

# compassion

justice  
hope  
dignity  
respect

## st stephen's green trust the first 21 years 1992-2013



*At an SSGT Board meeting in 2006 were: (from left) Michael MacNamara, Dáithí O'Maolchoille, Fr Vincent O'Hara OCD, Orla O'Neill, Jane Leek. Seated: Stephen Rourke, Sr Maria McGuinness RSM, Fr Paul Byrne OMI and Sr Kathleen O'Reilly FC.*

## the beginning – passion for change

*“My memory takes me back to a period that precedes St Stephen’s Green Trust. It was the late 1980s and Waterford was one of the worst casualties of the recession at the time. Unemployment was at a peak. The acute needs of the people were very apparent and immediate. There were no services to meet such needs. A response was urgently needed and I discovered I had a passion to meet the challenge. In addition a building had been made available to me by the Mercy Congregation. I decided to take a leap of faith despite the fact I didn’t have a penny to my name. Some may have deemed that foolhardy but I called it Trust in Providence!*

*It was in the context of this passion for the possible and Trust in Providence that St Brigid’s was born. Within the space of a couple of years it had become a very busy Family and Community Centre responding to urgent unmet need. All who engaged in delivering the services were excellent volunteers. But there were limitations. Increasingly it became apparent that our envisioned developments and the credibility the work warranted could not materialise without funding. The prospects for sourcing funding were very bleak indeed. Applications to the State were rejected and there was a dearth of Foundations.*

*Out of the blue my Trust in Providence manifested itself in the form of David Barker! David, from a grant-giving Trust in the UK, contacted me requesting a visit to the Centre with his colleague Brian Evans. I hadn’t a clue who they were or what to expect. My memory of their visit is as vivid today as it was then. Their approach bore the hallmark of servant leaders. Their very demeanour indicated a total interest in us and what we were doing. They elicited all the information they needed in a relaxed conversational milieu. The issue of anonymity arose. David’s reference to the Gospel imperative to do good without seeking credit made sense to us.*

*Within a very short time frame we got the wonderful news that the UK Trust was committed to funding the employment of two staff over three years on a sliding scale. The benefits of this were enormous. By the end of the three years the gateway to State funding was opened and the credibility of St. Brigid’s as a service provider was well and truly established.”*

Sr Maria McGuinness, RSM, founding Trustee of St Stephen’s Green Trust and founding Director of St Brigid’s Family & Community Centre, Waterford.

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*SSGT: Almost  
€6.5m in grants  
in 21 years. Over  
850 organisations  
supported with over  
1,500 grants.*

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Fr Paul Byrne, Stephen Rourke

The origins of St Stephen's Green Trust (SSGT) are best summed up in recollections like this, as this type of passion for change underpinned the decision by the Brenninkmeyers, a Dutch family, to establish an independent Trust for the island of Ireland in the early 1990s.

Dr David Barker and Brian Evans worked with Derwent Charitable Consultancy (now Porticus UK) which advised the family on its charitable giving programme. Their work included advising on grants on the island of Ireland, and as this increased and became more sustained, they felt they needed to follow the same approach used in the UK. A panel of advisors across different geographical and thematic areas was used to help assess applications in the UK. Following discussions, it was agreed to support establishing an independent Trust, based in Dublin, but with a remit for the island. They were mindful of the need to have a well-informed and well-balanced indigenous organisation to make grants, rather than try to second-guess priorities from the UK.

Dr Barker's reflections on his experiences are an indication of the scarcity of independent grantmaking in Ireland at that time. He recalls how Government officials with whom they negotiated about setting up the Charitable Trust were somewhat perplexed about the notion of a charity whose sole function was to distribute funds to other charities. Very few independent Trusts had been established in the State at that time (or since). The selection of the name – St Stephen's Green Trust – was a result of the geographical location of the office in which the legal documents were drawn up. The Trust was supported from the beginning by Dáithí O Maolchoille initially in his role as a partner with BDO. Following his retirement from that organisation in 1995 he has continued to provide accountancy and administrative services to SSGT.

