

# COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL WITNESS

Convener: Rev Dr TJ McCORMICK

Secretary: Mr LINDSAY CONWAY, OBE

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. **The Council report** addresses the general work of the Council for Social Witness under the headings of: A Time to Celebrate, A Time to Challenge, A Time for Collaboration, A Time to Consider. The report also includes the review and audit of the Strategic Plan 2015-2018.
2. **Disability Services Committee** reports on the day to day operation of the services offered by the numerous facilities. Although occupancy levels are good in the majority of our units, there is still concern over occupancy levels at Lawnfield House. The Kinghan Church Task Group has made an interim report to the Council. The involvement of the Committee in the My Place events has been well received.
3. **Older People Services Committee** had an exceptionally busy year with the relocation of Ard Cluan House and York House to Trinity House. An increase in the levels of dementia care beds has been under constant review. A number of official openings and anniversaries have punctuated the past year.
4. **Taking Care Committee** concluded the work on adult safeguarding with a conference and launch on 15th March. Major changes within Access(NI) and Garda Vetting have been implemented. The safe use of social media within churches is a major ongoing concern. There has been a good uptake of the new kirk session training module.
5. **Specialist Services Committee** continues to oversee the very specialist work within their charge. Staff in all the units have been supported through a number of difficult mental health related situations. Funding levels are a major concern in this whole area of work.

## MAIN COUNCIL REPORT

*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the sun.* Ecclesiastes 3:1

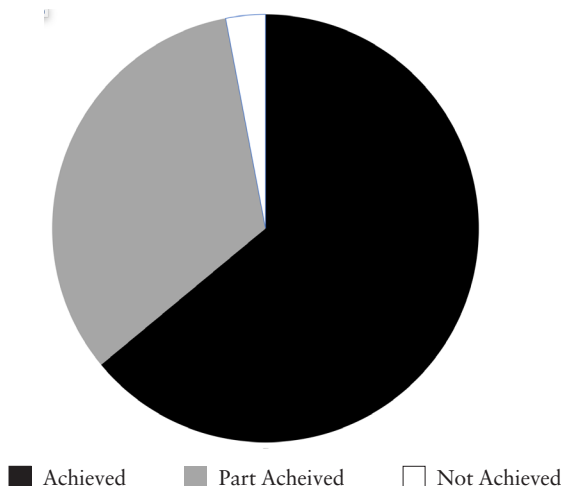
6. The breadth and diversity of the work undertaken by the Council of Social Witness is both a strength and a challenge. The Council continues to provide comprehensive service and care at a time of almost constant change and challenge.

7. **A Time to Celebrate:** The Council celebrated the work and witness of Ard Cluan House since 1977 in Londonderry, and York House in Portrush, opened 1970, prior to the relocation of residents and staff in Trinity House, Garvagh. This provided an opportunity to acknowledge the dedicated work of staff, the help of support groups, the co-operation of relatives and the understanding of residents. These celebrations were a significant stepping-stone on the journey to Trinity House, Garvagh, which was officially opened by the Moderator, Rt Rev Dr Noble McNeely, on 18th December 2017, a further cause for celebration and thanksgiving.
8. Other celebrations included the opening of a dementia garden at Sunnyside House in Bangor and the 25th anniversary of Harold McCauley Nursing Home in Omagh. The long-service of staff and completion of professional training have also been celebrated.
9. It is important to thank two committee conveners and celebrate the contributions they have made to the work of the Council, and previously the Board of Social Witness. Rev Colin Megaw served as Convener of Adult Services Committee from 2009-2014 and Specialist Services since 2015. To this work he brought a wealth of personal experience, an understanding of the complex nature of the work, an ability to relate to statutory bodies and an empathy for those using the services of Carlisle House, Gray's Court, and Thompson House in particular. Colin made the phrase "People Matter to God" a practical reality for many who too often are marginalised and ignored.
10. Rev John Seawright has been Convener of the Older People Services Committee since 2010. His warm and gentle nature has infused the work of this Committee at a time when difficult realities had to be addressed with discernment and determination. John has blended wise stewardship of resources with compassion for individuals in a most effective way. His leadership has been appreciated by committee members, staff in the office and in the various units, as well as residents and their families.
11. A special thanks to Harry Orr, who through the years gave support and advice to Social Witness on a range of building and health and safety issues. Council wish Harry well on his retirement.
12. **A Time of Challenge:** The Council and its Committees have encountered several challenges throughout this year. The anticipated takeover of the Peacehaven Trust in Greystones has not progressed as quickly as hoped. Following the guidance of the General Assembly Solicitor and with the permission of the Trustees, a revised proposal is brought to the General Assembly to enable the Church to continue the work and ministry of this significant project.
13. The Council has risen to the challenge of what is usually referred to as Adult Safeguarding. PCI has been at the forefront of resourcing leaders with regards to safeguarding children and young people, and with the support of members who hold key roles in this sector, the Adult

