

sligo social services

ANNUAL 2020 REPORT



Sligo Social Service Council CLG

Registered Office:

Retreat House

Charles Street

Sligo

Company Register Number 140759

BANKERS

AIB

Stephen Street

Sligo

Irish Permanent TSB

SOLICITOR

Hegarty & Armstrong

Millennium House

Stephen Street

Sligo

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Our Vision

To achieve long-term, sustainable improvements in the quality of life of those needing our services and support in the Sligo region, delivered in partnership with statutory agencies and other non-profit organisations, and through the support of our local communities.

To be flexible and innovative in our response to those who are experiencing difficulties in our community, recognising their changing needs and circumstances, in order that they will never find themselves alone and without support.

Our Mission

Sligo Social Services strives to empower individuals, families and communities in the Sligo region in improving their quality of life through the promotion of social justice, equality and the dignity of the human being.

We seek to address their needs respectfully by empowerment, support and encouragement and, where appropriate, direct assistance by caring, competent and professional individuals, deployed on a full-time, part-time or voluntary basis.

Chairpersons Foreword

2020 will be remembered as one of our most challenging years in providing Services, due to the World Pandemic of Covid 19. Volunteers and Staff rallied to the challenge and I thank them most sincerely for that. 2020 was a year of tremendous challenges for all of us.

To our statutory funders, Dept. of Social Protection, H.S.E., Tusla, Sligo Co. Council, thank you for your continued support. A special thank you to the Community Section of Sligo/Leitrim Garda Division for help in our Meals on Wheels service during Level 5 lockdown restrictions.

Without our volunteers we would not be able to provide the many services we offer, you are, and remain the bedrock of our organisation, thank you, most sincerely for your valued contributions in 2020.

Our ongoing partnership with the Diocese of Elphin is valued and most welcome.

Thank you to our Staff team, and Board members for your support and contributions in 2020.

Going forward, Sligo Social Services will continue the challenge of dealing with Covid 19, while bringing together our vision, and mission to deliver the four objectives outlined in our Strategic Plan – service development, continuous improvement and transparency, raise awareness and influence Policy and building a sustainable future.



Pat Forde
Chairperson

The Year in Numbers

WE SUPPORTED OVER 1200 PEOPLE IN 2020

People supported by our Substance Misuse Service



Children used our childcare service



School Packs distributed to families



Adults accommodated in our emergency homeless hostel



Phone calls made each week by our Friendly Call service



Meals provided by our Meals on Wheels service



Contacts to our Open Access Service



A Word from the CEO

The beginning of 2020 signalled the start of an exciting new decade for Sligo Social Services, with planning for the provision of the Housing First Service and the associated expansion of the organisation in the Northwest Region about to get underway. Over the coming months, so much changed.

The Covid-19 coronavirus outbreak meant we had to quickly re-align our priorities. As an organisation, we focused on key areas; safe continuation of services to those in need, protecting our people and protecting our income.

In 2020 we experienced a historical period with the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 global pandemic. The outbreak of COVID-19 will have a long-term and profound impact on the health and well-being of all, particularly the most vulnerable in our society. Social isolation and loneliness are likely to be one of the most affected health outcomes and are major risk factors which have been linked with poor physical and mental health status. Throughout the pandemic we adapted our services to ensure we continued to safely provide services to those most in need, finding new ways to stay in contact and support service users.

Despite significant disruption due to COVID 19 much of our work programmes and services continued throughout the year with some services reaching even greater numbers of people in 2020. Some of our services continued to be delivered directly e.g. our meals on wheels and residential homeless services. However many of our existing services moved from face to face contact to remote contact, including our counselling service for young people. Unfortunately in line with national public health guidelines our childcare services closed for a period of time .

Our Homeless services continued to be very busy with homeless emergency beds full on a regular basis. As a frontline residential service working with a very vulnerable and often transient client group COVID 19 had significant implications for the continued safe operation of the service. Measures were implemented immediately as per HSE advice for residential services and following recommendations from the HSE the use of shared rooms was eliminated resulting in a reduction in the number of bed available in Maryville Emergency Accommodation from 15 beds to 11 beds in the latter part of the year.

Our Open Access service continued to be in high demand with over 650 presentations to the service in 2020. Families experienced difficulties with household budgeting when social welfare payments moved from weekly to fortnightly payments and also struggled to have sufficient food available during the periods when children were no longer attending school due to COVID restrictions.

In late 2019 we were awarded funding from the HSE Community & Voluntary Supports Grant. This funding allowed us to dedicate resources to grow the Befriending Service both in terms of expanding the home visiting aspect of the service and to establish a Friendly Call service. With older people advised to cocoon due to the pandemic this element of the service became more important than we had ever anticipated. During 2020 we set up the Friendly Call service, recruited and trained a team of volunteers and made up to 97 calls per week to older people.

Following successfully winning the tender to provide the Housing First Service in the North West Region the service became operational in Counties Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal in February 2020. Housing First is a service model which aims to provide a person sleeping rough, or someone who has been long-term homeless, with their own secure accommodation as well as access to intensive and specialised support services. Housing First is being rolled out nationally and it is a significant moment for us as an organisation as we will move from being a local to a regional organisation.

The onset of COVID 19 saw a sudden increased demand for our meals on wheels service in 2020. We distributed 28,462 meals in 2020, an increase of 5,876 meals on the previous year. Additional support from the Covid 19 Emergency Grant Fund Scheme and from the HSE assisted us in covering the increased food and fuel costs in the service and allowed us provide the IT equipment required for the service to operate as an independent unit thus protecting staff and volunteers as much as possible.

When our offices, some face to face services and shops closed to prevent the spread of Covid-19, the lives of our staff and volunteers changed overnight. Desks became kitchen tables, many colleagues navigated work with home schooling, and everyone struggled to adjust to a new normal. To ensure the safety and wellbeing of our staff and volunteers, we adapted our ways of working and implemented strict controls in frontline services where staff continued to present to work on a daily basis.

