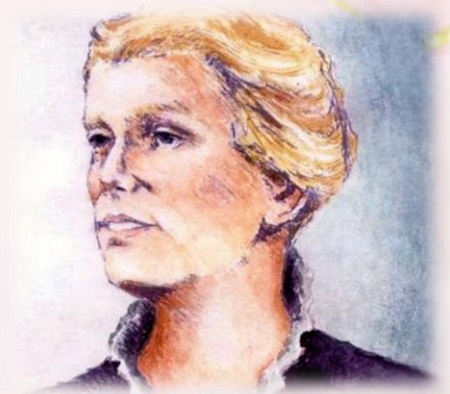




*Congregation of the
Sisters of Mercy
Northern Province
Northern Ireland*



Annual Report 2024

Annual Trustees' Report 2024

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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 2024. 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 MSSION 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 MSSION 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 six counties in Northern Ireland, where 106 Sisters reside. There are also 144 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
- ❖ 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

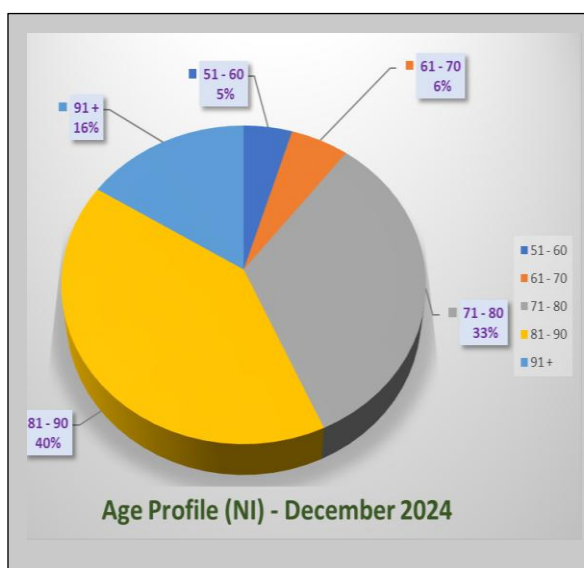
Public Benefit is delivered through religious activities, prayer, ministry activities, the prevention and relief of poverty, support to other charities who alleviate poverty, the promotion of holistic wellbeing, impact investments, overseas aid, ecological awareness and a variety of services provided 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 a communal prayer pattern in their local communities.

All aspects of the Charity's work involve the advancement of religion and the Trustees ensure 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 in the life of the 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. Consequently, Sisters have no independent means of support. Their lives and earnings are devoted 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 promotion of the objects of the Charity, property requirements and prudent management of finances. Residential accommodation is kept under review ensuring a continuum of care appropriate to members' needs. The Charity provides designated Assisted-living at houses in Enniskillen, Lurgan, Newry and Strabane.

Faith Development - Parish & 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.

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. In this report two particular Faith ministries are highlighted.

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.

Parish Ministry

Church Music

Sacramental Programmes

Chaplaincy

Parish Liturgical Ministers

Prayer Ministry

Diocesan Liturgy

Prayer Guidance

Family Support

Spiritual Direction

Prayer Ministry, Belfast

A Member of the Charity is part of Shalom Prayer Ministry. As a teacher and most active member of the wider parish community and has been known to many for her attentive listening, her spiritual guidance and her faithful commitment to prayer.

Her prayer ministry has developed in a new way since the days of the Covid-19 pandemic. When people were confined by the government norms in relation to isolation and restricted from congregating, a spiritual gap emerged. This When it was no longer possible to assemble for worship and prayer, a vacuum of spiritual support was experienced.

At that time, and ever since, this Sister provides spiritual support through praying with and for others which has mushroomed in the years that have followed.

The solace to others, offered through her commitment to prayer intentions, the creation of a sacred space in her home, the spiritual guidance provided through her telephone ministry, the comfort of enrolment of individuals in her Prayer Diary and the listening ear of compassion have led to numerous people making contact with her – many of whom she has never met, but who have heard of her ministry and who are simply travellers on the road of life, wishing to unburden their troubles and entrust their cares and concerns to her guidance and prayer.

Chaplaincy Work, Newry

A Member of the Charity works on the Chaplaincy Team in Palliative Care, in the Southern Area Hospice, Newry. The multi-disciplinary team offers specialized support to those who are on the palliative and end of life journey. With others, this Sister brings compassion and mercy, not only to those with serious illness, but also to their families and friends.

In helping people to look for hope and joy in the midst of living and dying, the team of which this Member is a part, encourages families to talk about the experience as they live through it. The team also encourages others to accept the limitations that they may not get “the closure” they need before death. It has been a most sacred work.

As faith/spiritual support persons on the MDT, the Chaplaincy Team works with the wider team inviting opportunities for peace, assisting people as they discuss their ideas and wishes regarding advance care planning, death, addressing regrets, preparing memory boxes or journals, and working with the medical team to reach the soul pain, which complicates physical pain.

This Member is aware of the trust others place in her, knowing she is a Religious Sister as she endeavours to bring non-judgemental compassion to her listening and chaplaincy.

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 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.

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.

Members are involved directly in compassionate care of the sick and those in need by

- i) being part of a Health Care Team for the Charity's care of Sisters
- ii) acting as 'Mercy Companions' to those in nursing and residential care
- iii) developing and providing wellbeing programmes to the wider community
- iv) offering therapeutic programmes through art and other media
- v) undertaking chaplaincy roles in hospitals
- vi) faithfully visiting people in the wider local communities who are sick or lonely
- vii) accompanying individuals in need to medical appointments

Members of the Charity offer care support to individuals in the wider communities where they live. Some Sisters have established more formal ministry entities in support of wellbeing and care. Other members are volunteers in care support facilities and still others are independent providers who ensure their registration with professional development requirements.

