



# Annual Report 2020/21





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# Foreword

2020/21 has been a year of significant challenge. We experienced the full first year of the COVID-19 pandemic which, as a care charity, had a massive impact on our operations. Fortunately the Board and Leadership Team responded magnificently at an early stage. The rapid purchase of PPE and the deployment of new safety procedures certainly mitigated both the death and infection rates of both our service users and staff members.



**Ken Brundle**  
Praxis Chair

Without the dedication of our staff and the willing cooperation of our service users we could not have achieved such an outcome. Quite frankly, Team Praxis did a grand job. Sadly, despite all the precautions, some service users passed away due to COVID and our thoughts and prayers are with their families.

During the year, we have had to learn how to run a major charity by using virtual meetings with our service users and suppliers, as well as between ourselves and all in our extended enterprise. Whilst not being perfect, it has enabled us to maintain high levels of care and move forward with developing the organisation. We have grown considerably during the year (14% up to £53 million) and this has involved the acquisition of new property and the commissioning of new services in all the jurisdictions we operate in. Recruitment and training have faced enormous pressure but have met these challenges. Our research initiative with Queen's University is bearing real fruit with a rapid expansion of research

initiatives underway. The key Board priority during the year has been the maintenance of the quality of our care. The response from our governance team has also been to the highest standard with innovative approaches being deployed.

Despite all the challenges, 20/21 has proved to be an excellent year. My thanks have to go to the Board for steering the organisation through the turbulence, applying their broad knowledge and experience, but also Andy Mayhew and the entire Praxis Team. The Annual Report reflects an excellent result.

From a Board perspective, we must recognize that we are no longer a small Northern Ireland charity. We operate both north and south in Ireland as well as in England and the Isle of Man. We are probably unique for Northern Ireland in growing to become a major national charity. However, the entire Team is still focused on providing exceptional care tailored to each individual service user. I commend you to read the full report.



## A message from our CEO:

**It was a year like no other, with the onset of the COVID pandemic impacting on our service users, staff, Board and all our families and loved ones.**

It is fair to say that, at the outset, we and all partner organisations in the social care family were struggling to make sense of very a fast changing picture in terms of public health advice and regulations. In our case, we had the added complication of providing services in four jurisdictions, each with their unique approach to managing the impact of COVID generally and on social care particularly

My abiding memory is of how all of our people—service users and their families, staff working in direct service provision and in our corporate service departments, members of our senior team and the Board of Trustees—pulled together with such flexibility, inventiveness and commitment. Knowing many of the people involved, I wasn't surprised, but I was impressed and proud

of what the organisation achieved: keeping vital services going and helping our service users and each other stay safe.

Sadly, we lost four service users early in the pandemic, before the protection of the vaccine became available. This was so traumatic for their loved ones and for the staff who had supported them so well to the end. That was when the cruel reality of COVID hit home.

I mentioned inventiveness and part of the legacy has been our ability to adapt to working and communicating remotely. The ideal, of course is to have options and choices about the mix of home and office working and between virtual and face-to-face meetings. Where the right balance lies is yet to be seen, but we will never go back to a one size fits all approach—flexibility is the key and has been seen to work extremely well.

At the outset, our Board and the Senior Leadership Team were single minded: the priority was keeping service users and staff

safe and our growth strategy would take second place. It is testimony to the commitment of our staff in all departments that, in the midst of the COVID pandemic, they continued to respond to urgent need by expanding services, where that could be achieved safely. It tells me that our strategic ambition—to reach and improve the lives of more people—is owned throughout the organisation. As a result, we increased the number of people we supported, increased our workforce and brought many additional properties into use as homes for service users.

A uniquely challenging year for all our people and one in which they far exceeded all reasonable expectation. I am full of admiration and gratitude.

**Andy Mayhew**  
Chief Executive

# Our Mission & Vision

Our vision, mission and values get to the heart of the work we do and why and how we do it.

## Our Mission

Empowering lives that are valued, meaningful and inclusive, regardless of the complexity of need, every day.

## Our Vision

Leading the co-production of innovative, individualised care and support approaches across the UK, the Isle of Man and Ireland.



# Our Values

These are what make Praxis Care unique, ensuring we make the right decisions and guiding us in our work with service users, each other and the wider community.



## Passionately Caring

Praxis Care is so much more than a job. We are aware of the enormous trust placed in us and value the uniqueness and potential of every person we support.



## Compassionate

Compassion for people who face real challenges in their lives is a defining component of what makes us Praxis Care.



## Person Centred

We assist people to make informed choices about their own lives and shape the support they receive around their individual needs and aspirations.



## Protecting Individuals

The best interests of service users are paramount. We work in partnership with other organisations, safeguarding individuals, ensuring risk is managed and encouraging positive risk taking.



## Acting with Integrity

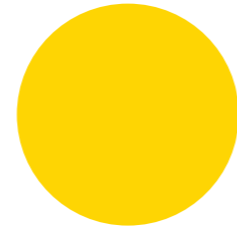
We uphold the rights of every person, ensuring their confidentiality, privacy and dignity are respected. We act with honesty and transparency in all interactions with our service users, their families, our staff, our partners and the public.



## Innovating & Improving

We are committed to continuous innovation through practice-based research, development of our staff and feedback from the people we support.

# Programmes Of Care



## Mental Health:

a range of supported living services to people experiencing mental ill health. Praxis Care also provides home response domiciliary care and counselling support services to individuals suffering from a range of mental health conditions such as agoraphobia, depression and anxiety. During the year, Praxis Care has provided accommodation and support to approximately 584 individuals, plus an additional 713 people through counselling services.

## Learning Disabilities:

supporting adults and children with a learning disability to live in appropriate community settings, through offering a holistic range of care and diversional activity. Praxis Care specialises in services for adults and children who have complex needs, including challenging behaviours, which could not normally be met outside a hospital or institutional setting. These services include a range of residential and supported living schemes and the provision of work and training opportunities. During the year Praxis Care has provided services to approximately 735 people.

