

BROADCASTING SURVEYOR SKILL

DONEGAL QUANTITY SURVEYOR CLAIRE IRWIN STARTED WORKING ON RTÉ'S *ROOM TO IMPROVE* IN 2018, BRINGING A WEALTH OF EXPERIENCE TO THE POPULAR PROPERTY PROGRAMME.

Claire Irwin has been working as a quantity surveyor for 16 years, and in the past few years has brought those skills to her own business and to the world of television. Claire began her career working for a main contractor: "I did that for about six years and then I moved into a bigger contracting company. They were doing more large-scale projects: a lot of commercial, a small amount of residential, but mainly commercial large-scale projects up to €25m". Claire set up her own business a few years ago and her work has changed in that time as well: "Up until about three or four years ago, I was doing primarily commercial projects, now I'm doing primarily residential. I would work mainly for the clients, so I really only do professional quantity surveying (PQS) work, which is basically where you work for the client directly. I wouldn't really work for subcontractors".

Room to Improve

In 2018, Claire and her husband Declan were renovating their home, so were regular viewers of RTÉ's *Room to Improve*. She heard from a friend that the quantity surveyor on the programme at the time was stepping down, and was encouraged to apply: "I went through a series of interviews and got the job. And do you know what? It was perfect because for the first year that I was doing it in 2018, for the show that aired in 2019, I was only doing two episodes out of the six-part series. It gave me

a good feel for how it went and what it was like to do it. Then after that series aired, I took on the job of doing all the homes. I love it. It's good fun. You know, they're very similar to the jobs that I do on an ordinary daily basis. You have that extra dynamic with the cameras and sound guys, and they're all in the background on the filming days. They're not there every day of the week that you're on site, however. They're just there on certain days when there's a filming day. They nearly become part of the construction team".

The onset of Covid delayed work on *Room to Improve*, but Claire used this time to build up her own business and reorganise how she worked: "Prior to Covid I was working in an office, but when Covid hit it kind of forced me to set up a proper office in my house. When I did that, I realised it was actually more convenient working in the house and I can actually get more work done".

Mica

Claire is working on homes in Donegal that have been affected by mica. She was also involved in the SCSi's Report to Government on Construction Costs for the Defective Concrete Blocks Grant Scheme: "I was heavily involved because it was Chartered Quantity Surveyors who carried out that pricing exercise throughout the country. Because I was a Chartered Quantity Surveyor living in the Inishowen area, I was one of the quantity surveyors that priced out the eight house types and fed that information back, and then the SCSi compiled a report. That was issued to the Department of

Housing and we were delighted with the feedback. The report was accepted by the Government and they said that the scheme would be informed by the SCSi's report".

Outside of work

Claire had a baby boy, Dara, last October, so he takes up most of her free time. She also enjoys walking, and she and husband Declan like to get away whenever they get the chance.



Claire Irwin is the resident quantity surveyor on RTÉ's *Room to Improve*.

SURVEYOR PROFILE

Colm Quinn
Journalist and Sub-Editor,
Think Media

