

Spring/Summer 2021

Issue 1

HOSPICE CONNECTION

Your link to us and the care that you support



HOW YOU SUPPORTED US THROUGH 2020

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Looking back to look forward: Our values-based approach to remaining resilient during the Covid-19 pandemic

Welcome to this first issue of **Hospice Connection**, our newest way of connecting to you, our community of supporters. In these pages, we aim to give you insights into how your support enables us to provide the highest quality palliative care to our patients and their families.



The Challenges of Covid-19

When the Covid-19 pandemic struck in March 2020, St Francis Hospice was faced with two challenges:

- Adapting our care services to maintain effectiveness and high quality, while ensuring the safety of patients, families and staff, and
- Maintaining the necessary level of income in the face of cancelled fundraising events.

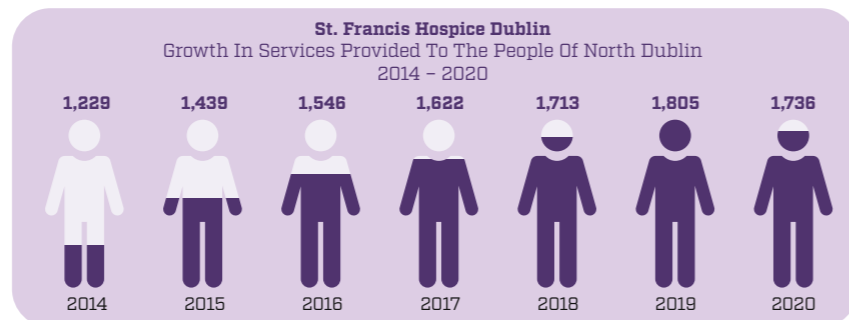
As the year unfolded, our team and our community came together to ensure that we rose to meet these challenges.

Adaptability and Resilience

Two words to describe the St Francis Hospice team over the past year are 'adaptable' and 'resilient'. Together, we ensured that patients and families

continued to receive the care they needed. Sometimes that care looked different than in the past (for example, there were telephone consultations in place of some in-person care), but our holistic, patient-centred approach remained the same.

In spite of the need to make changes to how we delivered some of our care, in 2020 we looked after nearly as many patients and families as in the previous year, and more than in 2018. This graphic shows how our service has grown to meet the increasing needs of the North Dublin community.



Creativity and Commitment

When our programme of fundraising events for the year was cancelled due to public health guidance, our wonderful community (that's you!) stepped up to help raise the funds urgently needed. On page 3, you will see just a tiny sample of some of the creative and innovative ways people supported us - thank you.

Looking Back to Look Forward

If we learned one thing from our experience of the pandemic, it is the importance of looking back to our foundations, especially our core values, for guidance in how to meet the challenges we face. Our values of dignity, respect, compassion, collaboration, excellence, and kindness are highly visible in action throughout the Hospice.

Looking back, we are also reminded that St Francis Hospice was founded in 1989 through the goodwill and generosity of the people of North Dublin. Today, we still need your support and collaboration to continue to provide palliative care services for the nearly 700,000 members of our community.

In the immortal words of Helen Keller:

***"Alone we can do so little,
Together we can do so much"***

Thank you for your continued support.

Fintan Fagan
Fintan Fagan

Chief Executive Officer, St Francis Hospice Dublin



THE LATE LATE SHOW

HOW YOU,
OUR COMMUNITY,
SUPPORTED US IN
CHALLENGING TIMES

Community, Care, Collaboration

In April 2020, Brendan Gleeson and his son Fergus sent out a rally cry on the Late Late Show, appealing for support for St Francis Hospice.

You, our amazing supporters, not only gave generously when Brendan asked, but you responded by dreaming up creative and Covid-19 friendly ways to fundraise for many months to come.

One event you might remember is the rivalry between Raheny and Clontarf GAA which saw each club wear their jersey with pride and clock up 100s of kilometres and over €100,000 in aid of St Francis Hospice Dublin.

Many of you kindly donated goods, PPE and lovely treats to the Hospice. Thank you to everyone who showed such generosity during challenging times for us all.

Individuals, families, schools and community groups found innovative ways to stay safe and have fun while raising much-needed funds for the Hospice. Ann McDonnell made masks to sell in the shop where she works, to raise funds for St Francis Hospice. In January 2021, Ann was recognised with the Lord Mayor's Award for the Retail Sector.

Throughout the spring and summer, our staff found many cheering surprises in the grounds of our Raheny hospice, thanks to the local children and their Raheny Rocks activity.

During Christmas week, An Tánaiste Leo Varadkar and Senator Emer Curie visited our Blanchardstown Hospice to give their thanks to staff and volunteers for the frontline care provided to patients and families during a difficult year.



Sr Margaret Cashman

Our much-loved and respected Director of Nursing, retired at the end of January 2021.

In her 21 years with St Francis Hospice, Sr Margaret provided compassionate, values-based leadership and fostered an ethos of teamwork.

