

Better Life Matters

Autumn 2026

St John
of God
Foundation



• • • • Thank you for the joy you bring
• • • • as you create better lives!

Welcome and thank you

Welcome to the latest edition of Better Life Matters, the newsletter that only exists because of you. None of the stories you're about to read could have happened without your incredible kindness and compassion.

Every day, your generosity supports adults and children living with intellectual disabilities or mental health challenges, and in doing so, you change lives. In Alexandra Manor, a respite centre that serves 65 families, your kindness has made the dream of a sensory room come true.

In Malawi, you helped Evelyn get the support she needed to overcome physical and mental health challenges, empowering her to build a better life for herself and her daughter.

In Northern Ireland, your support has been truly life-changing, helping to fund vital counselling services for people like Lynn, whose story you can read on page 7.

Whether it's here in Ireland or in Malawi, you show time and again, how deeply you care about the people we serve. This is your newsletter and it's testament to just some of the incredible work you've made possible.

Please enjoy reading and thank you once again from the bottom of my heart.



John Fleming

John Fleming
CEO, St John of God Foundation



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In Malawi, you're not just changing lives

You're saving them



When Evelyn's daughter was born with physical disabilities, her mother struggled to cope. Her little girl's condition was misunderstood and surrounded by stigma in their remote Malawi community. When Evelyn's husband abandoned the family, she sank into a deep depression.

Thanks to your incredible support, Evelyn found the help she desperately needed at a St John of God outreach clinic. **These clinics are truly life-saving for people like Evelyn,** because getting to hospital appointments is all the more challenging for people living in remote communities.

In her own words, Evelyn wants to thank you for the psychosocial support that is healing her depression, along with the physiotherapy her daughter is receiving.

"I first knew about St John of God because of the rehabilitation clinic, where I came for my daughter to start physiotherapy. I was so depressed and I think the clinician sensed it. We had a chat and I just started crying. I was told I had severe postpartum depression and was given medication and counselling. The team from St John of God has supported me so much. They changed my life. The care they provide to my daughter has given me so much hope, and the counselling they have provided to me has given me the will to live again."

Thanks to people like you, Evelyn is now building a better life for herself and her little girl. Your incredible support is not just changing lives; it is saving them. Thank you!



A new sensory room at Alexandra Manor

Thank you for making this possible!



You have made dreams come true at a respite facility in Clane, Co. Kildare! Alexandra Manor has been welcoming individuals with intellectual disabilities since 2007, providing them with 24-hour care for anything from 2 to 7 nights, at a real home away from home.

Such stays are incredibly important to both service users and their families. Alexandra Manor currently offers respite stays to 65 families, offering service users a change of environment and new experiences, while giving their families precious time to rest and recharge.

When Rachel Malone, who manages the facility, pointed out that a sensory room would be of huge benefit to service users, once again, people like you stepped in. Thanks to your support, work has

been completed to transform the old garage at the property into the sensory room they needed. They now have a space that is both quiet and relaxing, while also providing stimulation and activity.

Thanks to people like you, the floor, walls, and ceiling have been insulated, with new internal walls added to create different areas for them to enjoy. The electrics were upgraded and new heaters and lights installed. Meanwhile, a trampette was added so they can enjoy physical activity, and bubble tubes with bead lighting provide them with a fully immersive sensory experience.

Rachel says the whole team at Alexandra Manor is so grateful for what you've made possible!

"When the weather is fair we try to take them out and about, but when it's raining, and there's nowhere to go, that's when emotions can become heightened. This new room will see a massive reduction in behaviours and anxiety, it will give us that space and we're so grateful to have it."

Thank you for bringing comfort to those in need of your kindness

In Northern Ireland, your gifts have been hard at work, supporting the Koram Centre, a charity that offers counselling and mental health support in Strabane, Co. Tyrone.

Centre manager Adrian Loughrey says **your generosity has helped to provide 400 counselling sessions to adults struggling with their mental health.** One of them was Lynn, a young woman in her thirties.

Lynn had a troubled childhood, experiencing parental domestic violence and parental substance misuse/addiction. As an adult, she herself was a survivor of domestic violence and coercive control in past relationships. When she arrived at the Koram Centre, she was struggling with low mood and anxiety.

