

COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL WITNESS

Convener: Rev Dr T J McCORMICK
Secretary: Mr LINDSAY CONWAY, OBE

1. The Strategic Plan of the Council for Social Witness (CSW), presented as an Appendix to The General Assembly (2015), identified three vital applications:

- to enable the Council to stay focused on the work and responsibilities remitted to it by the General Assembly;
- to give a structured account of the work of the Council to the General Assembly;
- to relate to statutory agencies, regulatory authorities, service users and others, the particular focus and ethos of the Church's work in this particular area.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. This report indicates the effective implementation of this approach.

3. **The Council Report** addresses the general work of CSW (Strategic Objective (SO 1)¹ and endeavours to communicate its work to its members, the wider Church and community (SO 7)².

4. **Disability Services Committee** reports on the Day, Residential, Supported Housing and Respite Care in four locations, along with the ongoing and developing work of Kinghan Church for the Deaf. Inspiration from the 'Christmas Cracker' project is also shared (SO 2).

5. **Older People Services Committee** reports on the extensive work carried out in Residential and Nursing Homes in 9 locations. It also highlights the consistently high quality of residential care provided by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland which is an acknowledged Witness within the Health and Social Care world (SO 3).

6. **Taking Care Committee** reports on a comprehensive programme of training for leaders, designated persons, Ministers, and Taking Care trainers and on the detailed work required to address the issue of Adult Safeguarding (SO 4).

7. **Specialist Services Committee** reports on work in 3 sheltered housing locations with those with addictions, and/or offending behaviours. Initiatives to address issues such as Suicide Awareness and Domestic Abuse are also included (SO 5).

8. **Business and Finance Panel** reports on the management and stewardship of funds, personnel and property. Attention is drawn to the

1 **Strategic Objective 1:** "The COUNCIL shall deliver an effective Social Care service for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and to the wider community by the provision of Residential Nursing Supported Housing, Respite and Day Care and Community Based Programmes."

2 **Strategic Objective 7:** "The COUNCIL shall effectively communicate to its members, the wider Church and community the work, services and achievements of the Council."

challenging financial environment in which the Council serves, and the necessity of balancing vision with prudence (SO 6)³.

9. The introductory statement of the **Adult Safeguarding Task Group** has an application to all aspects of the Church's work:

“Christ calls us to love, care for and value everyone.

This gospel imperative of loving our neighbour as ourselves leads us to respect all as individuals, treating each with dignity and empowering them to reach their full potential.

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland seeks to reflect Christ's compassion for everyone and to safeguard all those who come into contact with the mission and ministries of the Church, by preventing harm and protecting those at risk.”

MAIN COUNCIL REPORT

10. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland, through its Council for Social Witness, continues to provide a wide range of services, as follows:

Residential Care – for older people

- Adelaide House, Belfast – 44 Beds
- Ard Cluan House, Londonderry – 13 Beds
- Corkey House, Belfast – 35 Beds
- River House, Newcastle – 29 Beds
- Sunnyside House, Bangor – 45 Beds
- York House, Portrush – 32 Beds

Residential Care – for those with Learning Disability

- Aaron House, Dundonald – 16 beds

Residential Respite Care – for those with a Learning Disability; Physical Disability, Sensory Impairment and Older People

- Lawnfield House, Newcastle – 20 beds
- Aaron House, Dundonald – 2 beds

Nursing Care – for Older People

- Harold McCauley House, Omagh – 32 Beds

Day Care – for those with Learning Disability

- Aaron House – 9 service users

Supported Living

- Willow Brook, Coleraine (learning disability) – 9
- Topley Terrace, Coleraine (physical disability) – 3

3 **Strategic Objective 6:** “BUSINESS AND FINANCE PANEL – will monitor the Financial Management, Personnel Functions, Information Technology and Property Management of the Council supported by the Finance and Staffing Commission.”

Supported Housing – Older People

- St Andrew Bungalows, Mallusk
- Tritonville Close, Dublin

Work with People with Addictions

- Carlisle House – 12
- Gray’s Court – 7

Work With Offenders

- Thompson House – 19
- Fresh Start Initiative at Hydebank Wood Prison and Young Offenders Centre

Ministry To The Deaf

- The Kinghan Church
- New work in Ballykelly

Taking Care

Advice, Support and Training, in collaboration with Council for Congregational Life and Witness (CCLW), and the appropriate regulatory bodies

Staff Training

- In partnership with appropriate organisations to meet the requirements of regulatory bodies and provide high quality care and enhance the lives of residents and service-users.
- Volunteering – supported by raising awareness and providing induction training through the ‘Getting on Board’ scheme and ‘Fresh Start’ Initiative.