David Barker managed the process of finding Trustees for the newly established organisation, drawing from people with whom he had worked over the previous few years in Ireland. The three founding Trustees were Sr Maria McGuinness RSM, Mr Paul Sweeney and Fr Paul Byrne OMI. Sr Maria was founding Director of St Brigid's in Waterford. Paul Sweeney was Director of the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust (now The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland). Paul is currently Permanent Secretary in the Department of Education (NI). Fr Paul had been Director of SHAC, a large housing agency in London, which owed its origins to funding from the same Dutch family. He was back in Dublin working for Irish emigrants at the time of his appointment as Trustee.

The first grant made by the Trustees in 1992 was a small multi-annual grant to the Ballymun Task Force towards the costs of their Coordinator. Other early grants included supporting the salary cost of a position in the Community Workers Coop, Parentline and the Irish Network of the Unemployed.

Advisors were appointed throughout the island and the Trustees took a hands-on role in visiting and advising potential grant applicants. As the Trust did not advertise its grant scheme, it relied on advisors

identifying suitable organisations and supporting them to make an application for funding. People such as Dr Gerard Crowley and Dr Pat O'Connor in Limerick, Dr Anne Louise Gilligan in Tallaght and Alan Delahunty in Galway were considered best placed to know good organisations working in areas of interest to the Trust. For the first 15 years the Trust made grants across a wide spectrum, including children and young people, Travellers and general community development. It was one of the only grantmaking bodies in Ireland interested in supporting Religious formation and transmission of Christian values.

*"The role of the advisors was to seek out projects within their own area of expertise and geographical location based on their knowledge of the Trust's philosophy and guidelines; investigate projects which have been received directly by the Trust and engage in policy debates periodically with the Trustees. "* SSGT Board Meeting Minutes 12th December 1994

Grants made during these first years included seed-funding for small organisations for one to three years. Many have since developed into substantial organisations providing services and advocacy in their particular area.

- The Shanty Educational Project in Tallaght was awarded a small grant in 1994 for core costs over three years – it is now An Cosán, a progressive, substantial Centre for learning, leadership and social enterprise with income of over €3m in 2012.
- Ballysally Community Association in Coleraine was awarded a challenge grant in 1994, the Trust agreed to support the salary cost of a Community Development Worker if they raised the balance from another source, which they did - from the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland.
- Another grant made in 1994 supported the startup costs of Threshold's first charity shop – SSGT granted IR£10,000 of the IR£25,000 needed to start the social enterprise.
- In December 1995 the Trust made a grant of IR£10,000 to St Pancras Housing for a manager. This organisation is now Cluid Housing Association which has made available a total of 3,664 houses all over Ireland in its 18 years of operation, providing housing to low income families and single people, older people, people with a disability and Traveller families. Its income in 2012 was €11.6m.

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Three years after the beginning of the Trust, a review of the IR£500,000 given in grants to that time found almost 60% had supported salaries and other core costs. Many multi-annual grants had also been awarded. The issue of evaluation of grants was discussed at the September 1996 Board meeting. It was indicative of the reflective nature of the Trust that the minutes recorded a significant discussion on how to be proportional when measuring impact. The conclusion was that Trustees considered it important to determine whether the grant had made a difference but they recognised the

cost of evaluation could exceed the value of the grant. They were concerned that any evaluation should also be of benefit to the grant holder.

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*“.....any evaluation should also be of benefit to the grant holder”*

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## collaboration among colleagues

St Stephen's Green Trust has worked collaboratively with other independent Trusts and Foundations since its establishment. In particular, it has had a close relationship with the Katharine Howard Foundation (KHF), which, in recent years has a specific focus on early childhood development. Both SSGT and KHF are of comparable size and share a similar approach to grantmaking, and have collaborated in many areas over the years, including making joint grants to specific projects. One of the first of these was a grant of IR£5,000 in 2000 to KHF's Community Playgroup Initiative in partnership with the South Eastern Health Board. Two other significant co funding grants were for the Social Housing in Ireland research project in 1999 and the Review of the Whitaker Committee Report in 2007. These made a large contribution within social housing and penal reform sectors. KHF also provided technical support to the Trustees prior to the appointment of SSGT's first employee in 2004.

The March 1997 minutes record that Fr Paul Byrne met with John Healy of Tara Consultants (now Atlantic Philanthropies), to share views and information as both were working in the same area of philanthropic endeavour. Both Trusts were also operating anonymously and grant holders were asked not to disclose the source of the funds. By March 1998, both St Stephen's Green Trust and Atlantic Philanthropies were talking of forming an independent funders group.

