

Research and Innovation Overview 2024

Department of Applied Social Studies

The Department of Applied Social Studies at Maynooth University is dedicated to advancing understanding and promoting social justice, human rights, sustainability, and equality through the disciplines of community work, youth work, social policy, and social work. With 14 academic staff and over 320 students, including 125 postgraduate students, the department continues to be a leading centre for research and practice in the social professions and social policy.

Head of Department: Dr Seamus Taylor



Research Themes and Focus Areas

The department's research is deeply rooted in promoting social justice and equality, with key focus areas including:

- **Social Policy and Housing:** Research in this area explores policy interventions in housing, homelessness, and social welfare.
- **Youth Work and Community Work and Engaged Research:** Faculty and students work on community-based research projects to support youth work development and enhance social inclusion and community development.
- **Human Rights and Equality Studies:** The department actively contributes to research on Travellers and Roma, violence against women, hate crime policies, mental health policy and practice, care, class and gender, and education and social inclusion.



Significant Research Outputs

In 2022-2023, the department produced an impressive range of publications and secured significant research grants, reflecting the breadth and impact of its work:

Publications

- Dr Rory Hearne published *Gaffs: Why No One Can Get a House and What We Can Do About It*, a groundbreaking book on Ireland's housing crisis, which has remained on the non-fiction bestseller list since its publication.
- Dr Niamh Flanagan authored a series of student textbooks *The Origins and Development of Welfare States*, *Irish Housing Policy*, *Social Policy and the Life Stages: Childhood, Youth and Old Age*, published by the Institute of Public Administration.
- Dr Seamus Taylor's book, *Hate Crime Policy and Disability: From Vulnerability to Ableism*, was nominated for Social Policy Book of the Year.

Awards

- Dr Johanna O'Shea's PhD thesis, 'Best PhD of the Year Award 2024' was commended for its significant contributions to criminal justice studies.

Grants

- The department received approximately €485,000 in research grant aid, including €240,000 from the EU Horizon programme for the INVOLVE project and €215,000 for the INFED project on infant feeding decisions.



Collaborations and Partnerships

The department has established strong partnerships with national and international organisations, collaborating on projects that directly impact policy and practice. Key collaborations include:

- **Pavee Point National Traveller and Roma Centre:** Dr Ciara Bradley's research on Pavee Mothering during COVID-19 explored the experiences of pregnant Traveller women during the pandemic, informing policy discussions with the HSE and other agencies.
- **Measuring the Impact of Youth Organisations (MIYO):** This multi-nation collaborative research project, led by Maynooth University (Emeritus Professor Maurice Devlin and Associate Professor Hilary Tierney), aims to develop methodologies for assessing the impact of youth organisations in Europe, enhancing programme delivery and support for youth development.



Research Impact and Societal Contributions

The department's research has had a wide-ranging impact on policy and practice in Ireland and beyond. Notable contributions include:

- **Housing and Homelessness:** Dr Rory Hearne's research on housing and homelessness has been instrumental in shaping public discourse and informing policy debates. His report 'Understanding Ireland's Hidden Homelessness Crisis' offers new insights into housing exclusion in Ireland.
- **Roma Community and Labour Market Access:** Dr Ciara Bradley's report on Roma in Ireland: *Access to Fair and Decent Work* was the first of its kind and is informing the development of the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy.



Future Directions

The department aims to continue its impactful research on housing policy, youth work, community work, and human rights, while expanding its engaged research on social work and social inclusion. Future projects will build on existing collaborations with NGOs and government agencies to influence policy and practice across Ireland and Europe.

The Department of Applied Social Studies at Maynooth University remains at the forefront of research and practice in social work, community work, youth work and social policy. Through its engaged research and strong partnerships, the department is making significant contributions to advancing social justice and equality in Ireland and beyond.