



*First a Home,
then Hope*

BUILDING HOPE

Good Shepherd Cork Strategic Plan 2022 - 2025

Summary version

July 2022

Introduction

Good Shepherd Cork is an independent, Cork-based charity. We provide emergency and longer-term accommodation, education, outreach and support services for women, children and families across Cork City and County who are homeless or vulnerable to homelessness.

This strategic plan covers the period 2022 – 2025. It sets out, over that period, our ambitions for Good Shepherd Cork and the women, children and families we work with.

In late May 2022, according to the Department of Housing¹, there were 72 families (including 105 adults and 109 children) homeless in Cork and Kerry. Typically over 80% of this number (approx. 60 families) would be homeless in Cork. (These numbers excludes families in the 12 units of DV refuge accommodation currently available in Cork and Kerry).

Of the approximately 60 families homeless in Cork in late May, Good Shepherd Cork was accommodating, or supporting in B&B emergency accommodation, 75%.

This Plan assumes that the homelessness crisis will not be resolved in the plan period and that therefore numbers of women, children and families homeless in Cork City and County over the plan period will be likely to increase and that additional emergency accommodation, including DV refuge units and longer-term social/supported housing, will be needed.

The Plan sets out the outcomes that Good Shepherd Cork wants to deliver, by the end of the plan period, for the women, children and families who are homeless or vulnerable to homelessness in Cork City and County and, in broad terms, the objectives and activities required to deliver these outcomes.

However, being able to deliver the ambitions of this plan is very much dependent on the support of our statutory funders investing in additional services and supports for the women, children and families we serve.

Whilst these plans are ambitious, major items of investment set out in the Plan (including the development of DV refuge accommodation, social/sheltered housing for women and families who are vulnerable and additional family hub facilities) are consistent with current policy priorities of the government and are already the subject of communication between GSC and relevant agencies.

Other plan ambitions (including additional educational and therapeutic supports for women and children in our residential services and additional supports for women and families in B&B accommodation, those in the community in need of ongoing assistance to avoid a return to homelessness and supports for non-nationals and minority groups who are homeless or vulnerable to homelessness) are likely to be highly dependent on securing additional philanthropic support. We will prioritise our grant funding and other fundraising efforts on behalf of these groups. We will also pursue relevant opportunities to advocate for these services and supports being funded by statutory agencies, as we see very clearly the urgent need for additional services and supports for these groups.

The change we want to bring about

By the end of the plan period, in late 2025, we want to be delivering the following outcomes (changes) in the lives of the people who avail of our services:

- Women, children and families in Cork who are homeless or out of home have access to a safe place to stay with quality, trauma informed supports and are assisted to move on to suitable long-term accommodation.

¹ Homeless Report May 2022, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

- Children in our services build resilience (and so are better equipped to deal with the trauma of homelessness and the trauma that may have brought them into homeless services) so reducing the likelihood of a return to homelessness.
- Women, children and families staying in B&Bs and other private emergency accommodation have access to basic necessities and realistic supports to deal with the many challenges of this type of accommodation and to move on to more suitable accommodation.
- Women, children and families supported by GSC in the community have an enhanced quality of life and avoid a return to homelessness.
- Service users who are non-nationals, or from minority groups in Ireland, are assisted, including through language and literacy supports, to better access relevant internal and external services and supports and, as appropriate, improve their integration into Irish society.

Across all outcomes we give particular consideration to the needs of service users (adult and child):

- with mental health and/or or addiction challenges
- needing support with education and personal development/social isolation
- who have experienced domestic/sexual violence
- with special needs
- who have experienced trauma.

As an organisation we understand that we can only deliver positives change for our services users through the committed efforts of an excellent team of staff. Therefore a priority over the plan period is to invest sufficiently in all staff and ensure that staff feel appropriately valued and rewarded, whilst strengthening our structure and systems to better support staff.

Over the plan period, GSC is committed to being responsive to the evolving needs of service users and to providing top quality, trauma-informed care across all services in line with best practices and standards.

In order to deliver these outcomes we will:

As per our mission, continue to do what we do well – *through trusting relationships, to support women, children and families across our services to live more empowered, fulfilled and self-sufficient lives.*

And continue to operate and develop our existing services to provide high quality supports to all service users.

We aim to deliver these plan outcomes through investment in the following objectives. However, as per above, these objectives are dependent on being able to secure additional long-term funding from our statutory funders, notably Tusla, HSE and Department of Housing (via City Council); maintaining current levels of resourcing from CETB and strengthening our fundraising with trusts, foundations, corporates and individuals.

