



# BUILDING RESILIENCE IN A TIME OF CRISIS

Annual Report 2016

*Caring for homeless women and children in Cork*



# Introduction

## Building Resilience in a time of crisis

2016 has been a year of change and consolidation – in a context in which the demands on and challenges to our services has continued to grow.

On the changes – over 2016 we formally changed our name to Good Shepherd Cork, from Good Shepherd Services, recognising the focus of our organisation on the people of Cork; alongside this we also adopted a new brand identity to better communicate the essence of our work. Chief Executive Tony O’Riordan also announced his intention to retire and move on to new challenges. We therefore conducted a recruitment process over the autumn, welcoming a new CEO, Allison Aldred, in early 2017. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Tony for his huge contribution to the development of Good Shepherd Cork.

Throughout the year we worked to consolidate the quality and reach of the services we provide to women and children who are homeless or vulnerable to homelessness. We progressed plans for the re-development of Edel House through the planning process with An Bord Pleanála. We were delighted to see the fruits of this work in March 2017, fittingly on International Women’s Day, when planning permission was granted. The re-development of Edel House is long overdue.

As the housing crisis deepens, bringing more women and children into homeless services for longer periods of time, we see how critical it is to be able to empathetically support women and children to be resilient - to recover from the events that bring them into our services and to have the coping skills and confidence to make changes in their lives and to stay strong in the face of adversity. We are increasingly recognising the trauma of a drawn-out period of homelessness, particularly on children, and the importance of working to minimise this trauma.

As the following pages highlight, we have therefore consolidated our approaches to strengthening the resilience of the women and children using our services, with, for example, more staff trained in and regularly using Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) and the Wellness Recovery Action Planning approach (WRAP) with service

users. We have also extended our programme of activities to build resilience of children and young women in our services, including introducing an award-winning Youth Club in Edel House, in collaboration with Springboard.

Over 2016 we worked with over 770 women and children across our services and had the privilege of seeing many people taking steps, sometimes very modest, sometimes transformational, towards empowerment and the capacity to make positive changes in life.

The funding environment in which we operate continues to be highly challenging as the demand for our services grows whilst statutory donors have had little capacity to provide additional support and public fundraising continues to be difficult against the backdrop of low levels of trust in the Irish charity sector. We greatly appreciate the sustained support of our core funders: Tusla (the Child and Family Service agency), the HSE, Cork City Council and the Cork Education and Training Board; and the generosity of the people of Cork who appreciate and support our work. We look forward to seeing growth in our resources as the demand for our services continues to rise and as we demonstrate the valuable impact of these services on vulnerable individuals and families in Cork.

We can only do the impressive work outlined in this Annual Report because of the very considerable commitment and capacities of our staff, volunteers and members of the Board; and because of the courage of the women and children who use our services and who understand better than anyone the traumas of homelessness and the determination it takes to be resilient and move on to more settled and secure lives. Our sincere thanks and admiration to all concerned.

**Miriam De Barra, Chairperson,**

**Sister Jane Murphy, Mission Leader,**

**Allison Aldred, CEO.**

## Building Resilience in a Time of Crisis: the Good Shepherd Cork approach

At Good Shepherd Cork we work to address the roots causes of homelessness and social exclusion and we aim to break the cycle of homelessness through generations. We have always believed that the answer is more than simply a home, and as the housing crisis persists, the need to support women and children that we work with as well as our own staff, to build their resilience and wellbeing becomes more and more urgent.

Building resilience involves work on developing attributes that help us to 'bounce back' in the face of adversity. The 7C's model focuses on strengthening seven inter-related attributes of: Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, Contribution, Coping and Control.

Supporting women in our services to know they have power to take care of themselves, to make healthy choices, to communicate their feelings and to value themselves is at the heart of all our interventions.

Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) is one of the key approaches underpinning the work of Good Shepherd Cork and all our staff are continually trained in its' application. This approach fits perfectly with our aim of building resilience as it looks at building solutions rather than solving problems and finding client-led solutions, based on the clients' strengths, skills and resources. Believing that the client is the expert on their life it maintains a future focus rather than examining past problems.