## Autism:

a wide range of dedicated support services to people with autism and their families. Praxis Care understands that autism affects every individual differently and influences how a person communicates and relates to other people. Praxis Care is committed to understanding each individual and the unique complexities which surround their diagnosis in order to provide bespoke accommodation and support personalised to their needs.

## Elderly Services:

supported living services for older people, including people with dementia. This model of support enables people to maintain their independence within the living environment of their choice as well as supporting family and primary caregivers. Praxis Care provided support to over 230 elderly people during the year.

### Annual Service User Survey

**92%** reporting having a good quality of life

**91%** were happy with their involvement in deciding what was in their support plan

**95%** felt safe

**97%** said our staff were "kind"



Number of people supported  
**+13.5%**

# Our Services

Note this list is not exhaustive.

## Accommodation and Support:

There are various accommodation models, residential care home, group living, residential flat cluster, flat cluster, dispersed intensively supported housing (DISH) and housing and support models. Accommodation and support schemes offer an opportunity for individuals to live in a community setting which best meets their needs.

## Home Response/ Domiciliary Care:

Praxis Care schemes provide several hundred hours of home response support on a weekly basis. Home response services provide a valuable link to the outside world and reduce the feeling of isolation that can compound mental health problems. Staff provide a range of practical support regarding home management and daily living tasks as well as emotional and social support through befriending, companionship and encouraging participation in educational, vocational and recreational activities. Staff can help in monitoring physical and mental wellbeing and, where necessary, can assist with personal care tasks.

## Workskills/Day Activity:

Praxis Care believes that every individual has a right to meaningful activity during the day. For some, the development of self-help and other life skills may be limited; however, the organisation aspires to enable each individual to develop and acquire skills relevant to adulthood and a level of self-reliance. The organisation has developed a range of projects that meet differing needs with a range of diversional and educational activities at day activity/workskills projects. These schemes enable access to rehabilitation, training, education, therapy and healthcare and an improved quality of life by facilitating individuals to take an active part in contributing to the economy and integrating into local communities.

## Respite Residential Care:

Praxis Care provides long-term or shared care for children with severe learning disabilities whose families are unable to provide care wholly in the family home. The organisation also provides respite to facilitate breaks for carers to enable them to continue in their primary caring role. We provide

respite breaks either in a residential setting or in the child's own home.

**Floating Support:** Floating Support services are short-term (up to two years), flexible services provided to individuals in their own homes. Floating Support services deliver housing related support aimed at maximising an individual's independence while supporting them to maintain their own home. Floating Support services are linked to the individual and not the accommodation meaning that if an individual moves house the service can follow the individual as long as they remain in the service's catchment area.



# Care And Development: Northern Ireland

It would be both impossible and inappropriate to reflect on the year 2020/21 in Northern Ireland without recognising the all-pervasive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on all of us: Praxis Care representatives and those who use our services.

It is important to highlight the great care with which all team members approached the ever changing landscape as coronavirus swept away many of our assumptions about life and we all adapted to a new living and working environment. We should pay tribute to all of our colleagues who have sustained frontline services this year, sometimes in circumstances where they were fearful for their own safety. It is a testimony to their core values and absolute dedication to service users that we were able to maintain all of our critical services throughout the most challenging year any of us are, hopefully, ever likely to face. Thank you all; your dedication is inspiring and is not taken for granted.

**“In Portadown, we re-settled a further five young gentlemen from medium secure hospital placements in England and Scotland, bringing them home to the heart of their own communities to continue their lives with a sense of optimism and hope.”**

In addition to the Praxis Care team, it is important to register our appreciation for the approach taken by the Department of Health and the Department for Communities, our primary funding partners. All five Health and Social Care Trusts, as well as the Supporting People programme, immediately committed to maintain contract levels, at either substantially or totally full value, to ensure that there was a true partnership approach from voluntary and statutory organisations throughout COVID.

Despite COVID, Praxis Care continued to deliver existing services and bring some new services successfully on line.

In Portadown, we re-settled a further five young gentlemen from medium secure hospital placements in England and Scotland, bringing them home to the heart of their own communities to continue their lives with a sense of optimism and hope. Whilst not without challenge, this service has delivered excellent outcomes for the young men in question, all of whom have found their own way to integrate into local community life and enjoy the lives of full citizens, free from the shadow of a hospital life.

New services also opened in Derry/Londonderry, Newry and Lisburn to provide accommodation-based care and support to several complex service users.

In conclusion, every team member and service user very much hopes that we never experience another year with such immense pressures. It is with great gratitude to our staff and partners and with great anticipation we look forward to moving ahead into a period of growth in the coming years.



# A Bright Spot: Bernard And Michael At Pettigo Road

One of 2020's bright spots was a new project undertaken by Bernard and Michael at Pettigo Road Kesh service.

Back in June, Bernard purchased a chicken coop in anticipation of the 3 salmon faverolles, donated by an anonymous local farmer. The men were so excited to take on their new project, particularly as restrictions meant they were spending a lot more time at home. The hens are as gorgeous as can be, amusing everyone as they scurry around the garden. The guys named them Sarah, Amelia and Betty. Michael has taken on the task of feeding and watering and Bernard maintains a cozy coop for the gals. Our Fermanagh farmers have done an admirable job of caring for their chickens daily and were rewarded for their efforts when, before Christmas, all the hens started laying eggs!

Michael has taken on the task of feeding and watering and Bernard maintains a cozy coop for the gals.



# Seamus's Story Portadown Bespoke/ Locke House



**My name is Seamus "Vulnerable Adult" Flood, as I like to call myself.**

At the age of 3, my mummy passed away and my dad was unable to care for me. I was put into care. At the age of 4, I was given my forever family. My mum and dad provided me with a loving home and made me feel like one of their own.

