

Kinship Care Ireland

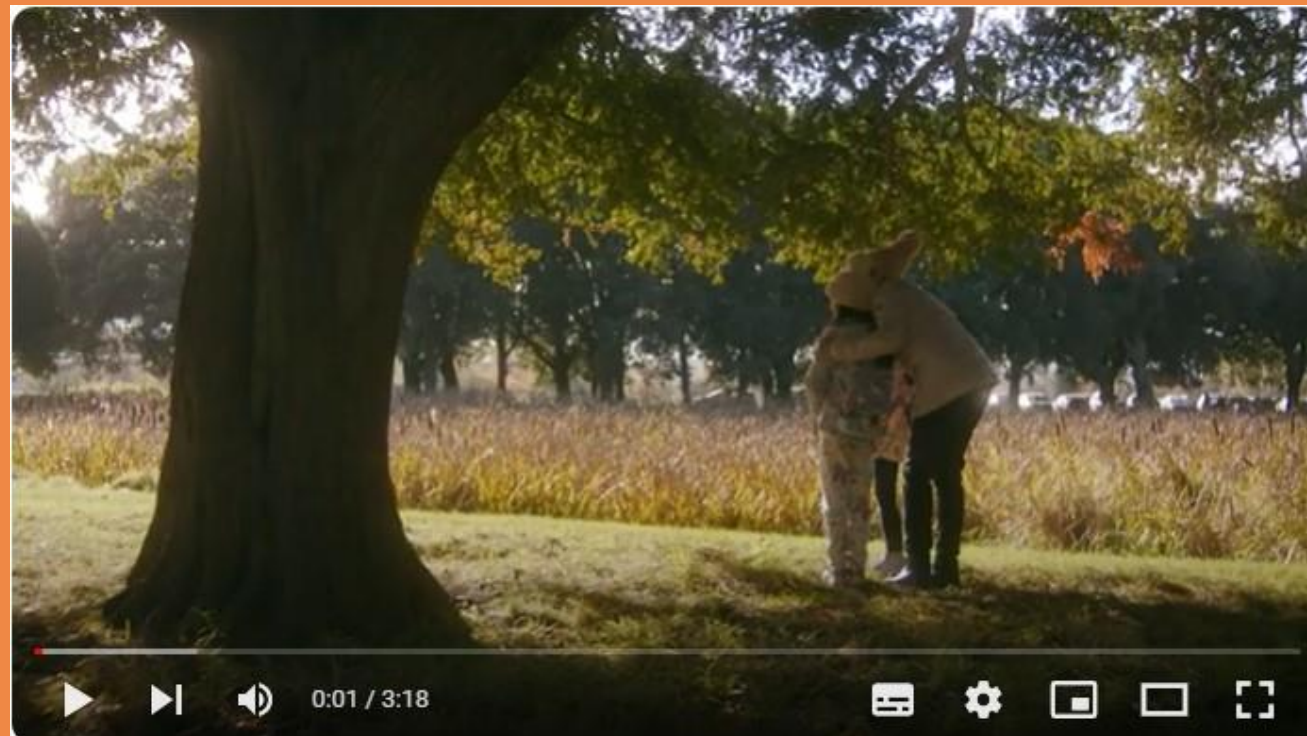
“We’re not isolated
anymore”





**Kinship Care
Ireland**

Watch Video Here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DjjkLbOe2AI>



Founded in 2019, by Caitríona nic Mhuiris

Funded by Tusla Child & Family Agency since 2020

Steering Group includes representation from Family Support organisations, IFCA and those with kinship family experience.

Kinship Care is the fulltime care of a child by a relative or close family friend, when a parent is unable to.

Kinship Care Ireland work with and for kinship families.



The strands of Kinship Care- Formal & Informal

Informal Arrangement:

Family arrangement, no Tusla Child & Family agency involvement

(unsupported/unreported/unknown).

Informal: 'Private Family Arrangement'

Informal- Kinship Care diversion,
Tusla Child & Family Agency request,
Kinship carer steps-in to caring role, Tusla
step-out.

(known, but unsupported, no pathway or
access to financial, legal, therapeutic, peer,
advocacy or sign-posting supports)

Formal Kinship Care

Relative Foster Care: Voluntary Care Order,
Tusla Child & Family Agency involved.
Relative foster care assessment.

