

# Annual Report

2021



SLIGO SOCIAL SERVICES

**Sligo Social Service Council CLG**

**Registered Office:**

**Retreat House**

**Charles Street**

**Sligo**

**Company Register Number 140759**

**Registered Charity Number 20024390**

**CHY Number 97 31**

**SOLICITOR**

**Hegarty & Armstrong**

**Millennium House**

**Stephen Street**

**Sligo**

**AUDITOR**

**Gilroy Gannon**

**25 Stephen Street**

**Sligo**

**BANKERS**

**AIB**

**Stephen Street**

**Sligo**

**Irish Permanent TSB**

## 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.

# Contents

The Year in Numbers	5
Introduction	6
Directors Report	8
Out of Home	13
Services for Older People	16
Community Services	18
Children & Family Services	19
Community Employment	22
Fundraising	23
Volunteering	23
Finance	24
Sources of Funding	26

# 2021 In Numbers



## Chairpersons Foreword



On behalf of the Board of Sligo Service Council CLG I am delighted to present the annual report for 2021, which has been another challenging year with Covid 19 and its impact during 2021.

Volunteers, Staff and Community Employment Scheme workers who ensured there was little or no impact to service provision in a year which also proved difficult to fill vacant positions, I wish to thank them sincerely for their commitment and professionalism in providing the highest level of services to the public.

I would also like to thank the continued support from our statutory funders, Dept. of Social Protection, H.S.E., Tusla, Pobal, Sligo Co. Council, thank you for your continued support and our ongoing partnership with the Diocese of Elphin is valued and most welcome.

To the board members that retired during 2021, I want to say a big thank you for your co-operation and support to the organisation during your tenure, it is much appreciated.

I welcome our new board members to the organisation and I look forward to working with the board in developing our new strategic plan to ensure the vision and mission of Sligo Social Services will continue to support those vulnerable, isolated and marginalized in our community.

Orla Barry

Chairperson

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Orla Barry". The signature is written in a cursive style.

## A Word from the CEO

2021 was another difficult year for Sligo Social Services with COVID 19 continuing to dominate society, bringing with it continued uncertainty, public health restrictions and social isolation. For Sligo Social Services, it meant significant financial struggles, shop closures and extreme difficulty in recruiting staff and community employment participants. However, with much flexibility from existing staff, services continued with as little disruption as possible. My thanks to all staff, community employment participants and volunteers for their unflagging commitment to the work of the organisation. Throughout the year we continued to work with our statutory partners and funders, government departments and colleagues in community and voluntary agencies to identify needs and provide effective responses.



The demand for the meals on wheels service continued to increase in 2021. Since the COVID 19 pandemic began in Ireland, the MoW service has seen an increase of 20% in the number of recipients availing of the service. In 2021, we distributed 31,501 meals. Our thanks to the many volunteers who are crucial in the delivery of the Meals on Wheels service throughout the year.

The supply of social housing or private rented accommodation diminished even further in 2021, with the very limited supply of private rented accommodation which did become available, not affordable for our clients. As a result of the ongoing housing crisis people are remaining in emergency homeless services for much longer than expected which is having a significant impact on clients and on services. In 2021 while the overall number of individuals availing of homeless emergency accommodation continued to decline the uptake of beds on a nightly basis was higher than ever with our homeless emergency beds full on a regular basis. We continued to implement COVID measures as advised by the HSE for residential Services including the provision of 11 beds in our direct access homeless hostel instead of 15 beds to ensure that there were no shared rooms. All organisations and services worked in partnership to maximise resources to ensure emergency beds continued to be available.

The Housing First team continued to support people in Counties Sligo, Leitrim, and Donegal and it is hoped that this service will be expanded throughout the country, including the Northwest Region in the coming years. Our Open Access service continued with 320 presentations to the service in 2021. With the support of the Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived (FEAD) programme we distributed over 300 school packs to children at the beginning of the new school year.

The organisation was successful in its application to the The Community Foundation for Ireland and the HSE for funding to carry out research into homelessness in Sligo. This research is seeking to identify the current and emergent issues in homelessness and the key lessons for preventing and reducing homelessness in Sligo.

