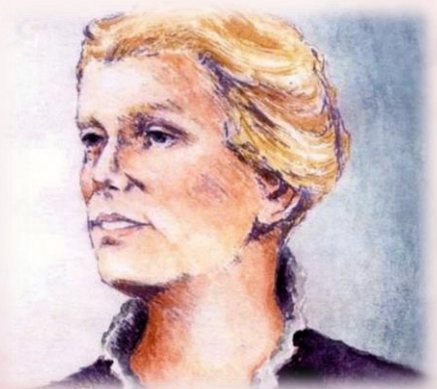




*Congregation of the
Sisters of Mercy
Northern Province
Northern Ireland*



Annual Report 2022

Annual Trustees' Report 2022

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The Trustees, comprising of the Provincial Leader and Team, present this Annual Report and the audited Financial Statements of the Sisters of Mercy of the Northern Province for the year ending 31 December 2022. The Trustees of the Charity are responsible for the life and mission of the Sisters of Mercy, Northern Province. They confirm that the Annual Report and Financial Statements comply with the Constitutions of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, the Charities Act 2011 and the provisions of the Statements of Recommended Practice (Charity SORP FRS102).

Signed and dated by the Provincial Leader and another Team Member.

Signed:

Date:

Introduction: Our Mercy Mission

WHERE OUR MISSION BEGAN

The Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy is an international Roman Catholic Religious Congregation founded in Dublin in 1831 by Catherine McAuley. Influenced by her Christian faith, she used her inheritance to set up a centre in Baggot Street, Dublin, Ireland from which she and her early companions responded to the needs of people who were disadvantaged.



House of Mercy,
Baggot Street, Dublin

The founding Sisters established schools and hospitals and cared in whatever way possible for the needs of the people who were poorest in society.

OUR MISSION TODAY

The Sisters of Mercy, Northern Province is one of the six Provinces of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy and has members in all six counties in Northern Ireland, where 122 Sisters reside. There are also 161 members who reside in the Republic of Ireland.

Throughout the last century, Government provision in healthcare and education improved and while the Sisters continue in to support access to education for all, the work and mission of the Sisters has become more varied.

Motivated by the Christian vision of a world of equality, justice, peace and care of the earth, the Charity has consistently worked for justice and responded to unmet needs. Sisters are committed to prayer while also being involved in pastoral care, eco-justice and spirituality. However, as the age profile of the Sisters has increased, the need to care for older Sisters has become a necessity for the Charity.

Our Mercy Mission

Constitutions of the Sisters
of Mercy - No. 104 (1985)

“The mission of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy is to bear witness to the compassionate and merciful love of God.

Our administration of temporal goods must express the Gospel call to justice, charity and almsgiving.

We use these goods for our common life, for the various apostolates of mercy ad for the needs of the Church, especially the poor and deprived.”

Purpose/Objects, Activities and Achievements

Charitable Purposes

- ❖ Advancement of Religion
- ❖ Prevention or Relief of Poverty

The Charity aims to support the religious and other charitable works carried out in the name of the Charity and to care for the Sisters throughout their lives.

The purposes and objects of the Charity are fulfilled through the following activities and ministries:

1. Congregational Living – the Advancement of Religion
2. Healthcare and the Compassionate Care of the Sick and those in Need
3. Relief of Poverty, Promotion of Education, Justice and other Charitable Activities including Collaboration and Support of Other Groups.
4. Positive Impact Investments
5. Heritage and Upkeep of Listed Assets

Public Benefit

Public Benefit is delivered through religious activities, prayer, ministry activities, the prevention and relief of poverty, support to other charities who alleviate poverty, the promotion of holistic wellbeing, impact investments, overseas aid, ecological awareness and a variety of services provided to families, refugees, older people, children, and to people experiencing hunger and poverty.

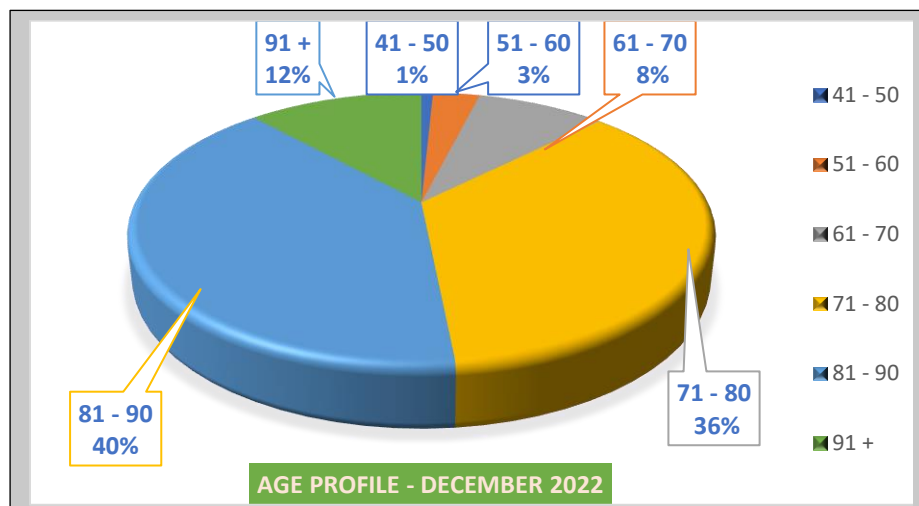
Congregational Living and the Advancement of Religion

The Charity is a religious congregation and so the nurturance of faith and the development of spirituality are of central importance. This underpins all aspects of the life and work of the Charity. The Sisters are committed to daily personal prayer and to a pattern of communal prayer suited to their local communities.

All aspects of the Charity's work involve the advancement of religion. The Trustees continue to assess the Charity's commitment to this fundamental purpose. Congregational Living and the Advancement of Religion are the essential dynamics that permeate the Charity. In our community living and ministry in local parishes where Sisters reside, members actively participate and interact with parish faith communities. Through this living and praying, Sisters from the Charity support people spiritually and practically.

Salaries, stipends, and pensions of the Sisters are donated to the Charity. Therefore, Sisters have no independent means of support. They devote their lives and earnings to the furtherance of the Charity's objectives. Sisters freely give their services in various ministries and do so well beyond retirement age. Hence the work of the Charity includes the provision of living accommodation, the upkeep, up-skilling and retraining of Sisters so to enable them to continue their service to the public.

The Trustees are cognisant of the aging demographic of its members, the work of the Charity, property requirements and financial implications. Residential accommodation is kept under review to ensure a continuum of care appropriate to each sister's needs. The Charity provides designated Assisted-living at houses in Belfast, Newry, Strabane, Enniskillen and Lurgan.



F Faith Development/Parish and Prayer Ministry

As a Religious Congregation, faith and spiritual development, parish work and prayer ministry are of prime importance to the Trustees. A number of Sisters seek to respond to the hunger for God in society by promoting faith development, engaging in inter-faith dialogue and nurturing spirituality.

