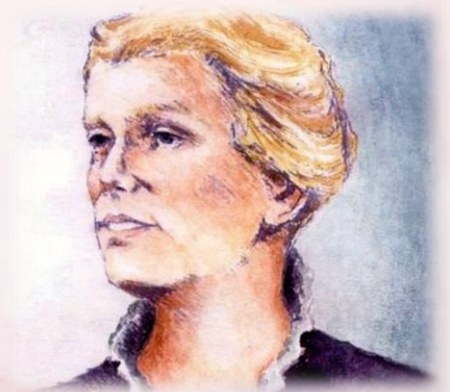




*Congregation of the  
Sisters of Mercy  
Northern Province  
Republic of Ireland*



**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<sup>st</sup> 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 and the provisions of the Statements of Recommended Practice (Charity SORP FRS 02) – Accounting and Reporting by Charities (October 2019).

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 eight counties in the Republic of Ireland, where 161 Sisters reside in 60 locations. There are also 122 members who reside in Northern Ireland.

Throughout the last century, Government provision in healthcare and education improved and while the Sisters continue 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
- ❖ 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.

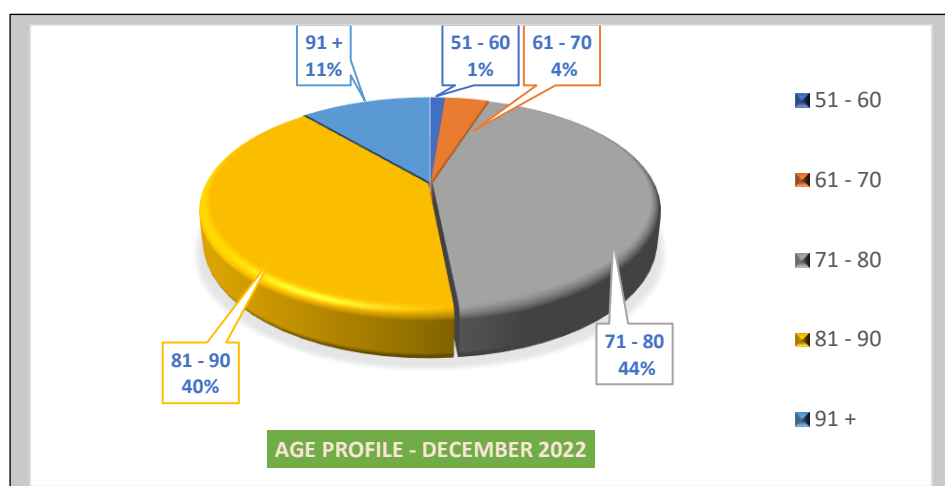
## *Congregational Living and the Advancement of Religion*

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 Ardee, Tullamore, Dundalk, Kells and Ballyshannon.



## *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, retreats, guided prayer, and the offering of experiences in creative forms of prayer are some of the services offered to people in the business of everyday life in the 21st century. A sample of this work is listed here.

<i>Diocesan Liturgy</i>	<i>Prayer Guidance</i>
<i>Céili Community</i>	<i>Spiritual Direction</i>
<i>Parish Liturgical Ministers</i>	<i>Eco-Spirituality</i>
<i>Diocesan Pastoral Work</i>	<i>Retreat Director</i>
<i>Parish Ministry</i>	<i>Diocesan Pastoral Council</i>
<i>Sacramental Programmes</i>	<i>Church Music</i>
<i>Marriage Tribunal</i>	<i>Family Support</i>

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, including Louth. She encourages clergy and laity in planning for the future. In 2022 her work as part of the Church 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 National School teachers in passing on the faith to young people, this Sister and the team of pastoral workers engaged with school principals from all over the diocese to ascertain the joys and challenges in their responsibilities.

### **Bethany House of Prayer, Dundalk.**

“*Bethany*” House of Prayer, Dundalk is a welcoming space for spiritual nourishment, encouragement and support. The founding Sisters continue to warmly welcome visitors, responding spiritually to the needs of those who come in-person or who make contact with them through their ‘Prayer by Telephone’ ministry (9:00 am – 9:00 pm daily). This year they received 2,500 calls approx. Their “Garden Room” is available for personal prayer and/or meditation Monday to Friday 9:30am–5:30pm with an average of fifty people visiting weekly. Throughout the year, counselling was offered to twenty-five clients and spiritual direction to fifteen others.

