

A photograph of a woman with blonde hair reading a red book to a young girl in a school uniform. The girl is wearing a white headband and looking down at the book. The scene is set in a room with patterned wallpaper. The image is partially obscured by a yellow graphic element on the right side of the page.

Annual Report 2016

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**Challenging  
homelessness.  
Changing lives.**

**FOCUS**  
Ireland



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**Thanks to our supporters we changed the lives of over 13,500 people in 2016.**

# Foreword

**Sr Stanislaus Kennedy,  
Life President & Founder, Focus Ireland**



Much great work was carried out in 2016 as our staff supported over 13,500 people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Our work is driven by the fundamental belief that homelessness is wrong, and our staff work tirelessly to help families, children and individuals to overcome the terrible impact that being homeless has on them.

We managed to secure a home for nearly one family a day in 2016. However, on that same day two to three more families became homeless as the crisis deepened. It is outrageous that this is still allowed to happen.

In our 2015 Annual Report I wrote that it had been the worst year for family homelessness. I am truly dismayed that 2016 was even worse. Childhood should be the happiest time for children and their families. However, it breaks my heart to think that over 2,500 children were homeless on Christmas Day.

It is wrong that this was allowed to happen. Especially in the very year that, as a nation, we marked the centenary of 1916.

However, Focus Ireland did not shy away from highlighting that homelessness is worse than ever.

We highlighted the unacceptable reality in Ireland today that some children are growing up in one hotel room with parents, where they don't have facilities to cook a meal. Parents who, no matter how they

strive, cannot provide a secure home for them. This is how some people are treated. Everyone agrees it's a scandal but yet it continues.

A key part of the failure by successive governments to tackle this ongoing homeless crisis is that the response has been led by a series of 'Halfway House' policies. The policies are developed in this watered down way to try to keep all parties happy. However, as a result they're failing to address the underlying structural problems to effectively tackle this crisis.

The policy approach has been to lead with market incentives in a whole range of areas - and hope this will work.

Focus Ireland is playing our own role in working to overcome the crisis - for people who are homeless or at risk - as under our new strategy we aim to double our housing stock over the next four years. As a first step last year we increased our housing stock to 820 units.

Focus Ireland is calling for a specific sub-strategy on family homelessness which includes a cast-iron timeframe to be set for how long families are to be allowed to endure as homeless.

The Government must move now to set out the actions to be taken over the next three years to prevent family homelessness and provide a home for all those who are homeless.

Let us treat people who are homeless with the same respect as others in our society.

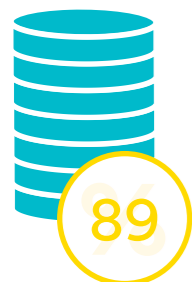
# About Focus Ireland

Focus Ireland works with people who are homeless or at risk of losing their homes across Ireland. We are driven by the fundamental belief that homelessness is wrong.

Wrong because it is a failure of society that creates victims out of ordinary people and robs them of their potential.

Wrong because it can be prevented, it can be solved but is allowed to continue and in doing so, undermines society.

Focus Ireland's strategy outlines that the real solutions to this crisis lie in preventing people from becoming homeless in the first place and ensuring that they have helped to stay in their home once they have found one. These are the two areas that will be central to our work in the coming years.



In 2016, 89% of every euro received was spent directly on our services to combat and prevent homelessness.

#### Directors

Sr Stanislaus Kennedy (Founder & Life President)  
Gerry Danaher (Chairman)  
Susan O'Connell  
Diarmuid Burke  
Anna Lee  
Michael Layde  
Declan O'Flaherty  
Suzanne Quin  
John Moloney  
Pauline Burke (Worker Director)