Supported by Irish Foster Care Association
(I.F.C.A.), EPIC, eligible to Foster Carer
payment and support pathways.



**Kinship Care
Ireland**

Gaps in Current Practice

- No clear data on kinship families in Ireland
- Needs of families are not acknowledged, or directly supported
- Resources are not adequate or accessible
- Views of Children and Young people are not sought
- No formal mechanisms for oversight or monitoring of progress



Informal Kinship Care is not seen as Alternative Care, in Ireland

(in contrast to the definition in the *UN Guidelines on Alternative Care*)





**Nanny's
Big
Heart**

Challenges for 'Informal' Kinship Families

Legal Status

- Rights and Responsibilities

Financial Support

- Child Benefit
- Guardian's Payment

Family Support

- Needs of Children and Young People

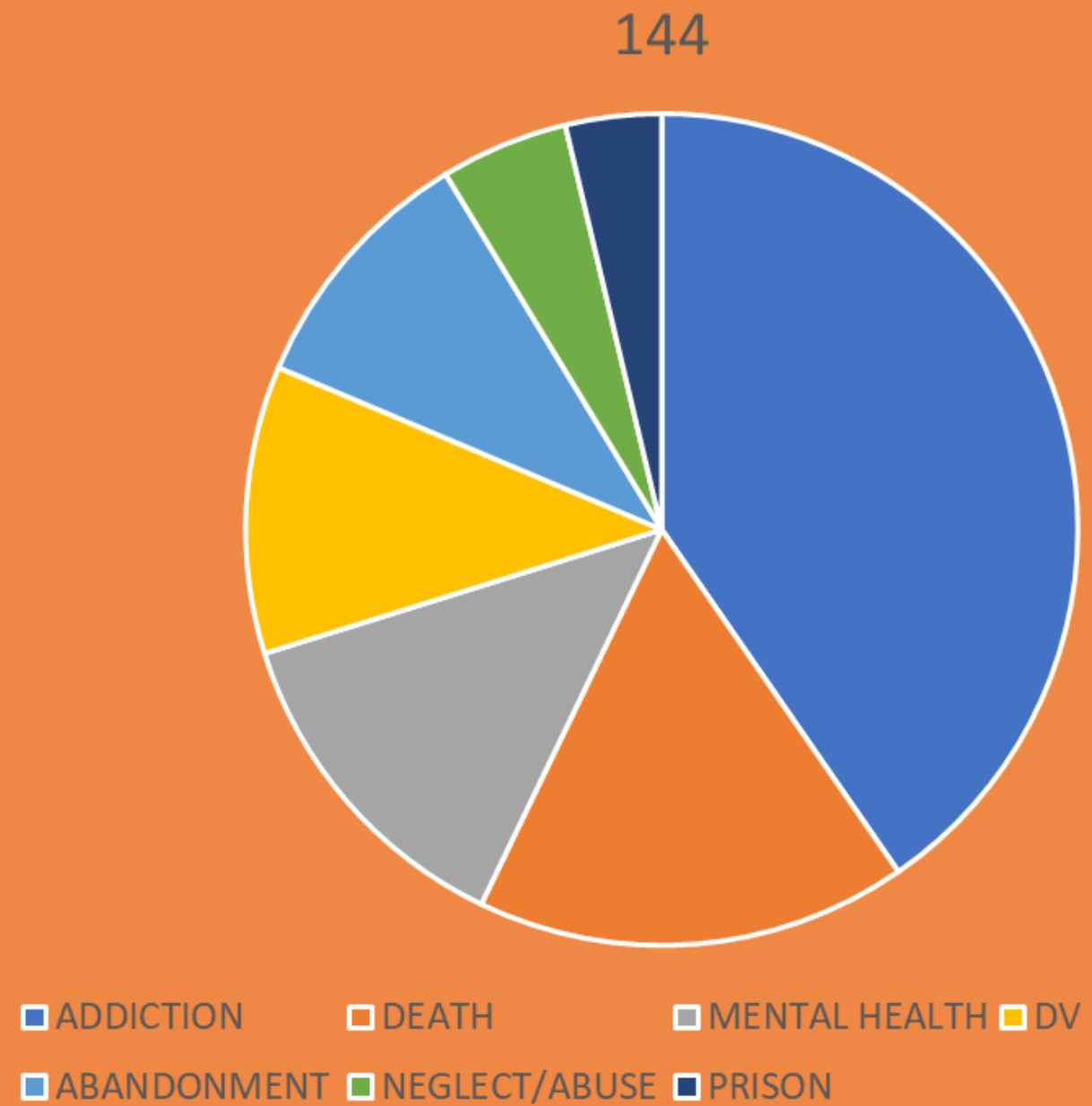
Lack of Data

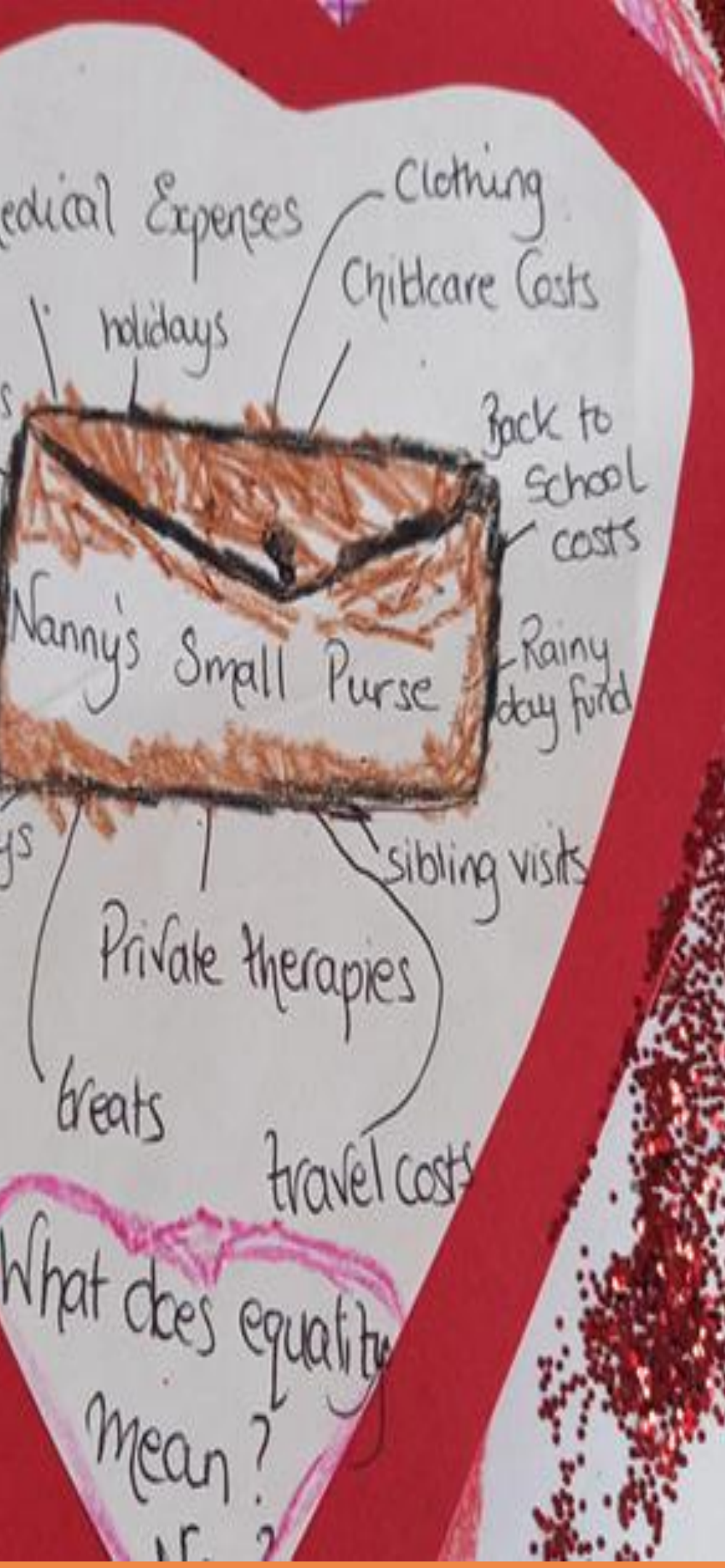
- not recognised, valued or supported



**Kinship Care
Ireland**

2023: reason leading to Kinship Care;