Other activities include: Cancer Prayer Support Group, the Outdoor Crib, monthly ‘Prayer Around the Cross’ with young adults and weekly Scripture Prayer Group. The feedback from those who avail of Bethany House ministry is an encouragement and endorsement of the work.

*“These days have brought a sense of meaning to my life, that I had not felt in a long time”.*

*“This call has encouraged and comforted me”.*

*“The experience of prayer, silence, talks and sharing really meant a lot to me”.*

### **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 Ballinamore, Kilbeggan, Laytown, Mount Bolus and Rochfortbridge. A number of Sisters from the Charity are also involved in the Circle of Mercy.



## *H* **Healthcare and the Compassionate Care of the Sick and those in Need**

Many Sisters engage in wellbeing activities: 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 Charity also has a duty to care for its older and frail Sisters who are now themselves in need of care. The Trustees continue to ensure that these Sisters, who have selflessly dedicated their lives to the furtherance of the Charity's objectives without any personal remuneration, are cared for in their older age.

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.

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."*

## *C* **Chaplaincy, Wellbeing and Care**

Review of  
Achievements and  
Activities in 2022

Members of the Charity offer care support to individuals in the wider communities where they live. Some Sisters have a more structured ministry of chaplaincy, wellbeing and care. A sample of work in Chaplaincy and Wellbeing and Care are offered here.

### **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.

During 2022, NLD worked in partnership with the following Organisations:

- ❖ Lifestyle Development Group, Drogheda.
- ❖ Connect Family Resource Centre, Drogheda.
- ❖ Blayney Blades
- ❖ HSE. Eastern Region
- ❖ Capacitar International; Capacitar Europe and Capacitar Ireland Association
- ❖ Northern Area Community Health Network (NACHN)

## New Life Directions

### Teamwork, Leadership and Organisational Development.

NLD facilitated programmes for Community and Leadership restructuring, and development of a financial management structure for some Religious Congregations. NLD mentored Lifestyle Development Group CLG, Board of Management and Governance sub group, facilitating a SWOT analysis; reviewing and updating of a Governance Handbook; carrying out a skills audit of Board Members.

NLD facilitated a partnership in Drogheda, (Connect Family Resource Centre), Moneymore and Lifestyle Development through Negotiating The Mid-Life Journey' and Negotiating the Later Years' Programmes.



### Wellbeing & Stress Management Programmes

'Tai Chi and Wellbeing' weekly at Ballsgrove, Drogheda.

Capacitar Wellbeing weekly at Iontas Centre, Castleblaney.

Tai Chi and Wellbeing Practices at Annagassan and Hope Castle Estate, Castleblaney during outdoor gatherings.

Commissioned by HSE, NDL offered: Training in Capacitar for Children and Adolescent Mental Health Teams and a programme of Staff Care to Health Promotion and Improvement Teams in the Eastern Region.



Feithreannacht na Scríbhíse Síolta  
Health Service Executive

### 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



## Chaplaincy in Care Choice Nursing Home, Trim

A Sister from the Charity is volunteer chaplain at 'Care Choice', Knightsbridge, Trim, six out of seven days in the week. The staff and residents are familiar with the support, the spiritual care offered, and the routine of activities. Daily one-to-one visits to residents ensure a listening ear, the getting to know individuals, bringing Holy Communion to those who wish to receive the Sacrament and building relationship with residents, staff and family members.

Gifted with an affable and gentle personality, this Sister brings her love of music and sense of fun to her work also. Her communal singing, particularly with residents who have a degree of memory loss, is a highlight of the week. Chaplaincy is not confined to the residents alone, as family members and staff alike find in this Sister, a person of wisdom and trust.

*"I have a sense that my chaplaincy is valued in giving support to all at Care Choice. In turn, I receive joy, appreciation, openness, and welcome in being allowed to contribute to the lives of so many".*

## *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, 161 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

### Review of Achievements and Activities in 2022

By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, second level schools were established in most provincial towns throughout Ireland. Over the years there has been a gradual transfer of responsibility for Catholic education in Mercy Schools to other trusteeships who ensure school communities are places where Christian faith, justice and responsibility are nurtured.