#### Chief Executive

Ashley Balbirnie

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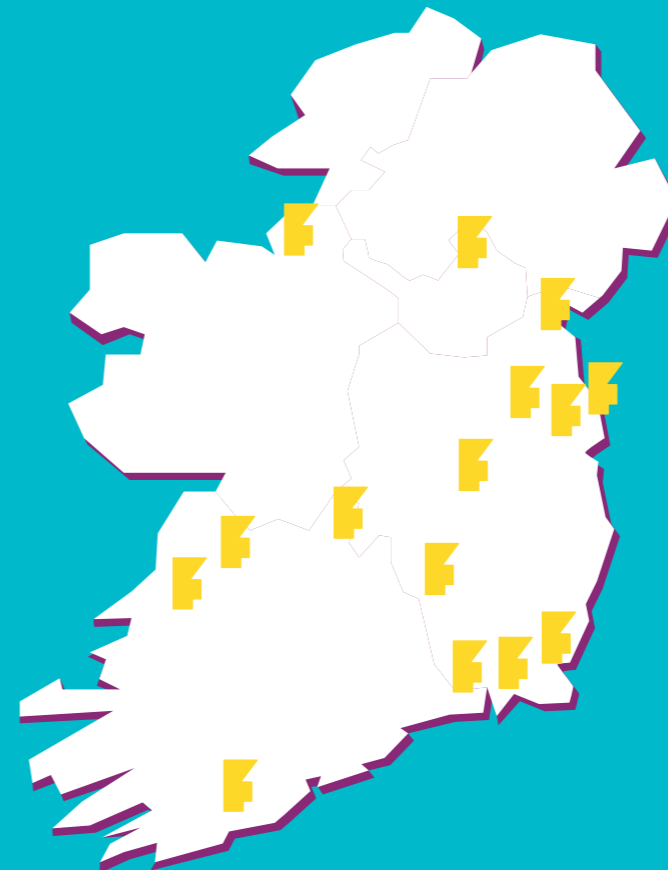
Arthur Cox, Ferrys Solicitors, McCann FitzGerald,  
Mason Hayes & Curran

#### Bankers

Bank of Ireland, Allied Irish Banks plc, Permanent tsb,  
Rabobank Ireland plc, Ulster Bank Ireland Limited

## Services and Housing Nationwide

Clare  
Cork  
Dublin  
Dundalk  
Kildare  
Kilkenny  
Limerick  
Louth  
Monaghan  
Sligo  
Tipperary  
Waterford  
Wexford



# 1,439

Provided 1,439 people with vital Advice & Information.

# 13,500

Supported over 13,500 people who were homeless or at risk.

# 480

Helped 480 households out of homelessness - up 16% on 2015.

# 40,000

Served over 40,000 meals.

# 71

Changed the lives of 71 young people leaving care by providing them with a safe place to live.

# 820

We own or lease 820 housing units, 175 of these provide temporary accommodation and 645 provide long-term homes.



# Challenging homelessness. Changing lives.

## Sharon's Story

**Like many other families, Sharon and her six-year-old daughter were homeless and living in a hotel due to the critical shortage of proper emergency accommodation. They were homeless after the landlord raised the rent again.**

Sharon said one of the worst things about being stuck in one little hotel room was not having anywhere to cook. She said "I was reduced to having to boil pasta and eggs in the kettle just so we had something to eat."

"As a mother it was so terrible to see the damage living there was doing to my daughter. She was so unhappy and just not the same as before. She was sad a lot of the time and started to get more withdrawn."

You are so worried about your child you just don't really see the impact the stress and everything is having on you as a person yourself. Then it all really hit like a ton of bricks one day and I was bursting out crying. I just felt so alone."

Things started to improve when Sharon was put in contact with the Focus Ireland Family Homeless Action Team. Our staff worked to support her and a specialist childcare worker was there for her daughter.

"Things started to get a bit better once I got help from Focus Ireland. It meant so much to me to see my daughter getting the extra support she really needed. Then for me it meant I wasn't as isolated. Someone was listening to me at last. Someone was helping me."

After a while Sharon managed to secure a rented home with the support of Focus Ireland and said she is now on the road back to where they were before homelessness. "Having a home again is unbelievable. I can close the door and I feel safe. I feel my daughter is safe. She is also a lot happier again and that is the most important thing to me."