Disability

- Raising awareness of disability, health and wellbeing in collaboration with CCLW.

Family Work

- CSW remains connected with the work of South Belfast Friendship House during the Review process.

11. The Council has overseen this work, on behalf of the Church, in 17 locations:

- providing 373 bed spaces
- employing 450 staff
- utilising 200 volunteers
- with an operational budget of £9.5 million

12. CSW has responded to this commission in the face of **SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES**, in particular:

13. **Increasing Standards and Expectations:** The Council recognises that all aspects of the Church’s work and witness operate in a closely monitored and

regulated sector. Throughout the year inspection reports have commended the standard and range of care that is provided and several have had no recommendations for further action. Nevertheless there are occasions when upgrading of facilities or revision of policies are required to meet amended standards and procedures. Often this impacts on financial resources and staff time.

14. Service users, and their families, come with their own expectations in terms of standards of facilities and care, additional opportunities and resources, past experiences and future security. Not all of the Council's property is "purpose-built" and while there have been programmes of routine maintenance and required upgrades it is not always possible to fulfil the expectations of potential residents or users in terms of en-suite facilities, single level buildings, etc. Focused work has been undertaken on some older properties to consider how provision can be continued in the future.

15. While endeavouring to satisfy, and often surpass, reasonable expectations, CSW provision is understood to be a witness in both word and action with a concern for the whole person. In the Homes/Units a range of opportunities and resources are provided for ministry and spiritual nourishment, including daily devotional times, weekly worship, Bible study, and distribution of devotional books and literature.

16. **Financial Pressures:** The financial climate in which the Council operates remains challenging. The Business and Finance Panel in monitoring financial, property and personnel issues has kept the realities of current deficit budgets and the necessities of future provision before CSW. One consequence has been the reluctant and regrettable adoption of the principle of introducing "Additional Charges" in the Older People Services facilities.

17. The Council's endeavours to maintain budgetary control are further complicated by a lack of clarity in future funding arrangements by some external bodies and agencies. The withdrawal of Special Needs Management Allowance by the Department of Health and Social Services and the introduction of the National Living Wage have brought additional pressures on finances. In the not too distant future the question of how much of this work PCI wants to/is able to sustain with internal financial support from the denomination will have to be addressed.

18. **Expanding Needs and Opportunities:** The Council is also aware of a multiplicity of needs all around. Human Trafficking, Domestic Abuse, Exploitation of the Elderly are just a few that have hit the headlines. Meanwhile some new areas of opportunity have been presented: further sheltered housing and supported living projects, and the development of the 'Christmas Cracker' programme.

19. In addressing these challenges the words of John Stott in 'Basic Christianity' bring encouragement and guidance; "We must trust in him as our Saviour and submit to him as our Lord; and then go on to take our place as loyal members of the Church and responsible citizens in the community."

20. The Council has been able to respond to this commission with the **SUPPORT and COLLABORATION** of a wide range of individuals and agencies.

21. To fulfil the Church's responsibilities to all service users and staff CSW staff have ongoing interaction with a diverse range of regulatory and statutory bodies and the wider voluntary sector; in particular Regulation and Quality

Improvement Authority (RQIA); Northern Ireland Social Care Council; Criminal Justice Inspectorate; Probation Board Northern Ireland; Supporting People Initiative (NI Housing Executive); and Health and Social Care Trusts, and partner housing associations.

22. Staff are a key resource whose professional skill, diligent commitment and human tenderness are foundational to the care that is offered. Regular training and professional development is available to all staff, and the Key Staff Forum for senior staff provides updates on new requirements and initiatives for senior staff.

23. Conveners and the Senior Team proof all the activities of Council against the Strategic Plan. Each Committee monitors progress at each meeting and the Annual Away Day brings the Key Staff Forum and Conveners together to carry out the annual review.

24. A vast number of people are engaged as volunteers: the Local Support Committees, 'Friends-of' groups, and volunteers in the 'Getting on Board' programme. CSW is committed to developing the role of volunteers in CSW projects and in an increasing number of both familiar and innovative projects initiated by Congregations, groups and individuals. The Council believes this will engender further engagement and deepen the sense of partnership throughout the Church.

25. During this year CSW has had helpful engagement with other PCI Councils and Departments and appreciates the developing sense of collaboration. In particular, Council for Congregational Life and Witness, Council for Church in Society, and the Creative Production, IT, Finance, Personnel and General Secretary's Departments.