Sample of Health and Well-being Activities in 2024

New Life Directions (NLD), founded by and co-ordinated by two members of the Charity, is a not-for-profit organization providing opportunities for personal, psychological and spiritual development of individuals, families and communities. NLD works with community, voluntary and statutory organizations. Part of the work of NLD includes Capacitar Multi-Cultural Wellness Education and Training.

Members of the Charity assist with some of NDL's Wellbeing and Stress Management Programmes also.

In 2024 NLD offered a wide-ranging menu of wellbeing practices and methods, facilitation, meditation, dance, song, ritual, journalling.

NDL has also worked in partnership with NI based organizations e.g.

-  Cookstown & Western Shores Alliance
-  Mid- Ulster Age Well Partnership.
-  Mid- Ulster Seniors Network
-  Northern Ireland Community Health Network (NACHN)
-  Pomeroy Area Community Group
-  Rural Health Partnership, South Armagh

Support Worker with Brain Injury Survivors
Chaplain in Mater Misericordia Hospital Belfast
Support Worker with Addiction Centre, Newry
Mindfulness Derry

- Training Course in MBSR
- Mentoring new MBSR Teacher

Director and deliverer of programmes - Tara Centre, Omagh
Counsellor with Daneo Services - Belfast

Relief of Poverty, Promotion of Education, Justice and other

Charitable Activities including Collaboration and Support of Other Groups

In 2024 there were one hundred and six Sisters engaged in the Charity's commitment to the relief of poverty. Activities ranged from the practical to systemic, from the local to global, from the personal to environmental, from the Charity's founding ministries to collaboration with other agencies who also address poverty in all its many forms.

Historically, the Sisters of Mercy were involved in the provision of formal education from the establishment of the Congregation. This work of Mercy endured for the first 170 years of the Charity. Many of our Schools have been transferred to other trusteeships that ensure school communities are places where Christian faith, justice and responsibility are nurtured. Three Mercy Schools remain in the Trusteeship of the Sisters of Mercy, Sisters also serve on schools' Boards of Governors that the Sisters of Mercy helped to establish.

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."

CSTS

The Catholic Schools' Trust is the sectoral body for Catholic Managed Schools (NI) and works on behalf of Dioceses 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.

CCMS

The Catholic Council for Maintained Schools is a support to the Mercy Schools and encourages development and collaboration for our Catholic Schools in North Belfast.

Schools under the Trusteeship of the Charity

Mercy Primary, Belfast: This all-inclusive school for girls in North Belfast promotes a Catholic ethos aligned with Mercy values and heritage while delivering its broad-based curriculum in line with the N.I. Revised Curriculum. Pupil population in 2024 is 228.



Mercy College: An all-ability co-educational facility in North Belfast which espouses the Mercy ethos throughout the School community and beyond. Core indicators are:-



- The burgeoning pupil population, at 854 in September 2024
- The successful achievements at KS4 and KS+
- The provision of Special Needs education in a mainstream setting

Our Lady's Grammar School: Founded in Newry in 1887, this Voluntary Grammar School for girls from 11-18 under the Trusteeship of the Charity. Inspired by the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, the education offered at Our Lady's ensures the holistic development of each student, particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalised. The pupil population in 2024 is 921 girls.



The school promotes the central Mercy ideals of Spirituality, Service and Scholarship. It aims foster a community in which all can enjoy a sense of belong, and work together in an atmosphere of mutual respect and co-operation. This spirit of co-operation reaches beyond the school in the joint partnerships developed with other schools in the Greater Newry area in diverse subjects i.e. Spanish, sports Science, Nutrition and Food Science, and Biology.

In 2024 some extra-curricular highlights included participation in the staging of the musical 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory,' our u-13 football squad got through to the last 16 of the NISRA Cup and our choir's entering of the Knights of Columbanus Choral Competition.

Education: – Wider Engagement

The Charity’s ministry engagements involve education in a broader sense than formal education e.g.

- promotion of right relations at every level.
- the examination of root causes of injustice in the communities in which we minister.
- the mistreatment of immigrants.
- the oppression of women.
- human trafficking.

Education: - Care of the Earth

Among and beyond membership of the Charity, ongoing education and awareness raising in relation to the socio-ecological and environmental realities of our time include:-

- Regular Webinars presented by two Members
- Charity’s eco-website to guide members throughout the year.
- Ecology Group to steer priorities.
- Commitment of Charity to Tree-planting.
- Support of Glór na Mara Ecology Initiative

Support of Other Charities

The Charity appreciates that use of finances is a support to ministries. Through disbursements, the Charity assists others who are working to break the cycle of poverty. The Charity also supports those who are committed to overseas development projects.

The Charity connects its efforts on a global scale with the network of Sisters of Mercy Congregations throughout the world. Samples of this work are referenced in this report.

In 2024, financial contributions were made to Charities in Northern Ireland and international Charities helping to alleviate poverty also.

£30,000	Redemptorist Ukrainian Appeal
£30,000	UNICEF Gaza Appeal
£10,000	Mercy Primary School, Belfast
£10,000	Mercy College, Belfast
£10,000	Able Child
£5,000	Aurora Counselling, Derry
£8,000	Charis Cancer Centre
£8,500	Simon Community, Newry
£15,000	Aisling Centre, Enniskillen
£15,000	Tara Centre, Omagh
£20,000	White Oaks, Derry
£6,500	Women’s Aid, Armagh

GLÓIR

Two Members, along with a SUSC Sister work with groups/leaders both internationally and nationally in facilitating imaginative ways to live justly on this planet; in making greater commitment to social justice and right-relatedness; in having clarity about roles re leadership, management and members; in living/working towards a common aim as part of the community of all of life.