We will work to build these relationships and secure additional income throughout the plan period.

Service Development Objectives

1: Provide short and long-term accommodation options with adequate supports, for women, children and families who are homeless or out of home. including:

- Make best use of the fully re-developed Edel House and our other residential services.
- Develop our Making Change project to support residents across all residential services.

- Build professional health expertise in GSC (including mental health and addiction supports), in collaboration with HSE, and strengthen the integration of health and social care supports for service users, using the care and case management approach where appropriate.
- Develop, in combination with Cuanlee Refuge, a state of the art DV refuge on the Turners Cross site in Cork City, building on the expertise and reputation of both agencies.
- Explore opportunities to develop DV refuge facilities in Cork County in association with other DV agencies.
- Develop, including on the Turners Cross site, transitional and long-term housing options for women, children and families who are marginalised.
- Continue to deliver a quality service in Riverview and develop supported accommodation for young women (18 yrs +), including care leavers.
- Continue to provide service users with a safe place to stay and range of quality supports in Redclyffe and develop additional family hub resources, in collaboration with local councils, as requested.
- Continue to deliver a quality service in Baile an Aoire and develop and implement a clear vision for the future of the community living there.

2: Improve outcomes for children in our services, particularly those affected by adverse childhood experiences, and ultimately reduce the likelihood of children returning to our services as adults.

- Extend our School Connect project to ensure all school-age children in our services are effectively supported to attend and perform well in school.
- Recruit additional Child & Youth workers and a role to strengthen coordination of supports to children in our services.
- Work towards all children in our services having an individual care plan and carefully targeted support with clear goals/targets and a process for monitoring progress.
- Conduct a Feasibility Study into the benefits and challenges of providing a childcare service within our premises.
- Ensure child-friendly (and trauma-informed) environments in all of our services.
- Provide relevant training to front line staff to better support the needs of children and parents.
- Develop our advocacy work on behalf of children in our services.
- Build links with external agencies with the skills and resources to support children in our services.

3: Provide women, children and families in B&Bs and other private emergency accommodation with additional supports to deal with the considerable challenges of staying in this type of accommodation and to move on to more suitable accommodation.

- Expand and develop our B&B Outreach Support team in line with demands on the team including resources to work with children in B&Bs.
- Develop a safe and convenient drop-in service for women and families in B&Bs to include access to laundry, cooking and other relevant facilities.
- Provide ESL/translation supports to service users who do not have fluent English.
- Develop an advocacy strategy for our B&B work – highlighting the unacceptable situation faced by many women, children and families staying in B&Bs.
- As above, explore the possibility of developing family hub accommodation in Cork County so potentially reducing the number of families in B&Bs.
- Provide additional training for the B&B team to be able to better support service users with complex needs.

4: Ensure women and families moving on from emergency accommodation receive adequate supports to settle well and remain in long-term accommodation in the community.

- Secure long-term funding for additional roles in the Support & Advocacy team, including a 'step-down' role offering more group/social supports, and to support tenants living in Baile an Aoire.
- Develop our Making Change project including support to residents in emergency accommodation to better prepare people for independent living.
- Build links with local services within the community (including Community Resource Centres, Family Resource Centres, Youth Services etc) to facilitate service users to access community-based resources.
- Find creative ways to support service users that are increasingly being housed in more remote areas with few services or transport links.
- Expand the range (and location) of community/informal courses and other learning opportunities we can offer, including ESL and literacy supports.
- Provide more evening/weekend/social supports for service-users in the community to help tackle social isolation.
- Strengthen co-ordination arrangements across the supports delivered to service users in the community, avoiding duplication or gaps, ensuring consistency of approach and quality standards (e.g. Care and Case Management approach) and a more 'joined up' engagement with external providers.

5. Improve outcomes, in our own services and in interactions with external agencies, for service users who are non-nationals or from minority groups - with a particular focus on English language and literacy skills.