I can't thank Focus Ireland enough as I don't think I would have made it this far on my own without the great support they gave me and my daughter. I feel we really have a future now."

"Things started to get a bit better once I got help from Focus Ireland. It meant so much to me to see my daughter getting the extra support she really needed."



# Overview of 2016

Shockingly, more people than ever before felt the terrible impact of homelessness in 2016 as the crisis deepened. More families and individuals were forced to spend ever longer periods of time in emergency accommodation only meant for short term use.

## 2016

55%

increase in family homelessness

28%

increase in adult homelessness

55%

increase in children homeless with their families

142

people sleeping rough in Dublin, winter count - up from 91 in 2015



## 2016

Numbers of families becoming homeless every month.



## 2014

20 families



## 2015

40 families



## 2016

75 families

In response to the growing number of people who need our support, Focus Ireland services moved up another notch: helping more people at risk of homelessness, supporting more people into new homes, building new homes and being there to fight for people when they are at their lowest ebb.

In 2016, we supported a total of 13,500 people who were homeless or at risk - an increase of 8% from the 12,500 we supported in 2015.

This deepening housing and homelessness crisis happened against the backdrop of a new Government following a general election in which Focus Ireland contributed by ensuring that homelessness had a higher profile than ever before.

Focus Ireland campaigned throughout the election, Government formation and then with the incoming administration. We consistently presented our insights and highlighted the policies that we believe will start to solve the problem (proposals can be found on [focusireland.ie](http://focusireland.ie)).

Many of the policies being implemented with energy and resolve by the Minister for Housing, Simon Coveney, are, we believe, the right ones: increased social housing, rent regulation, rent supports which reflect market realities. But the continued reliance on

private developers to build the social housing and the endless delays encountered by every new initiative mean that, at present rates of progress, it will be many years before there is an adequate supply of affordable housing and an end to the homeless crisis.

This is wrong. Men, women and children who are homeless should not have to wait these long years for a home.

In this context, Focus Ireland took the opportunity in our new organisational strategy 2017-2020 to restate our commitment to challenging homelessness and not merely managing it.

This strategy will lead our work of challenging homelessness and changing lives. Under this strategy, every service and policy demand will be directed to the twin goals of preventing homelessness or supporting people to exit homelessness for good.

## 2016

We supported over 13,500 people in 2016, an 8% rise from the 12,500 supported in 2015.



# Preventing homelessness

**“Making sure that we can prevent homelessness before it happens is one of the most effective ways we can tackle this crisis.”**

Focus Ireland’s Strategy 2017-20

There are three main approaches to addressing homelessness: prevention, emergency responses and providing housing with support. Emergency responses, such as night shelters, only give short-term help or ‘manage’ the problem and aren’t really helping people to find a way out of homelessness for good. Research has shown us that this way of tackling homelessness can be more expensive and less effective.

In recent years in Ireland, Focus Ireland has shifted towards working to prevent homelessness and our Advice & Information services play a vital role in this approach.

The first port of call for people at risk of homelessness is the professional and caring support of our Advice and Information (A&I) Workers. More people than ever before came to Focus Ireland’s ten A&I centres across the country, at risk of homelessness and looking for advice about what to do to avoid it.

Our trained staff are always there to listen to people and offer support. In 2016 they informed 1,439 people about their rights, their options and the

support services which exist to help them avoid homeless. We supported a further 2,794 households who were already homeless to find pathways out.

Being homeless or at risk puts so much pressure on men, women and children. We are keenly aware of this and, to make our A&I services more confidential and stress-free, we carried out a major refit of one of our centres, adding children’s play facilities in the meeting areas of the Coffee Shop to reduce the stress on homeless parents seeking support. To ensure the highest level of professional advice, we introduced a new comprehensive training programme for our front-line staff.

We are always searching for more effective ways to reach people at risk of homelessness. The earlier we are able to reach them, the more likely we are able to help.

