

THE



WINTER/SPRING 2024

BULLETIN

MAGAZINE OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL



SVP
180 Years
1844-2024

Changing
Times
**Continuing
Compassion**

The Voice of Social Justice in Ireland



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Principal founder of the
Society of St. Vincent de Paul,
Frederic Ozanam

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SVP – Society of St. Vincent
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Saint Vincent de Paul Ireland

Editorial

by **Linda O'Connell**
Editor



It has been a while since our last issue of the Bulletin, and in the intervening period, the world has seen significant upheaval. From the relentless rise in the cost of living, to the staggering number of requests for assistance – over 250,000 in 2023, with more than 70,000 during our Annual Appeal – the challenges facing our society are profound and far-reaching.

As we mark the two-year milestone of the war in Ukraine and witness the distressing scenes of suffering, it is disheartening to note the growing desensitisation towards such crises. Media research indicates a troubling trend where many prefer to turn away from the harsh realities of conflict.

The recent riots in our capital city also serve to remind us that we are not immune to global trends of problems created by mass immigration. As Ireland experiences unprecedented demographic shifts, with one in five of our population now not born in Ireland, we are presented with new challenges and opportunities. The question of how we view and embrace our evolving community is paramount. Will our compassion and generosity extend to include the newcomers to our shores? Or will we succumb to rancour, closing ourselves off to those seeking refuge and opportunity?

These are the questions that will shape the future of our society and our nation. As we navigate the complexities of a changing world, it is essential that we engage in open and honest dialogue within our organisation. We must examine our attitudes to diversity and see if they are fit for purpose in continuing the work of SVP in a manner consistent with its past, that is guided by the principles of inclusion and solidarity.

Speaking of the past, the St. Vincent de Paul has, for 180 years, endured and stood as a symbol of compassion and solidarity, offering assistance with love and empathy against a backdrop of famine, wars and previous social change. As we approach this anniversary, we celebrate a legacy of service that transcends borders and spans generations.

Reflecting on the past year, I am reminded of the profound impact our organisation has had on countless lives. From advocating for the marginalised to fighting for social justice, our volunteers have shown remarkable dedication and resilience. Even in the face of adversity, they have remained steadfast in their mission to extend the hand of friendship to those in need, regardless of their background or circumstance.

I hope you enjoy the read.

Linda O'Connell

Rose McGowan



Facing change and new challenges also brings opportunities

Welcome to the first Bulletin of 2024

Ireland at the moment is in a period of extreme change which brings challenges but also opportunities.

The challenges are meeting needs and providing the services we are renowned for against a backdrop of a rapidly changing society.

The opportunities are to look deep into our organisation with a view to renewing our faith in what we do and take the opportunities to find ways to even do it better.

This year will be a memorable year as we celebrate our 180th anniversary in Ireland. The first Conference, St Michan's, was established in Dublin in 1844. From there we have spread through every one of the 32 counties meeting the needs of those everywhere who seek our help.

We don't have to go back 180 years to view the changes in Irish society which our members have faced. In fact just think back 50 or even 25 years and you will see what changes have impacted on those we help and the way we provide that help.

Throughout every period of change our members have been a bedrock of support for hundreds of thousands of Irish people.

Our 180th anniversary Members Day on 20th April in the Dublin Convention Centre will be an opportunity to celebrate our history in Ireland but also to use the occasion to reflect and renew our commitment as we face into another period of societal change.

I encourage all members to make the effort to attend for the opportunity to celebrate their work.

SVP
180 Years
 1844–2024



**Changing
 Times
 Continuing
 Compassion**

While our new strategy was being developed we kept in mind that the key focus of everything we do has to be those in need who seek our help.

SVP in the future

As part of our preparation to face the changes in a way that continues to allow us to provide the high level of services that is expected of us and to operate effectively within the now highly regulated charity sector we have taken a big step forward for the Society with the roll-out of a new strategy entitled 'Journey Together 2024–2028'. Thank you to many of you who have participated in the surveys and meetings to prepare this strategy.

As Blessed Frederick Ozanam said "Do not be afraid of new beginnings, Be creative, Be inventive" Some of the aims of Journey Together 2024-2028 is to strengthen our organisational structure in terms of Governance, Risk and Compliance as well as ensuring that membership is secured for the future with a focus on recruitment and retention.

We now operate in a society where all organisations, including charities must not only act responsibly, but be seen to do so. It is a society where perception plays a major part in how individuals and organisations are judged.

We also now have to observe rules relating to discrimination, data protection, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, garda vetting, consent, confidentiality, and safe recruitment policies.

Managing an organisation in this modern era also requires us to embrace technology in a way unheard of 20/30 years ago.

While being mindful of all those legal and rule based issues we have to continue to support those in need to the best of our ability and always act to preserve the reputation of the Society we are devoted to.

As the largest voluntary charity in Ireland we are in the headlights when it comes to regulations and governance so we must show leadership for the sector.

While our new strategy was being developed we kept in mind that the key focus of everything we do has to be those in need who seek our help. Our history and the exhortation of our founders, especially Blessed Frederick Ozanam all have that as the cornerstone of our existence.

Rose McGowan
National President,
Society of St. Vincent de Paul

“I was beginning to wonder if we’d have Christmas at all.”

by **Paschal Scallon CM**
SVP Spiritual Advisor



So says the mother in the SVP Christmas Appeal ad this year, as some of the things that make Christmas in any home are brought into the house and the children can hardly contain themselves.

This year's ad for the Christmas Appeal of the Society of St Vincent De Paul was 30 seconds long. It showed members of the SVP visiting a family as darkness falls on a winter evening. The soundtrack was a particularly wistful rendition of *Walking in a Winter Wonderland*, and the lyric, 'are you listening?' was given added emphasis.

The family in the ad was not in obvious distress but the mother's saying, "*I was beginning to wonder if we'd have Christmas at all*", spoke volumes about the anxiety and the distress beneath the surface, anxiety and stress that beset her life and, in other ways, the lives of so many right now.

The thing is, we can take the situation of a family such as the one in the ad and see in their circumstances a wider and a deepening crisis troubling all of us. The last three years or so have been unrelentingly difficult. There has been so much going on around the world that is alarming but when illness and vulnerability, agitation and violence are no longer a world away but on our own streets, then we are worn down, and far from feeling we are in a wonderland, we find ourselves simply wondering.

Into all that gets us down, all that shocks us and makes us afraid, that wears us out and takes away our courage, Christians bring those strengths, some might call them virtues, that show we believe there is more for us than loss and grief.

The Society of St Vincent De Paul was founded in France in the ashes of revolution and emerged in Ireland in the 1840s just as our own families, only seven or eight generations ago, were about to endure, in the Great Famine, possibly the greatest catastrophe ever to befall the island.

If we are to find again a sense of wonder inspired more by grace than grief; if we are to regain the peace that replaces anxiety; it starts with each person having regard and respect for the person next to us. To see someone else as a person is to endow him or her yourself with an inalienable dignity.

Members of the SVP volunteer and work out of an ethic rooted in the Gospel. That motivation also draws on years of reflection contained in the social teaching of the Catholic Church. But our deepest motivation and the surest source of all that we have learned and keep safe are the faces and the voices of people who come to us asking if we can help.

If we are to find again a sense of wonder inspired more by grace than grief; if we are to regain the peace that replaces anxiety; it starts with each person having regard and respect for the person next to us. To see someone else as a person is to endow him or her yourself with an inalienable dignity.

At the opening of the SVP annual collection campaign, Christmas morning always seems a long way off, but the duration of the campaign and, indeed, the season of Advent itself is a moment in which we can make a difference, by the grace of God, in our own lives and for the sake of others. It ought not to be acceptable for us to hear anyone wonder if their hope and joy have gone. In what we say and what we do, we are with St Paul who says, "*May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ send you grace and peace.*"

January 31, 2024

Dear colleagues and friends:

Praise be to our Lord Jesus Christ!



Introduction:

My dear fellow members, aspirants, employees at our offices and social works, dear collaborators and volunteers:

As you know, on September 9, 2023, in the Chapel of St. Vincent de Paul in Paris, I had the honor of being invested as the 17th President General of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul by my predecessor, brother Renato Lima de Oliveira. For me it is a great responsibility and a special challenge to personify the unity of the Society in the world. Thank you very much for your trust.

From the General Council, I invite you, together, to continue strengthening the advances in training, youth, communications, governance, institutional relations and other strategic aspects developed during the previous mandate.

Leading the Confederation with a spirit of service, which by the will of the Lord is implanted in 155 countries, each with its own culture and particularities, requires an effort, not only from the President General but also from the entire structure and ultimately from all the members, in order to maintain our unity and to **be recognised as a community that is a sign of the love of Christ**. To this end, we need to feel this unity, that of being part of a single Conference of friends, which extends throughout the world.

Community identity:

The Conferences were born with a strong sense of community, of global community and have remained so for 190 years, far removed from the more individualistic and abstract modern concept of universality, reduced to economic or technical relations.

The principle of our Conferences is friendship and the double purpose for which they are founded is to be useful to our brothers and sisters and to ourselves. After the act of faith came the act of charity, but as Ozanam writes:

“charity must be a means, not the end of our association, which is rather to spread the spirit of Christianity, which is the spirit of Love”.

From this sentiment, the motto of my presidency is taken from a letter of Ozanam from Pisa in 1853, when he was already mortally wounded: *“Although they speak different languages, their hands always meet with such fraternal cordiality that they could well recognize us by the same sign with which they recognized the first Christians: Look how they love each other!”*

Sometimes we are busy with Conference matters and we tend to secularise ourselves, to measure ourselves by the kilos of food or clothes we give and not so much by the spiritual assistance we give to the suffering people. As our founder in Spain, the now Venerable Santiago de Masarnau, who knew Frederic Ozanam in Paris, used to say: *“If we measure ourselves only by this, the Conferences will disappear, not in the eyes of men, but in the eyes of God”.*



Presidential program:

In order for this Vincentian mission to give greater meaning to our life, and with the approval of the General Council, I have commissioned the Spiritual Advisors of the General Council, Father José Francisco Orozco CM and Father Andrés Motto CM, to **develop a program entitled: 'Growing Together in Faith'**. Ongoing Vincentian Formation is of fundamental importance in the life of the Conferences.

In addition, I would like to highlight some of the strategic priorities of this presidential mandate – the full program, for more details, is on our corporate website – that are rooted in our Rule, which underpins our unity and friendship:

– **To institute once a year an International Vincentian Day** in an important city of each continent, to be an event of world-wide repercussion, in order to make our Society and its social actions better known. An annual international event, through art and culture as a universal language, to give greater visibility to all that we do and to assert ourselves as faithful transmitters of the Word of God. An initiative ratified by the General Council that must have the support and help of the National Councils.

– **Strengthen and increase our support to international twinning and solidarity projects**, this is a request that is always present at all meetings. In this line, from the General Council, we are studying how we can implement or join projects in line with the encyclical 'Laudato Si'. The initiative is to try to contribute to solving the dramatic consequences of environmental degradation in the lives of the world's poorest.

– **Encourage the presence of young people in local and international events and activities**, since our young people are the natural successors in the Conferences. Therefore, it is a requirement, to maintain and enhance the annual collection to finance their activities.

– **To revise the Annual Report of the Council General International to add, for information purposes, the Annual Reports of all the National Councils**, in order to demonstrate the global impact that SSVP represents in the world, to increase its credibility and to ask for more support. I hope that all of you will enthusiastically support this initiative, approved by the General Council, and that you will bring your **Annual Reports for 2023 (Income and Expenses only,**

both of the National and Superior Councils, as well as of the social works in which the SSVP participate), to the Paris Office, before March 18, 2024, in order to consolidate them for information purposes only. If your fiscal year does not coincide with the calendar year, you can extrapolate the data.

– **To study new creative forms of financing**, so that the Councils and Conferences can address the changing types of poverty we face in our countries, as well as to seek and raise resources to finance these initiatives. From the team that forms the International Commission for Aid to Development (CIAD), we will lead this initiative.

– **Finally, and as a priority to be emphasised for a better governance, transparency and unity of the SSVP, I have instituted a third deputy vice-presidency**, with the agreement of the General Council, to organise a team to review and, if necessary, make proposals for the modification of the international statutes.

As well, from February 8 to December 8, 2024, the International Year will be dedicated to the Venerable Jean-Léon Le Prévost, (1803–1874). Le Prévost asked at the February 4, 1834 meeting that the Conference of Charity be placed under the patronage of St. Vincent de Paul and celebrate his feast day, and that each meeting begin and end with a prayer. Ozanam, in turn, requested that the Conference be placed under the protection of the Virgin Mary and celebrate the feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8. Since then, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul has maintained two patronages, that of the Immaculate Conception and that of St. Vincent de Paul.