**CEIST** In 2007 the Catholic Education and Irish Schools Trust known as CEIST and now an independent entity, was set up to act as Trustees for Secondary Schools for the Sisters of Mercy In Ireland and four other Religious Congregations. In 2022 CEIST celebrated 15 years in existence. Among the new initiatives this year, it introduced certification for its Religious Education Junior Cycle Programs. Participating Schools will be certified by the patron as part of each students' Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement under other areas of learning.

**EDUCENA** The Educena Trust Foundation works with CEIST to enable resourcing of trusteeship of Catholic Post-Primary education in Ireland, managing and optimizing the financial resources that will be needed in the future.

### Pre-Schools, Tullamore



The Charity enabled the establishment of two pre-schools in Tullamore – Scoil Íosagáin and Castle View. The founding Sisters is a member of the Management Committee of the former and has worked for over thirty years with families from the Travelling Community. She maintains good contact with the pupils long after they have left, and sees them mature into adulthood and, with a sense of pride, rejoices in them finding employment.

In 2022, the pre-Schools continued to flourish. The site on Dangan Road was donated by the Sisters of Mercy and the grounds are spacious and the building is in great condition. The is currently an enrolment of 25 children. Castleview school, built by the County Council currently has 10 children on the register.

The Management Committee is excellent with a high skill set which is put at the service of the organization, e.g. safe-guarding, recording, insurance, accounting, funding, etc. The schools receive support for salaries from Pobal and Tullamore Social Services sponsor the caretaker.

## Glór na Mara Ecology Initiative, Donegal

Glór Na Mara is an ecology initiative of the Charity established in Bundoran, County Donegal and is a vibrant practical expression of the Charity's commitment to the promotion of care for our 'Common Home.' The endeavour has a two-strand approach to service delivery:



1. Ecology education and awareness raising
2. Practical engagement in organic growing

Glór na Mara occupies a two-acre site and provides a community garden of twenty beds (7.1m x 1.2m) and thirty-three allotments of similar proportions. The Initiative is engaged in outreach work to the local schools and to many visiting groups within the county and further afield. The demand for allotments continues to grow.



In 2022, twenty-four community gardeners attended a 9-month organic growing course. They grew their own produce, learnt seed-sowing and gardening skills, and valued the social interaction with others afforded them by the group activity. It was a delight that five people from Ukraine joined the community garden group in June. A ten-week gardening course was also delivered on-line this year.

## ❖ *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 worked in schools, workhouses, orphanages and hospitals in co-operation with the Church and State.

Review of  
Achievements and  
Activities in 2022

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. Examining the root causes of these issues, we 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. Other charities supported in their work for justice this year included The Peter McVerry Trust - €10k, St Stephens Green Trust - €10k, Focus Ireland - €15k, The Big Issue Magazine - €500, Meath Women's Refuge - €10k and St Vincent de Paul - €10k,

Sisters of the Charity are members of organizations that promote justice, peace and reconciliation also. Some are referenced in this Report and others are AEFJN, ARISE Foundation, Irish Refugee Council, Lantern Project, Towards Healing, Towards Peace.

### **Green Sod Ireland**

A Sister of the Charity is a founding member and a director of the Green Sod Land Trust which works to ensure that Ireland remains a country where ecosystems thrive and flourish and help create safe habitats vital for biodiversity. The Trust holds land in six counties of the Republic of Ireland. In two locations there is a tenant/caretaker and link with the local community for special needs and organic growing purposes. Green Sod Ireland continually recruits and supports volunteers who work on biodiversity and education programmes for schools, colleges and local communities.

The Trust networks with NGO's community groups, schools and government agencies such as Teagasc, Department of Social Protection, National Heritage Council, Bird Watch Ireland and Environment Protection Agency. The Trust is registered with the European Re-wilding Network. Afri (Action from Ireland) has invited The Green Sod Trust to partner them and other groups in The Celtic Alphabet Tree Planting Project.