We know that teenagers can become homeless because they fall out with their families; too often resulting in long-term homelessness which can seriously damage their adult life. In cases like this we must act early. Sometimes these tensions can be overcome with intensive family mediation.



**2016**

**We served over 40,000 hot meals in 2016 and encouraged people to discuss support options.**

In response to this problem we introduced a new ‘family mediation service’, in collaboration with Tusla. This much needed service has already supported 10 teenagers at high risk of homelessness in just six months of operation.

We also worked to challenge the underlying factors which are forcing people into homelessness. This work included a high profile ‘Vulture Shock’ multi-media campaign to highlight the role of certain investment funds in evictions in the owner-occupied and rental sectors. Over 10,000 people signed up for the campaign, which helped influence Government policy and led to a Dáil debate on a proposal to give greater protection to tenants in buy-to-let properties. Although the proposal was voted down, we will continue to push for this and related protections.

**2016**

**Our staff informed 1,439 people about their rights, their options and the support services which can help them avoid becoming homeless.**

## Changing lives through prevention



### 71 young people

**We changed the lives of 71 young people leaving care in 2016 by providing them with a safe place to live, and vital support, through our residential aftercare.**

### 72 ex-prisoners

**Changed the lives of 72 people discharged from prison by preventing them from becoming homeless - so breaking the prison-homelessness cycle.**

# Leaving homelessness behind for good

Under our strategy, which runs until 2020, we will strive to bring about real and lasting change for the people who need our help by deepening our commitment to preventing homelessness and supporting people into housing.

In 2016, Focus Ireland's support staff helped more people than ever before to leave homelessness behind them.

Our staff throughout the country all contributed to this record outcome, with some of them working in our projects supporting families and individuals. We also support older single adults. All our projects work in close collaboration with statutory organisations (Local Authorities, the Dublin Region Homeless Executive, Tusla and the Department of Social Protection), and make the most effective use of the range of government supports now available.

A total of 320 of the households lifted out of homelessness were families supported by our Dublin Family Homeless Action Team. During the year, our Family Team was expanded, with the support of the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive, as a direct response to the rapid rise in family homelessness.

This meant that we provided vital case management support to 560 families at the end of the year, compared to only 212 in January 2016. However, as the number of homeless families continued to rise, we were still not able to provide dedicated support workers to all families. Hundreds of other families were supported through our advice clinics and 'duty key workers'.

The work of our expanded Family Team remained strongly focused on supporting families to secure homes. However, our specially trained staff also work

tirelessly to deliver new services to help the families to cope with the awful impact of homelessness. In particular, working with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to provide travel passes and access to early childhood education to help the families cope with the awful impact of homelessness.

## 2016

**We supported 480 households out of homelessness - Up 16% on 2015.**

Focus Ireland continues to be one of the leaders in delivering Housing First services in Ireland. This innovative approach sees staff work to get people who are sleeping rough into a home where they are provided with vital support services. This work in 2016 had great impact including:

- Dublin Housing First (in partnership with the Peter McVerry Trust) provided homes for 20 additional people with a long history of rough sleeping, bringing to 66 the total number of people provided with secure homes by this service
- New 'Housing First for Youth' services developed in Waterford, Cork and Dublin, building on our model developed in Limerick.
- We also became a founder member of the European Housing First Hub, based in Helsinki, to spread good practice and excellence in Housing First provision across Europe.

# Focus Housing Association

Focus Ireland is committed to doubling the number of homes we directly provide over the next five years. This increased housing delivery is already playing a key part in our work, challenging homelessness and changing lives.

We got off to a strong start by delivering 135 new homes in 2016, compared with 35 in the previous year. This work changed the lives of many who now have a place to call home. We will carry out this vital work with the physical provision of additional homes through the Focus Housing Association.

By the end of 2016, we owned or leased 820 housing units across the country, 175 of these provide short-term accommodation while 645 provide long-term housing with support as needed.

