



*Sophia*

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*Annual Report 2011*

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Front cover photo:  
Children playing at Sophia's Cork Street Residence.

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Liam Brazil, Chairman and  
Sinéad McCallion, Administration Manager.

## 2011 – *A year of challenges and achievements for Sophia*

I am pleased, indeed privileged, to be in a position to present our annual report for 2011. The Annual Report includes a report from our joint chief executives, a finance report and other information on Sophia's activities for the period under review.

Sophia is all about making positive changes in the lives of those who are most vulnerable and on the margins of society. With the on-going economic difficulties and cutbacks in state funding, 2011 was another busy and challenging year for Sophia. We continued to support a growing number of families and individuals through the provision of various services and housing at various locations around the country.

2011 was also a rewarding year for Sophia. We sustained and developed high quality services in our projects around the country. A major new development in 2011 was our new project in Tubbercurry on a site donated by the Marist Sisters. The project is also in partnership with Wisdom Services, Cregg House Sligo. Sophia has completed the first part of the project which is accommodation in three houses for up to 24 persons with intellectual disability. The project is due for completion in 2012.

During 2011 we engaged extensively with the Dublin Region Homeless Executive on the reconfiguration of services for homeless people. It was agreed that Sophia would be designated as a provider of long-term supported housing and support services for people with complex needs who need high levels of support to maintain their tenancy. Formal Service Level Agreements are now in place with the Dublin Region Homeless Executive on the service that Sophia delivers. As will be seen throughout this report, it is clear that our managers and staff have risen to the challenge of adapting our services, often in striking and creative ways.

Sophia also continued its collaboration with other charities in the sector and with key state agencies. I would like to thank them for their efforts and contributions and to reassure them that collaboration remains a key value and aspiration for Sophia.

In 2011, under the stewardship of the previous Chairperson, Ms Pat Reda, Sophia began several initiatives to strengthen how the organisation functions and is funded. We looked at clarifying our own position within the sector in the light of the reconfigured services and designed a new logo which reflects what we stand for. Planning for a new strategic plan was begun; this is due to be published by end 2012. It will set out our future work and how we will plan to meet the undoubted challenges ahead while delivering on our mission.

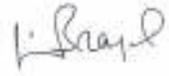
“Sophia also continued its collaboration with other charities in the sector and with key state agencies. I would like to thank them for their efforts and contributions and to reassure them that collaboration remains a key value and aspiration for Sophia.”

**Sophia**

Chairperson's Report

On behalf of the board of Sophia, I would like to thank Pat for all of her hard work, commitment and support while chairperson.

I would also like to thank my colleagues on the board of Sophia, who each bring a range of skills and expertise, for their support and commitment to the organisation. Lastly, but by no means least, I would like to thank our excellent staff, under the stewardship of Jean Quinn and Eamonn Martin, for all of their hard work and unwavering commitment to Sophia.



**Liam Brazil**  
Chairman



Eamonn Martin and Jean Quinn,  
Joint CEO's.

# Increased demand for services against a background of reduced funding

## **Report on Project Developments**

During 2011 Sophia continued to put our tenants to the forefront of all our considerations. As the year progressed, we found that the demand for our services increased and we are now working with people whose needs are more complex and consequently, a higher degree of support is required. The demand is due to the economic downturn but also an increase in the number presenting with drug and alcohol addiction. The increased availability of drugs is a very worrying trend.

Once again, our work was done against a background of reduced revenue funding. In common with similar organisations in the sector we experience the pressures in this area. Reductions, without warning or discussion, in the level of grants make for great difficulty in planning and budgeting. Cuts in training budgets has limited the amount of training our staff receive, which has a knock on effect on the level of services we can provide, particularly in the area of child care. To provide a more specialised service to the families and children supported by Sophia we need to employ more suitably experienced child care staff but we are unable to do so due to lack of funding.

We are continuing to provide support and accommodation in our locations across the country in approximately 200 units of accommodation. We continued during the year to explore new opportunities and collaborations. There was

significant progress in the Tubbercurry project on a site donated by the Marist Sisters. The first 24 units of accommodation will be reserved for people with an intellectual disability. Sophia will work with The Wisdom Services, Cregg House Sligo and the HSE on the project. The remaining refurbishment of the old convent building is well underway and is scheduled for completion in 2012.

The proposed project at Artane with the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary did not get the final go-ahead to proceed from the Department of Environment, but we are optimistic that the proposals for the development of the Carmelite site in Moate, Co Westmeath, will proceed.

The Wisdom Centre in Cork St, Dublin, offers individuals and groups opportunities to gather in a tranquil, creative environment and to step away from a busy life for some time. The increased use of the Centre during the year is evidence that people find a welcome there.

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### **Social Partners**

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Sophia works in collaboration with Mercy Law Centre who provide a pro bono service for tenants particularly those living in social housing accommodation. Many would not have access to legal services without their assistance.

Partners in Faith have worked in partnership with Sophia for many years. They work with adults on their personal and social development from a faith perspective. They provide opportunities for our tenants to mark important events in their lives with rituals and celebrations throughout the year.

In March we had a visit from the International Council of the Congregation of the Daughters of Wisdom. The sisters from around the world had a presentation on the work of Sophia. They had a reception with President Mary McAleese in Áras an Uachtaráin during their visit to Ireland.