In the words of CEO, Fintan Fagan, "I believe that Sr Margaret's success in her role can be attributed to three precious things which she holds dear. The first is being present with people; the second is kindness and the third is humanity, which ensures that she always puts others before herself. We all have learned from Sr Margaret that by being present you can understand and empathise; by being kind you can be supportive and by showing humanity you can become a leader of people."

Thank you to Sr Margaret for all she has given; we wish her good health, continued fulfilment, and some well-earned enjoyment in her retirement. It is reassuring to know the Hospice is in excellent hands, as Ms.



Aishling Kearney has taken up the role of Director of Nursing. Aishling was formerly the Quality and Risk Manager in the hospice.

Aishling joined St Francis Hospice in 1999, working first in the In-Patient Unit,

then moving to Day Care and eventually becoming manager of that service. During her time there, she oversaw the introduction of the first non-cancer programmes of care in the Hospice Day Care service as well as the expansion of the Hospice Day Care Service to Blanchardstown in 2011.

Aishling completed an MSc in Healthcare Management in 2012. Her studies sparked an interest in areas like quality improvement, risk management and policy development. In 2015, Aishling took up a new quality and risk role in the Hospice, enhancing patient care and safety through a number of quality improvement projects.

In recent times, Aishling led the management of the COVID-19 pandemic in St Francis Hospice Dublin. Her practice has always been informed by the core values of the organisation and she is looking forward to working with staff and volunteers in continuing to provide high quality specialist palliative care services to our patients, their families and our communities.

Our Annual

Tree of Life

ceremonies in December provide people a time to remember their loved ones at Christmastime. This year, Covid-19 saw us replacing our live ceremonies at both hospices with a virtual Tree of Life ceremony. Thank you to all who sponsored a light on our trees and tuned in to watch the Tree of Life video. If you missed it or would like to see it again, you can scan this QR code with your smart phone or find it on the St Francis Hospice YouTube channel.



Bereavement Support

is an important part of palliative care, as we journey with people through the illness and death of their loved one. The impact of Covid-19 restrictions on our usual rituals and gatherings in times of grief has had an influence on how people are experiencing bereavement. We have seen an increase in the number of people seeking bereavement support and an increase in levels of distress, grief and loneliness in the people who are presenting.

Due to Generous Support

Fortunately, thanks to a generous donation received, St Francis Hospice has been able to fund a part-time social work post over four years that is dedicated to the further development of bereavement services. In July 2020, Senior Social Worker Noirin Concannon (pictured) took up the post, enabling St Francis Hospice to provide more bereavement counselling in response to the increased needs. She works with bereaved family members, including children, in both Raheny and Blanchardstown, as well as phone/videocall support.

Supporting Bereaved Parents

A support in the form of a group for bereaved parents has been adapted to an online platform due to Covid-19 restrictions. Noirin has seen great benefits for parents, who can learn from and support one another while receiving specialist advice and guidance from Hospice social workers. Noirin and her colleague Anne Casey have also produced videos to help guide parents in their support of both young children and teens. Other resources, such as posters on self-care in bereavement and caring for bereaved children, have been created and shared on the Hospice's social media platforms.



St Francis Hospice provides bereavement support for family members and friends of people who die while in our care. If you would like support, please contact us on bereavement@sfh.ie, giving the name of the deceased person.



Star Baker

Some of you may already be familiar with our "Star Baker", Peter Foley, who has shared, through the St Francis Hospice social media platforms, his enjoyment of baking sessions with Occupational Therapy Assistant Ger McCormack. The use of meaningful activities to promote wellbeing is an

important part of Occupational Therapy in St. Francis Hospice. Peter has worked with Ger to develop his own recipe book. Peter would like to encourage everyone to take up baking, as he finds it fun, as well as a fantastic way to enjoy treats. When Peter's story appeared on the Hospice's social media

pages last November, the people at Odlums sent him an encouraging message, and a huge supply of baking ingredients. Peter has used the Odlums ingredients to bake a wide range of goodies, including a birthday cake for his grandson.



Our Family's Story by James Downey

To say that St Francis Hospice is a special place would be an understatement; here is the story of my family's experience ...

After 18 years, Mam had fought the good fight but was starting to lose the battle. The little things became big things and Dad's ability to manage was becoming tougher than we had envisioned. Mam had been gradually losing her independence, as she became unable to drive the car, walk up the stairs, some daily activities that we all take for granted. From a psychological perspective the decision to move from the family home to the Hospice was the toughest yet for Mam to accept. But as a family, we were all agreed, and Mam knew it was the right, though difficult, decision to make.

Experiencing the Hospice

Although not always a final journey when going into a Hospice, the people there have a way of dealing with the decision and helping the family to accept the possibilities that may come. Death is handled with a gentle touch and a kindness. The individual and the family are treated with such kindness that one doesn't feel they are in a Hospice at all. This is such a reassuring aura that keeps the normality of life present for both the patient and family. I feel that when Mam eventually went into St Francis Hospice she may have felt she should have gone in sooner, as the care she received allowed us all to relax somewhat and gave her the ability to continue her normal life. Mam came alive



again in the Hospice, organising daily excursions, parties and her hectic social calendar, which not only continued but blossomed.