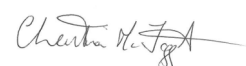
Of note this year was the investment made in Sligo Social Services technology systems. Staff reaped significant dividends as it better enabled the offering of virtual services to service users and remote working where necessary. With support from the RTE Does Comic Relief Fund, distributed by The Community Foundation for Ireland, we were able to purchase IT equipment thus enabling us to better deliver and support services remotely. By mid-2021 the organisation moved to a single IT system using Microsoft 365, providing laptops to staff to allow support their working off site.

Sligo Social Services depends on the generosity of individual and corporate supporters to sustain and ensure the continuation of our services. Our Thrift shop contributes considerably to our income and to the community within which it is based. 2021 was another 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 again this year. 2021 saw shop income reduced by 60% on 2019 income. Public Health restrictions continued to limit fundraising events and activities such as flag days. But despite the challenges faced, the generosity of our supporters continued throughout the year. My thanks to all the businesses, schools, local groups, and individuals who continued to support us in 2021.

Volunteering and the spirit of volunteerism are at the heart of the work of Sligo Social Services, and we are very fortunate to have many volunteers who help us deliver services, raise funds for our work and provide support and guidance through our committed Board of Directors. Thank you, to all of our volunteers for their time and expertise. A special thank you to the Directors who this year completed their terms of office on the Board having given many years of service to the organisation.

Thank you to the many donors who support the work of Sligo Social Services, every donation is greatly appreciated. I would like to thank our statutory funders who supported our work over the course of the year, the HSE, DSP, Sligo County Council, The Northwest Regional Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, The Office of the Minister for Children and TUSLA. Also, a particular word of thanks to the Friends of Sligo Social Services and the Diocese of Elphin for their ongoing support.

We remain extremely grateful to all our volunteers, supporters, and statutory funders without whom we would not be able to do the life changing work that we do.





# Directors Report

The Directors submit their report together with the audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2021.

## 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-schools, and youth counselling services. We provide targeted community support including 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 the significant impact COVID 19 continued to have on our work throughout the year services continued with as little disruption as possible. COVID 19 restrictions continued to affect how some services were delivered however services such as our meals on wheels and residential homeless services continued as normal but with increased safety measures. Childcare services closed once again during lockdown but reopened for essential workers as soon as possible. Some services moved from face-to-face contact to remote contact, during periods of lockdowns, this included our counselling service for young people and substance misuse service.

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 has had significant implications for the continued safe operation of the service.

We continued to implement measures as advised by the HSE for residential Services including the provision of 11 beds instead of 15 to ensure that there were no shared rooms.

While the overall number of individuals availing of homeless emergency accommodation continued to decline in 2021 with 56 individuals accessing the service, however the uptake of beds on a nightly basis was higher than ever. On most nights the emergency hostel was full, and all services had to work in partnership to ensure that resources were maximised to allow emergency beds continue to be available.

The Housing Liaison worker continued to access Sligo University Hospital throughout the year working with 69 people who were in hospital and had been identified as being homeless or having a housing need.

Housing First Service in the North West Region became operational in Counties Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal in February 2020. In 2021 the Housing First team worked with 29 clients: 22 housed and 7 awaiting housing. 2021 saw the challenge of accessing social housing or private rented accommodation escalate further for service users in need of housing with the very limited supply of private rented accommodation which did become available always being outside the HAP limits available to clients.



The organisation was successful in its application to the The Community Foundation for Ireland and the HSE for funding to carry out research into homelessness in Sligo. This research is seeking to identify the current and emergent issues in homelessness and the key lessons for preventing and reducing homelessness in Sligo. The research will look at what and how measures introduced in response to COVID 19 impacted on homelessness.

Our Open Access service continued with 320 presentations to the service in 2021. With the support of the Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived (FEAD) programme we distributed over 300 school packs to children. The demand for the meals on wheels service continued to increase in 2021. Since the COVID 19 pandemic started here in Ireland at the beginning of 2020 the service has seen an increase of 20% in the number of clients. In 2021, 244 individual recipients availed of the service, and we distributed 31,501 meals. This was an increase of 3,039 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 to purchase new kitchen equipment required for the service.