COVID 19 has required much of the organisations work to be carried out remotely. Even with the easing of restrictions our work is now a hybrid of face to face and remote working. Our existing IT system being ad hoc with local server arrangements in place in each different service centre meant that while remote working was possible it was far from seamless. As a result of the significant IT challenges the trustees agreed to invest existing fundraising funds in the development of a cloud based IT system. Financial support was also received from the RTE Does Comic Relief Fund, which was distributed by The Community Foundation for Ireland to purchase IT equipment thus enabling us to better deliver and support services remotely.

Income generation is an important feature of Sligo Social Services work as we significantly depend on individual and corporate support to sustain our services. In particular our Thrift shop contributes considerably to our income and also makes a contribution to the community within which it is based. Along with many other charities, the outbreak of Covid-19 had a huge impact on our ability to raise funds. Following government guidance, we immediately closed our shops and cancelled all public fundraising events – including our annual golf classic. 2020 saw income raised in our thrift shop reduced by 61% on the previous year. Our supporters also postponed community events. But despite the magnitude of the challenges faced, the generosity of our supporters, and the organisations capacity through our reserves, put us in a strong position to come through the crisis. My thanks to all the businesses, schools, local groups and individuals who continued to support us in 2020.

I would also like to thank our statutory funders and local authorities who supported our work over the course of the year. Thank you to the Friends of Sligo Social Services, and the Diocese of Elphin for their ongoing support.

Throughout this very turbulent year one thing has remained steadfast and that is the outstanding commitment, flexibility and motivation of staff and volunteers. Both longstanding staff and volunteers and new staff and volunteers pulled together in times of great pressure to ensure the delivery of frontline services to those in need. This being done despite the challenges and worries COVID 19 brought to everyone's doorstep. The support of groups such as the Gardaí who helped us deliver meals on wheels for several months, when many volunteers could not, demonstrated the true spirit of community. There is no doubt that despite its many difficulties 2020 saw the people who make up Sligo Social Services shine. I thank them profoundly for the incredible dedication they have shown throughout the year.

Looking to the future we will continue to focus on what's important to us: funding essential services and ensuring people have access to the basics such as food and shelter where needed. We will continue to provide services which seek to help service users meet their potential. Our retail and fundraising activities will continue to evolve to reflect "the new normal", and we will support our staff and volunteers to adapt to new ways of working. Taking decisions in the face of uncertainty will require bravery. Making the best possible decisions will rely on being informed and working with our partners. And our compassion for people in need, alongside our supporters, volunteers and colleagues will be key. Above all, we will be driven to bring about positive change for our service users.

Throughout the year our amazing supporters, volunteers and staff have shown the same incredible dedication as they have done in previous years. Our annual report and accounts tell the story of the past year – all the high and lows of a year which ended like no other, as we continue in our mission to improve the quality of life of those in need.



Christina Mc Taggart
CEO

Directors Report

The Directors submit their report together with the audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2020.

1. Objectives and Activities

We aim to achieve long-term, sustainable improvements in the quality of life of those needing our services and support in the Northwest region, delivered in partnership with statutory agencies and other non-profit organisations, and through the support of our local communities.

The principal activities of the organisation consist of the provision of services to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness including homeless hostels for single adults, short-term family accommodation, substance misuse support, housing liaison service and housing first services. We provide services for older people including a meals on wheels service and a befriending service. Our children and family services include pre-school, after-school, family resettlement and counselling services. We provide targeted community development support, advice and information services and operate a large community employment scheme.

The main areas of attention are the development of the company's existing activities, securing financial and human resources to make these sustainable and achieving the highest standards of corporate governance.

Our Strategic plan 2018 – 2022 agreed by the Board aims to:

- ensure that those in need in Sligo have access to the support they need when they need it enabling them to live life to the full
- provide services which have a real and positive impact on the lives of our service users while being accountable to supporters
- improve awareness of the work we do and influence local and national policy
- grow and manage our income ensuring that we can sustain and develop the services needed by our clients

2. Financial review, Achievements and Performance

The financial results for the year are set out in the Statement of Financial Activities on page 13 of the financial statements.

Despite significant disruption due to COVID 19 our work programmes and services continued throughout the year with services reaching even greater numbers of people in 2020. During COVID 19 restrictions some of our services continued to be delivered directly e.g. our meals on wheels and residential homeless services. However, many of our existing services moved from face to face contact to remote contact, including our counselling service for young people.

Our Homeless services continued to be very busy with homeless emergency beds full on a regular basis. 78 individual service users accessed the service in 2020 with bed occupancy per person increasing from an average of 43 nights in 2019 to 56 nights in 2020. As a frontline residential service working with a very vulnerable and often transient client group COVID 19 had significant implications for the continued safe operation of the service.

Measures were implemented immediately as per HSE advice for residential Services and following recommendations from the HSE the use of shared rooms was eliminated resulting in a reduction in the number of beds available in Maryville from 15 beds to 11 beds in the latter part of the year.

Despite considerable restrictions in accessing Sligo University Hospital due to COVID 19 our Housing Liaison Worker worked with 62 people who were in hospital and had been identified as being homeless or having a housing need.

Following successfully winning the tender to provide the Housing First Service in the North West Region the service became operational in Counties Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal in February 2020. Housing First is a service model which aims to provide a person sleeping rough, or someone who has been long-term homeless, with their own secure accommodation as well as access to intensive and specialised support services. Housing First is being rolled out nationally and it is a significant moment for us as an organisation as we will move from being a local to a regional organisation.

Our Open Access service continued to be in high demand with over 650 presentations to the service in 2020. With the support of the Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived (FEAD) programme we distributed over 400 school packs to children. The onset of COVID 19 saw a sudden increased demand for our meals on wheels service in 2020. We distributed 28,462 meals in 2020, an increase of 5,876 meals on the previous year.

Additional support from the Covid 19 Emergency Grant Fund Scheme and from the HSE assisted us in covering the increased food and fuel costs in the service and allowed us provide the IT equipment required for the service to operate as an independent unit thus protecting staff and volunteers as much as possible.