Safeguarding Policy and Guidelines were launched on 15th March 2018. The impact on congregations remains to be seen.

14. Within the Church, and the wider community, there is a growing awareness of several issues: the needs of those with dementia, and how we can minister to them and their families; the pain of domestic abuse; and the increase in human trafficking. The Council may not have the capacity to address these matters fully but there have been useful presentations at meetings of the Council which have encouraged 'signposting' to helpful resources and other agencies.
15. **A Time for Collaboration:** This year, perhaps more than any other, the Council is conscious that the celebrations have been possible and the challenges faced due to the positive collaboration of others. This was most clearly demonstrated in the opening of Trinity House. Appreciation must be expressed to the Personnel, Finance and IT Departments; and the Clerk and the General Assembly Solicitor for their professional guidance and support. There was also a host of volunteers who 'turned their hand' to anything to ensure that there was a warm and comfortable welcome for residents and staff.
16. In other aspects of the Council's work we have appreciated the support of other Councils and Departments and have continued to benefit from Local Support Committees and 'Friends of' groups.
17. Those statutory, voluntary, community and faith groups which work closely with the Council are now too numerous to mention. Their support and assistance is much appreciated by all our staff, committees and the Council.
18. Cheryl Lamont, Chief Executive of the Probation Board (PBNI) addressed the March meeting of the Council. She is responsible for the leadership, strategic direction and management of PBNI; the organisation's operational and financial performance and the quality of its external relationships. The Secretary, in introducing the Chief Executive, took the opportunity to thank the Probation Board for their support during the refurbishment of Thompson House. Probation and the other members of the Criminal Justice Sector pulled together to enable the work to continue. Cheryl commended the work of Thompson House and valued the other contacts within the Presbyterian Church. The Council was encouraged to explore other work with offenders as a way of reaching into the community.
19. All of this is undergirded by the continuing dedicated work of staff in our facilities and in the Council office. Thanks and congratulations are particularly extended to Mrs Linda Wray who has served the Church and Board/Council for 25 years, and Mr Lindsay Conway who has been in post for 15 years.
20. **A Time to Consider:** The Report to the 2017 General Assembly was structured according to the Council's Strategic Plan 2015-2018. It is now time to consider what progress has been made in achieving the strategic objectives of that plan before preparing a further plan for the next three year period.

### Strategic Action Points



21. The Council and Committees reviewed and audited the Strategic Plan 2015-2018. The plan contained 7 substantive Strategic Objectives and 74 individual Action Points – 40 were achieved, 25 part-achieved, 9 not achieved.
22. The Council in launching the Plan acknowledged that, “the Church was returning to its rightful place in being a key player in the provision of services. Welfare Reform and the daily pressure in Health and Social Care Services have brought society to a crossroads.”
23. The crisis within Health and Social Care Services has further deepened during the life of the Strategic Plan, resulting in longer waiting-lists, postponed and cancelled surgical procedures, fewer care packages and flaws in domiciliary care.
24. The absence of a Northern Ireland Executive has added to the crisis. The Council had received reports which indicated that significant changes in legislation have been held up or abandoned as a direct result of no Ministers or Committee structure being in place.
25. For the Council, which has to relate to a range of professional and regulatory bodies and Government Departments, the biggest challenge is the lack of local government. Budgetary confusion impacts this work both in terms of income and expenditure. There is increasing concern that the impact of the present situation is likely to extend into

the medium term with little forward planning or strategic thinking on future needs and resources. Other proposed cuts in funding will further destabilise an already fragile service.