26. Social Witness will engage with other Councils in setting priorities and those of the denomination. Council would anticipate that this process will strengthen the links with Congregations, who provide so many social witness programmes and initiatives at a local level.

27. All of this work is heavily dependent upon the professional standing and immeasurable commitment of Lindsay Conway, Linda Wray, Deborah Webster, Denise Keegan, Laura Kelly and David Hooks, who guide, develop and enhance all of CSW's work. The day to day functioning of the Council is facilitated by Julie Sykes (Office Manager); Gail Gamble; Wilma Steele; Jennie Telford and Cathy Mullin and to each the Council expresses sincere thanks.

28. CSW has endeavoured to engage others in this commission by **SIGNPOSTING** and **COMMUNICATING** significant issues, achievements and events. The Council is aware of the diverse and complex needs and issues faced by many in the Church and community today. While CSW has neither the resources nor expertise to address every situation the Council is developing a signposting initiative to give accessible information to members of PCI. The Council trusts this will be a help to the whole Church and a benefit to many individuals.

29. The Council's celebration of significant anniversaries at Aaron House, Sunnyside House, and the Staff Award Scheme for long-service and training initiatives are indicative of commitment to service and personal professional development. Each has also provided opportunity to make both the Church and wider community aware of the Council's work. In the words of John Wesley, "Our witness for Christ does not take place in private. A private witness for Christ is a powerless witness for Christ. Our witness is meant to be public for everyone

to see. The reality is that many more people will be influenced by your actions than by your words. People are influenced by the lives Christians live on a daily basis. The way that people see us matters because they see the example of Christ. We are the ambassadors of Christ and we are His representatives in this world.”

30. Council Conveners and Staff appreciate invitations to speak at services, and other meetings, believing there needs to be a constant flow of information to members of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the wider community. The Council continues to work towards a revitalised communications policy which will include news-sheets and updates, website, and prayer bulletins. The Council believes that the investment of staff time and finance in such a programme will expand the awareness of this work, encourage prayer support, and stimulate engagement and support.

DISABILITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Strategic Objective:

“DISABILITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – will deliver a high standard of Day, Residential, Supported Housing and Respite Care in all of our Units; oversee the Ministry of the Kinghan Church and wider Ministry to the Deaf; contribute to the Disability, Health and Wellbeing work of the wider Church in partnership with the Council for Congregational Life and Witness.”

31. The Committee continues to be encouraged by the work being done and care provided in each of the facilities with positive outcomes being received from RQIA visits and inspections.

32. Committee meetings this year have been held at Lawnfield House, Newcastle, and the Kinghan Church. This gives Committee members the opportunity to see at first hand these particular areas of work.

33. Last September saw Aaron House, Dundonald, celebrated 20 years’ of service to some of the most vulnerable members of society. Residents / staff / family / friends and representatives from PCI attended a family fun day which included a brass band, magicians and a barbeque.

34. In partnership with Presbyterian Women the refurbishment of bathroom facilities in Aaron House is a major improvement and the Council is grateful to PW for their generous donation towards this work.

35. Council agreed to the purchase of a new minibus which is used to transport residents to day-care placements, outings and medical appointments. Their “old” minibus has been transferred to Lawnfield House to replace their 8-year old minibus. The Committee has been shocked at the rates which people with a disability have to pay and the difficulties which exist to access disability taxis.

36. Willow Brook and Topley Court, Coleraine, continue to deliver a high standard of support to the tenants. In the summer of 2015 tenants holidayed in Enniskillen while Aaron House residents holidayed in Portaferry.

37. Lawnfield House, Newcastle, has seen improved occupancy levels but still has some way to go to reach its full potential. The Committee is trying

to increase publicity within Social Care Trusts, PCI and the wider community to encourage greater use of the respite, holiday and short-term care facilities available. The Committee welcomes the support of The Presbyterian Children's Society re the funding of Adult Respite Care in Lawnfield House to give relief to young carers.

38. The social enterprise scheme for young adults with a learning disability is beginning to take shape on the Denegarh House/St Andrew Bungalows site at Mallusk with the help of two teams from *The Prince's Trust*. They have cleared out one of the bungalows, painted two of them and created a number of vegetable plots in the grounds in preparation for the scheme to be launched.

39. 'Christmas Cracker' was held in three locations in 2015. One additional venue has already been agreed for 2016, with the possibility of at least one other.