COVID 19 has required much of the organisations work to be carried out remotely. Even with the easing of restrictions our work is now a hybrid of face to face and remote working. Our current IT system is ad hoc with local server arrangements in place in each different service centre. While remote working was possible via Google Chrome, this was far from seamless. As a result of the significant IT challenges the trustees agreed to invest existing fundraising funds in the development of a cloud-based IT system. Financial support was also received from the RTE Does Comic Relief Fund, which was distributed by The Community Foundation for Ireland to purchase IT equipment thus enabling us deliver and support services remotely.

Income generation is an important feature of Sligo Social Services work as we significantly depend on individual and corporate support to sustain our services. In particular our Thrift shop contributes considerably to our income and also makes a contribution to the community within which it is based. In common with not for profit organisations, the organisation must maintain and grow its income sources to ensure the sustainability and continuation of its work and services. In order to sustain and grow the organisation the directors review the sources of income on an ongoing basis and monitor the reserve levels to ensure that they are maintained at a reasonable level in the context of planned expenditure and future commitments.

2020 was a very challenging year for fundraising. Our primary fundraising income is generated from our Thrift shop which was severely affected by the many months of closure required under government restrictions as a result of COVID 19. 2020 saw income raised in the shop reduced by 61% on the previous year. In addition it was not possible to proceed with fundraising events and activities such as flag days, our annual golf classic and annual church gate collections.

The Board has implemented a reserves policy which is reviewed on an annual basis. Currently that policy is to create and maintain sufficient reserves to enable continued operation for a minimum of six months.

Volunteers continue to play a key role in the organisations work. These volunteers provided a range of help including:

Delivering services including:

- Meals on Wheels
- Advice and Information Services
- Homeless Services
- Befriending
- Assisting bucket collections
- Helping out working in our thrift shop

3. Structure, Governance and Management

Structure

Sligo Social Service Council Company Limited by Guarantee ('Sligo Social Services') is an Irish Company incorporated under the Companies Act 2014. It is a company limited by guarantee and does not have a share capital. It is governed by a memorandum and articles of association, which were last amended at the Extraordinary General Meeting on 30th August 2016. Sligo Social Services is a public benefit entity - the benefit we provide is demonstrated through our work with individuals, children, families and communities.

Governance

The Board of Directors of Sligo Social Services is committed to maintaining high standards of corporate governance. Sligo Social Services prepares an annual report and financial statements and makes them available to the public on our website. Members of the Board are elected by the members of Sligo Social Services at the Annual General Meeting and, subject to early retirement, serve for a four-year term which may be renewed once (a total of eight years). The Board has the power to appoint directors in the interim until the next Annual General Meeting.

The Board give their time to Sligo Social Services on a voluntary basis and receive no remuneration. Out-of-pocket expenses may be reimbursed.

Directors meet with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). When required, further training is arranged for individual directors or for the Board as a whole.

Finance, Audit and Risk Committee

The role of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee is to keep under review the adequacy, scope and effectiveness of the internal control systems of Sligo Social Services. The Committee have oversight of the external audit process and they review the findings of internal audits carried out by external consultants (on behalf of funders). This Committee consists of three Board members. The CEO is in attendance along with required members of the Executive Management Team.

During 2020 the audit committee reviewed and approved the Companies Risk Register.

Board Recruitment

When recruiting new directors to the Board, the Board aims to attract a diverse range of candidates with the skills Sligo Social Service needs. When vacancies arise, the Board identifies the skills, experience and knowledge required from the new Board member by considering the collective skill profile of the current Board. Recommendations will be made to the Board. Potential candidates are identified through a number of channels including from members and from the non-board members.

Training & Induction

All new directors are required to go through an induction process, which includes coverage of the aims of Sligo Social Services and how they are being fulfilled; the role and duties of the directors; and financial and risk management.

Directors meet with the CEO, managers and other staff. All new directors are encouraged to visit one of our projects in order to gain a better understanding of the services Sligo Social Services provides. When required, further training is arranged for individual directors or for the Board as a whole.

Conflicts of Interest

Sligo Social Services has a Conflicts of Interest policy in place for all Board members. The Board make annual declarations of conflicts of interest. No conflicts of interest were declared in 2020.

Protected Disclosures

Sligo Social Services has a protected disclosures policy in place to promote the disclosure of information relating to wrong-doing in the workplace. The policy offers protection for workers from penalisation in circumstances where they make a protected disclosure or “whistle blow” about concerns they may have about work, standards of practice or other areas of malpractice, dangerous, illegal or improper activity. No disclosures were made during 2020.

Decision Making

The Board ensure that the activities of Sligo Social Services are consistent with its charitable objectives and aims. There are clear distinctions between the roles of the Board of Directors and the Executive Management Team, to which day-to-day management is delegated. Matters such as policy, strategic planning, and budgets are drafted by the Management Team for consideration and approval by the Board, who then monitor the implementation of these plans. The Executive Management Team are the Key Management Personnel of Sligo Social Services.

Standards

The Board of Directors of Sligo Social Services is committed to maintaining high standards of corporate governance. Sligo Social Services Board adopted the Charities Regulator, Charities Governance Code in 2019. Sligo Social Services prepares an annual report and financial statements in full compliance with the Charities SORP (Statement of Reporting Practice under FRS102) each year and makes them available to the public on our website.

Directors and Secretary

The names of the individuals who were directors at any time during the year ended 31 December 2020 are set out below. All directors served for the entire year unless otherwise stated.

Pat Forde
Pat Mc Caffrey
Barry MacMahon
Orla Barry
Dan Scannell
Frank Murphy
Mary Harkin
Liam McGurrin
Maeliosa O'Brien
Fr. Michael Drumm

Company Secretary
Barry MacMahon

The Board normally meets ten times a year. However due to COVID restrictions no meeting took place in March 2020. Meetings resumed in early April, with meetings taking place via video platform from April onwards. Attendance was as follows:

	Jan	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Dec
Pat Forde	x	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Pat McCaffrey,	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Barry McMahon	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Fr. Michael Drumm	√	√	√	√	x	x	√	√	√
Liam McGurrin	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Maeliosa O'Brien,	√	x	√	√	√	√	√	√	x
Dan Scannell	√	√	√	√	x	√	√	√	√
Mary Harkin	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Frank Murphy	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Orla Barry	x	√	x	√	√	√	x	√	√

5. Principal Risks and Uncertainties

Business risks and mitigating actions are regularly scrutinised by the Board and management team.