In 2016 we increased our housing stock by 135 new units, on our way to doubling our housing stock by the end of 2020.

The end of 2016 saw the completion of one of Focus Ireland's most ambitious housing development projects. The provision of 28 new homes for families, couples and singles in Greenmount Close, Harolds Cross.

It has been a long journey since the Sisters of Charity decided to so kindly donate the land to Focus Ireland for social housing. It took some time to develop a suitable plan for this sensitive site and then later under the economic crash all house building ground to a halt. More recent funding programmes from the Housing Finance Agency made it possible to kick-start this development.

Without the support of Dublin City Council, Our Lady's Hospice and the local community, we could not have turned this generous gift of a vacant site into 28 much-needed new homes which will change the lives of the families and people living there who now have a place to call home.

## 2016

**In 2016 we increased our housing stock by 135 new units, on our way to doubling our housing stock by the end of 2020.**



# Challenging homelessness. Changing lives.

## Paula's Story

**“I am about to move into a home thanks to Focus Ireland.”**

**“It is such a different feeling to when I was homeless. Having nowhere to live destroys your self-worth. I was so low in myself. It took every bit of my energy just to get through each day.”**

I couldn't even begin to deal with my other problems – having no work and no money. I was just trying to find a way to eat and stay warm. Trying to survive.

I'm 19 now and my whole life I've had to become pretty good at surviving. My mam had depression and was an alcoholic. I had no brothers or sisters and dad died when I was a baby. At times it felt there was nobody to take care of me.

It wasn't the best childhood.

I was moved into care and lived in different places. In some places there was bullying and people getting into drink and drugs. I just knew I shouldn't get into that stuff.

Maybe it was remembering what alcohol did to my mam.

The thing is, though, when you are living in care and you turn 18 they say to you: “You're an adult now” and you have to leave and are just out on your own. I tried to be tough but was so alone.

I got into emergency accommodation and at least that was a roof over my head.

I was terrified though. I didn't know what was going to happen to me. I tried to find somewhere more long-term to stay. But there was nothing I could afford. More than anything I wanted a future

Then I got in touch with Focus Ireland. The staff were amazing and said they could help me – and they did! They've found me a temporary place to live and they're going to help me to get a flat. I'm so excited! I can't tell you how amazing it is to have a home and to not be on the streets anymore. I don't have to kill time on a dark corner until a shelter will let me in for the night. I honestly feel like that's all behind me now.

One day soon I'm going to close my own door, lock it behind me and feel safe. I'm going to sit down, relax and start planning my next move. Looking for a job, doing a course and starting my new life.

**I can't wait!**

**“One day soon I'm going to close my own door, lock it behind me and feel safe. I'm going to sit down, relax and start planning my next move. Looking for a job, doing a course and starting my new life. I can't wait!”**







Thank you for your continued support. Thanks to our supporters and funders we were able to support over 13,500 people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness in 2016



# Challenging Homelessness Together

Focus Ireland cannot work alone. We - and our customers - rely on the support of tens of thousands of people across the country. Our loyal supporters donate funds, campaign for policy change, volunteer in our services or support our governance. We also work closely with statutory organisations, Local Authorities, the Dublin Region Homeless Executive, Tusla and the Department of Social Protection to make the most effective use of the range of government supports.

All of this amazing support helps us to challenge homelessness and change lives. It helps our staff to be there when people need vital support and for someone to listen and to let them know there is help available.

## Individual Supporters

Our fundraisers are some of our most dedicated supporters and we cannot thank them enough for their loyalty and kindness. They donate online, mail in cheques, sign up to give every month, volunteer at events, and participate in the most difficult physical challenges to help us make a difference. More than 15,000 people helped us to challenge homeless and change lives in 2017.

We were delighted that Christmas FM chose to support Focus Ireland in 2016, raising a fantastic €360,000 for our services. Due to incredible public generosity and support, it was the largest amount of funds ever raised by Christmas FM for a charity and it meant that we were able to help more than 300 families to move on from homelessness.