*“The Wisdom Centre in Cork Street, Dublin, offers individuals and groups opportunities to gather in a tranquil, creative environment and to step away from a busy life for some time. The increased use of the Centre during the year is evidence that people find a welcome there.”*

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## **Our Thanks**

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Our Chairperson and Board members continued with their valued support and advice throughout the year. Their enthusiasm and dedication is very much appreciated.

In all our work we must acknowledge the dedication of our staff in all areas. Despite increased pressure on services, all staff have consistently worked with loyalty and commitment. To all our staff and many volunteers we offer our thanks.

We collaborate with the training and employment agency FÁS through the Community Employment Scheme. The scheme provides tremendous benefits to Sophia in so many areas. Equally, each person who works in Sophia as part of the scheme gets the opportunity to develop real skills and work experience. Thanks to one and all.

Our thanks are due to the support we have received during the year from the Dublin Region Homeless Executive, the Local Authorities and the Health Service Executive.

We are grateful to the many friends of Sophia who help us in a variety of ways – through volunteering their time and talents and assisting in fundraising efforts. We thank our donors and benefactors who have been so generous in their support over the years.

There are challenges ahead for Sophia, but the well-being of our service users and tenants will always be to the forefront of our activities. We will continue to seek new ways to foster this aim.



**Jean Quinn**  
Joint CEO



**Eamonn Martin**  
Joint CEO

# The Dream Come True

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**Jean Quinn, outgoing joint CEO and founder of Sophia, talks about the inspiration for Sophia and how the holistic approach to working with people began to take shape over the past 13 years.**

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When I was studying and working in the USA in the 1990s, I had the opportunity to really consider the question: "What do people who experience homelessness really need?" It seems like a simple question with a simple answer: they need housing. As experience and research has shown time and again, the causes of homelessness, and the reason people can remain homeless for many years, are complex. Losing your home often comes at the end of a long chain of events leading to the downward spiral of homelessness. Getting caught up in drug and alcohol addiction, fleeing domestic violence, finding it difficult to cope with daily living because of a disability or mental health problem or leaving the care system without any back-up or resources are just some of the challenges people face in finding and maintaining a home.

Providing people with the 'bricks and mortar' of a house is only part of the solution. People who experience homelessness need the opportunity to rebuild their lives. What is needed is a holistic approach to providing services. And so my question was evolving: "What might a holistic approach of providing services to people who have become homeless look like?"

The first thought was "to provide a safe space". A space that was literally physically safe and secure, but also a space where people had the opportunity to get their life back into balance. A place that, with help and support, people would find their own way forward, their own wisdom and so have more control over their own lives. The Sophia approach is to work with people 'where they are at'. Nothing would be forced. Sometimes people are only ready to take small steps towards greater responsibility and independence and to move slowly towards the goal of having a stable home environment. Others may need only a minimum amount of support. The way is to work with each person or family so that they could see a clear way forward to breaking the cycle of homelessness. Our job is to provide all the necessary supports for them to the best of our ability, through working with other agencies and partners.

## **Sophia**

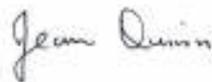
### The Dream Come True

I felt it was important to put more emphasis on working with the children of families who become homeless. Working holistically means working with the family as a unit. Creating a nurturing space specifically for children has proven to be an essential part of the service that Sophia provides. When we work with the adults and the children together, everyone benefits.

Providing space for people to draw breath and to have a quiet space became part of the quest. As people we need to have time to reflect on our lives and to give space to our mind, body and spirit. Our Wisdom Centres, meditative and gathering spaces within the housing complexes are open to Sophia tenants and community groups to use.