40. The Kinghan Church's ministry among the deaf community continues to grow in Belfast, while supporting an outreach work in Ballykelly on the first Sunday of each month.

41. The Moderator, Dr Ian McNie, conducted the 20th Anniversary Service of the opening of the refurbished Kinghan Church on Sunday 17th April – a time for celebration for the Congregation and the wider deaf community.

42. The withdrawal of the 'Special Needs Management Allowance' from April 2016 will have major implications on an already very challenging financial situation in this field of Learning Disability, Residential and Day Care.

43. Members of the Committee have agreed to undertake, with the Council's Residential and Supported Services Manager, monthly monitoring visits.

44. The Disability Services Committee appreciates the role of Local Support Committee members and 'Friends of' groups who enhance the work through their roles of provision of activities / outings / fundraising / spiritual input / quality auditing, etc.

PETER DICKINSON, Convener

OLDER PEOPLE SERVICES COMMITTEE

Strategic Objective:

“OLDER PEOPLE SERVICES COMMITTEE – will deliver a high standard of Day, Residential, Nursing and Respite Care to all our users and campaign and raise awareness on behalf of older people issues and services; support the development of the Pastoral Support of those requiring support in their own homes.”

45. The Older People Services Committee oversees the residential and nursing care for older people in its various homes in Northern Ireland and in Dublin. Recent inspection reports from RQIA have been most encouraging and it is obvious that this ministry to older people is carried out by a dedicated and willing staff in a thoroughly professional manner. Ongoing staff training is a regular part of the programme, and the Christian ethos is vital in what is an important part of the Church's mission to older people.

46. The work of Older People Services provides a vital ministry for many older people across the island of Ireland, and to their families, and I am pleased to report on a work that constitutes a significant witness to Christ.

47. During this year the Moderator of the General Assembly, the Rt Rev Dr Ian McNie and Mrs McNie have visited many units. This has been a great encouragement to staff and has greatly influenced the Moderator's year in office.

48. In September 2015 Sunnyside House celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the new facility in Bangor and a Special Thanksgiving Service was held in the Home. The Northern Ireland Amenity Council Best Kept Awards awarded Sunnyside House first place in the Residential Home category in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust Region. River House in Newcastle was runner-up.

49. The Committee is also pleased to announce that a Dementia Garden is being created at Corkey House. This will enhance the quality of life for all residents living here.

50. The Committee is actively exploring the relocation of Ard Cluan and York House (as detailed in Strategic Objective 2 of the Strategic Plan).

51. The Republic of Ireland Panel has raised the issue of the need for facilities such as sheltered housing in the Republic. The Council for Social Witness is happy to pursue with the relevant bodies the need for sheltered accommodation.

52. In an organisation with some 440+ employees there is necessarily some turnover of staff, but at a ceremony in Assembly Buildings in February awards were presented to staff members for long service (20 years) and also for additional training qualifications. The staff in the homes as well as in Assembly Buildings are a vital asset and so many go well beyond the call of duty; to them all we owe much gratitude. The Council is also grateful for so many volunteers and support groups connected with the various homes.

53. At present Older People Services provides 229 beds across its homes. Of these 44 are registered as being for residents with a diagnosis of dementia. In 2015 the occupancy rate target of 95% was reached by most of the homes. Over the course of the year we had 293 'permanent' residents and 34 'respite' residents.

54. Social Care is a vital part of the Health Service, and if the one is in crisis then so is the other. Older People Services is a member of the Independent Health and Care Providers, a non profit-making organisation representing private, voluntary, charitable and Church-affiliated providers of health and social care. This body has been making its concerns known to government since the cost of additional care for the growing number of residents with dementia, as well as the impact of the introduction of the National Living Wage will directly impact its members' ability to continue to provide services. Already some private homes in the province have been forced to close. An increase in funding by the government in February-March 2016 is a most welcome indication of its recognition of the difficulties, but of itself it is but a 'drop in the ocean'. The Health and Social Care Board's announcement of the regional nursing and residential home tariff rates for 2016/17 indicates an increase of 5% and it is hoped that these will take account of the range of financial pressures experienced by providers from the independent care sector.

55. The Council for Social Witness at its February meeting passed the following resolution: "Having exhausted all avenues of possible funding

allowed by current PCI structures we see ourselves obliged to propose with great reluctance the imposition of additional charges on new residents who require or are in receipt of additional services or facilities.”

56. The Committee were encouraged that the role of Activity Co-ordinators in Adelaide House, River House, Sunnyside House, York House and Harold McCauley has enhanced the range of activities/outings being offered to residents.