Key:    ✓ Fully achieved    ○ Part achieved    □ Not achieved

### 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.*

- ✓ In partnership with appropriate organisations and regulatory bodies, to carry out a comprehensive building survey of all our units.
- By the promotion of volunteering – the Getting on Board volunteering programme and the achievement of Investing in Volunteers standard.
- By responding to the needs of the Social Care and Faith sectors.
- ✓ By supporting those with additional needs.
- ✓ By continuing to challenge and lobby Government in conjunction with Council for Public Affairs.
- ✓ By raising awareness of adult safeguarding/human trafficking/domestic and sexual violence.
- By engaging with service-users for feedback.

### Strategic Objective 2

*The 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.*

- By developing Denegarath House site as a Skills Learning Centre/Social Enterprise initiative.
- ✓ By expanding the Christmas Cracker respite initiative throughout PCI congregations.
- ✓ By supporting the ongoing ministry of the Kinghan Church.
- By promoting deaf awareness throughout the Church.
- By exploring opportunities to establish outreach to the deaf community.
- By the ongoing development of our ministry with the deaf community.

- ✓ By promoting Lawnfield House as an all-year respite service.
  - By exploring opportunities for development at the Aaron House site.
  - By encouraging the integration of people with additional needs in organisations and congregational life.
- Raise awareness of disability issues throughout PCI including carers/ issues.

### Strategic Objective 3

*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.*

- ✓ To continue to consider the relocation of Ard Cluan House and York House.
- To continue to challenge Government Policy in relation to Transforming Your Care, pertaining to older people.
- To explore opportunities to provide Home Care Services.
- ✓ To train all staff and volunteers in dementia awareness and to develop awareness in the wider Church on dementia.
- ✓ To attain an overall occupancy rate of 95%.
- To increase the number of volunteers in the homes to 250.
- ✓ To provide respite/day care/holiday accommodation for an additional 50 residents.
- To establish Activities Coordinators in each of the residential homes.

### Strategic Objective 4

*Taking Care Committee (The Safeguarding Programme of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland) – creating a safe environment for all our members, users, volunteers and staff.*

- ✓ To provide training for those working with or in contact with children and adults at risk.
- ✓ To prepare for Access (NI) applications going online.
- To review current policies and devise relevant responses to safeguarding issues.
- ✓ Organise conferences and seminars in conjunction with the Council for Congregational Life and Witness.
- ✓ To raise awareness of Child Protection issues.
- ✓ To develop a training programme for kirk sessions.
- To appoint a network of Taking Care Ambassadors.

- To develop a Taking Care Sunday strategy.
- ✓ To develop a working relationship with our public protection partners.
- ✓ To develop a safeguarding strategy for adults at risk of harm, who attend our congregations and participate in activities.
- To continue to build relationships with other faith and voluntary groups.
- ✓ To raise awareness of human trafficking and domestic/sexual violence.

### Strategic Objective 5

*The Specialist Services Committee – will deliver a high standard of service to those with addictions, offending behaviours and who require supported housing.*

- Establish a closer collaboration between Thompson House, Carlisle House and Gray's Court.
- ✓ Develop a Crime Reduction and Life Skills Programme for Thompson House.
- ✓ Develop the Fresh Start Programme in partnership with the Northern Ireland Prison Service.
- Develop a link with prison chaplains and contribute to the development of community chaplains.
- Establish stronger links with Juvenile Justice Centre
- ✓ Include work of Flourish! Churches' Initiative on Suicide.
- ✓ Raise awareness of domestic/sexual violence.
- ✓ Explore with Oaklee/Trinity the refurbishment of Carlisle House.