Review of Achievements and Activities in 2022

Many of the Sisters, even in retirement, are actively involved with people and clergy in their local parishes, in ministries aimed at facilitating a deepening of faith and relationship with God. The Sisters collaborate with others also, in community activities, supporting and encouraging the development of leadership among the people and campaigning for services for older people. Home visitation of the sick and housebound, prayer and scripture groups, bereavement support, guided prayer, and experiences in creative forms of prayer are some of the services offered to people. A sample of this work is listed below.

Parish Pastoral Support

Marriage Tribunal

Liturgical Ministers

Diocesan Pastoral Work

Parish Ministry

Church Music

Prayer Guidance

Spiritual Direction

John Paul II Awards

School Chaplaincy

School Chaplaincy

Training of Parish Ministers

Sisters also offer emerging spiritual development programmes through Creation Spirituality and Ritual, Higher Consciousness, Sacred Dance, Mindfulness and Practices for Wellness, and seasonal reflection days.

Diocesan Pastoral Work

A Sister is a Pastoral Worker in the Archdiocese of Armagh, encouraging clergy and laity in planning for the future. In 2022 she promoted synodal engagement in parishes and schools.

Synodality is “mutual collaborative listening, guided by the Holy Spirit, in which all of the faithful have something to learn from each other, in order to know what God is saying”. Along with colleagues this Sister undertook extensive listening exercises in many parishes, culminating in large diocesan gatherings (May and December).

What emerged were the focal points for a process that has the potential to change how we experience church into the future.

Over and above supporting and resourcing Primary School teachers in passing on the faith to young people, this Sister and the team of pastoral workers met with the 150 school principals throughout the archdiocese to ascertain the joys and challenges in their responsibilities in passing on the faith. There were follow-up engagements that allowed the principals collectively to process the implications of the findings, to make connections with one another, to contribute to the overall development of synodality and to participate in the shaping of the mission of the Church in the world of today.

Circle of Mercy

The Circle of Mercy is a lay organisation whose members come together in a spirit of prayer, mutual support and compassionate living, to promote the Mercy Charism and live the Gospel in the spirit of Catherine McAuley. There are Circles in Derry, Downpatrick, Laurencetown, Newry and Warrenpoint. A number of Sisters from the Charity are also involved in the Circle of Mercy.



Healthcare and the Compassionate Care of the Sick and those in Need

Many Sisters engage in wellbeing activities and offer care support to individuals in the wider communities where they live: healthcare, care and visitation of the dying and the bereaved, provision of spiritual and psychological therapies and the promotion of wellbeing of body, mind and spirit. This is at the heart of Mercy life and ministry.

The Trustees exercise a duty to care for older and frail Sisters. These Sisters have selflessly dedicated their lives to the furtherance of the Charity's objectives without any personal remuneration, and many of them need cared for in older age.

Ministry:
Constitutions of
the Sisters of Mercy
No. 43 (1985)

"Catherine McAuley generated in her Sisters a deep concern and compassionate care for the sick and dying. This concern engages us in the compassionate care of the sick, manifesting to them Christ's healing love."

The Trustees are committed to

- i) enabling Members to actively engage in healthcare ministries.
- ii) ensuring Sisters receive the appropriate level of care they require.
- iii) maintaining and reviewing Community houses for Sisters.

Chaplaincy, Wellbeing and Care

A number of Members of the Charity have a more structured ministry of chaplaincy, wellbeing and care and engage in Palliative Care Chaplaincy - Southern Area Hospital, Newry, Chaplaincy at the Acute Mental Health Unit – Belfast City Hospital and Mater Hospital, Belfast and another Sister is a Social Worker in Dementia Services – Southern Health & Social Services. A Sister is an independent provider in Art Therapy- Divinely Inspired. Some of our Sisters have been trained in and offer Mindfulness Programmes in many parts of the Province.

Hospital Chaplaincy: Mater Hospital, Belfast and Belfast City Hospital

Review of
Achievements and
Activities in 2022

The Mater Infirmorium Hospital, Belfast was established in 1883 by the Sisters of Mercy. The sick and dying of Belfast and its surrounding areas were cared for by skilled nurses, many of whom as members of the Mercy Order worked without a salary up until 1972, when funding was finally granted. The Hospital is now under the management of Belfast Health & Social Care Trust.

A Sister from the Charity is a Chaplain in the Mater Hospital and is part of a multi-disciplinary health care team, providing spiritual, religious and pastoral support to patients and their families. The founding philosophy of the hospital, *to comfort, console, care and support the sick and dying, without distinction of Creed* is maintained. In addition, the Sister looks after the hospital chapel ensuring it is an oasis of peace for all who visit for a quiet moment, communal prayer or worship.

Sister is also Chaplain in the Acute Mental Unit at Belfast City Hospital. This is a very specialized and sensitive ministry of gentle accompaniment to those in need.

"I am a presence – a companion for those living and struggling with major mental health illness and who are weighed down by depression as they struggle to make sense of what is happening".

New Life Directions

Life Directions (NLD), founded by and co-ordinated by two members of the Charity, provides opportunity for personal, psychological and spiritual development of individuals, families and communities and works in partnership with community, voluntary and statutory organisations. NLD offers a wide-ranging menu of well-being practices and methods, facilitation, meditation, dance, song, ritual, journalling. In 2022, NLD worked in partnership with the following Northern Ireland-based Organisations:

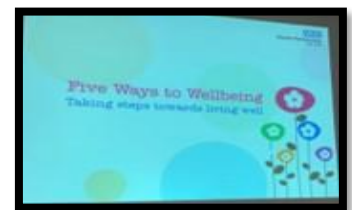
- ❖ Health Alliance Northern Ireland
- ❖ Mid- Ulster Age Well Partnership.
- ❖ Mid- Ulster Seniors Network
- ❖ Northern Ireland Community Health Network (NACHN)
- ❖ Lilac, Cancer Support Organisation

Wellbeing & Stress Management Programmes.

Programme of ‘Wellbeing for Carers’ offered through Cookstown and Western Shores Area 65 Network (CWSAN); ‘Time for Me’ a personal development programme delivered by NLD and sponsored by Cookstown and Western Shores Area Network (CWSAN); ‘Tai Chi and Wellbeing’ sponsored by Northern Ireland Lifestyle Partnership.

Wellbeing and Stress Management weekly sessions commissioned by Mid Ulster Age Well Partnership; Mid Ulster Seniors; Northern Ireland Community Health Network (NACHN).

Stress Management classes for Health Alliance Northern Ireland: An exploration Causes, Signs and Effects of Stress. These programmes introduced participants to Wellbeing Practices, Tai Chi, Breath Work and Reflection to combat Anxiety and Stress.



Development and Celebration Programmes

NLD offered a variety of programmes and activities throughout the year which included the following: Mid-Life and Long-Life Directions, Negotiating the Mid-Life Journey, Negotiating the Later Years, Age Friendly Conference, Brigid’s Day, International Women’s Day, ‘Look after myself, so I can be there for others’ (as part of a Palliative Care Conference). ‘We remember them’ memorial service.