COVID 19 has during periods of lockdown required much of the organisation's work to be carried out remotely. Throughout 2021 as restrictions were eased some of our finance and admin staff continued to operate a hybrid model to allow frontline staff as much access to premises as possible. Our existing IT system being ad hoc with local server arrangements in place in each different service center meant that while remote working was possible it was far from seamless. As a result of the significant IT challenges in 2020 the trustees agreed to invest in the development of a cloud-based IT system. At the end of 2020 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, other statutory funders also provided financial support to purchase laptops for service staff to allow them work remotely more easily. By mid-2021 the organization moved to a single IT system using Microsoft 365, providing laptops to many staff to facilitate their working off site.

Sligo Social Services depends significantly on individual and corporate support to sustain our services. Our Thrift shop contributes considerably to our income and contributes to the community within which it is based. As is the case for many not-for-profit organisations, Sligo Social Services must maintain and grow its income sources to ensure the sustainability and continuation of its work and services. 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.

2021 was another 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 again this year. 2021 saw income from the shop reduced by 60% on 2019 income. We were also unable to proceed with other fundraising events and activities such as flag days, and our annual golf classic.

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 organisation's 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 Constitution, which was 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 2021 the audit committee met with External auditors to review the companies statutory accounts. The committee also reviewed staff remuneration in 2021.

## **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's 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 several channels including from members and from the non-board members. 2021 saw a significant turnover in our Board membership with 5 Board members resigning from the Board as they had served the eight years (two four-year terms) which was available to them. Five new replacement Board members were recruited and inducted onto the Board during the year.

## **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. New directors are encouraged to visit one of our projects 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 Conflict 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 2021.

## **Protected Disclosures**

Sligo Social Services has a protected disclosures policy in place to promote the disclosure of information relating to wrongdoing 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 2021.

## **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.

## 4. Directors and Secretary

The names of the individuals who were directors at any time during the year ended 31 December 2021 are set out below. All directors served for the entire year unless otherwise stated.

Pat Forde (resigned 26/08/2021)

Pat Mc Caffrey (resigned 26/08/2021)

Barry MacMahon (resigned 26/08/2021)

Frank Murphy (resigned 08/06/2021)

Mary Harkin (resigned 08/06/2021)

Liam McGurrin

Maeliosa O'Brien

Fr. Michael Drumm

Orla Barry

Dan Scannell

Caroline Costello (appointed 08/06/2021)

Eamonn Grennan (appointed 08/06/2021)

Geraldine Gordon (appointed 26/08/2021)

David Mc Guinness (appointed 26/08/2021)

Tommy Mc Manus (appointed 26/08/2021)

### Company Secretary

Fr. Michael Drumm (appointed 26/08/2021)

The Board meets ten times a year. Meetings took place via video platform in 2021. Attendance was as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	Aug	Sept	Oct	Dec
Pat Forde	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Pat McCaffrey	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Barry MacMahon	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Fr. Michael Drumm	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Liam McGurrin	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Maeliosa O'Brien	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dan Scannell	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓
Mary Harkin	✓	✓	x	✓	✓					
Frank Murphy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Orla Barry	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓
Eamonn Grennan						x	✓	x	✓	✓
Caroline Costello						x	✓	✓	x	✓
David Mc Guinness								✓	x	✓
Geraldine Gordon								✓	✓	✓
Tommy Mc Manus								✓	✓	✓

## 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 organisation's cash position carefully and strive to always maintain sufficient reserves 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 and the rising fuel prices, 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

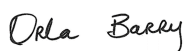
In the case of each of the persons who are directors at the time this report is approved in accordance with Section 332 of the Companies Act 2014:

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.

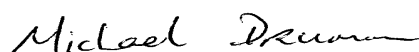
## 10. Auditors

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 26th May 2022



**Orla Barry**  
Director



**Fr. Michael Drumm**  
Director

# PROPERTY

HOUSING

VIOLENCE

EDUCATION



# Homeless Services

## RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

Sligo Social Services provides a number of residential services for people who are homeless or in housing need. This includes a number of accommodation Services described below.