### Strategic Objective 6

*The 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.*

- ✓ To develop policies/procedures and deliver training to staff in all Homes/Units re handling of finances.
- ✓ To continue to enforce strict financial controls.
- To establish more appropriate funding streams with stakeholders.
- ✓ To explore possible savings through group purchasing.
- ✓ To ensure funds from capital projects are appropriately controlled.
- To agree a protocol for the use of money given as a gift or bequest.
- ✓ To ensure that all new work/developments are project-managed.
- To explore other sources of funding and resources for our work.

**Strategic Objective 7**

*The Council shall effectively communicate to its members, the wider Church and community the work, services and achievements of the Council.*

- ☐ By the use of a vibrant fresh web-site.
- ☐ By the production of regular newssheets.
- ✓ By the organising of regular training events, seminars and conferences.
- ✓ By the establishment of a Staff Award Scheme for long-service and training initiatives.
- ✓ By a Recognition Scheme for Social Witness initiatives in congregations and within homes/projects.
- By the generation of regular press statements.
- ✓ By the production of monthly Prayer Alerts and contributions to Prayer for Today on the Presbyterian Church in Ireland web-site.

## **DISABILITY SERVICES COMMITTEE**

26. The Committee continues to be encouraged by the work being done and care provided in Aaron House, Lawnfield House, Willow Brook/Topley Terrace and the Kinghan Church, with positive outcomes being received from RQIA visits and inspections.
27. It was with sadness that the Committee learned of the passing of the very first resident to live in Aaron House. Her family requested her funeral service be held in Aaron House on Wednesday, 15th November, and afterwards expressed their deep appreciation for the way their sister had been “loved, respected and always treated with dignity” during her time in the home. One of the respite service-users also passed away at the end of last year.
28. Occupancy levels in Lawnfield House show an increase of 60 residents during 2017 but this needs to improve further in order to secure the home financially. Lawnfield is a specialised centre for Respite and Short-time Care but also has a small number of permanent residents.
29. The bungalow at Lawnfield, which was used by the volunteers/hosts, has been registered for Domiciliary Care and is now occupied by two brothers. A new cabin has been supplied and installed jointly by CSW and Disabled Christian Fellowship to accommodate the volunteers/hosts. We deeply appreciate the generosity of DSF in this valuable addition to the premises.
30. Willow Brook and Topley Terrace continue to provide a high standard of service, supporting young adults living in their own homes. Mrs Elizabeth Wilson took up post as Manager of Willow Brook on 1st December last year following Mr Alan Tate’s retirement on 30th November.



31. The takeover of Peacehaven Trust has proven to be more complex and slower than expected. A Task Group was established following the Council meeting in November 2017, including the Clerk of Assembly, Financial Secretary and the General Assembly Solicitor, to find a way of resolving the issues involved, in agreement with the Trustees of the General Assembly. On account of the legal difficulties identified the Trustees agreed that instead of pursuing an asset transfer arrangement as originally planned, PCI should now take over the company, Peacehaven Trust Ltd. This way forward has been approved by the General Council.
32. Christmas Cracker enjoyed another successful year, being held in five locations: McQuiston Memorial, Belfast; West Church, Bangor; Hillsborough; New Row, Coleraine; and Lislooney, Armagh. Hillsborough also piloted a Summer Cracker event which proved to be very encouraging. The Committee was given permission by the Council to establish a Task Group to explore the development of this valuable respite resource both throughout the year and in other locations, including a possible summer 'fun day' event.
33. The Kinghan Church continues to provide ministry to the deaf community in Belfast. The Committee is grateful both to Kinghan Church staff for their ongoing work as well as those who have supplied the pulpit during this time of vacancy. The strong link with Windsor has been beneficial and has greatly benefitted both Kinghan and Windsor. A Task Group comprised of members of the Kinghan Church, the Presbytery of South Belfast, the Council for Social Witness and two independent experts, has met on four occasions and has made the following recommendations as a strategy for the way forward:
  - (a) That there is a future for the ministry of the Kinghan Church and see it remaining in its existing premises.
  - (b) That the full and efficient use of the building be explored in conjunction with presbytery and other councils.
  - (c) Kinghan should have a mutually beneficial and meaningful formal connection with a congregation in south Belfast.
  - (d) In this context additional arrangements could be made to enable the members of Kinghan to have a more enhanced involvement in the wider life of PCI and both avail of and participate in additional pastoral care.
  - (e) That our ministry to the wider community would be best served by streaming the Kinghan worship services to individuals in their own homes and local church buildings.
  - (f) That links be renewed with other churches for deaf people and specialist organisations.
34. The Committee is grateful for the opportunity offered to its Convener by the Council for Congregational Life and Witness to give advice and be involved in the My Place events for ministers, leaders and all