### **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.

**GLOIR** Glóir is a collaborative venture of the Sisters of Mercy and the Holy Union Sisters. Sisters from the Charity deliver programmes or serve on the Board of Directors. It offers training to Leadership Teams and facilitation of Chapters. Underpinning this justice-work is a commitment to right-relatedness, clarity about role, and ability to deal with the complexity of people living/working towards a common aim as part of the community of all of life.



**MECPATHS** MECPATHS is a project of The Sisters of Mercy Congregation. It 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.



**MERCY INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION** Mercy International Association (MIA) is an association of the leaders of the Mercy Congregations, Institutes and Unions throughout the world. The leaders work together to share some aspects of the common work of the Sisters of Mercy.

**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 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 charities involved in overseas development.



International agencies supported by the Charity included: Trócaire's Romero Fund €20k, Medecins Sans Frontiers €5k. The Charity contributed to the Covid-19 vaccine roll-out in developing countries: South African Province €10k+, Kenyan Province €5k and Holy Rosary Sisters €7,570.

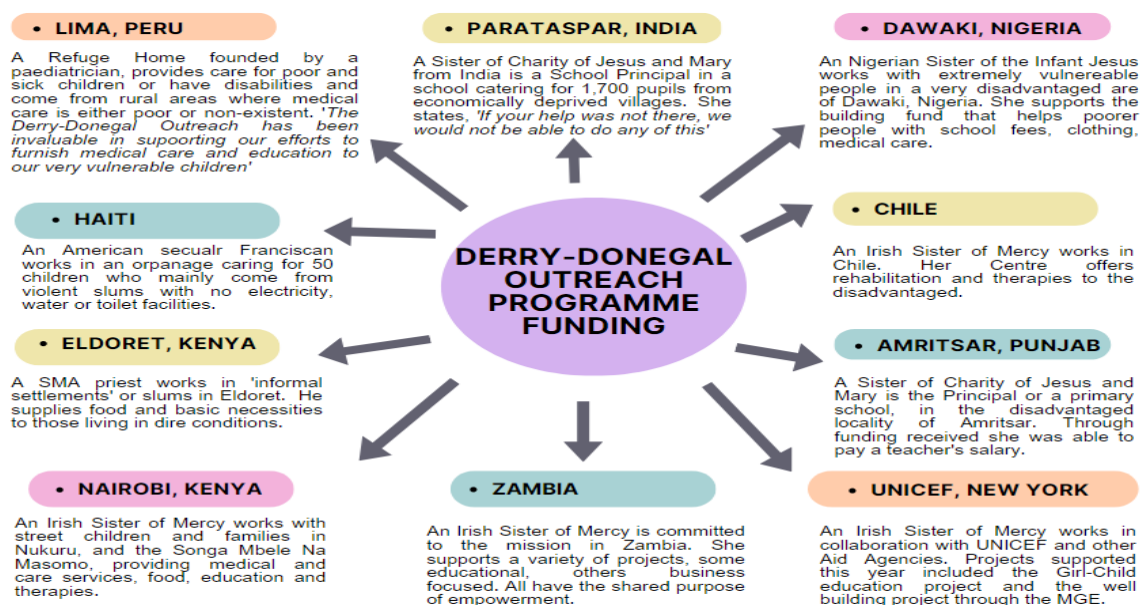
The Charity contributed to the Mercy Solidarity Trust helping the mission of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy worldwide, especially in the developing world. The Charity donated €10k to Schools of Sanctuary, reaching out to refugees from Ukraine and Afghanistan in Monaghan, Cavan and Louth.

The Charity disbursed €38,716.00 to Warru Jabbe, community development association, Nigeria which provides adult literacy programmes to Muslims and Christians.

Local communities of Mercy Sisters 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 those working for those in need.