Financial Support Access:

- 144 new Kinship Carers in 2023
- 17 in receipt of Guardians payment during first contact.
 - 64 support letters provided.
- After Kinship Care Ireland advocacy, 35/144
- 2023: 3,097 payments (increase on 2022 but still 7,000-9,000 going without)



**Kinship Care
Ireland**

Growth: We are reaching more Kinship Carers

Increase in number of calls received:

2024: 111 support calls Jan/Feb in 8weeks

2023: 344 support calls April-Dec (8months)

2022: 185 calls in the year

2021: 154 calls in the year



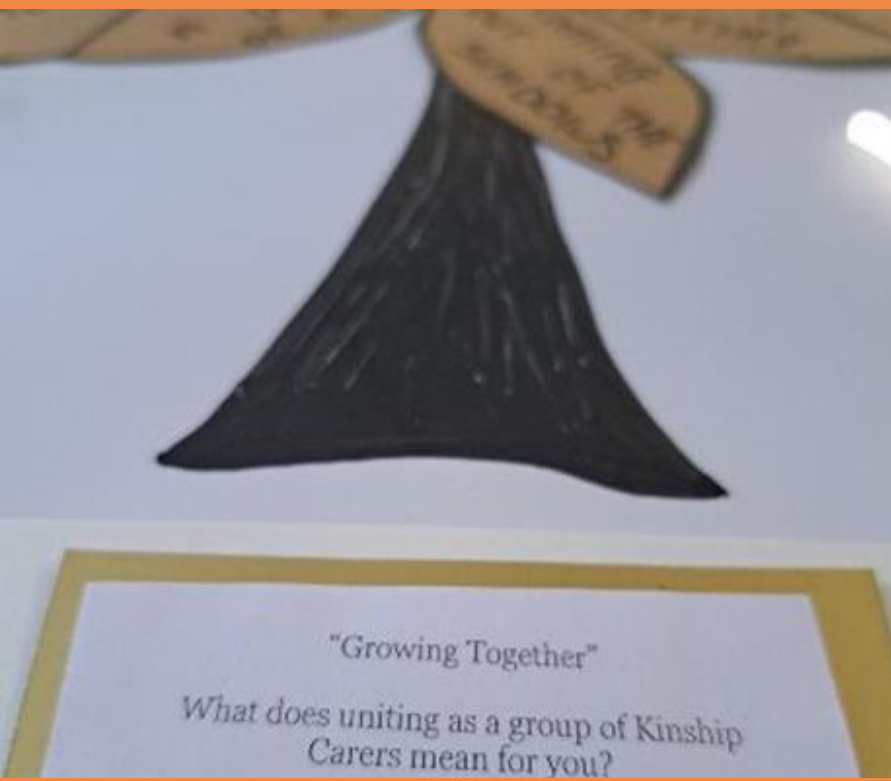
Finding each other along the journey

“So, I am a Kinship Carer?”

“It felt like I found my tribe”

“Finding Kinship Care Ireland was like coming home because I found others in my situation”

“There’s still stigma, at the school gate I feel that shame. Here in this room with others that understand, I am proud.”



A Voice- scoping exercise with children, by Susan Menton:

- “You learn to have much more empathy for people cos you know what it feels like to be alone and frightened. You feel it for them.”
- “We’re very lucky to have people who care about us and who look after us.” “It’s much better cos we know them, and they know us, and we can trust them.”
- “Adults talk around us but not with us.”



Child's voice... "they said to me" ...

"nanny I love living here...it's so...quiet"

"I can't go back there. Dad will make me go back, I won't survive".
(Child with chronic eating disorder with abuse experience)

"Nanny, my head feels full"

"She was hiding her face behind her fringe. She stands up tall again now and she's back smiling"



2023, Dublin 1, Pilot Peer Group: “we aren’t isolated anymore

“Nobody is considering these children's mental health. All my love, hugs and kisses can’t undo their trauma. They need early intervention- they needed it yesterday, and other support”.

“sometimes the 5 year old falls into the mammy role, looking after the baby. I have to remind her every day- nanny is here to do that, nanny is always here”.