members of congregations. These evenings explore ways of including children with special additional needs in worship and children's ministry through a mixture of Bible teaching, insights from parents and practical suggestions from those working in the field of special education.

35. The Committee expressed concern about issues arising from welfare reform and, in particular, universal credit and asked the Council to consider the possible appointment of an intern who could be employed to source available benefits or information and to link in with Congregational Life and Witness in this regard.
36. The Committee received approval from the Council to explore 'supported respite' and the inclusion of other areas of disability, such as ministry to post-19 age group, as part of the forthcoming review of our strategic objectives.
37. The Disability Services Committee appreciates the contribution made by Local Support Committee members and 'Friends of' groups who enhance the work through the provision of activities, outings, fundraising, spiritual input, quality auditing and so on.

PETER DICKINSON, Convener

## OLDER PEOPLE SERVICES COMMITTEE

38. The work and witness of Older People Services continues 24/7 365 days a year. Our various homes and residential facilities are managed and staffed for the benefit of our residents and are a significant part of our Presbyterian Church's witness. Alas, it would seem that far too many of the members and even of the ministers of our denomination are not aware of this important service.
39. In 2017 the total number of beds provided by Older People Services was 235, of which 63 were registered dementia beds. Over the year we had a total of 238 residents; 79 of these were privately funded and 159 care managed. At the end of 2017 over 60% of our residents were aged over 85 and this included 5 centenarians. We are glad to have continued to reach our goal of 95% occupancy as our homes are essentially self-funding.
40. 2017 was the first full year where some additional income was derived from a £20 per week top up fee for new residents who availed of en suite accommodation.
41. Our homes are subject to the rules, standards and requirements imposed upon all such facilities, and we can report that the inspection reports made by RQIA (The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority) on our facilities were uniformly positive. All such reports can be found on the Authority's web site (<https://rqia.org.uk>). This provides a most useful resource for those who need to choose a residential home.