A meeting of all grant making organisations operating in the Republic of Ireland was convened for 1st October 1998 and so the Irish Funders Forum (now Philanthropy Ireland) was born. Stephen Rourke, who had just been appointed as a SSGT Trustee, prepared

papers for the meeting, focusing on objectives and operational issues for the new organisation, including establishing criteria for membership. A Steering Committee was then established comprised of executives and Trustees from a number of Trusts and Foundations. A questionnaire sent to the 15 organisations involved found the main advantage of the Irish Funders Forum was considered to be the sharing of experiences. The mission was later expanded to include a second objective of promotion of philanthropy. Stephen Rourke served as the organisation's first Chairman from 1998 to 2003.

Philanthropy Ireland has developed over the past 15 years as an information and learning forum for its members as well as being a major advocate for the growth of philanthropy in Ireland. In 2013 it spearheaded a Government-backed campaign to increase philanthropic giving in Ireland – the One Percent Difference Campaign.

The Trust has also collaborated with organisations such as the Community Foundation for Ireland, the Ireland Funds and the Allen Lane Foundation in making joint grants. SSGT has supported The Community Foundation's small grants programme of last resort for ex-prisoners accessing crucial education opportunities for the past 3 years. The Ireland Funds recently supported the Darndale Belcamp Oblate Grant Programme Evaluation (SSGT 2013) through its funding priority of promoting philanthropy in Ireland. Sharing of information about emerging issues and organisations and signposting to alternative sources of funds are other areas of cooperation.



*Pictured during a site visit to Jobcare's refurbishment of the Exchange Building in Gardiner St in May 2010 were: Mark Brenninkmeyer, Gillian Brennan, Jobcare; Sr Maria McGuinness and Sammy Reilly, Jobcare.*



*Sr Maria McGuinness, Fr Paul Byrne, Stephen Rourke, Jane Leek*



## the only constant is change

Some changes took place within the organisation in the late 1990s. When Stephen Rourke was appointed to the Trust in 1998, Paul Sweeney retired from the Board. David Barker was retiring from Porticus UK in December 1998 and he was joined by his successor, Jane Leek, at the Trust meetings during his final year. Jane continues to work with the Trust in her capacity as Director of that organisation.

The Trust also continued its grant making, seeking out emerging organisations working with some of the most marginalised groups in Ireland, including people who were homeless, Travellers and prisoners/ex-prisoners.

In October 2001, the Depaul Trust (now Depaul Ireland) was supported with a grant of €10,000 towards start up costs. The organisation had been invited to Ireland from the UK to establish its first hostel for street drinkers in the Republic. Depaul Ireland, which now operates on an all-island basis supports vulnerable people experiencing homelessness and those at risk of homelessness and marginalisation. It has grown in size and stature in the last 12 years and is considered the leading organisation in its field, with income of almost €10.7m in 2012. It currently provides approx 300 bed spaces per night for homeless people and supports over 1,500 people each year to make changes to their lives with the help of expert staff and over 350 volunteers. The Trust has continued to support Depaul Ireland since 2001 as it considers it is reaching some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in Ireland.

Over the course of several years around the turn of the millennium, the Trust engaged in discussions with John Healy and the late Ray Murphy of Atlantic Philanthropies about the possibility of St Stephen's Green Trust becoming a vehicle for a Small Grants Programme funded by their organisation. Both Trusts had a mutual interest in severely marginalised groups such as Travellers and prisoners /ex-prisoners and their human rights. Following a prolonged internal review at their organisation, this potential collaboration did not come to fruition as Atlantic decided to follow a different approach to their grantmaking.