Community as the path to holiness:

The Conferences, from the beginning, demonstrated a committed social action rooted in the Gospel. Now more than ever and in view of the sanctification of Frederic Ozanam, we need a greater commitment to strengthen our social actions, not only to know the immediate fruits of our help to alleviate material and spiritual needs, but also to awaken the social conscience of many.

It will be by our example of unity, of mutual love, with a greater sense of community, that contagious joy, that Christian commitment, with which we will inspire and promote the healthy growth of the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul, will be manifested to others.

The General Council is open to listen to all ideas and proposals to carry out this program and improve it. It is in the community that we are perfected, where we pray together, grow in faith and mature as persons.

This is why I ask for your participation, contributing initiatives, sending articles, photos and news of all that you do, to International Communication, to awaken the consciences with our example and to make us stand out as messengers of the Word of God.

It will be by our example of unity, of mutual love, with a greater sense of community, that contagious joy, that Christian commitment, with which we will inspire and promote the healthy growth of the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul, will be manifested to others.

Acknowledgements:

Finally, I would like to thank first of all our outgoing President General, Renato Lima for his generous dedication and devotion and all the members who made up the previous team, for all the positive things they have contributed. I would also like to thank the members who have joined the new team and have accepted a position of service, as well as all the members and volunteers in general, for their selfless work, always recognised in the eyes of God.

Also to all the employees, benefactors and friends of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul for their support for a more socially just society. Thanks to the Congregation of the Mission, the Daughters of Charity and all the branches of the Vincentian Family with whom we collaborate to strive to make the world a better place, in the spirit of the teachings of St. Vincent de Paul, our patron saint.

I would also like to make a special mention of gratitude to the spouses and relatives of the members from all over the world, who patiently put up with the absences and sometimes also suffer changes in family plans due to a service assignment.

In this year 2024 that is beginning, I implore the Miraculous Virgin to protect the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, the Vincentian Family, us, our families and the people in need we serve.

Receive a fraternal embrace in St. Vincent de Paul and in Blessed Frederic Ozanam

Juan Manuel B. Gomez

XVII President General

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Our National President **Rose McGowan** has been reappointed by our new international president Juan Manuel to the commission for International Aid and Development.

Kieran Stafford, former National President has been appointed as one of the International Territorial Vice-Presidents for Europe 1.

We Don't Know Ourselves

by Jim Walsh

In her introduction to this issue of *The SVP Bulletin* Rose McGowan writes about this year being the 180th anniversary of SVP in Ireland. She says that we don't have to go back 180 years to see the changes that have impacted on SVP members and those they serve.

A very personal vision of the changes in Ireland since 1958, the year of his birth is described by Fintan O'Toole in his award-winning book *We Don't Know Ourselves*. In over 600 pages O'Toole, covers the changes in Ireland since 1958. It is in effect a history of Ireland since that time interwoven with his childhood and adulthood right up to around 2018.

The author Marian Keyes has described the book as "A clear-eyed, myth-dispelling masterpiece. Engaging, analytical, insightfulness, fascinating."

O'Toole doesn't mention SVP in his book which is a little surprising as he grew up in a predominately working class suburb of Dublin called Crumlin. Built in the 1930's and the 1940's it was the largest building project in Ireland with 5,500 two-story houses. He describes Crumlin as being built in the shape of a Eucharistic Congress badge, although that wasn't obvious at ground level. The centre is a geoglyph. One axis of the cross is Banger Road, the other Clonmacnoise Road. The outer circle is formed by the elegant curves of two roads, Leighlen and Lismore.

It was pioneer territory, a kind of Ireland, suburban and working class, not known before. Crumlin later became famous as the homes of the playwright Brendan Behan and Irish/rock singer, and one of the first black Irish people, Phil Lynott. Most of the families who came to live in Crumlin at the time were moved from inner city Dublin and for many it seemed like exile. In 1939 about 400 of the 2,000 families placed in Crumlin had applied

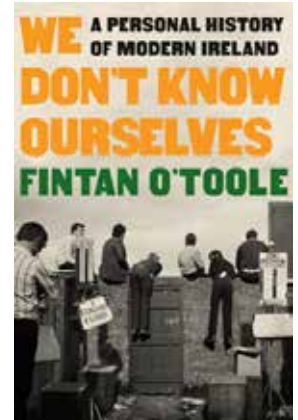
to Dublin Corporation to be transferred back to the city centre.

While SVP may not have been in O'Toole's consciousness as a child it clearly impacted him in his later life. In 2018 in a radio interview with Miriam O'Callaghan he talked about SVP as an example of how people who are poor can be treated with dignity and kindness in a non-judgemental way. He spoke of SVP as a genuine charity not asking questions about who you are.

Ireland has changed almost out of all recognition during his lifetime. While his book is not a memoir it is an engrossing social and historical narrative. Mapped out in a series of episodes he describes the disintegration of the alliance of church and state, sectarian civil war in the North, the Popes triumphant visit in 1979 and those who spoke out against the ruling consensus – feminists, advocates for the rights of children as well as gay men and women coming out of the shadows. Certain themes recur – of things that were known but could never be acknowledged.

O'Toole writes of the 1950s in Ireland as a very bleak period and how his parents, his father Samuel was a bus conductor, probably a strange occupation to the modern generation while his mother Mary worked in the Players Wills cigarette factory, it closed in 2005, a year after Ireland created history by introducing a smoking ban. They were close to emigrating like many young people at the time. O'Toole's father had eight siblings, six had emigrated. He had filled out the papers for emigration to Canada but O'Toole's mother wasn't disposed to moving out of Ireland.

O'Toole describes a cartoon in *Dublin Opinion*, a satirical magazine at the time which captured the bleak mood



in Ireland. It was an image of Ireland with nothing on it except a sign which said "Shortly Available: Undeveloped Country, Unrivalled Ppportunities, Magnificent Views, Political and Otherwise. Owners Going Abroad."

It was says O'Toole a stimulus for T.K. Whitaker, newly appointed General Secretary in the Department of Finance who had begun working on an inspirational document from which Irelands first 'Programme for Economic Expansion' grew. Whitaker died in 2017 aged 100.

We Don't Know Ourselves ends around 2018. O'Toole says on the last page, "When I was born there was no future and now, there is no future again. Back then it was a distressing thought, an alarm bell that awakened energies of change. Now it is a more positive idea: there need not be a single knowledgeable future. We ended up, not great, maybe not even especially good, but better than either – not so bad ourselves."

Fintan O'Toole is Assistant Editor and a prolific contributor to *The Irish Times* as well as the *Guardian*, *New York Times* and other British and American journals. He has written a number of books including *Ship of Fools– How Corruption and Stupidity Killed the Celtic Tiger* and is the Milberg Professor of Irish Letters at Princeton University.

We Don't Know Ourselves was first published in hardback in 2021 and is now available in paperback and as an audiobook.

National Children and Family Services

by **Tony Rock** National Children and Family Services Manager
& **Nino Tadiashvili** National Children and Family Services
Support Coordinator



UPDATES

Communication and Support

The National Children and Family Services department has continued to develop and enhance our communication networks across the country. Our Regional Child and Family Service Committees are now well established bringing together all of our Conference presidents of our services to share experiences, wisdom and details of national developments and strategy. Our Peer Support Networks are also now in place for service management staff across the country.

As part of our development strategy, this year we will be holding the first in person gathering for our Peer Support Network Groups. This event will bring together senior staff members from across the country, to network, get to know their colleagues, undertake training in an area of common need, as well as a chance to meet representatives from each national function. We look forward to establishing this as an annual gathering to build on these opportunities to network and learn from each other's experiences.

Safeguarding in our Children's Services

In 2020, The Society undertook a safeguarding audit of our children's services, carried out by an internationally acclaimed organisation, Keeping Children Safe (KCS). At the time we completed and achieved a Level 1 International Safeguarding Certificate. This provided assurance that our organisation has an effective child safeguarding framework in place. KCS also provided us with a range of recommendations on how we could improve and strengthen our child safeguarding practices in the future.

Our children's services across the country took those recommendations and developed and enhanced their procedures over the three years since the audit. This work was carried out by our dedicated volunteers and staff, improving our safeguarding standards, and putting children's safety to the forefront of our work.

In November 2023, The Society engaged with KCS again to progress to a Level 2 audit, to provide assurance that our children's services are implementing child safeguarding measures, and to provide us with a renewed and enhanced international safeguarding certificate. The completion of the Level 2 audit was only possible thanks to the volunteers and staff who made time to take part in the audit, providing a huge amount of evidence and meeting the auditor in person for interviews. The auditor met with over 90 volunteers and staff from across the Society working with children and young people, as well as members and staff of our National Office.

Engagement in the Level 2 audit shows the commitment of the Society to the welfare and safety of children and young people in our care.

Continued Supports and Developments

Over the past year, we have had a marked improvement in state funding supports for our Day Care Centres and Meals on Wheels, providing services for older people in the communities. This has greatly helped the services to enhance the programmes they offer. We continue to support all of our members and staff in our services in so many ways, to enhance the great work that they do across the country, supporting so many people in their every day lives.



KILLORGLIN DAY CARE CENTRE

For many years Killorglin SVP provided in house Meals and Meals on Wheels service from Ozanam House in Killorglin. As demand for the services increased the local Conference decided to find an alternate location which would facilitate expanding these services.

Deciding that the development of a Community Care Centre would greatly assist in meeting the growing needs of the community, the local Conference chose to develop the old vacant Carnegie building as a Community Care Centre.

After much research, discussion and work, Carnegie building was sealed in Ozanam Trust in July 1997. The Conference established Killorglin SVP Social Action Group to oversee the development of the project, which also incorporates three Social Housing Apartments. Eventually following the hard work and dedication of our members, the dream became a reality and Killorglin opened its doors to the public on 2nd of October 2000.

Killorglin Community Care Centre is a wonderful asset to the people of Killorglin and surrounding area, with continuous commitment and support from HSE services and the people of Killorglin, and it can only grow stronger.

The philosophy of care in our Centre is to create a welcoming, relaxed, peaceful and homely environment, promoting health and social activities to help enhance the lives of our clients.

The Day Centre provides respite day care for the elderly and support for their families. It is also a wonderful social outlet for people in the community, affording them the opportunity to stay connected through active conversation, social interaction, being listened to and know that they are an integral part of a caring and supportive community, thereby helping prevent loneliness and social isolation.

On arrival clients are treated to tea, coffee and freshly baked scones, in the afternoon 4 course lunch & prior to going home they enjoy tea, coffee and some more fresh baking. All food is prepared and served by our Chef and her kitchen staff, hot nutritious meals are provided and catered to clients individual needs. We also provide Meals

on wheels service for clients and people in the surrounding areas, a wonderful group of dedicated volunteers ensures this MOW service can reach a wider area in our community.

Each day our sitting room is a hive of activity, chair-based exercise, reminiscence therapy, bingo, crossword puzzles, arts and crafts, singing, dancing and musical entertainment, to name just a few! The days are busy and filled with lots of chat, laughter and enjoyment.

Since October 2000, the Centre has gone from strength to strength and this is due in no small way to the hard work and dedication of all the truly wonderful volunteers and staff who always go the extra mile to ensure that all who enter the building, leave renewed, refreshed, knowing they are supported and cared for in their own community.

The Carnegie was originally built at the beginning of the last century, serving the people of Killorglin as a school and library for many years. How fitting that now in the new Millennium the Carnegie is once again the centre of Community life in Killorglin, providing essential services for the people of the area, as one of our senior citizens said – “A home from home for all of us”.



DROP-IN CENTRE, LIMERICK CITY

Volunteers Ann and Christine with Caoimhe (middle) on International Overdose Awareness Day.



SVPs Drop-In Centre in Limerick City has been helping those at risk of or experiencing homelessness and, or food poverty since 2002.

Under the Management of Tom Flynn, the centre became recognised as a place of welcome, support and understanding. Serving sandwiches, hot dinners, tea, coffee and a listening ear, the service has always relied on its dedicated volunteers and staff.

The Centre is an integral part of the homeless sector provision in Limerick. When Tom retired in March 2023, the team, and Regional Office Colleagues came out in force to give him a marvelous and heartfelt send off- which was well deserved after over 20 years' service!

Built on strong foundations – the service continues to grow under the guidance of our new manager Eimear Purcell. The team has grown and adapted to meet to the increased demand and the challenging needs that the people who use the service present with.

Above, L-R: Drop-In Centre Team – Eimear, Caoimhe and Pat supporting SVP Christmas Jumper Day.

Michelle, Frances, Christine, Caoimhe, Martin and Pat spreading Christmas cheer.

