



MECPATHS - A decade on:

Celebrating 10 years of work this year, MECPATHS has been supported by The Congregational Leadership team (Ireland) since its foundation in 2013. The project grew steadily in its early years with a special focus on working with the Hospitality industry to raise awareness on Child Trafficking and supporting hotel staff and management to respond accordingly if suspicions were raised around the safety of a child within a property. Initial engagement with Hospitality rested on the personal links developed by project staff, volunteers and co-founders Srs. Mary Ryan and Patricia O' Donovan.

In 2018, strengthened efforts were engaged through the development of a MECPATHS' Strategic 3-year plan and a proposed extension of reach was arrived upon. Many changes took place in the following 12 months including a revision of the MECPATHS acronym, a revised branding and colour palette, the development of new education resources including a website, printed learning and promotional materials. The project became more public-facing and presented at events around Ireland, a strong core network began to emerge and strengthened links were fostered with The Department of Justice and statutory bodies. Requests from beyond the Hospitality industry emerged and University and College links were developed, partnerships with private industry were welcomed and the team responded to the 'call of the time', receiving International recognition with European Awards for innovation and social entrepreneurship.



Ann Mara & J. P. O Sullivan MECPATHS

The network flourished despite the global Covid Pandemic and connections were made globally with agencies and organisations who shared MECPATHS' vision, online. MECPATHS was the first anti-trafficking agency in Ireland to host a 'Pandemic Webinar' and brought 300 interested persons together from India, USA, Australia, The Philippines and across Europe, online. This webinar placed MECPATHS firmly at the centre of Child Trafficking conversations and extended its profile. Media interest picked-up and Ireland's national broadcaster (RTE) took a particular interest in developing a long standing relationship with the team. MECPATHS was engaged to develop bespoke workshops for private, statutory and non-statutory agencies and long running efforts to engage with high-level partners came to fruition. MECPATHS was requested by Ireland's Child and Family Agency to engage with their frontline staff (a long-term dream of the project) and avenues, doors and conversations opened quickly from 2022.

A high-level engagement held at the European Parliament offices in Dublin brought 2022 to a close with MECPATHS co-hosting a round-table with Maria Walsh M.E.P. and an invited panel from The Irish



Human Rights and Equality Commission, The Ombudsman for Children's office, The University of Limerick and The Inner City Organisations Network, Dublin (ICON). This event brought to fruition many years of commitment by the team who listened, shared, engaged and responded to the need of the time- the need for the voices of children caught in worlds of trafficking for exploitation in Ireland to be heard.

The future of MECPATHS is busy, strategic and focused but holds at the core of its success, people. The power of network and the strength of collaboration has helped MECPATHS to move steadily and confidently ahead to advocate for children who remain caught in invisible worlds of Child Trafficking. We appreciate your support over the years, your ongoing messages of support and your sharing of news with your friends, family and colleagues. As we celebrate 10 years of MECPATHS, we ask you to join us in hoping for the projects ongoing success and development.

JP and Ann