Precious time together

The access we, her family, as well as her close friends, had was something to be cherished. From taking her out of the Hospice for a stroll on the beach, to having a garden lunch in the sun at the Hospice, to getting her hair done by volunteers, the normality provided by the Hospice was there for all to see. Staff and volunteers catered for all sorts of requests with smiles and encouragement.

St Francis Hospice is a magical place where life is celebrated, and death not ignored but embraced

St Francis Hospice is a magical place where life is celebrated, and death not ignored but embraced and done so with the dignity and gentleness that anyone would like to see it dealt with. Even in Mam's final

moments the staff made things a natural part of the process and this is a gift our family will always cherish.

The dignity and respect we were shown was truly inspirational. We want to express the gratitude and respect that our family has for St Francis Hospice for making Mam's final journey such a seamless one.



Ensuring we are always here for our community when we are needed most.

Let that be your legacy.

Since 1989, St. Francis Hospice Dublin has provided specialist palliative care to all in our community. By taking the amazing step of leaving a gift in your Will for St. Francis Hospice, you will ensure that we can be there for our community long into the future.

A gift of any size will make an impact.

To find out more please contact Eimear Kellett by e-mail: ekellett@sfnh.ie or by phone: 086 066 8675.

St. Francis Hospice Dublin
(Under the Care of the Daughters of Charity)

A Versatile Volunteer Programme

In March 2020, when so much was as yet unknown about Covid-19 and the safety measures we would need to take, we made the difficult decision to suspend our volunteer programme. Our 300+ volunteers, who contribute so much to enhancing the quality of care offered to our patients and families, were as understanding and supportive as ever.

Staying Connected

It was important to us to ensure that we, through our Volunteer Department, continued to keep the strong connection we have with our volunteers, as this was a very isolating time for everyone, so we kept up regular communication with them through newsletters and updates from our CEO. Our thoughtful volunteers reached out with cards, texts, phone calls and emails in return, sending us best wishes and support. Volunteers clearly missed being here just as much as we all missed their presence and support.

Bringing our Volunteers Back

As life in the Hospice adjusted to working and living within the Covid-19 pandemic, each volunteer role was reviewed and considered how it might be possible to gradually re-introduce volunteers to the new ways of working. On a beautiful summer day in July a small number of volunteers returned to the Hospice. Their first stop

was for some 'Volunteering during Covid-19' training and to get an overview of their new roles. As volunteers returned, you could see and feel the delight in the air around the Hospice as staff welcomed familiar faces returning, albeit wearing a mask!

Innovation of our Volunteers

Despite the strict new protocols in place, 86 volunteers have returned to volunteering on a weekly basis. Some roles saw changes, such as our musicians sharing their talents from the safety of the Hospice gardens, to the immense enjoyment of patients and staff. New roles were needed, too, such as the Visitor Liaison Volunteers, who meet our patients' visitors on arrival to help them with Covid-19 questionnaires, temperature checks, and PPE/hand hygiene.

Looking Toward a Brighter Future

Volunteers have always been an integral part of St Francis Hospice, and this is evident even more in these unprecedented times. Their contribution is hugely valued, we miss them greatly and we look forward to a brighter future when we have all our team members back in their roles.



Goodbye to a dear friend



Patricia Breslin was the first volunteer of St Francis Hospice and she volunteered for 30 years across numerous roles: fundraising, counting coin in our cash office, serving teas at our bereavement information evenings and then her final role reading at mass. Pat upheld the values of Hospice and was a keen supporter over the years. She felt that the Hospice was at the centre of her community in Raheny. In 2019 Pat received her Long Service Award for 30 years volunteering in St Francis Hospice. Pat died on 20th December 2020. May she rest in peace.

How We Can Stay Connected



Walk and Remember
at our Memorial Walk in **March**

Enter our **Car Draw**

Donate to **Sunflower Days** in **June**

Host a **Hospice Coffee Morning** in **September**

Christmas Appeal
Sponsor a light in **December**

Look for our **Collection Boxes** in shopping centres

Place a **Collection Box** in work or home

Hold your **Own Event**

Nominate the Hospice as your **Corporate Charity Partner**

Purchase or sell **Hospice Merchandise**

Fundraise with your **School**

Engage with us on **Social Media**

St. Francis Hospice has a wide ranging fundraising programme and the Fundraising Team works very closely with our donors to raise funds throughout the year. If any of these activities interest you please do not hesitate to contact the team on **01-8327535**.

Currently we need to raise €4.4m annually to maintain our high quality palliative care services and continue to develop our services to meet the needs of the people of North Dublin City and County and surrounding counties.

Would you prefer to receive this newsletter by email?



If you would like to receive this Newsletter by e-mail, please let us know by e-mailing **fundraising@sfh.ie**. Tell us your name, address and the e-mail address you would like us to use for sending future issues of the Newsletter. They will be sent twice a year, in Spring and Autumn. If you no longer wish to receive the Newsletter, please contact Fundraising on 01-8327535.