At the age of 14, I became very challenging—heavily drinking and causing my parents upset. I have a diagnosis of bi-polar and a mild learning disability. As much as it broke my heart to go, I knew moving to Muckamore Abbey was the right thing to do for me and my family.

So at the age of 16, I moved from my home in Cavan. It was a scary experience moving to somewhere I didn't know. I thoroughly enjoyed my time there and met some good friends and staff that I still have contact with.

At 25, I was supported to move up to Portadown and started with Praxis Care's Forest Lodge where I stayed for 6.5 years. There are memories that come flooding back: holidays to Bundoran and day trips to Belfast Zoo, Newcastle and the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum.

The staff looked after my money and cooked me dinner and I was unable to venture into the community on my own.

I was moved to Castle Lane for the next 10 years. There, I had a bit more freedom and was supported to learn new skills such as cooking, cleaning and how to look after my personal hygiene. I like to have some daily routine and so started with Lurgan Road Day Services which kept me busy Monday–Friday, 9–4. In Day Services, there are a number of activities to choose from. My personal favourite is working in the allotments in Tandragee. I have even learnt how to make Baileys cheesecake from SCRATCH!

In 2016, I moved to Portadown DISH and was handed my very own home to manage in the community for the first time in my life. I classify myself as fully independent

receiving some support from Praxis Care staff. I come and go as I please, complete household chores and look after my budgie Joey as well as taking the occasional trip to the local pub for a few (too many). The Drop In service offered by Locke House provides great opportunity to spend some time with staff and other tenants on a Tuesday and Thursday evening, every week.

Only last night did we make some rocky road buns which went down a treat!

I am thankful for the support that I have been given over the years from the staff in Praxis Care and throughout the different services that I have lived in. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone that I have met, both tenants and staff.

Here's to the next 20 years.



# Lisnaskea Services: A Reflective Look Over COVID-19

A service user's house flooded and they couldn't manage this independently. Staff supported this service user through daily phone calls and arranging repairs and services.

Lisnaskea has 3 services including:

- 11-place** Mental Health Flat Cluster
- 20-place** Mental Health Floating Support
- 35-place** Dementia Floating Support

Service users from different religious backgrounds, who expressed an interest, were supported to reconnect with their faith. During the first wave, service users agreed a time every night they would pray to help reduce fear, loneliness and isolation which provided comfort.

## Impact On Staff

It has been widely documented that the COVID-19 pandemic has put a significant strain across our society and it is undoubtedly more keenly felt by those who have already been struggling with their mental ill health. Within the Lisnaskea services, we have had to rapidly, and continuously, adapt our service delivery throughout COVID-19. As a team, we utilised our local community resources, including staff family members making homemade masks for staff and service users well before it

was compulsory to wear one. Our teams needed to pull together and be flexible and creative in their approaches as working practices have changed and this enabled us to achieve positive outcomes with service users despite the unprecedented times.

Telecommunication has played a vital role in service delivery and has become the primary form of support. Although service users prefer face-to-face contact, they welcomed any contact. Blended support also played a part with a combination of doorstep support,

socially distanced community-based support with PPE and phone/video calls as lockdown measures have eased.

Within floating support, the lack of technology for our staff members and the confined office working environment made it a priority for us to arrange for work laptops to be made available to our staff. This enabled better communication between all agencies involved in the support of service users, as well as ensuring social distancing across the staff team can be better managed.

## Impact On Service Users

Service users have also had to adjust to the 'new norm', and, for many of our floating support service users, particularly those in more rural localities, our support is often the only contact they have with the outside world. Thus, loneliness and social isolation is a key need that we address.

However, some service users with social anxiety have expressed that they have actually found COVID easier as there is no expectation for them to go out (although they recognise this isn't good for them long-term).

Support to service users has changed over COVID-19 including

- Support to independently carry out home safety checks
- Providing clarity to understand PHA guidelines
- Establishing community links for grocery delivery or staff providing essential item drop off for more rural locations lacking delivery options
- Support to rekindle skills such as cooking and baking despite the flour shortage
- Discharge of service users who have achieved their goals
- Reviews completed remotely
- Good contact maintained with stat keyworkers



Some floating support service users reduced their external care packages to avoid contact due to being in vulnerable risk category, meaning our support became even more vital as the sole point of contact.

A service user who could drive but due to anxiety relied on others, including staff, for lifts was supported by staff to regain confidence. Staff drove in front of the service user as they made their way to local health centre— what an achievement!







# Introducing: Regional Directors

## Amanda Gray

Amanda Gray is the first Regional Director for the Republic of Ireland, overseeing services in the west, south and southeast. These services have only developed starting 2018, so she has been part of significant growth in the region during the unique challenge of the pandemic.



The Regional Director role came at a time when Amanda was interested in advancing her career and was already succeeding in her role as a Head of Operations. Happy to stay with the charity while developing professionally, she says, 'Whilst Praxis is a large organisation, it never feels so big that you can't pick up the phone and ask a question.'

'People like to support each other—it's never a competition between services but always about how do we learn and share what we do well so that we provide the best quality of service to everyone? In my experience, that is not something you would see everywhere.'

She explains why she thinks the new role of Regional Director is important:

'I think the role is vital in overseeing the quality of services we provide. The role allows the time to be in service when needed but also to be involved in the strategic planning of the organisation which I feel is critical. The Regional Director often has a unique perspective on Operational questions because of the close involvement with services.'

Amanda's favourite part of her role is seeing first-hand the positive impact of our work and talking with service users about their lives and how they can be best supported.

## Deirdre Carr

In a previous role at a large housing association, Deirdre Carr got an understanding of the diverse range of services and service user needs we supported. When the Regional Director for Northern Ireland role became available, 'This really interested me in that I could expand my learning and knowledge within my social work profession, but also progress within my own career in care.'



