

# Hidden Poverty and Hard Choices

**The General Grant applications that arrive in our offices every day continue to portray a stark reminder of the poverty that remains close to the surface in the lives of too many Irish families.**

The word itself, 'poverty', often conjures up old-fashioned and inappropriate images of a Dickensian society but what is today's reality?

**The parameters of poverty in the 21st century have changed considerably and yet it remains as pervasive and destructive as ever.**

A key aspect of evaluating poverty must surely relate to the ability to provide a home or accommodation of some sort, to eat wholesome and nutritious food, to clothe the family and at least on some level, participate in society.

It can manifest itself in simple ways, like the inability to switch on your heating or to prevent your children from attending birthday parties or school events due to the cost. The above seems so simple, reasonable and undemanding yet remains an unrealistic prospect for many people who continue to struggle in life for the basics - and struggle is the word.

I speak to so many individuals who have simply 'run out of road' on finances, stressing over whether to pay the rent, utilities or food but not having enough to cover all of them.

**Life ends up being a constant worry about the necessity to make hard and difficult choices.**

It can be tempting to blame people for their circumstances; the result of laziness, indifference or a history of poor choices, but the vast majority of cases I come across are about people in situations that would have been difficult for anyone to avoid.

**Poverty has an adverse impact on families but perhaps most cogently on children.**

It is one of the greatest threats, putting at risk their opportunities for a good education, physical and mental health as well as their social and emotional well-being. The applications we receive span the spectrum of life as they outline issues, some that most of us could not imagine let alone encounter.



However, we also receive calls and notes from those who have been helped. It is humbling to receive those, laced as they are with appreciation and thanks. Yet, this thanks belongs not to us but to our donors who themselves give with such grace and kindness. Without them, our task would be impossible and our motivation impeded.

**For every cry for help we receive, there is another voice we hear in our daily work. A voice of kindness, generosity and compassion, that of our donors.**

In a dark world of need and despair, they are a shining light and we are grateful to them for the hope they allow us to provide.

**100% OF YOUR HELP GETS TO WHERE IT IS NEEDED MOST!**

As always, 100% of your donations are used to alleviate financial distress without and deductions for administrative or other costs.

**"We are grateful for the continued strong support we receive"**

**"Our donors give generously, knowing that 100% of their gifts go to where they are needed most"**

Geoff Scargill, Head of Charitable Services

# Chairman's Statement



Despite an increase in average incomes and other signs of economic recovery, CSO figures show that a significant proportion of the population is still living in very difficult circumstances.

Notwithstanding wider global political uncertainty, these families have more immediate concerns that relate to maintaining a basic standard of living as they continue their financial struggle, often on the margins of society.

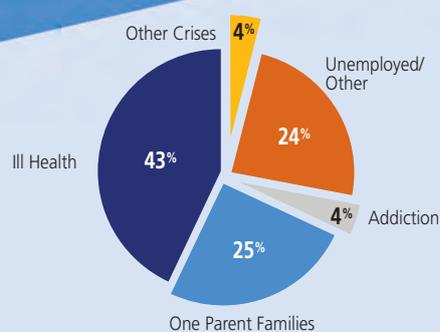
**Traditionally, employment meant you could manage at least reasonably well and pay your bills, but according to recent reports, poverty among working lone parents has more than doubled in the five-year period 2013 - 2017.**

One in five working lone parents were living below the poverty line in 2017, with children often bearing the brunt that financial distress brings. Our own General Grant Application Programme confirms the significant need that continues within our society, with a 9% increase in funds distributed during 2018 compared to the previous year.

Working with many organisations such as The Simon Community, Barnardos, The Peter McVerry Trust and Focus Ireland amongst others, Protestant Aid continues to give hope and practical assistance to those in difficult financial situations due to ill-health, addiction, separation, homelessness and many other challenging and arduous situations.