The principal risks identified that could have a serious impact on performance are:

Financial Risk

The organisation has budgetary and financial reporting procedures, supported by appropriate key performance indicators, to manage credit, liquidity and other financial risk. All key financial indicators are monitored on an on-going basis.

Insufficient Funding

The company is reliant on grants from Government and donations from the public to have sufficient funding to deliver its work. The directors monitor the organisations cash position carefully and strive to maintain sufficient reserves at all times to enable the organisation to continue to operate for at least six months should cash inflows deteriorate for a sustained timeframe.

6. Going Concern

The directors have a reasonable expectation that the company has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Thus, they continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the annual financial statements. Further details concerning the adoption of the going concern basis can be found in note 3 to the financial statements.

7. Events Subsequent to the Financial Year End

Aside from the ongoing COVID-19 situation, there have been no significant events affecting the company since the year end.

8. Accounting Records

The measures that the directors have taken to secure compliance with the requirements of Sections 281 to 285 of the Companies Act 2014 with regard to the keeping of the accounting records are the employment of appropriately qualified accounting personnel and the maintenance of computerised accounting systems. The company's accounting records are maintained at the company's registered office at, Retreat House, Charles Street, Sligo.

9. Statement of Relevant Audit Information

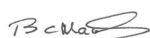
In the case of each of the persons who are directors at the time this report is approved in accordance with Section 332 of the Companies Act 2014:

So far as each director is aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the statutory auditors are unaware, and each director has taken all the steps he or she ought to have taken as a director in order to make himself or herself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the company's statutory auditors are aware of that information.

Auditors

Gilroy Gannon, Chartered Accountants and Statutory Audit Firm, have expressed their willingness to be re-appointed in accordance with Section 383(2) of the Companies Act 2014.

Signed on behalf of the Board on 8th June 2021



Barry MacMahon
Director



Pat Forde
Director

Children & Families

Childcare

Sligo Social Services offers a number of community-based childcare services including early year's childcare and afterschool's. All services are provided by fully qualified and experienced staff.

Our early years' service offers a range of activities, opportunities and experiences that will enable all children who attend, to develop skills, confidence and independence, ensuring a positive transition to Primary School. Where a need is identified, staff make referrals to outside agencies such as speech and language therapists, PHN's and Child Protection. The Early Years Inspectorate of Tusla has full responsibility of inspecting preschools and this in turn promotes a very high standard/quality of practice within the service. We are guided by Aistear (The National Curriculum framework for Early Childhood Education) and Siolta (The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education) in our practice re: learning and development of the child.

Sligo Social Services, provide two afterschool's in partnership with Cranmore/Abbey quarter Community Centre, and St. Edwards School Ballytivnan. Children receive support and encouragement in doing their homework, within safe, friendly environments. The children also receive a meal and have a wide range of activities to take part in once their homework is complete. These activities are based around sport, music, arts and crafts and play outside. The afterschool also runs activities during out of school periods within the academic year and offers Summer Activities in July.

2020 proved to be a challenging year for the childcare sector as a whole with all services closed in March 2020 due to COVID 19. During this period our staff remained in contact with all families providing materials and support to parents as much as possible remotely. Following the lifting of restrictions our Early Years service and Afterschool service in Cranmore Abbeyquarter reopened in September 2020. Measures were put in place such as detailed cleaning and sanitising of space and equipment, operation of bubbles within the service and greater control over access and egress points to ensure that both children and staff were as safe as possible. Unfortunately as the Afterschool in St. Edwards is delivered within the school premises and normally involves children from different school classes sharing the same space it was not deemed possible to reopen this service in September 2020. It is hoped that this service will reopen when the risks associated with COVID 19 can be managed safely.

Counselling Service

Sligo Social Services offers a counselling service to young people. The service is supported by Tusla and Foroige who provide a space for the counsellor to see young people on a one: one basis. This is a very limited service with 13hrs per week available. At present the counselling service is delivered entirely through one: one counselling sessions. In 2020 the service worked with 31 young people with the average length of time a young person engaged with the service being 30 weeks.

Like many other similar services COVID 19 had a significant impact on the delivery of the service in 2020, with the service moving to remote delivery via phone and video platform in response to government restrictions announced in March 2020. While it was possible to return to some face to face work when restrictions eased in the latter part of the year, this was managed carefully to ensure public health guidelines were adhered to.



Out of Home

Sligo Social Services provides a number of services for people who are homeless or in housing need including:

1. Accommodation Services including short-term and emergency accommodation services ;
 - Maryville Emergency Hostel
 - Ballytivnan Short-term Accommodation,
 - McAuley House Short-term Accommodation
2. Substance Misuse Support Worker
3. Housing Liaison Worker

Maryville Emergency Accommodation

Maryville Hostel provides emergency accommodation to single adults, men and women, who have been assessed by Sligo County Council as homeless. Every service user is allocated a keyworker to support them to identify and address issues which have contributed to their becoming homeless. Each person is helped to link with other services they may need in order to improve their quality of life, such as addiction counselling, mental health supports, health related services, resettlement, and education & training courses.

As a frontline residential service working with a very vulnerable and often transient client group COVID 19 had significant implications for the continued safe operation of the service. Measures were implemented immediately as per HSE advice for residential Services and following recommendations from the HSE the use of shared rooms was eliminated resulting in a reduction in the number of bed available in Maryville from 15 to 11 from October onwards.