We continue to offer WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) to our clients and to staff. WRAP is a self-designed prevention and wellness process that anyone can use to get well, stay well and make their life the way they want it to be. It pairs very well with SFBT as clients are helped to identify personal resources which can be used to develop client-led Action Plans that can help in dealing with challenging situations.



## Edel House: Emergency Accommodation

### *2016 was the fourth consecutive year of full occupancy for Edel House*

Edel House is perhaps the best known of Good Shepherd Cork's projects. Providing emergency accommodation for homeless women and children. In addition to providing emergency shelter, our staff work with women, empowering them to return to independent living as soon as possible.

Edel House is the only homeless shelter in Cork that can admit and care for children. The family section can accommodate 10 families. We have capacity for up to 18 single women.

### *Families are staying longer than ever as it becomes harder to source accommodation*

"In Edel House we see incredible resilience in the children and the adults that use our services. The people here face so many challenges daily and yet they get up and keep going. Even though they are stressed they manage to get together everything that is needed to move out of homelessness." – Colette Foster, Manager, Edel House.



Being homeless is hard work. The amount of appointments to attend, and paperwork that people must do to get themselves support and to find move on accommodation is a full-time job in itself. Keeping going is hard.

When women do get to view properties, they often face a lot of stigma and rejection and understandably it is difficult not to take this personally.

"They do get upset but they do not give up. We support women in this as it would be very difficult to get through homelessness alone."

There is still a huge stigma and shame attached to being homeless. This can prevent women from speaking out about their experience. It is vital that we work to maintain their self-esteem and to ensure they are treated with dignity and not made to bear the blame for the situation they find themselves in.



"We see the children up and ready in their uniforms each morning, often travelling long distances to school. The parents have them up and are doing their best to meet the children's needs."

There is great solidarity among the women in Edel House. They often welcome and support each other in a way that somebody not facing the extreme challenges of homelessness could not do."

A counselling psychologist provides counselling in Edel House and we have seen this to be very beneficial for women who are struggling. WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) has also been rolled out.



## Advocacy Group

In May 2016 women residents of Edel House set up an Advocacy Group, working together to draw attention to their situation.

They gained positive coverage in the local press and notably presented their case to the then Housing Minister, Simon

Coveney as he was preparing the government housing strategy that would become Rebuilding Ireland. Working together to make their voices heard was a positive, empowering experience for the women involved.



## Our staff

For staff working in Edel House, it can be difficult to stay positive when there are so many people in need of our service and so few move-on options.

We have engaged in resilience training. We identify a positive experience on a weekly basis at our team meeting; this has helped the team to remain resilient and engaged in the face of the housing crisis.

## Outreach work to families in Hotels and B&Bs

Our B&B Support work has shown that women in emergency B&B accommodation are struggling more than women in Edel House. The pressure and uncertainty of having to source B&B accommodation is immense and they have to do this over and over again. We have seen children helping their parents to find B&B accommodation the pressure of finding a place to live is not something that a child should have to bear.

Children find it very stressful to move between B&Bs on a regular basis. Families living in B&Bs have no access to cooking facilities and end up living beyond their means on expensive but nutritionally poor takeaway or instant food.

## Youth Club

*"Youthclub is excellent, awesome and cool"*

In our work in Edel House we have identified that the effect of homelessness on children can have a negative impact on self-esteem and the mental wellbeing of children. In response to this, in June 2016 the Youth Club was established in collaboration with Springboard

Youth Club is a space where children can be children, a safe space to play and take a step outside of their homeless experience where there is no pressure on them to conceal their homeless status from anybody. There is also the opportunity to identify children who we believe might need intensive, targeted support to bring them safely through their experience of homelessness. Up to 17 children resident in Edel House or in Hotels and B&Bs attend Youth Club every Tuesday.

*"I love the youth club because it's fun and we play with animals and race tractors."*

## Education and Development: Bruac

Good Shepherd Cork's Education & Development project at Bruac offers fresh educational opportunities to women who for a variety of reasons are unable to access mainstream education. Our approach is to place an equal emphasis on personal as well as educational development.