## ❖ *P*astoral, 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.

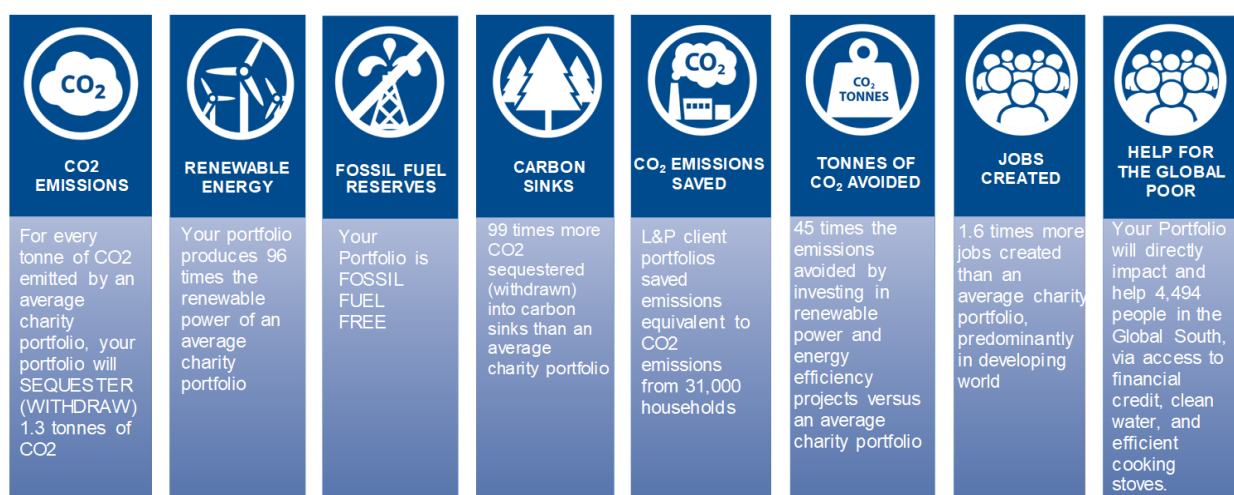




Our investment portfolio is part of our Mission. Alongside our active Ministries, we also seek to bring about change through our investment portfolios. Some investments can be harmful; for example, investments in fossil fuel companies or armaments companies supports the production of goods that can be highly damaging to the environment or human wellbeing. Avoiding these types of investments is an important step in ensuring that our investment portfolio is not involved in harmful activities.

In addition, we believe that it is also important to use our investments to bring about positive change in the world. Therefore, we seek to invest in activities that have beneficial impacts, for both individual wellbeing and for the environment.

We assess these positive impacts under a number of headings that we believe are important measures of 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.

We outline below some elements of a particularly important area in today’s world, that of Environmental Impact, and how the Portfolio addresses the SDGs in this regard.

# Environmental Impact

## Overall Carbon Footprint



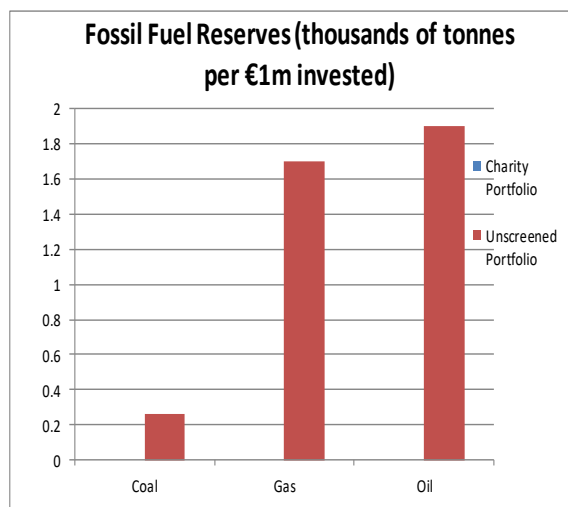
Measurement of carbon emissions is crucial to help us understand the role our investment portfolio plays in the climate crisis, while taking measures to address it. As the SDG logos to the left show, limiting carbon emissions interacts with several SDGs, helping address Climate Action in particular. 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 (SDG15) and in the ocean (SDG14)

The Portfolio includes a number of carbon sink-type investments, which sequester or draw carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) 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 CO<sub>2</sub>e 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.



**Portfolio holds no fossil fuel reserves (no blue bar)**

## *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.

## *Heritage and Upkeep of Listed Assets*

The Charity owns some Listed buildings which are protected structures. These buildings 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.



Gate Lodge, Villa Nova,  
Bundoran

In 2022, the Charity outlaid €41,098.00 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.

