

NEWSLETTER

UPDATE FROM CEO

Welcome to the latest issue of our newsletter,

We marked the end of Summer with our annual BBQ in recent weeks. As you will see from the photos, it was a great event that gets bigger and better each year. There were plenty of prizes donated from local businesses, good food, ice-cream, bouncy castle, face painting and other activities. A special thanks to DJ Brendan Kennedy for providing the music. As always, we are very grateful to have the support of the Fire Brigade and Gardaí. It was lovely to see those we support enjoying the emergency response vehicles on site for the afternoon. I would like to thank everyone involved in pulling this event together - it takes a lot of planning and organisation in addition to their already demanding roles. That said, the day was planned to perfection, so much so that it started with torrential rain but right on cue, the sun came out for the event and disappeared shortly afterwards!

September also marks the end of Summer and the start of a new school term. There's a great buzz around the place as all the pupils and staff return after the summer break; some are returning and others are joining us for the first time. I would like to give a special welcome to Ms Clare Carr as the new Principal of St Catherine's Special School. I am sure by now, many of you have met Clare who will be supported by Eileen O'Leary as her Acting Deputy Principal. While welcoming the new school management team, I must also extend my thanks to the outgoing team, Brigetta and Sarah. They gave so much to the school community in their time with St. Catherine's and I wish them the very best in their future endeavours.

We also said farewell to the class of 2025 back in June when Lucy Burton, Jessica Byrne, Anita Cleere, Sarah Gorman, Harry Kelly, Kyle Martin and James O'Callaghan graduated from St. Catherine's Special School. There was an amazing ceremony in the Parkview Hotel to mark the event that was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

All of our teams had a busy summer supporting those in our care to engage in a wide range of activities and events, and it was great to see a number of children and young adults to attend Ablefest again this year. As you can see from the photos, some of the team were training hard to participate in Hell & Back which took place on 6th September. Well done to all involved - it is quite the challenge!

You will also be aware that there have been a considerable number of HIQA registration renewal and monitoring inspection this year. I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to all of our staff in achieving such positive outcomes - it is testament to the quality and safety of care you provide each day.

In closing, I would like to provide you with a brief update on our Kilcoole Project. I am pleased to advise that the tender for construction of the Adult Day Centre has entered the public procurement process in an effort to identify the right contractor to commence work on this phase in coming months. It has taken a lot of time and effort behind the scenes to get to this stage. It's another milestone and one we intend to build on moving forward!

Michael



SCA Recruitment Day

Our next Recruitment Open Day takes place on Wednesday 15th of October from 11am-6pm in the Parkview Hotel. We will be recruiting for various roles. Interviews will be taking place on the day. For further information, please contact recruitment@stcatherines.ie

Employee Referral Scheme

Would you like a €500 voucher? Do you have a friend or family member who shares our culture and values and has the right qualifications and skills to apply for any of our exciting opportunities? If you do, then please let HR know and we will be happy to reward you if your referral is successful in joining the SCA team (T's & C's apply).



National Children First Awareness Week

Children First Awareness week is taking place this year from September 15th – 21st 2025

This year's national campaign will focus on parents, guardians, and relevant responsible adults as the key target audience. The campaign will help parents and guardians to understand what to expect from organisations that work with children, including what safeguarding policies and procedures should look like; how to report concerns safely; what questions they can ask to ensure children are being protected, and how to identify supportive and respectful environments.

The goal is to empower adults with the knowledge and confidence to engage with organisations and services about safeguarding matters.

The following resources will be made available in advance of the Awareness Week at www.hse.ie/childrenfirst:



Culture, Health & Wellbeing Group - Healthy Eating



How to Beat Weight Gain While Working Shifts: Healthy Eating Tips That Work

According to the National Irish Safety Organisation 15% of Ireland's workforce is employed in shift work. St. Catherine's employees work numerous shifts spanning across 24 hours including, day shifts, sleepovers and waking nights. Working irregular hours can wreak havoc on your body's metabolism, increasing the risk of weight gain, fatigue, and chronic conditions like diabetes or heart disease. The good news? With a few strategic changes, you can fuel your body right, even working a variety of shifts.

Why shift work affects weight:

Your body has a natural circadian rhythm, and eating at night—when your digestive system is at rest—can lead to a slower metabolism and poor blood sugar control. Combine that with disrupted sleep, stress, and cravings for quick energy releasing sugary food during late hours, this can make weight gain more likely.

According to a study "Managing food on shift work" undertaken by Dr. Corish across all 32 counties in Ireland, the majority of shift workers do not meet healthy eating guidelines for fruit, vegetable, dairy and wholegrain consumption. The same study also found that only 44% of shift workers are meeting the recommended weekly guidelines of 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise weekly.

