

New development officially opened at the Holy Ghost

A €3.6m refurbishment and modernisation programme has been completed at the Holy Ghost Residential Home

The latest chapter in the illustrious history of the Holy Ghost Residential Home was marked last week. Minister of State for Older People Jim Daly performed the official opening of a €3.6 million refurbishment and modernisation programme on Wednesday last January 22nd. The project represents the biggest development undertaken at the Holy Ghost, which provides supported residential care to the elderly population of Waterford City, County, and surrounding catchment areas

Previously, many of the rooms at the Holy Ghost were not en suite. Now, a new wing has been constructed and existing rooms have been extended and renovated to incorporate en suites. There are also a number of other welcome additions including an enclosed garden area and beautiful new pictures of local areas now adorn the walls of the dining area and corridors. As part of the project, a visitors' room has also been developed as well as a board room/meeting room.



Pictured with Minister of State Jim Daly are Hilary Quinlan, Master of the Board; Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan, Bishop of Waterford & Lismore; Bridget Roche, Nurse Manager; and Board Members Paddy Gallagher, Maurice Cummins and Pat Hayes. Photos: John Power.

Project

Master of the Board of Trustees Hilary Quinlan explained that this latest chapter has its roots in a strategy meeting of the Board which took place over five years ago. Recognising that communal bathrooms are a thing of the past, he says the Board was committed to improving the facilities and addressing the future of the Holy Ghost. "We looked at all aspects of the home and especially how we could bring it up to meet 21st century requirements while still retaining the highest standards of care

and ensuring that places here remained accessible to all those we serve in the local community,” he explained.

“As a Board, it was quickly apparent that for us to realise our ambition of modernisation of our facilities, we needed to engage and develop a shared vision with Government and all its agencies. We were very fortunate to meet at an early stage with Michael Fitzgerald from the HSE. Michael visited with some of his team, saw what we were trying to achieve and recognised that this was a capital project that was worthy of HSE support.”



Denise Walsh, Assistant Manager and Bridget Roche, Nurse Manager.

Phase One of the works was completed by Nevin Construction Ltd. This consisted of 30 en-suite bathrooms and included a new purpose-built wing of five en-suite bedrooms, along with a staff room and ancillary accommodation.

Phase Two, which was completed recently by Tom O’Brien Construction Ltd., involved the extension and conversion of a further 30 bedrooms to equip them with en-suite facilities, the addition of a new reception area and offices, a visitor room, library and hair salon. “Adding en-suite facilities to 60 bedrooms at a residential care home, while it continues to operate, takes great planning, coordination and care from all involved,” said Hilary.

“Special thanks to both our contractors who we are delighted to say are local and won their contracts by competitive tender.” He also thanked the political representatives who had worked with the Holy Ghost, specifically singling out Senator

Paudie Coffey and wishing him well in his future life.

Holy Ghost Nurse Manager Bridget Roche, Assistant Manager Denise Walsh and Superintendent Jim O'Dwyer were also praised.

Unique service

Bridget Roche says that she is incredibly proud of all the staff who worked so well with the builders during the ongoing works. She describes the Holy Ghost Home as offering a "unique service" in Waterford, responding to the needs of older people finding it difficult to manage at home but not requiring full time nursing home care.

However, Bridget says there is still a "misconception" as to what the Holy Ghost Home actually is and the services which are provided.

"We're not a nursing home, we're a supportive care home," she explained. "We provide a social/medical model. Residents at the Holy Ghost still retain a level of independence. If an older person requires supportive care and they receive it, it improves their life and they still have something to give back to society and they are still a part of their community."

The holistic needs of the residents are catered for to ensure they continue to enjoy a good quality of life and Bridget says she has seen the difference which residing at the Holy Ghost makes to people's lives.

"We're filling a gap and it's cost effective. Nationally, this model is helping to save money," she says. She points out that the care received at the Holy Ghost often reduces the level of hospital admissions.