### *Maryville Hostel*

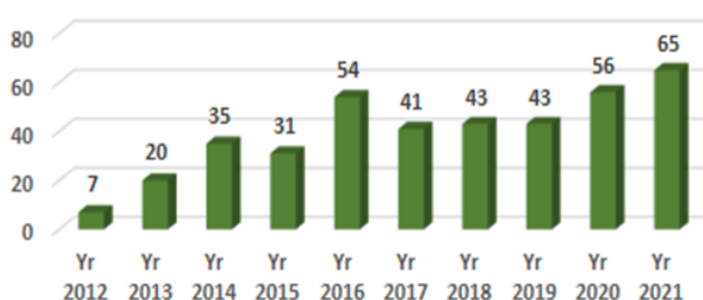
Maryville Hostel provides emergency accommodation to single adults, men, and women, who have been assessed by Sligo County Council as homeless. Every service user is allocated a keyworker to support them to identify and address issues which have contributed to their becoming homeless. Each person is helped to link with other services they may need in order to improve their quality of life, such as addiction counselling, mental health supports, and health related services. Sligo Social Services staff in Maryville also deal with any households presenting as homeless when Sligo County Council is closed to the public.

As a frontline residential service working with a very vulnerable and often transient client group, COVID 19 has had significant implications for the continued safe operation of the service. Following recommendations from the HSE the use of shared rooms was eliminated from October 2021 onwards. This resulted in a reduction in the number of bed available in Maryville from 15 to 11 beds.

Overall 2021 saw the continued reduction in the number of individual clients accessing the hostel with 56 adults; 44 men and 12 women, presenting as homeless. This was a decrease of 22 individuals on the previous year. In total there were 95 contacts with the service in 2021. While the number of individuals decreased the average length of stay increased to 65 nights, an increase of 15% on 2020. Over the past three years there has been a 34% increase in the average length of stay in the emergency hostel.

44 clients moved on from the service during the year; 21% moved to permanent housing, which included Housing First, Private Rented, and other Local Authority/Approved Housing Association housing. 16% of clients returned to family or friends, 8% moved to external short-term accommodation (often to make direct access emergency beds available), while a further 14% of those who accessed the service were assessed by the Local Authority as not having a center of interest and therefore would not receive ongoing housing supports in the Sligo area.

Average Length of Stay



As has been the case for the past number of years private rented accommodation was in extremely short supply with rents always outside the HAP limits available to clients. It therefore continues to be extremely difficult for service users to access move on accommodation. On most nights the emergency hostel was full, and all services had to work in partnership to maximise resources to ensure direct access emergency beds continued to be available.

### *Ballytivnan Short-Term Accommodation*

Ballytivnan offers short-term accommodation to individuals who have been unable to secure long-term housing but can live independently with floating support. Staff are not on site all the time but visit the project as frequently as possible to meet with clients for informal contact and to carry out key-working sessions. In 2021, 5 individual clients accessed Ballytivnan.

### *Mc Auley House Transitional Housing*

McAuley House offers four self-contained apartments, one- and two-bedroom units, which provide excellent quality short-term accommodation for up to four households who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The service also provides one: one support to help residents build their capacity in areas which are likely to cause difficulties in their family and their future accommodation. Securing move on accommodation from McAuley House for households has also become very difficult with many families remaining in the service for much longer than the anticipated 1 year. During 2021, 5 families, 1 couple and 1 single adult were accommodated in Mc Auley House.

## **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 them 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.

As COVID 19 restrictions extended into 2021, we continued to offer a mix of remote and face to face support to service users, working with 32 service users, 26 male and 6 female.

## **HOUSING FIRST**

Sligo Social Services is the service provider for the Housing First Service in the Northwest 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 service user.

As is expected, service users require intensive support from the staff team. Unfortunately linking service users to community supports continued to be hampered this year as many community services remained closed in 2021 due to COVID 19 restrictions.

A considerable challenge to Housing First is the difficulty in acquiring one-bedroom units as this is the only housing permitted under Housing First. In 2021 the Housing First team worked with 29 clients: 22 housed and 7 awaiting housing. This is less people housed than planned (28) as it has not been possible to secure the required one-bedroom housing. 11 clients were housed in Sligo, 3 housed in Leitrim and 8 housed in Donegal.