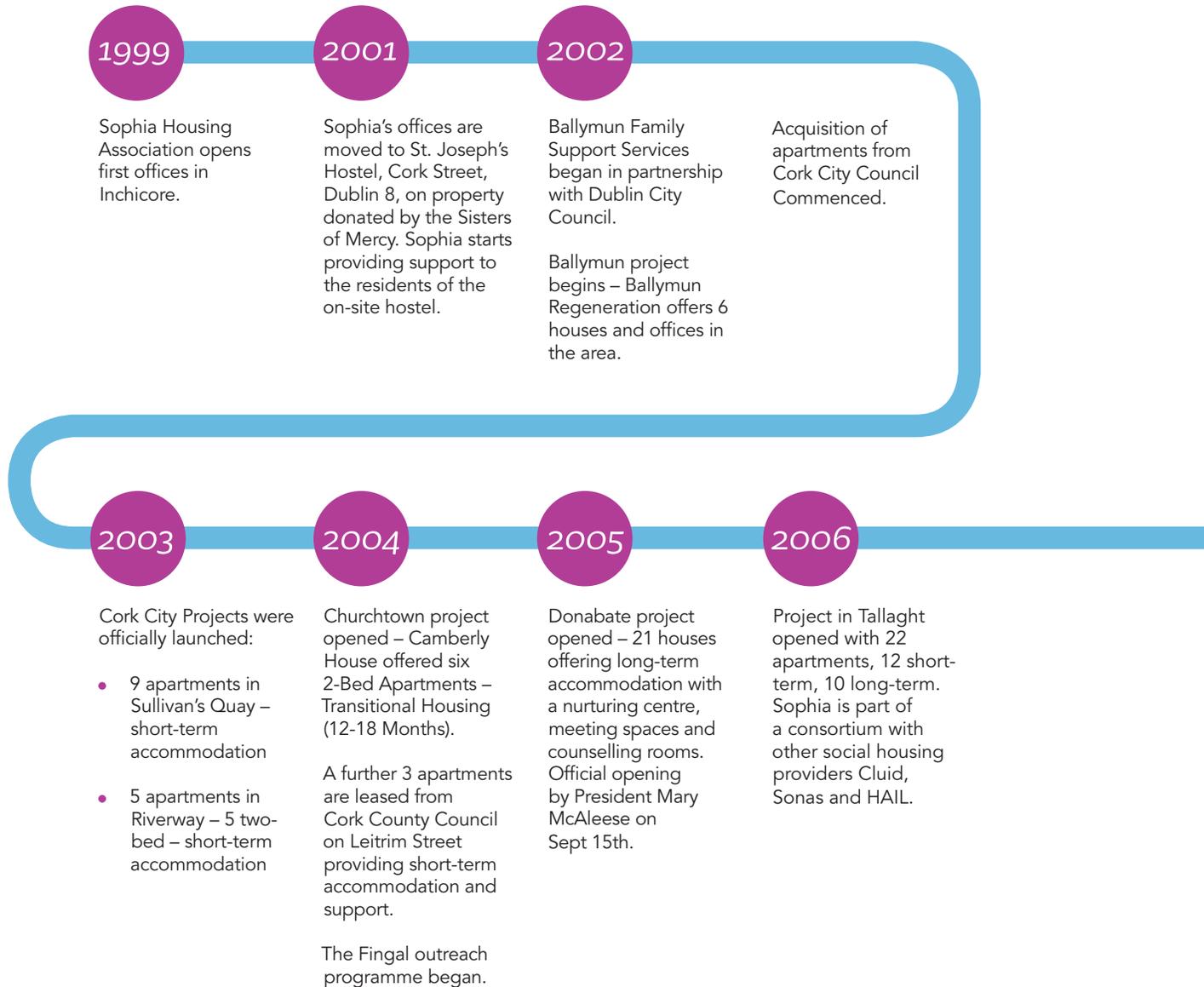
These are some of the threads that were woven into the dream that became Sophia when it began to take shape in 1999. With the help of dedicated staff, our partnership with several religious congregations, the local authorities, the HSE and the Department of the Environment, Sophia began its work on the cusp of a new millennium. Each of these partners brought their unique mission, philosophy and values to the development of the organisation, while developing a collaborative approach to enhancing Sophia's model of service. This is designed to empower people to move from the dependency caused by lack of education, lack of appropriate accommodation and child care facilities, to greater independence and self sufficiency. Thirteen years later, with many challenges and changes, Sophia has made its own unique contribution to the way services for homeless people are delivered. Our holistic approach has meant that we have been able to successfully provide services for people with very complex needs, providing them with either a long-term home in our own centres or with the skills and confidence to move into a home of their own, their own safe space.

Sophia is now entering the next phase of its development. A new CEO will be appointed in 2012. I intend to remain involved with Sophia over the coming years and to continue to work, in a different way now, to try and ensure that we can build communities based on justice and wisdom, where every person, young and old has the opportunity to live their life to the full.



**Jean Quinn,**  
**Founder and Joint CEO**

# Sophia's Timeline



2007

Official opening of Cork Street Project (Dublin) with President Mary McAleese – 50 Apartments, meeting rooms, nurturing centre, café and Wisdom Centre.

Provision of ten long-term units of housing in Togher, Cork (4 x 1 bed and 6 x 2 bed duplexes).

2008

Two bungalows are purchased in Cairns Hill, Sligo, offering supported accommodation for people with intellectual disabilities.

Began providing outreach support to families and individuals in the regeneration areas in Limerick.

2009

10th anniversary celebrations of founding of Sophia in Cork Street, Dublin.

New development in Douglas Street, Cork in conjunction with VEC and Cork County Council offering supported accommodation to people in full time education.

Provision of Tenancy Sustainment support in 15 units of housing provided through RAS.

Fourteen units of housing for single women in Mount Saint Vincent's, Limerick.

Greystones, County Wicklow project, with eight houses becomes fully operational. This is a collaboration with Cheshire who have nine houses in the small estate. Sophia offers long-term general support to tenants.

2011

First phase of new Tubbercurry project is completed offering accommodation for 24 persons with intellectual disabilities in collaboration with Wisdom Services, Cregg House.

The provision of one unit of housing and support for a family in South Hill, in conjunction with Limerick City Council.

Churchtown service changed from Transitional to Emergency.

# Sophia's Housing Projects in 2011

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In 2011 Sophia had projects in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Wicklow and Sligo. Sophia provides 200 units of accommodation, support and outreach services to people who have experienced homelessness or are at risk of becoming homeless.