Tom Flynn's retirement lunch, March 2023

The Drop-In Centre is a valuable gateway for people to access specific support services, e.g. Housing, Health, Addiction, Family Support and of course wider SVP supports. Specific events are celebrated within the centre, promoting wellbeing and helping to bring a focus and attention to issues that matter to our clientele. One example of this was engaging in International Overdose Awareness Day on August 31st last. A prayerful reflection was shared with all and an opportunity to remember and honour people affected by Overdose was created.

The centre relies on the amazing commitment of our volunteers and staff in SVP. This commitment allowed the service to remain open every day throughout the Christmas period.

Despite the difficult personal circumstances of the people using the service, a warm and festive atmosphere was created. The generous donations from local businesses and schools meant that sweet treats were plentiful!

The future of our service looks bright with plans at an advanced stage for the enhancement of the building of the Drop-In Centre. These plans will make the environment better suited to the needs and dignity of the people using the service. 2024 promises to be an exciting and positive year for the service!

Hope on the horizon?



Is the worst of the cost-of-living crisis behind us? Looking ahead in 2024 and beyond –

by **Dr Tricia Kielthy**

Head of Social Justice & Policy



Just like 2022, last year was dominated by the cost-of-living crisis and this was reflected in calls to SVP. Over a quarter of a million calls and requests were received through SVP regional offices and local Conferences.

Food and utility bills made up the majority of requests but many more were in touch because of back to school costs, third level costs, household goods, furniture, clothing, support with health related costs, issues with mortgages and rent or funeral expenses. Almost 30,000 people reached out to SVP for the first time, many of whom are working in low paid jobs unable to make ends meet.

But is there hope on the horizon? According to the latest data from the Central Statistics Office, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose by 4.1% between January 2023 and January 2024 with the rate of inflation slowing month on month in the past three months. We have also seen suppliers cut prices but they are nowhere near the level they were at prior to the energy crisis.

We can be hopeful that the worst of the cost of living crisis is behind us but it is far from over for people in poverty as prices remain high. Low pay, lack of adequate income supports, rising housing costs and homelessness, unaffordable childcare and lack of transport are just some of the challenges we are facing and the issues which are high on the agenda of the National Social Justice Committee.

While these are significant challenges we know with the right policies Government can make a difference and SVP's voice and analysis can have an impact. In 2023, the National Social Justice Committee achieved a number of successes in our advocacy efforts. Free school books at junior cycle, expansion of SUSI to part-time students, extra supports for children in Direct Provision, the reintroduction of Child Benefit for students over 18 and still in school and investment in supports in early years services for children experiencing disadvantage were all key measures secured in Budget 2023. However, there is still a lot more that can and should be done to help break the cycle of poverty.

The Government has committed to reduce consistent poverty to 2% or less by 2025 and the rate stood at 5.3% in 2022. To reach this target we need to see, a move towards benchmarking our social protection system to what people need to live, increased investment in education across the life cycle, better pay, training and employment supports to address in-work poverty, and significant strides by the Child Poverty Unit in the Department of An Taoiseach to set us on a path to ending child poverty.

In addition to the above longer term priorities, the National Social Justice Committee will place a particular focus in 2024 on the issue of rent arrears for low income households in the private rented sector, requests for voluntary contributions in schools, the use and cost of digital devices, payment arrangements by energy suppliers for those arrears and the cost of assessment and access to supports for children with additional needs.

We need your support and assistance to carry out our social justice work. Case studies and information from SVP volunteers engaged in home visitation is a vital source of information about the experience of members on the ground and the needs of the people we assist. Raising the social justice issues that you encounter in your visitation work to the social justice team (contact sjnetwork@svp.ie) is critical so that we can develop solutions and advocate for the changes required to create a more just and caring society. Throughout the year we will be in touch on our latest social justice work and we will also issue a short survey on the cost of assessments for children with additional needs that your Conference may have received.



SVP South West Region 'blown away' by immense public support for annual car draw

St Vincent De Paul South West has thanked the public for its "immense" support of their Annual Car Draw as they confirmed that €232,667 was raised from the initiative.

SVP continues to receive large volumes of calls and emails daily from families and individuals seeking urgent help.

Paddy O'Flynn said the much-needed funds would be "invaluable" to enable the Society to continue assisting families and individuals in Cork and Kerry with basic needs, such as food, heat, fuel, utility costs and education.

Mr O'Flynn continued:

"We have always received immense support for our annual car draw from the people of Cork and Kerry."

"2023 was a very challenging year, with the rising cost of living especially utilities driven by conflicts across the world. Despite this, the public supported us in their drives and the 2023 Car Draw was a huge success."



"We are eternally grateful to each and every one who pledged their support to this year's car draw."

"It has been a very difficult year for all charities, but due to the continued generosity of the good people of Cork and Kerry, we have raised a staggering €232,667, and this money will be used during the coming winter months to support many individuals and families facing hardship and need, with all of the money raised in Cork going to support those in need in Cork, and all the proceeds raised in Kerry going directly to support families and individuals in Kerry."

"I would like to extend a huge thank you to our main sponsor, the TOMAR Trust, for again donating the car. To the Bishops' of Cork and Ross, Kerry and Cloyne for their generous cash prize of €1,500. Also, a sincere and heartfelt thank you to everyone who donated or bought raffle tickets for our car draw," he concluded.

Lord Mayor of Cork City, Cllr. Kieran McCarthy drew the ticket for the top prize, a brand-new Ford Focus from the Cavanagh family's TOMAR Trust. He commented:

"There could not be the caring Cork we have without organisations like SVP who do such amazing and valuable work to support our citizens when they really need it."

The lucky winner of the 2024 Ford Focus was Yelyzaveta Ohorenko, from Tralee, Co Kerry, who was presented with her keys of her new car by The Lord Mayor of Cork, in the presence of SVP Regional President Paddy O Flynn, Vice President Mary Frances Behan, Bishop Fintan Gavin, and other guests.

Liza came to Tralee from her home in Kherson, Ukraine in April 2022 with her civil partner. Upon her arrival she was helped by the Society of St Vincent de Paul in Tralee, like many other Ukrainians who fled the war. She left behind her father, older sister, and other family, while her mother went to Denmark. Before leaving Ukraine, Liza has completed her law studies. She is now working in a Retail Store in Tralee.

Liza was effusive in her praise of Ireland, and told us how much she loves the country, and the Irish people and finds us to be friendly and giving.

She wants to give something back for all the help and kindness she received since arriving less than two years ago. When Liza was shopping in one of our Vincent's Charity shops in Tralee, she saw an advert for the Car Draw and decided to buy a ticket on-line. This, she said, was her chance to give back to those who supported her, when she arrived first.

Congratulations to all of the lucky winners, and thank you, once again, to all who supported this campaign.





“Today, however, we have to realise that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must intergrate questions of justice in debates on the environmen, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.”

Pope Francis (Laudato si’)

Can SVP Retail respond to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor?

by Dermot McGilloway

“The question which is agitating the world today is a social one. It is a struggle between those who have nothing and those who have too much. It is a violent clash of opulence and poverty which is shaking the ground under our feet. Our duty as Christians is to throw ourselves between these two camps to accomplish by love, what justice alone cannot do.”

– Blessed Frederick Ozanam

In a modern-day clash between opulence and poverty, a dialogue is needed to truly understand how the charity retail sector, and SVP Retail in particular, can ameliorate the fast fashion business model of excessive production, consumption, and disposal of low-cost clothing, and in so doing, respond more authentically to the cries of both the earth and the poor.

The role of SVP within the global fashion industry

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, revenue from the global fashion industry was estimated at between \$1.7 trillion and \$2.5 trillion (Euromonitor and McKinsey) with the sector also employing over 75 million people (solidaritycentre.org). It will surprise some people to know that SVP is a global player in that sector, by virtue of an estimated network of over 1,600 charity shops globally, primarily across North America (USA 550, Canada 100), Australia (633), Ireland (230), New Zealand (60+) and England & Wales (50). Thanks to changing consumer behaviour, led by climate activists, ethical shoppers, bargain hunters and vintage collectors, second hand clothing or thrifting as it has become known, is delivering exponential growth globally, with 2027 revenue expected to pass \$351 billion dollars (statista.com).



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SVP Retail – So much more than a charity shop

The staff and volunteers who work in our charity shops and indeed those who frequent them as customers or donors, understand their true value as:

- A source of affordable clothing & household items located at the heart of the communities who need them most.
- An ethical and sustainable shopping alternative
- A brand ambassador for SVP and a gateway to our services
- A community hub for people disconnected from society through poverty or other isolating circumstances.
- A welcoming environment for asylum seekers and refugees who can volunteer and make a meaningful contribution to the community they hope to settle in.
- An invaluable community asset that affords all local people the opportunity to volunteer their time or donate preloved clothing or household items.
- A vital fundraiser for SVP Conferences

However, a recent study, completed by the Charity Retail Association in the UK, also identified that for every £1 invested in charity shops, £7.35 of social value is generated, creating an additional £75.3 billion stg of social value across the UK in 2022. This is in addition to over €900 million of income annually across the UK for parent charities.



The carbon footprint of the fashion industry stretches from the over production of fast fashion, mainly in Asia, to the over consumption of fast fashion across the global north and the export and dumping of clothing in many markets including Africa in a move that has been referred to as 'Waste Colonialism'.



Environmental and Social Concerns

It isn't all good news, however! We now know that the fashion industry is also one of the biggest polluters on the planet with the textile supply chain emitting over 3.3 billion metric tons of greenhouse gases annually, (Quantis, 2018), more than all international flights and maritime shipping combined. Climate change is having a devastating impact on global populations with experts projecting that as many as 1.2 billion people (climate refugees) around the world could be displaced by rising sea levels and other extreme weather events by 2050 (The Ecological Threat Register). The carbon footprint of the fashion industry stretches from the over production of fast fashion, mainly in Asia, to the over consumption of fast fashion across the global north and the export and dumping of clothing in many markets including Africa in a move that has been referred to as 'Waste Colonialism'.



Pre consumption problems

An estimated 150 billion garments are made annually, mostly in Asia and increasingly from synthetic non-biodegradable materials, in an industry beset by poor working conditions. These synthetic materials are mostly plastic-based polyester, polyamide and acrylic and are now polluting our waterways and indeed our food chain. During this manufacturing process, greenhouse gases like nitrous oxide are released into the atmosphere. Nitrous oxide (N₂O) is a type of greenhouse gas that is 300 times more potent than carbon dioxide (Overview of Greenhouse Gases | US EPA). The sector also relies mostly on non-renewable resources – 98 million tonnes in total per year – including oil to produce synthetic fibres, fertilisers to grow cotton, and chemicals to produce, dye, and finish fibres and textiles (Ellen MacArthur Foundation)

There are also an estimated 40 million people, mostly women and girls, working excessive hours in clothing factories for low wages in unhygienic and unsafe working conditions whilst being exposed to harmful substances, including fabric dyes. It is estimated that of 3,500 chemicals used in clothes manufacturing, 750 are harmful.

Over Consumption of Fast Fashion:

Fast Fashion – a term for cheap and low-quality clothing, rapidly produced to meet new trends

The fashion industry, a strong advocate of consumer capitalism, will continue to make cheap and low-quality garments for as long as we keep buying them and we are consuming textiles at an unprecedented and unsustainable level. Consumers, many now digitally enabled, want fashion faster and cheaper than ever before and are bingeing on Fast Fashion due to its availability and low cost. The global north is now consuming and then discarding more textiles than ever before with an estimated truckload of abandoned textiles being dumped or incinerated every second of every day (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017).