## **HOUSING LIAISON WORKER**

The Housing Liaison Worker (HLW) works with people who are inpatients in Sligo University Hospital who have a housing need, assisting with applications for social housing, negotiating with other housing service providers or referring people to other services as appropriate. The HLW encourages people to engage with primary services when leaving hospital so that they are cared for in the community whether in their own homes or in a residential/hospital setting. Part of HLW's job is to advise and advocate with homeless people from any service that attend Sligo University Hospital. In 2021, the HLW worked with 69 people.





# Services for Older People

## MEALS ON WHEELS

Meals are prepared by staff in our kitchen in Charles St. seven days per week for people who are unable to provide or prepare it for themselves. The meals are collected by volunteers and staff and delivered to homes around Sligo City and environs and into North County Sligo. Recipients are referred to the service by their Public Health Nurse, other health professionals or may self-refer.

COVID 19 continued to have a major impact on the Meals on Wheels service in 2021. Restrictions were reintroduced in the early part of the year and many HSE day services remained closed. The number of recipients for the MoW service increased in the early part of the year and remained high. Since the COVID 19 pandemic started here in Ireland at the beginning of 2020 the Meals on Wheels service has seen an increase of 20% in the number of clients. In 2021, 244 individual recipients availed on the service, 116 female and 128 were male. Throughout the year 103 new service users joined the service, while 102 recipients left the service.

An average of 2,625 meals were provided per month in 2021 with 31,501 meals provided in total in 2021. This is an increase of 3,039 meals in 2020. The service has seen a 28% increase in the number of meals being provided since 2019.

## BEFRIENDING SERVICE

For a number of years Sligo Social Services has offered a home visiting Befriending Service whose primary aim is to reduce the service user's social isolation providing social and emotional support for people who are isolated and living alone. This was initially done through home visits and expanded to establish a Friendly Call service in 2020. Unfortunately, with the onset of COVID 19 the home visiting element of the service was suspended with the Friendly Call element of the service being the primary contact with service users throughout 2021.

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 helping service users feel less isolated at home. If a service user does not answer the call and we are concerned about them, volunteers or staff will contact a member of their family, a neighbour, or a friend to check in on the elderly person.

In 2021 the service supported 39 individuals. The majority (24) were female with 15 male service users. 51% of those availing of the service were over 80 years of age. The service is provided by a team of 11 volunteers who make an average of 81 calls per week to service users.

# Open Access

The Open Access Service is a drop-in service, which provides families and individuals with support, advice, and information on a wide range of issues such as housing, finance, health, entitlements, and welfare issues. This service operates on a walk-in basis three afternoons per week, Mon Wed and Fri 2-4:30pm.

The service is provided by a team of volunteers but like many other areas, volunteers were unable to continue working during 2021. Throughout the year 176 adults presented seeking assistance from the Open Access Service — this included adults from 95 families with a total of 287 children under 18 years of age. As individuals sometimes availed of the service more than once during the year this resulted in 320 contacts with the service. This was a reduction of 9% in individuals and a 15% reduction in contacts on the previous year.

The majority of people (93%) presenting to the service were seeking material aid, be that food throughout the year and /or assistance such as food, food vouchers or toys at Christmas. The FEAD Program has given us the opportunity to distribute nonperishable goods such as cereals, tinned items, pasta, rice etc. The food items we can now provide is of significantly greater value and as such lasts longer for individuals and families than the vouchers which were provided in the past and as such in 2021, we transitioned to the sole use of food assistance except in exceptional circumstances. We also supported other community and voluntary organisations including Focus Ireland, Finiskilin Housing Association and Northside Community Partnership with FEAD products during the year.

In 2021 the FEAD programme also provided us with School Packs for distribution through our services and through services provided by other community groups. A total of 300 packs were received and distributed.







# Children and Family Services

Sligo Social Services currently operate three childcare services, Charles St Preschool, Cranmore Abbeyquarter Afterschool and Ballytivnan Afterschool. All three services operate from a holistic approach and ensure that the physical, emotional, educational, and social wellbeing needs of the children are being met. Quality provision in early education has a very positive impact on the future educational, psychological, and social development of every child and can also be of critical importance in efforts to encourage long-term educational participation, to break the cycle of disadvantage and to move towards greater equity in society.