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## **Dublin/Wicklow Area**

### **Cork Street**

- 50 one/two/three bedroom apartments: long-term accommodation
- Nurturing Centre
- Café
- Wisdom Centre
- Conference Centres

### **Donabate**

- 19 two-bed units, 2 three bed units: long-term accommodation
- Nurturing Centre
- Meeting and counselling rooms

### **Churchtown – Camberly House**

- 6 two-bed apartments: Emergency Accommodation for families
- In partnership with Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown

### **Tallaght – Fortunestown**

- 22 Houses/Apartments
  - 12 are short-term supported housing
  - 10 are for longer term supported housing
- Formed a consortium with Cluid, Sonas and HAIL – They own other houses in the estate – Occasional estate management meetings
- Shared office and meeting spaces

### **Ballymun**

- 8 houses: Long-term supported housing

**Greystones, Wicklow**

- Collaborative project with Cheshire Ireland
- 17 houses in total, 8 of which belong to Sophia
- Long-term general needs accommodation (no support)

**Cork Area**

**Sullivan's Quay**

- 8 two-bed apartments: short-term accommodation and support

**Riverway**

- 5 two-bedroom apartments: short-term accommodation and support

**Leitrim Street**

- 3 apartments from Cork County Council: short-term accommodation and support

**Douglas Street**

- 10 units of accommodation offering supported accommodation to people in full time education in partnership with the VEC and Cork City Council

**Togher**

- 6 x 2 bedroom and 4 x 1 bedroom apartments – long-term housing

**Grattan Hill and Gerald Griffin St**

- Tenancy Sustainment in 15 units of accommodation

**Limerick Area**

**Limerick Regeneration**

- Providing support and outreach to families and individuals in their own homes in the regeneration areas of Limerick City
- Providing housing and support for a family in Southill

**Mount St. Vincents (in collaboration with the Sisters of Mercy)**

- Managing 14 units of housing for single women in the city

**Sligo Area**

**Cairns Hill, Sligo**

- Two bungalows offering supported accommodation for people with intellectual disabilities

**Tubbercurry, Sligo**

- Phase 1: Accommodates 24 persons with intellectual disabilities in collaboration with Wisdom Services, Cregg House

# Sophia's Holistic Model of Care

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In all our services, we strive to offer a holistic, person-centred model of care. This involves working with people at their own pace, using key-working and care planning to support them in their journey towards greater independence for themselves.

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It means creating a welcoming, supportive environment for the whole family, the parents as well as the children. We strive to create well designed, well maintained physical environments for tenants, safe spaces where people get the opportunity to rebuild their lives and to regain a sense of community.

Through our Wisdom Centres, we create quiet, reflective spaces where people can have 'time out' and to avail of a range of services and facilities that help to nurture and sustain them.

Partnership and collaboration with our supporters, other providers and state agencies has been central to our work from the beginning.

The well-being of the people we work with is at the centre of all that we do as the profiles of services and the human stories outlined in the following pages demonstrate.





Mary Connolly, Resident at Cork Street  
and Jade Fish, Care Assistant.

# Settling in to a new role

## **The Cork Street Project, Dublin**

**Niamh Cullen, Project Leader, talks about how the Cork Street Project has changed and is settling into its new role, providing Permanent On Site Supported Accommodation.**

“Our service offers long-term supported accommodation with long-term letting agreements with the tenants. People who come here see it as their home. Some may move on to other housing providers when they feel they need less support or their needs change. With more extended hours of service, we are now able to offer higher levels of on-going support, to people with complex needs, including those with addiction and mental health issues. When people have been homeless or in temporary accommodation – sometimes for years – they may need to reconnect with basic living skills. These include learning the routine of getting their kids up every day, getting them washed, dressed, fed and ready for school or learning how to budget, pay bills and cook for the household.

We start by creating a calm, safe, stable environment. Then our care and support team will work with single people and families to help them get their lives back on track. Through key-working we establish a care plan for each person and check in on progress as often as each person requires. Getting to grips with their addiction or health problems is a priority for many. We work with other agencies and with the local health services to ensure that this important issue is tackled as soon as possible.

Many people need to learn parenting skills or how to live side by side with their neighbours in a friendly and respectful way, we help them do that. It’s all about giving people the skills to live as independently as possible.

We are supportive, but also challenging. Any anti-social or unacceptable behaviour is pointed out straight away so that it does not escalate. People are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and the consequences of their actions. They also know we will support them to make the changes they need to make.

It’s wonderful to have a purpose built Le Cheile Nurturing Centre on site here. Our colleagues in the child-care centre get to know the children as well as the parents. We work closely with them to ensure that the children – who also have been homeless – are getting the support they need from Sophia.

I believe that people value the quality of the accommodation, the environment and amenities that we have here in Cork Street. We aim to create a greater sense of community through providing a range of activities and outings that people can enjoy together. When people have a stake in the community they live in, they are more likely to have respect for themselves, for other people and for the environment. It’s a great place to live and to work.”

*Taking  
the stress  
out of  
homelessness*

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**Paul's Story**

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"I grew up in North Dublin, with four brothers and one sister. My troubles started when my marriage broke up in my thirties. I found it very hard to get anywhere to live. Every time I got somewhere, something would happen and I would have to move out. I was on long-term sickness benefit after having cancer but when I got better I got myself a job.

Things were good for a while but when I lost my job I couldn't find any landlords who would take someone on social welfare. Eventually I found a place. I was only living there a couple of months when the landlord wanted to sell so I had to move. I had nowhere to live, so I was living in my car.

It made me feel low and dirty – a horrible experience, you wouldn't know who would be coming around the streets. I'd never stay anywhere twice. I was nearly suicidal. I was drinking and taking stress tablets, more tablets than I should have been taking, and one night things got so bad I rang an ambulance.

I asked for help and after that I was put in touch with Sophia. I can't get over how quick they got me a place. They were so nice, so kind. I'm a lot happier in myself. I still take stress tablets but I've a lovely home, I appreciate what I have and I keep it immaculate. I have come a long way in just a year and a bit. You have no idea what that place means to me – I keep her like a new pin, I'm worse than any woman."