However, the possibility of new funds being introduced into the Trust inspired the Trustees to consider other sources. The Daughters of the

Cross of Liege had sold land in Beechpark near Stillorgan and the Sisters in Ireland were anxious that some of the money be retained to support Irish charitable causes. Fr Paul Byrne knew the Sisters well and he recalls they approached him as they knew of his involvement in SSGT and how the Trust focused on some of the more unpopular causes. They were looking for expertise on how to give money wisely and considered it was not something they could do alone. Following discussion, in May 2003 the Daughters gifted €3m to the Trust as a permanent endowment fund. Their areas of interest coincided with that of the Trust and the Sisters were also interested in supporting issues in the area of autism, palliative care and hearing impairment. As part of the agreement on the fund, the Sisters appointed a representative who liaised with the Trust on the grantgiving and who attended each of the Board meetings. The current representative is Sr Anne Kelly. Between 2003 and 2007 (when distributions from the fund were temporarily suspended on account of a sharp decline in the capital value), €520,000 was given in grants to a range of organisations. The fund reopened in 2012 to support a grants programme focused on survivors of institutional abuse.

The late Michael MacNamara who had retired as a partner from KPMG was appointed as a Trustee in February 2003. Jane Leek became a Trustee at the same time. Some grants made during this period included €7,500 to Bedford Row Family Support Project in Limerick towards the costs of an outreach worker to work with the families of prisoners and offenders. A grant of €10,000 was made to Catholic Ireland Ltd, an internet based resource involved in communicating messages around faith and spirituality. Grants of €10,000 were also made to the Immigrant Council of Ireland the Irish Penal Reform Trust.

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*“ They were looking for expertise on how to give money wisely and considered it was not something they could do alone”*

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Sr Maria McGuinness, Trustee



Donal O'Brien, Trustee



Fr. Mike Drennan, Trustee

All Trustees were still heavily involved in grants assessment and evaluation. They regularly visited applicants all around the country, prior to making a decision. They also provided a mentoring role to some organisations, utilising the varied expertise on the Board, particularly around the area of strategic review and planning.

Towards the end of 2003, as the administrative burden of the new fund put pressure on the voluntary nature of the organisation, the Trustees decided to appoint a part-time Administrator to help manage the grants process. KHF's Director, Noelle Spring and KHF Trustees Philip Jacob and Nóirín Kearney helped the SSGT through this process.

Jane Leek assisted the organisation to set out its strategy during this time of change. The Trust was funding across a range of areas: prisoners/ex-prisoners; Travellers; Homelessness; Christian Values Transmission; Autism; Hearing Impairment; Palliative Care; Older people in isolation and New Communities. It did not grant-aid individuals; capital projects; retrospective funding or general appeals. As well as making grants to organisations, Trustees used expertise available on the Board to directly support organisations – a concept now termed Funding Plus. Challenge grants were also used to help organisations leverage funds from other sources. The Trust produced its first Annual Report in 2003, including its full financial statements. It has continued to produce Annual Reports which are circulated and available on the Trust's website. Its commitment to openness, transparency and accountability is a reflection of its values and desire that organisations supported by the Trust also practice the same principles.

Orla O'Neill was appointed part-time Administrator in February 2004, working from her home office in Kildare. She took over the administration which had been carried out through the Porticus office in London as well as some of the administrative functions undertaken by Dáithí O Maolchoille. Her position has evolved significantly over the last 10 years in relation to providing developmental support and guidance as well as processing grant applications. Orla is currently Grants & Development Director of SSGT and has been the only employee of SSGT since its establishment in 1992. Her background is in the voluntary sector, primarily as Director of a mental health charity and she is a Certified Public Accountant. The Trust invested in its capacity by funding Orla to complete a Post Graduate Diploma in Grant Making Management from the CASS Business School in London

between 2007 and 2008. Orla also links in with the Association of Charitable Foundations in the UK to augment the professional development available from Philanthropy Ireland. She served on the Board of Philanthropy Ireland between 2010 and 2012.

When the Discalced Carmelites sold land in Donnybrook, Fr Paul Byrne suggested to them that they might follow the example of the Daughters of the Cross and set up a fund managed by the Trust. As the strategic approach and values of SSGT were aligned with their own, the Discalced Carmelites agreed to ringfence €3m as a permanent endowment and use the income to support organisations working with people who were homeless, including accommodation issues which affected Travellers and ex-prisoners. The Trust started to make grants from this fund in 2005. Between 2005 and 2008 the value of grants awarded to organisations was €502,700. The fund was suspended in 2008 when the markets crashed due to the fall in its capital value and it currently remains closed. The Order's representative to the Trust is Fr Vincent O'Hara.