# Financial Review

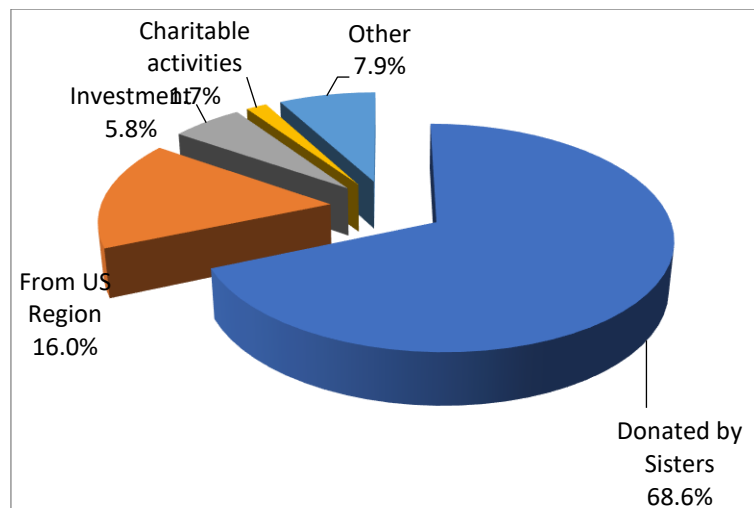
## Results for the year

A summary of the year's accounts can be found on page 34 of this report.

## *Income - where our income came from*

Income for the year totalled €5,196,599:

- Voluntary income of €4,396,946: the majority of this, €3,565,253, was the pension, salary, stipend and lump sum income earned by the members of the Sisters of Mercy Northern Province and donated to the Charity. The balance, €831,693, was received from the US Region of the Sisters of Mercy as a contribution towards the costs of members who have return to Ireland from the US.
- Investment Income of €301,232: was the income earned on the Charity's investment portfolio, bank interest and rent received.
- Charitable activities of €88,004: was legacies and other income received.
- Other Income of €410,417: was the gain on the disposal of tangible assets, mainly property.



## Breakdown of Income

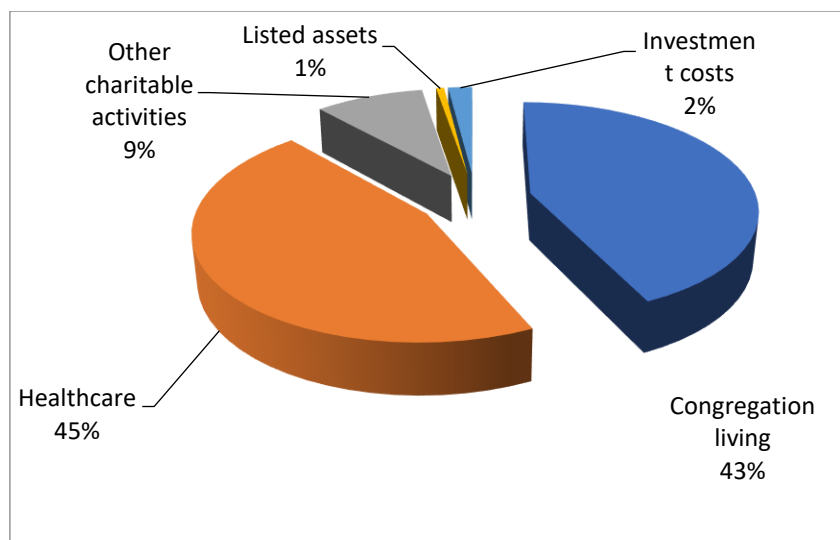
### *Expenditure - where the money is spent?*

Total expenditure for the year was €6,202,529.

Charitable Activities - of the total, €6,078,176, (98%), was spent on Charitable Activities:

- Congregational living, the advancement of Religion, €2,670,090: 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 also give their services free in ministries and continue to do so well beyond retirement age. Hence the work of the Charity includes the provision of living accommodation for the Sisters.
- Healthcare and the compassionate care of the sick and those in need, €2,806,456: 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 elderly members who are now themselves in need of care.
- Relief of poverty, promotion of education, justice and other charitable activities, €560,533: 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, €41,098: the Charity owns a number of protected structures. The structures are typically buildings that are listed on planning authority's Record of Protected Structures (RPS). By including them in the RPS, 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 development control process. 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 €124,353.