Our aim is to provide accessible education and developmental opportunities for highly marginalised teenage girls and young women. Our project builds skills and strengthens the confidence and

self-esteem of highly vulnerable learners, supporting them to become effective agents of their own positive change

***69% of learners completed the programme in Bruac that spanned the academic year of 2015/16 with 56% of learners achieving certification***

Formal QQI certification is just one measure of success used in Bruac. Just as important is the positive personal development and life building skills of our girls that contribute to supporting them to become resilient in a difficult world.

We were delighted that 100% of learners engaged in Sexual Health training and 75% took part in the WRAP programme.

Bruac instils in its learners positivity, belief in their own capacity to bring about change, and confidence in their decision-making capacity when in a crisis. Each girl will experience care and a sense of belonging during her time as a learner, gaining strength from that experience able to leave us, secure in the knowledge that she is worthy of care, dignity and respect.

We see our learners build their resilience and their ability to keep going. Their capacity to pull on positive reserves and strengths to bring them through the crisis is a source of pride and inspiration to staff.

We create the learning goals and space necessary for success. This approach is not conducive to timelines and deadlines. It is hugely dependant on the positive relationships that are developed between the learners and staff and this needs to happen organically.



Testament to the success of our approach are the six extremely vulnerable women who presented at Bruac in 2016 with severe mental health issues. For varying lengths of time these girls experienced the sense of belonging, achievement and care in a learning environment that we believe would not have been possible at any other centre or programme for that individual at that time.

In addition to our formal programmes, Bruac's nail art programme came into its own this year with 15 girls and women achieving Nail Art certification.

Five of these women came to Bruac specifically to take part in the nail art programme and were referred from local mental health services.

## Support & Advocacy

***The Support & Advocacy Team received 60 new referrals in 2016.  
In total we supported 191 adults and 195 children during 2016.***

Support work offered by the Support & Advocacy Service is tailored to each woman and child presenting and their individual needs. The work is client led thus empowering women to play an active role in their progress. The team offer a flexible approach and all support is delivered in a confidential and non-judgmental manner.

The number of contacts the team had with clients increased significantly in 2016 compared to the previous year.

***In 2016 we had a total of 6424 phone contacts with clients and 1210 face to face contacts.***

Homelessness continues to affect an ever-increasing number of women and children. Those affected require support across a broad range of issues. Lack of affordable and accessible housing and cuts to other services have placed a higher demand on our services.

***Helping the women and children we support to build resilience has never been more crucial to our work.***

Our clients are dealing with multiple adverse issues, many of which are outside of their control, such as the difficulty accessing appropriate and affordable accommodation; trying to manage their finances and coping with loneliness and social isolation. These issues have a detrimental effect on both mental and physical health and family relationships. Helping the women and children to build resilience is one of the major tools we use in helping them to cope with these issues and live more fulfilled lives.

Through our individual and group work we aim to help our clients acquire the building blocks of resilience so that they know: they **have** supports and supportive people around them to promote resilience; they **are** in possession of inner strengths of confidence, self-esteem and responsibility; they **can** use and develop skills and make use of supports.

***The majority of our clients are now successfully maintaining tenancies and are settled happily in their communities.***

One particular family we helped in 2016 were referred to us under particularly traumatic circumstances. Three young children were residing in a B&B and being cared for by their father following the recent death of their mother. The father had been residing in another country until recently and their current living situation severely compounded their difficulties in coping with both their grief and loss and their new family dynamics. With a lot of support the family are now settled and living happily in their new home. The children said one of the best things about finally having a new home, was the knowledge that they would be returning to the same school for the first time in their lives.



Ultimately, everybody needs social supports to thrive and helping the women and children we work with to build resilience can be the difference as they navigate their way out of homelessness.



Designated project workers currently support between 90 – 100 women every month, with 10% of this figure engaging with our service for six years or more.

The Support & Advocacy Service meet clients where they are at and through our individual and group work, we remain in our clients' corner, working in partnership with them to continually lift, empower and help them move in the right direction, for as long as they wish to remain connected.

## Support & Advocacy Children's Summer Scheme

The Summer Scheme took place over two weeks in July. The first week catered for children in the 5 – 9 yr age range. The second week catered for children in the 10 – 12 yr age group. There was great interest in the scheme from both children and parents with approximately 24 children attending in total.

Each week was planned and co-ordinated by staff to ensure a variety of both indoor and outdoor activities that were appropriate for the different age categories. All participants received breakfast, lunch and snacks on each day.