## Corporate, Major Donors, Trusts & Foundations

In 2016, a total of 782 companies supported our work through corporate partnerships, donations, employee giving and payroll giving.

The first year of our strategic partnership with Bord Gáis Energy, who have committed €1.2 million in funding over three years to Focus Ireland to help prevent family homelessness supported us to:

- give vital support to 2,283 parents and children in emergency accommodation
- deliver specialist advice and support to 339 families on the brink of immediate homelessness to keep them in their homes
- reach out to 2,500 families moving towards homelessness to provide preventative assistance.

The support of the Human Dignity Foundation enabled us to develop innovative approaches to combating youth homelessness in Ireland, through specific services such as Housing First for Youth, Family Mediation, Employment Focus for Youth and Education Matters.

In addition, Three Ireland supported Focus Ireland through a significant fundraising and awareness campaign 'Let's All Tackle Homelessness' during the 2016 RBS 6 Nations tournament.

Over €500,000 was raised through our Shine a Light Night, with over 100 CEO's, 450 employees and 54 companies sleeping out for one night in support of people who are homeless.

Valuable support from major donors provided funds to enable the build of 28 long-term homes at Harold's Cross for families and individuals at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

The first year of our five year grant from the Human Dignity Foundation supported us to develop innovative approaches to combat and change the policy landscape for young people facing homelessness in Ireland. This grant enabled us to set up four new initiatives to tackle some of the root causes of youth homelessness and to begin our campaign for policy change.

## Community Fundraisers & Beloved Shops

More than 700 community fundraisers organised and/or took part in events to support Focus Ireland, from traditional bake sales to freezing Christmas Swims. The annual Belvedere Boys Sleepout broke all records in 2016 and raised €95,000. The number of people taking part in physical challenges grew significantly, with the introduction of various new challenges such as Hell and Back, Tough Mudder and The Camino Challenge.

In 2016, we were delighted by the response to our new Beloved Store in Waterford and were amazed by the support of the thousands of ladies who shopped in and donated to Beloved in Waterford, Naas, Cork and Malahide throughout the year.

## 2016

**More than 15,000 individual supporters helped us to challenge homelessness and change lives in 2017.**



## 2016

**Support from major donors helped build 28 long-term homes for families and people who were homeless or at risk.**



# Monitoring, Evaluating and Research

Ever since Sr Stan founded Focus Ireland in 1985 our work has been deeply rooted in listening to people. This means that we are constantly learning about the problems and risks they face. In turn this, helps point to where the solutions lie.

Over the time span of our strategy our Research Programme, working with our customers and our teams on the front line – will closely track how effective our services are and help to gain evidence for what is working.

We use this evidence to ensure our organisation is always learning, bringing fresh ideas to improve homelessness policy and informing our advocacy and lobbying. This will allow us to challenge what is not working and to keep developing new thinking to keep pace with change.



In 2016, our publication of a number of important pieces helped to further deepen our understanding of homelessness and to inform our work.

- Four Focus Ireland customers participated as ‘peer researchers’ in the 13-country Re-Invest Project (based in NUI Maynooth) exploring the impact of the economic crisis in Ireland. The customers said they gained so much from this while also providing valuable insights through their work.
- We launched an ‘Insights into Family Homelessness’ series and published five influential papers including an important analysis of children in families that are homeless and three quarterly surveys of the pathways that result in families becoming homelessness. This work helps to inform and influence policy and services in these areas.
- Published an evaluation, our innovative ‘My Home My Choice’ project, which houses people with a diagnosed mental health diagnosis who are at risk of homelessness.

# Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities

The financial results for the year are set out in the Statement of Financial Activities. The significant surplus achieved in the year was mainly driven by Fundraising. Donations and fundraising income increased by 44% in 2016 and now represents 40% of total income (2015: 34%). Fundraising income includes a one off valuation for two properties donated to the organisation. The valuation of these two properties amounted to €1,350,000. One of these properties was a green field site at Harold’s Cross which has resulted in the construction of 28 homes for our customers. The second was for two large adjoining properties in Dublin which are providing a place to call home for people in housing need.