An early proponent of consumerism, advertising pioneer Ernest Elmo Calkins, spoke of “Consumer engineering” and the need to create artificial demand to boost sales. At the heart of this approach was an attempt to convince consumers that the product they had once used had now been used up. A combination of marketing and consumerism has since been used by manufacturers to boost sales by the “planned obsolescence” of perfectly reusable products. Calkins wrote

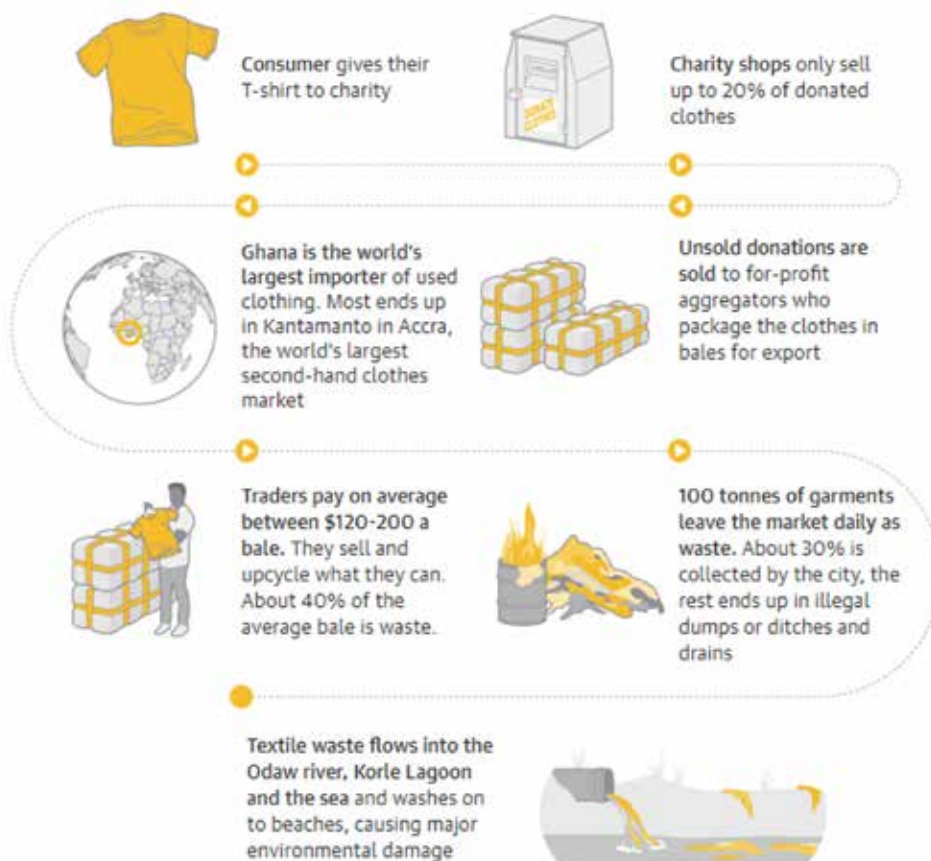


“To make people buy more goods, it is necessary to displace what they already have, still useful, but outdated, old-fashioned, obsolete”.



Discarded textiles on Jamestown Beach, Accra.

How T-shirts donated to charity are causing pollution in Ghana



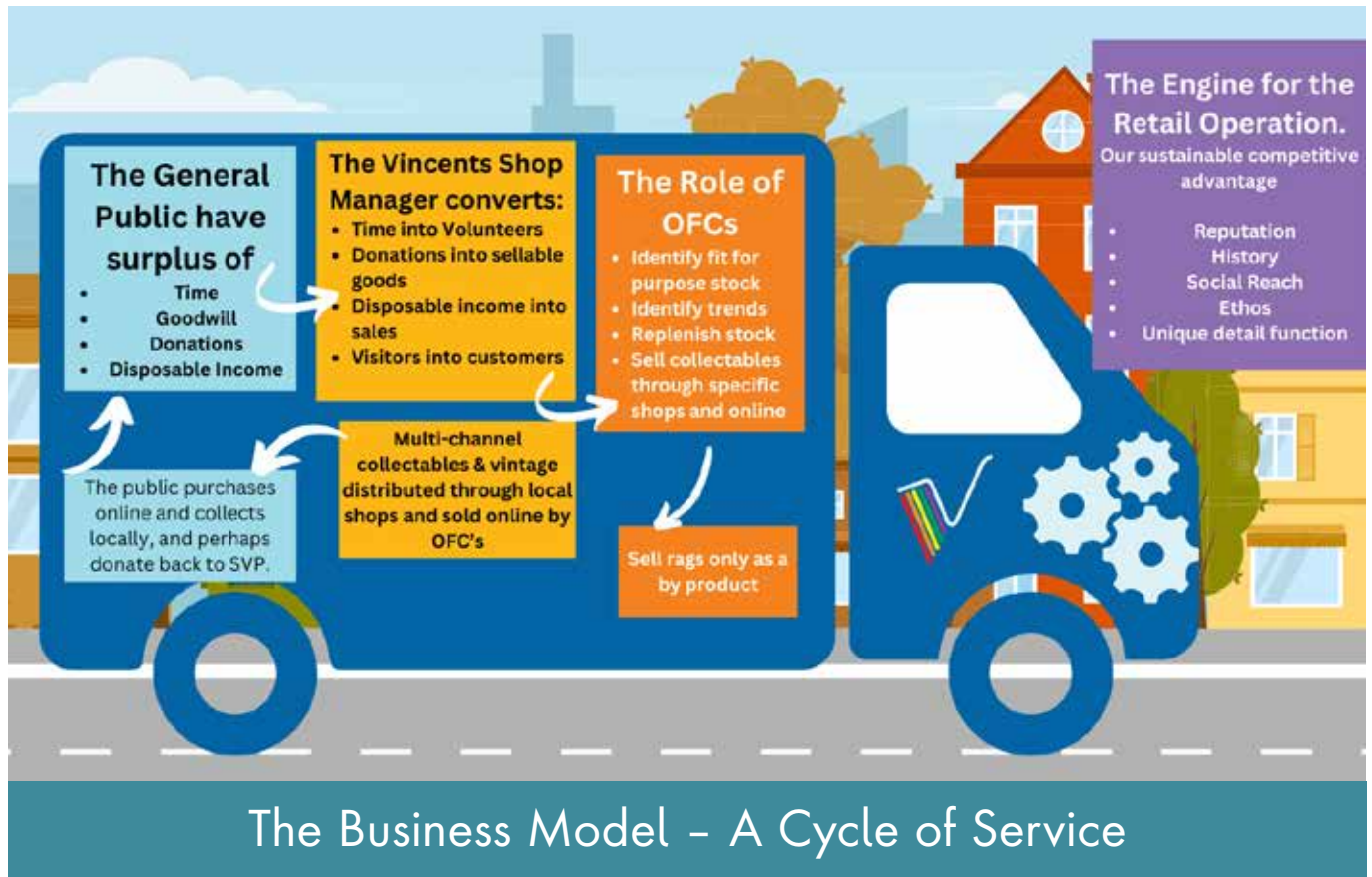
Post Consumption Problems

In the Republic of Ireland alone it is estimated that 170,000 tonnes of post-consumer textiles are generated annually, with 64,000 tonnes being disposed of through household waste. (www.gov.ie). It is estimated that 44,500 tonnes are sold for reuse whilst 15,000 tonnes are recycled.

It is estimated that across the EU that figure is 5.8 million tonnes or 11kgs of textiles discarded for every EU citizen. (Reuters). From January 2025, EU citizens will be required to dispose of these textiles using charity shops, clothing banks or other donation centres and will not be permitted to place them in domestic waste. This is part of a much wider EU push towards greater circularity, in line with the UN Sustainable Development goal.

The charity retail sector typically reuses 30% to 40% of donated textiles and sells the remainder to clothing recyclers or exporters. Recyclers here in Ireland will grade and then export 80% of available textiles with 15% going for fibre extraction whilst the remaining 5% is sold for Refuse Derived Fuel (RFD). Much of these exported textiles end up in markets across Africa like Kantamanto in Accra, Ghana where an estimated 15 million second hand garments arrive each week, many of them ungraded. It is estimated that up to 40% of imported textiles are unfit for reuse and are then dumped or incinerated, causing pollution to the land, sea, and air. See photo of discarded textiles on Jamestown Beach, Accra.

The Or Foundation has highlighted issues in Ghana, <https://theor.org/>, whilst Changing Markets has reported widely on issues in Kenya, accusing Western society of engaging in "Waste Colonialism".



Thinking globally, Acting locally

In addition to being a global player in the second-hand textiles sector, SVP is an associate member of UNESCO, a member of Global Catholic Climate Movement, is a special adviser to the UN Economic and Social Council and is fully aligned with the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (ssvp.com).

SVP retail in Ireland receives between of 15,000 and 20,000 tonnes of donated textiles and has developed a circular business model which includes a network of collection, sorting and redistribution centres for textiles called Order Fulfilment Centres (OFC's) which will soon be connected to our shops using Electronic Point of Sale (EPOS). That technology will be used to track customer demand across the national shop network and assist in the transfer of surplus stock from other locations to meet that need. This will go a long way to introducing greater circularity whilst fighting poverty in Ireland but is it time that we started to think globally AND act globally?

Future Challenges and Opportunities

Our planet cannot cope with our wasteful culture of "Take, make and throw away", particularly when it comes to textiles. Charity retail, and therefore SVP Retail, offers real hope in the fight to slow the harmful effects of fast fashion. In Ireland, and indeed many other countries with charity shops, we are making meaningful progress in keeping clothes in reuse locally, but is it perhaps time to start a conversation about how SVP Conferences globally can get access to some of the surplus clothing that we, primarily in the global north, are indirectly exporting to their countries, primarily in the global south, via recycling / export companies? If that topic could be meaningfully addressed, SVP Retail would truly be responding to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

Pope Francis throws down a challenge to us all in Laudato Si and asks "Is it realistic to hope that those who are obsessed with maximising profits will stop to reflect on the environmental damage which they will leave behind for future generations? Where profits alone count, there can be no thinking about the rhythms of nature, its phases of decay and regeneration, or the complexity of ecosystems which may be gravely upset by human intervention".

SVP is seeking **Volunteer Auditors**

**Are you interested
in volunteering with
the Society as a
Volunteer Auditor?**

The National Internal Audit function is establishing a panel of Volunteer Auditors who will visit Conferences to complete basic audit and compliance work in line with the Society's policies and procedures.

Volunteers should have previous experience in the areas of finance/audit. Relevant finance or audit qualifications are desirable but not essential.

For further details and a role description, please contact the National Internal Auditor at **internal.audit@svp.ie** to express your interest.



SVP Bursary Experience

An anonymous service user shares their experience of being helped by SVP.

The SVP have helped me so much over the years, and I am extremely grateful to them for all that they have done. My circumstances changed about 10 years ago, and I found myself in a little flat trying to make a fresh start. I also had a little boy – who I was trying to provide a future for – so I decided that I would go back to education and try to build a more stable life.

However, it was a real struggle to make ends meet while in college, and that is where the SVP came in. Initially, after I contacted them, they brought me out some food vouchers, which were an absolute life saver at that time. Over time, though, I began to know a couple of local women who worked for the SVP, and I explained my situation to them in a bit more detail. From that day on – up until recently enough – the SVP (and the two local women) were a constant in my life. They helped me in so many ways and were always there anytime I was stuck. They even helped me to get a laptop for college, which I would have struggled to do given my circumstances.

For me, one of the best things about the SVP is that they were always very supportive and personal. Not only did they help me financially, but there was always something really genuine about interacting with them. For example, they often enquired as to how returning to education was going and regularly asked about my boy, too. In addition, they dropped up vouchers for the zoo and McDonalds and seemed genuinely interested in what was happening. My circumstances have changed once again, and I find myself in a much more favourable position today. Truthfully, I would not have gotten this far without the SVP.

Successful Social Justice Network event highlighting solutions to educational disadvantage

by **Marcella Stakem**
Research and Policy Officer



The SVP National Social Justice Committee and the Social Justice team held a successful Social Justice Network Day for members on Saturday 20th January in National Office. Feedback from members stated it was an enjoyable, interesting and informative day, and will greatly assist them as they carry out home visitation with households affected by educational disadvantage.

The theme of the event was 'Access and Participation to Higher, Further and Community Education'. Over 80 members enrolled for the day-long event with a range of SVP internal and external speakers speaking on the issue.

SVP National President, Rose McGowan gave the opening address, and she highlighted the importance of education in breaking down barriers for people wanting to break out of the cycle of poverty. This was followed shortly afterwards by a lively discussion on solutions to educational disadvantage; Members from the Social Justice and Education committees shared their experiences of practical and policy initiatives that have been successful in ensuring people can reach their potential through education. Niamh Dalziel, SVP Research and Policy Officer, stated in her presentation, "Education is the best tool and resource a person can use to work their way out of poverty and change their lives, and the lives of the generations to come in their families. You, SVP members are a collective resource in society to changing the lives of the people you have served in the past, the here and now, and the future". She proceeded to give an analysis of the policy initiatives that have been implemented in recent years and have the potential to ensuring marginalised and low-income households have the same opportunities as their more affluent peers to access and participate in higher, further and community education.

Brendan Hennessy from the National Membership Development team in SVP provided a useful and engaging overview of the breadth of work undertaken by the Regional Education committees. He outlined also the importance of the assistance to students that SVP provides. Recent analysis of the bursary scheme highlighted that 65% of students receiving financial assistance from SVP are also availing of the student support grant, SUSI. This also highlights the need for our advocacy efforts to continue and ensure that SUSI is fit for purpose.