Mercy Girl Effect, New York

A Member co-ordinates the Working Group on Girls (UNICEF). The Mercy Girl Effect helps educate and animate advocacy for young women and children vulnerable to being targeted by traffickers. In 2023, MGE with the ARISE Foundation and UNICEF provided scholarships to support the SRAK – clandestine network of schools in Afghanistan - to educate 400+ girls.

Warru Jabbe, Nigeria

A Member established this foundation to assist Muslims and Christians in a shared community development project, providing adult literacy and computer programmes.

AMRI

Association 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 . As a constituent member, our Charity contributes to AMRI financially.

Charity Members work with others for justice and relief of poverty

CJPIC Group

Members are actively involved in Clogher Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation Group which progresses action on Climate Change and Homelessness. Education and awareness-raising are dominant aspects of CJPIC's work and networking with others e.g. Fermanagh Churches' Forum and Fermanagh & Omagh District Council.

MECPATHS

As part of the Sisters of Mercy, the Charity supports the Congregations' MECPATHS project. In partnership with Hospitality Sector in Ireland, the project works to counter child trafficking and sexual exploitation.

AEFJN

A Member is on the committee of Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network - a faith-based international network. It prioritizes EU policy as it affects Sub Saharan Africa e.g. food security, corporal social responsibility, ecological/environmental rights.

Derry-Donegal Outreach Programme

A Member of the Charity works in D-DOP in the North-West of Ireland to fundraise for missionaries and others providing education, healthcare and immediate practical relief in poorer parts of our world. In 2023, D-DOP distributed in excess of €50k to projects in Nigeria, Zambia, Haiti, Kenya (Eldoret & Nairobi) and India.

Members' Involvement in Supportive Ministries

The Charity has, from its inception, and up to this current time, been concerned with responding to those in need in line with Gospel values. In towns and parishes where the Sisters of Mercy reside, there are on-going efforts made to be aware of and to respond to people who are living in poverty and/or who are struggling to get the help they need to break the cycle of dependency.

Apart from hours spent in visitation (the traditional work of the Sisters of Mercy), individual Members of the Charity and communities of Sisters are actively involved with statutory and voluntary agencies who help alleviate those in difficult circumstances.

ST VINCENT DE PAUL

Supporting materially poor towns throughout Antrim, Armagh, Derry, Donegal, Down, Fermanagh and Tyrone.

SAMARITIANS

Offering a listening ear to those in need.

SOUTHERN HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE TRUST

Serving on Early Years and Adoption Panel

SCHOOL BOARDS OF GOVERNORS

Serving on Boards of Governors as Trustee Representatives

BRAIN INJURY FOUNDATION

Supporting survivors and/or family members and carers.

DANEO

Helping individuals and groups in human and spiritual development

CUAN MHUIRE

Providing support to those who are living with addictions.

AEFJN

Promoting economic justice between Europe and sub-Saharan Africa

TOWARDS PEACE

Accompanying individuals who are surviving the trauma of abuse.

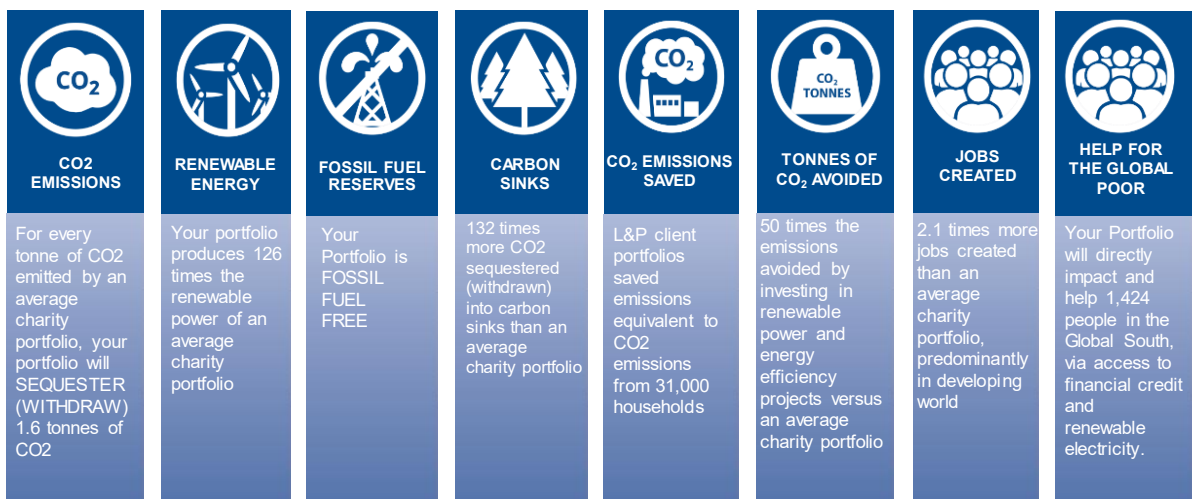
TARA CENTRE

Building a society where diversity is experienced as enrichment.

Our Mission Driven Investment Approach

As investors, it can be easy to get caught up in simple financial return. However, investing is an extremely useful tool for not only generating financial returns but also creating an impact on the world around us. We see our investment portfolio as an extension of our Mission. Alongside our active ministries, we strive to create meaningful change through positive impact investing. At the same time, we actively avoid investments in industries that are contrary to our values, such as fossil fuels and armaments. By doing so, we ensure that our financial resources are not supporting harmful activities.