JOHN SEAWRIGHT, Convener

TAKING CARE COMMITTEE

Strategic Objective:

“TAKING CARE COMMITTEE (The Safeguarding Programme of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland) – creating a safe environment for all our members, users, volunteers and staff.”

57. The Committee reflected on the fact that a Child Protection Policy for children had been established and expanded over a 20 year period throughout the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, while the Committee continues to update and revise policies and training programmes to keep abreast of developments in this field of safeguarding. Two policies were approved this year; one dealing with an Allegations Procedure and the second which relates to Quality Assurance for Trainers. A Kirk Session training module is being piloted with the intention of providing it to all Congregations.

58. There were 137 Taking Care training sessions during 2015 – 29 Foundation; 98 Refresher and 10 for Designated Persons. There were 2,048 police checks for new leaders processed – 1,845 for Access NI and 203 for Garda vetting. Twenty incidents were reported to the Taking Care Team and advice was sought on a variety of situations. As well as dedicated staff who oversee the management and functioning of Taking Care, we acknowledge the work of all those volunteers whether on Committee, acting as Trainers providing foundation and refresher training throughout Ireland, together with the Designated persons in all Congregations.

59. In December 2015, the Committee set about addressing the major issue of Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults. A Task Group, members of which have a wide range of relevant expertise, began to develop a policy statement and guidelines and this is ongoing. It is intended that this will be combined with the present Taking Care Two, into a final policy entitled “Taking Care of All”. The General Assembly is being asked to approve the following ‘Taking Care for All Statement: “Christ calls us to love, care for and value everyone. This gospel imperative of loving our neighbour as ourselves leads us to respect all individual, treating each with dignity and empowering them to reach their full potential. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland seeks to reflect Christ’s compassion for everyone and to safeguard all those who come into contact with the mission and ministries of the Church, by preventing harm and protecting those at risk.”

60. The Task group agreed that as a Church PCI has a duty to protect all who are members or participate in the life and work of the Church community.

Harm, abuse or exploitation can happen anywhere, even in Churches. **Relevant legislation and policies in both jurisdictions**, together with PCI's well established Taking Care Programme, will ensure that the risk from harm, abuse or exploitation is reduced for all within the Church. The Presbyterian Church should have a zero tolerance approach to all forms of harm, abuse and exploitation.

61. Adult Safeguarding is not restricted to Older People and those with additional needs, but will protect all who are at risk of harm, abuse or exploitation.

62. The Panel recognises that Safeguarding is everyone's business and should be given a high priority within Congregations and not seen as another burdensome policy, but as the living out of the Gospel imperative to love and care for another.

63. The purpose of the guidelines will be to add to the well established Child Safeguarding Guidelines as contained within Taking Care. Many of the core values and principles are similar, will distil the 'Adult Safeguarding – Prevention and Protection in Partnership Policy' and provide good practical advice for all involved in the work and life of the Church.

64. The Panel has agreed that a 'Training Strategy' will be built into the final submission and that Interim Guidelines will be issued by Council to enable the 'Road Testing' of all draft material for Council activities and Congregations.

PAMELA MARSHALL, Convener

SPECIALIST SERVICES COMMITTEE

Strategic Objective:

“SPECIALIST SERVICES COMMITTEE – will deliver a high standard of service to those with Addictions, Offending Behaviours and who require Supported Housing.”

65. The Specialist Services Committee meets regularly and is currently giving intentional focus on its agenda to developing an increased understanding of issues surrounding Domestic Abuse in wider society. In response the Committee has been addressed in the past two meetings by two representatives from ONUS and Women's Aid and considered the Churches' response to these serious issues. Specialist Services, in response to its extended remit will continue to seek ways of informing the denomination, for prayer and awareness for members, of appropriate agencies which are well equipped to help anyone suffering from domestic abuse. This also assumes inter Council cooperation within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland as a denomination.

66. Work at Thompson House, Carlisle House and Gray's Court continues to provide timely accommodation and support to its residents. The missional aspect to the work, in all areas, is of paramount importance to the Specialist Services Committee and to the Directors of units and to this effect spiritual ministries sit alongside the therapies and practical professional advice and intervention. Christianity Explored is frequently employed in Thompson House and quarterly Bible reading notes are issued to each resident under our care. Conversations of a spiritual nature are often enjoyed by residents linking with full time staff and approved volunteers.

