national newspaper coverage, would the ISIDA still have achieved its aim of raising the public awareness of SIDS. Most probably, the ISIDA would still have achieved this aim when we consider the audience reach of RTÉ television and radio in the 1970s and 1980s as the national broadcaster with nil opposition. However, what is undeniable is the fact that, had there been no media coverage, ISIDA would not have so successfully raised the public awareness of SIDS, therefore diminishing its' ability to successfully bring pressure to bear on the relevant authorities to fund SIDS research.

Alongside its' media tactics, ISIDA equally established relationships with the appropriate stakeholders connected with SIDS. For example, one of its' first tactics was the decision to affiliate itself to the Foundation for Sudden Infant Death (FSID) in the UK, thus, instantly joining the global approach to SIDS research. This intentional tactic immediately gave ISIDA access to authorities within the area of SIDS research. The next step was to garner equal credibility in Ireland, a goal which was achieved when choosing its first honorary president, Dr Victoria Coffey of Trinity College Dublin. ISIDA wanted someone from the field of medicine with a particular interest in SIDS, and it found that person in Dr Coffey, who coincidentally had been about to launch a new SIDS study in Ireland. In securing the support of Dr Coffey, ISIDA agreed to support her with its members participating in the study and this, in turn, resulted in the front page of the Evening Herald announcing the first Irish SIDS study in five years, giving ISIDA further credibility as a SIDS authority in Ireland. It was this 'affiliation' tactic that ISIDA would continually utilise throughout the next decade as it endeavoured to position itself as the insider group concerning SIDS research in Ireland.

It was this same tactic supported ISIDA securing a role with the MSRB, where after lobbying the Minister for Health in 1979, ISIDA became a member of the MSRB sub-committee on SIDS. The tactic was repeated when ISIDA set about establishing the SAC, via Dr Peter Froggatt, Vice-chancellor of the Queen's University of Belfast and former chairperson of the SAC of the FSID. By association with Dr Froggatt, the calibre of potential SAC members increased dramatically, for example, the first chairperson elected to the group was Professor Gerald Cussen of University College,

Cork. The SAC in itself as a group gave ISIDA a new level of creditability as an authority in the field of SIDS research.

While its' media exposure and position as the foremost authority on SIDS in Ireland were valuable, equally as important as its' tactics around lobbying, resulting from its' public profile. It was the same public profile that allowed ISIDA bring pressure to bear on the relevant authorities, via lobbying TDs in all five main political parties to start submitting Parliamentary Questions (PQs) to the Minister for Health regarding cot deaths, SIDS research and eventually the funding of ISIDA. It all started with ISIDA's affiliation to Dr Coffey's new SIDS study and the media coverage around it, which resulted in Dáil Deputies such as Jim O'Keeffe asking PQs about the number of SIDS deaths in Ireland and about what, if any, research was being undertaken into SIDS.

This line of parliamentary questioning led to the Medical Social Research Board (MSRB) entering the discussion, which in turn resulted in the Dublin City and Borough pilot SIDS study. While ISIDA was frustrated that the study only focused on Dublin, it allowed it the opportunity to develop a new relationship with the MSRB. This relationship was strengthened when, after lobbying the Minister for Health in 1979, ISIDA joined the MSRB sub-committee on SIDS, which was followed in 1983 by the establishment of the Scientific Advisory Committee SAC, which strategically positioned ISIDA as the pivotal interest group in Ireland on SIDS research. This position was further confirmed when we take into account that the number of PQs raised about cot death, SIDS and ISIDA for the years 1983, 1984 and 1985 was zero: as an '*insider group*' during this period, ISIDA did not need to use the tactic of having their elected representatives ask PQs, as the Association the direct contact it required via the SAC and MSRB sub-committee on SIDS.

This position changed in 1986 when ISIDA and the SAC explored establishing a national cot death register, only to be met with stern opposition from the then Minister for Health and the new Health Research Board (HRB). This opposition resulted in ISIDA resorting to *outsider tactics*, i.e. lobbying, media campaigns and galvanising its membership to ask questions of their local candidates in the 1987 general election. However, while not utilising the tactics of a typical insider group according to Grant's

classification, they were successful in achieving the desired goal for ISIDA, which was the announcement by the Minister for Health of the establishment of the NSIDR in July 1987. Nevertheless, as Robert Baggott made clear in *Pressure Groups Today* (Baggott, 1995, p. 19) , that is precisely the flexibility of Grant's classification: an insider group can become an outsider group and vice versa.

Where ISIDA reverted to being an insider group was in compromising with the Department of Health on the terms of the scope of the register: while both parties could not reach an agreement, the compromise was that the NSIDR would be kept for one year initially and then reviewed. While evident that the ISIDA contributed extensively to the establishment of the NSIDR, it did so skilfully utilising the tactics of both *insider* and *outsider* groups.

The ISIDA Case Study introduces an unprecedented amount of primary sourced materials from authoritative persons including the ISIDA founder Eimear Berry, Dr Peter Froggatt, Vice-Chancellor Queen's University Belfast, Prof. Gerald Cussen University College Cork, Dr Victoria Coffey, Trinity College Dublin, Former TD Jim O' Keeffee Fine Gael Party, Dr Freda Gorman, Consultant Neonatologist, National Maternity Hospital and Dr Rory O' Hanlon former Minister for Health Fianna Fáil party.

Collectively these primary sourced materials put forward a first-hand account of how interest groups function, exert influence and contribute to the establishment of public policy. Additionally, the ISIDA case study also demonstrates that in achieving its goal through the two channels of Dáil Éireann and the core civil service, both these institutions are the primary focus in Ireland for influencing public policy.

On the topic of testing the social theory of 'corporatism' for the five reasons listed below, it suffices to say that ISIDA was the sole interest group recognised by the government concerning SIDS research, and it did have a privileged position that gave it sufficient influence to have a pivotal function in the establishment of the NSIDR.

1. By 1979 it was the central interest group for SIDS research.

2. The Minister decided to appoint it to the MSRB sub-committee for Health.
3. From 1983 to 1985, the ISIDA exerted influence via the SAC and the MSRB sub-committee and, as referenced previously, there were no PQs during this period.
4. The tactics utilised by the ISIDA were all decided by its Board and the SAC.
5. The ISIDA members were galvanised or calmed as necessary and, when it came to the proposed scope of the NSIDR, this became a joint project between the Department of Health and ISIDA operating under the terms of an agreed compromise.

A subject for further research is considering what was already underway concerning SIDS research internationally - had the ISIDA never been established, would much of its accomplishments still have materialised in Ireland sooner, or later?

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