Thanks to people like you, the centre was able to offer her a safe and supportive space. Over 24 counselling sessions, Lynn developed tools

to increase her self-esteem and her confidence, eventually deciding to leave her unhealthy relationship. She now attends Women Together, a monthly support group run by the centre, and is immensely grateful to people like you, whose kindness changed her life.

"Counselling has helped me so much. I am better able to communicate and know my boundaries. I have started new activities and met new friends. Thank you so much for your help."

These vital services can only be delivered with your support. Through this important work, your compassion is changing lives and bringing comfort to those in need of your kindness. Thank you.

Your kindness in action

Thank you for your life-changing gifts



Every day, we see your kindness in action and sometimes, it's the seemingly tiny details that make the biggest difference.

Donating for the purchase of a hoist or helping a respite service buy a vehicle might not seem like much, but the impact of your generosity is profound.

A hoist means the difference between someone with mobility problems being able to take part in activities or feeling left out. And without a vehicle to pick them

up, people can't travel from their home to their day service. They can't attend hospital appointments or take part in fun outings.

When we say you're helping to create better lives, we mean you are instrumental in helping the services we fund achieve the level of service they aim to deliver. You are the reason that adults and children with intellectual disabilities or mental health challenges can live their best lives, realise their full potential, and embrace every possibility in life.

None of this work would be possible without you. Here are just some of the incredible things your generosity has made possible:

1 Sensory equipment in St Mary of the Angels

St Mary of the Angels is home to 76 people with physical and intellectual disabilities, in Beaufort, Co. Kerry. **Thanks to you, the facility was recently able to install new sensory equipment to benefit its residents.** This type of equipment is vital for people with intellectual disabilities, helping to provide a safe space that reduces anxiety, helps regulate the nervous system, and improves cognitive skills. Thank you for helping to provide this essential support.



2 Social Farming at Liffey Services

Thanks to the generosity of people like you, Liffey Services has introduced Social Farming for the people it supports. Liffey

Services currently supports over 850 children and adults with intellectual disabilities across Dublin South West and Kildare.

Its Social Farming project is funded by kind-hearted people like you, giving children and adults the chance to take a trip out into nature, see things grow, appreciate the open space and bond with animals. It's days like this that truly help people engage with the world around them and by doing so, increase their self-esteem and improve their sense of wellbeing. **Thank you for making this possible.**





A groundbreaking day centre in Dundalk

Work is close to completion at the new day services centre at Seatown, Dundalk, with some incredible transformations funded by your generosity. The new development will help us expand services in the area, offering more space for training and activities, enhancing twice the number of lives as the old building could.

This project could never have happened without your generosity. Before we reached out to you last Christmas, we really weren't sure how we could make this dream come true for people like Ruth and her friends. We had found the building and we had some funding, but it just wasn't enough. **We desperately needed more to make this project a reality – and that's where you**

came in. Thanks to your kindness, work could begin to transform this empty building into the day centre everyone deserves and that work is now nearing completion. **We're so grateful to you. Thank you for making dreams come true for Ruth and her friends!**



Giving Lucena service users a voice

The Lucena (CAMHS) clinics provide vital support in the South Dublin and Wicklow areas to children and adolescents struggling with their mental health. In order to serve its clients to the best of its ability, Lucena needed a way to survey children and adolescents, along with family members or carers, to see where it could improve.

Thanks to your support, they were able to implement a survey system that could collate all the feedback received from young people using the service, giving them oversight of areas for improvement. This has led to real, impactful changes on a scale that has never been possible before, ensuring the service is fit-for-purpose and continuing to serve young people to the best of its ability.

Here are just some of the changes your kind generosity has led to:



You Said

Changeover of Staff
The changeover of staff (especially psychiatrists) every 6 months can be challenging.

Information available
If information on what's available inside and outside our service could be easily accessed this would be helpful.

Training for Staff
It was important for staff to know about you as a service user and what is important to you.

Accessing re-prescriptions
Calling to get a re-prescription can be challenging.