**The average value of our grants given in Social Worker cases increased by 5%, reflecting the serious circumstances of many applicants who applied for assistance. As always, we were there to help, thanks to the consistent generosity of our faithful donors for whom we are very grateful.**

ALL GRANTS BY NEED



Our General Grant Scheme is inclusive, with genuine need taking precedence over denomination or ethnicity. We are particularly conscious of helping those of advanced years and our Emergency Heating Initiative in early 2018 was a caring and compassionate demonstration of that disposition, with almost 250 people benefitting from extra support towards heating costs during a particularly cold spell.

We have an efficient and well-run Charitable Services department that processes thousands of applications and enquiries each year with professionalism, compassion and complete confidentiality.

**Arthur Vincent, Chairman**

## Compassion in Action

*A recent letter received from a Social Worker.*

**I have worked with John (not his real name) over the last two years when you assisted him with a General Grant.**



Since that time I have witnessed a transformation of his life, as he himself describes, from the darkness of poverty and addiction to the light of freedom from active addiction. He has embraced many educational and career opportunities in his pursuit of a better life, while also supporting and encouraging others to do likewise.

It is a remarkable achievement for someone to emerge from the depths of despair to be entering college. He is now part of our Peer Mentor Team working with some of our clients experiencing similar situations.

His story is one that, because of the right opportunities and support, was re-written.

Thank you for your support and for the part you played in helping John - we are very grateful.

# Report of the CEO



**Protestant Aid was one of Ireland's first community organisations and has a proud history of delivering charitable services to people of all ages since 1836.**

Over recent years, the need for our services has intensified as thousands of families find themselves in dire predicaments due to competition for social housing and accommodation at the lower end of the rental market. It is a sad fact that housing supply problems now permeate Irish society at all levels.

Thankfully, we have been able to give financial support to many of those families and individuals that are struggling in overcrowded rented accommodation, hotels and B&Bs throughout the State.

Of course, homelessness is only one of the many problems our charitable services team of Geoff Scargill and Joyce Sparkes come across on a daily basis. We are fortunate to have such a dedicated team working to help the lives of those who find themselves struggling to make ends meet and every single request for assistance is considered with compassion and empathy and, importantly, without judgment.

We also continue to support hundreds of students who require assistance with their education, whether it is to help with school

fees for second level education or with general school expenses such as books, uniforms and travel. This is a vital resource for many students and we are very much aware that a good education can be the key ingredient to breaking away from a cycle of poverty.

Certainly, in my time working with PA, I can attest to the profound impact our education grants have had by the number of people that have approached me personally to thank Protestant Aid for the assistance we have provided. These education grants are only available due to the generosity of our donors.

As CEO, I have responsibility for the strategic direction, development and financial sustainability of Protestant Aid. We must ensure we continue to stay relevant and be ready for the inevitability of change. Although our roots go back many years, we continually assess our methods to ensure we are making the optimum positive impact on people's lives and are ready for the challenges that lie ahead.

**I am confident that by focusing on good governance, embracing technology, having broad skills at Board level and, importantly, listening to our supporters, that we should be optimistic about the future provision of our vital services.**

In recent times, we have sought to enhance relationships with our donors through representation at Diocesan Synods and other church functions. As we continue our fight against poverty, giving hope and confidence to thousands of people every year, it is your ongoing support that will ensure our services make a lasting difference.

**David Webb, CEO**

## St. John's House

**Completion of Phase 2 of the building project at St. John's House Nursing Home on Merrion Road is imminent.**

This final stage will see the coming together of the residents from the Molineux Home, St Mary's Home and St John's House and is the culmination of many years of planning and fundraising to establish a residential care home that will serve our elderly community into the future.

As a new era in St. John's begins, we welcome Anne Kavanagh who has been appointed the new Director of Nursing in St. John's. Anne brings a wealth of knowledge from her time working in St. Mary's Home and she is committed to delivering exceptional care and providing resident-centred care.



So far, the new facility has been a great success and a number of residents and staff from St. Mary's Home have already made the move over the last few months. It is wonderful to hear residents speaking with enthusiasm about forging new friendships through coffee mornings and many social activities.

