

NEWSLETTER

UPDATE FROM THE CEO

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2026. It was great to see so many of our team at the Christmas lunch in December. The Christmas Spirit competition was certainly a highlight for everyone present and we also celebrated many staff who achieved milestone service anniversaries over the course of the year – the longest of which was 30 years! I hope everyone enjoyed some much-needed time off over the holidays.

Things have been incredibly busy since the start of the year with the Management Team focused on finalising budgets and key priorities for the year ahead.

Last year saw a significant number of HIQA inspections and registration renewals for designated centres – all of which went very well thanks to your hard work and commitment. We anticipate further inspections this year and intend to maintain high levels of compliance with regulatory requirements, while also striving to enhance the quality and safety of services we provide at every opportunity. Supporting a culture of continuous learning and improvement is critical in this regard.

This year will also see the next phase of the HSE’s plan to restructure services into six regions. It will likely involve changes in key personnel and contacts within Disability Services. While this change takes place, we will endeavour to build and maintain relationships with new and existing HSE leadership as we continue to advocate for the necessary resources to meet the demand for services in this area.

Michael



KILCOOLE UPDATE

I am pleased to report that significant progress has been made on the Kilcoole development since our last update. The access road was completed late last year enabling construction to commence on St. Catherine’s Special School – a long-awaited development for the St. Catherine’s community.



Members of the Board and SMT at the Kilcoole site following the signing of the building contract

The Management Team and Board of Directors have worked closely with our Design Team in recent months following submission of tenders for construction of the Adult Day Centre. I am delighted to inform you that DCM Contracts were successful in securing the tender and will commence on site in March 2026. This represents a significant milestone for the project, and we are really looking forward to seeing the build get underway. Work will of course continue to progress the development of our new Operations & Learning Centre and Respite Centre on the site whilst the Adult Day Centre progresses.



Brendan Whelan, Chair of SCA and Michael Ward, CEO at the signing of the building contract for the first phase of the development at Kilcoole with Michael McCartan of DCM Contracts

Interview with Seán Reynolds

Company Secretary, Board of Directors



Why did you become involved in SCA?

In 2014, St. Catherine's Association (SCA) needed to add some new people and experience to its Board of Directors. Following a phone call from the then incoming Chairman, Brendan Whelan, I was honoured to be asked to join the Board of SCA. I must admit that I had little knowledge of what the Association did at the time, but after some hasty research, I wanted to grab the opportunity on offer. Today, when I look back, it was one of the best decisions I made during my career. SCA has always had a great reputation for the services it offered and the commitment and dedication of its front-line staff. It did, however, need to bring about improvements in terms of its management team and structures, its relationship with its major funder, the HSE, while consistently complying with regulations and standards. These were all areas I felt I could offer some experience and value to the Board and the Senior Management Team at SCA.

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

The biggest challenge facing the sector right now is the capacity to meet an ever-increasing demand for disability services. Demands on Government for funding are many and varied, but disability services need a serious injection of funds right now to grow capacity.

SCA continues to progress a major strategic project to develop a 2.5-acre site in Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow, to include an Adult Day Centre, Operations & Learning Centre and Respite Centre. SCA has an opportunity to create a state-of-the-art development in the heart of the local community, co-locating health, social care and education services, alongside community and residential developments and facilities. We hope the development will be completed in the next three to four years.

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

The one thing about SCA that gives me the greatest pleasure is to hear parents and guardians talk glowingly about our staff who take care of their loved ones. Having the right people in the organisation has been a key focus for the Board. When you get that key ingredient right, most other elements of the organisation fall into place.

What is your own career background?

Most of my working life was spent in the Bank of Ireland, where I had a diverse and rewarding career, and I must say I enjoyed every day of it. After I retired from the bank, I felt I was not ready to 'hang up the boots', so I joined the Banking and Payments Federation, the representative body for banks in Ireland. Moving on from there after Covid, I now spend most of my time working pro bono in the charity sector, as I don't plan to retire again!

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?

The demand for social care services is insatiable, and close to the top of the list of demands are the services provided by SCA. If funding were available from the HSE tomorrow and SCA could provide the necessary facilities, it could fill its current capacity twice over, but that is unlikely to happen in the short to medium term. In the meantime, SCA needs to maintain its focus and reputation as an excellent service provider, while bringing on board the additional capacity the Kilcoole project will offer.

