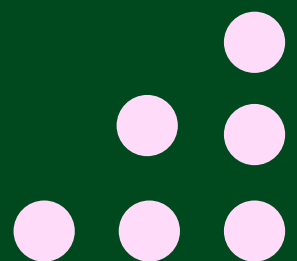


Strategic Plan

2025-2029



Quality Homes for People
with Disabilities



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Foreword from the Chair

I warmly welcome this new Strategic Plan covering the period 2025-2029. This Plan sets out our vision and values for the next five years together with key objectives and a comprehensive set of actions to increase housing provision for adults with intellectual disabilities and mental health difficulties. It aims to ensure that our existing housing stock is maintained to the highest standard. It also reflects the St John of God Housing Association's (SJOGHA) reputation for the highest standards of governance and financial accountability.

Founded in 2006 the SJOGHA continues the valuable work of the St John of God Brothers since the 1960s as a key social housing provider of homes for people with intellectual disabilities and mental health difficulties. While over 2,000 people in Ireland with intellectual disabilities still live in unsatisfactory residential centres the majority of those in need of housing with appropriate supports currently live in the family home, often with elderly or ill parents. Despite many official reports and commitments the human rights of most to quality and secure homes remain unfulfilled.

This Strategic Plan draws on expert advice and reports which have emphasised the need to provide additional “homes in the community” with appropriate support care, especially for adults with intellectual disabilities. This is in accordance with Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) now signed and ratified by the government. This is an ambitious Plan. Yet it cannot be implemented unless significant government support is provided for both housing and essential support care. **The Disability Capacity Review** published by the Department of Health in July 2021 highlighted the urgency of action: *“... if no measures are taken, unmet needs and demographic change will continue to grow and to become more acute as the disability population ages. In addition, there will be a significant human cost for the individuals concerned and their families”*.

The Review estimated that additional annual funding of between €380 million in 2022 and €520 million in 2032 would be required for housing people with disabilities and an additional €400 million in 2022 to €550 million in 2032 for essential residential care needs. The **Action Plan for Disability Services 2024-2026** published in December 2023 committed to an additional 900 residential care places between 2024 and 2026 to tackle unmet need and to keep pace with demographic change, as well as 500 new residential care places over the period 2024 to 2026 to advance a programme of de-congregation. The incoming government now has the opportunity and resources to implement the recommendations of the Review and Action Plan. Immediate action is required.

This Plan is the outcome of much thought by a dedicated and experienced Board and will be implemented by a skilled and committed staff. Combining these with the necessary government support SJOGHA will continue to provide quality homes for the vulnerable people we serve.

PJ Drudy
January 2025





Introduction from the CEO

Welcome to our Strategic Plan 2025–2029. I am delighted to introduce you to the outcome of the hard work of the board, staff and stakeholders of the St John of God Housing Association (SJOGHA). I would also like to thank our facilitators, Ann Clarke & Associates, for guiding the process.

We are a specialist provider of housing for people with intellectual disabilities, mental health difficulties and other vulnerable residents. Our origin lies in the pioneering work of the St John of God Brothers who recognised early on the importance and rights of people with disabilities and enduring mental health groups to live as independently as possible, in their own communities. Many houses were provided in the community from the 1960s onwards. From these beginnings SJOGHA was incorporated as a limited company in 2006. It was granted charitable status in 2008 and is now registered with the Approved Housing Bodies Regulatory Authority (AHBRA). We work closely with St John of God Community Services (SJOGCS) which provides care and support for people living in our houses. SJOGHA also avails of a number of services provided by St John of God Hospitaller Services Group (HSG).

We are aware of very long waiting lists, in both our services and nationally, for appropriate specialist housing. We work with local authorities, the Department of Housing and the Housing Finance Agency to get such properties completed. It is especially challenging in the current housing environment in Ireland, and our plan reflects this. We call on all decision-makers in the sector to support the Agency to procure and refurbish such properties. The homes need to be provided to prevent discrimination against people with disabilities when allocating housing.

Finally, I want to thank and acknowledge our current tenant group, who are at the centre of everything we do. We will continue to provide high quality housing to you, and to listen carefully to your needs in our decision-making.

I hope that you find that the Strategic Plan that follows reflects our aims and the way we operate, with ambition for the future and with security for our tenants in homes of their choosing.

Michelle Thunder
January 2025





Our Vision

Our vision is that every person with an intellectual disability or mental health difficulty has a place to call home.