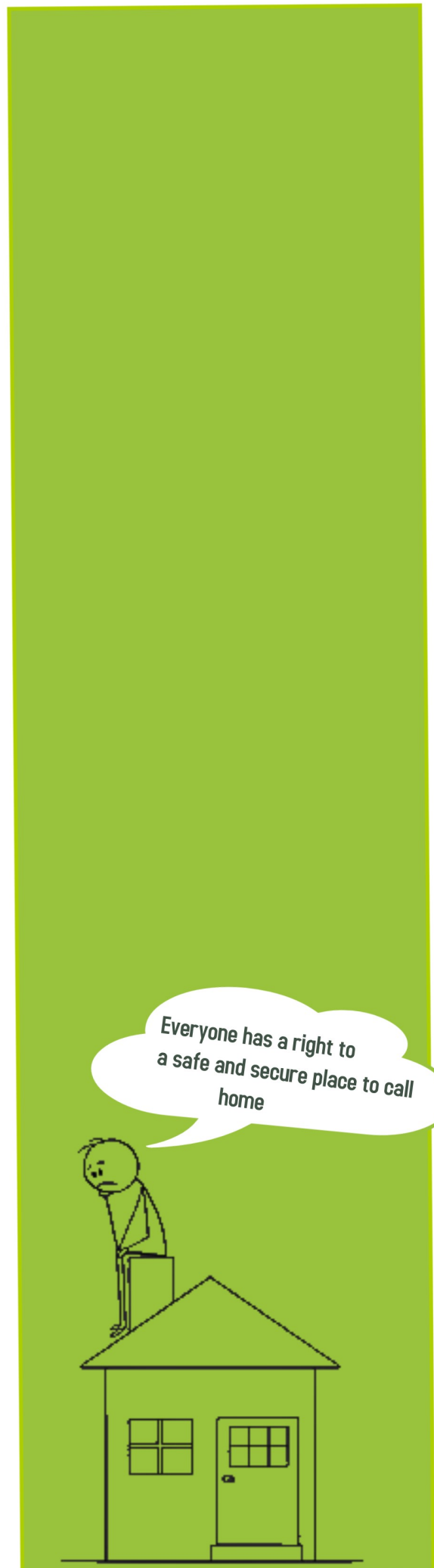
In 2020, 78 adults; 60 men and 18 women presented as homeless, this was a 20 % reduction on last year. However despite the reduced number of individuals 2020 saw the average number of nights service users remained in Maryville increase to 56 nights as compared to 43 in 2019. Much of this change can be attributed to two factors. There continued to be a dearth of affordable and available move on options for service users to move on to and COVID 19 restrictions resulted in a significant reduction in the movement from place to place of service users.

McAuley House Short-Term Housing

McAuley House offers four self-contained apartments, one and two bedroom units, which provide excellent quality short-term accommodation for up to four families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The service also provides one: one support to families to help them to build their capacity in areas which are likely to cause difficulties in their family and their future accommodation. Families remain in the service for up to a maximum of twelve months. During 2020, 5 families accessed the service. One family moved on to permanent housing in 2020. As has been the case for some time now securing housing for families in 2020 was extremely difficult.

Ballytivnan Short-Term Accommodation

This service provides short-term accommodation with support for five single men who have been identified as needing more Intensive support before they move on to live independently in the community. Staff are not located on the site but provide visiting support daily to meet with clients for Informal contact and to carry out key-working sessions. In 2020, 8 individual clients accessed Ballytivnan accommodation.



Housing Liaison Service

Sligo Social Services deliver an advice and assessment service for people who are in acute medical services and are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The worker engages with service users to ensure the housing needs of people in acute medical services are identified and met. The Housing Liaison Worker works closely with hospital services, homeless service providers, housing providers and support agencies ensuring that service users housing and support needs are assessed and met in line with the homelessness legislation and statutory guidance. The Housing Liaison worker works with patients who are in hospital and have an identified housing issue and/or are at risk of becoming homeless. In 2020 the HLW worked with 62 persons, of which 76% were Male and 24% were Female.

Substance Misuse Support

The Substance Misuse service complements and enhances existing treatment and recovery services in Sligo, targeting and engaging with service users through the delivery of an outreach based harm reduction and support service to drug and/or alcohol users in Sligo. The service aims to improve the individual's overall health and help clients to engage in and sustain rehabilitation, by supporting them in accessing mainstream services and specialist rehabilitation services and by focusing on contributory factors that impact on personal health status such as mental health, diet and nutrition, stress management, employment status and living conditions. The service operates in Sligo town 4 days per week and provides a satellite clinic in Tubbercurry one day per week.

In 2020 due to COVID 19 support to clients the service moved to remote support via telephone and video platform. While on occasion this proved difficult in terms of service users access to a phone many services users expressed that they found shorter, more frequent telephone support sessions easier to engage with. In 2020 the Substance Misuse worker worked with 52 service users, 42 male and 10 female. 52% of services users were receiving support regarding their alcohol use while 38% were receiving support regarding their misuse of drugs. The majority of service users were actively engaged in substance misuse (90%) and as such much of the work related to reducing harm and working towards stabilisation and recovery.

Housing First

Following a successful tendering process Sligo Social Services became the service provider for the Housing First Service in the North West of Ireland, covering the counties of Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal. This project will initially run from 2020 - 2023.

Housing First is a proven solution to long-term homelessness, specifically targeted at people who have been rough sleeping, or are long-term users of emergency hostels and shelters, with high support needs around issues such as mental health and addiction. It provides homeless individuals with a stable, secure home of their own as a first step, in order to effectively target them with personalised housing and health supports. These wrap-around services, which are provided for as long as needed, help people stay housed and supported in their recovery. Housing First will continue to support the individual in the event of a tenancy failure, to access another tenancy and the support service continues to engage with the participant.

Housing First is being rolled out nationally and it is a significant moment for us as an organisation as we will move from being a local to a regional organisation. Sligo Social Services Housing First team consists of Housing Support Workers, Addiction and Mental Health Specialists and are based in our offices at Charles Street, Sligo and Oliver Plunkett Street, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal.

Over the next three years a total of 41 people who are homeless will be housed and supported within Housing First. 2020, year 1 of the service saw 16 service users housed and supported; 6 in Sligo, 3 in Leitrim and 7 in Donegal. As is expected service users require intensive support from the staff team. Unfortunately linking service users to community supports has been hampered significantly as many community services closed due to COVID 19 restrictions. A further 11 service users have been approved for the Housing First service and will be accommodated once housing become available. The Housing First team have begun working with these clients also.