Like Amanda, Deirdre appreciates how the Regional Director role straddles both senior leadership and scheme-level management. 'There is no area of being a care provider that you do not cover as a regional director. As a Regional Director I have the pleasure of being close to the services and the Management teams supporting these services, whilst also supporting SLT and the wider teams to improve and develop their services. The Regional Director plays an important role in the implementation of change and new developments within the organization.'

She started at Praxis the week before lockdown, so she still has yet to meet many colleagues in person. Even though nearly all her interaction has been via email and video calls, 'I like the inclusion of people within every department in my day-to-day job. It takes a team to make everything work and come together. Everyone is so approachable throughout all of Praxis Care.'

# Care And Development: Republic Of Ireland

COVID-19 has been the greatest challenge to face the health and social care sector in decades.

Praxis Care rose to the challenge of COVID-19 and maintained essential safe services throughout this time. Staff worked alongside service users at this time to adapt their support models and provide new ways to engage service users under lockdown conditions.

We are beyond proud of what teams achieved. Despite the pandemic and restrictions our services continued to grow and develop and remain focused on strategic objectives.

Proudly after almost 18 months of due diligence, we transferred Cork Association of Autism to Praxis Care. Led by operations and supported by all corporate services colleagues, this is the largest transfer ever undertaken by Praxis Care.

We successfully transferred 4 day services, 2 residential services, 1 respite service and 5 home support services which included the transfer of over 100 staff and 70 service users. We also opened a further residential service in County Louth and Dublin as well as welcoming 22 new school leavers across our day activity locations.

Twelve positive HIQA inspections were conducted in the year across our residential services also.

By the end of the year, we supported over 400 adults and children across day, residential and respite services with a staff team of over 450. Our staff are our greatest asset, without them we could not have stood up to the challenges of this year. We also could not have done this without the support of our stakeholders whom we work alongside: families, parents, Health Service Executive, Tusla, HIQA and numerous multi-disciplinary professionals.

We are excited about the opportunities in the year to come.



“Despite the pandemic and restrictions our services continued to grow and develop and remain focused on strategic objectives.”



# Grace’s Story Ballina Day Services

Since joining Praxis Care in 2019, my independent living skills and quality of life have significantly improved whilst attending Ballina Day Service.

I’ve been supported by the staff to do what I want to do each day and to reach my goals in life. I have participated in panels interviewing staff, guiding new staff on their first day and taking visitors around Ballina Day Service. I’m a people person and I know these are important jobs.

My dream is to work as a receptionist.

The team at Ballina Day Service talked with me about the skills I already have and how I can develop more skills to make my dream come true.

So far, I have signed up to a computer course in the local education and training centre. I spend some time each week helping at the day service office, doing office jobs and learning how an office runs.

Staff are also helping me with my telephone skills and hand writing.

I am excited about my future!



## Peter Paul was bored.

Prior to lockdown, he had a volunteering job in Dundalk where he went out to cut grass, weed and do other outdoor work. He had a lot of pride and satisfaction in his role and enjoyed learning on the job as he was trained in different landscaping skills. This all stopped when coronavirus restrictions were put in place in 2020. When the team at Pond Park realised how much Peter Paul was missing working outdoors and putting his skills to use, they took matters into their own hands: organising the purchase of a shed, strimmer and other landscaping materials just for him. He started to do landscaping for Praxis Care services in the area and is very proud of his achievements, keeping the services in Dundalk looking beautiful.



# Slane Road

## A Reflection On The Past Year

Since hearing the news about the coronavirus last February in Ireland, things have changed a lot in our lives here in Blackcastle, Slane Road.

From staff's perspective, initially, we found we adapted very well to the anxiety and unknown information that has come from the deadly virus. In the first months of lockdown number one, we were blessed with the gorgeous weather and so the service users had ample opportunities for in-house and outdoor activities. However, although the service users appeared to be enjoying this "new normal", spending time together, spending lots of time outside, discovering new in-house activities, etc., there definitely was an anxiety amongst staff. We had so many questions like everyone else. What we found difficult right from the start was not being able to have a definite answer for everything.

Praxis Care did a great job with the amount of information and resources they gave for both staff and service users, from e-learning,

HSEland, updated information leaflets regularly, anxiety workbooks for both staff and service users and easy reads information for the service users. We appreciated how quickly we received these to help us understand what was going on much better.

Months later, although we felt knowledgeable about COVID and quite confident in trying to keep our home COVID free, there were still some questions we found difficult not being able to answer for the service users. "When will this virus go away?" "When will be getting our vaccine?" "When will we be going back to day service?" "When can I hug my mammy?" As a staff team, we supported the service users with their answers while also trying to not give any false hope or dramatising the information that we see on the news. We encouraged the service users to be confident in our government and that the choices they make for us around lockdowns and regulations, that it was all for our best interests.

Another thing that staff found difficult was having no face-to-face team meetings and staff training. We missed the interaction with one another and being able to speak to each other face-to-face. Talking into your phone is just not the same as communicating amongst peers and one thing to improve your practice is hearing other employees' ideas and insights during training.

Overall, looking back on the year, we have found that we all have adapted extremely well and we are so proud of the service users and how they have adapted and adjusted. We celebrated five service users' birthdays, one of whom turned 50 and another who turned 30! Initially, they were disappointed that they could not celebrate with a big party and all their family and friends as they wanted; however, they had a great time. We are all so excited to get back out doing our normal things. Three of the service users said they cannot wait to go bowling and to the cinema. Two service users said they miss their boxing class and

one is nervous, but excited to see his mother whom now resides in a nursing home. He has not gotten to see her in her new home yet and this will be a big change for him. Another is excited to be back in day care, even if only for a few days a week.