42. During the year the Moderator officially opened a dementia garden at Sunnyside House. He also visited River House, and as part of a presbytery tour of the Dublin and Munster Presbytery, Tritonville Close, Mount Tabor and Peacehaven. On 18th December he officially opened Trinity House, our new home in Garvagh. This is a purpose-built and further enhanced 50-bed unit; this includes 16 registered dementia beds. At the time of writing occupancy is steadily increasing and we look forward to a full complement before long.
43. The local community has welcomed our presence and many have been glad to get involved in various ways. The local Presbyterian churches have also been most welcoming and very practically helpful.
44. Ard Cluan and York House were formally closed in October. Shortly before this the Moderator paid a pastoral visit to these much loved homes. In the second week of October a Service of Celebration of Care was held in Ebrington Church, just a few doors from Ard Cluan, and a couple of days later many gathered in York House to remember the years of care and service given there also. These were both very special events of worship and of thanksgiving to God.
45. While some of the staff employed in these homes have now transferred to Garvagh not all have been in a position to do so; but the majority of these have continued to take an interest in the new facility and to visit particular residents there. We wish all of them well in their new positions or in retirement.
46. Over the course of 2017 Council bade farewell to four home managers: Ann Anderson from Corkey House, Sandra Boyd from Ard Cluan, Hazel Walker from York House and Miriam Chambers from River House. Hazel Walker transferred to Trinity House as interim manager and has now retired. We record our thanks to them all for their years of service. We welcomed Rosemary Gilbey and Jayne Bellingham as managers of Corkey and Trinity respectively. At present the manager's post in River House remains to be filled.
47. Our personnel department is kept busy at all times, with the national shortage of nurses placing the process under considerable pressure.
48. We owe so much to our dedicated and caring staff in our homes. All of these continue to receive ongoing training and it is not least on them that our good reputation for care and compassion depends, as does also the maintenance of a Christian ethos in all that we do.
49. At our annual awards ceremony for long service, which was held in Assembly Buildings in December, the choir was provided by Adelaide House and a resident testified to the help and kindness she had received as she first entered residential care and to how much that had helped her to make the transition.
50. At the annual NI Amenity Council Awards in September, River House took first place for the Best Kept Health and Social Care Facility in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust region and in the same region Sunnyside House was runner up.

51. Our annual Older People Services review day was held in Corkey House and afterwards a dementia garden and a tea room in the home were opened.
52. In 2017 Harold McCauley House celebrated its 25th Anniversary. A Family Day was held (and *Anniversary Cookery Books* are still available for purchase) and a very special thanksgiving service took place in the home. At the time of writing we are liaising with statutory bodies regarding flood defences and relevant contingency plans and protocols. The home also has a new car park.
53. "Do not cast me off in time of old age: forsake me not when my strength is spent." Psalm 71:9 introduces the "Guide to supporting people with dementia in the local church", a resource that was produced in partnership with the Dementia Services Trust.
54. The Guide systematically sets out the essential information that churches providing pastoral care require to be a dementia friendly church: What is dementia; When someone might have dementia; When someone has been diagnosed; When the person is trying to live the best possible life; When life becomes too hard; When the person must go into care; At the end of life.
55. In December, and in conjunction with the General Council, a round-table discussion was held regarding dementia. This was attended by representatives of statutory and voluntary bodies and was deemed very useful. PCI aspires to be among the first "dementia friendly" denominations. A research student is hoping to provide various resources for us regarding the issue of dementia and spirituality.
56. At its meeting in March the Council for Social Witness passed resolutions to consider the possible provision of Home Care Services and also to seek a still greater congregational awareness of the issues facing older people and their families.
57. The running of all our homes is overseen and facilitated by a dedicated team in Assembly Buildings whose manifest commitment to the work and to its witness to our Lord is a source of great encouragement and inspiration for all who are aware of even a little of the volume of work that they do; they go far beyond the call of "duty," and we record our thanks to them and wish them God's richest blessing.

JOHN SEAWRIGHT, Convener

## TAKING CARE COMMITTEE

58. The past six months has been a period of change, challenge and transition for Taking Care. As a Committee we seek God's guidance as to the way forward.
59. The challenge which faced us in 2017 was to provide a service which no longer had a Programme Co-ordinator leading it; this has impacted

on the day to day running of Taking Care and the implementation of our strategic objectives.

60. Deborah Webster, our Taking Care Programme Coordinator for 10 years, resigned in July 2017 to pursue postgraduate research. All aspects of programming had continued to develop under her supervision, especially the introduction of the Accredited Trainers Programme and kirk session training. The Committee acknowledges the high standards she maintained together with her diligence and devotion to her duties. Throughout PCI congregations both north and south she proved a reliable, efficient and trustworthy colleague. We are grateful for all she achieved on our behalf.
61. Despite the position of Temporary Taking Care Programme Coordinator being advertised on two occasions the post remains vacant. A decision taken beyond our Committee is that a permanent post is no longer appropriate due to the development of *Taking Care of All*, which combines the child protection aspect of our work with PCI adult safeguarding. This proposed transition will require different skill sets from the appointee. While decisions have to be made regarding this change, the demands of providing continuing training events at all levels, and advice on a 24 hour basis, has resulted in the Council Secretary needing to devote one day each week to Taking Care in order to bridge the gap.
62. The aforementioned development has impacted on the strategic objectives of Taking Care leaving it difficult to advance them.
63. We are appreciative of the hard work of our administrative staff, Cathy Mullin and her assistant Marjorie Coulter.
64. During 2017 the following have been provided:
  - (a) **Training:**