Capacitar Multi-Cultural Wellness Education – Training and Mentoring

In partnership with Capacitar International, USA, NLD delivered Module 1, Training on Capacitar Multi-Cultural Wellness Education at Marino College, Dublin. It was also involved in ‘Healing and Transforming Life Patterns’



Advanced Training to 42 people, upskilling them in co-facilitating Wellbeing and Stress Management workshops and qualifying them to offer programmes as independent providers.

Relief of Poverty, Promotion of Education, Justice and other Charitable

Activities

Ministry: Constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy - No. 43 (1985)

“Our foundress, Catherine McAuley, generated in her Sisters a deep concern for those at risk in society- this concern engages us in Christian Education . . . it urges us to be with, and for, the poor and distressed, working for social justice and wellbeing, seeking to bring rich and poor together in mutual love and service.”

In 2022, 122 Sisters engaged in the Charity’s commitment to the relief of poverty through activities of the Sisters and donations to other charities. Ministry engagement was related to the following areas:

- ❖ Promotion of all Aspects of Education
- ❖ Justice, Peace and Reconciliation
- ❖ Overseas Development and Support
- ❖ Pastoral, Social Care and Development

❖ *P*romotion of All Aspects of Education

A priority of the Founder of the Sisters of Mercy, was to open schools, creating education opportunities for children, especially poorer children. The provision of formal education was a major ministry of the Charity for over 170 years.

Review of
Achievements and
Activities in 2022

By the late 19th century, second level schools were established in most provincial towns throughout Ireland. In recent years a gradual transfer of responsibility for Catholic education in Mercy Schools to other trusteeships ensures schools are communities where Christian faith, justice and responsibility are nurtured.

Sisters serve on schools' Boards of Governors of Schools that the Sisters of Mercy helped to establish.

CSTS The Catholic Schools' Trust is the sectoral body for Catholic Managed Schools (NI) and works on behalf of Diocese and Religious Congregations. CSTS assists the Sisters of Mercy in trusteeship matters, ensuring the maintenance of ethos, values and spiritual focus in our schools. The Sisters of Mercy are the Trustees of Mercy Primary, Belfast, Mercy College, Belfast and Our Lady's Grammar School, Newry.

Mercy Primary, Belfast

Mercy Primary is an all-inclusive school for girls in North Belfast that delivers a broad-based curriculum in line with the Northern Ireland Revised Curriculum. The school works closely with other schools and the parish and promotes a Catholic Ethos aligned with Mercy values and heritage, all of which permeate the school.

The Sisters of Mercy Trustees offer support and encouragement to the Board of Governors and actively participate in negotiations related to the future of Catholic Primary School provision in the North Belfast Area.



| | | |
|----------------------------------|-------|--------------|
| Year 1 Pupil intake | 37 | |
| Total pupils | 239 | |
| Total teachers | 11.1 | |
| Pupils - SEN | 75/94 | Needs/Status |
| Pupils- In care | 5 | 12% |
| Pupils - Medical conditions | 49 | 20.76% |
| Newcomers | 10 | |
| Entitlement to free school meals | 148 | 62.7% |
| Attendance | | 90.68% |

Mercy College, Belfast

Mercy College is an all-ability co-educational facility in North Belfast. Standards continue along a positive trendline on the school improvement journey; 94% of our Year 12 pupils achieved 5 GCSES A-C and 94% of our Year 14 pupils achieved 3 A Levels A-C. These results are very favourable when compared to relevant benchmarking data for a like school.

Enrolment figures demonstrate the faith and confidence that the local community places in the College and retention rates from year 12 into post 16 is a further stamp of approval from the wider community. Moreover, leavers' destinations, in August 2022, indicate that the College is providing progression and appropriate pathways for all pupils, with 53% going on to Higher and Further Education courses. Courses chosen by pupils include: Children's Nursing, ICT, Hospitality, Business and Marketing and Teaching. 36% of Mercy College Year 14 pupils taking courses such as the CACHE went straight into employment.

On a strategic level, Mercy College supports the North Belfast Community by extending provision for children with Special Needs; those with ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder) can access specialised education in a mainstream setting. The specialist setting has now gained permanency and in September 2022 the first cohort transitioned into KS4 to study GCSEs.

Through Shared Education, the school provided excellent professional development opportunities for staff to ensure we are providing outstanding teaching and learning. In August 2022, a Staff Development Day was held in conjunction with Belfast Boy's Model School. Staff feedback and evaluation of this training was excellent.



| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------|
| Year 8 Pupil intake | 154 |
| Year 13 Pupil intake | 57 |
| Total pupils | 793 |
| Total teachers | 49.6 |
| Pupils with Statements | 97 |
| Pupils- In care | 5 |
| Looked-after Children | 22 |
| Newcomers | 8 |
| Entitlement to free school meals | 560 (70.62%) |
| Attendance | 84.92% |

❖ *Justice, Peace & Reconciliation*

The Charity is committed to raising awareness of the interdependence and interconnectedness of all of life. It aims to promote right relationships at every level. From its foundation, the Charity has endeavoured to alleviate suffering.



Sisters continue to work passionately to reduce poverty, violence and racism as well as the widespread denial of human rights, the degradation of Earth, the continued oppression of women, the abuse of children, the mistreatment of immigrants and the lack of solidarity among people and nations. We examine the root causes

of these issues and promote systemic change in the communities in which we minister. We connect our efforts on a global scale with the network of Sisters of Mercy Congregations throughout the world.

Sisters of the Charity are members of organizations that promote justice, peace and reconciliation including GLOIR, Green Sod Ireland, AEFJN, ARISE Foundation, Irish Refugee Council, Towards Healing, Towards Peace. Some Justice and Peace work is highlighted here.

Clogher Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

Sisters of the Charity are members of Clogher Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation group (CJPIC) which progresses action on Climate Change and Homelessness.

Education and awareness-raising are a core part of the group's work. CJPIC group liaises with, and networks with others including Fermanagh & Omagh District Council, and Fermanagh Churches' Forum, helping local people to preserve wildlife habitats by postponing hedgerow and verge-cutting until after the breeding season. CJPIC also works with Eco-Congregations Ireland re best practices around Church property and grounds maintenance etc.

The Mercy Girl Effect/ UNICEF

Mercy Girl Effect (MGE) is a Non- Governmental Group working in consultation with UNICEF and the Working Group on Girls. A Sister co-coordinates MGE to educate and animate a new generation to be advocates for young women and children vulnerable being targeted by traffickers.

In 2022, the focus of MGE was ‘Water and Sanitation.’ In conjunction with UNICEF resources, students in the Western hemisphere were educated on ‘Girls as Water-Carriers’. The campaign of MGE realised funding for 19 wells in the developing world.

MECPATHS MECPATHS is a project of The Sisters of Mercy Congregation and works in partnership with the Hospitality sector in Ireland to counter child trafficking and child sexual exploitation. It is the only project of its kind in Ireland.



AMRI The Association of Leaders of Religious and Missionaries of Ireland gives a collective voice to Religious Congregations in awareness-raising and response to current and emerging social justice. It represents Religious Congregations, Societies of Apostolic Life and Lay Missionary groups. As a constituent member, our Charity contributes to AMRI.