One service user sadly lost her mother in December. Both her housemates have shown an amazing amount of empathy and kindness towards her during this difficult time. Staff have noted how being kind to one another during difficult times, both personal and COVID related, really makes a difference in people's lives. Being kind costs nothing but you receive such a reward yourself in seeing everyone smile.

The major change that the service users found was being unable to interact with each other, as they lived in separate households. Although they were close neighbours and best friends who spent most evenings together, they were two households and, therefore, were unable to interact with each other in person.

The major thing that the staff found the most difficult was trying to maintain social distance with the service users and trying to discourage affectionate behaviour like hugs and high-fives, as this was so common before COVID. We felt sad not sitting at the dinner table, wearing masks all the time and having to repeat ourselves numerous times if the service users could not understand us. Explaining the reason why we wore PPE and must maintain social distance was tiring and a bit deflating each day. However, we continue to reassure and support our service users.

Now, as everyone gradually gets vaccinated, the service users are thinking about things they can look forward to and working towards achieving their goals and wishes.

Slane Road  
video



# Care And Development: Isle Of Man & Great Britain

Despite the day to day barriers, challenges and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, our teams are now working alongside more people in more locations than we have ever done before across GB&IOM.

## Our COVID-defiant new services include:

- Kaleidoscope—a profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD) day care service unique across the UK
- Plasden Shine On—bespoke step down to enable continued independence
- Birmingham Support Living Service—complex case bespoke supported living across Birmingham
- Growth across our Isle of Man bespoke provision

In all services, we have seen new people accessing our provision, some incredible progressions and outcomes and continued innovation in approach.

- Our young people’s respite service has reshaped itself to a new commissioning contract.
- Our entire IOM offer is responding to a system-wide change in commission and regulation whilst continuing to grow and innovate.

- The team at Coombe House continue to keep some of our most vulnerable adults safe and to look at growth in the service.
- The West Midlands Supported Living Service has grown by 25% and managed with great sensitivity through a really difficult spring in 2020.
- Our Warwickshire Supported Living Service has also grown by 25% whilst wrapping around a young adult through a period of extreme challenge. Manager Alex Blyth—on behalf of the service team—has received numerous award nominations through the year for this.
- Laura, our Plasden Court manager, also received a national award nomination.

There have also been some very dark times over the year: not everything has gone to plan; we’ve had some hard conversations, managed some incredibly challenging episodes and on-boarded some tough learnings. In all of this, the response of the service teams has always been shaped around and for the people they have been supporting.

Our colleagues, through dedication, compassion and selfless working are consistently “Empowering lives that are valued, meaningful and inclusive, regardless of the complexity of need, every day” across GB&IOM. It is this approach, the opportunities and choices it seeds and the life changing moments that happen consequent to it, that even in the hardest times gives us all something positive to draw and reflect on.

The key message to get across in this review is simply thank you—to every single member of the GB&IOM service team. Each of you is a star and your light is helping others to shine, sometimes in the very darkest of times.

# Sereina’s Story Clifton Terrace

## The staff at Praxis are like family at this stage.

I just know that I can go to them and trust them to help me when I’m upset. Even if I’ve got good news, I can go share that with them. It’s someone there to say, “Yeah! Well done.” At the end of the lockdown, one staff member came in and dragged me out of my dark place and pulled me back to where I was before the lockdown. I don’t think if I was living alone I could have done that. She really did bring me back to a good place. She did a lot to me to get me out of this dark place. Everyone was there for me... It was really nice.



## Wendy Green celebrated 18 years at Praxis Care.

Having left school at 15 with no qualifications, Wendy required all the training Praxis Care had to offer and then some when she became a support worker at Glenroyd on Isle of Man in 2003. She boarded an 18-seater City Wing aeroplane once a month to achieve her NVQ 4 in Health and Social Care—curing her fear of flying! She’s since advanced through the ranks to managing two services and was awarded an RMB lifetime achievement award in the Isle of Man. She was interviewed on the radio about the honour and describes the award ceremony as “like a night at the Oscars”.



# Joe's Story Plasden Court



**My name is Joseph, but everyone calls me Joe. I am 26 years old and I have struggled with depression most of my life.**

When I was 15 years old, my mum passed away and I was bullied at school, so I left school early. I also left college early, as I could not cope with the anxiety of being around other people.

Although I was under the home-based treatment team, I wasn't on any medication or getting the right support.

In my early 20's, I moved into a flat independently and things started looking good for me: I was working and I had a girlfriend. But then, my mental health started deteriorating; my girlfriend left me; I stopped going to the gym and I stopped working. This was when I had my first suicide attempt.

I spent 6 weeks in Park House, a psychiatric hospital. Then, I was placed at Beech Range, a 3-month stepdown service for people coming out of hospital. I ended up being there for 13 months, due to COVID and funding problems. Lockdown was very difficult for me as it was hard to keep busy and I felt like I was stuck in limbo. My low mood and anxiety led to another suicide attempt.

My care co-ordinator referred me to Plasden Court.

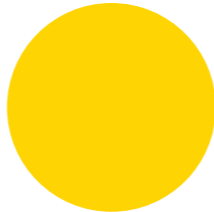
When I first moved in, I wasn't managing my flat very well; I was struggling.

I was admitted to hospital twice. During one admission, I had a learning disability assessment, requested by me and a support worker. I was told I had ASD which has really helped me understand why I am the way I am and why I behave the way I do. I feel like when you understand what's different with you, then you can do something about it. Before the diagnosis, I couldn't understand why I responded to emotions the way I did.

Every day I do a daily planner myself—my flat is the cleanest it has ever been! I have started going to I am Autism, a group which supports adults with ASD and do activities together. I have been to Alton Towers and Blackpool recently!

My goal is to be a HCA on a mental health ward and my dream is to be a mental health nurse.

I've been at Plasden for a year now, and I feel more content and positive than I've ever been.