After a satisfying hot lunch where members had the opportunity to network, members welcomed three external speakers working in the areas of higher, further and community education. Their experience and knowledge of their chosen subject was exceptional and facilitated further enriching discussions from those present. The first speaker was Paul Hayes. Paul works as an Education Coordinator at Northside Partnership. He has worked with the Partnership for over 20 years and has extensive experience of supporting, guiding and advocating for low-income and vulnerable groups and individuals to access and participate in further education. He was followed by Simon Ahern from Maynooth University's Access office. Simon in his presentation provided an overview of the various financial, practical, and advisory supports available for people wishing to access and participate fully in higher education. The final presentation was from Dearbháil Lawless, CEO of Aontas. She gave a positive and lasting impression on all attendees through her sharing of her life experience and knowledge of the issues faced by learners who want to return or begin their educational journey.

Rose McGowan in her closing address, reminded us of the difference members can make to a person's life when we give them the resources and self-belief that education is for everyone.

Our next Social Justice Network event will be in September 2024, and we encourage all members to attend, when we will explore another social justice issue affecting low-income households.

If you have any queries about the event or would like to join the social justice network, please contact Marcella Stakem, SVP Research & Policy Officer at sjnetwork@svp.ie.



Celebrating Decades of Compassionate Service:

Holycross Ballycahill's SVP honours dedicated members

In the hallowed space of the ancient Holycross Abbey on November 8th, a special Mass of Thanksgiving was held to honour the steadfast commitment of fourteen founders and long-serving members of the St Michael's Conference of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, Holycross Ballycahill. Despite the chilly and dark November evening outside, the atmosphere within was warm and welcoming.

The occasion not only paid tribute to the founding members but also illuminated the enduring spirit of the Conference, echoing the principles of Blessed Frederick Ozanam. The work of the Conference is a labour of love and kindness, as they continue to generously contribute their time, talents, and selves to uplift the community.

Rev Fr Mattie McGrath, a founding member and one of the honourees, presided over the Mass, joined by Archbishop Emeritus Dermot Clifford and Rev Fr Celsus Tierney. The late Fr Tom Breen, a former member, was posthumously honoured and represented by his sister Madge. Founding members Tomás de Veale and Willie Ryan were also remembered, with Willie's wife, Breda, recognised for her enduring contributions.

Founding members John Delahuny, Judy Power, Chris Casey, and Peggy Ryan, Joanne Bannon, Tommy Lanigan, Oliver Nolan, Mary Ryan, and Gus Sheehan were all given recognition at the event, and presented with medals and framed certificates by Regional President, Ellie Dwyer.

As the St Michael's Conference marks its 30th anniversary, Fr McGrath emphasised the indispensable role of the community's generosity in sustaining their mission. Despite their preference for quiet and discreet service, the honourees acknowledged the vital support needed from those willing to contribute, making the invaluable work possible.

Reflecting on St Vincent de Paul's timeless wisdom from the 17th century, Fr McGrath reminded everyone to keep their hearts open to the sufferings of others. The thriving state of the Society in Holycross and Ballycahill parish attests to the enduring spirit of compassion, embodying the true essence of God's spirit.

The Mass of Thanksgiving was elevated by the soul-stirring liturgical music and song provided by parishioners. The celebratory spirit continued into the night with a social gathering in the adjacent St Michael's Community Centre, with conversations and camaraderie in full flow.

This event not only celebrated the Society's three decades of dedicated service but also recognised the cumulative efforts of those who, despite societal challenges, have kept the flame of compassion burning bright.

ST MICHAEL'S CONFERENCE SOCIETY OF ST VINCENT DE PAUL HOLYCROSS BALLYCAHILL, HONOURS LONG SERVICE



Ellie Dwyer, Ormond Region President presented medals and certificates to:
Top left- Rev Fr Mattie McGrath; Top centre - Tommy Lanigan; Top right -John Delahunty.
Middle left - Mary Ryan; Centre - Breda Ryan; Middle right - Madge Breen, representing her brother, the late Rev Fr Tom Breen.
Bottom Left - Gus Sheahan; Bottom right: Sean Ryan representing Oliver Nolan.



The cost of adequately heating the home

Estimated weekly household energy costs

Single Adult, Older, Rural	€114	€87	€70	€62	€57	€38
Single Adult, Older, Urban	€153	€118	€93	€80	€75	€42
One Parent	€102	€85	€73	€67	€65	€49
Two Parent	€101	€84	€72	€66	€64	€48
Single Adult	€52	€44	€38	€35	€33	€28
	E1-E2	D1-D2	C2-C3	C2	B3-C1	A1-B2

The average weekly cost of home heating and electricity, by BER band and household type, when purchasing energy in a bundled contract (2023 prices). The average represents the total yearly cost spread evenly over 52 weeks, actual weekly costs will vary with the seasons.

The Vincentian MESL Research Centre at SVP recently published new research on 'The cost of adequately heating the home' during the recent period of high energy prices, and its implications on affordability and energy poverty.

by **Niamh O'Carroll**
MESL Researcher



Energy poverty results from three interlinked factors: household income, energy costs, and home energy efficiency. Our paper examines these three factors by identifying the cost of minimum energy needs at different levels of efficiency for four household types.

To estimate the minimum energy need, we identified the fuel required for adequate heating based on the Building Energy Rating (BER), alongside the electricity required to adequately power the home for each household type. We then priced the minimum energy need, looking at dual fuel bundled contracts compared to pay-as-you-go (PAYG) electricity or gas.

For a One Parent household with two children, it costs approximately €30 per week to adequately power the home. The cost of electricity is the same at each BER band. The cost of adequately heating the home varies based on how well a home can retain heat, this energy performance is measured by the BER. As expected, we found that heating costs are higher when living in an energy poor home. As the efficiency of the home improves, subsequent energy costs decrease.

For a One Parent household living in a C2-rated home with gas central heating, it costs an average of €37 per week to stay warm. Combined with electricity, minimum energy costs average €67 per week. Living in a less efficient home means staying warm costs more. For instance, in a D1-D2 rated home costs increase by €18 to €85 per week. Upgrading to a B3-C1 rating decreases costs by an estimated €2 per week. The difference between the least efficient level examined (E1-E2) and the most efficient (A1-B2) is stark, costs are more than double in inefficient homes.

When reliant on social welfare income a One Parent household would need to spend a quarter of their income on energy bills in a poorly insulated home (E1-E2). Even in an A1-B2 rated home, over one tenth of their income is required to meet energy needs. We found that current energy-related income

Our analysis presents the findings in the context of the overall MESL need and household income for each household type. The graphic illustrates the average weekly household energy costs.

supports, and other social welfare payments, are inadequate to meet minimum living costs, making it inevitable that low-income households are forced to go without essentials, such as food or adequate warmth. Using PAYG can cost approximately a fifth more compared to a bundled contract. Our analysis found that households pay more for their energy with a PAYG plan due to higher unit prices and standing charges, and additional service charges. For a One Parent household living in a C2-rated home and bundling, the estimated total weekly cost of household energy is €67. Purchasing the same basket of energy by PAYG would cost an additional €12 a week, bringing weekly energy costs to €79.

The value of current energy-related income supports, i.e., Fuel Allowance and Household Benefits Package, have not kept up with rising energy costs. They are also paid at a standard rate, which does not take account of how much is needed to keep warm. Based on our findings, it's clear that a more flexible system is needed to ensure that households can access essential energy. We explored and modelled an alternative policy response in the form of an Energy Guarantee type scheme, which supports households to meet minimum energy needs.



‘Teamwork makes the dream work.’

Frédéric Ozanam (1813–1853) wanted ‘to become little and do a little good’. As a twenty-year-old committed Parisian Catholic University student, he accepted and responded to a challenge from a fellow student, Jean Broet i.e. to stop talking about Christianity and to express his faith in concrete action.

Frédéric gathered five like-minded students on 23rd April 1833, formed a Conference of Charity which later transformed into the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SSVDP). The group met with their mentor Emmanuel Bailly near the church of Saint-Sulpice. Frédéric lived a short life as founder, husband and father, and teacher.

At Frédéric’s beatification on 21st August 1997, St. Pope John Paul II lauded the strength of bonds among members of the Vincentian family evoking Sister Rosalie Rendu’s [1786–1856] name, a Daughter of Charity ‘who guided the young Frédéric Ozanam and his companions toward persons who were poor in the Mouffetard section of Paris.’

Frédéric’s concern was for ‘the poor working classes’ – biblically known as ‘the little ones.’ In a newspaper entitled ‘The New Era’ (1848), Frédéric ‘found a platform to express his firm convictions on; democracy, the defence of those who were poor and the demands of justice.’ He planned for social reform and humbly sought out Sister Rosalie, a well-known worker in the Parisian slums of the Mouffetard district.

Sister Louise Sullivan DC, in her biography, ‘Rosalie Rendu: A Daughter of Charity on Fire with Love for the Poor’ portrays Sister Rosalie’s ‘tireless service’ and ‘heroic deeds’ for those living in dire poverty, during the revolutions of 1830 and 1848, and the cholera epidemics of 1832, 1849 and 1854. The author traces Sister Rosalie’s involvement to the original vision of the SSVDP, the service of Jesus Christ in the person of those who are poor. This is of major importance in the SSVDP internationally.



by Anne Neylon, DC

Sister Rosalie guided and welcomed the young university students to her little house on rue de l'Eppé de Bois, which before 1831 became the headquarters of charity for the destitute inhabitants of the Mouffetard district. Here the students encountered wretched poverty. Sister Rosalie's influence on the SSVDP from its origin was unquestionable. Her dedication to the service of those in need and the traditional welcome of the young Catholic students, initiated them to the service of those who were poor. Home visitation was their primary work.

The SSVDP members initially lacked experience and resources to achieve the goal they set for their Conference i.e. home visitation. Collaboration enabled a greater service of poor persons. Sister Rosalie was accomplished in home visits since this was the first work of the Ladies of Charity (1617) and the Daughters of Charity (1633). Her collaborative capacity is 'the most significant challenge' that she presents to people in the 21st century who seek to eradicate poverty internationally.

She shared with the students her conviction of serving each poor person with St. Vincent's spirit; 'to see with the eyes of faith that the Son of God... is present to us... in the person of these poor people.' She recommended that members be patient, listen and love without judgement or blame.

The youth listened and discovered that Sister Rosalie's 'name opened the doors of the hovels of the desperately poor to them.' Her 'beloved poor' trusted her. Subsequently, they trusted the Society's members. After home visits, Sister Rosalie and the youth gathered to share their experiences, thus bolstering the 'spiritual foundation of their service.'

Teamwork realised Frédéric's dream as he strove daily

*'to embrace the whole world
in a network of charity.'*



West Region

Young SVP in the West is working with 700 students across the region. The students are currently exploring the issues of poverty, equality and social justice. The students are taking part in a variety of projects that are helping people in their local community and shining a light on some of the social injustices they see happening in their area.

Maureen Mitchell (regional president) with students in **The Bish** climbing Croagh Patrick

Young SVP group from **St Joseph's** in Charlestown

For Christmas this year the students took part in a variety of awareness projects about the work of SVP. Students wore Christmas Jumpers, gathered food, toys and hygiene products, hosted quizzes and Christmas themed bake sales. All monies and food raised were given to the local Conference, who were then able to help local people in the community. The students were delighted to know that they helped others who are struggling. They played a large part in giving the 'wonder of Christmas' back to the most vulnerable people in our communities.

The students are now busy planning other projects. **Dunmore College** are planning to visit local National Schools and educate the students about SVP; they will then host an SVP themed poster competition in the Community.

St Josephs in Castlebar will be hosting a culture day in their school, while **Clarín College in Athenry** plan to open a pop up Vincents Shop in their school and will encourage students to shop sustainably and fight fast fashion.

Scoil Muire agus Padraig are doing a research project on the prison system. At **High Cross College** the students have started a breakfast club in their school and they visit the local nursing home.

Dominican College are inviting older people in the community into the school for a cuppa and chat every week, where they spend time doing what is at the heart of what we do in SVP, spending time supporting and befriending people.

Meanwhile, it's hiking boots at ready for **The Bish College in Galway**, who



are planning to climb Croagh Patrick to raise awareness around the uphill battle people in poverty are facing every day. The group are calling it 'Time to Climb'

This is just a snapshot of some of the projects happening in schools, the projects are very inspiring, and the students will showcase them at our Youth Day on the 25th April.

Helen Ralph
Youth Development Officer
for the West Region

Mid West Region

Secondary Schools across the Mid West were super busy in the lead up to Christmas organising various fundraising activities and acts of kindness in aid of SVP.