"I asked for help and after that I was put in touch with Sophia. I can't get over how quick they got me a place. They were so nice, so kind. I'm a lot happier in myself."



Children playing at  
Sophia's Cork Street Residence.

# Playing its part in supporting people

## **Sophia's Child Care Services**

**Mary Gilton, Childcare Resource Coordinator of Sophia's Child Care Service on how child care contributes to Sophia's holistic approach.**

"One of the things that's unique about many of Sophia's on-site child care services is that we get to know the children and the parents. Many childcare facilities don't get the opportunity to develop a relationship with the parents. We can often identify if there are problems at home and help to ensure issues get resolved as quickly as possible. We do this by linking with the support workers in Sophia projects so that there is a seamless and integrated service delivered to the whole family.

We provide a range of child-centred services, depending on the needs of the people and the resources that are available to each project. We create a safe, calm space for the children, a place they can be themselves. It's often the case that children who have experienced homelessness have had to play the role of parent and look after themselves and other members of the family. In Sophia, they get to develop skills in how to play, in how to get on with other people and how to name and acknowledge their feelings. In our after school programme, they get support with homework if they need that.

We are lucky to have purpose-built Nurturing Centres in Cork Street and Donabate, both are registered with the HSE and run to the highest standards. Our Cork Street Nurturing Centre operates an integrated Preschool Service with St John of God Menni Early Years Service.

By providing on-site support, we are able to help parents develop the routine of daily living after the chaos of homelessness. They learn to take responsibility for their children while knowing that their children are getting the care and attention that they also need. Parents can pop in and just have a chat as our team is part of the overall community. This kind of contact is helpful in creating that overall supportive environment people need. Sometimes it's a case of 'one step forward, 3 steps back' – but we believe that people have the capacity to find their own way forward.

In other projects, such as Cork and Tallaght we provide facilities for parents to have supervised access to their children who are in care, or playrooms to use when they are in key working sessions. We run summer activities for children as well with the help of volunteers in some areas. There are gaps, particularly for the 14-16 age group, who need their own relevant activities. We are always looking at the service we provide and asking 'how can we meet the needs of the children and their parents?'. That's the Sophia approach."

*A place  
I could  
call my  
home*

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***Adam's Story***

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"I have come a long way. In Ireland I have neither family nor permanent home. Back in Africa, a place of mine that I left in 2006, I was tortured and still struggle with some post traumatic stress disorders symptoms, including hyper vigilance, mistrust, withdrawal and loneliness. I am unable to move in on my own. I walk with crutches.

Due to this condition, of which I am always aware, I always look for an adequate place to stay; a place where I feel safe and protected, a place where I live with friendly and supportive people. Indeed I always need that which will not complicate further my life, considering my limited mobility and my emotional disturbances. I need enough space for doing physical and emotional exercises to recover.

I did not knock at many doors before I was referred to Sophia who offered me comfortable apartment in their compound. In the gorgeous sitting room or at the balcony, I relaxed or occupied myself with readings after enjoying the delicious food that I always prepared to respond to my needs and my choices. Although I was less experienced in yoga and meditation, I was unable to resist the attractive Wisdom Centre. I usually went in the centre for more relaxation and meditation. I came out revitalised.

Imagine the social settings that welcomed me in Sophia Housing. Oh! Where else would I have found a mixture of individuals of all ages and varied backgrounds who lived as peaceful as the dove? Welcoming, story tellers, creative, affectionate, cheerful and caring, the management and the resident of the compound was a community that gave me no chance to feel lonely or hide in my box; it was a community with which I felt safe until the hyper-vigilance and mistrust vanished.

Today I live in another sort of accommodation, and I still miss the Sophia Housing that I left along Cork Street in May 2010."

"Welcoming, story tellers, creative, affectionate, cheerful and caring, the management and the residents of the compound was a community that gave me no chance to feel lonely or hide in my box..."



Rose Daniel, Resident at Cork Street  
and Colette Foster, Cork and Limerick  
Service Manager.

# What's the best for each person? – that's always our question

## **The Cork & Limerick Projects**

**Colette Foster, Services Manager for the Sophia Cork and Limerick Projects talks about Sophia's projects and approach.**

"In Cork, many of our projects provide short-term, supported accommodation. That includes young people who have left care and are in full time education, men who have been released from prison and are at risk of homelessness and women who have been in emergency hostel accommodation and need to make that transition to longer term accommodation. Through key working and care planning, we support people to get the life skills to be able to sustain longer term tenancies. Many of the people we work with have complex needs and have been in and out of different services.

We have long-term supported housing in Togher which works very well. It would be ideal if the people we work with could be offered secure accommodation with the support they need.

In our Limerick services we have an outreach support service which is based in Southill. In 2011 we also began to provide housing and support to a family in the Southill area to enable them to sustain their tenancy. We have 14 units of accommodation in Limerick and work with some vulnerable women who are at risk of being homeless. The emphasis is on prevention to ensure that people do not drift into homelessness because they don't have the support to manage their own home.

One of the strengths of Sophia, I believe, is that we are encouraged to always ask "What is the best for this person in this situation?" We don't give up on people easily. Each person is treated with great respect. We develop real relationships with people and service users know that and work with us because of that. They know that we are there for them and will work with them to help them achieve their own goals. Another measure of the success of our approach is that in Cork and Limerick we are supported by state agencies and local authorities to develop specific services for people with very specific needs, people who need different levels of support. Our service has led to people having the skills to sustain their tenancies, and therefore avoid re-entering homelessness."

