

Annual Report November 2014/October 2015

I am very pleased to present to you St Christopher's 51st Annual Report.

This Annual Report covers the period November 1st 2014 to October 31st 2015. Over the past year we have continued all our programmes in Day, Residential, Respite and Outreach services, despite the very onerous financial constraints we operate under at this time.

Service Improvement Team – Finance

You may recall that on the eve of last years AGM we received a letter from Mr Pat Healy, National Director of Social Care with the HSE which outlined a course of action to be implemented to address the challenges being faced by the disability services providers in the Longford/Westmeath area.

Mr Healy's correspondence went on to state that a Service Improvement Team from the HSE would engage with us and focus on the implementation of the reform agenda and link funding to activity and output cost, quality and outcomes.

The Review Mr Healy went on to point out would provide an opportunity to develop future sustainable services with due consideration to available resources and having regard to the changing needs of service users.

It was hoped that the Review would have been completed in 3 months with a start date in early January.

As an interim measure the HSE provided €250,000 euro in December to help ease our cash flow difficulties.

We had our first meeting with the Service Improvement Team on January 21st with follow up meetings in March, June, September and on October 27th last we met in Tullamore to review the Service Improvement Teams Draft Report.

Our Senior Management Team responded to the Draft Report on November 3rd and we now wait the response from the Service Improvement Team.

Despite the €250,000 euro additional funding provided last December, 2015 has been a very challenging year financially. If the €250,000 euro had gone into our baseline funding in January last (rather than on a once-off basis) it would have made a considerable difference as the majority of our under-funding relates to recurring costs, it is to be hoped that whatever additional funding we receive as a result of the Service Improvement Team deliberations is provided on an on-going basis rather than once-off.

As a result of changes brought about under Company Law and the New Charity Legislation tonight's Financial Report relates solely to the Fundraising Activities of the Co Longford Association for Persons with an Intellectual Disability.

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The Accounts of St Christopher's Services Ltd for 2014 will be published after the Board of Directors hold their AGM early in the New Year and that will be the position each year going forward from tonight, but it is only fair to point out that we are projecting a deficit to the end of this year of approximately €600,000 euro if we do not receive additional revenue from the Health Service Executive.

Day Services AGM Report 2015

We continue to provide a wide range of day services to over 160 people throughout the county of Longford.

As service user's age and are experiencing more health related issues the day service model has been reconfigured to meet individual needs in some of our locations.

This year 2015 an additional three day places were provided to school leavers.

Despite very limited resources we have managed to embrace the New Directions model of day services in building strong links with community groups, Education Training Board, Employers, Arts & Culture community programme, Drama Groups, Musicians, Local Library, Access Officer, Sporting Organisations, Sports Partnership, ISPCA and many more.

Service users have participated in activities and realized many goals during the past year. It has been another successful year for people in achieving their awards through the Education Training Board.

The Day Services have completed the National template for New Directions and are working towards the introduction of National Standards for Day Services.

Residential and Respite Report

St Christopher's Residential and Respite Services comprises of fourteen locations located throughout the county of Longford. The residential service currently supports thirty four people on a full and part time basis and six on a part time basis. The number availing of the adult respite services is fifty two and the number of children who engage in respite service provision is seventeen.

2014

Many changes have occurred in response to the ageing and changing levels of support and care needs of residents, we continue to respond by placing additional resources thus enabling people to have the service they require and expect.

Through a process with Longford County Council which commenced in 2014, we acquired a property in 2015, which will provide an opportunity for two future tenants to have their own home.

Our residential and respite services are now registered with HIQA following inspections in 2014.

We are delighted to welcome Professor Mary McCarron, the principal researcher in The Intellectual Disability Supplement (IDS) to the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (Tilda) tonight and eagerly await the Workshop on Dementia, which Professor McCarron will facilitate on Saturday 21st November 2015. We look forward to a future joint affiliation with Professor McCarron in ensuring future service provision is benchmarked on the resident's identified support/care need and best practice.

Fundraising

As you will no doubt hear from the various Branch Reports tonight we rely on the very generous support of our Branch Members, Volunteers and the many Clubs and Organisations who support us year on year.

The truck run organised by Norman Hall and his friends from Aughnacliffe back in the summer was particularly noteworthy raising as it did in excess of €25,400 euro, which was shared on an equal basis to St Christopher's School and St Christopher's Services.

Dr Kathy O'Grady

For very many years Kathy O'Grady has been Psychologist to St Christopher's through an arrangement between Muiriosa Foundation and the HSE. Kathy retired in March of this year and I would like to take this opportunity to thank her for her very professional and dedicated service provided to us down through the years. We wish you good health and happiness in your retirement Kathy.

We extend a warm welcome to Kathy's replacement Paul Cahill who provides psychological support on a 2 day per month basis, and as we have pointed out so many times in the past this is grossly inadequate to meet the needs of the 160 plus service users availing of our services.

Our thanks also at this time to Ms Bernie Fay Senior Social Worker Muiriosa Foundation for her very valued support.

This year also saw us bid a fond farewell to our Chaplain Fr Padraic Kelleher who transferred to St Mary's Parish Athlone in September, we wish him well in his tenure in Athlone.

Bereavements

Sadly during the past twelve months many families, service users, committee members, staff and volunteers suffered the loss of loved ones.

We particularly remember Eugene McCarthy, Cathal Callaghan and Brigid Connolly at this time.

We also remember John McGrath who worked as Bus Driver with us for many years, but who also gave of his time in so many other ways and served on the School Board of Management for many years.

We extend our deepest sympathies and condolences to all.

Thanks

A very special word of thanks to our service users, their families and siblings for their ongoing support and co-operation.

We convey a special "Thank you" to all our staff in Day, Residential, Respite and Support Services for their commitment and dedication throughout the year.

It is regrettable that we are now beginning to lose some of our staff to other agencies and the HSE, this I feel is attributable to the lack of certainty with our current financial situation.

A sincere word of thanks and appreciation to my colleagues on the Senior Management Team, Pauline Davis, Clare O'Dowd, Audrey Ryan, Martina McCormack and Kieran Duffy, we are very fortunate to have such a dedicated and highly motivated team, also many thanks to the support staff in the General Office.

Our thanks to Maura Morgan, Donal Fitzsimons and the HSE Disability Team in Mullingar and Tullamore who work in partnership with us to deliver the most effective service possible for Children and Adults with an Intellectual Disability in County Longford.

We have many friends and organisations who support us from within the local community, we extend a sincere thank you to Longford County Council, Longford Gardai, the Citizens Information Board, the Lourdes Invalid Fund, CASA, Longford/Westmeath Education and Training Board, Irish Wheelchair Association, Longford Social Services Council, The Mall Complex, Longford Library, Longford Leader and Shannonside Northern Sound Radio, Longford Marathon Committee, Longford Tennis Club, Longford County Board of the GAA, and the many GAA Clubs who organise fund raisers, Longford Town Football Club, Longford Rugby Club, the County Arts Officer, Solas (formerly Fas) and Abbott Volunteers.

Finally my thanks to our Chairman Donal Drake, the Chairman of our Board of Directors Brendan Quigley, our Public Relations Officer Margaret Connellan and all the other Board Members for their guidance, support and friendship and for giving so generously of their time, expertise and skills in a voluntary capacity to St Christopher's.

Here's to 2016, with a fervent wish that we will see St Christopher's put on a sound financial footing.

Pat O'Toole
November 2015