Coláiste Nano Nagle in Limerick kicked off the Christmas Activities by attending our Mid West Christmas Appeal Regional Launch in November, where students from the school sang Christmas Carols and displayed a stand showcasing all the ways they planned to support SVP. Their goal was to support people living in homelessness in Limerick and they successfully did this by organising a food and clothes drive in their school which they then donated to the SVP Drop-in Centre in Limerick. Thanks to all of the other schools who organised and supported SVP food appeals for their local communities also.

Many schools from areas across Limerick, Clare, Tipperary and Offaly took part in bake sales, table quizzes, sports tournaments, raffles, fun-runs, carol singing and bucket collections and raised vital funds for their local SVP Conferences.

The new SVP Christmas Jumper Day Campaign was also a huge success in schools this year and raised a huge amount of income for SVP. Thanks to **Castletroy College in Limerick** and **St. Caimin's Community School in Shannon** for donating Christmas Shoe Box Gifts to the SVP Drop-In Centre in Limerick City which supports people who are experiencing homelessness.



Young SVP Group St. Joseph's Secondary School, Spanish Point, Co. Clare

Students from **Ennis Community College** and **Gaelcholáiste an Chláir** rolled up their sleeves and helped to run the local Vincents' shop in Ennis for a day. They successfully raised over €2,900 from this initiative.

Scoil Mhuire agus Ide in Newcastle West Co. Limerick raised €5,000 for SVP through a hugely successful school concert. They also held a food and toy appeal and sock collection in their school.

In Clonmel, students from all of the schools came together on the Christmas market day in the town to fundraise for SVP through carol singing and bucket collections. Many thanks to the students for giving up their time at the weekend for such a good cause, they helped raise over €1,500 from this event alone.

These are just a few examples of the good news stories and great things being achieved by enthusiastic Young SVP Groups all across the Mid-Region. I look forward to continuing to work with these fantastic schools and students in 2024 and to meeting lots of more young people who want to join Young SVP and make a positive difference to the lives of others.

Clodagh Lenihan
Youth Development Officer
for the Mid West Region



Students from **Castletroy College** Limerick with shoeboxes

Students from **C.B.S. High School Clonmel**, Co. Tipperary doing bucket collection



North East and Midlands Region



North East & Midlands Region
Cavan, Longford, Louth,
Meath, Monaghan,
Westmeath
YOUTH DAY
16th May 2024

Within the North East and Midlands region there are over 25 schools signed up to the Young SVP programme. They are supporting the community through Direct Aid which has seen schools do food appeals, Christmas jumper days, bake sales, 5k walks and much more.

Befriending projects have seen students supporting local primary schools, carol signing in nursing homes and making Christmas cards. These initiatives have made a huge difference to other people in the local area.

Education and Social Justice projects have seen students highlighting the homeless issues in the community. They also ran a poster campaign, which brought awareness around issues that young people see such as poverty, cyber bullying, fast fashion and more.

In the North East and Midlands, we would like to acknowledge the work of the schools for SVP from primary and secondary schools that are not on our program. This work is a huge help to the local Conferences.

On May 16th we will be holding our youth day. This will see 300 students and 25 schools in the region display the projects in which they completed as part of SVP. It allows students to mix with other schools and build a connection with SVP.

Clodagh Naughton
Youth Development Officer
for the North East and Midlands Region

East Region

The Young SVP programme in the East Region has been growing steadily since the beginning of my tenure in the role from the middle of September. At present, the Region currently has twenty post-primary schools who have taken or are taking part in the Young SVP Programme.

The focus over the past few months has been on establishing new relationships with schools in the East as these links had been severed over the past few years due to vacant positions and the COVID pandemic.

The implementation of the Programme has been very successful with students engaging well in the workshops, several groups setting up their own Youth Conferences, and many organising projects such as direct aid fundraisers, particularly in the run-up to Christmas.

The Young SVP Programme in the East is now getting ready for its Youth Day on the 30th April. For the first time ever in any region, the Youth Day will be held in a school which is partaking in the programme. The planning for the day is well underway and it is hoped to welcome several key speakers who are relevant to young people and who advocate for the work of SVP.

Emma Barry
Youth Development
Officer for the
East Region

East Region
Dublin, Kildare,
Wicklow
YOUTH DAY
30th April 2024



South West

2023/24 kicked off with over 20 schools in the South West signing up for our Social Justice programme and schools are continuing to join the programme as we speak.

Schools are also seeking a guest speaker to introduce their students the hard work of SVP.

Students have been engaged in identifying our mission and practice while also gaining an understanding of the work our members do, with a focus

on their person-centred approach to our clients. This inspires them to move forward in their academic year, engaging in projects to support SVP.

Alita Kelly

Youth Development Officer
for the South West Region

**South West
Region**
Cork, Kerry
YOUTH DAY
2nd May 2024



South East Region

We are having a busy and an exciting year here in the South East so far. 26 Conferences are up and running across the 5 counties, all of whom are in the thick of organising their Young SVP projects. Most Conferences have taken part in our Young SVP workshops where they got to learn about the work of SVP and social justice.

Our students have organised some lovely projects so far this year. **St Paul's Community College, Waterford** served Christmas dinner to homeless people in the city.

Coláiste an Átha, Kilmuckridge have organised a pen pal project for a nursing home in Youghal teaming up with the local Young SVP Conference in Youghal.

Mountrath Community School organised a workshop for 1st Years to teach them about SVP and Social Justice. While **Presentation De la Salle** in Bagnealstown have organised weekly visits to their local nursing home.

At **Loreto Secondary Kilkenny** the students organised notes of positivity and kindness for the 3rd and 6th years sitting their mock exams. There have also been some great connections between

some schools and local Conferences this year, including **Presentation College Carlow** who helped their local Conference with a cold mail project before Christmas.

A huge welcome to our new schools this year, their first year to have a school Conference! **Duiske College (Graignamanagh)**, **Gorey Community School**, **St Augustine's College (Dungarvan)**, **Scoil Aireagail (Ballyhale)**, **Mount Sion (Waterford City)**.

Our Young SVP Youth Day 2024 is taking place on 23rd April in SETU Arena, Waterford from 10–2:30. All members are more than welcome. *We would love to meet you and see you there!*

Debbie Donohoe

Youth Development Officer
for the South East Region

Girls from **Presentation Secondary School Waterford** helping out with the local annual appeal.

Students from **Our Lady of Lourdes Secondary School, New Ross** crying because of how sweet the residents of their local nursing home were on their visit before Christmas.

**South East
Region**
Carlow, Kilkenny, Laois,
Waterford, Wexford
YOUTH DAY
23rd April 2024



Testimonials...

“

My time in Young St. Vincent de Paul What does becoming a member of Young St. Vincent de Paul mean to me? At the beginning of my transition year, I didn't know that there was a young SVP committee, never-mind what they did. Never the less, I was coerced into joining and it became a highlight of my year.

“

My committee was a mix of people who I had been friends with for ages and people who I hadn't worked with before. Our committee meetings taught me how to work well with others and how to properly voice my opinions. We all had one goal, to spread awareness about the work of St. Vincent de Paul and to raise money.

“

Our meetings began with learning problems that the people of our world face, homelessness, gender inequality, poverty and overall social injustice. Our meetings ended with a group brainstorm, with the simple question of “How can we help? We've raised money through table quizzes, bake sales, food banks, window painting, raffles and our final, end of year fundraiser will be “I'm a TEACHER Get me out of here”. The idea behind this is that the audience will pay an entry fee to watch the shenanigans and that money will go to SVP, while our willing teacher contestants will take on SVP themed bush-tucker trials that will both entertain and spread awareness about the struggles some people face every day. An example would be a classic style eating/drinking challenge, many people struggle to put food on the table and the food that they manage to may not be the most appetizing or nutritional. We decided on this big fundraiser to achieve our two goals, spreading awareness and raising money. We believe that this is a fun way of educating people while keeping it fun and light-hearted.

“

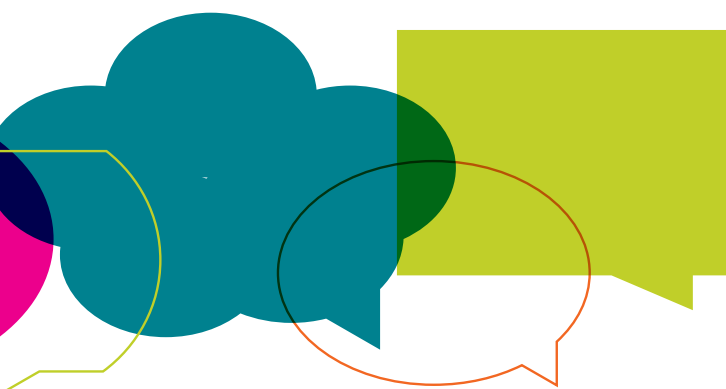
My time being a part of the Young SVP has been a blast and I will encourage the Tys after us to take part. We learnt so many new skills like organising events and fundraisers and we've learnt for to work through disagreements. I understand why over 10,000 people volunteer for SVP because you really do feel good knowing that your helping others. I have a great knowledge of the struggles that people face, and I know how I can help and spread awareness in the future.

“

I have absolutely no hesitation in recommending the Young SVP programme. We launched the Young SVP Conference in our school after Debbie Donohoe visited us way back in 2014. Our Conference started with one student! It has since gone from strength to strength. We currently have about 20 members. Our Young SVP Conference is for TY students only – we find it works better that way in our school. The programme is completely student-led. I am a mere facilitator, and, more often than not, devil's advocate! I have the privilege of watching and encouraging students to get out of their comfort zone for causes that are dear to them. We have taken part in Sleep Outs, Cycled from Malin Head to Mizen Head (virtually), held a Communion Dress Drive, raised funds for a fellow student whose house went on fire, collected foods for Christmas Hampers and are currently organising Care Packages for the Cherry Ward in Ardkeen, Waterford.

“

I have watched students change from being too shy to speak in front of their peers, to making phone calls to strangers, emailing for information, asking people for sponsorship and facilitating social justice workshops with younger students.



“

In my experience, the best thing about Young SVP is that it comes from the students – their ideas, their causes, their action. It is a fantastic way to make new like-minded friends, to have fun and to improve self-confidence.

“

Young SVP gives students a leadership role that goes beyond the school. The committee learn roles that will be useful to them long after school, whether in college, in working life or in their community. Conference members put forward ideas and help to see those through to the end, working with each other and with the wider community on matters that are important to them and their locality.

“

When we meet obstacles or we are looking for an objective point of view our Youth Development Officer, Debbie, is always just a phone call or a text away. Debbie has been an amazing support to us from the beginning. She has a wonderful rapport with the students and sees the positive in every situation. Thank you SO MUCH Debbie!

Lorraine Whelan

School Chaplin, St Paul's Community College,
Waterford



THANK
YOU

From everyone here at the Young SVP team we would like to say a massive thank you to all the schools, colleges, teachers, students, and members involved. The enthusiasm and generosity this programme receives every year does not go unnoticed and we cannot wait to continue our efforts in 2024.

Any questions/queries please CONTACT US at youth@svp.ie

COLLEGES

It has been an exciting semester for SVP Colleges. This year witnessed the formation of two new college Conferences – DCU SVP and TU, Dublin SVP.

For TU, Dublin, this was an historic occasion as it was the first time to have an SVP Society on the Blanchardstown campus. We would like to extend a big thank you to all the committed and magnanimous students who helped get these Conferences up and running!

February also saw the performance of the TCD SVP pantomime, 'Batman'. Along with 40 children from their Kid's Club and 10 adults from their T-club (a club for adults with different needs), the TCD SVP volunteers wrote, choreographed, and directed the pantomime. Together with the service users, they also created all the costumes and stage sets. The pantomime was sold out across both nights. A combined audience of 1000 people turned out to enjoy the show, and to experience a truly magical and fun filled occasion. One proud relative said how being involved in the pantomime was the highlight of her brother's year.

Meanwhile, many of the college Conferences continue to engage in Street Outreach trying to reach the homeless of our streets with small material items and more importantly, a smile and a kind word.

We look forward to what the next semester will bring!

NORTH REGION

Beyond Breaking Point: Sharing the perspective of SVP Members on the cost of living crisis

In November, the Northern Region launched a groundbreaking report at Parliament Buildings Stormont, shedding light on the harsh realities of poverty in Northern Ireland and calling on MLAs to get back to work to meet the growing needs of the people across the North.

The report, compiled by SVP Northern Region's Social Justice Committee, unveiled the escalating struggles faced by families grappling with the compounding challenges of the pandemic, rising living costs, and social security cuts and changes.

Based on responses from 161 SVP members, *Beyond Breaking Point* illustrated a 15% response rate with broad geographical representation. Survey results emphasised the increasing complexities faced by households, with 80% of respondents meeting families dealing with multiple difficulties.