Bridget believes it's the support structure and peace of mind, combined with independence, which makes the Holy Ghost so attractive.

"The residents are settled and feel secure. It's very much a homelike setting," she says. "They keep their independence but can get assistance if they need it and we're in the heart of the city, near all of the amenities, so the residents can retain their community links." Residents can enjoy the security of having a 24-hour call bell in their room and the knowledge that help is always at hand if required.

Residents can also retain their own GP service but staff at the Holy Ghost can intervene if an issue is identified. "When a resident becomes unwell, we can identify the issue and intervene and ensure the correct supports are in place," explained Bridget. Residents have their own Residents Association and regular satisfaction surveys are carried out.

"They are very forthcoming and will tell you what they like or wouldn't like," says Bridget. "Once they're happy, we're happy. Our objective is to deliver care for residents. This is not a workplace; we work in their home. This is the residents' home."

History

The Holy Ghost Residential Home is among the oldest charitable institutions in Waterford City still carrying out the intentions of its founders. On August 15th 1545, James Henry Walsh received a charter from King Henry VIII that the house be owned by the charity, governed by a Board of Trustees and their successors.

In 2019, this tradition continues as the Holy Ghost Home is still run as a non-profit charitable organisation, governed by a Board of Trustees and the Charities Regulator. Longest serving Trustee, Paddy Gallagher, gave an outline of the history of Home which will celebrate 475 years of service in August 2020.

Built on the site of a former Franciscan monastery in Greyfriars, the Holy Ghost Hospital building was extended in the 1740s.

In the late 19th century, the decision was taken to relocate the Hospital to the current site on the Cork Road with construction starting in 1882. It was in the mid-1970s that the now renewed building was built.

Also in the later part of the last century, the Holy Ghost incorporated the James Fanning Charitable Institution which had been located from the 1840s on the site of what are now the Government Revenue offices on The Glen in Waterford. Paddy explained that discussions are currently taking place with the Board of the Waterford County & City Infirmary Trust about a similar arrangement with them.

"It's heartening to think that charitable bodies such as the Fanning Institute and the City & County Infirmary, though no longer physically 'in-situ', can, through the Holy Ghost Home, continue their good works," he said. "The work of the Holy Ghost Charitable Foundation has been part of Waterford life for nearly five hundred years and we are very proud to carry on this honourable work."

Future

Many of the improvements made at the Holy Ghost, and many of the extra services which are offered, are as a result of the goodwill of the people of Waterford who have assisted through the Friends of the Holy Ghost. This is a voluntary group which raises funds for the residents' social activities, enhances décor and contributes to the overall comfort fund of patients.

The activities of both the Board and the Friends of the Holy Ghost are undertaken on a voluntary basis. Hilary Quinlan spoke of how committed the Friends of the Holy Ghost are. "Where would Ireland be without volunteers?" he said. "We have had people coming in here for years and the minute you come up with an idea, they're offering to help. There is always someone suggesting or organising a fundraising event for us."

Numerous fundraisers have been held such as concerts (including a special concert by Dordán Choir on the Waterford Greenway), bingo, barbeques, and bag packing events.

The staging of many of the activities offered to residents is heavily reliant on the goodwill of volunteers who come in to provide such services.

Hilary explained that the Holy Ghost also receives huge support from local businesses, specifically mentioning Bausch and Lomb. He says the recently completed works have brought the Holy Ghost right up to date in terms of compliance but, most importantly, they have also greatly improved the quality of care and comfort that can be delivered to residents.

"We are always conscious that our residents are the reason we do what we do and the real heartbeat of this very special community," he said.

"I could not say enough about the great spirit of our residents- they are an inspiration and an example to all of us in how they embrace aging and the wisdom that years bring.

The most common sound you hear here is laughter and that's one of the highest compliments I can pay to the people who live here and to the wonderful staff who care for them."

The opening of this new development truly signals a new era for the Holy Ghost and will ensure that this valuable service continues in Waterford for many years to come.