However, avoiding harm is only part of the equation. We believe that driving positive change through our investments is even more powerful. That’s why we focus on opportunities that promote individual well-being and environmental sustainability. We assess our impact across key areas that reflect how our investments contribute to a better world. Below are some of the positive outcomes achieved through our investment portfolio:



The Portfolio and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Every investment within our portfolio is analysed to assess its contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals,

adopted by all UN member states, serve as a global blueprint for creating a more sustainable, equitable, and prosperous future.

The SDGs aim to address some of the world's most pressing challenges by focusing on ending poverty, protecting the environment, and improving overall well-being. They encourage governments, businesses, and investors to take meaningful action toward achieving these objectives by 2030. By aligning our investments with the SDGs, we ensure that our financial decisions are not only responsible but also actively driving positive change. Through this approach, we contribute to solutions that foster economic growth, social progress, and environmental sustainability. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals are as follows:

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



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

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) closely align with the charitable missions and ethical principles upheld by religious organizations. Rooted in values of human dignity, social justice, and environmental stewardship, the SDGs provide a framework for addressing some of the world's most urgent challenges—many of which religious communities have long worked to combat.

The late Pope Francis' significant publication of *'Laudato Si'* released a consciousness in the collective responsibility of all, for sustainable

development and care for our common home. His call for “... *every person living on this planet for an inclusive dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet*” not only underscores the moral responsibility to care for our common home but has propelled many to act urgently on issues such as climate change, inequality, and global poverty. Pope Francis also voiced direct support for the SDGs, notably in his speech ahead of the United Nations General Assembly’s formal adoption of the 17 Goals. His endorsement reinforced the ambitious and transformational vision of the SDGs, aligning them with the principles of integral human development—the idea that progress must support both people and the planet.

By integrating the SDGs into investment strategies, faith-based organizations can actively contribute to a more just, sustainable, and compassionate world, ensuring that financial resources are directed toward initiatives that reflect their core values. To ensure alignment of the SDGs we use a comprehensive Ethical and Positive Impact screen which guarantees the Portfolio remains consistent with the ethos of the charity. The Portfolio currently excludes companies involved in the material production of weapons, tobacco, alcohol, pornography, and activities such as gambling and embryonic stem cell research. Additional Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) criteria complements the screening to improve the overall ESG risk exposure of the Portfolio.

Environmental Impact

Overall Carbon Footprint



Measurement of carbon emissions plays a critical role in shaping our understanding of how our investment portfolio affects the climate crisis, and also enables us to better address it. Additionally, 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 contributes to reducing poverty (SDG1), reducing inequality (SDG10) and preserving life on land (SDG15) and in the ocean (SDG14)

The portfolio includes several carbon sink investments designed to capture and remove carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere. Among these, forestry stands out as a particularly effective solution, as trees naturally absorb CO₂ during their growth process. As a result, the inclusion of forestry funds helps to offset the majority of the portfolio's carbon emissions, effectively balancing its environmental impact.

Put another way, this means that the Portfolio in aggregate will emit 6 tonnes of CO₂e (carbon dioxide or equivalent gases) from the atmosphere per annum while an unscreened portfolio of the same size would produce c. 2,973 tonnes of CO₂e. We believe that these extremely strong carbon emission statistics makes the Portfolio very much part of the solution to climate change, rather than part of the problem.

Fossil Fuel Reserves

In early 2017, the Trustees made the decision to fully divest from fossil fuels, ensuring that the portfolio now holds no fossil fuel reserves. This policy guarantees that there is no direct exposure to companies involved in thermal coal, oil, natural gas, or other unconventional reserves, such as oil sands, shale oil, and shale gas.

A significant portion of these fossil fuel reserves is expected to become "stranded assets", meaning they may never be utilized if global efforts to limit temperature rise to below 2°C are successful. By avoiding these assets, the portfolio not only reinforces its commitment to environmental sustainability but also mitigates financial risks associated with stranded fossil fuel investments.

The chart below illustrates the fossil fuel reserves held within the portfolio compared to an unscreened portfolio. As shown, the portfolio holds zero fossil fuel reserves, reinforcing its dedication to supporting the global transition to sustainable energy. This approach ensures that investments align with the portfolio's overarching impact-driven strategy, actively contributing to the shift away from fossil fuels toward clean, renewable energy solutions.

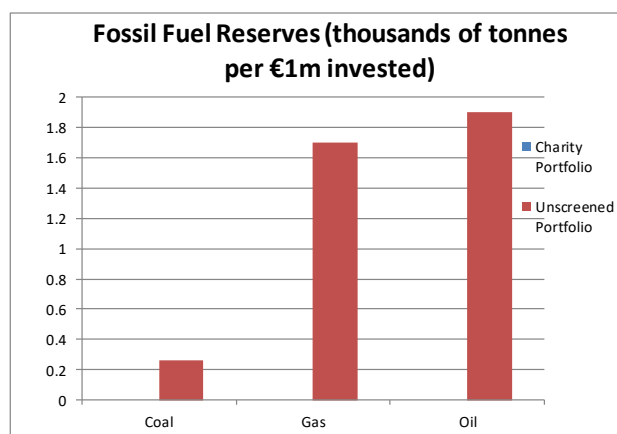


Chart showing the Charity's Investment Portfolio holds no fossil fuel reserves (no blue bar)

Renewable Energy

As the transition to renewable energy is crucial in addressing climate change, impact-focused investors typically aim for a high level of renewable power generation within their portfolios.