Consequently, there has been a substantial surge in calls to SVP across the Northern Region, almost double what they were before the pandemic.

To read *Beyond Breaking Point: Sharing the perspective of SVP Members on the cost of living crisis*, please visit: <https://www.svp.ie/beyondbreakingpoint-northernregionperspective>



Feast of St Vincent de Paul

The beautiful surroundings of St Peter's Cathedral was the setting for the Mass for the Feast of St Vincent de Paul which was celebrated by Fr Perry.

It was lovely to welcome so many members to attend such an uplifting evening.

An Evening of Seasonal Songs

A truly magnificent concert of Seasonal Songs was hosted by television presenter Claire McCollum in Clonard Monastery with performances by singer songwriter Malachi Cush, Fr Martin O'Hagan and Classical Soprano Margaret Keys.

They were joined by school choirs from St Dominic's Grammar and St Clare's Primary.

One person who attended the concert said: "Well done; what a wonderful evening of music – we really enjoyed it and to see so many 'old' friends was a pleasure."





Carlingford Day Trip

St Anthony's Conference Craigavon took a group of 40 senior citizens on a day trip to Carlingford. The annual outing visited Dundalk, Carlingford and Omeath before stopping at the Canal Court Hotel in Newry for dinner.

Everyone had a wonderful time with some thanking the organisers and saying that it was their only trip out for the year!

Included in the photo is Anita McGeown, President of St Anthony's Conference Craigavon; Mona McGinn, Vice President, who has been a member of the Conference for over 50 years; and Frank Lynch, Treasurer, who has been a member of the Conference for 38 years.



Visits to Knock

A number of Conferences visited **Knock** during the summer. Conferences from **Derry** and **Omagh** travelled together and **Kilmegan** and **East Down** got together once again for their annual day at Knock.

Sr Margaret Rose from **Ballynahinch Conference** attended the day trip to Knock and celebrated her 91st birthday in 2023.



Derry Offices Blessed

New Spiritual Director Fr Stephen Quinn celebrated mass for SVP volunteers in our Derry offices.

25th Anniversary of Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony

The John and Pat Hume Foundation hosted a special event in the Guildhall in Derry to mark the 25th anniversary of award of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1998 to John Hume and David Trimble promoting leadership for peaceful change solutions to lasting peace.

Mary Waide, SVP Regional President for the Northern Region, was invited to make a presentation at the event and there was a panel discussion on human rights, social justice and leadership for peaceful change, along with live music and video tributes.



Speakers included Bertie Ahern, Lady Daphne Trimble, Dawn Purvis and Brid Rodgers.

Celebrating Christmas

SVP Conferences St Josephs Crossgar and Kilmore celebrated Christmas with a Senior Citizens Dinner at The Millbrook Lodge Hotel.



Northern Ireland Assembly Christmas Giving Tree Appeal

The Northern Ireland Assembly nominated SVP to be one of its charities for its Christmas Giving Tree Appeal. Mary Waide, SVP Regional President of the Northern Region, was invited to speak at the Appeal's launch and Pauline Brown, SVP Regional Manager for the Northern Region, was invited to speak at the carol service. The Speaker of the Assembly, Alex Maskey MLA, got into the spirit of the season and wore his SVP Christmas Jumper to encourage staff of the NI Assembly to make a donation to the Appeal.



Newtownards and Comber SVP

enjoyed their annual Christmas dinner. A lovely evening was had by all. The group say "we try to go out as much as we can, just to catch up and enjoy each other's company. Any excuse for a party!" And how right they are!



Santa Train

A unique Santa experience was provided by The Railway Preservation Society of Ireland. Families were invited to enjoy a fun filled ride on the Santa Train and meet Santa and Mrs Claus.

Sean Haveron
Wednesday
Afternoon Group
at All Saints
Parish Centre
in Ballymena
presented £300 to
SVP. Funds were
raised from raffles
and quizzes.



Annual Appeal

SVP members were very grateful for the very generous donations from individuals, corporate donors, schools and partners in support of the Annual Appeal.

Nine year old Ella made a donation to **St Patrick's Portaferry and Ballygalget SVP Conference** from the sale of her Barbie Dreamhouse in memory of her granny Catherine Davidson who sadly died a few months ago. Ella's granny was a member of SVP in Kircubbin.



Mary Waide, SVP Regional President for the Northern Region, visited **Edmund Rice College** and collected a cheque for £770 raised from a Christmas jumper day, movie morning and donations from form classes.



Mr Rasdale, Mrs Lavelle, Ben Cregan and Amal Devaraj, welcomed local representatives from **Ederney St Joseph's SVP to St Michaels college, Enniskillen**, to present over 60 vouchers for various shops and businesses around the county collected by classes and staff.



Rosie from **St Enda's GAA** delivered vouchers to Regional Office. Pauline Brown, SVP Regional Manager for the Northern Region, accepted this generous donation which will help SVP members ensure that families across the Region enjoy a wonderful Christmas.



Pamela Muir, Principal of **Dunclug Nursery in Ballymena**, presented Mary Waide, SVP Regional President for the Northern Region with a cheque for £645 collected from donations made by parents who were asked to donate to SVP in place of buying presents for teachers.



Principal Siobhan Kelly and Thomas McCaughey of **St Mary's Grammar** school presented a cheque to SVP West Belfast Area President Valerie McGreevy for £1,595.00. Thomas organised events with the pupils to raise the money for SVP's Annual Appeal.



SVP **St Colman's Conference Kilkeel** received Christmas hampers from **St Columban's Primary School** and **St Louis Grammar School, Kilkeel**.

Donations like these ensured that over 100 families received support from SVP in the local area with each also receiving a festive Christmas card designed by local school pupils with the SVP logo and helpline number on the back.



Pupils from **St Columbas High School Portaferry** presented a cheque for £605 raised by the pupils for SVP's Annual Appeal to SVP member Mary B White.

As a result of various fundraising activities, **St Columbanus College in Bangor** raised £2,432 for SVP's Annual Appeal. Each year the College runs various fundraising events to assist SVP. Patricia Norrington, SVP Treasurer; Eileen Thomson, President; and Pat O'Driscoll, Vice President of **SVP Ballyholme/Donaghadee Conference**; are pictured receiving the donation from Maria Flynn, Principal of St Columbanus College.



Representatives from SVP receiving a cheque for an amazing £3,100 from **Loreto**.



Pearse Brolly from **Brolly's Butchers Cloughmills** and **St Brigid's GAA** presented a cheque to Anne Smiley of **Sacred Heart SVP Conference Cloughmills**.



Anne Smiley of Sacred Heart SVP Conference Cloughmills is pictured receiving a donation from **St Brigid's Ladies GAA Cloughmills**.



Knockninny Christmas Appeal

Children of **St. Mary's Primary school Teemore, Derrylin Co Fermanagh** presenting the local SVP representatives Paddy Mc Avinue, Betty Leonard and Anne Mc Brien with a cheque for £651 and 50 Euro.



Children who took part in the fundraising efforts and helped with gathering the hampers. Anne, Paddy and Betty also in the picture.



Staff of St. Mary's Teemore with the hampers that were gathered. Both pupils and staff contributed to these wonderful collections of goodies that were enjoyed by the needy in our own local community.



The local Conference is so grateful to the children of both St. Mary's Teemore and the children of **St. Aidan's High School Derrylin**. The staff of both schools and the very active St. Aidan's PTFA.



Children from St. Aidan's High School with hampers.



St. Aidan's High School PTFA with craft fair cheque.

RETAIL

Second Hand September



Vincent's stores around the Northern Region received visits from their local elected representatives on St Vincent de Paul Day to celebrate Second Hand September.

The Chair of Mid Ulster District Council is pictured with staff and volunteers during a visit to Vincent's Killyclogher.



Pop Up Shop in Derry

Shops PopUp Around the Region

Three hundred shoppers bagged bargains of clothing, footwear and handbags at the North Region's Pop Up Shop in Derry.

They enjoyed browsing, winning raffle prizes and refreshments with managers greeting customers from North Region shops in Derry, Dungiven, Strabane, Enniskillen, Killyclogher and North West Region shops in Letterkenny Main St, Buncrana and Castlefinn.

Vincent's Omagh hosted a Pop Up Shop with a team of Power NI staff helping with the set up. Local SVP members and volunteers joined with the shop team to hang approx 3,000 garments and displayed approx 200 pairs of shoes –



Vincent's Omagh

all selling at £1.00 each! The Pop Up shop team was made up of local members of Omagh area Conferences, volunteers and staff from Killyclogher, Omagh, Strabane, Enniskillen and Derry Vincent's.

Ormeau Road Vincent's and Power NI volunteers helped out at the Belfast Pop Up with all items selling for £1.00 each.

Belfast City Council, Connected Community Care and the Mums and Toddler group from Shaftesbury Community and Recreation Centre promoted reuse and recycling and the benefits of a healthy mind to the shoppers.



Window Fit for Grafton Street

Congratulations to Vincent's Cushendall on winning Causeway Coast & Glens Council Best Window Display!

The local community eagerly awaited the unveiling of the display and they weren't disappointed.

The Northern Region's answer to Brown Thomas!

Special Bereavement Mass in Derry.

A special Bereavement Mass was held in Derry for dearly missed deceased SVP members from the Northern Region. During November, the month to pray for our dead, Fr Stephen Quinn thought it would be fitting that SVP in Derry offered a mass for dearly departed SVP members.



North West

Area Gatherings in the North West

The North West Region has held four area gatherings in 2023 and 2024. These gatherings are an opportunity for SVP members to get together, share experiences and hear from guest speakers. At each area gathering we had an attendance of 30–50 members SVP members.

We kicked off in April 2023 with an area gathering in the **Milford-Dunfanaghy** area. Paul Wallace, a Crime Prevention and Community Relations Officer with An Garda Síochána was the guest speaker on the evening. Paul stressed the importance of personal safety and risk assessment when visiting people in their homes.

The following evening, we moved on to the Inishowen Peninsula when the next area gathering was held in Carndonagh. MABS was in attendance. They delivered a talk on dealing with debt, managing finances, how to make a referral and signposting members to their various supports and services.

The next Area Gathering was held in May in the Mount Errigal Hotel in Letterkenny. This was a joint area gathering with **Letterkenny and Convooy** area. The Community Welfare Service was in attendance. The Community Welfare Officer (CWO) talked about the purpose of the community welfare service, role of the CWO and the various schemes and payments available to people within the community.

In February 2024 we returned to Letterkenny where the Area Gathering was held in the Silver Tassie Hotel. This was a joint gathering between **Letterkenny and Milford-Dunfanaghy** area. This gathering consisted of a number of different guest speakers such as Donegal Intercultural Platform, Tusla, HSE, The Competition and Consumer Protection Agency (CCPC) Donegal County Council, Ascain Service and HSE Suicide Prevention Trainer.



All the gatherings were well attended, with vibrant discussions and a lot of learning taking place. An opportunity to connect and network with fellow Vincentians is always an insight. The Area Gatherings are co-facilitated by Area Presidents, the national Membership Support team, and Orla Beirne, the North West Member Support Officer. We look forward to hosting more area gatherings in 2024!

North East and Midlands

Celebrating Decades of Dedication

The Society of Saint Vincent De Paul in the **Laytown and Mornington Parish** had a very significant get together recently. The Star of the Sea Conference celebrated the presentation of long service medals to **Peggy Downey, Chrissy Ferris and Noel Quinn.**

In a heartfelt ceremony held at the parish hall, Michael Grogan, Area President of the Society, took the stage to honour individuals whose dedication has left an indelible mark on the community. Among the honourees, Peggy Downey stood out, receiving a prestigious gold medal in recognition of her extraordinary fifty-year commitment to SVP. Michael's tribute to Peggy painted a picture of a tireless leader who, through her unwavering dedication and forthright attitude, has been a guiding light for the organisation.

Chrissy Ferris and Noel Quinn were also celebrated, receiving silver medallions for their 35 years of service to SVP within the parish. Michael praised Chrissy's deep-rooted connection to her community and her exceptional ability to care for those in need, as well as her knack for fundraising. Noel, equally deserving of recognition, was commended for his compassion and steadfast dedication, having served as Conference president with distinction.

As the ceremony unfolded, Fr Denis McNelis P.P and P J Geraghty, president of Star of the Sea, expressed their gratitude for Peggy, Chrissy, and Noel's selfless service. Their words echoed the sentiments of the entire Conference, acknowledging the trio's invaluable contributions to those most in need.

In a touching moment, Noel Quinn took the stage to express his heartfelt gratitude and reflect on SVP's legacy within the parish. Fondly remembering past members and honouring those who have passed, Noel emphasised the enduring impact of participation in SVP as a cornerstone of life and a source of lifelong friendships.