❖ Overseas, Development and Support

Ministry: The Universal Church

Constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy - No. 45 (1985)

“Belonging to the Universal Church, missionary in her very nature, we seek to incarnate the mercy of God, according to the limits of our resources, in missionary countries.”

The Charity supports, through its human, financial and other resources, all charitable works carried out in the name of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy. This objective is rooted in the priority outreach of the Congregation to people who experience poverty and marginalisation and is expressed in its sponsorship of numerous and ever-increasing charitable activities.

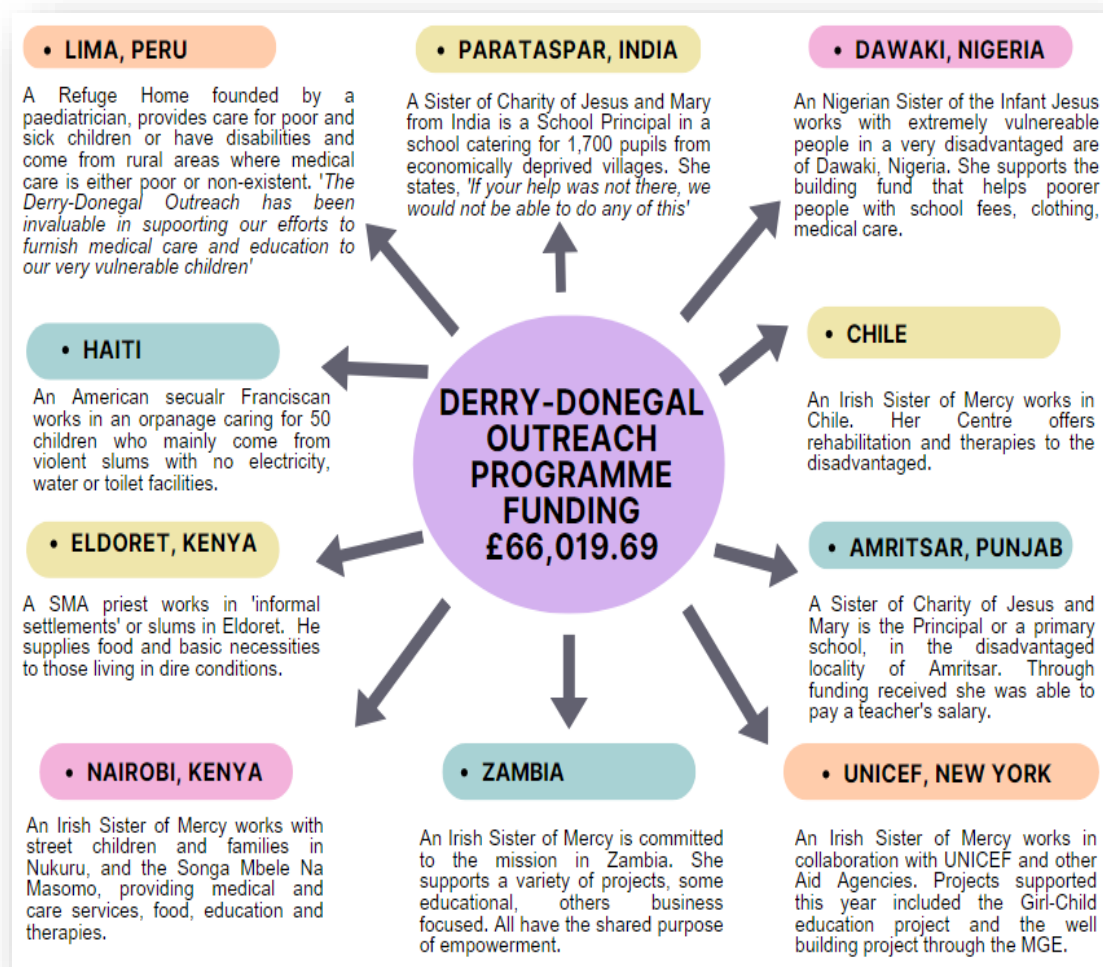
The Charity responds on a global scale to the call of people who experience poverty and disadvantage at local, national and international levels and works in collaboration with other Mercy Charities and in partnership with other charities involved in overseas development and support.

In 2022 the Charity offered particular support to Ukrainian appeals, donating to Clonard Monastery, Redemptorist Fathers - £10,000, donation of £15,000 to the Redemptorists Ukraine Appeal, and £1,317.70 to preparation of a house for Ukrainian refugees.

Local communities of Mercy Sisters also contributed financially to many charities at local and national and international levels.

Derry-Donegal Outreach Programme

A Sister is a co-founder of the Derry-Donegal Outreach Programme with a network of donors who support overseas development services for individuals, families and communities. Contributions directly reach people and projects overseas and regular feedback ensures an intimate connection between donors and the ‘on-the-ground’ people working for those in need.



❖ Pastoral, Social Care and Development

The Charity has, from its inception, been concerned with promoting pastoral and social development initiatives and responding to the needs of our time in line with Gospel values. The Sisters undertake meaningful social and pastoral ministries in response to the needs of the wider community, in particular to those who experience poverty and marginalisation.

Many Sisters spend hours weekly carrying out Visitation - the traditional work of Mercy. They are also actively involved with statutory and voluntary agencies who offer pastoral, social care and development. In short, in towns and parishes where the Sisters reside, pastoral care is taking place.

Sisters are involved in various projects and at various levels in offering pastoral and social care and support. This includes the Aisling Centre, Fermanagh, Tara Centre, Omagh, Gloir, Newry, and Daneo, Belfast.



Daneo: Human and Spiritual development Services

Daneo was founded by members of the Passionist and Mercy Congregations incorporating the mission and reflecting the values of both, whose aims are to offer solidarity and support to all those who are suffering. A Sister from the Charity is a staff member which comprises of four self-employed independent qualified counsellors and an administrator. All therapists belong to professional bodies, holding Accreditation status or working towards completion of these requirements, and the centre is insured to the highest standards.

Daneo personnel deliver counselling sessions along with clinical and pastoral supervision. They provide therapeutic outreach to Holy Cross Girl's primary school and consultancy work and counselling to Cancer Lifeline, consultancy work to Survivors of Trauma and Lenadoon Counselling Service.



Heritage and Upkeep of Listed Assets

The Charity owns some Listed buildings. These buildings are protected structures and are on the Department of Communities listed buildings database in recognition of their importance. Therefore, they are legally protected from harm. Any future changes to these structures are controlled and managed through the development control process.

Listing marks and celebrates a building's special architectural and historic interest. It also brings it under the consideration of the planning system so that some thought will be taken about its future. The Charity is legally required to make sure that these structures do not become endangered through neglect, decay, damage or harm.