- Conduct a review of translation needs within each service and external resources available.
- Secure resources for each service to have adequate translation supports.
- Provide training to GSC staff in effectively using translators/translation services.
- Build closer links with agencies representing/supporting non-nationals and minority groups (TVG, NASC, Cork Migrant Centre etc.) so as to be able to refer people to relevant agencies for supports.
- Review available literacy supports from external providers (e.g. NALA, Cork ETB, Cork Literacy Centre).
- Assist service users with equipment/connections for accessing online supports.
- Identify agencies that can provide support to families struggling with cultural expectations in Ireland different from their own cultural experiences. Help parents clearly understand expectations within our own services.
- Encourage improved arrangements for sharing information and for coordinating inputs between GSC services. (This may include an online information resource).
- Provide more educational supports to children in our services, including language and literacy supports.

Organisational Development Objective

In order to deliver on the above service development objectives we will:

Make sufficient investment in our staff, skills, structure and systems across Good Shepherd Cork to ensure professional and trauma informed development of our people, service and ethos, in line with best practise and relevant standards.

- Review terms and conditions of staff against comparator agencies. Where possible, provide longer-term contracts.
- Invest in additional management capacity to ensure space for strategic thinking, adequate support for all staff and meeting compliance requirements.
- Strengthen arrangements for consulting with and receiving feedback from service users and use this learning to inform the development of our services.
- Develop and implement a Trauma Informed strategy across all services.
- Develop and implement a Training Strategy to support continuous professional development of all our staff.
- Review supervision arrangements and strengthen as relevant.
- Further develop HR, financial administrative and data collection arrangements (including addressing concerns re duplication of inputs).
- Begin to widen diversity within GSC staff team to better reflect our service users.
- Build on GSConnect to develop our capacity to assess the outcomes and impact of our work.
- Engage in further research and advocacy, in collaboration with others.
- Review and consider re-branding Good Shepherd Cork, including to reflect the potential refuge development at Turners Cross.
- Invest in additional capacity to build an engaged volunteer base and continue to expand our fundraising operation, including building our profile and visibility, including through social media, across Cork City and County.
- Develop a strategy to become a responsible environmental actor.

Resourcing the plan

We are assuming a significant growth in income based on a major increase in funding from our statutory donors in response to new services coming on-stream, including the DV refuge and social/supported housing on the Turners Cross site and a new residential development in Cork County.

We will continue to invest in building relationships and inspiring confidence in our core funders – Tusla, HSE, Cork City Council, Cork ETB (and any agency taking over responsibility from Tusla for funding domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services).

We recognise the importance of being able to deliver and demonstrate positive outcomes in this regard and will continue to invest in the design and implementation of realistic systems for monitoring and evaluating the outcomes and impacts of our work.

In 2021, fundraising and grant (non-statutory) income came from:

- Grants from trusts, foundations and philanthropic donors
- Corporate donations, including through charity partnerships
- Standing orders and individual unsolicited donations

Going forward we intend to continue to build fundraising income through:

- Nurturing of relationships with existing donors and supporters
- Recruiting additional capacity for fundraising/communications work
- Submission of quality applications to relevant 'call for proposals' of donors underpinned by strengthened monitoring and evaluation of positive results
- Further building charity partnerships with corporates and other corporate outreach and promoting corporate mentoring opportunities
- Developing a programme of volunteer-led fundraising events and collections
- Refreshing our brand and strengthening our visibility and public profile.

Risks and assumptions

Good Shepherd Cork is committed to the protection and wellbeing of the women, children and families we support and of Good Shepherd staff and volunteers; as well as demonstrating openness and transparency in all matters relating to management and legislative compliance. To this end, Good Shepherd Cork is committed to promoting a culture of risk management based on best practice.

We have in place a risk management process with prioritised risks and risk management actions fully documented in the GSC Risk Register (available separately) and reviewed regularly.

Key assumptions:

- That the homelessness crisis will not be resolved in the plan period.
- That Tusla, HSE, Cork City Council and CETB continue to have resources available to develop and deliver services for women, children and families who are homeless, out of home or vulnerable to homelessness.
- That our statutory funders continue to recognise the value of working with providers in the voluntary and community sector.
- That we can recruit and retain sufficient, well qualified and experienced staff, committed to the ethos of Good Shepherd Cork, to be able to deliver existing and proposed new services to the highest quality standards.
- That our funders recognise that we need to make sufficient investment in our management and administrative capacity to be able to ensure quality services and meet all regulatory and compliance requirements.
- That we will not face another pandemic or other major external shock.

Monitoring Progress

We will use these outcomes and objectives to inform our organisational Risk Register and annual budget as well as annual service-level plans and performance objectives of staff across Good Shepherd Cork services.

We will implement an annual review of progress against the outcomes and objectives of this Plan as part of our annual monitoring processes.