# Kaleidoscope: A Labour Of Love

Our first parent-commissioned service, Kaleidoscope, came together this year thanks to the determination of parents of young adults with profound and multiple learning disabilities determined to see their children have fulfilling, interesting days even after leaving school.

Introducing  
Kaleidoscope Video



The Origin of  
Kaleidoscope



# A Year Like No Other: HR And Learning & Development



Our response to the pandemic was driven by the desire to protect our people and those we support; we were pro-active in sourcing PPE before any of the initial supply issues and, with our colleagues in the Quality & Governance department, systems and processes were put in place to monitor the impact of the pandemic across the organisation.

We were able to reduce some services to enable redeployment to services which required more intensive staff commitment. Despite the pandemic, we saw increased demand for our services. Through the further embedding of technology, we were able to improve efficiency in our hiring and on-boarding processes. Our employee turnover reduced to 23.6% from 29.5%.

In March, we took over the Cork Association of Autism, the largest take over in Praxis Care history with 105 employees and over 70 people requiring support transferring across. As with any transfer of services, there were challenges, but through close relationships with our commissioners, the employees and the people who use the service and their families, the transfer proved a huge success.

The pandemic forced us to rethink how we delivered our training and to do so safely without sacrificing quality. We converted 40 courses from face-to-face to e-learning, revamped the induction and, at the same time, implemented a new learning management system. This, along with reduced class sizes for our face-to-face training, resulted in significant pressure on our Learning and Development team. We continued to offer support to qualified social workers through the AYE programme and to provide qualification at levels 3 and 5 in Health and Social Care, ensuring that employees continued to have career development.

It is clear that our values shone through our people during 2020/21: we cared passionately and were compassionate to the needs of those who used our services; we innovated to respond to the pandemic; we acted with integrity and took a principled approach; but most evident was that we put the people we support at the centre of our work and protected them as much as we could.

## COVID Staff Snapshot

### First Wave:

**86** employees off, 5–10% confirmed COVID cases

### Second Wave:

**78** employees off, 40–50% confirmed COVID cases

**0** COVID-related deaths of staff



# Quality And Governance

There was significant progress made in the further development of the Quality and Governance MIS, which enables managers at all levels to remotely monitor the key safety and quality indicators for services.

The system provides real time information on a wide range of KPIs and one very important example of this was the ability to monitoring COVID infection rates and stocks of PPE, by service and by region, to ensure appropriate infection control measures.

The organisation retained ISO 9001, following a very successful ISO inspection during the year.

In 2021/22 the Q&G MIS will be further developed and refined with the priority area being the transfer of care, support and risk management plans onto an IT platform. The Internal Audit Team will also be expanded to create additional capacity to conduct audits routinely and in response to any emerging concerns.

## Management Information System

The QG MIS team's focus is leading on the development of the organisation's internal Quality and Governance Management Information System.

## Quality

The Quality team's focus is on policy and procedure frameworks, internal audit and (as the QG MIS develops) on identifying quality issues highlighted by the QG MIS data.

## Safety

The Safety team's focus is on the safety of individuals, completion of Fire Risk Assessments, analysis of incidents, and management of claims.



# OMS And Inside Track



## OMS

The OMS (Outcomes Management System) is a real-time IT based management tool to capture key information in a service user's journey through Praxis Care from referral to service user to leaver. An Assessment is completed annually to chart a service user's progress using a "distance travelled approach" to recognise outcomes achieved.

## Reporting

During 2020, reporting mechanisms were developed to support staff to collate data directly from the OMS. This in-built reporting suite allows organisational-, service- and individual-level comprehensive, accurate and meaningful reports. Reports are available to save in Excel, allowing data to be organised in a variety of formats.

## Inside Track

Praxis Care secured funding through NIHE's Supporting People Provider Innovation Fund (2020/21) to develop Inside Track. Inside Track is a service user mood tracking (Progressive Web App) app primarily aimed at Supporting People Mental Health services. Inside Track provides service users with an independent voice to manage their wellbeing. It also links to the OMS to bring improved responsiveness from services to service users—providing a conversation starter, allowing services to shape support around the individual.

## Dashboards

From early 2021, three dashboards are being designed to enhance the OMS user experience. The dashboards will provide interactive charts and tiles that include filters

and drilldown functions allowing staff to efficiently access relevant and timely information from the OMS. These will be available from autumn 2021 and will include:

1. Individual Outcomes
2. Group Outcomes
3. Demographics

## 2021/22 Outcomes Wish List

New 2021/22 NIHE funding has been secured to build on the infrastructure of the OMS to develop a fresh and engaging module that will record individuals' life goals—their 'Wish List'. The 'Wish List' will recognise each individual's realistic dreams, allowing them to be captured and achieved. These individualised outcomes will align with the existing Assessment process on the OMS.

# Praxis Property

Praxis Care now works in over 300 assets across Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, the Isle of Man and Great Britain. This is a large, diverse and growing property portfolio.

From a standing start and in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have made great progress and a positive difference. On a daily basis the team is increasing its knowledge of and contact with our operational services as well as supporting service growth, refurbishment and repair. Each jurisdiction now has a Head of Property who is responsible for all property activity and its coordination with operational colleagues. Each Head of Property also has a functional role across Praxis; this enables us to share learning and experiences, to be consistent across jurisdictions in our property offer and to continue to develop our approach from an informed and evidence-based perspective.

It's a great team and there is huge passion within it for our work and for the impacts that it can have on the operational service teams and the people that they work alongside: "Empowering lives that are valued, meaningful and inclusive, regardless of the complexity of need, every day".

To support our property work and growth and to further professionalise this activity the Praxis Property Division will launch officially in April 2021. Praxis **Property Vision: Enabling environments, personalised places—always.**

Without the dedicated and very committed work of the following people none of this would have happened.