Like all childcare services throughout the country COVID 19 has had an ongoing impact on our services. 2021 saw services close in the early part of the year due to the public health lockdown. During this period our staff continued to contact 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 March 2021. 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 2021.

Throughout the year we continued to implement strict measures regarding cleaning and sanitizing of space and equipment, operation of bubbles within services and greater control over access and egress points to ensure that both children and staff were as safe as possible. Recruitment of Childcare Staff to fill vacant positions presented as a major challenge throughout the year. Despite its challenges all the services operated fully once Public Health restrictions were lifted.

## CHILDCARE SERVICES

### *Charles St Preschool*

The service provides a preschool service and extended hours are available for children between the ages of 2yrs 10mths to 5yrs. The Early Years Inspectorate of Tusla has 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. We take children from diverse backgrounds and places are allocated based on need. Over the course of 2021 we worked with 27 children in our pre-school service.

### *Afterschool's*

The Afterschool services offer children support and encouragement in doing their homework, within a safe and friendly environment. The children receive a hot meal each day. The afterschool's also runs activities during out of school periods within the academic year and offers Summer Activities in July. Due to changing needs of families accessing the afterschool services both extended their opening hours from 4.50pm to 5.45pm from the start of the new academic year in September 2021.

### *Cranmore/Abbeyquarter*

Sligo Social Services, in partnership with Cranmore/Abbeyquarter Community Centre, run an afterschool service for the area. The service can cater for up to 30 primary school children aged between 4 and 13 years. In 2021 27 children attended the afterschool service in Cranmore/Abbeyquarter.

### *St. Edwards Ballytivnan*

With the support of St. Edwards School staff and management, Sligo Social Services provide an afterschool on the grounds of St Edwards Primary School. The service can cater for 16-20 children, however due to the continued concerns regarding COVID 19 at the request of the school the number of places made available to children was reduced to 12. It is hoped that this number can be increased to 16 in January 2022.

## COUNSELLING SERVICE

Sligo Social Services offers a counselling service to young people. This is a limited service with 13hrs per week available. The counselling service is delivered entirely through one: one counselling sessions and is primarily targeted at children between 13 and 18 years of age.

COVID 19 continued to have a significant impact on the delivery of the service in 2021, with the service moving to remote delivery via phone and video platform in response to government restrictions in the early part of the year. While it was possible to return to some face-to-face work when restrictions eased, this was managed carefully to ensure public health guidelines were adhered to.

In 2021 the service was operational from Jan to the beginning of June only as the counsellor left the position. During this period the service worked with 8 young people. As has been our experience throughout the year despite repeated attempts to recruit a replacement to fill this vacant position we were unable to do so in 2021.

## HEALTHY IRELAND

Sligo Social Services is working in partnership with Sligo Leitrim CYPSC in the delivery of Healthy Ireland programmes in Sligo/Leitrim. Sligo Social Services receive the funds and manage the financial administration for the various projects which are provided by the following organisations:

- West Sligo Family Resource Centre**
- Foroige**
- Sligo County Childcare Company**
- North Connaught Youth and Community Service**
- Leitrim County Childcare Company**
- Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board**

Sligo Social Services also deliver a project as part of the Healthy Ireland programme in Sligo/Leitrim, 'Healthy Food Made Easy.'

### *Healthy Food Made Easy*

Sligo Social Services have been working in partnership with several community groups to deliver the Healthy Food Made Easy programme, a standardised, tutor-led community cookery programme that is designed to help people develop the skills, knowledge, and confidence to eat well and improve their health. The aim of the programme is to improve nutritional knowledge, shopping and dietary behaviours and cooking skills in lower socio-economic and marginalized populations taking a community-based approach. The Programme consists of 6 sessions lasting 2-2 ½ hours.