Organisations such as The Irish Heart Foundation and Safefood provide tips for healthy eating and shift work including:

Plan and prep ahead: Plan healthy meals and snacks while in work to help curb cravings for sugary snacks. Include lean protein (like chicken, eggs, or tofu), fiber-rich carbs (like brown rice or whole grains), and healthy fats (avocados, nuts).

Stick to consistent meal times: If working a night shift, try to eat your "main meal" before starting your shift. Light, balanced meals during your shift can prevent sluggishness.

Hydrate well: Fatigue and hunger are often signs of dehydration. Aim for water over sugary drinks or excessive caffeine.

Choose smart snacks: Nuts, fruit, Greek yogurt, and veggie sticks are great options to keep your energy steady without spiking blood sugar.

Limit heavy or greasy foods: These can disrupt digestion and make it harder to stay alert.

Shift work doesn't have to derail your health. Working together as a team, preparing shopping lists, mindful eating and preparation, you can stay energized, avoid unwanted weight gain, and support your overall well-being—no matter the hour of the day!

Training Department Updates

Happy September from the Training Dept. We hope you all had an enjoyable summer.

We are currently planning our 2026 training calendar at present which will be rolled out to all managers in the next few weeks. Fire safety and Safety Intervention trainings will run monthly and First Aid and Manual Handling will run on alternate months throughout the year. We will also be rolling out Restrictive Practice training for all staff which was trialled recently with some of the team. Florence, the trainer has a great deal of experience in the field, a qualified nurse for many years, she now is the Quality and Patient Safety Manager in Leopardstown Hospital. We hope this training will be really beneficial to you all.

We will also run additional in person HACCP training. Again, we trialled this earlier in the year and the feedback was very positive - the exam was easier and completion results in a five year cert!

Your feedback is really important to us in order to improve and monitor our training, so going forward, we will be providing trainers an online survey link accessible via QR code which we hope you will complete at the end of your training, it will only take a couple of minutes of your time.

Thanks for all of the recent efforts to get your HSEland training up to date, please keep all the certs coming. Just a gentle reminder as always to please let us and your manager know if you are unable to attend training, as much notice as possible, but at a minimum 72 hours please.

Interview with Kathy Hctor

Vice Chair, Board of Directors



Why did you become involved in the Section 39 area; what drove you specifically to St. Catherine's?

I didn't specifically get involved with a Section 39 agency but I knew about St Catherine's services from many years ago through friends and neighbours who used the services. I knew about the services that were provided by St Catherine's and the need and increasing demand for them in the local community. I made a decision to join a board and was approached by a current Director to see would I join the board of St Catherine's. So I was driven to St Catherine's rather than a section 39 agency.

What do you think is the biggest challenge facing the sector?

The biggest challenges facing the disability sector are recruitment / retention of staff and the funding model – both of which are out of the control of St Catherine's. These are matters for the Government to address such as pay parity for Section 39 staff and their terms and conditions of employment. We are really lucky to have the high quality of staff that we do have and many of them have been with the organisation for a very long time which is testament to their dedication to St Catherine's and those we support.

What has been the greatest achievement in St. Catherine's that you are proud of?

A phenomenal amount of work went into planning the Kilcoole development, Adult Day Centre, Respite Hub and Administration building. There have been many challenges along the way, so it is a huge achievement to get through the planning stage. While planning permission was only one step, the completion of the development will be our greatest achievement and will cement disability services in Co Wicklow for many years to come. It will be the biggest single investment / development in our 50+ year history.

I think how St Catherine's came through the Covid-19 pandemic was also an achievement. It had such a detrimental impact on the level of service provision and for our frontline teams, some of whom worked in very challenging circumstances while the virus was still present. St Catherine's remained operational throughout the pandemic with innovative work practices which clearly demonstrates the organisations core values in compassion, integrity, innovation and dedication.

What is your own career background?

I worked in the Prison Service for 34 years in a variety of roles from basic grade Prison Officer to Governor 1 of Operations.

I held a number of administrative and operational roles and spent 2.5 years as Governor of Shelton Abbey in Arklow Co Wicklow. Shelton is an open, low security prison for males aged 19 plus requiring lower security levels. I particularly enjoyed my time in Shelton Abbey where I was involved with the reintegration of prisoners back into the community where they get to move on with the next phase of their life.

What do you think is the future for the social care sector and where do you think St. Catherine's will be in that future?

As I mentioned earlier, we have wonderful, dedicated and professional social care workers supporting our vulnerable children and young adults. It is great to see their profession being recognised and the title of Social Care Worker protected through CORU registration. This will further embed the professional standard in social care sector long into the future.

While the Kilcoole development will provide Adult Day Services and overnight respite services for children, I would like to see adult respite services being delivered through our team. Families deserve to have a seamless transition from children's services to adult services where they can continue to engage in respite services with their peer group familiar to them and one that offers the opportunity to make more life-long friends.