Foundation training	– 22 sessions
Refresher training	– 98 sessions
Designated Persons training	– 2 sessions
Total of 122 events	

There have been 157 congregations requesting the module on kirk session training which is delivered by either the Designated Person or a member of their session. It is hoped this will increase now that the Charity Commission NI has designated elders as trustees, with the attendant responsibilities this requires.
  - (b) **Garda vetting:** The number of checks totalled 745. This is triple the 2016 figure. The increased numbers have occurred due to the Republic of Ireland introducing a new law in April 2016 which has involved a lot of retrospective vetting.
  - (c) **Access NI:** 1,842 checks have been processed through the Taking Care Office in 2017.
  - (d) **Incidents:** Those requiring action or advice were 45.

65. On a more positive note, the Taking Care of All conference is to be held on Thursday 15th March. This is the first opportunity to provide members of our congregations, whatever roles they perform within the Church family, with an introduction to 'Adult Safeguarding: Prevention, Protection and Partnership'.
66. Human trafficking and domestic/sexual violence are a part of adult safeguarding and together with child protection issues we will continue to have close working relationships with our public protection partners. Our staff have regular contact with other faith and voluntary groups involved in this work.
67. As congregations are made aware of adult safeguarding the volume of work which will be generated is unknown. I would emphasise that Taking Care requires adequate, expert staff to provide a professional service so that we are "Taking Care of All".
68. Joyce McKee, an elder in Hillsborough congregation, was the key note speaker at the conference. She reported that in 2016-17, 6,579 referrals were made to the Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland, where there had been concerns in relation to adult safeguarding. The key principles of adult safeguarding are prevention, protection and partnership.
69. The conference where introduced to the categories of abuse – physical, sexual, financial, institutional, psychological/emotional, human trafficking, modern slavery and domestic abuse.
70. There is a key role for churches in the whole area of partnership, the churches having been part of the discussions from an early stage of discussions.
71. Jill Robinson from Flourish NI spoke on the area of human trafficking, stating that "People are not commodities". Those attending were encouraged to spot the signs – individuals being recruited, deceived, coerced or exploited, with the main areas of concern being the sex trade and forced labour.
72. Flourish NI provide a wide range of services – intensive case work, making a house a home, English classes, advocacy, to name a few.
73. Veronica Gray from Action on Elder Abuse introduced the Conference to a bold definition of elder abuse "a single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person." Over 500,000 older people are abused in the United Kingdom each year.
74. In Northern Ireland all abuse is under-reported, the majority of victims are women and are over 70 years of age.
75. The Clerk of the General Assembly, Rev Trevor Gribben, and Joyce McKee officially launched the Policy and Guidelines and the *Taking Care of All* pocket guide.
76. The policy and guidelines will be online as chapter 11 of the *Taking Care Manual*.