Whilst the programme started off as planned unfortunately Covid19 caused significant delays. The current programme of work involves group learning in a community setting. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic there were delays with the ability to run these groups in person, safely. Different ways of delivering the programme were considered whilst observing best practice. Classes were trialed online, but it was found that some participants didn't have the equipment, internet connection or personal ability to participate in this manner given the diverse needs of the group and therefore the classes were put on hold until a time they could safely resume in person. In 2021 venues undertook a review of health and safety policies and procedures, and it was decided that groups needed to be smaller in size to ensure social distancing and ease of comfort for participants and facilitators. To date the uptake to the programme has gone well and the group sizes have been filled for all. A total of 108 participants have registered and participated in the programme.

The feedback from service users and some staff supporting the programmes have been that the programme is very user friendly, interactive and worthwhile, teaching some basic skills that will enable services users to improve their diet in some small ways whilst also considering the budget available to them.

Equipment was also bought for the project sites at Northside Community Centre, The Avalon Centre, and the Abbeyquarter Community Centre. This means that these local community groups will continue to benefit from Healthy Eating Made Easy for several years.



Sligo Social Services is the sponsor of a large Community Employment (CE) Project. Community Employment is an employment programme funded by the Dept. of Employment Affairs & Social Protection. Sligo Social Services deliver both a Mainstream Community Employment programme and a dedicated Drug Rehabilitation Community Employment Programme.

### **Mainstream Community Employment**

Sligo Social Services Mainstream Community Employment (CE) programme comprises of 38 CE participants located within Sligo Town. This CE programme aims to help those who are long-term unemployed and other disadvantaged people to get back to work by offering part-time and temporary placements in jobs based within the local community. Individual training plans are designed to incorporate the skills each participant brings to the CE programme and what they would like to achieve for themselves. Participants are encouraged to take up other part-time work during their placement within the programme. This has led to many of the participants being successful in securing part-time employment. Through engaging in the CE programme, participants develop their skills, achieving many and varied educational qualifications, while also securing a supportive network of colleagues. A number of CE participants have secured full time employment with employers.

### **The Community Employment Rehabilitation Programme**

The Community Employment Rehabilitation Programme is a Department of Social Protection programme designed to assist those recovering from addiction to return to work through Training and Work Experience. There are 15 places for participants and 2 for support workers awarded. Participants provide vital work in the community including painting and decorating, garden maintenance or cleaning, while some participants work in various Charity Shops in Sligo Town. The Scheme was significantly affected by Covid 19 with much of our work slowed or stopped due to restrictions.

In 2021 Covid 19 continued to have a significant effect on the Community Employment project with many activities curtailed. We continued to seek opportunities for online learning for participants. Many CE participants made themselves available to work in and support frontline essential services such as Meals on Wheels and have been invaluable in the smooth continuation of essential services throughout the pandemic. During the year participants also found both part time work and full time work in various sectors providing them the opportunity to re-enter the workforce and using their newly acquired skills while with the project. However a significant challenge which has arisen in 2021 has been the recruitment of participants onto both streams of the Community Employment Programme. Despite considerable effort many positions have remained vacant for lengthy periods of time.





## FUNDRAISING

Fundraising efforts are essential for the survival of our organisation and every year Sligo Social Services supporters fundraise in a variety of ways to help finance the various services provided. 2021 was another extremely difficult year for fundraising with activities at a minimal again this year due to periods of lockdown and restrictions due to COVID 19, resulting in another year of significantly reduced fundraising income. The first quarter of the year saw a further forced closure of our Thrift shop, resulting in a huge loss of sales and income for the organisation from what is a key source of fundraising income.

Despite the challenges facing everyone the people of Sligo continued to give generously. We continued to receive donations of second-hand clothes and household items for sale in our Thrift shop. Schools, individuals, local businesses, and their staff donated money, food, and toys particularly at Christmas. This allowed us to assist many families and ensure a better Christmas for many families and children.

In 2021, we raised a total of €162,086. This was an increase on last year due to a generous bequest which we received in 2021. €43,749 of our income came from our Thrift Shops and Recycling. While our Thrift Shop income increased very slightly on 2020 it remained significantly lower than 2019.

The Annual church collection on the 8th December raised €4,594. Donations were received from various businesses, churches, community groups and individuals towards our work raising €53,572 this year. While it is not possible to name all our supporters, we are extremely grateful for all donations large and small, once off or regular.



## VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are central to the work of Sligo Social Services, working 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 many years. Over 200 volunteers offer their time and talents to Sligo Social Services and are involved in many aspects of the organisation. Volunteers help us provide following services:

- Meals on Wheels
- Open Access
- Befriending Service
- 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 our volunteers are dedicated to providing a caring and professional service and continue to receive support and guidance from staff and Management. COVID 19 has greatly affected volunteering in the organisation with areas such as our Thrift Shop less active due to restrictions while other areas such as our services for older people were busier than ever. Our thanks to all who have given of their time and energy to help during another very difficult year.

# SLIGO SOCIAL SERVICE COUNCIL (CLG)

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

		Designated	Restricted	Unrestricted	Total	Total
	Notes	2021 €	2021 €	2021 €	2021 €	2020 €
<b>INCOME</b>						
<i>Charitable Activities</i>						
Revenue Grants and Subsidies	4	-	1,268,707	-	1,268,707	1,134,784
CE Programme	7	-	558,487	-	558,487	626,755
Capital Funding/Grants	4	-	14,394	-	14,394	14,555
Income Generated from Services	4	-	246,400	-	246,400	230,061
<i>Donations and Legacies</i>						
Donations		-	-	113,962	113,962	63,880
<i>Fundraising</i>						
Fundraising Activities/Events		-	-	4,375	4,375	1,020
Charity Stores		-	-	43,749	43,749	41,229
<i>Other Income/Gains</i>						
Sundry Income		-	-	13,177	13,177	1,459
Interest Income		-	-	13	13	(6,662)
Gain/(Loss) on Financial Assets Held at Fair Value		-	-	385	385	(30)
Waiver of CAS Principal Amounts		-	17,411	-	17,411	16,904
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>2,105,399</b>	<b>175,661</b>	<b>2,281,060</b>	<b>2,123,955</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>						
<i>On Charitable Activities</i>						
Programmes and Services Expenditure		-	1,538,345	-	1,538,345	1,471,471
CE Programme	7	-	558,134	-	558,134	627,600
<i>On Raising Funds</i>						
		-	-	55,882	55,882	51,832
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>2,096,479</b>	<b>55,882</b>	<b>2,152,361</b>	<b>2,150,903</b>
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year</b>	5	<b>-</b>	<b>8,920</b>	<b>119,779</b>	<b>128,699</b>	<b>(26,948)</b>
Total Funds Brought Forward		612,500	169,325	242,281	1,024,106	1,038,554
Transfer of Funds		-	11,065	(11,065)	-	12,500
<b>Total Funds Carried Forward</b>	16	<b>612,500</b>	<b>189,310</b>	<b>350,995</b>	<b>1,152,805</b>	<b>1,024,106</b>

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# SLIGO SOCIAL SERVICE COUNCIL (CLG)

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## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2021

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	Note	2021 €	€	2020 €	€
<b>Fixed assets</b>					
Intangible assets	8	595		2,026	
Tangible assets	9	454,983		485,036	
		<u>455,578</u>		<u>487,062</u>	
<b>Current assets</b>					
Debtors	10	43,051		65,354	
Investments	11	2,011		1,626	
Cash at bank and in hand		1,389,173		1,236,768	
		<u>1,434,235</u>		<u>1,303,748</u>	
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>	12	(207,328)		(219,091)	
		<u>1,226,907</u>		<u>1,084,657</u>	
<b>Net current assets</b>					
		<u>1,682,485</u>		<u>1,571,719</u>	
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>					
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year</b>	14	(529,680)		(547,613)	
		<u>1,152,805</u>		<u>1,024,106</u>	
<b>Net assets</b>					
		<u><u>1,152,805</u></u>		<u><u>1,024,106</u></u>	
<b>Funds of the Charity</b>					
Designated Funds	15	612,500		612,500	
Restricted Funds	15	189,310		169,325	
Unrestricted Funds	15	350,995		242,281	
<b>TOTAL CHARITY FUNDS</b>	16	<u>1,152,805</u>		<u>1,024,106</u>	

These financial statements were approved by the board of directors on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2022 and signed on behalf of the board by:

Orla Barry  
**Orla Barry**  
Director

Michael Drumm  
**Fr. Michael Drumm**  
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

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

Benefactors