Our Mission

Our mission is to provide secure, high-quality, sustainable homes in the community where people with intellectual disabilities or mental health problems live independently in a supportive environment.

Our Values

Hospitality: we welcome all we encounter with warmth and generosity in the spirit of St John of God.

Compassion: We empathise with people with intellectual disabilities or mental health difficulties who are in need of housing, and aim to provide appropriate homes in a supportive environment.

Respect: We respect the inherent dignity and rights of the people we house, including their right to privacy and confidentiality, and we work in an open and honest manner.

Justice: We believe that adults with intellectual disabilities, mental health difficulties and other vulnerable residents should be treated with fairness and impartiality.

Excellence: We work to the highest standards in a professional and efficient manner to ensure excellent, responsive, and sustainable provision for the vulnerable people we serve.





Strategic Priorities

- 1.** Maintain and improve the quality of our housing stock, ensuring high standards that meet the needs of our tenants and the requirements of regulatory authorities.
- 2.** Make progress towards reducing the current housing waiting list of people with intellectual disabilities living in congregated settings or who are living with elderly or ill parents. Develop innovative housing models to support this.
- 3.** Advocate with others for systemic change about the housing needs of people with intellectual disabilities, the level of funding required to provide housing and support services, and the State's responsibilities under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).
- 4.** Ensure the highest standards of governance and transparency across the organisation. Enhance relationships with key stakeholder groups through this structured approach.
- 5.** Manage the Association's finances, including accessing additional funding resources where possible, to ensure on-going development and sustainability.



Objectives Overview

Our Strategic Plan 2025-2029 has six objectives:

• Objective 2

Expand our housing provision for people with intellectual disabilities or mental health needs to enable them to live independently in the community with appropriate supports.

• Objective 3

Develop an advocacy strategy, in collaboration with others, to influence policy at national and local levels with regard to appropriate housing for people with intellectual disabilities or mental health needs.

• Objective 1

Ensure that our housing stock is fit for purpose, of good quality, maintained to a high standard, and reflects emerging developments in housing and regulatory standards.

• Objective 4

Enhance our communication and strengthen our relationships with other St John of God entities, and other key stakeholder groups, to maximise our impact.

• Objective 5

Strive towards excellence in the governance and management of the Association.

• Objective 6

Manage the Association's finances, including accessing additional funding resources where possible, to ensure ongoing development and sustainability.



Strategic Priority Action Plan

Objective 1

Ensure that our housing stock is fit for purpose, of good quality, maintained to a high standard, and reflects emerging developments in housing and regulatory standards.

Goal	Actions
Efficient management of our housing stock	• Further development of our housing database. • Completing stock condition surveys. • Maintaining a rota of on-going stock condition surveys. • Developing an asset management policy.
Planned, preventative and reactive maintenance	• Agreeing with the care and support provider how responsibility for repairs and maintenance will be divided between the two organisations in the short and medium terms. • Implementing an annual plan for repairs and maintenance.
Remediation	• Developing a decision-making framework for the upgrading, leasing or selling of properties requiring significant remediation. • Completing fire safety remediation works.
Managing voids	• Developing a decision-making framework in respect of voids including those no longer suitable for people with intellectual disabilities (e.g. in what circumstances to upgrade, rent, or sell on the open market)
Climate action and green agenda	• Continuing to investigate sources of funding for energy upgrades. • Ensuring that new builds are to a minimum of C1 Building Energy Rating (BER). Assessing existing and new stock for climate risks, e.g. flooding.
Housing and regulatory standards	• Reviewing the implications of new housing and regulatory standards.

By the end of 2029 we will have:

- ✓ Developed an asset management policy, including decision-making frameworks that will support the management of our housing stock;
- ✓ Reviewed the condition of all of our housing stock and used this information to inform our asset management policy and financial planning;
- ✓ Implemented a rolling inspection cycle to maintain the quality and standard of housing for our tenants – with a minimum of 20% of houses undergoing a stock condition survey each year;
- ✓ Invested c. €2.5m in planned and legacy issue upgrades and maintenance, c.€1.5m in cyclical and reactive maintenance, and completed all fire safety remediation;
- ✓ Ensured that one-third homes have achieved as a C Building Energy Rating (BER);
- ✓ Updated key indicators in respect of voids, repairs, upgrades and the green agenda;
- ✓ Remained compliant with all relevant regulations and legislation.



Objective 2

Expand our housing provision for people with intellectual disabilities and mental health needs to enable them to live independently in the community with appropriate supports.