In 2016, grant funding grew by over 7% and now accounts for 49% of total income. We continued to develop and expand the services provided to our customers. We secured additional state funding to expand our Family Homeless Action Team and set up a Youth Housing service in Waterford and Limerick. Focus Ireland continued to deliver our housing programme as 135 new housing units were acquired through CAS, the private rented market and the development of the Harold’s Cross site.

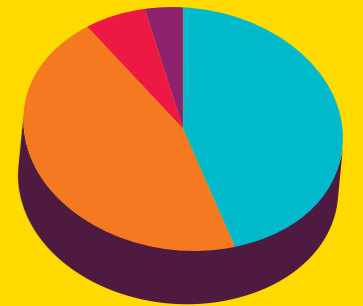
In the past number of years the organisation has invested significantly in Services provision, Housing and capability building within the organisation to counteract the effects of the economic recession. As a budgetary strategy the board have decided, in the interests of organisational stability and sustainability, to concentrate on replenishing the reserves of the organisation over the coming 2 years and have a reserve by the end of 2018 of 13 weeks.

To review Focus Ireland’s full financial report please go to [www.focusireland.ie](http://www.focusireland.ie)

## Analysis of income and expenditure

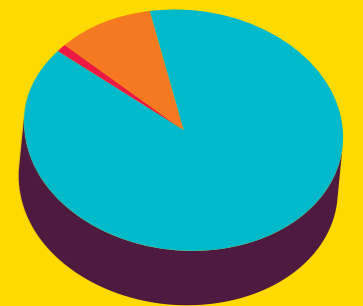
### Breakdown of income

- Grant income 49%
- Fundraising income 40%
- Rental income 7%
- Other income 4%



### Breakdown of cost

- Direct charitable activities costs 89%
- Governance and support costs 1%
- Fundraising and events costs 10%





# Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities

For the financial year ended 31 December 2016

	2016 Unrestricted Funds €	2016 Restricted Funds €	2016 Total €	2015 Unrestricted Funds €	2015 Restricted Funds €	2015 Total €
<b>Income from:</b>						
Donations and legacies	10,433,300	217,348	10,650,648	6,909,522	447,184	7,356,706
Charitable Activities	-	12,789,719	12,789,719	-	12,000,012	12,000,012
Other	2,860,041	77,810	2,937,851	2,563,216	-	2,563,216
<b>Total income</b>	<b>13,293,341</b>	<b>13,084,877</b>	<b>26,378,218</b>	<b>9,472,738</b>	<b>12,447,196</b>	<b>21,919,934</b>
<b>Expenditure on:</b>						
Raising funds	2,301,770	-	2,301,770	1,772,985	-	1,772,985
Charitable activities	7,266,611	12,688,725	19,955,336	5,841,080	12,101,172	17,942,252
Other	902,259	78,120	980,379	1,033,377	-	1,033,377
Interest on borrowings	99,418	-	99,418	13,016	-	13,016
Depreciation	220,301	-	220,301	184,587	-	184,587
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>10,790,359</b>	<b>12,766,845</b>	<b>23,557,204</b>	<b>8,845,045</b>	<b>12,101,172</b>	<b>20,946,217</b>
Net Income	2,502,982	318,032	2,821,014	627,693	346,024	973,717
Taxation Net Movement in funds for the year	-	-	-	-	-	-
	<b>2,502,982</b>	<b>318,032</b>	<b>2,821,014</b>	<b>627,693</b>	<b>346,024</b>	<b>973,717</b>

Restricted funds are resources that are held and maintained separately from other funds. This is in recognition of the circumstances in which the resources were originally received, that determine the way those resources are subsequently to be treated.

Unrestricted fund resources held by a charity, comprising money and other assets that can be used for any of the charitable aims of the charity. The use of unrestricted funds is not restricted to any particular charitable purpose of the charity.



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