*Back to  
education,  
forward to  
grassroots  
organisations*

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**Tiz's Story**

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“Sophia offered me accommodation and support when I was pregnant and continued to support me when my son was born. First I was in an apartment in town and now I am in one of their long-term houses. They helped me in many ways, particularly with my education. I left school early but my support worker helped to apply for a FETAC course in Applied Psychology and Social Studies in the College of Commerce.

From there I went on to do a degree in Social Science in UCC and then I did an MA in Women's Studies. Through all that, Sophia supported me, particularly linking me to child care. I think that the lack of child care facilities is the one big barrier preventing single parents taking up training and education. I am now interested in helping grassroots organisations, particularly in educating people about politics in the broad sense. I enjoy helping people to realise that they can take action and that they can change things.

And through all that journey so far, Sophia has always been there for me and my son. They create communities in their projects. I have met lovely people through Sophia projects and they are still my friends to this day. When I think back, it was all the small activities too that contributed to getting me back on my feet. We learned about healthy eating, first aid; they encouraged me to get therapy and help with my addiction, to get out and about and not sit around my apartment – all those early supports contributed to where I am today, looking forward to my son coming home for school, healthy and happy, looking forward to engaging with politics and looking forward to helping other people get more control over their lives. Thanks, Sophia!”

“And through all that journey so far,  
Sophia has always been there for me  
and my son. They create communities in  
their projects. I have met lovely people  
through Sophia projects and they are still  
my friends to this day.”



Máire Nally, Wisdom Centre Coordinator with Siobhan Wilson, receptionist at the Wisdom Centre.

# At the heart of Sophia

## **The Wisdom Centre, Dublin**

**The Wisdom Centre in the Cork Street Project, Dublin is a custom-designed, bright, tranquil space that provides opportunities and facilities for reflective time, holistic therapies, courses, training and conferences.**

The Centre offers a safe place where people can seek wisdom of mind, heart and spirit. It is a space which welcomes people who want to step back from the many pressures of their daily lives and environment.

Máire Nally, Coordinator of the Wisdom Centre, explains the part that the Wisdom Centre plays in Sophia's holistic approach to providing services to people.

"The Wisdom Centre is a core part of Sophia. It is a unique part of this project and we would love to have a Wisdom Centre in all our projects around the country. In this quiet space people can get in touch with their own creative energy through holistic programmes, including the use of art, music, yoga, meditation and drama. The grounds are against a beautiful backdrop, with the older buildings meeting the newer more modern buildings. Offering hospitality to people who come here is very important, whether that's a tenant coming for a counselling session, staff who are using it for meetings or people from the local community or further afield who come for courses and conferences. It helps to create a mix of people from different walks of life who come here into a protected environment.

When you create a support environment for people they get the chance to grow and develop. That takes time. Recently, when I was in the garden area, which has often suffered damage from destructive behaviour, two young lads living in one of the apartments came over and saw a caterpillar on a leaf. They were curious and I put it in a box for them to take away. One said, "Why are you being nice to us?" It was sad that in their short lives they didn't trust people. Two days later, I met them again in the garden and saw the same box I had given them. I asked what they were doing and they said, "We are putting the caterpillar back where it belongs, it doesn't belong in a box". That was a real breakthrough. They made their own decision on how to treat their own environment, their own home where they belonged. To me, they had found their own wisdom."

*Mother and  
daughter  
in a  
safe place*

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***Ann and Margo's Story***

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"It's safe, that's it. A really safe place. You don't have the fear that someone will kick in your door or break the window. That's the fear my mother and I were living in."

**Ann**

"They are always there for you if you need them in Sophia. And they really helped showing us how to deal with neighbours and people you don't get on with. Just pass them by. It's that simple in a way. That has helped us a lot."

**Margo**

"We got evicted from our house and the two of us were in a hostel. Then we got the chance to go to Sophia's place. I take all the help I can get; some people don't but I do. I am on less medication now and hope to go back to work soon. We are coming back to life here."

**Ann**

"We hope to get our own house when we are ready to move from here. We are here 9 months and it's great. We are both happier and calmer and people could not do enough for you."

**Margo**

"We got evicted from our house and the two of us were in a hostel. Then we got the chance to go to Sophia's place. I take all the help I can get; some people don't but I do. I am on less medication now and hope to go back to work soon. We are coming back to life here".



# *Volunteers and the role they play in the service*

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## **Volunteering at Sophia**

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Volunteers play a vital role in the work of Sophia. Some are individuals who want to contribute their time and talents. Some work in larger companies and work with their colleagues to provide services and develop amenities that enhance the work that we do. Volunteers work in a variety of roles, from hospitality to befriending people. They have played an important part in developing and maintaining the gardens and general environment in some of our projects. Providing activities and Christmas presents for the children who live in Sophia has been a source of great fun and enjoyment for all concerned.

Volunteers contributing to our work include people from:

- Capita
- GE Money
- UBS
- Bord Gais
- ESB



Gillian Hill, Wisdom Centre receptionist, with Anne Henry, Volunteer from the Wisdom Centre.

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## *Anne's story*

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Anne Henry volunteers with the Wisdom Centre in Cork Street, offering Caring Touch/Massage to residents every week.

"I first encountered Sophia and the Wisdom Centre in 2009 when I was doing a work placement as part of my study in Leadership and Pastoral Care. Now I volunteer once or twice a week in the Wisdom Centre, offering Caring Touch/Massage to some of the residents in Cork Street. Massage is good for helping with aches and pains, but the Caring Touch approach means that it's a way to connect with people at a deeper level.