Service User Engagement Survey

In 2024, we ran our first "Service User Engagement Survey" which asked you, our service users, what you felt we do well, and what we can improve on. We thank the huge number of young people, parents, and carers who took part. Your voice is important to us. Here is some of what you said in the survey, and how we used that information to improve your experience of attending Lucena CAMHS.

WE DID

- Where possible, teams have made a member of permanent staff available to run ADHD Clinics to ensure young people meet the same staff regularly.
- We have completed a massive review of our website lucenaclinic.ie which launched in December 2024. Our website contains lots of accessible information on what we do, and what help is available elsewhere.
- We have added a module to our induction for new staff letting them know about the results of this survey and what matters to you from their first day here.
- A digital re-prescription request system has been designed and is being tested. Soon, it will be introduced for all service users and families making accessing re-prescriptions easier for all.

The 2025 Service User Engagement Survey will launch in late May. We look forward to hearing about your experience with us. SMS Invitations to participate in the survey will be sent as links in a text to all service users who receive text alerts from us.

Shining a light of kindness in the darkest of times

For Martha and Rachael, your support has been life-changing

Life became very dark for Martha as she struggled to cope with her little girl's autism. Two-year-old Rachael was non-verbal, biting, and unable to sit still. Without the support she desperately needed, Martha sank into a deep depression.

In rural communities in Malawi, conditions such as autism are poorly understood and Martha was shunned, with neighbours blaming her for Rachael's behaviour.

In the end, in the depths of despair, Martha got to a point where she considered ending her little girl's life. Seeing no way out, she describes how she poured poison into a cup, planning to give it to Rachael, then realised she simply couldn't.

"My heart didn't let me. I changed my mind and cried so much."

Can you imagine the heartbreaking situation Martha found herself in? With no support, she had lost all hope and could see no future for her little girl.

Then your support changed everything.

When Martha took Rachael on a routine visit to Mzuzu Central Hospital, the little girl was referred to a St John of God community-based mental health service. **Thanks to the kind generosity of people like you, this service supports over 600 children like Rachael every year.** That introduction changed Martha's life and that of her little girl.

Rachael was enrolled in a school that caters to children with special educational needs, with teachers who were trained to deal with her issues. The centre also provided Martha and her husband with counselling and offered them the support network they needed, after the stigma and isolation they endured.

The support they received thanks to you was a desperately-needed lifeline. It has been life-changing for the whole family and transformed Martha's relationship with her daughter.

The impact of your kindness on this family has been profound and is something they will never forget. And with every gift you send, you change another life in need of your support. **Thank you for showing such kindness and compassion, creating better lives every day.**





Creating better lives through research

Did you know that your generous gifts also help fund important research aimed at improving care and outcomes for people who are living with intellectual disabilities or struggling with their mental health?

With your support, The St John of God Research Foundation carries out this research on behalf of everyone who uses our services, sharing findings and facilitating professional training through an annual research conference, which has now been running for 35 years.

Brain Busters is one important research project people like you have helped fund. The project set out to test healthy aging interventions for people with Down Syndrome and intellectual disabilities.

Irish rugby player Joe McCarthy recently presented completion certificates and medals to those who took part, including his brother Andrew. Andrew was one of 11 participants who took part in Cognitive Stimulation Therapy (CST) to test its effectiveness at improving the cognition and overall wellbeing of adults with intellectual disabilities.

Dr Sharon Hardiman of St. John of God Intellectual Disability Services came up with the idea for the project and has thanked people like you for helping to make the funds available for this important work.

“Our pilot study results have shown that these adults made significant gains in memory and independence following attendance at our CST programme.”



Making your kindness go even further

Please return your tax back form now!

Now that you've read about some of the amazing things you've made possible, would you like to make your kindness go even further? **Did you know that you can increase the value of your generous gifts by an extra 45% and it won't cost you a cent extra?**

If you donate over €250 in a year, St John of God Foundation can claim €112 or more in tax back on your donations. All you have to do is return your CHY3 or tax back form and you'll be unlocking an additional 45% in desperately-needed funding. **Just think what that money could do!**

You can submit your form securely online by visiting **sjogfoundationtaxback.ie/register.html** or if you'd like us to post you a copy, please call **01 913 5700** or email **hello@sjogfoundation.ie**

Thank you