A considerable challenge to Housing First is the difficulty in acquiring one bedroom units, which is a requirement of Housing First.

Counties	Target year 1	Target year 2	Target year 2	Total
	13	14	14	41
Sligo	8	8	8	24
Donegal	4	5	5	14
Leitrim	1	1	1	3

Community Services

Sligo Social Services provides an Open Access service which assists families and individuals with advice, information regarding entitlements and welfare issues. This service operates on a walk in basis four afternoons per week and offers:

- Crisis intervention to service users, undertaking initial assessment, offering support and taking appropriate action in response to their immediate circumstances/difficulties
- Advice, information and advocacy, assistance in accessing rights, entitlements and services if necessary, support to service users in identifying and addressing contributory causes of their difficulties and obstacles to addressing these difficulties and assistance in finding appropriate solutions
- Supporting service users in accessing and integrating into the facilities and services of their local community.

The service is provided by a committed team of volunteers but like many other areas volunteers were unable to continue working during the pandemic. In 2020, a total of 286 individuals availed of the Open Access Service, resulting in 659 contacts with the service. While there was a decrease in the number of individuals (41), who presented in 2020 compared with 2019, there was a considerable increase (11%) on recurring presentations when compared to the previous year. A very high percentage (72%) of the 659 contacts were seeking material aid i.e. food which we receive through the FEAD programme and donations or a food voucher. Many families expressed the difficulty they were having budgeting when social welfare payments moved from weekly to fortnightly payments. Families also expressed the need to have more food available during the periods when children were no longer attending school due to the COVID restrictions. Christmas is always a time of greater need for families and in 2020 147 families/individuals received material aid at Christmas, this included assistance with food and with toys.

We also distributed over 400 school packs received from the FEAD programme.

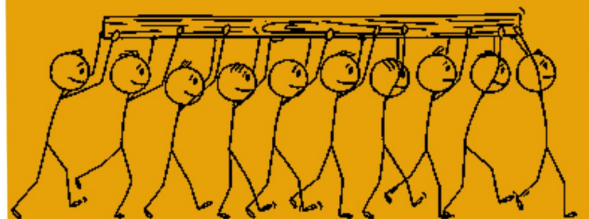
New Ballytivnan Community

Sligo Social Services have been working with residents in the New Ballytivnan area over the past two years. Unfortunately as there is no community centre available in the area this has significantly limited the work which can be done. While the SLETB gave us the opportunity of weekly access to a space which they have available to provide drop in advice and information, the onset of COVID 19 meant that it was not possible to use this space as hoped. Community work in 2020 included:

- Working with Sligo Leader Partnership, Ballytivnan Community Partnership, St Edwards NS and Northside Community Partnership to support the community in taking an active role in the development of much needed services in the Ballytivnan area.
- Parent toddler group in St. Edwards School with support from Lifestart Family Support staff.
- Pobal funding was sourced through the CYPSC Healthy and Active working group to deliver a community cookery course to Ballytivnan and surrounding areas. Collaboration took place with Ballytivnan Community Partnership, SLETB, YAPS, Northside Community Partnership, and Diversity Sligo with training for facilitators delivered. The first Healthy Food Made Easy course in Northside Community Partnership was underway when COVID restrictions were put in place.

Unfortunately it has not been possible to restart community work in the area due to COVID 19 restrictions. This will be reviewed once the concerns regarding the pandemic come to an end.

When we work together
as a community we can
do anything



Older People

Ireland has an ageing population with the proportion of the population over 65 years increasing. There is significant variation among counties in the proportion of the population over 65 years, but all counties in the West of Ireland have more people in this category (16.2% in Sligo) than the Rest of the State (13.0%).

Some of the most significant change in population structure is occurring among the 'older old', those in the 80+ year's category, with increased longevity and ageing of the older population. Some 3.7% of the Western Regions population is over 80 (3.0% in the Rest of State). Sligo has 3.9% in this category. In contrast, in Kildare only 1.91% are in this category while in Meath it is 2.21%. Sligo Social Services provides a number of services to older people including a Meals on Wheels and a Befriending Service.

Meals on Wheels Service

The meals on wheels service is need rather than demand based and is available to elderly people, housebound people, disabled people and to people who are unable to provide a hot meal for themselves. Meals are prepared in the kitchen at the Sligo Social Services centre in Charles Street by qualified chefs and staff and with the input of CE participants and volunteers. The meals are collected from Charles Street by volunteers on a rota system and then delivered hot to clients in and around Sligo town in the middle of the day. Workers on a Community Employment Scheme deliver meals to locations in the more rural areas in the north of the county and are equipped with special ovens in their vehicles to keep meals warm.

COVID 19 had a major impact on the Meals on Wheels service this year. As restrictions were introduced and many HSE day services were closed the meals on wheels service saw the number of recipients increase and the number of meals for existing recipients increase.

In 2020, 234 individual recipients availed of the service, this was an increase of 36 recipients on last year. 132 recipients were female and 102 were male. On average 126 people per month received meals in 2020 with an average of 2371 meals being cooked on a monthly basis. A total of 28,462 meals were provided in 2020, this is an increase of 5,876 meals on 2019.

As many of our volunteers were themselves over 70 years of age and thus considered vulnerable to COVID 19 a further and significant impact of COVID 19 on the Meals on Wheels service was the sudden loss of many of our volunteers who are the backbone of the delivery mechanism for the meals on wheels service. It required a great deal of ingenuity and flexibility to meet this challenge. Many of our remaining volunteers began delivering meals to a greater number of households while some of our community employment staff moved from their existing areas of work into meals on wheels to ensure the service continued. We outfitted a second van to allow staff deliver meals in and around Sligo town and for a number of months the Gardaí gave a great deal of assistance delivering meals to recipients around Sligo on Saturdays. With the support and flexibility of many people we were able to continue to provide the service to much greater numbers seamlessly throughout the year.

Additional support from the Covid 19 Emergency Grant Fund Scheme and from the HSE assisted us in covering the increased food and fuel costs in the service and allowed us provide the IT equipment required for the service to operate as an independent unit thus protecting staff and volunteers as much as possible.