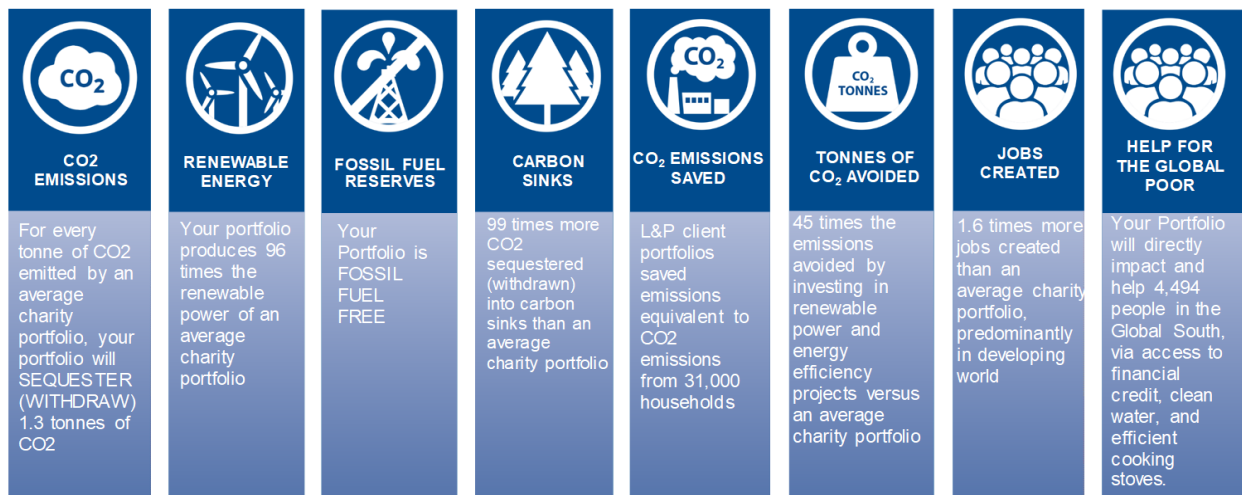
Mercy Centre,
Bessbrook

In 2022, the Charity outlaid £205,139 in the upkeep of listed assets. Certain repair works that are normally routine on a building, may require planning permission on a protected structure. Additional expenditure is incurred in sourcing expertise and materials for the renovation of a listed building or in carrying out demolition on a heritage site. Associated costs are insurance, maintenance, security, general upkeep, depreciation, engagement of a Heritage Architect and other Professional Fees.

Positive Impact Investing

Our investment portfolio is part of our Mission. Alongside active Ministries, the Charity seeks to bring about change through its investment portfolios. Avoidance of investments in fossil fuel companies or armaments companies that support the production of goods that can be highly damaging to the environment or human wellbeing is an aspect of the Charity’s efforts. The Charity is committed to ensuring its investment portfolio is not involved in harmful activities.

In efforts to bring about addition, positive change in the world, the Charity invests in activities that have beneficial impacts, for both individual wellbeing and for the environment. Positive impacts are assessed under a number of headings to help measure how our investments are positively affecting the world around us. Below are some of the positive impacts achieved by the investment portfolio:



The Portfolio and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

All investments within the Portfolio contribute towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs were developed and adopted by all member states of the United Nations to help achieve “a more sustainable future for all”. They represent a call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and promote prosperity and people’s wellbeing by 2030. They integrate and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

Achieving the SDGs on a global basis requires collaboration between governments, the private sector, civil society and citizens alike. The Portfolio plays a role in the realisation of the goals.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Source: UN (<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>)

The Sustainable Development Goals are also closely aligned with the charitable objectives of religious organisations. Since the publication of *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis has made a strong commitment to sustainable development. His appeal to “...every person living on this planet for an inclusive dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet”, provides a firm ethical foundation for actions that need to be taken urgently at all levels. Pope Francis’ speech ahead of the United Nations General Assembly’s formal adoption of the 17 SDGs gave further support to the ambitious and transformational vision of the goals.

A comprehensive Ethical and Positive Impact policy ensures the Portfolio remains consistent with our ethos. The Portfolio currently excludes companies involved in the production of weapons, tobacco, alcohol, pornography, and activities such as gambling and embryonic stem cell research. Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) criteria complements the screening as it improves the overall ESG risk exposure of the Portfolio. In particular, climate risk is addressed through the exclusion of fossil fuel companies and a focus to reduce the carbon footprint of the Portfolio through investment in such areas as renewable energy and forestry.

Elements of how the Portfolio addresses the SDGs are outlined below.

Overall Carbon Footprint



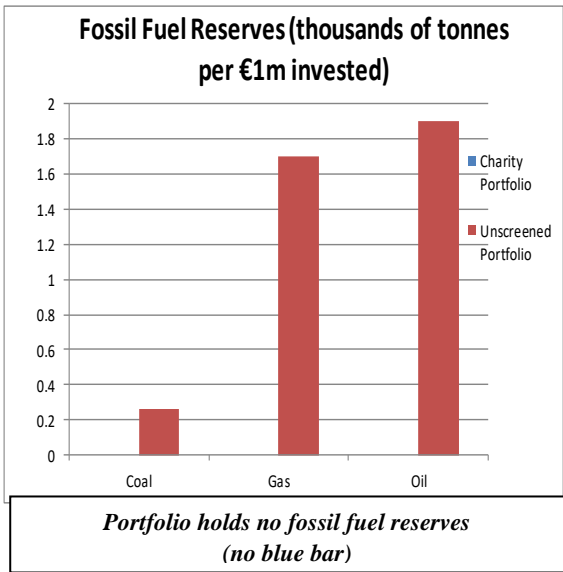
Measurement of carbon emissions is crucial to help us understand the role our investment portfolio plays in the climate crisis, while taking measures to address it. As the SDG logos to the left show, limiting carbon emissions interacts with several SDGs, helping address Climate Action in particular. Climate justice is another aspect addressed in our portfolio, as climate change predominantly impacts those who've done the least to contribute to pollution and have less resources to deal with it. Therefore, control of carbon emissions in our portfolio also has positive implications for reducing poverty (SDG1), reducing inequality (SDG10) and preserving life on land (SDG10) and in the ocean (SDG14)

The Portfolio includes a number of carbon sink-type investments, which sequester or draw carbon dioxide (CO2) from the atmosphere. Forestry in particular is a very effective carbon sink, as trees absorb carbon dioxide as part of their growing process.

The Portfolio in aggregate will sequester (withdraw) -1,769 tonnes of CO2e from the atmosphere *per annum* while an unscreened portfolio of the same size would produce 1,814 tonnes. We believe that these extremely strong carbon emission statistics makes the Portfolio part of the solution to climate change, rather than part of the problem.

Fossil Fuel Reserves

This section addresses the level of exposure to companies owning thermal coal, oil gas reserves and other unconventional sources of reserves such as oil sands, shale oil, and shale gas. Many of these reserves may not be useable if we are to keep the targeted temperature rise (as a result of global warming) below 2 degrees Celsius. This risk is referred to as stranded asset risks and it is addressed through avoidance of companies holding fossil fuel reserves. Hence, in addition to the impact, not holding these assets reduces the financial risk within the portfolio.



Renewable Energy

The benefit of generating renewable power can be measured by how much fossil fuel power (and resulting CO₂ emissions) it replaces. In 2022, the Portfolio avoided the release of almost 4,013 tonnes of CO₂e. This is equivalent to:

- Removing 631 cars from the roads every year
- 6,716 barrels of oil saved
- 2,432 acres of pine forest absorbing CO₂ for one year
- 321 round trips around the world by one typical passenger car (travelling at the equator).