“School is hard for him, that’s where the behaviour/needs emerge. I make pancake batter every evening so that it’s ready for him in the morning, little things like that. I heard him singing again there the other day, first time in a long time. When he is happy, it’s contagious”.

“We have to help him adapt to the changes in his life – being apart from his other siblings the breakdown in his relationship with his parent”.



Current Priorities of Kinship Care Ireland

Providing

- Providing information and support to carers and professionals

Advocating

- Advocating for reform, e.g. Guardian's Payment (DSP)

Developing

- Developing a Framework/Response Pathway for Kinship Care

Facilitating

- Facilitating peer support opportunities for Carers

Gathering

- Gathering 'data' to document experiences and inform research

Consulting

- Consulting with Young People



**Kinship Care
Ireland**

Research in the Irish Context

“....safe care can be found for the vast majority of children, in their extended family and social networks, *provided adequate support and supervision structures and processes are in place.*”

(O’Brien, 2012)

“*Private Family Arrangements*, receive less support and oversight ...family members providing care under this model have no legal rights or responsibilities...this places the child(ren) in a precarious position and raises concerns regarding a lack of equity of care.”

(Burns, O’Mahony and Brennan, 2021)



Research in the Global Context

- *“States should establish policies that recognize kinship care and provide equitable access to capacity-strengthening and practical, financial and emotional support for kinship care providers.”*
(UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2021)
- *“Recommendation: All kinship carers should be guaranteed a universal, non means tested allowance which matches the current national minimum fostering allowance until the child reaches age 18, as well as immediate support to help a child settle in.”*
- ‘Family For Every Child’ global guidance.
<https://familyforeverychild.org/resources/new-guidance-out-now-lessons-learnt-from-around-the-world-on-supporting-kinship-care/>



What can I do to support kinship families in the interim of policy?

Guardian's Payment- social work letter and advocacy is **vital** for payment approval.

Inform: Additional Needs Payment (Local Intreo/CWO), Child Benefit, BTSCFA

Get creative: as a team- is there any changes/introductions that can be made to practice

National Childcare Scheme

Legal- aware of Formal/Informal? guardianship information?

Inform about "Kinship Care" Kinship Care Ireland & signpost

Data: include "kinship Care" on your intake/closure forms, capture the prevalence

Kinship Care Aware: mindful of the barriers overcome to access your appointment/service.



**Kinship Care
Ireland**

In February 2023, the UNCRC recommended that Ireland develop policy on the Rights of Children in Informal Kinship Care.

We Are engaging with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth in relation to their policy scoping.

“Young Ireland” set a target for scoping to be complete by end of 2024.

Citizens Assembly on Drugs recommendation.

Family For Every Child Global Guidance launched.



Email: info@kinshipcare.ie

Phone: 087 1487124

Website: www.kinshipcare.ie (see publications section for research links)

Social media- follow us Kinship Care Ireland on: Facebook, Instagram and X (Twitter), linkedin

“ Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better”
(Maya Angelou)



- Liveline: <https://www.rte.ie/radio/radio1/clips/22313725/>
- Part 1 KFM Interview: <https://www.kfmradio.com/on-air/podcasts/kildare-today1/episode/thursday-28th-september-2023-hour-1/> (minute 15:23-25:00)
- Part 2 KFM interview: <https://www.kfmradio.com/on-air/podcasts/kildare-today1/episode/thursday-28th-september-2023-hour-2/> (minute 0:00-3:20)
- <https://www.kfmradio.com/on-air/podcasts/kildare-today1/episode/monday-11th-december-2023-hour-2/> (from minute 12:45)
- Podcast guest: <https://adoptionandfostering.podbean.com/e/podcast-special-kinship-care-ireland/>
- Drivetime: <https://www.rte.ie/radio/radio1/clips/22225146/>
- Journal.ie kinship carer: <https://www.thejournal.ie/readme/kinship-care-6244007-Dec2023/>
- Kinship Care Ireland Video: <https://youtu.be/DjjkLbOe2AI>
- Irish Independent: <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/were-doing-vital-work-but-were-being-taken-advantage-of-by-the-state-the-family-carers-who-want-you-to-vote-yes-yes-on-march-8/a1701947200.html>
- Echo Cork: <https://www.echolive.ie/corkviews/arid-41265454.html>