## Praxis Property

- Chelsea Clarke – Head of Capital Development and Property Management – Great Britain and the Isle of Man + organisational functional lead for Property Management
- Mark Harding – Head of Capital Development and Property Management – Republic of Ireland + organisational functional lead for Construction
- David Sutherland – Head of Capital Development and Property Management – Northern Ireland + organisational functional lead for Development
- Laura Morgan – Property Manager

# Knowledge Dissemination To Knowledge Mobilisation

Praxis Care aims to make services and interventions as engaging, supportive and effective as possible by routinely bringing the most relevant and up to date research evidence into service improvement and new service design activity.



### Research involves:

- Finding out what works
- Working with people from a wide range of backgrounds, not only "experts" with advanced qualifications
- Sharing the findings locally, nationally and internationally

### Published this year

Physical activity report: "Empowering people through physical activity: A co-produced research project studying how to improve physical activity for people with severe and enduring mental health problems"

Peer reviewed paper in Health Expectations: "An exercise intervention for people with serious mental illness: Findings from a qualitative data analysis using participatory theme elicitation"

Peer-reviewed paper in Health and Social Care: "Service users' experiences and views of support for decision-making"







# Praxis Care Staff Award Winners 2021

## Living The Values Award

Vincent Lavery

In March 2020 Vincent was asked by the Government to assist with the response to the COVID pandemic. It was not clear how long this would take, and during this time Vincent offered to continue in his role as data protection officer on a voluntary basis in the evenings and at weekends.

In the end, Vincent was away for 9 months, and during the entire time, on a voluntary basis he managed all SARs, data breaches, DPIAs, answered tender questions, and responded to all queries to ensure we remained compliant with GDPR.

## Etta Eid Jennings Award

Crumlin –  
The Courtyard

(Joint Winner)

This award is for a high performance team.

Against the impact of COVID-19, The Courtyard had the challenge of inducting a new service user. The service user was registered deaf and used Makaton, which was new to staff. The team sourced their own Makaton training so all staff had a basic level and secured funding for staff to complete level 2 + additional resources. Makaton became an operational objective. Makaton sign of the week was introduced with staff and service users completing them together. They also sourced clear masks to help barriers with PPE.



## Pat Cassidy Award

Alex Blyth

This award is for going above and beyond to achieve exceptional outcomes for the people who we support. Alex is an inspiration. He has been on an incredibly steep learning curve this year, overcome substantial and sustained challenge in his service and throughout has been an exemplary leader to his team and a compassionate carer to those we work alongside. He leads by example, is totally committed to his work and is highly respected, valued and appreciated by us, by our service users and by our multi-agency colleagues. It is an honour and a privilege to work with him.

## Recruitment Team

(Joint Winner)

The recruitment team moved to a new level during the pandemic, they have change from a largely administrative team to one that works in partnership with the teams to deliver an efficient recruitment process, demonstrated in the reduced time to hire for 2020/21. They have service first in their approach, getting involved in assessment days, performing leaflet drops, using a wider variety of advertising channels to attract new employees resulting in the recruitment of 783 new employees in 2020/21

## Developing Self And Others Through Either Formal Or Informal Learning And Development Award

Betty Duff

(Joint Winner)

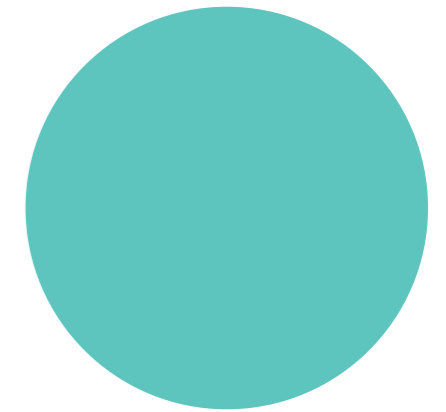
Every team needs a Betty Duff! The time Betty intentionally takes to train staff on completing audits, reports, care plans and all areas PBS is inspiring. For formal training, Betty ensure PBS training was pushed at Pond Park and sourced specific dysphagia training. One stand out memory was when Betty sat with a practitioner who was leaving and still talked them over how to complete a finance audit. Betty values up skilling her teams and individuals.



## Co-Production And Empowerment Of The People We Work With Award

Plasden Court

Co-production has been at the heart of the work Plasden Court does, continually. From service tasks plans, to actions groups to review policies, to consultation on the annual scorecard, to consultation on furniture packages, to a co-produced co-production easy read leaflet, to co-producing interview questions for candidates at interview, co-production really is embedded in daily practice. Plasden staff truly value co-production and the inclusivity and empowerment which are created.



## David Ashfield

(Joint Winner)

When joining he had to hit the ground running taking on management accounting tasks and tasks not in his job role. He took this as an opportunity to look at the current processes and find ways to improve them. He has streamlined some manual month end reporting tasks and has looked at the current management accounts to find improvements. David is always focused on improving output of reports for the wider business and takes time to understand the individual scheme and their needs to help support them. He has put himself forward to learn the workings of the finance ERP system to understand it better and improve his skill set. He has also taken on the mapping process project where he is learning a new skill from PWC to stabilise the finance department.

David has come from the charity back ground and has used his experience to mentor the other management accountants as he has learnt the processes and worked on improvements. He has then trained the management accounts department on the various tasks. He has also become the knowledge source for the team when they have queries over their own work and when he has developed a new process that makes life easier and produces high quality output, he shares with the wider group.

### Innovation Award

QG MIS team (Maura Gardner, Adam Taggart and Luke Bell)

This team enabled significant improvements in safety and service quality through their innovative work on the QG MIS development—in particular COVID processes but also the raft of other quality systems providing live-analysed information at corporate departmental and service levels. The QG MIS platform is providing huge benefits in terms of improved governance across the organisation as a whole.



### CEO Award – The Avenue

The team at The Avenue went absolutely above and beyond to ensure that a woman who they began to work alongside in 2020 would receive person-centred support. She has become a much more relaxed, happy and independent person thanks to their care and determination to make her life as suited to her own needs, wishes and goals as possible.