In our portfolio, renewable energy production is supported through various investments across Ireland, Europe, the U.S., and developing regions. These investments play a vital role in advancing clean energy solutions while contributing to global sustainability goals.

Below, we highlight some of the key impact metrics of these renewable energy funds:

Renewable Energy Fund

Renewable energy fund holding both onshore and offshore projects

- Energy for 300,000 houses per annum
- Avoids emissions of 400,000 tonnes of CO₂ per annum
- 1,000,000 MWh of renewable power per annum

Solar Income Fund

Fund holding approx. 40 solar plants in Europe

- Energy for 150,000 houses per annum
- Avoids emissions of 162,000 tonnes of CO₂ per annum
- 480,000 MWh of renewable power per annum



The benefit of generating renewable power can be measured by how much fossil fuel power (and resulting CO₂ emissions) it replaces. In 2024, the Portfolio avoided the release of almost 1,222 tonnes of CO₂e. This is equivalent to:

- Removing 264 cars from the roads every year
- 2,811 barrels of oil saved
- 1,018 acres of pine forest absorbing CO₂ for one year
- 134 round trips around the world by one typical passenger car (travelling at the equator).

In terms of renewable energy produced, the Portfolio produced 2,667 MWh in 2024, enough energy to power approx. 721 homes.

Environmental Protection and Carbon Sequestration

Environmental protection is a critical aspect of sustainability addressed by the Portfolio. The forestry investments within the Portfolio have a mandate to:

- Produce sustainable timber;
- Sequester carbon from the atmosphere;
- Protect natural resources and biodiversity of the area, in order to minimise the effect on the biodiversity and general environmental welfare.



The managers of the forestry investments in the portfolio review any new forest properties at the outset to record and maintain Biodiversity already present. They have also adopted an approach in their management to enhance biodiversity by planning linkage between features using corridors so that the biodiversity

features on site are conserved and new features being created are all joined and form part of a biodiversity unit within each property. These features are measured and captured on the managers' geographic information system (GIS). A detailed biodiversity classification and ranking system is in place and enhancement targets are being set to enrich diversification in fauna and flora throughout the portfolio.

Social Impact

Job Creation



Providing employment is one of the best methods of reducing poverty, and therefore it has a number of positive beneficial effects across the SDGs, from poverty reduction (SDG1) to providing Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG8). As the majority of the jobs created by the impact investments are in the developing world, and tend to favour women as much (if not more) than men, then job creation in these areas improves Gender Equality (SDG5) and Reduces Inequalities (SDG10), both between sexes and between the developed and developing regions of the world.

The Portfolio has a number of funds which provide job creation through their economic activity. The equity funds provide capital to companies that employ anywhere between hundreds to hundreds of thousands, and therefore additional capital from investors should enable these companies to create jobs, albeit that the job creation impact from additional investment in these typically large, established businesses is low. However, other funds that operate in the developing world tend to produce far higher job creation and comprise the majority of the additional jobs produced for the portfolio as a whole.

The new jobs created by an unscreened portfolio of the same size as the Portfolio would only create 11 new jobs, while the Portfolio helped create circa 13 direct jobs in 2024.

Homelessness Crisis

As of 2024, there were an estimated 14,000 homeless individuals in Ireland, indicating a dramatic rise of over 250% in the number of homeless families since 2015. This stark increase highlights the deepening crisis in Ireland's social housing sector, which has been struggling to meet demand due to severe limitations in the availability of residential properties and a rapidly growing population. At the time of this report, Ireland's population had surpassed 5 million people, reaching its highest level since 1851. This population growth, coupled with increasing urbanization and economic pressures, has put enormous strain on the housing market.

In response to this urgent need for affordable housing, the portfolio has included the New Haven Social Housing Fund, which is specifically designed to address the chronic shortage of housing for vulnerable populations in Ireland. The Fund's primary aim is to invest in and develop sustainable, high-quality housing for those most in need, including low-income families, individuals facing homelessness, and other at-risk groups.

The following outlines the key goals of the **New Haven Social Housing Fund**, which works to mitigate the social and economic challenges posed by this growing crisis:

Social Housing Fund

Innovative fund acquires properties for social housing purposes

- Provide €100m+ in long term capital to housing sector
- Target high ESG and sustainability standards
- 500+ new homes to be provided for social housing needs



*H*eritage and Upkeep of Listed Assets

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.”

Each member of the Charity has covenanted all that she is and has to the Congregation. Therefore, all possessions are held in trust for the promotion of the mission of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy.

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.

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.



*Mercy Centre,
Bessbrook*

Financial Review N.I.

Results for the year

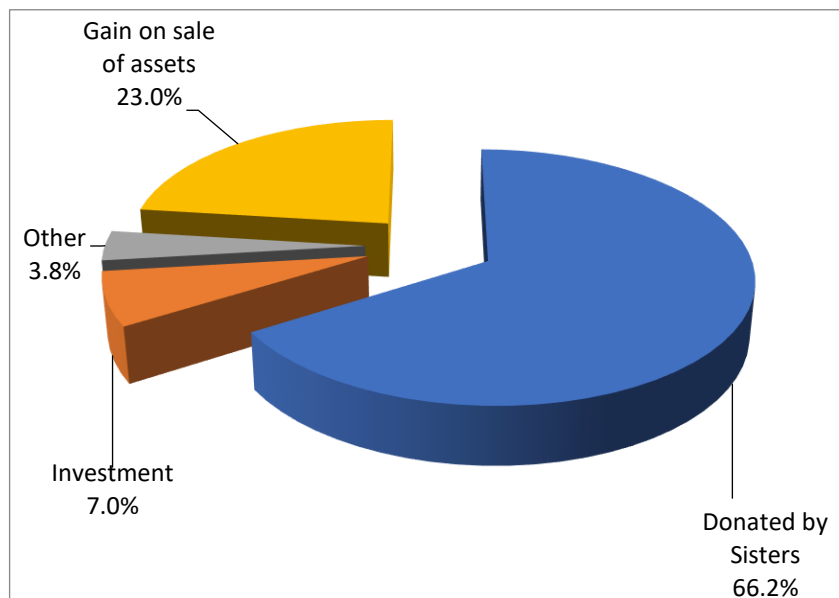
A summary of the year's accounts can be found on page 40 of this report.