Hopefully, over the next few years, the Adult Day Centre and St Catherine's Special School will be delivering high quality services in the Kilcoole community in purpose built premises with state of the art facilities; bringing these services right into the heart of the community where they belong.



SCA Summer Event 2025



What a great day! sunshine, great food, ice-cream, activities and great company! SCA would like to thank everyone who attended our 3rd Summer Event. Also a special thank you to all our vendors who donated some amazing prizes for our raffle and the local Fire Brigade & Gardai for attending. See you all next year!



CORU Registration



CORU Registration for Social Care Workers – Grandparenting Route closes on 30/11/25

REMINDER - the grandparenting route (you have worked 2 out of the last 5 years) is closing on 30/11/25. You can not apply to be a Social Care Worker after this date unless you are a new graduate.

If you are employed as a Social Care Worker you are required to have submitted your application for registration with CORU before 30/11/25 (and be able to provide written confirmation from CORU that you have submitted application) as it is a legally protected title after this date and cannot be used unless you are registered with CORU.

Please note there are significant delays from CORU in processing times due to the large volume of applications.

For further information on the registration process please visit [existing-practitioner-pathway-to-registration-guide-for-social-care-workers.pdf](#)

If you require any support with your application process please contact Linda Minchin at lindaminchin@stcatherines.ie

Staff News & Updates

A warm welcome

Emma Quinlan (Haughton House), Amy Roche (Adult Day Services), Ericka Farrell (RSM Meadow View), Sam Noonan (Ballylusk), Vanya Radmanic (Fairwinds), Amy O'Rourke (Woodbeg), Aleena Paul (Fairwinds)

And a fond farewell...

Wendy Sunderland (Haughton House), Kim Cosgrave (Fairwinds), Lorraine Moran (Ballylusk)

Baby News

Congratulations to Michaela Gorman who welcomed a baby boy Archie

Congratulations to Nadine Fagan who welcomed a baby girl Summer

Congratulations to Prince Fungula who welcomed a baby girl Nilaya Dauli

Congratulations to Nicole Breslin who welcomed a baby girl Aoibhinn

Congratulations to Natasha Bradley who welcomed a baby boy Odhrán

Congratulations to Amanda Kouogun who welcomed a baby girl Janaya

Welcome Back

Welcome back to Ciara Roberts (Ballylusk) who returned from maternity leave in June



SCA Pot Luck Lunch

As part of the Culture, Health & Wellbeing Group, staff in the EDC & Ballylusk held Pot Luck lunch!

It was a lovely way for staff to come together and try out some new recipes and enjoy each others company

Looking forward to doing this again and seeing other locations taking part!

For further information please contact Lynda lyndawoolmington@stcatherines.ie



AVIVA Care Benefits

Great news! Aviva have agreed to offer their Aviva Care Additional Benefits, at no extra cost, to all group life members of our National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers' Pension & Life Assurance Scheme. For further information on what benefits are available, please click on brochure;



Social Media

Please follow SCA on our Socials:

If there is any content you would like shared on our Social Media please contact Laurissa on **socialmedia@stcatherines.ie**



Prostate Cancer Talk...

The Marie Keating Foundation provided a talk on Prostate Cancer recently.

This talk raised awareness and educated staff on this illness.

We will be organising further talks through webinars for staff and will share details with you.



SCA Nurse Training Day

The Bi annual St. Catherine's Nurse Training day was held again this August. Nurses from all areas of St. Catherine's including Respite, Residential, Adult Day Services and School were in attendance. Sepsis recognition and treatment training was given by our own Olive Moroney, Clinical Nurse Manager 3. This training is in line with the HSE sepsis awareness campaign and encourages everyone to 'Think Sepsis'.

Fiona McGrane, Clinical Nurse Specialist for children with Downs Syndrome in the National Children's Hospital Tallaght was invited to give an information session on the medical needs of those with Downs syndrome over their life span. It was a very informative session with plenty of opportunity for our Nurses to ask questions and explore particular issues relevant to those we support with Downs syndrome. We are incredibly grateful to Fiona for making the journey down to Wicklow. Thank you to all the nurses who attended!

SCA Fundraising Event



Well done to all who participated in Hell & Back to raise funds for Adult Day Services and Woodbeg!! What an amazing achievement and some great memories I'm sure!! Further pictures, videos to follow shortly on our social media page! Thanks to all the supporters who attended on the day, it was very much appreciated! Last chance to donate for this great cause, please scan QR Code below;



Newsletter Editorial Committee members - Siobhan Power, Lorcan Claffey, Linda Minchin, Laurissa O'Toole & Clodagh Caffrey. If you have anything you would like featured in the next edition, please contact:

newsletter@stcatherines.ie