In 2022, the Portfolio produced 91 MWh in 2022, of renewable energy - enough energy to power 1,209 homes.

Financial Review

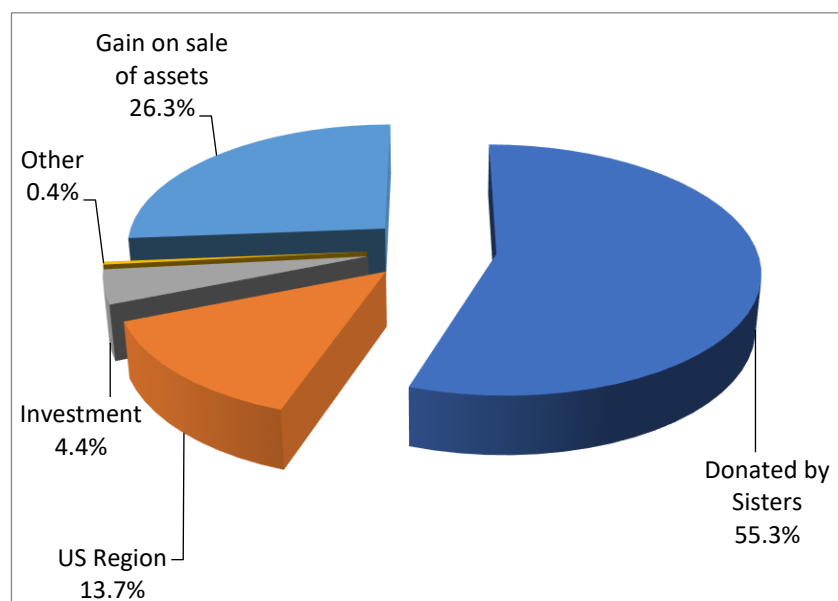
Results for the year

A summary of the year's accounts can be found on page 35 of this report.

Income - where our income came from

Income for the year totalled £5,034,710:

- Voluntary income of £3,470,971: the majority of this, £2,782,108, was the pension, salary and stipend income earned by the members of the Sisters of Mercy Northern Province and donated to the Charity. The balance, £688,863, was received from the US Region of the Sisters of Mercy as a contribution towards the costs of members who have returned to Ireland from the US.
- Investment Income of £221,546: was the income earned on the Charity's investment portfolio, bank interest and rent received.
- Charitable activities of £19,257: was other income received.
- Gain on the sale of assets of £1,322,936: the vast majority of this, £1,322,314 was the gain on the disposal of property.



Breakdown of Income

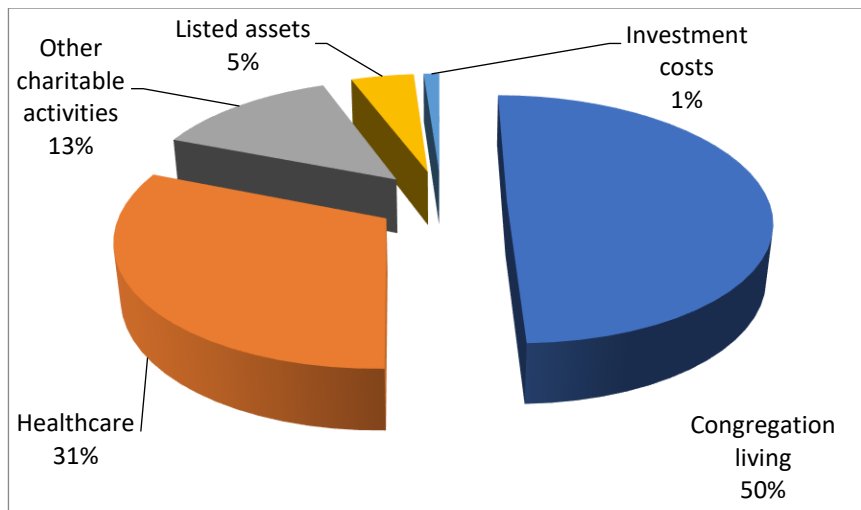
Expenditure - where the money is spent?

Total expenditure for the year was £4,469,698.

Charitable Activities - of the total, £4,418,712, or 99%, was spent on Charitable Activities:

- Congregational living, the advancement of Religion, £2,216,228: this includes the upkeep and up-skilling and retraining of the members of the Province so that they will be able to continue in their service to the public. The members who receive salary, pension, stipend and retirement lump sum income donate them to the Charity and therefore have no independent means of support. They have devoted all of their adult years and their earnings to realize the objectives of the Charity. Many give their services free in their various ministries and continue to do so well beyond retirement age. Hence the work of the Charity includes the provision of living accommodation.
- Healthcare and the compassionate care of the sick and those in need, £1,402,228: Catherine McAuley generated in her Sisters a deep concern and compassion for the sick and dying and today, over 180 years later, wellbeing activities, healthcare, care of the dying and the bereaved still engage many of the members in the Province. Members of the Province are involved in this work in hospitals, hospices, nursing homes, community care and within the Community houses. In addition, the Charity must care for the elderly members of the Province who are now themselves in need of care.
- Relief of poverty, promotion of education, justice and other charitable activities, £595,117: this includes expenditure on a number of headings, including Promotion of all aspects of Education, Justice, peace & reconciliation, Overseas development and support, Pastoral and social care and development, Support of other charities/groups and Involvement in critical global and local issues
- Upkeep of listed assets, £205,139: the Charity owns a number of protected structures. The structures are typically buildings that are placed on the *Department for Communities* listed buildings database. By including them on this database, the importance of these structures is recognised; they are legally protected from harm and all future changes to the structure are controlled and managed through the local council and the Department for Communities. The Charity is legally required to make sure that these structures do not become endangered through neglect, decay, damage or harm.

Investment costs – in the year, investment costs totalled £50,986.



Breakdown of Expenditure

Net movement in funds

Net income for the year, therefore, was £565,012. This was before the loss on investment assets, which when taken into account results in a net increase in funds in the year of £434,105.

Investments

At 31st December 2022, the Charity had investments of £11.4m. The purpose of these funds is to provide investment income to promote the charitable objectives of the Charity and to provide capital growth in the reserves over the medium term. The objective for the investments is to generate a return of 4% per annum while utilising the charity's stated ethical investment policy. L&P (Cantor Fitzgerald Ireland) are appointed to act as a Discretionary Investment Manager.

The investment funds have an ethical investment screen; they exclude companies that fall foul of certain ethical criteria, and where possible, favour stocks that provide positive benefits to society. As noted earlier, the Charity also holds a number of Positive Impact Investments that direct money towards fulfilling certain positive ethical criteria.

The Trustees, with their investment advisors, review the investments on a regular basis.