As human beings, we all need caring touch. It's what nurtures us and shows us we are cared for deeply. For many people who have been homeless, they miss out on that. So I am glad to be able to offer that experience to at least 2-3 people a week.

What struck me when I started volunteering here, and strikes me now every time I visit, is the caring, welcoming atmosphere that's always in the Wisdom Centre. It's a place I feel cared for too! The room is always set up for me, someone welcomes me. Not every place I work or visit has that atmosphere and that ethos. It's something I have really come to appreciate.

The other thing that always strikes me is that everyone is always treated with the same level of dignity and respect in the Wisdom Centre – whether you are a volunteer, a resident or a staff member. When people are treated with dignity and respect, they tend to treat others the same way.

Sophia's Wisdom Centre embodies that idea in everything they do. I love coming here and I love being able to make a contribution to supporting people in my own way."



# Playing a vital role in Sophia's services

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## **Community Employment Scheme**

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The Community Employment (CE) programme is a state-run scheme designed to help people who are long-term unemployed or suffer other disadvantages to get back to work by offering part-time and temporary placements in jobs based within local communities. Sophia has been working with FAS and the Department of Social Protection for many years to facilitate the scheme in its services.

In 2011, 90 people worked in Sophia services in locations all over the country. The scheme is managed by 3 CE Supervisors who recruit, plan individual training programmes and liaise with government agencies in relation to the scheme.

In Sophia, the CE workers get work placements and training in reception duties, in child care, in gardening and general maintenance, in accounts and in catering and hospitality. They work seamlessly alongside Sophia staff and support them in their work. In turn, they are supported to learn new skills, gain confidence, work as part of a team and to have the experience of being part of an organisation that has shared values and ways of working.

Sophia could not run the full range of services it now provides without the CE programme. That is the stark reality. In recent times, there has been great uncertainty about how the scheme will operate, making it difficult to plan from year to year as to how best use the resources that will be available.

Many people who have had work placements and training with Sophia have gone on to further training or employment; some have set up their own businesses.

Our hope is that the scheme will continue to provide work placement and training for long-term unemployed and, at the same time, provide much needed resources to Sophia.



Saundra Beggs and Essaid Muktari, CE workers at the Café at the Cork Street Project.

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### **Saundra's story**

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"I work here in catering and hospitality in Cork Street. This is my second year. I worked before in catering and hospitality, usually in waitressing.

Jobs were scarce and I was out of work for a long time. Then I got on the scheme here. I have learned a huge amount about food preparation, baking and barista. I love that barista! I would love to work in a coffee shop when I move on from here.

You get a lot of skills and confidence here. People have more patience to show you things. You don't feel stupid asking questions. Everyone is very friendly and we work as a team. Many of the tenants here in Cork Street come in for a coffee break or a meal. It's a social outlet for many. We chat and talk to them and there's a good sense of community here. I love it!"