The scheme comprised a mixture of day trips and in-house activities including: Arts and Crafts; Board Games; Bowling; Quasar; Sports Activities; Trip to Cork Jail; Trip to Fitzgerald Park; Trip to Fota Wildlife Park; Trip to the Donkey Sanctuary; Trip to Garryvoe Beach with BBQ.

## Residential Care for Teenage Girls:

### Riverview

Good Shepherd Cork offer residential accommodation to teenage girls between the ages of 15 and 19 yrs, who are out of home. Each girl has their own room, there is a communal kitchen and living room and staff are present 24 hours a day.



*Our ultimate goal is to help girls achieve greater resilience & wellbeing*

Key workers engage on a one to one basis with each girl to help them to resolve issues and to move on to independent living or to return to their families, whichever is most appropriate.

In 2016 we had 18 admissions, 14 under 18 yr placements, 4 over 18 yr placements. We saw residents demonstrate incredible resilience, settling quickly into work or education following their admission. Despite the fact that many had come to Riverview as a result of a crisis, they quickly turned this around and made huge efforts to engineer a brighter and better future for themselves.

Many of the residents conscientiously and successfully attended full time education (both secondary and third level) whilst others gained skills through employment and apprenticeships. The residents found a stability and support, both from staff and fellow residents, which allowed them to escape the chaos and turmoil in their lives and turn their skills and talents to something more productive.



Through our solution focused model of care, staff supported residents in turning their attention towards making positive changes to bring them closer to their goals.

Through regular meetings with social workers and by involving the residents in the care plan process, moving onto their next placement was tailored to meet their needs. This ensured successful and long-term stability for their future.

Establishing independent living skills and equipping residents with the confidence to know that they can go it alone, gives them a sense of self that in many cases has been shaken by their past and opens them up to positive options.

Staff, through their solution focused approach, support families and professionals in highlighting the successful aspects of the young person's placement and turn their attention away from the few negatives which are always magnified by circumstantial upheaval.

***A huge challenge to providing appropriate care for our residents is access to services, particularly mental health services, for an age group which is not young enough to be eligible for child services but too young for adult admissions.***

Maintaining staff supports and strengths is a huge part of the continuing care approach that is taken in Riverview. We try to care for each individual in the most appropriate way whilst maintaining a sense of stability for all residents.

Very often geographical isolation and emotional detachment translate as loneliness and rejection for a young person. Through solution focused approaches and involving family in the care plan process, Riverview offers

respite and the chance to see problems in a new light and deal with them on neutral grounds.

Young people are invited to give their input into the planning process and are involved in how they manage and maintain their placement. They have full transparency in the care plan process and no decision is made without their input, where appropriate.

Staffs are very supportive of each other and through supervision, handovers and team meetings successfully deal with all crises within the unit with a collective risk assessment ensuring a satisfactory outcome for those involved. However, the lack of suitable and available move on placements often hinders the continuum of care and is frustrating for staff and service users.

Riverview works in partnership with Tusla, and we are regularly inspected. This ensures we meet the standardised national approach to care.

### **Case Study 1 – Client Y**

*Client Y came to the services as an emergency admission following a call from Gardaí to the out of hours Social Worker. From the outset she was a very capable, independent young person with high hopes and aspirations despite finding herself in a crisis situation. She began a college course shortly after moving to Riverview and was delighted when offered an apprenticeship as a result of a work placement. She did very long hours during the festive season, yet still managed to maintain her placement obligations; attending meetings; doing weekly shopping and doing her own laundry/cleaning. She left here to move onto a more suitable, longer term placement and has since renewed and strengthened family contact and managed to keep her job and further training.*

## Supported Housing

The Good Shepherd Sisters have undertaken to transfer ownership of Baile an Aoire housing complex to Good Shepherd Cork. This transfer is currently in legal process and the Manager of Baile an Aoire is working alongside the Senior Management Team of Good Shepherd Cork to prepare for the future.



Baile An Aoire was opened in July 1994 and is a voluntary sheltered housing complex which responds to the needs of homeless women. Many of the older residents currently living in Baile An Aoire have at one time in their lives lived alongside the Good Shepherd sisters either in Cork, Waterford or Limerick. A significant number of the residents have lived all of their lives in care.