Policy on reserves

At the end of the financial year, the total funds of the charity amounted to £21.4m. Of this, £1,615 is restricted for specific purposes - see Financial Statements note 16. Of the balance, £6.5m is represented by properties and other tangible fixed assets essential for the running of the Charity. The Trustees have designated another £13.3m to provide for Mission and Ministry works and Congregation Living needs. Details are given in note 14 of these Financial Statements. The Trustees will continue to review and reassess these designations on an on-going basis.

Un-designated or general funds amount to £1.3m. This equates to approximately 4 months of unrestricted charitable expenditure. The Trustees would like this to be higher as, given the nature of the Charity's work and its commitments, they consider the level of free reserves should be equal to approximately 6 to 12 months' expenditure.

Review of Objectives for 2022

| Objectives Set | Progress Review |
|---|--|
| To continue its commitment to the care of the Sisters in the Province. | On-going |
| To facilitate and support the Sisters in undertaking the Charity's activities. | Activities and Achievements noted throughout Report. |
| To undertake an in-depth engagement with every member of the Province. | Each sister visited and formal conversation completed |
| To provide programmes of support to develop leaders. | Leaders completed Refresher Programme (Kinharvie Institute) Conflict Management for Managers (HR Team Webinar) |
| To reconfigure model of local leadership to meet the changing needs of the Charity. | Initial restructuring completed |
| To devise a 3-year strategy to support the flourishing of Religious Life in our time. | First year completed. Community clustering to begin. |
| To develop on-going education and formation processes in eco and social justice. | Education webinars and lecture series offered to all. |
| To engage in and Extraordinary Chapter event with Provinces and regions of the Mercy Congregation to further the process of governance restructuring. | Complete. |
| To work collaboratively with other groups and agencies in responding to global and local needs. | On-going. See Activities and Achievements throughout Report. |
| To convene a <i>Care of Creation</i> cohort to assist wider membership in developing an Action Plan for Care of our Common Home. | Group inaugurated, wider membership consulted, and priorities identified. |
| To maintain the Safeguarding Structures at National and Provincial levels. | See page 31 ff |
| To move to completion of transfer of trusteeship of the former St Michael's Grammar School to the Diocese of Dromore. | Complete. |
| To maintain a commitment to CCMS-led negotiations re future Primary School provision in North Belfast. | Process stalled due to changes? |

To actively engage with DE and CCMS in promotion and development of Mercy College, Belfast.

Has been delayed due to absence of Executive.

Future Plans and Objectives for 2023

The Trustees will continue to give direction to the governance responsibilities for the Charity. They will monitor needs and spending plans, and efficiently manage existing assets to generate income necessary to achieve the Charity's aims. They will support the works of the Charity and the Sisters who work in the various Activities. The Trustees will continue to collaborate with other Charities who have objectives in keeping with the objects of the Charity.

The Sisters are the mainstay of the Charity and are its chief agents, having covenanted their lives in dedicated service of the ideals of the Sisters of Mercy. The Trustees are committed to the ongoing care of all the sisters. However, concern for frail older Sisters is an ongoing challenge in a time of unprecedented change in our demographics. When necessary, nursing home care will be accessed for Sisters requiring full time care.

The Charity will:

- Continue its commitment to the ongoing care of all Sisters.
- Facilitate and support the Sisters in undertaking Charity's activities.
- Work collaboratively with other groups and agencies in responding to global and local needs.
- Create Cluster Communities, each with a 'Hub', to facilitate leadership and maximum engagement of all members
- Ensure support-programme for leaders.
- Undertake an in-depth review of Assisted Living Convents in support of vibrant life-giving communities, to maximise our provision of care resources.
- Support the Central Leadership Team in building cohesive channels of communication, shared approaches and common practices with members of Provinces and Regions of the Mercy Congregation
- Establish Action Plan priorities to address Care for Creation throughout the wider membership.
- Maintain the Safeguarding Structures at National and Provincial levels.

Structure, Governance & Management

Governing Document

The governing instrument of the Northern Province is the Constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy. It was adopted by the General Chapter of the Congregation (August 1994) and approved by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life in Rome (April 1995). The Province is one of four Provinces in Ireland and is an unincorporated association.

The governmental structure of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy involves a number of inter-connected units: local, provincial and congregational. The nature of the authority in each unit is described in the Constitutions. The Province is a unit of the Congregation having the personnel and other resources to support its life, mission and membership.

Appointment of Trustees (Provincial Leadership Team)

The Charity is governed by the Provincial Leader and Team who are elected every six years by Sisters in the Province. The Provincial Leadership Team are the Trustees of the Charity. Its members are chosen for their expertise and skills as well as their experience and knowledge of the Congregation, its nature and mission.

The Trustees are members of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy. They receive no personal remuneration for their services as Trustees.

Organisational Structure and Decision-Making

The Trustees of the Charity meet regularly. The 'Chapter' allows all Sisters to engage in a prolonged period of reflection/prayer, evaluation and planning with a focus on the development of policies and effective use of resources in an assessment of current and future needs.

Trustees attend formal training on their duties and seek guidance and advice as necessary from legal, investment and property advisors on the issues which arise in carrying out their duties. Professional advisors assist with various aspects of stewardship and the general management of the assets of the Charity.

Systems of accountability operate throughout the Charity. It reports annually to the Charity Regulator and formally within the organisation every three years. The Provincial Treasurer administers the affairs of the Charity under the direction of the Provincial Leader and her Team. Most of the income of the Charity is generated from Sisters' salaries, stipends and pensions, sale of property and investments. The salary, stipend and pension income is

voluntarily donated to a common fund, administered through a Provincial Stewardship Office.

Collaboration and Partnership

The Charity works in partnership and/or collaboration with ministry colleagues, statutory and voluntary bodies, religious congregations and parish and diocesan groups in serving the local and wider community. Some Sisters are employed in these organisations, and other Sisters are volunteers. As a member of AMRI, the Charity is part of the collective voice of Religious Congregations in awareness raising and responding to current and emerging social justice issues.

Risk Management

The Trustees conscientiously attend to governance, management and operational risks through monitoring the following:

- Implementation of strategic plans for Chapter priorities.
- Training and support for trustee and staff.
- Financial and operational performance.
- Investment strategy.
- Insurance cover.
- Suitability and maintenance of buildings.
- Data backup procedures and security measures.
- Ministry activities of Sisters.
- Safeguarding.
- Health and Safety.
- Internal Policies and Procedures.
- Employment Policies and Procedures.

Property

The Sisters of Mercy are committed to a lifestyle reflecting the fact that all our possessions are held in trust for the promotion of the mission of the Congregation.

Professional advice is sought in relation to leases and agreements, protected structures, planning, health and safety legislation, acquisition, refurbishment and disposal of property and all legally binding issues and transactions.

Policies

The Trustees ensure that policies and good practice guidelines are developed, circulated and implemented, that these are fully compliant with all legislative requirements and are regularly evaluated and updated.

The Charity has further policies and guidelines on Stewardship, Health and Safety, Fire Evacuation for all residencies, Safeguarding Adults at Risk of Harm, Data Protection, Data Privacy Notices and Statements etc.,.

One Sister works as Human Resources Co-ordinator. In addition to managing Human Resources for the Charity, the HR Co-ordinator also managed pandemic-related responsibilities, in providing regular updates and guidance on regulations.