67. In conjunction with the Business and Finance Panel, the Committee is determined to establish a protocol for the review of serious adverse incidents. This is viewed by the Directors as a welcome and supportive model of good practice.

68. The staff at Thompson House, Carlisle House and Gray's Court are thanked for their ongoing dedication and for the fact that they have upheld good professional practice in light of many day to day challenges.

69. The finance and funding aspects associated with the work will reflect elements of significant encouragement in recent times as is evidenced in the finance report delivered to Council.

70. The Specialist Services Committee covets the Churches prayers as it seeks to fulfil the defined remit in the service of God and in a spirit of faith.

COLIN MEGAW, Convener

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the General Assembly approve the 'Taking Care of All Statement' in paragraph 58 of the Report of the Council for Social Witness.

2. That the General Assembly welcome the introduction of the 'National Living Wage' and call on the Northern Ireland Assembly to adequately fund the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to increase

3. That the General Assembly give thanks to God for one hundred and fifty years of the Presbyterian Children's Society (formerly The Presbyterian Orphan and Children's Society) and express thanks to the Governors, Office-bearers and all who have supported this work by their generosity and their prayers.

4. That the Report of the Council for Social Witness be received.

FOR INFORMATION

The following funds are not under the control of the General Assembly and the Reports are included for information only.

OLD AGE FUND, WOMEN'S FUND AND INDIGENT LADIES' FUND

The Rev W P H Erskine reports:

1. The Directors report that, during the last financial year which ended 31st December 2015, 98 beneficiaries (44 in the Old Age Fund, 35 in the Women's Fund and 19 in the Indigent Ladies' Fund) received grants.

2. The changes in beneficiaries during the year is as follows:

Beneficiaries Receiving Quarterly Grant	Old Age Fund	Presbyterian Women's Fund	Indigent Ladies Fund	TOTAL
At 1 January 2015	38	30	17	85
New Grants Provided	5	2	1	8
Deaths	(2)	(3)	(1)	(6)
Grants no longer required	(3)	(1)	–	(4)
As at 31 December 2015	38	28	17	83
Beneficiaries receiving one-off donations	1	3	1	5
Deaths and Grants no longer required (as above)	5	4	1	10
No of Beneficiaries receiving assistance during the year	44	35	19	98

3. The total distribution of the Funds in Grants, Donations and Gifts was £152,166 (£67,161 from the Old Age Fund, £57,970 from the Women's Fund and £27,035 from the Indigent Ladies' Fund).

4. An annual grant of £1,440, paid quarterly, was sent to beneficiaries during the year (2014:£1,400).

5. A 'Special Gift' of £360 (2014: £350) was sent to every beneficiary prior to Christmas.

6. During the year the Directors responded sympathetically to various problems which had been brought to their attention. They gave one-off donations, as needed, to assist in particular cases where immediate financial aid was more appropriate than annual grants. Ministers are asked to bear in mind the possibility of help from these funds in similar cases connected with their own congregations.

7. The Directors assure the Church that all monies that come to the Funds are carefully and wisely spent.

8. The Directors of the Funds deeply appreciate the kindness and thoughtfulness of those who have remembered the work of the Funds either by gift or bequest, and hope that their example may encourage others to support this vital aspect of the Church's outreach.

9. The Directors of the Funds wish to thank the Staff for the sensitive and sympathetic way in which they carried out the efficient administration of the Funds during the year.

FOR INFORMATION

The following body is not under the control of the General Assembly. The report is for information only.

PRESBYTERIAN CHILDREN'S SOCIETY

Dr Paul Gray (Executive Secretary) reports:

1. The Presbyterian Children's Society (formerly The Presbyterian Orphan and Children's Society) exists to help Presbyterian children in Ireland. It provides support for the families of these children in order to alleviate poverty and financial hardship. This support is delivered mainly through regular and other grants but also through Presbyterian projects and programmes geared to children and their families.

2. The Society is not directly under the control of the General Assembly, being a separate charity with its own governing document and Board of Governors. Nevertheless it is closely associated with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, providing for children of the Church and operating through its Ministers. Having been founded in 1866 the Society marked its 150th Anniversary by holding a celebration meeting in the Assembly Buildings on 10th May, 2016. Nowadays only a few beneficiaries are, strictly speaking, "orphans" and the term may deter some families who are in need from seeking help, so the Society has changed its name to "The Presbyterian Children's Society". Since 1866 around 43,000 children within 17,500 families have been helped and at present there are on the roll about 740 children in 210 Congregations, including around 16 per cent in the Irish Republic.