Each resident has her own accommodation with access to communal facilities including the provision of meals, occupational therapy, day care and recreation.

Baile An Aoire has developed over the last number of years, as the houses became vacant due to death or move to nursing home, the community profile has changed and some younger residents have moved into Baile An Aoire.

2016 was a year of continuing development in Baile An Aoire. Conscious of the historical background that each resident has experienced our continuing focus is to progress away from institutional-type approaches to a more customised and client-centred service provision. The service is evolving to support each resident's individual choices and decisions so that a greater quality life is available and lived.

As part of the overall service development, empty houses were refurbished and new women took up residence. Referrals are received from a range of service providers including; Good Shepherd Cork, Sophia Housing, MNÁ Feasa, North Lee Mental Health, RESPOND Sheltered Housing, WELLSPRINGS, the Brothers of Charity and social workers from the Mercy Hospital.

## Transitional Housing

Good Shepherd Cork have been working collaboratively with City Council to support families who are homeless.

In late 2016, two apartments were made available to Good Shepherd Cork in the High St area of the city. These apartments provide transitional housing for two families who have been homeless for a number of months.

This development brought a great Christmas present, in December 2016, to two families who had been living in Edel House or Bed & Breakfast accommodation. This accommodation is an extension of our temporary emergency accommodation offering which is provided for those who lose their home.

## Transparency and Governance

Good Shepherd Cork supports over 770 women and children each year. We are committed to operating to the highest standards of person-centred practice, good management and corporate governance.

We operate in five different locations in our city to support women and children who are homeless or at risk and work to end homelessness in Cork.

In 2016 the board of Good Shepherd Cork committed to undertake the journey to full compliance with the Code of Governance for voluntary organisations. Once compliant, Good Shepherd Cork will have in place the 'Triple Lock' for best practice: the Governance Code, ICTR standards for fundraising and SORP compliant accounting.

We have clear work standards and we are transparent and accountable in all that we do. Our annual accounts are audited by Moore Stephens Nathans and are published on our website each year. We work to best practice service-level agreements developed in conjunction with our major funders and subscribe to a number of well recognised codes of practice.

Our accounts are prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice for Charities (SORP) and information regarding salaries and expenditure is identified within them as required.

The Board of Directors is made up of eight highly experienced members with relevant and diverse professional skills, supported by a committed Company Secretary.

All of our Directors are volunteers and do not receive any remuneration or expenses for devoting their time and talents to our service. We are extremely grateful to them for their commitment and generosity with their time and talents.

Our Board of Directors: The Directors who served on our Board during 2016 were: Ms Miriam De Barra (chair); Mr Garvan Corkery; Ms Ann Marie O'Sullivan; Ms Brigitte Mintern; Sr Ethna McDermott; Mr Paddy Caffrey; Mr Brendan Lenihan; Mr Jim Mulcahy. Sr Jane Murphy served as Company Secretary.

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Income	Fundraising	Grants	Rent	Total
Tusla		1,304,434		1,304,434
Rents			54,737	54,737
Fundraising	112,738			112,738
HSE		503,876		503,876
City Council		278,145		278,145
Amortisation		14,358		14,358
CETB		108,352		108,352
YPSF		44,415		44,415
Sundry Income		28,132		28,132
<b>Total</b>	<b>112,738</b>	<b>2,281,712</b>	<b>54,737</b>	<b>2,449,187</b>
Percentages	4.60%	93.20%	2.20%	100%

Expenditure	
Staff costs	2,084,610
Depreciation & impairment	55,822
Insurance	27,500
Light & Heat	32,634
Repairs & Maintenance	73,973
Office expenses	8,479
Crafts	999
Recreation	11,658
Printing, postage & stationery	21,816
Telephone	9,914
Motor & Travel	11,843
U/18's expenses	81
Client care	16,624
Household expenses	33,173
Sundry expenses	15,260
Course Materials	11,509
Support Costs	59,248
Bad and doubtful debt	960
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,476,103</b>

Our full audited accounts for 2016 and for previous years are available on our website: [www.goodshepherdccork.ie](http://www.goodshepherdccork.ie)