The Darndale Belcamp Oblate Grant Programme, administered by the Trust, was established during the Summer of 2005. Its aim was to support organisations working with residents of the area. The fund was part of the proceeds of the sale of Belcamp College which had been run as a school by the Oblate Order since 1893. Grant applications were invited from organisations in January 2006. Between 2006 and 2012 this small grants programme has supported 42 organisations with grants to the value of €971,000. A 2013 mid-term evaluation of the Programme by Burtenshaw Kenny Associates found a very positive impact from the grant giving. Following an internal review in 2012, the Oblates decided to change the way they distributed the fund in Darndale Belcamp. For the remaining 3 years of the small grants programme (2013-2015), €50,000 per annum will be dispersed through the St Stephen's Green Trust. Fr Tony Clancy represents the Oblates on the Trust Board.

In September 2006, the Trust commissioned Brian Harvey to undertake a scoping exercise on the areas of need for the most severely disadvantaged in Ireland and help the Trust reprioritise its grants focus areas. Several other philanthropic organisations had entered the sector and, like the Trust, were working in areas such as children and young people and New Communities. Trustees also worked on reaffirming the mission, ethos and guiding principles. As a result of this exercise, the Trust agreed to focus on Travellers; Homelessness; prisoners/ex-prisoners; New Communities; Older people; Autism;

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*“ In terms of social impact, the funding has made a significant difference to the work of the groups in the area. A very clear and quantifiable example of this is the remarkable improvement of literacy performance in the first and second classes in the Junior National School”*

Evaluation of Darndale Belcamp Oblate Grant Programme  
by Burtenshaw Kenny Associates, 2013

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Hearing Impairment and Christian Values. Trustees were keen to ensure a good geographical spread of grants including Northern Ireland. The Brian Harvey report also recommended the Trust adopt a more engaged approach with some of its grantmaking.

In May 2007, Fr Paul Byrne and the late Michael MacNamara stepped down as Trustees. Fr Paul had been Chair of the organisation for 15 years. Stephen Rourke was elected as the new Chairman. At the following meeting Fr Mike Drennan SJ (previously Secretary General of CORI) was appointed as a Trustee. Paul and Michael's retirement was marked at the launch of the 2006 Annual Report by Fr Harry Bohan in Collins Barracks on 24th May 2007. The Trust had used the launch of its Annual Reports in the previous few years to invite a

speaker to address the audience of grantees and colleagues from the philanthropic sector on a relevant topic. Fr Bohan spoke about values-led change in Irish society. The speaker for the 2005 Annual Report had been Peadar Kirby (then of DCU), who spoke about the importance of independent philanthropic funding to the community and voluntary sector.

SSGT was incorporated in September 2007 as a company limited by guarantee, considered good practice for organisations like the Trust. A consultant, June Meehan, was engaged to help with the assessment of applications which had grown exponentially as the funds available to the Trust had tripled in as many years.

## greater focus, make-a-difference criteria and an engaged approach

As recommended by Brian Harvey, a more engaged and developmental approach was employed from the outset when the Trust designed the small grants programme in Darndale Belcamp. The Trust sought and received agreement from the community (through open public meetings) for this approach. It commissioned a short report by Nurture, which recommended a wide ranging and comprehensive Community Survey be done to determine the major issues for people living in the community. A survey and follow-up programme was followed over the next four years in Darndale Belcamp, the outcomes of which are documented in the mid-term evaluation cited above and available on the Trust's website.

In addition, in September 2007 the Trust asked Dr David Barker, who now worked as a consultant, to undertake a thorough scoping exercise of the situation in relation to values-led leadership in Ireland. The Trust was interested in supporting initiatives taking a lead in the transmission of Christian values in Irish society. The outcome of his research was documented in a report to the Trust in 2008. This led to the design and roll-out of the Christian Values Grant Programme which supported 5 organisations working across this thematic area. This strategic small grants programme had a total annual value of €100,000 and was established as a three-year Grants Programme. The organisations granted aid for 2009 were Religious News Network; Iona Institute; Social Justice Ireland; Mary Immaculate College and Magis Ireland. The latter three organisations were granted aid for a further two years. Dr Barker supported the Grants Programme throughout the three years with formative evaluations and he also facilitated biannual Grantee Network meetings. The aim of the Network meetings was to share learning and promote collaboration. Dr Barker also reported annually to the Trustees on the individual projects and the overall programme. His final report on the Grant Scheme was tabled in October 2012 and much of the learning from this programme informed the development and approach of its successor, the Grant Programme focused on supporting organisations working with Survivors of Institutional Abuse.