The occasion took on added significance as Pat Heeney, area treasurer of SVP, formally launched the Fiftieth Anniversary Celebrations of Saint Vincent De Paul in the parish. With a year of festivities and renewal ahead, the ceremony served as a poignant reminder of the enduring spirit of compassion and community that defines SVP. A year of celebrations will begin in September.



Peggy Downey with her husband Matt and son Peter, Michael Grogan Area President and Fr Denis McNelis P. P. Peggy was presented with a Gold Medal in recognition of her fifty years of service to SVP.



Chrissy Ferris with her daughter Elizabeth and son John, Michael Grogan Area President and Fr Denis McNelis P.P. Chrissy received a silver medal for her thirty five years of service to SVP.

Noel Quinn with his daughters Yvonne and Aoife, Michael Grogan Area President SVP and Fr Denis McNelis P.P. Noel received a silver medal for his thirty five years of service to SVP.



South West

A quarter of a century service in the South West.

Members of SVP **St. Brendan's Parish in Tralee** gathered recently to celebrate the retirement of long time member Sr. De Lourdes. After 25 years of service to the Parish, it was a joy to see such an amazing turn out for an outstanding SVP member who wore many hats and helped many people.

Sr. De Lourdes retires as a member of **St. Martin's Visitation Conference in Tralee**. Her Conference have expressed a deep appreciation of having such a wonderful Vincentian in the Conference.

Her impact on the community in Tralee will never be forgotten. Sr. De Lourdes acted as a caring, compassionate and empathetic Vincentian when out on visitation. Her impact was witnessed recently, when many people of whom she supported through the years in her work with St. Vincent de Paul, wished her a happy retirement at her appreciation event in Tralee.

On behalf of St. Vincent de Paul in Tralee, we wish Sr. De Lourdes a very happy retirement.



Fr. Padraig Walsh, Minister Norma Foley, Maura Gleasure, Bernard Lynch, Sally Walsh, Paddy Kevane, Treasa Walsh. Centre was Sr. De Lourdes and June Carey.

South East

Christmas 2023

ERSS – Edmund Ignatius Rice Secondary School

Back L-R: Charlie Power, Ian Hennessy, Evan Power, Kerwick O Dwyer, Scott O Shea, Aidan Sweetman, Graham Phelan, Kristian Berko, Leon Foley, Rivers Briscoe, Michael Keyes, Fionn Power Ethan Derby



Front L-R: John Connolly SVP; Ms Linda Barry Assistant Principal; Ms Majella Gleeson Principal; Michael Lonergan President SVP; Student Billy Murphy; Mona Killeen SVP; Carmel Shortiss SVP.

All Students are members of young St Vincent de Paul, ERSS, Carrick-on-Suir.

Comeragh College

L-R: Mona Killeen, SVP; Tilly O Donnell, SVP; Student, Justin McCarthy; Michael Lonergan, President SVP; Carmel Shortiss SVP; Student, Aine Heffernan; John Connolly SVP; Ms. Anne Cleere, Teacher Comeragh College.



SVP Shop Portlaw celebrates a milestone!

Peggy Cuddidy a long-time volunteer with the Society, celebrated a big birthday, turning 90 years young, with 38 of those years serving her community in Portlaw with SVP.

Along with Biddy who also has 38 years' service in the Society, and Ann Nolan, they work to keep the SVP Shop stocked with beautiful clothes and items.

Best wishes to Peggy from all at SVP.



Yellow Brick Care Childcare

St Joseph's Childcare Centre, in Waterford City, has recently developed a Sensory Room in the centre. Sensory Room is a specially designed, calm environment to promote children's cognitive development, social skills, motor development and to boost their emotional wellbeing.



*Once upon a time, in a room far, far away...
...and then the magical fairy granted the
room it's one wish...*

Sensory Room



West

Corpus Christi Conference Oranmore/Maree

celebrated the retirement of **John Ward** and **Andy Clohessy**. Both were dedicated members with over 60 years combined service in various Conferences, in roles, as Secretary, Treasurer and President. We are grateful to them for giving of their time, their skills and knowledge. Those in need and fellow Vincentians benefitted from their care, compassion, empathy and friendship.



St Bridget's Conference Newport have celebrated 40 years serving their local community.

Pictured (left), former SVP members and family of deceased members, representatives from the **Westport and Louisburgh** Conferences plus the Regional President and Serena Matthews after attending mass celebrated by Fr Tod Nolan for 40th anniversary of the Conference.

Pictured (right), Maureen presenting former Conference President **Liz Kilroy** with a certificate of recognition and appreciation to the Conference.



Congratulations to all members, past and present.

Congratulations and many thanks to **Eithne Chambers** and **Mary Jo Guilfoyle**, who recently retired from their local Conference, after 38 and 12 years of volunteering service respectively.



To deceased members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Tim Maher

St Mary of The Rosary Conference, Nenagh

Tim Maher was born in 1932 and left Nenagh in the late 50's to train as a woodwork teacher in Colaiste Charman, Gorey. He loved working with wood and there are lots of beautifully crafted pieces in his home to treasure.

In 1960 he took up a teaching post in Killarney and became friendly with members of SVP who invited him to join. He greatly enjoyed his visits to Saint Columbanus, the county home. The patients loved his company and looked forward to his visits and the odd cigarette he brought with him! – even though he was a non-smoker himself.

In 1966 he came back to a Nenagh and taught woodwork and mechanical drawing in the local vocational school, now Nenagh College. He married his wife Dolores in 1969, designed and oversaw the building of their family home and together they happily raised three children and have seven adored grandchildren.

In 1975 he was approached by the late SVP members John Cavanagh, Michael Ryan and Bill Fitzgerald to join St Mary's of the Rosary Conference in Nenagh, a service unbroken, until his death on 17th May 2023, following a brief illness.

During this time Tim served as President for two terms. He was also involved in setting up Vincents Shop, Mitchell Street, Nenagh. He spent many a day searching for a suitable premises. Once opened he would drop back in to say hello to the manager and volunteers.

Tim loved to connect with people on the margins and showed huge empathy to the poor. He always gave willingly of his time. Weekly meetings were hugely important and sometimes took priority over other events! He was humble, never wanted adulation or praise and never looked for limelight. He was very sensitive and his experience with people often meant that Tim was called upon to make the final decision if the Conference vote was undecided. He loved home visitations and missed not being able to undertake them during covid. He was delighted to return on 13th March to the first face to face meeting in the pastoral centre.

He was ever-present at fundraising events. He would always welcome the opportunity to return to Nenagh College and along with the Religion teacher helped organise their Christmas fundraising events. He would inform the students about the importance

of the work of SVP and the difference their generous donations and beautiful hampers, would make to the lives of people that were being helped.

He looked forward to attending the annual SVP mass in September and enjoyed meeting fellow volunteers afterwards to chat. He kept in contact with the many members who became lifelong friends and had great respect for them all.

It is not surprising that a large crowd attended his funeral service. The SVP visitation handbook was one of the treasured items to be brought to the altar at the offertory.

We extend our sympathy to his beloved wife Dolores, son Eoin, daughters Aileen and Sinead and his seven grandchildren.

Go dtuga Dia suaimhneas do.

To deceased members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Pat Phelan

St Mary's Conference,
Slieverue, Co Kilkenny

The members of St Mary's Conference, Slieverue, Co Kilkenny were deeply saddened by the passing of their beloved ex Conference member Pat Phelan. For over 60 years Pat was an active and very hard working member of our local Conference in Slieverue. He devoted himself to the work of the Society with love and kindness. He gave his time freely and used his talents wisely for the good of the Society. He always carried out his work in a very caring and compassionate way, always respecting the dignity of those he helped. So many families in our parish will be eternally grateful for the help they received during Pat's time in the Society. He was a very friendly, sociable and pleasant person. Our friend Pat may you now be reunited with your dear wife Bid. May your many good deeds go before you and May the good Lord Grant you eternal rest. Ni bheidh a leitheid Ann aris.

South West Belfast lost some
valued members this year.

Roisin Hyland

The area remembered the life of former member Roisin Hyland expressing their sympathy to her loved ones. Roisin was a former member of the Nativity Conference and Requiem mass was celebrated in St Lukes Church before Roisin's burial at Milltown Cemetery.

Peggy Reid

Peggy Reid, passed away on 31 December. She served St Peters SVP for a long time and just last year amalgamated with Most Holy Redeemer, Clonard. Peggy was buried from St Michael The Archangel Church.

Eithna Rodgers

In December, West Belfast lost two long-time volunteers, who will be sadly missed, and hard to replace. Eithna Rodgers, a volunteer member in St Patricks, Derriaghy, passed away on 15 December and was buried in St Colman's Church, Lambeg.

Eileen Faulkner

This year Vincent's lost one of our longest serving volunteers: Eileen Faulkner was a much loved volunteer in Vincent's Newcastle and is terribly missed. She was a part of the retail team for 30 years!





"Use your voice for kindness,
your ears for compassion,
your hands for charity,
your mind for truth,
and your heart for love."

- Anonymous

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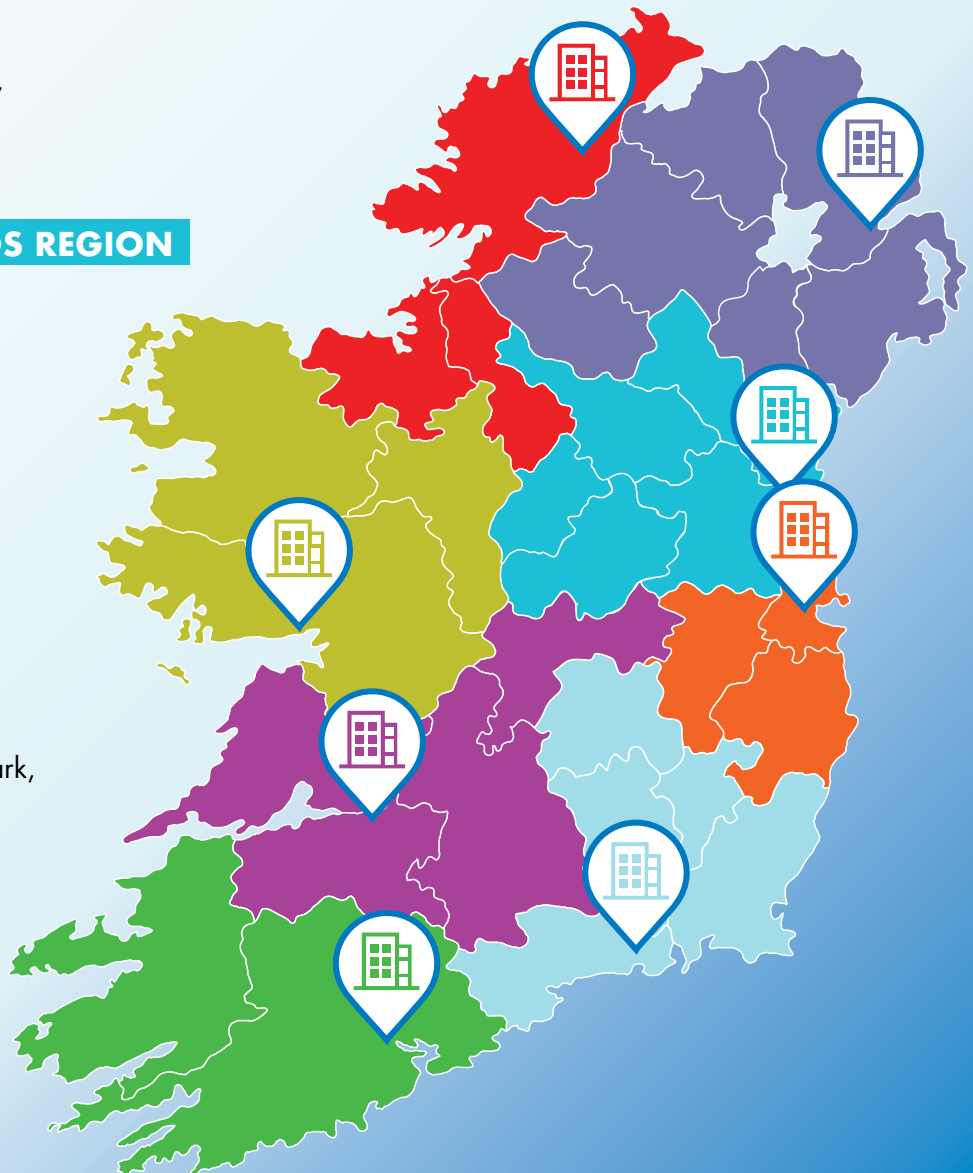
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