



# Saint John of God Kerry Services



February 16, 2009

Dear Parent / Guardian,

I am sure many of you will be aware of an article recently written by "The Kerryman" newspaper concerning the future of St. Mary of the Angels, Beaufort and following this, I am writing to clarify a number of questions that you may have and to allay any concerns that may also have arisen with respect to the continuity of care at St. Mary of the Angels.

Firstly, from the moment that the Order of St. John of God was invited to take responsibility for St. Mary of the Angels, we have made every effort to emphasise the deep respect we hold for the immense dedication, commitment and pioneering work of the Franciscan Sisters in the development of services for children and adults with special needs in Kerry, and especially at St. Mary of the Angels. In addition, we also recognise the tremendous work and commitment of the staff team at St. Mary of the Angels, many of whom have given considerable years of service to the people for whom St. Mary of the Angels is home. As parents, I know that each and everyone of you will share our view that the quality of care and dedication by staff members at St. Mary of the Angels is second to none and follows the very best traditions and values promoted and upheld by the Franciscan Sisters over many years.

Having entrusted St. Mary of the Angels to the care of the St. John of God Brothers, I am also sure that the Franciscan Sisters would wish and expect us to further develop their work in our own way, in keeping with our own experience, insights and values and that the service would change and develop in keeping with the changing needs of the people residing there and with improved methods of service delivery.

In this regard and as you will know, many of the facilities at St. Mary of the Angels, which were first built in the 1960's to cater for children, are no longer sufficient for the needs of adults and require considerable redevelopment, refurbishment or replacement. In the four years of our involvement there we have already completed some of this work, which includes:

- new and updated residential facilities at Woodview and Rose Lodge for former residents of St. Margaret's Unit
- a new community based residential respite house for children at "The Arches"
- substantial new day care facilities for adults at "Ashfield" Listowel and,
- the building of three new bathroom extensions to improve ageing and inadequate facilities within some of the residential houses.

In addition to this, we have also invested considerable resources to staff training and development and to the refinement of administrative systems across the service.

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*Saint John of God Kerry Services is a service of: Saint John of God Community Services Limited*

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However, despite these developments and, as stated in "The Kerryman", there are still a number of facilities in St. Mary of the Angels which remain inadequate for the needs of adult residents and we are committed to addressing these as effectively as we can within the limits of resources available to us. For instance, we would like to see:

- that every person resident at St. Mary of the Angels would have his or her own individual bedroom and personal living space
- that appropriate and separate bathroom facilities are available for men and women, with adequate provision for personal privacy and dignity
- that appropriate day service programmes and facilities are available to all residents
- that all residents will have the opportunity for new developmental experiences appropriate to their needs and,
- that new residential respite services will become available to replace the currently inadequate level of service.

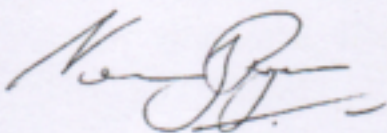
In addition to the work we have already done on the campus at St. Mary of the Angels, we will seek opportunities to develop new services within the various local communities around Kerry, similar to those already developed by the Franciscan Sisters in Listowel and this is very much a part of our plan for the expansion and development of services. Through our discussions with individual parents and families, we already know that many of you, but perhaps not all, would prefer to have a service for your son or daughter closer to home and our only regret is that, with the limited resources available to us, we are not able to deliver these sooner.

Of course, the development of new and additional services will mean change and our expectation is that this will take place on a gradual basis over a number of years when the necessary funding and resources are available; during the difficult times we are now faced with, we must also find ways to improve and change the ways our existing resources are used for the benefit of the people we serve. Nonetheless, our commitment to you is that the care needed by your son, daughter or family member will continue as long as the resources are available to us and that every effort will go into improving and developing services further, even though this may take some time.

Again, as parents and families, I know you will understand the efforts and challenges ahead of us in continuing the development of St. Mary of the Angels services and I have no doubt that we will continue to enjoy your future support and encouragement. As our plans unfold over the months and years ahead, we will also welcome any additional support you can give by lobbying your local public representatives to further improve their understanding of the needs of the people we serve and help us secure the resources which are so vital to our success.

In conclusion, I hope that from this letter you will see that our main concern is to improve, expand and develop St. Mary of the Angels and to build upon the excellent services established by the Franciscan Sisters over so many years. I also hope that this letter will reassure you of our commitment to the continuity of services to your son, daughter or family member and that it will answer any lingering questions that might have arisen from recent publicity.

With very best wishes and regards,



Kevin M. Ryan  
Director