Goal	Actions
Expand provision in the counties where we already have properties while remaining open to opportunities in other counties	• Partnering with other AHBs to secure housing units in their developments. • Engaging further with the Housing Agency, the Department of Housing and Local Authorities to secure housing and access to sites and to identify how Part V development, under the Planning and Development Acts, development can be unlocked. • Identifying and partnering with developers with an interest in intellectual disability to develop suitable housing units within larger estates. • Identifying suitable properties for lease. • Ensuring a mix of housing options (one-bed apartments, four-bed houses, etc.) to provide choice for our tenants.
Introduce a prioritisation selection model for allocation of tenancies	• Develop a segmented prioritisation model for selection of prospective tenants with intellectual disabilities based on level of disability, need and compatibility.
Research future needs and housing and construction models	• Researching how best to meet end-of-life care for our tenants. • Exploring with St John of God Community Services, the Housing Agency, the Health Service Executive and the Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage opportunities to develop new housing models for people with intellectual disabilities.

By the end of 2029 we will have:

- ✓ Engaged with others in the housing development sector to ensure increased availability of housing for people with intellectual disabilities or mental health needs;
- ✓ Continued partnership with our service providers to support our tenants to live independent lives in the community;
- ✓ Developed as many units as possible, subject to availability of funding;
- ✓ Provided a mix of housing options for tenants;
- ✓ Assessed the changing housing needs of our tenants, including end-of-life care, and a plan to support these needs;
- ✓ Identified and piloted new housing models for people with intellectual disability to meet their needs and support their choices and independence.



Objective 3

Develop an advocacy strategy, in collaboration with others, to influence policy at national and local levels with regard to appropriate housing for people with intellectual disabilities or mental health needs.

Goal	Actions
Inform decision makers about the housing and support needs of our target groups	• Setting up an advocacy working group comprised of representatives of Board and staff. • Developing an advocacy plan. • Participating in the Housing and Steering Groups in the local authority areas where SJOGHA homes are located. • Making a pre-Budget submission each year and other submissions as appropriate. • Networking with key public servants and senior managers in funding agencies with responsibility for housing and care supports, and making presentations at key events.
Partner and collaborate with others	• Partnering with St John of God Community Services to advocate for the care staffing levels that would enable the targets in this strategy to be achieved • Collaborating with other AHBs, St John of God Community Services, and national representative bodies, such as the Irish Council for Social Housing and the National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers to advocate for systemic change and appropriate levels of funding for housing and supports for people with intellectual disabilities.

By the end of 2029 we will have:

- ✓ Strengthened collaboration with St John of God entities, other AHBs and national representative bodies in the housing and intellectual disability services;
- ✓ Used our advocacy plan and collaborations with other stakeholders to actively influence national and local policies so that these will adequately respond to the housing needs of people with intellectual disabilities or mental health difficulties;
- ✓ Contributed to systemic change in how people with intellectual disabilities are appropriately housed and supported in the community of their choice;



Objective 4

Enhance our communication and strengthen our relationships with other St John of God (SJOG) entities, and other key stakeholder groups, to maximise our impact.

Goal	Actions
Engage with other St John of God Boards	Holding meetings between our Board and the Boards of other St John of God entities.
Collaborate with St John of God entities	Developing a framework for collaborating with St John of God Community Services and with the St John of God entities in respect of advocacy, fundraising and any other relevant matters.
Engage with Tenants	- Developing a Tenant Charter and Tenant Forum. - Instigating a Menu of Tenant Involvement to ensure the voice of the tenant is heard and taken into account – this to be done in consultation with our tenants and their circles of support or decision-making support, as appropriate. - Continuing with our annual tenant survey. - Ensuring that tenants are informed and kept up to date about the provisions of the AHBRA Tenancy Management Standard.
Engage with external stakeholders	- Maintaining good relationships with stakeholders including Housing Agency, AHBRA and Charities Regulator - Local Authorities. - Representative Bodies. - Funders. - Relevant Government Departments.
Develop a communications strategy	- Agreeing a communications strategy that encompasses - Website – keeping it current. - Social media – deciding on engaging with certain platforms. - Public relations and media. - Spokesperson (especially in the event of adverse publicity). - Communication with tenants.
Demonstrate Impact	- Developing a small number of key indicators to measure the impact of the Housing Association's work (e.g. number of units, tenant profile, tenant feedback). - Including a section on impact in our annual report.