HIQA inspectors were highly impressed with the quality of accommodation and care provided in St. John's - the result of the hard-working team of committed nurses, carers and support staff.

As well as the spacious bedrooms (all with en-suite facilities), there are many outdoor spaces provided throughout the new building, including a courtyard garden, a large outdoor space to the rear and a large terrace on the first floor. Both long-term and respite care is provided for residents with low, medium, high and maximum dependencies.

Enquiries for places within our state-of-the-art nursing home are now being taken so if you are considering the next stage for you or a loved one, please contact with our administrator Mr. Simon Homan at (01) 269 2213 or email:

**admin@stjohnshouse.ie** to arrange a viewing.

# How you can help the battle against poverty...today!

We remain very grateful to our donors who consistently help Protestant Aid make a real difference to the lives of many families within our community.

DONATIONS CAN BE MADE IN A NUMBER OF WAYS:

## Online

[www.protestantaid.org](http://www.protestantaid.org)

using the

**DONATE NOW BUTTON**

## Setting up a regular Standing Order

If you wish to contribute in this way, please find our bank details below, or alternatively use the Standing Order form which is available from Protestant Aid (or can be downloaded from our website).

### PROTESTANT AID BANK ACCOUNT DETAILS

Account Name: **Protestant Aid**  
IBAN: **IE39 AIBK 9312 9214 7880 64**  
BIC: **AIBKIE2D**



Please detach and return with cheque donation

## By Cheque

I would like to make a donation of:

Name: .....

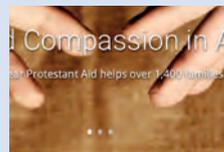
Address: .....

Tel: .....

Email: .....

Please return to: **Protestant Aid, 74 Upper Leeson Street, Dublin D04 K2N6.**

*Thank you for being our partners in tackling poverty.*



## Online Donate Facility

A feature of the website that has already been widely used is the facility to donate online. This eliminates the need for cheques, envelopes and postage and the entire process is seamless and easy. Please consider donating today in the knowledge that 100% of your gift is used to help those in need, with no deductions for administrative costs. Please go to [www.protestantaid.org](http://www.protestantaid.org)

## PA Network Visitors



In a world dominated by self-interest, we continue to be thankful for a great team of Network Visitors who give unstintingly of their time to help others. Working on a voluntary basis, they visit Annuity and General Grant applicants as well as promoting the work and vision of Protestant Aid. Their empathy, sensitivity, diplomacy and confidentiality are vital

skills and we are very grateful to each of our Network Visitors for their generosity and commitment. Our team consists of <sup>1</sup>Elizabeth Temple (Mountcharles), <sup>2</sup>Jennifer Shaw (Ennis), <sup>3</sup>Mildred Gilmore (Ballisodare), and <sup>4</sup>Phyllis Grothier (Bagnelstown).

## Special Thanks

The Department of Rural & Community Development has been a consistent supporter of PA's work over the years - in fact, since the mid-90s - and 2019 was no exception. The Department again provided an annual grant of €150,000 as well as an additional €30,000 amount for those with urgent needs, and as with all donations to PA, this was distributed without any deductions for overheads. PA is most grateful for this generous addition to its funds.

## Donors' Generosity

Thanks to the on-going generosity of loyal donors who consistently contribute every year by cheque, standing order or online, Protestant Aid is able to distribute every euro it receives. The personal tax element of donations over €250 from PAYE taxpayers and the self-employed can be reclaimed by Protestant Aid, while there are also tax advantages for corporate donors. Those giving a gift of assets can do so without the imposition of Capital Gains Tax.

## Legacies

In recent years, legacies have become an increasingly important contribution to PA's funds and because they can be invested wisely for use in the future, they are an invaluable resource. They are entrusted to PA by those who have left provision in their wills for the continuity of PA's work, so current supporters are asked to consider Protestant Aid and its work when making out their will.