Income - where our income came from

Income for the year totalled £4,014,832:

- Voluntary income of £2,656,354: this was the pension, salary and retirement lump sum income earned by the members of the Sisters of Mercy Northern Province and donated to the Charity.
- Investment Income of £279,280: was the income earned on the Charity's investment portfolio, bank interest and rent received.
- Charitable activities of £154,054: was legacy and other income received.
- Gain on the sale of assets of £925,144: the majority of this, £911,239, was the gain on the disposal of property.

Breakdown of Income



Expenditure - where the money is spent

Total expenditure for the year was £4,802,304.

Charitable Activities - of the total, £4,752,967, or 99%, was spent on Charitable Activities:

- Congregational living, the advancement of Religion, £2,182,729: this



includes the upkeep and up-skilling and retraining of the members of the Province. 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 their various ministries and continue to 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 the members of the Province so that they will be able to continue in their service to the public

- Healthcare and the compassionate care of the sick and those in need, £1,675,782: 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. The 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, £643,986: 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

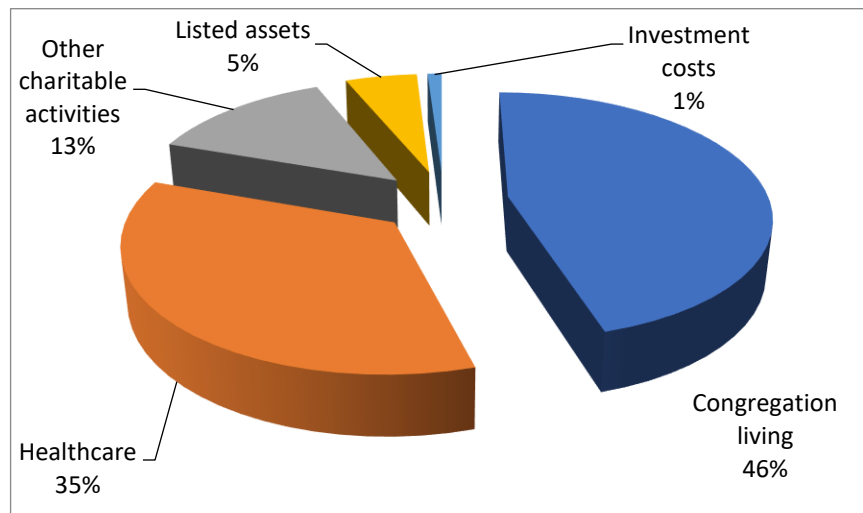
critical global and local issues

- Upkeep of listed assets, £250,470: 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 £49,337.

Breakdown of Expenditure



Net movement in funds

Net expenditure for the year, therefore, was £787,472. This was before the loss on investment assets, which when taken into account results in a net decrease in funds in the year of £993,419.

Investments

At 31st December 2024, the Charity had investments of £10.4m. 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.

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 £18.5m. Of this, £0.1m is restricted for specific purposes - see Financial Statements note 16. Of the balance, £5.9m is represented by properties and other tangible fixed assets essential for the running of the Charity. The Trustees have designated another £11.2m to provide for Mission and Ministry works and Congregation Living needs. Details are given in note 15 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 3 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 2024

Objectives Set	Progress Review
To continue its commitment to the care of the Sisters in the Charity	On-going.
To facilitate and support the Sisters in undertaking the Charity's activities.	Activities and Achievements noted throughout Report.
To work collaboratively with other groups and agencies in responding to global and local needs.	On-going. See Activities and Achievements throughout Report.
To support and strengthen the Six Cluster Communities throughout the Charity.	Consolidate the development of Cluster Communities through Hub Meetings, Gatherings and review (with Kinharvie Institute support.)
To continue to review the Assisted Living provision, optimizing care and resources.	Sisters in Newry Convent relocated to a more suitable accommodation. Ongoing support process provided to the Sisters.
To put in place a process for move to new structural change within the Congregation.	All elements of management and admin working across the Congregation (plenary and/or bi-lateral) to harmonize practices where possible.
To ensure all members engage in discernment for Central Leadership and are familiar with the revised Constitutions.	Membership fully engaged. Revised Constitutions disseminated and all becoming versant in them.
To explore the setting up of a Mercy Education Trust for the Schools where we have Trusteeship	Work on this advanced and will be completed in 2025
To maintain the Safeguarding Structures at National and Provincial levels.	See page 33

Future Plans and Objectives for 2025

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 carry out 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.
- Continue to review the Assisted Living provision, enhance Health-Care co-ordination and ensure care support appropriate for each Sisters
- Work with Central Leadership in enacting the new Religious Constitution, help reflect the change from Province to Branch at every level and harmonise practices so they are consistent with the Congregation
- Convene an assembly of members for appointment of new Trustees.
- Attend to managing the portfolio of properties of the Charity.
- Establish a new administration base due to the impending closure of Offices at Clogher.
- Establish the Mercy NI Education Trust for the schools where Sisters have Trusteeship.
- Maintain the Safeguarding Structures at National and Provincial levels

Structure Governance & Management

GOVERNING DOCUMENT

The governing instrument of the Charity is the Constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy. Its revision was adopted by the Extraordinary General Chapter of the Congregation (August 1994) and approved by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life in Rome (April 1995). The Province is an unincorporated association. Within the governmental structure, there are a number of inter-connected units, one of which is the Northern Province, with personnel and resources that support its life, mission and membership. Every level of governance is co-operating in the enactment of the revised Constitutions.

APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEES (Provincial Leadership Team)

The Charity is governed by the Provincial Leader and Team, who are Sisters of Mercy elected for a six-year period by its members. The Provincial Leadership Team are the Trustees of the Charity, chosen for their expertise and skills and knowledge of the Congregation, its nature and mission. The Trustees receive no personal remuneration for their services as Trustees.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND DECISION-MAKING

The Charity Trustees meet regularly. Every six years the Charity convenes a 'Chapter', where Members 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. 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 is voluntarily donated to a common fund, administered through a Provincial Stewardship Office.

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP

As referenced throughout this Report, the Charity works in partnership and collaboration with ministry colleagues, statutory and voluntary bodies, and other religious congregations in serving local and wider communities.

RISK MANAGEMENT

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

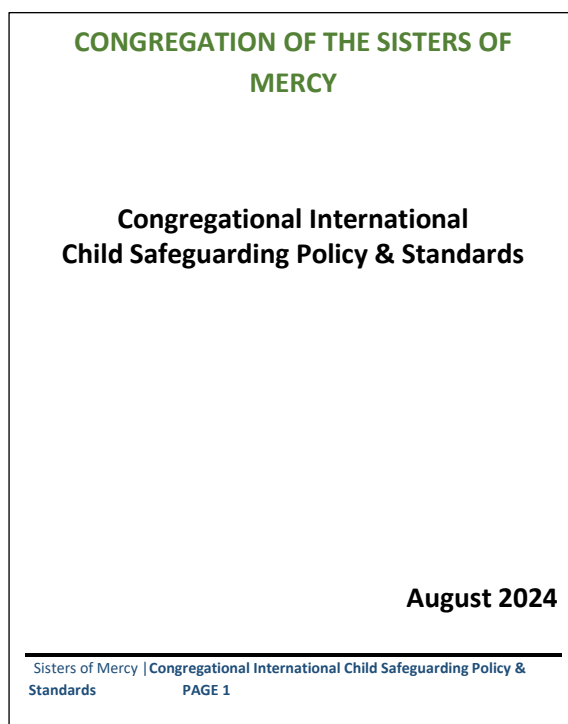
- Implementation of strategic plans for Chapter priorities.
- Training and support for Trustees and Staff.
- Financial and operational performance.
- Investment strategy.
- Insurance cover.
- Suitability and maintenance of buildings.
- Data backup procedures and security measures.
- Ministry activities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

POLICIES

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

The Human Resources Co-ordinator and attends to recruitment, employment protocols and procedures, staff induction, etc. Supervision and appraisals are regularly monitored and reviewed. The Charity fully complies with vetting obligations. The HR Co-ordinator 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. The Policy aims to encourage adequate awareness and best practice throughout the Charity, among members and employees, ensuring 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. The Trustees review annually the implementation of its Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.



Safeguarding

Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures

In June 2024, following a review of the 'Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016,' the National Board published the document 'A Safe and Welcoming Church, Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2024' with accompanying guidance. The Sisters of Mercy, Northern Province has adopted this Policy and are committed to implement and adhering to it.

Safeguarding Adults at Risk of Harm

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

The Charity adheres to the legislative requirements and the policy guidance in place in Northern Ireland. In 2019, the Charity's Policy and Procedures 'Safeguarding Adults at Risk of Harm' which is based on the Northern Ireland Policy, 'Adult Safeguarding, Prevention and Protection in Partnership, N.I.' was updated and disseminated widely to Sisters and staff living, ministering and working in Northern Ireland.

In 2023, the National Board disseminated the Adult Safeguarding Template Policy. The Congregational Policy was reviewed in line with the National Board Template Policy and was found to be compliant.

STANDARD – Leadership, Governance & Accountability

Accountability for ensuring best practice in safeguarding rests with the Congregational Leadership Team.

Following the Congregational Chapter of April 2024, the current Provinces will be dissolved in 2025 and become Branches of the Congregation. The Branch Leader will be accountable to the Congregational Leadership Team.

In early 2023, the internal structure of the Northern Province was reconfigured into six Cluster Communities. The Cluster Leaders facilitate the dissemination of information in relation to safeguarding practice, and assist with the compilation of the Annual Safeguarding Self-Audit process.

The Safeguarding Structure

A Safeguarding Committee of ten members who have relevant expertise and experience in safeguarding matters, promotes a culture of best practice in safeguarding and monitors the implementation of the Safeguarding Strategic Plan within the Charity. This Committee met on a quarterly basis during 2024.

The safeguarding structure is supported by safeguarding personnel who guide and monitor the implementation of Safeguarding Policies and Procedures within the Charity.

A Designated Liaison Person manages any concerns of a safeguarding nature and liaises, as required, with the statutory authorities and external agencies.

Trainers accredited by the National Board organise and deliver Safeguarding Children Training within the Charity.

A Human Resources/Health and Safety Co-ordinator ensures the maintenance of safe environments and supports the implementation of consistent recruitment practice within the Charity.

The Office Manager is responsible for co-ordinating the vetting process and maintaining the vetting database in accordance with Access NI requirements.