By the end of 2029 we will have:

- ✓ Developed a range of options for tenants to actively engage with us and to provide us with feedback and for us to keep tenants informed;
- ✓ Collaborated with other St John of God entities on a range of common issues;
- ✓ Raised awareness about the housing needs of people with intellectual disabilities or mental health difficulties, and the work that we do to support them;
- ✓ Maintained positive relationships with key external stakeholders;
- ✓ Demonstrated our impact and shared relevant information about our impact with key stakeholders.



Objective 5

Strive towards excellence in the governance and management of the Association.

Goal	Actions
Expand our staff team's capacity	- Providing access to training/information briefings about: - Energy awareness. - Risk Management. - Implementation of the Assisted Decision-Making Act 2015. - The requirements of the Standards for AHBs issued by the AHBRA. - The Principles and Standards of the Charities Regulator. - Other relevant training and development. - Expanding the housing and development teams as additional units are brought on stream. - Developing a succession plan for key staff posts. - Reviewing pay and terms and conditions of employment to ensure that we are competitive and to support staff recruitment and retention whilst ensuring operating expenditure is covered by operational income.
Enhance our governance	- Engage in conversations that will ensure a smooth transition in any evolving Membership structure within the SJOG Order. - Enhancing the equity, diversity and inclusion on our Board and include skills that will add value. - Continuously reviewing and updating policies and SLAs.
Collaborating to achieve scale and expansion	- Actively seeking collaborations with other like-minded organisations to benefit from scale. - Expanding the portfolio of properties/units through the Irish Council for Social Housing and its Collaboration Fund, provided suitable properties are available.



Goal	Actions
Enhance our governance contd	• Ensuring efficient decision-making processes at Board level. • Developing a succession plan for the Board. • Having an annual appraisal by the Board of its operation and performance as a governing structure and reviewing the number and terms of reference of its sub-committees. • Providing access to training and development for Board members.
Enhance systems and processes	• Using software to enhance efficiency and property management. • Reviewing, updating and verifying our Risk Register regularly.

By the end of 2029 we will have:

- ✓ Facilitated a stable organisational structure;
- ✓ Expanded our staff team commensurate with housing delivery and provided the team with access to relevant training, development and systems;
- ✓ Expanded our Board and provided relevant training;
- ✓ Strengthened our decision-making protocols and enriched our governance;
- ✓ Developed a full suite of up-to-date policies and SLAs.



Objective 6

Manage the Association's finances, including accessing additional funding resources where possible, to ensure ongoing development and sustainability.

Goal	Actions
Managing reserves effectively	• Proceeding with capital projects as approved by the Board within the context of risk appetite and the constraints of the reserves. • Ensuring operating expenditure is covered by operating income to prevent deficits affecting reserves.
Targeting other sources of funding	• Developing a short and long-term funding plan. • Targeting philanthropic foundations and commercial entities to seek funding opportunities and exploring the potential to attract legacy donations, in conjunction with St John of God Foundation. • Assessing the potential to borrow against the asset base and agreeing the basis on which borrowing might be employed. • Working with St John of God Foundation on fundraising campaigns that will benefit the Housing Association and the potential to attract legacy donations.
Asset management	• Judiciously evaluating the disposal of less serviceable assets. • Using the proceeds from such disposals to invest in more modern units Explore the feasibility of using modern methods of construction.
Financial management	• Maintained sound financial standards, controls and reporting.
Risk Register	• Investments that reflect our values and are managed effectively. • Incorporated an ESG ethos into our investments and our Annual Report is adapted to ensure it complies with best practice in relation to ESG reporting.



Goal	Actions
Investments	- As a fiduciary, investments are made in assets which reflect the values of the Association. Data and information related to ESG mandated assets will be collected and considered by our Investment Asset Managers. (The Board will apply its discretion, if necessary, to give its approval to investments of reserves in these assets). - Developed an investment policy and monitor our investment portfolio to encompass ESG.

By the end of 2029 we will have:

- ✓ Working relationships with other like-minded organisations that will ultimately lead to benefits for people with intellectual disabilities and mental health needs;
- ✓ Scaled up our property portfolio so that people with intellectual disabilities and mental health needs have access to quality housing;
- ✓ Maintained financial sustainability and developed a clear pathway for funding future growth of our housing provision;
- ✓ Diversified our sources of funding;
- ✓ Increased our reserves;
- ✓ Continued sound financial management and reporting;
- ✓ Established a Risk register that is reinforced through a risk management and control system which includes the four lines of defence;
- ✓ Our investments reflect our values and are managed effectively;
- ✓ Our investments will have incorporated an ESG ethos and our Annual Report has been adapted to ensure it complies with best practice in relation to ESG reporting.



Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting

We are committed to reviewing and evaluating the implementation and impact of our strategy through robust processes and reporting mechanisms. The CEO and the Executive team will develop a draft implementation plan for consideration by the Board. Thereafter the Board will review the operation of the strategy annually monitoring the progress against each objective and the key actions outlined.

Critical Success Factors

SJOGHA is a niche housing provider, with a specialism in intellectual disability and having an expert Board and team who are visionary, responsive and flexible.

Two of the biggest challenges in meeting the housing needs of people with intellectual disabilities are outside our immediate control. The first of these relates to the funding necessary for care staff to support the tenant to live independently. This funding is provided by the Health Service Executive (HSE) and over an extended period has been inadequate to support full de-congregation or a reduction in the number of people with intellectual disabilities on waiting lists for social housing and still residing at home with elderly or ill parents. Advocating with the care and support provider for funding to staff our houses will, therefore, be critical in being able to meet the housing targets we have set for the next five years.

The second major challenge relates to funding for housing acquisition and development. Most funding comes from government-backed sources such as the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) and Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF). This will continue to be the case in the future. However, within these schemes, there are limitations, ceilings and bureaucracy that impact significantly on our ability to bring appropriate housing for people with intellectual disabilities on-stream. The cost of providing homes for this target group is significantly higher than for general needs housing. At present, these two statutory schemes do not adequately recognise this reality. In addition, managing cash flow until receipt of the scheme grants is a critical challenge.

Maintaining houses to a high standard is central to our operations and very important in the context of ensuring compliance with the Standards for AHBs issued by the AHBRA and with HIQA standards for people with intellectual disabilities. Rental income is an important funding source for this work, yet it is not always sufficient to cover unplanned works, remediation and energy upgrades. We will need to explore funding mechanisms with relevant statutory agencies for example, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) – as well as alternatives to government-backed schemes.

We have a small, dedicated and stable staff team that has enabled continuity and the building of positive relationships with tenants, other St John of God entities, external stakeholders and funders. However, this team is near capacity in terms of managing our existing housing stock. In order to support growth, we will need to source funding for additional staff members in our housing and development teams and find resources to support our advocacy ambitions.



Global Context



The ambitious Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 with the aim of ending poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring peace and prosperity for all by 2030. This **Strategic Plan: Quality Homes for People with Disabilities 2025–2029** echoes four of the SDGs:

- **Goal 10:** Reduced Inequalities, by supporting equal opportunity, inclusion and better housing outcomes for people with intellectual disabilities or mental health needs.
- **Goal 11:** Sustainable Cities & Communities, by ensuring access to adequate, affordable and secure housing for people with intellectual disabilities or mental health needs.
- **Goal 13:** Climate Action, by developing a programme of energy upgrades to our housing stock and ensuring that new builds achieve the highest energy rating.
- **Goal 16:** Peace and Justice, by advancing social justice and promoting the human rights of people with intellectual disabilities or mental health needs.

With only five years remaining to 2030 it will take determined efforts by governments, law enforcement, health care, businesses, civil society and faith based groups to deliver these global promises. SJOGHA is more than willing to play its part.



How This Strategy Was Developed

SJOGHA was supported in the development of its strategy for 2025–2029 by Ann Clarke & Associates. A multi-stage and iterative process was used to inform the development of the strategy. The process was overseen by an Oversight Committee comprising Board members representing the Finance Audit & Risk, Governance and Development Committees with the CEO of the Housing Association. The stages included a review of internal documentation and statistics and consultations with the Chairperson, Board members, the CEO, the Senior Management Team and staff members. An online survey was completed by staff. Interviews were held with tenants and with parents. Additionally, one-to-one interviews were held with senior representatives of organisations within HSG and with key external stakeholders, namely:

- Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council Housing Section
- Health Service Executive
- Housing Agency
- Housing Finance Agency
- Irish Council for Social Housing
- Kerry County Council Housing Section
- Louth County Council Housing Section
- St John of God Community Services
- St John of God Foundation
- St John of God Hospitaller Services Group
- St John of God Member

Sincere gratitude to all for their co-operation and their contributions.

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Saint John of God Housing Association clg
Gleann na hEorna
Tessa House, Block D
Springfield
Tallaght
Dublin 24
D24 DTN1

Phone: 01 223 9138
Email: housing@sjog.ie

RCN: 20069823
CRO No. 426952