## SPECIALIST SERVICES COMMITTEE

77. The Specialist Services Committee continues to meet regularly to develop and review its strategies in accordance with Objective 5 of CSW's Strategic Plan 2015-2018. In addition to this, the Committee continues to deliver a high standard of services for those connected with Carlisle House, Thompson House and Gray's Court.
78. **Thompson House** continues to receive a high number of requests for its services from the PBNI. Throughout 2017, the average occupancy levels averaged over 90%. Four critical incidents have occurred in recent months. (1) In November, as staff conducted their regular room checks, they discovered a deceased resident. Investigations concluded that this resident had committed suicide. Staff attended the deceased's funeral and met with family afterwards. (2) In December, a 26-year-old resident assaulted a 69-year-old resident. Staff intervened and were able to assist the older resident. For safety reasons the 26-year-old resident was asked to leave Thompson House. (3) In January two residents assaulted another resident causing minor head injuries to the injured party. Both perpetrators were asked to leave Thompson House as a result of their behaviour. (4) In March a resident attempted suicide. Staff responded, managing to restrain and administer first aid with the assistance of another resident. The resident who had attempted suicide was eventually brought to hospital by the PSNI after two calls for assistance to the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service. It should be stressed that the current protocols in place are working well, but the lack of Ambulance cover and their ability to respond to the incident on 7th March does raise concerns for both resident and staff safety.
79. The staff at Thompson House should be commended for their response and subsequent interventions in dealing with these incidents; all welfare protocols with regard to the incidents have been offered to the staff involved. A recent inspection from Supporting People recommended the use of new risk assessment forms, which, on implementation, have proved very useful. A number of residents who helped out at Trinity House, Garvagh, were invited to attend the official opening of this new residential home for older people. They are keen to get involved in any future projects. There are currently no staffing issues.
80. **Carlisle House:** Referrals from both the Belfast and Northern Health and Social Care Trusts are steadily increasing. An RQIA Unannounced Pharmacy Inspection took place in January 2018. No requirements or recommendations were required from the inspection. The Inspector made special reference to the commitment and compassionate nature of staff and said that the management of residents' medicines was of the highest standard. A senior practitioner is on long-term sick leave following a cycling accident; the post is currently being covered internally by staff who can 'step up'. A new support worker has recently been appointed, which now means that Carlisle House has a full complement of support workers. However, one member will avail of maternity leave later this year.

81. **Property, Maintenance, Health and Safety:** Choice Housing has completed the refurbishment of fire alarm systems, fire doors, emergency lighting and heating system. Some minor snags are still to be resolved in the near future. The backyard has been refurbished and a new summerhouse and gazebo is planned for the front garden to enhance service users' experience.
82. **Funding:** We still await the outcome of the SNMA Review on Special Needs Management Allowance; the future looks bleak on SNMA being retained. On a positive note NHSC Trust have agreed to pass onto Carlisle House the annual uplift in funding from the HSC Board for Residential Homes; This is a significant increase and will offset the loss of SNMA. The Bamford Review remains stalled, which means that recent developments with the South Eastern and Southern Heath Trusts are at a standstill.
83. The Committee continues to promote, and to encourage congregations to use, the Flourish material, pastoral guidelines and training in the area of suicide prevention and emotional wellbeing.
84. **Reconnect** – the replacement to the old Service User Group – continues to grow with positive results due to its greater focus on the continued recovery of group members.
85. **Gray's Court** is at full occupancy (7) and is a vital stepping-stone in the long-term recovery of those who have suffered from substance misuse. The Residents Group is highly motivated and well engaged in the process of moving to independent living. The Senior Project Worker remains on long-term sick leave and her post is being covered by suitable staff members from Carlisle House.
86. The Specialist Services Committee continues to focus on developing and drafting new objectives for the 2018 onwards Strategic Plan.

JOHN STANBRIDGE, Acting Convener

## RESOLUTIONS

1. That the General Assembly give thanks to God for the opening of Trinity House, Garvagh and for the efficient transfer of the work and witness of Ard Cluan (Londonderry) and York House (York House).
2. That the General Assembly note the launch of the Adult Safeguarding Policy, Guidelines and Pocket Guide on 15th March 2018 and encourage congregations to use the resources and avail of appropriate training.
3. That the General Assembly, recognising the under provision of support services for those with a Learning Disability in the post-19 age group, encourage the Council for Social Witness as it explores this matter and, if appropriate, engages with the Department of Health in collaboration with the Council for Public Affairs.
4. That the report of the Council for Social Witness be received.