Administrative staff support the safeguarding structure by disseminating safeguarding material, maintaining filing systems and providing secretarial assistance.

Safeguarding Strategic Plan, 2024

The Safeguarding Strategic Plan, 2024, was drawn up in line with the revised Standards of the National Board's Policy '*A Safe and Welcoming Church, 2024.*'

The Plan aims to -

- i) maintain environments which are safe for children, adults at risk of harm and the adults who work with them.
- ii) ensure that the Charity has in place safeguarding arrangements which are in keeping with best practice and comply with legislative requirements.

Annual Safeguarding Self-Audit, 2024

A Review of Sisters in ministry with children and adults at risk was carried out within the Charity, during 2024.

The Annual Provincial Safeguarding Self-audit identified that Sisters are mainly involved in ministry with children through external organisations, such as, schools, parishes and voluntary organisations.

Sisters are involved in ministry with adults at risk through external organisations i.e. parishes, hospitals, nursing homes and voluntary organisations.

The Safeguarding Self-audit indicated that Sisters are increasingly involved internally in organising and managing care for Sisters who are deemed to be adults at risk and who require ongoing support and assistance.

STANDARD - Nurturing A Culture of Safeguarding

Recruitment & Selection Policy and Guidance

The Trustees recognise that all positions of employment require safe practice at every stage of the recruitment process. The Human Resources Co-ordinator supports and monitors recruitment practices within the Charity and reports to the Safeguarding Committee on a quarterly basis. The Recruitment Policies, Procedures and Staff Handbooks are regularly updated in collaboration with an external Human Resources Company and disseminated to Sisters and staff.

The Charity employs managers and staff who provide care and support for Sisters who require assistance with activities of daily living in the larger communities.

Staff are required by the Charity to attend Adult Safeguarding Awareness sessions and participate in additional relevant training online.

Vetting

The Vetting Policies and Procedures of the Charity reflect the legal requirements and guidance in place in Northern Ireland. Staff members were vetted through Access NI in Northern Ireland during 2024. A Verification of Identification Form is used to support the vetting process.

5 staff members were vetted through Access N.I. in Northern Ireland during 2024.

Safeguarding Induction

To ensure that staff in the Charity receive effective induction, a 'Safeguarding Information Pack is distributed to all staff on commencement of employment. The Pack includes relevant materials on safeguarding children and adults at risk of harm. The record of completion of the Safeguarding Induction process is signed by the employee and is retained in the employee's place of work.

Safeguarding Training - 2024

Safeguarding Children Training

Safeguarding personnel attended training events hosted by the National Board on the following dates -

15th April 2024 & 30th April 2024 04.24 - Induction on a '*Safe and Welcoming Church Policy*'.

28th May 2024 - Designated Liaison Person training.

15th October 2024 - Metropolitan Ecclesiastical Area Meeting.

Safeguarding Children Refresher Training: '*A Safe and Welcoming Church Policy*'

18th September 2024 - Safeguarding Children Refresher Training (Omagh) - attended by 23 Sisters and 3 Staff.

25th September 2024 - Safeguarding Children Refresher Training (Newry) - attended by 22 Sisters and 2 Staff.

Adult Safeguarding Information sessions

Since Adult Safeguarding information sessions were delivered by safeguarding personnel to staff and Sisters in Enniskillen, Strabane, Bessbrook and Portadown the previous year, in 2024, managers facilitated access for staff to relevant safeguarding information and material and online training sessions where appropriate.

Safeguarding Communication

The Trustees recognise the importance of ensuring that Sisters and staff are kept informed of developments in relation to safeguarding matters within the Charity. Safeguarding information continued to be disseminated during 2024 through meetings, Newsletters and correspondence.

A Safe and Welcoming Church Policy, 2024

On 11th June 2024, the Provincial Leader of the Northern Province, signed the 'Safeguarding Children Policy Statement' and the 'Commitment by the Church Authority' and forwarded both documents to the C.E.O. of the National Board.

On 25th June 2024, '*A Safe and Welcoming Church Policy, 2024*' was disseminated widely to Sisters living in Convents and larger communities.

The Child Safeguarding Posters have been updated in line with the revised Policy and distributed to the Cluster Leaders, for display in the Convents.

The Safeguarding Annual Report, 2024, was compiled and submitted to the Provincial Leadership Team.

In January 2025, the Annual Safeguarding Report, 2024, along with a copy of the letter to the C.E.O. of the National Board, was forwarded to the Congregational Leader of the Sisters of Mercy.

In January 2025, a letter was forwarded to the C.E.O. of the National Board to confirm that the Annual Safeguarding Self-audit, 2024, had been completed in the Province and the Confidential Report, 2024, of the Designated Liaison Person had been submitted to the Provincial Leader.

The Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry (N.I.)

The Historical Institutional (N.I) Act 2019, provided the legal framework for the establishment of the Historical Institutional Abuse Redress Board. The Board was established on the 31st of March 2020. Former residents of any residential institution in Northern Ireland were invited to apply to the Board for financial redress compensation.

The Northern Ireland Executive Office has indicated that the last date when applications will be accepted to the Scheme is 02.04.2025.

The HIA Redress is due to conclude in April 2025.

Reference and Administrative Details

Name of Charity	Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Northern Province
Charity Number	XR-8740 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	First Trust Bank Meadowbank House 143-145 Strand Road Derry BT48 7TN
Investment Managers	Setanta Asset Management Ltd Unigestion SA
Solicitors	Gerrard L. McGowan The Square Balbriggan Co Dublin K32 XN61

Independent Auditor's Report