# 2011 Board of Directors

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## **Directors**

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Chairman: Liam Brazil

Secretary: Felix McKenna

Maureen Seddon DW

May Lewis DW

Helena O'Donoghue RSM

Gerard Fox

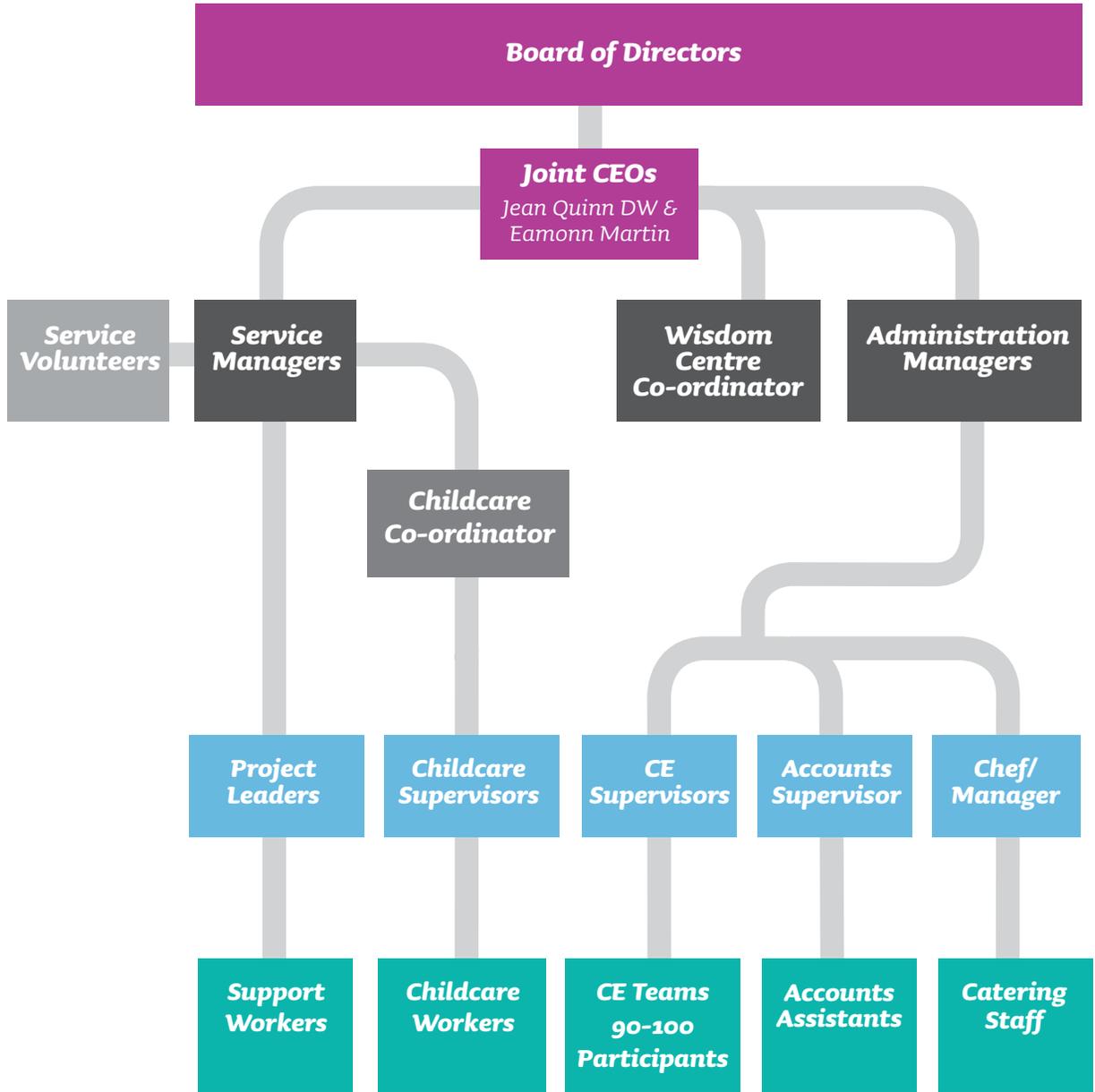
Paudie O'Donnell

Mary O'Dea MA

Derek Donohoe

Kathy Donovan

Pat Reda



**Statement of financial activities for the year ended 31 December 2011**

	Endowment funds €	Restricted funds €	Unrestricted funds €	2011 €	2010 €
<b>Incoming resources</b>					
Revenue based grants	-	1,708,279	-	1,708,279	1,640,333
FAS community employment	-	1,298,067	-	1,298,067	1,217,613
Capital donations	397,134	-	-	397,134	-
Rents and service charges	-	-	390,832	390,832	375,391
Donations and fund raising income	-	-	71,593	71,593	180,301
Interest receivable and similar income	-	-	3,968	3,968	100
<b>Total income resources</b>	<b>397,134</b>	<b>3,006,346</b>	<b>466,393</b>	<b>3,869,873</b>	<b>3,413,738</b>
<b>Resources expended</b>					
Support and services for persons/ families in housing projects	-	(2,667,922)	(110,186)	(2,778,108)	(2,801,680)
Depreciation	(7,943)	(92,725)	-	(100,668)	(93,644)
Finance and administration	-	(166,265)	(108,126)	(274,391)	(279,608)
Repairs and maintenance	-	(65,041)	(115,271)	(180,312)	(168,924)
Fundraising and events costs	-	(3,068)	(27,609)	(30,677)	(28,331)
Research, development and education	-	(8,390)	(932)	(9,322)	(10,391)
Interest payable and similar charges	-	-	(12,576)	(12,576)	(15,122)
<b>Total resources expended</b>	<b>(7,943)</b>	<b>(3,003,411)</b>	<b>(374,700)</b>	<b>(3,386,054)</b>	<b>(3,397,700)</b>
<b>Net movements in funds</b>	<b>389,191</b>	<b>2,935</b>	<b>91,693</b>	<b>483,819</b>	<b>16,038</b>

**Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2011**

		2011		2010	
		€	€	€	€
<b>Fixed assets</b>	<b>Notes</b>				
Housing properties		41,432,293		36,616,614	
Less: CAS/CLSS loans	1	(34,784,130)		(29,842,489)	
		6,648,163		6,774,125	
Other tangible assets		744,605		347,121	
		7,392,768		7,121,246	
<b>Current assets</b>					
Debtors		641,740		437,969	
Cash at bank and in hand		768,141		1,079,087	
		1,409,881		1,517,056	
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>		<b>(1,015,090)</b>		<b>(1,334,562)</b>	
<b>Net current assets</b>		<b>394,791</b>		<b>182,494</b>	
<b>Net assets</b>		<b>7,787,559</b>		<b>7,303,740</b>	
<b>Reserves</b>					
Sinking fund		60,000		60,000	
Accumulated funds					
- endowment		389,191		-	
- restricted		6,922,722		6,919,787	
- unrestricted		415,646		323,953	
<b>Retained funds</b>		<b>7,787,559</b>		<b>7,303,740</b>	

**Notes:****1. Capital Assistance Scheme/Capital Loan and Subsidy Scheme ("CAS/CLSS") loans**

CAS/CLSS loans have not been amortised on the basis they remain repayable in full over a period of twenty to thirty years from the date of advance. On completion of the loan period, provided certain conditions are met, the loans and interest, if applicable, are relieved in full and will be released to reserves.

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## ***Acknowledgements***

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Photography: Paul McCarthy

Thank you to all who contributed.  
Thank you to the Daughters of Wisdom  
who generously contributed to the  
publication of this report.

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**Sophia**

Annual Report 2011

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**Notes**

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Back cover photo:  
Child playing at Sophia's Cork Street Residence.

[www.sophia.ie](http://www.sophia.ie)