### Breakdown of Expenditure

#### *Net movement in funds*

Net expenditure for the year was €1,005,930. This was before loss on investment assets, which, when taken into account, results in a net decrease in funds in the year of €2,142,191.

#### *Investments*

At 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022, the Charity had investments of €21.4m. 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) 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. 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 €38.4m. Of this, €0.4m is restricted for specific purposes - see Financial Statements note 17. Of the balance, €11.5m is represented by properties and other tangible fixed assets essential for the running of the Charity. The Trustees have designated another €25.7m to provide for Mission and Ministry works and Congregation Living needs. Details are given in note 16 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 €0.4m. This equates to less than 2 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 29ff

## 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 '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 meet regularly and 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. In addition to annual reporting to the Charity Regulator, formal reporting within the organisation takes place 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 are voluntarily donated to a common fund, administered through a Provincial Stewardship Office.

### *Collaboration and Partnership*

The Charity partners and collaborates with ministry colleagues, statutory and voluntary bodies, other religious congregations and parish and diocesan groups in serving the local and wider community. Some Sisters are employed in these organisations; other Sisters are volunteers. The Charity as a member of AMRI, is part of the collective voice of Religious Congregations in raising awareness and responding to 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.

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 in the Republic of Ireland. The Trustees review annually the implementation of its 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. She is assisted by the Safeguarding Co-ordinator and together they promote and oversee the implementation of best practice in safeguarding in the Northern Province, 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 promote 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 best practice in relation to safeguarding children and adults at risk of harm 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 information and supporting materials in relation to ‘Safeguarding Children’ and ‘Adult 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. This Provincial Safeguarding Self-audit has identified that 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.

The Audit also revealed that Sisters are increasingly involved internally in providing and managing care for Sisters who themselves are deemed adults at risk and who 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 Charity has adopted the Congregational International Child Safeguarding Policy and Standards and has been approved by the National Board. All Sisters and Staff are required to 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 the Republic of Ireland.

### *Garda Vetting*

Vetting Policies and Procedures reflect the legal requirements in place in the Republic of Ireland. All vetting records and documentation are stored securely and destroyed in accordance with guidance. A 'Verification of Identification Form' was introduced this year to support the vetting process.

13 new staff members were vetted and 2 staff members were re-vetted.

### *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 hosted by TUSLA

- Safeguarding Children First E-Learning - Safeguarding Co-ordinator (8.03.2022)
- Mandated Person E-Learning - Safeguarding Manager (11.04.2022)

Safeguarding Children training provided by Trainers to Sisters in Íontas Centre, Castleblayney. (15.06.2022)

### *Safeguarding Adults Training*

Sisters of Mercy Trainers offered training to the following cohorts:

- 7 Sisters and 11 Staff in the Convent of Mercy, Ballyshannon (09.02.2022)
- 8 Staff in the Convent of Mercy, Kells. (15.03.2022)
- 13 Sisters and 6 Staff in Navan/Kells area. (04.04.2022)
- 8 Sisters and 12 Staff in Dundalk. (10.05.2022)
- Safeguarding Personnel attended the following Training opportunities.
- Adult Safeguarding training with an external organisation. (30.03. & 06.04.2022)
- Assisted Decision -Making (Capacity) Act, 2015, webinar (17.02.2022).
- Listening Meeting and Safeguarding Ireland seminar (10.11.2022)

### *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 and updates were provided through newsletters, correspondence and meetings via zoom conferencing.

Inter-Provincial Safeguarding Managers Meetings met to finalize the revision of the Congregational Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons Policy, to update safeguarding information on the Congregational website and to consider the compilation of the Annual Safeguarding Self-audit process.

The Safeguarding Annual Report, 2022, was compiled for submission to the Provincial Leadership Team and the Congregational Leadership Team.



## Reference and Administrative Details

Name of Charity	Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Northern Province
Charity Number	CHY128 CRA No. 20000318
Address of Principal Office	Sisters of Mercy 1 Mornington Way Trim Co. Meath C15 V064
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	Bank of Ireland Ballybofey Co. Donegal
Investment Managers	Setanta Asset Management Ltd Unigestion SA
Solicitors	GL McGowan The Square Balbriggan Co Dublin K32 XN61