In February 2008, Donal O'Brien, a Chartered Accountant, was appointed as a Trustee (officially a Director as the Trust was now a company limited by guarantee). Jane Leek stepped down as a Director in October 2008, following a reorganisation at Porticus. Jane continues to represent Porticus at Trust meetings.

Following the market downturn in September 2008, the funds available to the Trust from 3 of its 4 sources of funds were cut dramatically. As the capital value of the permanent endowment held by the Trust had been drastically reduced, Trustees suspended any disbursements from it. The organisation was informed by the Discalced Carmelites they were suspending paying out from the €3m endowment ringfenced for supporting people affected by homelessness. The annual amount available for grantgiving in Darndale Belcamp was reduced from €200,000 to €120,000. As a result, the Trustees decided to tighten the grants focus areas to projects supporting work with male Travellers; prisoners/ex-prisoners and people who were homeless. It also decided to only accept applications from organisations with income of less than €500,000 per annum.

In late 2009, following the publication of the Ryan Report, the Trustees commissioned a short report by Mary Higgins to outline a socio-economic profile of the survivors of institutional abuse in Irish religious-run institutions. Its recommendations informed the design of the Survivors Grant Programme (2012-2014) which awarded €100,000 in grants annually for three years to 5 organisations or projects: Depaul Ireland; Right of Place/Second Chance; London Irish Centre/icap; Irish Women Survivors Support Service and Irish in Britain.

The Programme has a Grantee Network as an integral part, whereby the 5 organisations meet biannually to share best practice and learn from each other. Formative evaluation, by Liz Lennon, is key to the supported work of the 5 organisations and an engaged and co-creative approach is employed. This means the Trust's evaluation of

each project is shared within the group and all have input into each other's work. The synergies achieved by this approach are already evident through sharing of resources, information and ideas. The Grantee Network has also used its strength to make representations on issues of mutual interest to Government and Statutory bodies.

This Programme is partly funded by the Daughters of the Cross fund, which reopened in 2012 as the capital value of the endowment had partially recovered.

As the 21st year of the operations of St Stephen's Green Trust approaches on 10th December 2013, the philanthropic sector is again in a state of change. Two large foundations, the One Foundation and Atlantic Philanthropies are exiting between now and 2020. The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust has just announced it too will exit grantmaking in the Republic of Ireland in 2016, but will continue in

Northern Ireland. The JRCT has been a very important funder for people who address the root causes of conflict and injustice in Ireland and its early work in Northern Ireland was transformative. However, there are many other foundations which continue in their grantmaking. There are also ongoing initiatives to increase philanthropic giving in Ireland and it is hoped new sources of funding will replace those Foundations which are 'spending out' in the next few years.

As has been the strategy with the last 21 years, St Stephen's Green Trust will look to the future, considering how it is best placed to improve the lives of people affected by poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion. It will do this through an engaged, strategic approach to its grantgiving and supporting initiatives aimed at encouraging potential philanthropists.

October 2013

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*"Find out what works and promote it - identify good practice/demonstration projects in addressing the needs of this group and help to promote them so that learning can be shared and replicated, leading to more improvements in interventions" Mary Higgins, Developing a Socio Economic Profile of Survivors of Abuse in Irish Religious-run Institutions, SSGT 2010*

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"SSGT will build on the achievements of the last 21 years and continue to support projects which have the potential to improve the quality of life for people experiencing significant levels of disadvantage. SSGT will also continue to work with our sister organisations within the philanthropic sector and within the broader community and voluntary sector in Ireland. It will also continue to engage with relevant statutory agencies. It is only through us all working together, in a spirit of collaboration and practical cooperation, that we can maximise the resources which we have at our disposal. Only then can we achieve the best outcomes for those people who are most vulnerable, most disadvantaged and most isolated from mainstream society in Ireland." *Stephen Rourke, Chairman, SSGT.*



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