HAPPY HALLOWEEN

This year's Halloween celebration was full of creativity, and spooky fun! From haunting decorations to creative costumes, everyone brought their own style and spirit to the day. Enjoy the snapshots of our spooky fun!



Training Department Update

Happy New Year from Training,

We are set for a busy 2026 training year. Just a quick few updates for you.

Restrictive Practice training will roll out for all staff this year. It will take place in Clermont running from 9.30am-1.30pm. Florence, the trainer has a background in patient safety and quality. We hope you find the training beneficial.

Thank you for completing the KnowBe4 online Cyber Safety training, in the next few months we will be asking all staff to also complete the HSEland training in Cyber Security. This training should only take about 30 minutes, once complete please email cert to training@stcatherines.ie

Thank you!

News from Glenview Heights



Glenview Heights has recently had some amazing refurbishments, to include new kitchen, wall coverings, radiator covers and new flooring throughout!
What a huge transformation, thanks to everyone involved!



Emmanuel has been busy with outings to Carlow sensory gardens, walks in the park, bird watching and swimming. Emmanuel also celebrated a big birthday recently turning 21, Happy Birthday!!!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY





CORU Registration for Social Care Workers

As you are aware the grandparenting route (Section 91) for registration as a Social Care Worker closed on 30th November 2025. You can now only apply to be a Social Care Worker if you are a new graduate (Section 38). CORU have confirmed that they are prioritising new graduate (Section 38) applications at present and due to the large volume of applications in November there is a significant delay in processing all applications. CORU have stated that they will be working on grandparenting (Section 91) applications right through 2026 so please be mindful it may be some time before you receive your registration.

Staff News & Updates

A warm Welcome

Sara Jane Dowdall (Potter Club), Maeve Murray (Behaviour Support Worker), Katie Miley (ADS), Zoe Kearney (ADS) and Daniel Breen (QC Officer), Laura Hodgkinson (Woodbeg), Jinky Villalobos (Fairwinds) and Mary Byrne (Ballylusk)

And a fond farewell

Anna Sheehan (Potters Club), Ciara Roberts (Ballylusk), Niall Murphy (Glenview Heights), Bryan Kenna (Meadow View), Dillon Redmond, Joe Hewer (Bird Hill), Megan Sweeney (Fairwinds) and Eileen Tyrell Browne (Adult Day Services)

Baby News

Congratulations to Roisin Mannion on the birth of her baby boy Emmet Aidan

Congratulations to Eimear Walker on the birth of her baby boy Rowan

Congratulations to Adrienne O'Connor on the birth of her twins Dáithí and Síofra

Congratulations to Aine O'Brien on the birth of her baby girl Saoirse

Congratulations to Stephen Murphy on the birth of his baby girl Ellie

SCA Pot Luck Lunch – October



More successful Pot Luck lunches held in two locations in October. It was great to see so many staff participate, what a great way to enjoy some delicious food & have a catch up with friends! We look forward to seeing other locations taking part this year.

For further information please contact the Culture, Health & Wellbeing group - CHW@stcatherines.ie



CHRISTMAS SPIRIT 2025 WINNERS

Well done to our joint winners ADS and Brambles!!

Thank you so much for all the amazing entries..



Best Actor: Ian Walsh ADS

Best Singer: Philip Kelly Fairwinds

Best Baby Jesus: Patrick McDonald ADS

Best Christmas Poem: Mimi Hilditch Brambles

Best CEO Impersonator: Jack Lacey Brambles

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



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).

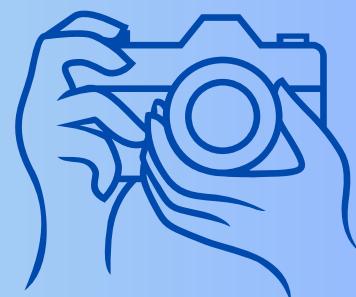


Photo Competition

Welcome to our very first photo competition! The theme is 'Something That Makes Me Smile', invites everyone to capture the small moments that bring happiness - a favourite place, a pet, or something beautiful you notice. The competition is open to everyone and there will be separate prize for children/young adults and staff.

Please email your entries to newsletter@stcatherines.ie

Deadline for entries is 24th of April. The winning photographs will be featured in our next Newsletter.



Let your camera find what makes you smile!



SCA Christmas Lunch 2025

It was lovely to see so many attend the Christmas Lunch and getting into the Christmas spirit!!
We hope you all enjoyed the day and look forward to seeing you again for the next one!



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

newsletter@stcatherines.ie