Throughout the year, the usual human resources matters are attended to and safe recruitment protocols and procedures, staff induction, supervision and appraisals are constantly monitored and reviewed. The Charity fully complies with vetting obligations. The HR Co-ordinator also ensures all policies in the Staff Handbook are familiar to managers and employees and that the policies are implemented.

Constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy - No. 119 (1985)

“For the sake of our mercy mission, the congregation and each province, has the right to acquire and possess, to administer and alienate property temporal goods and revenues according to the norms of universal law and the constitutions, with due respect for civil law.”

Constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy - No. 118 (1985)

“We value the resources of the earth as gifts of God and use them in a spirit of stewardship ... In the spirit of religious poverty, we seek to have a simple lifestyle and to balance concern for our future with support and compassion for poor and needy people.”

From the mid-1990’s the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy has had a Safeguarding Policy in place which has been reviewed regularly. The Policy aims to encourage adequate awareness and best practice among all Sisters in the Congregation and those working for them, to ensure that all children and adults at risk of harm are safeguarded from abuse of any kind. The Charity is committed to a culture of safeguarding and to ensuring compliance with best practice in this area. The Trustees are proactive in complying with civil and ecclesiastical requirements for safeguarding and annually review the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding Policies and Procedures

The Trustees have adopted the ‘Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland’, 2016. They adhere to and implement the Child Safeguarding Policy within the Northern Province.

The Charity has a robust safeguarding structure in place. The Safeguarding Manager is the Designated Liaison Person for the Province. With the Safeguarding Co-ordinator she promotes and oversees best practice in safeguarding, liaising with the Statutory authorities and external agencies as necessary and appropriate.

The Safeguarding Committee

The Safeguarding Committee convenes quarterly. Its members monitor and support the implementation of the Safeguarding Standards and ensures a strong safeguarding culture within the Charity.

The Safeguarding Strategic Plan 2020 - 2023

The Safeguarding Strategic Plan is based upon Standards 1, 5,6 and 7 of the NBSCCCI (National Board for Safeguarding Children in Catholic Church in Ireland). It guides the development of safeguarding best practice within the Province. The completion of the Safeguarding Annual Audit and Report also assists with the monitoring of safeguarding practice within the Charity.

Safeguarding: Induction

New members of staff receive induction in safeguarding and are afforded opportunities to attend Safeguarding Information sessions. They are also issued with an information pack and supporting materials in relation to ‘Safeguarding Children and Adults at risk of abuse.’ Safeguarding’. Records of completed induction processes are monitored by the Human Resources Co-ordinator and are retained in the workplace.

Annual Safeguarding Self-Audit

A yearly review of Sisters’ ministry engagements is carried out by the Charity. Sisters are mainly involved in ministry with children and ministry with adults at risk of harm, through external organisations, e.g. schools, parishes, nursing homes and voluntary organisations.

Sisters are increasingly involved internally in providing and managing care for older Sisters who are deemed adults at risk and require support and assistance.

Safeguarding Children

The Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy has adopted the Policy and guidance of the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI), 2016. The Congregational International Child Safeguarding Policy and Standards and has been approved by the National Board. All Sisters and Staff comply with this Policy.

In August 2022, the Mercy Child Safeguarding Policy Statement was updated and disseminated to places of ministry with children and to the larger communities.

The Bishops Conference and the Association of Missionaries and Religious Institutions of Ireland jointly commissioned an extensive Review of Child Safeguarding practice within the Catholic Church in Ireland. It was conducted by an independent external organisation (RSM). The Sisters of Mercy, Northern Province participated in this Review.

Safeguarding Adults at Risk of Harm

The Trustees are committed to promoting the safety, wellbeing and protection of adults at risk in ministries and in communities. They take all allegations and disclosures of abuse seriously.

The Charity adheres to the legislative requirements and the policy guidance in place in Northern Ireland. The Charity's Policy and Procedures '*Safeguarding Adults at Risk of Harm*' is based on the Northern Ireland Policy '*Adult Safeguarding, Prevention and Protection in Partnership, N.I.*' and has been disseminated to Sisters and staff living, ministering and working in Northern Ireland.

Vetting – Access NI

The Office Manager is responsible for co-ordinating the vetting process and maintains the vetting database in accordance with Access NI requirements. The Office Manager is an accredited Trainer with the National Board and assists with the delivery of safeguarding training.

In January 2022 a Verification of Identification Form was introduced to support the vetting process.

Safeguarding Children Training

Safeguarding personnel attended training events hosted by the National Board

- Listening Meeting (13.01.2022)
- Trainers Update (19.01.2022)
- Train the Trainers Course (April/May 2022)
- Annual Safeguarding Conference (11.05.2022)
- Risk Assessment and Self-Audit process (20.09.2022).
- Review of the Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards, 2016 (10.11.2022)
- Metropolitan Ecclesiastical Area Meeting (13.12.2022)

Safeguarding personnel attended training events

- Keeping Children Safe (E-Learning) - Safeguarding Co-ordinator (16.03.2022)
- Mandated Person E-Learning - Safeguarding Manager (11.04.2022)

Safeguarding Children training provided by Trainers to Sisters in Iontas Centre, Castleblaney. (15.06.2022)

Safeguarding Adults Training

Adult Safeguarding on-line training completed by 2 staff. (24.01.22)

Dementia Care completed by 12 staff (on-line accredited training).

End of Life completed by 15 staff (on-line training).

Medication Training completed by 1 staff member (on-line accredited training)

Safeguarding Updates / Safeguarding Communication Record

The Trustees recognise the importance of keeping Sisters and Staff informed of best practice and developments in relation to safeguarding.

Safeguarding information/updates were provided through newsletters, correspondence and meetings via zoom conferencing. A meeting as also held with Local Leaders and Area Group Co-ordinators to provide an update in relation to Safeguarding developments (1.04.'22)

Inter-Provincial Safeguarding Managers revised the Congregational Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons Policy, updated safeguarding information on the Congregational website and considered the compilation of the Annual Safeguarding Self-audit process.

Reference and Administrative Details

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| Name of Charity | Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Northern Province |
| Charity Number | CCNI:102827 |
| Address of Principal Office | Provincial House 74 Main Street Clogher Co. Tyrone BT76 0AA |
| Trustees (Provincial Leadership Team) | Sr. Rose Marie Conlan (Provincial Leader) Sr. Perpetua McNulty (Assistant Provincial Leader) Sr. Mary De Largy (Provincial Team Member) Sr. Áine Campbell (Provincial Team Member) Sr. Mabel Marron (Provincial Team Member) |
| Provincial Treasurer | Sr. Áine McGoldrick |
| Independent Auditors | Daly, Park & Co 6 Trevor Hill Newry Co Down BT34 1DN |
| Principal Bankers | AIB (NI) Meadowbank House 143-145 Strand Road Derry BT48 7TN |
| Investment Managers | Setanta Asset Management Ltd Unigestion SA |
| Solicitors | GL McGowan The Square Balbriggan Co Dublin K32 XN61 |