### The Leadership Award

Betty Duff

(Joint Winner)

On two occasions in the last twelve months, Betty has been asked to provide leadership support to schemes experiencing significant challenge. The future of these schemes were in real jeopardy, with commissioners seriously considering the contract, which had a combined value of almost £2m annually. Betty provided practical, solution-focused leadership, and established credibility quickly with both staff teams and commissioners. She understood the corporate priorities for Praxis Care SLT, but advocated firmly for the necessary resources and interventions to deliver the necessary improvements. Both schemes were substantially improved as a direct result of Betty's leadership and vision.

David Sutherland

(Joint Winner)

David has poured value, energy and innovation in to Praxis. His work rate is huge, his remit expansive and yet in everything he does the implications for and with those around him is considered. He is a passionate advocate for those we work alongside and for our staff team members and brings all he can to make their daily experience the very best that it can be. He has brought rigour, vision and challenge to the property team, we are well advanced on where we should be thanks to his passion.

# Volunteering

Praxis Care was started as a befriending charity and we went back to our roots this year as other types of volunteering were halted. Even though many face-to-face volunteering activities had to be put on hold due to restrictions, 93 volunteers still continued to support Praxis Care's efforts in 2020–21 as befrienders or Board members.

the life out of me for people like [befriender] Margaret [Marshall] because that is their thing to look forward to, getting a coffee with someone and meeting up with them or even getting down to the garden."

Margaret concurs, "Just knowing that someone cares and listens, that means the world to me."

We are so appreciative of our volunteers who picked up their phones and made sure to check in on someone who needed a connection.

As things open up in 2021–22, we look forward to restarting and developing new volunteering opportunities in other areas such as assisting services with gardening, cooking, skills training, going for outings and more.

As a result of the pandemic, tele-befriending was the primary volunteering activity with some face-to-face visits on the Isle of Man where restrictions were less strict than other jurisdictions.

Individuals with mental ill health or young people coming out of care were still able to connect with someone who cared. More than ever, the participants in our befriending services were at risk of loneliness and isolation without the kindness of befrienders. As befriender Frances Rea says, "Befriending is very important, especially with everything that happened with COVID. It worried



# Appendix

## 1. Board of Trustees

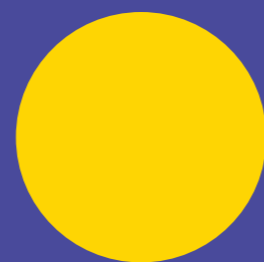
Authority to conduct Praxis Care’s day-to-day activities is delegated by the Board to the Chief Executive, who is responsible for ensuring that the agreed activities are carried out and objectives achieved.



## 2. Senior Leadership Team

The Chief Executive and the Directors form the Senior Leadership Team and each has clearly defined areas of responsibility and accountability. The Senior Leadership Team reports to the Chief Executive and meets weekly.





## 3. Financial Accounts

Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities (incorporating the Income and Expenditure account) for the year ended 31 March 2021

	Unrestricted Funds 2021 (£)	Restricted Funds 2021 (£)	Total Funds 2021 (£)	Unrestricted Funds 2020 (£)	Restricted Funds 2020 (£)	Total Funds 2020 (£)
<b>Income</b>						
Donations and legacies	18,779	-	<b>18,779</b>	23,821	-	<b>23,821</b>
Income from investments	84	-	<b>84</b>	2,541	-	<b>2,541</b>
Income from charitable activities	48,843,398	4,708,990	<b>53,552,388</b>	42,858,573	4,410,557	<b>47,269,130</b>
Other income	23,590	-	<b>23,590</b>	18,339	-	<b>18,339</b>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>48,885,851</b>	<b>4,708,990</b>	<b>53,594,841</b>	<b>42,903,274</b>	<b>4,410,557</b>	<b>47,313,831</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>						
Raising funds	225,354	-	<b>225,354</b>	94,942	-	<b>94,942</b>
Charitable activities	46,851,933	4,749,351	<b>51,601,344</b>	40,340,933	4,820,242	<b>45,161,175</b>
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>47,077,347</b>	<b>4,749,351</b>	<b>51,826,698</b>	<b>40,435,875</b>	<b>4,820,242</b>	<b>45,256,117</b>
(Loss)/Profit on disposal of fixed assets	(9,025)	-	<b>(9,025)</b>	(15,656)	-	<b>(15,656)</b>
Net income	1,799,479	(40,361)	<b>1,759,118</b>	2,451,743	(409,685)	<b>2,042,058</b>
<b>Other recognised gains/ (losses)</b>						
Unrealised loss on investments	734	-	<b>734</b>	(1,665)	-	<b>(1,665)</b>
Unrealised foreign exchange gain	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Net movement in funds before transfers</b>	<b>1,800,213</b>	<b>(40,361)</b>	<b>1,759,852</b>	<b>2,450,078</b>	<b>(409,685)</b>	<b>2,040,393</b>
Transfer between funds	(40,361)	40,361	-	(331,796)	331,796	-
Total funds brought forward	16,390,799	-	<b>16,390,799</b>	14,272,517	77,889	<b>14,350,406</b>
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<b>18,150,651</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>18,150,651</b>	<b>16,390,799</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>16,390,799</b>

## Acknowledgments

A warm and heartfelt thanks to everyone who supported Praxis Care over the past year. With your help, Praxis Care is able to continue to provide high quality services to individuals who have complex needs across Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Great Britain and the Isle of Man.

A special thank you to:

- Funding bodies
- Families of service users
- Staff
- Regulators
- Volunteers
- Friends of Praxis Care
- Service users

An extra special thank you to Seamus, Grace, Joe and Sereina who shared their stories in this annual report.

If you require more information about Praxis Care services or if you would like to receive this information in a different format, please contact:



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