It's important to stay connected. Please get in touch, so we can stay in touch

Befriending Service

For a number of years Sligo Social Services has offered a home visiting Befriending Service to persons who are:

- Aged 65 and over
- Residing in their own home in Sligo
- Experiencing social isolation
- Wishing to increase their social interactions and decrease their loneliness

The primary aim of the Befriending Service is to reduce the service user's social isolation providing social and emotional support for people who are isolated and living alone through regular visits. Each client is matched with a volunteer befriender – one with similar interests if possible. Befrienders visit clients in their own homes on a weekly basis. Where the client is interested and able to get out of the house the volunteer may go for a walk or do some other activity with the client. All volunteers receive training prior to commencing their role.

In late 2019 we were successful in our application for funding to the HSE Community & Voluntary Supports Grant. This funding allowed us to dedicate resources to grow the Befriending Services both in terms of expanding the home visiting aspect of the service and to establish a Friendly Call service. Unfortunately with the onset of COVID 19 early in 2020 the home visiting element of the service was suspended for much of the year, with only a small number of service users opting for the visiting option, most choosing the ' Friendly Call' element of the service.

The 'friendly' call service provides a phone call for up to 5 days a week to older people or individuals who may feel lonely, isolated and vulnerable in Sligo and surrounding areas; the service specifically targets people with chronic illness or anyone who cannot engage in an active way in the community, providing friendship and security helping clients feel safer at home. If a client does not answer the call and we are concerned about them, volunteers or staff will phone a member of their family, a neighbour or a friend.

The service commenced as planned early in 2020. However as the initial phase of the service coincided with the onset on COVID 19, the planned recruitment of a team of volunteers could not take place. As such the service was delivered directly by staff and Community Employment participants for the first number of months. The recruitment of a team of volunteers began in September 2020 and by the end of 2020 we had recruited and trained 13 volunteers to begin delivering the service.

32 clients received the service in 2020 with the service being available for as many days between Monday and Friday as they wished.

While all service users were lonely and or isolated, other health issues which they identified to us included;

Memory problems

Blind

Lung Cancer

MS

Arthritis

Hard of hearing

Heart Condition

Macular degeneration

Parkinson's

In 2020 we made 97 phone calls per week to clients. 59% (19) of the client group were female with 41% (13) male service users involved. Service users ranged in age from 65 to 93 years of age.

Fundraising

Fundraising efforts are essential for the survival of our organisation and every year Sligo Social Services and our supporters fundraise in various ways to help finance the services provided. In 2020, the world stood still as a result of Corona Virus. As with many other organisations we have experienced an extremely difficult year for fundraising activities and this has seen a significant reduction in funds raised. We have seen the periodic forced closure of our Thrift shops, resulting in a huge loss for our organisation from what would traditionally be our main source of fundraising income. At times throughout the year we have had to stop taking public donations of clothes, household items and bric-a-brac, which we sell in our Thrift shops.

In 2020, we raised a total of €106,621. €46,428 of this income came from our Thrift Shops and Recycling. Our Thrift shop income declined by 61% in 2020.

Annual fundraising events including flag days, church gate collections, carol singing and our Annual Golf Classic event unfortunately had to be cancelled due to public restrictions for the control of the virus. December 2020 saw the introduction of a new annual event – Sligo Social Services Christmas Jumper Day. Schools, individuals and local businesses and their staff donned their Christmas Jumpers to help raise much needed funds. The year's events has highlighted the importance of digital as a tool for fundraising activities. We have embraced the possibilities of digital including social media platforms and will continue to grow our online presence in the coming years. The key objectives are to raise people's awareness of our organisation and the work we do through the services available through Sligo Social Services.

Also in 2020, we were delighted to be awarded funding of €7,388 as part of RTE Does Comic Relief Fund, which was distributed by The Community Foundation for Ireland. This funding will help us develop our IT capacity allowing us deliver and support services remotely.

Schools, individuals, local business and their staff continued to give very generously donating food and toys at Christmas. This allowed us to assist many families and ensure a better Christmas for many children. We have benefitted greatly from the support of the people of Sligo over the years, support which we continue to rely greatly on. While it is not possible to name all our supporters, we are extremely grateful to you for all the donations no matter how big or small.

We look forward to the coming year when we hope to have a thriving year for our Thrift shop and the safe return to our fundraising events.

2020 has been a very challenging year for charities who rely on fundraising income to run services



Volunteering

Sligo Social Services promotes active citizenship and invites volunteers to become involved in our activities. Volunteers are central to the work of Sligo Social Services.

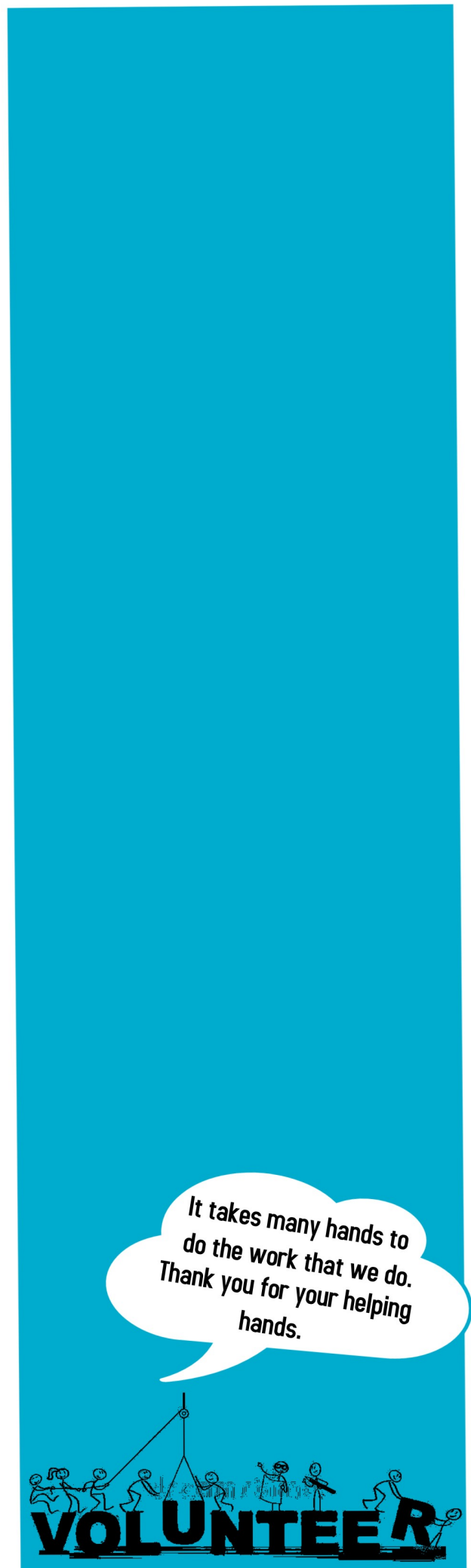
Volunteers work alongside professional staff to deliver vital services to those in need. The time dedicated by individuals ranges from new volunteers to those who have been involved in various services for almost all of the life of the organisation. More than 250 volunteers offer their time and talents to Sligo Social Service each year. They have and continue to be involved in many specific aspects of the organisation. Volunteers help us provide following services:

- Meals on Wheels
- Open Access
- Befriending Service
- Homeless Services
- Thrift Shop
- Fundraising
- Board of Directors

Sligo Social Services also benefits from the support of professional services, who often give advice and guidance on a voluntary basis.

All of our volunteers are dedicated to providing a caring and professional service and continue to receive support and guidance from staff and Management. Each year we take some time out to recognise and thank all our very committed volunteers for the contribution they make to Sligo Social Services.

Like all our areas of operations volunteering was greatly affected by COVID 19 but while some areas such as our Thrift Shop were less active due to restrictions other areas were more active than ever, with many volunteers offering their support in new areas such as in our Friendly Call service. This year saw many new volunteers join the organisation to help us deliver services particularly our Befriending and Meals on Wheels services. Our thanks to all who have given of their time and energy to help during these very difficult times.



Finance

SLIGO SOCIAL SERVICE COUNCIL (CLG)

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

		Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Unrestricted Funds	Total Funds	Total Funds
	Notes	2020 €	2020 €	2020 €	2020 €	2019 €
INCOME						
<i>Charitable Activities</i>						
Revenue Grants and Subsidies	4	-	1,134,784	-	1,134,784	863,039
CE Programme	7	-	626,755	-	626,755	644,776
Capital Funding/Grants	4	-	14,555	-	14,555	18,484
Income Generated from Services	4	-	230,061	-	230,061	207,041
<i>Donations and Legacies</i>						
Donations		-	-	63,880	63,880	39,189
<i>Fundraising</i>						
Fundraising Activities/Events		-	-	1,020	1,020	57,122
Charity Stores		-	-	41,22941,229107,747		
<i>Other Income/Gains</i>						
Sundry Income		-	-	1,459	1,459	562
Interest Income		-	-	(6,662)	(6,662)	5,014
Gain/(Loss) on Financial Assets Held at Fair Value		-	-	(30)	(30)	262
Waiver of CAS Principal Amounts		-	16,904	-	16,904	29,631
Total Income		-	2,023,059	100,896	2,123,955	1,972,867
EXPENDITURE						
<i>On Charitable Activities</i>						
Programmes and Services Expenditure		-	1,471,471	-	1,471,471	1,299,618
CE Programme	7	-	627,600	-	627,600	642,194
<i>On Raising Funds</i>						
		-	-	51,832	51,832	39,131
Total Expenditure		-	2,099,071	51,832	2,150,903	1,980,943
Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year	5	-	(76,012)	49,064	(26,948)	(8,076)
Total Funds Brought Forward		600,000	149,247	289,307	1,038,554	1,046,630
Transfer of Funds		12,500	96,090	(96,090)	12,500	-
Total Funds Carried Forward	16	612,500	169,325	242,281	1,024,106	1,038,554

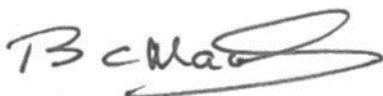
Finance

SLIGO SOCIAL SERVICE COUNCIL (CLG)

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

	Note	2020 €	€	Restated 2019 €	€
Fixed assets					
Intangible assets	8	2,026		3,457	
Tangible assets	9	485,036		516,737	
		<u>487,062</u>		<u>520,194</u>	
Current assets					
Debtors	10	65,354		94,755	
Investments	11	1,626		1,656	
Cash at bank and in hand		1,236,768		1,218,164	
		<u>1,303,748</u>		<u>1,314,575</u>	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	12	(219,091)		(231,192)	
Net current assets		<u>1,084,657</u>		<u>1,083,383</u>	
Total assets less current liabilities		<u>1,571,719</u>		<u>1,603,577</u>	
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	14	(547,613)		(565,023)	
Net assets		<u><u>1,024,106</u></u>		<u><u>1,038,554</u></u>	
Funds of the Charity					
Designated Funds	15	612,500		600,000	
Restricted Funds	15	169,325		149,247	
Unrestricted Funds	15	242,281		289,307	
TOTAL CHARITY FUNDS	16	<u><u>1,024,106</u></u>		<u><u>1,038,554</u></u>	

These financial statements were approved by the board of directors on 27th May 2021 and signed on behalf of the board by:



Barry MacMahon
Director



Pat Forde
Director

Sligo Social Services wish to acknowledge all our funders including:

Health Service Executive

Office for the Minister for Children and Department of Justice and Equality, administered by Pobal

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage via Sligo County Council

Northwest Regional Drugs and Alcohol Task Force

Department of Rural and Community Development

Department of Social Protection

Tusla Child and Family Agency

EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund via Department of Justice and Equality, Irish Refugee Protection Programme

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Environment Covid 19 Support Grants via Sligo County Council and Revenue

RTE Does Comic Relief Fund, via The Community Foundation for Ireland

Friends of Sligo Social Services

Diocese of Elphin

Revenue Generated by Thrift Shops

Income from Services

Benefactor